



Friends of Chorleywood Common

Newsletter September 2012

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1. Chairman's Notes

This Newsletter has unfortunately been much longer than usual in preparation; as Members will recall, in the course of this year Village Day has been called off twice and there have been several changes to the proposals for reintroducing grazing on the Common, so that we have had to begin those items of the Newsletter again, and other projects – particularly the Butterfly Survey – have made progress and needed more re-writing. Here we are at last; the Newsletter team hope you will be interested in what we have eventually put together.

The AGM last February is now so long ago that it does not seem appropriate to include my Report on 2011-12 in this Newsletter; it is on the Friends of Chorleywood Common website, <http://chorleywoodcommon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Chairman%E2%80%99s-Annual-Report-2011-12.pdf> - and anyone who wants a copy but does not have Internet access is welcome to ask me for one (01923 283555, evenings and weekends).

However, I do want to repeat in this Newsletter our thanks to Les Dacre, who was a stalwart of the Committee for many years and took the lead in all sorts of practical tasks, including setting up and clearing up on Village Day and at the evening meetings in the Library; he decided at the end of last year that he wanted to stand down from the Committee, though he is still involved in our activities; we look forward to seeing him for a long time to come.

Although Village Day had to be called off, I am happy to report that the Friends of the Common's own outdoor events did go ahead, and were enjoyed by all those who took part.

Mosses and Lichens (and earthworms) were the subject of a Field Day on 26 April, led by Agneta Burton of the University of Hertfordshire and in charge of OPAL East of England - part of a national project to encourage local communities to take part in observing and recording biodiversity. She then gave a follow-up talk in the Library on 31 May. All of us who attended were struck by the variety and the beauty, when one looks at them under a magnifying glass, of the lichens that grow so prolifically on the trees on the Common.

Pond Dipping, after a postponement, took place on 15 June at Darvells Pond. Our thanks go to Andrew Goddard (Parish Ranger) for identifying tadpoles, fish, etc, which the children caught, and for taking the sticklebacks away to be re-homed.

The ***Herb Walk***, led by Victoria Stainsby on 24 June (St John's Day) started at the Shepherd's Bridge parking area and went no further than about halfway to Cherry Tree Dell, then through the cattle creep and back to the clump of trees between the bridge and the Old Shepherd – but in that comparatively small area, Victoria identified 16 plants that herbalists use: plantain, hawthorn, nettle, gorse, fireweed, oak, dock, artemesia, goosegrass, wild rose, St John's Wort, couch grass, clover, elder, mallow and yarrow. There is more to the flora of the Common than meets the casual eye!

The ***Flower Walk*** on 22 July, led by Martin Hicks of Herts Biological Records Centre, concentrated mainly on the other side of the Common and particularly on Larks Meadow; the photograph later in this Newsletter gives some impression of the height of the grass (now cut and lifted) and the variety of the flowers growing up through it. There was a particularly good show of Pyramidal Orchids.

The volunteers, organised by Simon Varnals in co-operation with the Rangers, have pulled a substantial part of this summer's prolific crop of ragwort; the next job in prospect is encouraging the heather between the Memorial Hall and Top Common Ponds: collecting seed, scarifying the ground nearby and spreading the seed – and removing saplings and brambles.

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2. Grazing and Play Area Updates

Members will be aware, from the Notes of Open Spaces and Parish Council meetings, and from the letter which the Council recently sent to all residents, that no grazing is taking place this Autumn, and further issues have been raised about the terms on which the provisions regulating the management of the Common allow grazing to take place.

The Council are still committed to grazing and are looking at ways of safely and legally facilitating grazing on the Common for nature conservation purposes. Until these investigations are completed, no grazing is planned to take place. Once the Council has agreed a way to proceed, further information will be available.

Once this further information is available, the Committee of the Friends of the Common believe it will be important to demonstrate the extent to which residents of Chorleywood support the proposal to reintroduce grazing and at that point we shall consider arranging some form of petition in favour of it.



Play Area Consultation – Three Rivers District Council have invited residents to complete their survey on the possible locations and type of equipment for the proposed play area in

Chorleywood. Views have been sought from interested local groups, advice has been given by local police and the Parish Council's Open Spaces Committee discussed the issues at their meeting on 11 September.

The deadline for completing the survey, either online, by hard copy or by 'touch screen' at the Library, is now **Friday 28 September** and we strongly encourage all members of Friends of the Common to voice their opinions through this survey in order that Three Rivers have as wide a body of opinions to consider as possible.

The introduction of more play facilities for Chorleywood has been a matter of long-standing debate and now funding has been allocated to bring this to reality. The survey therefore represents an important opportunity for residents to have their say and influence the decision on where and in what way this matter will be concluded.

3. Butterfly Survey



Speckled Wood



Meadow Brown on knapweed

Members who receive (and read) the Notes of the Open Spaces Committee meetings will have seen that the second priority in that Committee's "Four Year Vision" is to make arrangements for future butterfly surveys: Mr Bill Cattle, who has undertaken such surveys for the Council for many years, has arranged training for FOCC volunteers so that this work can continue with our very grateful thanks for all the work he has put into this over the years. Having an ongoing record, year by year, of the butterflies found on the Common is interesting in itself, and also a way of tracking the effects of how the Common is managed and of environmental changes generally. Under Bill's guidance, the new group has carried out three surveys during the summer and is intending to do one more in the autumn, with the hope of finding a migrant or two to add to the list. So far 17 species of butterflies have been identified on the Common, around the woodland edge and in Larks Meadow: -

Comma, Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, Meadow Brown, Hedge Brown, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Ringlet, Large White, Small White, Orange Tip, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Small Copper, Small Skipper.

If you would like to join this group, or can add to the list saying whereabouts you saw them, please e-mail Michael Hyde mrhyde1@hotmail.co.uk and he will be in touch.



(No names)

4. **Chorleywood Cricket Club**

Chorleywood Cricket Club, who play their games on the Common, are this season's champions of Division 1 of the Saracens Herts. Cricket League. With two matches still to go they were in an unassailable position at the top of the league having not lost a match this season. Many of the team have come up from young local children to play in this side, and Chorleywood and those who use the Common, should be proud of their achievement.

In the middle of September The Club will be visited by the Home Counties Premier Cricket League (HCPCL) committee to assess the quality of the ground and pavilion on The Common to see if promotion can be offered. Of course we shall make great play about our future plans to replace our crumbling Clubhouse. If The Club can go up, Saturday cricket next year will start at 11.30am for spectators to enjoy.

The club are in the process of implementing Phase II of the square replacement so subject to weather, there will be heavy equipment on The Common and there will be a continuation of the spreading of loam removed off the square into the playing field hollows to improve the quality of the surface for ball games by the School and the General Public, as well as the cricket.

(We have put "Dates for your Diary" on a separate page, so that you can pin it up somewhere, as a reminder, if you wish.)

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5. Dates for your Diary

Talks take place in Chorleywood Library, starting at 8 pm; admission £2 for members or £3 for non-members, which includes light refreshments and makes a contribution to the cost of hiring the library and the speaker's fee and expenses. The AGM is also in the Library at 8 pm; no charge.

Talk – Thursday 4 October, John Catton from the Bumblebee Conservation Group, giving a talk entitled: “The Honey Bee and its relations”

Apple Day – Saturday 6 October, Organised by Chorleywood Community Orchard in their Orchard (11 am to 3 pm; enter Chorleywood House Estate at South Lodge and turn right immediately past the Lawn Cemetery.)

Talk – Thursday 1 November, Rachel Sanderson, the Commons Project Officer from Children's Conservation Board will be talking about the history of commons and ours in particular.

Fungus Foray – Sunday 18 November (exact time and place to meet to be confirmed)

AGM – Friday 22 February

Talk – (Date to be confirmed) James Shipman from BerksBats.org.uk talking about Bats.

Talk – Thursday 18th April, Nick Bessant talking on British Reptiles and Amphibians particularly smooth, palmates and alpine newts.