



Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons
Preservation Society
Newsletter March 2007

Draft Minutes of the 2006 AGM:- These will soon be found on our website
www.cholesbury.com/hccps.htm

Dates for your diary:-

Litterblitz week will be held from **24th March – 1st April**. As always there will be a supply of black plastic bags at the top of Church (Parson's) Path; near the lay-by opposite the school and by the Cricket Club. Rubbish should be returned to these points for collection. Thank you to all who routinely help keep the Commons tidy and to those who make a big effort at Litterblitz time.

Summer walks:- This year we have 2 walks planned. **Both are dependent on the weather.** If it is very rainy we will try to reschedule the walk. Please get in touch with me (758 440) or another Committee member should this happen and you will be notified of the change of date.

Birds/Plants:- John Kilpatrick will lead a bird walk on the Commons on Sunday **6th May at 7am**. John's wife, Francesca is a keen botanist and she will also help identify plant species.

Please check the April/May edition of Hilltop News for the meeting point!

Butterflies:- David Dennis will again conduct a butterfly walk on **Sunday 3rd June** starting at **2pm opposite the Full Moon**. David says that it will be too early in the year for the nationally rare White Letter Hairstreak which we saw last year but who knows what we might find this time?

East Enders:- A film crew from East Enders visited the commons to film part of an episode at High Chimneys, Cholesbury. I believe that this will be shown over the **Easter period**. They donated £100 to Christine for her help and for use of the Common for parking. Christine has kindly given this to the Society.

Motorcycles:- We will shortly be erecting signs at each end of the lower horse ride and where it intersects Horseblock Lane to try to deter the persistent nuisance motorcyclists. We hope that the signs will be a temporary measure and that the young offenders will get the message. Please continue to log any information that you have about them and notify Thames Valley Police (0845 8505 505) if you see them.

Grant money from Chilterns Conservation Board from the Sustainable Development Fund has enabled us to carry out work to extend the area of heather on the south side of Horseblock Lane; grind stumps where trees have been felled in open grassland areas, and to re-train members so that they can fell small trees safely. Thanks to their efforts and to the recent strong winds we have a good supply of wood (mostly unseasoned) which will be delivered to the elderly and others who can use it soon. Please tell us if you know of someone who needs it. We have recently purchased a very smart new box for the tractor which makes delivery easier.

If you see a tree down on a horse ride or footpath on the Commons, please contact Isobel Clark (758 987) or Steve Cheeld (758 292). If a tree is down on **the road** please ring the **Highways Agency** (0845 230 2882).

Summer work:- Now that the winter working parties are coming to an end we thought you might like to know what we are planning to do during the spring and summer months. Isobel has outlined the various tasks which will be undertaken. As you see there is a great deal to do and we are fortunate in having a number of willing helpers but there is always work for more! If you are interested in being involved in any of these activities, please get in touch with Isobel (email hccps@cholesbury.com). You can help even if you can only offer a couple of hours.

Many thanks to all of you who do help.

For information on the general principles underlying this work please refer to the website:

www.cholesbury.com/pdf/hccpsmanplan0202.pdf

Paths: Our first activity is to keep the paths cut low enough for walkers. This is done by a volunteer who uses his own tractor on part of the Commons and by others using the society's tractor and mowers to keep the rest of the paths open. In addition we have some tractor maintenance to carry out every so often.

Grassland/Heathland: A wide variety of plants can be found on the open areas on the Commons; of particular interest are those found on acid grassland and heathland. The Commons here provide one of the few places in Buckinghamshire where this kind of habitat is found. To maintain this habitat we need to **remove the nutrients** provided by the mature grasses. In the past this would have been carried out by grazing animals. Today we try to mimic the effects of grazing by cutting the grass in September and collecting it. This also allows the herbs and finer grasses to flourish because they are not smothered by the fallen stems of the coarse grasses.

Bracken Control: The advice we have is that rolling the bracken when the fronds are about 18 inches tall, thereby breaking the stems, weakens the rhizomes which continue to try to develop the broken fronds. This drains them of energy in a way that cutting off the fronds does not. We have been making measurements of the effect of rolling on the height and density of the bracken in a number of areas. We have 4 years' data and hope to continue collecting this in future. Any help with this would be greatly appreciated.

Heather: Over the last 4 years we have been developing a programme to encourage the heather to spread. The most important thing to do is avoid mowing the areas too closely, which has been successful on the whole. The next and most arduous task has been to remove the thatch from a strip around the degenerate plants exposing the mineral soil so that seed can germinate and grow in relatively benign conditions.

Bluebells: As you probably know, the native bluebell is under threat from the foreign Spanish bluebell. The native wild bluebell cannot easily be established outside its native habitat but the Spanish bluebell planted in error will grow anywhere. What is more, it will hybridise with the native wild bluebell, and, its traits being dominant, will breed it out of existence. Both Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons have a fine distribution of native bluebells and we want to protect them from the invaders. With this in mind we are in the process of removing the invasive Spanish bluebells and their hybrids from the Commons. This is a task which will extend over many years since it takes 4-6 years for a seed to mature sufficiently to flower.

Congratulations to our vice-Chairman David Barnard for walking 70 kilometres from Goring to Ivinghoe Beacon on his 70th birthday in aid of the Chilterns Multiple Sclerosis Centre at Halton. Running on the Commons and regularly turning out for working parties has certainly helped keep you fit, David! Well Done!!

Subscriptions fell due at the AGM. They remain at £7.50 per member and are payable to **Mike Fletcher, Ivy Cottage, Cholesbury, Tring, Herts. HP23 6ND.**

Lindsay Griffin