



FRIENDS OF WOLSTONBURY

WISHING YOU ALL A VERY  
HAPPY NEW YEAR

Thank you for supporting us in 2014

Task days in the New Year:

Friday 2 January

Saturday 17 January

Meet at 10.00 at The Plough, Pyecombe

Events:

National Trust Walk – Wolstonbury in Winter

Sunday 11 January - 10.00-1.00

Meet at Clayton Recreation Ground, cost: £3.00



## FRIENDS OF WOLSTONBURY NEWSLETTER

### **TASK DAYS AND WORKING PARTIES**

Unfortunately we have been affected by some poor weather this year so have had to cancel two task days and got quite wet on two others. We have, however, carried out a variety of different tasks on different parts of the Hill. It is amazing how different the Hill looks from different places.

Our first task following the end of the spring scrub bashing season was to remove the old fence along the bridleway at the bottom of the Northern side of the Hill. This fence was re-positioned uphill by the National Trust to exclude the grazing stock from the woodland.

Some of the revetment on the footpaths along the foot of the Hill was looking quite rotten so we spent two tasks replacing some of this while keeping out of the rain.

During the summer there was an abundant yellow colour to be seen across a large area of the Hill – Ragwort flowers. Whilst this is a native species it is quite poisonous, especially to horses, so we spent two tasks hand pulling patches to reduce its distribution.

Come September we once again reverted to scrub removal visiting three different areas on the Hill: the top near the trigpoint, the Northern slope on the grassland above the cattle troughs and a very steep area just above the fence line. The clearance by the trigpoint has visually made quite a difference and we intend to continue plugging away at this area. Unfortunately because of the exposed nature of the site we need good weather, so on our last task day in persistent rain we opted for thinning some of the non-native sycamores in the woodland.

If you fancy lending a hand or just popping over to say hello on a task day please do.

Mike Botterill  
Chairman FOW

# AN INTRODUCTION TO ORCHID CULTIVATION

It was a fine morning in mid May when a small group of Wolstonbury volunteers' took up the offer from John Haggard to visit his local orchid nursery. He explained his interest with native orchid species and the fascination of propagating these plants from seed.

We were given a detailed introduction as to how he germinates and subsequently propagates a wide range of locally found terrestrial orchids. He explained how orchid seeds are very small and don't in themselves contain sufficient energy to germinate but rely in the wild with a symbiotic relationship with an appropriate fungus found in the soil. To mimic this natural process he initially germinates the seeds under sterile conditions using an agar gel with a suitable fungus all held within a sealed jar. Later, as protocorms, they are transferred to the nursery, and for 'winter greening' species, to a greenhouse for protection and to simulate a Mediterranean climate.

Many of our native orchids are growing at their most northerly range and prefer a much dryer European climate. It's the high rainfall in the summer months that limits the range of local orchid species. However, although our visit was in early spring and many plants were yet to come into flower we were fortunate to see a Lesser Butterfly Orchid, (*Platanthera bifolia*), in full bloom, a plant rarely found in the wilds of Sussex.

I think all of our party were agreed this was a most pleasing and educational visit that extended our knowledge and interested in our local orchid species.



Lesser Butterfly Orchids in the wild



# HURSTPIERPOINT AND SAYERS COMMON COMMUNITY EVENT

This took place on a wet Saturday at the end of June. The event was organised by the Parish Council to give the local community a taste of the different community groups active in the local area.

FOW had a stand next to the Hurstpierpoint Singers and Hilary provided a good cross section of photographs and labels describing the various tasks we undertake.

Our Chairman, Mike, took the first stint followed by Fred, Margaret and Martin. Whilst the event was never crowded there was a good flow of people and a few of them expressed interest in our work. We were able to sign up one new member to help further our cause.

We had some good feedback about our work and it was a worthwhile event to have attended.

## VISIT TO LAGWOOD

Lagwood is ancient woodland and the stream which flows around two sides is a high grade chalk stream, where have been sightings of otters. On Saturday 12th July Friends of Wolstonbury visited Lagwood, Hassocks and were taken around by the wood's new owners, Paul and Sue. They bought the wood and adjacent field with the intention of maintaining them as a conservation area. They have only owned the wood for a short while but have studied, researched and recorded so much on the wood's ecology and history and they were now happy to impart their knowledge to us.

We were shown trees which were coppiced many years ago, including a huge ash tree and there are also several hornbeam clearings with coppiced trees. Three different types of habitat within the wood were pointed out to us, where the tree species mixture was different and we saw dormice tubes hanging in the trees. The tubes are there as prospective homes. If a dormouse takes up residence it will be proof of their presence in the wood. As they are a protected species once proved to be there only a licensed handler can look in the tubes. Down by the stream a fallen oak tree branch has been carved into a seat and four carved otters clamber around the branch. There are no notices but it is a memorial to a local resident who died fairly young of cancer.

The wood is full of interest and Paul has set up web cams to record some of the resident creatures who are usually only viewed in the dark. We had a very enjoyable visit hosted by such enthusiastic people.

To view the web cams go to [www.lagwood.org.uk](http://www.lagwood.org.uk)

# **SURVEY OF THE DEW POND AT WELLCOMBE BOTTOM**

**4th July 2014**

Friends of Wolstonbury have carried out annual surveys of the dew pond from July 2007 till 2011. After that there was little actual pond left until we helped with its restoration at the end of October 2013. Since then the pond has been left to recover naturally so we were keen to observe and record any evidence of pond life.

It was a hot, sunny day, 24 C in the morning sun and 19.5 C in the shade. The water temperature was 21 C. The pond measured 52 feet in diameter. There was Water Milfoil floating near the surface and a few rushes were beginning to grow. There seemed to be an abundance of Newts of different sizes and Lesser and Greater Water Boatman, with Broad-bodied Chaser dragonflies darting above the surface. We know it will take some time for the pond to recover but it was encouraging to see that life is returning.



# **SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK STUDENT CONFERENCE**

**Summer 2014**

Friends of Wolstonbury will be aware that the South Downs National Park has recently been formally established. The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) intends research to be a cornerstone of their development strategy. Plumpton College in partnership with the University of Brighton were commissioned in December 2013 to establish and deliver a SDNP Research Hub over a 12 month period. A physical base for the hub was established at Plumpton College. A student conference was seen as a key annual element to be developed, thus ensuring that young researchers were drawn into close liaison with the newly-established park.

The inaugural conference was held on 9th July 2014 at the SDNPA headquarters in Midhurst. This event also marked the opening of the new conference facility constructed by the authority. 86 delegates from 16 organisations attended. In addition, displays were exhibited by a number of organisations including the Brighton and Hove Biosphere, Tablehurst Community Farm and The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) who also sponsored a student prize.

The conference was opened by Trevor Beattie, the Chief Executive of the SDNPA, and the keynote speech was given by Professor Andrew Church, one of the lead authors of the National Ecosystem Assessment. Four themes were chosen to structure the presentations: Health and Culture, Landscape, Biodiversity and Conservation, and Sustainable futures.

An Open Session was also included. During the breaks between sessions, attendees had the opportunity to look at the poster presentations by students from six organisations.

In the afternoon, two workshops were held, one on publishing in academic journals and the other on research into re-evaluating European minor rivers and canals as cultural landscapes. The event concluded with a prize giving for the best oral presentation, the best poster presentation, and the CIEEM sponsored best Landscape, Biodiversity and Conservation presentation award.

It was interesting to observe the SDNPA technical staff slipping in to the main hall to listen as word spread around the site about the quality of the presentations being given! The feedback from participants was uniformly very positive, and arrangements are already in hand to run a second such event in 2015. Given the success of this inaugural event, it's hoped to open it up to a wider audience next year, including the general public. We may be witnessing the start of an exciting tradition.....



# BUTTERFLY WALK

**Saturday 2nd August 2014**

Led by Bob Foreman from Butterfly Conservation

We met at the end of Pyecombe Street and walked south along the bridleway past Chantry Farm to Wolstonbury Hill. Much to our surprise part of the bridleway had been re-surfaced by WSCC and the vegetation cut back. What a difference it has made. On this wooded section of our walk we saw: Small White, Green-veined White, Red Admiral and Speckled Wood butterflies.

This was the first time that Bob Foreman had been to the Hill so it was a new experience for him. The weather forecast wasn't favourable for seeing butterflies but it was sunny with a westerly breeze to begin with. Unfortunately the breeze increased in strength, it became overcast and there was little shelter even in the hollows. After one very brief shower the sun came out and where it was more sheltered so did the butterflies. Bob thought that many of the Blues had only hatched that day as they were such beautiful specimens. Sadly none of them were Adonis blues.

Butterflies we did see: Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Brown Argus, Small Tortoiseshell, Chalkhill Blue, Small Skipper, Silver-spotted Skipper, Peacock, Marbled White, Clouded Yellow, Small Heath, Holly Blue



Silver-spotted Skipper

Thyone Outram

Moths: Six-spot Burnet, Silver Y, Dusky Sallow, Red Twin-spot Carpet, Chalk Carpet, Pretty Chalk Carpet, Pyrausta sp, Wavy-barred Sable  
Cricket: Roesel's Bush-cricket

It was an interesting and enjoyable walk with time to stop and identify butterflies and appreciate their beauty, thanks to Bob Foreman's leadership. He has agreed to lead another walk next year, probably in May.

# WILDFLOWER WALK

**Saturday 9th August 2014**

Led by Sarah Brotherton

We began the walk from Clayton Recreation Ground on a lovely sunny morning. The bridleway from New Way Lane was still muddy and took us to the Lower Orchid Bank. Eight years ago this was the first area that the Friends of Wolstonbury cleared to begin the task of restoring the grassland habitat. By removing the scrub we hoped to encourage the Orchids and other Chalk Grassland plants to recover. Sarah was very impressed by what we have achieved and the number of different plants that are now flourishing. Plants such as: Marjoram, Yellow-wort, Common Centaury, Chalk Milkwort, Lady's Bedstraw, Small Scabious, Common Bird's-foot Trefoil, Black Medick, Common Knapweed, Perforate St John's-wort, and Agrimony, to name but a few.



Marjoram

Sue Davies

As we walked to the more exposed area beyond the Dew Pond at Wellcombe Bottom we came across Harebells, Red Bartsia, Eyebright, Dwarf Thistle, and Round-headed Rampion, known as the county flower of Sussex. Sarah shared her knowledge in a way that meant you didn't need to be an expert to enjoy the walk.



Round-headed Ramp

Thyone Outram