

Great Wilbraham Common SSSI

Report for the 2016 Annual Parish Meeting

It has been another pleasing year managing the Common. As Common Rights Holders we take the responsibilities which come with the Rights seriously. The historical rights are for each Rights Holder to be able to graze one cow and two yearling calves and we are grateful to Michael Beaumont for using some of these rights on our behalf. The Common must be grazed - that is a traditional responsibility and also a requirement of Natural England, who support us with an annual management grant and advice. The other responsibility is to maintain the fences, which we do.

A small group enjoyed the organised walk over the Common on Saturday 27 June, which was led by Iain Webb of The Wildlife Trust and Monica O'Donnell of Natural England. There were two Common Rights Holders in attendance and four members of the Wilbrahams' Gardening Club. We all enjoyed hearing from the experts about the flora, fauna, history, and importance of the site. There were photos of the walk posted on the village web site.

Ragwort was a huge problem this year, after last year's sparse growth. We had two volunteer days: Sunday and Monday, 2nd and 3rd August. Two people made a modest start on Sunday and there were 10 volunteers on Monday, who made a big difference. However, we did need to have the professionals in for several days as well.

During the Summer a Bat Survey was carried out on the Common and a report sent to us. Apparently there were four species of bat detected, so we seem to be providing a good habitat for bats.

We joined the Wildlife Trust Wednesday volunteering group for their annual visit to the Common on 16 December, when we tackled scrub near the main entrance.

Stephen Bartlett has indicated his willingness to take on the Chairmanship of the Common Rights Holders group from Jo Ladbrooke and has met key people involved in the management of the Common. The Chairmanship of the Common Rights Holders Committee has been with Sargent's Cottage since 2003, so Jo and Peter are pleased to hand over the reins to someone they know will do an excellent job of looking after the very special place that is Great Wilbraham Common.

Jo Ladbrooke