




# FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES COMMON

## NEWSLETTER NO 1- AUTUMN 2009

### From the Chairman

 Welcome to our first newsletter and thank you for your support. As this is our first newsletter I thought I would give some background. The 'Friends' group was started in response to the announcement that the East Sussex County Council was ceasing operations on the site. This raised the prospect of neglect, abuse and a decline in the amenity and wildlife value of the site.

Lewes District Council is responsible for the site and we have been lobbying with them for permission to operate and support. The response has been very positive with input from the two rangers, funding for tools, essential works and contractors and bringing other volunteer groups on site to restore the high pond.



The activities of the Friends group will be primarily habitat restoration. Initial assessment indicates that the mature woodland is in good condition so the group will focus on clearing glades of invasive birch, bracken and bramble allowing a more diverse community of

plants to re-establish itself. Already we are encouraged by the increase in wild flowers we have seen after one year of operations.

Our next Sunday task day will be on November 15<sup>th</sup> and we will again be clearing birch from areas of the mire. Please let us know by email or telephone (01825 722863) if you are planning to come so we can bring enough tools and advise you should it be cancelled due to bad weather

### Membership Matters

I am pleased to say that we have over twenty Friends who have joined us and you are all very welcome. As you will read elsewhere, we had a marvelous response to our Open Day, thanks to Thyone our Ranger and to Rupert Hall.

Here is a picture of the group on the day.....



We hope to send out Newsletters and other things by email to save on postage and printing. If you have received this in the post, do let us have your details if you wish to use email in the future.

Thank you.

*THE FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES COMMON      CHAIRMAN RUPERT HALL*  
*THYONE OUTRAM - ASST. COMMUNITY RANGER      LEWES DISTRICT COUNCIL*  
*MEMBERSHIP TO :- FOMC EVERGREEN VICARAGE LANE SCAYNES HILL RH17 7PB*  
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## SURVEYS and SURVEYING

It is important to be able to monitor the effects of our habitat restoration work. We have initiated some transect surveys in some of the cleared areas to see how desirable species – such as grasses, wild flowers and heather – replace the bracken and birch. Some methods of restoration may be more effective than others and our surveys may help identify these.

We also conduct regular surveys of species in each area of the Common – noting which species are present as well as rough estimates of their relative abundance – to build up a picture of species diversity. We have already added several species to previous records. One task to be undertaken this winter is to record the details of the ancient trees and register them on the national database.

We welcome anyone who is interested in joining in with these aspects of our work. You don't need to have previous experience – the surveys provide good opportunities to learn on the job.



### Notes from our Ranger – Thyone Outram

As Markstakes comes alive with the orange and yellow leaves of beech, hornbeam and oak, the animals of Markstakes are slowing down and hibernating. This includes dormice, adders and grass snakes, newts and frogs as well as some insects such as peacock and red admiral butterflies.

The recent Markstakes Open Morning went well with 17 of us taking part in all. Rupert led a short walk and then all of us felled invasive birch with a bonfire and enjoyed Jacqui's delicious home-made cake. The Friends will now meet every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month for a morning's work from 9.30 to 12.30 (see diary dates). Everyone is welcome so bring your family and friends.



Lewes District Council Rangers, Volunteers and Contractors, have been doing some work on the main pond in the woods. We have cleared some of the overhanging branches to let more light into the pond and pulled out the willow in the pond that was contributing to it drying out. We have also dug out some of the silt that has accumulated over many years. We should see the benefits of this over the next few years.

And so to miracle of the disappearing gates – would that it was so romantic!. Unfortunately it was straightforward theft. The new gates at Markstakes Lane were stolen despite being hinged so that the thief had to unscrew the hinges to take the gate away. We are replacing them and will be using a more secure screwing method.

### Dates for your diary

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday monthly, practical work morning.

15<sup>th</sup> November

20<sup>th</sup> December

17<sup>th</sup> January

Sunday 24th Jan Wintery Trees Walk led by Thyone Outram