

# A 'Hempstead' connection



Roger Hands with dignitaries from Hempstead in USA showing the Town and Village seals

**Twenty-six years ago Roger Hands, Chairman of the Box Moor Trust from 1988-96, was part of a delegation from Hemel Hempstead that visited Hempstead on Long Island, USA to foster links between the two communities. This summer, he returned to cement those bonds.**

"Contact between both Hempsteads in Long Island and Hemel Hempstead in UK began in 1993 when Hempstead Village and Hempstead Town were celebrating their 350th anniversary. My wife, Joan, and I were invited to attend along with Derek Townsend, Deputy Lieutenant of Hertfordshire.

Planning a trip to visit family in the States in July this year, I spoke with Derek Townsend about my thought of presenting the book 'Royalty to Commoners: 400 years of the Box Moor Trust' which had been published after that first meeting in 1993. Derek felt this would be appreciated. I also took several other books namely, 'Paper Pioneers', 'Boxmoor Ironworks' (all three co-authored by myself and Joan) together with 'Times Highway' written by Elizabeth Buteaux. Accompanied by my son and supported by Village of Hempstead Historian Reine

Bethany, I was invited to attend a reception on 16th July 2019 in the Hempstead council chamber. The ceremony commenced with a Marines Acknowledgement salute, Presentation of Colors, Pledge of Allegiance and National Anthem performed by Jayla Bryant. The council chamber is dominated by an impressive mural which covers the whole of the rear wall. This mural depicts the first real-estate transaction in Hempstead on 13 December 1643. Tackapousha and the 'One Eyed Sachem', along with other native Americans, convey to Revd Robert Fordham and John Carman, both settlers from Hemel Hempstead in England who were honourably purchasing the land on behalf of all local settlers. These historical details were confirmed within the extensive number of books and documents which were presented to me by the many dignitaries and local residents who were present.

It does not take long studying this fascinating historical material to appreciate the extensive similarities between both Hempstead Village and Hempstead Town with our own Hemel Hempstead. Both areas are an historic landscape incorporating extensive common land, notable rivers and wetlands, whilst being situated in close proximity to major cities, New York and London, both of which exert significant pressures of future development. An interesting detail is the matter of Belted Galloway cattle being photographed in Long Island in 1920, whereas they are the breed of cattle the Box Moor Trust now stock.

I am currently researching more on this subject and hope to publish another book shortly."

**Roger Hands (Emeritus Trustee)**

## The Box Moor Trust

Your land, your heritage, your future

# Autumn Newsletter

## Return of the Water Vole



David Watts of Affinity Water meets the Trust's Volunteers (Photo: courtesy of Affinity Water)



**Phase 1 of the Trust's water vole reintroduction programme got underway in September, when 177 voles were introduced to the River Bulbourne and the local canal. The voles were captive bred in Devon by national water vole expert Derek Gow, who has dealt with a number of introductions across the country and has advised throughout.**

With the help of volunteers, pens were placed in 38 locations and the voles were fed for a few days to acclimatise them to their surroundings. Four days later, they were released to fend for themselves. Members of the Trust's Junior Wildlife Rangers enjoyed the experience of feeding and releasing them.

Water voles disappeared from local waterways and most of the country in the latter part of the 20th century. Reduction of habitat, poor water quality and piling of canal banks started the decline. The final straw was the spread of non-native mink (a vicious predator), as a result of escape and deliberate release from fur farms. For the past three years, the Trust has been working with the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust to monitor mink and has had much help from local fishery managers to reduce their numbers.

Trust Chairman, David Kirk, said "We had to be sure the conditions were right. The final piece of the jigsaw was the recent award

winning River Bulbourne improvement scheme in Boxmoor, which was supported by the Environment Agency. We now have an ideal chalk stream habitat."

This project has been made possible through the generosity of local individuals and organisations, beginning with a welcome bequest from the will of talented local artist Sheila Jackman. "It just shows how much can come from a bequest to a charity in a will", David said. "A large contribution from Affinity Water and a welcome grant from the Canal and River Trust have taken us a long way to funding this first phase and we are very grateful to both these agencies."

David Watts of Affinity Water said: "Affinity Water is very proud to be able to contribute to this exciting and valuable project. Water may be our business, but we also want to do our bit to improve the local environment and enhance biodiversity across our supply area and we are grateful to have

the opportunity to work with the Box Moor Trust to reintroduce water voles, an iconic species, back into the Bulbourne."

This is only the first of 3 phases to ensure a strong genetic base. More will be introduced in different parts of the Trust land for 2 more years subject to securing funding. Any grant, sponsorship, donation or bequest would be a huge help for this project or indeed for other special wildlife projects carried out by the Trust. Members of the public can also help by reporting mink sightings or volunteering to monitor water voles.



## Forthcoming Events

We have two family events coming up in the next couple of months, both taking place at the Old Barn at Westbrook Hay:

**Half Term Family Bat Walk** on Wednesday 30th October, 4.30-6pm.

This is always very popular so booking is essential at [education@boxmoortrust.org.uk](mailto:education@boxmoortrust.org.uk)

**Christmas in Hay Wood** on Saturday 7th December, 10am-12.30pm.

Drop in session with Father Christmas in the woods, Christmas crafts and outdoor activities. Suggested donation £2.50 per child.

Contact Us

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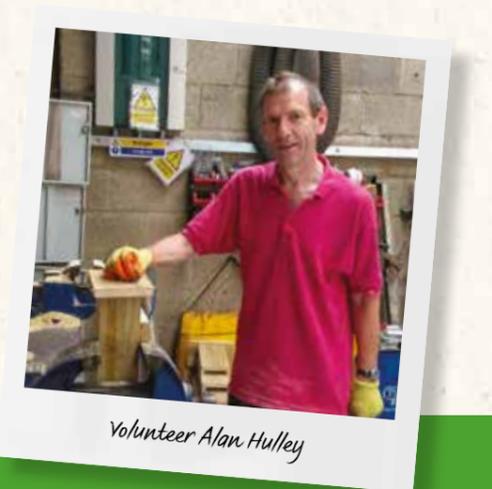
Edward Grayson with Peter Phillips

## Cricket bat presentation

On 15th September, Trustee Peter Phillips was at Hemel Hempstead Town Cricket Club to present a very special bat to young player Edward Grayson for Junior Contribution to Senior Cricket. The bat was made from willow grown on the Trust estate, only a few hundred yards from the club's pitches. This special type of willow, *Salix alba caerulea*, has been planted for many years on the moor and takes 20 years or more to achieve its optimum size (about 5' diameter). The trees are then harvested by JS Wright & Sons and are cut and graded into bat sized 'clefts' before being sent to India for production and finally exported worldwide. Each year, the Trust awards two bats – one to each of the two cricket clubs on the estate.

## Boxing Clever!

Three of our volunteers, Alan Hulley, Mike Dunks and Steve Hayward, have been generously donating their time and skills to provide accommodation for local wildlife. Alan has been working on constructing bat boxes, whilst Mike has been making swift and owl boxes. Thanks for all your hard work guys.



Volunteer Alan Hulley

# Autumn Festival Fun

**Blackbirds Moor**  
(off St John's Road/Heath Lane, Boxmoor)

Saturday 12th October: 11am to 3pm  
Sunday 13th October: 12 noon to 3pm



**Bigger and better than ever this year, our flagship event will be once again celebrating local crafts and produce over two days in October.**

There will be 2 large marquees plus some separate smaller ones, selling delicious baked wares, cheeses, jams and preserves, fresh fruit and vegetables, plants and other goodies. A range of stalls will be selling hand-made gifts, papercrafts, handbags and clothing, bath accessories, jewellery and crafted wooden items.

Berkhamsted Bowmen will be offering the chance to try your hand at archery on both days. There will also be live music and hot food/refreshments available. There will be plenty of activities for the younger members of the family, with children's crafts, story corner, face painting and sand art in the marquees and a mobile petting farm with small furry creatures to stroke. On Saturday, there will be a 'Mad

Science' show with slime making! Sunday will feature the ever-popular pottery and circus workshops.

We are very excited to announce the launch of '1594: Spirit of Box Moor' gin, which will be available for the first time at the festival. The gin has been produced for us by local Puddingstone Distillery, using berries from the Trust's own junipers on Roughdown Moor. Puddingstone will be selling the gin, both in bottles and to sample on the day!

NB: With entries in the conker tournament having dwindled significantly over the past few years, we have decided not to run the competition this time, but will still have a ring available for those wanting to take part in some friendly conker combat.

## Barn Owls at Boxmoor

Thanks to the expert photography skills of Liam Edwards we have the first pictures of two beautiful barn owls raised this year on Trust Land. We have been doing a lot to get the habitats right for many years and we think this is the third year running that they have bred. As far as we are aware, these are the only breeding barn owls in Hemel Hempstead for many decades. Sadly, for their protection, we cannot be specific about the location.



# Photo Winners – 2020 Calendars



Iain Nibbsy



Derek Dunks



Peter Barley

**We had an amazing response to our calendar photo competition with 132 photos entered! The theme, 'Unusual Viewpoints', inspired some different and imaginative shots and it was very hard to narrow them down to just 12.**

Once we had agreed our selection for the calendar we invited our Facebook followers to vote for their favourite to decide the top three places, and hundreds of you responded. These are the winners:

Third, with 472 votes, was Peter Barley with his spectacular shot of sunrise over Bulbourne Moor. The glorious colours filtering through the early morning mist made this a popular choice with voters.

The second placed image was this stunning kingfisher, captured by photographer Derek Dunks at the very moment it is about to swallow a fish. Taken at Gadespring, the site

of an old watercress farm, Derek's picture got 558 votes.

The overall winner, with a staggering 723 votes was Iain Nibbsy's great shot of two frogs, also taken at our Gadespring site. Fulfilling all the requirements of the theme, the image is shot from a low perspective and combines technical expertise, wildlife interest and humour.

Congratulations to all the winners, and to everyone who had an image selected for the 2020 calendar. Copies are available to buy from the Trust office and website at a cost of £6.00 (plus £1.50 p&p if ordered by post).

## Grants for Local Causes

Grants have now been approved under the Trust's annual programme for community projects within its Area of Benefit, with the following organisations being awarded funds:

**Bovingdon 10:** £950 for gazebos, signs, health & safety equipment and two-way radios.

**Hospice of St Francis:** £2,300 for a specialist recliner chair.

**Chaulden Adventure Playground:** £2,500 for construction of pond and wildlife education area.

**Chaulden Infants Parents Committee:** £2,500 for development of garden and wildlife area.

**St Cuthbert Mayne Parents Association:** £2,500 for refurb and extension of overgrown forest trail.

**Shelley Netball Club:** £1,426 for purchase of team strip and equipment.

**Apsley Paper Trail:** £2,500 for replacement outboard motor for tour boat.

**HH (Camelot) RUFC:** £2,500 for renovation of kitchen facilities in club house.

**Friends of Parkwood Surgery:** £628 for purchase of projector stand, screen and display board.

**Friends of Pixies Hill School:** £1,895 for equipment for launch of gardening project.

**1st Bovingdon Scout Group:** £2,450 for camping equipment.

**Adeyfield Free Church:** £1,850 to furnish two counselling rooms.

**St Mary's Church, Apsley:** £1,000 for replacement of six bell ropes.

In addition, a grant of £6,000 was confirmed for the Dacorum Community Trust for distribution by them to deserving cases.

The Trust continues to support the Community Wheels minibus scheme with an annual contribution of £2,500.