



Commons Link

Newsletter for the Friends of Ludshott and Passfield Commons



National Trust

Issue 20 - October 2015

Selborne Priory and Ludshott Common by Chris Webb

It seems astonishing that nothing of Selborne Priory remains above ground, no ruined chancel or cloister to admire, not one wall or pillar betrays the site. If it were not for the name ‘Priory Farm’, a mile to the east of Selborne, even the location of the medieval monastic house could well go unnoticed by a passer-by. As well as a lack of any standing structure, the notion that there was a relationship between the Priory and Ludshott Common is also forgotten.

With the publication, in 2014, of a full report by David Baker, on the Priory excavations in the 1950s and 1960s, a new

chapter in a greater understanding and appreciation of an important institution in our local history has opened.

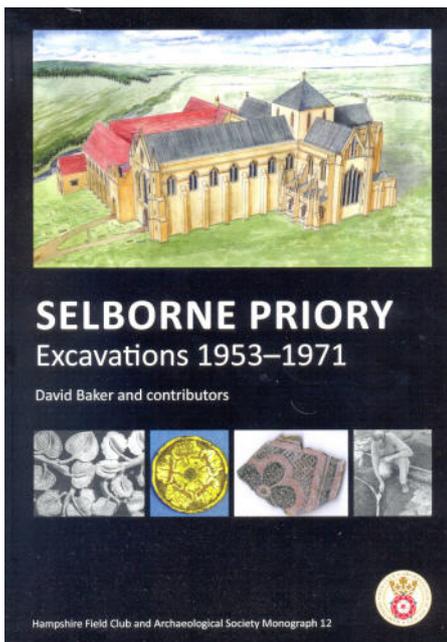
David writes:- *The story of Selborne Priory is as much 'archaeographical' - about the history of archaeology - as about the archaeology and history of the site itself. Lodged in antiquarian consciousness by Gilbert White himself, it attracted antiquarian attention in the mid 20th century just at the time that the new fieldwork discipline was struggling to emerge. 17 years work by enthusiastic volunteers from 1953, mostly directed by a local vicar, Rev George Knapp, went on a sometimes tortuous path of discovery which I was privileged to conclude and rationalise in 1970-71. The upside of my failure to publish the results until 2014 due to the demands of a 'proper job' was the maturing of the archaeological discipline during the intervening years, providing a much more developed context for understanding what was found at the site.*

properties of the Priory which had been closed down by Bishop William Waynfleet. The college only broke its manorial ties with Selborne during the later part of the 20th century and with this went the last vestiges of the village’s relationship with the medieval institution.

Ludshott’s connection to the Priory came about with the grant of land at the edge of the Common during the 1230s – the mem-



Excavations in progress during the 1960s. Priory Farmhouse in the background.



The cover of the monograph on the Priory excavations published by the Hampshire Field Club 2014 (Monograph 12).

We are lucky to have surviving charters and documents relating to the Priory which shed light on to some of its history and how it exerted power that affected the development of areas of landscape around Selborne during the Middle Ages. Some parcels of land, included those owned by the National Trust, can chart their histories back to the Priory – Selborne Common was often referred to as the ‘wood of the Prior and Canons’. In 1486 Magdalen College, Oxford succeeded as lords of the manor of Selborne having acquired the

ory of this landholding survives with the name ‘Priors’, a property along Ludshott’s southern boundary. Although detached and laying at some distance, this gave the Priory extra land which could be farmed to provide more income. Added to this, common rights were also granted by the lord of the manor of Ludshott, and we can imagine the Priory taking full advantage of their right of ‘common of pasture’ which allowed them to graze cattle, sheep and goats on the heath or ‘brueram’ in the Latin of the medieval charter. The right of ‘pannage’ allowed pigs to be turned out to feed on acorns and beech mast during the

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autumn. Although on a very different scale, comparisons with the commoner's livestock grazing the heaths and woods of New Forest today are entirely reasonable.

It appears from the Ludshott manorial records that Magdalen College sold some of the land to Downlands Estate during the 18th century although the common rights remain with Priory Farm to this day. Another modern connection which

perpetuates and echoes historic natural ties across the landscape between Ludshott and Selborne is the National Trust's property arrangement which unites these ancient and related commons within a single management unit.

QUIZ EVENING

The second Ludshott NT Quiz Night took place on the evening of 6th March after last October's was cancelled. It was held at Headley Village Church Centre and was so well attended we had a full house.

Participants enjoyed a fun-packed evening. The quizzers varied in age from young to old and the questions were a good mix, giving everyone an opportunity to participate. The quiz comprised of four rounds and a marathon with bonus marks given for the best completed limerick. David (the quiz master) and Ann Knighton are to be congratulated for their superb efforts.

The evening was split into two halves with an ample ploughman's being provided during the interval. There was a popular selection of cheeses served with french bread, apples, grapes, and chutney, and everyone brought their own drinks.

Before the second half the raffle was drawn, with prizes including cream teas for two at both Hinton Ampner and Uppark.

There was also the ever-popular heads and tails game played and won convincingly by a very young lady much to the pleasure of the audience.

In all, an excellent evening's enjoyment, raising over £400.

Guided Walks

This year as well as the annual 'nightjar walk' - see What's Been Happening - the Superior Camp Walk took place on Sunday 13th September.

A good sized group assembled on the site of the old World War II camp (one of several in the area occupied by the Canadian Army, and all named after one of the Great Lakes) and spent a fascinating couple of hours under the joint leadership of Chris Webb, our NT Head Warden, and Richard Peskett, Chairman of the Grayshott Archive Society. The skies were murky but the rain kept off and we were able to discover the former sites of the garage, a small shop, the parade ground, water tower, rifle range and traces of various other buildings, at the same time learning about life in the camp during the war and afterwards when the buildings were acquired by Petersfield council and turned into housing units. Lively discussion and reminiscences of a few of the group who had lived in Grayshott at that time added to the occasion.

The vigorous tree growth we see today is a complete contrast to the land as it was then, open heath, ideal for exercises by tanks and other vehicles. This use caused contamination to the soil which is not obvious now, but other more material hazards such as concrete bases, rusting metal and missing manhole covers can still pose a problem for the wardens today. It is gratifying to think that since its return to NT stewardship in the early 1960's it has become such a well used area and at the same time an important SSSI.



Gathering at Dunelm carpark for a nightjar walk

USEFUL CONTACTS

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Celebratory Opening of the Wardens Base, June 2015

To mark the completion of the new base at Cooper's Field, the Committee and Wardens agreed that there should be a Hog Roast to celebrate the conclusion of this major project. This was in recognition of the enormous task that was undertaken many years ago to provide the wardens with a suitable work base using the locally raised funds held by the Committee. This achievement has been hard won and recognises the long road that has been travelled to provide the facilities for the Wardens to work from.

The office structure is a remarkable quality build and an excellent example of sustainability and what can be achieved. As far as possible materials were resourced locally. Thanks are to be given to all who were involved, especially the Wardens for their patience while the work progressed, with special acknowledgement to Jim Avenell who spent many hours planning, building and fitting.

In keeping with the sustainable build it was agreed that everything for the celebration should retain the sustainable ethos. The food consisted of spit-roasted pork accompanied by various salads and washed down with apple juice, cider, beer or wine all locally produced. Warden Charlie's mum provided a wonderful selection of homemade cakes and gateaux to complete the feast.

The weather stayed dry, which was wonderful as straw bales were scattered around the base to provide adequate seating for everyone. The evening was a great success, enjoyed by everyone who attended and provided Friends and invited guests with the opportunity to see for themselves what has been happening at the base and to meet the wardens and committee informally.



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

If you haven't seen much of Head Warden, Chris, over the summer it's because he has been on sabbatical, although he had to return early. A further few weeks will be taken when pressure of work permits.

Changes are afoot at Waggoners Wells regarding the fishing. The wardens have been in consultation with Grayshott Angling Club, who bailiff the fishing for the Trust, about purchasing fishing tickets 'on line' and hopefully this will be in place from next year.

The Angling Club has also agreed to carry out a trial looking at the feasibility of managing and supervising fishing along the northern side of Hollywater Pond in an attempt to counteract some of the problems we have had with illegal fishing at this wildlife pond. The southern side of the Pond will hopefully be subjected to less disturbance and remain a valuable area for wildlife. Jim, with help and advice from the NT's River Wey Navigation team based at Guildford, has mended a leak in the sluice using an old technique with poles and turfs. It is hoped that a permanent repair can be done soon, although the temporary solution is standing up really well.

In the summer 180 children from Woolmer Hill School, walked to and from Waggoners Wells, with a bottle each, to collect water to gain more understanding of the problems in the 3rd World where people don't have access to piped water supplies. Jim from the wardens team was on hand to talk to the students and introduced them to the wildlife in the woods surrounding the lakes.

Across Ludshott the number of silver-studded blue butterflies has been magnificent. And the research project carried out by a student from Sparsholt College has given us a very good study of them. This winter management work needs to be carried out to try and maintain this increase.

It has also been a very good year for the migrant nightjars which have been much in evidence flying at dusk. Our annual nightjar walk this year was one of our highlights and provided a large turnout of local friends with good sight and sound of nightjars with the added bonus of 'crepuscular' woodcock.

In line with our ongoing management plan for Ludshott Common, over six hectares have been sprayed at various places around the common to reduce its dominance and spread across the heathland.

Although it is still small scale, our work to facilitate traditional 'commoning' on our common land areas continues. On Bramshott Chase and at Hollywater Green, Passfield, commoners (local's who hold 'common rights') are still grazing their cattle to help maintain the landscape in its historic form.

At Conford, Dr Jonathan Cox led an exercise during June to update the biological survey data for the wetland and fen areas. Jonathan and the wardens were helped by over a dozen volunteers keen to learn about botany and the various techniques used for surveying habitats. Jonathan will write up his findings for us for comparison with previous data collections.

This winter the work programme will follow its usual course, including cutting and clearing scrub etc, to encourage our special heathland species, and tree survey work especially along the road sides at Passfield.

CHRISTMAS TREE SALE

SATURDAY 5th DECEMBER 9.00am until 12.00 noon
Dunelm car park, Ludshott Common

Start your Christmas activities by buying a freshly cut National Trust tree which doesn't lose its needles over the festive season.

These are sapling Scot's Pine which seed themselves all over the common and need to be removed so that the open heathland is maintained. So by buying one you will be helping the conservation management of the site.

As every year there will be trees of all sizes and shapes to choose from (priced at £3/foot) and complimentary mince pies and mulled wine will be served.

Details on posters across the Common, and on the website, or phone the Wardens.

SEE YOU THERE!

