



FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES COMMON

14th ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 23

Fourteenth Annual Report

Chair – Rupert Hall

Treasurer/Membership – William Coleman

Secretary – Jacqui Hutson

Specialist Advisor (ESCC - Downland and Nature Reserves) – Lydia Dowell

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Butterflies.

Chair's Summary

Over the last year the group has been continuing their activities and we are now fully recovered from the hiatus caused by the Covid 19 Lockdown. The Monday morning group focus on a few locations within the site and we have been able to clear back encroaching bracken and bramble. Working on the Common can lead to wildlife sightings and one of the highlights last year was the sound of nightingales calling.

The Council now also seem to be back up to speed, dealing with falling trees and keeping paths clear. They also arranged for pond restoration work on the high pond. There are plans to create 'leaky' dams on the site which hopefully will hold back some of the flood waters often seen after heavy rain. The Friends also completed one of their periodic repairs of the dead hedge which discourages dogs from swimming their and helps preserve the wildlife interest of the pond. No pond surveys have been conducted in recent years, so we are not sure whether Great Crested Newts are still found on the site.

A new member, Jonathan Vernon has been patrolling the Common and photographing fungi. He now has a fine collection of photographs which remind us of the richness of the wildlife on this site.

I am sorry to report that Tony Hutson passed away this spring. Tony was an authority on bats and conducted several surveys across the Common. I have a happy memory of his catching a Bechstein's bat on one occasion thus confirming its continued presence on Markstake. He will be sorely missed.

Overall, with the continued efforts of the Monday group and the support of the Council I am happy to report that this special place continues to be looked after.

Rupert Hall

Treasurer's Summary

Following the relaxation of the COVID restrictions the Monday work party has resumed.

The very modest membership amount is still £2 and thank you for sending in a cheque or paying by bank transfer. Donations are always most useful so thank you if you have done this. We are most grateful to the Plumpton Plant Stall Group and Jacqui Hutson for their generous support of donations to our funds. Thank you to the Lewes DC for their support with the bigger items too.

The accounts are set out below and we have used a little of our funds as necessary.

William Coleman

FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES COMMON

Year 01/03/22 to 28/02/23

INCOME & EXPENDITURE

<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
Subscriptions	20.00	TOOLS	53.96
Donations	218.00	PRINTING	0.00
Grants	0.00	POSTAGES	0.00
Other	0.00	Other	50.00
Total	238.00	Total	103.96
		Income over Expenditure	134.04

BANK RECONCILIATION

Opening Bank Balance 01.03.22	<u>357.45</u>	Income over Expenditure	<u>134.04</u>
	<u>357.45</u>	Closing Balance	<u>491.49</u>
		28.02.23	

BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS		
BANK BALANCES		491.49
OTHER ASSETS		
TOTAL ASSETS		491.49
LIABILITIES		
CREDITORS		
OTHER LIABILITIES		
TOTAL LIABILITIES		0.00
NET ASSETS(LIABILITIES)		491.49

Specialist Advisor's Report – from Lydia Dowell

Markstakes Common Annual Report – LDC Ecologist

2022 was a positive year at Markstakes Common, and the first full year I was able to experience the different seasons and ever-changing landscape here. A lot of hard work



was carried out across the year by the volunteers, which Lewes District Council is extremely grateful for. Particularly we are amazed and thrilled by the work that has gone into The Mire, and the continued maintenance and restoration of the Heather Glade, which is astounding and a real asset to the site.

This year LDC was able to call in a contractor to help manage High Pond. By clearing vegetation that was increasingly overpopulating the pond and drowning out areas of clear water where smaller less invasive species could establish, a network of open water was created

The bordering dead hedge was restored by the Friends of Markstakes, with the main purpose of keeping dogs from entering the water. This area was a real achievement of 2022.

Over the next year, we will continue to work together with the Friends of Markstakes Common, to restore, maintain and enhance the different habitat areas of the nature reserve, and manage the site for biodiversity. A huge thank you to all those that helped achieve the many successes this past year and follow the site's journey.

Lydia Dowell

Specialist Advisor (Ecology & Biodiversity)

Lewes District council & Eastbourne Borough Council

Survey Reports and Results

Butterflies.

Butterfly Survey Report

Following Ian Seccombe's move away from East Sussex I attempted the Butterfly Survey for 2022.

A total of 333 butterflies were seen over the season compared to 384 in 2021. This should not be seen as a decline in the population but rather the weaker field identification skills of the surveyor! Several times I was unable to distinguish a butterfly and so they were not added to the records.

A total of 20 species were identified compared with 26 in 2021 and 19 in 2020.

As in previous years Meadow Brown was, by a substantial margin, the most frequently observed butterfly with a total of 153 sightings. Although the Holly Blue was not recorded on the surveys in 2022 two specimens were observed in April while working on the Common confirming their continued presence on the site. The highlight of the year was five sightings of White Admiral on June 24th. Despite it appearing to be widespread throughout the Common, there were no other sightings of this beautiful butterfly in 2022.

The table below shows the observations for the last five years.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Small Skipper	22	44	6	18	0
Large Skipper	8	2	30	15	17
Brimstone	21	17	4	9	9
Large White	43	28	21	10	18
Small White	9	7	2	9	12
Green-veined White	1	2	1	2	4
Orange Tip	0	3	0	3	3
Clouded Yellow	0	0	1	0	0
Small Copper	2	1	4	1	1
Holly Blue	4	3	11	1	0

Common Blue	31	4	0	4	3
White Admiral	9	4	3	1	5
Red Admiral	2	4	6	21	2
Peacock	12	15	7	11	18
Comma	4	7	6	6	7
Silver-washed Fritillary	15	15	0	9	13
Small Tortoiseshell	0	0	0	1	2
Marbled White	7	21	16	32	17
Purple Emperor	0	0	0	0	0
Purple Hairstreak	14	22	0	3	2
Speckled Wood	40	18	22	18	29
Gatekeeper / Hedge Brown	52	165	101	101	13
Meadow Brown	157	215	108	101	157
Ringlet	7	12	5	3	1
Small Heath	11	31	10	2	0
Large Tortoiseshell	0	0	0	1	0
Painted Lady	1	5	0	2	0
	472	645	364	384	333

Rupert Hall.