

## *Editorial*

Printing and postage costs continue to rise using a significant proportion of an annual subscription. We have taken the decision to make this issue, No 45, the final printed, distributed Newsletter. However, you will still be able to keep in touch with all that is happening on Magog Down through our website. If anyone does not have access to a computer, please send an SAE to the office address, for a print version of articles from the website.



## *Come and join a work party!*

Volunteers gather on the **1st Wednesday of each month** to enjoy an hour or two in the fresh air on the Down. We have cleared blackthorn encroaching on the Youth Wood, spread wood chips to keep winter mud at bay, pulled thistles to make the grazing safer for the sheep and trimmed back invasive plants to encourage the native chalkland plants to flourish. Do come and join us if you are free; we meet at 2.30pm in the car park. Look for the bright yellow van! It belongs to Bill French, Volunteer co-ordinator.

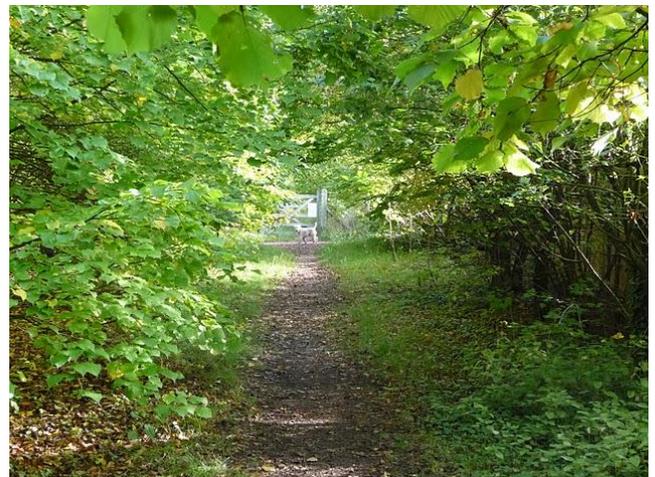
We also sometimes meet at weekends; please email [administrator@magogtrust.org.uk](mailto:administrator@magogtrust.org.uk) with subject heading Weekend Volunteer and tell us if you would prefer a Saturday or Sunday session.

## *Obituary*

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Michael Nurse on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2011. Michael edited the Newsletter for many years and was a stalwart supporter of the Trust, taking a very active role on the Events Committee when we held the Downland Fair and Teddy Bears' Picnic. His cheerful and willing presence is missed.

## *Dogs on the Down*

One of the joys of Magog Down is walking with your dog, and letting her/him romp with the other canine visitors in Fair Field, which almost always has at least two dogs playing together before or after a walk. There are many places to enjoy a stroll and admire the view together. The off-lead walk came out of the perimeter fencing installed originally as a rabbit barrier. It was patrolled regularly and proved a very effective way of keeping rabbits from destroying new tree growth. It now provides a very popular walking area for all. In other areas, we are asked to keep our dogs on a short lead. These on-lead areas provide shelter for nesting birds and other wildlife, refuge for people who like to relax on the benches without fear of being interrupted by a loose dog and free play areas for children. Keeping dogs on leads also makes it easier to *scoop that poop*, not only a legality but also necessary to keep the meadowland clean for the sale of the grass crop and for the acidity of the soil.



A pamphlet, *You and Your Dog in the Countryside*, can be obtained from Natural England.

## *History of Little Trees Hill*

The Gog Magog Hills, south of Cambridge, once formed part of a great swathe of chalk grassland and open heath that stretched from Norfolk to the Chiltern Hills, bordering the Fens to the north. Cleared of forest in Neolithic times, it provided a well-used thoroughfare, with a series of parallel tracks known as the Icknield Way, along which, for example, Neolithic axes from Grimes Graves in Norfolk were carried to the great prehistoric centres of Salisbury Plain and Wessex.

The crescent of the Gog Magog Hills is rich in ancient archaeological monuments, including the Wandlebury Iron Age ring fort, the Cherry Hinton Ward Ditches and a recently excavated ceremonial site close to the Gog Magog golf course. However, on Little Trees Hill itself we have the remains of two particular Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments.

### **3000 - 2400 BC Middle Neolithic**

A causewayed enclosure, partially eroded by ploughing but generally in good condition has been identified on Little Trees Hill. The soil markings are visible on aerial photographs taken in the early 1960's. The perimeter is defined by a segmented ditch closely following the 65m contour. A trackway, running NW to SE, on north-east side partially converges with the enclosure. Other trackways are found on the northern side together with other unidentified markings. This whole area is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Causewayed enclosures are incredibly rare with only 50 -70 recorded nationally, mainly in the South of England. There are just five sites in the East Anglia region, constructed over a 500-



year period during the Middle Neolithic but continuing in use in later periods. The ditches forming such enclosures tend to be shallow and may have been used for retaining livestock rather than for defensive purposes. Perhaps they were sites for seasonal gatherings, or for the counting and selling of cattle.

### **2400 - 1500 BC Late Neolithic to late Bronze Age**

A Bowl Barrow is present on Little Trees Hill, within the enclosure. This feature is thought to indicate Bronze Age reuse of the Neolithic enclosure. Bowl barrows are funerary monuments dating from the Late Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age. Such barrows were often reused for cremations following the original burial. The surrounding ditch has become infilled over the years, but can be traced around the eastern and southern edges. The Barrow is part of a wider group extending across the chalk uplands of North Hertfordshire and South Cambridgeshire.

### **Mediaeval and later times**

By about 970 the Abbey of Ely had acquired the Moor or Heath field comprising Wandlebury, Gog Magog and Heath Farms and Little Trees Hill, recorded as 500 acres in the 13th century and 547 acres in 1740. The first records of ploughing and sowing to improve pasture was c1720 and c1810 despite opposition from the Dean and Chapter of Ely, who always claimed sole ownership of the heath and sheepwalks. The land was divided in 1741 between the Dean and Chapter and Lord Godolphin, each receiving 274 acres with sheepwalks for 300 animals. With enclosure in 1814 much of the chalk grassland was ploughed for arable use. Arable crops were being grown on the site in 1894, with oats the principle crop until the 1920's, but some sheep were still present in 1977.

To ensure that we can stay in touch with all our valued friends and members, please send an email to [administrator@magogtrust.org.uk](mailto:administrator@magogtrust.org.uk) , with **email address** in the subject line, so that we can update our files. Addresses will not be shared with any other organisation.



*What's on the Down?*

Whose sheep are these? This is a question we often hear, and the answer is that the shepherd and the Trust work together in a major contribution to the maintenance and conservation of the site, crucial to the development of chalk grassland. This is one reason why it is so important to ensure that dogs are kept on-lead and do not foul the land. A group of volunteers spent an afternoon pulling thistles out of the paddock on the South Down to allow more sheep to enjoy the pasture. The bottom field is farmed following standard crop rotation.

*The Skyline WILL change!*

*A neolithic and bronze age landscape.* Many would not recognize this description of Magog Down, as just described. When the site was purchased in 1989, the Bowl Barrow was planted with trees, as part of a shelter belt formed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to provide cover for game birds for the estate of the Duke and Duchess of Leeds at Wandlebury. In the last few years, the trees have been cleared and a start made to return this to a turfed hilltop, as it used to be. Here the skyline has already changed.



*The causewayed enclosure*

		<p>The first photo shows the current skyline and the second a prediction of how it will change.</p>
		<p>The first map shows the current woodland planting with the area of the scheduled monument superimposed. The second gives some indication of the woodland to be removed. This includes the original shelter belt as well as the later plantings. The pathways will be re-routed.</p>

