



Friends of Markstakes Common

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2019

From the Chairman

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter.

In contrast to last year, the winter so far has been extremely mild with record temperatures recorded for February. I appreciate that climate and weather should not be confused but it is slightly unnerving to have such a mild start to the year.

One advantage is that we have lost relatively few days to bad weather and have been able to catch up on the maintenance of the open areas. The main task remains the removal of birch seedlings and we have benefited from the recent acquisition of two smaller tree poppers. Unlike the larger and heavier tree poppers we have been using up to now, these are suitable for all volunteers and well up to the task of taking out the smaller birch saplings.

A Brighton based team of volunteers organized by the Lewes District Council Ranger came out for a day and helped so much that the open areas in the northern parts of the Common are now looking in good condition.

We have also been busy repairing the dead hedge around the high pond. This work is dependent on a period of dry weather as the path in that area quickly becomes muddy and very slippery. As I write I think that completing the task will have to wait.

I would like to thank Ian Seccombe and Ian Woolsey for their help with the survey work. The

bird populations look relatively stable with some redwing and Fieldfare seen during the winter.

By contrast the butterfly populations are sharply down in what should have been a good year for butterflies. This is a cause for concern but may be part of the ecological succession as cleared areas dominated by colonizing plants give way to more dense cover of grass. We will be checking the plant distributions over the summer to see if there have been major changes over the last few years.

Rupert Hall

NOTICE OF TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE 'FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES
COMMON' WILL HOLD THEIR

TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY APRIL 10TH 2019

At READING ROOM CHAILEY GREEN
AT 7.30.P.M

ALL ARE WELCOME

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY 10th APRIL 2019 7.30.p.m.**

AGENDA

- 1. APOLOGIES**
- 2. MINUTES of 25th APRIL 2018**
- 3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND ADOPTION**
- 4. TREASURER'S REPORT AND ADOPTION**
- 5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**
- 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
- 7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Followed by a Talk by Bob Epsom
Woodland Officer South Downs
National Park
'Ancient/Veteran Trees of Sussex'**

From our Ranger

Anyone who knows Markstakes Common will know THE Old Oak. It faces you as you head south across the open glades toward the deep woods. It makes extraordinary sculptural shapes in winter. It has wood anemones and bluebells beneath it in spring, a host of interesting lichens and mosses on its living and dead wood, birds feeding on the caterpillars that live on it in summer and purple hairstreak butterflies flying around its top branches in June.



Everyone loves this tree and from a management point of view we have treated it rather differently to most trees on the Common. We have already felled some of the neighbouring birch that were interfering with its crown (Haloing).



When one of our tree officers from the Council saw it, he was of course delighted by it. But he pointed

Membership Matters

Our team of volunteer members has been doing a great job with the many tasks that we become involved with. There haven't been any new members joining us for a while, but work has been going on with excellent and inspiring results.

The very modest membership amount of £2 is due at our Annual General Meeting and thank you also if you send in a cheque or pay by bank transfer. Donations are always most useful so thank you if you have done this

Hopefully we will continue our sensitive and careful clearing and maintenance of this lovely place continues. Thank you for your support.

William Coleman

out that, with the path running right underneath it, especially in recent years with horses having used the route, there may be root compaction. Root compaction can slowly kill a tree as the roots lose the ability to function properly when the ground around them is compacted.



Trees do everything slowly – growing and dying, so nothing may show with the oak for 10 years or much longer, but the tree may become weakened and more susceptible to diseases and rot. Serious root compaction can definitely shorten the life of a tree.

We have diverted the path around the oak with the help of Brighton Conservation volunteers and hope that all will understand and use the new route. Of course, you can still go right up to the tree if you want to, but this should be because you particularly want to see or feel the tree close up, not as a matter of course just passing by.

I have always imagined that in the 250 or so years of this oak's life, lovers have met underneath to elope, travellers have snoozed in the shade at its base, cattle have scratched their bottoms on it, people have just stood and admired it and creatures of all kinds have called it home. Long may it live.

Thyone Outram

Work on Markstakes continues...



Flint wall cleaned

Friends Glade tidied



Dates for the Diary

Monday Weekly (most Mondays)

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. working until around 12.00. Tools and gloves are provided, and suitable clothes and footwear are recommended according to the weather. There is a drinks break to keep you going.

If you have not been already, do come along and help us with this worthwhile and sensitive conservation work which is very rewarding and keeps you fit. No phoning required, just come along and join us – we shall be pleased to see you.

Email – markstakes@chaileyccommons.org.uk

