Newsletter

Winter 2013





Photofeature

One of our commoner summer moths – a brimstone moth *Opisthograptis luteolata*. During the year 258 were caught. The largest numbers, 59, were taken on 4^{th} September.

Editorial	2
BCG Calendar for 2014	2
Achievements in 2013	2
Strength in numbers	3
The Farnham Rivers Group	4
On being a River Warden	5
Old Church Lane; Sturt and Allen	6

Moths in 2013	7
Our footpaths in 2013	8
Plants to get MBL buzzing	9
Planning report	10
Publicity	11
Stop Press	11
Your Committee	12

Editorial

A Happy Christmas to you all. In 2014 BCG will continue to strive to keep our local environment safe and full of rich diversity. How to involve young people in our work conserving the environment and wildlife of our 'patch' is a real challenge. We were hoping to find a partial solution by becoming more involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, but when the rules of the scheme were changed recently, they made our full participation problematic, but we are still exploring possible options. Last year we ran several events for our local Beaver lodges and our successful training day in the Old Churchyard was focused on attracting young families. But can we do even better? The Old Churchyard and the Middle Bourne Lane Garden are excellent for wildlife training but they are small and will not withstand heavy use. This year I became an assessor for schools seeking to be awarded a green flag in the Eco-schools programme. A notable feature for me has been the

BCG Calent	
Weekend Work sessions	please note these dates
in your diaries	
Sunday 12 th January	Burnt Hill Wood West
1600-1800h	Social in Indigo Cafe
Sunday 9 th February	MBL/OCY
Sunday 9 th March	Footpaths
Sunday 6 th April	The Bourne X Roads
Sunday 11 th May	MBL/OCY
Sunday 8 th June	MBL
Sunday 15 th June	OCY Training Day
Sunday 6 th July	Balsam Bashing
Saturday 19 th July	The Bourne Show
Sunday 7 th September	Our AGM
There will be many mid	
supplement week-end	work sessions.

infectious enthusiasm and curiosity of the children about wildlife. But it has also highlighted how the obligations imposed on schools to fulfil the targets of the national curriculum are stifling these enthusiasms. This is not helped by a legacy of ignorance in both parents and teachers about what I consider to be some of the basics about biodiversity and sustainability. We believe that one way BCG can make a small contribution is by training teachers and parents as how to adapt the imperatives of the curriculum to improve the 'environmental literacy' of children. We are exploring how best to do this – any ideas will be gratefully received. Martin Angel

Our achievements so far this year



New members, Jan and Dave Tunks, digging out laurel from the bank in Middle Bourne Lane.

At our last committee meeting Noel produced a summary of what BCG has achieved since the end of our financial year on 1st June. It is an impressive list. We have accomplished 545 'man'-hours of physical work (185 at weekends, the rest midweek). Work has been carried out in the Old Churchyard, Middle Bourne Lane, the crossroads including The Bourne Beautification project, Underdown and along the Bourne Stream. Thirty members have participated in the weekend sessions, 16 of whom have attended three or more times. These working sessions do not just happen serendipitously; they need to be planned, co-ordinated, and perhaps most importantly the coffee has to be prepared. This burden falls mainly

BCG Calendar for 2014

on Noel, but others do contribute. There has been as much, if not more, activity behind the scenes associated with the Neighbourhood Plan, Bourne Beautification, Farnham-in-Bloom, the Heritage Weekend, planning issues, training and being trained, monitoring etc. We have participated in or run various events – The Bourne Show, one of the Mayor's charity events, a walk in Farnham Park, two Surrey Wildlife Trust events, and a training day in the Old Churchyard. Our thanks must go to the many of you who have continued to give us so much support in time and effort. However, not everything has gone our way; we have failed to prevent or modify all of the planning applications we have contested on environmental grounds. For example, we failed either to prevent or to re-site the crossing at the Bourne crossroads, and the application to develop Kendal cottage has gone ahead in Old Church Lane despite it being a conservation area. It is difficult to be entirely optimistic about the outcome of the Neighbourhood Plan, but nothing ventured, nothing gained. Although we can be proud of what we have achieved, we cannot rest on our laurels. There is more, much more, still to do! For example, we still plan to start improving Battings Garden in the coming year. As we take on more projects, the problem of maintaining all our sites is ever-growing. Our successes are breeding new demands and hence new exciting opportunities. So we do need to find tomorrow's heroes, if our efforts are to be sustained in the future. Martin Angel

Strength in Numbers

Right from its formation, BCG has recognised the need to work in partnership with other organisations. Initially this was confined to the local authorities but links were soon formed with other groups such as the Friends of



Farnham Park, the RSPB at Farnham Heath, and recently the Bishop's Meadow Trust. Cooperation with all these continues and is of immense value in broadening our horizons, but conservation issues are ever-changing and valuable new links have been forged in recent times.

At the professional level we have gained much from advice and support from the Surrey Wildlife Trust, especially since the formation of their Greenspace Team five years ago. This has been very much a two-way relationship and we were delighted to be asked to say a few

David Haverlund Chairman of the Friends of Farnham Park hosting our walk around the Park

words at their recent Chairman's Reception. In the introduction it was said that they had found our contribution "inspirational". We plan to maintain this strong link with SWT although its character will change as the Greenspace Programme is being wound down. In future, we will get less direct support, but this will be counter-balanced by our greater self-sufficiency; we can now contemplate running events, such as our training days using our own resources.

Another link that has evolved during the last year is our relationship with The Bourne Residents Association (TBRA). The Bourne Beautification Project has moved this on from routine liaison on



Valerie Nye (Chair of TBRA) and Councillor Carole Cockburn in discussion outside the Indigo Cafe during a beautification work group

matters of mutual interest to practical cooperation. This will continue for the good of the local community in our area, which is facing pressures both from new development and the overloading of the local infrastructure. It is crucial for us to present a united front whenever it is appropriate and possible. We are also talking regularly to the Farnham Society and to the other local residents associations on issues of mutual concern. In this respect the Town Council's work on the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan is proving a unifying factor. Our attendances at the series of workshops have broadened our understanding of problems and how other local groups view them. We have been able to contribute from our experience on biodiversity issues, which are relevant across the town.



One of our declining species – a dunnock beneath one of the feeders in the Old Churchyard.

One such example is our collaborative attempt with the South Farnham Residents to designate Compton Fields as part of Farnham's Green Infrastructure. Another link will be forged by a lecture that Noel and Martin are to give on 16th January to the Farnham Museum Society. Our link with the Museum has previously been limited to the archiving of copies of our newsletters and our borrowing of the Palaeolithic axe for the heritage day event. Elsewhere in this Newsletter our work in the Farnham Rivers Group is highlighted and this represents another level of cooperation with both voluntary and official organisations. We firmly believe that these existing links and potential new ones are increasingly important in assisting us to conserve our local green

spaces and its wildlife, which are facing a multiple threats, both natural and man-made. To substantiate that we need only quote the result of RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch this year: "Sadly the UKs most threatened and best-loved bird species are continuing to decline." These include starlings, house sparrows, bullfinches and dunnocks. We are on the case!

Noel Moss

The Farnham Rivers Group



The Wey is a chalk stream and even in winter it is an attractive feature of our landscape.

This group came into being in 2011 as a subset of the Wey Landscape Partnership, which is led by the Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT); the partnership is endeavouring to obtain funding for a series of improvement projects throughout the whole catchment area. Money is hard to come by and no major pot of gold has so far been found to support this work. Our group is a member of the Partnership and at a meeting in early 2011 we suggested that a volunteer project for The Bourne Stream might be a cheap way of getting started. This was agreed with the proviso that any project should be for the whole Farnham area and as a result the Farnham Rivers Group was formed under the leadership of Farnham Town Councillor Jess Parry. Since its first meeting in August 2012 the group has brought together BCG, The Bishops Meadow Trust, The North Wey Trust and The Friends of Farnham Park

along with representatives of some of the larger organisations concerned with the river, notably the Environment Agency, the SWT and the Wey Valley Fisheries Association.

This forum has brought into focus several problems in the Farnham area such as a series of pollution incidents in Farnham Park and has also identified areas for possible improvements, including the removal of obstructions to fish passage near Coxbridge. Study of the latter has led to a proposal to divert a short length of the Wey through Bishop's Meadow back into its old course. Despite all this useful liaison and good work, no project for the whole of Farnham has been identified and no funding found. However, progress has been made in other ways. Readers

will be aware that BCG was successful in obtaining a grant from South East Water to fund a clear-up operation in Compton Field in February 2013. Also, SWT have used a small grant to set up and train River Searchers to monitor the Wey and its tributaries. Several BCG members are already performing this function.

The background to these welcome activities is the remit the Environment Agency has under the EU Water Directive to clean up our rivers. Towards this, they have been carrying out detailed surveys to determine the state of the Wey and presented the results to the Farnham Rivers Group in November. Sadly the North Wey from Alton to Farnham fails to achieve "Good Ecological Status" because of high phosphate levels. These are thought to result mainly from discharges from sewage works supplemented by discharges from private sites and agricultural sources. In other chalk streams, the Test and Itchen, the high phosphate levels are thought to come from domestic cleaning products, especially dishwasher tablets!



The Wey below Moor Park in snowy conditions

We are continuing to support the Farnham

Rivers Group and to cooperate with the other volunteer groups for the benefit of the local environment. It is also to be hoped that funding is obtained to implement larger projects in the Wey catchment such as creating a bypass of the weir at Waverley Abbey to facilitate fish passage and the creation of wetland at Snayles Lynch behind the BP station.

Noel Moss

On being a River warden

As Noel mentions in his article about the Farnham Rivers Group, several of us, along with members of other groups have volunteered to participate in the SWT River Watch programme and monitor stretches of the Wey around Farnham. Rivers are dynamic features in the environment, they are constantly changing course if left to themselves. Those who own land along the banks (riparian owners) get extremely angry when the river eats into their land or even floods their property. But the more a river is left to find its own way, the healthier and more diverse it becomes. Maintaining the optimum balance between allowing Nature to flourish and to have its own



A riffle stretch along the side stream below Culverlands. At present it supports a rich abundance of river flies, but will it be affected by the East Street development?

way, and the needs to regulate and control natural forces so as to preserve property and maintain safety, is a constant problem in conservation. So our first task is to map in detail and photograph the river banks, noting all the features of the geomorphology of the river - where the flows are impeded or unimpeded, where the banks are eroding and where local run-offs are reaching the river, which are where flash floods may introduce pollutants. Pollution increases the turbidity of the water, reduces the amount of oxygen dissolved in the water, and in extreme cases results in strings of whitish filaments of sewage fungus appearing on the stream-side vegetation. Clean rivers support rich populations of mayflies, stoneflies and

damselflies, so by regularly walking the river bank, the warden will note their presence and abundance. The warden will also look for signs of wildlife, water voles, mink and even otters (they are reported to have made a comeback to the Wey!). By following the changes along each stretch of river, the best strategy for managing it can be developed. In Farnham, one immediate question to be addressed by such monitoring is what impact the East Street development may have on the health of the river. Without pre-impact assessments of the river, it will be impossible to prove whether or not any adverse impacts are resulting from the development. Martin Angel

Old Church Lane: George Sturt and W.H. Allen

In addition to being the 250th anniversary of William Cobbett's birth, 2013 marked the 150th anniversary of George Sturt's birth, an event which the Bourne Conservation Group has done its bit to commemorate by incorporating into its programme for National Heritage weekend in September a brief, wet visit to Vine Cottage with a short reading from *Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer* describing George and Fred Grover working in the garden in similar weather. Since his death in 1927, Sturt's grave, and those of his sisters Mary and Susan, in Green Lane Cemetery have been unmarked but talks between Richard Sandars and the Town Council have resulted in the tidying up of the three graves and the installation of a commemorative stone.

Also born in 1863, some three months after Sturt, was William Herbert Allen who was for forty years the Head of the Farnham Art School. The two shared similar interests (Sturt joined Allen's outdoor watercolour club) and both became friends, with Allen and his wife regularly visiting Sturt at Vine Cottage towards the end of George's life. "Allen came last evening, bringing for me to see his recent water colours from Binsted – interiors of barns, granaries, a smithy..." The genuine affection between the two men is expressed in Sturt description of Allen patting his arm as



The new commemorative plaque marking Sturt's grave in Green Lane Cemetery.

he leaves as if trying to "convey by touch what (he) could not express in words". Allen produced a large number

of paintings and sketches of Farnham and the surrounding areas, including three chalk sketches of Sturt and three watercolours of 'Sturt's Lane' – now Old Church Lane. These and other works by Allen can be seen on the website for the Allen Gallery <u>www.hants.gov.uk/allen-gallery/w-h-allen.htm</u>. In 1905 Allen married Adelaide





Two of Allen's watercolours of Old Church Lane (or Sturt's Lane as Allen called it)

Maria Sothern at the Old Bourne Church and the couple moved into Strangers Corner on the Tilford Road built for them by Harold Falkner who previously had been a student of Allen's. Richard Sandars

Moths in 2013

The season for moth trapping is nearly over for the year, but even in December there are some moths about when the weather is relatively mild. Male winter moths fly even on cold nights, but the females are wingless. Their caterpillars hatch as the new leaves burst in the spring and are an important food resource for adult birds to feed their nestlings. The first moth I found this year, however, was one that hatched from nest



Carpatolechia alburnella, the first moth of the year was hatched from a nest material collected from a nest box in the Old Churchyard.



Esperia suphurella – one of our attractive micromoths

material cleaned out of the bird boxes in the Old Churchyard. I have plotted graphs of the accumulative totals of specimens (in red) and species (in green) throughout the year. They show how, because of the cold spring, moth numbers and species were unusually low until around April. May is always a dull time and the graphs show that I was away in June. Then numbers soared during the warm weather in July and August. Although the largest numbers of specimens were caught in September, the numbers of species were already beginning to decline. Throughout the year, I have trapped 4060 moths belonging to 290 species during 59 trapping sessions. The figures for previous years were for 2010 - 2671 specimens and 269 species; for 2011 - 2933 specimens and 289 species; and for 2012 - 2106 specimens and 296 species. However, my favourite moth picture for the year was not one of an adult but of a caterpillar. I found this psychedelic caterpillar of a pale tussock moth *Calliteara pudibunda* one night in October eating one of our Acers.



Martin Angel

Our Footpaths in 2013

Firstly, many thanks to our fine team of footpath wardens who monitor the condition of the many footpaths in the Bourne area.

Pale tussock caterpillar

Our team regularly walk the paths allocated to them and report back any problems to our footpath coordinator Martin Wisdom who records all issues and in turn, where necessary, notifies the Surrey Rights of Way team via Surrey's interactive website. The issues are then prioritised according to the seriousness of the problem – fallen trees or branches blocking paths are normally cleared within few days, whereas missing or damaged posts are added to a worksheet, which is passed to a contractor's team, who take action when there is sufficient work to be done in an area. More major problems are reviewed with the Surrey Countryside Access Officer, James Browne, and are only actioned when funds and resources are available (Sadly we have several such issues that have been waiting for some months, even years!)

Several of our wardens have also been trained as Surrey Volunteer Footpath Wardens who are thereby permitted to resolve straight-forward problems themselves, such as cutting back vegetation and the replacing missing arrow signs

The storm overnight on 28th October caused some damage in our area with two issues being reported to the Surrey ROW team. Several fence panels were brought down on Old Mans Hill path (68) off Lodge Hill Road. Whilst this is the fence "owners" responsibility to resolve permanently, as the path was blocked for walkers, a report was made to the Surrey team, and temporary repairs are now in place.



The fence panels across Old Man's Hill



The large oak branch brought down across footpath 51

A large Oak Tree branch was also brought down alongside the Bourne stream on foortpath 52, which Surrey County Council workmen cleared within 24 hours! Martin Wisdom

Plants to get MBL buzzing

The garden at Middle Bourne Lane has had a planting makeover this autumn. The garden had been lacking 'middle storey' plants and we have aimed to rectify this, not only to provide more interest to visitors but also to greatly increase the numbers of flowers attractive to pollinators. We wanted to really get Middle Bourne Lane buzzing. A garden that is really going to appeal to a broad range of pollinating insects must have a number of key elements to its design:

- There must be flowers for as much of the year as possible.
- Planting is done using groups of the same type to create large blocks so insects can easily hop from bloom to bloom.
- The plants are ideally in a sunny spot.
- There are plants from the favoured plant families of deadnettle (Lamiaceae), daisy (Asteraceae) as well as buttercup (Ranunculaceae), rose (Rosaceae), borage (Boraginaceae) and foxglove (Scrophulariaceae).
- There is a range of flower heights and colours; bear in mind that bees cannot see red and prefer pinks and purples. Yellows however appeal to other useful insects such as hoverflies. (Note insect can see ultra-violet colours that are invisible to us)
- A good range of different flower structures is included; different flower shapes appeal to different species.
- A lot of the plants are either biennials (they have a two year life cycle) or herbaceous perennials which come back year after year.
- The plants are as near to the species type as possible and not overbred e.g. with double flowers.
- Water is easily accessible.



A globe thistle abuzz with bees

So, with these points in mind, we have included plants such as hellebores, perennial cornflower, ox-eye daisy, *Echinacea, Stachys* (lamb's ear), *Echinops* (globe thistle), *Coreopsis, Phlomis, Dianthus* and *Inula* as well as *Verbena bonariensis* and *Bergenia*. Most of these belong to the preferred plant families and all are herbaceous perennials that should continue to provide the garden with pollen and nectar year after year.

We are hugely grateful to the green-fingered members of the group who either grew or donated plants for this project. Next year, thanks to their efforts, we should have a spectacular, buzzing, humming display to look forward to. Hilary Dickson

Planning Report – a mix of success and failure

There are three planning matters to describe from the last few months:

First was a welcome success; it was for a development at 49 Burnt Hill Road – near the little bridge over The Bourne stream. It was the third application, over the years, for a new house to be built at the junction of Burnt Hill Road and Tyford Lane, and would have been situated in one of the last open spaces in the Bourne Valley. A record number of objections (including ours) were posted to the original application. It was duly dismissed by Waverley planning, and inevitably went to appeal. The recent history of appeals has been for the majority of appeals to have been approved by the Government Inspectorate; so it was a welcome surprise when the Waverley dismissal was upheld in this case. Reading the appeal decision notice, it was a pleasure to see that the Inspector, Elizabeth Laurence, had clearly been to the site, had taken notice of the landscape and environment, and produced a sensible and carefully considered report. This contrasts with some recent inspectorate reports where you wonder if the Inspector actually got out of their car! Full marks to Ms Laurence!

The Bourne Woods Forestry Commission Filming application was finally decided, after what seemed like an interminable delay. Probably no-one got everything that they wanted, but after considerable lobbying a number of concessions to the original application were extracted, and hopefully a reasonable compromise will result. The number of months available to film companies is now more manageable, especially if looked at over a two year period, and there are now more restrictions on night work and helicopter overflights. Perhaps most usefully the permission is to be reviewed in five years, when we can all reflect on how the experiment has progressed. The Forestry Commission's website currently says *"We will now be working to put in place the arrangements and documents that are required by the planning consent."* - so it appears that they have accepted the conditions, and will not appeal so filming can go ahead again. We congratulate Tony Patterson of The Bourne Residents Association for presenting such a strong case for modifying the application. Finally, Councillors O'Grady, Lear, and Cockburn deserve honourable mentions for pointing out in no uncertain terms the failings of both the Forestry Commission Application and the Waverley Planning Department; they were instrumental in the imposition of many of the conditions mentioned above.

And finally one we did not win — Kendal Cottage in Old Church Lane. This has been the scene of a protracted, and sometimes very public and vitriolic battle by a developer who wants to change the two bed farmhouse/cottage into a huge modern mansion, in a most sensitive conservation area with its local literary associations. Because of the exploitation of 'Permitted Development', which is a badly written piece of legislation, Waverley Planning have had no option other than to pass this application, in addition they also have been unable to impose many of the conditions which would normally have been imposed under normal planning rules. Planning clearly did their best, including quoting Farnham Town Council's adverse comments as well as a

good précis of our letter, but in the end could not find a legal reason to refuse. However, they have included warnings about the legal aspects of bat disturbance, and added a Surrey Wildlife Trust letter about badger protection, so I think we did have some useful influence. You can't win them all!

Otherwise it's quite quiet on the planning front at the moment, but Christmas is coming, and from past experience it will bring a clutch of new applications, in the hope that no-one will notice them and raise objections during the holidays.

Charles Fearnley

Publicity

Our last Newsletter received good coverage in the monthly Farnham Diary, which has often carried news of our activities. Recently, the first issue of the re-launched Bourne Parish magazine in December has an interview with Noel Moss and gives an excellent overview of our Group's work, with special mention of the Old Churchyard. Also very locally, we were delighted to be described as 'amazing' in the most recent Bourne Green Newsletter, which has a request to its readers to complete our garden questionnaire.



One of the pictures published on our Facebook page was this one of a pinkbarred sallow moth found one evening in Compton Field in September.

The Farnham Herald has not given us a great deal of coverage since the excellent spread on The Bourne stream project in early 2013, but that is because we have not started other new initiatives of wider interest. It carried a good article and photograph of the dedication of the seat in memory of Stan Cockett. We will continue to look for news items that may interest its readership in 2014.

In December our website has had its most extensive refresh for some time and now has photos and short profiles of all members of the Committee. We hope that this group of interesting people may attract further volunteers! We try to post regular new items about activities on the home page, with the most recent being about our work in the Underdown nature reserve after the storm. Our Sunday work sessions and other key dates for the Group are available to members on the website.

We continue to use Facebook to post reports of our work sessions and some of our members provide our Facebook page with interesting wildlife observations with some wonderful photographs. We always encourage more of you to share your pictures taken locally that show the variety of nature and attractive surroundings we work to maintain. Please contact David Todd for further information if you do not wish to use Facebook yourself. David Todd

STOP PRESS

Changing the course of The Bourne Stream

On Christmas night last year there was a landslip down the steep embankment into The Bourne stream adjacent to Sturt Walk. This had been brought about by a very wet year in 2012 and some extremely ill-advised landscaping by the landowner. After months of negotiating with the owner and with Waverley (who own the other bank of the stream), the Environment Agency decided to fulfil their responsibility of maintaining an unobstructed watercourse by diverting the stream away from the embankment. With the approach of autumn this work became urgent because of the likelihood of heavy rain; work was schedule to start on 16th September and the footpath was closed in readiness. In fact, work did not get under way for another two weeks and has

proceeded very slowly. In the main this seems to have been due to inadequate or faulty machinery to drive in the steel piles.



Situation along Sturt Walk on 6th December looking upstream from the bottom of Old Church lane.

The picture shows the situation on 6th December. On the left is the footpath which will have a new surface. It rises gently away from the camera towards what will be a new footbridge just beyond where the excavator is standing. To the right of the path is the line of interlocking steel piles standing about 1m high. These will be hidden from view by timber cladding, work on which is just starting. Behind the piling and not visible are rock filled gabions to complete the flood bank. The whole will be topped by grass and flowers. The new stream bed is just visible between the woodwork and the stonework on the right hand side. The stream (almost dry at present) is already flowing along this new bed. The

bare earth in the middle of the photograph will be landscaped with some new planting. When the stream is in spate this will form a small natural flood plain.

Now that the form of these changes can be seen, it seems it is going to be a nicely landscaped solution with a much more attractive bridge than the old one and, above all, greatly improved flood protection. The work has undoubtedly disturbed existing wildlife and cost a nice little oak tree. A question remains as to what the landowner will do about the site of the landslip (hidden in the trees on the right of the photograph). The Environment Agency is saying it hopes to finish by 20th December – provided the new bridge is delivered on time!

Noel Moss

There are two more future events you should know about:-

The next Big Garden bird watch is on 25-26th Jan. 2014.

The next Surrey Wildlife Trust BioBlitz will be at Newlands corner on 21-22nd June – a family day a strongly recommended fun and learning day.

Richard Sandars Fiona Warburton Karen Redman Martin Wisdom
Karen Redman Martin Wisdom
Martin Wisdom
David Todd
Charles Fearnley
Hilary Dickson
Martin Angel
Lisa Malcolm
<u>il.com</u>