

Friends of Naphill Common

Welcome to our fifth Newsletter. There are some encouraging things to report. One is that our membership continues to grow and we now have almost 200. All of our events have been well supported this year from the Rogation Day 'beating the bounds' to the tree recognition walk – even the pouring rain failed to deter thirty people from the fungus foray. Ron Collins' Walks for Health are as popular as ever and, if only we could find a second leader, we could run more of them – perhaps we could offer a choice between long distance and short distance walks. Any offers?

On 28th September two of our members, together with John Morris, acted as guides for a visit of the Royal Forestry Society. They showed a lot of interest in our common: stopping to discuss individual trees and other features. They were particularly interested in our veteran pollards and the few remaining junipers. These were experts and they had helpful advice about what we need to do and who might be able to advise us. Equally important is the fact that they are an influential body who may be able to help us in our struggle to get permission to work on the Common.

The Clumps Project

Perhaps the best piece of news concerns "The Clumps": that enigmatic group of circular earthworks lined with

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trees situated on the Western part of the Common, bordering Bradenham, and owned by the National Trust. We may be able to return one or two of

cattle. Although this is highly unlikely, their exact purpose is still a mystery. They were probably rings of trees planted on low earth banks in the late 18th or early 19th Centuries: perhaps to mark the edge of the Bradenham estate or to hide a straggle of hovels that had appeared on the Common. What is evident is that they were planted with species of trees, including lime, horse chestnut, ash and



them to their original glory.

There are five Clumps, sometimes called 'The Rings', and they have always been a subject of mystery and speculation. It has long been a popular belief that they were enclosures used by the drovers for their

probably fir, found either rarely or nowhere else on the Common. They are not exact circles and vary in size from 144 sq m (5.7 pole) to 561 sq m (22.2 pole).

There were a number of old photographs of the Clumps at Pam Smith's recent exhibition and, fortunately, committee member Kevin Bennett was able to scan them. They are now on our website. The earliest (above) was probably taken at the beginning of the last Century because it shows the same two women, the Tilbury sisters, who appear on the post card of the Umbrella Tree, which carries the date 28th August 1906. The later photograph (left) with the boy seated on one of the banks may be around the 1930s, and FoNC Chairman, Trevor Hussey, can remember having picnics on the Clumps in the 1940s when they were still fairly open and covered in grass.

What the pictures show is that the Clumps originally stood in open



We are indebted to Pam Smith for allowing us to scan her collection of photos from the Common during her recent Past Times exhibition

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grassland, and that the inexorable advance, first of scrub and then of trees, has since engulfed them. The banks have lost their grass and the whole area is becoming dense woodland. We have proposed a project to clear back the scrub and the bushes so as to return one or more of the Clumps to their original state.

Fortunately, Neil Harris, the Gardens and Countryside Manager for the National Trust has embraced the idea and we recently held a site meeting to try to identify the specific Clumps shown in the pictures, and decide what it is possible to do. We are already in Neil's debt for the excellent way he has trimmed the Umbrella tree back to something close to its original shape, and if



Photographic Competition



'A photograph taken on Naphill Common'

(Any subject - people, trees, landscape plants, animals, however you see our Common)

Entries by 9th Jan 2011
All entries on display at our AGM 21st Jan 2011
Prizes for 1st and under 16
 Check our website for more details
www.naphillcommon.org.uk



Friends of Naphill Common

Photographic Competition.
 All those photographers amongst you might like to enter our photographic competition. Just send in up to two pictures of features of the Common - people enjoying themselves, plants, animals, trees, landscapes - whatever takes your fancy. If you have old photographs they would be welcome too. The entries will be judged by someone from the Wycombe Photographic Society. There will be a prize for the best and another for the best by an under 16 year old. Please send entries by email to fonc@hotmail.co.uk. Unfortunately we can't accept paper copies but we can accept slides if you get consent from the organiser at that address. See our website www.naphillcommon.org.uk for the rules and instructions. The closing date is Sunday 9th January 2011 and the entries will be shown at our AGM on Friday 21st January.



The three clumps in the photo above stand out clearly against the open grassland of the early 1900's. Below is the scene today with the same three clumps picked out in red. The clumps cannot be seen without some significant detective work on the ground.



this project is successful we shall owe him even more. How refreshing to find a landowner who takes a positive role in caring for the Common.

We have organised **work parties** to clear some of the scrub on 28th Nov, 12th Dec, 2nd Jan, 16th Jan and 30th Jan, each starting at 10am and meeting at the Common end of Forge Road. Your help would be most welcome, please email us at the address below if you are interested. We may, eventually transform one corner of the Common and even let some of the heathland return: fescue grasses, heather and even juniper. The improved biodiversity and open prospect will add to the richness of the Common and people's enjoyment of it.

Future Programme.

Our **Walks for Health** continue. They start from the Village Hall at 10 am on Monday 20th December and Tuesday 18th January. Call Ron on 562240 for details. Our **AGM** is at 7.30 pm on Friday 21st January 2011 at Naphill Village Hall. We will start with a cup of tea or coffee and a display of the entries to the photographic competition, followed by a report on the year. There will then be a talk on historical and **archaeological** aspects of the Common and local woodland by John Morris of the Chilterns Woodland Project. John is well known locally, an excellent speaker and the author of an admirable book *The Cultural Heritage of Chiltern Woods*.

We will organise another programme of events next year and your suggestions are welcome.

