



Commons Link

Newsletter for the Friends of Ludshott and Passfield Commons

 National Trust

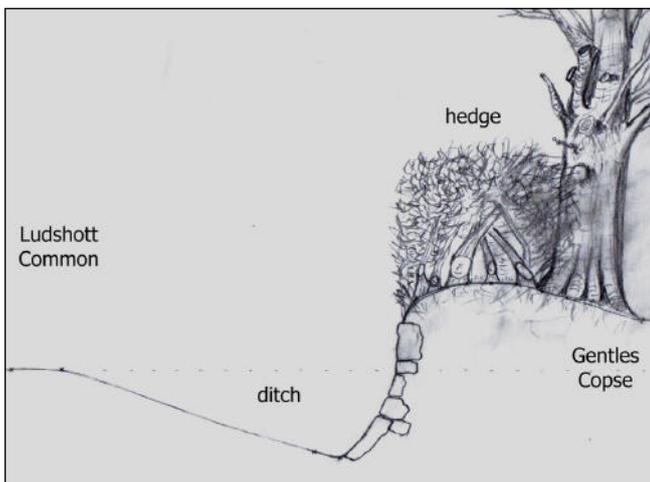
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The Great Wall of Gentles Copse

During the 1980s the National Trust acquired part of Gentles Copse situated on the western border of Ludshott Common. Gentles Copse, roughly oval in shape, had originally reached half a mile across to Gentles Lane and been around 100 acres in extent. The NT ownership amounts to around 20 acres and represents the only part of this ancient woodland that has survived – the rest of the original copse having been cleared to create paddocks and pasture. From a historical and ecological point of view the surviving woodland is of importance both locally and regionally. Being predominantly Sessile Oak, rather than English Oak, it is a type of woodland more characteristic of

survived intact until the early twentieth century when it began to be clear felled. Fortunately we still have around a fifth of the old copse which is now being conserved.

As well as supporting important plant and animal species, the old coppice woodland has some interesting archaeological features and one of the most notable and obvious is the historic boundary bank that has marked its border with Ludshott Common for many centuries. Because the woodland was coppiced routinely, it was necessary to make sure that the animals grazing on the common did not get into the copse and browse



Left: The boundary earthwork in cross-section. The ditch and stone faced bank formed a metre high barrier which was topped with a laid hedge to stop cattle, sheep and ponies getting into the coppice woodland.

Right: Surviving stone faced bank, facing out towards Ludshott Common that helped make the boundary stock proof.



western and northern Britain and is unusual in this part of the country. What is more, the trees still display the evidence of a centuries old form of management, i.e. coppicing. Because this species, like many of our native broadleaved trees, have the ability to regenerate after being cut down, a regular cycle of coppicing was undertaken. The stumps or ‘stools’ of the coppiced trees would produce new shoots which would grow on to form a new crop of polls time after time – the original renewable energy supply. Most of this wood was probably used for fuel and it is highly likely that it was turned into charcoal for the local iron working industry during the 16th and 17th centuries. From old maps we can see that this ancient medieval coppice woodland

off the new shoots that were needed for the next crop of wood. This was achieved by enclosing the copse with a strong bank and ditch topped with a stock-proof hedge. At Gentles Copse there was obviously a great deal of attention paid to making this boundary stock-proof and the robust earthwork, probably dating from the Middle Ages, can still be seen. This is one of our important archaeological features. This was not a simple boundary bank and ditch however, and it retains, in places, evidence of stone facing that would have required a lot of routine maintenance. It highlights the importance placed on protecting the coppice wood by our forebears. This stone facing is missing along significant

lengths of the boundary and is now in a fragile state where it survives. We are beginning to undertake a survey to record the condition of the structure and determine what work is necessary to protect and conserve this historic landscape feature for the future.

Right: A surviving patch of sessile oak coppice. The trees were probably last coppiced more than half a century ago, but could be as much as 500 years old.



Coopers Field

We are very pleased to report that, apart from some minor outside cosmetic work, the new office building and workshop is up and running.

In December a small occasion was held to thank all the NT staff and others who had been involved in any way with the project.

A five year temporary planning permission has been granted for the portacabin which will be used for storage and a mess room for the regular volunteers.

All the funds to construct this facility have been provided by the Friends, not least by bequests. We will be holding an event in June when official recognition of this can be given.

News from other parts of the property group

Hinton Ampner

Many will know that during the storms of February 2014, the house lost nearly half its roof. Now after getting funding and the necessary permissions the repairs will be getting underway this spring. As part of the reconstruction there will be guided tours to the roof to see the works, and also the magnificent views over the estate.

Uppark

From March visitors will be able to enjoy the property for much longer as it will open for 363 days of the year.

Winchester City Mill

Here the NT is funding a project together with the South Downs National Park to provide a hub for the western end of the Park which will include a map room and a themed 'flour' walk.

REQUEST FOR EMAIL ADDRESSES

Please let us have your details and then we can quickly circulate details of events etc.

Contact us via the website: www.ntludshott.org.uk

THANKS

Grateful thanks to those who responded to our call for volunteers to distribute this newsletter.

*If you enjoy reading this newsletter,
please pass it on!*

Become a Friend

You will receive your own personal copy of the newsletter, and you will be helping valuable conservation work to ensure the survival of our precious landscape and habitat - 'Forever for Everyone'.

Becoming a Friend costs only £5.00 for a year. Contact the Membership Secretary, Colin Brash on 01428 713256.

Ash dieback disease

A case of Chalara ash dieback has been recorded in Bramshott on a mature common ash tree. This is a serious disease of ash which is present in Britain. It is caused by the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, although the name ‘Chalara’ reflects the description of the asexual stage of the fungus, called *Chalara fraxinea*. Common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) including the variety ‘Pendula’ is highly susceptible, as is narrow-leaved ash (*F. angustifolia*). Over short distances the disease is believed to be spread mainly by the movement of airborne spores. Long-distance spread is more likely to be facilitated by the movement of infected plant material. Although first confirmed in the UK in 2012, in 2014 the number of ‘wider environment’ records exceeded those on recently planted ash, reflecting the fact that the disease is now mainly spreading by natural infection, rather than by the introduction of infected planting stock.

So what are the main symptoms to look out for?

1. A tree is first infected when spores land on the leaves and cause small lesions. This is very weather dependent, requiring cool, moist conditions to be successful. Potentially, foliar infection can happen from June until October when the spores of the fungus are being released from the tiny cup-like fruiting bodies on infected leaf litter.

2. The foliar lesions expand and the leaves will dramatically hang dead from the branches. If the fungus is able to grow in to the rachis (stalk) of the compound leaf, it may infect the branch of the tree. It may take several years of foliar infections before the fungus grows into the branch of the tree.

3. Once in the wood, the fungus spreads and causes a lesion. This is often diamond shaped and is centred around a branch or side shoot down which the fungus has grown.

4. When the lesion girdles a branch, all the growth above that point dies. This is often noticeable in early summer when soft tissue may suddenly wilt, blacken and die. The leaves do not have time to be shed naturally and so are retained, hanging dead on the stem.

5. The old infected leaves are shed from the tree in the autumn and remain on the woodland floor. The leaflets decay, but the rachis (stalk) remains and tiny, beige cup-like fruiting bodies appear during the following summer. These release the spores which are airborne and go on to infect new leaves.



Ash can display symptoms which can be confused with Chalara dieback, but which may have other causes. These can include the retention of ash keys, the blackening of shoots by frost and cankers caused by other pathogens such as *Phomopsis* and bacterial canker. However, if you see an ash tree with possible symptoms of Chalara, this should be reported using Tree A!ert, the Forestry Commission’s reporting tool for tree diseases.

There is no requirement for owners to fell diseased trees unless they pose a safety risk. European ash is genetically very diverse and the hope is that as time passes, resistant individuals will become apparent. These plants will become the foundation for a breeding programme to select ash trees which are tolerant to the disease.

Visit the Forestry Commission website for further advice or information at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara>

DATES for your DIARIES

For further details of any of the events please see:- www.nfludshott.org.uk and Posters on the Commons
Or Contact:- Wardens 01428 751338 selborneandludshott@nationaltrust.org.uk

Friends Hog Roast 5th June 2015

By invitation only for the Friends of Ludshott and Passfield Commons

'Heathland at Dusk' Saturday 27th June 8.30pm

The annual 2 hour **walk** on Ludshott Common for glimpses and sounds of wildlife and birds, hopefully including the nocturnal Nightjar.

Meet at Ludshott Common main (Dunelm) car park on B3002 between Headley Down and Grayshott (map ref SU853358).
Please wear stout footwear and bring a torch. £2.00 per person.

Superior Camp Walk

Sat or Sun 12th or 13th September (date to be confirmed) 2.30pm

A 2 hour walk to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and reflect on what happened on Ludshott Common by viewing the surviving artifacts of the camp.

Please wear stout footwear. £2.00 per person.

Christmas Tree Sale 5th December 2015

Proceeds from all events will be used locally towards the nature conservation of Ludshott Common, and Passfield Common & Conford Moor.

2014 Christmas Tree Sale

The weather was kind once again for a most successful opening to the festive season. The trees this year were excellent in both size and shape which pleased the many buyers when selecting their Christmas centrepiece. Mistletoe and holly was also on sale. Free mulled wine and mincepies added to the happy atmosphere. And nearly £3000 was raised for the local funds to help the wardens in their nature conservation role.

For those who haven't had one of our trees, they are young Scot's pine which regenerate naturally over the Common and need to be removed so that the open landscape can be maintained. But best of all they will keep their needles well into the New Year.

Out on the Commons

As always the winter and early spring brings the most intensive time for conservation management, so that it does not conflict with the bird nesting season. On Ludshott there has been much clearance of scrub and gorse which needs to be done to comply with the 10 year DEFRA Higher Level Stewardship agreements that are in place, together with its accompanying paper work. Also some pine has been thinned along the boundary with Headley Down.

Excitingly, for the first time, a Mottled Bee colony has been found. Appreciating the bare sandy soils and heather of Ludshott, the colony is one of only a handful in the UK.

Tree inspections continue and work carried out, using contractors where necessary, especially in high risk areas along the road sides in Passfield.

Along with the autumn clearance at Passfield and Conford, made possible by the drier weather, some pollarding of oak trees has been carried out on Passfield Common.

This is a very old management technique, which has not been practised for decades, whereby the crown of the tree is cut back out of the reach of grazing animals. It helped to provide a continuous supply of timber but in addition helps to rejuvenate the trees and thus increase their life-span. The trees' progress will be monitored. Around some of the oldest pollards clearance or 'haloing' has been done to reduce competition from other trees and shrubs.

To bring more light into the fen area at Conford there has been some coppicing of the alder and hazel, cutting back all shoots to a "stool" near ground level (see article on Gentles Copse on page 1).