

Friends of Naphill Common

Welcome to the first Friends of Naphill Common Newsletter. It is intended to keep you up to date with what the group has been doing and to let you know about future events. We hope to distribute it electronically to those who have email and by post to those who do not. Obviously post is expensive, so if you have an email address please let us know. You can also keep in touch by visiting our web-site

www.naphillcommon.org.uk

and by looking at our column in the *Naphill and Walters Ash Gazette* each month.

The group exists to try to look after Naphill Common. We want to preserve what is valuable about this magnificent local asset and make improvements where they are required. Our chief aims are to conserve and enhance the ecology, the natural tranquillity of the area and the archaeological features, while making them more accessible to local people. We hope to organise working parties to clear blocked paths and improve their surfaces, and to do research so as to gain a bet-

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ter understanding of the flora and fauna. We are very fortunate to have such a remarkable common but many feel that it is forbidding or inaccessible. It is large enough to be enjoyed by more people without losing its quiet and peaceful atmosphere.

What we have done so far.

The group was formally established on 2nd December 2008 and began recruiting members at Pam Smith's Local History Exhibition in Naphill Village Hall in February 2009. This was followed by an open meeting in Naphill Village Hall on 20th March at which we had speakers talking about the common and the local area. By the time of the village fete in June we had recruited over one

hundred members.

During the summer Ron Collins has led three "**Walks for Health**" and these have become friendly social occasions, well worth joining. Ron hopes to organise more later in the year. We also held a midsum-



Angus Idle's enthusiasm for grasses was infectious

mer picnic at the umbrella tree which was enjoyed by several family groups. In a more scientific vein, Angus Idle led a walk on which several of us learned to identify some common **grasses**, and the entomologist Mike Bloxham carried out a

A-hoy me-hearties!

A hunt for me ol' treasure on ye Olde Common, a prize for whoever finds it afor me. Meet at Naphill Village

Hall, 2.30pm
Monday 31st
August.



Guided walk through the Common, April 2009

preliminary survey of *insects* on the common, discovering some fairly rare specimens and species native to ancient woodland. Details of the results of these surveys are on the website.

Future programme.

We have a number of events planned for the next few months.

(1) Wednesday 5th August 2009: A Common Botany Walk led by Dr Alan Showler. Meet at Naphill Village Hall at 7 pm. One of Alan's claims to fame is that he discovered the exceptionally rare star-fruit *Damasonium alisma* in ponds on Naphill and Downley Common. He will be introducing us to some of the flowering plants, ferns and mosses on an evening walk.

(2) Monday 31st August (Bank Holiday): A Treasure Hunt.

(Weather permitting)

Meet at 2.30pm at Naphill Village Hall or join us at the common end of Chapel Lane. All the family are welcome for a light-hearted quiz and a hunt for buried treasure.

(3) Sunday 13th September 2009: A walk: 'Ponds and Ancient Sites' led by Philip and Trevor Hussey. Meet at Naphill Village Hall at 2.30 pm. Bring your walking boots for a two hour tour of some of the features of the common. We will visit some of the oldest trees, archaeological features and ponds. All welcome.

(4) Wednesday 28th October: Fungal Forey. Meet at Naphill Village Hall at 10am A walk lead by Bucks Fungus Group's Derek Schafer and Penny Cullington to find and identify some of the many wild fungi growing both on the ground and the trees.

(5) October: A tour of Naphill Common's Junipers. Details to follow. See feature in box.

(6) January 2010: The Annual General Meeting. Naphill Village Hall. This will be a meeting with a speaker or speakers and refreshments, open to all.

Ideas for the future.

There is a lot to do on the common and much to learn. Because Naphill Common is an SSSI under the stewardship of Natural England, we need to

get permission from them and from the landowners before we can organise *working parties*. Negotiations are underway and

the future care of the common. With just a few changes we could increase the diversity of species and preserve what is

Save the Juniper

Junipers were once abundant all over the Chilterns but today cling on in a just a few locations. One hundred years ago Naphill Common was renowned for its forest of enormous juniper bushes but now only five or six struggle to survive. Bucks County Council have a scheme to collect cuttings from those remaining and hope to replant in suitable areas. We hope to arrange for the botanist concerned to lead a walk to collect specimens on the common and tell us something about these venerable old bushes.



eventually we hope we can start doing minor projects such as clearing paths and improving their surfaces. We plan to put maps on the notice boards at the main entrances to the common and improve the path signs. The common should remain a quiet and natural place but there is plenty of room to allow more people to enjoy its peace.

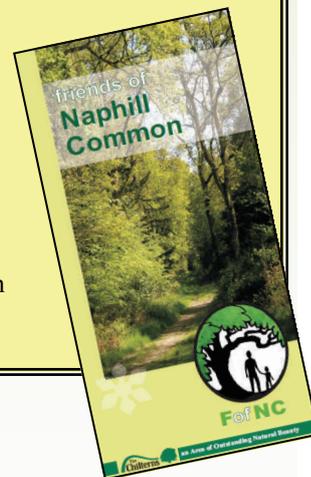
We also hope to be able to clear around the few surviving *juniper bushes* that are slowly being killed by overshadowing and around some of the ponds. We intend to organise surveys of the flora, fauna and *archaeological* sites led, wher-



ever possible, by experts. These studies will contribute towards the development of a management plan for

important. There is no proper history of the common and it would be fascinating to set up a group and produce one.

Have you picked up one of our leaflets yet? If not, email us at the address below and we'll send you one. It has a simple map inside, indicating some of the footpaths. We'll be preparing a more detailed map in the next few months!



The *social programme* will continue with walks for health and various social events aimed at introducing the common to newcomers and making it more accessible to village people. The committee would welcome comments and suggestions – *it is everyone's common.*

