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August/September 2022

Jubilee Celebrations: The 70th Jubilee Celebrations in the Villages were a huge success thanks mainly to Phil Matthews and Janet Hopkinson. The Beacon to mark the occasion was organised with Phil's usual care and the addition of Mark Verney's beautifully restored fire engine was a huge bonus, making any possible fire hazard a minimal risk. Phil's team were out very early on the morning after doing their clear up and, apart from a patch of scorched ground, there is no evidence of the bonfire which gave pleasure to so many people. Thanks also to Janet for organising the village bunting and to her and the neighbours who organised a very enjoyable street party in Hawridge and to Sarah Higgins and others who did the same in Cholesbury.



9.30pm: A Salute to The Queen's 70 Years!



Family Verney standing by...

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Pull Harder! Tug of War at the Street Party on the Commons



Of course, in order to celebrate this historic event, parts of the Commons were cut earlier than usual. This was to minimise fire risk opposite the beacon and to allow safe parking as well as to provide places where residents were to picnic. Whilst this cutting was done earlier than usual since we usually allow the wildflowers to set seed beforehand, we are advised that occasionally cutting earlier isn't a major problem since there is still a large seedbed of wildflowers on the Commons. The rest of the grassy areas on the Commons will be cut by James at the appropriate time.

The area outside the Village Hall has also now been cut in preparation for the Bank Holiday Fete. We are grateful to Mark Lake who cut and baled it. Hopefully, this hay can be used for fodder. Unfortunately, because of the amount of dog mess the hay from the main Commons is not suitable for this use.

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Cutting the Manorial Waste: This year James's cutting will include all of the grassy area on the Manorial Waste (the land outside people's houses on the south side of the main road). We are impressed that so many of the residents now leave that area as a corridor for wildlife and appreciate that it may be difficult for some of you to cut without the necessary equipment. However, if for any reason you do not want to have yours cut by James, please let Christine know (758 240). At present James has no means of collecting the cut grass so if you are able to rake up yours that would be very much appreciated since our wildflowers flourish best in less fertile soils and so removing the nutrients from the hay provides their optimal conditions.

Benches by the Village Hall: At present John Caple is organising the installation of a bench beside the existing bench for Gill Goodchild. This is in recognition of our longest serving ever HCCPS Committee member, David Barnard and of the contribution that he and Joan have made and continue to make to our community. John Kilpatrick is replacing the broken slat on Gill Goodchild's bench. This bench has been much used over the years and we anticipate that the new one will be too.



David Barnard with the plaque for their new bench

Isobel's present: A bowl is being turned by Richard Charles, using previously felled cherry wood from the Commons, which is what Isobel requested after her many years' service to the maintenance of the Commons.

Tree Inspection and work on Ash Trees: In August, John Morris, formerly of Chiltern Woodlands, will come to do his regular inspection of the trees on the Commons with Christine. Sadly, most of the Ash trees on the Commons are now affected by Ash Dieback and Christine and John will establish which need to be dealt with first for safety reasons.

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We anticipate that Pete Leybourne and his team will be back in early October to carry on with their felling. However, there will be a large number of trees for example by the roadside where felling is more problematic and which will require climbers. This is considerably more expensive and we may need to think of additional fundraising ideas to help Christine cover some of this expense.

Other visits:

Reptiles and amphibians: We anticipate further visits from the Bucks and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre (BMERC) looking at the ponds in the area. The tadpoles found in Pallett's Pond have been confirmed as toad tadpoles. The reptile mats that have been placed on the Commons are also being monitored.

Invertebrates: Thanks also to Fiona Everingham at BMERC we are expecting a visit from the Bucks Invertebrate Group (BIG) on September 3rd for a daytime survey of invertebrates on the Commons and an evening moth trapping. Obviously, as a result of long-term surveys conducted by David Dennis and Peter Bygate, we have very good records of the 367 moths now identified here but it will be really good to have a record of some of the other little creatures which live here most of which have not been previously examined.

Glow worms: One cause for excitement has been that when David laid out small lures on July 6th, he reported 'we discovered glow worms on the Commons for the first time in nearly 20 years. This is the second year that we have surveyed, and last year we found none. This time, five males were found, attracted to LED lures which mimic the green light emitted by the females. We have not yet seen any females, so it may be that these males were merely visiting the Commons in search of a mate. We will continue to survey to determine if we have a breeding colony.'



Male glow worm.

'Glow worms are not worms at all but beetles. The male, shown here, is just 1.5cm in length, has wings and can fly considerable distances. The female does not have wings and, once she emerges from their chrysalis, merely climbs up a grass stem, switches on her light and awaits a male. The larvae do a great job eating small snails. It would be marvellous, once again, to see glowing females on our Commons. Fingers crossed!' A local expert at Princes

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Risborough, John Tyler, said that, given the number of males, it is highly likely that we also have females but they are not that easy to spot.

Moth Event: This event was held on June 25th. As always it was popular with adults and children alike. David writes ‘Three ‘light traps’ had been set the previous evening at different points on the Commons and by the time that some 30 interested observers arrived at The Full Moon in the morning to see the results, Peter Bygate and David Dennis had examined most of the contents. Examples of over 50 different species of moth had already been placed in see-through containers so they could be closely examined.

The many children and adults present were fascinated by the wide variety of shapes, sizes and colours on display, including several large ‘hawk-moths’. We were particularly pleased to welcome two members of the Ukrainian community who are now living alongside us. ‘



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Calendar Photos: It is that time of year again when we are looking for your photos of wildlife, scenes or events taken locally for our 2023 Hilltop Villages Calendar. As usual, photos for a full calendar month picture or for the front cover need to be taken on a camera though ones taken on your phone or other devices are also welcome for composite pages. Please email to lindsaygriffin@yahoo.co.uk by early September. We would also like some new photos for our ever- popular card series. Both the calendar and our cards are major contributors to the maintenance of the Commons and so your help in producing good images is very much appreciated.

Christmas Event: We hope to have another pre-Christmas sale and further details will be forthcoming nearer the time. However, if you want to order Lindsay's famous and delicious boiled fruit cake, (not Lindsay's comment!) please order early at the above email address. These will remain at £15 each.

Lindsay Griffin