

Ham Green Conservation Area

Presentation to Sparsholt Parish Annual Meeting

16 April 2025

We have a small band of currently 14 volunteers helping in the Ham Green Conservation Group to maintain the wooded strip of common land that stretches for a kilometre from Ham Green Cottage along the byway towards Dean. The conservation area also extends across the road from the car park with a small wooded area of just over an acre at the start of the Burrow Road bridleway that leads to West Wood. The area is a SINC, a site of interest for nature conservation, and provides a precious local habitat that is a well frequented amenity for walkers, horse riders and cyclists.

Over the last year the volunteers have been busy as usual keeping the byway on the south side of the corridor clear of overhanging growth and maintaining the footpath on the north side that faces the village. Walking along the footpath you will see the coppiced hazel we have cut in the last three months and the fences we have built using the hazel sticks to fill in the gaps in the hedge on the field side. There are also hazel benches to sit on and admire the view.

Just down the bridleway from the car park near the entrance to the footpath across Stockers Field we have recently installed two renovated wood benches behind which are two wild cherry trees planted in the last couple of years that make a pleasant resting place with views over the field. I am grateful for Howard Annesley's work in renovating the benches he discovered discarded on a bonfire at Lainston House and for repairing the wood cycle barriers on the footpath.

Recently tree contractors for Scottish and Southern Electricity Network have cut back tree growth beneath the power lines and they will shortly fell some dead ash trees at the Dean end of the site to prevent them falling on to the power lines.

We have also worked with the Hampshire Forestry Project, part of Hampshire County Council Countryside Service, to receive four elm "feathers" especially bred for disease resistance that we planted at the beginning of this Spring. So, whilst losing a large number of ash trees a few years ago we continue the work of planting new trees and you will see the crab apples and rowans planted over the last four years coming into blossom at the moment.

The conservation area is becoming increasingly used by dog walkers including professional dog walkers and we will be putting up signage soon to remind them of their obligation to clear up their dog's poo and dispose of it in the green bin at the car park or take it home. Dog poo is not only damaging to the habitat but also potentially seriously injurious to the animals including horses and indeed us humans.

Malcolm Hewson

15 April 2025