

Downley Common Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter of the Downley Common Preservation Society Issue 16. June 2001

Web: <http://www.downleycommon.org.uk>. Email bill.thompson@downleycommon.org.uk

DOWNLEY DAY

Glorious weather contributed to one of the best Downley Days for some years and the Preservation Society was fortunate to enrol over 15 new members during the afternoon. The traditional tug of War was enjoyed by all and the evening dance in the marquee to the refrains of "Billy and the Bonkers" was a sell-out. Thanks to all those who worked hard to make it a success and we look forward to see everybody there again next year.

The picture below shows part of the Preservation Society display of traditional woodcraft with a young volunteer learning the art of woodturning on a pole lathe.



TRAPPING AND TRACKING ON DOWNLEY COMMON

On a gloriously unclouded Saturday in mid May, the Wycombe Wildlife Watch group met uncharacteristically early.

Early because Tony Speight, one of our Wycombe District Council rangers, had risen even earlier to set some small mammal traps ready for our meeting, and we didn't want the hoped for small mammals to spend long inside the traps.

As it turned out, our traps had been avoided by all animals, with the possible exception of a slug. So we turned into mammal seeking detectives instead, looking for evidence of an earlier presence. The first clues were spotted on the slope by the Methodist chapel: heaps of dry orange soil surrounding dozens of small holes. Ants!

At the top of the rise hundreds of pine cones with characteristic squirrel nibbles, showing they had been sampled for their seeds.

Great excitement at the discovery of a small burrow about 10cm deep, occupant unidentified, close by a scattering of mole hills.

Thence into newly re-opened woods to look for prints around Mannings pond. As the

Diary

	Diary	
16 June 2001, 10.00am	Working Party. Clear up in dells	Dairy
23 June 2001	Downley Day	Commonside
1 July 2001, 10.00am	Working Party. Clear bracken & brambles round coppice area	Dairy
1 July 2001, 1.00pm	Environmental Family Day	Village Hall
4 July 2001, 8.00pm	Quarterly Meeting	Village Hall
4/5 August 2001, 10.00am	Working party. Grasscutting	Bus turning circle

footpaths were undisturbed after many weeks of Foot and mouth closure, we saw some perfect Muntjac tracks in the soft clay.

Tony finished the session with a fascinating look at his collection of small mammal skulls, pointing out identifiable features.

The guided walk ended with even more enthusiasm from our young Wildlife watchers than it had at the start, thanks to an engaging and approachable leader.

FOOTPATH RESTRICTIONS

We have now received notification from Bucks County Council that all restrictions on footpaths have been lifted and that all yellow (No Entry) and orange (Restricted Entry) signs may be removed.

While we all appreciated the need to observe the restrictions as part of the fight against foot and mouth, the lifting of the restrictions will be warmly welcomed and we can all get back to enjoying our countryside again.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

At the next Public meeting to be held on 4 July, the following topics will be on the agenda:

1. There will be a proposal to reduce the number of public meetings from four a year to three. It is proposed that these be held in July and September, with the AGM and social/educational evening to be held in October. All meetings will be on the first Thursday of the month
2. The Japanese knotweed by the cricket pitch is starting to spread – should we consider chemically spraying it?
3. Working parties. The principal summer activity will be the grasscutting in the central area. This year we are hoping to construct a grass box to collect the cuttings. We will be looking for volunteers to help drive the tractor on the weekend of 4/5 August.

CONTINUING ACTIVITIES

There have been some requests for the Society to identify some activities that can be pursued at times other than the normal working party times, for those that find it difficult to make the Sunday morning slot. The following list represents those tasks that can be carried out at any time.

1. Clear the sledging slope of brambles and low undergrowth
2. Clear the bracken and brambles from around the saplings in the coppice area. Don't chop down the saplings!
3. Continue cutting back the spreading hawthorns by the track leading to the allotments.

The locations of these are shown on the map opposite. We will attempt to identify other projects in the near future.

