



HCCPS Newsletter April 2024

Litterblitz: Our annual Litterblitz will be held from 28th March to 8th April. As always, garbage bags may be found at the three collection points by the Cricket Pitch, by the bench opposite the school and by the sign opposite Church Lane. Rubbish may be left at these points but if you can take it home for roadside collection that would be very much appreciated. If you find anything that is too large or too heavy, please try to leave it by the side of the road or let us know where it is so that we can arrange Council collection. This collection is really important before the vegetation grows and obscures the litter. Free litter picks are available from Lindsay Griffin (lindsaygriffin@yahoo.co.uk)

AGM: Our Annual General Meeting will be held on 7th May at 7.30pm at Cholesbury Village Hall. We expect to have a speaker from The Chiltern Society before the formal part of the meeting. Further details will be sent out by New Grapevine and MailChimp messages nearer the time.

Website: We are currently making changes to the website which will include a change of domain name. Further details will be forwarded when the new website is ready to go live.

Barn Owls: Last year we had no Barn Owl chicks and we were not alone. The following message from Bucks Owl and Raptor Group explains why this was the case.

“We have over 650 boxes throughout the county. However, availability of monitors was limited, so we tried to prioritise depending on previous successful use and whether it was a new installation. The prolonged cold in the winter and a wet and chilly spring meant that Barn Owls took a while to get into breeding condition. The first box checks in May found barn owls paired up in nest boxes but very few had started to lay. This ties in with reports from groups in the West Midlands, Berks and the South West that nesting was delayed, and that some adults decided not to breed at all. The three nests that did hold eggs in May all failed, probably due to the lack of rodent prey. The majority of our birds that did nest laid eggs in late May/June with chicks hatching in July and August. At that time the weather was warm but unsettled, with lots of showers, which would have made hunting tricky. Clutch sizes were fairly small, with an average of 4.1 eggs per nesting attempt. The largest we found were two clutches of 7 eggs, which produced 3 and 4 chicks respectively. The majority of the successful nests held 2 or 3 chicks and we only had three nests this year that fledged more than that, with 4 chicks each. Two of these boxes were sheltered within barn buildings, including a box at the National Trust site near Bradenham that had a live video feed into their office. A late nest with eggs still in September was successful and we ringed our last chick on 11th October. Overall, it was not a bad year; Barn Owls can be flexible to take advantage of the fluctuations in mammal prey and this year some birds bred later in the summer when the numbers of voles and rats had increased; others decided to keep their strength for their own survival. Hopefully these birds will get a chance next year.”
BORG Monitoring News for 2023





Barn Owl photos by Steve Thomas (BORG)

BORG visit 22nd March 2024

Lynne and Claire came to investigate which barn owl boxes need replacing on Christine's farm. The top field box had a barn owl in residence so the box was left in place and a new one will possibly be fitted nearby later in the year. The valley box was replaced after evicting the squirrel who was in residence.

There were owl pellets in both boxes allowing Lynne to collect some for her local school where the teacher was planning for each of 15 children to dissect them. They will send the results to BORG.

It was particularly good to hear that there is a resident owl in one of the boxes on Christine's land. Barn Owls do not have oil on their feathers to repel water so they cannot hunt in wet weather. This will have made life very tricky for them given the weather lately! Over the previous years Christine had regularly seen Barn Owls at dusk but has not seen them recently.



Jackdaws: Steven Morris reported in The Guardian that for Jackdaws blood is thicker than water. They will readily ditch their friends to obtain food but stick with their family (offspring, siblings and mating partners) even if at the risk of going hungry themselves. These were the findings of a decade-long Cornish Jackdaw Project at the University of Exeter's Penryn campus in which they monitored hundreds of wild Jackdaws each fitted with a transponder embedded in a leg ring.

DofEs: Groups of DofEs often elicit bad press around here but, on the Commons, we have reason to be grateful to them over many years. Our most recent volunteer, Zac Morris has just finished his stint and he (and his mother!) carried out a number of very useful tasks including planting more native daffodil bulbs and transplanting snowdrops, removing birch saplings from the heather beds, collecting copious amounts of litter and very efficiently taking payments at our pre-Christmas sale. We encourage prospective volunteers to work in pairs or they need to be accompanied by an adult.



Thank you, Zac!

Rosemary Beirrum: We were sorry to hear of Rosemary's death. Her family were long-term residents in the area and Rosemary's father Edgar Taylor was an early member of the HCCPS Committee. A bench in his memory was replaced in 2020. Rosemary and her husband Roger were first to try it out. Roger was also a member of HCCPS Committee.



A bit more Commons history:

There is evidence of habitations in Hawridge and Cholesbury for over 2000 years and although they weren't mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 Hawridge and Cholesbury manors have existed for a great many years as part of the manors of Marsworth and Drayton Beauchamp respectively.

Common Land was usually infertile land and only used to supplement the other lands held by the tenants of the manors. Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons were used principally for summer grazing. Common Land was really important for peoples' livelihoods. From Medieval times there was a system in place whereby tenants had certain rights according to the amount of rent they paid. Rights could be to graze cattle, sheep etc. or to take wood for repairs to property/fuel, fishing etc.

Common Land is always owned by someone or a particular group or organisation. It is not owned by the Common people. In the case of Hawridge and Cholesbury it has always been the property of an individual. The two manors of Hawridge and Cholesbury were first bought together by the Seare family in 1650 though they remain separate commons.

Early joint owners of Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons:-

1650 Richard Seare of Marsworth, Sherriff of Buckinghamshire (is buried at Hawridge)

1714 his son John Seare

1748 Robert Dayrell bought the combined manors

1749 left to his eldest son Edward Dayrell (Director of the Bank of England)

1814 left to Edward's nephew Rev John Jeffreys

1862 left to Rev Henry Jeffreys died in 1898 at age 104

At the time of Henry Jeffreys' death, the manors of Hawridge and Cholesbury were part of extensive holdings which included properties in St Leonards, Dundridge Farm, The Lee, Pednor, Ballinger and Chartridge. The sale of the whole fetched almost £40,000 when the manors of H and C and the Lordships fetched about £650.

From 1748 - 1899 the manors of Hawridge and Cholesbury were held by the same family and, although absentee landlords, their manors were cared for by agents such as John and Christopher Francis and Frederick How of Chesham.

After the death of Rev Henry Jeffreys the manors of Hawridge and Cholesbury and the Lordships of the manor were sold to Henry Turner of Braziers End and since 1899 all of the Lords of the Manors have continued to live locally.

Lindsay Griffin