

Friends of Naphill Common

Our next big event is the AGM, to be held in Naphill Village Hall on Friday 22nd January 2010, beginning at 7.30 pm with tea and coffee. I hope as many members and non-members as possible will come.

The main feature will be a talk by Cathy Rose on **red kites** in the Chilterns, followed by time for questions. The evening will also include a brief talk by Steve Rodrick on the project concerning our neglected **orchards** proposed by the Chiltern Conservation Board.

However, a very important part of the evening will be a discussion of our future programme. There are two components to this: a chance for you to suggest activities in the coming year, and a more general discussion of ideas for the future of the common.

As far as the programme for next year is concerned, some events are fairly obvious. We need to repeat the surveys of grasses, flowers, insects and other aspects of the wild life, and the walks for health will no doubt prove popular

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again. But we need your suggestions for other activities – perhaps a bat survey, a walk round the boundary of the common, a sculpture trail and so on.

Any ideas will be welcome. We have plans to arrange working parties to do such things as improve the paths, clear some of the scrub, refurbish some

ponds, replace the information boards and improve the signage on the paths but, as reported previously, we need to gain permission from the landowner and Natural England for some of these activities, and that has not proved easy. Have you any ideas for future activities? (See 'Branching Out' below.)

The discussion of the **long term future** of the common is of obvi-

ous importance. There are likely to be widely different views and the discussion will not be concluded at the AGM. However, we need to begin because the common is for everyone's benefit and is, ultimately the responsibility of all of us. To help with the debate we will give everyone at the AGM a paper with three "possible futures" outlined upon it, and

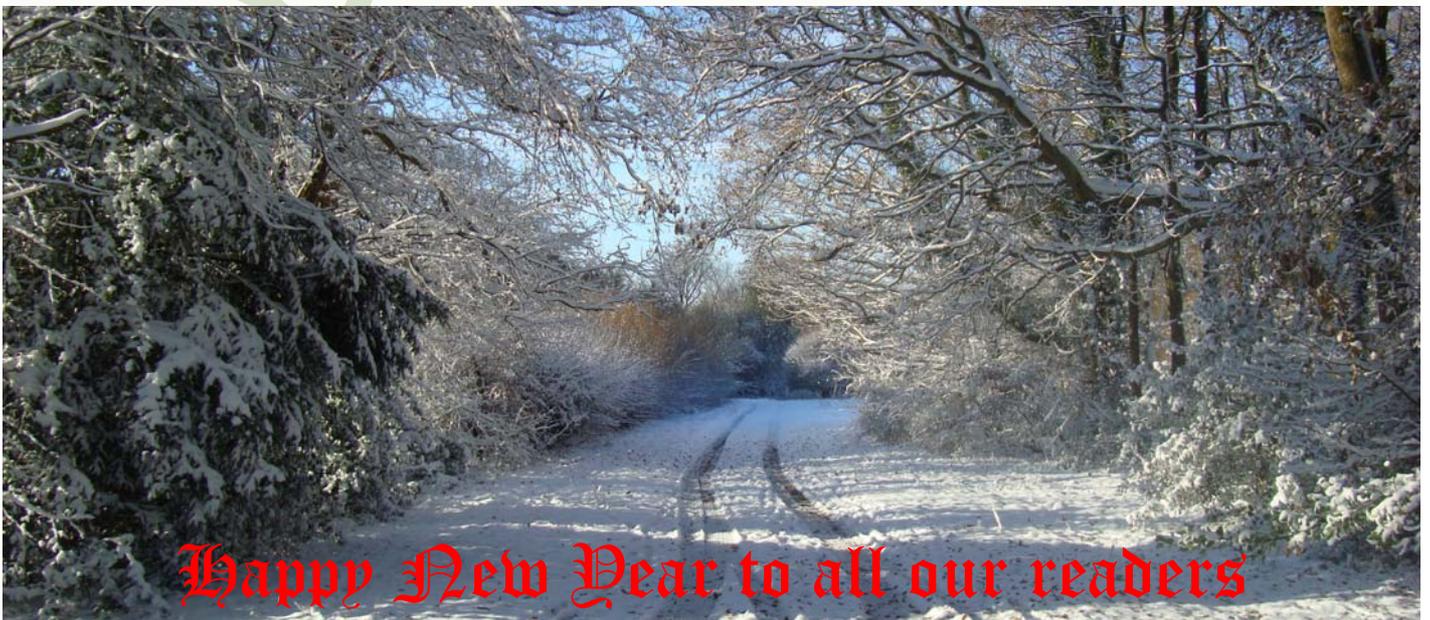
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hope to get a feeling about which is the most popular. Of course they will not exhaust all possibilities or be definitive in any sense, but it is hoped that they will spark discussion. See the box overleaf.

Branching Out.

We now have a membership of over 100 and it is likely that amongst those there are many varieties of talent and interest. Eventually it might be possible to

form interest groups within the Friends of Naphill Common. For example, some may be keen on



Happy New Year to all our readers

the walks for health and may want to organise variations on that theme; others may be keen to get involved with practical tasks such as scrub clearance, path improvement or pond maintenance; others may be interested in the survey of the plants and animals of the common and so on.

We know remarkably little about the **early history** of the common and we could form a history group to research the area. It seems likely that what is now Naphill was originally two hamlets, Moseley

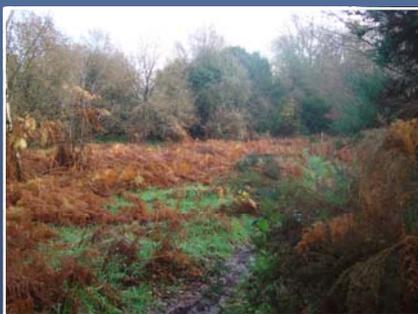
Very roughly, the three "possible futures" for the Common can be summarised as:

(1) Do very little and let the common continue its evolution into mature woodland.

(2) Intervene in a modest way so as to maintain paths, open up some of the glades and encourage a more diverse flora and fauna.

(3) Be more ambitious and eventually produce a common with areas of mature woodland; large glades of open grassland; others areas with heathland species such as juniper and gorse; perhaps even introduce grazing to help keep the cleared areas open.

These options will be presented in more elaborate form at the AGM.



A few small areas of heathland still exist at the southern end of the Common

and Naphill or Naphle, each with its own common. 'Moseley' was written 'Musleghe' in 1237-40 and 'Mesleye' in 1302, and it seems likely that this comes from the Old English 'meos leah' for 'moss clearing in woodland'. The earliest 'Knaphill' appears in print is in



Our Programme.

Only a couple of events remain on our existing list.

(1) On **Sunday 17th January 2010**, Andy McVeigh, the County Botanist, will lead a walk to visit the few remaining **junipers** on Naphill Common. He will take cuttings as part of a scheme to reintroduce junipers to some areas of the Chilterns, and will tell us about the shrub and the scheme. Meet at Naphill Village Hall at 10 am. Boots are recommended.

(2) The **AGM** is on **Friday 22nd January 2010** in Naphill Village Hall, beginning at 7.30 pm. There will be a talk on **red kites** by the authority on these beautiful birds, Cathy Rose, and a talk on the **orchards** project by Steve Roderick. There will also be a discussion of the future of Naphill Common and the FONC programme for 2010.

1599, but becomes 'Naphle' in 1766, both suggesting the Old English 'cnaepp' or 'rounded hill'. These give a tantalising glimpse into the history of our common.

If we are to get even further back in time perhaps we could form an **archaeology** group to investigate the original boundary of the common and the earthworks within it, including what is thought to be a Romano-British farmstead or enclosure. The nearby Dew Pond may even be contemporary with the earthwork because a



shard of Romano-British storage jar was found in or near it: which would make it a very ancient pond indeed. Even earlier use of the common is suggested by the discovery of Bronze Age flakes and an arrow head on land once included within the common.

There are so many aspects of the common that are worth investigating and so many activities to undertake, all just waiting to be enjoyed. All that is needed is for a few enthusiasts to get started. We can use the Newsletter and the web site to bring people together and organise themselves. Just let us know of any ideas.

In the New Year we will be offering a whole new programme. As

you may know, in November, Friends of Naphill Common won a Highly Commended **award** from the Chilterns Conservation Board in the 'Enjoyment and Understanding' category, so we must at least match that performance in the year to come.

OUR YEAR 1 ACHIEVEMENTS

(Number of attendees in brackets)

- Past Times Exhibition
- Talk about the Common (85)
- Guided Common walk (37)
- Midsummer Picnic (29)
- Looking at Grasses walk/survey (11)
- Three walks for Health (21, 15 & 13)
- Botany walk/survey (20)
- Treasure Hunt (16)
- Heritage Open Day walk (37)
- Fungal Foray walk (33)
- Establish our web site
- Win our Highly Commended

award

