

THE FRIENDS OF CHORLEYWOOD COMMON
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 28 MARCH 2019
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I welcome the opportunity to use this Annual Meeting to get to know you our members better and for you to meet other members who you probably know but may not have had a chance to talk to properly.

Last year you set us the challenge of redefining our future. Your Committee has spent several hours debating this issue. We talked to the CRA and will work closely with them – do sign up to receive their monthly newsletter and speak to Owen Edis who is here tonight about how to do so. However, we have come to the conclusion that we should continue to act as an independent organisation and that membership is more about what you give and rather less about what you receive. We are a small but focussed organisation and we believe that:

- it is your support that you give, as you are showing by being here tonight and
- it is the confidence that we are acting effectively on your behalf that you receive

As an association, we believe that we add value by acting:

- As an advocate to safeguard and conserve the Common
- As a point of contact to disseminate and encourage knowledge and enjoyment of the Common
- As a provider of assistance in the maintenance of the Common
- As a contributor to other activities

As Daniel said, Yvonne Merritt, the Clerk to our Parish Council, describes our Common's grasslands as 'rarer than pandas' because we are losing them more quickly than we are losing pandas. The actions we have taken and the stance we adopted after consulting you in relation to the play area, reflects this situation, from which we have derived your support. We have endorsed the Nature Trail and have recommended to the Parish Council that they use its play provision to increase the play facilities within Chorleywood. We intend to work more closely with the Parish Council and to this end we have put forward a proposal to the Council that a member of theirs should become an Honorary Member of ours and act as the point of contact between us.

Tonight's meeting gives us a valuable occasion to talk to you and hence our emphasis on the social aspect. We are certainly trying to pass on information to you which is central to your interest in the Common. For those of you on email, we are increasingly trying to let you know of items of interest as they occur. We see this as almost akin to an electronic newsletter.

We are working with Daniel du Gard in supporting his programme of educational working parties - duckweed has been cleared from the ponds, saplings have been taken out of the middle of Top Common Pond, and saplings have been cleared from the heather area which has been seeded, though the removal of holly and laurel from the previously undisturbed area of the Common is a big task.

And as an organisation, we have been in a position to add value by being called upon to contribute to several initiatives for the Parish, such as continuing with the Neighbourhood

Plan, fixed point photography, helping with pond-dipping sessions for the Forest School at Christ Church and putting on a display for the WW1 commemorations. In addition to the Parish's Easter Treasure Hunt mentioned by Daniel, volunteers are also invited to take part in the Parish's forthcoming surveys of the use of the Permissive Parking areas – please speak to Claire James in the Parish Office about that.

We've been consulted by the Cricket Club on their plans for rebuilding their pavilion.

We have spoken at several meetings of the Parish Council's Open Spaces and Full Council meetings, and we've attended the Common Users Group meeting, a Local Area Forum and the Three Rivers Environmental Forum. This Forum was particularly interesting in relation to our Common Conservation Area because there was a presentation on Swift Conservation, led by Anna Marett who you may know, about what we can do to help to halt the dramatic decline of 50% in their numbers in the last 20 years by putting up nest boxes – we have screaming parties flying around Chorleywood Bottom which show they are nesting here. The Swift is one of the few endangered species that we really can help in our own properties. I think our slogan should be 'SOS' - Save Our Swifts. Please talk to me afterwards for more information – I'm planning on putting up 2 boxes for them.

The Herts and Middx Butterfly Group took over the butterfly surveys in 2018 and we posted their report onto our website. They had almost all the species we would have expected, except the Red Admiral and the Essex and Large Skippers and almost had a rare Small Blue but that was challenged and then discounted by their County Recorder. But they confirmed the Purple Hairstreak that we thought we'd had the year before.

All in all, it has been a year of considerable activity, though much of it is probably not very visible to you as our members. It was our winter programme of evening talks that brought us together in the past, but currently we have been unable to recruit a member to the Committee who is in a position to organise it – and likewise the summer walks - naturally if you know of anyone who would like to, please encourage them to get in touch.

But it is Village Day that gives us the best opportunity to put across our advocacy for the Common and what it represents to a good cross-section of our residents and those beyond, which I believe we do successfully. We put on displays of relevance and interest, and answer questions, so please come and visit us on 13th July this year in the Environment zone.

In reply to the Chairman's invitation for suggestions, Ray Krystofiak suggested a bat watch evening and offered to follow up with a contact of his.