

# **WE ARE NOT ALONE**

([Added 31/07/2010](#))

The National Trust and Natural England are busy upsetting local people all across Britain: here are a few instances.

[HEATHLAND MADNESS](#)

[DON'T TRUST THE NATIONAL TRUST: ERDDIG](#)

[THE UNTRUSTWORTHY TRUST AGAIN: CHESHIRE](#)

[ASHDOWN FOREST](#)

[DUNSTER ACTION GROUP: SOMERSET](#)

[HEADLEY HEATH, SURREY](#)

[THE GRAZING WAR COMES TO KINGWOOD COMMON, OXFORDSHIRE](#)

[CHAILEY COMMON, EAST SUSSEX](#)

THE HEATHLAND MADNESS web site states that there is plenty of evidence in the public domain to suggest that there is widespread disagreement to heathland restoration and that National Heathland Conferences have paid little heed to this in the past. It records that "Objections often refer to the lack of sustainability; the lack of consultation, or the fait accompli of consultation on a predetermined management plan; and more often than not, the heavy handed management itself. The usual response from conservation professionals is to dismiss this as a lack of understanding, or to besmirch objectors by inferring that they are new incomers or just affluent, or both. It seems to me that a fundamental issue is at stake here. Its not just about the fact that conservation professionals get to have their choice of what nature is conserved, it is that many other people have a different perception and set of values about landscapes". Sounds a bit familiar doesn't it?

**[THIS IMPORTANT SITE HAS MANY LINKS TO OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTESTS.](#)**

Ref: [http://www.self-willed-land.org.uk/heath\\_madness.htm](http://www.self-willed-land.org.uk/heath_madness.htm)

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### **DON'T TRUST THE NATIONAL TRUST: ERDDIG**

A campaign began in February 2007 against a National Trust plan to build 223 houses on Erddig ground opposite the village of Rhostyllen in North East Wales. At a meeting it was reported that concerns of local people were expressed to the Trust. They acknowledged that the consultation process had not been good enough..... Sounds very familiar. Have a look at what is going on at [http://www.rhostyllen.com/home/?page\\_id=97](http://www.rhostyllen.com/home/?page_id=97)

### **THE UNTRUSTWORTHY TRUST AGAIN: CHESHIRE**

An article in *The Chester Chronicle* (21/11/2008) entitled "National Trust 'dawn raid' angers Friends" reported that shocked members of the Friends of Bickerton Hill (FOBH) group were misled by the National Trust after trees were chopped down in the picturesque Cuckoo Rock Valley. This was part of a heath regeneration scheme intended to chop down almost all the birch trees, but was temporarily halted after "a heated meeting between the two groups last month".

A spokesman for FOBH was reported as saying: "This clearance was and has been done without any clear notice of the Trust's intentions and without any consultation with local people or hill users and at a stage when the trust had almost reached its 50% target. In what can only be described as a surprise dawn raid, about a dozen contractors, with eight chain saws, were instructed by the trust's management to get the trees down as fast as they could, which left a chaotic tangle of trees lying in all directions."

Ref: <http://www.chesterchronicle.co.uk/chester-news/local-chester-news/2008/11/21/national-trust-dawn-raid-angers-friends-59067-22305790/>

See also The Crewe Chronicle: <http://www.crewechronicle.co.uk/crewe-news/local-crewe-news/2008/11/26/friends-of-hill-angered-by-dawn-raid-tree-felling-96135-22337391/>

## ASHDOWN FOREST

<http://www.ashdownforestactiongroup.co.uk/>

The Ashdown Forest Action Group was formed to prevent FURTHER ENCLOSURE of the Forest.

Natural England wish to 'restore' this lowland heath with sheep in conjunction with new fencing.

The 1974 Act and previous Act dating back to 1885 clearly show their purpose was to PREVENT ENCLOSURE.

In 1988 when East Sussex County Council bought the Forest, made possible by private donations, the Ashdown Forest Trust that was formed reiterated the aim to promote the conservation of Ashdown Forest "as a quiet and natural area of outstanding natural beauty and as an amenity and place of resort for members of the public."

The lowland heath that Natural England etc wish to "restore" was created by CATTLE and DEER, not sheep. Sheep were NOT commonable animals originally. In fact prior to 1885 it was ILLEGAL to put sheep on the Forest. Because sheep are anathema to all deer (it was a Royal Hunting Forest.) There has been NO consideration given to the presence of deer on Ashdown Forest in either of the published grazing plans!!(535&602).

The fencing required to contain sheep kills and maims deer and other wildlife, condemning them to a long and painful slow death. The benefits of grazing sheep on AF are definitely NOT proven; the reason given for the fencing erected in addition to the limit of 100 acres [as laid down in the 1974 Act] was because of pressure from a grazier over road casualties to his sheep. (See Grazing Plan 535) This now encloses over 1300 acres!! It was not for heathland regeneration.

Deer are the reason that the Ashdown Forest exists at all. On the New Forest a condition of the Countryside Stewardship scheme they are signed up to states: that the Verderers must NOT financially support sheep grazing on the open forest because of the ECOLOGICAL DAMAGE they may cause!!! If sheep were NOT the "preferred" choice on AF we believe the growing conflict with dog walking would not exist. This amenity is being reduced by the presence of SHEEP.

Sheep created the South Downs NOT the Ashdown Forest .

Common land should NOT be fenced. It is part of our heritage and should be preserved as it was intended. The Act of Parliament created to protect the Forest is being undermined by those empowered to protect it.

## **CAN WE TRUST THE NATIONAL TRUST?**

### **DUNSTER ACTION GROUP: SOMERSET**

[www.nationallyuntrustworthy.co.uk](http://www.nationallyuntrustworthy.co.uk)

The Dunster Action Group is at present fighting The National Trust who want to have a tearoom at Dunster Castle that is in the middle of the village where there are 12 catering establishments within 2 minutes from the Castle.

If you Google *Dunster Castle tea room* you will see we have had quite a lot of local and national press coverage.

Dunster action group is made up of about 20 businesses in Dunster and is also supported by residents. National Trust has paid £15000 for a market survey (very biased) hoping to prove that there is a need for a cafe. Outcome of survey should be at end of this month.

We have large banners up in village. CAN WE TRUST THE NATIONAL TRUST. Our petition has about 5000 signatures at present.

## **HORSE INCIDENTS - HEADLEY HEATH, SURREY**

### **NATIONAL TRUST ENCLOSE HEATHLAND**

#### **UNSATISFACTORY GATES**

#### **ACCIDENTS TO RIDERS**

If all this sounds very familiar to horse riders in West Penwith then you will soon realise that this experience is not unique to us. The National Trust has also enclosed heathland in Surrey with numerous gates; here is an edited selection of emails below.

If after reading this, you want to make your voice heard then please write or email to the National Trust (for gates etc that are intended to be installed on Watch Croft and Carn Galva) and to Natural England for gates already installed on Carnyorth Moor and Men-an-Tol Croft

(Lanyon Farm). [Addresses can be found here](#). Also please send me reports of any problems you have had with gates or cattle to [info@savepenwithmoors.com](mailto:info@savepenwithmoors.com)

**31/5/2009 Subject: Injury received whilst riding on Headley Heath. Email sent to National Trust.** “I am writing to report an incident that happened to me whilst riding on Headley Heath on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May. I was riding on BP490, going west, and I came to the gate by Ashurst Drive Car Park. The gate was closed so I pulled the handle to open the gate, pushed it away from me and moved my horse forwards into the gap. The gate started to close immediately, hitting and trapping my lower left leg between the latch and the side of my horse, causing me considerable pain and extensive bruising despite my wearing half chaps, jodhpurs and thick socks. My understanding was that there should be a delay on the gate closure. This certainly did not happen on this occasion. As a member of the National Trust for the last 20 years, I am very annoyed about this incident as it was easily avoidable had the gate been securely fastened open or at least set so it stayed open for the correct amount of time. I await your reply with interest.”

**28/8/2009 Subject: RE: Dangerous gate and plain wire. Reply from National Trust.** “My apologies for the delay in replying to your e-mail. With regard to the gate I am not certain which gate you are referring to however I am adjusting quite a number as they are easing up with use.....”

**14/9/2009 Subject: FW: Dangerous gate and plain wire.** “You are probably aware of the ongoing problem we have had with the National Trust re their "management" policies on Headley Heath. I.e grazing which has necessitated a previously open heath to be fenced, as one member of the Surrey CAF put it "like a concentration camp". It is perfectly disgraceful that these so called ecological policies have resulted in the situation outlined by Brenda Spencer below. The Trust have effectively driven riders off the heath where they had ridden for decades without there being ANY gates.....many riders are disabled by arthritis and find the gates are too stiff to open and dismounting /remounting very difficult so a gate free environment is the way to go; not having 22 gates on a site that previously had none.”

**23/9/2009 Subject: RE: Dangerous gate and plain wire.** “I am becoming more convinced that safety of anyone other than the cattle is not a concern. I am showing the good will by closing the gates which are not properly hung. It would be helpful if the good will worked both ways..... This whole episode of enclosing common land is littered with broken

promises and inadequate consultation and decision making which was desperately ill informed.”

**8/10/2009** ..... “if the majority of riders can't operate them [gates] without their horse being banged on the flank or hock then they are obviously unfit for purpose whatever any standard might say. Then she [Surrey County Council official] said that the fitting was up to the Trust and if they had not installed them correctly that wasn't her problem. But of course it is on Definitive Paths because she is responsible for ROW being open and available for use and not obstructed.....”

8/10/2009 Subject: RE: Headley Heath - timings on bridlegates taken on Sat 26th Sept results show non compliance with Surrey County Council 'licence'. “These timings are similar to the self closing gates I have in my area of West Berkshire. Riders complain about them (but thankfully we have few gates). I think it is generally acknowledged by the average equestrian that the gates are an accident waiting to happen - if horse riders are not put off using them first...”

**11/10/2009 Subject: The gates on Headley Heath. Email sent by a 13 year-old girl to the National Trust.** “I am annoyed with the gates on Headley Heath because they won't stay open when you let go of them and they come flying back towards you. They are too heavy to push open away from you and I have to open them by pulling the gate towards me (my pony does not like going through them when they are pulled back towards her). I have been on the area tetrathlon team for my pony club and we had no problem with the gates on those competition courses. I used to enjoy going out for a hack on the heath on my own but the gates spook my pony and me with all of the bangs and slams and these wind my pony up. Please can you either remove the gates or alter them so that I can enjoy the heath again?”

**13/10/2009 Subject: Headley Heath. Email sent to National Trust.** “I feel that I need to write with my concerns regarding the new enclosure of Headley Heath. I have had horses in Headley for 23 years, and have always enjoyed the fact that we had such fantastic easy access hacking. I now find myself having to do more roadwork as the heath is no longer that. I have a 9 year old daughter who I sometimes do ride and lead with, so I can not go on the heath as it is impossible to get myself on horseback and my daughter on her pony on a lead rein through a gate safely. It is a very difficult manouver to do. The gates are difficult enough on your own on a skittish or young horse. I have also walked with my daughter and taken other children on their ponies to the heath to try the gates for themselves. Again this is very

difficult as the children's arms are not long enough so they end up pushing the gates in hope they have time to get through but inevitably the gates fly back onto the ponies before they can position themselves to get through. These are children who are old enough to ride the heath together without parents and have done in the past, but are not happy to have to dismount 3 or 4 times out on a hack. That is when ponies can start to misbehave and get into trouble. I have hacked out with friends on the heath a couple of times but have found the gates swing back far too fast and so making the horses start to rush through the gap nearly catching my leg as we go. Other times the gates have been pushed too far and not closed behind us so we then have to try and get close enough once again to try and close the gate. Horse riding is a very pleasurable past time and Headly was very popular because of the relaxing hacks available, but I know quite a few people who have now moved away from Headly as they can't get their horses to do the gates even with dismounting. This reflects in the fact that there are a lot of vacancies in livery yard surrounding the heath where as there was always people on waiting lists to get to the yards. I have also noticed people with livery yards not close to the heath advertising gate free and cow free hacking!!!! It is a very sad time when we can't enjoy the heath as we used to. I personally won't walk my dog there as I have always had a fear from cows after being chased by a herd at the age of 8 when walking through a footpath through their field. Will we have to wait for a serious accident to happen before this problem is sorted?

**14/10/2009 Subject: Headley Heath Gates. Email to National Trust.** "I am writing to express my concern about the new gates recently installed on Headley Heath. I ride and walk regularly on the Heath and have done so for many years. I am also a long standing member of the National Trust. The problem is that the newly installed gates do not stay open long enough to allow a horse to pass through safely. The action of the closing gate can frighten the horse and even cause it to panic, endangering the rider and making the horse reluctant to go through the gate again. I have already informed you of an incident where my leg was trapped against the gate by Ashurst Drive car park, it was only luck I was not injured. (I was very disappointed that only Avril replied to my report of the incident, but I heard nothing from yourselves.) Where the gates are close to the main road, the situation is more serious. As many drivers travel extremely fast they may not be able to avoid a horse panicked by the closing gate, which could cause a major accident. To address my concerns, I suggest the following should be carried out 1. Increase the amount of post and rail fencing surrounding these gates. 2. Full risk assessments for each gate should be carried out, if this has not been

done already. It is with much regret that this situation has made me consider withdrawing my membership of the National Trust. Please act now before some one is badly hurt.”

**15/10/2009 Subject: Headley Heath gate concerns. Email to National Trust.** “i have had a successful and happy full [livery] yard for the last ten years. until the gates were installed on the heath, and unfortunately this has not only made it harder and unsafe for horse and rider it has also cost me liverys leaving my yard, i would class myself as a good competent rider but it is difficult{ due to the gate closing times } for myself to be able to pass through the gates safely and confidently. so could someone please spend time investigating the problem, it is hard also for young horses to be long reined now all the gates are in place, this is really affecting my business and my own exercise programmes for my own young stock. also not every rider is completely able bodied so doing gates is a serious problem and also miss out on the opportunity to ride and take in the beauty of the heath. thank you for taking the time to read this letter and i look forward to seeing this serious and quite dangerous problem resolved.”

### **THE GRAZING WAR COMES TO KINGWOOD COMMON, OXFORDSHIRE**

Go to the link below and see what is going on elsewhere – it all sounds very familiar.

[http://www.self-willed-land.org.uk/articles/kingwood\\_common.htm](http://www.self-willed-land.org.uk/articles/kingwood_common.htm)

### **CHAILEY COMMON, EAST SUSSEX**

A report from November 2006 on the introduction of a grazing scheme for Chailey Common in East Sussex mentions that a previous fencing and grazing scheme had met with considerable local opposition. In view of this it was considered important that no new decisions were finally taken before proposed consultation was completed so that the community could make its views heard.

[[http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A40F9B5E-5943-4FA7-9956-C95C2369C373/0/footprint\\_chailey\\_common\\_first\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A40F9B5E-5943-4FA7-9956-C95C2369C373/0/footprint_chailey_common_first_report_final.pdf)]

A public enquiry into the grazing scheme was held in March 2010 although a committee had previously considered all responses “and decided to introduce grazing of animals contained within a permanent perimeter fence. Grazing would be by cattle, sheep and ponies using traditional quiet breeds with no bulls, cows with young calves, or stallions. At least one of the

grazing areas would be free of animals, to allow for dog walkers and others.”

[\[http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/walks/chaileycommon/download.htm\]](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/walks/chaileycommon/download.htm)

Following the public enquiry on the fencing of Chailey Common as part of conservation grazing involving Natural England, permission was granted for the enclosure of five commons with 6764 metres of fencing, 88 gates and 13 cattle grids for a period of 20 years. If the grazing scheme ends or fails to produce the expected benefits then this stock proofing can be removed.

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<http://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/newsmain/FULL-STORY-Plans-to-enclose.5609219.jp>