



Titan in action, removing fallen trees to allow the bluebell carpet to push through in late spring.

True Titan makes way for the fragile bluebell

AN ancient tradition to preserve and protect precious bluebells has been introduced to a Surrey woodland.

A rare Suffolk Punch breed was brought in to Sandhurst Copse near Shamley Green to extract timber from windblown oaks in an area where the protected species grow.

Bluebells, which flower in the spring, are very fragile and their habitat can be damaged forever without careful management of their environment. Horse logging is a technique that was used centuries ago and is still regarded by many experts to be the most efficient

and environmentally sound way of drawing fallen trees from such a delicate area.

Modern day machines such as tractors would create deep tracks in the ground and the survival of the bluebells underneath the top soil could not be guaranteed.

The 84 acres of woodland is owned and actively managed by Patrick Mannix, who lives in Shamley Green.

Mr Mannix is committed to preserving the woodland to maintain its character for future generations. "This will definitely become a regular feature of the wood. Traditional

methods are often the best when managing such ancient woodland for the long term," he said.

Horse logger Dan Brown and his impressive Suffolk Punch called Titan extracted five tons of oak timber to a small sawmill in the wood without any discernable damage to the surface.

The woodland sits on the border of Guildford and Waverley and Mr Mannix would like to see the planning authorities in both boroughs take a more active and supportive role to the management of woodland in the area.

Residents have permission to walk in the wood and can enjoy one of the most extensive displays of bluebells in the south of England.

Vivian Benn from nearby Bramley said: "When you come here in the spring and the bluebells are out the colours are so spectacular. I think it is wonderful these traditions are being used to preserve such a special place."

The beauty of the bluebells has been captured by well known Surrey artist Peter Symonds and the woodland has recently featured on ITV's Country Ways.