



The Friends of Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons

Annual General Meeting 16 April 2008 Chairman's Annual Report

It gives me great pleasure to report another successful year in the life of the Friends of the Commons in 2007.

All our traditional activities took place - the Tea Party at the Beacon where some 30 members and friends enjoyed the view and the cakes! The Annual Dinner which this year was at the Royal Wells, an occasion much enjoyed by all of us. The speaker from the RSPB was most interesting and we have made a donation of £50.00 to them.

The monthly work parties during the winter months have continued to clear brambles, gorse and saplings wherever they are not wanted and we have agreed to fund the replacement of the tools which we have been using for a number of years.

Our website (www.friendsofthecommons.org.uk) continues to be much visited and admired thanks to the work of Daniel Bech and Katharina Mahler-Bech who run it for the Friends of the Commons.

Common Ground - the green newsletter - has seen its two issues. We are indebted to George Lawson who has been the editor for the last few years and who is retiring this AGM. We thank him very much for all his hard work in getting people to write the articles in the first place and for preparing it all for the printers (newsletters' artwork/design was done by Daniel Bech). We are hopeful that a solution to the lack of an editor will soon be found and a discussion will take place tomorrow to that end.

Of course, the major item this year concerned the sale of the Lord of the Manor title and estate. Numerous meetings were held with the main interested parties such as the Civic Society, the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent County Council. In the end it was purchased by Targetfollow who are working with the Commons Conservators, the warden and ourselves with a view to helping improve the commons. The major change so far, of course, has been the signage and increase in fees at the Major Yorke's Car Park. They have invited the Friends to submit a list of improvements that we would like to see but with no promises to fund them all. So if you have particular items, please let me know.

Lastly, as the Membership secretary (Pat Maxwell) will report, our membership (270 members) is fairly static. This in turn contributes to our difficulties in recruiting either a new chairman or a new newsletter editor. So I have decided to continue as your chair, if you are willing to re-elect me, for one more year. More and younger members are desperately needed - in a town with 40 thousand residents, it's amazing that so few are prepared to support the commons in this way. Please do your best to recruit this year.

I would like to thank the members of the committee for their support this year and to thank you, the members, for your continuing support.

Jennifer Blackburn