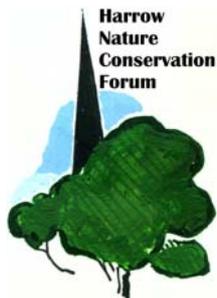


Evaluation report: Restoration of Bluebell Heath, Stanmore Common



Harrow Heritage Trust / Harrow Nature Conservation Forum

August 2015



Contents

Note: Our original intention at the start of the project was to note all our discussions, decisions and activities in an online blog. This final evaluation report would then be simply a slightly edited summary of that blog. In practise most members of the steering committee found that their computers were incompatible with online blogs. Instead, Simon Braidman kept a very detailed record of working parties and guided walks and Stephen Bolsover kept an online record of the project progress (all available online, see http://www.harrowncof.org/Bluebell_Heath_project_archive.html) In keeping with our original concept this report is created in large part from our ongoing online record.

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Forward

Stanmore Common is a remarkably wild and natural open space on the borders of Harrow, Bushey and Elstree. It is cared for by an enthusiastic and hardworking team of volunteers led by the voluntary warden Simon Braidman and his deputy John Winter.

The Harrow Nature Conservation Forum is a subcommittee of the Harrow Heritage Trust, registered charity 1072773, and acts as an umbrella group for the voluntary wardens of Harrow's wild open spaces. In 2011, concerned by the loss of open grassland and heathland on the common, the Forum applied for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to restore Bluebell Heath, which had been the largest open space within Stanmore Common but which by that date had been reduced to little more than a series of narrow grassy rides. The application was successful and the project began in May 2012.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the funds to carry out this project, which was also supported by grants from the Harrow Heritage Trust and Dr. Ronald Cormack. The project would not have been possible without the hard work of Simon Braidman, John Winter and their volunteer team at Stanmore Common.

Section Two - Your Project

2a What is the heritage that your project focuses on?

If your project is about heritage that is not physical (such as oral history or cultural traditions), tell us about the subject and the time period it covers.

If your project is about physical heritage (such as a building or a park), give us factual information about the asset, its size, when it dates from, the surviving features, its condition and why it is important in your local area.

Tell us if there is any official recognition of this heritage. For example, it may be a listed building (if so, give its grade) or a site of special scientific interest.

For centuries Stanmore Common was open heathland, shown thus on the 1822 Ordnance Survey map. In 1879 local naturalist Eliza Brightwen wrote "the furze blossoms on Stanmore Common spreading over more than 200 acres of undulating ground". When grazing ended woodland began invading, and by 1990 only pockets of open space remained, the largest being a 2.2ha area now called Bluebell Heath. Nevertheless Stanmore Common was given Site of Special Scientific Interest status because of the community of invertebrates associated with acid grassland/heathland. Since then the woods have continued to advance, so that Bluebell Heath is now divided by belts of secondary woodland into a series of isolated glades. As a result the Common lost its SSSI status in 1994 and is now classed as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for nature conservation. Within the glades persists the remnants of the characteristic acid grassland of the original heath, including plants such as heather and tormentil that are rare in the London area, as well as the rare invertebrates. Acid grassland is a Harrow, London and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat. Restoration of an area of acid grassland is a specific objective in Harrow's BAP.

2b What is your project? Please give a short factual description of your project. We may use this on our website or for other publicity purposes.

Throughout this application we use the term heathland/acid grassland. Although these appear as distinct terms in the UK BAP, they are really a continuum, as reflected in the amalgamation of the working groups for the two London BAPs into the Heathland and Acid Grassland Working Group.

As befits its history and the presence of relict glades, Stanmore Common is identified on the Green Spaces Information for Greater London database as suitable for creating and/or restoring relict acid grassland habitat. We propose to restore Bluebell Heath as a continuous open space dominated by heather at the northwest end ("heathland") grading to a dominance of grass and acid grassland herbs at the southeast end ("acid grassland"), thus increasing both public amenity, by creating an open space rich in wild flowers, and biodiversity.

Volunteers will be trained in ecological surveying, tree felling and pesticide application and will use these skills in the project.

Local historians, ecologists and the general public will collaborate to generate a statement of significance for the site plus an interpretation manual for leaders of walks and other educational activities. Boards, leaflets and a nature trail will describe the work and alert visitors to plants and animals to look out for.

2c What are the aims of your project?

Tell us about the specific aims of your project. Your aims should relate to your heritage and also to the people involved.

Remember to make sure that they also relate to our 'learning' aim and either one or both to our aims of 'conservation' and 'participation'.

| Aims |
|---|
| 1. Restore 1.5 hectares of Bluebell Heath to the state it was in in the early 19th century, with a rich mix of heathland/acid grassland flora and accompanying fauna. |
| 2. Train volunteers in ecological and horticultural skills that will be useful both on the nature reserve and in equipping them for a career. |
| 3. Generate archives, both virtual and concrete, than will be used by interested parties to inform planning decisions and to educate the public for many years to come. |
| 4. Educate and entertain the public with guided walks, nature trails, interpretive signs and exhibitions to reveal the richness of historical and ecological heritage within their own borough. |
| 5. Recruit volunteers to maintain the site, including wardens to take responsibility for its management over the subsequent years. |

1. Restore 1.5 hectares of Bluebell Heath to the state it was in in the early 19th century, with a rich mix of heathland/acid grassland flora and accompanying fauna.
2. Train volunteers in ecological and horticultural skills that will be useful both on the nature reserve and in equipping them for a career.
3. Generate archives, both virtual and concrete, than will be used by interested parties to inform planning decisions and to educate the public for many years to come.
4. Educate and entertain the public with guided walks, nature trails, interpretive signs and exhibitions to reveal the richness of historical and ecological heritage within their own borough.
5. Recruit volunteers to maintain the site, including wardens to take responsibility for its management over the subsequent years.

If we award you a grant, before we pay the final 10% of the grant we will ask you to fully evaluate (assess) how well your project has met its aims.

2d Provide a detailed project plan

Describe your project as fully as you can.

We suggest you work through a draft version of the project plan table and share it with colleagues and partners before you fill in the detailed project plan.

When filled in, the table should give you and your colleagues a realistic project plan. However, we understand that the plan is likely to change and improve as your project develops.

Remember that the activities within your project should help you to meet our aims relating to 'learning', 'conservation' and 'participation'. We have a selection of guidance notes on heritage topics and activities to help you and have identified the relevant ones below.

All projects must meet our 'learning' aim.

Opportunities to learn about the heritage could include:

Providing information through displays, leaflets or a website.

Providing opportunities for people to be trained in new skills.

Holding open days, tours or practical sessions.

You will find it useful to read *First steps in learning*.

For projects meeting our 'conservation' aim.

Opportunities to preserve and protect the heritage could include:

Surveys and research to help people understand the heritage better.

Repairing a building or monument.

Carrying out conservation work to a heritage item, archive or collection.

Providing training in conservation skills as part of the project.

You will find it useful to read *First steps in conservation*.

For projects meeting our 'participation' aim.

Opportunities for people to take part in your project could include:

Developing a volunteer programme.

Holding activities for specific audiences that are not currently involved with your heritage.

Setting up a new group to allow a wider range of people to make decisions about your heritage (for example, a community advisory group or a youth forum).

You will find it useful to read *First steps in participation*.

See example project plans on our website for ideas on how to fill in this table. These show roughly how much information you need to provide, in proportion to the size of the grant you are asking for.

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| 1. Alert the public to the project and to the educational opportunities offered within it. | Start: May 2012 End: September 2012 | We will place a story in the Harrow Observer (which regularly carries articles on our activities) and in the Harrow Times and Watford Observer. We will display a single poster panel at the Harrow Museum. An article on the project will be placed on the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum website. Our followers will be alerted by Twitter. | Elliot Bertram, Publicity Officer of the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum. Stephen Bolsover, project leader. | (Section 2c: aims 2, 4 and 5) The activity is aimed at recruiting interested members of the public for the guided walks, as well as recruiting new volunteers from the Harrow community, including those who would benefit from the training available. | We expect to have between 20 and 30 members of the public on each of our guided walks (five in each of the three years of the project). In this activity we expect to recruit 20 volunteers, 10 strongly committed who will attend many working parties some of whom will be formally trained, and 10 peripheral volunteers who will attend a few working parties. |
| 2. Photograph all our activities on Bluebell Heath: seed collection, tree clearance, seed sowing, re-establishment of heathland/acid grassland. | Start: May 2012 End: April 2015 | Bluebell Heath, Stanmore Common | Project leader; voluntary wardens; members of the public | (Section 2c: aim 4) Members of the public | Photographs will be used in reports, press releases and both as prints on displays and in digital picture frames in the close of project exhibition at Harrow Museum (activity #20). Harrow Museum is visited by ~10,000 members of the public over a three month period. |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| 3. Design, print and erect two interpretive panels to explain the ongoing work to the public. | Start: May 2012 End: April 2015 The panels will be removed at the end of the project period. | Entrances to Bluebell Heath | Design by the educational materials steering group. Printing by contractor. Erection by the project leader and members of Harrow Nature Conservation Forum | (Section 2c: aims 4 and 5) Members of the general public | The boards will set out the aims of the project and the timescale of the work. They will be seen by about one thousand visitors to Stanmore Common over the course of the three years. Contact details on the panels will help recruit volunteers. |
| 4. Generate a statement of significance for the site. | Begin: May 2012 End: December 2012 although the document will remain online and open for editing and correction | On line/project leader's home office. The document will be published on the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum web site. | Harrow Nature Conservation Forum; Harrow Heritage Trust (providing expertise in local history); Harrow Natural History Society; London Heathland/Acid Grassland group; Interested members of the general public | (Section 2c: aim 3) The project team and all future groups and individuals with an interest in Stanmore Common. The statement of significance will describe the site and in particular the characteristics that make it special and worthy of protection and careful maintenance. Generation of the statement will act to share information between the organizations creating it, and once generated the statement will be used by the planning departments of Harrow and Hertsmere Councils, and by all volunteer organizations that interact with the site in future. | The statement of significance will describe the site and in particular the characteristics that make it special and worthy of protection and careful maintenance. Generation of the statement will act to share information between the organizations creating it, and once generated the statement will be used by the planning departments of Harrow and Hertsmere Councils, and by all volunteer organizations that interact with the site in future. |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 5. Guided walks over Stanmore Common concentrating on Bluebell Heath. We currently lead five guided walks per year over Stanmore Common and expect to continue indefinitely. | Start: May 2012 We will continue this activity indefinitely | Stanmore Common | Harrow Nature Conservation Forum | (Section 2c: aims 4 and 5) General public | Over the project period we expect that guided walks will be attended by about 400 members of the public. These will learn about the very special geology, history and natural history of Stanmore Common and Bluebell Heath in particular. Use of the object collection (activity #16) will make the walks interesting to children and improve the educational outcome. The walks will help to recruit volunteers for our ongoing activities. |
| 6. Update and reprint the existing Harrow Nature Conservation Forum leaflet on Stanmore Common | First update, describing the ongoing work: Start: May 2012 End: June 2012. Second update, describing Bluebell Heath in its restored state: Start: December 2014 End: April 2015 | On line/project leader's home office | Research and design: educational materials steering group. Printing: commercial printers. | (Section 2c: aims 4 and 5) General public | Our standard runs are 500 leaflets, which are distributed in libraries, at the Harrow Civic Centre, and at our stand at fairs. One run of 500 lasts about a year, so we expect to reach at least 1,500 families with these leaflets, explaining the geology, history and natural history of Stanmore Common including Bluebell Heath. The leaflets will help to recruit volunteers for our ongoing activities. |
| | | | | | |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| 7. Collect seeds from the relict areas of acid grassland on Stanmore Common | Start: June 2012 End: September 2012 | Stanmore Common | Volunteers: those specifically recruited for this project, corporate workday volunteers, and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers | (Section 2c: aim 1) The activity is a component of the restoration of the heathland/acid grassland habitat of Bluebell Heath. The primary beneficiary is biodiversity; human visitors will appreciate the open, flower-rich wild area. | Once the seeds are planted the plant species now present in the relict areas of acid grassland will become established on the 1.5 ha of newly cleared area. |
| 8. Training of five volunteers in plant surveying | June 2011 | Veolia Water Environment and Education Centre, Clay Lane, Bushey, located only 600 metres from Bluebell Heath, and on site at Stanmore Common | John Dobson of Make Natural Ltd, the ecologist who carried out the recent botanical survey of Stanmore Common (available for download from the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum website). | (Section 2c: aims 2 and 5) Volunteers who wish to gain expertise in plant surveying, either as part of professional training or as interested amateurs | Five volunteers will become proficient in botanical surveying and in recognizing the species present on Stanmore Common. This work will be a strong component of a CV for students applying for further education courses in land management or ecology. The volunteers will use these skills in the project (Activity #9). |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 9. Carry out botanical surveys of Bluebell Heath before the clearance work is done and in the subsequent two years including final evaluation of site status. | Start: June 2012 End: April 2015 | Bluebell Heath, Stanmore Common | The five trained volunteers (see activity #8) | (Section 2c: aims 1 and 3) Project leaders; the general public; the five trained volunteers | The initial survey will complement the existing survey by Make Natural Ltd. giving details of the plants found at present on the site. Surveys immediately after and in the years following the clearance will allow us to judge how well restoration of heathland/acid grassland is proceeding on the cleared areas allowing the management to be varied (e.g., by resowing if the initial sowing has failed; Asulox spraying if bracken is becoming overdominant). Knowledge of the common or prominent plants will allow us to design the leaflets and nature trail, while presence of rare or local plants will be noted in the interpretation manual so that guided walk leaders can point them out. Surveying will show the volunteers how their skills can be useful in a real ecology project. |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| 10. Training of two volunteers in pesticide use to NPTC accreditation | The course takes three days, with a further one day for NPTC assessment. Capel Manor runs the course approximately once per month. The volunteers will take the course at a date of their choosing in 2012. | Capel Manor College, Bullsmoor Lane, Enfield | Capel Manor College, Bullsmoor Lane, Enfield | (Section 2c: aims 2 and 5) Volunteers who wish to gain expertise in pesticide use | Two volunteers will become proficient in the safe use of pesticides. This qualification will be very useful to young people hoping to follow a career in gardening, farming or horticulture. The volunteers will use these skills in the project (activity #17). |
| 11. Training of one volunteer in chainsaw maintenance and felling of small trees to NPTC accreditation | The course takes five days, with a further one day for NPTC assessment. Capel Manor runs the course approximately once per month. The volunteer will take the course at a date of their choosing in the period June-September 2011. | Capel Manor College, Bullsmoor Lane, Enfield | Capel Manor College, Bullsmoor Lane, Enfield | (Section 2c: aims 2 and 5) A volunteer who wishes to gain expertise in chainsaw use | The volunteer will become proficient the safe use of a chainsaw. This qualification will be very useful to a young person hoping to follow a career in tree surgery. The volunteer will use these skills in the project (activity #13). |
| 12. Clear secondary woodland from 1.5 hectares of Bluebell Heath, scraping leaf litter from the 0.5 hectares that have been established as woodland for the longest time (~ 30 years). | Start: September 2012 End: November 2012 | Bluebell Heath, Stanmore Common | Contractors. We have discussed the project with two contractors, prices quoted in section 4a are the lower of the two quotes. If funded we will obtain at least one more quotation. | (Section 2c: aim 1) The activity is a component of the restoration of the heathland/acid grassland habitat of Bluebell Heath. The primary beneficiary is biodiversity; human visitors will appreciate the open, flower-rich wild area. | Following the clearance a continuous 3.1 hectare space will be clear, comprising: Clear at present: Glades within Bluebell Heath: 1 ha. New Heath: 0.6 ha. Cleared in this project: 1 ha of recent secondary woodland separating glades within Bluebell Heath plus 0.5 ha of older secondary woodland lying between the westernmost glade in Bluebell Heath and New Heath. |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| 13. Fell and remove trees by hand. | December 2012 | A small area (~ 100 square metres) that forms a flush of wet ground directing ground water to an area where Heath Spotted Orchid (a Harrow BAP priority species) grow. | The volunteer trained to safely use a chainsaw. | (Section 2c: aim 1) The primary beneficiary is the natural environment. The general public also benefits. | The small flush (~ 100 square metres) will be cleared of trees without the compaction of the soil and resulting damage to groundwater movement that would be caused by vehicles. |
| 14. Sow seeds collected from the relict grassland areas onto the newly cleared areas | Start: September 2012 End: December 2012 | Bluebell Heath, Stanmore Common | Young volunteers from the Chinmaya Foundation and Kol Chai Reform Jewish Community | (Section 2c: aim 1) The activity is a component of the restoration of the heathland/acid grassland habitat of Bluebell Heath. The primary beneficiary is biodiversity; human visitors will appreciate the open, flower-rich wild area. The young volunteers will gain a real sense of having helped the environment. New Heath, sown by Chinmaya in 2009, is present as an example of what can be achieved. | The plant species now present in the relict areas of acid grassland will become established on the 1.5 ha of newly cleared area and establish themselves over the remaining 2½ years of the project. |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| 15. Evaluate project | Ongoing, beginning April 2012 | Botanical and invertebrate surveys on site; feedback after guided walks on Stanmore Common; on line surveys; survey forms at Harrow Museum | Evaluation steering group; voluntary wardens of Stanmore Common, especially John Dobson for invertebrate surveys; the five volunteers trained in botanical surveying; walk guides for public feedback. | The botanical and invertebrate survey evaluation is aimed at adjusting the physical activity to optimize the restoration process. Voluntary organizations including ourselves. General public | Everyone involved in the project will contribute to an online project diary (blog) which will document the impact of the project on the site and all interactions with the public and volunteers. Evaluation forms as part of guided walks, together with follow-up surveys, will assess the success of the project in making the public aware of the geology and natural history of Stanmore Common, of the recreational opportunities it provides, and the responsibilities of visitors in preserving this resource. A redacted version of the diary (removing, for example, any commercially sensitive material relating to the contractors) will be published on our web site as the project proceeds and a full summary will be printed for those archives that need a paper copy. |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| 16. Generate an interpretation manual and a collection of objects for the site (samples of Pleistocene gravel, pressed flowers, mammal skulls, shed snake skins, artificial painted bird eggs, preserved insects, replica of the type of pistol Dick Turpin would have used...). | Begin: January 2013 End: April 2015 although the document and collection will remain open for editing, correction and addition | Interpretation manual: On line/project leader's home office. The document will be published on the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum web site. Object collection: with team leader, but loaned to Harrow museum and schools as required | Educational materials steering group; Harrow Natural History Society | (Section 2c: aim 3) The manual and collection will be used by the leaders of guided walks and other educational activities | Making knowledge available to all leaders of guided walks and other educators will make the guided walks more interesting and provide a depth of knowledge beyond the expertise of one person or even one group. In turn guided walks will be attended by about 400 members of the public during the tenure of the project and by about 150 in all subsequent years while the object collection will be used at the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum stall at fairs and will be seen by about one thousand members of the public over the tenure of the project. |
| 17. Spraying bracken with Asulox or a suitable alternative | During the tenure of this project, we will spray during August 2013 and August 2014. Continuation of the treatment beyond the tenure of this project may well be necessary (and will be funded by the Harrow Heritage Trust). | Bluebell Heath, Stanmore Common | The two trained volunteers (see activity #10) | (Section 2c: aim 1) The primary beneficiary is the natural environment. The general public also benefits. | The primary aim is the preservation of biodiversity in an area of ~ 1 hectare by the suppression of bracken that would otherwise dominate and suppress other plants. The public will also benefit because a better mix of flowering herbs will be maintained on the site. |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| 18. Design and create a nature trail within Stanmore Common with numbered posts on the ground and a leaflet describing the geology, plants and animals to be seen at specific locations. The trail will have start points at the car park and the bus stop on the A4140 "The Common", and lead visitors through the common with special emphasis on Bluebell Heath and the heathland/acid grassland community. | Start: December 2013 End: September 2014 | Project leader's home office. Stanmore Common. Activation of the trail will be advertised in local media and on our web site. There will be a formal opening in September 2014 by a local dignitary, probably the Mayor of Harrow. | Educational materials steering group; Harrow Natural History Society | (Section 2c: aims 4 and 5) General public. A number of members of the public and of the Harrow Natural History Society have told us that they get lost in Stanmore Common and that this detracts from their enjoyment of the site. | Discrete numbered posts on the ground will guide visitors through Stanmore Common and over the Bluebell Heath site without detracting from the open, wild experience for those who would rather explore on their own terms. We expect to print and distribute 1000 copies of the leaflet in the project period, hence reaching 1000 families. |
| 19. Design, print and erect one interpretive panel describing the heathland/acid grassland habitat and the plants and animals that visitors are likely to see. | Start: September 2014 End: April 2015 | Stanmore Common car park on Warren Lane, Stanmore | Design by Educational materials steering group. Printing by contractor. Erection by the project leader and members of Harrow Nature Conservation Forum | (Section 2c: aims 4 and 5) Members of the general public | By locating the board at the car park we keep Bluebell Heath itself free of obtrusive signage, allowing visitors to appreciate it as it would have looked in the early 19th century. The board will describe the heathland/acid grassland habitat and the plants and animals that visitors are likely to see. They will be seen by about three thousand visitors to Stanmore Common over the course of the three years. Contact details on the panels will help recruit volunteers. |

| What? | When? | Where? | Who will carry out the activity? | Who is the activity for? | What will you achieve? |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| <p>20. Create a display comprising two sets of ~ 5 pull-up panels plus a display case of material (digital picture frame showing images and text, plus samples of Pleistocene gravel, pressed flowers, mammal skulls, shed snake skins, artificial painted bird eggs, preserved insects, replica of flintlock pistol as used by Dick Turpin...) with accompanying text and images promoting Stanmore Common, describing the long history of the site, and describing the rich variety of plants and wildlife.</p> | <p>Start: December 2014 End: April 2015</p> | <p>The complete display will be first exhibited at the Harrow Museum. The pull-up panels will then tour a variety of local venues including leisure centres, libraries and faith centres (two of which are located on Wood Lane very close to the site).</p> | <p>Design by educational materials steering group. Printing by contractors.</p> | <p>(Section 2c: aims 4 and 5) General public</p> | <p>The display will be seen by the ~10,000 members of the public who visit the Harrow Museum over a three month period, and then by many more as it tours other venues. The exhibition will reach members of the public who do not spontaneously visit the open spaces including the disabled. These will be made aware of the geology, history and natural history of Stanmore Common including Bluebell Heath. From this exhibition In this activity we expect to recruit 20 volunteers, 10 strongly committed who will attend many working parties some of whom will become assistant wardens of the site, and 10 peripheral volunteers who will attend a few working parties.</p> |

Governance

A steering committee oversaw the project. The membership was as follows:

Chairman: Simon Braidman, volunteer warden, Stanmore Common

Project manager: Steve Bolsover

Treasurer, Harrow Heritage Trust: initially Robin Youle, then Leslie Bolsover

Neville Day, Stanmore Common volunteer

John Dobson, Stanmore Common volunteer and expert on botany and entomology

John Hollingdale, Joint volunteer warden, Stanmore Country Park

Margaret Huitson, Joint volunteer warden, Stanmore Country Park

Denis Vickers, Biodiversity Officer, Harrow Council

John Winter, volunteer deputy warden, Stanmore Common

Isobel Thompson, Stanmore Historical Society

Representative of Headstone Manor Museum: initially Steven Gregory, then Alison

Torbitt

Success in achieving the aims of the proposal

1. Alert the public to the project and to the educational opportunities offered within it. All done. In addition to the stories in the Harrow Observer and Harrow Times a nicely illustrated story appeared in Optima magazine, delivered to 42,000 houses in south Hertfordshire and north Middlesex (see pages 21-22).

2. Photograph our activities on Bluebell Heath: seed collection, tree clearance, seed sowing, re-establishment heathland/acid grassland. All done. Three digital picture frames each displaying a different set of images were used at the close of project exhibition at Headstone Manor.

3. Design, print and erect two interpretive panels to explain the ongoing work to the public. Done - see page 23

4. Generate a statement of significance for the site. Done - see pp 24-48. This document (with appendices not included in this printed document) is available on our website (link "Link to PDF with more details about Stanmore Common" on the Stanmore Common page http://www.harrowncof.org/SC_home.html)

5. Guided walks over Stanmore Common concentrating on Bluebell Heath. We currently lead five guided walks per year over Stanmore Common and expect to continue indefinitely. During the project period we led 26 guided walks at Stanmore Common explaining the purpose and progress of the Bluebell Heath restoration.

6. Update and reprint the existing Harrow Nature Conservation Forum leaflet on Stanmore Common. The first update was completed in June 2012 (see pp 49-50); 1,500 copies were printed and circulated at libraries, fairs and in the metal leaflet box on site. The new leaflet describing the completed work and the nature trail was completed in August 2015 (see pp 51-52). 1000 copies were printed in the first run.

7. Collect seeds from the relict areas of acid grassland on Stanmore Common.

Seeds were collected by volunteers from the National Citizenship Scheme on 30th September 2012 and by Mitzvah day volunteers on 17th November 2013.

8. Training of five volunteers in plant surveying. This took place in June 2012, taught by John Dobson. The course was attended by Simon Braidman, Tony Gourdin, Vanessa Marlowe, Sue Kabel and Molly Heal. It is worth noting that this course attracted Sue Kabel into the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum community, she has gone on to become one of our most hardworking wardens, at Bentley Priory, and an indispensable part of the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum team.

9. Carry out botanical surveys of Bluebell Heath before the clearance work is done and in the subsequent two years including final evaluation of site status.

Detailed botanical surveys have been carried out each year by Simon Braidman and the trained volunteers. All records are published on our website at www.harrowncof.org/HNCF_Species_records.zip. The results are summarized on p 53.

10. Training of two volunteers in pesticide use to NPTC accreditation. Steve Bolsover and David Bailey were trained at Capel Manor in August 2012.

11. Training of one volunteer in chainsaw maintenance and felling of small trees to NPTC accreditation. Zubair Aziz was trained at Capel Manor in February 2013. A second volunteer, John Bugler, was trained at Capel Manor in January 2014.

12. Clear secondary woodland from 1.5 hectares of Bluebell Heath, scraping leaf litter from the 0.5 hectares that have been established as woodland for the longest time (~ 30 years). This work, the major component of the project, was done by contractors T + T Earthmatters. The effect is clear from satellite photos: see pp 54-57.

13. Fell and remove trees by hand. Selective clearance of individual trees on Bluebell Heath by hand has been performed in the years subsequent to the main clearance in the winter of 2012-2013 as the site has developed and the need for additional small scale clearance was noted.

14. Sow seeds collected from the relict grassland areas onto the newly cleared areas. The seeds collected in September 2012 were sown by volunteers from the Woodcraft Folk on 2nd September 2013. The seeds collected by the Mitzvah Day volunteers were sown on the same day they were collected, 17th November 2013 (see page 23).

15. Evaluate project. The initial plan was for everyone involved in the project to contribute to an online project diary (blog). This proved impossible because most participants' computer systems were too old for blog software to run. Rather, Stephen Bolsover, the Project Manager, kept an online diary of events, . meetings and decisions accessible to all members of the steering committee, while Simon Braidman (Chief Warden) wrote detailed records of all working parties and guided walks (all available online at http://www.harrowncf.org/Bluebell_Heath_project_archive.html; see, for example, pp 58-60).

Feedback postcards were distributed to members of the public that we met on the Common. The results are summarized on pp 61-62.

The present document is available online at http://www.harrowncf.org/Bluebell_Heath_project_archive.html.

16. Generate an interpretation manual and a collection of objects for the site (samples of Pleistocene gravel, pressed flowers, mammal skulls, shed snake skins, artificial painted bird eggs, preserved insects, replica of the type of pistol Dick Turpin would have used...). We have amassed an excellent object collection that has been used at the exhibition at Headstone Manor, at a number of fairs and other events, and at the guided walks.

The interpretation manual appears as "IN DEPTH" following the Statement of Significance, and is available on our website (link "Link to PDF with more details

about Stanmore Common” on the Stanmore Common page
http://www.harrownecf.org/SC_home.html)

17. Spraying bracken with Asulox or a suitable alternative. Simon Braidman has sprayed Bluebell Heath with Asulox every year. In addition working parties have carried out further control by hand using scythes, hand pulling, and stem breakage. The bracken is still present everywhere it was before, but the growth is significantly sparser, allowing a proliferation of grasses and wildflowers underneath.

18. Design and create a nature trail within Stanmore Common with numbered posts on the ground and a leaflet describing the geology, plants and animals to be seen at specific locations. The trail will have start points at the car park and the bus stop on the A4140 “The Common”, and lead visitors through the common with special emphasis on Bluebell Heath and the heathland/acid grassland community. The nature trail was completed in August 2015. The descriptive leaflet is reproduced on pp 51-52. The Mayor of Harrow will formally open the trail on 6th September 2015 and we will use this as an opportunity to publicize Stanmore Common with a display of the object collection, guided walks, pond dipping and a scavenger hunt for children.

19. Design, print and erect one interpretive panel describing the heathland/acid grassland habitat and the plants and animals that visitors are likely to see. This was erected on 22nd July 2015. See p 23.

20. Create a display comprising two sets of ~ 5 pull-up panels plus a display case of material (digital picture frame showing images and text, plus samples of Pleistocene gravel, pressed flowers, mammal skulls, shed snake skins, artificial painted bird eggs, preserved insects, replica of flintlock pistol as used by Dick Turpin...) with accompanying text and images promoting Stanmore Common, describing the long history of the site, and describing the rich variety of plants and wildlife. Our exhibition at Headstone Manor ran from 8th January to 24th April 24 and was well received by the public. Pictures of the exhibition appear on page 63. Public feedback cards were collected by museum staff, but they have not yet sent us the data even after reminding.

Additional outcomes

A need for additional training surfaced during the project, with volunteers keen to gain additional skills. We therefore added these items of training:

Chainsaw: cross-cutting, felling and processing trees at Capel Manor:

February 2013 attended by Zubair Aziz

January 2014 attended by John Bugler

Brushcutter use and maintenance at Capel Manor 29-30 July 2013 attended by David Green

Emergency First Aid, St. Johns Ambulance, attended by John Winter, 8th March 2013

Woodland Ecology and Management, Field Studies Council, 8th March 2014, attended by Neville Day

Broad Leaved Trees, Field Studies Council, 10th May 2014, attended by Neville Day.

From Optima Magazine number 490
17th March 2012

Harrow Heritage Trust has been awarded £38,400 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore Bluebell Heath, an area of open space within Stanmore Common.

Jill Glenn finds out more.

singing the blues...

IN THE 1970s, local historian Ronald S Brown produced a fascinating series of pamphlets called *Histories of Harrow Weald Highways*, and in Volume Five – *From Stanmore Common to Chandos Country* – he observed how fortunate the residents of Harrow were to be bordering on the protected Green Belt land

to the north of Stanmore Hill. Stanmore Common, he wrote, 'is one of those gems which has survived the onslaught of 20th century developers.'

Brown painted a vivid picture of the area's wild and violent past. The history of the Common can be traced back beyond the





opposite: Bluebell Heath; above, from left: honeysuckle; heath spotted orchid; hard fern

birth of Christ, to the time when the Romans marched this way to engage with the British chieftain Cassivellaunus, somewhere near St Albans. The Romans settled... but then the Saxons came warmongering, destroying the town of Sullonicae on the side of Brockley Hill and scattering debris across acres of the Common.

Centuries later it was no calmer. 'Medieval hunters pursued game', Brown wrote, 'and highwaymen lurked in the shadows to rob unsuspecting travellers.' Having escaped the very real threat of the 19th century Land Enclosure Acts (when over 200 acres of Great Stanmore were lost to local people), under the control of Harrow Council the Common is protected to this day.

It is also cherished, and its significance as a natural history habitat has been further acknowledged by the Heritage Lottery Fund award, which will allow the restoration of an area of flower-rich heathland that has been invaded by woodland over the last twenty years.

Heathland used to be widespread in London but is now rare – and thus all the more valuable – and it is vital to maintain and assist it. In the remnants of heath on Stanmore Common the purple flowers of gorse mix with the bright yellow of tormentil and the blue of devil's-bit scabious. Furthermore there is also a distinct community of insects, spiders and birds associated with heathland that is not found elsewhere. Birds known to breed here, for example, include all three woodpeckers (green, great spotted and lesser spotted) plus tawny owl, tree creeper, nuthatch and whitethroat.

Twenty years ago, Bluebell Heath, which lies towards the north of the Common, was a single open area of grassland and wild flowers. The scrub and woodland that has invaded it since

has turned it into a series of isolated glades with something of a wilderness aspect; you wouldn't be surprised to see one of Cassivellaunus's men emerging from the trees. The grant will be used to restore a small part of the extensive heath that existed here in the early 19th century, by removing secondary growth and distributing locally collected seed to revitalise the acid-rich grassland. It will open the landscape out to connect it with nearby New Heath, an area that was restored a few years ago. The existing mature trees (mostly oak and Scot's Pine) will keep their positions in an open parkland setting.

In addition to biodiversity and natural heritage projects, the Heritage Lottery Fund is keen to support projects that meet a wide range of learning, conservation and participation criteria. As a result, the Bluebell Heath project is not only about the land, but also about opportunities for volunteers. Participants can be trained in ecological and land management skills, specifically in botanical surveying, pesticide spraying and chain saw use – the last two to an industry accredited level.

Long term there will be guided walks across the heath, and volunteers will use locally collected objects such as mammal skulls and snake skins, shed naturally, to illustrate the history and ecology of the site. A nature trail will also allow visitors to explore independently. A display explaining the project will tour Harrow to profile these wonderful open spaces.

Project manager Stephen Bolsover is thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund. "With their help," he says, "we will restore a beautiful heath to both raise the spirits of the human visitors and support a wealth of rare plants and animals". ♦

To discover more about the sites, volunteer help, find out about the training opportunities or request leaflets, email admin@harrowncf.org or visit www.harrowncf.org or telephone 020 8933 2823.

Right: Chief warden Simon Braidman with one of two temporary interpretive panesl explaining the project, 8th July 2012.



Left: young volunteers sowing heather seed on parcel 6 (New Scrape) on Mitzvah Day, 17th November 2013



Deputy warden John Winter (2nd from left) and chief warden Simon Braidman (3rd from left) with other volunteers after erecting the permanent information panel describing the nature trail at Stanmore Common, 22nd July 2015.