

The Longlander

MARCH 2021 ISSUE 02



Welcome



Photo: Gary Lawson

Spring Greetings! We are now nearly a quarter through the new year and what a year it has been so far. Perhaps not the beginning we were expecting but there is a lot to look forward to in the coming months and well into the rest of the year for Long Lands Common.

As the trees begin to leaf and the early blossom arrives, behind the scenes is a flurry of activity to ensure that we take ownership of the site as soon as we can so that work can begin on installing the first pathway which will enable site access.

The team is also busy working on getting all your ownership certificates to you. This is a huge task as there are so many of you wonderful people out there and we really appreciate your patience in this. Additionally, work has begun on negotiating an access point directly from the Nidderdale Greenway which we hope to bring you more news on in the near future.

In this issue, we meet two very special and ambitious young sisters in our Volunteer Hero section. We firmly believe that the more young people become interested and active in protecting the planet the better. Nurture that interest and it will be there for life and show others the way forward.

We also have a species spotlight on the fox and finish with a superb write up from Dan Carne, a Woodmeadow Officer with the Woodmeadow Trust, who visited the site recently in the pouring rain to look at the existing ecology and habitats on the site. His findings point to lots of modern agricultural change but there are glimmers of its ancient past. We look forward to further visits from Dan and his suggestions on how to move forward.

If you would like to contribute to The LongLander by writing an article or want to send us your letters and photographs, then get in touch at: thelonglander@yahoo.com

Your Long Lands Common Team

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Contributors



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Dan Carne, Woodmeadow Officer - Woodmeadow Trust



Ralph Hipps, Writer



The Long Lands Common Team

News From Long Lands Common

Land Purchase

Since our last update on the 1st of March, our solicitors have been working towards the completion of the land purchase and we are now expecting to take community ownership very shortly. Standby for an announcement over the next few days!

We understand you will be excited to see Long Lands Common, but please DO NOT go on site until further notice as currently the land is still private property until the purchase goes through. We hope to hold (socially distanced) open days in the Spring. This will be the first opportunity to go on site.



Photo Credit: Long Lands Common Ltd.



Art work: Laura Crompton

Certificates

We are intending to organise two print runs to get all certificates out to shareholders.

By the end of this week, the Long Lands team will have matched payments to approximately 2000 application forms. This information will go to the printers so that they can print out certificates along with any outstanding gift certifications. These will be delivered by our army of 290 delivery volunteers who responded so willingly to our appeal in the last email. Thank you all for your tremendous enthusiasm to help with this.

We have approximately 500 queries to chase up where we have either an application form with no payment or vice-versa. Once these queries have been resolved, the data will then be used to generate the second print run. If you are in this group, you will be contacted in the next couple of weeks to resolve the issue.

Thanks again for your patience and understanding with this ...and please don't contact us, we'll contact you. Please be reassured that everybody will get what they applied for, or paid for, no matter how long it takes!

News From Long Lands Common

Site Accessibility

We want everyone to be able to enjoy Long Lands Common and have marked access for all as one of our priorities. So far, members of our committee have met with the Unity charity, Henshaws College staff and local residents. They have given lots of suggestions which will be considered as plans are drawn up for the site design.

We are also reviewing our communications so that we can make sure we are as accessible as possible (e.g. on our website) to those with different sorts of disabilities. An example here could be families with neurodivergent children who often need to plan a visit or day out in great detail. We could provide a virtual 'walk-through' of the site on the website, to help them plan.

Keep an eye out for design updates which will be put out for consultation to the wider community.



Photo Credit: Ron Bailey



Photo Credit: Lisa

Shipping Container

To assist with the delivery of volunteer work on the land we are on the lookout for a shipping container to use as a workshop and storage shed for tools and materials.

If anyone knows of a secondhand 20ft unit for sale or knows where there could be one, then we would love to hear about it!

Please email us at: info@longlandscommon.org

News From Long Lands Common

Nidderdale Greenway Access

Work is currently ongoing bringing together design ideas for the intended access ramp to Long Lands Common from the Greenway, with on-site discussions taking place with a variety of interested volunteers, contractors and Harrogate Borough Council.

Work is still in its early stages and will need to go through the planning process first, but it is our intention to complete the work this year, if possible.

In the meantime, before the access ramp is complete, our only public entrance* will be via the public footpath which runs from Bilton Triangle to Bilton Hall Drive. Laying a suitable track from the footpath to our entrance gate will be our first job after completion of purchase.

***Please note that the driveway to Long Lands Farm from Bogs Lane will remain private and will only provide managed disability access to Long Lands Common.**

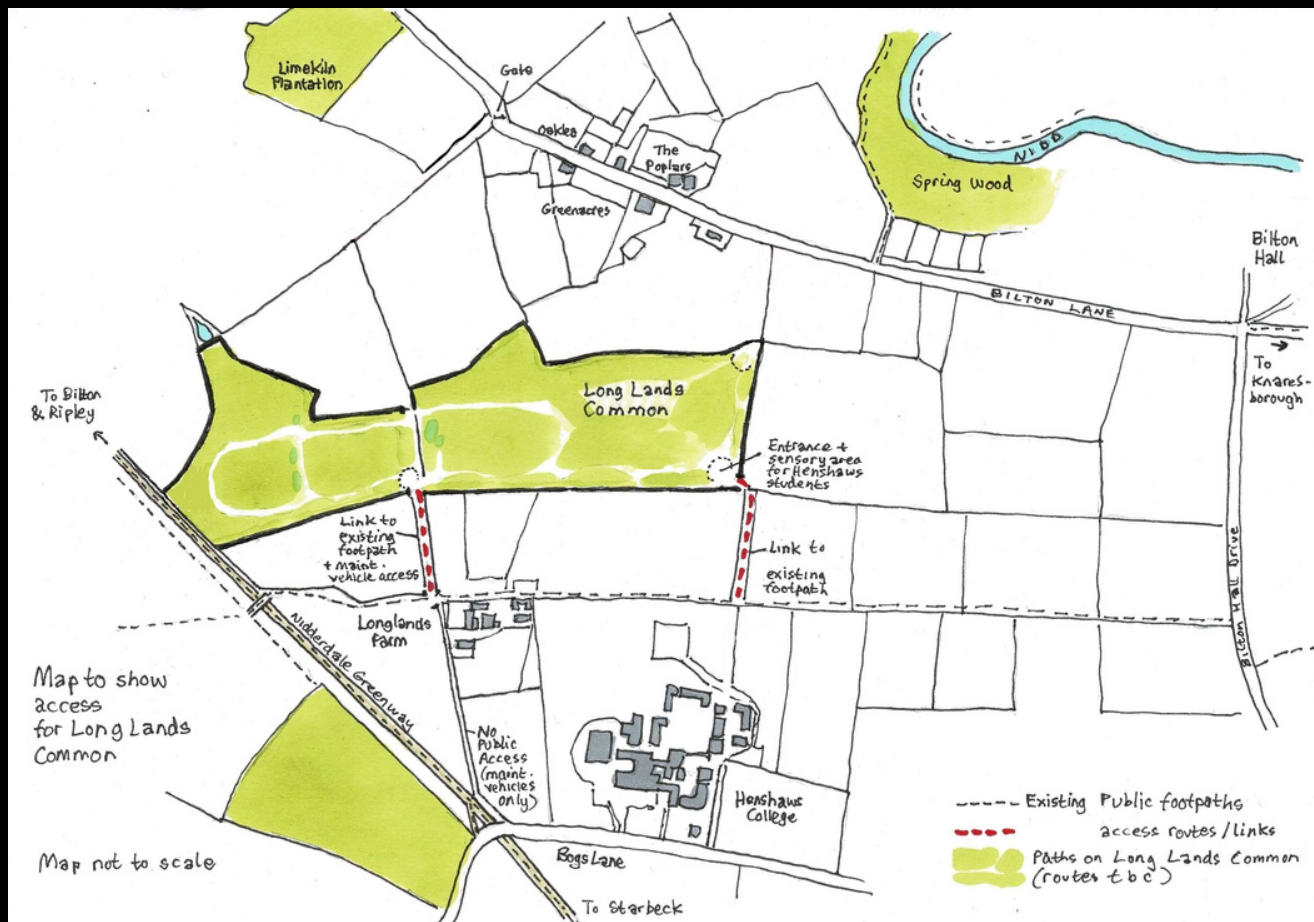


Illustration: James McKay

News From Long Lands Common

Permaculture

We have had a fantastic response to the idea of running an 'Introduction to Permaculture' workshop for our members. 163 people have now registered their interest in learning more about Permaculture, its ethics and principles and its potential to transform our world.

The likelihood is that we will run a number of the same workshops, over different days, once we have moved onto the land. This will give members a range of days to choose from and allow us to fit everybody in. It is likely that the workshops will take place in May and June.

You can still register for the workshop here:

<https://www.longlandscommon.org/permaculture-course>



Photo Credit: Simon002



Photo Credit: Fotoimperiya

The 1st Oak Trees Arrive

Recently, Long Lands Common became the proud guardians of 2,000 oak saplings that came via the Save The Oaks campaign.

It was reported towards the end of 2020 that 750,000 saplings were destined to be burnt, so crowdfunding was set up to raise the money to purchase 30,000 of them.

The Oaks saved are now being distributed across the UK. Our trees are currently being kept in a newly created secure nursery area ready to be planted on-site when the time comes.

You can find out more about the campaign [here](#) or if you prefer to listen you can hear Mark Shipperlee talk about it over at [Rebel Radio](#).

Volunteering News



Photo Credit: Sviatlana Lazarenka

The response from people wanting to volunteer with us in the near future has been terrific. Over 130 people have already registered an interest. Those 130 include individuals of all ages, many with specialist skills relevant to the project, and many wanting to learn new skills and muck in wherever they can.

Long Lands Common membership secretary Jo, adds, "There will be roles to suit everyone and lots of opportunities that require no experience at all, just enthusiasm to give new things a go and to see Long Lands thrive. Whatever time you can give us, we will appreciate it all.

"We want to say a really big thanks to those volunteers who are already working behind the scenes with us, and those who answer the calls to action we put out, like helping to deliver certificates. We also understand that there will be people who can't, for whatever reason, volunteer. Just having your support and kind words keeps us pushing forward, so thank you too."

If you would like to register your interest to volunteer then please follow [this link](#) to be added to our volunteer contact list. Please be assured that your details will not be shared with any third party and will only be used by the Long Lands Common team to keep you updated on upcoming volunteer events and any coordination required to organise them.

- The Long Lands Common Team

Volunteer Heroes



Photo Credit: Kerry

Our March Long Lands Common Champions!

Meet Avery and Addison

Sisters Avery and Addison have supported the Long Lands Common project from the very beginning, appearing on our roadshow display posters to encourage people to back our campaign. Along with Granddad Dave and Nanny Sue, the sisters have volunteered on several conservation projects including tree planting so are very excited about rolling up their sleeves and helping out!

Last year Avery won the 2020 Young Ranger award presented by the North York Moors National Park Trust for her dedication and commitment to conservation, a devotion she carries through into different areas of her life including encouraging her school friends to care about the environment.

But their talents don't stop there. Their creative side was put to use when the siblings designed their own posters to share news about the project at school and with their friends and family. Avery even wrote a song about trees that she performed whilst playing her guitar!

More recently the pair, accompanied by their Grandparents, helped hand deliver gift certificates for Long Lands before Christmas, wearing their Santa hats and spreading festive cheer on their route.

Long Land Common team's Jo said:

"With the love they show for nature and conservation at a young age, Avery and Addison are an inspiration to us all. Supported and encouraged by their family, including Granddad Dave and Nanny Sue, they have championed Long Lands Common from the very start. With great energy and creativity, they have been a big help in getting the word out about our fundraising campaign.

"We want to say a huge thank you to Avery, Addison and their family and the rest of our Long Landers, including our shareholders, who have and continue to champion the cause and make a difference. It will be a pleasure to eventually meet you in person. "

All the team at Long Lands Common would like to congratulate Avery on her well-deserved award and look forward to meeting both sisters very soon!

Species Spotlight - The Fox



Photo Credit: Sasha Fox - Walters

By Ralph Hipps

Spring is upon us and the time when Vixens (female foxes) give birth to their cubs. The Dog fox (male fox) can be seen regularly as he hunts for food to bring to the vixen and her litter and if you keep a sharp eye out you may see one!

Fox cubs enter the world deaf, blind and dependent on their mother's milk, much like domestic dog puppies. The cubs start eating solid food at around four weeks old and are usually completely weaned by the time they are 12 weeks of age. They emerge from their dens later in the spring, usually May time and by June or July the entire family have left the den completely.

By this time, the cubs will be learning from their mother how to hunt for their own food and all the life skills they'll need to make it on their own. Have your cameras at the ready and be extra observant if you want an interesting photo but bear in mind that foxes are shy and nocturnal, so you'll only see one around after dusk.

If you fancy trying to spot one, then you'll need to grab your torch and be on the lookout for an animal with these characteristics: a bushy tail, pointy triangular ears, a pointed and slightly upturned black snout, a length of between 45 and 90 cm (when full grown), and a dog-like tendency to leave their tongue out.

Foxes also make a distinctive and eerie screaming noise. You may be privileged to spot a dog-fox on the hunt or a cub learning the ropes and, as our towns spread further out into rural areas, you could even see one raiding bins and feeding on leftovers.

As omnivores, foxes have a diverse diet and are highly skilled hunters. Whilst they catch and eat wild rabbits, rodents, birds, frogs and earthworms they aren't full carnivores as they also like to feed on fruits and berries too. If you would like more information on how to feed foxes in your garden then [The Woodland Trust](#) has some guidance as do [The Wildlife Trusts](#).

Talking Point: Do We Want Foxes in Our Towns?

If we want a biodiverse world, it makes sense to keep foxes in woodlands. Foxes are an integral part of a forest food chain. They play the role of a predator and ensure that numbers of voles, rabbits, and mice stay within limits; also, they disperse seeds.

The latest news about foxes shows that they are adapting well to urban environments. A recent study by the University of Brighton and Reading estimates that there are around

150,000 foxes in UK towns. It is hard to say whether this is due to rising numbers overall or the destruction of their rural habitat which forces them to migrate into our towns.

What is important, though, is to preserve natural habitats and stop driving these animals away from where they can be of maximum benefit to the biodiversity of our countryside and nature.



Photo Credit: Jakub Rutkiewicz

Ecology at Long Lands Common



Photo Credit: Dan Carne

Dan Carne is the Woodmeadow Officer at the Woodmeadow Trust. The Woodmeadow Trust manage a small nature reserve just south of York, Three Hagges Woodmeadow, and support external woodmeadow projects across the country. Dan recently carried out a Phase 1 Habitat survey at Long Lands Common and has been providing ecological advice to help inform its design and future management.

By Dan Carne, Woodmeadow Trust

I'm yet to see Long Lands Common in spring, but I'm looking forward to it. I've visited twice this winter, and both times it rained prodigiously. On my second visit, Bilton Beck, which forms the northern boundary of the site, had broken its banks and spilled across an adjacent field, just off site. It's easy to resent the pouring rain, especially when the wet weather soaks through your paper, rendering careful notes and sketches illegible. However, that second visit left me feeling incredibly privileged to have seen the site in such dramatic conditions.

Floods call attention to the history of the countryside like nothing else, flaunting hidden dips and hollows that would otherwise remain invisible, and divulging some of the secrets of an ancient landscape that has been continually shaped and reshaped by agriculture for hundreds of years. Along the western boundary, a shallow waterlogged ditch and a barely discernible earth bank are all that remain of the medieval deer leap associated with Bilton Park, signposted by a line of mature oak and ash trees.

When I last visited, the unruly beck had reclaimed its historic route, rejecting the straight lines imposed upon it by some previous generation, albeit only for a few days. To the south of the beck, there is a strip of slightly boggy ground and a small sinkhole. Water continually burbles and babbles at the base of the sinkhole; there is another beck hidden underground which once wound its way across the site, before it was buried and converted into yet another land drain.



Photo Credit: Ian Fraser

Across most of the site, the grassland appears fairly species-poor, the legacy of a chequered past. It's likely that both fields were ploughed and resown with grass at some point, perhaps following a stint where they were used to grow arable crops. I suspect that the entire site has been 'improved' with chemical fertilisers, which tend to promote vigorous grass growth at the expense of less competitive wildflowers. However, the composition of the sward varies across the site, with patches of creeping bent, common sorrel, soft rush and reed canary grass in damper areas. All of these species are common, but together they also hint at a forgotten past, when Long Lands Common might have featured areas of floodplain meadow subject to periods of prolonged inundation.



Photo Credit: Ian Fraser

The field boundaries also tell a story. The smattering of dog's mercury, a plant more commonly found in ancient woodlands, suggests that some of the hedgerows may be of ancient origin, though we'll have to wait until the spring to learn more. There are very few berries on any of the hedgerows, which have started to develop telltale 'knuckles', indicating that they have been trimmed to the same height year after year. Blossom typically grows on second or third year growth, so annual trimming inherently limits the fruit crop, limiting the hedgerows' value for wildlife.

Trimming a hedgerow to the same height every year also stresses the plant and inevitably leads to gaps and a leggy, top-heavy structure. This is now common practice, but historically hedgerows were managed by 'laying' every 10 to 20 years to produce a stock-proof barrier and rejuvenate the hedge. Intriguingly, some of the hedgerows at Long Lands Common contain scattered old hawthorn stools with broad stems bent nearly horizontal, suggesting that these hedgerows were laid at some point in their history, maybe not that long ago.

Over the last century, we cleared 500,000km of hedgerows and 97% of our wildflower meadows in the face of economic pressures and government incentives driving increased agricultural productivity. At the same time, traditional woodland management practices have largely disappeared, in many cases replaced by uniform, evenly aged conifer plantations of minimal value for wildlife. However, the extraordinary grassroots effort which has made Long Lands Common a reality is a beautiful example of how our national philosophy is shifting towards recognising and embracing the importance of our 'natural capital'.



Illustrations: James Mckay

When I first heard about the Long Lands Common project via Zero Carbon Harrogate, I was inspired by the powerful story of the environmental campaign as well as the beauty of James McKay's illustrations, but I was struck most of all by the vision for a mosaic of different habitats, including woodland, wildflower meadow and wetlands. It's hard to overstate the value of this from an ecological perspective. We love to define and categorise the natural world, sorting plants and animals into species, and each species into its preferred habitat, but these definitions are artificial, and can sometimes lead us to overlook the obvious: that nature is messy.

Animals may feed in one habitat but rely on another for shelter. Butterflies in particular can be extremely persnickety, with caterpillars often relying upon a single plant species growing in extremely specific conditions, whilst the adults take advantage of a wide range of nectar sources. By providing a mixture of different habitats with lots of habitat edges and transitional zones, you maximise the number of microhabitats and benefit a wider range of species. The Long Lands Common team understand this, and we at the Woodmeadow Trust are very happy to be supporting this project, which will be a sanctuary for wildlife and people.

You can find out more information about the work of the [Woodmeadow Trust here](#).



Happy Easter

Wishing all of our shareholders and supporters a very

Happy Easter!

From all the team at Long Lands Common

