



# Commons Link

Newsletter for the Friends of Ludshott and Passfield Commons



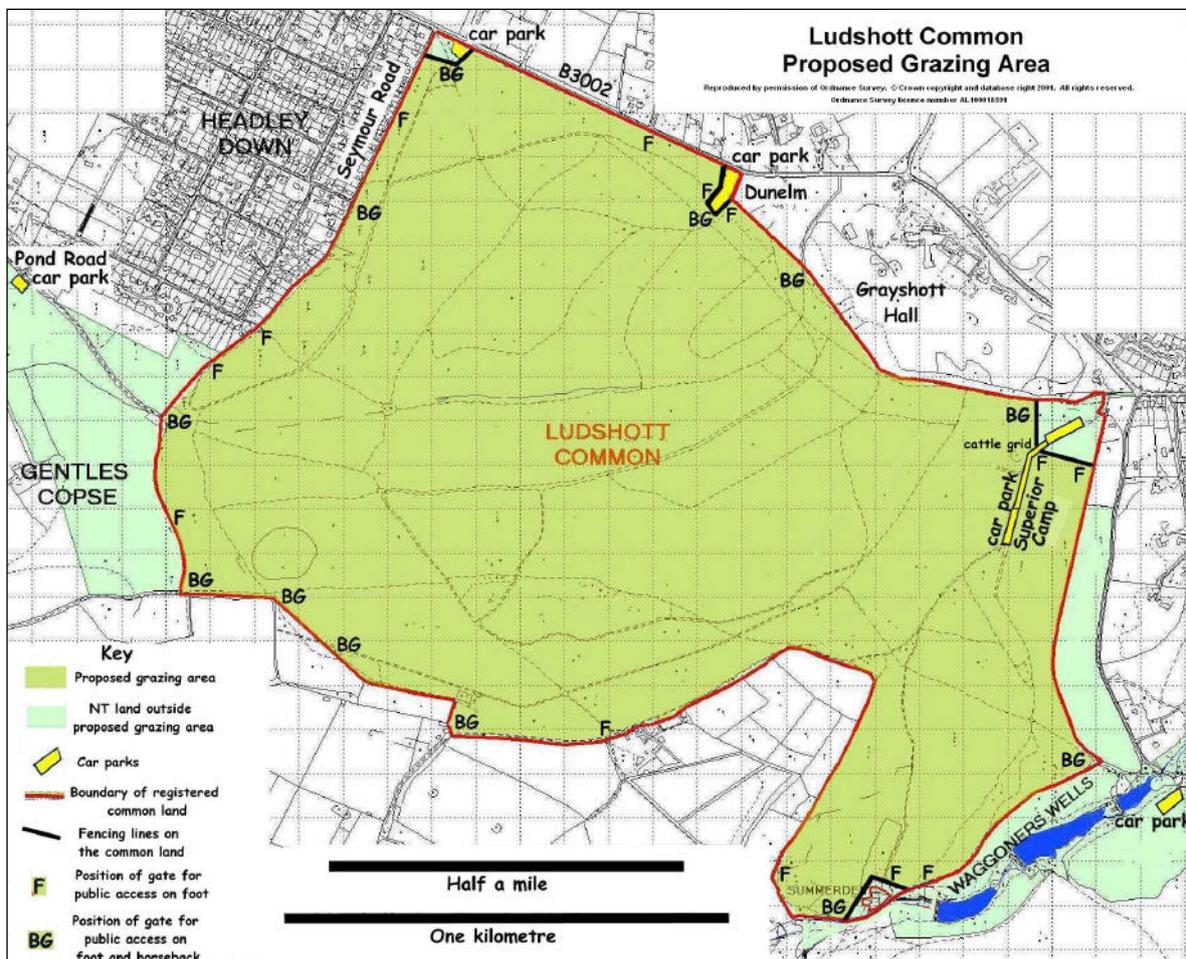
Issue 17 - March 2014

## Looking forward - Ludshott Common and its future management by Chris Webb

Several years ago we began to take a hard look at the future of Ludshott Common and its management. We undertook a wide-ranging consultation as part of a process known as 'Common Purpose' which is required by Natural England and DEFRA, the government agencies con-

cerned with common land and designated wildlife sites. We spoke to a large number of people who use Ludshott Common regularly for walking etc, our neighbours and other interested parties, such as registered commoners, about the future of the common. Unfortunately a variety of issues

conspired (not because of the Common Purpose process) which resulted in the consultation being put on hold. Because we are obliged to complete this exercise, we are now resuming the process in a lead up to a possible application to the Secretary of State for the Environment.



*Our previous newsletters have carried reports on the Common Purpose work and they can be obtained online at [www.niludshott.org.uk](http://www.niludshott.org.uk) or as hard copies from the wardens office on 01428 751338. However, we are repeating the information from the October 2010 edition below and would welcome further comments on the proposal. We will undertake a further 'on site roadshow' at Ludshott during the next few months to gather information from people who may have missed one in 2010 when the last roadshows were held.*

Having spoken to most of our neighbours, and a large number of people who use the common regularly, it is apparent that there is a demand for more detail about one of our proposed options for management – to re-instate grazing. To date, discussion about the future management of the common has met with a variety of reactions with a significant majority expressing enthusiasm, support or interest in the idea of using animals to undertake a traditional and more natural form of management.

Because Ludshott is a registered common and designated for its wildlife, the National Trust is required to gain an understanding of stakeholder's views about significant changes in management or works affecting the land. An application to the Planning Inspectorate to carry out

works on common land needs to show that there is general support and a clear need.

The map shows a proposed grazing area for Ludshott Common (a larger version is available in Issue 10 - October 2010). Ancient laws prohibit fencing on or across common land without special permission and it will be expected by the agencies who grant consent that every effort is made to fence along boundaries. At Ludshott, the boundaries are usually marked by ancient ditch and bank earthworks.

Currently, about one third of the boundary is fenced, some of which is stock-proof. Another third could be fenced against the boundary, and a further quarter has fencing consent under an 1840 Enclosure Award or can be located just beyond the legal boundary. Around one tenth of the fencing would be located directly on the Common.

In this proposal the main Ludshott car parks would be excluded from the grazing area (except for the southern half of the Superior Camp / concrete road car park which would be accessed across a cattle grid). Residents at Summerden and other nearby neighbouring properties would also need cattle grids for vehicle access.

Public access is of paramount importance, so gates would be installed on all Rights

of Way, at car parks, next to cattle grids and where there is regular informal access onto the common. Access for horse riders along bridleways onto the common would also have specially designed gates with easy-to-open latches. Field gates would also be needed for NT staff, management and emergency vehicle access. Unauthorised vehicle access onto the common would not be permitted.

This proposal would allow a large area of approximately 550 acres to be grazed. The small number of grazing animals required would mean they would be widely dispersed across the Common. Agricultural and wildlife regulations would require there to be just enough animals to maintain the heathland habitat in good condition, but not so many as to damage the habitat structure to the detriment of the wildlife.

If this proposal were generally acceptable a great deal more detailed design would need to be worked on in collaboration with neighbours and stakeholders before seeking formal consent. We are urging anyone that has an interest in Ludshott Common to contact us about this proposal, whether supportive, or with concerns or suggestions. We would be very happy to come and speak to anyone who would like to discuss this in more detail.

## From the Wardens - Winter work at Ludshott and Passfield

Because it was a dry autumn, we were able to get a lot of work done on some of the wetter fenland areas at Passfield and Conford. Machinery work on Ludshott Common, to keep our heathland open and free from too much scrub, also continued over the winter.

Obviously the big issues for the countryside team, over the last few months, have been the series of storms which have caused extensive damage across the East Hampshire estate. The storm events which began at the end of October and continued through into February, have severely disrupted our scheduled programme of work at Ludshott and Passfield. The wardens and contractors have been called out on a number of occasions over Christmas and at weekends to deal with tree safety work. The clearing up on roadsides, near access routes and neighbouring properties will continue into the spring and has added an unexpected 2 to 3 months extra work. The team are also dealing with significant damage at Selborne and at Hambleton (Speltham Down) on the South Downs which now falls within our remit. High rainfall levels have required us to monitor our lakes and the dams closely. And in places fencing has been damaged and some longer term repairs will be required.

With the new arrangements in place (Ludshott, Selborne and Hambleton are part of a property group which includes Hinton Ampner and Uppark) we are working towards an additional ranger's post within the East Hampshire team who will have responsibility for the countryside and woodland at the Hinton Ampner estate.

## Update on the new office building



It's great to see the timber we cut from our own estate now being shaped, jointed, and fitted together. Here we have the main walls from the outside, and the rafters and ridge timbers from the inside of the building.

## Flowers by the Pathsides

### Continuing the Plants of the Commons Series

At the edges of the paths on the Commons, especially the sandy tracks of Ludshott, there are several low-growing little gems. Throughout the spring and summer look out for the blooms of the bright yellow tormentil, red scarlet pimpernel, blue heath milkwort and the white heath bedstraw.

**Tormentil** *Potentilla erecta* is a low, clump-forming perennial with slender, prostrate and upright stalks, growing 10-30cms (4-12ins) tall. It flowers from May to late August and sometimes on into early September; at the tip of each long stalk there is one yellow, 7-11mms (0.3-0.4ins) wide flower with almost always four notched petals, each with a length of between 3 and 6mms. The glossy leaves are pinnately compound, having a series of leaflets on either side of the common leaf stalk or petiole. The leaves from the base have a long petiole, while the leaves on the main stalks are usually sessile (with no leaf stalk). Each leaflet has toothed margins. The thick root is rhizomatous and can be used as a vegetable dye to colour leather red, and is particularly used in herbal medicine.



Tormentil

The name "Scarlet Pimpernel" was widely popularized by a novel of the French Revolution by Baroness Orczy, whose hero, Sir Percy Blakeney, used the flower as an insignia when he rescued victims from the Reign of Terror. **Scarlet pimpernel** *Anagallis arvensis* is a low-growing annual or short-lived perennial species. It is also known as red pimpernel, red chickweed, poor-man's barometer, poor man's weather-glass, shepherd's weather glass or shepherd's clock because it opens its petals

between about 8am and 3pm and then only if the sun is really shining. It has weak, sprawling stems growing to about 50cms (20ins) long, which bear bright green, ovate, sessile (with no leaf stalk) leaves in opposite pairs. Its small orangey-red flowers are produced in the leaf axils from May to late August, pollinated by visiting insects, which are attracted by means of the bright purple hairs inside the flowers which act as lures. When ripe, the fruit capsules at the centre of the flowers split open, with the top sections hinging backwards to allow the release of the tiny seeds. This plant was widely used in the past to treat toothache, liver problems, snake bites and kidney inflammation. And, as its other names 'laughter bringer' and 'shepherd's joy' indicate, it was also used to reduce bouts of melancholia!



Scarlet Pimpernel

**Heath milkwort** *Polygala serpyllifolia* is a native perennial of heaths and grassy places and grows to a height of 25cms (10ins). During May to August this plant opens its lovely bluey-purple flowers in clusters of up to ten per stem. The lowest leaves are usually opposite each other and crowded towards the base (whereas the leaves of its cousin the common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris* are alternate up the stems). The family name *Polygala* is derived from Greek and means "much milk" - it was believed that the cattle that grazed on these plants had a good high yield of milk. Another suggestion is that the plant was so named as the flowers are like mini udders. Heath milkwort is also known as thyme-leaved milkwort - probably due to the leaf shape and arrangement which is very similar to that of wild thyme.

**Heath bedstraw** *Galium saxatile* is related to the more well-known Cleavers or Goosegrass (also known as sticky willy).



Heath Milkwort

It is a perennial matt-forming herb with an aroma which some find sickly, and can reach a height of 30cms (12ins). It has erect flowering stems and prostrate non-flowering, barren stems. The small white flowers are about 3mms across, with four free lobes and are evident from May to August. The leaves grow in whorls of five to eight and on flowering stems they are lanceolate, (sword-like) but broader and rounder towards the tip on the flowering stems. They all have a terminal small spike and a few forward-pointing marginal prickles. The leaves on barren stems are broader and less lanceolate. The stems are 4-angled and may be a bit twisted and they turn black when dry. The name Bedstraw comes from its use in stuffing mattresses (though this is usually the Lady's Bedstraw which has yellow flowers and has a sweeter smell) and being mixed in the animal bedding which used to be gathered from the commons and heaths. Galium derives from the Greek gal, milk, because of its former use in curdling milk and cheese-making. Saxatile means 'pertaining to rocks'. The Welsh call it llysiaw'r eyr, or shingles plant, and still use it today to treat shingles. As with other bedstraws, in earlier days a tea would be made from it which was thought useful for nosebleeds and urinary infections, and the seeds were used to make a coffee substitute...!



Heath Bedstraw

## DATES for your DIARIES

### Open Day at Waggoners Wells

**Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2014 - From 11.00am to 5.30pm**

In 2012 the NT had a presence at Grayshott Angling Club's 'Fishing' open day at Waggoners Wells. The overall event was a great success, introducing this beautiful spot and its conservation to the many who walked and fished. It's a joint venture this year. So, together with GAC's fishing activities we will be organising **pond dipping** in the lakes, **bug hunting** and **woodland crafts**.

All suitable for every member of the family. *BBQ and refreshments*

### 'Heathland at Dusk'

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 8.30pm**

A 1 - 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.*

### 'Passfield and Conford in late Summer'

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2.30pm**

A 2 hour **walk** around this area of Common. Meet at Conford Village Hall (map ref SU823330).

*Please have stout footwear, maybe wellies if it has been wet! £2.00 per person.*

### Quiz Night

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November 7.30pm for 8pm start.**

Come as a team or join one on the night. Ploughman's Supper provided.

*Tickets available from September.*

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

### Christmas Tree Sale

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December 9am - 12 noon**

Ludshott Common main (Dunelm) car park on B3002 between Headley Down and Grayshott (map ref SU853358).

*Homemade mincepies and mulled wine.*

For further details of any of the events please see:- [www.ntludshott.org.uk](http://www.ntludshott.org.uk) and Posters on the Commons

Or Contact:- Wardens 01428 751338 [selborneandludshott@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:selborneandludshott@nationaltrust.org.uk)

Chairman 01428 751409 [trustsusan@btinternet.com](mailto:trustsusan@btinternet.com)

## 2013 Christmas Tree Sale

Once again we had fine weather for this annual festive sale on 7<sup>th</sup> December, at Dunelm car park (the main one for Ludshott on the B3002). The new larger gazebo, which had been bought with Friends donations, was a focal point and made serving the mulled wine and mince-pies much easier.

The event was its usual success and thanks to such great support we raised over £3000. This will be used to buy a log burning stove for the new office building, and other equipment which will make the Wardens' conservation work run smoothly and efficiently.

We were almost sold out of trees by the end, so put 6<sup>th</sup> December 2014 in your diary, arrive in good time, and enjoy a homemade mince-pie and mulled wine as well.



*A happy family at the Christmas Tree sale in 2011.....and now two years on!*