

Friends of Naphill Common

In this newsletter we report on three very successful events last month. On 25th October 45 people enjoyed perfect autumn weather with bright sun and wonderful autumn colours on the **Naphill Common Fungus Foray**. We were led by experts from the Bucks Fungus Group, who were able to identify many of the findings on the day. In all we found 76 species, of which 16 were new to the Common.

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when you peek into the gaping hole that's been exposed by the toppling of the tree, the trunk was hollow, large enough to house an adult – although none of the group was tempted to try!

The trunk of the Great Beech was supporting some fantastic examples

of bracket fungus *Ganoderma australe* (Southern bracket). The brackets, up to 300mm across, had coloured the surrounding tree brown with its spores.

From death comes life, and so it was with the fallen limbs which were supporting many different types of fungus, particularly jelly forms such as *Neobulgaria pura* (Beech jellydisc). Many thanks to Penny Cullington and Neil Fletcher of the Bucks Fungus Group for their expertise and for leading the walk. You can read Penny's full account of the foray at www.bucksfungusgroup.org.uk/report.html

The second successful event to report is the planting of six of our **Juniper saplings**. We know that Naphill Common is a suitable site for Junipers as it was once described as a "Juniper forest". Junipers generally prefer chalk and our soil is clay so this is a little surprising, perhaps our Junipers adapted to the conditions. In any event, the few sorry remnants of that Juniper forest have been severely overshadowed by the tall trees that have proliferated in the last 50 years and the Juniper has all but died out. So, three years ago, the Friends of Naphill Common organised for botanist Andrew McVeigh to take cuttings from our specimens and grow them on in a nursery in Scotland. They are

now mature enough to be planted back so, on 18th October four FONC members did exactly that, taking advantage of the



Laccaria amethystina

We found several examples of *Laccaria amethystina* (common name Violet deceiver) with its dramatic purple colouring and *Mycena vitalis* (Snapping bonnet) with its delightfully delicate stalks.



Mycena vitalis

Towards the end of the walk we arrived at Dew Pond and the once mighty Great Beech. As has been reported in our website and Naphill Gazette articles this fantastic tree had lost two enormous limbs in recent months. We are sad to report that on Sunday 15th November, during storm Abigail, the remaining two limbs came crashing down. The reason for the tree's decline becomes apparent



Ganoderma australe



Neobulgaria pura



Juniper sapling

Upcoming events:
 Chris' short walks, meet at
 Naphill Village Hall at 10.30am:

- Dec 2nd
- Jan 6th
- Feb 3rd
- Mar 2nd

Row's long walks: meet at
 Naphill Village Hall at 9.25am:

- Dec 21st
- Jan 18th
- Feb 15th
- Mar 21st

AGM, Naphill Village Hall:

- Feb 12th

We stacked the debris, mainly leaf-mould, around the edge of the ponds so whatever fauna it contained could make its way back into the water.

In this first work party the volunteers managed to achieve:
Shipwash Pond – tidy up of undergrowth and raking out of leaves.
Small Pond – removal of undergrowth on both sides, removal of dead wood at the back, raking out of leaves at the back. It now looks like a pond again rather than a muddy puddle.

Willow Pond – clearance of all growth on the banks and on the edge of the water, also removal of most of the dead wood.

Ladyhorse Pond – start of clearance of the major growth around the pond.

In total, 77.5 volunteer hours were worked, which is the equivalent of about 5 months of our normal working parties. The work was supported by the Chiltern Rangers with funding from Bucks County Council Local Area Forum.

recent felling along footpath H21. Two groups of three bushes – one female and two males – can now be seen protected by stakes and chicken wire to keep squirrels, Muntjac, rabbits and humans at bay. They like plenty of sunshine and the seeds need exposure to frost so we hope the clearings are suitably wide enough for the correct conditions. Juniper is declining across the Chilterns so we hope we can make a small contribution to their survival.

Our third event was the start of our **ponds renovation** project on 1st October. The working party, organised jointly by Chiltern Rangers and Friends of Naphill Common, was a great success. As well as half a dozen volunteers from FoNC, we had 6 pupils and a teacher from RGS and a similar number of Chiltern Rangers. Later on, we had 24 members of the local Brownies who were keen to employ the loppers and tidy up. Brown Owl was delighted with the evening, and the RGS contingent were also enthusiastic to repeat the experience. Apart from the great improvement to the environment of the ponds, it was a terrific opportunity to get more young people interested in the Common and its varied attractions.

Before starting this project we had commissioned an investigation by Tony Marshall and Holly Bennett which was funded by the Chiltern Conservation Board. The findings verified that the ponds were neglected and the advice was to clear each pond over a period of several years so as not to completely shock the inhabitants and sanitise the pond.

www.naphillcommon.org.uk

Photos on this page © Peter Davis



Small Pond before



Small Pond after



Email: chairman@naphillcommon.org.uk

Twitter: @NaphillCommon