



About the Isle of Man Woodland Trust

Treisht Cheylljyn Vannin

The [Isle of Man Woodland Trust](#) was launched as a charity and a limited company in 2004, and began the task of planting trees and creating more woodland on the island.

Our aims are to protect, maintain and enhance the existing woodland on the Isle of Man and to create new woodland by additional planting using predominantly Manx native species. We also try to encourage access to and enjoyment of existing and new woodland by the public.

Eyreton Wood, was our first acquisition, a 3 acre naturally re-generating plantation, near Crosby containing some 150 year old elm trees. This small, beautiful woodland was opened by the Trust in 2005. Eyreton Wood now shows all the signs of being used by children, with dens, hides, ropeways and arial runways being built and played in. In spring the entire floor of the woodland becomes covered in wild garlic, and the smell is absolutely magical and stunning.

During the six winter months, on Sunday afternoons almost every other weekend, our volunteers are out planting trees, mainly on private land. Each year we plant out over 2,000 new trees, all from our own nursery. Most of these trees are grown locally from native seed, and we try to adhere to our policy of only planting species that are native to the Island.



Eyreton Wood in early spring with a carpet of wild garlic (photo: Richard Crowhurst).

In the past, the Island had become virtually devoid of trees, having been systematically stripped over the centuries for timber to build houses, boats, furniture and for charcoal. Early descriptions, drawings and photographs show an almost treeless landscape. But we owe a huge debt of gratitude to our recent forebears because over the last three hundred years there has been much non-forestry planting wherever possible in glens, around farms, country houses, roadsides and town parks. Starting with Bishop Wilson from the early 1700s, then the Crown and also, particularly, with the development of glens for the tourist industry. Trees have also been planted by individuals, landowners and farmers, and in most recent times by the Government's Small Woods Scheme and the Millennium Oakwood' schools planting in 2000 All this planting has gradually started to rebalance the landscape and encourage wildlife to flourish again, even though native species or locally sourced seed was not usually used.¹

In percentage terms, excluding Forestry Commission land, England has about 12% of its land area covered with broad-leaved trees, and in Europe it is about 44%. On the Island it is only 1.7%. This means that we are way down compared to other countries. As the climate began to warm after the last ice age, the island became naturally colonised with woodland, until by about 8,000 years ago, by which time most of the island was covered in trees. Tree stumps in the dew ponds and in peat high in the uplands show that even the tops of the main hills were once covered in trees. In a few places, such as cliffs and steep gullies, there are tiny remnant fragments of the ancient forest

¹ [see also Suzanne Cubbon's book *Manx Glens a stroll through history* and Garry Curtis has recently noted two butterfly species that have recently arrived on the island that need woodland to survive, see his article: Curtis, G. 2010 'Notes on the butterflies of the Isle of Man' *Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* XII: 2, 2650-270 Ed.]

that once covered the Island, places where the sheep have been unable to get to the young trees. So far about 25 fragments of the Island's ancient forests have been identified by officers from the Wildlife Trust.



Gully trees in Sulby Glen (photo: Richard Crowhurst)

Such of these trees that are left are desperately clinging to life, so we need to instil a programme of growing young trees from these specimens to use as replacements.² Andree Dubbeldam has been surveying these areas as part of the 'Wildflowers in Mann' project, the species are being recorded, and fencing off may occur for protection, this is the subject for another article.



Oak trees clinging to the cliff edge on the lower slopes of Cronk ny Arrey Laa, south of Eary Cushlin, only accessible to the intrepid (photo Andrew Johnson).

² [as the Native Oak Group did for oak trees. Ed.].



Oak and hazel growing on the steep gully side in the Block Eary valley a tributary of the upper Sulby, too steep for sheep and humans (photo Philippa Tomlinson).



Aerial view showing the cliffs just north of Port Cornaa at Traie ny Halsall with trees growing almost vertically up the cliff (courtesy MANNGIS, © Crown copyright/DOI).

Woodland encourages wildlife, and the more woodland in an area, the more cover there is for wild plants and animals to live and flourish. 'Freedom to Flourish' as some people say! If you would like more information or would like to come and plant some trees and want to see a list of planting dates, please [look at our website](#) where there is a form that can be downloaded if you wish to join. Also, if you have some land on which you would like some trees planted, then please contact our membership secretary, Vivienne, on 843726.

Richard Crowhurst, March 2012