

**Pre-Christmas Stall at the Cricket Club on 25th November
from 10am to 12 noon:**

Once again we will be holding this event to raise funds for the maintenance of the paths, ponds and grassland on the Commons. As well as our usual cards (some suitable for Christmas cards), calendars and cakes we hope to have a wider variety of small gifts for sale. Our very grateful thanks to the Cricket Club for the use of the pavilion and for their help in organising the event. Come along and enjoy a tea/coffee and your first mince pie of the season with friends and neighbours.

PLEASE pre-order your boiled fruit cake as soon as possible from lindsaygriffin@yahoo.co.uk. They remain £15 each and pre-ordered cakes should be available for collection on 25th November at the stall.

Calendar:

Thank you to everyone who submitted photos for next year's calendar. It is always a pleasure to see what has been going on around the area over the past year and to see what talented photographers we have. Many thanks too to Susie Bell who has agreed to design the calendar for us again free of charge, as she has done since 2013 when we produced our first calendar. Calendars will be available at the Pre-Christmas Sale, from Chiltern Motors, from me lindsaygriffin@yahoo.co.uk or from other members of the Committee. They also remain £10 each and £1 for a sturdy envelope.

End of year cut:

At the time of writing this article James is doing the final grass cut of the year and this time he will also cut all of the Manorial Waste. That is the land on the South side of the main road outside people's homes. We are very pleased that so many people now leave these verges to nature. This was a contributing factor in the decision to designate the whole of the Commons as a County Wildlife Site.



HCCPS Hilltop News October/November 2023

As well as cutting the grassland, James has been asked to clear Pallett's Pond which he will do in the next couple of months. This happens routinely every two years to try to keep the New Zealand Pigmy Weed (NZPW) and other invasive species under control. Last time, James buried the NZPW at the bottom of the Common and he will do so again since it is a real menace and is easily transferred to other ponds. It can survive in or out of water and on land and is very hard to get rid of. It can't survive being buried though!

Trees:

During this summer's strange weather and as a result of Ash Dieback we have had a number of branches down including huge branches off the ash by Milton cottage. Please note that if a tree/branch comes down on a ride or path on the Commons we will try to deal with the problem as soon as possible. If this happens elsewhere on the Commons, they may simply be left in situ to provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. If they are obstructing the road and cannot be shifted, please report it on FixMyStreet.

Coronation memorial trees:

These seem to be faring well and thanks to all the wet weather earlier watering them has been a much less onerous task.

Winter Tree Work:

Christine met with John Morris, her woodland consultant, on 2nd and 30th August to consider general tree safety and the felling programme for this autumn/winter. She reported back 'The work is approved by the Forestry Commission under the felling licence that runs to November 2026 and trees for felling this year are marked in orange.

'As usual at the moment, most mature trees marked for felling are ash where the Dieback has progressed to the extent that they are likely to become unsafe in the foreseeable future. A total of 67 mature ash in all, spread throughout the Commons, some very large, are due to be felled. In addition, a number of smaller oaks and birch have been marked as part of the ongoing thinning process, together with several dead elms.

'Between Stoney Lane and Pound Lane, we hope to start to coppice the large old hazel stools as required by the felling licence. Any gaps in this area from the ash removal and hazel coppicing may eventually need to be replanted with a mix of broadleaves, depending on how successful natural regeneration is.

The contractors, Pete Leybourne and his team, plan to start in November but as usual this is all weather dependent.'

HCCPS Hilltop News October/November 2023

Glow worms:

David Dennis has continued to check out the Commons for the elusive glow worms. On 2nd August he wrote ‘The weather last night held off long enough for me to set the lures for males and scour the grassland for over an hour looking for females. Sadly, nothing. There was little wind and it was warm, so conditions were perfect. I’m sorry not to be able to report better news. It may be that the season’s timing has been disrupted by the weather, although we know they were flying during the usual July peak period in other places.

‘I think we must now start to doubt the existence of a breeding colony of any size on the Commons, and maybe last year’s males were just passing through. Strange that they arrived so quickly after the lures were set, though. Maybe we’re looking in the wrong places. Definitely worth having another go next year and having more people looking would make sense. For new people, attending one of John Tyler’s walks near Princes Risborough early in the season would be useful so that they know what to look for – they’re easy to miss.’

Because of his other commitments, David is planning to do fewer moth trapping sessions at least for the time being. However, having identified a total of 448 over the years he and Peter Bygate have definitely contributed to our understanding and appreciation of the night life on our Commons. Best wishes with your new ventures, David and thank you very much sharing your knowledge and expertise with us.

Things that go bump in the night:

Especially now that the evenings are getting cooler, we dread the noises in our attics which we regularly get living here in the country - not only glis glis and mice but also sometimes rats. Writing in the Times some time ago, Jonathon Tulloch pointed out that whereas ‘mice skitter, rats bang and swagger’! He goes on, ‘Brown rats, having arrived in Britain in the 1700s, are an invasive species, much admired for their intelligence and resourcefulness. Research indicates that they may even have a sense of humour – the only other animal to laugh? Poisoning rats is not the answer. The best way to control their numbers is to have a healthy population of foxes, owls, polecats and stoats, all of which prey on young rats.’ Sadly, we have had no further reported sightings of a polecat.

HCCPS Hilltop News October/November 2023

Litter:

As always, thank you to everyone who regularly helps to keep the Commons free of litter. Unfortunately, it is an ongoing problem. Recently, Sarah Higgins posted the following picture of this 'camp' on Cholesbury Common. Obviously, we are pleased that people enjoy the Commons but it is such a pity that they leave their litter behind for someone else to clear up.



HCCPS Hilltop News October/November 2023

Subscriptions:

Although we have now changed the date of the AGM to the summertime our financial year continues to end on 31st October and our annual subscriptions become due for the next year. The easiest way to pay is by following the instructions on our website. Subs remain £10 for an individual or £20 for a family which is great value for all the benefits the Commons provide for all of us. Payment for your membership can be made in the following ways:-

- **Standing Order: (Preferred!)** Complete a standing order form available on the website
<https://www.hawridgeandcholesburycommons.org/hawridgecholesbury-preservation-society>
or make an online standing order with your internet banking.
- **Bank Transfer:** Account Number: 50458015 Sort Code: 20 02 06
Reference: SUBS + Payer's name
- **PayPal:** Use the link on the website.
- **Cash or cheques:** Cheques made payable to 'HCCPS' and sent to Philip Prettejohn, Barncroft, Vale Farm, Hawridge, Chesham, HP5 2UG

Lindsay Griffin