

Friends of Naphill Common

Our programme is shaping up and it is going to be a busy year. Chris Miller has generously offered to lead **short walks** around Naphill. They will take place on Wednesdays: 4th April, 2nd May and 6th June, and will continue on the first Wednesday of the month if the first three prove popular. Walks will start from Naphill Village Hall at 10.30am and will last about an hour, so the distances will be between two and three miles. Ron Collins will continue leading the longer **"walks for health"**. These will all start from the Village Hall at 10am on the following Mondays: 16th April; 21st May; 18th June; 16th July; 20th Aug., 24th Sept.; 15th Oct.; 19th Nov., and 17th Dec. Everyone is welcome to either or both of these walks, whether you are a member of FONC or not. All are free and you will find the company very friendly. Our work parties (also free!) take place on the first and third Sunday of each month.

Anyone interested in the **geology** of our locality, especially the Common, will be interested in a new project we are hoping to start shortly. We are currently seeking permission from the landowner and Natural England for a major geology project led by Dr Jill Eyers. We plan to begin with an indoor meeting on Sunday 13th

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May in Naphill Village Hall when Jill will explain some basic geology and the techniques we can use to investigate our area. This will be followed by two or three field trips during which we will explore the geological features on Naphill Common. We will be looking at the soils, the sarsen and pudding stones, and trying to discover why the various pits and dells were dug. Come and discover how to do geological work and then practice it on the Common. Details of times and dates will be in the next Gazette, on posters, on our website and members will find them in our next newsletter. There may be a small charge.

Hoping for better weather than last year, there will be another evening walk to search for **bats** on Friday 15th June led by Bridget Parslow. Bridget and her colleagues are very informative about these enigmatic creatures and, by using bat detectors, we should be able to identify several species on the Common and even find out what they are doing.

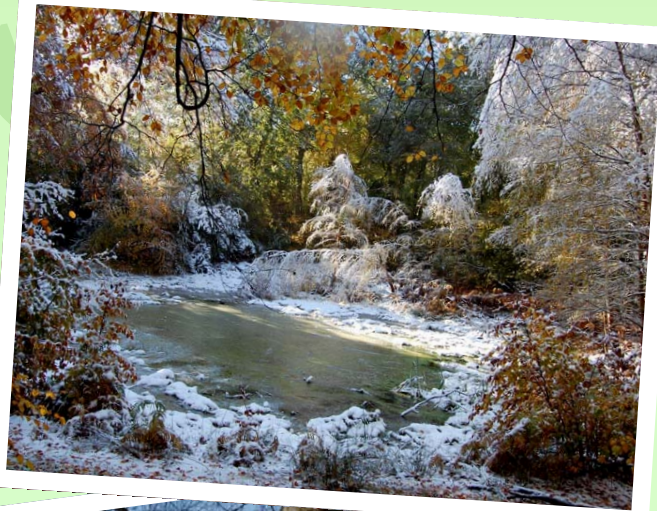
Following the discovery last year of the

rare and beautiful purple emperor butterflies on Naphill Common, the **butterfly** expert Dennis Dell will lead a walk on Wednesday 4th July in the hope of spotting some. These insects are elusive but with luck we will see them, may be with binoculars, since the males generally fly above the oaks, while the females are generally lower down on the willow bushes. There will, of course be other woodland species to see.

John Tyler has agreed to lead another **mini-beast safari** on Sunday 22nd July. We welcome parents to bring their children to hunt for insects and other mini-beasts, which John will identify. There will be nets and trays available, and all creatures will afterwards be set free.

The **pond** expert, Tony Marshall has just completed a survey of Downley's ponds, which included discovering crested newts in Manning's Pond. We hope to get permission for him to begin a survey of the seven main ponds on Naphill Common in February 2013, and what Downley has, surely we have better.

We have plans for a mid-summer bonfire to dispose of the holly brash removed from the Clumps, and hope to be joined by people from the National Trust and Downley Common Preservation Society.



*Congratulations to our
Photographic Competition
winners Sheila Bottomley
and Emily Creaser plus
Highly Commended entries
from Patrick Gunn and
Molly Gunn*



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Anyone who has the dubious pleasure of using the narrow strip of mud that purports to be a footpath between the end of Chapel Lane and Ladies Mile has hopefully appreciated the clearance of scrub that has been occurring along this stretch. The before (left) and after photos show the walker now has more choice of routes and can consequently avoid the mud.



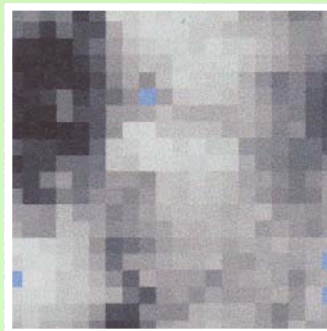
All of our events cost money, especially the archaeology, geology and pond surveys. Much of this is covered by our member's subscriptions and a small charge in some cases, but we would like to thank Rachel Sanderson of the Chiltern Commons Project and Richard Pushman from the County Council for their financial help.

News from the History and Archaeology Group

The Great Beech Tree behind Dew Pond grows out of the embankment to a suspected Romano-British farmstead. It is claimed to be a 'D' shaped enclosure but the bank and ditch fades out on one side, so we set out to try to trace its original position with the able assistance of the archaeology team from the Risborough Countryside Group.

They brought their geophysical survey equipment and the team surveyed two twenty metre squares on the likely path of the ditch and found significant traces on one of them. The survey method is entirely undamaging and we hope to extend it in the near future.

Members are invited to a day of woodland archaeology on Wednesday 18th April led by John Morris. Booking is required as we have to limit numbers to about 16 and make a charge of £10. Meet at Bradenham cricket pavilion at 10am for a briefing, followed by a trip to the Common to explore some of its archaeology. Contact Kevin Bennett (01494 568689) if you are interested in either event.



Can you spot the ditch and bank feature in this geophys plot?

The perimeter of the farmstead is marked by two embankments separated by a 3m wide ditch



The device sends a pulse into the ground to measure the resistivity of the soil. The bottom of an ancient, filled-in ditch might be damp and therefore have a low resistivity.

