

'FRIENDS OF THE TOWANS'

HAPPY SPRING 2016!

So, the wet stuff finally ended and now we have cold northerlies. It's dried my firewood out nicely at last, but means that I'm still burning more of it than I'd wish to in late April. Most of our migrant birds have returned around their normal dates, but some plants seem to have been held back a bit. There's a big panic brewing in Helston that the Lily of the Valley won't be ready in time for Flora Day on 7th May. Maybe a floral substitute will be needed this year.

Talking of fires....as I often do...we've had some great ones since Christmas. The volunteers have got through a huge amount of work clearing scrub from a range of sites across the Towans. To give you the dry facts, we've had **9 outings**, with an **average of 8.5 people** on each, and worked **just over 300 hours**.

Sites benefitting from this attention were **Lethlean, Mexico and Gwithian Towans and Gwithian Green**. We also carried out a successful **beach clean** on a beautiful February day, when we cleared probably over 30 bags worth of litter from the beach between Mexico and Gwithian.

The less dry facts are that we've shared some good company, fresh air, tea, biscuits, even cakes at times, and seen some wildlife too. It's lovely to hear the skylarks overhead again as we have on our last few outings on Mexico.

I also co-ordinated a group of 33 Hayle and Camborne cubs, scouts and leaders in February, clearing and burning scrub in Lethlean and Mexico. Hopefully we can develop this contact through lighter evenings in the summer.....which leads me on to the **Summer Programme**.

This is the season when we do no 'slash and burning', instead spending more time trying to observe and learn about the precious wildlife inhabiting the Towans. The programme includes trips to observe plants, birds, butterflies and moths.

We started this yesterday with a **birdwatching walk** through Gwithian Green, St Gothian LNR and on around Godrevy to Hell's Mouth. Twelve people enjoyed watching and learning a bit about the **52 species** we observed. That's a great total in a few hours in a fairly small area, which just underlines how rich and diverse the area in and around the Towans is. A full species list appears on the next page.

We also plan to embark on a vegetation survey over the summer in order to produce a more accurate map of the various vegetation communities present across the Towans, which will inform its ongoing management. It will be great to involve the volunteer group in this, as it will really give everyone an insight into *why* we keep cutting so much scrub....and when and why we need to stop!

We are also continuing our close relationship with Save Our Sand, by including their list of beach cleans in our programme. At their first beach clean last Sunday, they attracted **over 40 people**, which is excellent news. So, why not enjoy the beach this summer, but pick up some litter too, to give you a warm glow on the way home?

So, I hope you all enjoy the summer to come and we look forward to your company as and when you are able. As before, unless stated otherwise next to the specific events' details, we **start at 10am and work on until 2-2.30**.

Bird species recorded on 28th April 2016, Gwithian to Hell's Mouth

(Birds are listed where they were first observed, although many were seen in numerous locations. Those in **Red** are summer visitors – great to see that many had returned already!)

Gwithian Green LNR

Wren	Chiffchaff	Blue Tit
Robin	Blackcap	Great Tit
Dunnock	Sedge Warbler	Long-tailed Tit
Blackbird	Willow Warbler	Woodpigeon
Pied Wagtail	Reed Warbler	
Sparrowhawk	Chaffinch	Swallow
Buzzard	Goldfinch	Sand Martin
Rook	House Sparrow	
Jackdaw	Linnet	Mallard
Carrion Crow	Magpie	

(Many of these birds were detected by song, indicating that they are breeding within the LNR. The noise from the churchyard rookery indicated many well-grown nestlings there)

St Gothian LNR

Herring Gull	Canada Goose	Whimbrel
Great Black-backed Gull	Mute Swan	Common Sandpiper
Tufted Duck	Moorhen	
Pochard	Raven	Skylark
Shelduck		
Meadow Pipit	Stonechat	Wheatear

(The pochard may be a late-staying winter visitor, while the whimbrel dropped in, probably on a pit-stop from wintering in Africa to heading north to the Arctic Circle to breed. One mallard duckling was seen, while many sand martins were skimming across the water. Some of these nest on the sand cliff within the Sanctuary area)

Godrevy to Hell's Mouth

Cormorant	Oystercatcher	
Shag	Gannet	
Fulmar	Rock Pipit	
Lesser Black-backed Gull		Dicky counted 99 seals on the beach at
Guillemot		Fishing Cove, a very wide range of colours
Razorbill	Swift	and sizes – definitely worth a look!

(Around Hell's Mouth in particular, especially on the offshore stack, many seabirds were on active nests. Let's hope they avoid late spring storms...great to see swifts: these are one of the last summer birds to return, meaning that (surely?) summer is now here...)

SUMMER PROGRAMME - May to September 2016

Thurs May 12th - Mexico Towans

This will be our last outing this 'winter' to clearing up cut privet, brambles and clematis in the western area of Mexico Towans. Meet on the road to Beachside Leisure Pk SW 565/388.

SUNDAY May 15th – Beach Clean at St Ives Bay Holiday Pk.

Meet at 10am by the pool – more info at www.sos-hayle.org.uk. Led by Save Our Sand

Thurs May 26th – Upton Towans

Likely to be a combination of vegetation mapping and litter picking. Meet at 10am at main CWT reserve entrance, near the tall chimney.

Thurs June 9th – Upton Towans

Same details as previous outing.

Thurs June 16th – Mexico & Riviere Towans BOTANY walk

Following last year's successful walk at Gwithian, ace Cornish Botanist Ian Bennallick will lead us on another walk, this time in an area he hasn't visited before – there aren't many of those! Meet at 0930 for a 10am start in the car park at the western end of Copperhouse Creek, by Hayle swimming pool and cafe SW 558/377. **Please bring a packed lunch.**

SUNDAY June 25th – Beach clean at Haven Leisure

WEDS June 29th and Thurs June 30th – Moth trapping

Come and observe some of the amazing moths that inhabit the Towans, under the expert guidance of moth enthusiast George Davis. On weds evening at dusk we will attract moths using a white sheet and light. We'll then set up a lamp over night and open up the trap early on Thursday morning to see what's come in. So, two separate events are available. Location has yet to be fixed, so contact Martin closer to the time if you wish to come.

SUNDAY July 3rd – Beach clean at Beachside Leisure

Meet at Reception at 10am – more info at www.sos-hayle.org.uk. Led by Save our Sand.

TUESDAY July 5th – Butterfly transect walk at Upton Towans

Come and see which butterflies inhabit the Towans, and how all your winter scrub clearance benefits them. If the weather is good, we should observe the beautiful Silver studded-blue, which has one of its UK strongholds here. Meet at main CWT reserve entrance by the tall chimney, at 11am. Led by Dick Goodere.

Thurs July 14th – Gwithian Green

We'll carry out various tasks including cutting back dense growth from the stream and probably doing some summer hay-making using the new scythes. SW 587/413

Thurs July 28th – Summer BBQ at Martin and Sarah's near Helston

This is a genuine 'rest' event! Come over to our wetland nature reserve near Helston to observe dragonflies, butterflies and other wildlife while enjoying a BBQ next to the pond. Please let me know if you plan to come and I will give you detailed directions. 10am-2pm

SUNDAY August 7th – Beach clean at North Quay, Hayle Harbour

Meet at 2pm by the gate to the beach – see www.sos-hayle.org.uk. Led by Save our Sand.

Thurs August 11th – Gwithian Green

More hay-making, along with ragwort control if the cinnabar moth caterpillars are having an 'off' year and not eating enough of it.... Lay-by just north of Gwithian Church SW 587/413

Thurs August 25th , Thurs Sept 8th & Thurs Sept 22nd – locations unknown at present

In advance of the ponies returning to graze from October, we may need to reduce ragwort in some areas. These tasks may be varied (a little...) by weeding out other invasive species from some of our scrub-cleared areas, along with litter picking. Details and locations will be decided upon nearer the time.

I will bring tools and gloves, tea/coffee and biscuits to all events but please bring your own suitable outdoor clothing, especially boots.

I will run through a risk assessment before each task, but you should be aware that the Towans is an open, exposed environment. We may have to contend with sun from above and adders from below on a good day, and with rain and wind when it's not so good....

It would be useful but not essential if you could indicate to me via text, phone or email if you do plan to attend, just to give me an idea of numbers of tools, tea bags etc.

I look forward to seeing you soon

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