



# Commons Link

Newsletter for the Friends of Ludshott and Passfield Commons

 THE NATIONAL TRUST

Issue 13 - March 2012

## New Warden Base Update

*By Jim Avenell, Countryside Warden*

**W**e have now completed Phase 1 of the project, with the workshop and hard base for the office finished. The office structure will be built on the base this year. In the interim we will be working out of a temporary portacabin, which we have recycled from another NT property.



*Arrival of the portacabin*

Before we can move in we will be busy addressing some maintenance and repairs issues to the portacabin and then furnishing it to create an office to work from. One major element delaying the move is the electricity supply. The wayleaves that we require have taken a long time in obtaining but we hope that by the end of April 2012 we will have power.

Around the site there is a need to construct some hard standing areas for our tractors and vehicles to move around with ease. The ground conditions are such that the area would very quickly become muddy and rutted without this.

Before the winter is out we need go to The Vyne (National Trust) at Basingstoke to fell Douglas Fir trees. These will be used as the main structure for the office. The

timber will be extracted and transported to the new base at Bramshott and then machined to size, ready for fitting.

In March 2012 after completing some fencing we intend to plant 350 native hedging plants around the site. These in time will mature and have a wildlife value due to the diversity of the species chosen for this project.



*The newly timber-clad workshop*

## The Warden Base - what does it mean?

*By James Taylor, our Property Manager, based at Hinton Ampner*

The new base, in Bramshott, for the wardening team at Ludshott marks the start of a new beginning for the property team. We have been seeking a permanent solution for many years, probably since before Head Warden, Chris Webb started working for the National Trust over 25 years ago. The base will provide the modern facilities that are now required to maintain our machinery, provide the right welfare facilities for our staff and the inevitable office space for the increasing mountain of paper work that we face in carrying out our tasks.

To me one of the biggest wins is that we now have the opportunity to recruit more volunteers to help in the management of the sites, and we can develop a range of different roles. Volunteering is not just about helping with physical tasks, we desperately need volunteers to help carry out surveys, help in the office, and also to lead walks and help with promoting the commons to everybody through walks and other engagement activities.

I would like to thank the Local Advisory Committee for their support to Chris and his team through the challenges associated with finding the site and the construction of the new base. I also thank Mrs Warren for putting up with the Trust at Hatch Farm, Standford for so many years and I know the Team will be sad to say goodbye, but they are only moving down the road!

# NATURE NOTES

*By Craig Vincer, former Warden on Ludshott Common*

As spring unfolds listen for the clear musical notes of the woodlark singing in flight, from a tree top or on the ground. Sometimes it will sing throughout the night. This light brown bird can be identified by a short tail, best seen in flight, and when foraging for seeds and insects on the ground, by its broad white eye stripe.



*Woodlark*

Follow a sandy track out onto the heath, this is where the sun loving green tiger beetle makes its home. Flying up when disturbed, it quickly returns to the bare sand to use its huge eyes and jaws to find and capture ants. Its long legs make it one of the fastest running beetles in the insect world. Their larvae construct burrows in compacted sand, where they lie in wait to ambush passing prey.



*Green tiger beetle*

The rare Dartford warbler, a secretive bird, spends most of the day hunting for spiders and insects within the dense stands of spiny gorse. Look for it on a fine day, when it may suddenly ascend the topmost spray of gorse to sing its scratchy song, before quickly returning to the safety of the bush below. From a distance, the dark coloration and long tail of this small bird

are distinctive. But a closer view reveals eyes ringed with red and feathers of slate grey, burgundy, chocolate brown and white.



*Dartford Warbler*

Listen for a short whistle, followed by the sound of two pebbles being struck together, this is the song of the aptly named stonechat. Scan the stands of gorse until you see the handsome male bird with its sooty black head, white collar and chestnut waistcoat. The females plumage, although less colourful, is beautifully marked with finely streaked varying shades of brown.



*Stonechat (male)*

From late April, look out for the green hairstreak butterfly alighting on the flowers of gorse or egg laying in the soft green growing shoots. It always rests with its wings closed showing their bright green undersides. Its upper wings are brown and so not so distinctive in flight.



*Green hairstreak butterfly*

In the twilight of late evening, listen for the nightjar's sustained churring call. Or see its silent flight and dark silhouette make sudden twists or wheeling turns, as it captures flying beetles and moths over the heath.



*Nightjar*

In July and early August, look for silver-studded blue butterflies taking nectar, and laying eggs amongst the flowering heathers. The first purple flowers of bell heather and pale pink clusters of cross leaved heath, are followed by ling heather with its slender racemes of lilac coloured flowers.



*Silver-studded blue butterfly*

Along sunlit sandy tracks grayling butterflies lay their eggs in the short tufts of grass, while the rapidly flying small copper butterfly searches for its food plant, sheep's sorrel. Elsewhere flowers of tormentil, heath bedstraw, scarlet pimpernel and heath milkwort can be found at the pathside.



*Tormentil*

# What's going on at Ludshott and Passfield?

*By Chris Webb, Head Warden*

## FUTURE MANAGEMENT at LUDSHOTT

One of our key conservation projects at Ludshott Common, to investigate the possibility of reintroducing grazing onto the heathland, is progressing to a conclusion. The consultation process to agree future management is set out by DEFRA and is known as 'Common Purpose'. Although we have had to put the process on hold for a few months to deal with other issues, it is nearing completion and after a little more work we hope to apply to the Secretary of State for the Environment for consent to carry out works along the boundary of the common land. The outline of the proposal, including how Ludshott Common might be grazed, positions of gates and the lines of boundary fencing, have been set out in earlier editions of Commons Link. These can still be obtained from the warden's office, or visit [www.ntludshott.org.uk](http://www.ntludshott.org.uk). If you have any questions, please contact us at the Wardens Office - 01428 751563.

## HEATHLAND MAINTENANCE

Higher Level Stewardship grants and agreements to keep the heathland habitat at Passfield and Ludshott in good ecological condition have been helping us to meet our legal obligations for these nationally important sites. Tractor mounted machinery has been deployed to undertake much needed work at Conford to maintain heathland that has been in decline for many decades and become very scrubbed over in recent years. We started this task in the middle of December, just after we acquired a new Valtra Tractor and a Seppi Mulcher.

The mulcher is designed to be able to tackle trees of about 10 inches in diameter so was ideal for scrub clearing. Once we had had a few trial runs with the new kit we embarked on Operation Conford!



*New tractor and mulcher.*

## TREE INSPECTIONS

Two winters with heavy snow burden coupled with more storm events and an in-

creasing range of diseases have taken their toll on many of our trees across the Ludshott and Selborne estates. Our annual tree inspections have brought to light a greater number of trees needing attention and a programme of work over this and next winter is underway.

## DUNELM CAR PARK

Vital improvements to the surface of the main car park at Ludshott were carried out in December. We also put a new map on the notice board at the car park, and during 2012 a further information panel covering the site's natural history will be installed to help visitors to the Common. This map is also available to view on our website

## FOUNDERS' EVENTS

This year sees a variety of events across the National Trust marking the centenary of Octavia Hill's death – she was one of the NT's founders. At Ludshott we are beginning to plan for the centenary in 2013 of the death of Sir Robert Hunter, another founder member of the Trust who lived locally. He was directly responsible for the acquisition and preservation of Ludshott Common in 1908, and in 1919 Waggoners Wells was bought in his memory.



*The new map on the notice board, and a lost glove!*

## WHITEHILL/BORDON ECOTOWN

Several external issues have demanded the attention of the Head Warden and other NT colleagues recently. The Whitehill/Bordon eco-town proposal is now at an advanced stage and the Trust is examining the District Council's 'Core Strategy' which sets out local planning policy until 2028. As stated in previous issues of Commons Link there are concerns about mitigation and the impacts of local population growth on the NT's ability to undertake its obligations to conserve our historic and internationally important wildlife sites for the future. We will be considering whether the NT should make representations to the inspector at the

public examination in August and we will be consulting with partner conservation organisations such as the RSPB and Hampshire Wildlife Trust.

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Now that the South Downs National Park has come into operation various contacts are gradually being established with the Park Authority staff. Although just outside the boundary, the NT's sites at Passfield and Ludshott could well stand to benefit from the Park's support. We anticipate collaborating with the Park Authority and its 'Wooded Heath' project which is aimed at improving heathland and woodland landscape conservation within the western Weald where it stretches across West Sussex into eastern Hampshire.



*The Sir Robert Hunter memorial stone at Waggoners Wells*

## Thanks

We are delighted to thank Coomers Ltd for sponsoring our 2011 Competitions and especially Jill Hammond, Coomer's Marketing Administrator, for presenting the prizes at our Coffee Morning on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

The following businesses in Grayshott supported our raffle with prizes, for which we are most grateful:-

- Grayshott Books
- Grayshott Florist
- Grayshott Pottery
- Grayshott Wines
- Blue Hair and Beauty
- Magical Rooms
- The Fox and Pelican
- The Village Post Office

Also our thanks to the new Commons Link distributors, as well as continuing appreciation to our existing volunteers.

## OTHER HAPPENINGS

### Coffee Morning and Competitions

The Coffee Morning on 5<sup>th</sup> November at Grayshott Village Hall, was well attended and enabled the committee to meet many of you as well as selling NT gifts and other items in time for Christmas. The wardens had a very informative display which attracted a great deal of attention, and the Art and Photographic competition winners were presented with their prizes.

The winners were:-

#### Junior Art Aged 6 and under

- |                 |                     |                       |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | Hannah Frost (6)    | Walking by the stream |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | Philippa Boosey (5) | Hammer Woods          |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | Zia Davies (5)      | A butterfly           |

Aged 7-10 1<sup>st</sup> Amelia Lynch (7) Walks at Waggoners Wells

2<sup>nd</sup> Victoria Kendall (8) Ludshott Common

3<sup>rd</sup> Anoushka Davies (8) A windy day

Aged 11-15 HC Amy Krai (12) Princess Soraya

#### Photography (Children)

1<sup>st</sup> Hollie Ruda (12) Ludshott Common

2<sup>nd</sup> Naomi Anstead (13) Fungi on Ludshott

3<sup>rd</sup> Isobel Honeywood (12) Swans on Petersfield Heath

HC Naomi Anstead (13) Tree Avenue

**Photography (Adult)** 1<sup>st</sup> Karen Hewson "Ludshott Common"



Hollie Ruda



Victoria Kendall



Naomi Anstead

### DATES for your DIARIES

#### Guided Walk on Passfield Common - 2.30pm Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012

A 2½ hour walk looking at the history and ecology of the ancient common land.

Meet at Standford Community Hall by the Methodist Chapel (map ref SU815342 (GU35 8QZ))

Please have stout footwear. There will be a **£2.00** charge per person.

#### Guided Walk - Heathland at Dusk - 8.30pm Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012

A 1½ hour walk on Ludshott Common for glimpses and sounds of wildlife and birds and particularly the nocturnal nightjar.

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

Please have stout footwear and a torch. There will be a **£2.00** charge per person.

#### Family Ramble on Ludshott Common - 2 - 4pm Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2012

Join us for a walk and activities for all the family! Meet at Ludshott Common main (Dunelm) car park on B3002 between Headley Down and Grayshott (map ref SU853358) **No Charge**

#### Coffee Morning Grayshott Village Hall. - 10 - 12 noon Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2012

Exhibition of entries to the Junior Art Competition; Meet the Wardens; Raffle; National Trust Gifts for Christmas.

#### Christmas Tree Sale - 9 - 12 noon Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2012

Ludshott Common main (Dunelm) car park. Homemade mincepies and mulled wine.

**For further information contact the Wardens on 01428 751563) or visit [ntludshott.org.uk](http://ntludshott.org.uk)**

### Annual Christmas Tree Sale 2011

The weather was glorious for this annual festive sale on 5<sup>th</sup> December, at Dunelm car park (the main one for Ludshott on the B3002). The resurfacing of the car park (which was only finished the day before!) and relocation of the selling area made the event run very smoothly.

It was a great success thanks to your support, and the committee thank you for helping us raise over £2000, which will be spent on the planned interpretation panels for Ludshott, and funding some interior fittings at the new wardens base. The funds raised at last year's event were spent on the new Ludshott notice board and the resurfacing of the car park. The logs sold raised funds for the Selborne part of the wardens portfolio.

We were almost sold out of trees by the end, so put 8<sup>th</sup> December 2012 in your diary, arrive in good time, and enjoy a homemade mincepie and mulled wine as well.



A happy family at the Christmas Tree sale