The Longlander

September(ish) 2025 ISSUE 17

In Memoriam

Ian Fraser

Just as we were putting the final touches on our latest newsletter, we received the shocking and sudden news that our founder Long Lands Community committee member and woodlands officer, Ian Fraser, had passed away. Several of our members have written dedications and tributes for Ian.

So saddened and shocked to hear this devastating news... Ian was a kind and gentle soul, and will be greatly missed. As someone who came to Long Lands knowing little about ecology and the landscape I have learnt so much listening to Ian sharing his knowledge. The care and kindness he showed me when making the sign for Carls shed will stay with me. Thinking of Ian and sending thoughts and love to his family.

- Linda Nelson

Oh Ian. A beautiful soul, who has left an incredible legacy, he has played a huge role protecting and planting woodland throughout our surrounding countryside, not just here at Longlands Community, his fierce passion and dedication to making our world a greener, more compassionate place in his own inimitable style. He truly put the gentle in gentleman.

Brings home the beautiful, profound verse about "planting trees, the shade of which he will never sit under".

I loved his sense of humour, patience and his all round gentleness. We have lost a really special man from our team today, and it's so incredibly, heartbreakingly sad.

- Trisha Sanders

I first met Ian at a Woodlands For Life event, hosted by Zero Carbon Harrogate in Oct 2019, where he was one of the main speakers talking about the upcoming Northern Forest Project and the many benefits it would bring to our district.

Coincidently, or uncannily maybe, this was right about the time we were conceiving the idea of Long Lands Common - a new Community Woodland for Harrogate & Knaresborough - that would contribute to the same Northern Forest.

The stars must have been aligned that night because, at that exact time we were looking to build up the team to drive the Long Lands idea into being and as soon as I heard Ian speak, as the ZCH Tree Officer, I knew we needed a man of his passion and sincerity at the heart of our team.

Fortunately for us all, Ian jumped at the chance to put his passion into practise and soon became our tried and trusted Woodland Creation Officer, diligently overseeing the considerable administrative tasks of putting together our Woodland Creation Plan, obtaining White Rose Forest funding and implementing the plan to plant new woodland blocks and transform the land into the Northern Forest nature reserve it is gradually becoming.

Ian was a dedicated, safe pair of hands behind the scenes, thoroughly and quietly getting on with the nature recovery work he saw as vital to all our futures in this time of global environmental crisis. He wasn't driven by personal glory but by altruism and the desire to be a good ancestor to people he would never meet. To see Ian's legacy, go to Long Lands Common and look all around you. If the world was full of Ian Frasers there would be no problem.

Over the past six years I have got to know Ian as a trusted friend, a kind-hearted gentle giant and one of the most genuine and humble people I have ever met. His loss leaves a huge hole and he will be terribly missed by all of us. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Thanh, his children Rose, Donald and Duncan and his first grandchild, Aiden, born in January this year.

Ian was also a talented woodworker and craftsman, making all our carved oak signs for the new woodland blocks and Carl's Shed on Long Lands Common. He had only just retired from his museum conservator's job at Temple Newsam House and was looking forward to having more time for his many passions and interests.

Poignantly, and in typical humble fashion, when it came to the unveiling of his sign for Wilkinson Wood, when I asked Ian if he would like credit for his work as the sign maker, he said, "No, just say something nice about me when I'm gone…"

Unfortunately for us all, this has come far too soon.

- Chris Kitson

We have lost a quiet man of wisdom and integrity, an eco-warrior who put hope into action.

Ian was the spark that started Zero Carbon Harrogate.

His decision to show the film "This Changes Everything" at St Peter's Church in December 2015 brought us together. Driven by his yearning for justice and ecological awakening he wanted others to understand better the implications of climate change. From that film showing a small group was formed to help the Harrogate area respond proactively, setting a vision for a sustainable future.

Ian has been instrumental to Zero Carbon Harrogate from those early days, developing a particular interest in how natural climate solution, tree planting and restoring biodiversity, can play their part in sequestering carbon and helping the local economy cope better with extreme weather.

He was a ZCH trustee, representing the charity on the White Rose Forest partnership, liaising with the Rotary Club of Harrogate to support their tree planning in Nidderdale, and contributing to multiple government and council consultations on planning and landscape strategy.

Ian has always been a calm dependable member of ZCH, more than that he was a dear friend with a rich sense of humour and generosity of spirit. His quiet faith underpinned his open and equitable way of working with people and his deep love and respect for creation.

He wrote recently:

"My motivation with regard to environmental action emerges from, and is guided by, my strongly held belief that it is essential that our society (local, regional, national) needs to be more ecologically based because there is no route to resolving the climate crisis without sufficient nature recovery."

He will be deeply missed, but his work will continue with us.

- Jemima Parker, Chair of Trustees, Zero Carbon Harrogate

Ian Fraser was an excellent colleague to work with at Long Lands Common.

His dedication to the Society's aims was resolute, combining a quiet determination and sound common sense. He brought a clear head and a finely focused attention to detail in everything that he tackled, and could also find humour in the process of getting things done.

Having only retired in July, he was beginning to give more time to his varied interests and I was looking forward to getting to know him better.

His untimely passing is a huge loss to his family and to the Long Lands community, and that loss is keenly felt by all who knew him.

- Barry Slaymaker

Ian was a great man. That's where my thoughts keep returning, as I think about this sudden and shocking news. His was a mind of confident goodness, driven by a need to use his time to make our world a better place for the future generations to inhabit. He was also funny, insightful, encouraging, gentle, wise, and passionate.

He would often mention his intent to become a Good Ancestor, deftly reminding us all of the honour and responsibility we have in stewarding the planet during whatever days we may have. And now, so many generations to come will walk in mighty forests that he quietly and skilfully planned, to make *their* lives better.

He gave me an acorn one day as we walked the Common, picking it out as a good prospect to sprout. Tended in a pot, it's a strong sapling now, growing fast.

I will miss my friend Ian. A great man, a good ancestor; His memory a blessing, to those who knew him.

- Ben Skinner

It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of our friend and colleague Ian Fraser - a gentle, wise and beautifully spirited man whose quiet dedication to restoring the land and nurturing community touched everyone who knew him.

Ian was a founding presence in our shared work across Harrogate and Knaresborough - through the Long Lands Common and Knaresborough Forest Park vision - where his deep green understanding of ecology, systems thinking and landscape restoration shaped so much of what we do. He approached nature not as a problem to solve but as a relationship to be tended and he lived this belief with rare grace.

Those of us who worked alongside Ian knew him as a true sage - soft-spoken yet profound, always generous with ideas, readings and reflections. He delighted in sharing books, articles and music, from Roman Krznaric's The Good Ancestor to Simon Schama's reminder that "the past is never dead; it's not even past." His messages often carried small treasures - a Guardian article, a thought on sweet chestnut coppice, a link to Bruce Cockburn's music, or reflections on design and time.

Ian had a remarkable ability to weave together ecology, history and the spiritual - though he rarely spoke of faith directly, his life expressed it quietly through care, stewardship and service. He believed in the "politics of belonging," in landscape as a living community and in our responsibility to act as good ancestors.

In one of his final messages to me, he wrote:

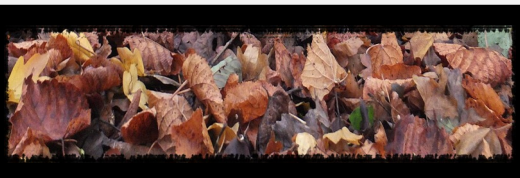
"Long Lands Community and site teams, our strength is our diversity, our motivations to help; we all bring something useful and something bigger emerges."

That spirit of emergence - of many parts forming something greater - is perhaps the most fitting description of Ian's legacy. His ideas and presence will continue to shape the land and the people he helped bring together.

We will miss his gentle humour, his insight and his companionship on long walks and thoughtful conversations. But we carry forward his wisdom: the conviction that change begins quietly, in listening, patience and reverence for the living world.

Thank you, Ian, for everything you shared - your kindness, your knowledge, and your faith in what can grow. Your roots run deep in this landscape.

- George Eglese



Ian Arthur Fraser is survived by his wife, Thanh, sons Donald and Duncan, and daughter Rose. He had recently become a grandfather in January.

Introduction to Newsletter – September(ish!) 2025 – Chris Kitson

Autumn greetings Longlanders,

Welcome to this Equinox edition of our community newsletter as we mark the passing of the long hot summer of 2025 and look forward to the much-needed rains that will refill our ponds and water our thirsty young trees and desperate shrews, that have struggled to survive over the recent dry months.

In the Long Lands Community, the last few months have given us a few memorable opportunities to come together in uncertain times and unite as a community on the land and build the bonds that will help to sustain us and give us hope for the future in the years to come.

In this edition, we look back on Community Earth Day, in April, when we celebrated the naming of our most recent woodland block on Long Lands Common, Forster Wood, …and also the emergency watering days when our army of wonderful volunteers answered the call up and came marching over the hill, with watering cans at the ready, to keep the young trees alive through the baking hot days.

And then, to June, on a lovely Thursday evening, when we hosted the summer gathering of our friends, neighbours and fellow greenbelt defenders in the Nidd Gorge Advisory Partnership.

We also revisit the hottest day of the year, Knaresborough Forest Day, in August, when sunstroke posed the biggest problem and the common people of the Royal Forest of Knaresborough came out to celebrate the return of their land to the commons.

In between these events, one Saturday in July, there was also the rare occurrence of a doom-laden weather forecast that put paid to our planned Summer Fair and AGM - postponed due to almost certain heavy rain and guaranteed lightning strikes …that never really materialised!

Thankfully, last weekend, we were finally able to hold the AGM in the new henge on Long Lands Common. Thank you to all members who attended for making it a great success.

For those unable to attend, minutes and reports are available to read here:

https://www.longlandscommon.org/downloads/2fe83540-3224-4991-bdc2-785be67cf06f

We hope you enjoy reading about the progress of your society and feel inspired to get involved. The success of our projects depends on our collective voluntary efforts as a community.

Together, we can be the change we wish to see in the world!

Thanks for your continued support.

…and special thanks to our guest editors, Cate and Sandra, for putting together this latest edition of The Longlander!

'The Long Lands Community Team– One Community, Three Projects…

PS: Members who bought shares in the latest share issue to raise funds for the purchase of Knaresborough Forest Park were able to collect their certificates at various collection points over the summer, culminating in the AGM. After this, the remaining certificates were distributed to our leafleting team leaders who in turn shared them out among their volunteers.

Our Membership Secretary Alison Organ reports that non-local certificates have also all been posted. It may take a while for the teams to deliver all their certificates, but if you haven't received yours by the end of October she encourages you to get in touch via info@longlandscommon.org. We owe a huge thank you to all of our delivery volunteers who have once again been willing to tread the streets for the good of the Community.

PPS: "September-ish!"… our layout chap promises to try to hit the release deadline a bit more promptly for the next issue!

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KEEPING IN TOUCH

The Long Lands Community has a number of social media channels and email contact addresses. Please feel free to follow them all, and contact us with enquiries too.

LONG LANDS COMMON

FACEBOOK LINK

YOUTUBE LINK

EMAIL LINK

INSTAGRAM LINK

TWITTER / X

KNARESBOROUGH FOREST PARK

EMAIL LINK

FACEBOOK LINK

TWITTER / X

Coppicing

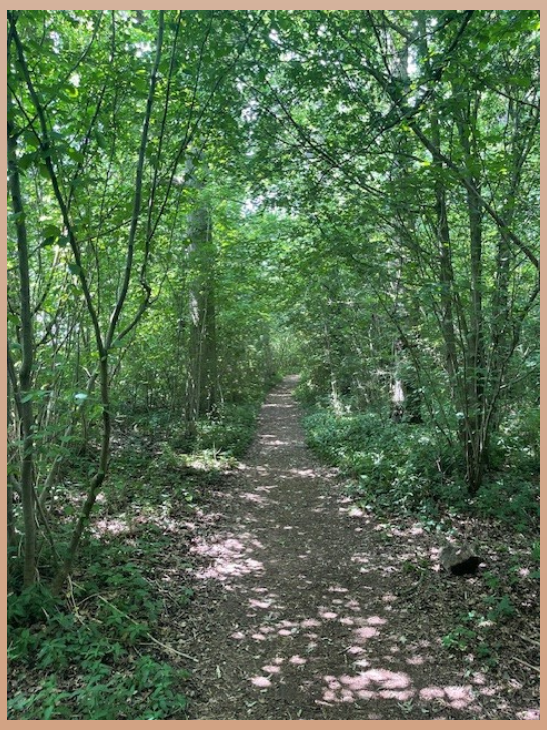
Coppicing: Reviving a Traditional Woodland Practice

The next phase of tree planting on Long Lands Common (probably in the winter of 2026/2027) will be in the north-east corner of the top field (the opposite corner to Carl's Shed), an 'L'-shaped area of about 1.5 hectares. This is designated as coppice in our Woodland Design Plan with hazel as the main component with some sweet chestnut. Other tree species will be planted as 'standards' in amongst the hazel and sweet chestnut: these trees will be allowed to grow to full height. The area will be fenced with sweet chestnut paling to protect the young trees and later regrowth from animal browsing, avoiding the need to use tubes and stakes as with our other tree planting.

Coppicing hazel (Corylus avellana) is an age-old woodland management technique that involves cutting the tree back to its base, encouraging vigorous multi-stemmed regrowth from the stool. This sustainable practice, typically carried out on a 7-10 year cycle, has both ecological and economic value that continues to be relevant in modern woodland stewardship.

Ecological Benefits

Coppicing creates a mosaic of habitats at different stages of growth, fostering biodiversity. We plan to have 8 'coupes' that will be harvested according to stem size in cycles of 5, 7 or maybe 10 years. At each cut, light floods the woodland floor, encouraging wildflowers like bluebells and primroses. Insects, especially butterflies, thrive in these sunlit glades, and in turn support birds and small mammals. Hazel itself also supports a rich array of wildlife as it matures.



Coppicing

Sustainable Timber Resource

From an economic perspective, hazel produces strong, flexible poles ideal for traditional crafts, fencing, hurdles, walking sticks, and garden products like broom handles, pea sticks and bean poles. Sweet chestnut also produces strong timber typically used for fencing products, and may be harvested on a 15-year cycle. Because coppicing encourages regrowth, the same stool can yield functional timber for decades or even centuries, making it a renewable and low-impact alternative to more intensive forestry methods. Multi-stemmed hazel grows rapidly and captures carbon in each cycle; carbon is also held in the extensive root systems. The coppice product at Long Lands Community sites can be used for our own needs for fencing, and also potentially for sale to derive a future income for the Society.

Cultural and Landscape Value

Coppiced hazel has a long history in rural heritage across the UK and parts of Europe. Reviving coppicing can help maintain the character of traditional landscapes and support a resurgence of woodland crafts. Moreover, managing hazel & sweet chestnut coppice can contribute to carbon sequestration and climate resilience by maintaining healthy, actively growing woodlands.

In a time when sustainable land use is more important than ever, coppicing hazel offers a model of regeneration and productivity in harmony with nature.

Drought

Huge thanks go to all those who turned out to water the trees of Forster's Wood this summer. Planted in December 2024, the trees were extremely vulnerable to the exceptionally hot and dry conditions as they established themselves during their first growing year at the Common. Special watering days in July and August saw 40+ volunteers on each occasion bringing watering cans and buckets and working their way through 1,800 trees giving them a much-needed drink.

Our single water supply from a spring in the neighbour's field had dwindled to a bare trickle by mid-August, insufficient to fill some borrowed bowsers. A valiant effort by site manager John Jackson with permission from Yorkshire Water filled the 1,000 litre containers from his domestic supply and conveyed them to site so that we were able to get the job done.

We will review the scheme next Spring to see if we need to replace any losses but we think that we will have contained them within acceptable levels.

Other vulnerable trees including Celebration Trees and fruit trees received regular attention from Site Rangers and work party volunteers.

A marvellous team effort by all.

Barry Slaymaker

Henge Update

Everything 'henges' on the definition

The Human Zone at Long Lands Common, affectionately referred to as 'The Henge', is beginning to mature following its construction in the winter of 2024. There is still further design work to complete, but the ditch and mound design has clearly taken shape and is starting to green over.

The 'henge' was built to reflect the historic Bilton Park deer fence on our north-western boundary, and the top of the bank may be planted with hedging to provide a deer proof screen and additional habitat, depending on the future intended uses for the zone.

However, anyone who has visited the Thornborough Henges near Nosterfield will be struck by the similarity between our 21st Century 'henge' and the remains of the three Neolithic circular structures, whose banks originally stood at around four metres high, with an internal ditch and had two opposing entrances, much like the structure at Longlands. There would have been a shallower outer ditch and smaller outer bank as well. The Northern henge is now covered by dense tree cover. This site was believed to have been used as a place of gathering and funeral rituals for more than 2000 years.

The Thornborough Henges were preceded by an earlier cursus monument – an elongated, narrow enclosure, which is thought to have acted as a formal route or barrier across the landscape. It was about ¾ mile long and 44 metres wide, probably constructed in the early Neolithic period (between 3600 and 3400 BC).

Henge Update

Our Neolithic relatives would not have been able to see the surrounding landscape from within the henge, apart from through the entrances and so, it has been suggested that these aligned with the movement of particular stars; the southern entrance being aligned with Sirius and the midwinter solstice sunrise. The layout of the three henges also replicates that of the stars in Orion's belt.

The henges lie within a belt of Gypsum, which is prone to subsidence causing natural sinkholes and hollows. The banks were covered in this white gypsum, possibly as an association with the underworld, ancestors' bones or stars. The white covering would have been striking and visible for miles.

Evidence of regular gatherings at the Thornborough henges has been uncovered by archaeologists and there may have been early Neolithic settlements near to the River Ure. There is also evidence of travellers visiting the area during the late Neolithic period from some distance, for example the Pennines, Yorkshire Wolds and coast.

Bronze Age burial mounds and artefacts have also been found in the area, suggesting that Thornborough remained an important site for hundreds of years. There is also evidence of a series of timber posts having been erected in an avenue format, possibly acting as a guide for people or to link the monuments.

There are numerous Neolithic monuments along the path of the River Ure, it being a key route between the Pennine Hills and Yorkshire Dales, and the Devil's Arrows near Boroughbridge are in perfect alignment with the Thornborough Henges. There are also similar henges close to Ripon at Nunwick, Hutton Moor and Cana Barn.

Henge Update

But what is a henge? English Heritage, who manage the Thornborough site, define a henge as "*a pre-historic circular or oval earthen enclosure, dating from around 3000 BC to 2000 BC … The key feature of a henge is a ring-shaped bank on the outside and a ring-shaped ditch on the inside that mark out a central, circular area. Some henges have multiple rings of bank-and-ditch, and some have additional structures (like standing stones or timber posts) inside the henge earthwork. They all have openings, or 'causeways' that pass through the earthwork circuits into the central circle. If there are two cause-ways, they often face one another across the circle.*" They are typically between 20 and 30 m in diame-ter but can be bigger.

The term 'Henge' is derived from Stonehenge in Wiltshire, where large stone lintels are balanced on vertical monoliths. It possibly originates from the Old English word for hanging or suspended. But despite having an earthwork circle around it, Stone Henge does not qualify as a true henge as the main ditch is external to the main bank. It is merely a 'proto-henge'. Our '*Stonehenge of the North'* may have been equally as important in ceremonial terms in its day and the northernmost henge, although overgrown with trees is probably one of the best preserved henges in Britain.

So, although our Human Zone at Long Lands is more of a 'proto-henge', it shares a number of features in common with the Thornborough Henges and will be a focus for our modern-day gatherings. Who knows what people will make of it in another 5000 years?

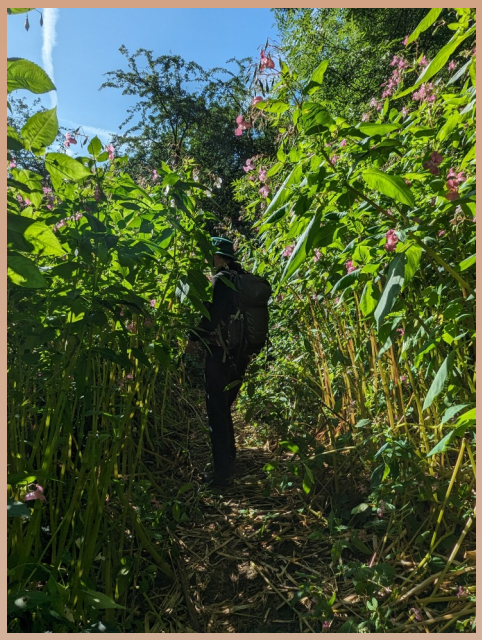
Sources:

https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/thornborough-henges/history/

https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/inspire-me/what-is-a-henge/

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thornborough_Henges

Himalayan Balsam (Impatiens glandulifera) by Sandra Sweeney



Himalayan Balsam was originally introduced to UK in 1839 as an ornamental garden plant but soon escaped and became widely naturalised along riverbanks and ditches.

It is classed as a non-native invasive plant and is listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act in England and Wales (1981). This means it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause it to grow in the wild. It is also on the Non-native Species Secretariat (NNSS) list of Species of Special Concern.

If Himalayan Balsam is already growing in your garden, this is not considered an offence, though it is recommended that you control or remove it.

Its negative impacts include

Outcompeting native plants for space, light, moisture and nutrients. Rapid growth early in the season leads to dense, tall stands of Himalayan Balsam that crowd out other plants and reduce species diversity.

Soil erosion along water courses. Himalayan balsam often colonises the banks of rivers, streams and ditches. Its shallow roots and annual growth habit do little to stabilise the soil along banks, leading to habitat alteration and degradation.

Himalayan Balsam is a fast growing, tall annual plant with sturdy hollow stems and can grow to a height of 3m or more. It has scented, trumpet shaped flowers in shades of pink and purple which grow on long stalks and appear from June to October. Seed pods develop from July to October and are green, developing to brown. When ripe, seed pods explode when touched and can send seeds over 7 meters away. One plant can produce 500 seeds.

Himalayan Balsam Management

The aim of control is to remove the plant each year before seeding occurs. To do this, control takes place in the early summer months before seeds ripen. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for two years, so populations of balsam can be removed after 2 or 3 years of consistent control.

Himalayan Balsam (Impatiens glandulifera) by Sandra Sweeney

Hand Pulling

The shallow root system means that Himalayan Balsam is very easy to pull from the soil by hand. Plants can then be put into a heap where they compost down, or for individual plants, stems can be hooked over a branch to dry. If plants are left on the ground there is a risk they will re-root.

The best time for pulling Himalayan balsam is early to mid summer, from May to July/August. After this time control should be stopped as disturbance of the seed pods will cause them to explode, spread seed and make the problem worse.

Cutting or strimming

An alternative option is to cut the plant with a strimmer or hand tool eg. weed slasher or scythe. The important thing when cutting is to make sure that the stem is cut below the first node ie. close to the ground. If cut above this node the plant will regrow and potentially set seed. It is crucial that cutting is only carried out before the seeds form so this is an early summer activity

New methods

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust have been trialling the use of Rust Fungus to control balsam in West Yorkshire and at Wheldrake Ings near York. The National Trust have also been involved in these trials and they say early results are “Very encouraging”.

www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3en2qwv99jo

Although Himalayan Balsam is an invasive species with significant negative environmental impacts it has some positive aspects such as providing rich sources of nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinators, including hoverflies, butterflies and wasps. Because it flowers late into the summer and autumn it provides a crucial food source when other floral options are limited. The plentiful nectar is so attractive to honeybees that beekeepers value it for helping colonies build up their winter stores.

It can even be used to make wine, jelly and even paper!

It is important to realise that these benefits do not outweigh the plants harmful environmental impacts as an invasive species and over the last three summers we have worked hard at Long Lands Common to remove Himalayan Balsam. With permission from our neighbours, we have pulled balsam from adjoining fields to try and reduce the risk of it spreading. We now have a good idea where to look for it and pull it up early in the season before the flowers have produced their seeds. We are optimistic that with continued vigilance we will be free of this species in the next few years.

https://www.nonnativespecies.org/assets/Uploads/ID_Impatiens_glandulifera_Himalayan_Balsam-1.pdf

Knaresborough Forest Day

Knaresborough Commemorates the 255th Anniversary of the Enclosure Act and Celebrates Knaresborough Forest Day

Knaresborough is a town rich in history, shaped by its iconic gorge, medieval castle, and once-vast Royal Forest. One of the most significant moments in this heritage was the Enclosure Act of 1770, which marked the formal division and enclosure of the forest lands. On 13th August 1770, commissioners and local people met at the Borough Bailiff (now the Commercial Hotel) in Knaresborough to discuss the implications of this Act. It was a turning point that took away the people's rights to access and use the forest and common land.

Fast forward to Wednesday 13th August 2025, and the town came together to commemorate the 255th anniversary of this historic anniversary, while also celebrating 'Knaresborough Forest Day' – introduced last year to honour and celebrate our natural heritage, green spaces, and the renewed connection between people and land.

Knaresborough Forest Day is more than a look back; it's a hopeful celebration of what's been reclaimed. This year's event recognised the rebirth of the Ancient Royal Forest of Knaresborough, highlighting inspiring local achievements; the development of Long Lands Common, a growing example of community stewardship and access to shared green space, and the successful community purchase of Knaresborough Forest Park, a powerful step toward restoring public access to land and reviving the values of the commons. Together, these milestones reflect a community that is not only remembering its past but actively shaping a greener, more inclusive future where nature, heritage and people can thrive side by side.

This year, Wednesday 13th August fell in the much-loved Knaresborough FEVA festival, and it was fantastic to see the town come alive with people, groups, and organisations coming together to remember and celebrate the ancient Royal Forest of Knaresborough.

The week was filled with activities, workshops, and events for all ages, shining a light on the town's rich history and vibrant community spirit.

Knaresborough Forest Day

Highlights included:

- A brilliant community theatre production of *'The Knaresborough Eleven'*, performed on Sunday 10th August in the Castle grounds. The play brought to life JT Glew's *"The Extraordinary Tale of the Castle Yard Riot"* in an unforgettable way.
- Guided walks led by the Mayor of Knaresborough's Tour Guides, offering fresh insights into the forest's past.
- A fantastic Forest Family Fun Day at the Kingfisher Kiosk at Conyngham Hall, packed with nature-inspired activities led by Yorkshire Create.
- A civic event hosted by the Mayor of Knaresborough at Knaresborough House, where speakers (including our own Ian Fraser and Shan Oakes, as well as Anne Richards from Bilton Historical Society) shared engaging talks on the history of the Royal Forest, the brilliant community-led land restoration efforts at Long Lands Common and Knaresborough Forest Park, and exciting future plans to increase woodland cover in the North of England. The event also provided valuable networking opportunities for local groups and organisations. Following the talks, many attendees joined a guided walk to Knaresborough Forest Park.

An afternoon of celebration and picnics at Knaresborough Forest Park itself. There were two huge and floaty parachute tents which kept off the heat and allowed a breeze underneath. One tent hosted a delightful medley of musicians and poets who all gave freely of their superb talents. The other tent housed a nature quiz, poetry, basket making, Japanese leaf printing, and nature celebrated in a variety of art activities.

Other activities included meditation, yoga, archery and wood carving, and home-made elderflower cordial made from flowers picked on KFP. People were also able to pick up their LLC share certificates. Big thanks to the volunteers (including scouts) who made an enormous effort to assemble and remove tents, compost toilets, and so on.

Knaresborough Forest Day

Despite the sweltering heat, the energy and enthusiasm were undeniable. It was a truly memorable day – a fitting tribute to our shared heritage and a hopeful step toward a greener future.

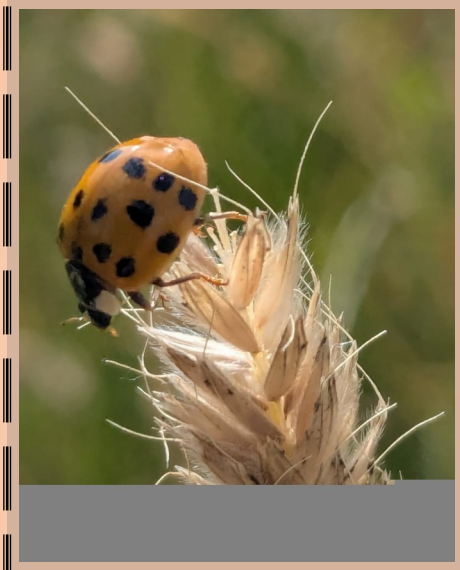
Huge thanks to all the individuals and organisations involved, The Mayor Cllr Helen Westmancoat and her Consort John Westmancoat, Knaresborough Town Councillors and staff, our brilliant Town Guides from The Mayor of Knaresborough's Town Walking Tours, The Kingfisher Kiosk at Conyngham, Knaresborough Forest Park, Yorkshire Create, FEVA, Knaresborough Youth Council and all of the individuals and organisations who joined us and participated, and to the Rotary Club of Knaresborough who supported the events.

Written by Hannah Read of Knaresborough Town Council office and Shan Oakes, Vice Chair, Long Lands Community

Ladybirds by Sandra Sweeney

There are more than 40 species of these familiar beetles in Britain. Many are predatory on aphids and other insects, but a few eat fungi or plants. They belong to the Coccinellidae family, range in size from 1 to 10mm and are round or oval.

Ladybirds go through several stages including egg, larva, pupa and finally adult. Eggs are usually laid in the spring, predatory species lay eggs on plants with colonies of aphids or other insects, those that feed on fungi on mildew affected plants. The egg lasts around 3 to 10 days, they then become ladybird larvae for around 3-4 weeks. Ladybird larvae all have similar elongate body shape with three pairs of obvious legs, most are black or dark grey, some have yellow or orange markings and many have hairs or spikes – in this time they grow rapidly and feed on pests.



The pupal stage lasts around 1-2 weeks, and this is when the larvae undergo metamorphosis. This brings them to their final stage of life, adulthood, where they can live up to a year, sometimes longer if they survive the overwinter period. Adults of the most familiar species have brightly coloured (red or yellow) wing cases (elytra) with dark or light spots. All the British ladybirds pass the winter as dormant adults, often sleeping in large groups. Many species can have several generations during the summer. New adults begin to appear in early summer, so active ladybirds can be found from early spring until late in the autumn.

Birds are the main predators of ladybirds, but they also fall victim to frogs, wasps, spiders and dragonflies.

Of our 40 native species of ladybird about 20 are small (less than 3mm) and dark in colour so often not recognised as ladybirds.

2025 has been a particularly good year for ladybirds due to unusually warm weather and a plentiful supply of aphids. The warm conditions have allowed both ladybirds and aphids to complete their life cycles faster leading to this peak in populations. The influx of ladybirds even disrupted a cricket match at Lord, with the insects distracting players and causing a brief pause in play!

Ladybirds by Sandra Sweeney

Common UK Ladybird Species

Seven Spot Ladybird

This species is one of the most common in the UK. It has bright red wing cases and seven black spots. This is a native species and often found on plants and deciduous trees.

Two Spot Ladybird

This small ladybird is red with two black spots. Its often found in large groups on tree bark and in sheltered places

Harlequin Ladybird

This species is an invasive Asian species and is recognised by its varying colour patterns – with the population having red, yellow, orange or black wing cases. It also has black markings.

Originally native to Asia it was introduced to Europe as a biological control agent against aphids and other pests, it first arrived in the UK in 2004, likely through accidental importation via trade and horticultural shipments. Its rapid spread across UK was facilitated by its high reproductive rate, adaptability to various habitats and broad diet, allowing it to out compete and displace native ladybird species.

22 Spotted Ladybird

The 22-spot ladybird is a bright yellow with black spots. This small conspicuous ladybird is often found on low vegetation and is primarily a mildew feeder, unlike most other ladybirds that prefer aphids.

Fun facts

There are about 5,000 different species of ladybirds in the world

In its yearlong life a single seven spot ladybird can eat more than 5,000 aphids!

Ladybirds are colourful for a reason. Their markings tell predators “Eat something else I taste terrible!”

Researchers at Hull university have discovered that ladybirds can fly at a speed of up to 37 miles per hour and remain airborne for up to two hours.

The collective noun for a group of ladybirds is ‘a loveliness’

Long Lands Common Site Ranger Corner by Sandra Sweeney

The weather has been tricky for our new trees this summer but some species have thrived. In particular ladybirds, butterflies and wasps have done well – we have certainly had more butterflies on The Common than last year (which was a particularly poor year) and have had our first sighting of a small blue.

Our dragonflies have also done well with four new species observed this season. Early in the summer we had sightings of the four spotted chaser and brown hawker dragonflies and in the last few weeks reports of migrant hawkers and emerald damselflies. The emerald damselflies are unusual in that when resting their wings are usually half opened (damselflies usually rest with their four wings held closed together along their abdomen). This takes our total number of species to 12 which is fantastic as our ponds were only dug in 2022 and is more than half of the total number of species that have ever been recorded in Yorkshire!

Ranger Melanie has started a bee transect walk at LLC (please see her fascinating article) there is an open invitation for site rangers to join her on one of her monthly walks (March to October) to learn more about bees.

We've all enjoyed the abundance of house martins who seem to frequent the water around the henge, earlier in the season they were busy collecting mud to build their nests and later as everything dried up swooping down for a drink. This area is accessible to animals like the middle pond and we can clearly see that they are visiting to drink, we have seen deer and badger footprints regularly over the summer months.

We have also had sightings at the AGM and a couple of days later of a Bar-tailed godwit – a wader which visits our shores for the winter and is not often found so far inland, this has caused much excitement amongst our birders.

We also had our first apple on the new fruit trees by the mound!!

Using LIDAR to survey Long Lands Common

During a recent guided tour of Long Lands Common in late June 2025, it was commented that the western boundary, which also once formed the ancient boundary of Bilton Park, possibly showed evidence of an ancient deer fence, ha-ha. The dense summer vegetation and lack of time during this evening visit made it difficult to closely examine the boundary hedge, but a quick look suggested that where the hedge ran diagonally across the slope, there was possible some evidence of a boundary bank with the land on the outside of the Bilton Park land being at a higher level, thus potentially making it easier for deer to enter Bilton Park rather than escape.

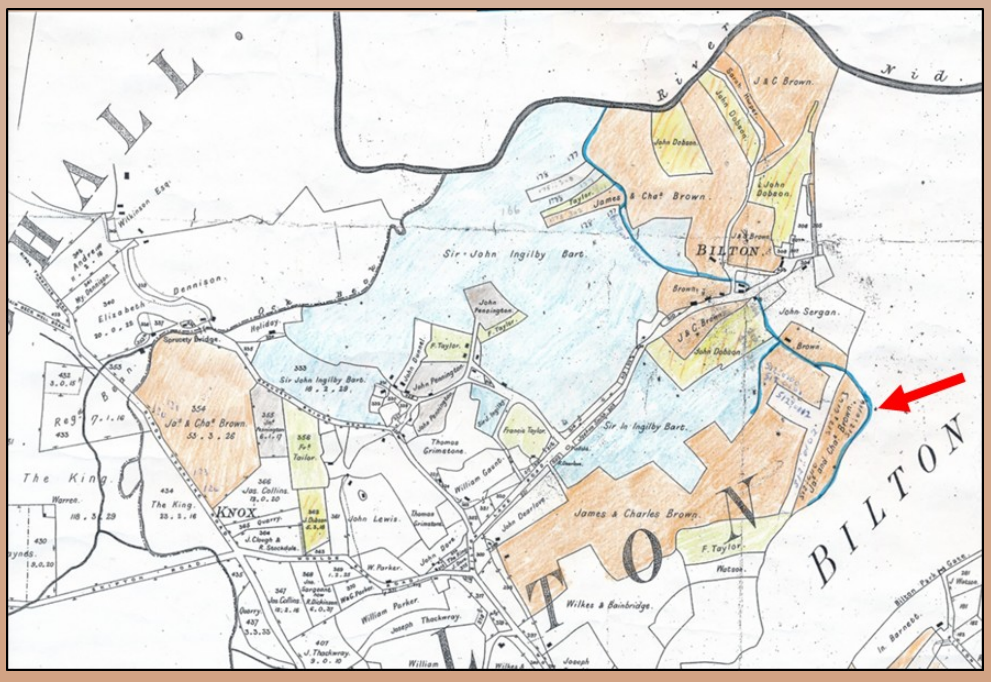
My interest was aroused, but rather than fight with the vegetation I would see what insights could be gleaned from the available information; in particular LIDAR data. LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a remote sensing technology that uses laser beams to measure distance. The data provides accurate elevation information at 1m spatial resolution and is a valuable tool survey and mapping tool. Within the UK, the Environment Agency has a national programme to generate the data, which is publicly available to use. The most recent LIDAR data was generated during the winter of 2021, about the same time that the Long Lands fields were purchased and therefore it shows the area before the recent programmes of groundworks, fencing and tree planting were carried out.

Firstly, it can be confirmed that the curving western hedge boundary of Long Lands Common, was once part of the ancient western boundary of Bilton Park.

Image from Google Maps.

Part of the 1768 Bilton Park estate map (West Yorkshire Archives Services Leeds WYL132/141

The 1778 Enclosure award map shows that the land to the west of this boundary was owned by James and Charles Brown, who were major land owners in the Bilton and Knox areas in the late 18th century.

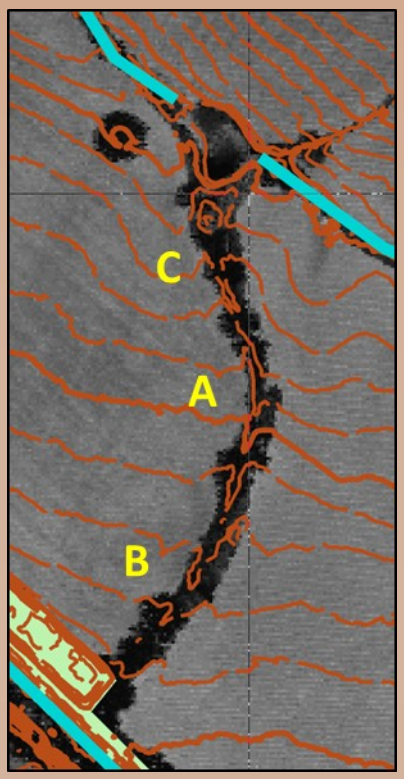


1778 Enclosure award map. Bilton Park is to the east. Land owned by the Browns is shaded brown.

Using LIDAR to survey Long Lands Common

Using specialist OCAD2018 software to process and analyse the Environmental Agency LIDAR data it has been possible to generate contour lines, LIDAR reflection intensity and hill shading maps of the Long Lands Common area.

The contour data for the western boundary suggests that in the middle, Point A, where the boundary is running diagonally across the slope, there is evidence for a small bank, with a distinct change in height, under the hedge. Unfortunately, however, both higher up, Point B, and lower down the slope, Point C, the contour information is more characteristic of a narrow ditch, with no bank or height difference along the ancient Bilton Park boundary indicative of a (ruined) ha-ha.

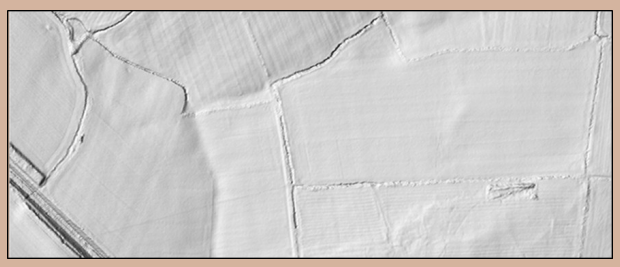


0.5m contours overlayed onto the 2021 LIDAR reflection intensity map of the western Long Lands Common boundary
LIDAR information supplied as Open Data by the Environment Agency. Copyright Environment Agency

This ditch within the western Long Lands Common boundary flows into the small pond in the neighbouring field which is at the confluence of two other streams/ditches. The outflow from this pond, together with other small streams, becomes Bilton Beck.

Although the LIDAR data does not support the presence of an ancient and ruined ha-ha, a close inspection of the hill shaded image suggests, in addition to the obvious field boundary ditches and the north-south shallow valley, the presence of a variety of other faint linear features which may be worthy of further investigation or consideration, especially when undertaking future groundworks.

Hill-shaded image representation of the 2021 LIDAR data for Long Lands Common
LIDAR information supplied as Open Data by the Environment Agency. Copyright Environment Agency



Hill-shaded image representation of the 2021 LIDAR data for Long Lands Common showing the locations of a variety of faint linear features
LIDAR information supplied as Open Data by the Environment Agency. Copyright Environment Agency

These faint features are:

Ploughing typically E-W direction, though the most western part was possibly ploughed in a SW-NE direction (see double headed black arrows)

A lot of linear features, possible field drains? (yellow ovals)

Scrubbed out old field boundary hedge (red ovals)

Slight mound (purple oval), possibly also associated with the scrubbed out old field boundary

In addition to looking at landform features, the analysis of LIDAR survey data also enables the classification of vegetation by height. I always remember a few years ago that a farmer commented that the “powers that be” would know if he had, or had not, cut his hedges! The information is such that this is the case. Therefore, future LIDAR surveys will enable the growth and extent of the Commons wooded areas to be determined. It is perhaps fortunate that the 2021 LIDAR data coincided with the purchase of Long Lands Common and therefore offers an excellent baseline against which the development of the area assessed.

Alan Gould, Bilton Historical Society

Successful Waugh Trust Grant Application

The Knaresborough Forest Park team have been successful in applying to The Waugh Trust for grant funding to support the strong **education and training** component of the Long Lands Common (LLC) / Knaresborough Forest Park (KFP) vision.

Broadly the educational focus of LLC could be said to reflect UNESCO's Four Pillars of Education which are intended to guide education throughout a person's life.These are:
Learning to know-The right to understand the world and oneself
Learning to do-The right to develop occupational skills and talents
Learning to be-The right to develop a wholesome personality and self-identify
Learning to live together-The right to live harmoniously with others and determine oneself

Lifelong learning is the idea that people can learn throughout their lives, in a variety of ways, and in many different contexts.It's a holistic approach that involves everyone, from children to the elderly, and in many different settings, such as school, the workplace, and the community.

Funding was obtained to provide essential amenities to the KFP site in the form of water, off grid power, lighting and composting toilet facilities. Seating and moveable outdoor shelters for learners were also funded. Although primarily focussed on the KFP site many of the purchases can also be utilised for educational activities taking place at Long Lands Common. The two 'Cathedral' parachute shelters purchased were successfully utilised at the recent Knaresborough Forest Day Celebrations at KFP as part of this year's Festival of Entertainment and Visual Arts.

The Long Lands Community board of directors are very grateful to the Trustees of the Waugh Trust and Knaresborough Rotary who are managing the fund and applications and granted us this funding.

Mark Flood, Director, Long Lands Community

Hic sunt dracones?

In the early days of map making, when much of the world remained unexplored; wide expanses of theoceans were depicted with monsters and serpents and remote tracts of land captioned ‘hic sunt dracones’ [‘here be dragons’]....

and so it felt as 22 visitors from the Nidd Gorge Advisory Partnershipmade their way through the developing wilderness of Longlands Common....

The well manicured paddocks of private fields bordering the 30 acres (12 hectares) of Longlands contrasted sharply with the wild prairies of the common, the dramatic re-creation of a moated Iron Age henge, maturing wildlife ponds and new woodland plantings. A high point on the common, planted with specimen Scots Pine, has a clear line of sight to a corresponding clump of Scots Pine off Duck Lane, Greenhow Hill over 12 miles away. By 2070 it should be possible to see the Longlands Common Scots Pinesfrom Greenhow.

Wild life is taking every advantage of the newly-protected habitats. Barn owls hunt here for voles and mice, roe deer seek refuge to feed and drop their fawns in the deep grass and frogs, toads and newts have colonised the new ponds. The Longlands volunteers share this habitat; retreating to the iron site tool store for refreshments; with a montage of their latest wildlife sightings on the wall.

This is a ‘Work In Progress’, announces Chris Kitson, with a 1000 year plan to bring self-sustaining per-maculture to this new green oasis between Harrogate and Knaresborough.

Longlands Common AGM is to be held on Saturday 19th July when those attending will cross the earth bridge to muster on the grassy banks of the amphitheatre of the ‘Iron Age’ henge for the first time.

NGAP had representation on this occasion from Bilton Conservation Group, Bilton Historical Society, Dog Walkers,Harrogate & District Naturalists Society, Harrogate Town Council/North Yorkshire Coun-cil, Knaresborough Town Council,, Knox Valley Residents Association, Longlands/Knaresborough Forest Park, Nidd Action Group Starbeck Greenway Conservation Group,and Woodland Trust (volunteers), along with NYC Countryside Education Officer, Shirelle Hawkins.

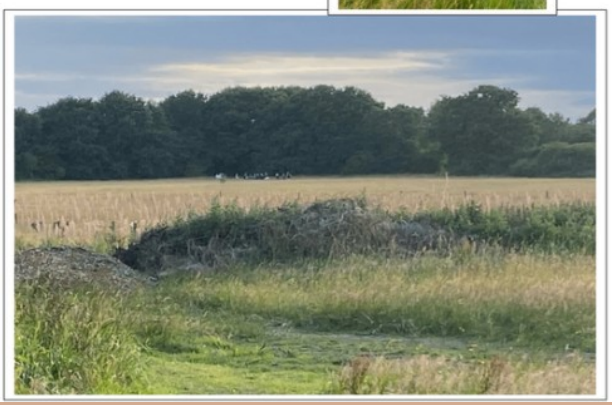
The NGAP is grateful to James McKay and Chris Kitson for their guided walk to and around Longlands Common and the support team of John Jackson, Angela Jex, Alison Organ who provided the refreshments and back up (with apologies to anyone I have missed).

K.W. Chair, MMXXV

Hic sunt dracones?

These are the private paddocks – Longlands is to the right in the far distance.

Looking into the Henge amphitheatre



One of the new ponds

Wild Life Gallery

Hic sunt dracones?

Exhibition – Knaresborough Library – 26/06/25.

Painting by James McKay, Chairman, Longlands Common (should this be titled 'Partners in Crime'? or 'No A59 here'?)

Bee counts at Long Lands Common

Let's start with a quick quiz…

True or False? Have a guess – the answers are below the article.

1. Only male bees can sting.
2. In the UK, there are 24 species of bumblebee and only 1 species of honeybee.
3. Both bumblebees and honeybees live in colonies, with a queen and lots of workers.
4. Individual bumblebees can live for up to three years.
5. The bee on the left is a honeybee. The bee on the right is a bumblebee.

Why do bumblebees need our help? Bumblebee numbers nationally have been in decline for decades, due to habitat loss and widespread pesticide use. 2024 was the worst year for bumblebees since records began. 2025 has seen an increase in numbers due to the warm dry weather, which is favourable for bees and most other insects. However, there is no cause for complacency, as we are losing more and more land to development.

What makes bees such great pollinators? Bees are literally made of flowers – unlike their close relatives the wasps, a bee's entire diet is made up of nectar and pollen. They have a long tube-like tongue (proboscis) for drinking nectar from the centre of flowers. Worker honeybees and bumblebees have 'pollen baskets' on their hind legs for collecting pollen. When they have collected enough, they carry it back to their colony – a hive (in the case of honeybees) or a nest (for bumblebees) – to feed to the larvae.

This penchant for flowers makes bees extremely important pollinators. As they fly from flower to flower, they drop some of the pollen they have collected on each one.

Common Carder Bee on red clover *(Long Lands Common, 08/09/2025)*

This bee is using its long proboscis to drink nectar from the clover flowers.

Garden Bumblebee on self-heal *(Long Lands Common, 17/06/2025)*

The yellow blob on this worker bee's hind leg is the pollen she has collected in her pollen basket.

Bee counts at Long Lands Common

What is a bee walk? The BeeWalk programme is a citizen science project run by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/). A bee walk involves walking a particular route (a transect) once a month from March to October, counting all the bees seen and, wherever possible, recording the species and caste (queen, worker or male). The data is entered on the BeeWalk website, and is collated to provide a detailed picture of how bumblebee populations are doing nationally.

The Long Lands Common bee walk transect

Doing a bee walk is very rewarding, especially trying to identify the different species. Some bumblebee species are easy to identify …

Red-tailed Bumblebee on buttercups *(Long Lands Common, 21/05/2025)*

There's really no other species this could be.

but others are not so easy …

Bumblebee on white clover *(Long Lands Common, 17/06/2025)*

We can tell this is a worker – she is smaller than a queen and has the tell-tale pollen basket – but she could be a White-tailed Bumblebee or a Buff-tailed Bumblebee. The worker bees of these two species are identical to the naked eye.

Why start a bee count at Long Lands Common? 2025 is the first year that dedicated bee counts have been carried out at Long Lands Common. Numbers have been fairly modest this year – we saw a peak on 17 June with a count of 49 bumblebees and 31 honeybees. It is a great time to start a bee count, while the Long Lands Common project is still in its early stages. It will be interesting to see the changes in bumblebee numbers over the coming years, as wildflower populations become established, providing more food for the bees.

Quiz answers:

1. False: only female bees can sting – the stinger is part of the egg-laying tube (ovipositor).
2. True.
3. True – the colony lives in a hive (in the case of honeybees) or a nest (for bumblebees).
4. False: bumblebees live for only one season. New bumblebee queens hibernate over the winter and start a new colony in the spring.
5. True – honeybees are slimmer and less hairy than bumblebees.

Working Party Dates - and, does anyone have a roller going spare?

Future working party dates for Longlands Common :

Saturday 1st November

Sunday 7th December

Saturday 4th January 2026

Sunday 1st February

Saturday 7th March

Sunday 5th April

Saturday 2nd May

Sunday 7th June

Also see our web site for more details and booking.

In addition, we are seeking a roller* for use on Long Lands Common to smooth our paths to make them flatter for wheel-chairs.

If anyone has one available to donate or long term loan to the Common, please let us know.

* ie a small roller that can be pulled behind a lawn tractor max width 4ft, max weight 500kg

If so, please contact **John Jackson** 07779 516 285 cjfencing@hotmail.com