

## **Clearance at Bluebell Heath: Contractors considered for the job**

We showed representatives of the following companies around the site:

Chris Slack

Ecologist

Flat 6, The Arches

Heathcote Road

Bordon

Hampshire

GU35 0FG

Chris Slack is an independent consultant recommended by Simon Braidman and others

T + T Earthmatters

9 Pleydell Avenue

London

SE19 2LN

Ecospaces Ltd

PO Box 1058

Uxbridge

Middlesex

UB8 9RD.

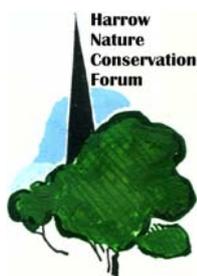
Ecospaces gave a very high quote, more than ten times the quotation from T + T Earthmatters. Chris Slack's quote was slightly higher than T + T's, but our final choice of T + T was based more on their availability than on price.

# Open ground: Loss then restoration

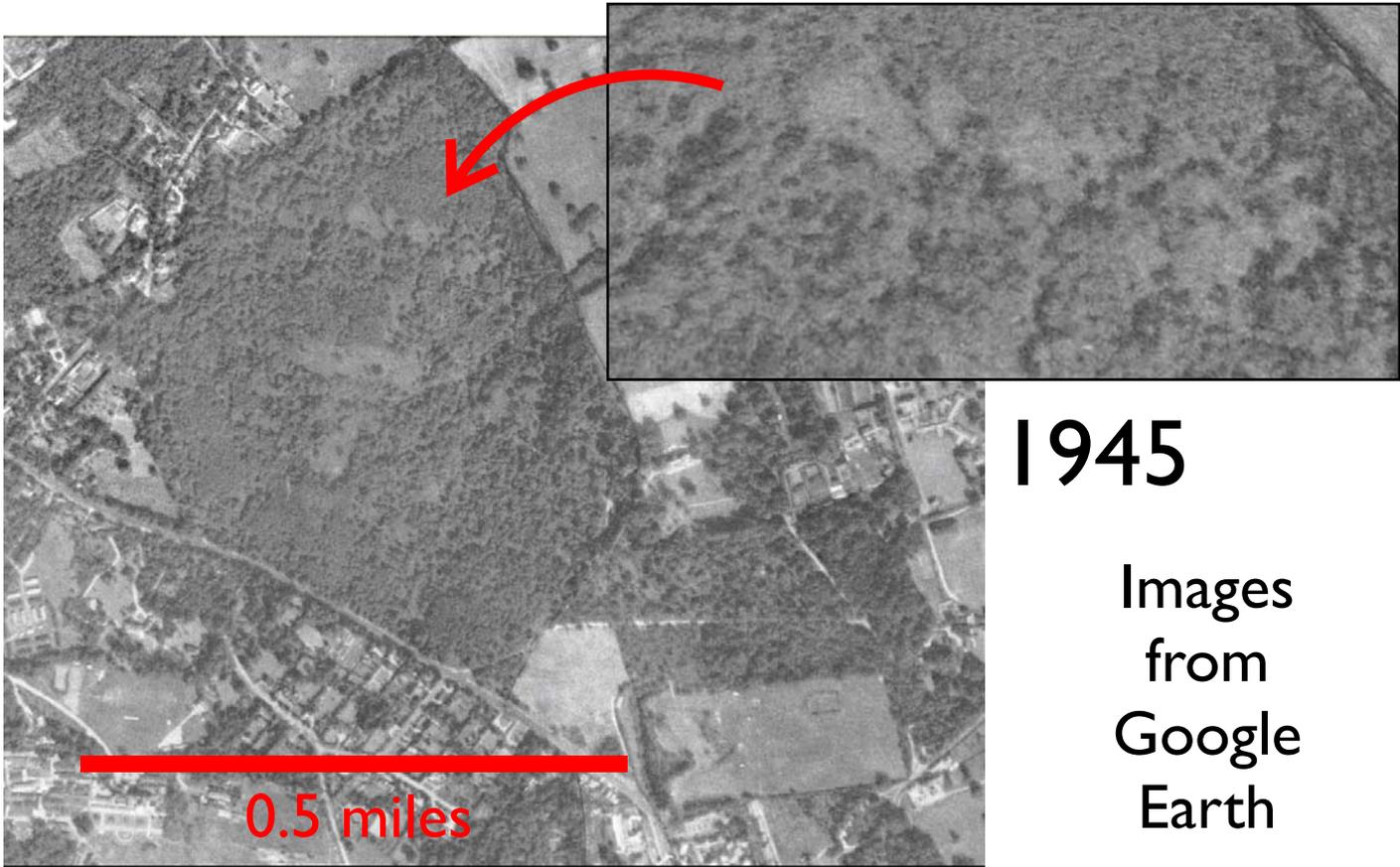
Images from Google Earth record the more recent stages in the loss of open space. In 1945 the whole central area of the Common was more or less open, though much was scrubland with many trees. By 2006 only isolated open areas remained.

The satellite image of 2010 shows further loss of open area. In particular, the open space that we now call Bluebell Heath was now reduced to a series of grassy rides between wooded areas. This image also shows a prominent white area at the western end of Bluebell Heath - this is the result of topsoil removal which we describe below.

The Bluebell Heath Project was designed to restore the open areas leaving large mature trees in a parkland setting. The main clearance work was done in the winter of 2012-2013. Young trees and scrub were cut. The smaller branches were burned while larger logs were left as log piles where mammals and reptiles could overwinter. The result can be seen in the most recent satellite image (August 2013). Bluebell Heath has been restored as one continuous open space with trees and taller vegetation scattered through it.

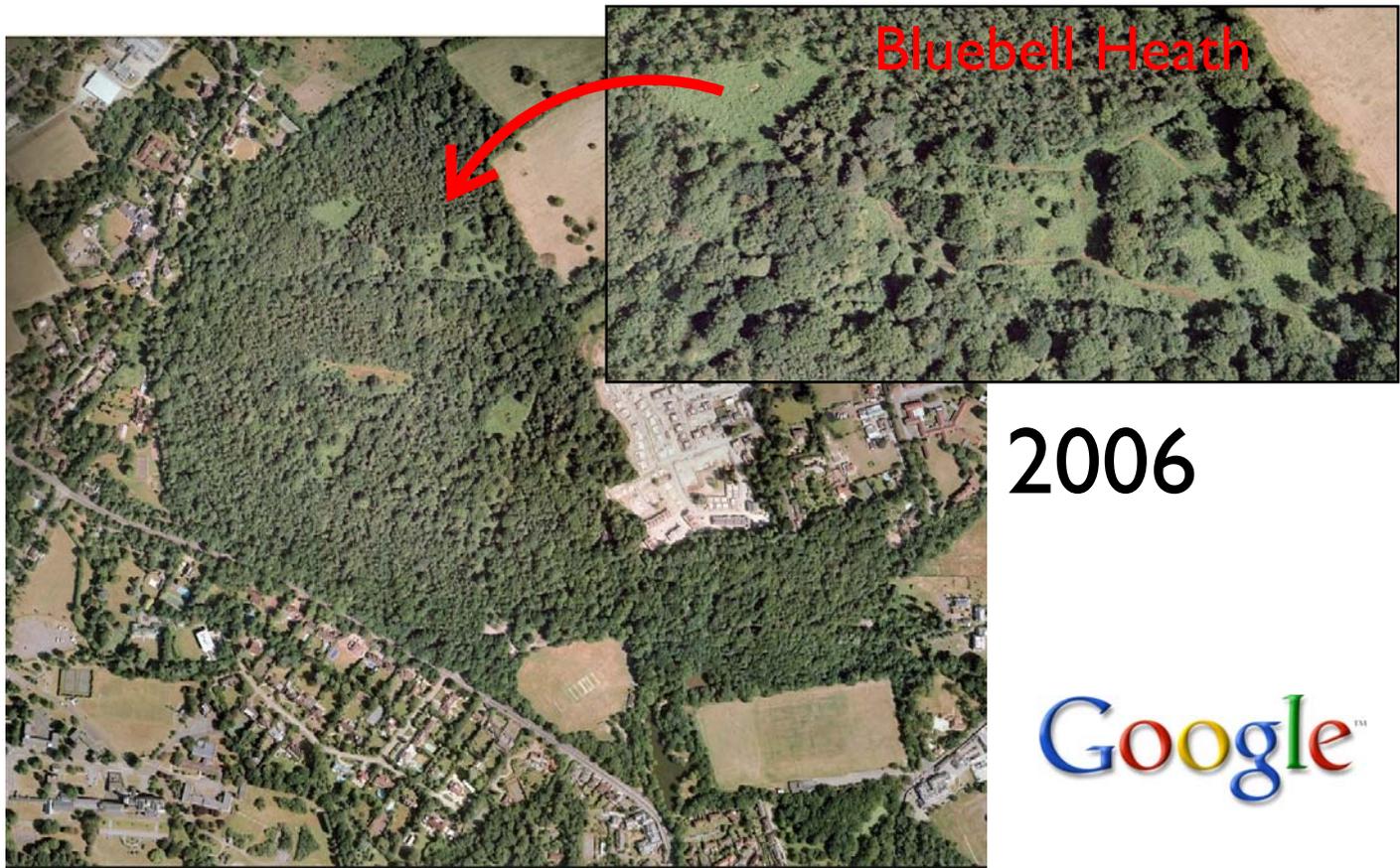


*1200 years of  
history in Harrow*



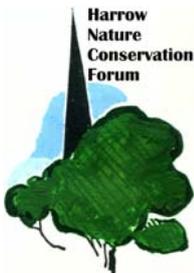
1945

Images from Google Earth

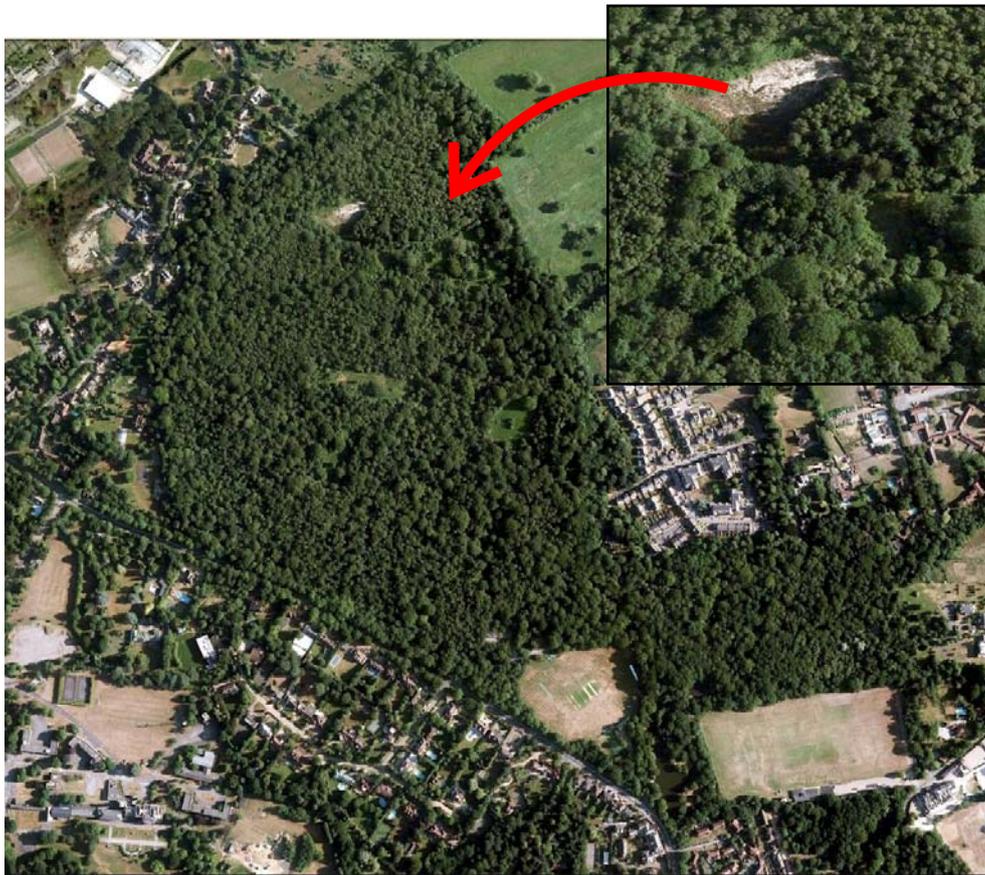


2006

Google™

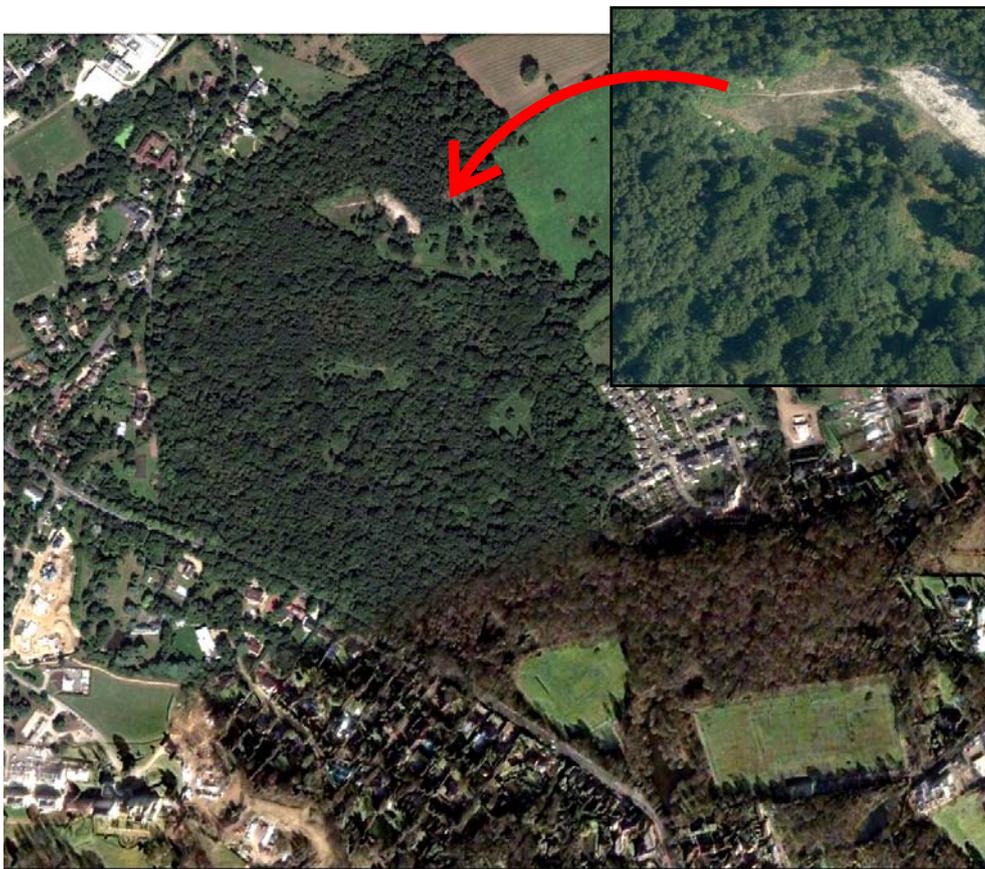


1200 years of history in Harrow



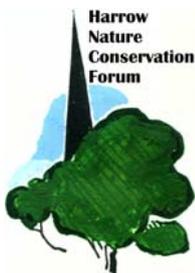
2010

Images from Google Earth



2013

Google™



1200 years of history in Harrow

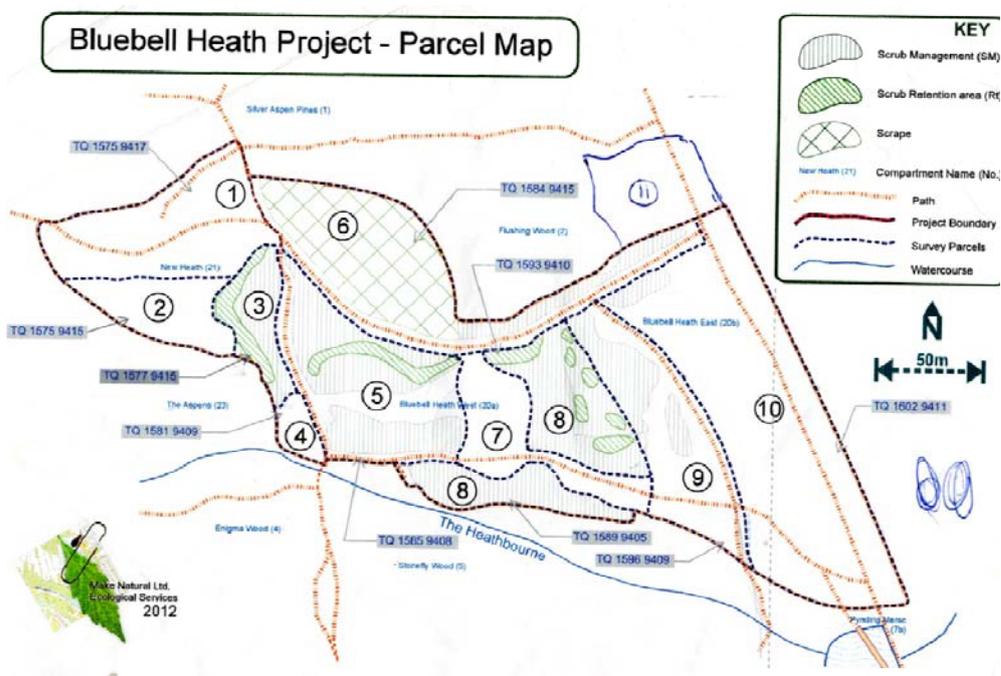
REPORT FOR WORK PARTY SUNDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2014

ATTENDEES: Simon Braidman, John Winter, David Green, Neville Day, Josh Kalms, Emmanuelle Braidman and Margaret Griffin

TASK: To start the botany survey of Bluebell Heath and to count the Heath-Spotted Orchids.

I brought along maps and crib sheets and survey sheets for the survey.

Bluebell Heath has been split by John Dobson into 10 habitat parcels each is a characteristic area.



We have since added an additional area parcel 11 ( the area marked in pen).

We practised the 26 key species we needed to recognise, starting in Parcel 10.

These species are indicators of acid grassland condition. They are either important species where a good population means the area is on good condition or invasive species where population increases means the clearing is deteriorating.

A key species for good condition is Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*)



This member of the Rose family has characteristic leaves composed of leaflets in groups of 3. The flowers are quite like Buttercups but the petals are 4 in number. It is a perennial and a typical acid grassland species.



Young Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*

Bracken is another of the 26 species. It is found on acidic soils and is a food source for about 30 species of invertebrates. It also provides shelter and shade, however it is an invasive aggressive native species which can shade out acidic grasslands and can become impassable to walk through.

This species is being controlled and its population on Bluebell Heath monitored through the survey

The laminated crib sheets work well they are a help. We did Parcel 10 together.

We did 3 pieces of work for each parcel:

1. A Phase 1 habitat survey sheet which describes the plot of land and expresses the habitats in terms of % area as viewed from above. One also notes the conservation condition of the land, the invertebrate or other interest and key features.
2. A survey sheet for the 26 key indicator species. Each species is estimated in terms of ground cover and given a DAFOR rating. This stands for Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional and Rare. It is assessed on ground cover.
3. A sketch map of each parcel giving the habitats, key species and features.

Below is a sketch map of Parcel 8 from 2013.



It is hoped this way we can monitor the changes in the vegetation over time.

Parcel 8 has proved a problem in assessment as it comes in 2 sections. In previous years the results have been averaged.

It is decided to split the 2 into 8a and 8b but still present also the result average.

We carried out the full process on parcels 10 and 4.

## Feedback from the public

We handed out stamped addressed postcards to visitors on the site inviting feedback.

Cards representing 22 visitors were returned.

Ethnicity: The overwhelming majority (20) identified as white with only one Asian and one mixed race.

There was a good mix of ages:

0-16	6
17-25	1
26-45	4
46-65	6
>65	5

Responses to “what is the best feature of the site?”:

Woods

The nature/seclusion

Really beautiful nature (I saw a snake!)

All of it

Woodland, grassland/heath/acid grassland

The wilderness and variable habitats

Peace and tranquility

Little streams

Open space, ideal for dog walking, away from traffic and noise. Abundance of nature

Parking

Small river and lake and nature

Trees

Responses to “what needs improvement?”

Pathways and signage\*

Maps - need updating\*

Nothing

Widen main woodland paths to allow more light in and get a mix of vegetation<sup>\$</sup>

More light in the woodland areas<sup>\$</sup>

Benches would be an asset<sup>\$</sup>

More bins

A few areas a little overgrown\*

Maps; could benefit from being neater and have some interactive/visual projects  
that visitors/kids can enjoy and take part in\*

River and lake needs to be clean

\* These points have been addressed by work carried out as part of this project, which has cleared the overgrown areas on Bluebell Heath, installed signage around the nature trail, installed a new information panel with map at the car park, and created the nature trail with many items for children to spot.

\$ These points have been addressed by work by volunteers during the time frame of this project but not as part of the Bluebell Heath project nor funded by it.

