



Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons Preservation Society
Newsletter October/November 2009

AGM

The AGM will be held on **Tuesday, 8 December** at **Cholesbury Village Hall**, starting promptly at **8 p.m.** After the formal business has been completed, refreshments will be served, followed by a talk from a representative from the Million Ponds Project. Led by the charity Pond Conservation, this is a national conservation programme that aims to promote the creation of new ponds throughout the country. We hope that as many residents as possible can come to this meeting, where you can hear about the work that is undertaken on the Commons, and express your own views. If there are any issues that you would like discussed at the AGM, let me know, and we can put it on the agenda.

One of our committee members, John Cooper, resigned this year, so we have a vacancy. If anyone would like to join the committee, please let me know beforehand. I would like to thank John for all his help over the years.

Newsletters by email

If you would like to receive future newsletters by email please let us know on 758750 or hccps@cholesbury.com. In this way, you should receive them promptly, and we would be able to cut down on the amount of paper that we use.

Proposed work on the Commons

After Christmas, we are planning to do some work on the open grassland area to the north of Horseblock Lane (on the left as you go down the hill from Hawridge). This is one of the areas which was identified originally as being the remains of an acid grassland/ heathland mix and as such is a good area in which to regenerate that habitat. Over recent years, we have controlled bracken by rolling in June/July and cutting and collecting the grass and bracken in September/October. The strength of the bracken has declined over this period and a wider variety of grasses and finer herbs have become established, showing the benefits of this regime.

You may have noticed, however, that there are still a fair number of trees in this area which suppress the growth of the heathland plants and acid grasses in their vicinity. In addition, it is far more time consuming, and therefore costly, to mow around the trees. There are quite a number of oaks and a single sweet chestnut, a holly and a conifer, which cast dense shade, as well as a number of birches and rowans, which cast less shade.

We have also considered the effect these trees have on the view from Horseblock, and to a lesser extent the ridge along the top of the Common. At the moment it is quite possible to see a fair amount of the horizon on the other side of the valley, but if they are left to grow to maturity their canopies will obscure large parts of that view.

With these considerations in mind, we are proposing to further enhance this area by removing the trees that are in the main open area. The first priority is to remove the trees that are most shading and which, if left, will grow to be very tall, have wide canopies and be long-lived. Any trees which are already well on their way to maturity will be left, so we will be leaving a couple of oaks on the edge of the area, and some

large birches which have relatively open canopies and are not long-lived.

We are interested to hear your views on this and encourage you to email us on hccps@cholesbury.com or call us on 758750. You can also come along to the AGM to meet us and talk about it then, if you prefer.

Before Christmas we will be concentrating on widening some of the rides and paths where the scrub has invaded and would encourage anyone who uses these to come and help our trusty group of volunteers at least once in the season. We will also be felling some smaller trees along the edge of roads to make sure that we can manage them in future. If you want to be kept informed about the working parties by email then please contact Oliver Parsons on oliver@parsons111.freerve.co.uk . The programme up until Christmas is as follows:

	<u>Location</u>	<u>Activity</u>
Oct 11	Bottom ride below Shepherds Cottage, Hawridge (Grid Ref 945067)	Cut back scrub and low branches to assist riders. Burn brash. Bonfire
Oct 25	Rays Hill ride between Common Ley and Post Office Cottages (Grid Ref 934070)	Re-open path and cut back low branches. Burn brash. Bonfire
Nov 8	Bottom of Horseblock Lane - SE side (RHS going down from Hawridge) (Grid Ref 943068)	Cut back overhanging branches and encroaching trees. Burn brash. Bonfire.
Nov 22	Opposite Shire Lane, Cholesbury (Grid Ref 933073)	Re-open paths in gorse area, remove trees; remove oaks from birch woodland. Bonfire
Dec 6	Opposite Tankards Dene, Hawridge (Grid Ref 946066)	Re-open hollow way. Clear around broken apple tree Bonfire
Dec 13	Opposite High View to Ridgeway, Hawridge (Grid Ref 943067)	Fell trees on edge of road. Bonfire

Meeting with Kath Daly and Andy McVeigh

On 6 October, Christine Stott, Isobel Clark and I met Kath Daly (Countryside Officer for the Chiltern Conservation Board) and Andy McVeigh, an ecologist working for Buckinghamshire County Council, who has worked on the Biodiversity Action Plan for Buckinghamshire and is a member of the Association of Local Government Ecologists. We discussed the possibility of putting together a plan for specific environmental projects that could secure funding for a period of four to five years. This would be a very valuable asset to the Society. We spoke about a number of management concerns that we try to address, but our choices are always dependent on our limited funds. One possible area that we might explore is the development of a coppicing regime in parts of the woodland areas. As you know, much of the woodland has reached maturity, with the result that trees are beginning to die. In some places, this can be left to a natural process of decay and regeneration. However, for safety reasons, this is not practical in all areas. Wherever possible, trees are removed while they are still within the capabilities of the chain saw team. Other projects that could benefit from extra funding are the extension of the open grass areas and the restoration of selected views to the north-east.

Andy was very pleased with the heather regeneration areas, but we need to find a way to ensure that re-emerging deep-rooted plants do not gain a foothold. We are very fortunate to have all this professional advice from two people with a profound understanding of the management of commonland.

Annual Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2010 are due at the AGM - £7.50 for individuals and £15 for a couple. You can pay at the AGM, or send to **Mike Fletcher, Ivy Cottage, Cholesbury, Tring, Herts., HP23 6ND**. Cheques should be made payable to HCCPS.

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