

**HAWRIDGE & CHOLESBURY COMMONS
PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7TH 2005

The AGM commenced at 8.00pm, chaired by Lindsay Griffin, Chairman and was the 38th in the Society's history.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Anne & John Hawkes, James & Sylvia Watson, Rick & Liz Holroyd, Steve Cheeld, Windsor & Paddy Thomas, Christine Stott, Mandy Houlihan, Chris Brown, Alison Grief.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM (8th December 2004)

The minutes were agreed by the meeting and signed by the Chairman as being a true and correct record of that meeting. NB. After the meeting, at which she had been present, Jenny Parsons asked if the minutes relating to the Willow Tree Cottage discussion could be amended to reflect her comments that it was her belief that the Common was sacrosanct and that building was not allowed anywhere on it.

3 MATTERS ARISING

To be dealt with in the Chairman's report:

- Status of the Commons – Countryside Stewardship Scheme
- Willow Tree Cottage

4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman opened her remarks by welcoming David Collett as a new working party member and David Dennis who was to give a talk on butterflies after the AGM.

The Chairman thanked a number of people for their continuing support and work on the Commons:

Christine Stott, who missed the AGM due to a prior engagement. Special thanks were due for the donation of £1,000 – the fee from allowing the crews filming Midsomer Murders in Cholesbury park on the Commons.

Christine was still considering the Countryside Stewardship Scheme for the Commons, but needed more time to judge whether it was the best thing for the Commons. Nothing would happen without further consultation by Christine (as Mike Wallis had requested at the last AGM). If anyone had any questions for Christine, she was happy to answer them on the phone.

The HCCPS Committee for their hard work. She remarked that they were an interesting bunch with mixed skills and interests.

The office bearers, who get on with their jobs efficiently and effectively.

The working parties, whose work benefits the Commons. At a recent committee meeting Isobel Clark had estimated that the hours worked in 2005 amounted to:

- 325 hours of conservation work
- 64 hours of maintenance on the tractor and equipment
- 44 hours of tractor driving.

Isobel Clark who puts in an enormous amount of effort organising and advertising the working parties.

The Chairman went on to say that, sadly, the Society would be losing two people – George & Liz Pitman. Liz was an ex-committee member and had worked on the education element of the application for the Lottery Heritage Grant. George had resisted persuasion to join the committee, but had been a stalwart of the working parties and in attacking Japanese knotweed. He had regularly put in two hours per week irrespective of the working parties. There was a presentation to George to thank him for his efforts.

The Chairman commented on the arrival of travellers during the year. The message that they had arrived came at a time when Christine Stott was busy working in London. Nevertheless she put in the effort to have them removed – gentle badgering of the police by residents had helped the situation. Christine had been accompanied by the police when the order to move on was served on the travellers.

The Summer Party had been enjoyed by all but the Chairman hoped for better weather next year. Likewise the Summer Walk was enjoyable despite the miserable weather.

The Chairman went on to comment that Commons regulations were flouted by a number of people. This was difficult to do anything about and, unfortunately, those who tried often encountered rudeness.

The analysis of the data collected in the flora survey in 2003-04 was now available. Those interested were asked to leave their contact details. The survey showed that plants were in a happier state than was thought – plants thought missing were present but it is unclear if they are fewer in number.

Much work had been done on Palletts Pond with the help of the Hemel Hempstead Conservation Volunteers and Ian Eld.

Isobel Clark was experimenting with a patch of ground to encourage heather regeneration.

Spanish bluebells – a great job had been done in removing these from the Commons.

Verges – much work had been done on the Commons verges. Rays Hill was to be dealt with by the Council soon. Work opposite the school had been done by the Society – time would tell if it had been successful. Graham Warren of Christopher Rowland had provided the signs asking people not to park on the repaired verges. One spin-off benefit of the work was that parents of children at the school were now largely parking on the school side of the road, which was safer both for the children and passing traffic.

The Society had heard recently that more lottery money was available – up to £5,000. John Cooper and Lindsay were interested in putting an application together and would welcome suggestions for work on which we might seek funding.

Willow Tree Cottage – this was being dealt with by Chiltern District Council Planning department and their Legal Services. Alison Grief and Martin King had sought their own legal advice. There was no dispute that planning permission was required for the gabion wall and oil tank, but still under discussion were the grounds on which planning permission should be sought. Alison & Martin had been advised that they enjoyed permitted development rights and have applied for a certificate of lawful use. There has been no response to this from Chiltern District Council. It is understood from Mike Shires at the Planning Department that planning authorities are required to settle disputes such as this as amicably as they can; therefore the issue is likely to go on for some time. The Chairman concluded the update by saying that it was not productive to discuss the issue in plenary session. When there is a judgement on the legal position then the Society and individuals could make their views known.

In conclusion the Chairman thanked Hilltop News and Steve Clark for doing such a good job in disseminating information that fewer Newsletters had been published this year.

5 SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Secretary said that there had been four committee meetings during the year and no extraordinary meetings. Following up the Chairman's earlier point, only two Newsletters had been distributed during the year.

The Secretary thanked those involved in organising the Summer Party - a good time was had by all, despite a rather chilly evening. A map showing the permissive rides had been distributed to local riders via the Bellingdon End shop and a local farrier.

During the year there had been correspondence regarding refuse collections, rubbish at the cricket club, misuse of the Commons, Willow Tree Cottage and parking at the school.

6 TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer opened his remarks by saying that members were down in numbers and consequently subscription value had fallen also. He hoped this was not because the Commons were looking so good that residents thought the money was not needed.

The £165 of "Other donations" included £100 from the Vale of Aylesbury Hunt.

The Summer Party raised nearly £350, after having provided for the hire of the school (for which the bill had not yet been received).

Midsomer Murders visited in September and Christine Stott negotiated the parking fee up from £500 to £1,000, which she had donated to the Society.

The Lottery Heritage Grant had come to an end last year, therefore expenditure was back to the usual annual level of around £2,000.

The Treasurer commented that the voluntary hours put in by working parties and other individuals were of enormous value and not reflected in the accounts – he thanked all of those involved.

The year finished with a surplus of £1,064, £1,000 of which was the fee from Midsomer Murders. Reserves stood at £8,122, of which £7,620 was on deposit and the rest in a current account. Reserves were held for the replacement of the tractor when it becomes uneconomic to repair it.

The Treasurer concluded by thanking Adrian Sparkes, the Honorary Auditor, who was willing to stand again.

7 ELECTIONS

The Officers and Committee for 2005-06 were elected as follows:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Chairman | Lindsay Griffin |
| Vice-Chairman | David Barnard |
| Secretary | Graham Kersting |
| Treasurer | Mike Fletcher |

Committee members:

Nicola Chaplin
Steve Cheeld
Isobel Clark
John Cooper
John Garner
Paul Hembury
Mike Wallis

Honorary auditor
Adrian Sparkes

8 MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

Signs & signage 1 – Oliver Parsons

Speed limit signs

Oliver Parsons gave a short presentation on the increasing proliferation of signs in the area, and circulated some example photographs.

The recently introduced revised speed limits had first been proposed 3 or 4 years ago. There had been some changes to the original proposals at the request of the Parish Council. There was now a 40mph limit from Nuthazel Cross to the Icknield Way – some

6 miles. Whilst the lower speed limit was good news, the bad news was the derestriction signs that were needed at all the roads off plus the repeater signs. Fortunately some of the latter would be painted on the road.

Some speed limit signs were thought to be in the wrong place visually but their positions were designated in the relevant Orders. However, Shaun Pope says that it may be possible to get some of the signs moved after a year.

Direction signs

All signposts have been replaced except the very old ones. However, consideration is being given to changing the new signs and replacing them with a sign using a fluorescent white board and with better inter-linking of the arms to make them less obtrusive.

Village signs

It is not proving possible to find a solution that satisfies everybody – some want very ornate signs, others want nothing. The County Council doesn't seem to care and seems willing to do whatever the Parish Council wants. Signs similar to those in use at Wigginton seem to be favourite.

Other

The signs relating to the Chiltern Special Parking area have now been removed. Oliver has produced a web site detailing the background to the signpost and speed situation (<http://www.hilltopsigns.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk>).

Signs & signage 2 – Fletcher Nicholson

Fletcher said that he was unhappy about the commercial signs on the Commons. He had been told by that Windsor Thomas that all signs should be on residents' premises – this had been the policy when he had been Chairman.

Lindsay Griffin said that the policy had not changed. Regarding the "For sale" on Rays Hill, Lindsay had forgotten that this was part of the Common, but the house in question has no garden or suitable curtilage. Fletcher's view was that the sign should be at the edge of the Common against the house wall.

The building signs at the school were mentioned. It was thought that there were at least 10, some of which were the same. David Barnard thought that the HCCPS should make a point to avoid a precedent being set. Lindsay said she would get in touch with the school and others whose signs were on the Commons.

Verges – raised by Chris Brown

Whilst good to improve the verges, it simply moves the problem elsewhere. Chris' particular problem was the Full Moon where there is now more parking by Mermaid Cottage and by Rays Hill. The latter was causing an obstruction for cars turning out of Rays Hill. If anyone thinks of a solution please let Lindsay Griffin or Chris Brown know.

Margaret Walton said that obstruction was a matter for the police; she also observed that members of Society Working Parties parked on the verges.

John Cooper suggested that those running a commercial organisation should provide proper parking. There was land adjacent to the Full Moon, but Peter Alberto (the pub landlord) does not own the land in question and the Commons must be crossed to get to it.

Working Parties – Isobel Clark

Isobel opened her remarks by describing the large map which illustrates various areas of the Commons and shows where work is to be or has been done.

Working Parties run from October/November – March. There is no formal management plan owing to the nature of the work – rather there is an annual appraisal of what work

needed to be done in the forthcoming season. Definitive paths have to be kept open and in the correct positions, plus there are many informal paths.

The Pound Lane/Stoney Lane area is generally left to its own devices and for nature to take its course. The general principle is to maintain what is developing naturally, eg. the birch area at Cholesbury Bottom. This area has its own particular species, eg. fly agaric. Birch and cherry occur in places and the fruit on trees is generally left for the birds.

Particular jobs this year have been scrub clearance, the standard cutting and collecting on grassland, Spanish Bluebells, Palletts Pond and heather regeneration.

Isobel closed her remarks by describing the colour-coding on the Commons map.

The formal meeting closed at 21:11.

After a break for refreshments David Dennis gave an excellent talk on some of the butterflies which might be expected on the Commons, either as transient visitors or more regularly. These were beautifully illustrated by his slide show. David kindly offered to conduct a walk on the Commons in May of 2006 and he is prepared to instruct local residents on how to conduct butterfly transects so that a more up-to-date survey of the species found here may be made. He also discussed strategies which might be adopted to encourage butterflies on the Commons and in nearby gardens and gave lists of the plants which different species particularly like.