



Commons Link

Newsletter for the Friends of Ludshott and Passfield Commons

 THE NATIONAL TRUST

Issue 10 - October 2010

Congratulations Chris!



The small surprise party for Head Warden, Chris Webb, to mark his 25 years service with the NT and the Ludshott Commons Committee

Plant Ecology at Passfield

In July, we hosted a NT Biological Survey Holiday and during their week's stay, the 18 strong group spent a day at Passfield Common and Hollywater Green studying the different habitats to be found there and recording the plant species present. Formal research like this began in the 1980's before grazing was re-introduced by one of the Commoners, and monitoring continues on a regular long-term basis.



Chris overseeing a group

We were very glad indeed that consultant ecologist, Dr Jonathan Cox, could be present to identify the 20 one metre square, quadrat sites which he had recorded during a previous visit.

This is important to ensure continuity so that any data collected can be directly compared with previous results. And we were delighted that despite the very hot weather the group enjoyed their studies whilst adding to our knowledge of this corner of the property.



Dr Jonathan Cox describing a grass species found within one of the quadrats

Ludshott Future Management - Tell Us What You Think

During the spring, National Trust wardens and colleagues from the Ludshott Commons Committee have been undertaking consultations on the future long-term, sustainable management of Ludshott Common. The issues confronting the Trust are outlined in the previous three editions of Commons Link which should be read in conjunction with this article (they are still available to anyone who would like copies).



Consultation Road Show on Ludshott

Having spoken to most of our neighbours, and a large number of people who use the common regularly, it is apparent that there is a demand for more detail about one of our proposed options for management – to re-instate grazing. To date, discussion about the future management of the common has met with a variety of reactions with a significant majority expressing enthusiasm, support or interest in the idea of using animals to undertake a traditional and more natural form of management. This article sets out this option in more detail, and is intended to generate informed discussion and comment.

Because Ludshott is a registered common and designated for its wildlife, the National Trust is required to gain an under-

standing of stakeholders' views about significant changes in management or works affecting the land. An application to the Planning Inspectorate to carry out works on common land needs to show that there is general support and a clear need.

The map, opposite, shows a proposed grazing area for Ludshott Common. Ancient laws prohibit fencing on or across common land without special permission and it will be expected by the agencies who grant consent that every effort is made to align fencing along boundaries. At Ludshott, the boundaries are usually marked by ancient ditch and bank earthworks.

Currently, about one third of the boundary is fenced, some of which is stock-proof. Another third could be fenced against the boundary, and a further quarter has fencing consent under an 1840 Enclosure Award or can be located just beyond the boundary. This would leave under a tenth of the fencing located directly on the Common.

In this proposal the main Ludshott car parks would be excluded from the grazing area, except for the southern half of the Superior Camp / concrete road car park which would be accessed across a cattle grid. Residents at Summerden and other nearby neighbouring properties would also need cattle grids for vehicle access.

Public access is of paramount importance, so gates would be installed on all Rights of Way, at car parks, next to cattle grids and where there is regular informal access onto the common. Access for horse riders along bridleways onto the common would also have specially designed gates with easy-to-open latches. Field gates would also be needed for NT staff, management and

emergency vehicle access. Unauthorised vehicle access onto the common would not be permitted.



Typical gate arrangement for walkers and riders at Bramshott Chase

This proposal would allow a large area of approximately 550 acres to be grazed. The small number of grazing animals required would mean they would be widely dispersed across the Common. Agricultural and wildlife regulations would require there to be just enough animals to maintain the heathland habitat in good condition, but not so many as to damage the habitat structure to the detriment of the wildlife.

If this proposal is generally acceptable a more detailed design would be drawn up in collaboration with neighbours and stakeholders before seeking formal consent. We are urging anyone that has an interest in Ludshott Common to contact us about this proposal, whether supportive, or with concerns or suggestions. We would be very happy to come and speak to anyone who would like to discuss this in more detail.

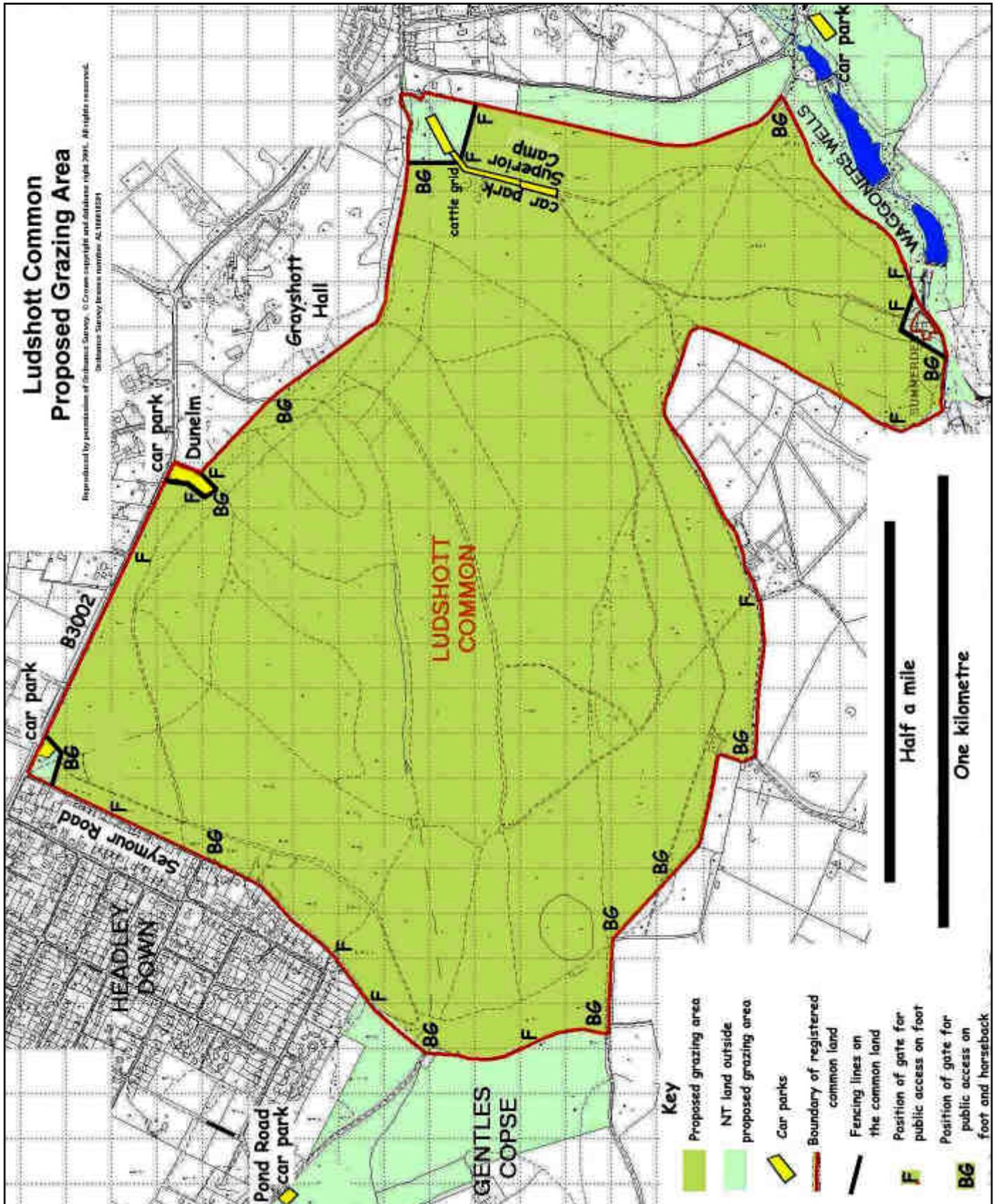
Chris Webb



Cattle on Selborne Common



Commoners' cattle at Bramshott Chase



Please send your comments to me, Chris Webb,
 Wardens Office, Hatch Farm, Standford, Bordon, GU35 8RB.
 Email: info@ntludshott.org.uk

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Sir Robert Hunter Wardens Base

As we go to press we are delighted to learn that EHDC has granted Planning Permission for work to commence on the new wardens workbase, more details in the next issue. The Committee is especially pleased that this project can now get underway as the finance for it is being provided from their resources which have been built up over many years by fund-raising and the generosity of the Friends.

Further Happenings

Over the Summer the Wardens have been busy with their usual work programme, and we have had the benefit of a volunteer working holiday group who have helped in clearing scrub at Conford and tidying up at Waggoners Wells.

Out on Ludshott Common the latest biological survey has been carried out by Andy Foster, a NT ecologist. Research like this involves recording the presence of all the heathland wildlife from 'mini-beasts' – beetles and spiders, to our resident mammals.

These surveys are very important as without such knowledge it is very difficult to ascertain the condition of the habitat, as each animal, whether large or small, has a niche in, and a role to play in maintaining the heathland community in ecological balance.

During his visit Andy reported the excellent news that he had seen sand lizards outside their usual area of heath. Although sand lizards were reasonably widespread in the 1970's, despite some very thorough searches in the 1980's it was concluded that the 1980 fire had wiped them out. In 1995 the Herpetological Society re-introduced a colony on a suitable site, where until now they have stayed. Being seen beyond their original site almost certainly means that the re-introduction colony has expanded and individuals have moved out along the 'wildlife corridor' created 5-6 years ago onto the main block of the Ludshott heathland.



Sampling for mini-beasts using a specialised low-powered 'vacuum cleaner'

Woodland Management

During the autumn, felling and thinning work will be taking place along the western boundary of Ludshott Common close to Seymour Road and Furze Hill Road. The aim of this woodland management work is to promote a belt of trees which have a less flammable character, and develop a more broadleaved type of woodland along this edge of the common. There are several areas where oak, beech, sweet chestnut and rowan have regenerated in dense stands – these will be given space to grow. Two blocks of dense pole-stage pine will be cleared for the restoration of heathland. Where there are no broadleaved species that can be encouraged, a narrow, open belt of pine will be retained to maintain the continuity of the wooded margin of the common.



Chris meeting with residents from Seymour and Furze Hill Roads

During this work some paths and tracks may need to be temporarily closed for safety reasons while contractors machinery is in operation. Similarly the small car park close to the Seymour Road - B3002 junction will need to be closed at times. Notices will be posted on the common when work is due to commence and we apologise for any inconvenience that may be caused.

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

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<http://www.ntludshott.org.uk>

Christmas trees

On Saturday 4 December we plan to cut Christmas trees to be sold on Saturday 11 December at Dunelm car park between 9:00 and noon.