

# Newsletter

Winter 2015-2016

The **Bourne**  
Conservation Group



**Photo Feature:** This colourful bug, a rhododendron leaf-hopper, *Grahocephala fennali*, was caught in my garden on Vicarage Hill. It is a native of the USA and was introduced here in the early 1900's. It is one of the few species that will feed on rhododendron. The adults can be found from late summer through to the end of November.

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**Editorial**

In 1976 I attended an International Oceanographic Conference at which two contrasting papers were presented. The first discussed how fluctuations in the Earth’s orbit were related to the 17,000 year cycle of alternating ice ages and warm periods, and forecasted that we were on the verge of the onset of another ice age. The second paper discussed the green house effect of raising the carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere and how World climate was already showing dangerous signs of warming. Over the intervening forty years it has become increasingly evident that the latter paper carried the more dire warning. At last developed nations are recognising the dangers as the probable symptoms of serious changes to global climates become increasingly evident – such as the flooding of



**The predictions are that extreme weather events, like the Cumbrian floods and conversely droughts will become more frequent.**

atolls in the Pacific and record breaking rain-fall and flooding in Cumbria this month. Like having cancer, if we ignore these early symptoms the impacts will be catastrophic even terminal. We have to start acting, individually, communally, nationally and internationally if we are to avoid our world becoming devastated. The remedial actions will be neither cheap nor easy. If we continued to eat, drink and make merry today – tomorrow we will ....?? It is unfortunate that the

unsavoury antics of ISIS are distracting attention away from the longer-term global problems that lie ahead of us. The present refugee crisis will seem like a walk in the park compared with what we may have to cope with in

the future – and not very distant future. A sobering thought for the New Year, but our local conservation work is one way in which our individual personal efforts can make a contribution.

Martin Angel

**For your diaries the BCG work programme to summer 2016**

<b>Main sessions</b>		<b>Mid week sessions</b>
<b>January</b>	Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> Woodland manage <sup>t</sup> Burnt Hill Wood	<b>Thurs 7<sup>th</sup>; Fri 15<sup>th</sup>; Weds 20<sup>th</sup>; Tues 26<sup>th</sup></b>
	<b>Social event – St Martin’s Hall 1530-1730h</b>	
<b>February</b>	Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> Langham’s Recreation Ground	<b>Mon 1<sup>st</sup>; Fri 12<sup>th</sup>; Weds 17<sup>th</sup>; Tues 23<sup>rd</sup>;</b>
	Toad Watches start along Boundary Road	<b>Mon 29<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>March</b>	Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> To be decided	<b>Fri 11<sup>th</sup>; Thurs 17<sup>th</sup> Tues 22<sup>nd</sup>; Thurs 31<sup>st</sup></b>
	Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday	
<b>April</b>	Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> To be decided	<b>Dates of further midweek sessions to</b>
	Butterfly transects begin	<b>be announced later.</b>
<b>May</b>	Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> To be decided	
	Tub planting at cross-roads	
<b>June</b>	Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> To be decided	
	Saturday 11 <sup>th</sup> Bioblitz in Old Churchyard	
<b>July</b>	Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> To be decided	
	<b>Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> The Bourne Show</b>	

## A New Wall at The Bourne Crossroads

Some residents became alarmed in October when Surrey County Council Highways appeared with heavy machinery on the corner of Lodge Hill Road. Were they going to build something to rival the hideous structure across the road considered by many to rival the Berlin Wall? Fortunately this was not the case as they were in fact constructing a new raised flower bed in natural stone to replace the wooden structure we had installed in 2005 and had reached its sell-by date.

The Crossroads is an important focal point in the village and we have done all we can to keep it as an attractive place for residents and a habitat for wildlife in the increasingly urban environment all around. Indeed the



We started work at the crossroads in 2006 before the 'Wall' was built and the Toyota Garage was still there.



Construction work in progress

wooden bollards all round and evening out the speed hump on Burnt Hill Road. And, of course, the finger post with its roundel has already become an iconic symbol of The Bourne.

We believe the new raised bed is a fitting complement to the sign and we are grateful to Highways for building it for us. Our task was to approve the design and do the planting. For that there was much preparation to be done and this was led by Vivien Sinfield who has preserved many of the old plants for use elsewhere. The new planting plan was kindly drawn up for us by Cathy Morse to whom we most grateful as also to the planting team. All in all we think this has been yet another good example of our cooperative work in the community. By the way, all the plants chosen are on the RHS "Perfect for Pollinators" list. Noel Moss

Crossroad Project was the first scheme that BCG undertook. It started with clearing the scrub and litter from the embankment and moved onto planting bulbs along the grass verge, followed by re-positioning the seat and building the original flower bed. All this has served very well but has gradually evolved. In part this has been due to the inception of the Bourne Beautification Project in which we have partnered The Bourne Residents Association. Together we have designed and maintained the excellent flower arrangements and worked with Highways to improve other aspects such standardising on



All done and planted – the planting team stand by their good work.

## The Underdown Reserve

The Underdown Reserve in the Bourne is one of Surrey Wildlife Trust's least known reserves and also the smallest being much the small size as the Old Churchyard. It lies just within The Bourne (at SU832444) - on the north side of The Bourne Stream behind the gardens of the houses along the east side of Sandrock Hill Road, and not very far from the Bat and Ball Pub. It was donated to SWT in 1987 by Mrs Underdown, who we believe lived at 3 Wicket Hill, in memory of her husband. It consists of a narrow strip of woodland on a steep slope and is a remnant strip of the heathland that formerly bordered south Farnham. At the top of the slope are some mature trees, mostly Scots pines, between which are the openings of a moderately sized badger sett. BCG has been assisting with management of the site for six years, helping the site manager Fiona Hayes to open up the sunny slope, so that the heathland vegetation (heather and gorse) will flourish, and also to provide some of the bare soil habitat that solitary bees and other desirable insects need for their nesting burrows. We have helped to clear some of the more invasive plants - sycamores, black cherry and snowberry. A number of elms grow there; these are the food plant of one of our threatened butterflies, the white-letter hairstreak, as well as several less common moth species. The elms are re-colonising, but unfortunately once they reach a height of about 20-30 feet they get attacked by the bark beetle that transmits Dutch Elm disease and they die. So by cutting out and burning any dead or dying elms we hope to curb the spread of the disease. The plan is to plant a mixed species (blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel and cherry) hedge along the boundary at the back of the gardens from where the snowberry has been removed. At one of the work parties this year we found a rusting two man cross saw that must be over 50 years old and points to the use of timber from the site in the past.

Martin Angel



Warm work undertaking woodland management in Underdown - clearing away a large sycamore that had been casting dense shade on the bank.

## 'Garden' Bioblitz 2016



An elephant hawkmoth is one of the hawkmoths we would hope to see.

Despite the poor weather we experienced during the garden bioblitz in the Middle Bourne Lane Community Garden on the 31<sup>st</sup> May in 2015, we gathered some really useful information particularly on the plants. So this has encouraged us to organise another event in 2016. This time we are planning to carry out the bioblitz in the Old Church Yard. The date we have selected is Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June, which will coincide with the date of National Moth night in 2016. We will start by running the moth trap on the night of Friday 10<sup>th</sup>. So, the first event in the morning will be recording catch; later the records will be submitted to the national recording scheme. The theme for National moth night is to be hawkmoths, and based on previous years' records we should be able to show you one or more of elephant, lime and poplar hawkmoths. We will also run another botanical survey and Isobel Girvan (SWT)

has offered to help out again this year. Will we equal the remarkable tally of 160 species of plants that Isobel and Hilary identified in Middle Bourne Lane? Other activities will include having another pond dipping session, keep a running tally of birds, investigating catches in pitfall traps and what has taken up residence beneath refuge mats. We will welcome the participation by any children who are accompanied by an appropriate guardian. The idea is that it should be an enjoyable experience for all (with a bit of learning thrown in), and I can guarantee that you will be pleasantly amazed by the wealth and diversity of the wildlife that inhabits our patch.

Martin Angel

## Moths in 2015

This year I have trapped on 104 evenings, mostly in our garden in The Bourne, but 2 nights in Middle Bourne Lane (for the Garden Bioblitz the other in preparation for Farnham-in-Bloom), one in the Old Churchyard (National Moth Night), two in Sablewood (for Bruce Calender), 8 in Royal common (for SWT), 4 on Thundry Meadow (for SWT), and 3 in Farnham Park (for Friends of Farnham Park). In the garden I have caught 5168 moths belonging to 365 species. The total species count for the year stands at 476. The most abundant moth by far (636), as in previous years, was the common quaker - a species that normally flies in the Spring between mid-February and mid-April, but this year one turned up in late November. Throughout the early Spring, the persistent occurrence of clear skies after sunset temperatures



This pebble prominent was one of the moths caught in the Middle Bourne Lane garden and shown to the Farnham-in Bloom judges.



This streamer was one of the moths that appeared in the garden for the first time in 2015.

resulted in air temperatures plummeting, and catches remained persistently poor until the end of April. The toad watchers shared much the same experience. As a result the running tally of moth numbers did not exceed 1000 until 23rd April, which was three weeks later than in 2014. The final total count for 2015 was 15% lower than in 2014. However, the numbers of species I recorded rose from 336 in 2014 to 365 this year. This increase in species numbers is partially explained by my learning to identify more of the micromoths. As reported in the last newsletter the most exciting catch for me this year was a goat moth. Another first for the year was a streamer that was caught in the early spring. The national moth night session which was run in the Old Churchyard after the heritage walk on 12<sup>th</sup> September was supposed to be focussing on migrant species. But once again the weather played a role in making it a rather disappointing evening.

Not only was a rather chilly, but the winds had been blowing persistently from the north-west, so that no migrant species appeared in the Old Churchyard - such are the unpredictable vagaries of moth trapping! On the previous Thursday, I participated in another Moth Night event this time on Royal Common (near Elstead), where we were rewarded with superb catches that included a clifden nonpareil.

Martin Angel

## A Butterfly Transect in The Bourne?

In the last newsletter the significant potential of 'citizen science' was discussed in providing extensive field data



A comma butterfly which is one of the species that has actually increased in abundance recently.

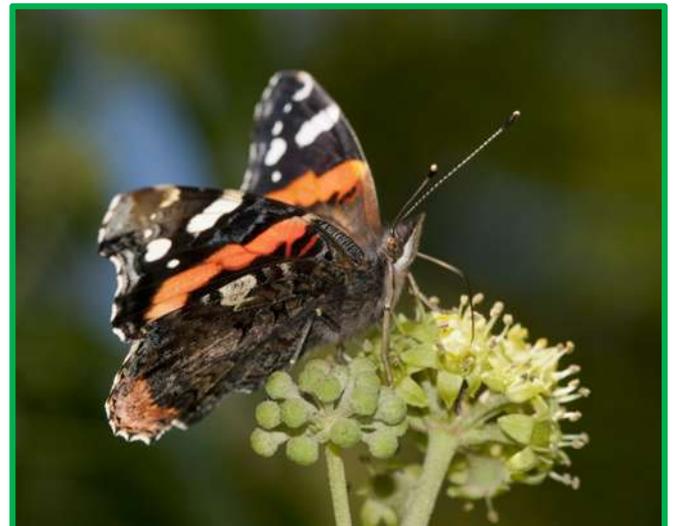
surveyed routinely each week between 1045 and 1545h in the 26 weeks from April to September, whenever the weather is suitable. During each walk participants will record and count all the butterflies they see within 5m of the path. The records will then be entered on a tailored field-sheet and submitted on-line. To ensure we can fulfil such a commitment we will need a team of about four volunteers so that any holiday periods can be covered. Data for any missed weeks can be interpolated from previous counts, but the results will be compromised if too many are missed.

In the New Year I am going to explore a route with Harry Clarke who is the Butterfly Conservation transect coordinator for Surrey. We will start from Bourne Green and go up through Bourne Woods (avoiding areas that may be blocked during filming). Any volunteers will be trained in butterfly identification, and I am sure that any other observations that are recorded (like bird counts etc) will be welcomed. Can anyone interested in participating - you do not have to join Butterfly Conservation - please contact me ([mvangel37@gmail.com](mailto:mvangel37@gmail.com)). If you are interested in seeing previous year's results they are available on the Butterfly Conservation website.

Martin Angel

that are proving invaluable in making environmental decisions more robust. BCG is already contributing data through our toad watches and biodiversity surveys, but the group can contribute even more, if the membership is willing to participate. I am suggesting that the Group becomes involved in surveying a butterfly transect. The transect scheme is organised by Butterfly Conservation and was launched in 1976. Butterflies are proving to be sensitive indicators of the health of our environment and how our local ecology is responding to environmental pressures such as climate change. The fluctuations in the abundances of the 52 of the 59 British species that are monitored show a clear relationship to the weather and its long term vagaries, and may throw light on what is causing the declines in pollinators that are so worrying.

A transect is a fixed-route typically 1-3km long so can be walked in about an hour. The transect needs to be



A red admiral butterfly feeding on ivy flowers in the autumn. The butterflies hibernate so you may find them asleep in your garden shed.

## Noenics – Silent Spring revisited?

One of the most significant environmental books ever to be published was Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' in which she catalogued the catastrophic impacts the almost universal use of DDT was having on wildlife. This persistent

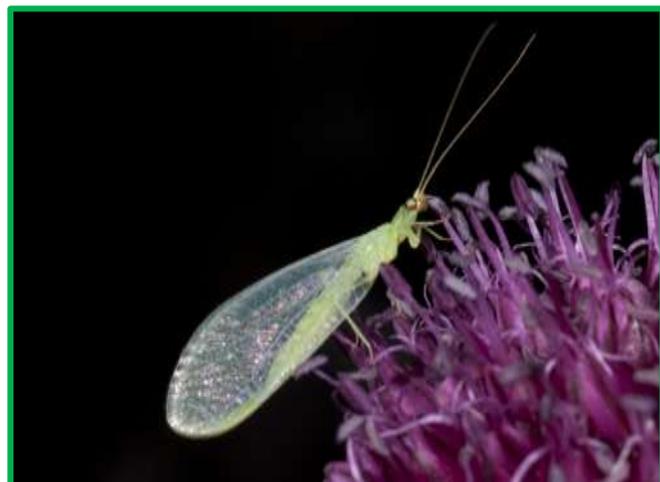


A rosy rustic moth gathers nectar from Verbena one of the highly recommended pollinator friendly flowers you can grow in the garden.

compound was being concentrated up the food chain, and was poisoning the top predators. For example it was resulting in the thinning of the egg shells of many of our birds of prey so the eggs were crushed during brooding. There were disastrous declines in very many species and not just in birds! May be we are facing similar problems today with the wide use of neonics in agriculture and the gardening industry. Neonics (or neonicotinoids) are relatively new systemic insecticides (the first of this family of compounds was introduced by Bayer in 1991). They persist on the surfaces of treated plants (foliage and seeds) and permeate the plant tissues making them poisonous to any consumers – the manufacturers claim that we, as consumers, are safe. There are five types of neonics being used in the UK for: - 1. The seed treatment of cereals, sugar beet and oil seed rape (about 90% of these crops are so treated); 2. Treatment of the soils in which ornamental plants are planted; 3. Treatment of turf in amenity areas; 4. Foliage sprays of apple and pears, and glasshouse crops. Worryingly they are widely available in commercial insecticides available to the general public (see <http://www.pan-uk.org/home-garden/list-of-home-and-garden-pesticides-containing-neonicotinoids>).

Evidence is accumulating that they are responsible for some of the declines in bee populations, in butterfly populations and may be disrupting the navigation abilities of migrating birds. They may well be a significant factor contributing to declines of many of the pollinating species on which we are so dependent. Already in some Chinese orchards fruit blossom has to be hand pollinated because bees are so rare there! However, the manufacturers and the agricultural industry argue that until there is scientific evidence verifying their deleterious environmental impacts, their usage should not be curtailed. The precautionary principle would argue the opposite especially as the research needed will take time and so little of it is being funded. What research is being carried out, for example under the aegis of Butterfly Conservation, will take a long time, may be several years. Can we afford to wait that long? Like taking action to ameliorate climate change, the longer the taking of remedial action is delayed, the less effective it will be and more likely we are to encounter irreversible environmental changes.

So what can we, as individuals, do? Refrain from using insecticides in our gardens. Always ask when buying plants and seeds from a garden centre whether they have been treated with insecticides, (these will almost certainly be



This lacewing gathering pollen from an *Allium* is more than just another important pollinator – its larvae are voracious consumers of greenfly.

neonics). So if you are trying to boost the attractiveness of your garden to pollinators, inadvertently your efforts could well be thwarted by the way in which your new plants may have been treated.

Martin Angel

## Heritage walks 2015

This was the third year that we have participated in the Heritage Open Days run every autumn by the Farnham Society and sponsored by the town council. Since we first started offering tours of the Old Churchyard and an area of the Bourne most closely associated with George Sturt's writings we have followed what has now become a familiar pattern with a Friday evening and Saturday morning tour, as previously described on the website. Each year we have managed to add a bit extra to our tours. Last year it was a visit to the site in Middle Bourne Avenue reputed to be where the young William Cobbett and his two brothers 'disported' themselves by taking it in turns to roll down a sandbank in their smock- frocks. This year tour leaders were able to provide some more to the history of Havelock Cottage where Fred Grover's wife Lucy grew up. The story of those times is not a happy one as Lucy's father was an alcoholic who eventually took his own life.



Havelock Cottage today, where Lucy grew up, is opposite Sturt's House in Old Church Lane.

In the Old Churchyard we looked at the more permanent notices where we believe the unmarked graves of Fred and Lucy are located, giving short descriptions of the two drawn from Sturt's *Lucy Bettesworth* and *The Bettesworth Book*. Also this year we were fortunate to have as one of our visitors the new owner of Little Willows Cottage who was able to describe her plans to extend the cottage while seeking to retain the heritage features of the original building.

Richard Sandars

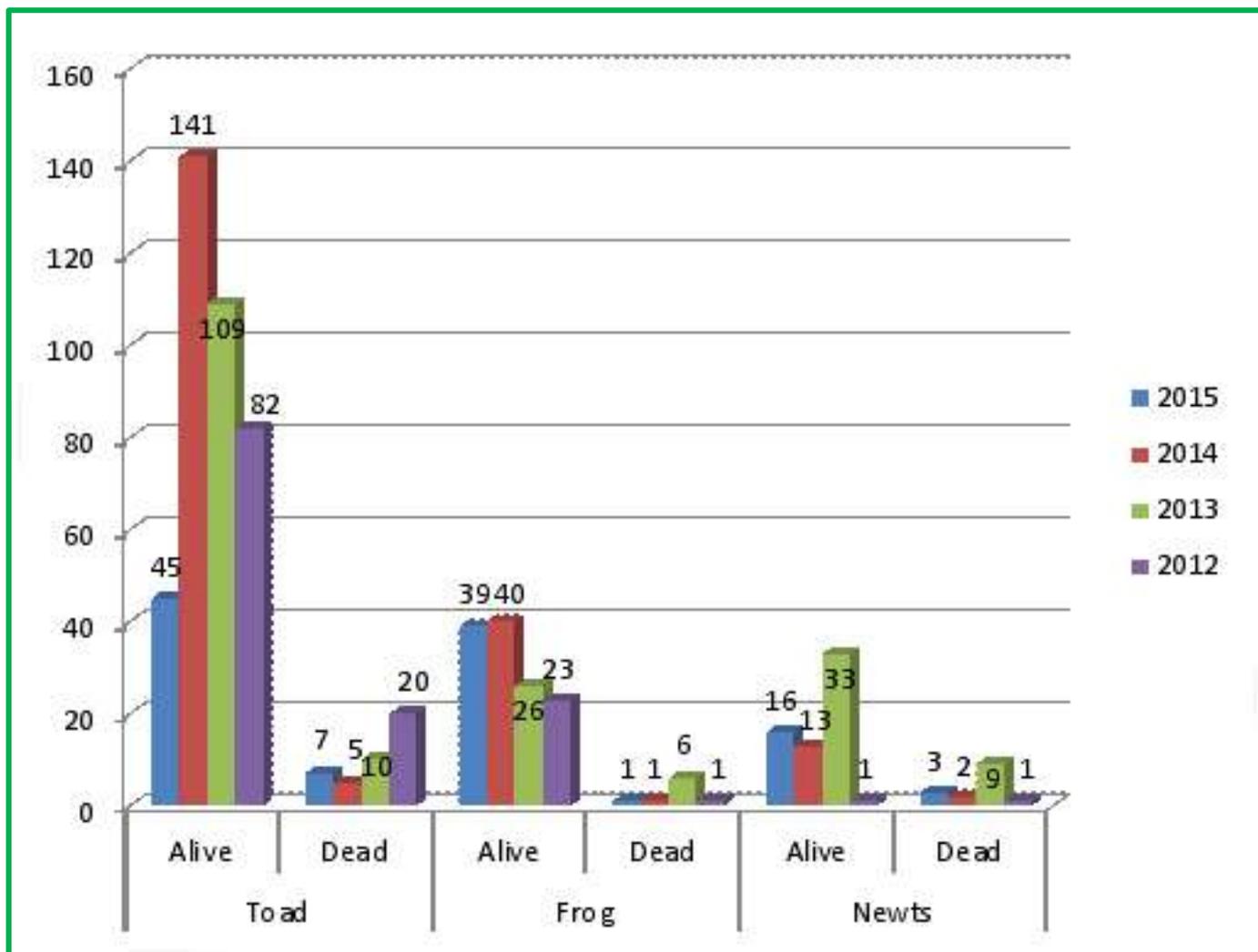
## Toadwatches 2012-2015



Come rescue me – I was never taught the 'Green cross code'

2016 will see the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bourne Conservation Group protecting our toads, frogs and newts in their post hibernation migration to their breeding ponds. Each year, around late February/early March, on behalf of Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group (SARG), the Bourne Conservation Group patrols Boundary Road (outside Rowledge village) looking out for toads, frogs and newts that are crossing the road. While it is not a particularly busy road, on the dark nights, without volunteer help, many amphibians do get squashed by passing cars, particularly during the rush hour.

From the end of February, as the temperatures rise to 7°C or more (or if the weather is very wet) toads, frogs and newts migrate from their winter hibernation sites to their breeding ponds. Toads can migrate up to 2km from their hibernation site to their breeding ponds. On warmer, wet nights in early Spring during a 1 – 2 hour survey we have rescued as many as 90 amphibians! Each year, the numbers we record are passed to Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group contributing to their research.



Above is a summary of our recordings for the last 4 years.

Variations in numbers may be partly because of Increased surveyor awareness (especially for newts that are quite hard to spot in the torchlight on a wet road) and partly the result of inter-annual temperature differences (in 2015 the spring was cooler than 2014). However, we finish our patrols after the rush hour at 1930h and the amphibians may have continued to migrate throughout the night unseen by us. It will be interesting to compare the numbers for 2016 to see if this decrease is a trend or just a one year aberration.

**So we need your help again in 2016!** If you are interested in helping out patrolling Boundary Road to give a safe crossing to toads, frogs and newts in February and March 2016, please 'phone Lisa Malcolm on 07717 791514 or e-mail : [lisa.malcolm31@gmail.com](mailto:lisa.malcolm31@gmail.com) for more details. We can provide



Male smooth newts in a pond waiting for the females.

meeting details and hi-visibility jackets. You will need warm clothing, comfortable foot-ware and a good torch. We look forward to seeing you. Even now you may come across amphibians in the garden. Toads, newts and frogs spend their winters sheltering burrowed away in refuges under rocks or in compost heaps, and so providing refuges of wood or rocks piles with good gaps near your pond or anywhere in long undergrowth will be ideal. They are excellent controllers of pests and so worth your protection. So whenever tidying your garden or using your compost early in the year keep a good look out for overwintering amphibians!

Lisa Malcolm

## Publicity

The Heritage Open Days in September once again generated good coverage for BCG, not just because of the goodwill from those who joined the guided walks, but by association with the Farnham Society's publicity, they put our name in front of all in the Farnham area interested in heritage. We placed an article in the Farnham Herald in October about the effects of the horse chestnut leaf miner, which helped emphasise our interest in biodiversity.

Now that the recent work at the Lower Bourne Crossroads is complete, we will seek further publicity for our efforts at this highly visible part of the local scene over the past ten years, and link it to our contribution to the Bourne Beautification Project. The group is purchasing a digital projector which will enable us to offer talks to local groups and societies on subjects ranging from local heritage to biodiversity for a modest fee to boost our finances. So if anyone knows of any group looking for such a talk please contact us via the BCG e-mail address [info@bourneconservation.org.uk](mailto:info@bourneconservation.org.uk)

The dark nights of winter are a good time to refresh the extensive information held on our website, and we always welcome contributions and observations from our members and friends.

David Todd

### Your Committee

Chairman	Noel Moss
Secretary	Richard Sandars
Treasurer	Fiona Warburton
Membership	Karen Redman
Footpath co-ordinator	David Dearsley
Publicity	David Todd
Technical support	Charles Fearnley
Horticulture	Hilary Dickson
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You will note that there have been a couple of recent changes in the composition of the Committee and/or the tasks being undertaken by each member. Martin Wisdom (Martin 2) has moved to pastures new – and we thank him for all the work he has achieved on our behalf. His replacement as footpath co-coordinator is David Dearsley. Charles Fearnley has had to give up the onerous and demanding task of dealing with all the planning issues, but remains on the Committee as our technical advisor – for which his first task has been to advise us on what model

of digital projector we might buy. The Planning issues are now to be undertaken by individual members of the Committee.

## Postscript

While preparing the final draft of this Newsletter the results of the Climate Change Conference in Paris were announced. While these are considerable advances - there is no doubt that compromises have had to be made in order to get the more than 150 nations too agree. This means that there are big questions left unanswered, which are already posing doubts as to the adequacy of the proposed measures. I, personally do not believe they are enough. Limiting the global temperature rise to between 1.5 -2°C will not be inadequate – we are already seeing glaciers retreating, polar ice melting (bye bye polar bears!) and sea-levels rising so that Pacific islands are being inundated. Globally millions of people live within a metre of present sea levels – if all these peoples are displaced, the present refugee crisis will pale into insignificance. Will we have to get used to death tolls of many thousands rather than a few hundred in climate related catastrophes? In Britain our coastal flood defences will prove inadequate, so can we continue afford to re-build defences that within the foreseeable future will prove useless? Will we see repeats of the 1953 floods associated with storm surges? We will continue to have too much water in some places and far too little in others. In Farnham we seem to be buffered against the worst of these impacts, but impacts there will be. Despite the best efforts of climate scientists major uncertainties remain when making any long-term predictions unreliable.

Then politically there are doubts. For example will these agreements be 'over-Trumped' after the next US presidential election? How will developing countries like India with vast coal reserves be able to limit their carbon dioxide emissions while still growing their economies? Will China's responses be adequate? How much of the 'tab' will we have to pick up? So far so good – but is any of this deliverable? We can but hope!

Martin Angel