



The Common

The newsletter from the Horsell Common Preservation Society

Volume 23

Autumn 2023



Meadow Brown



Brimstone



Speckled Wood

Butterflies found on the common. Photos by Jon Mullin.

Small really is beautiful, especially butterflies! During a day long survey on the Common in July, 21 different species were identified, with the rare Silver-studded Blue sighted in various locations and in very good numbers. The conservation work to create and maintain favourable habitats for birds, insects and reptiles is crucial for their survival. Summer work on footpaths and riverbanks guarantees a safer and pleasanter experience for the thousands of people who visit the Common. Learn more about the work on the Common in this newsletter and at the AGM on Wednesday, 4th October at Goldwater Lodge. Please arrive at 7pm.

Caroline Hughes (Editor)

From the Trustees

AGM Notice

The Trustees of Horsell Common Preservation Society invite members to join us and meet us for the Annual General Meeting. The AGM will be held on Wednesday, 4th October at "Goldwater Lodge", Wishbone Way, GU21 3RT. There is ample parking. Please arrive at 7pm. Once the formal business has been concluded, there will be a presentation by our guest speaker, Lucy Lee, UK Chief Advisor, Conservation Programmes, WWF-UK.

Members will have received formal notice of the AGM and accounts. Further AGM details are available on our website: <https://horsellcommon.org.uk/statutory-information>.

About the Trustees

The Society is managed by a committee of Trustees with a wide area of experience and skills and who are all passionate about the welfare of the Common and its wildlife. They are elected by its members at the Annual General Meeting and retire by rotation every three years but can choose to stand for re-election.

What is the role of the Trustees? There are 10 Trustees with a number of specific sub-committees. The Trustees work to support the Estate Manager and the Senior Ranger and to ensure the good management of Horsell Common for recreation and for conservation.

A Trustee of "The Horsell Common Preservation Society" is also a Director of a company of the same name with duties and responsibilities set out in the Companies Acts. The Board which comprises its Trustees/Directors, are collectively responsible for managing its affairs. They must at all times act in the best interests of HCPS and can be held personally responsible for failing to do so. They must make sure that the charity is complying with its governing documents, in this case its Articles, and carrying out the purposes for which it is set up, and no other purpose.

Finance & Investment sub-committee

This committee is set up by the Board and is responsible to it for the running of the financial aspects of the Charity. It ensures there are proper financial controls for day to day management and that timely financial information is produced for the Board. In addition, it makes low risk investment decisions where there is cash surplus to

immediate requirements.

Role of the Estate Management sub-committee

The Estate Management sub-committee meets four times a year and reports to the Main Board of Trustees, which also has four meetings a year. Members of the EM committee oversee the work of the Estate Manager and the Senior Ranger.

This includes conservation work to maintain the open heathland areas of Horsell Common for the benefit of the fauna and flora associated with the lowland heathland habitat, dealing with dog waste and fly tipping, keeping footpaths open, dealing with fallen or dangerous trees, and other work to keep the HCPS estate a safe and pleasant place for the thousands of people who visit every year.

Role of the Public Relations sub-committee

The role of PR is to promote and support the Society by keeping our members and the public informed. We produce The Common newsletter twice a year, leaflets and new members' booklets with news and information about the management of the Common, its wildlife and its history. The best source of information is the website which we recently redesigned. This year we are also promoting a new waymarked walk with a map and guide. PR is also responsible for membership. IT skills and being familiar with social media are essential.

Farewell to Elizabeth Cuttle

This year we say "Farewell" and "Thank you" to Elizabeth Cuttle, a long standing and well respected member of HCPS and a dedicated Trustee for 14 years.

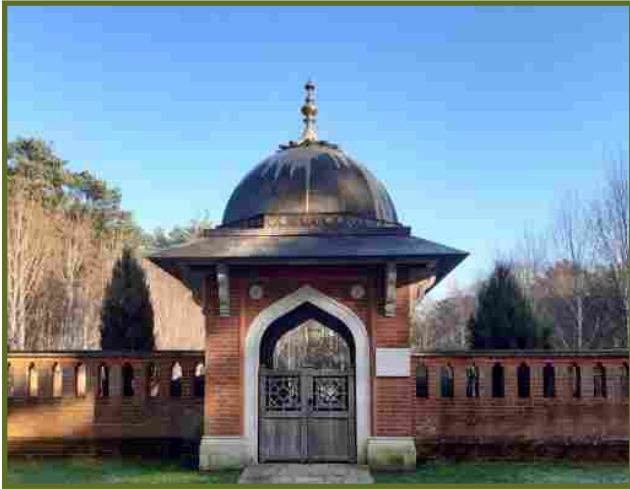
"When I became a Trustee of Horsell Common Preservation Society in 2009, it was an exciting and busy time for the Society and a privilege to join in discussions and help make decisions on projects such as the Bedser Trail, the carving of Pegasus on the storm damaged oak opposite the WWF building, work on improving the heathland habitat, and the acquisition and development of the Heather Farm and Wetlands complex and the adjacent fields.

The project I was most closely involved with, and which gave me a lot of satisfaction, was the restoration of the walls and entrance of the Muslim Burial Ground (it was thrilling to see a golden finial once more on the dome glinting in the sunlight) and the design and installation of the Peace Garden which was formally opened by the Duke of Wessex in 2015. I often go there and find it a pleasant

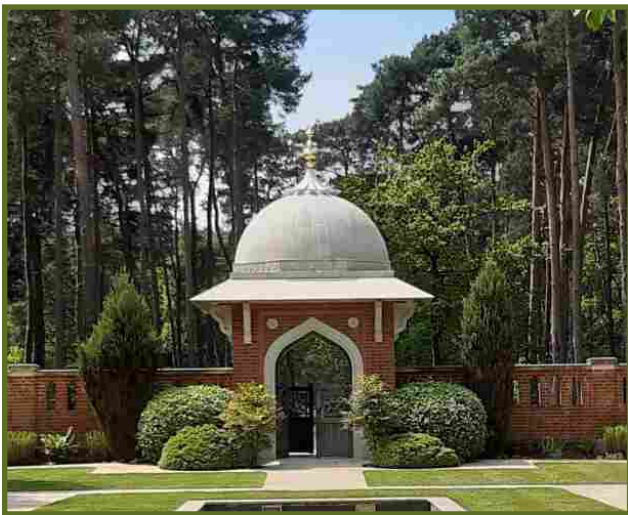
and peaceful place to be in at any time of the year.

It has been a great pleasure to have been so closely involved with the Society for so long and I am sure it will continue to flourish in the years to come with its excellent staff and Trustees.”

Elizabeth Cuttle



The Chatri—before cleaning



The Chatri—after cleaning

Elizabeth has always ensured that the Peace Garden is well looked after. This year, the chatri and paving stones were cleaned and the finial glitters once more.

As I'm standing before the Peace Garden, far away
from home
Returned to the country that we fought for but never
known
It should be me: you should be here to see how you
died in glory
But instead I'm the one left to tell our story
We were the anonymous soldiers who walked
through the dark of night
Now brought back to life as countries and culture
unite.

*Final verse from 'The Peace Garden' by Molly Price—
written from the perspective of a Muslim soldier who
fought alongside those who are remembered here.*

Out and about

Estate Manager's Report

Heather Farm Works

This Summer we have completed some repairs and improvements to paths and riverbanks at Heather Farm. The ford across the river Bourne had become badly eroded, threatening to undermine the bridge footings, and creating a muddy bog. We used the services of a specialist contractor to reprofile the crossing point using quarried stone and install revetments made of hazel to protect the reinstated banks. We will be planting some Black Alder around the bridge this Winter which will form a good root network and help prevent further erosion.



The river bank —before repair



The river bank —after repair

The network of paths around Heather Farm has also received some attention. Some sections which had become badly worn and were subsiding, have been rebuilt and 120m of new path has been installed to complete the circular walk. We have also been improving the pedestrian access by making a separate walkway along the main drive and linking this to the main network of paths

with pavements and pedestrian zones.

Heather Farm is now the starting point for a waymarked trail which will take you to McLaren Park and back again. The easy to walk 4-mile circuit takes you through riverside meadows and woodland paths, and past the iconic Sand Pit on Horsell Common.

Wildfire

I am lucky to have not witnessed a wildfire yet at Horsell Common. Sadly, I am sure that it is only a matter of time as the heathland sites we look after have all suffered accidental fires in recent history. With hotter and drier conditions becoming more regular in the summer months the risk of wildfire is elevated. With a large amount of dry fuel to burn, on a hot day the effects could be devastating. There have been incidents like this in many other Thames Basin heathland sites in recent years, one of the worst being in the heatwave of 2022.

Although we can't fireproof the Common, there are some measures that help reduce intensity and facilitate more effective firefighting. I recently attended a training course in the New Forest along with our Senior Ranger to learn more about managing for fire resilience and how to be an effective member of a team dealing with a wildfire. Some of the actions we can take are to remove 'ladder fuels' which can carry fire from low scrub into a woodland canopy, mow out areas of very woody old heather to regenerate young green plants and reduce fuel loading, ensure fire crews have good access to the site, and have some basic firefighting equipment on hand for extinguishing small fires before they can escalate.

Battery Power

As some of our petrol handheld tools were in need of replacement this year, we have decided to try out some professional cordless equipment now the technology has improved. The new strimmer and hedge cutter are much lighter than their petrol equivalents and seem to be just as powerful. The backpack battery lasts for 3-5 hours on a single charge and it is also a nice change not to have a can of petrol rolling around in the truck. We have a large solar array on the roof at Heather Farm which charges the battery pack. I love the idea of managing the Common powered by sunshine!

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

As OPM is now a permanent feature of the English countryside we need to learn to live with it. Application of large quantities of insecticide trying to combat OPM has

proved to be largely ineffective and very damaging to other species of insects found on oak trees. There is also a knock-on effect to woodland birds which rely on caterpillars and insects found in oak trees to feed their chicks. HCPS will remove OPM nests which are low enough on the stems of oak trees for people to reach and are in high use areas. This year our contractors removed six of these low-level nests, mostly from around the Sandpit area.

Max

Our dog wash continues to be very popular and even Max has learned to enjoy a bath after playing in the mud with all his doggy friends at Heather Farm.



Jeremy Dalton

Senior Ranger's Report

Nest box project

Since early Spring, we've been running a project to make, assemble, and install nest boxes across our land holding – so far, 105 boxes have been put up in our woodlands near Heather Farm, and on Wheatsheaf Common, to provide nesting opportunities for the likes of blue tits, great tits, nut hatches, robins, and other woodland birds.

We plan to survey these boxes, monitoring their usage and success, and eventually install boxes for bats, kestrels, and owls too. With almost 1000 acres of land to cover, most of which is secondary woodland, there is space and potential to accommodate hundreds of boxes!

Corporate work parties

In addition to our usual corporate groups helping with scrub clearance in Autumn/Winter, we are now inviting companies in to help with woodland thinning and bird box assembly during the Spring and Summer months. In July and August, we ran three successful corporate bird box assembly days: each delegate can assemble 3 - 4 boxes in a day. We keep three to put up on our land, and we allow them to take one home to put up in their garden or a location of their choice.

For a change of scene in the afternoon, we take them out to do a bit of woodland thinning. One of our regular Tuesday morning volunteers kindly hand-made the bird box kits to a very high standard for our first corporate

session and helped to run the day. We have since invested in a circular chop saw to speed up the bird box kit-making process.



Rupert putting up a nest box



Making a nest box

Butterfly surveys

Last year, we invited an expert in from Butterfly Conservation, to advise on survey design and ideal locations for a transect on the Common.

On 12th July, we put the plan into action with a team of 12 people conducting a site-wide iRecord butterfly survey . The findings were extremely encouraging, with the rare Silver Studded Blue butterfly observed widely across areas of open heath. That was particularly reassuring to us as land managers, as we've been working hard during last Winter to improve and link up areas of favourable habitat for this species through selective heather mowing and bare ground creation.

In addition to the Silver Studded blues, another 21 species were recorded, including the similarly rare Grayling – all great news for butterflies on the Common.

Next year, we will supplement these iRecord surveys with a transect route surveyed weekly over 26 weeks throughout Spring and Summer.

I would like to thank Bill Downey from Butterfly Conservation, and everyone who helped on 12th July, for making this survey possible.



Silver-studded blue



Grayling

Volunteering

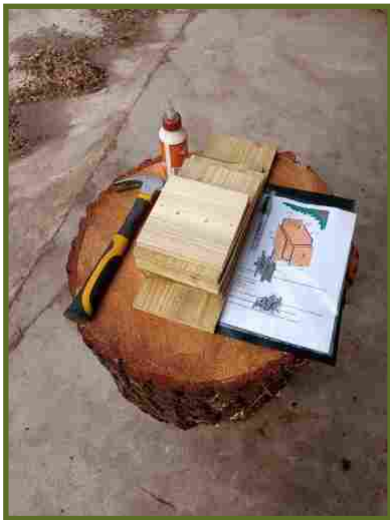
Alongside these exciting new projects, our trusty bedrock of Tuesday volunteers continue with their essential work removing blocks of invasive species from our woodlands. In particular, the densely scrubbed-up belt adjacent to Shores Road on the Southern perimeter of the main common. This has become infested with laurel and rhododendron escaped from nearby gardens and would invade the woodland heading North towards the open

heath if left unchecked. As always, the volunteers have removed as many of the runners as possible using tree poppers, leaving the large stumps ready to be cut with a chainsaw at ground level and then treated.

Our recent volunteer session, planting new *Hebe parviflora* plants in the Peace Garden, gave our volunteers a well-earned break from all this hot and physical Summer woodland work. The previous plants died due to hot dry summers and the very cold winter, but recent research conducted by RHS Wisley has found this particular species to be more resilient – fingers crossed they survive for us to see their brilliant white flowers next year!



Hebe parviflora



Nest box kit



Nest box painting

Rupert Millican

Common Knowledge

The House in the Woods

The volunteers have spent many hours working on Woodham Common this summer. We often think of this area in connection with the Bedser Trail, the Bronze Age tumuli or the Peace Garden, either side of Monument Road. As you delve deeper into the woodland towards the Six Crossroads, it becomes rather overgrown and mysterious. When volunteers were working there in May, the air was filled with a beautiful scent and the woodland floor was carpeted with lily of the valley. There are very few flowers growing in this environment, so it was hard to understand why they should be found there.

However, there were other clues such as raised earth banks suggesting that this area had once been cultivated. A leaflet found in The Lightbox solved the mystery. There was once a "House in the Woods". Margaret Ann Bellin and her painter husband Arthur lived in the old Thistle Cottage but in 1910 they built an "Arts and Crafts" style house next to the cottage and called it "The House in the Woods". By 1968 Thistle Cottage had burnt down and eventually The House in the Woods became derelict and was demolished by Woking Borough Council. The lily of the valley are some of the last traces of the gardens cultivated here and it is hard to imagine that once there was a putting green, a tennis court and a rose garden. In 1995, Woking Borough Council exchanged the site for Brewery Road car park under the Inclosure Acts 1845 and Commons Act 1899. This area of Woodham Common either side of Monument Road is owned by HCPS.

Taken from "All Saints Church and Woodham Common" by Phillip Arnold September 2018.



Dragonflies and Damselflies

Dragons and damsels

Horsell Common has two large water bodies, known as the Danewell Pond and Horsell Birch Pond. There is also a lake at Heather Farm and the Bourne stream flows nearby. These provide habitats for several species of dragonflies and damselflies. The latter have slender bodies and usually hold their wings vertically above their bodies when at rest. The hind and fore wings of damselflies are similar in size and shape. The hind wings of dragonflies are larger than the fore wings, being wider at the base. When at rest, dragonflies generally hold their wings out more or less horizontally from their stout bodies.

The first damselfly to be seen is often the Large red damselfly, *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*, which is on the wing from late April.



Large red damselfly, *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*

At the other end of the season, the last dragonfly to be seen is the Common darter, *Sympetrum striolatum*. This can be seen on sunny days as late as November in mild autumns.



Common darter, *Sympetrum striolatum*



Banded damselfly, *Calopteryx splendens*

Other species likely to be seen around the Horsell Common ponds and the Bourne include the Azure damselfly, *Coenagrion nymphula*, Common blue damselfly, *Enallagma cyathigerum*, Blue-tailed damselfly, *Ischnura elegans*, Emerald damselfly, *Lestes sponsa*, Banded damselfly, *Calopteryx splendens*, Emperor dragonfly, *Anax imperator*, Keeled skimmer, *Orthetrum coerulescens*, Ruddy darter, *Sympetrum sanguineum*, and Broad-bodied chaser, *Libellula depressa*.



Emperor dragonfly, *Anax imperator*



Keeled skimmer, *Orthetrum coerulescens*

Depending on the species, dragonflies and damselflies lay their eggs in mud at the edge of ponds, drop them into the water while in flight, or they insert their eggs into the submerged stems of plants growing in the ponds. The eggs hatch into wingless nymphs that prey on aquatic insects, tadpoles and small fish.

When the nymphs have completed their feeding, they emerge from the water and climb up plant stems or other vertical surfaces. The nymphal skin splits open and out steps the adult dragonfly or damselfly. Once the wings have been fully expanded and have hardened up, the adult insect is ready to fly.

The typical colours of the adult insects are often not fully developed until several days after they have transitioned from the nymphal state. Adult dragonflies and damselflies feed on insects that they capture while in flight.

Andrew Halstead

Bird Update

How well did our birds survive the severe winter and spring weather?

Throughout the UK, Schedule 1 bird species have special protection during the breeding season, either because their numbers are threatened, or because their habitats are reduced. There are three Schedule 1 birds that the Common supports, namely Dartford Warblers, Woodlarks and Nightjars. Less than 20% of the UK's original lowland heath remains, much of it in Surrey, and Horsell Common is an important part of these birds' important heathland habitat.

Dartford Warblers have been doing well on the common in recent years, but they are particularly susceptible to prolonged cold weather when it becomes difficult for them to find the spiders and insects they rely on, so the two very cold snaps in the winter were a cause for concern. One of the best times to see Dartfords is on a sunny day in spring, when they are establishing breeding territories. The cold spring this year, alternating between very dry and very wet didn't make for ideal conditions to spot them, but fortunately their numbers do seem to have held up reasonably, although probably lower than last year.

Woodlarks prefer areas with lower heather heights. They bred on the main common in 2022, and fortunately bred again this year. They were seen briefly on Grasslands, a previous breeding site, but it isn't known if they bred there this year.

One bird also rarely seen except at dusk in spring and summer which seemed to be in good numbers this year is the Woodcock, sometimes known as the Snipe of the Woods. Male Woodcocks patrol their territories at dusk in a display known as 'roding', flying over the treetops while emitting either high pitched sharp calls, or low almost frog like grunts. They are wonderful to see, particularly if two rival males are chasing each other. The long straight beak is clearly visible with binoculars even in the dusk.

One last but particular highlight in the spring of 2023 was the sight of four lapwings displaying over the water meadows near Heather Farm. To our amazement, they stayed around, and seem to have successfully bred in the damp meadows adjacent to the meadows. In August at least 13 juvenile Lapwings were seen in the fields,

presumably from two successful nests, despite the proximity of plenty of corvids. Hopefully they return and breed again next year.

Now it is time to look out for the return of our winter visitors – the Fieldfares and Redwings that will be returning from Scandinavia to feast on our Autumn berries.

Margot Scott



Dartford warbler—Photo by Jon Mullin



Woodcock—Photo by Jon Mullin



Redwing—Photo by Jon Mullin

Thames Basin Heaths Partnership



Our Amazing Heathlands!

As Education Officer for the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership, I am incredibly fortunate to have a job that means I can share the marvels of nature with others every day. It's particularly rewarding to be able to introduce local school children to the wonders of heathland - a habitat rarer than rainforest. Nature connections made when young are vital in fostering life-long interests, and spending time outside is important for wellbeing.

Over the past few years, I've been creating an education programme – Our Amazing Heathlands – from scratch. It's been challenging, but things have really taken off and lots of local schools have been joining in. Together we can all fall in love with our local wildlife and the heathlands on our doorsteps. We can learn what we can all do to help protect them and children can often be far more persuasive to their parents in encouraging responsible behaviour on the heaths!

In the UK, we've lost about 85% of our remaining heathland in the past two-hundred years and that which remains is fragile and needs us all to look after it.

Connecting children with heathland

Thanks to the support of the Horsell Common Preservation Society, I get to spend quite a lot of my educational delivery time on Horsell Common. I've been able to build a community of school-aged children who know all about our amazing Nightjars and wonderful Woodlarks. Whenever possible, heathland visits are complemented by assemblies, classroom lessons and suggestions for follow-on projects. The children absolutely love the experience and want to share what they have learned with their friends and families.

Feedback from sessions has been positive and one Year 1 child even exclaimed that they had 'the best time ever' after a seasonal walk. I think it helped that there were lots of puddles to jump in, but we also discovered lots of fascinating fungi, got to smell some coconutty gorse flowers and encountered a snoozing Hornet! These visits have really inspired children to connect with their local wildlife and led on to some amazing follow-up work in the classroom, like 'Help the Heath'. It's fantastic to see these children become amazing heathland ambassadors!

A big thank you to all the local teachers who have enabled their classes to reap the benefits of learning more about their special local wildlife and the wonders of fantastic places like of Horsell Common.

Get involved!

If you'd like to connect your children (or yourself!) with local heathlands, please get in touch as we offer a variety of free, fun sessions for schools and community groups – both inside and out on the heath.

Michael Jones , Education Officer – TBHP

www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/schools

A few words about Heath Week 2023!

What a week! The Thames Basin Heaths Partnership advertised 27 free events across Surrey, Hampshire & Berkshire and quite a few of them were at Horsell Common.

The family-friendly week is all about spreading the word about this amazing heather-clad landscape we have on our doorstep. It's actually very rare now - in fact it's rarer on the planet than rainforest! Many plants and animals have evolved to live here and wouldn't survive anywhere else. The birds that nest on open heathland and in forest clearings, nest right on the ground. Nightjars, for example, come all the way from Africa to nest here and make little more than a scrape on the ground. Dartford Warblers stay all year round, nesting in low-growing vegetation like heather and gorse.

There were several twilight expeditions during Heath Week to listen for Nightjars at dusk. It's a magical experience to hear their unusual song, called churring, and witness their flight as the sun goes down. Despite the weather, we were treated to some amazing views of these nocturnal birds.

The butterfly walks at Chobham Common, the treasure hunt and the insect walks at Horsell Common were some of the highlights. And the Surrey Fire & Rescue Service put on a Wildfire Roadshow in aid of spreading the word about how to be wildfire aware in the countryside. As we all know, a wildfire in the countryside is devastating, but by leaving the barbeque at home, disposing of cigarettes responsibly and taking our litter home with us, we can all stay safe.

Sarah Bunce , Communications Officer – TBHP

www.tbhpartnership.org.uk

The Martian Race 2023

In 2016, Woking Lions Club came up with an idea to host a run on Horsell Common with the intention to raise funds to support their charitable efforts. As some of the route always goes through the Sand Pit on Horsell Common, which famously is near the site where the Martians first landed in H.G. Wells' novel *The War of the Worlds*, the Martian theme was adopted. In the summer of this year, 2023 saw a record 730 runners registered for its sixth annual Martian Race with a new race start now based at McLaren Park.

Race distances on offer were 5k, 10k and 21k and for the first time, a 2k children's run which attracted 70 youngsters. The children's 2k run kicked off the whole event at 9am with all the adults cheering and supporting the enthusiast youngsters, who ran the perimeter. All the race distances started in McLaren Park and followed routes out across Horsell Common, winding through the shaded woods and heathland, looping back towards a downhill finish back into McLaren Park to receive their iconic Martian medals.

The Race Director said after the race, "There are always too many people to thank; our sponsors, our 40 plus volunteers and the runners themselves. We have to thank each and every sponsor who supported us for 2023 without which we could not have made the event a success. These include Trident Honda in Ottershaw, Optichrome Ltd Printers, McLaren for the use of their venue, Foundation Independent Estate Agents and The Run Company. Horsell Common Preservation Society allowed us the use of the Common for the sixth year. Heather Farm Café and also Temple Huts Coffee provided refreshments to our competition. We aim to balance the three objectives which are to make it a great run, success for the charities and also to bring the community together. This year we had an added bonus as the Bee-Lieve Foundation chose the run as part of their 10,000 challenge and organised around 80 runners raising their own money for mental health for kids."

All proceeds from the Race are donated to local charities selected by Woking Lions. Last year over £10,000 was raised and this year, the Martian Race has exceeded that, raising a whopping £13,900 proving to be the most successful event to date.

Mary Tibbotts, Woking Lions Club

HCPS Diary Dates

- ◆ AGM, Wed 4th October at 7pm, Goldwater Lodge, GU21 3RT
We are delighted that our guest speaker will be Lucy Lee, UK Chief Advisor, Conservation Programmes, WWF-UK
- ◆ Guided walk of the new waymarked walk to McLaren Park, 10am Friday 13th October. Meet by information board by Heather Farm Car Park.

HCPS Membership

- ◆ Please ensure that your details are up to date. Go to www.horsellcommon.org.uk/membership and use your email address to log in.
- ◆ Refer to our website for current membership fees. If you would like to make a one-off donation this can be done via our new link on the website.

Stop Press

Walking party ...



Walkers trying out the new waymarked circular walk to McLaren park.

County Councillor Lance Spencer with Angela (left), who was instrumental in obtaining funding from SCC for the finger posts and way-markers.

Waymarked circular walk, Heather Farm to McLaren Park

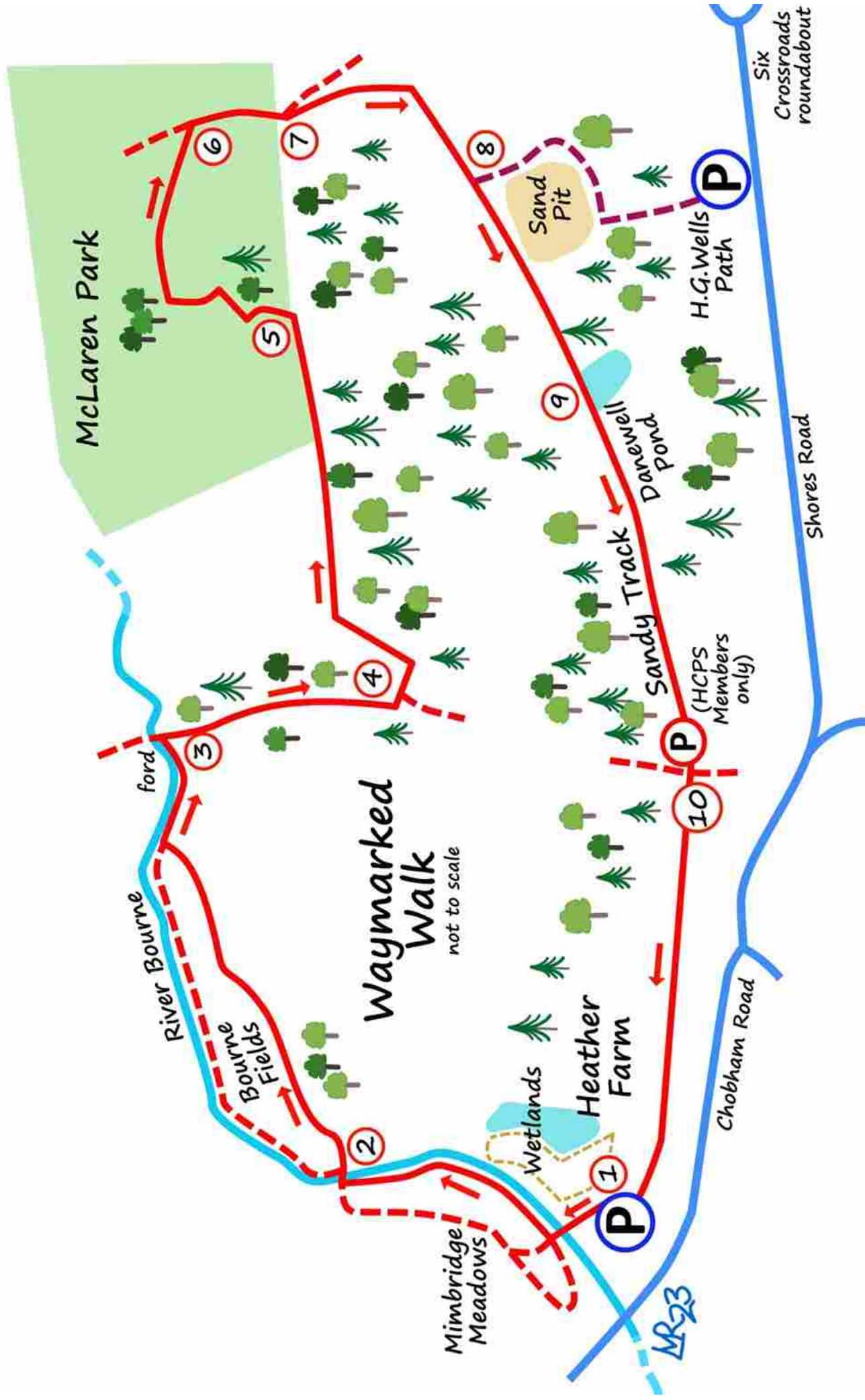
DISTANCE: 4 miles approximately. Allow 90 minutes to 2 hours

Start and finish at Heather Farm car park, GU21 4XY. Refreshments at Heather Farm café.

The walk takes you through open meadows alongside the river Bourne, through woodland and past the Sand Pit. There are benches in McLaren Park and by the Sand Pit. Do give yourself time to stop and stare and listen to the different birds. Some parts of the walk are wet and muddy after heavy rain.

1. Start by the information board next to Heather Farm car park and the Wetland area. The path leads through an avenue of pink hawthorn trees, planted in November 2022 to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee. Cross the River Bourne into Mimbridge Meadows and turn right. In summer look out for yellow toadflax and purple loosestrife near the river.
2. Cross the bridge leading into Bourne Fields and follow the boardwalk. In July 2023, the banks of the river were reinforced following serious erosion. The grass in Bourne Field is cut and used for animal fodder so please keep to the path. Amongst the grasses you can spot vetch, clover and other wildflowers. The blackcap often sings in the willows.
3. Follow the way marker arrows taking a sharp right then left as you enter the next section of Bourne Fields, making towards the very end of the field, where dogs enjoy swimming in the ford. The three-way finger post indicates Fair Oaks Airport left across the big wooden bridge, and Horsell Common right. Follow Horsell Common direction along a wide shady track.
4. You will pass one of the many hidden-away houses on your left and soon reach a "crossroads" with the perimeter track. Turn left, along the old perimeter track, passing the track to Scotcher's farm. This section of the walk offers welcome shade on a hot summer's day.
5. After about 800m, follow the arrows going left, on to a boardwalk which leads to the edge of McLaren Park. Follow the path ahead mown in the meadow grass straight up to the small copse of trees above. You can spot many meadow flowers, including geranium, tansy, vetch and comfrey. The butterflies love all these varied flowers and grasses. Keeping to the right of the copse (though there are benches where you can rest just off the path) turn right, looking out carefully for the green waymarker arrows. Skylarks abound in these meadows so please keep your dog on the path.
6. As you descend the gentle slope, you will see the main track ahead where you turn right, soon passing a seasonal pond and benches on your right.
7. Follow the path keeping gently left to the exit of McLaren Park and meet the perimeter track once more, keeping ahead a short distance but don't miss the arrow on the right leading into the woodland. This is the trickiest bit of the walk but just walk straight ahead. On your right you can see heather at the edge of the heathland. Soon you come to Sandy Track, a wide straight track which leads from Anthony's to Shores Road. Turn right.
8. Walking down the broad Sandy Track, you will soon come to the Sand Pit on your left. Sand was excavated from here for construction work. This is a lovely spot to explore and marvel at the iconic Scots pines with their network of exposed roots. It is very close to the site where the Martians landed in H. G. Wells' *"The War of the Worlds"*. The exposed sandy banks are the ideal habitat for solitary wasps and bees.
9. Continue along Sandy Track passing Danewell Gutter Pond on your left, a favourite haunt of many species of dragonfly.
10. At Sandy Track car park, continue straight across onto a cycle track which emerges at Heather Farm. Turn right into Heather Farm. There is a "posh wash" if your dog is muddy and fantastic refreshments at Heather Farm café.

Horsell Common is the largest recreational space in Woking with its heathland, woodland and meadows. The heathland is a Special Protection Area because of the rare and endangered ground-nesting species, including the nightjar and Dartford warbler. From March to September, you are kindly requested to keep to the paths in the grasslands and heather area, and to keep your dog on a lead.



Thank you to Surrey County Council for funding the finger posts and way marker discs through the "Your Council Community Fund",

to Lance Spencer, SCC councillor for Horsell and Goldsworth East, for enabling HCPS to get this funding and to Linda Russell for drawing the sketch map.