



HCCPS Newsletter June 2023

Commemorative Trees: On Tuesday 9th May we planted five trees opposite the dewpond on Cholesbury Common to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla. These are three Wild Service Trees and two Field Maples which were suggested by John Morris, our woodland advisor, as suitable for the site and to enhance the Commons in spring and autumn respectively. The ground was prepared and the trees were planted in the morning by James Jolliffe and his team and this was followed in the evening by a little ceremony to mark the occasion. Fourteen children from toddlers to teenagers were chosen by various groups in the villages to represent us as a community and each child was given a little pot of soil to pour on the trees to encourage them to grow.



Afterwards, each child received a little memento of the occasion. For the younger children this was a copy of Michael Morpurgo's book 'The Boy who would be King' which was presented by Chris Brown and Paddy Thomas on behalf of the Hilltop Villages Good Neighbours Group who donated the books. The older children received a book token. Our thanks to Paddy Thomas who inscribed the bookplates with each child's name and to Sam Holland who designed the bookplate.



After the presentations, we were joined by various members of the Hilltop Voices who helped us all sing God Save the King accompanied by Eva Thorarinsdottir and Nick Bootiman of Echor.

Fortunately, the weather was reasonable until the last few minutes

We are grateful to the Good Neighbours Group, the Village Hall Committee, H&C Cricket Club and Cholesbury Cum St Leonards Local History Group who have contributed to the costs of the trees, the necessary ground work and protecting the trees from deer. If you would like to contribute you may do so on our website hawridgeandcholesburycommons.org under HCCPS donations. If you are paying by Bank Transfer, please give your name as reference plus 'trees'. Alternatively, please send an email to our treasurer to clarify what the donation is for.

Note: Chris Brown has asked me to let you know that there are still a few Coronation mugs for sale. These are £7 each and are available by emailing mugscholesbury@btinternet.com.

Presentation by John Morris: After the tree planting members then went to the Village Hall for a presentation on Trees on Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons by John Morris. This was an excellent presentation. John pointed out that it is easy to become disheartened by the numbers of ash trees which are having to be felled because of ash dieback and indeed by the prospect of other potential tree diseases. However, John explained that though ash is the predominant species here at the moment this was not always the case and, of course, until about eighty years ago our Commons were predominantly grassland. He pointed out that when ash trees are removed then some other species will grow up to take their place. He did not advocate re-planting and discussed the difference in policy now as opposed to dealing with Dutch elm disease some sixty years ago. Then it was thought best to remove all of the affected trees whereas, the current thinking on ash dieback is only to remove those which pose a threat to roads and buildings and where possible to leave mature ash in situ. However, people should be discouraged from getting too close to them by allowing natural growth such as brambles to grow around their base and, where necessary, by re-routing paths. This means that some ash may well survive but the trees need to be monitored on a regular basis which is what happens here when Christine and John walk the Commons twice a year.

Apparently, the main danger in felling ash is to the tree fellers since they can be very unpredictable in the ways in which they split and in how they fall. Fortunately, there are remarkable machines which make this work safer.

AGM: After John's talk the AGM was held. This was our first meeting in spring. Unfortunately, the weather was almost as bad as it often was in November but, hopefully this is a one-off!

The Treasurer's Report, Chairman's Report and Minutes of our 55th AGM can now be read on the website hawridgeandcholesburycommons.org. However, in brief, Philip Prettejohn was able to confirm that the Society remains in good shape financially thanks to steady memberships and fundraising efforts such as the sales and sponsorships of the calendars, our ever-popular cards, Janet's Don't Frighten the Horses sessions and pre-Christmas sale of cakes. This will enable us to make a contribution to Christine for work of ash dieback should the need arise. Philip has not asked us to raise our membership fees which remain at £10 per individual and £20 per family as they have done for well over a decade.

However, he did encourage everyone to tell newcomers to the villages about our work and how membership of the Society represents extremely good value.

In Mark's Chairman's report, he was able to report that the maintenance work on the Commons continues smoothly thanks to regular inspections by Christine and Janet and to the work which James does as a result. Mark reported that, in the two and a half years since he took over as Chairman, he had not had a single complaint about the maintenance work on the Commons. This surely must be some kind of record? But is almost certainly due to the fact that James has the skills and equipment to deal efficiently with a range of problems as they occur.

Mark was also able to advise that a number of experts in their fields had visited over the last 18 months and their findings are encouraging that here at least nature is flourishing.

Mark went on to thank many people on the Committee and in the community at large who continue to make possible our work in maintaining the Commons as a diverse and enjoyable place to be for our wildlife as well as for human users. We are very fortunate.

Borg Visit: After their visit in February which was reported in the last issue of Hilltop News, BORG have returned twice. On the first of these visits, they reported that they had found tawny owls in each of the boxes on the Commons and they were astonished to find an old box occupied by this bird!! Steve Thomas, BORG's photographer was able to capture this image as it flew out. Yes, it is a female mandarin duck!



On a visit on 12th May, they were able to ring the little tawny chicks on the Commons. So far there are no signs of kestrel eggs on Christine's farmland though the adults are using the box. Lynne and Clare were excited to hear what they think is a tree pipit in the hedge near to the kestrel box.

I hope that our barn owls are late in breeding since they would be having problems feeding their young at present. They cannot hunt in the rain as their feathers become water logged.

Greetings Cards: I have four new cards as well as an array of others (See our website). Once again, we are grateful to the photographers Steve Thomas for the barn owl; Andy Harris for his goldfinch; Susie Mitchell for View over the Valley; and artist, Jill Try for her image of a Glis Glis. Cards remain £1.25 each or 5 for £5 and may be ordered from me lindsaygriffin@yahoo.co.uk

Lindsay Griffin



