



# Prestwood Nature Annual Reports 2017



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## 1. Angling Spring Wood (Leaders Hilary Tyrrell & Keith Tyrrell)

Yet another busy year working in the forty plus acres of Angling Spring Wood. Several work parties have taken place, keeping the footpaths and bridleways clear of brambles and nettles. A few trees leaning in dangerous positions have been removed for safety purposes. The removal of holly and laurel is an on-going job but left alone during the birds nesting period. The collection of litter is also an on going job, especially on the Martins End Lane side of the woods.

Following the cutting of scallops last year, another area along the main ride was scythed back and a few hornbeams removed to provide more light for the invertebrates.

Tony Marshall brought to our notice that there is an old record of a very rare species of bramble in Angling Spring Wood. Further investigation into this species of bramble will take place next year. Much of the work in Angling Spring Wood is on the advice from John Morris, Director of Chiltern Woodlands.

Scything and weeding around the fifty service and lime trees planted last year recently took place to allow more light and space around the trees. Most of the trees are in good condition and should thrive well.



Areas cleared around the Service and Broad leaf Lime trees



Clearing a path through the brambles to the Service and Broad leaf Lime trees.

The six information boards have been cleaned, and one had fallen off and was glued and screwed back on by two of our members. Sadly, the two boards on the bridle path have been defaced with spray paint and also a tree has been sprayed.



The clearing work party enjoying a fun moment.

## 2. Bougs' Meadow (Leader John Obee)

This has been another typical maintenance year down at Boug's with several work parties and as usual, frequent work periods by individuals. We did not see a return of the river unfortunately. Never mind, we will hope to see the river flowing in 2018. Our efforts in the last 12 months have centred around controlling the growth of unwanted nettles, clearing up after contractor cutting and pruning hedges. The car park hedge is now full and thick that so we are glad that we have the use of our new power trimmer which Chris Lee has wielded to good effect through out the year. The eastern (paddock) boundary hedge is coming along nicely thanks to timely light pruning but still needs more attention if and when we have some spare time!

Our seeded trial plot, carefully prepared in Autumn 2015 produced a lot of ox-eye daisies, some mallow, a few poppies and a lot of mixed grasses. Not the swathe of flowers we had hoped for! Once again David Wildman has tried hard to improve our plant diversity by adding various plants throughout the year and once again many have been damaged by hungry rabbits. His patience is not quite exhausted but his appearance resembles a gamekeeper more and more as time goes by.....

The benches continue to be very popular with families and elderly people looking for a bit of peace and quiet in the centre of the village. Unfortunately we have had some vandalism this year resulting in chunks disappearing from the bench by the table and part of the Link Road boundary fence being pulled out. The police have been informed .

On the evening of September 1<sup>st</sup> we had a Beasts of The Night Safari event at the meadow led by Julie Hopton. A bunch of adults and kids had a good time looking for bugs, trapping moths and scouting for bats. It was fun and Julie was an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and and uplifting host.

We also had a Community Day on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. A wonderful turnout of PN members/volunteers worked alongside a group of staff from Chiltern Rangers to further develop the meadow and copse. The costs were met by a generous grant from The Co-op. The work included scalping part of the meadow and then seeding/hay covering it. We are grateful to the many hay and seed providers. We will do more work on this area in the coming weeks and in the Spring, including the addition of many plug plants. In the copse we coppiced some hazel and generally 'cleared out' a lot of unwanted trees. The result is a big increase in light getting through to the trees that we DO want. We will also plant some new ones soon. The fun aspect of the day was greatly enhanced by the attendance of a group of children from Little Kingshill Primary School parading as The Eco Warriors. They had a wonderful time assembling bat and bird boxes and stomping hay. They also had a picnic lunch sitting on DRY grass, a rare commodity during the previous few days. Overall a lovely, productive, enjoyable day, blessed by sunshine and expertly captured in a set of Keith Tyrrells' photographs. Certainly one of the most rewarding days of my 11 year tenure as Project Leader.



Eco warriors from Little Kingshill School helped at the Community Day.

So overall another satisfying year at Boug's. With no further news on the meadow being turned into a car park we hope the threat has gone. Here's to a return of the Misbourne, more flowers in our scalped/seeded patches and plenty of (well behaved) visitors in 2018. As usual I take this opportunity to thank all the loyal hard working people who have helped me this year. A special mention for Jonathan Margetts for his path cutting and Chris Lee for his hedge husbandry. David Wildman and Paul Heath have given me tremendous, frequent and stalwart support throughout the year. Finally, on behalf of all the volunteers I would like to say, as always, how much we enjoyed the invaluable 'fuel' to keep us going, namely Valerie's flapjack!

### 3. Butterfly Transect (Co-ordinator Sylvia Bennett)

We are now in our twelfth year in providing data to the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) and despite a slow start to the season our numbers are up on last year. We saw our usual high mid season, but sadly the weather changed dramatically and this impacted on what was hoped to be a good year. The Transect was not walked on four occasions during the season due to the weather; two weeks early in the season and two weeks towards the end.

On a more positive note it was encouraging to welcome a new Transect walker to our core team of volunteers, with another volunteer trained and ready to walk the Transect for next year [recruited at one of our village events].

As in previous years we have witnessed as the weeks progress that some sections of the Transect become overgrown and this year has been no exception. During the latter part of the season walkers were again advised to take along a pair of secateurs as a precautionary measure. However, no major hazards were reported. Hi-viz jackets continue to be made available to walkers for those concerned about the short walk along the Hampden Road.

Year	Annual Total
2013	2348
2014	2786
2015	2846
2016	1426
2017	2009

The Meadow Brown Butterflies again top the charts with the largest number of sightings for the year - 999 compared to just 472 in 2016. The Marbled White came in second with 182 recorded sightings which is slightly up on last year's total of 161 recordings.

The sightings in the latter weeks may have been disappointing low, but one high was the sighting of a Purple Hairstreak by Tony Marshall. This is a first for the Transect and only the third local record. Tony feels it is possible that it is under-recorded because it stays mostly at the top of oak trees where it flew after it was spotted!

#### Special Note:

The Duke of Burgundy was last recorded by PN in 2011, a butterfly that was considered the fastest declining butterfly because the Chiltern countryside suffered as a consequence of intense farming some 40 years ago. In 2010 as part of a joint project between Butterfly Conservation and the local National Trust twenty Duke of Burgundy caterpillars were released onto a steep chalk grassland slope on the Bradenham Estate. With careful management of the grassland and seven years on the numbers have doubled with a plan to release Duke of Burgundy butterflies elsewhere on the estate. Fingers crossed that they stray a little closer to the PN Transect site in the future.

#### **4. Holy Trinity Churchyard, Prestwood (Leader Tony Marshall)**

I have had discussions with David Page and Rev. Deiniol Heywood about how to take forward the treatment of the churchyard as a nature reserve and how we might achieve similar management at Great Hampden churchyard. This will involve an application for a certain amount of funding, including a chipping machine (which will be shared with Prestwood Nature), an information board, and payment for Great Hampden to be appropriately cut and the arisings removed. As part of public education, I shall give a talk on the fungi of the churchyard on 21 October at the church and, if the weather is suitable, taking people on guided tours. A leaflet is also being prepared.

#### **5. Junior Photo Competition (Paul Heath)**

Inspired by one of our younger members, Hanna, taking some remarkable pictures on a phone during the Bird Walk earlier in the year, we set up a photo competition for under 16's to explore their interest in nature and wildlife photography. After a slow start we have had a wide range of pictures submitted, which can be seen on the Prestwood Nature Flickr page. There are examples of great photographic technique, creative endeavour, floral beauty and some heart-warming photos too. The competition is still open at time of writing and the results will be presented at the AGM. Many thanks to all those who entered - we have been most impressed.



Hanna's picture

#### **6. Kiln Common Orchard (Leader Vanessa Rickett)**

The trees flowered well this spring and the apple trees set so much fruit that they had to be thinned to prevent damage to the trees. However the tree producing the most fruit was a plum - the Langley Bullace.

George Lewis has helped keep a close eye on the orchard and we have arranged work parties as necessary to weed around the trees. The nettles have been scythed as needed and Chris Lee has been responsible for cutting paths around the fruit trees to improve the appearance of the area.

The grass continues to be a major problem. This year it was decided to have only one contractor cut the whole area which enables the wildflowers to set seed. This cut produced 20 builders bags of grass cuttings which we disposed of at the local recycling centre at Amersham - not an environmentally friendly procedure (many thanks to Paul Heath and David Wildman). We need to consider alternative ways of dealing with the arisings.

We do not have enough resource to care for the orchard as well as we would like and would appreciate it if there are any members who are able to help keep an eye on the trees and alert the Council to any problems.

## **7. Membership (Membership Secretary Paul Heath)**

Membership (Family and individual subscribers) has risen from 87 at the 2016 AGM to 94 at the time of writing. These memberships cover 179 people with approximately 158 adults and 21 youngsters under the age of 18. The 13 new memberships more than made up for 6 members failing to renew and many of these new members have become very active in our various projects and events.

While this membership is healthy, we are keen to encourage younger members and young families to participate where they are interested. Various activities during the year including the Great Missenden Library "Wicked Wednesday" school holiday sessions, Boug's Meadow Night Safari, family walks and the Junior Wildlife Photo Competition have tried to enable such engagement and support membership.

On the administrative front, legislation in the area of privacy and data protection taking effect in May 2018 has caused us to review our policy and practices on handling personal data. Membership records contain the bulk of the personal data held by Prestwood Nature but, fortunately, there are few changes that need to be made. Activity is underway to ensure we comply.

The annual membership subscription was £8 per household for the 2017 calendar year and will remain at this level for 2018. This represents excellent value for all the free walks and talks, newsletters and fellowship on our various projects as well as enabling Prestwood Nature to serve the community in the area of nature and conservation.

## **8. Pollinator Friendly Garden (Leader Tina Hillas)**

The Garden has fulfilled its purpose by attracting many pollinating insects. Other creatures have also been seen from time to time, including a toad in the compost bin and a wren making its 'scolding' noise from one of the cornus (dogwood) shrubs. The echinops (globe thistle) flower heads were especially popular with bees, as were the scabious flowers. Many different butterflies visited the garden and enjoyed the buddleia flowers.

Similar to last year, four work parties were held during 2017 to carry out routine maintenance:- in April, May, September and October. A small band of faithful volunteers continue to give support and anyone is welcome to come along and join in.



The notice board at the Garden states that the Garden is being managed by volunteers for the benefit of the whole community and people have told us that they do enjoy and appreciate it.

## **9. Roving Plant Protection Team (Leader Tony Marshall)**

There has been no call on our services this year. Numbers of orchids at most of our sites have been low this summer.

## **10. Sheepwash Pond (Leader Fiona Waller)**

The pond continues to be well used by the community and this came to the fore when, once again there was another two instances of vandalism this time worse than what we have seen before with many of the boards on the platform being broken. The event was shared through the Prestwood Village Association (PVA) website and it was clear from the comments and emails we received from residents of Prestwood that the dipping platform and Sheepwash Pond are greatly appreciated and this encourages us to continue with the site. Once again the very generous Mark Cunnane repaired the platform and we had offers from other residents too.



Sheepwash in peaceful times

The current platform is now seven years old and, other than the interference by local youths has been a good design. However in light of yet another event we are also considering if we need to invest in using a material which is more vandal resistant such as plastic wood which the bench nearby is made from. This will be costly but may be more resilient. The local community police have the site on one of their walks and we can hope that those that have done the damage grow up and become more responsible members of our community.

In terms of the management of the site the hedges have been maintained once again by Sylvia Bennett and many people continue to collect litter from the site. Later this year we will carry out some cutting back of the scrub that has grown up over summer and will check whether the fish are still in evidence and if we can carry out further planting.

## **11. Events (Vanessa Rickett)**

We have held our usual programme of 3 talks throughout the year. At the 2016 AGM John Tyler gave us a very informative and interesting talk about the formation of the Chilterns over the millenia. In February our own Tony Marshall talked to us about Sex and the Single Flower and then in June we heard about water voles - from Julia Lofthouse of BBOWT . If you have any ideas for future talks or have heard a particularly good speaker please let us know.

Again this year we have arranged several walks led by our local members; there have been spring walks to look for birds and wildflowers . Then in summer we had a glowworm walk where we ended up seeing barn owls rather than the elusive beetles! This autumn there will also be a walk to find out about the fungi in the local churchyard and also one taking children to see the Harvest of the Hedgerows.

## **12. Special Hedges and Trees (Leaders Tony Marshall & Val Marshall)**

No progress this year, although requests from the Parish Council for information on hedges and trees involved in planning applications are increasing, so that we really need to be getting on top of these surveys. As we do not seem to be able to get enough voluntary resources we may have to think about a funded project.

## **13. Surveying and Records (Leader Tony Marshall)**

Our database now has 36,000 records (exactly!, as at 1 September), covering 5,902 different species and 1,191 sites. This is an increase of 4% on last year this time. There are still possibilities for members to contribute more - I am sure there are many of you taking note of birds in your garden: a record of what you see in any particular year would be very useful. It is even useful to have records of common species, as these are often the ones we are not told about.

I organised a field trip for bramble specialists from the Botanical Society of the British Isles at the beginning of July, including several sites in our area. This has much increased our knowledge of this difficult group and included confirmation of one of Britain's rarest endemic brambles (ie it grows nowhere else in the world) in Angling Spring Wood and at Lee Common, and added two more sites in the same region - Lodge Wood and Sandwich Wood.

I have also started surveying the bees in our area, which have been seriously under-recorded in the past, but publication of good keys for the first time has now made this large group more accessible to study.

## **14. Website (Webmaster Frank Rickett)**

The web site continues to provide up to date information about Prestwood Nature and our various activities.

This year we have added new facilities to support the Junior Wildlife Photo Competition. So that we can display the photos as they are submitted, we have set up an account with the photo sharing site Flickr. This web site allows us to have any number of different albums to showcase our various activities; the first album has been set up for the Photo Competition and a second one is in preparation for photos taken at the Great Missenden library this summer.

To enable people to submit photos to the Photo Competition we have established a dedicated email address and also designed a new web page containing an upload form. Visitors to the web site can access the Flickr album directly from a button on the photo competition page.

Over the past year Tony Marshall has added a further 7 chapters to his book "The Ecological Flora of the Central Chilterns"; 32 of the projected 46 chapters are now available. The most popular section continues to be chapter 12 dealing with orchids and related species

The web site is still being well used; the number of visitors remains similar to last year, averaging over 150 visits per week.