

Friends of Markstakes Common

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2023

From the Chair

Our 'Mondays' group has continued their activities over the last six months and have finally started to catch up with areas that have previously been neglected. Several years ago, we had cleared an extension to the Corner glade at the south-eastern edge of the Common but have not been able to maintain due to long absences from the site during the Pandemic.

As a result, the area had become severely overgrown. The two photographs show the glade before and after.



(Before)



(After)

It may look like a scene of devastation, but the plan is to spread heather seed over the area to encourage the spread of heather. Some Willow saplings have been left behind as they are the food plant of the Purple Emperor butterfly.

The mornings were rained off for several weeks and regular visitors to the site may recall that at one point a large volume of water built up behind the flint wall. We cleared the culverts allowing a better flow and the cleared rapidly.

The Council is liaising with the Sussex Flow Initiative and some 'leaky dams' may soon be erected across the two main flow courses with a view to holding back some of the water after high rainfall.

The Common became a more popular site during the lockdown and a greater number of dog walkers are using the site. Irresponsible dog walkers are not clearing up after their dogs which can make conservation work deeply unpleasant at times. Temporary signs have been taken down repeatedly. The committee have decided that a permanent sign may do something to alleviate the problem and as we have financial support from the Parish Council we plan to construct and erect a permanent sign over the next few months.



Rupert Hall

Membership Matters

Our team of volunteer members has been doing a great job with the many tasks that we do on Mondays, and we are always pleased by the results of our efforts, at least until things grow over and we have to start again! 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. Do ask a friend to come along and join us at our 'Green Gym' for free exercise and great company. Thank you for your support.

The Friends will be holding their **Annual General Meeting** on Tuesday April 11th, 2023, 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'.

William Coleman

NOTICE OF MEETING

**'FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES
COMMON'**

14th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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

Followed by a Talk
Tuesday April 11th, 2023, 7.30.p.m.

News from the common

Fungi Explorations by Jonathan Vernon (March 2023)

Visit Markstakes Common this week and you should be able to find some of the following: Scarlet Elf cup, Pearl Oyster, Bitter Oyster, Peeling Oysterling and Crust fungus. And amongst the winter survivors: Artist's Bracket, King Alfred's Cakes and even Candlesnuff.

A handful of Scarlet Elfcup can be found in the small log pile just off the path at the southwestern end of the Common amongst the Hornbeams.



The splendid Pearl Oyster, though quickly foraged, emerges from an oak log and its nearby barely living decaying mature oak off the east-central path that heads up to the High Pond.



Bitter Oyster has been making a gradual appearance on the large log below the notable Beech (No. 17) by the far eastern path. It is bioluminescent, though I have yet to venture into the woods in the dark.



I also spotted some tiny Peeling Oysterling on the long-decayed stump on the veteran Hornbeam (No.5).



And Wrinkled Crust Fungus.



Otherwise, fungi which survive over winter, include an impressive group of Artist's Bracket in the hollowed-out trunk of one of the old stems of notable Beech (No.7).



And even a long enduring Candlesnuff from last year, a patch of which I have been observing on a small log on the eastern bank of the Shallow Pond until its point of its demise under a large slug.

King Alfred's Cakes (below left) of all sizes and ages appear on fallen branches all over the Common. The younger ones are a lighter brown, while the oldest ones look like crumbling pieces of smokeless coal.

And, of course, you can always find Birch polypore (below right).

(Pictures Jonathan Vernon)
Numbers in () refer to map page 8



Jonathan Vernon (March 2023)

Fern on a tree (not a tree fern!)

The fern on the fallen oak branch (right) is Polypody *Polypodium vulgare*. It is one of three related species and grows on old stone walls (not limestone), earth banks and acidic tree bark, particularly oak.

We do have another species on Markstakes, Intermediate Polypody *Polypodium interjectum*, which prefers basic substrata and grows on the flint wall (below).

Jacqui Hutson



Winter Group Walk

We welcomed a group of Ecology research students to Markstakes in December. They were particularly interested in veteran and notable trees and the growth pattern and relationship within other trees.

Our woodland pasture situation provided a revealing session for them and, despite the snowy conditions they enjoyed the visit.

The feedback was that they were especially lucky to see Markstakes in the snow, they all learnt a lot about the veteran trees and variability of features on different tree species, and the different historic management areas of Markstakes Common.

Here are examples of the atmospheric conditions of a December day after the snow.

(Pictures – Fiona Baker)

Web Site - <http://friendsofmarkstakescommon.weebly.com>



High magnification of slime mould

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 with us - fun and exercise free! Tools provided – wear suitable clothes for outside.

Web Site - <http://friendsofmarkstakescommon.weebly.com>

