



Diane and Steve Poole – October 22



# Bookham Blue Hearts Wildflowering Journey



# Benefits of wildflowers and long grass

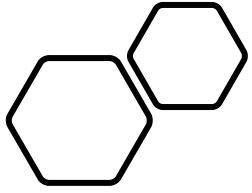


## Wildflowers

- *With over 97% of wildflower meadows destroyed since the 1930s, **road verges are a vital refuge for bees, butterflies birds, bats and bugs. A good verge will supply a diverse source of nectar and pollen from February to September.** Birds-foot trefoil alone is a food plant for over 130 species of invertebrate*
- *'British wildflowers are under threat and therefore so are the pollinators they feed. Not only is it heartbreaking to lose the beauty and colour these native flowers give the UK landscape, **but the plight of pollinators has a very real impact on the food we eat ourselves.'***

## Value of long grasses

- Long grass improves conditions for invertebrates, which in turn provide food for birds and small mammals such as hedgehogs and mice.
- Wild grasses provide nourishment for Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Skipper family caterpillars
- Long uncut grass provides great habitat for moth caterpillars which are blue tits' favourite food
- Spiders can spin webs from the tall grass to catch flies.



# How it all started

- Daily lockdown walk
- Verge flowers were coming out in all their glory
- Total annihilation



# Stopping the mowers

SCC July 2019 motion – was it working?

Complained to Cllr Furniss and raised with BRA and County Councillor

Trial A246 verges for 2020 – more added in 2021

What would come up?



Council therefore agrees to:

- I. Work with the Districts and Boroughs to:
  - a. Produce a pollinator action plan for the next contract period,
  - b. To further review and reduce the frequency of highway verge cuts where it is both safe and desirable to do so,
  - c. To assist in the management of verges and timings of cuts to promote wildlife habitats.
- II. Communicate to residents via our website and social media the reasons for the changes to the frequency of the cuts, explaining the benefits this can have on the wildlife habitat; and



The Bookhams  
Residents'  
Association

bookhamresidents.org.uk  
Tel: 0300 030 9890

# Blue Hearts



Blue Campaign and Blue Hearts

Plain and not well recognised

Why not make them pretty with a message?

Lots of volunteers got involved in making and decorating the hearts



# Positive good news – lots of local publicity



**Bookham Blue Hearts Wildflower Verges**  
@bookhambluehearts · Community

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Promote

## Wildflower 'highway' on village verges

by Diane Poole of Bookham Bees WI

ACCORDING to the national charity Plantlife, over 700 species of wildflower grow on the UK's road verges — nearly 45% of our total flora. And where wild flowers lead, wildlife follows ... a multitude of bees, butterflies, birds and bugs.

In April 2020, my husband Steve and I were delighted by the cowslips and other spring wildflowers on the local highway verges — and then horrified a week later to see these same verges scalped by the Surrey County Council mowers.

That was the start of our Bookham Blue Hearts Wildflower Verges project, working with the residents' association and county councillor to leave some verges unmown again until the autumn as a pilot.

The long-term aim is to create nectar-rich 'highways' that interconnect to form a national 'bloomband' network.

The Blue Heart signs used on protected verges are beautifully decorated with bees, butterflies and flowers with slogans like *Bookham Bee Friendly* to tell passers-by what it's all about and spread the love.

Bookham Butterflies WI members Frances Fancourt and Angela Jones have been helping; Angela being an excellent artist; painted the hearts — this one was done for a verge with orchids.

The scheme was so successful, with the emergence of long suppressed flowers, that we have agreed yet more Blue Heart verges this year with SCC and well over 50 residents have expressed interest in having their own Blue Heart verge outside their homes.

In one road, there will be multiple hearts in place soon, thanks to a past and a present Great Bookham Belle member (not all our WIs are named after pollinators!).

We've used Facebook (@bookhambluehearts) and local print media for publicity and already the neighbouring villages of Fetcham and Eftingham are joining in. We hope other Surrey WI members will be inspired to join in!

*Toadflax brightens up a roadside verge in Bookham*

## Blue Hearts in Bookham's Heart



Have you noticed some beautifully-decorated Blue Hearts sprouting right in the centre of Bookham in the Lower Shott? Grove Corner area? Most of these have been hand-painted by Angela Jones to highlight areas reserved for wild flowers. Once again we have seen a lot of orchids there this year. The area just east from the pedestrian lights at the top of the High Street contains a lovely mosaic of flowers and shrubs planted and maintained by Frances Fancourt and her helpers. Frances is our local tree warden and this is another 'branch' (sorry!) of her activities! She is also responsible for the stunning display of wild flowers outside the telephone exchange in Church Road. In previous times this area was 'maintained' by the use of weedkiller but Frances persuaded them to 'see the light' and everyone is delighted with the result! Have you also seen that some mini-hearts have appeared, Banky-like, on the ugly wooden fence surrounding the electricity sub-station at Lower Shott? We have been given permission by MVDC to enhance the beauty and wildlife-friendliness of this eyesore by growing a hedge of Pyracantha up it which the Blue Heart team will maintain. This will provide a colourful feast of flowers for the bees and berries and nesting sites for the birds. Beautiful wild flowers such as Cranesbill, Devils Bit Scabious, Ox Eye Daisies and Birds Foot Trefoil are popping up nearby and we intend to enhance this further next year with some judicious planting and seeding. The rest of the area will be mown as usual by MVDC.

We've been delighted to be joined on this project by over 60 residents who have put out Blue Hearts on their own verges and gardens this year, some displaying their own beautiful artwork. By the time you read this, all the Blue Heart verges should have been mown, cleared and put to bed, ready for the flowers to spring up again next year, hopefully even better than in 2021!

If you have any other ideas for ugly buildings or sites which could be enhanced by wild flower planting, please email us on [bookhambluehearts@gmail.com](mailto:bookhambluehearts@gmail.com). You can also like our Facebook page [@bookhambluehearts](https://www.facebook.com/bookhambluehearts). Finally, we were the lead feature in the August issue of Surrey Life magazine - now there's posh! Thank you to everyone who has helped us with our project over the last year. The bees, butterflies and other wildlife send their thanks too!

Article and Photos by Steve Poole

## Bookham Bulletin

LOCAL NEWS FROM BOOKHAM COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION  
Issue 10: bookhamcommunityassociation.org Winter 2021

### Bookham Blue Hearts End of Season Review

Well, Summer is over and we can look back on a year in which we have achieved a lot in our efforts to promote wild flowers on roadside verges. This is the first time in many decades that flowers in our designated areas have been allowed to complete their natural cycle and it has been amazing to see what has popped up, including lots of rare orchids! There has been a lot of local support and 60 residents are now managing their own blue heart verges under the scheme. Email us for details on how to do so.

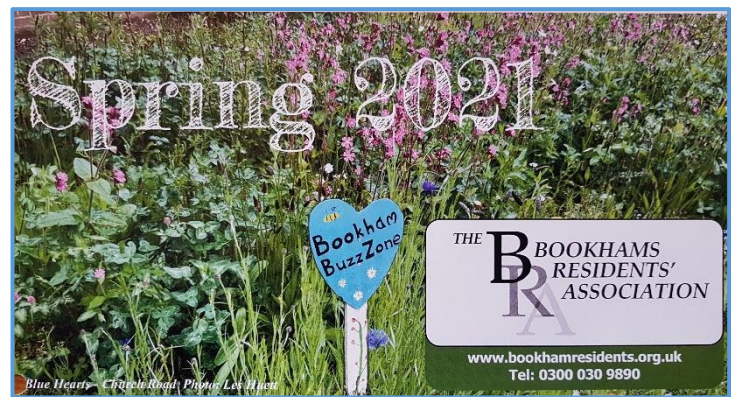
You may also have noticed some Blue Hearts sprouting up in the centre of Bookham around the Lower Short car park. Most have been beautifully decorated by Angela Jones to highlight areas reserved for flowers. There is now a lovely display of flowers and shrubs near the crossing planned and maintained by Frances Fancourt and her team. She also created the delightful mini meadow outside the telephone exchange in Church Road, an area which had previously been 'maintained' by the use of weedkiller!

We're also 'greening up' the ugly fence around the electricity sub-station at the Shott with bee and bird friendly shrubs which the team will maintain. Beautiful pollinator-friendly native flowers such as Meadow Cranesbill, Devils Bit Scabious, Ox Eye Daisy and Birds Foot Trefoil have appeared there and we intend to enhance this further next year with some judicious planting and seeding. The rest of the area will be mown as usual by MVDC. By now, all the Blue Heart verges should have been mown, cleared and put to bed. Here's hoping next year will be even better!

For more information please email us [bookhambluehearts@gmail.com](mailto:bookhambluehearts@gmail.com) or find us on Facebook [@bookhambluehearts](https://www.facebook.com/bookhambluehearts). Thank you to everyone who has helped us over the last year. The bees, butterflies and other wildlife send their thanks too!

Steve Poole

Village Day 2021 – see centrefold for photos of the day!



Spring 2021

Blue Hearts - Chrissie Keath Photos, Lavinia Hill

THE BOOKHAM RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

[www.bookhamresidents.org.uk](http://www.bookhamresidents.org.uk)  
Tel: 0300 030 9890

Mail us on [bookhambluehearts@gmail.com](mailto:bookhambluehearts@gmail.com)

# 60+ Residential verges in 2021

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- As soon as signs went up on main road verges got positive comments
  - Responded to local publicity
- People started asking about their own
- Street champions
- Link into local school and SWT





## Spreading the message



- SWT webinar and blog
- Article in August 2021 Surrey Life
- Surrey WI News
- Blue Hearts now in Effingham and Fetcham and interest in Ashted, Horsley and Oxshott
- SWP webinar March 2022



# Some residential verges



# Guidance for Residents



## BOOKHAM BLUE HEARTS WILDFLOWER VERGES Guidance for Residential Verges

The small central team are working with SCC on management of highway verges but we'd love residents to come on board with suggestions to manage their own grass verges.

We will provide advice - you need to provide the love and care!

Guidance available on making and decorating your own hearts — kits and ready-decorated hearts are also available

Great project to get your children or grandchildren interested in nature and even helping you decorate your Blue Hearts

### THE IDEAL VERGE

- Residents are happy to manage their own verges, seeding or plug planting if necessary
- It needs to look 'cared for' so maybe mow a narrow 'frame' around it and put up a Blue Heart
  - Any 'Mr/Mrs Neat and Tidy' neighbours to be sweet talked

### NOT EVERY VERGE IS SUITABLE

- Must not be regularly walked over, parked on or played on
  - Must not have sightline issues for traffic

Facebook: @bookhambluehearts Email: bookhambluehearts@gmail.com



## BOOKHAM BLUE HEARTS WILDFLOWER VERGES Guidance for Making Your Own Blue Hearts

This should be a fun activity and will unleash your creative skills! A great project for little ones too.

Suggest practising letters and bee, butterfly, flower images on paper first.

**Hearts**—ideally 6 mm marine ply or equivalent but you could recycle something you already have. Key thing is to make it weatherproof. Remember to treat the edges and also screw holes when attaching to stakes.

We have a supply of suitable **stakes** made of treated wood – no further treatment needed. Contact us on the email below.

**Paints and decoration** as follows:

1. **Outdoor quality paint** in a lightish blue. Options we have tried are
  - *Matt finish*—Cuprinol 5316975 Garden Shades Exterior Woodcare, Cornflower—*does not need a separate primer, water-based and easy-to-use*
  - *Gloss finish*—Paragon Enamel Paints BS4800 20-E-51 Cornflower blue / Corfu—*paint heart with a wood primer or coat of the Cuprinol Shades first*
2. **Acrylic paints for letters and pictures** of bees, butterflies, flowers etc – e.g. small packs of assorted colours such as <https://www.whsmith.co.uk/products/whsmith-acrylic-paints-12-ml-pack-of-12/0000034477618.html> but similar available from many suppliers. Or you could even use permanent marker pens.
3. Three light coats of **Clear Lacquer** (to seal over the finished heart including screwholes) e.g. Plasti-kote 1138 Super Clear spray or Rust-Oleum Crystal Clear Multi-Purpose Spray Paint Lacquer Coat Semi-Gloss. *We recommend first spraying a small test area on the back of the heart to make sure it does not mess up the paint.*

Facebook: @bookhambluehearts

Email: bookhambluehearts@gmail.com



# Getting the kids involved

Great project to get your children or grandchildren interested in nature and even helping you decorate your Blue Hearts



# Our reward

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- Native orchids started coming up
  - Existing large grassy area to the east of Lower Shott – ca. 40
  - New verges too
  - Common spotted, pyramidal, bee



# The challenges from residents

## Ragwort is dangerous to horses

- Horses will avoid eating ragwort; the danger being from eating hay with dried ragwort in
- Our verge arisings are not collected for hay



- Critical food plant for cinnabar moth caterpillars



## My dog and I are going to pick up ticks

- This is a potential problem but why do they want to walk on the long grass when there is either a surfaced path alongside or a mown / trampled path through it?
- Most dog walkers take their dogs out in the countryside where they love to run in the long grass!



# Working with SCC


New SCC process for requesting a Blue Heart verge

Exact details of mowing regime still needs fine tuning – need to ensure sightlines maintained and mown strip by road

SCC mow Mole Valley, Elmbridge, Tandridge

Other districts and boroughs currently do their own but taken back to SCC in 2023








End of season full width late mow

 **Tell us about a highway issue**

Roads > Maintenance > Highway's issue

### What is the issue?

Select the option that most closely resembles the issue.

 <p>Untidy grass in Elmbridge, Mole Valley or Tandridge</p>	 <p>Untidy grass outside Elmbridge, Mole Valley or Tandridge</p>	 <p>Parking causing damage to the verge</p>	 <p>Big hole in the verge</p>
 <p>Long grass blocking views into traffic</p>	 <p>Planting a blue heart on the verge</p>	 <p>Any other grass issue</p>	

# Central Bookham and MVDC



- MVDC responsible for Local Open Spaces
- Leaving areas of long grass
- Open to us planting
- Local guerrilla gardening group
- Looking for WIs to join a rota for looking after specific areas





# 'Wildflower' Verges in Swansea

- We currently sow around 40,000 square metres (almost 10 acres or about 6 football pitches) of wildflowers across approximately 190 sites in Swansea.
- Throughout late spring/summer the flowers offer a riot of bright colours for residents and visitors to enjoy, as well as providing important habitats for insects and wildlife across verges, roundabouts, parks and rough ground.
- Our parks and nature teams work together to create these wildlife havens in order to conserve and improve the biodiversity of the area.



# Moving forward



More verges under our umbrella

Support residents

Sharing and spreading 'the love'

Consider 'cut and collect' as contracts renegotiated