

Newsletter

Summer 2015

The **Bourne**
Conservation Group



Photo Feature: One of the rarer British moths the goat moth turned up in The Bourne in July. Its larvae live beneath the bark of living trees, taking up to four years to mature.

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Editorial

The need for Britain to balance its books is resulting in the Government looking to save 40 Billion pounds in the next few years. The spending on the NHS, defence and education is being ring-fenced, and as a result other Government Departments are being called upon to take cuts of 25-40%. Inevitably environmental expenditure is going to be hard hit, and there will be large sell-offs of Government owned land. The natural environment does



Farnham Park – a much valued open area which is well maintained by Waverley BC with the help of an enthusiastic and extremely hard-working band of volunteers, but will care of such sites be compromised in future as a result of austerity?

not figure highly in Central Government's concept of sustainability – it does not command many votes! The ecological concept of sustainability has been subsumed by the economic pundits whose vision for the future is seen purely in monetary values; this is ironic when you consider the monetary crisis was created by the greed of some of these same financial operators. The environment is also under attack from the pressures generated by the growth in the population of the British Isles and human driven climate change, which together are creating enormous demands on all aspects of our infrastructure and the quality of our environment. There seems to be an increasing lack of awareness of the importance of environment in relation to our materialistic life-styles. The local apolitical role of BCG in protecting our environment and educating our local community about the risks and dangers will inevitably become more significant. We will have to make

increasingly greater efforts to fight battles, often against overwhelming odds, to continue to protect and enhance what we have in The Bourne and its environs.

Martin Angel

For your diaries the BCG work programme to early Spring 2016

Main sessions

August	Sunday 30 th	The Old Churchyard
September	Sunday 6 th	AGM at 19 Stream Farm Close
	Friday 11 th	Heritage Day Walk
	Saturday 12 th	Heritage Day Walk
October	Sunday 4 th	Middle Bourne Lane
November	Sunday 1 st	Langham's Rec.
December	Sunday 6 th	The Old Churchyard
2016		
January	Sunday 10 th	Woodland Management
February	Sunday 7 th	To be decided

Mid week sessions

Wed 12 th , Thurs 20 th , Mon 24 th
Tues 8 th , Thurs 17 th , Fri 25 th .
Thurs 22 nd clear tubs, Sat 24 th re-plant tubs
Further mid-week dates to be announced
BCG social event to be arranged

Our part in 25 Years of Farnham in Bloom

Farnham in Bloom (FIB) was started in 1989 at the suggestion of the then Chairman of the Visitors Council, who said "I want to make Farnham a beautiful place for all by bringing flowers into the town." The scheme was taken up by Madge Green, a local resident and national judge of flower arranging. She recruited the enthusiastic group



Hilary, flanked by Carole Cockburn and Valerie Nye, describes the planting regime at the Crossroads.

of ladies who for the next 15 years did a wonderful job organising it. They finally put away their watering cans in 2005 and handed the organisational baton to the Town Council. Madge is still around - a revered figure for all that she and her team achieved. So 2015 is the 25th anniversary of FIB, and is also the tenth year that the Town Council has been in the lead. In 2008 the South and South East in Bloom competition was entered for the first time and the high standards set by Madge have been maintained in the town centre. Then in 2011 Farnham made its first entry into the Large Town category, achieving double gold awards each year from 2012 to last year. Our Group first chose to play a part in this fine tradition in 2009, entering the Middle Bourne Lane



This years' judges were fascinated by the moths caught in MBL



Noel talking to the judges In the Middle Bourne Lane Garden while the Mayor and her husband look on.

Community Wildlife Garden (MBL) into the Small Parks category; for which it achieved a Silver Gilt award. In the same year, the garden qualified to be entered into the Biffa small projects national competition - Biffa had granted us the funding to initiate our reclamation of MBL - and it won! Since 2011, we have continued contributing to the town's effort in the Large Town category, and each year we have been encouraged by the judge's comments. They have consistently expressed appreciation of the

merits of MBL in all three elements of the competition – horticulture, environment and community. In previous years, the Old Churchyard had also figured in our input and stimulated the comment from one judge "I wished I could have spent all day there." Last year The Bourne Crossroads Beautification project was added to

the Town's programme, as an example of a community project.

This year we have put considerable effort into maintaining and improving the standards of both MBL and the Crossroads, the latter being a joint project with the Residents Association. At the Crossroads, however, two factors have hampered our efforts - the regrettable closure of the Indigo Café, which had been an element in the community story, plus the effect of the early summer drought!

The results of this year's competition will not be known until September, but we are reasonably confident we have presented both our entries in the best possible light, ably assisted at the Crossroads by Valerie Nye of TBRA and Cllr Carole Cockburn. We are grateful both to them and to all of our members who have worked seemingly endless hours to get both sites up to the standard demanded by the competition.

Is it worth all the effort? It might be argued that the time and effort we expend on getting the two sites ready for the competition is distracting us from tackling many other demanding tasks around The Bourne. While there is an element of truth in this, there is no doubt that the extra attention we have paid to MBL has greatly added both to its appearance and also the wildlife habitat it provides – the creation of the herbaceous border with its bee-friendly flowers being a case in point. Added to this, the goodwill within the community engendered by our participation, the contacts we make in the rest of the town and our feeling of satisfaction in being an active part of the wider community outweigh any possible downsides.

Noel Moss

The Garden Bioblitz

We decided to participate in the National Garden Bioblitz rather at the last moment on learning about it from the Wildlife Gardening Forum newsletter (www.wlhf.org/). It was time-tabled for the weekend of 30/31 May. A bioblitz is a survey conducted over a 24 hour period when all the animal and plant species in an area are recorded. A BCG work session had been programmed well in advance for the Saturday, so we decided to run the bioblitz on the Sunday in the Middle Bourne Lane Community Garden, although rain was forecast for the Sunday. So in anticipation we erected the gazebo late on the Saturday afternoon to provide shelter, which proved to be a very wise decision. At dusk (2100h) on the Saturday evening Martin Angel, Paddy Lewin and Noel Moss began the session by light trapping for moths. There was total cloud cover so the air temperature did not fall as sharply as it had on earlier evenings, so that it was still 10°C at midnight. A few moths began to arrive at 2200h, but their numbers did not pick up until after 2300h just before the drizzle started half an hour later. The trap was dragged in under the shelter of the Gazebo, and the light was finally turned off at 0030h. By then the increasingly heavy rain had reduced the numbers of moths flying. At 0900h the next morning, with the rain still falling, Martin, Paddy and Noel re-convened and started going through the catch. We had caught 72 specimens belonging to at least 35 species. The two most abundant species were treble lines (25) and heart and darts (8). By 2015 standards this was a quite good catch, but in previous years we had caught more moths and more species.



Hilary and Isobel carrying out the floristic survey in the rain, while Isobel's son gets close to the action and Celia and Richard Sandars look on.

Throughout the rest of the day there was a succession of activities when we collected and identified all the species we could find. Paddy kept a running tally of the birds visiting the garden. Later in morning Hilary Dickson



One of the moths caught on the night – an elephant hawkmoth.

and Isobel Girvan (SWT) braved the rain and carried out the botanical survey. Remarkably they identified **169** plant species! This tally was a mix of naturally occurring species (including many weed species) and those we had planted. We had a pond dipping session - during the night we had seen eight adult frogs around the pond, but during the day we found no frogs but numerous smooth and palmate newts. Disappointingly there was little else apart from many mature dragonfly larvae and the highly predatory water boatmen. This abundance of predators may have accounted for the general lack of other species. We examined the contents of pitfall traps, looked under the mats, and gently used sweep nets on the nettles, brambles and the hedge. We found the usual suspects, but far fewer than expected. Almost certainly this was because of the persistent rain –

for example we recorded not a single hoverfly and there were very few bumblebees buzzing around braving the rain.

Even so by the end of the day, we had identified 83 species of animal - 15 birds, 5 species of slugs and snails, 19 insects, in addition to the 35 moths, and 5 other invertebrates (woodlice, millipedes and centipedes). If the weather had been better I am sure we would have doubled this number. Even so, we are now so much better informed about the biodiversity of the garden especially about its plants (many thanks to Hilary and particularly Isobel). Some of our members now know a little more about animal and plant identification, we contributed to a national survey, and may be scored some brownie points with the Farnham-in Bloom judges. May be next year we will repeat the exercise in the Old Churchyard.

Martin Angel

The Bourne Show 2015

Last year we had gone to some trouble to improve and extend our participation in The Bourne Show. This year we made sure we capitalised on those very successful enhancements. We also made sure we allowed for the earlier opening time of 1230 by bringing forward our timings on the day. The result was a very smoothly conducted operation by the BCG machine. Charles Fearnley was on the Green very early to make sure of the very good pitch we had been allocated by the Show Committee sandwiched between the bandstand and the Tilford Forge! Charles waited patiently for the arrival of Bryan Snashall's van carrying all our gear including the proverbial kitchen sink as well as his brother Kevin and the chairman. The rest of the set-up team were soon on hand and in no time at all our four gazebos were up and ready to be filled - this was a precision exercise achieved with no argument or confusion - as illustrated!



The set-up team in full action solving the IQ test of assembling the gazebo frame

Even as the erection of the gazebos was nearing completion, the first goods for sale began to arrive. One kind contributor drew up with a large car load of plants saying "I have another load waiting at home." This set the tone for the day and by noon we were ready for business, and sales had begun.



The bric-a-brac stall attracted a large crowd.

The Bourne. The same was true of our Heritage tent where Wendy and John Maddox had a steady stream of visitors to discuss local and family history matters. The Show seemed bigger than ever this year and by mid-afternoon there were reports of the nearest available parking being a kilometre away along Monks Walk. This speaks highly of the work of the organising committee in attracting such a large crowd and we extend our thanks to them for running the event so efficiently. The show is so important in building a sense of community within our village.

Was it all worth it? The answer to that is a resounding "Yes" for a number of good reasons. The first is that on the financial side our two trading stalls raised record amounts of money, which will cover our running costs for

the coming year. On the recruitment side we signed up a number of new members and Friends and hopefully will attract some more with the leaflets we handed out. We also renewed many old contacts and made some new ones, for example the craftsmen at the Tilford Forge who we might like to do some work for us in the Old Churchyard. More important perhaps are the less tangible results: we had 22 members working with a will during the day and there were many comments on how much they enjoyed it; a good team building exercise! Also our large and interesting stand will have made many people who are newly arrived in the area aware not only of the work we do in the community and the professional way in which we go about it, but also the richness of its biodiversity and heritage.



The plant stall with its home grown plants had another successful show.



Many had fun attempting Noel's pictorial quiz on 'How well do you know The Bourne'.

The last word is "Thanks" to everybody in BCG who contributed in any way to the success of our contribution to this year's Bourne Show.

Noel Moss

Planning issues

Members will no doubt have been aware of the ever increasing pressure for development around Farnham, and particularly in our area of The Bourne. This will be a short update on the present situation from January this year, and some thoughts on the tactics that developers are now using.

The Big Ones

The three large proposed developments on our “patch” are Compton Fields off the Tilford Road, 35 Frensham Vale, and the Baker Oates site in Gardeners Hill Road. These are all progressing slowly, and have attracted very large numbers of public comments (mostly objections) – and of course our Group letters.

Compton Fields - Wates finally put in a formal application in April for 156 houses, spread across two of the three fields involved, with the third field designated as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). A month later two alternative applications were posted as well, splitting out the two fields intended for building into 98 and 59 houses respectively, but retaining the SANG as before.

South Farnham Residents Association is the nearest local group, and has done a sterling job in rallying everyone with an interest to make their comments. You may have seen the reports in the Herald about SOFRA’s demonstrations at Farnham Station - pointing out the increased pollution and congestion at Station Hill should this development go ahead.

With others, we pointed out that one of the major problems involved was that the suggested SANG was too small to meet the minimum specification from Natural England, and that the proposed design would effectively ruin what is currently a remarkably rich area of biodiversity (see Martin Angel’s excellent report on the BCG website). It was therefore good to see that WBC rejected the primary 153 house application, with queries over the SANG being a major factor. We now need to see whether the developers wait for a result on the two subsidiary applications, or go to appeal directly.



It is not just the building site where environmental damage is caused - there is a lot of peripheral damage. While one cannot cook an omelette without breaking the eggs – but such damage can and must be minimised.

The other two large developments in **Frensham Vale** and **Gardeners Hill Road** are geographically close, and share many of the same characteristics, in particular relating to narrow and difficult road access, and problems with the already inadequate sewage infrastructure. Both have conservation issues, but Frensham Vale has a greater population of rare and protected bats, reptiles and amphibians – whose importance has inevitably been conveniently skirted by the developers.

The local pressure group is the Frensham Vale Action Group, led by Joe Michel, which has run extremely effective campaigns for both sites. The current situation is that both initial applications were rejected by WBC, but now appeals have been lodged by both developers.

Tiddlers – But Still Important

As well as the major house building companies there are several very active small local developers in our

area, who specialise in building extra houses in large gardens, cramming multiple houses onto small plots, and sometimes using poorly written legislation to completely bypass the planning system.

Disappointingly, we have had little success in **Lodge Hill Road**, or the conservation area of **Old Church Lane**. However, development at two of the oldest houses in the area (**Kiln Farm** and **Heron Court**) has, for now at least, been avoided. Heron Court is just recently up for appeal, but as the house is now nationally grade two listed there may still be a decent outcome – fingers crossed.

Developer Tactics

In the last year a new tactic has begun to appear – the use of multiple applications for a single development – usually alternative versions of the same plan. At first sight this might seem reasonable, but I suspect it is also intended to put extra pressure on an already stretched planning department, perhaps in the hope that applications may not get the full attention they deserve, and might be quickly passed simply to reduce workloads. A good example is Heron Court, which in not much over six months has generated **four** applications and an appeal – just for one single small development.

A Personal Note

This will be my last report on planning for the news letter. I've been writing BCG planning letters for nearly three years, and have learnt more about the complex world

of planning that I ever expected. It has at times been interesting and stimulating, but commitments to family and other local organisations have meant that I no longer have the time available to continue with planning for the Group. I will, of course, stay with BCG, and have accepted the appointment of Technical Support on the committee for the coming year – subject to acceptance at the AGM in September.

Charles Fearnley

Editor's Note Having in the past been responsible for planning issues when planning was a relatively quiet issue, I know just how much time effort Charles has had devoted to dealing these tasks, with increasing professionalism. I think we owe him more than the usual thanks.

Rights of Way

Our continued thanks go to our many footpath wardens who undertake to walk regularly the numerous footpaths in our area checking for and reporting any issues affecting the quality of the network. Over the past months the issues reported have ranged from fallen trees and branches, to overhanging vegetation and seriously muddy or flooded sections. Several finger posts or way markers have been reported to be either missing or in need of repair



Noel tamping down the base of the replacement fingerpost for 'The Pieces' path, and (right) the replaced fingerpost for 'Mitchells' path

On receipt of the reports the Footpath Coordinator enters them on his spreadsheet and may go to take a look at the site. He assesses the work involved and urgency and who is best suited to deal with it. While many jobs can be handled by the BCG team, either as individuals or as part of a monthly or weekly work session, the larger issues require professional attention from the Surrey Rights of Way team. The latter are then reported without delay using the Council's recently improved on-line reporting system. Surrey will react quickly to a complete blockage of the right of way or where there is some hazard to the public. This may mean them getting on to the landowner concerned to carry out the work. Lesser tasks will probably be given to their contractor who may take some time before he is able to do it.

For our part, in the past months we have erected several replacement fingerposts that have been supplied by SCC. If there is any hint of underground services nearby this is done in conjunction with a county representative who scans the site electronically. Some of the posts and way markers are standard versions; others in The Bourne are part of the named network installed to commemorate the Millennium. We now have a number of the named fingers and inscribed posts which we are gradually installing so as to maintain the network to the same standard as it was in the year 2000 as illustrated.

Martin Wisdom

Our New Generator



The group has made its largest ever investment in equipment by buying a portable Honda generator. This is a great compliment to the efforts I have been making to study the biodiversity of our fauna in The Bourne – so thank you! It will also enable us to operate electrical equipment anywhere in The Bourne to which we can carry it (it weighs just 35kg). We no longer have to rely on the generosity of friends and neighbours to provide an electrical power supply. It runs surprisingly quietly on lead-free petrol, and with a full tank of fuel it will provide power for 8 hours. This means that not only can we carry

out moth surveys almost anywhere we choose in The Bourne, but also use it to power mowers, hedge-cutters and even computers at all our sites. It has already been used to carry out moth surveys in the Middle Bourne Lane Community Garden in preparation for the Farnham-in-Bloom inspection, in Sable Wood in support of our friend Bruce Callender, and to provide moth fauna data for the Friends of Farnham Park.

Martin Angel

Pollinator crisis

We are heavily dependent on the natural services provided by the 1500 species of insect that pollinate our flowers and food crops (the UK's £100 billion food industry is at the heart of our national economy). So the waning in numbers of pollinators should be of considerable concern to us all. Indeed the coalition Government produced a strategy to promote our pollinators (www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-pollinator-strategy-for-bees-and-other-pollinators-in-england). Unfortunately there are already cracks appearing in the strategy. For example, in May 2013, the European Commission adopted Implementing Regulation 485/2013 that from 1 December 2013 prohibited the use of three neonicotinoid insecticides (clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam) on crops visited by pollinators. A recent article in the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's newsletter Buzzword presents convincing evidence that neonicotinoids are detrimental to brain cell function in bumblebees and are an important contributing factor in the declines of these important pollinators. Even so, after a recent

review of the data accompanied by strong misguided lobbying from the manufacturers and the NFU, this ban has been relaxed in the UK – a short-term solution which will lead to serious long-term consequences! Moreover, it is



Two species of bumblebee extracting nectar from *Allium sphaerocephalum*.

not just bees that are being affected by these potent insecticides, but all insects - good as well as bad. There is now evidence emerging that the navigation ability of migratory birds is being disrupted (incidentally many of whom feed on insect pests). The use of insecticides is a very blunt quick-fix instrument it may solve an immediate pest problem but will be counterproductive in the longer term. Why? - Because these substances not only kill the pests but also the predators that provide the natural controls on the pest populations. As a result once they are used, one has to continue using them.

Were you aware that there was a National Pollination Awareness week on 13-19th July this year? Along with most others, I wasn't – such was the ineffectiveness of the publicity!

In general, the focus has remained very much on the crisis with bees, particularly our honey bees. Yet there are so many other species that contribute crucially important pollination services such as hoverflies, lacewings, butterflies

and even some beetles. To be effective any strategy must be joined up and provide safe and productive environments for the full range of pollinators. As individuals we can follow the lead we have taken in the Middle Bourne Lane Garden by planting species, which not only look good, but also provide supplies of nectar and pollen throughout all seasons. Above all avoid the use of chemical pesticides, particularly those that are persistent. Remember the warnings in Rachel Carson's book *The Silent Spring* and be more tolerant of 'creepy crawlies'.

Martin Angel

Riverfly surveys

If you pause on the bridge at the bottom of South Street on the morning of the second Thursday of every month, and glance down the Wey beside Borelli Walk, you will see a group of people paddling in the river with nets. They not a group of people who are merely revisiting their childhoods and having fun in the water, but they are making a serious contribution towards the monitoring the health of the river (admittedly it is fun – well it is on dry sunny



The riverfly team in action in the Wey .

days when the river is not in spate!). The group of volunteers, lead by Libby Ralph, is conducting regular 'riverfly surveys'. Each of these surveys follows a standard sampling protocol to estimate the numbers of the more common aquatic invertebrates living in the river that the fish feed on, namely mayfly and caddisfly larvae and freshwater shrimps. These surveys were initiated throughout the country by the fishing fraternity, but now have been more widely adopted as a nationwide citizen science approach to monitoring the health of our waterways. The abundances of these invertebrates provide a sensitive indication of the health of the river. In addition to the netting, concentrations of certain chemicals (nitrates

and phosphates) in the river and the outpourings of local outfalls are measured using simple chemical colour indicator tests. Although these surveys have only been carried out for a few months, they have shown that the health of the river – a registered chalk stream - is moderately good. However, a dip in the abundances of the indicator species was observed, and this dip coincided with some increases in the nitrate and phosphate concentrations in the river. It is suspected that a nearby broken drain has been leaking of pollutants into the river, hence the declines in the abundances of the invertebrates. Another far less tractable problem the survey has revealed is the high abundance of signal crayfish in the river. This nasty alien invader is having a seriously detrimental impact on the ecology of the river, which we will just have to live with. It indicates how much greater care is needed over the way the aquarium trade operates, and people dispose of their unwanted pets. For example, we are constantly having to remove goldfish from the pond in the Middle Bourne Lane Community Garden, otherwise its high diversity will be compromised. There is exactly the same 'goldfish' problem in Carron Pond in Farnham Park, where the fish may be having a serious impact on its highly prized great crested newt population. So PLEASE, PLEASE do not dispose of unwanted fish and terrapins in our ponds and rivers.

Martin Angel

Membership

The sun shone for the Bourne Show this year and so we were able to attract a host of visitors to our fantastic stalls. Not only did we raise a superb amount of money which will go towards our running costs, but also we encouraged local people to learn more about us as a Group and the work we are involved with - hence recruited several new members and friends. We received some applications for Membership from John Cregan, Bryan Skinner, Paul Townson - we hope to welcome them soon as volunteers at the work sessions. Jeffrey and Pamela Powell joined as Friends, and our thanks go to them as well for supporting BCG. I also welcome Sarah Woolf and Angie Hider as new members of the Group. Sarah has been volunteering regularly with us since June and Angie, newly arrived in The Bourne, has just joined as I am completing these notes.

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

Publicity

We aim for regular coverage of our activities in the Farnham Herald, but only when we have something interesting to say. Since the last Newsletter we have achieved that with a good article about our contribution to the National Garden Bioblitz. We have also featured in the pages of the

Herald in its coverage of Farnham in Bloom, and a good photo of our impressive stalls at the Bourne Show.

The Farnham Diary has given us good coverage over the years under the editorship of Ted Parratt, and this continued with its lead article on Compton Fields in May, which mentioned BCG prominently. The June issue paid a glowing tribute to our last newsletter, quoting from it extensively and carrying the headline: "Things are buzzing at The Bourne – BCG Newsletter is a cracker". Sadly, that issue was the last published by Ted and Jean Parratt, and its future seems uncertain.

We have continued to keep our website up to date, at least on the Home Page. More content is always needed and contributions of information and photos from our members and friends are always welcome.

David Todd

Your Committee

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

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