

**HAWRIDGE & CHOLESBURY COMMONS
PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON TUESDAY, 22nd NOVEMBER 2011
Cholesbury Village Hall**

The AGM commenced at 8.00pm, chaired by Paul Hembury,

PRESENT: Paul Hembury (Chairman), Linden Bevan-Pritchard (Vice Chair), Mike Fletcher (Treasurer), Veronica Mash (Secretary & minute taker). David Barnard, John Caple, Steve Cheeld, Isobel Clark, Lindsay Griffin, Sue Phillips, Christine Stott.

MEMBERS: Ben Lewis; Margaret Walton; Joan Walton; Paddy Thomas; Windsor Thomas; Val Harris; Brian Harris; Oliver Parsons; Fletcher Nicholson; Janet Hopkinson; Chris Brown; David Dennis; Clare Muir; David Tarn; Graham Kersting.

1. Welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the 44th AGM of the Hawridge & Cholesbury Commons Preservation Society. He drew members' attention to the information on display about butterflies and moths and the Court Rolls from the Manors of Cholesbury and Hawridge from 1767, which had been transcribed by Fred Skinner.

2. Apologies

Joan Barnard; Sue Fletcher; Geoff Harvey; Linda Harvey; Ann Hawkes; John Hawkes; Mark Hobbs; Tim Watts;

3. Minutes of 2010 AGM

The minutes were agreed by the meeting and signed by the Chairman as being a true and correct record of that meeting.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 A standing order form for membership has been introduced this year and members are encouraged to use this. Subscriptions are now due for 2012.
- 4.2 The issue of Gift Aid would be dealt with in the Chairman's report.
- 4.3 Members are to be encouraged to submit their email addresses to facilitate the communication of HCCPS information. The new Grapevine will be used to request this.

5. Chairman's Report

- 5.1 Summer Party:- an enjoyable event at which people could get together. Special thanks to Annie and Peter Alberto and their staff at the Full Moon. Raised over £1000 with thanks to sponsors.
- 5.2 The recently elected Chairman of the Butterfly Conservation charity, David Dennis, a member of HCCPS, kindly presented a richly illustrated talk on behalf of the charity in the village hall in March.
- 5.3 The Society has generated several hundred pounds already from the sale of butterfly cards. Thanks were given to David Dennis for his photographs and Sue Phillips for producing and selling the cards.
- 5.4 The North Bucks Bat Group set up a marvellous exhibition of their conservation work and they also conducted a walk after dark. Thanks go to all involved in the organisation of this event.
- 5.5 The Chairman thanked Mike Fletcher on his retirement as treasurer after 24 years saying he had provided sound advice, unerring accounts and much common sense across a broad range of matters in every one of those 24 years. The Chair expressed gratitude to Mike, and he was presented with a picture.
- 5.6 At last year's AGM, there was a question from Fletcher Nicholson as to whether the society could gain Gift Aid on its income in general and subscriptions in particular. This has not been the case to date, but the committee have looked into the matter and believe that we can do so without the need for the Society to become a registered charity with the Charity Commission. Full registration is only available to charitable organisations with an income of £5,000 per annum or more and brings with it legal and accounting obligations

that the HCCPS would find onerous, even if it met the income hurdle – which it does not. However, we believe that we can claim Gift Aid by registering with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and are actively pursuing this route now. It may be necessary to revise the Society's constitution in order to demonstrate a charitable purpose. If this is the case, one of our members, Tim Watts, who is a lawyer, has kindly volunteered to help with this. It is hoped that the benefit that would accrue to the Society through Gift Aid would amount to several hundred pounds per annum.

- 5.7 The 'Get Out There' Project, an initiative taken by the Hammersmith Community Gardens Association, is an environmental charity that provides opportunities for people across the Hammersmith and Fulham Borough to experience working at a wide variety of locations. In June, Anna Guzzo, who runs the project, brought several trainees to the Commons, where they were briefed by Isobel Clark and Mark Hobbs, and then set about the removal of unwanted birch and oak saplings and the regeneration of old gorse bushes.
- 5.8 Isobel Clark was thanked for running the Working Parties, with much help from Steve Cheeld, Oliver Parsons and Mark Hobbs.
- 5.9 The chairman summed up by saying he felt that the Society was working for everyone to increase their enjoyment of living on or alongside the Commons:
 - By clearing paths and permissive bridleways so as to provide better access for all.
 - By sympathetic management of flora and fauna.
 - By organising events which are interesting, social and good fun!

6. Secretary's Report

The secretary was new to the role this year and thanked the committee and Graham Kersting, the previous secretary, for their support. Graham continued to run the HCCPS website and the secretary is very keen to promote the use of email to communicate HCCPS news to members. Five committee meetings had been held in 2011 and the committee members were all very active.

7. Treasurer's Report

- 7.1 Mike Fletcher was retiring as Treasurer after 24 years. He thanked Paul Hembury for his kind words and said he had thoroughly enjoyed his time on the committee.
- 7.2 Ben Lewis's name has been put forward as a suggestion for the new treasurer.
- 7.3 Membership numbers were approximately the same as last year but had generated significantly more income this year due to the increase in subscription fees. The use of standing orders to pay subscriptions had been introduced and 15 families (out of a possible 100) were now using this method.
- 7.4 The sale of butterfly cards had generated £425.35 profit and thanks were given to David Dennis who donated the photos and Sue Phillips for printing and selling them.
- 7.5 The Summer Party had produced a good income with thanks to various sponsors for their contributions.
- 7.6 The figure for rolling, cutting and collecting on the commons was up because last year this task had not been carried out due to machinery problems.
- 7.7 The total figure for tractor maintenance over the past 3 years was £9022. This has been provided in the larger part by grants and funds and has resulted in an almost 'new' tractor.
- 7.8 The surplus for 2010-11 is £555.73.
- 7.9 Adrian Sparks the auditor for many years was planning to move away from the Commons and Mike Fletcher ~~was voted in~~ **was asked to stand for election** as the new auditor.

Questions:

- 7.10 Peter Hall asked if quotes had been obtained for the task of cutting and collecting as £1040 was a significant cost.
 - Isobel Clark responded that she had sought quotes in the past and one of these had been for £3500. Contractors were not prepared to use their machinery on the rough terrain on the Commons. Also the current contractor had machinery suitable for dumping the cuttings in the dell hole on the common whereas other contractors had priced to take the cuttings away and dispose of them. She was not **averse** to asking for quotes from other contractors.
- 7.11 Peter Hall asked why such a large reserve (nearly £7000) was being held.

- Mike Fletcher answered that this money had been reserved for the maintenance of the tractor but in fact the money for this had come from other grants.
 - Peter Hall suggested that some of this reserve should be spent on purchasing some more efficient mechanised tools to replace the current hand tools that volunteers used on the working parties. He pointed out that it was hard work using the tools they currently had and several of the volunteers were not youngsters.
 - Windsor Thomas said the swipe had been purchased in 1970 by HCCPS and when the gearbox fails they will not be able to replace it. A new swipe would cost about £5000 - £7000 and the reserve would be needed for this.
 - Christine Stott suggested that professional workers could be used to do the more demanding tasks in balance with the volunteers.
- 7.12 Peter Hall asked that if volunteers were using power tools not for hire and reward, did they still need to be covered by insurance.
- Isobel responded that it was necessary for public liability.
- 7.13 Peter Hall and Oliver Parsons said that they did enjoy helping on the working parties and were only trying to offer suggestions to make it more efficient.

8. Election of Office Bearers & Committee

- Paul Hembury was re-elected for the role of Chairman, nominated by Lindsay Griffin and seconded by David Barnard.
- Linden Bevan-Pritchard was re-elected for the role of Vice-Chairman, nominated by David Barnard and seconded by Isobel Clark.
- Veronica Mash was re-elected for the role of Secretary, nominated by Christine Stott and seconded by Linden Bevan-Pritchard.
- Ben Lewis was elected as Treasurer, nominated by Lindsay Griffin and seconded by Mike Fletcher.
- Seven committee members:- David Barnard, John Caple, Steve Cheeld, Isobel Clark, Lindsay Griffin, Mark Hobbs and Sue Phillips were re-elected, nominated by Christine Stott and seconded by Paddy Thomas.
- Mike Fletcher was appointed as the Honorary Auditor, nominated by Paul Hembury and seconded by Linden Bevan-Pritchard.

David Barnard suggested that the committee should decide at the next meeting how to reward Adrian Sparks. Paul Hembury agreed.

9. Open Discussion

- 9.1 David Dennis asked about tree safety on the Commons.
- Christine Stott replied that there was no news other than the electricity board were taking down some trees on Rays Hill. The forestry Commission plan had been signed off but there were doubts over whether funding would be available. CS has been looking for contractors to carry out the proposed work in a "conservation style". CS does not want to release the plan until funding and costs are resolved as it still may not be progressed
- 9.2 Chris Brown asked if HCCPS had plans for an event to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June 2012.
- Paul Hembury replied that this would be discussed by the committee and they will keep Chris B informed.
 - Chris Brown suggested HCCPS consider the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Beacons Event and passed the official information on this to VM. The Parish Council has no particular project yet but will aim to coordinate dates for events over 4th & 5th June 2012
 - St Leonards show will be held on 2nd June 2012.
 - For the Silver Jubilee there was a band that played outside the Full Moon and this was very popular.

The formal meeting closed at 9pm.

Presentation of HCCPS website by Graham Kersting.

Graham demonstrated the various aspects of the website with the assistance of David Barnard and David Dennis.

Questions:

- Fletcher Nicholson asked for a list of past committee members to be put on the website. Oliver Parsons offered to supply details of this to GK.
- Joan Walton recounted that she had chaired the inaugural meeting of HCCPS in 1977 and that the society had continued with no breaks since then.
- GK agreed to ask Steven Clark for some web stats to see how much the website was used.
- Peter Hall asked how much awareness of the website there is e.g in the village school etc. and whether there was some way of using the website to generate income. Paul Hembury said they would take this idea to committee.

The meeting closed at 9.55pm

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