

Friends of Markstakes Common

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2022

From the Chair

Like many aspects of life in Britain, things are returning to normal following the pause due to COVID. The Monday morning group has continued its activities over the winter with progress being made in both the Northern Bracken Field and the Mire. We have been pleased with the progress that we have made although after two years of subdued activity there is still much to do.

AS you may have noticed, stormy weather during the winter caused several large trees to be uprooted. Grand old trees knocked over by the storms make a melancholy site, but it is a key element of the ecology of the Site, providing a niche for invertebrates and fungi to exploit and contributing to the biodiversity of the Common. As such we tend not to 'tidy up' events with activity limited to the Council dealing with trees deemed unsafe.

As members may be aware a 'dead' hedge, a dense barrier of brash secured between two rows of stakes, was installed to discourage dogs from entering the high pond and disturbing the habitat. After a period of neglect the dead hedge surrounding the pond needed refurbishment. We were able to source material from the Common and Jacqui Hutson made a further contribution of some fine hazel stakes. After a couple of mornings hammering in stakes and weaving in willow branches the hedge is now restored – see

picture below - and should provide major discouragement to any curious dogs.

As a result of the COVID 19 restrictions there has been a long gap between AGMs. I am happy to report that these will resume this year with a meeting on the 13th April. Details can be found in the notice at the end of this Newsletter. We look forward to meeting you then.

Rupert Hall

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 will be 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. Thank you for your support.

William Coleman

From our Specialist Advisor Lewes DC and Eastbourne BC

Hello,

My name is Lydia, and I am one of the new ecologists working for Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils. Since graduating from University, I have built up a varied repertoire of experience within the environmental field, including three seasons in ecological consultancy, various research projects in conservation, and most recently managing habitat restoration, enhancement, and creation projects.

I have a specific interest in the conservation of European Protected Species, such as bats, dormice, badgers, reptiles, and great crested newts, and I am looking forward to becoming involved in conserving these species across our county. I am excited about the variation in my new role, specifically being out on site and working within the wider ecology team across Sussex.

Away from work I enjoy nature photography, specifically wildlife and landscape photography, and can often be seen out and about with my camera. I am hoping to meet some of you at Markstakes Common in the not-too-distant future!

Lydia Dowell

*Specialist Advisor (Downland and Nature Reserves)
Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough
Council*

News from the common

The High Pond and the dead hedge

As Rupert has reported, the dead hedge has received a makeover. The new stakes are supporting the reclaimed material and put over the top of any existing remains. The willow which

was reclaimed for the Mire has made a strong hedge.



Winter storms

AS a result of a succession of winter storms there has been some damage within the common – luckily not to any property but older trees have suffered.

Here can be seen the substantial uprooting and crashing of a beech tree, affecting nearby trees too.



It seems that one large beech has uprooted and tipped another beech the opposite way.

Surprisingly the roots are quite shallow and there was no resistance to such a strong storm force.



Evernia

Lichen – *Evernia prunastri* – (aka oak moss) growing on a Hawthorn bush. Widespread on tree trunks and bush branches. Foliose in habit and tough when dry and rubbery when wet.



NOTICE OF MEETING

**'FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES
COMMON'**

13th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Chailey Reading Room
Chailey Green BN8 4DA**

Followed by a Talk
Wed April 13th 2022 7.30.p.m.

The Friends will be holding their Annual General Meeting on April 13th, 2022, in the Reading Room Chailey Green (BN8 4DA) at 7.30. p.m. We are looking forward to seeing the 'Friends of Markstakes ' and interested visitors will be welcome by registering on 01444 831098 or by email to 'Markstakes@chaileycommons.org.uk'.

After the formal meeting we will be welcoming Clare Blencowe, Manager of the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre at the Sussex Wildlife Trust who will tell us of their work and how important biological recording is and, in particular, how volunteers can really help in gathering new records.

Dates for the Diary

Monday Weekly (most Mondays) 9.30.a.m.

This is our regular Volunteer Group time to meet at the gate in the stone wall – Markstakes Lane or email – markstakes@chaileycommons.org.uk Find a friend to volunteer - fun and exercise free! Tools provided – wear suitable clothes for outside.

