

Friends of Naphill Common.

We have been given an award!

By the time this appears the Friends of Naphill Common group will be one year old. The idea was hatched during a conversation at the end of a Heritage Open Day walk on 13th September 2008 and, at a meeting on 2nd December, the existing Naphill Commons Committee was wound up and the Friends group inaugurated.

Our first year has been a great success. The committee proved to be enthusiastic and vigorous, and our membership passed 100 within eight months – which illustrates the concern and interest local people have about the Common. We were able to organise an ambitious programme of events: a crowded meeting with speakers; walks for health; exploration of the commons botany, insects and fungi; guided tours; a treasure hunt and a picnic. We have produced a website, an information leaflet and two news letters: all highly praised. We have even begun to make practical advances on the Common by improving the path signs and producing a helpful map.

However, it has proved more difficult to undertake practical work on the Common. We have yet to gain permission, or even a response, from the tenant of the Dashwood Estate which owns the Common, to improve the paths and clear some of the invasive scrub. I am sure we will succeed eventually. Meanwhile, remember that, since the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act of 2000, we all enjoy the right to roam where we please on common land.

Our achievements have now been recognised by the **Chilterns Conservation Board**, which gives awards to organisations and individuals who make a notable contribution to the welfare of the Chilterns. The Friends of Naphill Common were given a **Highly Commended** award in the 'Enjoyment and Understanding' category: a great surprise and very gratifying – but they have not seen anything yet!



The Chilterns Conservation Board is a remarkable official body that works to promote and conserve the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. With only a handful of officers they strive to care for all the natural features, from the woodland to the chalk streams; from the commons to the agricultural land. The officer with responsibility for the commons – and there are 187 of them in the Chilterns – has already been of help to us in our first year. A sister organisation, the Special Trees and Woodland Project, has managed to record hundreds of significant trees and the stories associated with them; including the Great Beech at Dew Pond and the Umbrella Tree, both on Naphill Common.

The Friends of Naphill Common group exists to conserve and improve Naphill Common, and make it a more accessible amenity for local people without spoiling its essential wildness and tranquillity. These are not easy goals to achieve and we would like **your** ideas and opinions for the year ahead. Whatever your views – positive or negative – **please come to our AGM in Naphill Village Hall on Friday 22nd January 2010, at 7.30 pm.** You can have a cup of tea, listen to talks on red kites and local orchards and, if you want, express your opinions about what we have done and what we ought to do. Like our award, it is highly commended.

Trevor Hussey, Chairman.