

The Magog Trust

Annual Review 2015

Development, activities and achievements this year



Michaelmas 2014 marked the 25th Anniversary of the purchase of the land now known as Magog Down. This was celebrated with a gathering of Friends, Members and guests in The Granary, Stapleford; the talks by Niki Williamson, from the RSPB, and Philip Oswald, reflected the status the land has reached. For, although Magog Down is now an area widely used for recreation from walking – with or without dogs – to running and kite flying, it is also an area of conservation to which have returned birds, mammals, insects, and flowers in an environment of new woods, hedges and grassland.

To mark the occasion, an appeal was launched for the purchase of plants to act as ‘singing trees’ for birds. The first batch of eight of these trees have now been planted on the SW boundary. Over the



next couple of years more will be added, with the intention of having twenty five in total. Additionally, a copse of trees planted between the paddocks, was named Barnes Copse to acknowledge the part played by Joan Barnes and her husband Ray, at the outset of The Magog Trust. As if in celebration, a Pyramidal Orchid, *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (left) has flowered for the first time in all those years.

An evening to attract new volunteers was held in February, which demonstrated the various tasks undertaken on behalf of the Trust. Although it was not very well attended, a couple more people joined the Magog Down volunteer group

which meets on the first Wednesday of each month carrying out a number of diverse tasks on the ground and is a vital part of the management of the Down. The Governors acknowledge the work of all the volunteers and thank them for their efforts.



After five years with CPPF (Cambridge Past, Present, Future), we have changed our Ranger contract and, from April 2015, have engaged Jon Gibbs as a Conservation Ranger to patrol and care for the environment of the Magog Down, for visitors and wildlife.

A change in management responsibilities within the contractors who carry out the majority of path cutting, hedge work and scrub clearance meant that we have been able to catch up on a backlog of work, brought about also by the productive growing season last year. Further, because of the changes in the requirements of CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) in their European Agri-Environment schemes, the cropping regime has changed for the 2015 season: In addition to wheat (21.45ha) we are also growing sugar beet (4.05ha) and 1.2ha of bird feed to fulfil the requirements for a greening crop under the crop diversification rules. An invitation to talk on the History of Magog Down at Stapleford History Society, gave us the opportunity to explore the agriculture of the land, in the context of the surrounding landscape, before its purchase by the Magog Trust 25 years ago. Before the 1812 Inclosure Act the land was primarily heath on which sheep were grazed, an environment to which it is returning. The paddocks are returning to a good state thanks to the excellent management by our current shepherd. It is always a joy to see sheep grazing on the hillside.



In striving to keep down costs, our administrative assistant has been working hard at keeping our Friend/Member database current and inviting subscription renewal through Standing Orders. The Governors approved a small charge for handling renewals by cheque. Over half of our database contacts now have email access though we would like this to be even higher. The number of Friends and Members though remains fairly even at around 500 with around 50% more new Friends compared with last year, but a similar number of lapses.

However, the total of Friends and Members does not equate with the number of visits to Magog Down, which we can estimate at around 60,000 per annum, through data gained from a vehicle counter, and supported by results of surveys. With the huge rise in house building south of the City of Cambridge, we can only expect the footfall to increase. In exploring new income streams to meet this anticipated demand, the Governors are taking steps towards introducing parking charges for those who are neither Members nor Friends. Although there are currently restrictions to this, a case for such charges will be made in the months ahead. Every endeavour is made to engage with current Friends and Members as well as encouraging new ones through activities such as a bird survey in April 2014, circulation of information in local magazines, interacting with visitors on site and attending local fetes and feasts. Keeping the website as up to date as possible is an important factor too. The use of email means that we can more readily keep in touch and we are currently installing a new noticeboard to replace the one that had been damaged by fire.

The Governors have developed their formal business plan to take full account of the risks and opportunities that lie ahead. Sustainability is one of the key criteria we apply to our work.

The Trust has been fortunate in obtaining the services of two new Governors recently, though anyone interested in securing the future of this fragile landscape should consider supporting us in this way. We are looking for able local people interested in what we are trying to achieve with the restoration of intensively farmed arable land to traditional chalk grassland. The Board of Governors needs to have people with a wide range of knowledge and skills to inform our discussions and decisions.

Collectively we need working knowledge of current environmental issues, finance, land management and relevant legal requirements. Governors do not have to be experts in any of these subjects as we can and do seek professional advice from experts. We need people able to give time to helping the Trust and its small army of volunteers without whom we would be able to achieve very little.



Magog Trust Financial Summary 2014-15

BALANCE SHEET	2015	2014
	£	£
Fixed Assets		
Tangible Assets	478,339	478,842
Investments	576,397	557,784
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Total fixed assets	1,054,736	1,036,626
Current Assets		
Debtors	32,635	5,425
Cash at bank and in hand	75,613	79,296
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	108,248	84,721
Creditors:		
Amounts falling due within one year	31,153	14,196
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Net current assets	77,095	70,525
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Net assets	1,131,831	1,107,151
Funds:		
Restricted funds	4,790	940
Unrestricted funds:		
Accumulated Fund	477,335	477,335
Expendable Endowment	585,951	561,452
SFC Designated Fund	16,325	16,325
General Fund	47,430	51,099
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Total Unrestricted funds	1,127,041	1,106,211
Total Charity Funds	1,131,831	1,107,151

SUMMARY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

	2014-15	2013-14
	£	£
Total Incoming resources	85,566	93,203
Total resources expended	85,369	83,509
Net movement in funds	197	9,694

For the financial year ended 31 March 2015, the charity was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Registered Office: The Magog Trust,
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