

# Annual general meeting 2010



We had a small but dedicated turnout for the PW&HG annual general meeting on 22 November last year.

Jonathan Wood was elected as our new chair, replacing Mike Barnard, who has stepped down due to other commitments. Mike was a founder member of the group, and we are delighted that he is staying on the PW&HG committee.

Mike briefly summarised the group's activities over the past 12 months. We have:

- installed nesting boxes for swifts in All Saints Church tower
- completed a survey of the local badger population
- conducted a survey of the wildflowers in our roadside verges and submitted a report to ESCC on their management
- carried out major clearance work at the station, as part of the Station Partnership Scheme with Southern, and seeded and planted both sides of the platform with hedgerow and meadow wildflowers
- completed a survey of house martin nests throughout the parish.

We also organised several events for PW&HG members: a nightingale walk, two nightjar walks, a wildflower walk on the Downs, a bat spotting evening at St Michael's Church and a fungus foray in October.

We have just submitted a grant application to the Big Lottery community wildlife fund, to support next year's plans. These include various activities for European Year of the Bat, a dormouse survey, insect surveys, Himalayan balsam removal from Bevern Stream and other habitat management schemes, as well as projects involving the school.

The highlight of the annual general meeting was a fascinating talk by Margaret Pilkington about the River Ouse Research Project. This is a long-term project to restore traditional 'washlands' along the banks of the upper River Ouse in Sussex.

Dr Pilkington described how these washlands were once an essential feature of natural flood control, as they can absorb sudden, temporary rises in water levels and so avoid more catastrophic flooding further downstream at Lewes. Simply deepening and widening the river serves only to channel more water downstream more quickly, with predictable results. The project is restoring these washlands to meadow grassland, which can tolerate short periods of flooding.

It is also testing out which species of wildflowers do best in these conditions, including cowslips. Local people interviewed for the project recalled these meadows being full of cowslips before fertiliser was applied in the mid-20th century.

Catherine Jackson  
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