

Summer Newsletter



Deregistration approved

Photo: John O'Dell

The Trust is delighted to confirm that its recent application to deregister a small section of common land adjacent to the south side of London Road and exchange it for a larger area adjoining and to the west of the commons on the opposite side of the road has been successful. Both pieces of land are already owned by the Trust.

The deregistered area includes part of Box Hill (Gees Meadow) and the paddock at Snooks End. Already integral to our land management and agricultural activities, this additional operational space will be used to improve our livestock housing and will allow us to provide enhanced educational opportunities and community activities. A new pedestrian gate and permissive footpath will be installed by the Trust to link Box Hill with Westbrook Hay and also to public footpath 96, which crosses the moors that run alongside the A4251.

The area to be exchanged is Snook's Triangle and part of Snook's Moor which, although privately owned by the Trust, was not previously common land. The Trust believes that the exchange will be advantageous to its beneficiaries and the wider public, as it will generate an area of registered common land three times the size of the deregistered section, thus increasing the overall acreage of open access common land within Hemel Hempstead and protecting people's right of access in perpetuity.





Photo: Dacorum Borough Council

Wild About Dacorum

Our staff team were delighted to attend the 'Wild About Dacorum' Community Fair on Thursday 2 April.

Hosted by Dacorum Climate Action Network, this successful event celebrated local action for nature, volunteering, and the amazing groups supporting wildlife across the borough. It was great to meet everyone involved, including Hertfordshire Health Walks, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, National Trust, RSPB and Butterfly Conservation.



Photo: Will Atkins

Tongues of Fire

(Gymnosporangium clavariiforme)

How impressive is this fungus, going by the spectacular name of 'Tongues of Fire', observed and photographed by Will Atkins on the juniper bushes at Roughdown Common during May. It is a species of rust fungus which alternately infects juniper and hawthorn. Juniper is the primary host, on which the fungus produces these orange tentacle-like fruiting bodies. These release spores that travel on the wind until they infect a hawthorn tree. On the secondary host, the fungus produces yellowish depressions on the leaves and infects the fruit, which sprouts a medusa-like head of spore tubes. The spores must then infect a juniper to complete the life cycle. It does not cause serious damage to junipers, but hawthorns can suffer significant loss of haw production.

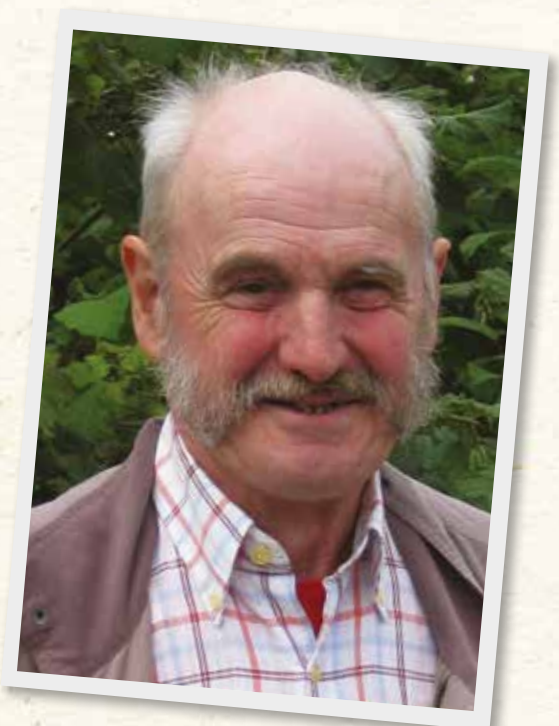
George Tite, Trustee

4th August 1939 – 7th March 2026

George was born and brought up in Apsley and went to a school at Two Waters (where Aldi now is). He then went to Berkhamsted School. As a child he spent a lot of time on Two Waters Moor and Roughdown Common, experiences that inspired his keen interest in wildlife.

On leaving school he began his career in agriculture. He later joined John Dickinson in Apsley as a fireman, rising to the rank of Station Officer. George used to have a smallholding for many years, during which time he kept a variety of livestock. Later, he had ponies and a few sheep. His main hobby was carriage-driving, and he would often be seen driving his piebald mare round Felden and Bovingdon. Townspeople, George believed, should be given a taste of the countryside in an urban setting and not just another park. He believed that the Trust must ensure the maintenance of grazing land and use the moors for as many different outdoor, educational and recreational pursuits as possible.

During his tenure as a Trustee, George served on the Estate and Grants committees for many years and as Vice-Chair between 2017 and 2022. His knowledge and experience, particularly of grazing and managing livestock, will be greatly missed.



Sad News

In May, one of our Old English goats was attacked by a dog and, following the vet's advice, had to be euthanised due to its injuries.

We are all devastated by this. Many people commented on our social media post, asking if the dog's owner had come forward. We regret to say that the incident was neither reported to us nor to the police, resulting in unnecessary suffering for the animal. Furthermore, no dog owner came forward to take responsibility. As a direct result of this incident, we have reluctantly taken the decision to make Bovington Brickworks nature reserve an area where all dogs must be kept on leads at all times.

The **Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025** came into force in England and Wales on March 18, 2026, introducing significantly tougher penalties and expanded powers for police. Key updates include:

- **Unlimited Fines:** The previous £1,000 fine cap has been removed. Courts can now issue unlimited fines to dog owners whose pets are involved in an incident.
- **Expanded Definition of Livestock:** The law now explicitly covers alpacas, llamas, and equines, in addition to traditional farm animals like sheep, cattle, and pigs.
- **Broader Scope:** The offence is no longer limited to fenced fields. It includes incidents on public roads, footpaths, bridleways, and when livestock are being moved.
- **Stricter Definition of Worrying:** Physical contact is not required for an offence. Chasing, running at, or causing stress, fear, or panic counts as livestock worrying.
- **Enhanced Police Powers:** Police now have greater authority to seize and detain dogs where there are reasonable grounds to believe they have worried livestock and pose a future risk.



Photo: Elaine Rushton



We encourage any member of the public who witnesses livestock worrying on Trust land to report it to the police and Trust office (emergency number is on our answerphone out of hours).

Boxmoor Cricket Club awards evening

Every year the Trust presents a bat to a young cricketer in our locality. The bat is made of willow grown on the Trust estate. The bat is normally awarded to a player who has made the transition from junior to adult cricket.

This year the bat was awarded to Harry Stevens, 17. Harry has played Herts Junior League cricket with Boxmoor CC for many years now; and has become a regular in our adult teams. Last season he was the club's leading medium-pace bowler, taking the second-highest number of wickets (34) at the club, behind only our club captain. His best figures were 4-8. With his batting, whilst normally a tail-ender Harry has developed his skills, and last year scored his maiden 50 in adult cricket.

Boxmoor CC are very grateful that the Trust continues with what has become a tradition at the club. It's a highlight of each year's awards night. Thanks from all of us, especially to Peter Ablett who presented on behalf of the Trust, alongside our own head of cricket, David Coster.

Mark Vaughan, BCC Club Secretary



Photo: Boxmoor CC

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Donation from local company

We're incredibly grateful to Vital Radiology Services for their generous £500 donation to support our environmental and wildlife work at the Trust.

This contribution will go towards projects like our tern raft, helping to create safe nesting spaces for these migratory birds. It also supports our ongoing wildlife monitoring across the estate, enabling us to use trail cameras to better understand and protect the species that make their home on Trust land. Thanks to donations like this, we're able to capture amazing moments, like this still from recent video footage of otters exploring the waterways - a graphic reminder of why this work matters.

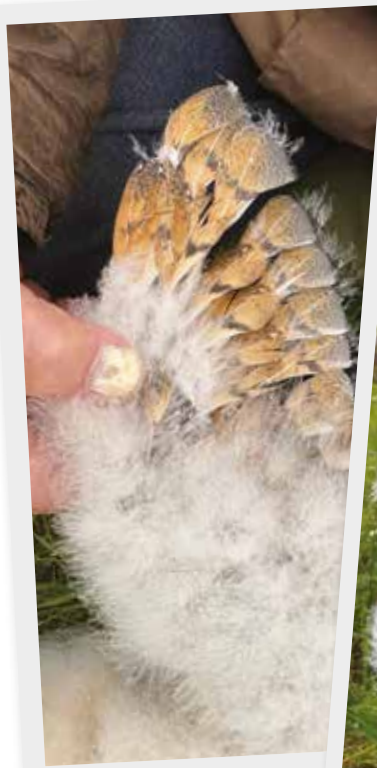


Fledgling raptors doing well

Following on from our story in the spring newsletter, disappointingly only one egg out of five laid actually hatched.

However, the single infant thrived and grew fast. Liam Edwards of L&L Wildlife Monitoring and registered BTO bird ringer Stuart Downhill took charge of the important job of weighing and ringing the six-week-old barn owl chick, ably assisted by Trust Senior Ranger, Heather Burrows. A wing check was also carried out. All the data collected is recorded and feeds into a national database, giving us an insight into how well we are managing the estate. Latest news is that the owls have begun laying again – at time of going to press three eggs are being brooded.

In another nest box on the estate, we have been monitoring a pair of kestrels raising five chicks, all of which have now fledged successfully.



Photos: Liam Edwards



Box Moor Trust Festival 2026

19th and 20th September on Blackbirds Moor

Applications for stall space, either inside a marquee or an outside pitch, are welcome from local crafters, artisans, and small businesses, as well as community groups and charities. Contact us at admin@boxmoortrust.org.uk if you are interested in having a stall. This is an established, free event for visitors.

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