



# NEWSLETTER

## AUTUMN 2009

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### News from the Heath

Summer has come and gone and the first signs of Autumn are clearly showing on the heath. This year there has been a very large crop of blackberries enjoyed by the visitors and the wildlife alike. The Fungi are not really showing much yet because it has been so dry but the first real rains will bring them out.



The Belted Galloways were let free to roam the whole heath in mid-August and have made full use of their freedom, with evidence of their passing visible over nearly all of the fenced area. This has caused a problem as the NT staff need to find and check them each day. They will be purchasing a radio location device; a radio collar will be worn by one cow and the staff will be able to get a bearing on the location of the cattle by means of antennae. Our existing eight animals will soon

be joined by four Galloway steers, currently part of the herd that has been on Box Hill for many years. We think that the cattle are likely to form two separate groups and not mingle.

A very successful children's event was held on the heath during a sunny afternoon in August. Sarah and Sue set up a camp in the woodland just off the Main Fire Break with the help of two members of The Friends. The children made animal masks and played games. Drinks and biscuits were provided by The Friends.



In late August a contractor came, and using a sprayer mounted on a Quad Bike, was able to spray Asulox (a bracken specific chemical) to help to control some of the bracken on Middle Hill and the southern part of Purley Plain. This will be repeated in 2010.



We should like to welcome David Forrest, the new long term volunteer, who will be working with Sue Harris on Headley. He will be living at Warren Farm in the Old Dairy. The NT has also appointed two other new long term volunteers who will be working at Box Hill.



To publicise the Friends, the committee members have had a small stand on the Heath behind the car park on two Sundays this year. This has brought in new members and a small income from the sale of bric-a-brac.

### **Survey of Headley Heath**

In June, Giles Groom completed the detailed botanical survey of our eight selected plots and has submitted a detailed report of the plants found in each. These findings will be invaluable as a baseline of what was here in 2009. It is now thought that rather than volunteers carrying out future botanical surveys, we may ask and pay for Giles to return on a bi-annual basis to repeat the survey. Later in the autumn when the time is right Ray Tantrum, a local Fungi expert, will be casting her expert eye over the plots to report on the Fungi present.

### **Friday Work Group**

In August the Friday Volunteers made a small presentation to David Hassell who left us after his volunteer year to return for the final year of his degree course. We wished him good luck for the future and we now look forward to meeting the new David. We have been working all over the heath doing various tasks one of which was to remove the electric fence. At this time of year a lot of time has gone into vegetation control and clearing pathways, mainly on Purley Plain. We have also done a second bracken pull on the scrape. This is a very successful but labour intensive way of controlling bracken. The last couple of weeks have been spent restoring the coppice area just off the heath on the southern side. Whilst there we noticed just how effective our brushwood fences that we built last year have been in allowing new sweet chestnut shoots to regenerate without deer damage, providing a new crop of timber in years to come. The pictures on the front page show the result of a morning that we have just spent clearing around Heath House Pond.

We hope in the near future to be putting in the marker posts and setting up the new Heathland Self Guided Trail, enabling visitors to learn more about the wildlife and history. The marker posts will bear distinctive orange marker discs with a lizard motif.

The volunteer group numbers reached a record in the summer when fifteen turned up. However we are always looking for more members. If you are interested just come along to the main car park at about 9.15 on a Friday morning and join us for the morning. There is no commitment to come again if you do not like it. Full training is given. Please wear sensible working clothes. Age or physical ability is not a problem, we can find a job suitable for you.

### **The Annual General Meeting**

The AGM this year is on Saturday October 31<sup>st</sup> in Headley Village Hall in Church Lane at 2pm. Please come along and support us. After the formal business Marcus Turley from The Surrey Heathland Project will be giving an illustrated general talk on Heathland in Surrey. This will be followed by tea and cakes. I hope to see you there!

Sue Hassanein has for a long time been our minutes secretary and we are very grateful for all her work, but because of other commitments she needs to leave the committee. We are therefore looking for extra secretarial help. Are there any computer literate volunteers out there who could help with this important task? If you wish to find out more then please contact us. If there are other members who might be interested in joining the committee please put your name forward through the Chairman at least one week before the meeting.