

Friends of Bookham Commons Newsletter

Supporting The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty. Registered Charity No. 205846



March 2007

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Friends of Bookham Commons supporting The National Trust

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Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

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From little acorns

Do you ever notice those large, round-shaped, magnificent old oak trees that are hidden in the woods down on the commons? You would be forgiven for not seeing them, as they are nearly all being shaded by young, tall, thin ones crowded around them! It would be understandable if you thought they were different types... they are the same species (*Quercus robur*, the Common or Pendunculate oak), but have grown in a different way.

Given plenty of light, the oaks grow outwards as well as upwards and in the past this is how they developed, further apart in a



Bookham Commons has a wealth of splendid oak trees.

landscape known as wood pasture. This is probably more like natural woodland, where large wild animals such as wild cattle (aurochs), deer, wild boar, elk and beavers would have had a significant effect, grazing the vegetation. Latterly, the thinning of trees and grazing by the commoners with domestic stock would have maintained this more open landscape, which favours a greater variety of wildlife too.

Trees from the commons were harvested to fuel and of course, to build, the village. Did you know that the word "beam" is merely Anglo-Saxon for tree! (Later, one of Henry VIII's stewards toured the commons looking for suitable timbers to build Nonsuch Palace).

We are hoping to imitate the effects of those wild animals, along with the more recent influence of the commoners, by re-creating "pasture woodland", particularly by thinning around the older trees. This will have the added benefit of allowing plenty of light in, making suitable conditions for young trees to grow and spread as eventual replacements... if we want large, open grown, broad-crowned and yes, magnificent oaks for the future, we need to be thinking 400 or 500 years ahead.

With the help of the London Natural History Society we have completed a survey of the veteran (250-450 year old) trees on the commons, finding two that are classified as ancient - a mere 500 years old. From little acorns...

FRIENDS WORKING PARTY

Welcoming several new volunteers last year, the valuable conservation management by our evergreen working party makes a significant contribution towards our efforts to make the commons a haven for people and wildlife... both now and in the years to come.

Please come along to Merritt's Cottage (just past the main Isle of Wight Pond) on the **SECOND TUESDAY** of EVERY MONTH. We can provide tools and gloves, just wear your gardening gear and wellies or work boots!

Get as much or (if you need to go carefully) as little exercise to keep you in trim... and do a whole lot of good for yourself, visitors, plants and wild animals...

FUNDRAISING 2007

We would very much like to update the information panels on the noticeboards at each car park on the commons. These provide a useful, interesting and educational background to the wildlife and history of the commons, with a "you are here" map to give people an idea of the lie of the land....

Our present boards have given sterling service for over ten years, though they are now beginning to look rather tired and worn. With advances in production techniques over the years, with your help we hope to make the new ones even better and now in glorious Technicolor!!

Guided Walks

(and a bike ride!)

PLEASE NOTE: There are varying start times.

Evensong: A Nightingale Walk

Wednesday
May 9th 7.30pm

Marvel at the Nightingale's song. Meet the Warden for this two hour, two mile walk. Sorry, no dogs please. Bring wellies if wet and a torch to light you home! Stay later and it gets even better!

Family Bike Ride

Sunday
July 8th 10.00am

Join the Warden for a cycle ride tailored to the requirements of those attending (a short/circular/longer route can be arranged dependant on the age-range!) Optional excursion to Downside and Chatley Heath afterwards.

Ancient Trees

Sunday
October 7th 10.00am

Looking at venerable trees, how they grow, the wildlife they support and what the National Trust are doing to ensure their survival. A gentle stroll with Ian, approximately 2 miles.

Wildwoods

Wednesday
December 26th
11.00am

A bracing Boxing Day hike to walk-off the Christmas Pudd! Ian will show you the history and development of the commons as we go... with an emphasis on how our ancestors shaped the modern world and the wild animals they depended upon. Approximately two miles over easy terrain.

All walks start from Tunnel Car Park (near Bookham Railway Station) and last approximately 2 hours. Wellies or stout footwear recommended.

In line with all other National Trust guided walks, a small contribution towards our costs is requested.

Date for your Diary

Thursday 17th May – 7.00 for 7.30 pm prompt

Cheese and Wine Supper at The Old Barn Hall, Great Bookham

An illustrated talk by Comtesse Caroline de Guitaut *(Curator of the Royal Collection trust)*

The Diamond Wedding of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness Prince Philip
The Annual Summer Exhibition at Buckingham Palace – July to September

Tickets - £10.00 each inclusive - obtainable from Granary Crafts, Church Road, or from Ron Smith, 01372 452361.

Chairman's note ...

Rob Hewer has settled in well during last year and luckily for us has given Ian more time on Bookham Commons – still not enough I hear Ian cry! A lot of work has been carried out on the areas on Little Bookham Street and Church Street to make them more attractive but still natural. I call this area the "public face of the National Trust" and the better it is tended the more the public will appreciate all that goes on to keep our Commons such a lovely place to visit.

Having all enjoyed Dennis Bright's marvellous talk at last year's Cheese & Wine, I feel that Mary Eason has excelled herself again in the choice of this year's speaker. She has arranged for the Comtesse Caroline de Guitaut to give a personal talk on her preparations for the Queen's Diamond Wedding celebrations. Mark the date and get your tickets early!

Whatever global warming has in store, the Commons will always be a great place to visit – enjoy it.

Peter Corliss



Subscriptions

If you enjoy what the Commons offer, then urge your friends to join us.

Please send your cheque now before you forget and thank you for your continued support.

Friends of Bookham Commons

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