



# PONY EXPRESS

## **News from the Chairman**

Well, I'm told that summer has arrived, or has it already been and gone?

Thank you to everyone who took time to attend the AGM on 29<sup>th</sup> April at East Hoathly Village Hall.

I hope that you found the meeting informative, enjoyable and not too boring!

Our thanks also go to Malcolm Emery from Natural England who gave a very interesting presentation on conservation grazing at the end of the formal meeting.

If you recall, our 2011 accounts showed the Trust dipping into the 'red' for the first time. I am happy to report that 2012 was much better, in that we just about broke even.

Whilst our financial situation is healthier, we cannot afford to be complacent. Our income from grazing the ponies covers our day to day expenses and operational costs, but leaves little spare for any capital expenditure or emergencies. The focus of the Trustees and Committee continues to be on raising funds for these purposes, as well as continuing to tightly manage our cost base.

Like all small charitable organisations, finding funding and grants has become more difficult than in previous years. Any help or ideas to assist in fund raising will be most welcome. Donations from our supporters and members also continue to be a valuable source of income and are gratefully received. We have recently been lucky to be introduced to Angela Richardson, who is experienced in charitable funding and has agreed to help us in seeking out grant funding opportunities from various organisations.

In recent months, a number of the committee members have decided that the time has come for them to 'hang up their boots'! Wendy Muriel, Neil Baker and Moira Barnard will be sadly missed. Wendy was Vice Chair, as well as doing a splendid job of producing the Trust Newsletter. Thanks go to them all for their contribution to the Trust.

As always, I am extremely grateful for the time, effort and support provided by my fellow committee members.

Despite the vagaries of the British weather, the ponies all appear to be faring well on their summer grazing sites. As always we are indebted to the efforts of those of you on the Looker rota for your

continued support and efforts. Monty, ably assisted by Anna Bogg, would have a much harder job without your help. We are currently in the process of agreeing the 2013/14 winter grazing schedule and will keep you informed of progress.

I have recently arranged for a local company to set up an embroidered trust logo for a wide range of clothing. It is possible to have the logo put onto polo shirts, T shirts, sweatshirts, hats etc. in an extensive range of makes and colours. As the artwork has already been set up there is no minimum order quantity, so a one off order is not an issue.



If you are interested in purchasing SPGCT branded clothing, please let me know and I will get the pricing confirmed.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!!!!

Tony Clarke

## **Treasurer's report from the AGM**

The Trust fared better financially in 2012, just breaking even after making a loss of £7,388 in 2011. The improvement in 2012 was due to the ponies being fully engaged in their grazing duties all year - we are very dependent on the ponies undertaking paid grazing and changes to their plans can have a significant impact on income - changes are usually unanticipated but unavoidable e.g. if the site isn't accessible because of the weather, the fencing not complete on a new site, or a customer just changes their mind! So the same factors are likely to influence our result in 2013.

We try to avoid unexpected expenses for the same reason and keep a bit in reserve for the odd surprise - we clearly couldn't let Monty go off to Pippingford without getting the 4WD on the truck fixed last December. But we don't hold sufficient reserves for any major expenditure, such as the fact that the truck is aging fast and really needs replacing - so we have enlisted some outside assistance to try and raise some external finance.

On that note, we **really** benefit from your generous contributions - supporters donated over £1,300 in 2012, which was sufficient to cover all the pony-related expenses i.e. vet, wormer, farrier and transport for the year; many of whom also support us through their looking duties. In response to a question that was raised at the AGM, I can confirm that donations are gratefully received in cash, by cheque, by direct debit or however anyone is minded to support us. And if you are a tax payer, please ask for a gift aid form when you donate. Thank you.

Alison Smith

### **Anna's 'month as Monty'**

Once I managed to stop thinking: 'What is Monty doing parked outside my house?' when I opened the curtains every morning, I soon settled into life as Grazing Co-ordinator.

I discovered that there is much more to the daily routine than just checking ponies. There are regular clerical duties; responding to email enquiries and rota management, as well as meeting new lookers, boundary maintenance and of course, being 'on-call'! I enjoyed it all, especially getting the chance to spend more time with the ponies under slightly calmer conditions than the spring round-ups and worming sessions.

A particular highlight of the month was relocating an old retired pony of ours, Camilla, from her home in Hadlow Down, where she had been keeping company with a feisty, field gate jumping non-Exmoor, Marmite. Marmite was off to equine boot camp, thus leaving Camilla alone. To remedy the situation we decided to bring Camilla out of retirement for the summer and take her to Lullington Heath to join the last pony standing of Natural England's own herd, Scarpa. With Lisa Clarke on hand to give Camilla a health check, the move went without a hitch. Those of you who looker Lullington will know Scarpa has been alone there for some time so is very happy to have Camilla around.

Good deed done and age and agility considered, it was then a particular surprise that it was these two that should be the ones to bring my worst fears to fruition and elicit the dreaded 'Ponies Out' phone call.....on my penultimate day in charge. Stalwart volunteer/helper/first-man-on-the-scene, Mick Woolgar, generously came to my assistance, if nothing else, calming my nerves as we drove onto the reserve by chatting away as if we were just off for a stroll. It in fact turned into something more closely resembling a safari as we drove around and around, me standing atop the truck with binoculars trained on



the distant horizon, images of ponies charming patrons of the Eight Bells or trotting through Alfriston High Street coming to my mind with increasing frequency and vigour. Eventually a man on horseback pointed out the errant two, just over the brow of a field which we had checked when we first arrived.

Then Camilla's familiarity with the bucket and Scarpa's new found familiarity with Camilla paid off and the two dutifully trotted back into the paddock behind me.

I handed back the keys to Monty a couple of days later with a much increased appreciation for the work he does and the responsibility he shoulders. Then I took myself off to the Eight Bells.....

### **Other news**

#### **Broadwater warren and dogs**

At the RSPB's Broadwater Warren reserve, the ponies are doing very well on what at first glance, appears to be very little! The introduction earlier this year by the RSPB of an 'on-leads only' policy has ruffled the feathers of some of the local dog-walking community. This was brought in because a number of people were not observing the voluntary code. Ground-nesting birds are very susceptible to what in evolutionary terms to them are potential predators. One disgruntled visitor saw fit to write to the Kent & Sussex Courier,

*"...The RSPB claimed that the reason for requiring dogs to be on leads was so they would not disturb ground nesting birds. Yet they have brought back six ponies whose sole job is to keep the plants cropped. They roam everywhere, with more threat to ground nesting birds than dogs ever were..."*

Any livestock grazing may cause casualties to nests and their contents but at the low stocking rates such as we are practicing at Broadwater, these losses are very likely to be low. Research has shown that birds treat grazing animals as not being a threat – even horses with a rider in the saddle are apparently largely ignored.

## Lapwings

While looking at the ponies of Herd 1 on the Pippingford Army Training Area (ATA), Monty has noticed on several occasions recently, that when he started to venture into an area of marshy ground (at the risk of a boot-full of black smelly mud!), a very disgruntled lapwing (or if you prefer, peewit) would fly up. Displaying birds have also been observed. It would be nice to think that the years of persistent grazing are now paying another dividend, that of assisting this once-common wader bird. The flora is also improving with increasing diversity.

## Corrals

Two new permanent corrals have just been built to our specification at Broadwater and paid for by the RSPB. These will assist when we move ponies from off the reserve or if we need to corral them for a welfare reason. It will also reduce our carbon footprint as we will not need to haul our heavy portable equipment to and fro from our stores at Berwick. This coming September, more conifer trees are due to be felled so the ponies will be leaving Broadwater a little earlier, so putting to use these new facilities.

## Trust Website

In recent months there has been discussion about the appearance, format and content of the Trust's website.

A review of the website and our much wider publicity needs (new brochure, posters, merchandise etc.) are well overdue. Having been in existence for some years, the website is now quite dated and difficult to manage and update on a regular basis.

We dedicated the last committee meeting to discussing views on what needed to be done to make the website more relevant and up to date.

Some of the key improvement points suggested were:

- Provide information on where the ponies can be seen grazing
- Grazing maps for Lookers
- Fundraising links
- Online membership and gift aid forms
- Links to other relevant organisations, sponsors etc.
- Newsletter archive
- Facebook and/or Twitter pages
- Potential to include a video in the site

At the meeting, we were fortunate to have Steve Goodwin in attendance. Steve has been involved in managing our website needs for some years. He has agreed to look at the areas and needs we highlighted and come back to us with some practical proposals and costings.

## Can you help?

Are you, or do you know, someone who could help in the development and ongoing management of the website? This is purely a voluntary role that may appeal to someone with a keen interest in this area.

We would also like to hear from anyone who has knowledge or experience of shooting, editing and producing promotional video clips for embedding in the website.

If you know of anyone who could help, please contact Tony Clarke.

## Promoting the cause

Are there any members who could help by manning a Trust promotions stand at a few events? We have a gazebo, display stands and some merchandise which could be used for fund raising and general awareness raising. Please contact the secretary if you could help.

## Never look a gift horse...

Wendy Muriel recently retired as the Trusts's Vice Chairman and Newsletter Editor and the committee presented her with a lovely framed photograph (below), taken by Monty, of some of the ponies grazing at Tarring Neville.



## What's in a name?

There was some lively debate both at the last committee meeting and via subsequent emails, over the terms 'looker' and 'looker' being used to describe the people who check on the ponies.

There was some suggestion (mainly by the 'gentlemen') that the term 'looker' could have a slightly less than politically correct meaning, especially when referring to the ladies!

Monty says:

This is where I got the term from back in 1999 and perhaps now regrettably, then added the additional 'er' on the end of the word!

*A Dictionary Of The Sussex Dialect*, re-printed 1981 states:

Looker (East Sussex from Anglo Saxon to *look*). A shepherd or herdsman; a man employed to look after cattle in the marshes.

Looking. The occupation of a 'looker' in the marshes.

Below, is an additional piece I just found on the web plus what I already knew

<http://www.hunnisett.org.uk/tree/richard1748.php>

Richard Hunnisett (1748 - 1827). Richard was a 'looker' in the Wartling and Herstmonceux area. A Marsh Looker was someone who looked after sheep and cattle, not necessarily his own, on the marshes to the south of these villages, on the Pevensey Levels and was often provided with a cottage and a small amount of land and often owned some livestock of their own. Checking the cattle is still known in the area as 'looking'. Whilst it doesn't sound very glamorous Richard apparently made a good living.

Traditionally, many local farms would own a small area of the Pevensey Levels and in the days before the car, employed someone to keep a day to day watch over their livestock. Exceat Farm near Seaford for instance, owned 47 acres of the Levels. Today, the word has come to the fore in conservation grazing circles around the country. Wildlife conservation would not be able to manage without YOU!

In the end, the consensus of the debate was that 'looker' was less of a mouthful than 'lookerer' and that the ladies were prepared to accept the implied compliment.

*All members are invited to*

## ***The Making of the High Weald***

**Saturday 3 August 2013, at 2pm**

**An afternoon guided walk of around 2 hours, led by Jason Lavender of the High Weald AONB Unit. Refreshments will be available en route and there are pubs and cafes in Mayfield (for pre-walk lunches – but please be ready to start promptly at 2pm – or post-walk supper/drinks) for anyone who wants to make a day of it.**

Travel back 700 years in time to walk the medieval landscape of the High Weald to experience firsthand a land of dispersed settlements, historic routeways, abundant woodland, gills and shaws, and small, irregular shaped fields draped over a deeply incised and ridged landform of clays and sandstones. Learn how successive generations of people have collaborated with nature to create the distinctive High Weald landscape, changing it from the unpopulated area it was 10,000 years ago to the very human and cultural landscape we see today.

Numbers are limited to 15-20, so first-come-first-served. Please contact Monty ([sussexmoors@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sussexmoors@yahoo.co.uk)) to reserve places. Meet in the public car park in Mayfield, then a short drive (sharing cars) to the start of the walk outside the village. A map will be available from Monty upon booking.

Please dress appropriately for the weather and wear stout shoes or boots.

## **Sussex Pony Grazing & Conservation Trust**

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### **TRUSTEES & COMMITTEE**

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