

# Newsletter

Winter 2012/13

The **Bourne**  
**Conservation** Group



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## Future Work Programme

Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Woodland Management
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	Crossroads
February/March	Toad watches
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> March	Footpath maintenance
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> April	Middle Bourne Lane
Saturday 13 <sup>th</sup> April	Open Day, Sable Wood
Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup> May	Bourne Stream work
Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> June	Balsam Bash
Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> June	Junior training day OCY
8-19 <sup>th</sup> July	Farnham-in-Bloom judging
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> July	Old Churchyard
Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> July	The Bourne Show
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> Aug	To be decided
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> Sept	AGM
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> Sept	OCY
Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Heritage Day

## Editorial

### Happy Christmas and New Year to you all.

The aim of this newsletter is to give some impression of the high level of activity we are currently involved in. Previous issues of the newsletter have been criticised for being dauntingly long and so have remained unread, hence defeating the object. Your committee wants to keep you, our membership and friends, fully informed about what is going on, especially at this critical time when the whole planning system is in the melting pot. Herein lies a problem – how best can we keep you up-to-date with what is happening? The issues will inevitably impinge on all our lives, and we want to ensure

that everyone has a chance to express well informed opinions, and to vote knowledgeably in the eventual referendum (see the item on the Neighbourhood plan).

## A Group for All Seasons

Since our last newsletter in July we have held our AGM at which those present were able to review and discuss our work over the preceding year. Once again it has been a period of remarkable achievement for a voluntary group. The numbers of hours we had worked have increased, so has the time spent on supporting activities such as attending meetings, giving presentations, contributing to the Neighbourhood Plan and

addressing development issues. All of this reflects extremely well on every Member and Friend of our Group so warm thanks are very much in order.

Many conservation groups concentrate their excellent efforts on a single site, examples being the Rowhill Nature Reserve Society or the Fleet Pond Society. BCG is different! We work right across the 1500 acres of The Bourne helping to look after its 'Green Infrastructure' and enhancing its biodiversity. The variety of what we do is quite amazing! Even in the short period since July we have kept up with the work in the Old Churchyard and Middle Bourne Lane including taking part in Farnham-in-Bloom, kept on top of the tasks along our footpaths, built a flight of steps at the top of Old Church Lane, made quite an impact on the Underdown nature reserve and planted another 1000 or so bulbs along the A287 and elsewhere. We have also enjoyed helping other community groups such as the Beavers, of whom we have seen quite a lot of this year.



**The step building team sit down on the job at the top of Old Church Lane in August (front to back Noel Moss, Martin Angel, Richard Sandars and Charles Fearnley).**

As we go to print our work is continuing with autumnal tasks at all our main sites and we are

also planning the year ahead starting with a session of woodland management in Paradise Wood in January. Thereafter our efforts will follow much the same sort of pattern as in the past, but perhaps with more emphasis on The Bourne Stream within the context of the river Wey catchment programme reported on below. We are actively considering how best to progress with the Battings Garden project started in 2012 (see the article).

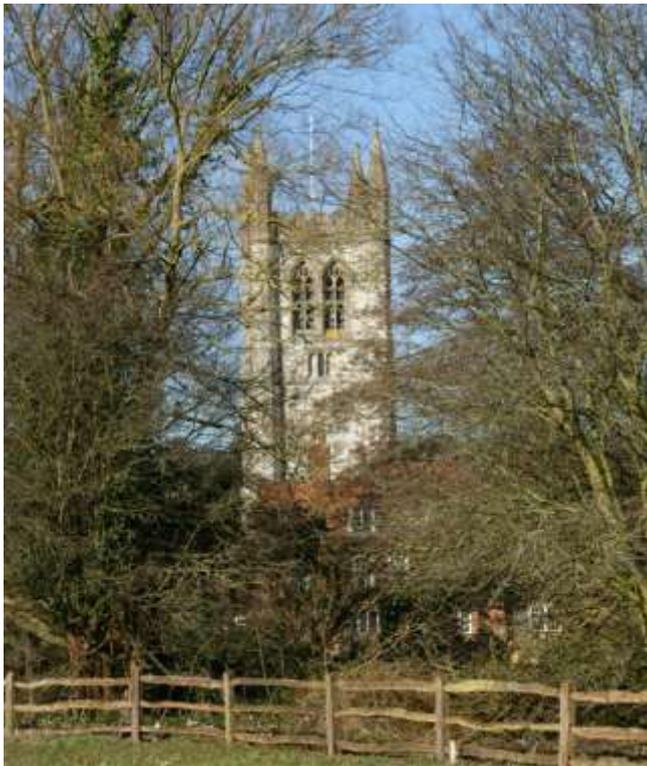
The coming year promises to be no less busy, interesting and challenging for all members as 2012. The good thing is that, based on ten years' experience, we know we can rely on everybody's help, support and commitment to get the jobs done.

## **Farnham's Neighbourhood Plan**

Theoretically the Localism Act of 2011 gives communities the right to shape the development of their local area through the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. Farnham had already attempted to influence development through its Design Statement, and has now circulated its first draft of a Plan. It is a document that, if accepted by Central Government, will guide development within the town and immediate villages for the next fifteen years. In the absence of such a plan, Farnham's future will be controlled by Waverley BC enforcing the policies of central government! Farnham council has been actively developing the plan under the leadership of Carole Cockburn, our councillor for the Bourne Ward. It will include contributions from local residents and other relevant groups, including our own, and is now in draft form.

A workshop to discuss the draft was held on November 29<sup>th</sup>. It was attended by four of our members. Initially, there were discussions between small mixed groups of six to eight participants, who constructively criticised the draft, suggesting improvements and edits. The comments of each small group were collated and will contribute to a second draft. There was some lively discussion, firmly chaired by Carole Cockburn.

Subjects the Plan has to address include future Population and Housing, Infrastructure, Retail, Employment, Transport, Education, Sport and



**Farnham has many fine buildings and a landscape that needs careful and sympathetic development.**

Leisure, and environmental issues. We had already submitted contributions on the environmental issues, namely on Green Infrastructure and biodiversity, which are key ingredients for the development of our town. These, we are pleased to see, have been incorporated into the draft, and since the workshop we have submitted some further comments, trying to ensure that a consistent environmental thread runs throughout the document.

There are, however, major hurdles ahead. The neighbourhood plan has to be consistent with Waverley's Core Planning Strategy – but as yet this has neither been finalised nor agreed. For example, the controversy over the East Street Development will have to be resolved. Then the Plan will have to be approved by a local referendum, and then examined for its legality by a government inspector. Meanwhile, you can be of help simply by sending an email to [planningpolicy@waverley.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@waverley.gov.uk) saying that you support Farnham Town Council's intention to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for Farnham. Recently Richard Sandars sent you all an email with more details and a sample of an email we hope you will send.

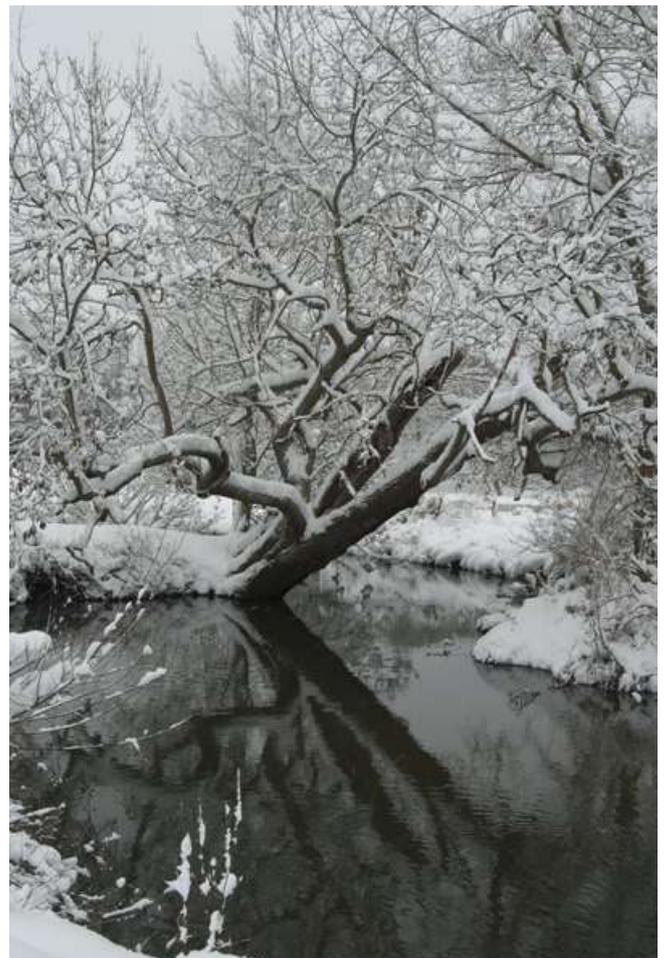
We believe it is important that Farnham Town Council continues to think seriously about the town's future and involves the public in the process. As a Group, we are pleased already to have played a modest role in seeking to maintain the landscape and character of our town. If any of you have issues to raise or ideas to explore, please let us know. Although the draft plan is not yet available on the web, but I can provide a PDF version (29 pages) of it by email or you can contact other members of the committee.

Charles Fearnley

[charles.fearnley@googlemail.com](mailto:charles.fearnley@googlemail.com)

## **The Wey Landscape Project**

We have continued to be involved with the Wey Landscape project under the leadership of the Surrey Wildlife Trust. The project has two closely connected themes; the first of which is to



**The winter-time beauty of the river flowing through the meadows below Moor Park exemplifies our aspirations for the Wey and its feeder streams around Farnham.**

preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the whole of the Wey catchment, and the second is to improve the quality of the water in the river system as required by the UK Water Framework Directive. The Environment Agency is responsible for implementing the Water Framework legislation and has been funded by central Government so to do. The Agency is well advanced in conducting a detailed analysis of the state of the Wey, and how its water quality and ecology can be improved. In our area the Wey's main water quality problem is pollution by phosphates which get into the river from agricultural run-off and discharges from sewage treatment works.

Recently the management structure of the Project has been established in a Partnership Agreement. There is to be a Steering Group made up of representatives from the main players, and a series of Task Groups, which will deal with more restricted specific, themes, issues or projects scattered throughout the catchment. We have successfully argued for a representative of the Voluntary Sector to be in the Steering Group. We have also argued for the roles of the Task Groups to focus more on the practical work and not become mere talking shops.

A number of well defined tasks have been identified including, for example, the by-passing of the two weirs at Waverley Abbey to facilitate fish movements. It is hoped to attract funding for such tasks in early 2013.



**Lush growth of Himalayan Balsam along Borelli Walk is an example of some of the undesirable alien species that are threatening the ecology of our river.**

Over the past two years we have continued to promote the need to address the environmental problems of the feeder streams that run through our area. We have proposed a sub-project, to be led by ourselves, to carry out such work starting in the Spring, with financial help from the overall Catchment fund. After some deliberation it was suggested that this should be widened into a slightly larger endeavour which would include the River Wey and all its tributaries in and around Farnham. This has been agreed and the first steps towards defining the scope of this project have been taken through establishing a Farnham Rivers Group of which we are founder members.

## The Farnham Rivers Project

The inaugural meeting of the Farnham Rivers Group was held in the Council Offices on 3<sup>rd</sup> August under the chairmanship of Cllr Jessica Parry, who had already played an important role in bringing river and flood management issues to the notice of the Town Council. The group includes our representatives (Martin and Noel) and representatives of the Bishops Meadow Trust, the Wey Valley Fisheries Consultative Association and Surrey Wildlife Trust, and in due course the Waverley ranger from Farnham Park will join.

Since August several further meetings have been held, during which a number of tasks to improve the ecology of the River Wey and its various feeder streams around Farnham have been defined. The stretches of river involved are the Northern Branch of the Wey, the Nadder Stream, which flows through Farnham Park, The Bourne Stream and Frensham Vale Stream. The Frensham Vale stream is very small and its problems are yet to be considered. The problems of The Bourne Stream are detailed in the next article. The Nadder Stream is also in dire need of restoration, for example no efforts have been made to restrict the spread of Himalayan Balsam and stop leaks from Farnham's rather antiquated sewage works and illegal discharges into drains intermittently giving rise to pollution problems.

Another investigation, is being led by the Bishops Meadow Trust (which has already made substantial improvements to the water meadows west of the town), into how fish movements can be facilitated. At present a series of weirs

prevents the movements of migrations up and down the river. These not only restrict their breeding and but also slows the rate at which they can recovery from pollution events.

For example, at present the natural course of the Wey near the Coxbridge roundabout is starved of water, because most of the flow is diverted into the milling channel, which formerly served Weydon Mill. If the flow in the natural watercourse can be restored, the ecology of the river will be greatly improved.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the other Farnham groups on this project, and in particular in improving the ecology and landscape of The Bourne valley.

## The Bourne Stream

The Bourne Stream is an important but neglected feature of our patch. In March this year when the stream was dry, Martin Angel carried out a photographic survey of its lower reaches from where it flows under the Tilford Road near Redhill House to where it flows under the end of Monk's Walk. The results along this 700 metre stretch were pretty shocking – fly-tipped rubbish is falling into the stream, large numbers of articles of rubbish litter the stream ranging from plastic bottles to a galvanised water tank and a tractor tyre, many large trees have fallen across the river, and there are several patches of Japanese knotweed, one of which is over ten metres across. Noel extended these observations up through the built up area to the Bridge on



**Probably the worst of the horrors along the Bourne Stream is the overflow from the pumping station just upstream of the bridge that carries Monk's Walk.**

Sandrock Hill. He found many more, but rather different problems. Although we can justifiably be proud of the work we have achieved in making the Bourne Stream virtually a 'Himalayan Balsam free zone', but there is still so much more to do.

Noel and Martin walked much of the Stream with two representatives of the Environment Agency, and pointing out many of the problems. However, the EA's responsibilities are limited to those impacting on water quality and flood risk. In several areas the banks are in a very sorry state, but keeping them in good order is the responsibility of the riparian owners. To illustrate the difficulties – near the Bat and Ball the stream bank is eroding away because it is not stabilised by vegetation. In several places this bank erosion is already presenting serious hazards to walkers using the stream-side footpath. Maintaining the footpath is a Surrey County Council responsibility, but shoring up the bank with 'hard engineering' is both unsightly and ecologically unsound. The best solution is a mix of 'soft engineering' and ensuring the banks are vegetated. However, no plants will grow on the



**Along the water course through the village there are many examples of amateur attempts to prevent bank erosion, which are ineffective, unsightly and ecologically unfriendly.**

banks because they are so densely shaded by the overhanging trees and shrubs. Our 'trained' footpath wardens are empowered to trim back overhanging vegetation, but only to a height of seven feet.

What is needed is for the dense overhanging evergreen laurels and hollies to be cut back, but



**Along the border of Compton Field a fallen tree has accumulated rubbish washed down by the Stream, and behind the large area of dried stalks of Japanese knotweed illustrates the severity of the alien plant invasion.**

they are growing on the private land adjacent to the path. Noel has been seeking out the landowners and believes that some have been persuaded to cut them back.

Many of the tasks that need to be done, to restore our stream are within our capabilities given a modicum of funding. There are, however, a large number of tasks that are beyond us, clearing large trees, reinforcing the banks, etc. We have already discussed with the EA Fisheries officer the possibility of improving the lower stretch where it joins the River Wey, but once again we need to find out who owns the field through which the Stream flows to get permission to carry out the work. We are also preparing a bid to the South-east Water's community chest for the funds to clean up the lower reaches; once again we having to hunt the land-owner.

The Bourne Stream may not be the most exciting waterway ecologically because its flow is seasonal. But it provides an important green corridor for exchanges of animal species between the Wey Valley and Alice Holt Forest. A clean and healthy stream will improve the environment, both for walkers and for wildlife.

## Old Churchyard Events

Since our last Newsletter, we have responded to further requests from local groups asking us to introduce them to the natural life and history of the Old Churchyard. We entertained another bevy of Beavers in early October on a damp evening that became progressively wetter as the evening continued. This time BCG was better prepared for some rumbustious behaviour by the youngsters. The visit began with the formal initiation of some of the younger Beavers (kits?) as full members of the Lodge and the award of their coveted yellow bandannas. Noel then launched them on a roaming quiz he had devised – “Can you name three creatures that live in ponds”, “There are various logs and stones in a little house here. What are they for?” By the end of the evening the questionnaires had become very soggy, and varying degrees of input from the helpers had been needed for them to be filled



**The obvious thrill of pond-dipping shown by this small boy, who was a casual visitor to OCY during this year's training day, encouraged us to consider targeting young people in the coming year's training day.**

in. The results were vociferously compared and honour seemed to have been satisfied. Quite unexpectedly, the four BCG 'guides'- Noel, Martin, Karen and Richard - were each very

generously presented with a bottle of wine in thanks for hosting the group.

For the future, BCG has been approached about participating in the 2013 Farnham Heritage Weekend (12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September) for which there will be more details nearer the time. In addition we are discussing with Frances Halstead of SWT the possibility of running a junior training day on the Saturday during the summer half term. We will probably run two consecutive courses, one in the morning followed immediately by another in the afternoon. Our success in enthusing the Beavers has suggested to us that we can play a role in encouraging some of the younger generation to take an interest in our environment.



**Those who participated in the working group in the Old Churchyard on 2<sup>nd</sup> December were rewarded with hot mince pies courtesy of Richard Sandars.**

It is important because children are seldom exposed to the reality of the natural world. They may witness it on television on programmes like Spring Watch, but few of them have ever held a moth or a spider.

## **The Bourne Crossroads Saga**

Our first “prestige” project starting in 2006 was to rescue the small green space running down the east side of the A287 from the junction with Lodge Hill Road to the vet’s surgery. We have worked very hard on this ever since and we believe our improvements are a welcome and popular feature in the village. A new value of this project to the ‘visual landscape’ of the approaches to the village will undoubtedly be in softening the impact of the over-sized building



**The proposed site of the crossing at our crossroads site, also shows two of the BT boxes.**

project now under way on the old Toyota Garage site.

Unfortunately other agencies have designs on this tiny piece of real estate; BT seem intent on spattering it with green boxes (three to date!), there is marker on the ground for a phone mast, and now there is a proposal to build a pedestrian crossing across the main road at our site. On a more positive note, Cllr Carole Cockburn wants to see it remaining much as it, because it greatly enhances the appearance of The Bourne along the main road. She has plans to develop further the village look of The Bourne, but these have gone into abeyance, because of the heavy demands on her time being made by the urgency of drafting a successful Neighbourhood Plan.

The cluster of shops, which now includes Café Indigo to the south of the crossroads, is very important to everyone in the village. They are needed not only to meet local needs, but also to keep traffic movements down. The majority of residents, when asked, are in favour of a pedestrian crossing being installed across the main road between the shops. Such a crossing would be particularly helpful to those of ‘advanced’ years and to parents walking their young children to The Bourne School. The provision of a crossing at the shops was considered some years ago, but because highway rules specify that the sight lines for the crossing must be adequate, most of the parking places would be lost. However, these parking places are essential for the shops to be viable because they are so dependent on passing trade.

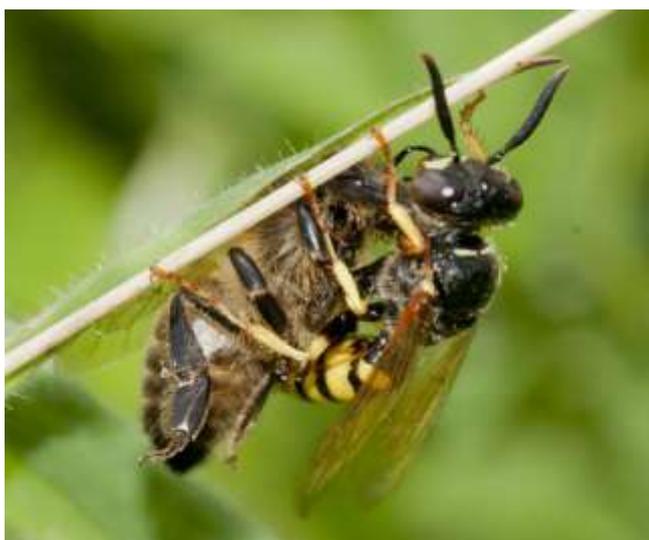
The only firm proposal that has been made for a crossing to be sited on the north side of the



record. It was not until 8<sup>th</sup> August that I caught such large numbers again 170 moths (66 species). A comparison with the previous year is instructive. In 2011 I trapped on 60 nights and caught 4357 moths belonging to 345 species. This year I trapped on 57 nights but caught only 2900 moths belonging to 326 species. So the average number of moths caught per night declined by 30% from 72 to 51, and 2011 was not a particularly good year. Probably most of this decline was the consequence of the rather grim summer weather, but is habitat destruction now beginning to have an impact in The Bourne as there has been more and more building?

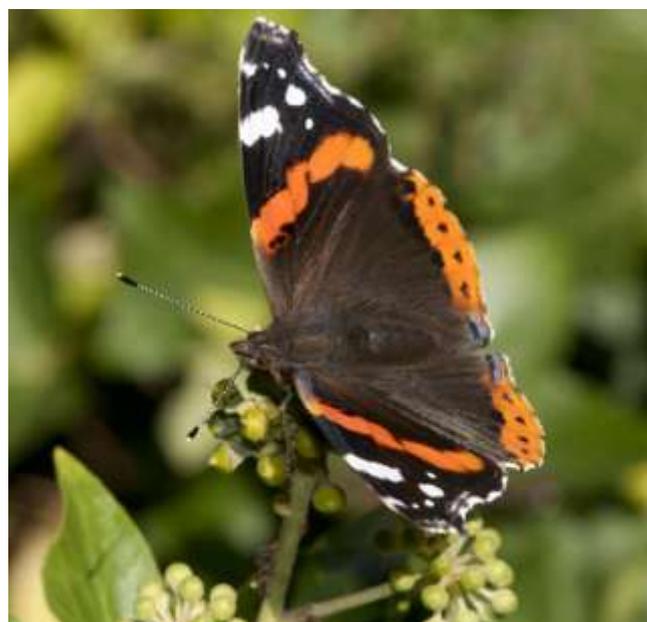


**The male clifden nonpareil *Catocala fraxini* caught in The Bourne in September. This moth once bred in Britain but is now a rare migrant from the Continent.**



**In August I watched this female bee wolf *Philanthus triangulum*, which is the largest British solitary wasp, attacking and killing a honey bee in Compton Field.**

Should we be concerned about moths? Well yes, because so much of our other wildlife depends on moths (or their caterpillars) for their food. The decline in the moth populations is indicative of a decline in all insects many of which are important pollinators. Moreover, if there are fewer moths/caterpillars the breeding success of many of our birds will be further eroded. The RSPB is already reporting that many species had poor breeding success in 2012 and there have been large declines in many of our breeding birds. For example, one factor contributing to this year's sharp decline in cuckoos, whose calls are such an iconic sound of



**Red Admirals and comma butterflies were abundant feeding on ivy flowers during the last few sunny days this autumn.**

Spring is the decline in the abundances of the caterpillars of large moths that are the main component of the diets of the adult birds.

Martin Angel

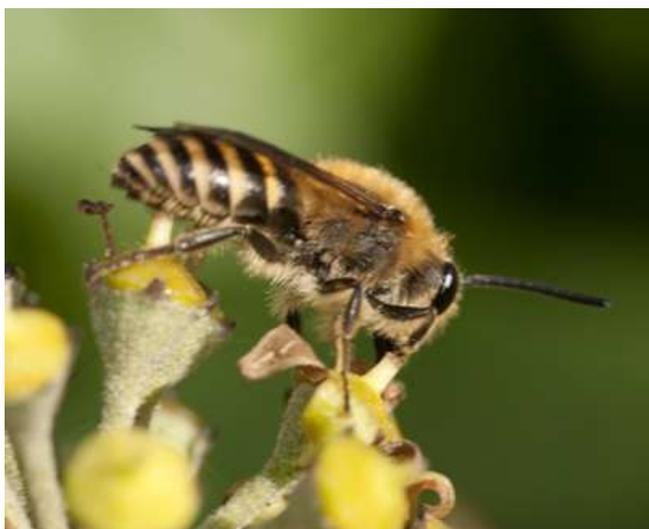
## **The year without summer**

Are you disgruntled about this year's weather? If so, then bear in mind that on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1815 Mount Tambora, which at the time was a 12,000 foot volcano on the Indonesian island of Sumbara, exploded. It was the biggest volcanic eruption in recorded history, larger than the far better known event on Krakatoa in 1883. The explosion, which was audible 1600 miles away,

blew away the whole mountain leaving just a caldera 3 miles across and 3600 feet deep. Vast clouds of ash were injected into the stratosphere which in the following year blocked out the sun's radiation resulting in a sharp reduction in global temperatures. 1816 became known as the 'year without summer' or the 'poverty year'. Throughout much of Europe and America snow fell in summer, harvests failed, and starvation was rife (200,000 people are estimated to have starved to death in Ireland alone, a prelude to the far greater potato famine). There were widespread food riots in post-Napoleonic war-torn countries. If you think the summer of 2012 was too cold, miserable and rainy, it will seem like a stroll in the park if Tambora has a repeat performance - there are reports that it is rumbling again! A small crumb of comfort is that some of the masterpieces featuring dramatic sunsets painted by Turner and Constable date from those years.

## Publicity

We have continued to gain regular coverage of BCG's work in both the Farnham Herald and the monthly Farnham Diary. There has not been a current major project or issue on which we have been able to focus, but the summer issue of this Newsletter generated an article in the Diary that was both favourable and balanced. More recently, Martin Angel's observation and



**The first ever records of the ivy bee *Colletes hederae* in Farnham, here photographed in the Old Churchyard, was the subject of an article in the Farnham Herald.**

excellent photograph of an ivy bee was covered in a Herald article that helped get over the breadth of what we do.

Other publicity has mainly come in a reflected sense from the success of Farnham-in-Bloom, which has given us a number of mentions in the Herald. The letters page in the Diary has seen commendation of our Old Churchyard restoration work by our Friend Val Banham, and in the most recent issue there is an article by Noel Moss and Wendy Maddox on the life of one of our local celebrities, Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald. We were also able to get our name over to the good people of Farnham through a display in the Public Library and the collection of green tokens for a month in Waitrose.



**Those of you who do not look at the Group's Facebook pages will have missed this picture of a green woodpecker feeding in a windfall pear on a lawn in Vicarage Hill.**

Our Facebook page is probably seen by more people than our website, and we are grateful to those members and friends who add photos of wildlife. It is open to anyone who has joined Facebook to contribute, and we encourage more of you to do so, or to ask David Todd if you are not sure how (or simply want to be anonymous). This is the easiest way to get BCG known to the wider public, and when time permits we will make use of Twitter. The website is used as the public record of our work, although it is regularly updated, it would benefit greatly from more contributions by members.

## Membership

We have had a busy few months trying to raise the profile of the Bourne Conservation Group through articles in our local press, the fantastic

display in Farnham Library advertising our work, and the Waitrose green token scheme.

Since the last newsletter was published, we have recruited a record number of new volunteers and I would personally like to welcome Laura Blackmore, Joanna Brockhurst, Catherine Hill, Helen Michel, Joe Michel, Chloe O'Brien, Richard Pantlin and Ben Weir to the Bourne Conservation Group. We look forward to them all being active Members, whose practical support and efforts at the work sessions will enable us to continue achieving the fantastic work the group does in enhancing the environment and biodiversity of our local area. Thank you all!

It is also wonderful to thank Bruce Callander for becoming a new Friend of the BCG. We look forward to helping him with his Open Day in his Spire and Sable Woods on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2013. The subscriptions that the Friends raise are really important in helping us to meet our running costs, without which we would not be able to function. We are always pleased and delighted to welcome new Members and Friends. If you are not already a member and would like to become either an active volunteer, or a Friend of the Bourne Conservation Group, or you know of



**Ben Weir, one of our new (and young) members working in the Old Churchyard on 2<sup>nd</sup> December.**

someone who might be interested, then please contact Karen Redman on 01252 723408 or email [info@bourneconservation.co.uk](mailto:info@bourneconservation.co.uk)

Karen Redman

## Acknowledgements

The Editor would like to thank Noel Moss, Charles Fearnley, David Todd, Richard Sandars, Karen Redman and Hilary Dickson for their help in producing this newsletter; it has been a real team effort.

## Your Committee

<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Noel Moss</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Richard Sandars</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Fiona Warburton</b>
<b>Membership</b>	<b>Karen Redman</b>
<b>Footpath co-ord<sup>n</sup></b>	<b>Lisa Malcolm</b>
<b>Publicity</b>	<b>David Todd</b>
<b>Planning</b>	<b>Charles Fearnley</b>
<b>Horticulture</b>	<b>Hilary Dickson</b>
<b>Newsletter</b>	<b>Martin Angel</b>

[mvangel37@googlemail.com](mailto:mvangel37@googlemail.com)

Contact us at  
[info@bourneconservation.org.com](mailto:info@bourneconservation.org.com)

Website <http://bourneconservation.org.uk>