



Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons Preservation Society
Newsletter October/November 2008

AGM

The AGM will be held on **Wednesday 3 December** at **Cholesbury Village Hall**, starting promptly at **8 p.m.** After the formal business has been completed, refreshments will be served. This year, we have two guest speakers: **Margaret Jarrett** has been involved with plans to introduce grazing on Chorleywood Common; **Jenni Hignett** works for BBOWT and is the Nettlebed Commons Projects Officer involved in planning sustainable strategies for the Nettlebed Commons.

Items for discussion: If you have any issues that you would like to raise at the meeting, would you let me know beforehand so that we can give proper attention to any questions. Either call me on 758750 or email bvanp@care4free.net Everyone is welcome to attend this meeting.

Cutting and Collecting

This year, the torrential rain that we had during the summer has interrupted our annual cutting and collecting regime. The Commons have been too wet most of the time to allow the use of heavy machinery. To date, this work has encouraged the increase of native heathland grasses and we hope that it will still be possible to do some mowing and collecting before the winter.

Replacement of posts

The weather has also made it very difficult to replace some of the marker posts that have rotted. We have arranged for the replacement of nine posts at the eastern end of Hawridge Common. Conditions have improved lately, so we hope to have the work done soon.

Working Parties

Our small band of helpers would be very pleased to see new people at the working parties. Even if you can only come to one or two, it would be appreciated. They start at 9.30 and there is always plenty to be done. Refreshments are served half way through the morning and there is often a bonfire. If you are interested in coming to future working parties, we have an email list so that we can let you know dates and venues. Please email Isobel on isobel.clark@cholesbury.com

For those of you who follow an exercise regime, Ian Phillips has suggested that you might enjoy the opportunity to get fit in the open air at the working parties. He has kindly offered to be on hand to help you make the best use of this type of activity. For more information about this, see the article that HCCPS has put in the October and November Hilltop News.

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Schedule of Working Parties

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Activity</u>
Oct 5	Opposite Box Tree Cottage, Hawridge (GR 945065)	Cut down fallen oak limbs. Fell damaged trees nearby and extend open grass area. Log and stack. Burn brash. Bonfire
Oct 19	Downhill behind Mermaid Cottage opposite The Full Moon (GR 936071)	Cut up fallen cherry and hawthorn trees. Log and stack. Burn brash. Bonfire
Nov 2	SE of Mermaid Cottage on path leading off road (GR 936069)	Fell fallen elms on path beside Mermaid Cottage, cut down stumps. Log and stack. Cut up fallen oak limb beside Mermaid Cottage. Burn brash. Bonfire.
Nov 16	Downhill behind Mermaid Cottage opposite The Full Moon (GR 936071)	Continue clearing up fallen cherries behind Mermaid Cottage. Finish cutting back blackthorn beside Mermaid Cottage. Bonfire
Nov 30	Between Oak Dene and High View, Hawridge (GR 943067)	Cut up fallen and falling trees, burn brash. Log and stack. Bonfire
Dec 14	Clearing behind the cricket pitch (GR 934072)	Fell 3 ill oaks, burn brash. Log and stack. Remove outer willow branches uphill on edge of clearing; fell hawthorn. Bonfire

The Commons are for the whole community

I am sometimes asked why the Society needs money, since volunteers do much of the work. The Society tries to maintain the Commons for the whole community, and there are several groups that use the Commons, all of which are free to enjoy this wonderful amenity. The owner, Christine Stott, allows horse riders to use the permissive rides, walkers are free to wander, walk their dogs or have a picnic, the Cricket Club enjoys a superb pitch, the Schools Cross-country Race is permitted to hold its annual event and, with Christine's permission, the Hunt meets on Boxing Day each year. Increased traffic associated with these and other activities in the villages and more heavy vehicles have led to considerable erosion to the edges of the Commons and to damage to the water pipes that were previously protected by the verges.

All these uses and community interests have to be considered by the Society. Much time, hard work and money is required to ensure that rides and pathways are kept free of overhanging branches or fallen trees. Those who work with chainsaws must be trained and equipment may need to be mended or replaced. We have a much-loved tractor that has been carefully maintained by Windsor Thomas, but this occasionally has to go in for more substantial repairs, and, after many years' service, may have to be replaced before too long. As well as the uses that we humans make of the Commons, the Society tries to conserve and enhance the area for plants and animals. For example, our acid grassland, a rare habitat in Buckinghamshire, which has resulted in the Commons' designation as a County Wildlife Site, requires careful management.

Volunteers do most of the work on the Commons, but, from time to time, we need to employ extra help, for instance in the control of bracken or felling dangerous trees that are too big for our chainsawers to handle. However, our finances are limited. Our only source of income is your annual subscriptions, donations and money raised at the Summer Party. With your support, we can continue to ensure that your visits are enjoyable.

Annual Subscriptions

These are due at the AGM. We have decided to keep them at £7.50 each or £15 for a couple. They are payable to **Mike Fletcher, Ivy Cottage, Cholesbury, Tring, Herts., HP23 6ND.**

Linden Bevan-Pritchard