

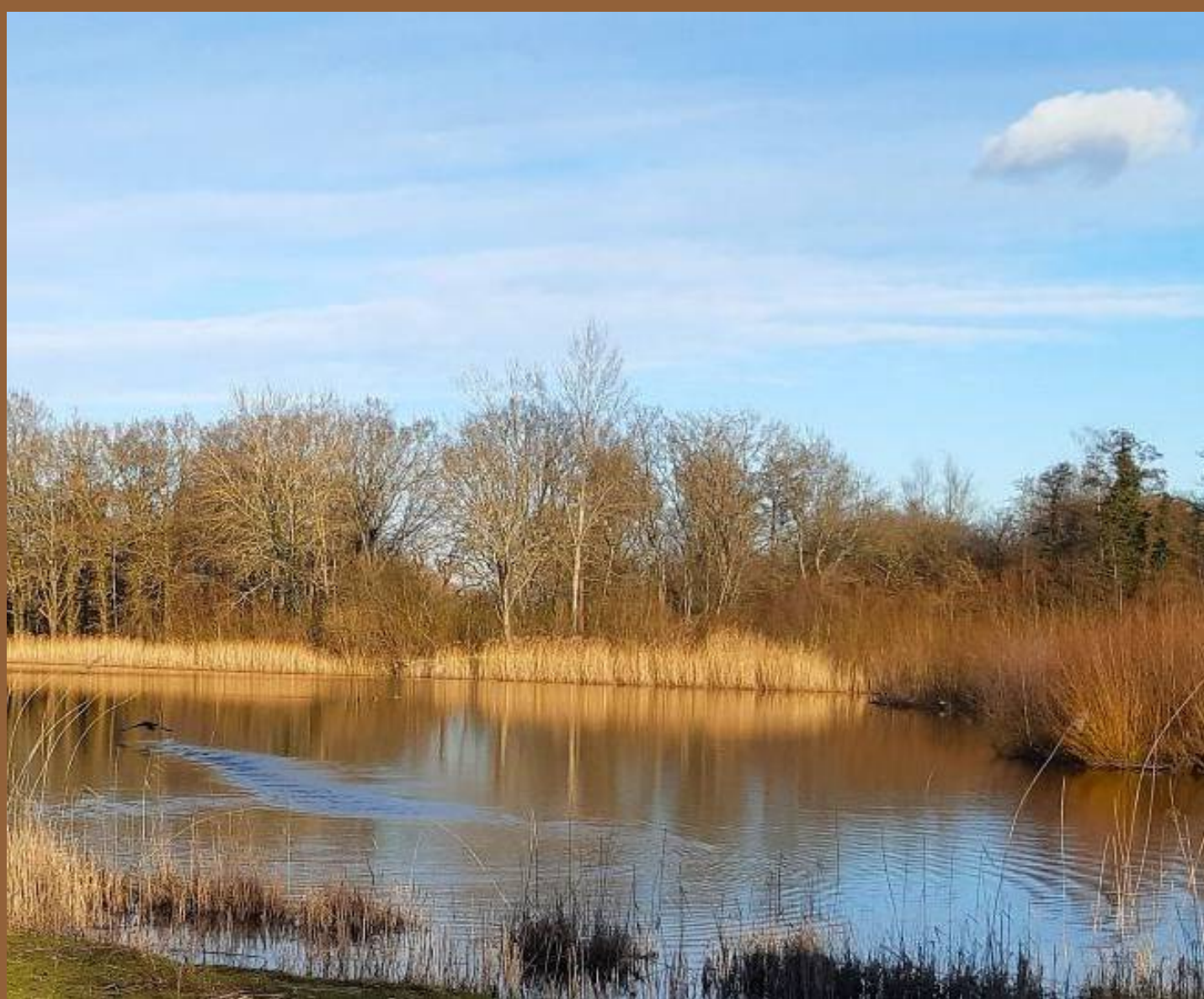


The Common

The newsletter from the Horsell Common Preservation Society

Volume 26

Spring 2025



During winter, there were some bright, crisp days when it was a joy to see blue sky and the network of trees reflected in the big puddles on the flooded paths. Equally lovely, in this image of the Wetlands, the colours of the reeds and water complement each other perfectly. This is a view we can now all enjoy from the comfort of the newly extended Heather Farm Café. You might spot a kingfisher or a cormorant taking off! Soon, reed buntings and reed warblers will be flitting amongst the reeds and maybe some swallows skimming across the water.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and will join HCPS or TBHP for some free guided walks on the Common. Information about all the walks is on the back page, where there is also a tribute to Robin Hoyle. You can read about the history of Cheapside, how HCPS works with various disadvantaged groups and the important work on the Common to maintain and improve this fragile and very special habitat with the needs for recreation. Let us know if you spot any woodlarks, Dartford warblers, stonechats, woodcocks or nightjars. We love to know where there have been sightings of these and any other birds.

Caroline Hughes (Editor)

Out and about

Estate Manager's Report

A Fresh Look at the Café

After a long, wet winter, it's a joy to see the outdoor seating at Heather Farm Café buzzing with visitors once again. And this year, there's something new for them to enjoy. The old marquee has been replaced with a stunning wooden barn extension, completed just after Christmas. This cozy yet airy space has quickly become a hit with café-goers, offering a warm, rustic charm alongside a panoramic view of the lake.

Nature lovers are in for a treat, too—our team has been receiving reports of fascinating wildlife sightings from the café's new space. A Kingfisher, previously unnoticed in this area, has been spotted fishing in the lake, adding a splash of vibrant colour to the scenery. So, next time you're sipping your coffee, keep an eye out—you never know what you might see!

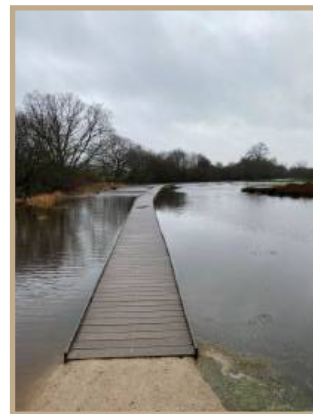


New Boardwalks and Better Paths

A brand-new 160-meter boardwalk has been completed in Bourne Fields, replacing the deteriorating path that often disappeared under winter floodwaters. Now, visitors can enjoy a complete circular route around Heather Farm

without worrying about muddy boots.

Built with durable recycled plastic, the new boardwalk is designed to last for decades, reducing the need for constant maintenance. But we're not stopping there. A particularly muddy section of the adjoining path is next on our list for improvements, with work scheduled for the drier summer and early autumn months when access is possible.



Caring for Our Heathland

Throughout the winter, our team has been working to keep Heather Farm's natural spaces healthy and resilient. A key focus has been managing gorse - an essential heathland plant that provides shelter for birds and nectar for insects. However, when it becomes overgrown, it poses a fire risk and can obstruct emergency access.

By carefully thinning out older, woody gorse near paths and woodland edges, we're making the area safer while encouraging fresh new growth, which benefits local wildlife. It's all about striking the right balance to protect both nature and visitors.



Jeremy Dalton

Senior Ranger's Report

Volunteering

Our volunteers have been removing a percentage of old leggy gorse from the open heath, reducing fire risk and allowing heather to flourish. There's still plenty of young dense gorse on Grasslands and other areas, offering shelter, insects and spiders for Dartford Warblers and other birds. Birch and pine removal has continued apace.



Volunteering now switches from Winter clearance to our Spring and Summer programme of works. Tasks will include removing invasive rhododendron and laurel from areas of woodland uninhabited by nesting birds, footpath and boardwalk maintenance, tree care in our orchard, and ditch work.

Replacing our ageing owl and kestrel boxes with new ones

Our tree surgery contractor has removed our damaged and uninhabited little owl, barn owl and kestrel nest boxes. We have identified suitable locations across our land for new ones and have engaged with the local 'Men In Sheds' group to make them. We aim to get the new boxes up by the end of Spring.



Swift project

We have so far put up 12 swift nest boxes under the eaves of our biomass barn, and plan to install another 18. We made the nest box kits ourselves and got corporate volunteers in to assemble them.



Once we have our swift-calling system installed alongside them, we may very well have our own swift colony at Heather Farm, if we are lucky.

(see below "Swifts Over Horsell")

A second butterfly transect on the main part of Horsell Common

Following recommendations from Butterfly Conservation, we have set up a second transect on Horsell Common and found extra people to start surveying it. Surveys over the last two years have revealed that populations of the rare Silver-studded blue butterfly are doing very well here, with sightings throughout the main common and Grasslands.

Start of the ground nesting bird season

Now that the bird nesting season is here, dog walkers are encouraged to keep their dogs on paths when using Horsell Common, to help protect our vulnerable ground nesting birds.



You can help them by sticking to main tracks and paths and keeping dogs under effective control.



New dog waste bin on Wheatsheaf Common

We have installed another dog waste bin, making it easier for dog walkers to dispose of their dog waste when leaving Wheatsheaf Common. The bin is located at the end of the footpath leading onto The Grove. We now have 23 dog waste bins across our land, mainly at, or near car parks.

Commercial dog-walking licence scheme continues for 2025-26

Our commercial dog walking license scheme continues to run from 1st April to 31st March each year with 3 new companies joining in the last 12 months. Dog walking companies operating their business on land owned by Horsell Common Preservation Society must be licensed by the society to do so. Information packs were sent out in the middle of February, and so far about 3 companies have confirmed their renewal.

Leaky dams

On Horsell Common, we are very lucky to have an area of wet lowland heath, a very rare habitat supporting signature species such as roundleaf sundew, cross-leaved heath (which is one of the food plants for the rare silver-studded blue butterfly), and bog asphodel. For these species to thrive, the habitat needs to remain damp. In recent years this area has become drier due to longer, hotter summers.

A way to counter this is to take a leaf out of the beavers' book and build a series of leaky dams restricting the outflow of water from that area to keep it damp even when conditions are hot and dry.

This wet lowland heath is located where the Danewell Gutter runs from south to north through the open heath. The leaky dams simply consist of 2 pairs of posts installed opposite each other either side of the stream, with bundles of hazel stuffed between them to form a 'leaky' barrier holding the water back. We have so far installed 3 several metres apart from one another and will monitor their effectiveness with a view to installing more if required.



Bog Asphodel



Sundew

Rupert Millican

Swifts over Horsell

In years gone by the sight and sound of parties of Swifts screaming above the village was a common sight, and to many it was a hall mark of summer approaching. Sadly, the loss of nest sites and the reduction in insect populations have had a serious impact on many bird species, but Swifts have been incredibly hard hit, with the breeding population halved in the last 30 years.

Migrating around 3.5 thousand miles north from Africa for the summer, these amazing birds spend virtually their whole life on the wing, eating, sleeping, and even mating without ever landing. In fact, the only time they land is to nest, in nooks and crannies of old buildings. This means that from the day it leaves the nest, a Swift will spend the next 2-3 years without ever landing, until it is old enough to breed.

If you spot a group of birds like dark scimitars streaking across the sky in fast aerobatic flight, you might be lucky enough to have spotted Swifts. The wings are longer and narrower than a Swallow, and the tail less forked. From the ground they appear black, whereas Swallows and Martins are smaller and paler underneath. Listen too – you may hear them before you see them!

Very few buildings constructed after the second world

war have suitable sites for Swifts to nest in. However, in the absence of nest sites in buildings, we can help swifts by providing nest boxes. Small groups of Swifts were seen over the village in recent years, so there is a real hope that we can help by providing some boxes.

Observant users of the Heather Farm car park may have spotted a line of boxes under the eaves of the barn behind the orchard area. Because adult Swifts will attempt to return to their previous nest sites, and new nesters will listen for established colonies, we need to try and attract birds to investigate the boxes by playing the calls in the evening. If you are out for a stroll at Heather farm in the early evening, listen out for the characteristic 'screaming' calls.

It can take several years to establish a new Swift colony, but if successful we can delight in seeing these magical birds again.

Margo Scott

Annual General Meeting 2024 Report

A most interesting meeting

Thank you to all HCPS members who attended the 2024 AGM in October. We were delighted to hear from Jeremy Dalton, our Estate Manager, from Michael Jones (Thames Basin Heaths Partnership) and Jack Smith from Surrey County Council.

Michael Jones, (Education Officer of TBHP) is passionate about the flora and fauna of the Lowland Heath and equally passionate about the value of going into schools to share this enthusiasm with school children and to take groups out to discover this special habitat. Michael's enthusiasm is truly infectious and his descriptions of even the smallest of invertebrates have inspired children and opened their eyes to the wonders of nature.

Jack Smith is the "Community and Prevention" team manager, for the "Green Health and Wellbeing" project. This project is part of a national programme aimed at preventing and tackling mental ill health through "Green Social Prescribing". Funding is used to create and develop a community greenspace offering opportunities for people to learn new skills in an environment where they can connect with nature and the health value it affords. HCPS and its chairman Paul Downes are keen to work with Surrey County Council as part of this project, enabling residents from diverse backgrounds to benefit from the natural environment of the Common.

Editor

Green Health

At the last AGM, the members supported the board's recommendation to make an alteration to the objectives of the Society.

Simply put, the Society owns some 75% of the public spaces in Woking Borough and it was felt that we could do more in these testing times to support those less fortunate, particularly as more conventional help was drying up.

I am pleased to say that the Charity Commission agreed with our proposals and the approval process has now been finalised.

With this in mind, we are pleased to point out that: -

- ◆ We recognise the need people have to connect with nature for physical and mental wellbeing. Horsell Common has and maintains an intricate network of paths criss-crossing some of the rarest habitats in the UK and providing residents with access to this resource.
- ◆ We have been working with Surrey Choice to provide opportunities for adults with a range of support needs to volunteer in the countryside to mutual benefit. Last year their team built 180 metres of dead hedge which has helped reduce erosion along the banks of the river Bourne and provides a great habitat for invertebrates. We are collaborating this year again to construct woodland bird boxes and continue the dead hedging work.
- ◆ The Camberley Men's Sheds charity which supports men experiencing a range of mental health issues, will be partnering with us this year to build new owl boxes.
- ◆ Our Senior Ranger, Rupert Millican runs volunteering sessions on the Common to provide opportunities for LinkAble, a local charity which supports local residents with varying disabilities.
- ◆ The easy access paths at Heather Farm are very popular with visitors who have mobility issues or use wheelchairs. We are committed to improving and maintaining these paths at Heather Farm, the Bedser Trail and our easy access track around the sandpits so they can be enjoyed by all.

Paul Downes (HCPS Chair)

Date for Your Diary

HCPS AGM 2025, Wednesday 15th October, 7pm for 7:30pm at the Goldwater Lodge, Goldsworth Park.

Waymarked Walk

Bedser Trail to The Sandpit and Peace Garden

This walk links many interesting and historical sites on Horsell Common. You will pass areas of heather, the Wheatsheaf ponds, The Sandpit, Peace garden and Bronze Age burial sites. There are several information boards en-route.

This basic route can easily be extended, to all of the Wheatsheaf Common, the Basingstoke canal leading to Woking and other areas of Horsell Common. You pass The Gosling for refreshments or with a slight detour can easily reach The Wheatsheaf opposite the Wheatsheaf recreation grounds.

Key facts

Allow up to one and half hours for approx. 3 mile walk. Flat with some surfaced paths but rougher in places. Usually dry underfoot, even after rain. Benches en-route

Car park: Woodham Common car park, 53 Monument Road, GU21 5LU (200m south of 6 cross-roads roundabout). What3Words: *sup-ply.poker.fend*

OS Map ref: TQ1472 60130

Always wear suitable footwear, carry water and please keep dogs under control.

NB patience and care required to cross 6 roads

1. Leave the car park, passing the information board "Exploring Woodham Common" and turn right next to the second information board. (Bedser twins) Continue straight through woodland for about 200m. At a T-junction, with a dog waste bin ahead, turn left then almost immediately right. You pass a bench and soon emerge alongside an area of heather, cleared of scrub pine and silver birch by HCPS volunteers. Continue straight on towards the A320 Chertsey Road (do not follow the Bedser trail going round to the left) Cross at the traffic island onto the Wheatsheaf Common
2. In 2023, the flood alleviation ponds were completed with board walks and thousands of native trees planted to create a varied environment for wildlife. Turn right and cross the long board walk "bridge" and keep right (*If you want to explore this area it is easy to wander all around and then get back to point 2.*) Continue through woodland to Woodham Rise. Cross and keep straight ahead then cross Pinewood Close. Stay on the A320 Chertsey Road, then then take first left into Carlton Road.
3. Opposite Fennies Nursery, turn right onto a narrow path next to a wooden barrier (*This grand Victorian house used to be the famous Tante Marie Cookery school*) Always bear left, emerging onto Woodham Road. Cross and go straight on to Shores Road. Cross into HCPS car park and go straight ahead, onto the easy access path, called "The H.G Wells path".
4. After about 300m, where there is a steep dip ahead, turn sharp right. Follow the surfaced HG Wells path, soon turning left and arriving at the sandpit. (*This area was excavated for building sand. The Martians in H.G. Wells' novel, "The War of the Worlds" landed close to this site. It is a lovely place to "stop and stare" and admire the iconic pine*)
5. Continue to the main broad track called "Sandy Track" (*often muddy not sandy! Take time to read the information board and admire the heather in late summer*) and turn right up this wide track until almost reaching the metal barrier. Turn right onto a narrow path, and gently bearing left, make for the A320. Cross this busy road with care to "The Gosling" (*re-opened in 2023 after refurbishment. Once known as "The Sands" and "The Bleak House"*).
6. Go into the car park and take a path on the right at the end of a low brick wall, next to a tall oak tree into woodland. You might have to squeeze between parked cars. Follow this path with overgrown holly either side. Through the bushes on your left, you can see a Golf Course and soon you see All Saints Church, Woodham. Go straight across Woodham Road (with patience and care) and continue along the woodland path, keeping left until you meet a wider cross path and go right, soon spotting the chattri of the Peace Garden on your left, through the trees.
7. Continue straight ahead towards Britannia wharf (*First visit the Peace Garden and enjoy the tranquillity. There are information boards about the Peace Garden and also the Bronze Age Tumuli*) Pass Britannia Wharf flats on your left and cross the bridge over the Basingstoke canal, and turn down left to the canal, keep turning left under the bridge and left up onto Monument Road. (*There is another interesting information board by the canal*) Turn left onto Monument Road and continue across the bridge over the canal.

8. After about 70m. turn left onto a small foot path (next to a metal rail) through trees. Keep slightly right then left and you come to a T-junction. (look straight ahead and you can see the heather covered mound of the Bronze Age burial tumulus)
- Turn right and stay on the main track, passing a dog waste bin and a bench and return to the car park.

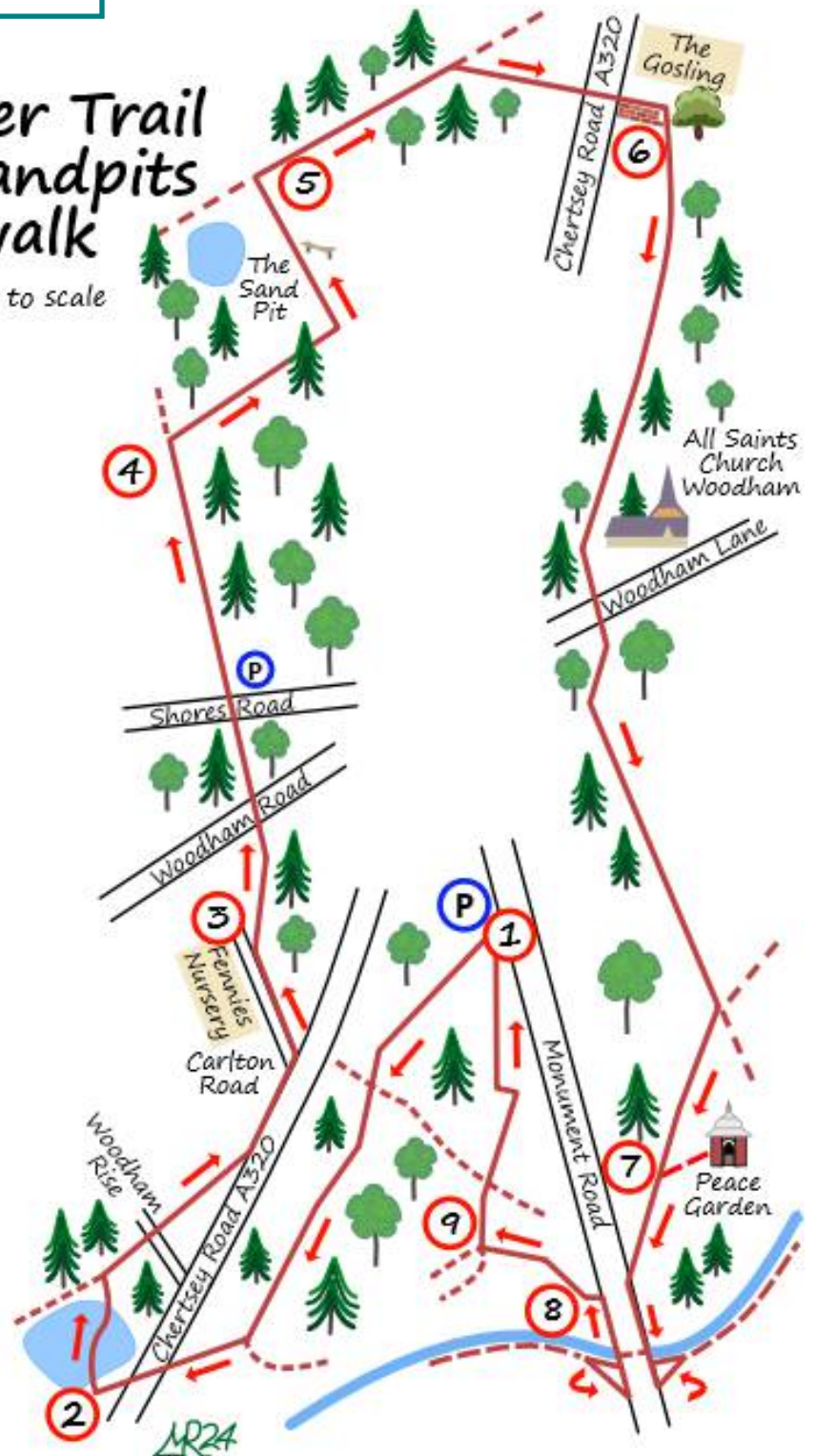
Note:

The waymarking is not in place at the time of writing but installation will take place in the next few months.



Bedser Trail to Sandpits walk

Not to scale



Common Knowledge

Cheapside

Cheapside is a common English place or street name, meaning "marketplace", from Old English ceapan, 'to buy' also ceap-stow "market" in Anglo-Saxon. The word "cheape" also meant an innkeeper. There is no connection to the modern meaning of cheap ('low price', a shortening of good ceap, 'good buy'), though by the 18th century this association may have begun to be inferred.

Cheapside has probably always been a self-contained hamlet; in the 19th and 20th centuries it extended west beyond the area we know today, across Morton Road (Gullies Lane) as far as Grobars (Grove Barrs). It provided for most of the needs of a small community. An alehouse, chapel, school, employment with a thriving forge and shop. The 1851 census records Elisabeth Howard (62) as a grocer and Mary Ann Cox (26) as Grocers Assistant.

Cheapside probably aligned itself more with the manor of Twicken than the village of Horsell. Before the coming of the railway, cottages in Cheapside would in most cases have larger gardens than they have today. Properties at the western end (The Plough) had part of their gardens compulsorily purchased in 1959 to create, what are now, the Woking High School playing fields. Cottagers would have grown their own vegetables and fruit; kept poultry and possibly owned a pig or cattle. It was the housewife who tended the garden and looked after the poultry.

There was an active Horsell Cottage Gardeners Association dating back to 1865 that held an annual show. For many years in the nineteenth century the Sussex, a dual-purpose chicken, was a popular breed in its own county and neighbouring Surrey. Higglers, dealers who traded in dairy, poultry, and small game animals would attend markets to purchase produce to sell on in London. Some properties carried Common Rights these rights are attached to a property rather than to any individual.

Someone who makes use of the common rights attached to their property was known as a practising commoner. Common rights took various forms. "Pasture " was the right to graze livestock. "Pannage or mast "was the right to turn out pigs during the 'pannage' season in the autumn to feed. The pigs provided a useful service by eating acorns that are poisonous to ponies and cattle. "Haybote" was the right to take wood for house repairs. "Piscary "

was the right to take fish from Manorial waters. "Estovers or fuelwood" was the right to cut wood for fuel. "Turbary" was the right to cut turf for fuel. "Marl " was the right to dig clay to spread on and improve land.

There is a suggestion that the pits on Grasslands Common and around the Warren Ponds are the result of Marl extraction. On most commons, rights of pasture and pannage for each commoner are tightly defined by number and type of animal. For example the occupier of a particular cottage might be allowed to graze fifteen cattle, four horses, ponies or donkeys, and fifty geese. The numbers allowed for their neighbours would probably be different.

Animals would have been turned out to graze on the common during the day and gathered in at night. They would defecate in their stalls and the manure would be used to improve the cottage gardens. This was one of the factors contributing to the reduced fertility of the open heath.



Anyone who had common rights could not sell for profit or hand on produce derived from exercising common rights. Such produce was intended solely for the use of the individual or their family. To do so would risk prosecution by the Lord of the Manor.

On 2 January 1967, the Commons and Greens registers in England and Wales were opened. The registers were created following the Commons Registration Act 1965. The registration period was short, running only until 31 July 1970. If rights were not registered, they were effectively extinguished. There are no Rights of Common registered on Horsell Common. As well as a market for produce Cheapside was probably a labour market. An entry from the Roake family ledgers shows amounts for the hire of casual labour to assist at harvest time. The Roake family were owners of large tracts of Horsell including much of Cheapside. The 1834 Horsell Survey shows Richard Roake with several farms, in total 255 acres, including Kettlewell,

Wapshott, Parley, Deep Pool and Cobbetts Farms.

The majority of this land was arable and would have been farmed on a three-field rotation system. John Roake of Castle House Farm (now Castle Road) owned 47 acres. In 1847 John Roake died. In his will he left to his son Jonah Roake two parcels of land known as Stillwells and Haywards each of between 5-6 acres. The two fields together with two messuages thereon were sold in April 1892 to William Richard Roake builder. Today this land forms part of Cheapside between Lemon's garage and Horsell Rise.

Cheapside today retains a strong sense of community. There is an active residents' association which, as well as maintaining the tracks, holds an annual Bar-B-Que in July and gets together for drinks at Christmas. Cheapside is listed under the Woking development plan as a SNCI = Sites of Nature Conservation Importance.

Bill Pugh

Our thanks to Bill Pugh, who has lived on Cheapside for over 40 years. He has restored the original well in his garden, which provides a constant supply of water for his beautiful garden. He has researched the history of Cheapside, one of the many un-made residential roads of Horsell Common. Bill was a former Trustee of HCPS and editor of The Common newsletter.

Editor

The Benefits of Tree Felling

Once grazing stopped on open common land, Scots pine and silver birch rapidly grew and dominated the landscape.



The forest floor soon became too dark and cool for heather and other vegetation to thrive.



Within six months of clearing the trees, heather started to regenerate.



Heather growth after three years.



HCPS has installed interpretation boards on Horsell Common with information about lowland heath and the wildlife it supports.

Check Horsell Common Preservation Society website <https://horsellcommon.org.uk>, for full information on the flora and fauna. You can also download back copies of "The Common".

Our Neighbours

Horsell Common is one of many fragmented areas of Low-land Heath in the Thames Basin. Adjacent to Horsell Common, there are Whitmoor and Chobham Commons. It was very interesting to read about the work carried out by SWT volunteers during the winter and shows that we are all working hard and doing the same tasks to ensure that this very special habitat is carefully managed and maintained.

Helping Heathland thrive on Chobham and Whitmoor Commons

SWT Volunteers: their winter work

“ We’ve used the winter months to carry out extensive scrub clearance, removing selected trees like Scots pine and also reducing the cover of dominant species including gorse and silver birch to create a more open and varied landscape, essential for ground nesting birds and reptiles, as well as the diverse array of flowers that provide essential food for the pollinating insects and the creatures that feed on them.

We’ve also invested in measures to increase the resilience against wildfires, by creating new firebreaks on sites like Chobham Common, including pathways consisting of either heavily mown vegetation on bare ground. Roads, rivers and other vegetation -free features can also act as firebreaks. This could be essential insurance against the threat we expect to encounter in the years ahead, with temperatures likely to reach record peaks in the summer months.

Recent surveys by Natural England, the UK’s regulatory body for the environment, showed increasing numbers of breeding Dartford warblers, woodlarks and nightjars. As climate patterns in the UK and around the world shift with amazing speed, we can’t take this progress for granted (and different species will be affected in different ways) but it’s hugely encouraging to see all these threatened species doing comparatively well. All these birds need structurally diverse, insect rich, heathland to breed successfully and we will maintain and expand our efforts to ensure that Surrey’s wild places offer safe and abundant nesting, resting and feeding opportunities for these wonderful species”.

(Extract from Surrey Wildlife Trust blog)

Thames Basin Heaths Partnership



Spring 2025

Spring springs!

Spring on the heath is a wonderful thing. The long period of winter quiet is shattered by the song of birds belting out beautiful tunes to set-up territories and impress potential partners. The melodic lu-lu-lu-lu-lu of the Woodlark brings warmth to anyone who is fortunate enough to hear it. And I hope to encounter it once more on a bright, sunny Horsell Common morning. For me, this sound is the start of spring on the heath – it is as if the Woodlark single-handedly has the power to cut the ribbon announcing that spring is officially open... and that moment can’t come soon enough.

The buzzing song of the Dartford Warbler is a welcome addition to the springtime heathland soundscape. I always think they sound like they’re in a hurry, as they bustle through their scratchy medley. The sun’s out, there’s warmth in the air, there are things that need attending to right now! Perhaps, eating spiders plucked from Gorse or a fluttering vertical display flight.



As the temperature warms, the insects begin to appear. One-by-one like a slow-dripping tap, different butterfly species appear – Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak. At the same time, bees emerge – Bumblebees and solitary bees. I am quickly reminded that I’ve pushed most of what I know about bees into a distant corner of my memory over the long winter. Fortunately, some of it comes back, jolted to the forefront by a sighting or two of a Hairy-footed Flower Bee or a Early Mining Bee. More warmth turns the dripping into a torrent and, all of a sudden, there are insects everywhere. I love this time of year. I am engulfed by the diversity. I want to drink it all in. I want to watch. I want to listen. I want to learn. All on my local heathland. Fantastic!

Spreading the word about Our Amazing Heathlands

Back in October, I was honoured to be invited to speak on behalf of the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership at the Preservation Society's AGM. I give quite a few talks about the wonders of heathland, so I covered that, but decided that the main part of my musings was to be about the work I've done to create an education programme encouraging local children (and their teachers!) to fall in love with heathland.



I hadn't ever spoken publicly about my education work in much detail before, so was excited and a bit daunted to share on the evening. I talked about the value of connecting children with nature and their local heathlands and I shared some wonderful examples of project work children had created after visits – most of which was designed to encourage people to help look after the special habitat and creatures that live there. I rounded off my presentation with a big thank you to the Preservation Society for allowing me to use Horsell Common as an inspirational outdoor classroom. I repeat that thank you here. This support has been instrumental in the delivery of more than 3000 high-quality heathland-focused engagements through our education programme to local school children in the past three years. As a result of these engagements, local children have had experiences that have connected them to nature, they know about heathlands and how to look after them and are empowered to spread the word to friends and families about how local communities can help – with key messages being:

#PawsOnPathsPlease and **#BeWildfireAware**.

I love working at Horsell Common. It's probably the place where I feel most a part of the community across the whole heathland area covered by our project. In my talk, I spoke about a morning where I was walking from our office at Heather Farm to a school in the village. On my way, I shared a wonderful moment enjoying the beautiful song of a Woodlark with someone who had enjoyed reading my articles in the Horsell Resident's Association maga-

zine and then bumped into a couple outside the Co-Op who had previously attended my Nightjar walks. I then arrived at the school to collect some posters the Year 1s and 2s had created to help raise awareness about the dangers of wildfire on heathland. Later, I popped the posters up on the noticeboards and the children's work was instantly helping the heath.

I'd like to thank the local community for being so welcoming and for treasuring Horsell Common – it is a truly special place.

Get involved!

If you'd like to connect your children (or yourself!) with local wildlife, 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.

I generally like to finish my articles with a quote from a child inspired by a session as a bit of encouragement for others to get involved. Recently, I delivered an assembly to a local infant school and when the teacher was asking children for comments, one girl said, *"Afterwards I thought I should look after the heathlands"*. How amazing is that?



Michael Jones

Education Officer – Thames Basin Heaths Partnership

tbhschools@naturalengland.org.uk

www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/schools

Free Guided Walks on Horsell Common 2025

Book with	Date of walk or activity	Guided walks and leaders
HCPS	16 April, Wednesday 10am	Discovering Wheatsheaf Common and The Peace Garden Senior Ranger Rupert Millican
TBHP	29 April, Tuesday, 5.30am	Dawn Chorus Ruth and Mark
HCPS	3 May, Saturday, 5.30am	Dawn Chorus Trustee Margo Scott
TBHP	22 May, Thursday, 8pm	Night time Safari Paula and Ruth
TBHP	4 June, Wednesday, 5.30am	Dawn Chorus Mike and Zoe:
TBHP	26 July to 2 August	Heath Week Check TBHP web site for all details
TBHP	29 July, Tuesday Heath Week	Insects on Horsell Common HCPS trustee Andrew Halstead Entomologist
TBHP	30 July, Wednesday Heath Week	Scavenger Hunt
HCPS	25 September Thursday, 10.30am	Managing Horsell Common Estate Manager Jeremy Dalton
HCPS	29 October Wednesday, 10am	Fungi on Horsell Common Richard Alder

Bookings with HCPS:

caroline.hughes@horsellcommon.org.uk

Bookings with TBHP:

Check Thames Basin Heaths Partnership website for further details and book through "Eventbrite".

Numbers are limited per group.

Final details will be sent out to all who have booked, 10 to 7 days in advance.

Remembering Robin Hoyle, HCPS Chair - 2015 to 2021

It was with great sadness that we learnt of Robin's untimely death on Friday, 10th January, as he was cycling across Wheatsheaf Common one very cold evening, to meet Amanda from work.

Robin had many fine qualities of leadership, entrepreneurial skills and positive energy but above all he is remembered for his cheerful welcoming spirit, his genuine care and interest in his fellow man and for the encouragement and help he gave to us all. The following words by former HCPS Trustees and Estate Manager are testament to his many qualities.

David Robbins writes "I admired Robin for taking on the chairmanship of Horsell Common Preservation Society back in 2015 when we urgently needed a local man of stature to give us leadership. I don't know whether he knew what was involved when he agreed to do the job but he got stuck in and used his innate management skills, clear commercial outlook, and empathetic nature to succeed and leave the Society in a better place following his term in office. Whilst Heather Farm has flourished there were some bumpy times during the early versions of the Café which needed a calm hand on the tiller. In those years Robin was also holding down a tough job with a small company which involved working long hours, but he still found time to continue his volunteering works for the community."

Paul Rimmer writes "I remember back in 2014 David Robbins and I had been discussing the need for someone to lead the Horsell Common Preservation Society through a very busy and difficult time, particularly with the development of Heather Farm. Robin's name immediately came to mind. Robin was a much loved and respected, hard working member of the Horsell community and so after a couple of pints in the Crown he was gently persuaded to become a Trustee and subsequently took over the chairmanship of HCPS. His strong links with The Horsell community and HCPS became a valuable asset and helped to further promote the Society locally and beyond. His links with McLaren also proved very helpful to the Society in our development of Heather Farm. I was very saddened to hear of the loss of Robin. Horsell has lost a great ambassador who added so much to the community he loved."