

The Longlander

DECEMBER 2022 ISSUE 09



Welcome

Midwinter comes, biting, bitter, and beautiful.

To visit Long Lands Common at this time is to step on crisp frosty ground, sharing space with the fox, the deer, and the wind... and with the occasional crew of volunteers, planting thousands of hedge trees?

Yes, it's true, after several years of preparatory work behind the scenes, we have finally reached the stage where large scale planting projects can begin!



Photo Credit: Ben Skinner

The first of these plantings was to establish the Great Hedge (an inspiring and totally not over-done name, I'm sure you will agree) on our Western field. The planting days were carried out without a hitch, and will only be the first of many such days to come.

Please do feel free to volunteer (either again, or for the first time) to help out on future planting days – it is only with the effort of our own members and their mostly willing families that Long Lands Common can continue to change from a typical agricultural field into a special publicly accessible nature reserve, filled with thousands of trees, animals, and memories.

Our “land swap” with one of our neighbours has now also been finalised in title and deed (a good thing this is too, given we just built a fence and then planted a hedge on the new border!), granting us ownership of our own access track to meet the public right of way path that crosses near to the middle of the Long Lands site – this will make access to Long Lands Common more reliable and under our own control for now, until such time as we get the Greenway entrance access ramp constructed, when it would then naturally tend to take over as the main way to enter and leave the Common. For myself, I continue to be amazed at the dedication our volunteers each put in to bring Long Lands into being. Emails, meetings, spades and seedlings, so many ingredients come together to form the whole. I feel lucky every day, to be a witness to that effort. Thank you everyone, for everything we do.

And thanks go to our editor Artemis, for another excellent issue of The Longlander, put together at a very busy time, too!

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

Ben Skinner – Chair of Long Lands Common

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Contributors



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Ian Murdie



Miranda Dunstan



The Longlands Team

Knaresborough Forest Park

Urgent Appeal



Graphic: <https://knaresboroughforestpark.org/>

A large area of farmland near Long Lands Common is being prepared for sale. If it remains in private hands, as it is now, the local community will continue to have only limited access to green space, and the land, like all Green Belt land, may be under threat of future development.

On the other hand, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to secure the area for the benefit of wildlife and the local community, and it would establish a wildlife corridor from Bilton Fields and Long Lands Common all the way to Knaresborough Waterside at Conyngham Hall, effectively recreating the historic Bilton Park, part of the ancient Knaresborough Royal Forest.

A team from Renaissance Knaresborough and members of Long Lands Common have started a campaign to raise funds from our community to acquire the land, using the same model as Long Lands Common.

We will purchase this farmland to create a beautiful tree-rich natural parkland; a protected haven for wildlife and people that we'd call Knaresborough Forest Park.

We're asking members of the community to register their interest in buying community shares in the land which abuts Mackintosh Park, off the Beryl Burton cycle Way.

The land is on the market for £405,000 and we need to move really quickly. We are exploring all options, with advice from White Rose Forest staff and other advisors who have helped with Long Lands Common.

Knaresborough Forest Park

Urgent Appeal

We're asking for people to pledge to buy community shares, in the same way as we did with Long Lands Common.

***Please note carefully* - at this stage we are only asking you to register your interest to buy community shares. Your pledge is not legally binding in any way and no money will be transferred at this time. We also understand if personal circumstances change.**

Shares will only go on sale once there is enough interest shown by individuals, businesses and community organisations. A share offer will then be set up by long-established community group, Renaissance Knaresborough, using a nationally accredited share offer scheme like Long Lands Common. All shareholders will become members of the parkland project with voting rights and receive a share certificate, and there may also be options to buy shares as gifts for loved ones.

We are preparing an electronic pledge form to be posted on the website (or email: admin@knaresboroughforestpark.org for a pledge form), or telephone: 01423 549376 and leave a message and we will get back to you

Be part of this exciting project!

We urgently need help to make the land purchase happen. Do you have skills in: campaign, marketing and fundraising; social media and website design; accountancy and legal knowledge and any other relevant experience? Then we would love to hear from you.

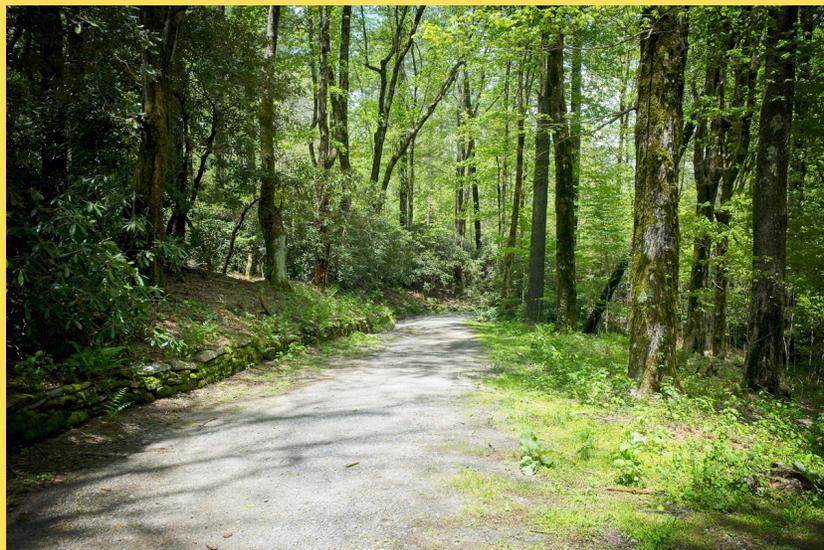


Photo Credit: Warren Eisenberg

News From Long Lands Common

Veloheads Workdays



Photo Credit: Long Lands Common

The autumn/winter period has seen the start of the first workdays at Long Lands Common for the Veloheads students and the fulfilment of a 2020 vision.

Ever since the idea of Long Lands Common was first announced in 2020, Veloheads, the alternative educational provision based in Starbeck, have been one of our staunchest supporters.

Right from the outset, Carl Nelson, the Veloheads founder, recognised the potential for Long Lands Common to be an ideal educational venue and quickly offered the services of the Veloheads vocational students to help get the common established.

Now that we have moved from the planning to the doing phase of the project, it has been a great pleasure to be able to welcome the Veloheads students this term and watch them get stuck in with the variety of jobs that need doing.

“It is a privilege to be able to go to Long Lands Common and have an opportunity to do different jobs and develop different skills. I am learning how to organise things and work out solutions for different problems. I have been thinking for myself. Getting outdoors and being with nature is good for my health: it’s a change of pace and I wouldn’t normally be getting outside. It has given me a sense of satisfaction, working towards a goal and achieving outcomes. It has been good to do things outside of my comfort zone.” - Harley Knapton-Smith

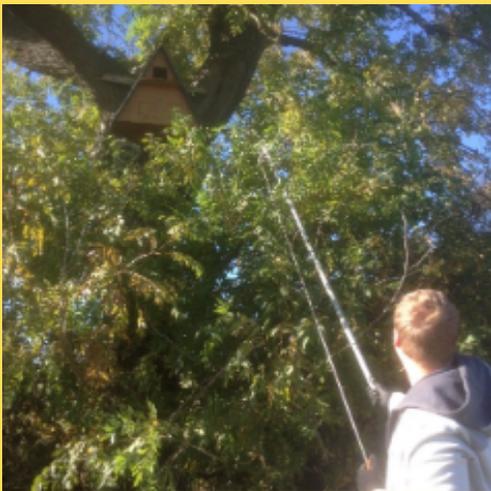


Photo Credit: Long Lands Common

News From Long Lands Common

Cleish Group Visit Long Lands Common!

We were delighted to welcome Cliff Culley and his group from Cleish, Perthshire to Long Lands Common on Sunday 4th December.



Photo Credit: Cate Quinn

We donned our wellies and waterproofs for a tour of the site, taking in Carl's Shed, The Mound, The Quiet Place and the Top Pond, explaining our vision and plans for the site. The Cleish crew have their own community space with a playing field, wildflower area, orchard, picnic benches and even a pop-up pub!



Photo Credit: Cliff Culley

It's great to hear about other community projects and hopefully inspire others along the way.

Thanks to Miranda Dunstan and Cate Quinn for hosting.

News From Long Lands Common

Orchard Design Workshop

We had a good turnout on Saturday 12th November for the Orchard Design Day where members had the opportunity to learn about orchard design and contribute ideas to the plan for the orchard area at Long Lands Common.

The workshop was led by Mark Simmonds from Community Orchard Services who gave us the benefit of his knowledge and experience in setting up orchards for other community groups and organisations across the country.



Photo Credit: Ben Skinner

Starting out from Dene Park Community Centre, where the workshop was based, the group walked to Long Lands Common to observe and interact with the landscape, before we took advantage of the autumn sunshine to have a communal outdoor lunch and a productive ideas session.



Photo Credit: Ben Skinner

News From Long Lands Common

Back at Dene Park in the afternoon we then drew all the ideas together to come up with a plan:

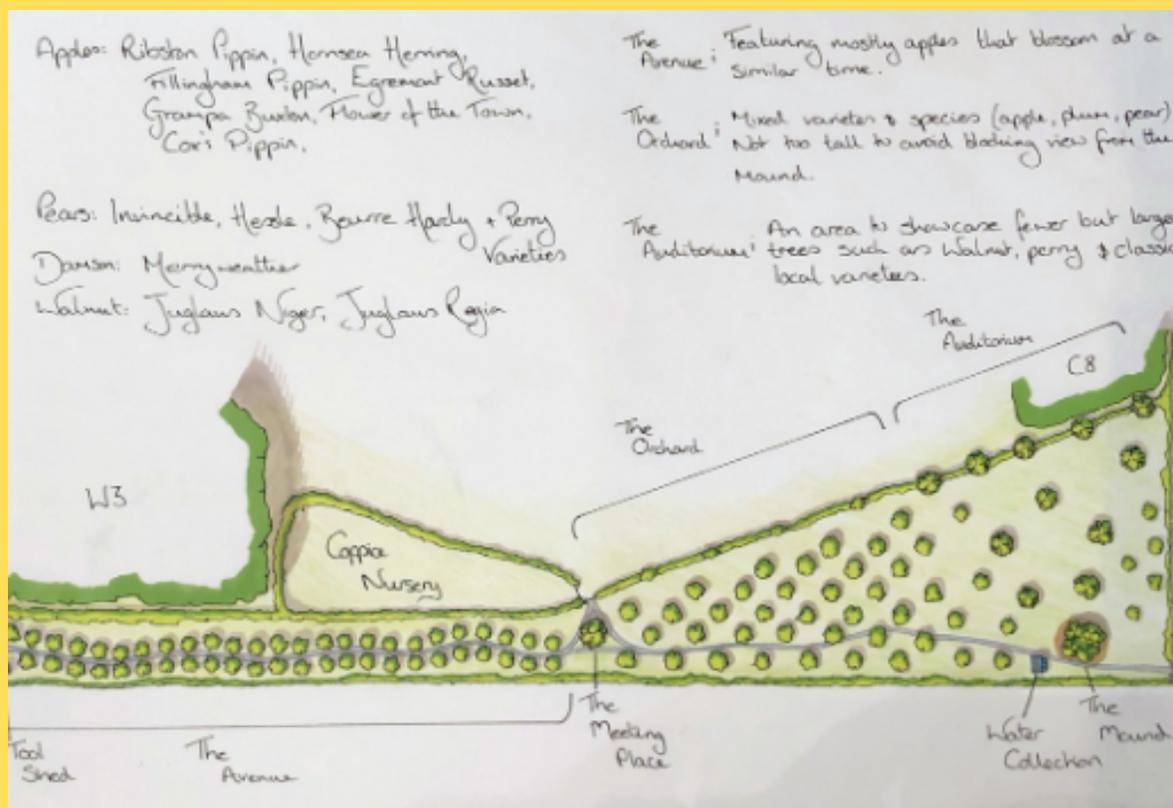


Photo Credit: Ben Skinner

As part of this plan members and supporters will have further opportunities to join in with the establishment of the orchard - with both a planting day and a grafting workshop planned for the new year.

Please keep your eye out for announcements about these opportunities closer to the time. Many thanks to our all our enthusiastic members who attended and particularly to Graeme Knowles-Miller for drawing up the plan and Kate Wilkinson for helping to lead the workshop.

News From Long Lands Common

Tree Planting

We often get asked whether you will be able to plant your own home germinated tree on Long Lands Common. Read on to find out the answer!

Many of our members have been collecting and growing their own saplings over the past few years, in anticipation of one day planting them on the Common.

Having investigated the legal situation on this ambition, there are a few legal hurdles we as a Society have to clear in order to comply with the Forestry Commission rules on biosecurity for large scale planting projects.



Photo Credit: Richard Johnson

The intent of the law in this area is that forests should not be planted without giving reassurance that all saplings have been obtained from sites free from contagious diseases and that any nursery sites involved have also met similar standards.

Our understanding is that these laws shouldn't be too difficult to comply with, so long as we can confirm formally that any saplings Long Lands Common obtains come from compliant sources.

As such, the Long Lands committee will be setting up a "tree nursery biosecurity team" in the new year, to handle the required paperwork, and work with any members who wish to donate trees to plant on Long Lands Common to ensure every planted tree has a suitable paper trail (half-pun unintended) for legal purposes.

We'll have more news on this plan in our Spring Newsletter, once we have put together a long term management plan for donated trees.

The Great Hedge Planting Days, December 17th & 18th

For several years now, Long Lands Common has been inching towards unlocking grant funding for the purchase of thousands of plants and shrubs, to be dug in on the Common. With funding now starting to flow, this December has seen the first major batch of planting.

With our Southern border recently delineated by a permanent wooden post and rail fence, we were next looking to establish a long and thick hedge to grow up along this fence, in order to enhance the biodiversity along this fairly barren stretch of the site, and to form a more natural looking boundary in the longer term.



The fence, before planting began on Saturday... a little frosty!

Photo Credit: Ben Skinner

And so, with 35 Long Lands volunteers on Saturday the 17th, and 43 on the Sunday, under the direction of our selected delivery partners Yorgreencic, over two thousand hedgerow saplings were planted to form our new hedge! Easy to say, not so easy to organise and complete, particularly in the cold conditions – warm clothing was essential, not optional!



The Long Lands crew hard at work!

Photo Credit: Ben Skinner

The Great Hedge Planting Days, December 17th & 18th

Before anything could be planted, grass had to be cut out with mattocks, so that the hedgerow could be planted into bare mud.

Hedge species planted include Blackthorn, Crab Apple, Elder, Quickthorn, Field Maple, Hazel, and Holly. This should provide for a varied hedge, and promote biodiversity from its very first days. Each species, and the borders between them, will support different species of animal life, and encourage as rich a hedgerow environment as we can possibly manage.

After each hedge “whip” (a term meaning a young unbranched seedling) was planted, mulch was spread to suppress grass growth around it, and so stop the young plant from being out-competed by the vigorous grass. There’s little point in planting, if we’re going to let grass immediately take back over!



*Volunteers of all ages joined in
Photo Credit: Ben Skinner*

The Great Hedge Planting Days, December 17th & 18th

In addition to the thousands of hedgerow species, seven small leaved lime trees were planted. These will be allowed to grow higher than the main body of the hedge, to reach a final height of around 30 metres. Even in the early years, they should provide interest for the eye, breaking up the look of the lower hedgerow. In our site development plan, one of the main pathways across Long Lands Common will run close by to the hedge we have just planted, all the way from the Greenway entrance, up to the Lookout Point on the Eastern tip of the site. So much still to do, but it's all approaching at speed now!



The last tree is planted on the Sunday, job done – for now!

Photo Credit: Ben Skinner

Did you miss out on joining in with the planting days? Don't worry!

Our next big planting day is currently likely to be in early March, and will involve around 700 forest tree species, to be dug in on the Eastern field near to the newt pond. So there will be plenty more days of spades and saplings for you to have your own chance to dig in a little piece of history on the Common – and then sit back to watch it grow.

Site Rangers Corner



Photo Credit: Margaret Buck

By Ian Morris

Would you be interested in being a Ranger? Several images sprung to mind one including a mask but on further investigation it turned out to be helping survey and be responsible for visiting the Long Lands Common area.

After a morning's briefing on the development and culture of Long Lands Common and then an afternoon visit walking around the site, I became a fully-fledged Ranger joining the small but enthusiastic band of volunteers.

So, you may ask what does it entail? Primarily a lot of walking! Upon arriving at the site, you meet up with your partner for the day – going around in twos for safety reasons – you walk around taking note of what you see and hear. The flowers, condition of the trees whether fruiting or damaged, the birds, mammals, butterflies, insects, dragonflies. In fact, anything and everything and in that lies the challenge.

The great thing about today's smartphone is a thing called an app – and there is an app for virtually everything. Now this is a good thing as I have a limited knowledge about birds but a willingness to learn. I'm sure all the Rangers see this as an opportunity not only to serve the Long Lands Community but learn more about nature on our doorstep.

There are now three ponds to be found in the area and during this warm summer we have seen the water levels in all three gradually shrink. Muddy footprints have been found around the water's edge as animals and birds come to drink and bathe. Fox, badger, deer, and a variety of bird prints have been found. Dragonflies, damselflies, and darters can be seen flitting over the water.

As we approach autumn, flocks of house martins and swallows swoop over the field and the ponds hunting for insects as they stock up for the long migration ahead.

Buzzard and Red Kite fly slowly overhead and small birds' flit amongst the bushes and trees in the hedges.

The hawthorn bushes are laden with red berries and we hope this will attract Redwing and Fieldfare in the winter when they arrive from the continent.



Photo Credit: Artemis Swann

As we look into the future and the site continues to develop, tree planting is on the agenda later this year. Being a Ranger is both rewarding and at the same time challenging. You may like to join our team. Why not?

If you would like more information on becoming a site ranger at Long Lands Common visit [here](#) for information on future induction sessions or send an email to: rangers@longlandscommon.org



Photo Credit: Jon Flowers

Avian Influenza

How Bird Flu may affect Long Lands Common



Photo Credit: Sjo

By Miranda Dunstan

Avian influenza (AI, avian flu, bird flu) is in regular circulation in captive and wild bird populations. Most strains cause few problems, but since November 2021 there has been a devastating outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI – H5N1) in the UK and worldwide. This strain developed in intensively farmed poultry and spilled over into wild bird populations and causes a high level of mortality.

Seabird species have been particularly impacted including our migratory population of Barnacle Geese on the Solway Firth whose population is down by a third after more than 16000 birds died last winter. The UK has an internationally significant breeding population of Great Skuas and Northern Gannets which have been highly impacted as have Sandwich Terns where complete breeding failure has been reported.

In view of this backdrop, there was concern amongst the Long Lands team back in October when two members of our Site Ranger Team were alerted to a sick buzzard on site by a member of the public.

Avian Influenza



Photo Credit: Mary Schofield

Although it is seabirds which have been primarily affected, there have been 160 positive tests in raptors this year and swans and geese in urban parks have also been infected and many fatalities reported.

We can all do our bit to try and limit the spread and assist the various bodies who are trying to manage this outbreak. If you find a sick or dead bird(s), it is not recommended to touch it (although the risk of transmission to humans is extremely low). Keep any dogs away. You can report online at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds> or by calling the DEFRA helpline on 03459 33 55 77.

If you find a dead bird or birds at Long Lands Common, please alert a Site Ranger if anyone is on site, or alternatively let us know by email at info@longlandsccommon.org. It is safe to continue feeding garden birds but make sure you remove old bird food and regularly clean any feeders.

Further information on Avian Flu and what to do if you find distressed or dead birds can be found on the [RSPB website](#) or [Gov.UK](#) by clicking on the underlined words.

Despite efforts to help the bird, no vets were available until the following day, and he unfortunately did not make it through the night. In accordance with government guidelines a report was made to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) who collected the body and carried out an autopsy.

We later learned that our buzzard was negative for avian influenza – no cause of death was established but he was generally in poor condition.



Photo Credit: Ian Burl

Why Plant Trees?



Photo Credit: Artemis Swann

By Ian Murdie

Tree planting is soon commencing at Long Lands. But why is so important to plant trees?

It's an easy one to start with - we all know about global warming, greenhouse gasses, photosynthesis, trees turning CO₂ into wood and oxygen etc. One question I've sometimes heard asked – when a tree dies, a lot of that carbon gets released back into the atmosphere as the tree rots. So, what's the point? Well, we're not just planting a tree – we're planting a forest. In a mature woodland there are trees of all stages of life. When a tree dies it is replaced by another – there is always a succession of trees passing the carbon on from one to another, and down the food chain to the animals and fungi that feed off them. There's a constant carbon store keeping CO₂ out of the atmosphere (unless the whole forest gets chopped down.)

Now obviously a tiny sapling uses only a tiny amount of CO₂. Larger trees absorb considerably more. So, planting trees now is really about solving future problems, not current problems. A newly planted woodland soaks up CO₂ at a peak rate between 15 and 40 years old depending on species. That's about the age of Rotary Wood. (Just saying!)



Photo Credit: Taya Cho

Why Plant Trees?

Car exhausts produce a lot of tiny sooty particles, too small to see. They float around in the air until they hit a solid surface, then they stick to it. If that surface is the inside of your lung, then that's a bad thing. If it's a tree, that's a lot better. Trees have an enormous surface area and act like huge air filters scrubbing the dirt and stopping it clogging our lungs.

Trees with large numbers of hairy leaves are best for this. It has been shown that for houses next to busy roads, planting the right hedge in the front garden will considerably improve the air quality inside the house. Nitrous oxides are another pollutant from car exhausts. When dissolved in water (eg inside your lungs), it creates acid – not good. However, nitrogen is a vital component of chlorophyll. Trees need lots of it and can absorb these noxious gases through their leaves



Photo Credit: Daniel Tadevosyan

Another article from Woodlands.co.uk explains that red colouring arises from anthocyanin's response to sugar (just as our teeth can change colour from too much sugar). So leaves can be red, yellow and green.



Photo Credit: Denis Doukhan

Rain. Wow we needed more of that this summer! Obviously, rain comes from moisture in the air. The more moisture there is, the more likely it is to rain. 10% of water in the atmosphere comes from transpiration from plants. The more trees there are, the more it will rain both locally and downwind. It's estimated that increasing tree cover in Europe by 20% will increase rainfall by 7.6%.

If trees create rain, then surely, they can't claim to prevent floods as well? Well, stand inside a dense forest during a heavy rainstorm – it can take up to an hour for the water to drip down onto the forest floor. But then it will continue to drip for hours after the rain has stopped.

Compare that to a new housing estate where plants have been replaced with tiled roofs and tarmac roads. The rain hits the floor immediately and within minutes, torrents are rushing down the streets. Trees slow the passage of water, thus considerably reducing flood risk, especially when planted on steep hillsides.

Why Plant Trees?



Photo Credit: Simon Skafar

Why do we plant in autumn? – It's bloomin' cold! Planting is quite traumatic for a tree's roots which are really quite delicate. Roots are the source of water for the tree and without water the tree will die. So, we plant when the ground is wettest, the air is coolest, and evaporation is lowest (and in the case of deciduous trees – when they have no leaves - water loss mainly happens through the leaves). This gives the roots a few months to establish themselves in preparation for the next growing season.

What are we planting? Almost certainly tiny twiglet saplings. Often asked – why not bigger trees? Well bigger trees are more expensive. Not just that though. Smaller trees will establish themselves quicker, will grow faster and healthier and will overtake larger planted trees.

A fine example of this – I live in a conservation area, and the council requested I plant a replacement tree for one I wanted to take down due to it being far too close to the house. So down the bottom of the garden I planted a 3-foot-tall wild cherry. The council told me I should have planted something at least 10 foot. So, I dug it up and replanted it in some scrubland nearby.



Photo Credit: Marcin Jozwiak

That tree is now 20 foot plus tall and looks super strong and healthy. The 10 foot one I replaced it with is now only about 15 foot tall and looks quite stunted.

So let's get planting – it's good for the planet, it's fun and the exercise will do us some good!!

Your Nature Finds

Across much of this year, we have had a motion-triggered site camera operating on the Common. As well as taking some photos of members visiting the site, looking into the lens and saying “what’s this thing here tied to a fence post?”, we’ve also captured lots of video of visiting wildlife. Here’s a look at some screenshots from some of our favourite videos!

We will be uploading an 18 minute video of wildlife from the year, to the Long Lands Common website.



We would love it if you sent us your captures of what you've found and we'll do our best to feature them!

Email your photographs to: thelonglander@yahoo.com

or

Tag us in your pictures on Twitter [@LongLandsCommon](https://twitter.com/LongLandsCommon), on our Instagram [@longlandsccommon](https://www.instagram.com/longlandsccommon) or over on our [Facebook page](#).

Seasons Greetings

and Best Wishes for 2023



*From all of us
at Long Lands Common*