

Downley Common Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter of the Downley Common Preservation Society Issue 28. March 2007
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Common Activities

Log Seat

Some of you may have noticed that the fallen oak near Well Cottage has recently got a bit shorter. This is part of the project to make a new "log seat" for Commonsides.



We've got as far as cutting the log from the tree (the difficult bit) and now we need to drag the log up the hill and place it in its final resting place (exact location still to be decided). Finally the seat will be carved by our chainsawyers.

Grassland Management

We are approaching the time of year when we flail certain areas to remove bracken and

brambles. We are hopeful that the increased power of the new tractor will increase the speed at which this is performed and hence enable us to flail all the areas required. Those interested in driving the tractor and operating the flail should come along to the May/June working parties on the first Sunday of the month, where instruction will be given to those unfamiliar with the equipment.

Bridlepath

The new WDC rights of way officer came for a walk round the common a few weeks ago and we discussed with him the possibility of upgrading the southern end of the bridlepath that comes out onto Plomer Green Lane just near the tank crossing. Since the northern part of the bridlepath was upgraded in 2001, there has been much more traffic such the southern end is now very muddy and difficult to traverse. Watch this space to see if our proposal to improve the bridlepath here comes to fruition.

Circular Walk

The first stage of the easy access, stile-free, Downley Circular Walk project (named the Colonel Cody walk in memory of the famous landing on Mannings Field) has commenced

	Diary	
12 April 2007. 8.00pm	Member's Meeting	Village Hall
6 May 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
13 May 2006, 2.00pm	Downley Walk	High Street
3 June 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
16 June 2006, 1.00pm	Downley Day	Commonside
1 July 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
5 August, 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
2 Sep 2006, 10.00am	Working Party.	Bus turning Circle
6 Sep 2006, 8.00pm	Member's Meeting	Village Hall
4 Oct 2006, 8.00pm	AGM	Village Hall

with the installation of two kissing gates, one on the edge of the Common near Mannings pond and the other on the far side of Mannings field where the footpath enters Little Cookshall Wood. Additional kissing gates have also been installed at each side of the small paddock adjacent to Blacksmiths Cottage.



The project is supported by the Chiltern Society, the Chiltern Conservation Board and by a donation from Downley Day funds.

The Annual Downley Walk will take place on Rogation Sunday 13th May and will incorporate the circular walk into its route so that we all admire the new gates.

Memories & Mince Pies

The Christmas meeting organised by DCPS was a very successful event and attracted a large crowd to a packed Village Hall last December. John Willson started the proceedings off with an entertaining trawl through the pictorial history of Downley and concluded with a foray into the alternative history of Downley (the one involving Spanish galleons from the Armada).



This was followed by an open session in which those present shared photos and other memories of their own. Some of these were

scanned to produce a resource available for the community as a whole. These will be loaded onto the DCPS website (see above) shortly.

Commons Act 2006 – Consultation

The Commons Act 2006 came into force in July last year and DEFRA are now starting to frame the regulations required to put the Act into force.

DEFRA have issued a consultation document covering the proposals on reforming the consents system for works on common land and ensuring that existing protections are applied consistently. It will also reinforce existing protections against abuse, encroachment and unauthorised development.

Works requiring consent under section 38 of the 2006 Act can include erecting fencing, constructing buildings, digging ditches, but also resurfacing of land with tarmac and similar materials, although certain minor, temporary or urgent works may be excluded from the scope of the consent regime.

Consent is not required for works for the installation of electronic communications apparatus.

The Act has introduced a power for “any person” concerned about unlawful works on commons to which section 38 applies to take action through the Courts. Previously, this power was limited, primarily to local authorities, owners and commoners. If the works would not, on balance, improve or maintain the common, or would be inconsistent with the normal use of the common (for example, building a supermarket) it is unlikely that consent would be given.

If you would like to find out more about what is being proposed and to comment, the consultation paper is available on <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/commmonsact2006/consultation.pdf>.

Ministerial Visit

The Minister for Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs at DEFRA, Barry Gardiner MP, who is responsible for the implementation of the Commons Act, is due to visit Downley Common as part of a tour around the Chilterns on 8th May 2006.