



# Commons Link

Newsletter for the Friends of Ludshott and Passfield Commons

 National Trust

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## Views from Ludshott Common by Chris Webb

Ludshott Common is not known particularly as a high point although it can boast some fine views. From the higher parts of the Common the view of distant hills extends from almost due south round to west-northwest, an arc of more than 90 degrees, although there isn't one spot from where the full panorama can be seen all at once. To appreciate the horizon fully some walking is required.

From the main Ludshott car park (Dunelm) the view directly ahead is of Butser Hill at 888 feet topped with its communication tower. Stretching left from Butser Hill is the open and wooded downland which forms part of the South Downs, a long chain of chalk hills that extends from Eastbourne on the Sussex coast to Winchester. Directly to the left of Butser Hill is War Down and together they form Queen Elizabeth Country Park to the south of Petersfield. The valley that separates them is also the cutting for the

A3. Walk to the right towards Headley Down to get glimpses and a better view of the horizon between the trees growing on the Common. Scanning left from War Down the section of the downs that can be seen from Ludshott takes in West Harting Down, Harting Down and the more prominent Beacon Hill. The downs disappear from view at a point near Treyford and Didling Hill, some 11 miles (18km) to the south. In the foreground the rising wooded slopes that partly obscure the downland behind are that of Weavers Down to the west of Liphook and Hill Brow to the north of Rogate.

To the right or west of Butser Hill the South Downs disappear behind a closer line of hills. This is the escarpment of the East Hampshire Hangers (hanger means wooded slope). Again formed of chalk the hangers mark the western margin of the Weald, a region of sandy clayey soils that extends eastwards through Surrey and Sussex into Kent. Although close to its

edge, the heathy common land of Ludshott lies within, and is characteristic of, the Wealden landscape. Beyond the ridge of the Hangers but unseen from Ludshott, a broad belt of chalk runs through central Hampshire into Wiltshire to form the heart of the Wessex landscape.



*A close up view of the hangers above Hawkley looking south to Wheatham Hill*

From Ludshott the most southerly of the hangers is Wheatham Hill which shows up



as a distinct slope rising from left to right thereby cutting out the view of the South Downs to the west of Butser. Wheatham Hill stands out because it is the shoulder where the escarpment makes a sharp turn from a north – south to a northeast – southwest alignment. Looking right from Wheatham Hill the hangers behind Oakshott and Hawkley take the form of a wooded ridge with some hilltop fields just visible. Further to the right and barely registering along the skyline, Noar Hill is a little more prominent, as is the next hill along - Selborne Common (an NT site which is part of the Ludshott/East Hampshire property group). At Noar Hill the gappy tree line on the skyline can just be made out and is a reminder of the damage done by the 1987 hurricane.

Selborne Hanger, although suffering some wind-blown areas fared better and remains well wooded.

For a better view of the distant horizon to the northwest its best to walk to the eastern edge of the open heathland area on Ludshott close to Superior Camp. Looking across to the right (north) of Selborne it's the high ground of Four Marks behind Farringdon and Chawton that forms a dark wooded skyline. Continuing round, the chalk hills above Alton disappear behind trees at Headley Down as you cast round to the right. The last of these hills visible from Ludshott is Holybourne Down marked by two pairs of communication towers. Out of sight, this ridge continues eastwards towards

Guildford and becomes the North Downs running through Surrey and Kent on the northern edge of the Weald.

Below the horizon between Selborne and Holybourne the wooded hangers behind Blackmoor, Oakhanger and at East Worldham face in towards Ludshott. These are the hangers of the Upper Greensand escarpment which run along below and inside the arc of the chalk hangers forming a second inner ridge. Luckily the lower land in the foreground running up to a nearer line of hangers has a well-wooded appearance which hides some of our larger urban settlements at Whitehill and Bordon.



View from Dunelm car park

## Call 101 if you spot illegal off-roading on the Commons

It is a road traffic offence to ride or drive illegally or anti-socially on paths in the countryside, and people are being called on to report it to the police using the new 101 phone number.

A special service called Country Watch has been set up in Hampshire to help protect the safety of everyone using the countryside and to prevent the damage that illegal off-roading can cause. Anyone can report an offence by calling 101 or emailing [countrywatch@hampshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:countrywatch@hampshire.pnn.police.uk)

### Riding motorbikes on Ludshott is illegal so please report it.

Most people driving off-road do so legally and with consideration for other people. Unfortunately there are a small minority who give all a bad name and do not follow the advice of the Land Access and Recreation Association or the Trials Rider Fellowship.

To find out more about the Country Watch service go to [www.hampshire.police.uk/internet/advice-and-information/rural-crime/country-watch](http://www.hampshire.police.uk/internet/advice-and-information/rural-crime/country-watch)

*If you enjoy reading this newsletter, please pass it on!*

**Become a Friend** - You will receive your own personal copy of the newsletter, and you will be helping valuable conservation work to ensure the survival of our precious landscape and habitat - 'Forever for Everyone'.

Becoming a Friend costs only £5.00 for a year. Contact the Membership Secretary, Colin Brash on 01428 713256.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

### Wardens

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### Ludshott Commons Committee

Dr Susan Salter	Chairman	01428 751409
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Visit our website

[www.ntludshott.org.uk](http://www.ntludshott.org.uk)

# Alder - the 'Elf King' - love it or fear it?

Do you love the catkins it bears to forecast the spring?

Or do you believe like the ancient peoples that evil lurked within the alder tree!



This species of tree was feared because it's wood, although white when first cut, darkens o orange/ chestnut on exposure to the air, making it look as if it is bleeding. Superstition was that the tree was an embodiment of a malign spirit such as the Erlkonig ('Alder King') of old German legend, made famous by Goethe and the composer Schubert, although in this country its title was usually the 'Elf King'.



Alder catkins and fruits at various stages of ripeness

Common Alder *Alnus glutinosa* is our most frequent waterside tree, found along river banks, lake sides, and marshes, from the lowlands up to 1500'. Pollen grains in peat deposits show that alder has been established in Britain for thousands of years. The species is not confined to the British

Isles and can be found all over Europe, also in Siberia and North Africa.

Ludshott Common is too dry to support alder, there is some at Waggoners Wells but to see good specimens locally, go to the east end of Hollywater Pond, at Passfield, where it forms the climax vegetation, 'alder carr'. In fact this woodland covered the whole of the lake area after it was drained during World War II. In the 1980's the NT restored the water habitat for wildlife conservation and alder grows around the banks of the lake where the roots prevent soil erosion.

It is able to thrive in marshy conditions because its roots, like legumes, have nodules in which the tree forms an association with nitrogen-fixing bacteria which are capable of utilising nitrogen from air so making up for the usual lack of nitrogen in wet soil. Thus alder can enrich poor soil as it puts more fertility in than it uses. Fertility is built up and in the places where alder carr has been cleared and the site drained crop yield can be quite high e.g. in the Fens of East Anglia where there were once many alder thickets.

An established alder has a tap root approx 5' long which enables the tree to survive falling water levels during drought conditions or when the ground is reclaimed. Deep tap roots will survive for many years but as the soil shrinks the fluted upper root stocks emerge and give the trees something of the look of land-bound mangroves.



Alder growing along a river bank

It's wood is very useful as it doesn't rot under water, so is used for shoring up canal and river banks. And this water resistance thus means that when the wood is dry it doesn't split when it is nailed. So in former years because of this ease of working, it was used to make clogs and it is still used for shoe soles, and broom and tool handles. Another of its commercial uses was in the production of gunpowder, and its bark, fruit and leaves still yield dyes.



Ripe Alder Fruits

Traditionally, too, it was a lure for woodworm, as if placed in cupboards the wood worm beetle will lay it's eggs in alder in preference to other wood.

Unfortunately, alder is now another of our native trees which is susceptible to a species of *Phytophthora*. Visit [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk) for more information on its effects and distribution so far.

The name Alder comes from the Anglo Saxon *aler* and is a common element in place names e.g. Aldershot which means alder wood.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### Superior Camp Walk

This is a fascinating part of Ludshott Common to visit. Come on our walk on Remembrance **Sunday November 13th** at 2.30pm and learn more.

This will be a sequel to last year's walk which looked at the military occupation, and will focus on the post-war era. Please wear stout footwear. £2.00 per person.

### CHRISTMAS TREE SALE

SATURDAY 3th DECEMBER 9.00am until 12.00 noon  
Dunelm car park, Ludshott Common

The price is the same as last year - **£3/foot**

There will be trees of all sizes and shapes to choose from, and complimentary mince pies and mulled wine will be served.

Start your Christmas activities by buying a freshly cut National Trust tree which doesn't lose its needles over the festive season. These are sapling Scot's Pine which seed themselves all over the common and need to be removed so that the open heathland is maintained. By buying one you will be helping the conservation management of the site.

Details on posters across the Common, and on the website, or phone the Wardens.



### NT Friends of Selborne Common annual winter lecture.

Peter Thompson, the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust's (GWCT) Biodiversity advisor.

Working together for a better countryside around Selborne that includes you...!

**Saturday November 12<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm. Selborne Village Hall. Doors & bar open at 7.00pm**

Peter is an enthusiastic advocate for the countryside and in his role as biodiversity advisor he gives advice to farmers and land managers across England, on practical methods of implementing conservation programmes developed by the Trust's Farmland Ecology Unit.

He has helped with the development of **The Selborne Landscape Partnership** a farmer-led cluster formed 18 months ago involving 18 land managers around Selborne. The group was recently visited by the former DEFRA Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2014–2016) Liz Truss and Permanent Secretary Clare Moriarty resulting in widespread publicity focused on the successful recovery of harvest mouse populations.

The land managers are 18 local farmers, the National Trust (Selborne Common & Long Lythe), the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (Noar Hill National Nature Reserve) and the Gilbert White Museum and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) and South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) have been involved in providing support for the project from its outset.

Tickets £8 in advance, £7.50 for Friends of Selborne Common, and £10 on the night

**For tickets & further information contact:**

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