

Friends of Naphill Common

Despite dire weather warnings, our Open Meeting-cum-AGM on Friday 25th January was well attended. Almost fifty people were there to listen to an excellent talk by Rachel Sanderson of the Chilterns Commons Project and to admire an exhibition of paintings and photographs. The existing committee was re-elected, plus a new member, Sheila Draper, who has kindly, and bravely, offered to be our secretary. The committee is in the process of working out our programme

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of events and activities for the year ahead, so if you have any suggestions please let us know.

The Clumps. If you get a chance, stroll across to the Bradenham end of the Common and look at the changes made at the Clumps. As you know, the Friends of Naphill Common with the co-operation of the National Trust, are trying to return the Clumps to something resembling their original state. Our work parties have spent numerous days cutting the holly scrub that has engulfed these historic features. We have worked hard and made a difference but the area is huge and the holly regrows almost as fast as it is cut, making it a daunting task. Then the cavalry arrived – well, a squad of camouflage-clad young RAF men and women from Halton. We were offered 27 volunteers and 46 arrived.

In a day's hard work they did more than we could have achieved in a year. They managed to clear a strip of holly-infested land between the path and the hedge of the field belonging to Bradenham Hill Farm, leaving just a narrow strip. The sun can

now stream in to dry the path and encourage grass to reclaim the banks of the Clumps.

We thank the young recruits and their officers for this generous help, given with such good humour and enthusiasm. We must also thank Rachel Sanderson for arranging the visit and the National Trust for organising day, with a field canteen complete with a generator for the essential tea making and an instructor for the safe use of the tools – which were supplied by the National Trust and The Chiltern Conservation Board. It was a model of what can be achieved by good will and co-operation.

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There is still much to be done at the Clumps. Some of the smaller trees that have grown up around them will be removed by the National Trust. Unfortunately several of the trees within the circular banks were diseased and have had to be felled or reduced in height. Whether we can re-plant is open to debate because the Clumps are historic monuments. Soon we hope there will be an information board near the Clumps to explain what we are trying to achieve, complete with a picture painted by FONC member, Philip Hussey.

Main events last year

- (1) Feb: **The Clumps:** FoNC met with the National Trust and agreed a programme to help restore the Clumps, by removing the holly and young saplings.
 - (2) March: **Romano-British Farmstead:** FoNC and the Risborough Group jointly undertook a geophysics survey of the Romano-British farmstead, which has now been partly traced as a D-shape, the entrance to which remained unclear.
 - (3) April: **Archaeological visit:** John Morris, a woodland archaeologist, undertook an educational survey of the Common with interested FoNC members.
 - (4) May-June: **Geological survey:** Dr Jill Evers, a geologist, led a FoNC survey and discovered that the current maps were inaccurate and the Sarcen stones, located in Willow Pond, had now been estimated to be 50M years old rather than 30M.
 - (5) June: **Bat walk:** spotted or heard: pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat and Natterer's bat.
 - (6) June: **Naphill Fete:** FONC's stall raised awareness of activities.
 - (7) July: **Flora and fauna walks:** *Butterfly walk:* Dennis Dell, a butterfly conservationist, led a walk, but the rare purple emperor butterflies proved elusive.
 - Mini-beast safari for children:* John Tyler, an entomologist, showed youngsters various insects and found a slow worm.
 - Discovery of a Yellow Birds-nest saprophyte:* found on the Common for first time.
 - (8) August: **Tree damage and loss:** An energy provider had damaged paths and an oak used by purple emperors and, following complaints, had agreed to consult before carrying out any works in future.
A major limb on the 300 year-old Great Beech at Dew Pond was lost, rendering the tree lop-sided and thus unstable. The limb that hosted the rare fungus *Hericium* was undamaged.
 - (9) Oct: **Annual Fungus Foray:** *Galerina sideroides* found – a first in Bucks.
- Ongoing: Walks, path clearing, re-labelling important trees and pond survey by Tony Marshall.
- Into 2013: new events for this year include moth trapping sessions and the reintroduction of the Juniper cuttings.



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