

**MINUTES of the 579th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 20th January 2018 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. J McCrae
Cllr. R Mantle
Mr. J Mill
Cllr. V Broad
Mr. D Atkins
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present were Gillian Hein (Tadworth & Walton RA), Ralph Maciejewski (NRA), Alan Sherren (Burgh Heath RA), George Curry (Tadworth & Walton) and David Gradidge,(BVRA).

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. N Cull

2. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the chairman.

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- a. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The sheep have now been moved from Park Downs to Banstead Downs where they are in a much larger pen. They are making some impact but not as good as that on Park downs.

John Peacock submitted a paper on 'Peacock's Field – restoration of arable field to chalk grassland'. The paper discussed the improvement in the sward and flora after 3 strips had been cut once, twice and three times a year respectively. The conclusion was that multiple cutting does accelerate the disappearance of coarse grasses but as yet this has not been associated with a dramatic increase in herbage. The few areas where the rabbits have grazed suggest that the field should now be included in our grazing regime from 2019 on, whether with continued cutting needs to be decided.

- b. **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Stewardship Agreement.

- ii. **Travis Perkins** – This issue is still being pursued by Steve McLeod, RBBC. The Clerk will liaise further with him.

- iii. **Summer Walks** – It was agreed that the dates for summer walks for 2018 will be;

Banstead Downs – Tuesday 1st May - meeting at Highdown Road at 6.00pm
Park Downs – Tuesday 5th June – meeting at Holley Lane car park at 6.00pm
Banstead Heath – Tuesday 3rd July – meeting at Mill Road notice board at 6.00pm
Burgh Heath – Tuesday 7th August – meeting at the pond at 6.00pm

Members of the public and local Residents Associations will be invited to attend.

4. **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators**

Most of the chapters have been written together with some photographs and the chairman needs to speak to Ralph Maciejewski to determine the format required for publication.

5. **Warden's Report**

The Warden reported that the inclement weather is hampering operations to some extent although the staff are being kept busy with other duties. There are areas of the commons where it is undesirable to take heavy equipment at the moment as the ground would cut up quite badly. The scrub having been reduced on Park Downs has been beneficial and is now showing a big improvement to the common. There is still some fly tipping taking place, mostly Christmas trees and garden rubbish, and the lack of foliage on the trees tends to make any tipping stand out more.

6. **Forthcoming Events**

None reported.

7. **Any Other Business**

- i. **Burgh Heath Signage** – Plans for signage on Burgh Heath as a result of the surveys in connection with the Preston Regeneration Scheme had been circulated to members. The plans were discussed and the members views on suitability and amendments will be forwarded to RBBC.
- ii. **Planting of Trees on The Green, Tadworth** – Residents of Tadworth had requested permission to plant trees on The Green, partly in support of their tree planting project and partly to muffle road noise from the adjacent houses. After discussion it was determined that permission would not be granted as the area should maintain its village green aspect, trees would hinder grass cutting and to limit road noise the branches would need to be low enough to effectively form a hedge.
- iii. **RBBC Tender for Fishing Rights** – The Conservators agreed to a request from RBBC to include the pond on Burgh Heath in a tender, together with Woodhatch Lake and water at Horley, for a private fishing club. The council already hold the piscatorial rights for the pond and it was thought that the presence of an organised club might eliminate the regular outbreaks of social disorder by those fishing illegally in the pond.

- iv. **Notice Board in Sutton Lane** – David Gradidge pointed out that there were no notices on the board in Sutton Lane.
- v. **Water Pooling in Sutton Lane** – The chairman had been informed that a member of the public had reported to SCC Highways water pooling in Sutton Lane due to blocked drains. The response he received was that they filled up with mud flowing off the commons and that they had no money to keep them open and they can't do anything about it. John Peacock will provide details to the Clerk for further investigation.
- vi. **The Mere Pond** - was low on water and did not seem to have the flow of previous years. Cllr Curry and Cllr Broad had visited the area and, although not totally within Banstead Common, the Warden was able to call on his local knowledge and give some reasons why the flow of water may have ceased or been diverted.
- vii. **Dog Litter Bins** – Cllr Curry enquired about the policy in relation to dog litter bins and the reasons for their not being on the commons was explained to him. Some of the RBBC litter bins will now accept wrapped dog poo and notices to that effect will be placed on them.
- viii. **The Bench at Chapel Road Pond** has been removed, having for a time been in the pond, and David Atkins reported that elderly people who regularly used it were in need of somewhere to sit.

8.

Date of the Next Meetings

21st April 2018

21st July 2018

20th October 2018

**MINUTES of the 580th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 21st April 2018 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. J McCrae
Cllr. V Broad
Cllr. G Curry
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present was Alan Higgs.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr. R Mantle, Mr. J Mill, Mr. D Atkins, Mr. N Cull.

2. Appointment of Conservators and Election of Chairman

Cllr. G Curry was welcomed as a newly appointed member of the Conservators. Cllr. Broad and John Mill have been re-appointed for a further 3 year term. John Peacock was nominated as chairman for the forthcoming year by Cllr. Broad and seconded by John McCrea. The vote was in his favour and John Peacock was duly elected.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the chairman.

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- a. **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The chairman reported that he thought the sheep have been fantastic this year on both Park Downs and Banstead Downs but we will have to wait and see the beneficial effects of their grazing. Banstead Downs was mowed after the sheep had completed their grazing and the results look very favourable at this stage.
 - b. **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Stewardship Agreement.
- ii. **Travis Perkins** – This issue is still being pursued by Steve McLeod, RBBC. The Clerk will liaise further with him.
- iii. **Summer Walks** – Members were reminded that the first walk will be on Banstead Downs on Tuesday 1st May, meeting at Highdown Road at 6.00pm.

4. **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators**

The chairman reported that the first draft had been completed but was in need of tidying up and editing. He hoped to circulate it soon.

5. **Warden's Report**

The Warden reported that the wet weather had curtailed some of the activities, particularly at the Sportsman end of the Heath. Everything has been tidied up but not necessarily finished and whereas it may be possible to catch up with some parts it will not be all as other seasonal tasks take precedence. Staff have been busy repairing fences and ditches and were now making a start on grass cutting. A sink hole had appeared on Blue Ball Green and was filled in but will be kept under scrutiny.

There then followed a discussion on Walton Pond and the possibility of there being a sink hole within the pond and the various means of diverting water into the pond to keep up the water levels.

Rubbish was still being dumped on Highdown Road pavements and then pushed back onto the commons. It was suggested that the Clerk talk to Lee Wilcox about the possibility of a camera, or dummy, near to the entrance of the road to act as a deterrent.

6. **Forthcoming Events**

John Peacock will attend Tadworth R.A. Annual Meeting and give a presentation on aspects of the commons.

7. **Any Other Business**

- i. **Burgh Heath Signage** – The planned signage in connection with the Preston Regeneration Plan is now in place should Conservators wish to view it.
- ii. **Notice Boards** – It was suggested and agreed that for operational reasons the staff take back the responsibility of renewing the information on the BCC notice boards.
- iii. **Request for a Bus Stop in Mill Lane** - A request had been received for a Bus Stop to be sited in Mill Road about 60 yards from the A217 junction. This would initially consist of a hard standing of 3 x 2 metres and a Bus Stop sign on a pole. No shelter would be required as passengers would only alight and not board the bus at this point. The request was refused on the basis that although the requirements were minimal at the moment it was thought that they could grow in the future; 60 yards was too close to the turning off the A217 and to move further along Mill Road would put it in an area where vehicles parked to use the commons thus adding to a potentially dangerous situation, and passengers alighting for Kingswood at that stage were thought to be very few.
- iv. **Cutting of Brambles** - David Atkins had been spoken to by local residents requesting that the brambles on the 'Chinthurst' margin of the common be cut before they turn into bushes and sprouting trees. The

Warden agreed to cut them back at the appropriate and convenient time.

8. Dates of the Next Meetings

21st July 2018

20th October 2018

**MINUTES of the 581st Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 21st July 2018 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. J McCrae
Cllr. V Broad
Mr. R Mantle
Mr. J Mill
Mr. D Atkins
Mr. N Cull

Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present was Alan Higgs.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

None received

2. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the chairman.

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

a) **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The chairman reported that grazing followed by cut and collect on Park Downs was very favourable but there is a problem with scrub which will have to be treated. The grazing is superb for the density of the flowers and butterflies. The butterfly transept on Banstead Downs has also shown good results this year. The cut and collect on Peacock's Field is also beneficial.

He went on to explain why we don't graze during the summer, mainly because Natural England are not in favour of it and the butterflies also need the flowers.

b) **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Stewardship Agreement.

ii. **Travis Perkins** – This issue is still being pursued by Steve McLeod, RBBC. The Clerk will liaise further with him. *(24.7.18 – a meeting has now been arranged between Steve McLeod and Travis Perkins surveyor which we also hope to attend).*

iii. **Summer Walks** – Members were reminded that the last planned walk of the summer will be on Burgh Heath on Tuesday 7th August, meeting at the pond at 6.00pm.

4. **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators**

The chairman reported that the draft is almost complete and now includes the chapter by John McRea on 'The Commons at War'. It only needs photographs to be added which he is trying to show as 'then and now', i.e. 100 years ago alongside the same view today. Alan Higgs mentioned that the Banstead Downs Golf Club anniversary book contained old photographs that may be useful.

5. **Warden's Report**

The Warden reported that due to the continued spell of dry weather staff had extended the width of the existing fire breaks and cut grass where there was a high possibility of fires as well as grassed areas close to residential properties. There followed a discussion about posting 'No Smoking' notices and providing fire beaters both of which have been considered previously and thought not useful as smokers tend to ignore such notices and untrained people using beaters tend to fan the flames and spread the fires rather than extinguish them. The Warden will visit the fire station to seek their advice and acquire any 'Fire Risk' posters they have prepared.

The wet spring and dry summer have increased the rate of growth of bracken, particularly in shady areas, so staff have been busy dealing with that issue also repairing and realigning the bridleway barriers on the Dorking Road which appear to have been abandoned by Rights of Ways; they only do this as they are on the common and are a safety issue for horse riders crossing the road and Rights of Ways apparently no longer have the resources or money to do it.

6. **Forthcoming Events**

None reported.

7. **Any Other Business**

- i. **Mere Pond** – David Atkins was aware that we keep our ditches clear but wondered if this was happening around the Mere Pond which was drying up quickly. RBBC took over control of the pond and have been looking at this issue. The pond on the old police training centre is dry and there is a possibility that the water flow has been diverted away from its normal course. There is also a strong possibility of a sink hole in the pond and remedial work to catch the water flow from Dorking Road has come to a temporary halt as a previously blocked road drain has been cleared but there remains a lip around it which requires the involvement of Surrey County Council to remove. When done the flow should increase the amount of water going into the pond.
- ii. **Japanese Knotweed** – The Court of Appeal has ruled that homeowners whose properties had been invaded by Japanese Knotweed were entitled to damages from the owners of the adjacent ground from whence it came; a ruling which could have implications for us. However, new research by a global infrastructure services company together with the University of Leeds found no evidence that Japanese Knotweed causes significant structural damage, even when growing in close proximity. Many trees, climbers and shrubs can inflict greater damage and JK only causes problems where property already has existing structural faults. At the moment this does not change the way it should be dealt with.

- iii. **Fly Tipping** - Alan Higgs mentioned that there are still opportunities for fly tipping on the A217 Mad Mile. The contractors have only blocked off one area.
- iv. **Cllr. Broad** spoke about the operational advantages of having a drone to fly over the commons. This would save time in checking on trees, fly tipping, fires, campers and a host of other issues. It was agreed to purchase a drone and the ancillary equipment.

8.

Date of the Next Meeting

20th October 2018

**MINUTES of the 582nd Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 20th October 2018 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. J McCrae
Cllr. V Broad
Mr. R Mantle
Mr. D Atkins
Cllr. G Curry
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present was Alan Higgs and Ann Boyce.

Part 1

The chairman spoke about the sad loss of John Mill's wife Ros. Over the years Ros had been a good friend to Banstead Commons Conservators, particularly in her role as a councillor, and he wishes to formally record the condolences of all of the Conservators to John and his family.

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. J Mill
Mr. N Cull

2. Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes were agreed as circulated and signed by the chairman.

3. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

a) **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** Twenty-five sheep are now on Banstead Downs and, at the right time, they will be moved to Park Downs. Costs are slightly down on last year.

b) **Natural England.** There has been no specific contact with Natural England during the last three months in respect of Higher Level Stewardship Agreement.

ii. **Travis Perkins** – A meeting had been held between Steve McLeod (RBBC) the Clerk and Warden with representatives of Travis Perkins when they agreed to re-site the fencing and gate on the line shown on the circulated photographs which is to our satisfaction. This is subject to their Legal department and the Lessor also being in agreement.

iii. **Summer Walks** – It was agreed that at least one Conservator with knowledge of the common be in attendance at each walk. A schedule will be drafted for next year's walks.

4. 125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators

The Banstead Downs Golf Club 100 and 125 year anniversary booklets had proved useful but there was still a shortfall of old photographs for Banstead Heath and Burgh Heath. Various suggestions to obtain old photographs included advertising on social media or in local publications including the Tribute paper, the Banstead Challenger and the Surrey Mirror.

5. Warden's Report

The Warden reported that the last three months work had been routine and mainly grass cutting, including the Mill Field and Sportsman Field. The heritage sites have been cut and are kept tidy even though English Heritage no longer make a financial contribution. A good deal of time has been spent on blocking entrances to the common due to a large amount of travellers being in the area. They then have to be unblocked to allow legal access and then when necessary, blocked again. To date we have not had any unlawful intrusions onto the commons. Fly tipping has abated slightly, other than dumping of garden waste and next year we are expecting more trees than usual to have died due to drought conditions this year. Our fingerpost signs are renewed as necessary but the public footpath and bridleway signs, which are the responsibility of SCC Rights of Way are deteriorating badly and in some cases falling over which means they are not there for people to notice and therefore do not always follow the correct direction.

6. Forthcoming Events

None reported.

7. Any Other Business

- i. **Suggestion of Dog Poo Bins at New Road** – Ann Boyce had previously submitted an email and now spoke on the need for Dog Poo Bins on the common near New Road. She said that at times it was on the footpaths as well as on the common and was difficult to escape from. After a long discussion on the topic including current policy, picking up in plastic bags and then throwing them down or hanging them from trees, public education, no car parks on commons so no single entry point, it was determined that we would again try to raise public awareness by signage on notice boards. Cllr. Curry said that strategically placed black bins could also now accept dog mess which need to be better advertised, including on the actual bins.
- ii. **Tadworth & Walton Tree Wardens Group** - This group had asked if they could manage the small area of Burgh Heath to the south of Shelveys Way/A217 junction. Despite the fact that it would be time consuming for our staff to supervise and may be a dangerous road to go down it was thought that, if possible, we should do something to help them in what is a community activity. We will, therefore, meet with them and ask them to itemise what they would wish to do and produce a detailed work plan.
- iii. **Burgh Heath Pond** – Horley Piscatorial Society has won the RBBC tender to fish on 3 stretches of water including Burgh Heath Pond. Of the three, one is at Horley, which is close to their base, another is Earlswood Lakes

which is by far the largest, and Burgh Heath Pond which is the furthest away from them and is the smallest of the three, but, apparently, they intend to fish it regularly. David Atkins has circulated points we need to clarify with them and I will have a meeting with them in order to do so. Any further points to the Clerk please, sooner rather than later.

- iv. **Clearing the gulley at Mere Pond** – Cllr. Curry asked if there were any likely problems in clearing the gulley that runs into the Mere Pond to try to improve the flow of water. The Warden said there are no issues except they should be aware of rats having been there and the possibility of catching a virus from them which could be very nasty.
- v. **Clearing scrub on Banstead Downs Golf Course** – Alan Higgs asked if permission was required to clear some of the scrub to the right of the 4th hole on Banstead Downs Golf Course. It was thought no special permission was required but to be safe he should check with Georgina Terry of Natural England.

8.

Dates of the Next Meetings

19th January 2019

27th April 2019 – note this is the 4th Saturday of the month as the 3rd is Easter week end.

20th July 2019

19th October 2019