



PONY EXPRESS

Happy New Year and welcome to the January issue of *Pony Express*

Pony News

Fifteen ponies were moved from Pippingford Park down to the Seven Sisters Country Park at Exceat in November, where they will stay until the end of January. The sixteen ponies remaining on Ashdown were boosted, however, when the Trust took delivery in early November of *Hawkwell Habitat* aka 'William', a four year old registered gelding. This pony was donated to the Trust by the owner after he had proved unsuitable for riding. It took about a week before he was fully accepted by the other ponies but he has since settled in well and can look forward to a peaceful life of conservation grazing. Upon looking into his pedigree, Lisa discovered we already have his maternal grandmother in herd 2!



New boy William settling in at Pippingford. Photo: Monty Larkin

Matters are progressing on Chailey Common where the ESCC are currently erecting boundary fencing. However, there are still a number of important issues to be resolved before the Trust agrees to commence grazing with ten ponies in the spring. Apparently, the Council has received complaints from some local residents that the noise from traffic passing over the cattle grids is too loud!

It has been confirmed that five of our existing ponies will start grazing the RSPB Broadwater Warren Reserve in the spring. Fencing is currently being erected and, in a change to the previous plan, the cleared areas are to be grazed as one unit. Because of the large area involved it was suggested that a GPS tracking collar would help locate the ponies and the RSPB is currently looking into the cost and practicality of this. To quote Monty: "lookers might require survival kit if there is no GPS!" (N.B. After all this time Monty has decided 'lookerers' should really be termed 'lookers')



One of the scraped areas at Broadwater Warren Photo: Monty

According to the RSPB warden, visitors to the reserve are looking forward to the arrival of the ponies.

All was well with the ponies on Kingston Escarpment until the 21st October when this sight greeted Mike Bridges...



Justin in a pickle!

Photo: Mike Bridges

Justin had obviously misjudged a jump into greener pastures and had got himself firmly stuck on the barbed wire fence.

In Mike's own words:

"...I found that the youngster had tried to vault the fence just inside the gate and had got himself completely entangled in the barbed wire on the top. He seemed to be viewing this situation as a slight inconvenience rather than any cause for panic, and continued grazing the other field whilst I phoned Monty. The mother was in attendance close by and I went slowly towards them making comforting 'there there, never mind' kind of noises and got a cold hard stare from the pair of them. The mother slowly came towards me. Her intentions were not clear but I retained eye contact and slowly spread my arms. She came right up to me and stopped, then gave me a gentle shove with her nose. With this I stroked her, and gave her ears a gentle tug. She then

turned, emptied her bladder with gusto, and trotted up the hill in the direction of the distant herd, without a backward glance! I don't know what her thoughts were, but they were either: "I have every confidence in you, and am sure I am leaving him in safe hands" or "Well, if you are going to poke your nose in, I'm off". I would like to think it was the former!

Monty duly arrived, and after a few deft clips with the wire cutters, the youngster was freed, and galloped away, with no apparent ill effects.

That was the good news. The bad news was, of course, that he was now in the wrong field, and showed very little inclination in returning to the right one! After about an hour of patient (?) coaxing, and I am sure, with the help of the rest of the ponies, who were now keeping him company on the correct side of the fence, he was eventually persuaded to rejoin the herd through a convenient gate. With that they had a quick dip into the water trough, and galloped up the track and over the horizon.

Monty and I looked at each other and grinned.

Monty then looked again at the fast disappearing ponies and said: "I suppose there were 22 there?"

Yes I said".

(Despite Monty's fear that he "might be walking a bit funny" Justin seemed none the worse for his mishap when I saw him a couple of days later. Ed.)

Juggs Way

Lookers who approach the Kingston Escarpment site via the Kingston Ridge route may not have realised that they are on part of an ancient trackway that links Brighton with Lewes. The route, known as Juggs Road (or Juggs Way), was the trading route across the Downs used by Brighton fishwives to transport their fish to the market in Lewes. The fish was salted, packed into earthenware pots (or jugs) and loaded onto donkeys. The sign on the village pub The Juggs Arms (which, incidentally, is **not** on the Juggs Way) depicts a jolly rosy cheeked fishwife holding a basket of fish, which can be a bit confusing to visitors who are unaware of the connection.

Ashcombe Mill

Once lookers have toiled up the track to the top of the Kingston Escarpment to reach the ponies which, in my experience, are where they are nearly always to be found, it is worth taking a few moments to catch your breath and appreciate the view back towards Lewes. No one can fail to miss the prominent and distinctive white shape of a windmill being constructed just to the north side of the Juggs Way. This is Ashcombe Mill which is being built on the site of an original post mill that was blown down in a gale in March 1916. The first mill was built in 1858 and was the only one in Sussex to have had six sails (or sweeps). It is the intention of the owner to reinstate that number of sweeps on his rebuild but instead of grinding corn this mill will be used to generate electricity and provide accommodation. If you are interested, more information and updates on its progress are available at: www.sussexmillsgroup.org.uk/ashcombe.htm.

Heritage Grazing Traineeship

The Trust has agreed to become a 'Placement Host' for a Heritage Grazing Trainee in conjunction with the Ashdown Forest Conservators. This scheme, run by the Grazing Advice Partnership (part of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust) and funded by a Heritage Lottery Grant, provides bursaries for trainees to be placed with farms, wildlife trusts and other similar hosts for a period of nine months in order to receive experience and instruction in livestock handling, conservation and land management.

Annual General Meeting

We have booked the Pump Barn at Exceat for the AGM on Saturday 24th March. The agenda and papers will be circulated nearer the time but please make a note in your diaries and make an effort to attend – there may be some exciting new developments to announce!

SUSSEX PONY GRAZING & CONSERVATION TRUST

Registered Charity No. 1108065 Registered Company No. 5206972

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