

Annual Report, June 2012 – May 2013

Introduction

1. Formed in 2002, The Bourne Conservation Group (BCG) comprises volunteers who undertake practical work in The Bourne area of South Farnham. The emphasis is on the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through a range of projects carried out either independently or in partnership with the local authorities and the Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT).

2. In a remarkable year for the UK which included the Royal Diamond Jubilee and the brilliant Olympic Games against a background of some interesting weather conditions, the scope of our activities continued to be very wide with the following highlights:

- Initiating a more comprehensive project for The Bourne Valley
- Generating a Plant Growing Initiative (PGI) for members
- Emphasising the collection of wildlife data and using it to inform the planning process
- Cooperation with The Bourne Residents Association in a Beautification scheme for The Bourne
- Putting more effort into encouraging children to take an interest in conservation
- Making a significant contribution to the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan on environmental subjects
- Cooperation with Surrey County Council (SCC) in their new Footpath Warden scheme
- Participation in the newly formed Farnham Rivers Group

3. **Membership.** Our members and Friends will always be our most important asset and we are fortunate to have an active core of loyal volunteers for whose extraordinary efforts no praise is too high. Several excellent new members have joined in the past year and the overall numbers of active members has increased to about 30. Recruiting is not easy and it remains a priority to attract new members to cope with a steadily increasing workload. The number of Friends of BCG is growing slowly, and the support they give is invaluable.



4. **Administration.** The scope of work has changed and expanded since 2002, necessitating changes to the Constitution. The new draft will be presented at the 2013 AGM for formal approval. We are also examining how best we can organise our practical work to suit our range of projects. Close attention continues to be paid to Health and Safety and our policy on this document is being revised. The current financial state continues to be healthy and the Group is now well on the way to having a sustainable income to cover annual running costs.



Stop Press

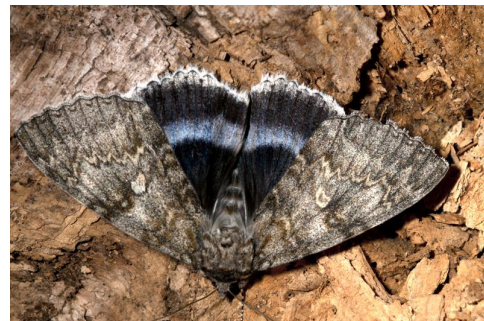
Since the closing date of this Annual Report we have entertained the Farnham-in-Bloom judges in The Middle Bourne Lane Community Garden and also enjoyed a very successful Bourne Show. The picture shows our most attractive plant stall with our other two gazebos in the background.

5. **General Approach.** Our practical approach to conservation is guided by the Surrey Biodiversity Action Plan. Across the county, the SWT is implementing the Action Plan through Landscape Scale projects based on Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA). We are directly interacting with this in two ways:

- By being partners in the Wey Landscape Partnership
- Advising Farnham Town Council (FTC) on the development of the Green Infrastructure of the town. As an urban area Farnham does not lend itself to landscape scale conservation but its network of green spaces, suitably managed, can provide important corridors between BOAs.

Our monitoring indicates that biodiversity is being sustained on all the sites we manage, but we recognise that, as a small local Group, we can only make a relatively small contribution to conservation. We are therefore looking to maximise our effectiveness by increasing the awareness of residents to what they can do to support and encourage wildlife, and by building and strengthening our affiliations with organisations such as the Farnham Society and the Farnham Rivers Group.

6. **Wildlife Recording.** Both globally and nationally, despite some welcome conservation successes, there continues to be depressing news on the status of many wildlife species. This encourages us to redouble our own efforts. Understanding our local environment and wildlife underpins all that we do and for the fifth year we held a Survey Day in the Old Churchyard in conjunction with SWT who also carried out a special plant survey for us in Compton Field. We are hoping that this field, which is such a rich haven for wildlife, can become designated as part of Farnham's green infrastructure. Dr Martin Angel has been indefatigable in recording and reporting all sightings and coordinating our biodiversity efforts. His tally of moths recorded in The Bourne is now up to 489 which is about 20% of the total moth fauna of the UK. Lisa Malcolm's expertise has supplemented this both by recording bats and once again organising toad watches in early 2013.



7. **Pattern of Work.** Our pattern of work consists of a main session on a Sunday morning each month, augmented by many mid-week sessions which account for 60% of the work accomplished. The number of hours worked decreased slightly from the exceptionally high figure in 2011 - 2012 to 842 hours in the current year. However, the time spent on essential supporting tasks once again increased from 767 hours to 885 hours, reflecting the range of activities undertaken. The overall total of 1727 hours, our highest yet recorded, has only been made possible by the excellent support of the whole membership.

New Projects

8. **The Bourne Stream.** Over the years our practical work has almost all been carried out in The Bourne Valley, including some, such as pulling Himalayan Balsam, in the stream itself. Of necessity the work has been somewhat piecemeal but our recent contact with the Wey Landscape Partnership has convinced us for the longer term to take a more systematic approach. In November 2012, an opportunity to bid for funding for a water related project from the South East Water Community Chest was seized and the award of £2439 enabled urgently needed work in the lower Bourne valley to be undertaken. Further work has continued since then; for example to prevent Compton Field from being generally sprayed with herbicide, we hand pulled the ragwort that presented a danger to cattle. There is a small amount of work still to do and later phases will follow in due course along other reaches of the stream. We are most grateful to South East Water for the funding and their interest in our work.



9. The state of the stream banks in many places is a cause for concern and we have been disappointed by the lack of willingness of the authorities to do anything about it. We are now attempting to tackle some of this through the Farnham Rivers Group but this too has so far achieved little. There are conflicts of responsibilities between the Environment

Agency (with permissive powers to deal with flood risk along the stream), the county council (responsible for footpaths) and riparian owners (who take short term and environmentally unfriendly solutions to protect their properties from flooding). This situation results in a lack of coordinated maintenance.

10. **Bourne Beautification Project (BBP).** This project originated from a task posed by Councillor Carole Cockburn to The Bourne Residents Association in 2012, the first part of which got under way in May 2013. Since this was to tidy and brighten up the area from the shops at the crossroads to the Fox pub with some colourful planting, it was natural for our horticultural member, Hilary Dickson, to take the lead, working with Valerie Nye, chair person of TBRA. Abigail McKern, who is a member of both organisations, has also been a key participant. The resulting tubs and hanging baskets which complement our own flower bed on the corner of Lodge Hill Road, have achieved the aim and been well received by residents.

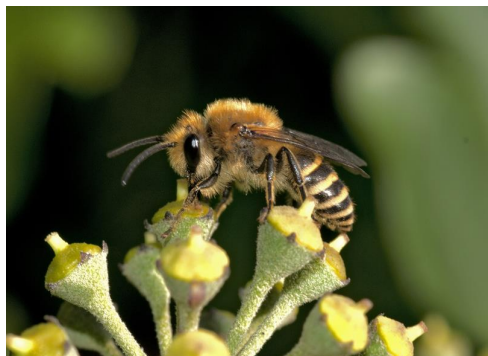


BCG Projects

11. **Middle Bourne Lane (MBL) Community Wildlife Garden.** Much effort has once again been put into this urban site which continues to be a haven for several wildlife species and a peaceful space for local residents to enjoy. A number of improvements have been carried out but the wild flower display in summer 2013 was disappointing as a result of the lack of Spring sunshine. After helping the town to win its first gold medal in the South East in Bloom competition (Large Town Category) in 2012, we remain mildly optimistic about the visit of the judges in July 2013. We have been grateful to neighbour Yasmin Osborne for keeping the bird feeders topped up during the year, and glad to welcome new neighbour Vivien Sinfield as an active BCG member and footpath warden.

12. We now feel there is more we can do to optimise this site for biodiversity and hope to bring about further changes in the coming year with the removal of some of the smaller trees and fresh planting of perennial flowers.

13. **The Old Churchyard (OCY) Project** . After the major effort to complete our funded project reported last year, this has been a quiet time for OCY. We continue to strive to achieve the uneasy balance between a neat and tidy, closely mown churchyard and the slightly unkempt environment that provides a diversity of habitats for wildlife. The site was looking at its best in Spring 2013 when the cold, wet weather prolonged the flowering of the crocuses and primroses. That we have got the balance about right was confirmed by SWT when they visited to help with the Survey at the end of May. Martin Angel has had some interesting sightings here including the first ever record in Farnham of the ivy bee, *Colletes hederæ*, (illustrated) which was the subject of an article in the Farnham Herald.



14. We continue to gather snippets of information about the people buried in OCY thanks mainly to the researches of Wendy Maddox and have offered tours as part of Farnham's Heritage Weekend in September 2013. We are hoping to have some tree work carried out before then, courtesy of the Parochial Church Council. We remain extremely grateful for the very real support given to OCY by John and Mary Egan.

15. **The Bourne Crossroads.** Much attention has been focussed on this exceptionally busy crossroads in the past year because of the building works across the road and the unwelcome prospect of a pedestrian crossing. Partly to compensate for these intrusions, the Bourne Beautification Project has got under way as previously mentioned. Our flower bed on the corner has as usual provided a splash of colour throughout the year thanks largely to the dedicated efforts of Sheila Musson, Jill McIntosh and Pat King who have also looked after the small raised bed at the foot of Granny Cook's Steps and the flower beds outside Café Indigo.

16. Our view is that this tiny site (on which we have recorded slow worms for the first time this year) is now an even more important piece of green space than in the past and, once the building work has settled down, we will in concert with TBRA and SCC Highways be looking at how to improve it both for its biodiversity and its landscaping, linked to the Beautification scheme.

17. Roadside Planting and the Ridgeway School Embankment. Some gaps in the daffodil planting on Gravel Hill were filled in and gave an excellent showing in Spring 2013, as did the heather and primroses on the Ridgeway School embankment which we continue to maintain. We would like to be able to provide some later colour on Gravel Hill by means of wild flowers if effort is available in Autumn 2013.

Joint Work with Outside Agencies.

18. Public Open Spaces in the Waverley Estate. In conjunction with Waverley BC Countryside, work was carried out in Paradise Wood in January 2013. This has also become the site of the memorial to our founder, Dr Stan Cockett who sadly died suddenly in 2011. FP 71 which runs through the wood is now formally named after him, and on 29th May 2013 we sponsored a ceremony at which Cllr Carole Cockburn and Yvonne Cockett unveiled a handsome rustic bench to commemorate his life and local conservation work. We are grateful in particular to Nicky Scott of SCC who was instrumental in procuring the seat.



19. Rights-of-Way (ROW). Martin Wisdom has taken over the Footpath Coordination role from Lisa Malcolm and we are glad to welcome him to the committee. A meeting has been held with James Browne the new SCC Countryside Access Officer who encourages a flexible attitude towards footpath work and who has overcome the backlog of outstanding jobs reported. Under Martin's direction, our combined team of local and SCC Footpath Wardens is keeping abreast of routine jobs. Additionally, we held several group work sessions to tackle some of the more major tasks on The Switchback path and the Paradise Wood steps.

20. Underdown Nature Reserve. Situated just off Sandrock Hill Road and belonging to the SWT, this interesting site is not formally listed as a reserve and we are investigating whether it can be registered to ensure its future protection. It has somewhat fallen into disrepair and we have been pleased to assist SWT in restoration work which will continue in summer 2013.

21. Battings Garden. The plan for transforming this garden at the junction of The Ridgeway and A287 has been agreed in outline by Waverley. We are at present reviewing our resources and method of work to see if we shall be in a position to go forward with the project in 2014 as originally intended. We are grateful to local landscape designer, James Ebdon, for his assistance.

Development Issues

22. There is concern in several national conservation organisations about the potential loss of countryside to development and much concern locally on a range of development issues. A common theme is the way in which many decisions made in accordance with local planning policies and views expressed by residents have been consistently over-turned by Planning Inspectors, the Toyota Garage Site development being a classic case in point . so much for the effectiveness of the Localism Act.

23. Responding thoroughly to planning applications is a time consuming business but, under the leadership of Charles Fearnley, we continue as far as possible to oppose those proposals which we know will have an adverse effect on the local environment. At the time of writing this report we are responding to applications for three new houses and 2 more at the appeal stage, all in areas of Special Environmental Quality. Our views on these matters are very similar to those of TBRA, the Farnham Society and other local groups such as the South Farnham Residents Association with whom we are cooperating.

24. The application from the Forestry Commission to extend filming days in Bourne Wood was of a rather different nature. We commented at some length on this but, because of the promised provision of additional habitat and corridors for sand lizards and other heathland species, we were not as bitterly opposed to the proposal as some individuals and organisations.

25. Our line is that we are witnessing over-development of our area which runs counter to local wishes and is inevitably leading to loss of habitat and wildlife corridors. In Farnham as a whole there is likely to be degradation of its unique landscape and biodiversity. For the future we continue to put faith in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan and, in conjunction with the Surrey Wildlife Trust, are working very hard to make sure that this document lays the foundation for conserving the current green spaces of the town and providing sustainable Green Infrastructure and biodiversity in the future. In connection with this work we have launched a survey to provide evidence on the value of gardens which comprise up to a quarter of the land area of Farnham.

Finance and Equipment

26. Our account, which will be circulated to members, shows a closing balance of £6,598.21 compared with £5,095.23 a year ago. The overall position remains strong with income in this period more than balancing running costs. The innovation at The Bourne Show 2012 of Bric-a-Brac and Plant Stalls played a large part in that equation. We are grateful to all who contributed to that endeavour which has set the pattern for the future. We are also very grateful for the grant from Cllr Munro which will fund bulbs and plants for the Autumn, and to the Ward Trust for their generous donation which has been set aside for further work on The Bourne Stream.

27. **Physical Assets.** A complete list of our tools and other assets appears at **Annex A**.

Information, Publicity and Liaison

28. **Information.** We strive to keep members, partner organisations and the public well informed of our activities. To this end we maintain a website, publish a newsletter three times a year and issue occasional updates on specific issues. The website is essentially a database and remains probably the best single source of information about The Bourne. It is linked to Twitter and Facebook, the potentials of which have hardly been tapped so far but would both benefit from more inputs from members. But there is no substitute for face to face contact and the Social Evening organised for us by Karen Redman in January 2013 (pictured) was a welcome opportunity to get out of our working gear.



29. **Publicity.** We have continued to obtain regular coverage in both the Farnham Herald and the monthly Farnham Diary. The Herald has carried a number of articles including a major spread in March on our work on The Bourne Stream (which greatly pleased South East Water) and a very good piece on the unveiling of Stan Cockett's Memorial Seat. We have had recruiting displays in the Library and are now able to wear our new BCG shirts to meetings and on special occasions as part of reinforcing our brand. Richard Sandars wrote an article on The Bourne for the Farnham and District Museum Society which appeared in their journal in March 2013. Richard also wrote an article on George Sturt which appeared in the June edition of Round & About. Also in that month a BCG presentation was given to the Guildford Environmental Forum.

30. **The Bourne Show 2012.** We had a very good presence at the Show in 2012, adding sales to our normal displays of current conservation topics, and made a handsome profit of £457 to help towards our running costs for the following year. 20 members took part on the day and to them and all who contributed in any way we say a big thank you.+

31. **Liaison.** We continue to act in an open manner and can report excellent relations with our three local authorities, the Surrey Wildlife Trust and all relevant local groups. Much of this depends on good personal relations and in that context we are pleased to record our thanks to a large number of individuals for the

enormous help, advice and encouragement they have given us. In turn we are often able to assist other individuals or Groups; we have once again, for example, assisted the new owner of Sable Wood.

32. We are keen to increase our engagement with children and young people to endeavour to capture their interest in the magic of wildlife. We were pleased to be able to entertain three Beaver Lodges in OCY in 2012 and took another one for a walk along The Bourne Stream in 2013. We are now looking to see how we can best take the step to allowing children and young persons, say above the age of 14, to join us as members.



Organisation

33. At the AGM in September 2012 the following committee was elected for 2012-2013:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Chairman | Noel Moss |
| Secretary | Richard Sandars . also member for Heritage |
| Treasurer | Fiona Walberton |
| Membership Secretary | Karen Redman |
| Biodiversity | Martin Angel . also Vice Chairman and Newsletter Editor |
| Horticulture | Hilary Dickson |
| Footpath Coordinator | Lisa Malcolm |
| Planning | Charles Fearnley |
| Webmaster & publicity | David Todd |

This is the largest the committee has been, reflecting the increased scope of our activities. Since the AGM, Martin Wisdom has been co-opted to take over as Footpath Coordinator to relieve Lisa who nevertheless remains on the committee.

Future Work and Activities

34.. For the year ahead, subject to further deliberation in committee and any guidance received from members at the AGM in September 2013, we shall continue to focus on practical work in The Bourne, balancing what is attractive to the human community with the enhancement of biodiversity. Some specific tasks for the coming year include:

- Evolving The Bourne Valley project
- Continuing to introduce improved planting on all sites for the benefit principally of pollinators
- Determining the way ahead for the Battings Garden project
- Further landscaping at The Bourne Crossroads as a contribution to %Bourne Beautification+
- Developing our ideas on the Green Infrastructure of Farnham and making further contributions to the Neighbourhood Plan

35. Our most pressing need continues to be the recruitment of more long-term members to enable us to support the wide range of activities outlined in this report and perhaps to relieve somewhat the pressure on our existing core membership.

Noel Moss
Chairman

BCG Physical Assets as at 31st May 2013**1. Tools**

- 4 x bow saws plus 2 new
- 8 x loppers assorted plus 3 Bahco unused
- 3 x small bulb planters
- 4 x long handled bulb planters
- 1 x rubber hammer
- 6 x assorted secateurs plus 7 new in packets
- 1 x sythette
- 1 x detachable broomhead with handle
- 2 x Sickles
- 1 x Machette
- 1 x Lawn rake, plastic
- 7 x Spare bow saw blades
- 2 x Shears plus 2 new, telescopic
- 1 x Slasher
- 4 x trowels and forks
- 1 x crow bar, small
- Refurbished tools from prison service:
 - 1 x Fork
 - 2 x Spades
 - 1 x Rakes
 - 1 x Wire rake
 - 1 x Edge trimmer
 - 2 x hoes

2. On Loan from SCC ROW

- 2 x tool bags
- 1 x secateurs
- 1 x signpost level
- 3 shears
- 4 x loppers
- 2 x rip saws (1 unservicable)
- 2 x bow saws
- 2 x pole saws with detachable heads
- 2 x spades
- 1 x lightweight post spade
- 2 x mattocks
- 1 x crow bar
- 1 x shovel

3. Refreshment Kit

- 12 x enamel mugs
- 1 x 3-litre metal thermos jug
- 1 x Thermos flask

4. Health and Safety Kit

- 2 x First-aid kits in satchels
- 1 x 18 hi-viz jackets
- 4 x safety helmets (on loan from SCC)
- 1 x illustrated first aid book
- 4 x goggles
- 3 x pairs medium grade wiring gloves

5. Display Equipment

- 1 x Pop-up Gazebo with walls (2011)
- 1 x Pop-up Gazebo with 3 walls (2013)
- 1 x Old gazebo, 4m x 3m with 4 x wall panels
- 2 x 2m by 1m display panels supported by 3 posts with steel feet
- 1 lightweight set display panels

1 Table op set display panels
~~A~~ frame display panel
2 x heavy duty table cloths
1 x easel
2 x BCG banners

6. Installed

Sundry bat, bird and insect boxes at MBL, Paradise Wood, Sturt Walk etc
Bird feeders in MBL and OCY

7. Miscellaneous

1 x Bat detector
1 x Petrol driven strimmer with mixer bottle
1 x Honda petrol mower
2 x Stand up clearance bags
1 x Rake and scoop device
1 Warning sign on tripod
5 Named fingers for finger posts (property of TBRA)
4 Named fingers %Stan Cockett's Path+
2 Hoses on reels (Middle Bourne Lane & Old Churchyard)
1 Water bottle, rectangular

8. Expendables

Sundry nails and screws
Post nails and tacks (property of SCC)
Direction arrow discs (property of SCC)