



PRESTWOOD NATURE ANNUAL REPORT 2013



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1. Angling Spring Wood (Project Leader Sue Graham)

We have continued to remove holly, primarily from the area near Martinsend Lane and the hard standing. Also keeping the re-growth down on the laurel in that area with three work parties this year. Some holly has been cleared by contractors in another area.

Information boards on the natural history of the woods have been put up with the Prestwood Nature logo on them.

Chiltern District Council contractors have chipped the cuttings twice but are unable to move their machine any further down the hill. This means that we have reached the extent of the holly clearance that we can do as the hill is too steep to pull branches up to the area that the chipper can reach.

Elm trees donated by the Woodland Trust as part of their Jubilee tree planting project were also planted.

A decision is needed on the future of this project as the project leader is standing down and it isn't possible to see what further work can be done other than to keep down re-growth as and when it becomes a problem.

2. Bogs Meadow (Project Leader John Obee)

This year's summary of Bogs activity has to be preceded with the news of the wonderful return of The Misbourne which flowed through the site for several months. We even had ducks! It was a real treat to see. Also of note is that last autumn we were in receipt of some (free) trees from The Woodland Trust (WT) to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. They included a 'Royal Oak' propagated at Sandringham or Windsor. We planted it in the centre of the meadow. The grandchildren of current PN members might get to climb it one day! We also used the plants in the WT pack to augment our 2010 eastern boundary plantings and start a small hedge along the footpath near the northern boundary.

We have had fewer work sessions at the meadow this year as we gradually get the growth of docks and nettles under control. We have also benefited from 3 contractor cuts paid for by CDC. The first cut in May was probably done too early but left us with a splendid looking field of 'grass'. The second cut in July was quite amusing in that by then the growth was about 4 feet high (higher than the guard on our royal oak) and the contractor had to return to 'base' and get a much more robust cutter! The last cut will be done in late September. On each occasion we rake the cuttings to impoverish the soil for our eventual, much-desired wild flowers!

The car park hedge is growing rapidly and has been pruned several times this year. It contains a good mixture of plants including lots of nice roses. Most of the work party time is still spent scything and raking. Our efforts have brought pleasing results in what is a slow but sure process to convert the original piece of unkempt land into a wildlife meadow complete with paths and an attractive small copse. The once dominant population of docks has been all but eradicated and the nettles are slowly being conquered. We now have a good showing of grasses and flowers including violets, bluebells, cowslips, red campion, buttercups, common knapweed, marjoram and ground ivy.

The eastern boundary hedge, behind the copse is coming along nicely. Frequent cuts by myself over the year have greatly reduced the once enormous rampant nettles in favour of ground cover plants which have spread out from the copse, along the 'wagon road' and into the base of the boundary hedge.

We have had a table installed in front of our bench and another splendid bench 'built' under the alders on the western bank of the river. We are grateful to the Great Missenden Parish Revitalisation Group for their help with the cost of these new acquisitions. They have been stalwart supporters of our efforts at Bogs.

Later this year we will plant another batch of hedging from The Woodland Trust. Next year we plan to continue with what has become a well established routine of site improvement. Let's hope The Misbourne pays us another visit.

3. Butterfly Transect (Project Leader Sylvia Bennett)

It would seem that it is not unusual for us to experience some inclement weather at the start of the Butterfly Transect and 2013 was no exception. However, it was not too long before we experienced a rise in temperature and we witnessed our first butterflies.

Although a number of walks were not undertaken in the early weeks of the Transect because of the weather, with some walkers not sighting any butterflies at all, 2013 has proved to be a very successful year. With only three weeks to go, the numbers of sightings are well up on those recorded in 2011.

Year	Total No Butterflies
2011	1671
2012	948
2013	2082

This is the eighth year in which we have submitted our data to the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS), which was undertaken by fourteen volunteers, one of whom was new to the Transect.

Butterflies are uniquely placed amongst British terrestrial insects and other invertebrate groups to act as indicators of the state of the environment and our continued involvement with UKBMS is of great importance.

4. Chalk grassland sites (Project Leader Tony Marshall)

Little Stocking Meadow - After strimming was carried out on the rampant dogwood across the site, a work party of volunteers helped gather up the cuttings and dispose of them. One cluster of meadow clary plants was protected from deer browsing by a tall guard and flowered well. A pre-arranged visit for members to see the clary was unfortunately a little late, when they were mostly in seed. In the autumn it will be necessary to tackle again the regenerating dogwood.

Prestwood Picnic Site - This site is now managed by the Chiltern Society who has leased it from Wycombe District Council. Prestwood Nature is lending volunteer support.

We still await sheep on this site, hopefully a few weeks this winter. Meanwhile volunteers cleared more areas and a corridor was opened up for the spread of Duke of Burgundy butterflies. It was a good year for the imperforate StJohn's-wort and further rare invertebrates continue to be recorded. Unfortunately we did not see any Duke of Burgundies

Plant Protection Project - With the help of three volunteers, cages have been designed to prevent deer browsing of orchids and other rare plants. These were used at Little Stocking Meadow, Longfield Wood and Great Missenden Cemetery.

5. Glow Worm Transect (Project Leader Fiona Waller)

Prestwood Nature carries out two areas for monitoring glow worms, Hampden Bottom Farm and Prestwood Picnic Site. Transects are completed by Ian Taylor at the Picnic Site and Fiona Waller at Hampden Bottom. This year the spring and early summer were cooler than average and so numbers of glow worms in June were down on last year at Hampden Bottom with only very low observations on occasion only one glow worm on a 1km walk. Later in July the numbers increased slightly but still only 4 or 5 glow worms were spotted on each transect walk. During August there were similar numbers but notably numbers of moths seen during the walks increased significantly as did the number of occasions on which bats were seen.

6. Hedges and Trees (Project Leader Vanessa Rickett)

Work continues to progress very slowly. More volunteers are needed not least because we have several times used the information from the hedge surveys to negotiate improved management or restoration of important hedgerows with the appropriate landowners - the most recent being the hedge planted on Denner Hill. All the information also goes into our general database, and Tony Marshall is particularly gathering information on important road verges (including bordering hedges) in order to negotiate improved road verge management with the council.

Occasionally we get public enquiries about particular hedgerows and our data bank has been useful in responding to these. In addition, although this is not central to PN's concerns, high-scoring hedgerows are likely to be ancient and give an idea of where the earliest farms (Anglo-Saxon) were located. The data have already allowed us to locate clusters of old hedgerows in the Prestwood and Great Kingshill areas, but we need more coverage of our outlying areas.

7. Kiln Common Orchard (Project Leader Lesley Stoner)

The trees are on the whole, beginning to take off as they have had a few wetter summers. One or two have not done so well, particularly the pears for some reason. Any dead trees have been replaced but the policy is that they will only be replaced once. Broken signs are also being replaced.

The grass is cut twice a year by Ian Waller. The bottom half of the orchard has tended to have more docks so this has had an extra cut.

Compost and mulch mats have been put around those trees which have needed a bit more care.

8. Ponds (Project Leader Tony Marshall)

No work has been carried out this year and none is planned for the coming year. Water levels have recently been reasonably high where ponds are capable of retaining water.

9. Sheepwash Pond (Project Leader Fiona Waller)

Sheepwash continues to have a great community following so that the concerted effort of a number of local residents and members keep this site in good tidy condition. The site is used by families, teenagers, dog walkers, ramblers and those who just want to peer into the water from the dipping platform.

Last year an area around the platform had some of the burr reed removed and the maintenance plan is for regular reduction of this quick spreading plant in three zones, by the platform, the edge adjacent to the reservoir and around the island.

The road side hedge is being kept level with the fence just so that the pond is not obscured totally from the road. On the other sides the hedge is managed by the local landowners. Plans for the next year include working with the Chiltern Society to remove other plants from the edges, topping up the wood chippings on the path and installation of a bench for picnics.

10. Surveying (Project Leader Tony Marshall)

Surveys to rediscover old plant records have been carried out, with some confirmed but others now to be presumed extinct in our area. On average one plant species has been lost per year over the past hundred years - a rate which is obviously unsustainable.

11. Wildlife Garden (Project Leader Lesley Stoner)

The garden has continued to mature since it was started four years ago and has looked quite attractive in the summer. Some volunteers have been very busy weeding and tidying up, clearing teasels in particular which have somewhat taken over.

The grass has been cut every two to three weeks to help to keep the garden looking managed.

The present project leader is standing down this year and so a decision is needed over the garden's future. Unless someone comes forward to take responsibility for overseeing maintenance it will have to be dismantled as the parish council only allow us to have it in its present location at Greenlands Lane allotments if it is properly managed.

12. Social Events

This was the 10 year anniversary for PN and so we held a celebratory event in May at Greenlands Lane. Gazebo, cakes, displays, pond dipping at Sheepwash and tours of the Orchard and Wild Life Garden were all organised and ready for visitors and members. Unfortunately the weather was against us so numbers were disappointing but three cheers for those hardy souls who came to look at the progress of the fruit trees and the children whose enthusiasm for the quiz, bran tub lucky dip and pond dipping was not dulled!

As part of the PN 5 year plan we surveyed members to establish what they wanted from the Society. One area that got a very positive response was for an increase in the number of activities to learn more about and see local flora and fauna. In response we held three events a bird walk, spring flower walk and a glow worm transect and in addition to these we organised trips to see the Chiltern Gentian, Meadow Clary and Prestwood Nature Reserve. It was rewarding to see interesting specimens on each of these occasions and a number of new families who we hadn't seen at events before. The feedback from members is for us to continue with this type of activity next year too.

13. Membership

There are now 88 Memberships comprising 161 Adults and 16 children; 2 New memberships this year comprising 3 adults; 6 households did not renew their memberships comprising 15 adults and 4 children.