

"...one of the most significant days in the history of the WDBA"

From the Chair

It seems a very long time ago since I wrote the Spring newsletter in January but such a lot has happened in between that I hardly know where to start.

The snows came and went and caused all sorts of chaos. There is still evidence in my garden of damage to plant life from that episode and it certainly was a challenge to look after the horses. Thankfully we were able to look forward to better weather and the Easter ride. The weather was perfect and it was a truly colourful scene at Wood Street Green when the riders returned for refreshments and the legendary cakes. I am sure most of you will have seen the photos on our website and what is more we also made the front page of the Surrey Advertiser.

Our next event must be deemed one of the most significant days in the history of the WDBA. The official opening of the Normandy permissive path across Normandy Common took place on 31st May at the Cricket Club. It was a huge success and we were blessed with the most gorgeous weather and distinguished company. In all, there was a gathering of about 90 members and guests. My opening speech thanked everyone who had helped us with this project. The Breathing Places Big Lottery Fund who made the project possible was represented and so was Normandy Parish Council who own Normandy Common. Guildford Borough Council, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Normandy PC, Normandy Historians and representatives from several other local organisations also came. Professor Philip Mellor OBE was our guest and with his many years of scientific research relating to conditions in animals caused by biting insects such as sweet itch, African horse sickness and more recently bluetongue, delivered a lively speech in praise of our work. Mayor Pauline Stone (seen below with me) responded favourably in support of our achievement and hoped that we would continue with our responsible, thoughtful and improved access to our treasured countryside.

Guests were plied with a welcome drink and canapés and later had chance to join in a short, informative talk about dormice. The sound of leather on willow from the adjoining cricket pitch made a perfect day and the event was recorded with lengthy editorial and a super picture in the Surrey Advertiser.

Above all, this project was about our community. The WDBA is a local organisation and the project involved local people. The contractor who completed the groundwork is local, the sponsors are local and we were supported by local people such as those who made and installed the bird bat and owl boxes. Special thanks however must go Linda Pike, project co-ordinator and WDBA representative for Normandy. She and her husband Richard worked their socks off to meet the various deadlines involved as did Philippa Wright, our Secretary who kept up with the stack of paperwork. The Path sub-committee also devoted a huge amount of time and expertise, the success of which was reflected at the opening ceremony. My thanks to all of you for your contribution during the project and on the day.

So what next? We still need your ideas, so get in touch. Visit our website to check out future events and browse through the photographs, there may even be one of you. Can you help us enrol new members? Is there anyone in your yard that would like to join? If so, membership forms can be downloaded too.

Wendy

PS. Thankfully no complaint was made by the cricket club for the mess the meringues made on the function room carpet and so far no residents in my owl box, better known as the O2!



Normandy Path Opening

The first and original phase of our breathing places lottery funded Normandy Path is now complete. During the past year we have spent the major part of our £10,000 grant on the resurfacing of this permitted horse ride to create a wonderful all-weather surface. This winter certainly put it to the test! We have also installed about 30 small bird nesting boxes, 2 tawny owl boxes, 20 bat roosting boxes and 25 dormouse boxes. Why not take a walk through Normandy common to see how many of these you can find? We have worked hard to reinstate the path verges and to keep the local community informed and involved. New signage/information boards are on order and will be erected soon.

In April we were awarded a further £1825 by the breathing places Big Lottery Fund to enhance the project. Some of this money was for the path opening ceremony but there is funding for bird feeding stations and for the planting the path verges with wild flowers, also for notice boards and environmental experts. This phase is to be completed by the end of September 2009. Please contact Linda Pike tel 01483 811891 if you or anyone you know would like to be involved.



Horse ID deadline from DEFRA

A new European Regulation on the identification of horses (plus zebras and asses) was introduced on 1 July 2009. The new regulation builds on the existing system that all horses born on imported to the EU must be issued with a single passport for the lifetime of the animal. The existing restrictions preventing sale, export and slaughter for human consumption will remain for those horses not issued with a valid passport.

The key features of the new regulation include:-

For passports issued after 30 June 2009 foals and adults not previously issued with passports must be implanted with microchips containing a unique code number. If a horse is microchipped then a silhouette is not needed. However some passport issuing organisations may require both. Responsibility is placed on the primary keepers (such as livery yards and transporters) to ensure horses are identified in accordance with the regulation.

Horses must be accompanied by their passports at all times only some exceptions notably when stabled or a pasture or moved on foot where the passport can be retrieved within three hours.

Exceptions are provided from passport and microchip requirements for animals kept under wild or semi wild conditions

Passport rules are extended to zebra and other exotic equidae not previously covered.

Vets cannot treat horses without passports with medicines that are banned from the food chain.

A revised passport format is introduced that includes a new Certificate of Origin to record pedigree details and a new section to be used in the event of a disease outbreak.

Applications must be submitted before a foal is six months old or before 31 December in the year of its birth (whichever is later). For applications received after this deadline the horse will be signed out of the food chain.

Benefits:-

Microchipping may help recover stolen horses.

Accurate identification may aid the control of a disease outbreak.

Stronger controls at the slaughter house and prevent the withdrawal of key veterinary medicines.

It is an offence to keep an animal if it is not issued with a valid passport – more information can be found on www.defra.gov.uk/farminglink

