Newsletter

Autumn 2014





Photo Feature: This clifden nonpareil moth is a great rarity nationally – this was the second specimen to be caught in The Bourne, so it may be breeding locally. Their caterpillars feed on aspens - does anyone know of any aspens growing locally?

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Editorial

The Bourne Conservation Group is apolitical, however we are a deeply conservative group - in the true sense of the word - in that we want to keep our local environment much as it is now. This means stemming the flood of inappropriate new developments that are threatening to overwhelm our infrastructure and erode the quality of our surroundings. While recognising the need for new housing - especially affordable housing, we value the environment and landscape of The Bourne and do not wish it to become blanketed with bricks, mortar and tarmac and to lack trees. There are those who will consider us to be 'green' do-gooders and to be antiwealth creation. However, we also want to see fairness and equal opportunities, so some will regard us as liberal or socialist. Similarly we do not want our neighbourhood to be overrun with undesirable immigrants, but to us the

For your Diaries

Wednesday 12th Nov. Middle Bourne Lane

Friday 21st Nov. Footpath work

Friday 28th Nov. Underdown Nature reserve

Sunday 7th Dec To be decided

2015

Sunday 11th Jan. Woodland Management

Evening social event

Sunday 8th February To be decided
February to March Toad watches
Sunday 8th March To be decided
Sunday 29th March Palm Sunday
Sunday 5thApril Easter Sunday
Sunday 12th April To be decided

undesirable immigrants are Himalayan Balsam, Japanese knotweed and laurel - not those human immigrants that are currently the focus of so much debate at Westminster and elsewhere. Next May it seems likely that we will be faced with an invidious choice between parties, none of which are showing much concern for the environment in their manifestos. It is important to vote, so perhaps as individuals we should take every opportunity to challenge our local candidates about our local and global environmental concerns.

Martin Angel

Planning

If you read nothing else in this Newsletter you should read this.

For this edition of the newsletter I would like to make you fully aware of the larger local planning initiatives that are afoot that will affect all of us - as Farnham and The Bourne are inevitably targeted for housing development.

Waverley Local Plan

Under current legislation Waverley is required to have an updated Local Plan in place, as are all Borough Councils in England and Wales. Unfortunately WBC's first two attempts at a replacement for the existing plan from 2002 were unsuccessful, with the second version being withdrawn during the very early stages of an Inspector's Examination - on the advice of the Inspector.

More recently we have had a consultation process which asked residents for their views on housing development in the borough, in which the major change from previous policy was that Dunsfold Airport was now to be seriously considered for a major housing development project. You can view the responses in detail at:

www.consult.waverley.gov.uk/consult.ti/potential housing scenarios/listresponses

From the Farnham point of view it's good to see that Scenario 4, utilising Dunsfold and with smaller numbers of new houses in Farnham, was by far the most popular, and that landscape and conservation needs were also regarded as important by the four thousand plus respondents.

Unfortunately however, progress towards a new Waverley Local Plan is proceeding at something of a snail's pace, with a current target for adoption of the plan well into 2016 – and that's assuming there are no further delays. In the meantime it's clear that building developers are regarding Waverley as an opportunity not to be missed during this period of uncertainty – which leads me on to:

Farnham Neighbourhood Plan

Many of you will have seen the recent Farnham Herald front page article on this more local plan, and may be aware that it is now approaching its final stages of consultation, with a target final draft for Inspection in April 2015. With a fair wind it could be in force by winter 2015, well before the Waverley Local Plan.

As part of this process an update on the plan was presented at a meeting in the Farnham council chambers in September, with three BCG committee members present. Councillors speaking included Carole Cockburn, who represents The Bourne, and who is one of the major forces behind the plan. The Councillors explained the importance of the plan in controlling housing development in Farnham, **especially in the period while Waverley Borough Council do not have a valid Local Plan in place**. The Farnham plan is therefore particularly important, because having a complete and coherent view of the future could have a significant influence on the Planning Inspectorate while there is a vacuum at borough level.

The next stage for the Neighbourhood Plan is a local consultation, including an online questionnaire, leaflet distribution, and travelling exhibitions in November and December. To see the draft plan and other documents go to www.farnham.gov.uk/services/shapefarnham where you will find the questionnaire.

<u>Please</u>, <u>please</u>, <u>visit the Farnham Council website</u>, and leave your views, as a large local representation will add validity to the plan. I know many of you have recently filled in Waverley's consultation form – but **please** look at this one as well!

Current Developments

Developers stop for no-one, and we have several major local housing development projects at various stages of application at Compton Fields and Frensham Vale, Gardners Hill Road and further afield in Hale, Bagshot Lea, and the Hop Fields behind the Art College. Additionally, decisions are expected soon on the "footballer's mansions" in Ford Lane, and the Langham's Court development on The Ridgeway. There is no space to go into detail on these in this edition, but I will keep you posted, but there will be more developments to discuss next time.

Charles Fearnley

Farnham-in-Bloom 2014

As a result of achieving a Double Gold in the RHS South East in Bloom competition, Farnham was declared Best Town in the region and so able to participate in this year's Britain-in-Bloom competition. We anticipated being again invited to participate through the Middle Bourne Lane Wildlife Community Garden because in 2013 the judges had commented so favourably on it, but we were surprised and delighted to be asked also to enter the Crossroads project as another example of community endeavour in the town. This, of course, is a joint effort with The Bourne Residents Association and has a direct connection with the Café Indigo charity.

So this year we needed to prepare for the visitations by two separate judging teams, which generated a considerable amount of work. I think it is fair to say



we took it all in our stride. We had already started planning and making preparations in the Middle Bourne Lane Garden – by giving the garden a makeover and planting more of the nectar-rich herbaceous plants that are



Noel briefs the National Judges in the Middle Bourne Lane Garden, while the Mayor and Kevin Taitt look on.

attractive to bees. With much of the 'ground' work being done in the winter it was a case of keeping on top of all the maintenance tasks, and planting out the plants grown by some of our members and then hoping the summer flowers would be in bloom at the right time. The Crossroads was a different matter because it was not exactly clear how this busy site should be presented. We helped with developing the story that on the day Hilary and Valerie Nye excellently presented. In MBL we fielded a team which included, Noel, both Martins, Vivien Sinfield and Hilary (who had to travel in the bus with the judges because of her double billing).

The judges for the South East competition were highly

complementary about both sites including the gratifying phrase "The work of The Bourne Conservation Group speaks for itself". Once again Farnham won Double Gold and we were pleased to have played our part. The two national judges were quite delightful to deal with, and in the town hall afterwards said they were impressed with all they had seen, especially the extent of the community activities in Farnham. Our expectations were therefore high, but perhaps the town was brought down to earth when at the final awards ceremony the very high standards demanded at this level of competition were underlined. In the end the town was awarded a Silver Gilt — good but not outstanding! If the town enters again in 2015, and it probably will, an even greater effort will be needed on all aspects - horticulture, environment and community participation.

We are extremely grateful to every member who helped in the preparations throughout the year, including our friends in TBRA, to Kevin Taitt and his team and to Adrian Selby of SCC Highways for getting things done in time at the Crossroads.

Noel Moss

Heritage Open Days 2014

The Bourne Conservation Group contributed to Farnham's Heritage weekend by leading walking tours around The Bourne on the evening of Friday 12th September and the following Saturday morning. Each tour attracted about 20 visitors, and fortunately this year the weather was fine, unlike the previous year. On the Saturday morning one couple, with a particular interest in George Sturt, had even travelled from Dorset to participate! The groups initially gathered at the present church of St Thomas-on-The Bourne for a brief introduction, which included references to the early mesolithic and Roman inhabitants of the area. They walked to the Old Churchyard and there divided into two smaller groups, one starting a guided around a circular walk



Noel giving the introductory talk outside the church

along Old Church Lane and the other first touring the Old Churchyard, and then vice versa.

The tour down Old Church Lane first described the geology and history of the surrounding area, before visiting Vine



Cottage, which until his death in 1927, had been the home of George Sturt, the local historian and social commentator and his two sisters. In the garden of Vine Cottage there was a reading from one of Sturt's books describing how he and his gardener, Fred Grover, had worked together in the rain. The tour continued down to the bottom of the lane and along the stream to Willow Cottage where Fred Grover lived briefly. The tour then continued back along Sturt Walk, pausing to look at Taylor's Hall, built to keep the local youth from the evils of drink, before crossing the main road and climbing up the 'The Pieces' footpath to Middle Bourne Lane. Here, there was a second stop to

see the probable site where the young William Cobbett and his brothers had played at rolling down the steep slope. The group heard Cobett's account of how this play had taught him things that were to serve him well in his remarkable later life.

Back at the Old Churchyard our visitors heard how it was the site of the first church in The Bourne from 1861 until it was demolished in 1925, and how it is now being managed to maintain its remarkable heritage and to support its rich diversity of wildlife. During the tour emphasis was given to some of the remarkable people buried there, but special attention was paid to the

George Sturt sitting in the garden at Vine Cottage probably in the mid-1920's.

several young men from the village, who gave their lives in the Great War and are either buried commemorated there. Back at the Church coffee and biscuits were served and some had the opportunity to see a memorial to one of the local fallen in the organ loft; it is normally hidden away behind a curtain.



The Bourne Conservation Group would particularly like to thank the Reverend Karen Hutchinson, the owners of Vine Cottage and 70 Middle Bourne Lane for their hospitality and support. We would also like to thank one visitor for bringing

with her some original and previously unknown photographs of George Sturt sitting in the garden of Vine Cottage. Richard Sandars

The Bourne Show 2014

This year we put even more effort into the Show than ever before. There were two reasons for this. The first was to publicize the connection between the practical work we are doing to encourage pollinators and the simple ways

that everyone can do this. The second reason was to attract new volunteers to join the Group so we can tackle

even more of the environmental problems in The Bourne. The committee met in solemn conclave beforehand to decide how to link those themes with the other essential elements of fund raising and local history research. A plethora of good ideas came up and as a result on the day we put up an impressive array of four gazebos filled with all the attendant display boards and graphics.

To help with the pollinator theme we were fortunate to have the help of a good friend and local beekeeper, Margaret Lennard, who came and took part. She very kindly provided attractive baskets of fruit, vegetables and groceries from all over the world; all of which are



Noel and some BCG stalwarts discuss the exhibits. Margret Lennard's baskets are at the front of the Gazebo

totally dependent on the pollination services provided by insects such as bees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths.

This central display was backed by many of Martin Angel's magnificent photographs. There was natural linkage to our beautiful plant stall and to one of our displays on the theme of wildlife gardening.

The overall results were the impressive and interesting stands, which were manned by 22 of our members throughout the day; we are very grateful to each and every one of them, especially the stand leaders. The tangible results were, firstly, a number of potential



The plant stall, stocked with plants grown by members, attracted a lot of interest.

new recruits and, secondly, cash of over £750 thanks to

the efforts of Fiona on the Bric-a-Brac stall and Hilary and her team of growers on the Plant stall. The intangible results were that those who took part had a lot of fun, and the goodwill that was expressed by visitors both for the quality of our exhibits, and for all the effort we put into our work all in The Bourne. We would like to think that we have increased awareness of the benefits that come from the environment in which we live.



Brisk business at the bric-a-brac stall.

Noel Moss

We are not alone

Right from its inception our Group has seen the need to work with other organisations. Indeed, BCG was formed by Stan Cockett specifically to work with Surrey County Council and Waverley Borough Council, because they clearly needed support to keep the footpaths and woods of The Bourne in reasonable shape. Those partnerships continue to this day and as budgets get ever tighter they will need our help for the foreseeable future. Although we have our differences with SCC and WBC, overall these have been and remain mutually beneficial. In particular we have always enjoyed working with their Rangers at the grass roots level. Over time the scope of our relationships have broadened and we now have many contacts within our Local Authorities, especially with Farnham Town Council through Middle Bourne Lane and Farnham-in-Bloom, to name but two joint activities. We now also work more with SCC Highways, for example in connection with the Beautification project.

Another connection we made at an early stage when we felt the need for deeper conservation know-how was with the Surrey Wildlife Trust. Any initial difficulties were improved when they formed their Greenspace Team for a 5 year period. Frances Halstead gave us enormous support and in return we were able to help her with the Living Churchyards project she created. The funding for the Greenspace programme eventually dried up and its team was disbanded, but we still regularly cooperate with SWT, for example with managing their Underdown site, where it is a pleasure to work with Fiona Haynes accompanied by Shep and Rowan.



We recognised the mutual benefits of cooperating

with other voluntary groups with similar aims and objectives. At one stage, we did a lot with the RSPB on Farnham Heath and helped to build an Otter Holt on the Wey; we still regularly draw on the expertise of their warden, Mike Coates. We have regular dealings with the Bishops Meadow Trust and the Friends of Farnham Park and occasionally with the Rowhills volunteers. Our joint inputs are going to be vital in managing the green spaces across Farnham in future years. There is now a common forum for these groups - the Farnham Rivers Group - of which we were all founder members. One aspect of its work is to link with the much broader Wey Catchment programme; one successful aspect of that is the River Search programme led by Surrey Wildlife Trust. Our two Martins and Charles are volunteer river searchers in addition to the multiplicity of the other things they do for us.

We have evolved good relations with some local landowners. First and foremost is our strong link with the Church in the form of the parish of St Thomas-on-The Bourne for whom we manage the Old Churchyard. We also value the friendship of Greg Sadler, owner of Redhill House, who allows us access to work along the lower stretches of the Bourne Stream. More recently we have been cooperating with Bruce Callander in his project in Sable Wood.

Being a community group, it is good to report that we are working closely with The Bourne Residents Association, most notably in the Beautification Project, but also in other ways. We have also been cooperating with the South Farnham Residents Association (SOFRA) in helping them to build a strong case for the defence of Compton Fields. We have a strong interest in the conservation of the fields, having worked long and hard there. More recently we have started a joint project with our local scouting groups along Sturt Walk (see below).

Our competence in the conservation field is enhanced by the associations of Martin Angel and Lisa Malcolm with expert individuals and groups such as the Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group, the Bat Conservation Trust and the Surrey Moth Recorder; the latter giving us expert help with surveying the ecology of Compton Field.

So, we are part of a flourishing network of groups with whom our mutual links depend to a large extent on good personal relationships. It is important to develop and preserve these relationships, whatever the minor local differences that may arise from time to time, so that we can present coordinated responses to local challenges.

There is one final group of important partners – the funders who make our projects possible. We have received consistent support from Cllr David Munro his county fund, and more recently we have received help from The Bourne's Benefactor. We have received substantial grants from the Surrey Community Foundation (Orchid Trust), BIFFA, South East Water, the Ward Trust and the Farnham Institute. We are extremely grateful to them and all those who have given us private donation.

Noel Moss

Trouble with Trees

Waverley is one of the most wooded boroughs in the country. It is easy to believe this is true when we consider the



An old pollarded beech in the ancient woodland near Redhill House. Note that in background the woodland is choked with rhododendron.

South Farnham area which includes part of Alice Holt Forest, Burnt Hill Wood, Paradise Wood, Bourne Wood and Compton Copse. Some of the other patches of woodland, such as at Redhill House and Compton Field are classed as Ancient Woodland, which mean that trees have been growing there for at least 300 years. Collectively these woodlands and the trees that mark former hedgerows make an important contribution to the local landscape. They not only screen out houses and roads but also provide wildlife habitats, remove carbon dioxide from the air and filter out the particulates and other pollutants from the emission of our vehicles. As a Group BCG believes that our wooded landscape is a valuable part of our natural heritage. While we need to conserve it, we also recognise that it has to be carefully managed to keep our trees free of disease, to ensure people's safety and that enough light gets to the understory of plants and flowers that we enjoy and which provides shelter and sustenance for much of our wildlife. Sadly, the management of our trees and woodland is no longer fit for Nearly all our woodlands are being over-run by purpose.

aggressively invasive species, some of which are aliens. In Paradise Wood and Burnt Hill Wood

(West) holly and laurel are forming dense, impenetrable thickets that are suppressing the woodland flowers. In the Compton Wood rhododendron — an alien species - is taking over, and in Bourne Wood another alien species, *Gaultheria* which was usually introduced to provide cover for game birds, is squeezing out the native species.

Our local authorities have dwindling financial and manpower resources with which to look after their estate, which includes several of the woodlands mentioned above, as well as our footpaths and recreational areas. Despite the hard work of the rangers and the help they get from volunteers, it is a losing the battle. For example, the large copse on Langhams Recreation Ground has not been maintain for years; the better trees are suffering, and the residents now feel it to be an unsafe and threatening place. Similarly the tiny pieces of woodland along Aveley Lane which should be richly diverse have become totally overgrown.

`The flush of new developments is inevitably resulting in the loss of some trees, but at present developers are finding ways of beating the system. A typical scenario is that a site is cleared of all trees and



One of the ancient oaks bordering footpath 73 that crosses Compton Fields. We strongly believe that TPO's should be placed on these trees and hedgerows as they will be extremely vulnerable if development proceeds.

shrubs which, provided they are not subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and their volume is less than 5 cubic metres, is perfectly legal. The next stage is the submission of a Planning Application for the development

which states "it will not be necessary to fell any trees!" Even when a felling license has been correctly applied for from the Forestry Commission, things can go badly wrong. Recently in Frensham Vale permission was given to thin trees on a large site. In the eventit is believed that mainly oaks were felled leaving the Scots pines. Moreover the felling took place in the bird nesting season. No sooner had this work had been completed, then a planning application to build 50 houses on the site was submitted; this later application was not mentioned in the original submission to the Forestry Commission.

There are no easy answers to these and other related problems, some require a change to the planning laws to ensure the underlying reasons for felling applications are revealed. We will continue with our practical work, helping in a limited way to keep our public woodlands in good order. We are also in discussion with Waverley about the more knotty issues and have made a number of suggestions. These include the greater application of TPOs to individual and groups of trees that are important to the landscape but are made vulnerable by outline development proposals. In this we have the support of the Farnham Society. We have also suggested what has to be done to ensure developers plant native species when landscaping their sites, rather than planting quick fix hedging of laurel and Lawson's cypress, which only creates future problems.

Noel Moss

Biodiversity in 2014

Compared to 2013 and 2012, this has been a remarkably good year. I have caught over 5800 moths almost twice as many as in 2013, belonging to 331 species in the garden. These included the first emperor moth - a moth of open heathland that I have caught in the garden, and the second Clifden nonpareil (see the opening photo feature) in three years. The Surrey moth recorder thinks this spectacular moth may be breeding locally – does anyone know of any aspens growing in The Bourne? The grand total of moth species I have now recorded in The Bourne is 332 macromoths and 242 micromoths (these are the smaller moths which include those tiny species whose



The first emperor moth (Saturnia pavonia) caught in the garden.

caterpillars burrow between the upper and lower epidermis of leaves forming leaf mines. The species that have been caught in the largest numbers were the common quaker (851), the brimstone (at least 280), the lesser broad



An Old Lady (*Mormo maura*) feeding on ivy in the main carpark.

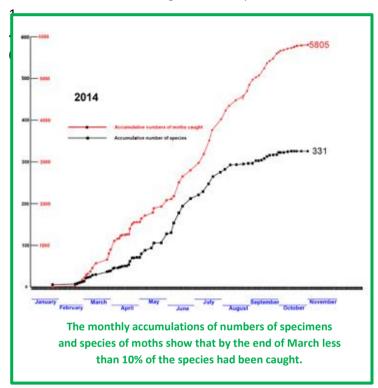
bordered yellow underwing (232), the large yellow underwing (183) and the garden grass veneer (at least 175). I ran two trapping sessions in the Middle Bourne Lane Garden in preparation for the In-Bloom inspections and caught 95 species. I also had two sessions along Sturt Walk to provide baseline data whereby we can evaluate how effective our work with the beavers, cubs and scouts has been in improving the biodiversity along the valley and caught 79 species. I spent several evenings in Compton Field looking to see which species were nectaring on the ragwort flowers and recorded 47 species! Looking back at previous years' records, I see that this year the ragwort flowered about three weeks earlier than in 2013, so it was no surprise to see a rather

different assemblage of moths on the flowers - what a difference a year males. I saw my first ghost moth in

Farnham flying in Compton Field – the males are all a ghostly white and 'lek' at dusk. Inspecting the ivy flowers in

Middle Bourne Lane, the Old Churchyard and the Farnham car parks yielded 13 species - the most spectacular being two 'old ladies', one in the Waggonyard and the other a week later in the main carpark. It has been another good year for ivy bees, which are now firmly established in and around Farnham. Those of you that watched Autumn Watch will be aware that Chris Packham showed a disappointing ignorance about the presence of these bees in Farnham.

Our observations recording over 500 species of animals and



unremarkable places!
Martin Angel



species of plants in Compton Field have proved to be more than just an esoteric exercise. The data have been used to argue against the development of Compton field as a building site for 180 houses; its rich biodiversity and landscape qualities providing supplementary reasons for not covering the fields with bricks and mortar. The developers have carried out an ecological survey of the fields in March and concluded they have little or no environmental merit. If one considers moths to be good indicators of biodiversity then the graph of this year's the occurrences of species throughout the seasons illustrates that a survey in March was well timed to miss the vast majority of species and so mistakenly conclude the fields to be an

The Sturt Walk Project

Sturt Walk is part of the network of footpaths that is an important component of The Bourne's environment. It follows along the bank of the Bourne Stream and is an attractive footpath that is well used by local people. During the heavy rains in the 2011-2012 winter there was a landslip into the Stream near the bottom of Old Church Lane resulting from excavations on nearby local private property. As a result of the slip the Environment Agency carried out remedial work and re-aligned the stream. This work left the site looking like an untidy building site. The land along the bank of the stream belongs to Waverley Borough Council, but they neither had the resources or manpower to renovate the footpath back to its former attractiveness. So when the Mayor of Farnham called for projects to support pollinators and the local scouts asked if we had any ideas about how they might respond, we thought the renovation and enhancement of Sturt Walk would make and ideal project. Noel, with his usual enthusiasm and efficiency, drew up a detailed plan of action. Reluctant and rather discouraging approval was received from Waverley. So every evening one week in June we tried to control the energies of troops of beavers, cubs and scouts in picking up litter, clearing away thick undergrowth, smoothing out the landslip site, and creating

a heather bed. For some of the children it turned into a training exercise of how to use cutting tools safely,

fortunately the scout leaders carried the responsibility of ensuring their safety! One evening's work was curtailed by a torrential downpour; even so we made good progress. Sturt Walk is now much tidier than when it was left by the contractors. Even so, there is still much left to do – clearing some of the overhanging branches of the trees, improving the 'island' behind the flood barrier and keeping the undergrowth from taking over again. We hope that the local scouts now feel some 'ownership' of the footpath and will continue to help to look after it. It was encouraging that the cubs came back one gloomy evening in October to do a bit more work. Spurred on by the work we have led, Waverley is now developing a management plan and our joint efforts will inevitably become an on-going project. Martin Angel



Membership

There is good news on the Membership front!

We have recruited 10 new volunteers since the last Newsletter was published! These new Members have contacted us in several ways - at the Bourne Show, through the Streetlife website forum, the Volunteer Bureau or through the good old Google search engine!

So we welcome Hannah Picknett, Hannah Hopwood, Alice Crutchfield, Peter Crutchfield, Simon Bradbury, Rachel Edwards, Amanda Knight, Orlagh Anderson, Nicky Anderson, Nicky Brooks and Debra Gadd. It has been great to meet some of you already at our work sessions, and look forward to seeing the rest of you soon!

Thanks also go to the support of all our Friends, and we especially welcome and thank our new Friends - Janet Fearnley, Marilyn Philpott, Faye Franckel and Pat Lambert.

Thank you to all our Friends and Members for your continued support of the Group - we couldn't function without you! We always welcome new Members - please contact info@bourneconservation.org.uk for more information

Karen Redman

Your Committee

Noel Moss Chairman Secretary **Richard Sandars** Fiona Warburton Treasurer Membership Karen Redman Footpath co-ordⁿ Martin Wisdom Publicity David Todd **Planning** Charles Fearnley Horticulture Hilary Dickson Newsletter Martin Angel Member Lisa Malcolm

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