

Friends of Naphill Common

Our open meeting and AGM will be on Friday 7th February 2014 at Naphill Village Hall.

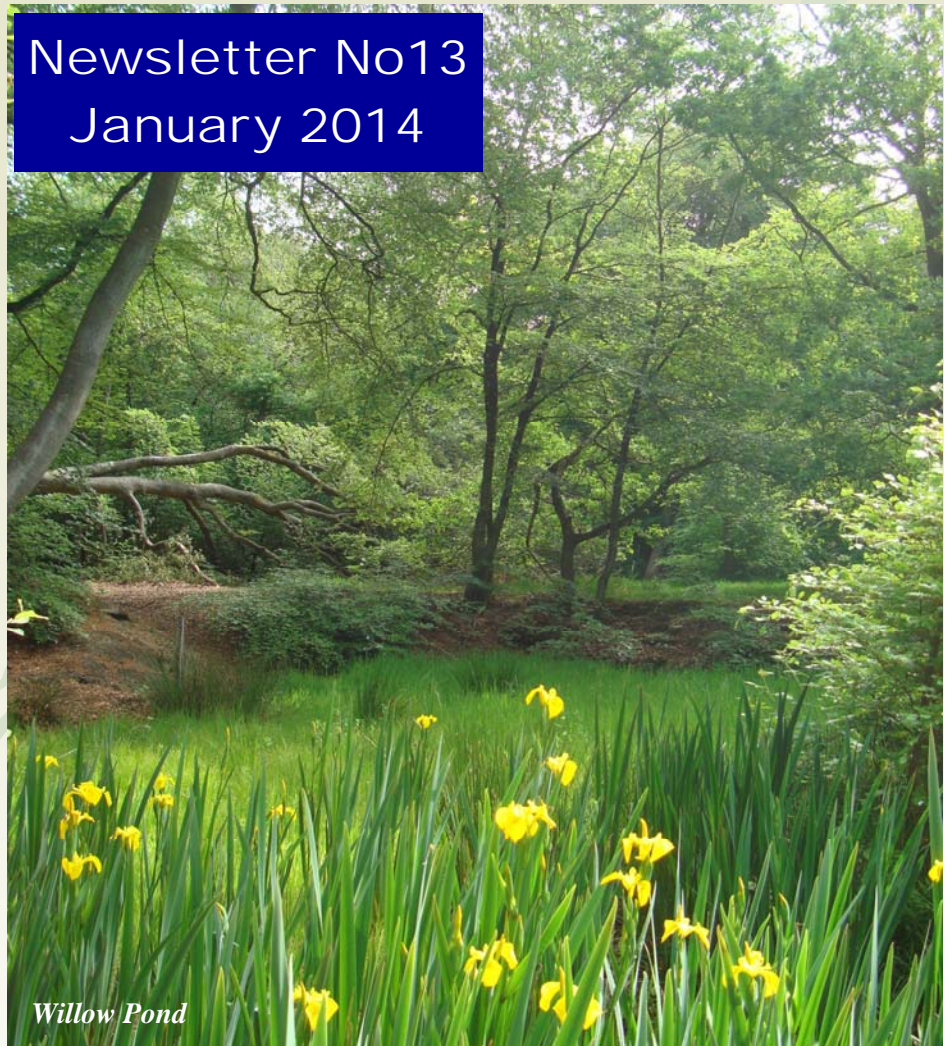
Doors will open at 7.15pm for a 7.30 start. There will be tea and coffee available. The highlight is an illustrated talk by the historian **Frances Kerner**, entitled '**Wild and Picturesque Places: a local and national history of our common land**'. Before that, there will be an opportunity for you to elect a new committee and even offer your services if you wish. There will be a brief outline of what we have been doing and as much information as we have about the proposed felling and scrub clearance to start next year. Please come and ask questions and make comments and suggestions about what FONC should be doing. We need your opinions and advice.

The Pond Survey. Visit:

www.naphillcommon.org.uk/ponds.html

This year the Friends of Naphill Common commissioned a survey of the ponds on Naphill Common. Two experts, Tony

Newsletter No13
January 2014



Willow Pond

Marshall and Holly Bennett (who has a Great Crested Newt licence) spent a year looking at the flora and fauna associated with the seven principal ponds.

The survey was paid for by the Chilterns Commons Project under the leadership of Rachel Sanderson and cost £800. A copy of the final report is on the website and it makes interesting, if sobering, reading.

The survey is in-

teresting because it has revealed 232 species of plants and animals (including insects) and gives us a clear picture of the wetland communities we have. It is sobering because it demonstrates how much our ponds have deteriorated since they were last surveyed. As they have become overshadowed by trees and scrub, filled by leaves and choked by dominant plants, so their biodiversity has declined as species have been lost.

Of the 174 wetland species once present only 33 were



Ash Pond

found during the survey. **Pal-mate newts** were the most common amphibians, and smooth newts were found in two ponds, while great crested (or warty) newts were found only in Daisy Pond. Of the 80 species of **wetland plants** previously been recorded, only 15 were detected. For example, Daisy Pond is the richest we have but the great rarity, star-fruit, was last seen in 1995, and the pond has also lost lesser water purslane and alternate water-milfoil. Of the 26 marsh-land **beetles** previously re-corded, only three turned up this year. Only two out of ten **water-bugs** were found and four out of seven **water-snails**.

The report ends with recom-mendations for work to be done to try to halt the decline of the ponds and even revive their for-tunes. This work includes

scrub clearance around the ponds and clearing out both the rubbish and some of the leaf debris. But all this will have to be done with great care so as not to disturb or destroy what is of in-terest and still sur-vides, and of course, the Common's SSSI status has to be respected.

We hope to embark on sev-eral years of work, attending to the problems a little at a time so as not to do damage. For ex-ample, we need to achieve lar-ger areas of clear water by re-moving weed, but this must be done gradually. Dredging out the dead leaves that have al-most filled the ponds is essen-tial, but we must not destroy the invertebrate communities we want to preserve. Even the



Daisy Pond

shape of the ponds can be of historical significance, as in the case of Shipwash Pond, where there is an earthen promontory along which the sheep were driven for dipping.

Fortunately, Sir Edward Dashwood has given us per-mission to undertake this work. We will have to produce a man-agement plan and arrange for expert guidance, and then our work parties can get on with a programme of work. *Perhaps you would like to join in.*

Felling.

There is not much new information about the proposed tree felling and scrub clear-ance by Wessex Woodland Management, due to start next autumn. FONC has been supplying information and maps show-ing the significant trees that must be pre-served and the archaeological features that must be protected from the heavy machin-ery. Whether the men doing the work will take note of this information is another matter and we must remain vigilant throughout. Volunteers will be welcome to help in monitoring what happens. It is said that the intention is to undertake only limited felling of some of the smaller and middling trees but how many we do not know. It is going to be a busy year.

