



Friends of Markstakes Common

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2024

From the Chair

As you are aware we have had a very wet winter with record levels of rain falling in February. Surprisingly this hasn't stopped the Monday morning group going out with only one morning lost due to the weather. It has, however, made the ground wet and waterlogged with many of the paths becoming very muddy indeed. Apparently, Sussex has twenty words for mud and Jacqui sent out a list. My favourite was clodgy and there is no doubt that conditions have been clodgy underfoot.

We still seem to be catching up with the work schedule clearing bracken, bramble and birch from the Corner Glade and Asulox glade.



The before and after photographs show the impact we are having in the Asulox Glade. Our objective is to stop bracken and bramble swamping the site.

We are turning our attention to the Mire where willow saplings seem to be getting established and in danger of swamping the fine grasses there. The glades often look a bit battered and bruised after our clearance, but it is worth bearing in mind that heathland habitat arises in part from regular disturbance and open, broken ground gives new plants an opportunity to colonise.

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

After the quiet months of winter, we are starting to see some signs of life emerging and one notable sighting was an adult female adder on the Asulox glade in February. It has been a few years since adders have been recorded on the site, so this sighting is encouraging.

The Council Ranger, Lydia Dowell, left at the end of December and the departmental head, Andy Frost, also retired at around the same time. After a few weeks' hiatus a new departmental head has been appointed and the recruitment of a replacement ranger is under way. We have made contact with the Councilor responsible for the environment so we if do have issues or concerns we now have a channel of communication.

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 (09-01-29 06750439). 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 16th, 2024, 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.

NOTICE OF MEETING

**'FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES
COMMON'**

15th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Chailey Reading Room Chailey Green
BN8 4DA.

Tuesday April 16th, 2024, 7.30.p.m.

Followed by a Talk by Jonathan Vernon on
Ancient and Veteran Trees.

News from the common

Last autumn revealed many fungi all around the common and our volunteer and 'Friend' Jonathan has been busy finding them and recording them. These are a small selection of his fine pictures.



Scarlet Elfcup *Sarcoscypha austriaca*



Slime mould



Oyster mushroom



Blue-Green Open Wood Cup (*Chlorociboria*)



Porcelain Mushroom



Amethyst Deceiver (*Laccaria*)

Heather Glade

This is looking clear and tidy thanks to our earlier efforts. The boundaries are cut well back, and this gives the heather room to expand and new seedlings to appear.

Corner Glade

Cleared and the bracken removed. The young willow which were left after clearing have not grown too much and we will see if they are a worthwhile group to provide a benefit to the insects.

The Mire.

This is currently receiving a lot of attention and is hard work. Willow and bramble are being removed whilst the ground is soft and often slightly flooded. We are aiming at a mosaic of habitat by leaving clumps of bramble to flower and fruit, whilst some areas of grass cover are weeded to allow the flowering plants to appear again. The small pond created from the willow stump removal is looking good and plants of Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* are appearing. More weeks of steady digging is to come!

The Shallow Pond

Looking a clear space and currently flooded due to the heavy rains. No attention at the moment.

Azulox Glade

Looking good after clearance – pictures shown above by Rupert illustrating the difference after work has been done.

Northern Bracken Field and Crescent Glade

Still clear but showing signs of bramble returning. No attention at the moment.

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@chaileyccommons.org.uk

Find a friend to volunteer with us - fun and exercise free! Tools provided – wear suitable clothes for outside.