



COMMON GROUND

Registered Charity No. 1013975

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THE RANGER'S REPORT

August 2022

Dan Colborne The New Ranger



Regular readers will no doubt know that the Commons Warden, Steve Budden, retired at the end of June. Steve is now enjoying his new life of leisure, and can often be seen smiling away to himself as he continues to enjoy walking his dogs around the Commons. He has so much knowledge to share, and I have very much appreciated him being so willing to help and guide me as I take on responsibility for his amazing 30 year legacy. I am hoping that he will perhaps write a little memoir, as I am sure that many would enjoy reading about his time managing the Commons.

I am absolutely delighted to now introduce myself as the new Ranger for our wonderful Commons:

Brought up in the West Country, I have found my way to beautiful Kent via Bristol, London, Tonbridge and

Heathfield. I spent much of my adult life working for the Ministry of Justice, but then in 2011, aged 42, I chose to take a leap of faith in myself, deciding to change my lifestyle and career entirely. I realised that my lifelong passion for wildlife meant that I should be courageous and re-enter education to study for a degree in Ecology and Countryside Management. This degree, alongside my volunteering with the National Trust, opened a whole new world of excitement and experiences, which took me to Africa to protect rhino, to Crowborough where I was a Ranger for five years, and finally to Sissinghurst and Scotney Castle where I spent two years working with teams of rangers and extremely lovely volunteers.

I feel so very lucky to now be the Ranger for Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons. The title has changed from 'Warden', but don't worry, it's still the same role to protect

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The Society founded for '... the conservation, maintenance, preservation and peaceful enjoyment for the benefit of the public of the Commons by such means as the Society in consultation with the Conservators for the Commons thinks fit'.

and nurture our precious nature. I have been in position now for just over two very enjoyable months. People have been so welcoming, and it is clear to me that the Commons are a special and important place for everyone who uses them. There is such a lovely community feeling, and I have been very struck by how people are so happy and willing to chat and engage with me and each other. To be able to see friendly faces and say hello to another person is so important for our health and well-being. This is perhaps especially the case during these more challenging times, when we or others may be feeling more vulnerable or lonely.

So far I have been observing how the Commons is being used by wildlife, local residents and visitors. Very importantly at the moment, I need to tell everyone that I have been discovering lots of disposable BBQs and fire sites. This is very worrying indeed, and given the recent catastrophic wildfire events in the news, I would very much like to politely remind everyone that fires or BBQs are absolutely not permitted on the Commons. The Commons reach into the heart of Tunbridge Wells town centre and also into some areas of Rusthall, which would be extremely vulnerable should a wildfire occur. I would be very grateful if residents could be especially vigilant during these dry spells, so that our community and our precious wildlife are as safe and protected as possible.

On a more positive note, I am happy to say that plans are now being created with the Commons Conservators and the Friends of the Commons for some exciting projects

which will help us to better understand and further improve our wildlife habitats. If successful, we should see even more critically important pollinators and other wildlife making their homes all around us in the Commons. I have been so happy to be contacted by many people who would like to volunteer some of their time to improve the habitats in some way. Volunteering opportunities are far and wide on the Commons, from the less strenuous photography or wildlife surveying using simple apps, to full manual tasks such as scrub clearance and litter picking. Many tasks can be done alone or in groups and can be completed in your own time. If you are interested in volunteering then please do get in touch with me via email info@twcommons.org.

I would like to give special thanks to the Friends of the Commons, as it is their members whose subscriptions and donations provided the much needed funds for many of the additional wildlife improvement projects. Please do consider asking friends, family and neighbours to join the Friends, or make a much needed donation if you would like to help in this way. Friendstothecommons.org

If you see me, please do stop to say hello and ask me what I am doing. I will always be very happy to stop, talk or explain. At the moment I can be seen along the roadsides in my high-vis vest, as I am carrying out a survey of our ash trees which are sadly being seriously affected by Ash die-back. One thing is very clear, no two days are the same on the Commons, and I look forward to meeting you all.

Dan Colborne



THE NEW RANGER DAN COLBORNE

NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN

AUGUST 2022 - WITH CLIVE EVANS

The continuing hot weather is of concern regarding disposable bar-b-q's and small 'camp' fires on The Commons. We all need to be vigilant.

As you will know, Steve Budden has now retired, and this issue includes photos from our Summer Tea Party and Volunteers 'Thank You' Buffet. Steve was presented with gifts at both events. I must thank our members for their generous donations. Steve and his partner Penny have had an offer accepted on their Crowborough property, and our now looking for a property in the Taunton area. We wish them both – and their dogs – well.

Dan Colborne, whose title is The Ranger (not Lone), will be taking a few months to find his feet (and all of The Commons). We wish him well.

Two future events coming up are:

1. The AGM which will be held on Wednesday 28th September at The Linden Park Cricket Club pavilion, 6pm til 8pm. A free drink will be offered to all.
2. The Winter Lunch will be on Sunday 20th November at The Spa Hotel 12.30 til 3pm. A very kind benefactor will subsidise the meal to the tune of £5 per head. Full details and a choice of menu will be sent to all members at the end of September.

Best wishes, Clive Evans.



Horsriders on a parched Common.

The Friends Officers & Committee Membership 2022

Officers:

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Chairman: | Clive Evans | Tel: 01892 518975 |
| Treasurer: | Donald Clarke | Tel: 01892 615306 |
| Mem. Secretary: | Chris Gurr | Tel: 01892 542408 |
| Secretary: | Terry Coulthard | Tel: 01892 548785 |

Committee:

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Dr Ian Beavis | Tel: 01892 523007 |
| Lynne Lane | Tel: 01892 533493 |
| Clive McAllister | Tel: 01892 532817 |
| Peter Miall | Tel: 01892 517599 |
| Joy Podbury | email. joypodbury@talktalk.net |

STEVE BUDDEN RETIREMENT SPEECH AT THE SUMMER TEA PARTY AT THE SPA HOTEL



ATTENDED BY OVER 60 MEMBERS



*STEVE IN FULL FLOW
"I will come back for my bench unveiling"*

**THANK YOU LUNCH FOR ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS
(YOUNG AND OLD), PLUS ANOTHER PRESENTATION
TO THE RETIRING WARDEN STEVE BUDDEN
(OVER 60 VOLUNTEERS ATTENDED)**



THE MAYOR GODFREY BLAND PRESENTING CERTIFICATES TO OUR YOUNG VOLUNTEERS



LYNNE LANE, CHIEF ORGANISER WITH FOOD PROVIDED BY THE WONDERFUL CHARLIE'S ANGELS



STEVE LOOKING RELAXED, AND DAN ALL SET TO TAKE OVER THE REINS. A BIG THANK YOU TO THE FORUM FOR PROVIDING THE VENUE FOR FREE, AND TO CHARLIE'S ANGELS, LYNNE AND HELPERS

LATEST NEWS AND UPDATES FROM THE FRIENDS

NEW WEBSITE

A big thank you must be given to Joy Podbury for all her time and expertise in producing a new up to date website for the Friends:

Friendstothecommons.org

Please visit it and let us know your feedback, and please offer any news items.

Members – please help us become more environmentally friendly and reduce costs, please consider receiving your newsletter by email.

Contact Chris Gurr on **chris.gurr@yahoo.co.uk**

Currently, there is a serious risk of wildfires so please:

- . Take your litter home.
- . Don't throw cigarette ends on the ground or out of car windows.
- . Glass in direct sunlight can cause fires - ensure there is none lying around.
- . Don't have campfires or barbecues on the Commons or in the countryside.



GIFT AID

Important notice: if your personal details have changed, or your subscription no longer qualifies for Gift Aid, please let Chris Gurr the Membership Secretary know. **Chris.gurr@yahoo.co.uk**.

FRIENDS OF THE COMMONS AGM

Please make a note that this will be held on

Wednesday 28th September 2022.

**Venue: The Linden Park Cricket Club Pavilion, Fir Tree Road
TW, TN4 8BU.**

6pm til 8pm.

All members and friends are invited, and a free drink will be offered. Please come along to meet you Committee and the new Ranger Dan Colborne. And please let us know of any ideas or projects for the future of the Commons.



FRIENDS OF THE COMMONS WINTER LUNCH

Another date for your diaries.

Venue: The Spa Hotel TW. Sunday 20th November 12.30-3pm.

A full menu and form will be sent out to members in late September.

Thank you all for your continued support of our wonderful Commons.



HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We are grateful for the continued support of our members, and welcome the new members who have joined during the last two difficult years when the Commons have provided a lifeline for us all. Your annual subscription contributes to our ongoing programme of projects which help to improve the Commons. We are spending between £10,000 and £20,000 a year, thanks to one-off donations and grants which supplement your subscriptions. However, we are aware of various projects which the Conservators would like to carry out but are unable to due to most of their annual budget being consumed by routine maintenance.

MAKING A DONATION

Restoring areas suffering from excess wear, protecting wildlife habitats, carrying out improvement projects which will enhance accessibility and biodiversity on the Commons-and perhaps adding to the fund we are creating for their ultimate purchase-are all needs your donations could help meet.

If you able to assist us further in supporting the Conservators, you could help pay for a particular project which the Friends have agreed to fund. Alternatively, you could leave us to decide where the need is greatest. Donations, like subscriptions, qualify for Gift Aid.

Please contact the Treasurer, Donald Clarke 2, Molyneux Park Road, Tunbridge Wells TN4 8DN drc. scc1897@gmail.com 01892 615306, setting out your wishes. You can either enclose a cheque payable to "Friends of Tunbridge Wells Commons", or make a bank transfer, reference "projects" to this account.

Nat West Bank sort code 55-70-13

Account Number 01028774.

LEAVING GIFTS IN WILLS

Leaving a gift to help protect and enhance the Commons will mean the community will be able to enjoy these amazing green spaces for years to come.

Legacies need not be large: even a small amount or percentage of your estate can make a big difference. Please consider leaving a legacy and help look after the Commons we all love. If you would like to leave a gift in your Will we recommend that you speak to a solicitor.

If you already have a Will, minor changes can be added simply by using a codicil-a short addendum that forms a separate document from the original Will. There is no need for a new Will. The following details will need to be included, with your expressed wishes for its use.

Beneficiary: The Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons.

Registered address: 2, Molyneux Park Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN4 8DN

Registered Charity Number: 1013975 (England and Wales)



RETURN OF THE EMPEROR

The Purple Emperor has always been the most sought-after of British butterflies. Whole books have been written about them. The old collectors of the Victorian era and early 20th century flocked to places like the New Forest with their long-handled nets (they fly very high) and baits for the males (they sometimes descend to the ground to feed at dead animals and other decaying matter). Nowadays butterfly enthusiasts travel to well-known hotspots like the Knepp estate or Dene Park Wood near Tonbridge in search of those elusive close encounters and close-up photographs.

The Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge areas have always been a stronghold for this woodland butterfly, but since the turn of the millennium they have become more widespread. There are established sites either side of Tunbridge Wells, at the two local RSPB reserves – Tudeley Woods and Broadwater Warren. The frequently visited hotspots are places where multiple males stake out their treetop territories and compete with each other in aerial battles. But the butterflies are strong flyers and range over a wide area – the males in search of a mate and the females in search of suitable willow or goat-willow trees to lay their eggs. So random sightings may occur almost anywhere.

Back in 2018 a male Purple Emperor was photographed in the Fir Tree Road carpark on Tunbridge Wells Common. It was settled on a car, which is a widely observed but not well understood habit – they do seek out additional minerals (hence the dead animals) to supplement their diet of tree sap or honeydew, so perhaps there's a scent that attracts them. Around the same time a female was seen flying along Castle Road. There were two records in the following summer.

In early July this year there were at least two sightings of a male near Wellington Rocks, close to the location of the first record. Tunbridge Wells Common is certainly capable of supporting an established colony of Purple Emperor. It has tall oaks on the edge of open sunny ground that males could use as territorial perches, and the foodplants sought out by the females occur in the same area. So we may see more of them in future years.

Purple Emperors fly from late June to August. Only the males have the famous purple sheen, although the white markings on a dark background are similar in both sexes. The purple only shows up when the wing is lit from the right angle, so in illustrations the males are usually shown with one wing purple and one wing dark. Males are most likely to descend to the ground in the morning and take up their territorial perches after midday. The caterpillars hibernate on their foodplant through the winter and finish feeding by early summer. After a brief chrysalis stage the adults emerge to start the annual cycle once more.

