



# Commons Link

Newsletter for the Friends of Ludshott and Passfield Commons

 THE NATIONAL TRUST

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## Tree Felling at the Vyne for the New Workbase

By Mandy Phyfferoen, Ranger for Ludshott Common

The middle of February saw us travelling to The Vyne in Basingstoke. The Vyne is a 16<sup>th</sup> Century house owned by the National Trust with 452 hectares of land consisting of parks, woodland and farmland. It is a planted, managed woodland with a large Larch (*Larix decidua*) plantation. A felling license had been granted by the Forestry Commission to thin selected Larch trees in this area.

The construction of our new workbase involves the use of Larch for the vertical and horizontal cladding on the outside of the workshop and office. Larch



*Selecting trees*

is regarded as one of the best timbers for building because it is tough, water-proof and durable. Larch is a hard



*Using the tractor winch*

wearing wood that is 50% harder than common pine. It is resistant to rot and therefore does not need to be treated with preservatives before use.

We therefore selected the Larch trees that we wanted to fell based on size, shape and whether the area needed thinning. As this area is very well used by the public we needed at least four people on site whilst we were felling. One person felled the tree, another was responsible for using the tractor winch to help make sure the tree was felled in the correct direction and two people were tasked with making sure the area was clear of people.

We could not have undertaken this work without the help of our regular

volunteers who manned the paths and tracks around the felling area, warning and engaging with members of public. Once the trees were on the ground they were de-limbed and measured to the size required for the cladding.

In May and June the felled butts will be planked to size for the cladding. This will be done on site using a mobile wood-mizer.

We are aiming to use a local contractor to plank the wood for us and are planning to make this an event where members of the public can watch the action if they wish!



*Regular volunteers  
(from left) Keith, Tom and Geoff*

## Progress of Consultation on the Future Management of Ludshott Common

This continues to be an ongoing process with a few stakeholders still needing to be approached. We have consulted with over 200 people: users of the common, most neighbours, commoners, and many others with statutory or other legal interests in the common. So far the responses amongst 95% of those asked range from being favourably inclined to being wholly enthusiastic about the return to a traditional, ecologically beneficial and less mechanical form of management using grazing animals. To allow the re-introduction of grazing to go ahead, Head Warden, Chris Webb is working on the details necessary prior to submitting an application to DEFRA for consent to undertake works such as fencing and erecting gates.

If you haven't already done so, see Chris' articles in the back numbers 8-10 of Commons Link, which can be accessed on our website [www.ntludshott.org.uk](http://www.ntludshott.org.uk).



*U3A walkers*



*Friends meeting*



*Horse riders*

## Annual Christmas Tree Sale on December 11th 2010

As always we sold young Scots pine trees, taken this year from Ludshott Common and Bramshott Chase. These are part of the natural regeneration that occurs on the heathland and which if left unchecked would shade out the heather, and ultimately develop into woodland. Thus it is important to remove these trees and the sale gives us the opportunity to generate an income from what would otherwise have no practical use. This recycling provides a quality Christmas Tree which does not lose its needles, and for an attractive price.

We were delighted to have a dry morning for the sale this year and we raised a record amount, over £1300. This money goes directly to help and support the Wardens in their nature conservation work and at our next meeting the committee will discuss how it will best be used. Chris Webb, the Head Warden had a small exhibition and was able to talk to some customers about the management of the commons. Our sister committee from Selborne joined us and raised £160 selling logs which had been felled in tree safety work on their common. And to add to the festivities we served mulled wine and mincepies, in appreciation of which a further £53 was donated.

Altogether a very successful day for which we thank all those who came to buy - see you next year!



## Woodland Management

During the late winter, the work scheduled along the western boundary of Ludshott Common, close to Seymour Road and Furze Hill Road began, having been delayed by the adverse weather conditions in December.

The felling work in the block of Scots pine where we had permission to 'clear fell' has been completed. Further thinning of the remaining pine and oak stands, levelling of stumps, and general clearing up operations must now wait until the end of the summer, so that ground nesting birds like Woodlarks will not be disturbed. The cleared area, which will revert to heathland, is ideal for such bird species and because of this we ask that dogs are not allowed to run into it over the next few months.



*Contractor's felling equipment*



*Clearing up*



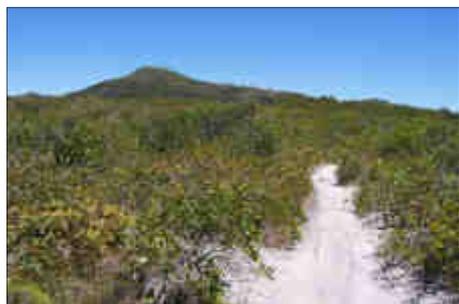
*New heathland vista being created*

# The Wallum Heath

By Susan Salter

Last October, whilst in Australia, I was fortunate to visit the Open Dry Heath coastal ecosystem of south-east Queensland.

This heathland and associated shrubland occurs in small sites conserved as part of the Noosa National Park, north of Brisbane. It is known as Wallum, Wallum country or Wallum heath, the name being derived from the aboriginal word, in the Kabi language, for the plant Wallum banksia (*Banksia aemula*). All banksia species are native only to Australia, but this particular species is characteristic of this kind of coastal heathland, which also extends in small, restricted patches into north-eastern New South Wales.



Path to higher dunes

The nutrient-poor, acidic soils are derived from the dunes formed from the sand blown from the beach and accumulated to great depths over millions of years. The dunes are now well stabilised by the vegetation cover but the sandy soil is still very evident on paths and between the plants. Unusually for such poor soils they support a floristically-rich ecosystem.

The native flora of Australia is unique, but what was interesting to me in the Wallum was not so much the differences but the similarities with Ludshott Common. Our heathland has developed on nutrient-poor, acidic, sandy soils too, although ours are shallow and support relatively few spe-

cies. However, Ludshott's gorse (*Ulex europaeus* and *Ulex minor*) is represented in Wallum by banksias, both very prickly! Here we have heather (*Calluna vulgaris* and *Erica* species), there Australian heaths (*Epacris*), all members of the Ericaceae family, together with other small shrubby species. I did not see bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) in the Wallum heath but it was very evident in the forest parks, inland.

There are more larger shrubby species than we are used to, co-dominated by Wallum banksia (*Banksia aemula*) and black sheoak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*) with wattles (*Acacia*), tea trees (*Leptospermum*) and grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea*), growing from half to three metres tall, their heights determined by their distance from the effects of the wind from the sea. There are almost no overstorey *Eucalyptus* trees which would equate with our oaks (*Quercus* species) and pines (*Pinus sylvestris*).



Wallum Banksia

In the past, similarly as with our heathlands, the Wallum habitat has been destroyed. Data suggests that this ecological community has always had a naturally restricted geographical range with an estimated pre-clearing area in Queensland, of 1,022 ha. By 1999 this area had declined by 59% to 418 ha, and of this, 89%, being 293 ha is conserved in small patches of National Park (compare this with Ludshott

at 285 ha but all together in one single block), the rest is privately owned. Threats to the survival of the whole ecosystem include clearing for residential development and pine plantations, alterations to the drainage from adjacent developments, nutrients from fertilisers in run-off water, fire damage, pollution from mosquito control sprays and the introduction of alien species. Many of these threats we would also recognise at Ludshott.

If Ludshott Common as an open-space had been lost it would have been a tragedy for our area. Its ecological community would have disappeared. Bird species such as the Dartford warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark, together with the Silver-studded blue butterfly, and the Sand lizard would have lost their habitat and had their geographic ranges curtailed. But, if the equally ecologically sensitive Wallum heath habitat were to be destroyed, not only the plants that are only found there but the animal and bird species endemic to Wallum would also become extinct. Thus, Australia would lose three species of frog adapted to living and breeding in the acidic waters of seasonal swamps which develop due to the rainfall patterns, and, at least in Queensland, the endangered Eastern Ground Parrot. And not only Australian, but global biodiversity would be the poorer.



Boardwalk over swamp

## More Volunteers needed

In last year's Spring issue, so that we could save postage costs, we appealed for help in hand delivering Commons Link in Grayshott as elsewhere, and we are very grateful to the two volunteers who came forward to help. This year the Committee would welcome further help, particularly for Headley Down. We are delighted that membership of the Friends has grown substantially here, to the extent that it is now beyond the capacity of the distributor to cope.

So we would be very pleased to hear from anyone who would be willing to help with these deliveries. Contact Susan on 01428 751409 or [trustsusan@btinternet.com](mailto:trustsusan@btinternet.com)

## **OTHER HAPPENINGS**

The winter programme for the Wardening Team did suffer some disruption due to weather conditions and unscheduled tasks that required attention. The snow-fall this winter, though less severe and prolonged than last winter, had a cumulative effect such that physical damage to many trees did occur, due to the excessive weight of snow blanketing their canopies. This added to the list of trees needing attention. Some at Waggoners Wells, near to Summerden, were felled for safety reasons and further tree work will be required across the Ludshott and Passfield area in the pre-spring period and into next autumn.



*Jim busy with the tractor*

On the Ludshott heathland area, conservation management has involved tractor 'grazing' and clearance of gorse, birch and buckthorn to maintain wildlife corridors and produce the varying ages of the bushes so important for the success of bird species such as the Dartford Warbler and Stonechat. Along with the reinstatement of the small car park on the B3002 near Seymour Road following its use as a timber collection point, we are looking at our options for maintaining the other Ludshott car parks and key access tracks in view of changing weather effects on surfaces and increasing usage.



*Wildlife corridors*



In addition, our team has been busy on the Selborne property which they also manage.

### **DATES for your DIARIES**

- May 1<sup>st</sup> Stall at RSPCA Gala.  
Headley Village Green, 12 noon - 5pm.
- July 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual 'Nightjar' walk.  
Meet at Dunelm car park 8.30pm. £2 per person.  
All proceeds go towards conservation work on the Commons.
- August 17<sup>th</sup> Family Fun on Ludshott Common, 2 - 4pm.
- November 5<sup>th</sup> Coffee Morning.  
Grayshott Village Hall, 10am - 12 noon.  
Exhibition of entries to the Junior Art Competition, and to the open Photographic Competition;  
Meet the Wardens; NT goods; Raffle.
- December 10<sup>th</sup> Christmas Tree Sale. Dunelm car park, 9am - 12 noon.

Further details for these events will be available nearer the time from posters on the Commons and from the website.

#### **USEFUL CONTACTS**

**Wardens**

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Jim Avenell	07768 830661
Mandy Phyfferoen	07789 926593

**Committee**

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Janet Crossman	Hon. Treasurer	01428 751980
Colin Brash	Membership Secretary	01428 713256
David Knighton	Publicity	01420 473637
Sylvia Gamble	Hon. Secretary	01420 475501
Steve Thames	Webmaster	01428 713096

<http://www.ntludshott.org.uk/>

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please pass it on!***

#### **Become a Friend**

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