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Stop Press

Please join us at

The Bourne Show

on the Green

on Saturday 21 July

from 1430h

**We need your bric-a-brac
for fund raising**

Please telephone Fiona on 01252 715593

**Don't forget the AGM on
2nd September**

Editorial

There has been a crescendo of activity since the last Newsletter. The on-going changes to the planning procedures and the critical need to develop a Neighbourhood Plan have resulted in a flurry of behind-the-scenes activity. The weather turning so wet in April and on into 'summer' has meant the grass has continued to grow vigorously on many of our sites and Himalayan Balsam has been growing profusely. The Bourne Stream changed from being bone dry in March to being in full spate in April and has continued to flow ever since. The opportunity to help in the re-development of Battings Garden could not be turned down. The way the Council

organises footpath maintenance has changed radically with much greater reliance being placed on using volunteers, including us! There have been innumerable tasks to carry out at all our various sites – the crossroads, the Middle Bourne Lane Garden, the Old Churchyard – especially recently in preparation for this year's Farnham-in-Bloom competition and The Bourne Show. We have participated in various Surrey Wildlife Trust events – a churchyard day, meetings on the Wey Valley Catchment programme and co-organising the fourth training day in the Old Churchyard. We have hosted organised visits to the Old Churchyard by the Friends of Farnham Park and two troops of beaver scouts. If we are to continue to meet these increasing demands being made

on the group, we do need to build up our active membership, particularly with some younger members.

The Old Churchyard

Work on the site has continued unabated. The show of crocuses this Spring was not quite as spectacular as in previous years because their peak flowering was spread out as a result of the inconsistent weather. We spent the balance of the generous grant we had received from the Orchid Trust on time by the end of January; the final task was to have a contractor remove the remaining large laurels from the hedge along Vicarage Hill which we replaced with a withy fence and far more desirable hedging plants. Throughout February and March the frog and toad activity in the pond was monitored and reported back to SARG (Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group). In February we constructed a stag beetle loggery in the north-west corner. Thanks to the eagle eyes of Bryan Snashall we were able to fill the hole, which we had previously excavated (with care), with rotten oak logs retrieved from a building site in Weybridge, which already contained stag beetle larvae. When we filled the hole with the logs in *February*, we found a couple of adult male stag beetle males in the 'sawdust'. Had they just hatched or were they overwintering survivors from 2011? It was impossible to tell. A male stag beetle was sighted on 6th July, and some lesser stag beetles emerged from the logs. The Church once again used the Churchyard for the Palm Sunday service. A new 'meadow' area has been planted with plugs of a range of native species – the choice of plant species was partly inspired by Sarah Raven's television programme on the need to encourage more nectar producing flowers to help insect pollinators to flourish. Noel and Martin gave a well received presentation on our successes in the Old Churchyard at a day's meeting organised by the Surrey Wildlife Trust in Godalming in April. The Friends of Farnham Park were hosted on a visit and also survived a conducted walk down Old Church Lane, along Sturt Walk and back up via Taylor's Path. More recently we hosted two visits by troops of Beavers (junior scouts), getting them to do some light maintenance, but concentrating on wildlife aspects.



A male stag beetle in February in OCY – taken against a crocus to prove the season!

Their rumbustious enthusiasm was rewarding, but did raise concerns about the impacts of 20 young people on our small and rather fragile site. On 30th June we hosted the fourth successive annual insect training day, run in conjunction with Frances Halstead of the Surrey Wildlife Trust.



One of the Beaver troops in the Old Churchyard.

We were fortunate in choosing one of the few decent days this summer, but the abundance of wildlife was down on previous summers because

of the cool wet weather. A survey of the pond showed it to be in excellent condition and is proving to be a star attraction to many of visitors – both casual and formal to the Churchyard.



Pond gazing – a form of Karma being carried out by participants in the joint Training Day held on 30th June.

The next day a working party tidied up the Churchyard in preparation for Judgment Day in July – not the end of the world - but for the 2012 Farnham-in-Bloom event.

Farnham-in-Bloom

Last year Farnham did well in this competition (it is part of a nation-wide effort sponsored by the RHS), winning a Gold for the Town Centre and a Silver Gilt for the Large Town Category which is the part in which we are directly interested. This year it is hoped to achieve Gold in both and we are doing all we can to fulfil this aim.

In the Large Town competition the judges are briefed on the town and then taken round the whole area for about two hours, paying short visits to a series of sites and projects. Each one is assessed against criteria in the two Sections of Horticultural Achievement and Environmental Responsibility. Last year in both the Middle Bourne Lane Garden and the Old Churchyard we believe we scored extremely well on the environmental front, but perhaps not so highly on the horticultural side.

This year we should score even higher on the environmental side because of our work in the Old Churchyard installing the rain water tank,



The judges in the Middle Bourne Lane Garden last year.

putting up bat boxes and planting native hedging plants. We also hope to do better with the ‘horticultural’ evaluation because we have got a better display of wild flowers in the Old Churchyard and have carried out a lot of new planting over much of the Middle Bourne Lane garden. Time, weather and the mood of the judges will no doubt tell!

Noel Moss

Planning in The Bourne

Commenting on planning applications in The Bourne is not an obvious part of the Group’s environmental work, but keeping a watch on developments is necessary to ensure their impacts on our environment and its biodiversity are minimised. It requires constant vigilance and is quite time consuming. I joined BCG in winter 2011, intending just to be involved in the practical work. However, during one working session Noel inveigled me into “having a go” at planning matters. Without really knowing what was committing myself to, I agreed. The past few months have been busy on the planning front, and I have been on a steep learning curve. Early in 2012 two applications arose in Lodge Hill Road. One was part of an on-going project to build six or seven houses in the large garden of an older house, and the other was a repeated application to build a second house in another garden. We opposed both applications on similar grounds:

- The landscape of the ridge on which Lodge Hill Road runs would be adversely changed from its current attractive wooded nature.
- The strip of woodland concerned is an important wildlife corridor between the Bourne Woods/RSPB reserve, and the Wey Valley.
- Both projects would impinge on wildlife populations.
- In the second case it would be impossible to realise the project without loss or damage to trees protected by a Tree Protection Order.

In both cases, the applications were rejected by Waverley, for reasons that coincided with many of our points. Inevitably both applications have gone to appeal to the central Planning Inspectorate, and we have supplied further documentation in support of our opposition. Previous experience gives us little confidence that the Inspector will agree with us!



Dark clouds over the garage site from Burnt Hill Road.

However, the most important current planning development for The Bourne, which has been rumbling on for some time, is the re-development of the old Toyota garage site at The Bourne crossroads - opposite to where we have lovingly tended the verges to improve the attractiveness of the crossroads. This application has caused considerable local dissent, with the majority of residents considering the planned fourteen houses to be over-dense and their orientation making the site visually unattractive. A third application, which was published in January was referred to a Waverley full Planning Committee hearing. I gave a brief presentation on behalf of BCG, raising some additional points from The Bourne Residents Association. Despite Councillor Carole Cockburn eloquently

elaborating on some of our points, the Committee agreed that, in the light of previous decisions by the Planning Inspectorate, Waverley had no option but to approve the project. So much for the much vaunted local democracy! A number of conditions have been imposed to improve the site's external appearance and the wildlife habitats. The project now goes ahead. As part of the application the developers have agreed to fund a much needed pedestrian crossing across the Frensham Road, somewhere in the vicinity of the crossroads with Lodge Hill Road. But where? A number of organisations and individuals have already expressed strong (and conflicting) preferences as to where such a crossing should be located. Perhaps we need a local referendum – so watch this space!

Charles Fearnley

Neighbourhood Plan

As part of the Government's Localism Bill, now passed into Law, the concept of Neighbourhood Plans to allow local people to have a say in the development of their own areas is introduced. Earlier this year the concept was incorporated into the National Planning Policy Framework.

Historically we must recall that, until fairly recently, Farnham was responsible for everything that was truly local through the Farnham Urban District Council. At that time there were (if we exclude Parish Councils) just two layers of local government: Farnham UDC and Surrey County Council. With the introduction of Waverley Borough Council, Farnham lost most of its real powers but has lately been trying slowly, slowly to claw some of them back. In 2010, as part of this process the town produced a very good document called The Farnham Design Statement that describes in some detail the nature and characteristics of the "villages" that constitute Farnham. Its aim was to supplement planning policies in Waverley's existing Local Plan and hopefully to influence the core strategy of the new, emerging Local Development Framework (LDF). This Design Statement was accepted by Waverley.

We believe it is now the intention of the Town Council to continue this trend by creating a

Neighbourhood Plan and a very immature skeleton draft has been circulated. Our Group has commented on this to try to ensure that it recognises the need for the town to preserve and enhance its Green Infrastructure. We believe we have much to contribute to this debate and will be featuring our ideas at The Bourne Show this year.

We must remark that the whole planning process is in a great state of flux at present due to the changes mentioned above, none of which has yet firmly bedded in. Put another way, it is in a right mess! How the Neighbourhood Plan will evolve will be most interesting. There are two major constraints, firstly it must be compliant with the LDF and, after submission, will be subject to approval by the Planning Inspectorate. How far it will eventually reflect local concerns and ideas is thus difficult to predict as it has to comply with the top-down directives, but we strongly support the initiative and will do our best to contribute constructively on environmental and biodiversity issues.

Does this matter to you? Yes - because in the absence of a Neighbourhood plan, any planning application that purports to be economically sustainable – (Note not environmentally) will automatically be approved.

Noel Moss

Farnham's Green Infrastructure

If our towns and cities are to be healthy and enjoyable places in which to live, they need good Green Infrastructure; this will comprise of any places not covered in concrete and tarmac - namely parks, recreation grounds, church yards, patches of woodland, streams and canals. These are the features that give people breathing space in which to live and work. They are also very important for the wildlife whose presence helps to improve the "feel-good" factor for many people.

In most places this patchwork of green spaces, perhaps connected by roads, footpaths, hedgerows and other natural feature, has evolved haphazardly over many years. Now that its value in our increasingly urbanised land has



Sturt Walk exemplifies the value of the green infrastructure in The Bourne.

been recognised it needs not only to be better managed, but also to be extended in a planned way as new developments are built. This is called for in the legislation and locally is recognised in Waverley's Draft Core Strategy. There is a clear link with the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Once agreed and identified in the Neighbourhood Plan, areas designated as green infrastructure should be protected from development.



Compton Field, perhaps the most biodiverse site in whole of The Bourne, which needs to be protected against development – the only hope is to get it recognised as significant green infrastructure.

Potentially Farnham is already blessed with very good Green Infrastructure, but it is not managed as an entity and it is constantly under threat from the increasing demands for development. We have been giving some thought to this with a view to making a contribution to the emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Farnham. We will be putting up a display on the subject at The Bourne

Show. The essence of what we are proposing for Farnham is:

- Draw up a Schedule of all the green spaces and corridors as a baseline
- Consider some rationalisation of ownership of public land
- Obtain written undertakings that the public land will not be sold
- Agree with the public authorities a set of guidelines for management
- Enter into dialogues with major private landowners
- Publicise to the residents of Farnham that this is a Green Town and encourage them to support biodiversity on their properties

This will not happen over-night. In the meantime we intend to go on working not only to enhance the Green Infrastructure of The Bourne, but to ensure it is fully recognised in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Noel Moss

Footpaths

Assisting the County Council with maintenance of our network of footpaths has been one of our core tasks since the founding of the Group. We have got to know it very well, and each year we have aimed to get round all the paths and keep them tidy. We have speeded up the reporting of blockages or other problems through our Footpath Wardens scheme that has been coordinated by Lisa. We have also undertaken some more major tasks on the footpaths such as renewing the named fingers and restoring Taylors Steps.

We shall probably continue with this approach, but it will need to be adapted to the changes being put into effect by the Council. Faced with budgetary cuts and loss of staff SCC is now training Footpath Wardens and providing them with a basic tool kit. Each warden is authorized to tackle small footpath tasks anywhere in the county, thus avoiding the previous cumbersome bureaucracy. We welcome this apparent relaxation, but it remains to be seen how it will work in practice.



The Bourne has several miles of footpaths, which we will continue to maintain.

Already seven of our members have attended a one-day course for Wardens, and are now empowered (and insured) to work in their own right on light tasks. We have already carried out two such tasks - one the removal of a large branch that had fallen across the path paralleling Greenhill Road, the other the pruning back the vegetation besides Granny Cook's Steps near The Bourne School. Other local people, notably from The Ramblers, have also become official Footpath Wardens.

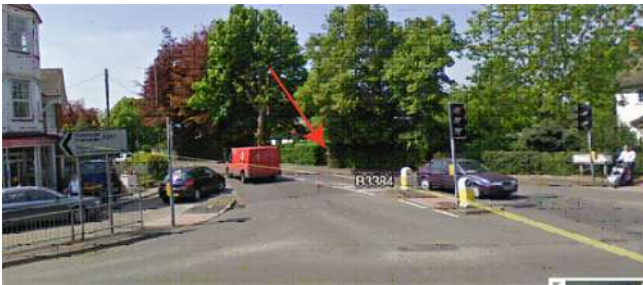


The kissing gate on the footpath near Redhill House where it enters Compton Field, showing the beauty of our footpath network in winter.

We are yet to see how we can best exploit the new system to the advantage of our Rights-of-Way in The Bourne - perhaps through a combination of a rejuvenated version of our local Footpath Warden scheme and our traditional team sessions. Ideally, we hope we can achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in the use of our time.

Battings Garden: Ugly duckling or hidden gem?

This small garden was bestowed on the town in 1933 in memory of Walter Batting. Despite it being sited near one of the town's busiest junctions, very few people are aware of its existence. The garden, opposite Annie's Antiques on the Ridgway, was intended to be used as 'a garden of rest'. Being kept 'neat and tidy' by Waverley BC, has not stopped it from becoming a rather bleak and uninspiring place with little to interest either human visitors or wildlife.



Spot the garden!

A neighbour Jon Austen started a rescue plan for the garden last year, and contacted our group, and subsequently joined it, to see if we could help. The chance to add another stepping stone along The Bourne green corridor was hard to turn down, and work started in earnest in February. A plan was developed to maximise the site's appeal. Our ideas were approved both by the Council and the immediate neighbours, and the hard work began in April. The most pressing challenge inevitably was to remove the large amounts of laurel which had come to dominate the garden. This clearance generated an impressively high mountain of prunings which the council removed. It also revealed some lovely small trees and shrubs, brought the two mature fig trees under control and introduced light into the very gloomy northern corner.

Martin, Fiona and Janina donated a variety of plants - foxgloves, ferns, penstemons and deadnettles, which were planted to provide colour and sources of pollen and nectar for insects. Future plans include the installation of rustic compost bays, a rain water harvesting system (vital as the garden has no other water



View of Garden from the gate with the mountain of prunings on the left

supply of its own) and a new bench. The lovely, original gate, presently in a sad state of disrepair, is to be expertly restored. Our initial plans for a wildlife pond and a pergola had to be abandoned on health and safety grounds, but log piles, bug hotels and bird boxes are to be put in place. Half of the area will be left to grow as a mini-meadow, the other half will become a small orchard with a variety of fruit trees to provide a succession of spring blossom.



The oak gate at the entrance to Battings Garden.

The most daunting challenge will be to remove the vast expanses of tarmac which presently

regiment the garden into quadrants, probably originally to provide a layout for very a formal (and labour intensive) rose garden. Without roses, these paths now appear more suited to being a landing strip for light aircraft than for a garden of rest. Various solutions for their removal are under consideration, none of them simple. Even so, Batting's Garden is already beginning to change from being an austere drab gap between the houses along the Ridgeway, to a more attractive stepping stone along the green corridor of The Bourne Valley, complementing our other site sites such as OCY and MBL. It is also becoming a lovely place to pop into for a quiet sit down!

Hilary Dickson

Wey Valley Catchment Project

In recent years several unsuccessful attempts have been made to get projects off the ground to improve the landscape of the Wey valley. Last year, however, a fresh start was made and there are now promising signs that this may meet with greater success. Partly this is due to funding by the Department of Environment provided to meet the requirements of the European Union's Water Directive. The new project, led by the Surrey Wildlife Trust, links the desire to enhance all aspects of the Wey with the much wider "Living Landscapes" campaign across the whole country and on which we have leaflets available for those interested. The new project covers the considerable area of the Wey Catchment, not just the watercourse, and thus takes in The Bourne Valley. It is a big task not yet defined in detail and will be long term. However a start has been made in a number of ways:

- A Partnership has been formed to drive the project. This includes a very wide range of organisations and authorities across two counties that have an interest in the Wey Catchment such as the National Trust, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency. We are partners as is the Bishops Meadow Trust. We are also endeavouring to get Farnham Town Council to show an interest.
- A small amount of money from the Surrey Wildlife Trust has enabled training of

volunteers on how to deal with the menace of invasive species to take place. We took part in one of these training days.

- The Environment Agency, under their remit within the EU Water Directive, has launched a project to monitor the quality of the water in the river – a basic requirement. Four of our members took part in a seminar on this in St Thomas' church.



The upper of the two weirs near Waverley Abbey, which presently prevent the free passage of fish along the river.

- Bids are being placed for further funding for two or three additional projects to tackle specific problems in the catchment. Local ones on the list include recovery of the wetland at Snayles Lynch (near the BP Station) and by-passing the weir at Waverley Abbey to allow free passage of fish.
- Sources of pollution, which reduces water quality, are being identified.

Clearly we are minor players in such a far reaching programme but we feel that we and other volunteer groups will have an important role to play as time goes on. In particular we know The Bourne Valley and its problems better than anyone. When looked at in detail it is in a terrible state. Led by Martin we have begun to survey the



This looks to be an idyllic scene on the Wey, but if stock has access to the river they add pollutants and the water quality suffers.

range of problems (varying from possible pollution to the presence of Japanese Knotweed to major items of litter) with a view to submitting a bid for funding to deal with them.

Toad Watch 2012

Working with Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group (SARG) during late February and early



Fiona releasing rescued toads near their breeding pond

March, some Bourne Conservation Group members could be found wearing high visibility jackets wandering along Boundary Road (outside Rowledge village). The aim was to rescue toads, frogs and newts migrating to their breeding ponds from being squashed by traffic. The migrations start at the end of February, as the nighttime temperatures rise to over 7°C. Along Boundary Road, the migrants have to cross the road to reach their breeding ponds, but not having learnt the green-cross code they tend to linger on the roadway. This Spring we helped 82 toads, 23 frogs and 1 newt to safety, but were too late to save a further 20 toads and 2 frogs from getting squashed. These data were passed on to SARG to help with their research, and to ensure that the Council erects a toad Crossing warning sign along Boundary Road.

Obviously many toads, frogs and newts did successfully get to their breeding ponds, as many of you noted clumps of frogspawn and strings of toad spawn in your ponds. There has been successful breeding in our ponds in the Middle Bourne Lane Garden and the Old Churchyard.



Common frog in the Old Churchyard pond

Records of spawn clumps from our ponds have been sent in to Pond Conservation (www.pondconservation.org.uk) to contribute to their records. Pond Conservation reported that over 1000 people sent in records – of which BCG provided four. The average number of spawn clumps for small ponds is 6, rising to 13 for medium sized ponds.



Male smooth newt in full breeding dress

For those of you lucky enough to have amphibians in your ponds, most of the tadpoles will have left now. If you have fish or newts in your pond, do not be surprised, if the numbers of tadpoles diminished over time. Fish and newts love a tadpole breakfast. So were you able to tell which tadpoles you had? Toad tadpoles are black, but frog tadpoles may start off black, but become speckled brown as they mature. If you are wondering what a tadpole with gills and front legs, but no back legs might be - it is a newtpole.

Throughout summer, the newtpoles grow into mini-newts (known as "efts") and most leave the pond. Most amphibians spend most of their lives out of water and provide gardeners with valuable services - eating many insect pests and slugs. They hide away in damp places during the day only emerging at night to forage, especially when it rains. Toads are more tolerant of dry conditions and can often be found on patrol on garden paths. In winter amphibians seek out frost free places – in compost heaps under logs and large stones, and the hibernaculum we have constructed in Middle Bourne Lane Garden. So look out for amphibians if you are using your compost heap in early spring. Pond Conservation wants to gather information about what sort of ponds are best for amphibians and other aquatic wildlife. So by taking part in "The Big Pond Dip" you can contribute to this basic information – to find out more about it look at their website - www.pondconservation.org.uk/bigponddip/bigponddip

Lisa Malcolm

Membership

Since the last newsletter was published, we have had a record number of new volunteers that we warmly welcome to the Bourne Conversation Group. They are Jon Austen, Tim Kingham, Lucy Petrie, Pan Panayiotou, Jo Rutherford and Catherine Smith. We hope they have enjoyed their work sessions to date and will continue to help when they can!

It is also wonderful to thank George and Kathleen Lynch, Michael England and Samantha Taylor for becoming new Friends of the BCG. Their subscriptions are vitally important to help us with our running costs, without which we would not be able to function.

We are always keen to welcome new Members and Friends. If you are not already a member and would like to become one as an active volunteer or a Friend of the Bourne Conversation Group, or you know of someone that might be interested, then please contact Karen Redman on 01252 723408, or email info@bourneconservation.org.uk.

Karen Redman

Publicity

We have continued to obtain regular coverage in the local press, gaining goodwill with both the Farnham Herald and the monthly Farnham Diary. The Herald has carried two articles so far this year, both on the Old Churchyard. The first was a progress report to mark the end of the grant funded stage of the project, and this article was later re-run in the Bourne Parish magazine. The second was on the rescue of stag beetle larvae by Bryan Snashall and their transfer to the loggery in OCY. The Diary carried a very good article about Toad Watch which also referred to an item in the last issue of this newsletter. More recently it published a letter from our Chairman about Battings Garden, which posed questions about the garden's history, and generated at least two responses from local residents, which have added to our knowledge of the site.



I was saved by the Bourne Conservation Group on Boundary Road AND, a real bonus, this pin-up picture of me appeared in the Farnham Diary.

Our submission to the Planning Committee about the proposed redevelopment of the Toyota Garage site was also well reported in the Herald, earning us more publicity.

Surrey Nature, published by the Surrey Wildlife Trust, carried a beautifully illustrated article in its Spring issue on our work in the Middle Bourne Lane Community Wildlife Garden written by Noel. It is well worth seeing if you have not done so already.

We will be looking for further publicity from our efforts for Farnham in Bloom, but much depends on the judges' decisions.

Our page in Facebook has continued to develop and carries some wonderful photos, notably those by Martin Angel. This is a way of reaching an extended audience and getting our work better known to those who do not read the local press. Any member can easily upload their own photographs and observations to the page and we strongly encourage you to do so. If you are not sure how to go about it just contact David Todd. Similarly, our website carries some interesting content but the challenge is always to have fresh material, and it, too, would benefit from more contributions by our members.

David Todd

In Memoriam

We are greatly saddened by the loss Deirdre Lecoq who died on 20th May after a long battle with cancer. We always knew her as Dee and she was a much liked and active member of our Group from 2004 until she became seriously ill. She was often accompanied at our work sessions by her husband Paul and we remember in particular their joint work on the Crossroads project and along some of our footpaths. Dee also put a great deal of effort into the early planting of trees and shrubs at Middle Bourne Lane and became most interested in the Old Churchyard project when it started. She was concerned to make sure everything was done in the right way to preserve the charm and character of the site.

Dee was widely travelled and lived life to the full. She loved golf and was Ladies Captain at Hindhead in 2002. A refreshingly robust character with her own very definite views on the work of our Group and a whole host of other subjects, she was always ready to see the funny side of things. This was unsurprising in view of her very successful career in industry in personnel management. Most of all we remember her as a good and loyal friend with an engaging sense of humour who was willing to turn her hand to any task. We extend our sympathies to Paul.



Future Work Programme

Thursday 2 nd August	Underdown Reserve
Thursday 16th August	Underdown Reserve
To be decided	Old Church Lane - build steps
Sunday 2nd September	AGM
Sunday 9 th September	Footpaths
Sunday 7 th October	Crossroads
Sunday 18 th November	TBD
Sunday 2 nd December	Middle Bourne
Sunday 13 th January 2013	Woodland Management

Your Committee

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

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