

**HAWRIDGE & CHOLESBURY COMMONS
PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

MINUTES FROM THE AGM HELD ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8th, 2004

The AGM commenced at 8.00 p.m, chaired by Mr. David Barnard, Chairman and was the 37th anniversary of the Society.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chris Dennis, Joan & Margaret Walton, Sue Fletcher, Brenda Nicholson, John & Ann Hawkes, Mandy & Stewart Houlihan, David & Elaine Roberts

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM (9th December 2003)

These minutes were signed by the Chairman as being a true and accurate record of that meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

David Barnard opened his report by saying that it had basically been a good year. A few unfavourable comments had been received, but many favourable comments also. He noted that this year had seen the heaviest crop of apples that he could remember, and had also been the best for foxgloves and fungi – but best to talk to Clive Carey before eating the latter!

The Lottery Heritage Grant had come to a belated end. The completion report was sent in just in time. The Heritage Grant fund was rather surprised that HCCPS had not claimed the maximum amount – this was rectified by the Treasurer sending in a supplementary claim.

Much of the latter grant money received had been spent on contractor work and 85% of the last part had been spent on chainsaw training – the Society now has several qualified chainsaw users.

Twelve normal working parties had been held during the year. Those attending had enjoyed the work and particularly the cake. One working party had been at Palletts Pond to clear reeds (which had now grown back). Two ad-hoc working parties had also taken place – one to top timber behind Flint Cottage; the other to scratch around the heather to encourage germination of seeds. There are still some heather seedlings to plant.

There had been lots of mowing by tractors both the Society's own with the flail and by Duncan Mitchell.

The Chairman thanked Mike Wallis, Steve Cheeld and Windsor Thomas for tractor maintenance during the year and Oliver Parsons and George Pitman for their work as chief and apprentice arsonists respectively. Isobel Clark was thanked for her many faceted help & Jef Bell for path cutting on Cholesbury Common.

The Summer Party had been a hog roast held in the evening as requested by the majority vote at last year's AGM. This was attended by slightly more people than in the previous year and the Chairman thanked Mandy in her absence for several years' hard work in organising the parties and for her work on the committee generally.

John Morris had undertaken a tree walk in June where much was learnt by those who went with him. Notes of the walk (courtesy of Isobel Clark) may be found on the HCCPS section of the Cholesbury.com web site.

Two parties of travellers had stopped on the commons during the year. The first arrived in May at the time of the drive-by shooting at the Full Moon and were gone the next morning; the second arrived in September on a Tuesday and again were gone by the next morning. This was the first occasion that the bye-laws had been invoked.

The left hand side of Shire Lane had now been included in the survey of flora. Lindsay Griffin has a list of what has been seen on the commons in old surveys, but not seen recently, and it was intended that this list should be published to see if any of the missing species could be re-identified.

A planning application had been lodged for a field shelter on the highest point of the ridge at Moon Penny Meadow. Tring Town Council had already objected. The plans could be seen at the Tring Information Office.

Finally, the Chairman thanked everybody, especially the committee, for their support. He also thanked Christine Stott for her encouragement.

At the end of the Chairman's remarks, Christine Stott thanked David for his three years as a very good Chairman, especially given his reluctance to take the job in the first place. As a token of appreciation, she presented him with a walking stick made by Clive Carey.

5. SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Secretary reported that there had been five committee meetings during the year. The Litterblitz had again resulted in even fewer sacks of litter – only two this year. The special device to pick up litter is still available. Lastly, the Secretary said that Lindsay Griffin would welcome more contributions to her collection of house histories.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer gave a summary of the annual financial statement. Subscriptions had increased to £1,425, partly due to the number of members increasing from 170 to 179 and partly due to the increase in the subscription to £7.50. Over half the households in Cholesbury, Hawridge, Braziers End, Heath End and The Vale are members.

A £200 donation had been received from a long-standing member of the district who had moved away. Donations had also been received from the recipients of logs from the tree felling course.

The summer party income increased from £1,009 in 2003 to £1,108; since expenses had decreased as well, double the profit had been made.

The Treasurer gave an analysis of where the monies received from the Heritage Grant had been spent. He thanked those who gave their time voluntarily estimating that some 400 hours had been spent.

The year ended with a surplus of £503.51 giving a cumulative surplus of £7,057.86.

The Treasurer thanked Adrian Sparkes, the Honorary Auditor, who was willing to stand again.

7 Elections

Officers:

Post	Proposed:	Nominated by:	Seconded by:
Chairman	Lindsay Griffin	David Barnard	Windsor Thomas
Vice-Chairman	David Barnard	Lindsay Griffin	Christine Stott
Secretary	Graham Kersting	Joan Barnard	Jenny Parsons
Treasurer	Mike Fletcher	Paddy Thomas	Windsor Thomas

Committee members:

	Nicola Caplin	David Barnard	Mike Wallis
	Steve Cheeld	Jenny Parsons	Mike Wallis
	Isobel Clark	Mike Fletcher	Graham Kersting
	John Garner	Mike Wallis	Windsor Thomas
	Paul Hembury	Mike Fletcher	Graham Kersting
	Mike Wallis	Mike Fletcher	Graham Kersting
Auditor	Adrian Sparkes	Windsor Thomas	David Barnard

Following her election as the new Chairman, Lindsay Griffin made the following remarks: She gave thanks to all those who had helped in any way, but gave particular thanks to: *Mandy Houlihan* for the summer party and noted that she had left good records for her successor.

Soo Sapey who worked quietly and effectively in the background, noting particularly the party bags for the children at the summer parties and delivering logs in her horse and cart.

Mike Wallis, who may have moved away by the next AGM, was thanked in advance for maintaining and driving the tractor, and liaising with the school.

David Barnard as one of the hardest working members of the society and who had just completed 25 years on the committee – also noting the record was held by Ron Howe at 27 years. She commented that David had been a very reluctant Chairman but had done a magnificent job. She wondered (jokingly) whether his walking stick was an appropriate gift for someone who runs on the commons. Lindsay presented David with book.

The meeting ended at 20:40.

The AGM was followed by an informal Question and Answer session, a summary of which follows.

Why aren't dead branches cleared or cut down? – Clive Carey

Good trees may be cut down for a number of reasons. Most dead branches are high up. If suitable machinery is in the area then dead branches may be taken off but the society has no-one qualified to climb a ladder and cut branches down. In any event dead branches provide a habitat for wildlife – the woodland areas are being managed for habitat not woodland management per se.

If particular trees are thought to be an issue then let Isobel Clark know where they are.

Christine Stott noted that the commons lacked scrubby areas; there were open glades and then woodland but little in between.

Flora and fauna records – Lindsay Griffin

Lindsay Griffin has a further study by Maycock and Gray on her PC and was intending to send it out. Some of the plants thought to be missing have been found but there are still absentees to look for. She did not believe that much had been done on the various species of butterfly to be found on the commons.

Countryside Stewardship Scheme – Christine Stott

Christine Stott was interested in putting the commons under the scheme. The current scheme had been looked at before the Heritage Grant had been applied for but it had been mainly aimed at capital works requiring lots of commitment from the HCCPS without payment. It was therefore decided to apply for the Heritage Grant. The new scheme is based on payment by area and it may be possible to get a large part of the commons maintenance costs funded. The new schemes are for 10 years with a break option at five years. Payment is available to help draw up a management plan. Funding from this scheme plus the usual HCCPS funds would help maintain the commons, otherwise it may be financially difficult to keep the commons as would be wished. There may also be the possibility of seeking funding to build up the verges to control parking to some degree. Whether there were any disadvantages to applying for funding under the scheme was not known as its details would not be available until January 2005.

If an application was made, there was no guarantee that Countryside Stewardship funding would be obtained but Christine has funding from the current scheme for her farm.

Mike Wallis asked for another meeting when more details were available; Christine Stott agreed this was a good idea but said it could be some time before sufficient details were known. If an application was successful, Christine said she would be responsible for whatever she had committed to in the application whether the work was done by HCCPS or others.

Works at Willow Tree Cottage – Fletcher Nicholson

The Chairman said that the matter was with Chiltern Planning Department and it was unclear in which direction it would go. The land in question has been used as a domestic garden for at least 45 years by several generations of occupants. Therefore there had been no change of use under the current occupants, only a change of appearance.

Mike Wallis said he was worried about there being a precedent – what if a shed were to be put up? Christine Stott said there was no issue of precedent for the remainder of the commons, since the land under discussion is owned by the owners of Willow Tree Cottage.

Jenny Parsons said she was objecting to the fact that Willow Tree Cottage was different from the other houses along Hawridge Vale.

Alison Grief, one of the owners of Willow Tree Cottage, commented that she thought the letters of complaint about the works at the cottage were disingenuous having apparently been written from the point of view that the land was virgin common. This had not been the case for 45 years. Alison said that she had obtained a Counsel's opinion on the situation, on the basis of which she had written to Chiltern District Council. She said that the garden will take 12-18 months to establish itself when it will look very different from now.

Joan Barnard commented that she thought Willow Tree Cottage was an anomaly – it was out of line with the other houses along Hawridge Vale, the commons land there was under different ownership and she believed that a similar situation was unlikely to happen again.

Christine Stott said that no-one including herself had the authority to give permission to build on common land – such works required consent from the Secretary of State.

Works at the Village Hall – Fletcher Nicholson

Joan Barnard said that the Village Hall committee had been saving for 10 years to get work done to reinstate the edges of the common with some reinforcement. The land had now been drained with a soakaway. Unfortunately the contractor had brought the wrong material for the reinforcement. Discussions were taking place as to whether the wrong material would be suitable for the job. It was suggested that this work might provide a useful guide as to what could be done to repair other damaged areas of the commons, eg. at the Full Moon and the school.

The meeting closed at 10.15pm