

# Newsletter

Easter 2015

The Bourne  
Conservation Group



**Photo Feature:** This lime hawk moth *Mimas tiliae* was the first hawkmoth to be caught last year on the 11<sup>th</sup> April. So keep your eyes open for one in the coming few days.

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## Editorial

Much of what the Group does in The Bourne is not directly obvious to the general public, for example the excellent work done this year in Burnt Hill Wood and Sable Wood. Some of it, however, is plain for all to see, and we feel certain that many who travel along the A287 road will have been uplifted by the colourful tubs of flowers at the



This year's display of daffodils at The Bourne Crossroads.

Crossroads, the planting at the foot of School Steps and most of all by the displays of daffodils up Gravel Hill. These exemplify the very positive impact our efforts are having on the street scene.

There are many other facets to our work; for example, our care of the Old Churchyard has led to a real interest in the heritage of The Bourne, and we are planning to repeat the successful walks we conducted last September. These were well received not only by those who took part but also by the Farnham Heritage Committee that has already approached us about this year. Another example is the immense effort put into critically studying and commenting upon the numerous and often complex planning applications, which are now proliferating on a weekly basis. Through this activity we have entered into closer working relationships with other local organisations such as The Farnham Society and the South Farnham Residents Association; we welcome these contacts as way of

making new friends and widening our horizons.

All this day to day activity and hard work is imperceptibly increasing our store of knowledge of the landscape, history, human geography and wildlife of our local area, which we write up and post on our website. Importantly, we are generating an increasing volume of wildlife data, including some on rare or endangered species. These data are entered into the Surrey database at Pirbright and are hence available to inform conservation and planning policies. Probably we can all do more in this respect rather than leaving it to our few expert members.

All of these matters and more are discussed in this Newsletter which makes interesting reading.

### Noel Moss

#### Future Work Programme

Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> April	April Work Session
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> May	May Work Session
Saturday 30 <sup>th</sup> May	Tub planting
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> May	Bioblitz in Middle Bourne Lane (See p.7 )
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> June	June Work Session
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> July	July Work Session - Balsam Bashing
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> July	Farnham in Bloom Judging
Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup> July	The Bourne Show
11 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> September	Heritage Walks and National Moth Night

#### Mid-week sessions currently planned for:-

April: 10<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>  
May: 5<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>  
June: 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>

## Noel honoured by Farnham

Congratulations to Noel. For those who did not see the recent report in the Farnham Herald, Noel received a richly deserved 'Services to Farnham Award' at a ceremony at the Town Hall on 23<sup>rd</sup> February. The public citation, drawn from a more detailed appreciation, read "*Services to the environment through the Bourne Conservation Group*. He is a founder member of The Bourne Conservation Group (BCG) in 2002 acting initially as its Secretary and since 2006 as its Chairman. Under his active and enthusiastic leadership the BCG has transformed the Middle Bourne Lane Community Wildlife Garden and restored St Thomas-on-the-Bourne's old churchyard as a wildlife haven. As a



The eleven recipients of the awards with the Mayor.

result of Noel's energetic and infectious enthusiasm, and working closely with a range of statutory and community organisations, the BCG is a thriving and successful volunteer organisation improving biodiversity and transforming the local environment." Unfortunately, space did not allow for emphasis on Noel's role in increasing local awareness, particularly among youngsters, of the importance and impact of biodiversity on the environment in which we all live. I am sure everyone will want to join me in congratulating Noel and in thanking him for his seemingly tireless activity on behalf of BCG and in building up its

profile as a significant contributor to the many aspects of life in The Bourne and in the town more generally.

**Richard Sandars**

## The Saga of Compton Field

Copies of Wates prospectus to build 157 houses on Compton Fields (see [www.waverleylane-farnham.co.uk](http://www.waverleylane-farnham.co.uk)) have been circulated to residents of South Farnham (but not to residents in The Bourne). The South Farnham Residents Association is implacably opposed to this development objecting on the basis of a whole raft of issues. These range from:

- Insoluble problems that would arise from the inadequacy of the road system (Note: Farnham enjoys seven of the most congested roads in Waverley!).
- The out-dated sewage system that already discharges into the Wey at peak flows.
- The serious lack of school places (even given the funding on offer).
- The struggling provision of medical services.
- The already illegally high air pollution levels on Station Hill  
- to name but a few!



The lower field in summer: beautiful and rich in biodiversity.



**Orchids flowering in the upper field, which is the only site for orchids in The Bourne.**

The traffic problems were highlighted for me when last week I walked down to the station at 0830h. At the traffic lights at Great Austins I strolled past a lorry turning towards the station, when I arrived at the station the lorry was still over 100 yards away from the level crossing, which was yet to close! One aim of the Wates prospectus is undoubtedly to enable their formal planning application to undermine local objections to the scheme. The fields are owned by a family trust, of which only one trustee is resident in Farnham. He is a Friend of BCG who over the years has always given us access to that part of the valley for which we are very grateful. While we respect the position of the Trust, which is required to maximise returns from the land, we do question the environmental costs of this proposed development to South Farnham.

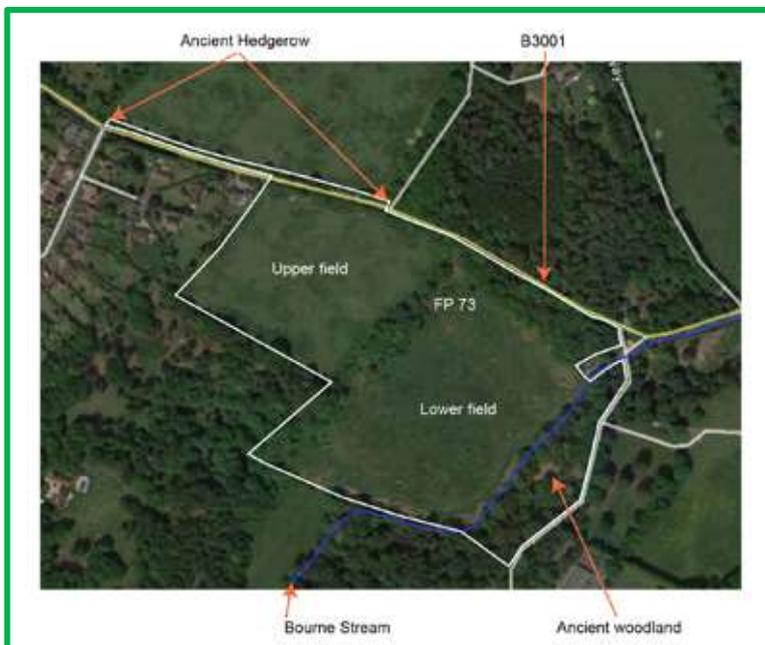
The Bourne Conservation Group has a long history of conservation work along The Bourne Valley including the lower field. Working with the landowners we have kept the valley clear of Himalayan Balsam and encouraged them to get rid of Japanese Knotweed. In 2013 we received a grant from the Community Chest of South-East Water to clean up the water course of the Stream (See the Easter 2013 Newsletter), in the course of which we removed three skip loads of fly-tipped and other rubbish. Later that year, we hand-pulled ragwort from the lower field, as an alternative to it being sprayed with herbicides. We have carried out wildlife surveys over several years in conjunction with the Surrey Wildlife Trust, the Surrey Moth Recorder and the Surrey Botanical Society. As a result

of these surveys we have records of 145 plant species and 510 species of animals. Remarkable as these figures are there are several groups that have been under recorded (e.g. lichens, mosses and liverworts, spiders, beetles, and slugs and snails). We have tried two strategies for giving the fields some protection. Firstly to extend the boundary of the Surrey Hills ANOB to include the fields, but remarkably this proposal was rejected because the landscape of the fields did not fulfil the required criteria. The second proposal was to get the fields designated as a Site of Natural Conservation Importance (SNCI). We have prepared such a proposal, however, it requires the agreement of the land owners, which unsurprisingly has not been forthcoming.

We hope that the strength of all the arguments against this proposal and the much vaunted concept of localism will lead to its rejection. The draft neighbourhood plan for Farnham has identified sufficient land to meet the target for houses required by Central Government. Unfortunately the presumption in the National Planning Policy Framework that



**One of the UK's less common bumblebees, a forest cuckoo bumble bee foraging on a thistle in Compton Field.**



**The area we have suggested should be designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI).**

developments should be favoured – a presumption that is reinforced by the absence of a Local Plan for Waverley. However, we note that several major conservation organisations such as CPRE and the Woodland Trust have spoken out against the NPPF because of its detrimental effect on the natural environment.

**Martin Angel**

## Green or Wildlife Corridors

One of the more insidious threats to the diversity of our wildlife is habitat fragmentation. Intensive agriculture, road building and dense housing developments tend to create barriers to the dispersal of both plant and animal species, progressively isolating our dwindling patches of natural habitat. This is making them increasingly vulnerable to disasters, both local and large-scale disasters, caused by flood, fire, outbreak of disease, a pollution event or even the introduction of invasive alien species. Any of these can result in local extinctions of species, which can only be restored either by re-population from neighbouring areas or by re-introductions. In the absence of pathways along which a fresh population can migrate back into an area, a series of local extinctions can soon build up into large-scale regional or even national extinctions. The recognition of the potential seriousness of the increasing habitat fragmentation has led to the concept of conservation on a landscape scale, whereby reserves and areas of natural habitat are linked by green corridors. This concept is especially important across urban areas, which otherwise present an impenetrable barrier to wildlife. In our area despite its many green features the Farnham-Aldershot-Farnborough-Fleet-Church Crookham-Camberley conurbation is fast becoming such a barrier.

Ideally these corridors should be continuous and wide enough to enable unimpeded dispersion. However, increasingly the best we can hope for in our overcrowded little country is that the remaining oases of high diversity can remain linked by 'stepping stones'. The spacing of these stepping stones has to be less than the distance that species are able to move – for terrestrial animals this is how far they can travel in a single journey, and for flying animals it is how far they can fly. Even though highly mobile species



**The footpaths along the Bourne Stream are corridors for wildlife as well as people.**



**Not all species need green corridors. The silver Y moth migrates remarkable distances and so can turn up anywhere. It has been tracked by radar commuting in the spring from Spain flying at heights of 500m. Breeds here during the summer and then returns to Spain in the autumn.**

may be capable of ‘hurdling’ a barrier, they have behavioural blocks, for example they may be unable to cross an open or busy road. Hence, it is important to understand how far a species of moth can fly or a hedgehog can crawl, and what are the features that may deter them from crossing a gap. For the less mobile species a species-rich hedgerow with plenty of cover may constitute a good corridor, or even a place to take up residence.

Two years ago BCG carried out a survey of Farnham gardens (See Autumn 2013 newsletter), which highlighted just how important our larger gardens are in providing such stepping stones. However, large gardens are being targeted for infilling, and because of the cost of land new housing developments tend to have pocket-sized garden plots (if any). These tiny plots tend to be highly manicured and too small to function as stepping stones. In addition, developers tend to erect either impenetrable fencing or plant hedges of alien species such as laurel. The garden

survey also highlighted the effectiveness of trees in facilitating the movements of many species. One of BCG’s objections to the proposed housing development on Compton Field is that it will attenuate the Green corridor (see p. 3 ) through South Farnham provided by the Bourne Stream valley that at present links the Wey Valley with the environs of Alice Holt Forest. These green corridors are not only of conservation significance but also provide benefits to the human population by keeping us in touch with Nature and healthy in body and mind.

**Martin Angel**

## **Citizen Science**

There are an increasing number of examples of where scientists have resorted to seeking the help of the wider community to solve key problems. These usually involve surveys over extensive geographical areas across which individual or small teams of scientists cannot hope to achieve. This may involve the collection of material across wide areas, such as mapping the spread of alien invaders (for example [www.conkertreescience.org.uk](http://www.conkertreescience.org.uk)). There are many potential values for Citizen Science both scientifically and for society. For the scientist it allows the collection of data synchronously from across wide geographical areas that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive in financial terms and totally impractical logistically. For the wider community it enables ordinary people to get involved, it increases awareness of the environment and its problems, and allows participation by young and old in worthwhile projects. These projects offer considerable educational opportunity. Some of the projects get enormous publicity from TV programmes such as ‘Spring Watch’. Others gain



**Leaf mines of the Horse Chestnut leaf-miner in a leaf from the tree that was in the Middle Bourne Lane Community Garden.**

publicity from large organisations – like the Bird Garden Bird Watch, the National Moth Night organised by Butterfly Conservation, and the surveys organised by OPAL (<http://www.opalexplornature.org/>). Without citizen



The rapid spread of the tree bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*), seen here foraging on white deadnettle, was tracked after it first arrived in Britain in 2001 by citizen science.

science we would be totally unaware of how the ivy bee (*Colletes hederæ*) and the tree bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*) spread after they first arrived in Britain in 2001.

Similarly the project to track the spread of the horsechestnut leaf miner (*Cameriana ohridella*), which originated from Greece and was first reported in Britain in 2002 attracted 3500 participants. This tiny moth spread at a rate of 25 miles per year, which is much faster than its ability to fly – hence its spread was enhanced by wind. In Farnham the leaves of horse chestnuts first show the signs of the mines of these moths in June and by August out trees are heavily infected.

For conker enthusiasts the bad news is that conkers produced by infected trees are some 15% smaller than normal. Of course Citizen Science is not without cost – a web-site needs servicing, the data need to be interpreted and analysed, and there need to be feed back to those who

participate. It also presents problems of verification, and identifications are not always accurate. OPAL finds that in its Bug Count programme 13.4% of data submitted by children aged 12-17 are inaccurate. So the careful checks have to be carried out on the accuracy of the data, but even so the value of the large data sets with extensive geographical coverage are proving to be of immense value. Last year the Wildlife Garden Forum held a meeting at the Natural History Museum which reviewed the importance of citizen you can read the proceedings of this meeting at <https://app.box.com/s/7qb6fywdyyons5wu2856j5lj8qaqqyj4>. We are also planning to participate in the National Moth Night weather permitting in the Old Churchyard after the evening Heritage Walks on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September.

**Martin Angel**

## What is a Bioblitz?

There is to be a National Garden Bioblitz on the 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> May this year. The objectives of these bioblitzs are three-fold:-

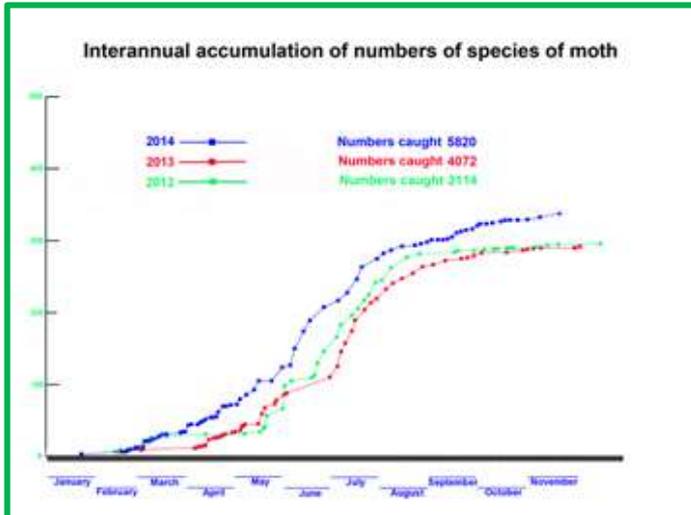
1. To hold an interesting and enjoyable wildlife event.
2. To develop comprehensive inventories of all the animals and native plants within a garden.
3. To provide training in identification and recording.

A garden bioblitz involves a concerted effort to identify all the animals and wild flowers occurring within the garden over a 24 hour period. All species will be identified as far as possible and if necessary photographed and collected. The collection of voucher specimens will be necessary for subsequent verification by experts. All records will be entered into a data base and submitted via 'iRecord' which is a web-based National databank. We are proposing to run such a bioblitz in the Middle Bourne Lane Community Garden this year. It will start with running a moth trap and maybe a bat walk on the night of 30<sup>th</sup> May, followed by a series of other events during the day of the 31st May. The MBL garden is small and parking is virtually non-existent, so we will have to restrict the number of participants to the families of members and friends, and local people who have helped us in the garden. Maybe you will be inspired to do one in your own garden.

**Martin Angel**

## Moths in The Bourne 2014

Moth recording in 2014 was frenetic. The relatively warm spring meant that the season started early and never looked back. In my garden I caught 5826 moths (4181 in 2013) belonging to 337 species (307 in 2013). A



**An interannual comparison Of the numbers of moths and their species, which shows more were caught in 2014 and they occurred three weeks earlier.**

whether they are breeding locally). I ran two trapping sessions in Middle Bourne Lane in support of the Farnham-in Bloom inspections (95 species) and two along Sturt Walk (79 species) to monitor how effective the project we had carried out with the Scouts was in improving the biodiversity along the path. Serendipitously these latter data have proved useful in responding to the proposal to build another 'mansion' off Old Church Lane. I prowled the Farnham car-parks during the ivy flowering season and found seven species nectaring on the flowers including an Old Maid; four additional species were noted on ivy in Middle Bourne Lane. I was not able to trap in Compton Field, but inspecting the moths nectaring on the ragwort yielded at least 32 species. Ragwort, hated by the equestrian community, is a remarkable species that supports a rich diversity of insects, including several that are considered to be vulnerable.

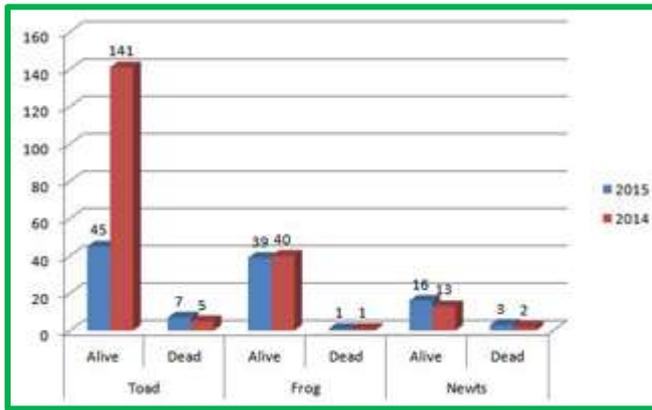
**Martin Angel**

comparison of the numbers of species caught during the last three years shows a remarkable difference between the last three years, and highlights what a poor year 2012 was. However, it is worth pointing out that if a comparable survey had been carried out 25 years ago the numbers of moths caught would probably have been around 10,000 specimens! The decline of moth abundances is worrying and will have had a knock on effect on those other species that depend on moths (e.g. cuckoos). The most abundant species last year were common quakers (851), brimstone moths (280) and lesser broad-bordered yellow underwings (232). Notable records for the year included an oak rustic (first record for Surrey) and a second clifden nonpareil (posing the question as to



**A rosy footman moth one of 32 species of moth seen nectaring on ragwort in Compton Field at night.**

## Toad Watch 2015



**Comparison of the amphibians saved in 2014 and this year. The substantial reduction in toad numbers would suggest that we missed the time of the main migration.**

under 3 weeks, we helped 45 toads, 39 frogs and 19 newts to cross the road to safety (sadly we were too late to save 7 toads, 1 frog and 3 newts). These data have been given to Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group to help with their research. As can be seen from the graph, compared to last year the numbers of frogs and newts have been roughly the same, but the numbers of toads is significantly less. Interestingly, this year we had no big 'peak nights'. In previous years when it has been particularly warm and wet, we have had up to 80 amphibians in a single night. This year, the temperatures have been generally cooler, which may account for lower numbers on individual nights (peak count 26). We also finished our checks after "rush hour" and so many amphibians may continue to migrate throughout the night, out of our sight. So hopefully, the lower numbers are simply indicative of the fact that we didn't see them! Note added in proof:- Late on the wet evening of 30<sup>th</sup> March one of our helpers, Trevor, was cycling along the road and spotted a further 19 toads – some unfortunately flattened. There were no toads the following night, which was cold and dry.

### **What to look out for now.**

We have already seen frog-spawn in the Old Church Yard (where it covers about 3m<sup>2</sup>) and Middle Bourne Lane ponds. Please keep a look out for frog and particularly toad-spawn (the spawn is in strings often wound around the weed) in your garden ponds and continue to welcome newts into your ponds (although they do eat tadpoles!).

As toads, and also newts and frogs often spend the winter sheltering under rocks or in compost heaps, providing a pile of rocks/stones (with gaps) by your pond or near long undergrowth by a pond is ideal. Leaving some leaf piles and old wood also helps amphibians find shelter during summer and autumn when they are out foraging. Also, don't forget to look out for overwintering amphibians if using your compost early in the year!

**Lisa Malcolm**

On behalf of Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group (SARG), The Bourne Conservation Group could again be seen in our high visibility jackets on Boundary Road (beyond Rowledge village) during late February and into March. We were looking out for toads, frogs and newts waking up from hibernation and migrating over the road to their mating ponds either side of the road. From the end of February, as the temperatures rise to 7°C or more (or the weather is very wet) toads, frogs and newts migrate from their winter hibernation sites to their breeding ponds.

Sadly, this can mean that they get squashed during rush hour in particular. The cold early spring nights this year, resulted in the first early migrators not appearing until 27th February, about a week later than normal. In just



**A pair of happy toads doing what we want them to do - making more toads.**

## Membership

Since the last newsletter was published, we had a successful social gathering in February at St Martin's Hall where Friends and Members were able to mingle and chat in a relaxed environment. It was great to catch up without being in our work clothes! Thanks to all those that contributed and helped to make the event so enjoyable. We have introduced our new Children Safeguarding Policy which I hope you are all familiar with now. It is with great pleasure we welcome two young Duke of Edinburgh candidates to the Bourne Conservation Group - Paddy Lewin and Joseph Blackmore. It is wonderful to have you volunteer at our work sessions and we hope you are finding being part of the Group both rewarding and enjoyable. Our thanks also go to all our Friends for their continuing support, but especially our new Friends, Mr and Mrs Tate. Thank you all for your continued support of the Group - we could not function without you! We always welcome new Members - please contact [info@bourneconservation.org.uk](mailto:info@bourneconservation.org.uk) for more information.

Karen Redman

## News snippets

**Bourne Beautification.** It has been a quiet period in The Bourne Beautification Project (BBP). The winter flower tubs came into life as a daffodils bloomed and the tulips are yet to do so to give further impact. For the summer the plan is to remove the central Dogwood plants that have done so well and to probably replace them with the more compact Pittosporum "Tom Thumb" or "Irene Patterson." Advice is also being sought on blooms for the hanging baskets which will give greater impact as well as continuing to support the bee corridor.

**Crossroads Improvements.** We were grateful that SCC Highways have replaced the missing fingers on the sign post without undue delay. There is now to be a further site meeting to finalise some changes to the bollards and pavement at the Crossroads, together with replacing the rotting timbers on our raised flower bed. The speed hump on Burnt Hill Road will also be repaired and reprofiled. There is insufficient funding at present to do further work at the junction with the Old Frensham Road.



We had called upon Brian Snashall to help to replace part of the fence that had been damaged by a contractor's dumper truck.

**Village Sign.** Completion of the Lower Bourne sign programme has gone much slower than anticipated for various reasons. Negotiations are once again in hand with the contractor on both the design and colouration. Both are tricky issues which need to be got right. Better to take time at this stage rather than get it wrong.

**Old Churchyard.** Our efforts to tidy up the Churchyard for the annual Eater ceremony (with Twinkle the donkey) were all in vain. The weather was so bad that the service and procession was cancelled. Rest assured though Noel was able to give Twinkle a carrot as a reward.

**Sable Wood.** At our work session in this wood in March we were impressed with the progress made on bringing invasive species under control by the owner, Bruce Callander. We were able to help by taking out a few more rhododendron and a large patch of *Gaultheria*. Since then Bruce has taken off the protective sleeves on the hazel saplings we helped him plant a year ago. He reports that, although, a few have not survived, most are doing well. He has put a brash barrier around the plants to keep the deer off and now is offering 200 Tubex sleeves (one careful owner) to anyone who would like them.



The team that worked with Bruce Callander clearing *Gaultheria* and rhododendron in March.



The new hedge we helped to plant in Sable Wood before the protective sleeves were removed.

**Langhams Recreation Ground.** At our suggestion Waverley will commence a new grass cutting regime this year which leaves some patch around the periphery uncut until the end of the summer to provide shelter for wildlife and encourage wild flowers. Comments from residents, especially those with children are welcome. We hope also that the paths we cleared through the woodland will provide a popular and safe place for children to run and play. Removing the mass of litter on our work session there was greatly appreciated by neighbours.



The team of litter pickers standing by their achievements at Langham's Rec, on 8<sup>th</sup> February.



Preparing the wildflower bed in the Middle Bourne Wildlife Community Garden on 8<sup>th</sup> March.

**Middle Bourne Lane Community Garden**

Preparations are already being made for Farnham-in Bloom. On 8<sup>th</sup> March a start was made on preparing the Wild Flower bed.

**Committee.** The BCG committee will meet on 19<sup>th</sup> May. If Members or Friends have points they would like raised about what we do and how we do it or other local issues, please let us know.

**Noel Moss**

## Publicity

Our website had its annual refresh and updating in the short days after Christmas and in January, as we often do each year. Inevitably there is always more to be done, and even more that we would like to include, but we do commend our website to members and friends as a repository of information not just about our Group, but about the history and environment of The Bourne. It also carries our current work programme and the Group's policies for such things as Health & Safety, so it can be a valuable source of reference. Your comments and contributions are always welcome! In the local press, the Farnham Herald published an excellent piece about our February work session in Langhams Recreation Ground, also mentioning our social gathering for members and friends later the same day, in St Martin's Hall. Our friends at The Farnham Diary once again gave favourable coverage to our last Newsletter, particularly mentioning the work we did along the Bourne Stream last summer with the local Scout troop. Noel Moss' recognition in the Mayor of Farnham's Awards was also covered in the Herald, making our work known to the wider community. We continue to maintain a Facebook page and our members and friends are encouraged to post your own observations of local wildlife.

David Todd

## Stop Press

**Please if any member is willing to help deal with planning issues can they please contact Noel.**

### Your Committee

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

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