

# Friends of Markstakes Common



**NEWSLETTER AUTUMN  
2020**

## From the Chairman

Dear All

We would normally publish a newsletter at this time of year but this has not been a normal year. Operations ceased in March and did not recommence until July. Since then the volunteers have been coming out on Monday mornings and focussing on bracken control. Clearly this has been a disappointing year, but I have been heartened that the Common still retains its great natural charm.

As a result of the COVID 19 Pandemic we decided to postpone the Annual General Meeting, normally held in April, until later in the year. Due to the recent increase in cases and the return of restrictions on meetings the Committee members have decided not to hold a meeting this year. The officers will continue in their role until the next annual general meeting. We are forwarding the annual report prepared for that meeting.

If anyone wants to get in touch with queries or concerns the contact details are as follows:

Chairman of the Friends of Markstakes Common and task leader: Rupert Hall  
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Community Ranger: Thyone Outram  
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Email: [Thyone.Outram@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:Thyone.Outram@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

Rupert Hall

## Membership Matters

Our core group of 'Friends' support us, and we especially value the practical help which we receive on our Monday morning working party sessions. Sometimes the

task ahead seems difficult, but after making a start we soon find that progress is made, and we can see the result after each session.

We are grateful for the support of our Community Ranger Thyone Outram and our Group Leader Rupert Hall. Teamwork makes it happen.

As subscriptions for this year have not all been paid up to date, I am attaching a reminder of these and hopefully, if you have not already paid, you would like to do so. Some have already paid either directly to me or by standing order so thank you for that.

Your continued support is much appreciated as it does enable us to keep our tools etc. up to date for our working party mornings so thank you.

We look forward to seeing you.

William Coleman

## From the Ranger

The last six months have inevitably been dominated by Covid-19 and the changes that it has brought. One of these has affected the way we have been able to manage Markstakes Common this year. The Friends, of course, perform some of the management but we also invite other groups to help with the work. In the last few years, this has mostly been Brighton Conservation Volunteers. They cannot travel together in their van at the moment so a good deal of the group cannot get to Markstakes Common, and of course they must work in a socially distanced way. In the past they have controlled birch seedling growth, controlled bracken, opened up paths, cleared ditches and perhaps most importantly controlled some of the vegetation growth in High Pond.

We have found the most effective way to do this is with a human chain of up to 10 people handing wet vegetation up the

chain and out of the pond. Once in the pond, the thick mud makes it practically impossible to move so a human chain with each person moving as little as possible is by far the best option. This will not be possible this year so the pond will have to wait until next year for some vegetation to be cleared. Many pond creatures thrive perfectly well in heavily vegetated ponds - the plants provide places to hide, shelter and breed but some creatures do need some open water. Great Crested Newts need a certain amount of open water to display during mating and open water warms up faster than shaded water so we usually try to clear the vegetation from around 1/3 of the pond each autumn. Hopefully this will be possible again next autumn.

Thyone Outram



## **AGM - Annual General Meeting**

As Rupert has said above, we have not held an Annual General Meeting.

The Annual Report for 2019-20 has been prepared but not sent out after the AGM, so this now attached together with this Newsletter and I hope that this will keep you up to to date on all the work and things that have been happening and seen at Markstakes.

William

## **Dates for the Diary**

Monday Weekly (most Mondays not Bank Holidays)

This is our regular volunteer group time to meet. We gather at the gate in the stone wall by Markstakes Lane at 9.30.a.m. and usually work until around 12.00. Tools are provided, and suitable clothes and footwear are recommended. We have a break so bring along light refreshments to keep you going. Come along if you can.



Early purple Orchids in April