



Where is the fox?

Spring 2015

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Chairman's Report

2014 was an excellent year for the Friends with membership increasing from around 85 to over 175 with annual subscriptions increased from £5 to £10. The construction and opening of the Natural Play Area resulted in widespread publicity in the *Bookhams Bulletin*, *Leatherhead Advertiser*, *Look Local*, and *Bookham Residents Association Newsletter*.

Good Friday last year saw a large recruitment/outreach operation with a Committee member at each of the 4 main entrances to the Commons – Tunnel Car Park, Hundred Pound bridge (Downside), Mark Oak (Fetcham) and outside Merritt's Cottage armed with leaflets. We plan a similar exercise again this year. Other outreach occasions include sharing a stand with the National Trust at Bookham Village Day.

The Friends were able to donate a useful sum to the National Trust towards the cost of constructing the Natural Play Area (NPA). This feature has brought a great deal of fun and pleasure for children who can climb and explore various log features while Mums, Dads and Grandparents sit at a picnic table and watch! For those who have not visited the NPA, it's located about 400 yards from the Tunnel Car Park (park your car, turn left by the NT notice board and keep walking!).

We welcome 2 new committee members – NT Volunteer Leah Lainchbury and Maria Bruce who has kindly taken on the job of Secretary as Julian Boag, who in particular helped enormously in drawing up the FBC Constitution, has had to stand down.

I am extremely grateful to all members of the Committee and National Trust rangers Rob Hower and Ian Swinney for all their help and support in promoting a much greater awareness of the Friends across Bookham.

Robert Hall

Celebration Evening 2015

The date: Wednesday 20th May
The Speaker: Derek Renn.
The Venue: Old Barn Hall
The Food: Mediterranean Buffet
The Time: 7.15 for 7.30

Tickets this year are £15.00 to reflect the increase in the spend on food.

Full details are on the enclosed flyer together with how to obtain tickets. If you would like a poster to display please either use the attached or email or phone

It will be preceded by our first AGM at 7.00 **for Members only** where the agenda is:

Chairman's Introduction

Finances

Re-election of Committee

Honorary Lifetime Memberships

See you there.

2015 Subscriptions

These are due for all Members who joined or renewed before September 2014. For those who joined September to December your subscription is valid until the end of 2015.

The subscription form is on the next page to complete and return to the treasurer. There are a growing number of standing orders and we would encourage this as it means that you do not have to remember each year and the Treasurer does not have to chase non-payers!

Website

Hopefully you will have visited our website.

To keep it current we would welcome contributions from all Members. Any topic is welcome (favourite walks, comments, sightings etc.) as long as it concerns the Commons.

Send us an email and we will upload, subject to approval of content.

Ranger's Report

A question of balance

Another year has flown-by on the commons, so it's a good time to take stock of what we have achieved with the help of the "Friends". A very successful Wine and Cheese Celebration Evening, along with your continued (and much appreciated) membership has raised funds for the Natural Play area, an information panel in the bird hide, new map panels for the information boards, path surfacing and the new leaflet map. All these special projects are "extras" that make a great difference to people's enjoyment of the commons, but what about the wildlife?



Galloway and Dexter 2014

Other things that have flown-by recently were 3 red kites, 5 buzzards, a goshawk and 18 herons! These were all airborne at the same time, the herons probably alarmed by the presence of so many raptors at once – though the birds of prey looked more interested in courtship and territory disputes, than feeding... The really good news is that for there to be so many predators, everything else must be in-place. There are lots of birds because there's plenty of food, shelter and nest sites – which is due to the varied plant-life, helped along by our careful management. Our volunteer team

have done a marvellous job of caring for the commons, supervising the cattle grazing and "browsing" other areas with their bow saws!

Other tasks this year, supported by the Friends, will include improvements to the car parks, more benches and further enhancement of the footpaths and bridleways. This is where the balance has to be right – we need to welcome visitors and keep their interest and support. The commons are only here because of it – but too many clearings at once would damage the wildlife (though none-at-all would also see it disappear), too many benches and the commons could look like an outer-London park. There are places where a log seat looks more appropriate. Let's keep the commons suitably "wild", whilst encouraging people to enjoy it. With long-term management aims and a caring vision for the future, let's hope that your great-grandchildren will enjoy it too...

The money that you raise goes directly to keeping Bookham Commons as a special haven for people and wildlife. Thank you for your continued and generous support.

Ian Swinney

Projects 2014

For those of you who do not yet know the Natural Play Area was completed in August and has proven to be a great hit with kids and parents/grandparents.



The Official Opening

Projects 2015

We are in the throes of planning various projects with money raised in 2014 which include the improvement of paths, more seats and possibly more picnic tables. We have also agreed to sponsor a new Commons Information Panel and new Leaflets.

If you have ideas please submit them. We cannot guarantee to carry them out but we can guarantee to discuss them at a Committee meeting.

Friends of Bookham Commons

TO : Mr Paul Gallard (Hon. Treasurer), 5 Fox Lane, Little Bookham, Surrey KT23 3AT

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