



HCCPS Newsletter December 2022

Calendars

As I write the 2023 Hilltop Villages Calendars are being printed at Orbitpress and are again available for £10 each plus £1 for a sturdy envelope for postage. The calendar is a wonderful example of the local community working together for a good cause.

Many local photographers continue very generously to send us their lovely photos, giving us a wide variety of subject matter to choose from. Susie Bell continues to design it at no cost to us other than a copy of the calendar, despite having moved away eight years ago and our sponsors remain loyal year after year. This is our 11th calendar and, like our cards, we have managed to keep the price the same throughout this time. This is due to the fact that Orbitpress has only very reluctantly raised our costs this year for, I think, the first time in all the years and to our sponsors who have raised their sponsorship contribution so that we can still cover our costs and keep the price low.

Our thanks to all involved and to each of the following sponsors for making the calendar possible.

WE Black
George Brown's
St John's Veterinary Practice
Chiltern Motors
The Full Moon Pub
MT Loos

HG Matthews
Philip Matthews;
Cholesbury- cum-St Leonards Hort Soc
Chiltern Velo Café
James Jolliffe
Christmas Tree Farm
Orbitpress

As you know sales of the calendar and cards as well as subscriptions provide most of the payment for the routine maintenance of the grassland, paths and rides on the Commons.

Financial Report

This year for the first time in our Society's history we are not having an AGM at this time of the year but have postponed it to the spring when we hope the weather will be better and that you will be keener to come out and join us!

However, our financial year continues to run from November to October and our Treasurer, Philip Prettejohn, has just finished his financial report which will now be audited by our Examiner Mike Fletcher before being posted on the website by early January.

Once again, Philip's report shows the generous spirit of the community in caring for the Commons. Despite the enormous hike in the price of fuel, our contractor, James Jolliffe, continues to carry out most of the work on the Commons at cost and initiatives such as Janet's Don't Frighten the Horses, sales of fruit cakes, various stalls and so on all help to keep the Commons in good shape.

Grassland and Woodland Maintenance



The final cut for the year.

Generally, HCCPS cares for the grassland, rides, paths and ponds whilst Christine takes responsibility for the woodland. For this she takes advice from John Morris (formerly of

Chiltern Woodlands) at least twice a year as well as following Forestry Commission guidelines. With the help of Pete Leybourne and his team of contractors a great deal of work has been achieved over the last 12 years.

However, the prevalence of Ash dieback on the Commons, as throughout the rest of the country, will undoubtedly mean that the cost of carrying out necessary work to fell affected trees will become outfacing. This is particularly the case when there is a need for the involvement of tree climbers or cherry pickers.

In a recent message to New Grapevine Christine flagged that this year's work would start in mid-November on Rays Hill and at Braziers End. Other roadside trees are likely to be dealt with later and further felling will take place over the next few years. Meanwhile, for your own safety, please avoid areas where work is being done. Note that, as the weather deteriorates, we may have fallen trees or branches.

Should this happen please contact Highways if a road is blocked.

As a community we will need to consider how we can assist in making the Commons safe whether by making a donation, becoming members of the Society if you aren't already, running some fund-raising events or perhaps asking for a donation to HCCPS if you are giving away goods on Grapevine.

Subscriptions

If you do not pay your subscription by direct debit or PayPal your annual subscriptions are due now. Family membership remains £20 and for an individual £10.

It is easy to make payments to HCCPS via our website hawridgeandcholesburycommons.org under HCCPS Membership. Here you can:-

- complete a **Standing Order** form
- use **PayPal** without signing up to PayPal.

Alternatively, you can make a **Bank Transfer** to

Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons Preservation Society,

Account Number: 50458015, Sort Code: 20 - 02 - 06, Reference: Subs + Payer's name

NB It would be helpful if you send a confirmatory email to treasurer.hccps@gmail.com

Cash or Cheques made payable to HCCPS may be sent to

Philip Prettejohn, Barncroft, Vale Farm, Hawridge. Chesham HP5 2UG

Polecats

Some time ago, when Andrew Jordan rescued and photographed a polecat in the pond he was excavating on his property in Hawridge Vale, a number of others reported possible sightings around the area. We would be interested to hear of any further sightings since a recent Nature Note by Melissa Harrison in The Times stated that

'Increasing numbers of polecats are being reported in parts of the country in which they had previously been declared extinct (mid last century)... Some of the recent records are the result of roadkill which, although unfortunate, allows for close inspection of the animal in order to determine whether it is a 'true' polecat or the result of interbreeding with escaped ferrets...It is clear that this native mammal is slowly re-establishing itself in the UK, a source of great hope.'



Andrew's polecat being released.

Playful Bumblebees

Also widely reported recently were the findings of a group of scientists from Queen Mary University, London that individual bees repeatedly rolled balls up to 117 times when given the option of going straight to a treat or playing with the balls en route to the treat. This behaviour was found to be more common among young male bees than others and 'did not contribute to immediate survival strategies but was intrinsically rewarding....It goes to show, once more, that despite their little size and tiny brains, they are more than small robotic beings.'

Who knows what fun the insects are having on our Commons?

Lindsay Griffin