

History

Markstakes Common is a remnant of a large tract of common land in the Chailey area and is a patchwork of woodland and open areas. Maps from the 17th Century show the area as open woodland and historical records suggest that Commoners used it for grazing cattle and pigs, harvesting firewood and cutting bracken for bedding. Throughout the Common remains of old clay workings are reminders of a once important local industry.

Habitats & wildlife

The woodlands are a mosaic of oak, ash, beech and hornbeam. Parts of the Common were formerly wood pasture, a rare and valuable habitat. The rich diversity of plants includes ancient pollarded trees, rare species of fungi and spectacular displays of bluebells and wood anemones. Small patches of mire; with their moisture-loving special plants have developed in some of the clay workings

Adders, grass snakes and common lizards have been seen here and woodland birds are well represented. Mammals recorded include dormice and six of the 16 species of Britain's bats, one of which is the rare Bechstein's bat.



Care of the site

The decline of traditional practices has led to the wood pasture becoming overgrown with bracken, bramble and silver birch. If nothing is done the site will continue to suffer a decline in its wildlife interest.

Members of the Chailey Commons Society formed a new group: Friends of Markstakes Common. In partnership with Lewes District Council's Community Ranger the group is working to conserve and enhance the character, wildlife interest and amenity value of this ancient habitat.

Find out more

More information on the Common can be found on the Chailey Commons Website- www.chaileycommons.org.uk

Getting involved

The Friends of Markstakes Common undertake activities that include practical conservation work, surveying and monitoring the wildlife, and raising funds.

If you would like to get involved or simply want to have your say on the future of the Common why not join by completing the Application Form and returning it, together with the subscription. There will be a regular Newsletter and meetings, and you will be playing a part in helping preserve the Common for future generations,

New volunteers for task days and wildlife monitoring are always welcome. If you are interested in volunteering or have concerns please contact:

the task leader: Rupert Hall (tel 01825 722863; email markstakescommon@live.co.uk) or

the Community Ranger, Dan Ross (tel 01273 484408; email dan.ross@lewes.gov.uk).



Friends of Markstakes Common

I/We would like to join the 'Friends of Markstakes Common'

Name(s).....

Address.....

Post Code.....

Date.....

Email.....

Tel.....

I/We enclose subscription

Adult £2 Child 50p

Total £.....

(Year starts 1st March Annually; Cheque payable to Friends of Markstakes Common)

Send to:

The Treasurer FOMC, Evergreen,
Vicarage Lane, Scaynes Hill, West Sussex
RH17 7PB

I am interested in volunteering

The map shows Markstakes Common with a red boundary. An inset map shows the location relative to South Common, Town Littleworth, and South Chailey, with A275 and Markstakes Lane labeled. A north arrow is in the top right. Callouts include: 'Entrance through gate in flint wall on Markstakes Lane' (top); 'Barcombe and Newick' (top right); 'Furzeley Farm' (left); 'Veteran oaks, estimated to be over 300 years old' (right, with photo); 'Holly thickets, originally used for winter fodder and now provide a stable habitat for bats, bird and insects' (right); 'Glades, which are being restored to encourage butterflies and other insects' (right); 'Ancient hornbeam pollard' (bottom right, with photo); 'Old clay pits' (bottom); 'South Chailey' (bottom left); and 'High Pond: dragonflies, newts and grass snakes' (left, with photo).