

**MINUTES of the 583rd Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 19th January 2019 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

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

Also present were;
Alan Higgs – Banstead Downs Golf Club
Gillian Hein – Tadworth & Walton RA
George Hinton – Nork RA
Ralph Maciejewski – Nork RA
Ben Clark – Horley Piscatorial Society
Matt Pipe – Horley Piscatorial Society
Roger Ponsford
David Gradidge – Banstead Village RA

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. J McCrea
Mr. N Cull
Warden

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 are now on Park Downs having finished on Banstead Downs. They are on the second pen on Park Downs and a third pen is currently being fenced. John Peacock said that the grazing was successful and beginning to show benefits, particularly on the butterfly transepts. There is now a total of 32 different species of butterfly on Banstead Downs and Park Downs. Jill Hall to be thanked for her work on Park Downs butterfly transepts.
 - 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** –Steve McLeod (RBBC) had emailed to say that the Landlord's consent to the works has been obtained and Travis Perkins are now awaiting a quote for the works.

- iii. **Summer Walks** – It was agreed that at least one Conservator with knowledge of the common be in attendance at each walk and if the nominated Conservator has to withdraw he should find a replacement. Suggested dates for 2019 are:

7th May – Banstead Downs

4th June - -Park Downs – nominated Conservator John Peacock

2nd July – Banstead Heath – nominated Conservator – David Atkins

6th August – Burgh Heath

All walks starting at 6.00pm

4. 125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators

It was found that the current work replicated a previous history of the commons by Maurice Thompson which had not been officially published and a copy of which had recently come to hand. It was thought that that book should be updated with selected excerpts from it going onto the new web site.

5. Burgh Heath Pond

RBBC have issued fishing rights on Burgh Heath Pond, along with other ponds within the borough, to Horley Piscatorial Society. The Clerk had met with officers of the fishing society who were also present today to talk about their views on the way forward. Local residents would be contacted, probably through the Residents Association, to be kept informed of the intentions and progress of the club. Members would be recruited from the area as would the bailiffs to give some ownership to the project. There would be no fishing until late spring or summer of 2020 during which time the pond would be assessed for plant life, electrofished and then restocked.

Horley Piscatorial Society is a non-profit making group and any excess funds is spent on fishing or the immediate area of the fishing waters. Their ideals include teaching youngsters how to fish responsibly and not throw hooks and line into the pond or even abandon it if it happens accidentally. It is hoped through their presence that the social disorder of rowdyism, litter, noise and nuisance, all of which have been experienced in the past, will be eliminated to the satisfaction of the local residents.

6. Warden's Report

The Warden reported that staff had spent time erecting fences for the sheep to graze. One pen had been used on Banstead Heath and three on Park Downs all of which had to be erected and then taken down when the sheep finished grazing.

When conditions allowed scrub on the Sportsman Field had been cut and removed and when dry it was burned.

Over the Christmas holiday there was an increase in fly tipping which has now been removed; this is probably due to a combination of dark evenings and local tips not opening as regularly as they were. Motor bikes and quad bikes have been evident on the Heath and one occasion caused a rider to lose her horse which was later recovered. Although staff were on the Heath quickly the bikes had gone and, as usual, they had no number plates.

Roadside trees in need of attention have mostly been taken down. A lot of them are known as 'pussy willow' trees and tend to grow fast then start to lean and rot at the base so, if they are near property or roads they are taken down.

7. Forthcoming Events

None reported.

8. Any Other Business

- i. **Mere Pond** – Correspondence had been received from Withybed Corner Residents concerning increasing the level of water in Mere Pond, with which we would help wherever possible but the only pond in this area for which we are responsible is that next to The Bell Public House which does not form part of the watercourse to Mere Pond. In respect of clearing the nearby woodland (which is not Banstead Woods as stated in the correspondence) our policy will remain to ensure that the area is safe and thereafter non-intervention unless we consider it necessary. Intervention has taken place at Banstead Woods which appears to have been turned into a park rather than a nature reserve, whereas our areas are important habitat for wildlife and we do not wish to create a precedent by changing one of them. The Clerk will also check our boundaries in this area.
- ii. **David Gradidge** stated that this had been one of the driest Januarys' on record and we could expect repercussions later in the year. Although the reservoirs may be full the ground water level will be well below average.
- iii. **Gillian Hein** asked if the Tadworth & Walton Tree Wardens Group could manage the area between the end of the south side of Shelveys Way and the A217 and she was asked to itemise what they wished to do in a detailed work plan for further consideration. Gillian also said that the notices on the Notice Boards were in need of attention, to which was added the usefulness of a QR code for quick response.
- iv. **Alan Higgs** said there was still fly tipping taking place on the west side of the mad mile in areas where it may be difficult to get in to clear it.

9. Dates of the Next Meetings

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

**MINUTES of the 584th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 27th April 2019 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. D Atkins
Mr. N Cull
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present were;

Ian Mockford, Heathside Place Resident
Fawid Daerni, Heathside Place Resident

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. J Mill
Cllr. V Broad
Mr. R Mantle
Cllr. G Curry

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 completed their task in the pens on Park Downs and Banstead Downs and the areas they have grazed are looking really good.
- 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** – There has been no further movement on this issue and the Clerk will continue to liaise with Steve McLeod (RBBC) for an update on when the work may be completed.

iii. **Summer Walks** – As there was no-one to lead the walk on Banstead Downs On 7th May it was decided to postpone it until Tuesday 21st May and relocate the meeting place to the far end of Banstead Downs Golf Club car park. This would enable a visit to the golf club side of the Downs, particularly the area to rear of The Drive. Federation of Residents Associations to be contacted so their members are informed.

21st May – Banstead Downs

4th June - -Park Downs – nominated Conservator John Peacock

2nd July – Banstead Heath – nominated Conservator – David Atkins

6th August – Burgh Heath

All walks starting at 6.00pm

4. 125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators

As the current work replicated a previous history of the commons by Maurice Thompson which had not been officially published it was decided not to continue with our research but to bring his book up to date. There appears to be no copyright issues.

5. Golf Club Issue

The chairman explained that the golf club had an area for dumping rubbish but then used it as a track and looked for other locations to dump their green waste. The issue is not straightforward as we dump our arisings when forage harvesting. The area will be visited during the walk on Banstead Downs on 21st May.

6. Access to Burgh Heath Common

Several years ago the access gate from Heathside Place to Burgh Heath common was closed due to the large amount of garden rubbish being brought through it and dumped on the common. Recently a resident of Heathside Place, Ian Mockford, had asked for it to be opened again as the walk to the local shops was excessively long without such access. The site had been visited by the Clerk and Warden who determined to keep a watch on the area and consider opening the gate if there was no more dumping. The chairman had sympathy with the request to open the gate but had seen elsewhere on the commons where similar gates had been opened and the problem quickly returned. Subsequently Cllr. Nick Harrison had become involved and supported opening the gate. After discussion among the Conservators it was agreed that a site meeting would be arranged between the Clerk and Warden and Cllr. Harrison and Ian Mockford to discuss the possibility of opening the gate, and, if so, the conditions on its remaining open.

7. Tadworth & Walton RA – Tree Management

Gillian Hein had submitted a draft management plan in support of a previous application by Tadworth & Walton Tree Wardens to manage the area at the end of Shelveys Way junction with A217. After due consideration the Conservators decided not to allow them to do so as the plan was not in line with our objectives for the area and it will be necessary, in the foreseeable future, to bring down some of the larger trees there for reasons of safety.

8. Warden's Report

The Warden reported that the winter work went well and was mostly completed on time; some of the machinery broke down so time was spent on repair work. All commons accesses are open with the exception of those we deliberately block off to prevent unlawful access. Fly tipping is a continual problem and, although we haven't had any large amounts dumped on the commons they have come very close, Mill Road where a lorry dropped a large load for example. We are also getting lots of garden waste which is a seasonal problem in spring and autumn; this is by both local residents and contractors unwilling to pay disposal charges. A grab machine would be of great assistance to the staff in removing such waste and in recovering brick and builders rubble which we can mostly re-use.

With the Derby being not far away new posts are being strategically sited to prevent caravan access.

9. Belmont Vision

The Belmont Vision, which is the Neighbourhood Forum for Belmont, South Cheam, Shanklin Village, South Sutton and Carshalton Beeches had drawn up options for the local environment challenges brought about by the possible development of the old Sutton Hospital site, particularly the transport infrastructure which has 3 options for roads crossing Banstead Downs. Nick Cull was able to state that Neighbourhood Forums are constituted under the Town & Country Planning Act and Sutton Council have accepted Belmont Vision but has only agreed the area that it will cover. He further stated that London Borough of Sutton will not support anything that includes loss of 'green space'.

It was decided that we will await further developments, if any should arise.

10. Forthcoming Events

None reported.

11. Any Other Business

David Atkins said that flowers had been left as a memorial on Banstead Heath. They were there for a while and then removed. Also the bags with dog poo were becoming more prevalent and more notices by accesses were required as well as notices and police action on the Heath and Downs regarding the unlawful use of motor cycles and quad bikes at those locations.

12. Dates of next meetings

20th July 2019

19th October 2019

**MINUTES of the 585th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 20th July 2019 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. D Atkins
Mr. N Cull
Mr. J Mill
Mr. R Mantle
Dr. W.S Bellenger
Cllr. N. Moses
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present were;

There were no members of the public present.

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. V Broad

2. Appointment/Election of New Conservators

Dr WS (Bill) Bellenger had been elected to replace Mr J McCrea and Cllr Nadean Moses appointed to replace Cllr George Curry. John Peacock had also been re-elected for a further 3 years.

3. Election of Chairman

Richard Mantle proposed John Peacock as chairman for the coming year which was seconded by John Mill. There were no other nominations and John Peacock was duly elected.

4. Minutes of last Meeting

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

5. Matters Arising

i. Environmental Stewardship

- a) **Grazing/Cut & Collect.** The benefits of Grazing and Cut & Collect were explained for the information of the new members. Grazing was completed on time and Cut & Collect will start at the end of the summer.
- 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** – There has been no further movement on this issue and the Clerk will continue to liaise with Steve McLeod (RBBC) for an update on when the work may be completed.

iii) **Summer Walks** – The chairman stressed that it was important that, whenever possible, Conservators attended the walks, particularly now that several members of the public were attending. Following discussion it was suggested that rather than have organised walks only in the summer they are held in each of the four seasons to appreciate how they change and their appeal at different times of the year. For full discussion at the next meeting.

The next walk will be on Burgh Heath commencing at 6.00pm on Tuesday 6th August, meeting at the notice board near the pond; John Peacock agreed to lead it.

iv) **Golf Club Issues** - During a walk on Banstead Downs it became evident that the Golf Club were dumping large amounts of waste, grass and tree cuttings and suchlike, in the woods just off the path at the rear of The Drive when they were supposed to take it to their depot for disposal. Some residents of The Drive were also disposing of garden waste by throwing it over the fences at the rear of their gardens onto the commons. The Clerk and Warden had spoken to representatives of the Residents Association when visiting on a different matter and they would circulate their members to try to stop this practise. The Secretary, Chair of Greens and Ground Staff were also spoken to and would take steps to prevent recurrences. They were also spoken to regarding the cutting of fairways tight up to the tree line when their agreement specifically instructed them not to. They would also look at changing this practise. The major problem at the Golf Club however was an invasion of the Oak Processionary Moth which is affecting almost every oak on the golf course to the west of the A217. They have reported it to the Forestry Commission and were in touch with Reigate & Banstead Borough Council Tree Officer and were making a joint approach to deal with the issue. As yet it has not crossed the A217 to the eastern side and our Warden will continue to check our oaks. OPM is spreading across the south of England and undoubtedly will affect the commons at some stage.

v) **125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators** – the chairman will continue updating Maurice Thompson's book and when complete will put it on the website which is now up and running again.

vi) **Access to Burgh Heath Common** – Ian Mockford had emailed thanking the Conservators for allowing him to re-open the gate at Burgh Heath and in particular to the Warden for moving an amount of earth that was blocking the gate. The gate itself has been rebuilt and is working but needs further structural attention which he will do. Access through the gate will be restricted to those who need it.

6. Meeting of the West Weald Fungi Recording Group

This group had submitted a request to hold one of their meetings on Banstead Heath on 31st October 2019. The area covered would broadly be a circle of woodland both sides of Mill Road and taking about 3 hours during which time they would record details of fungi found which would form part of the British Mycological Society database; we would also receive a copy. This was considered worthwhile and an invitation should be extended to them to return periodically and provide us with further information.

7. Warden's Report

The Warden reported that routine summer matters were going ahead as planned. The Oak Processionary Moth invasion at Banstead Downs Golf Club, although serious, might just have to be one of those things that we learn how to live with as it is unlikely to be

quickly eradicated. We should be mindful that as the golf club is part of the commons we may have to bear some of the cost of dealing with it.

We also have Ash Die-Back across the commons. We have 100's of ash trees and almost all of them are affected. When they get it it affects the roots and they die more quickly. They do not recover from it so have to be removed. Staff have commenced felling those they can but those alongside roads and paths, or adjoining properties need to be removed with some urgency as they will be a potential danger to life or property. On our own we do not have the capability of closing the roads to take them down and some of the larger ones are too large to climb. Others in less prominent locations can be dealt with with less urgency. Discussions have been held with RBBC and maps showing the location of ash trees near roads returned to the Tree Officer to see if he can involve Surrey CC and determine what RBBC can do to assist. We now await a further meeting with RBBC but again, the cost could be immense and beyond our budget to cope.

8. Forthcoming Event

- I. The Sportsman are holding a Community Farmer's Market in their side garden on the last Saturday of every month with the idea of bringing the local community together to support local businesses and produce. Stalls will sell plants, fruit & vegetables, flowers, local cheeses, honey, smoked meats, jams, chutney and pastries. They also hope to include bread and fish stalls and involve local charities, schools and scout groups. They will ask non-charity stalls for a minimum donation of £10.00 which will be donated to The Friends of East Surrey Hospital. They now request the Conservators to consider allowing them to have some of the stalls on the common. After full and lengthy discussion the application was refused on the basis that it appeared to be a commercial event to attract custom to the public house rather than a straightforward charitable fund raising event.
- II. Keith Robertshaw of Chapel Road, Tadworth would like to plan a Tadworth Country Fair/Festival on an annual basis commencing in August 2020. This would be purely a charitable event with the likely beneficiary for the first year being the Tadworth Trust. He requests consideration to hold this event on a small part of the common. Although details are sketchy at the moment he would form a committee to develop the idea and envisages a programme of local artists and groups from local choirs to musical ensembles and bands. There could also be fancy dress competitions, pet competitions and a race around the commons; there would need to be refreshment stalls and perhaps, craft stalls. Although at the moment it is just an idea for the future, he would like the agreement of the Conservators to a possible location to continue with the project. After discussion the Conservators agreed that this was entirely charitable and, without nominating an area of land, agreed in principle to his request. Mr Robertshaw is to keep us in touch with progress.

9. Any Other Business

- i) **Benches on Park Downs** – John Peacock asked how much we would charge if someone paid for the replacement of benches on Park Downs and the response was 'a suitable donation'.
- ii) **Spoil Heap Damage** – John Peacock raised the issue of damage being caused to the 'Spoil Heaps' on Banstead Downs by mountain bikers and motor

cycles generally on the common. Although little now grows on the spoil heaps, and plants that do grow seem to thrive when the heaps are disturbed, the building of tracks and jumps is changing the whole aspect of the area. Police are not responding and we are getting several calls a day from concerned individuals. John Peacock had spoken to some of them but they are difficult people to deal with. They come and go at various times and durations, often as short as 20 minutes, but are usually there on a Sunday. We have previously spoken about purchasing a drone and it would perhaps be an advantage in this situation. It would give the impression that they are being visually recorded and could possibly track them back to the location of a road vehicle from which details could be recorded. It might also be useful to put copies of the Bye-laws on Track 40.

10. Dates of next meetings

19th October 2019

18th January 2020

**MINUTES of the 586th Meeting of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS
held on Saturday 19th October 2019 at The Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead.**

Present: Mr. J Peacock Chairman
Mr. N Cull
Mr. J Mill
Mr. V Broad
Dr. W.S Bellenger
Cllr. N. Moses
Mr. J Milner Clerk
Warden

Also present were;

Mr R Maciejewski Nork RA
Cllr P Harp RBBC

Part 1

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr. D Atkins
Mr. R Mantle

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.** John Peacock had circulated a paper showing that grazing on Park Downs over the years was having a slow but positive effect on the vegetation and butterflies on the grass downland.
Twenty sheep were presently in Pen 1 on Park Downs and another 5 would arrive this weekend. After Pen 1 they will move to Pen 2 on Park Downs and then to Banstead Downs.
- b) **Natural England.** Jane Sevenoaks of Natural England had indicated that she would be visiting Park Downs in the near future and John Peacock had offered to meet her there to assist with her inspection.
To date she had not replied to his offer.

ii Travis Perkins – The fence outside Travis Perkins has been re-sited on the original boundary line and no longer extends over the common.

iii) Summer Walks – Further discussion took place on the structure and nature of Conservator's walks resulting in the overriding view that Conservator's Walks should be regarded as 'business walks' and therefore limited to only Conservators.

Unhindered discussion could then take place and such walks could be seasonal or a timely response to a suitable topic. Conservators were invited to submit a subject and date for the first such walk. It was also suggested that, if the business agenda could be limited, consideration could be given to such a walk being held on one of the commons on the date of a Quarterly Meeting.

John Peacock volunteered to lead one or two public walks which would be more of nature trail events. These would be properly advertised through Facebook, local Residents Associations and possibly leafleting.

iv) 125th Anniversary of Banstead Commons Conservators – All of the information is now on the website.

4. Professional Dog Walkers

Complaints have been received regarding professional dog walkers, each with a number of dogs sometimes exceeding 6, meeting up on the commons and congregating with in excess of 20 dogs, some on leads but most not, causing obstruction, fear and even threat to other commons users, particularly those walking their family dog and horse riders who were having to move off Bridleways onto areas they should not be using. The increase in such professionals using Banstead Heath has occurred since Epsom & Ewell Council banned dogs not on a lead from Epsom Downs during mornings; it seems they have been displaced to Banstead Heath. On all RBBC open spaces the current number of dogs permitted to be walked at any one time by professional walkers is 6 and there is no requirement to have them on a lead.

It was determined that initially the way forward would be one of education and that leaflets would be handed out to walkers with numbers of dogs informing them of the concern they are causing when they meet up with other such walkers and the dogs act as a pack, the requirement for them to have control of their dogs at all times as well as the need to have third party insurance. The Clerk will forward a list of the salient points to Nick Cull who will prepare a leaflet for handing out to those with numbers of dogs accessing Banstead Heath at The Sportsman and Mill Road and other locations as necessary.

5. Motor Cycles on Commons

A drone has been purchased for use on the commons and may be used for gleaning information on motor cyclists riding on the commons in particular on the vehicles in which they and their motor cycles arrive. It is also hoped that we will soon have a meeting with police to make them directly aware of the problem and seek whatever assistance they can give.

6. Permissive Rides

A horse rider has asked for extra Permissive Rides to be made available on Banstead Heath as the present rides were often blocked by large numbers of dogs (see item 4 above). It was thought inappropriate to consider this at the moment for the reasons shown above.

7. Ash Die Back

This was now a significant problem, especially where ash trees were growing over roads and Rights of Way. At a recent meeting with RBBC Greenspaces Officer and Tree Officer they stated that Surrey County Council had carried out some safety work and they (RBBC) would assist BCC staff with a short closure of the Dorking Road whilst overhanging ash trees were felled. They also promulgated the advice of both the Forestry Commission and SCC that they were generally happy with the safety of the trees in the area and RBBC would carry out another survey in the spring. The chairman, John Peacock, had also looked at 2 ash trees overhanging the carriageway on the A217 between Burgh Heath and the Kingswood roundabout and thought they were a significant risk to motorists, particularly as once infected they never recover and can fall or drop branches at any time.

The Clerk will continue to press RBBC Tree Officer for action in respect of the trees overhanging the A217 and, at the request of Nick Cull, will also write to Surrey County Council and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council expressing the concern of the Conservators regarding the entire situation with Ash Die Back and its inherent risk in general, but especially to motorists should trees or branches fall onto roads.

8. Warden's Report

All was going well with the seasonal work. There had been a large amount of fly tipping on New Road but this had actually been on the road, not the commons. Staff still block off as many accesses as possible for vehicles entering onto the commons to try to counter fly tipping activities.

The remainder of the Warden's Report had been explained during the meeting in relation to Ash Die Back, Motor Cycles, Dogs and Horses and erecting the sheep pens.

Dr Bellenger requested a visit to the depot which the Warden will accommodate.

Nick Cull mentioned an informal discussion he had with a member of Belmont & South Cheam Residents Association. They had previously circulated a plan for a road system which included 2 roads across Banstead Downs. At the moment finances prevented further development of the plan but they were keeping it in abeyance for possible future resurrection.

9. Forthcoming Events

Meeting of the West Weald Fungi Recording Group - 31st October 2019 on Banstead Heath

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business

11. Dates of next meetings

18th January 2020
18th April 2020
18th July 2020
17th October 2020