



HCCPS Newsletter December 2023

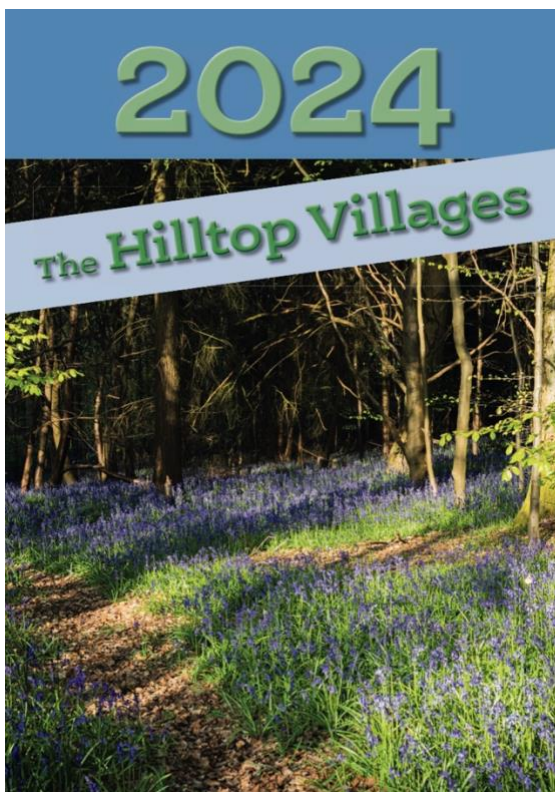
Calendars/cards: As I write, the 2024 Hilltop Villages Calendar and some new cards are being printed at Orbitpress and will be on sale by the time this edition of the Newsletter comes out. Once more, calendars can be purchased from Chiltern Motors, from me lindsaygriffin@yahoo.co.uk or other members of the Committee. Again, our local photographers have come up trumps and, with Susie Bell's help in designing it, we have another stunning calendar.

We were spoilt for choice given all the photos that were submitted so I do hope that you won't be disappointed if your image didn't make it this time.

The calendars are still £10 each (£1 extra for a sturdy envelope) for the tenth year in a row thanks to the generosity of our sponsors who, between them, almost cover the printing costs. Thanks to them the calendar generates a substantial part of the contracting costs to maintain the paths, rides, ponds and grassland.

As always, our grateful thanks to the following for their loyal support: -

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; and Orbitpress.



Baldwins Wood. Photo by Joan Ingram.

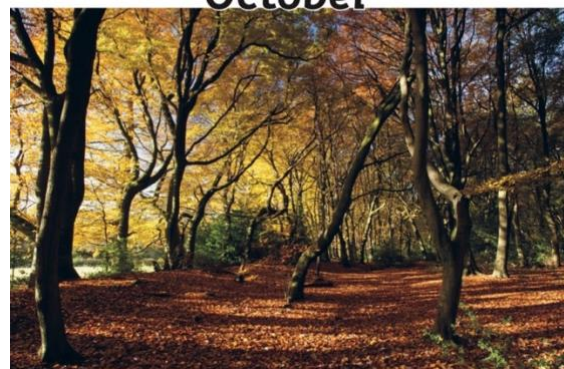
April



Barn owl in flight

Photograph by Steve Thomas

October



Autumn on the Common

Photograph by Andy Harris

Cricket Club: We would also like to offer our thanks to the Cricket Club for allowing us to use their facilities once again for our pre-Christmas stall on 25th November. This arrangement makes it very much easier for us to sell our calendars, cards, fruit cakes and this year some of Charles Elliott's decorations and apple juice, produced by Janet, and wooden bird feeders made by Peter Hopkinson. Fingers crossed for the weather!



Peter's bird feeder

Dormice: Some time ago we installed some Dormice footprint tunnels on Hawridge Common since we have lots of Hazels and Honeysuckle which are good habitat for them. These are very elusive creatures and we have never had reports of any on the Commons. However, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence! At the time we did not advertise this venture since dormice are heavily protected and we didn't want people to interfere with them if there were any around. Sadly, no evidence was found and we are not alone in finding none. A recent report has shown that populations of dormice have plummeted by 70 per cent since 2000. This is due largely to the decrease in understorey in woodlands and, in part, to the fact that we have warmer winters; dormice, which hibernate for six months of the year underground, wake up too early when there isn't enough food to sustain them. [The People's Trust for Endangered Species](#) has a number of initiatives to try to stop this decline.

Brown rats: In the October Newsletter, I quoted Jonathon Tulloch who reported in The Times that research indicates that brown rats may have a sense of humour and speculated that they may be the only other animal to laugh. However, a Google search suggests that 'Laughter as communication is found in over 60 species including chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans, rats, dogs and dolphins' and that 'rats emit long, 50-kHz ultrasonic calls that are induced during rough and tumble play, and when tickled by humans. The vocalization is described as distinct "chirping". Like humans, rats have "tickle skin", areas of the body that generate greater laughter responses than others. Rats that laugh the most also play the most and prefer to spend more time with other laughing rats. It has been reported that there is no decline in the tendency to laugh and respond to tickle skin as rats age, however, it has also been reported that in females, brain maturation after puberty appears to redefine tickling as aversive, leading to avoidance rather than appetitive responses.' It is good to think that local rats may be having fun as long as it isn't in my attic or your hen house!

DofE: Our latest DofE volunteer, Zac Morris and his mum, Lucy, have recently planted a further 120 native daffodil bulbs opposite the school, towards the bug hotel. They also cleared part of the manorial waste of fallen branches etc to make it easier for a little tractor to keep that area clear in future. Zac is also going to add some bug friendly items to the hotel, clear birch saplings from the heather beds and help at the sale at the Cricket Club. Thank you, Zac and Lucy for all your help.

Litter: After the final cut on the Commons the amount of rubbish has become much more evident and we appreciate any help in keeping it under control. As the annual Litterblitz is usually in the school holidays and young children often participate we are considering having blitzes in other school holidays. We are happy to provide litter-picks and would welcome suggestions for little rewards for participating children and helpful dogs! Rubbish which cannot be carried home for disposal as household waste may be reported on Fix my Street for Council collection <https://www.fixmystreet.com/>



Subscriptions: Although the date of the AGM has changed, the end of our financial year remains 31st October and so 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

<https://www.hawridgeandcholesburycommons.org/hawridgecholesbury-preservation-society>.

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, but please give your name as a reference!

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

Failing all, **Cash or Cheques** made payable to HCCPS may be sent to Philip Prettejohn, Barncroft, Vale Farm, Hawridge. Chesham HP5 2UG

Annual Accounts: In February 2024, after the accounts to 31 October 2023 are approved by the Committee and our Examiner, Ben Lewis, they will be posted on our website <https://www.hawridgeandcholesburycommons.org/agm>

Lindsay Griffin