



Commons Link

Newsletter for the Friends of Ludshott and Passfield Commons



Issue 16 - October 2013

Conford Moor by Chris Webb

During the last three years the wardens along with volunteers and contractors have been carrying out habitat conservation work across Passfield Common and at Conford Moor. These are important areas for wildlife hence the site's designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and as a Special Protection Area, which gives it European conservation importance.

For many years Conford Moor in particular has been the subject of much research by local naturalists and biologists from further afield. The late Dr Francis Rose (the author of the Wild Flower Key and the Flora of Hampshire) knew the site from the late 1940s and was very enthusiastic about the range of unusual and rare plants growing in the wetland areas at Conford and Hollywater. At this time some of the locals who held common rights (the 'commoners') were still keeping up tradition by putting livestock out on the heath and fen.

They were also cutting birch and gorse for fuel and bracken for animal bedding, thereby maintaining the site in an ideal condition for a wide range of species. There were, for instance, hundreds of fragrant orchid in the fen area along with marsh helleborine. Today we only have heath-spotted and southern marsh orchids, the others having become extinct at Conford. The marsh-fritillery butterfly was also a charismatic species, but sadly this also disappeared due to changes in the habitat condition once the commoners stopped being active in the 1960s. At Hollywater where one of the commoners still has cattle, the fen continues to have a range of plants and insects that would have been familiar to our forebears. One notable example is the marsh cinquefoil along with ragged-robin, and bog pimpernel which tucks itself down in the hoof-prints and bare patches left by the cattle.

Today's work on the common uses horsepower of the mechanical kind – chainsaws, trimmers and tractor mounted machinery



Southern marsh orchid

– to replicate some of the effects traditional 'commoning' would have had over the centuries. Because so much of this type of habitat has disappeared locally and nationally in the last few decades, it is vital to keep the site in reasonable condition for the remaining species that survive. There are similar conservation issues facing the local NT wardens across a range of sites in east Hampshire and it's a challenge to keep the routine and essential habitat management on schedule. Because of recent improvements – a new wardens base, new machinery, a growing complement of volunteers, and fantastic support from the Ludshott Committee, the Friends Group and from other benefactors, we hope good progress can be made in halting and reversing species and habitat loss.

If you see the wardens and volunteers on site, we're always happy to spend a few minutes talking about our conservation work – it's at the heart of what we do.

CHRISTMAS TREE SALE

**Saturday morning
7th December**

At Dunelm Car Park

**DON'T FORGET to
make a note in your DIARY**

FROM OUR NEWLY APPOINTED GENERAL MANAGER - GORDON GARDNER

I come from the land of the long white cloud – New Zealand. I was brought up on a typical sheep farm covering 1800 acres with 3000 ewes, having a wonderful childhood with access to generous amounts of outdoor pursuits.

With stories of the Scottish Highlands from my mum, I made my way to the UK in 1990.

From a career destined to be in farming I made a radical change and became a bookseller, working for Waterstones for 13 years. At the beginning of 2003 I became the Commercial Manager for Sir Harold Hilliers Garden. In 2009 I took an opportunity to work with Hampshire County Council Countryside Service and over the next 3 years managed Staunton Country Park, Queen Elizabeth Country Park and was Business Manager for the Countryside Service.

Finally for me a dream role, managing a property for the National Trust. I currently live in Medstead with my fabulous wife Julia and three lively boys.

I'm really impressed with the dedication to Ludshott Common from the local community, the committee and the National Trust team. I look forward to working with you.

Gordon not only oversees the work at Ludshott and Passfield but also looks after the NT properties at Selborne, Hinton Ampner, Uppark, and Winchester City Mill.



FAMILY ACTIVITIES and BBQ

Sunday August 11th was a lovely summer's day for this event held on the old parade ground site of what was the World War II Canadian Army Superior Camp, on the eastern edge of Ludshott Common.

The children enjoyed bug-hunting under the expert eye of Craig, collage making from materials found around the area supervised by Helen, leaf and tree identification with Mandy, and Jim organised the den building which the Dads enjoyed almost as much as the children! Afterwards we were joined by more adults for the BBQ, super sausages and burgers from the butcher in Godalming, French bread and salads, and finished off as befits an English afternoon, with strawberries and cream.

We are planning for next year so watch out for the posters on the Common and keep an eye on our website.



Collage Making



Butterfly Hunting



BBQ in their Den



Bug Hunting

Junior Art and Junior and Adult Photographic Competitions

The landscape around Ludshott Common and Waggoners Wells was brought to life again this year with the staging of our Competitions. The standard of the entries was very high and the winners received their awards at the Exhibition held on Saturday 21st September at the Timothy Room, St Luke's Church Grayshott.

Most were present to collect their prizes from the Executive Dean of the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, Dr Roni Brown, one of the judges, who gave a short inspiring talk encouraging the entrants to continue with their art and photographic interests.

Results:

Junior Artwork

Painting under 6: Mirabelle Wallace-Bourgoin

Painting 7 - 10: Angelique Wallace-Bourgoin

Painting 11 - 16: Lottie Tellyn; runner-up Christina Linton

Poem 7 - 10: Georgina Bollom

Story 11 - 16: Edward Linton

Junior Photography: Jennifer Linton; runner-up Robin Simons

Adult Photography: Kathleen Bird; runner-up Jim Henson



Prize-winners, from the right: Kathleen Bird; Jim Henson; Christina Linton; (Judge, Dr Roni Brown); Edward Linton; Lottie Tellyn; Robin Simons; Mirabelle Wallace-Bourgoin.

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

Become a Friend

You will receive your own personal 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 Or visit www.ntludshott.org.uk



Lottie with her winning entry

To see all the winning entries, visit www.ntludshott.org.uk

THANKS

We give thanks to Coomers Timber and Building Supplies for their sponsorship of our Junior Art and Open Photographic Competitions, and appreciation to the following businesses for raffle prizes:

Grayshott Florist
Grayshott Pottery
Magical Rooms
Artworks, Liphook

A Day in the life of a Volunteer at Ludshott & Selborne by John Trevail

All the team, of wardens and volunteers, meet at the base, and over a quick coffee plan out what the day is going to throw at us. The day is generally pre-planned although overnight there may well have been a message left about a tree coming down blocking a path or similar urgent request. It is then decided who is going to do what and with whom.

As volunteers we are there to support the wardens with whatever is needed. As the areas we look after are combinations of heathland and woodland, a great deal of the time is involved in tree and heathland management. The team are very good at ensuring the volunteers' skills are fully used to help with all tasks. The vast majority of the work is outdoors so rain, sun, snow or wind we all get on with the job in hand suitably attired in National Trust regalia.

After a couple of hours of hard graft warden Simon fires up his "Kelly kettle" to make a brew. Then it is back to the fencing, strimming, or whatever else we are doing until lunch. This break is taken out on site, and what could be nicer than eating one's sarnies in the woods or on the common (we are allowed to sit in one of the vehicles if it is lashing down!!). Another 2 or 3 hours of work in the afternoon and everyone convenes back at the base to put back and maintain the equipment, and a short discussion to see how the day has gone.

I have been volunteering now a day a week for 3 years, and every day is genuinely different, varying from manual work to butterfly surveys. It is always a great and satisfying way to spend a day in the country.



The Broomsquire and his wife



Sir Robert Hunter and Flora Thompson by the Wishing Well



Open Afternoon at Coopers Field



Questionmaster David and scorer Ann



Nightjar walk Below: Nightjar



Founders Event

This year throughout the National Trust the centenary of the death of one of its founders, Sir Robert Hunter, has been commemorated. Sir Robert was local, lived in Haslemere and was instrumental in acquiring Ludshott Common for the Trust. The lakes and surrounding area at Waggoners Wells was bought by public subscription in his memory and the Hunter Stone was erected by the ford.

The stone, as with all monuments, is inspected on a routine basis for any maintenance work it may need and, at the moment, is awaiting cleaning and restoration. We hope that this will be completed soon.

In May we held our Founder's Event when Jo Smith and the Headley Theatre Group presented a dramatised walk around Waggoners Wells. Jo Smith as Sir Robert Hunter guided the audience through the history of the area around the lakes, stopping at various places where the cast enacted events that would have occurred. It was very enjoyable 'theatre on a walk' and we again thank Jo and his fellow actors for their support.

Friends Open Afternoon

At the beginning of July, we were pleased to welcome a goodly number to Coopers Field in Bramshott. This is the new base for the Wardens, and Friends were interested to view the newly refurbished barn, the wardens working equipment, their tractors with their mounted appliances, and enjoyed tea and cakes in the portacabin which serves for the moment as office and welfare facilities.

This was an important occasion, for although all the works and the new office accommodation are not yet complete, it gave Friends the chance to see the progress of the development of the Wardens' working environment which has all been paid for from money raised locally over many, many years.

Quiz Night

This was held in the Church Centre, Headley on a wet and windy evening in October but the weather did not dampen the spirits of the Quizzers. More than 40 people joined in the fun and games, and enjoyed an excellent Ploughman's Supper in the interval.

We think that this event may well become a permanent fixture every Autumn!

Annual 'Nightjar' Guided Walk

On a lovely summer evening at the end of June about 30 people gathered for Chris Webb's annual guided walk on Ludshott Common. This is a popular event to experience the sights and sounds of the Common at dusk and to hopefully see and hear the elusive Nightjar.

This summer migrant comes to breed, making its nest on the ground and feeding at dusk having remained totally camouflaged during the day. This year several birds were seen and their unusual churring song heard.

USEFUL CONTACTS

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