

Report on the Friends of Naphill Common AGM Friday 27th January 2012

About 70 people attended the AGM despite it being a cold and wet evening.



Chairman's report

Chairman Trevor Hussey started his report by thanking Ron Collins for leading our highly successful "Walks for Health". These are held each month and 25 people attended the last one. The dates are published in the Naphill and Walters Ash Gazette and on the FONC website (www.naphillcommon.org.uk). We do need a volunteer to lead shorter walks of about 2 miles.

Trevor then discussed some of our events in 2011 as follows:

- Mini Beast Safari, led by local entomologist John Tyler, searching for insects. It was very successful despite the drizzle.
- The bat walk was also spoilt by rain but a Soprano Pipistrelle and a Common Pipistrelle were located.
- The Butterfly Conservation Society asked whether we had any Purple Emperors on the Common, they like combinations of mature Oak for the males and Pussy Willow for the females. We identified several possible sites and they found three at the first site they checked. We hope to run a walk and talk in the summer on butterflies.
- The Clumps project has progressed well with the scrub having been cleared. Next, The National Trust will remove many of the saplings that have grown between the clumps and a few diseased trees. In time we hope to restore the clumps to their former glory by planting replacement trees of the same species as the original. Postcards of the early 1900's show the clumps to have been conspicuous ring-shaped embankments lined with unusual tree specimens not found elsewhere on the Common. The trees

appear to be about 50 years old in the pictures making them at least mid 19th century.

- Our working parties meet on the first and third Sunday of every month, up until mid March. We usually meet at 10am at the Common end of Forge Road. Typical duties include scrub clearance/path widening using hand tools. FONC members are welcome to help.
- The History and Archaeology Group (HAG) has surveyed the WWII Churchill Tank tracks, caused by testing tanks assembled at Broom Wade High Wycombe prior to dispatch to the front. Two projects for the New Year are to interview villagers about their recollections of the Common over the years and to conduct a geophys survey of the suspected Romano-British farmstead in an attempt to find the missing fourth side.
- The Chilterns Conservation Board secured a generous grant from the Lottery Fund and has set up the Chilterns Commons Project to care for the 187 Commons. We hope to be involved in due course.
- Most of Naphill Common is owned by West Wycombe Estate and they are interested in managing the Common which could include some felling. The Common is a SSSI grade 1 of international importance. The Forestry Commission, Chiltern Conservation Board, Natural England and FONC met the Estate's management agents Wessex Woodland to discuss the constraints to such work. FONC has produced a map to show features such as veteran trees, trees of interest, ponds, junipers, tank tracks, the farmstead, perimeter bank and ditch, purple emperor sites, purple hairstreak sites, hairy bindweed and starfruit locations. Limited felling to open up the rides and glades would let in some sunlight and increase biodiversity. We have 30-40 really old (300-400 years) pollarded trees and it would be good to have an agreed management plan for them. Clearing the ponds would be another useful activity.

Photographic Competition

Trevor then introduced this year's Photographic Competition and thanked Peter Davis for organising it and Alan Jaycock of Wycombe Photographic Society for judging it. Peter announced the winners as follows:

- Under 16s winner: Emily Creaser
- Highly commended: Molly Gunn
- Commended: Lewis Hussey, Matthew Creaser, Maisie Gunn and Harriet Slade.
- Over 16s winner: Sheila Bottomley
- Highly commended: Patrick Gunn
- Commended: Chloe Wells, Margaret Wagner, Eleanor Thorn and Nicola Hives

All the photographs were displayed in the hall before the AGM and will now be placed on the website, www.naphillcommon.org.uk. The winners received a

mounted print of their photo and a book token. The winning photos will be featured on the front cover of the Naphill Gazette.

Membership Secretary's report

Membership Secretary Stephanie Morgan reported that we have had 228 members although not all renewed their membership last year. January is the renewal month and she urged the members who had not renewed at this meeting to do so soon.

Treasurer's report

Treasurer Peggy Ewart thanked John Harris for auditing the accounts. We have £1300 in the bank. Our income has been predominantly from membership subscriptions plus a donation from an ex-villager. Our annual costs are about £600-700pa so we need approximately 140 members each year to break even. Typical expenses include paying for speakers and for experts to lead walks but this can prove costly. For example, a specialist to look at and advise on ancient trees is about £400 per day.

Election of New Committee

Committee Member Daisy Leak had decided to stand down so there was one vacancy on the Committee. The only volunteer from the audience was Chris Miller who was duly proposed and seconded for the role. The committee for 2012 thus comprises; Peggy Ewart, Philip Hussey, Peter Davis, Trevor Hussey, Stephanie Morgan, Kevin Bennett, Steve Rodrick, David Greenwood, Ron Collins, Marek Pawlik and Chris Miller. The committee will elect its officers' positions at the first committee meeting on 7th February.

Richard Pushman thanked the Committee, and Chairman Trevor Hussey in particular, for all their hard work and said he could really see it starting to come to fruition.

Any Other Business.

Richard Pushman invited FONC to apply for some of his community fund. He also raised the issue of motorbikes roaring around the Common and recommended people inform the Police if they come across such behaviour, which is not permitted on the Common.

A discussion was held on the possibility of grazing the Common to keep the undergrowth at bay.

Speaker

The AGM then closed with a detailed and fascinating presentation by guest speaker Dr Jill Eyres on the Geology of Buckinghamshire.



Dr Jill Eyres speaking

Copies of the AGM minutes will be available in due course – see website www.naphillcommon.org.uk