



AGM

Date: December 8th, 8 pm, Cholesbury Village Hall. There will not be a guest speaker this year, which will leave more time for discussions and questions (Christine Stott will be there to answer questions about her ideas for future management of the commons). We will have there the map that we use in planning future work so that you can see what's proposed and where, and there will of course be the customary refreshments. The agenda is on the forth page.

COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS

We have several vacancies on the committee, and also need to find a new chairman (I will have served my maximum 3 years) and vice-chairman. Volunteers for these jobs do not have to attend working parties, but we would like people who know and enjoy the commons to help us keep them as they should be.

WORKING PARTIES

We started the working party season with work on the pond, trying to clear as much of last year's growth as possible, starting at the back. The dry weather last year made it difficult to remove the roots and tubers of the reedmace and rushes with the result that this year they all grew back albeit somewhat more weakly. We have also burnt up brash created in February on the tree felling course and have made a start on controlling the holly between Cholesbury Road and the cricket pavilion. We start at 0930 alternate Sundays (omitting Xmas to the New Year). Excellent exercise, usually a bonfire or two, refreshments circa 1100. We pack up about 1230, so the ideal time to arrive is 5 to 11! Thick gardening gloves are a good idea. The next working party is on 28th November, when we will continue with the holly control. We would be very pleased to see anyone who fancies an hour or two pulling and cutting, or stoking the bonfire. Every hour you can spare helps. If you can't make the next working party, why not come along to one of the later ones. The timetable for the rest of season is after the AGM agenda, so you can easily separate it and pin it up somewhere noticeable.

Oliver Parsons is the convener (& chief fire-lighter). He emails reminders - to be added to his email alert list and/or telephone list, contact him at oliver@parsons111.freeserve.co.uk or by phone 758694. Local notice boards and the website (cholesbury.com) also list the plan and report changes.

On Jan. 2nd there is an extra working party, run by the Hemel Hempstead Conservation Volunteers, to continue work on the holly near Cholesbury Road. We

would like any of our regular workers who can, to work alongside them, helping burn off the extra Xmas calories and maintain Jan 1st's good resolutions.

STATE OF THE COMMONS

We have had a lot of comments on how good the commons look now. This is the result of a lot of hard work by hand; by our own tractor, flail and swipe; and by contractor. There has certainly been a fine crop of blackberries, apples, and mushrooms (check the fungi identities with Clive Carey before you eat them) for the hungry - how many people make blackberry and apple pie from the common? Most of the apple trees are not crab. There are some piles of cut-and-collect stuff along the bottom, which is not where they were meant to be, but it is difficult to move them when both they and the ground are wet. (The intended dumping place is the hole by the bottom ride just south of Horseblock.)

The commons consist of a mixture of woodland, woodland pasture, scrub, and open areas. Some of the grassland is acid, where we are trying to encourage the heather to extend. There are patches of gorse, which we want to maintain, and lots of bracken, which we struggle to reduce.

Heather regeneration project: The area cleared 3 years ago has many young heather plants creating an area which is 3 times large than it was originally. Linden Bevan-Pritchard, Evaline Sarbout, David Barnard and Isobel Clark cleared another ring around the enlarged area to allow another generation of plantlets to develop.

WORK DONE

The paths on Cholesbury Common and to the northwest of Horseblock Lane have been cut this year by Jeff Bell, who has done a splendid job using his own tractor for which we are truly grateful. Stephen Cheeld has done most of the path-cutting and some of the bracken control to the southeast of Horseblock. We would like to thank him for all his time and effort especially as he has also been helping with the maintenance of the Society's tractor. Isobel Clark and Windsor Thomas have also done a share of the cutting of both grassland and bracken, and most of the routine maintenance. There seem to be so many paths on the Commons that any help with keeping them open is gratefully received. Our thanks also go to Duncan Mitchell who has been our contractor again this year, rolling bracken in July, and cutting and collecting grass and bracken in October.

Just to get a feel of the value of what we do, consider the cash equivalents of last year's voluntary labour: about £580 for tractor driving, £240 for mechanical maintenance, and £3310 for manual labour.

SURVEY OF FLORA & FAUNA

Both commons have been resurveyed, mostly by Roy Maycock (Bucks Recorder of the Botanical Society of the British Isles) and Wendy Gray (ex Bucks County wildlife). When Isobel reported crosswort on the corner of the common that extends up Shire Lane (to just before the 2nd house, Spring Lea), we realized that this piece of the common had been omitted previously, & Roy spent an extra half-hour there (& confirming the crosswort). There are still some things seen on previous surveys but not found recently, whose survival we would like to confirm. Lindsay Griffin maintains the records, updated from those published in the Local Heritage Study of Hawridge & Cholesbury Commons published two years ago. NB if you smell garlic at bluebell time near to the phone box in Cholesbury, go and admire the large patch of ramsons (aka wild garlic). George Pitman has done some great work clearing dead elm trees and

brambles from the area, so next year the ramsons should be easily visible and highly aromatic.

TREE WALK

John Morris took a group of about 12 people on a walk around part of the commons identifying various trees and giving us information about how and where they grow, their history, the effect of grey squirrels and other pests. Notes about the walk are on the website www.cholesbury.com/hccps .

SCRUB MANAGEMENT

Andy McVeigh, the man responsible for Buckinghamshire's Biodiversity Action Plan, visited the Commons earlier in the year and provided some detailed advice on how to manage the various scrub areas found on the Commons. If anyone is interested to read what he had to say, please contact either David on 758365 or Isobel on 758987.

TRAVELLERS on the commons

It is a breach of the commons byelaws to camp or drive on the commons, but we often have travellers (usually local!) arriving and establishing themselves. It was gratifying to see that the police reacted very quickly to the last group, told them they were breaking the byelaws, and gave them a deadline. They left within 24 hours!

Works in front of Willow Tree Cottage (bottom ride, Tankards Dene aka Hawridge Vale)

Work has been carried out in front of the house to reinforce & landscape the slope, to ease access & provide hard standing for two cars. The land concerned is owned by the householders, but is still part of Hawridge Common & subject to commoner's rights. Chiltern District Council consider that the work requires planning permission; it may also require permission from Defra. The owner was unaware of this till much work had been done, and has written a full letter setting out her position; anyone wishing to see it can ask David for a copy.

GARDEN WASTE etc. on the commons

You may have read the reminder from Gary Brown of the district council (p. 44 of last Hilltop News) that it is illegal to deposit rubbish / litter, including garden waste, on the roadside verges and in other public places. Much work is done to maintain the commons and to encourage their biodiversity, and they have been recognized as a County Wildlife Site. (Both sides of the Chesham to Buckland Common road are part of the commons.) Please do not put your garden waste, not even grass cuttings, on the commons. It will enrich the soil to an unnatural degree, and introduce non-native species that we do not want! Effort & money is spent each year to cut and collect both grass and bracken to prevent such enrichment. If you do not compost your own garden waste, you can take it to council tips for compost, at Chesham (by Holloway Lane) or on the A413 (between Amersham & Chalfont St Giles).

David Barnard, chairman
david.barnard5@which.net

Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons Preservation Society

AGM

December 8th, 8 pm, Cholesbury Village Hall

AGENDA

Minutes of the AGM 2003 December 9th

Matters arising

Chairman's report

Secretary's report

Treasurer's report

Election of:

chairman

vice-chairman

secretary

treasurer

committee

Appointment of hon. auditor

Questions & answers *

AOB

* Christine Stott will be present to answer questions as landowner of the commons, besides the officers and committee of the society.

WORKING PARTIES

2004 Nov. - 2005 April

Nov. 28th	Opposite Shire Lane junction with Cholesbury Road	Pull up small holly whips. Cut larger holly and paint with herbicide. Leave large specimen trees. Bonfire.
Dec. 12th	East of Mermaid Cottage	Reopen path by removing fallen elms. Cut stumps to ground level. Fell trees on line of path. Possible bonfire.
Dec. 26th		Well-earned rest
Jan. 2nd	Opposite Shire Lane junction with Cholesbury Road	Work with Hemel Hempstead Conservation Volunteers: Pull up small holly whips. Cut larger holly and paint with herbicide. Leave large specimen trees. Bonfire.
Jan. 9th	Top end of Horseblock Lane	Clear scrub from around some young oaks, remove others to reopen grassland. Bonfire
Jan. 23rd	Half way down Horseblock Lane	Continue scrub control. Bonfire
Feb. 6th	Between glade and line of view NE of cricket ground	Remove trees from gorse area keeping oak on SW edge and NE corner. Bonfire
Feb. 20th	Bottom ride below Horseblock Lane	Control scrub separating ride from grassland. Bonfire.
Mar. 6th	Below Milton Cottage, Hawridge	Remove dead oak, fallen elm, oak by ride, lower branches of oak near woodland pasture. Bonfire.
Mar. 20th	West of Shepherds Cottage, Hawridge	Fell hawthorn sycamore and dead elms. Burn brash. Bonfire
Apr. 3rd ?	NE of Shepherds Cottage?	Clear up glass and rubbish (one-time dump, it seems).

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2004/11/18th