

Friends of Bookham Commons Newsletter

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



March 2008

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Friends of Bookham Commons supporting The National Trust

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Wren
Troglodytes troglodytes

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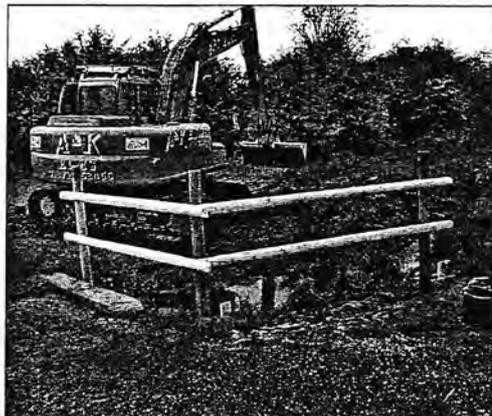
Busy Bees ...

The Bookham Commons may not, on the surface, look like a hive of activity, but they are quietly buzzing with exciting projects, most of them involving the suggestions, approval and generous financial support of the "Friends".

Work to save the oldest (and finest!) trees has begun near Kelsey's Pond at the North end of Little Bookham Common. Careful thinning (known as "halo-release") of the densely-packed young trees that are crowding these giants, will help to ensure their longevity and provide eventual replacements growing nearby. This project is being funded (to the tune of £25,000) by SITA Trust with money from Landfill Tax and was only made possible by a 10% contribution from the Friends of Bookham Commons!

The track to Mark Oak, part-funded by the Friends, has been carefully widened and is awaiting some surfacing of the wettest sections – watch this space (but mind you don't sink in the mire!)

New information boards with a colourful



Bank repairs at Bank stream.

map and text are finally being produced for the car parks. Apologies for the delay, though we have gained from other peoples' experiences, so ours should be ready very quickly and really look the part. This includes the provision of a new board at the small car park on the plains (near Bookham Grange Hotel) where we need to engage with visitors and let them know what we're doing and why... We have just secured a Higher Level Environmental Stewardship agreement from Natural England for this area of outstandingly rare and diverse grassland, which will provide £30,000 towards its management over the next ten years. More good news!

The ride widening, halo-release and wood-pasture restoration has generated a fair-sized stack of timber at Merritt's Cottage. This is about to be sawn into posts and benches for use on the commons... a great use for durable and sustainable English oak.

With only four Wardens covering 4000 acres on the North Downs West properties (large patches of glorious chalk downland between Dorking and Guildford, Polesden and Ranmore farms and woods, Hatchlands Park as well as Bookham Commons), we are a little 'thin on the ground'. By using contractors to mow some of the grass in the village manorial strips, renew stud posts, clear scrub and help with the tree work, I hope to have more time to meet you all, complete a survey of every bridge and culvert on the commons, the tree safety survey, plan and seek funding for a major restoration of the main ponds and pick-up more litter, more frequently!

Well, must fly... Hope to see you out there... and thank you SO much... I wouldn't be around and the Commons wouldn't be here without your support...

2008 Appeal

We would like to ask for your help in making improvements to our land at Church Road and Little Bookham Common. These manorial strips are where the commons meet the village and we are often judged on what people see every day, rather than the long-term nature conservation management hidden away on the main area of the commons.

It is therefore rather vital that we improve the appearance of these areas, manage the trees along our boundaries and replace the somewhat scruffy stud posts that are in need of attention. Road safety is also an issue and many of the sight lines need clearing. Your help with this interesting and high-profile project would be greatly appreciated...

Working Party Volunteers

Keep fit, save wildlife and help to maintain the commons for future generations to enjoy, by coming along to our Working Party on the second Tuesday of every month, meeting at 10.00 am at Merritt's Cottage (near the main pond).

A small (or rather, a very large) word of praise needs to be given to Keith Poulton, one of our longest-serving Working Party volunteers and former chairman of the Local Committee.

Keith has just been presented with a 30 years service award (though it is more like 35 years of hard work for the National Trust) and we would like to send our congratulations along with a big thank you!

Guided Walks 2008

PLEASE NOTE: Please make a booking for these events. Due to high demand and the Health & Safety of visitors, the number of places now has to be limited on these walks. Please telephone our North Downs Administrative Assistant, Miss Rosie Pite, on **01372 220642** to reserve your place.

Nightingales Wednesday May 7th 7.30pm

Join the Warden, Ian Swinney, to listen to the enchanting song of the nightingale. Please bring a torch, warm clothing and wellies if wet!

Butterflies Sunday June 29th 10.00am

A look at the life cycle and habitats of Purple Emperors, White Admirals and Silver-Washed Fritillaries with Butterfly Conservation's expert, Ken Willmott

Mighty Oaks Sunday October 5th 10.00am

Join the Warden for a stroll among the magnificent oak trees of Bookham Commons and hear what the National Trust is doing to ensure their survival.

The Holly and the Ivy Friday December 26th 11.00am

Walk-off the Christmas Pud with Ian, the Warden, and learn about the wildlife on our wonderful Bookham Commons.

All walks start from Tunnel Car Park (200 yards east of 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 22th May – 7.00 for 7.30 pm prompt
Cheese and Wine Supper at The Old Barn Hall, Great Bookham

Bird Song in Surrey An illustrated talk (with bird songs) by Peter Haynes of Hurtwood Common

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

Chairman's note ...

Ian has given you a good run down on the various projects which are still being progressed. We were delighted to have been able to fund the 'Contributing Third Party' payment of about £2600 to the SITA Trust which in turn enabled them to award funds of £25,000 to the National Trust, with a part of that earmarked for Bookham Commons. This money is made available through the Landfill Communities Fund and will be most beneficial to our area.

Our project for 2008 will be a continuation of the work started last year on the Commons area alongside Church Road and Little Bookham Street. Obviously there was far more work to do than we first thought and the work this year will be to improve the total appearance of the whole area. I'm sure we shall all be watching progress very closely.

Do continue to enjoy your Commons but please, if you are a commuter, don't clog the National Trust Car Park with all day parking.

Peter Corliss

P.S. Do please read the articles written by Peter Hendry in each issue of the BCA Magazine – he really does bring the Commons to life.

Remembering Arthur Piper

The Bookham Commons lost one of its greatest supporters when Arthur Piper, a stalwart of our Working Party and former Honorary Commons Manager, died last year. With an amazing dedication, Arthur could be seen inspecting every corner of the property, accompanied by his much-loved retriever, Stroller. After acquiring a wealth of knowledge from his years as a civil servant attached to the Admiralty, he applied his skills towards saving the wildlife and making the commons safe and enjoyable to visit. We would like to give thanks for his life and work, remembering him when we look about our beautiful commons.



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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