

Aymestrey Parish Commons Association

Minutes of committee meeting held **18 January 2023** at Aymestrey Parish Hall

Present: Committee: Martyn Booth, Dan Hurcomb, Ian Goddard, Richard Hammond, Nicola Kearton

Welcome observers: James Oliver (Gatley farms), Rory Locketts, David Dunn

1. **Apologies:** Helga Douthwaite, Domenica Dunne, Carla Goodwin, Helen Hamilton.
2. **Minutes** of the meeting held on 16 November 2022 were approved. Thanks expressed to Susanna Checketts for looking after our minutes since September.
3. Ian Goddard stood down and **Martyn Booth** was unanimously **elected as Chairman** in his place. There were no other nominations.
4. **Ian Goddard** was appointed **Secretary** of the Association. There were no other nominations.

5. **Collation of information**

Yatton Hill and Yatton Marsh: historic information has been collated from known sources, including the 2006 survey and substantial information from the Chairman personally and other local observations. Particular thanks to Susanna Checketts and Helga Douthwaite for sharing information and data collected by their observations over years. Collated information is now exhibited on the website (apca.aymestrey.org).

At Ballsgate there is no observed information to date. Need to open pedestrian access to allow observation was agreed. Chairman will contact Emma Kenchington to see what historic information she may have.

Richard Hammond will review tree species on the three commons over the year ahead.

6. **Report on meeting with Sarah King, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust.**

Sarah King met with six members at Yatton Hill and Yatton Marsh on 2nd December. Her report has been circulated. Her guidance was as anticipated to gain/maintain access with minimum necessary disruption and do surveys before any significant works. After the meeting Sarah provided a list of organisations which may be able to offer help and advice and a list of possible sources of grant finance. In particular, Hidden Herefordshire (promoted by Herefordshire Biological Records Centre) has a mission and National Lottery funding to get people recording wildlife across Herefordshire and runs courses to train potential observers.

However, immediately following the meeting Sarah King moved to a new role; APCA will contact the new Volunteer Co-ordinator.

7. **Next work target(s):**

Yatton Marsh: David Dunn reported that it is now too wet to create a 'crescent' path at Yatton Marsh east. As an alternative for present requirement of access the aim will be to create a short path at the Yatton Marsh Farm side and another short path from close by the outflow going back into the common – both stretches being firmer ground.

It is also realised that the water level can be adjusted by raising the inlet pipe at the outflow – an easy fit and equally easy to adjust. To discuss with nearest landowners before implementation; subject thereto, proceed with paths and drain improvement.

No surveying since November – not a lot happening!

Yatton Hill: aim to improve access by reconnecting the track from the Hole (at Deepmore top corner) with Mortimer Trail near the bench. Owners of the cottage at the Hole have started it; quite difficult growth to cut back, but this will create access at a point with flora other than bracken as well as creating a circular path on the common.

Ballsgate: there is no pedestrian access at present, although once the growth by the track (Gypsy Lane to many) is crossed the common opens out. Chairman will investigate the best point for access (difficult to do in the Parish Hall). Needs to be done now and maintained in the summer.

8. **Control of Invasive Species**

Gatley Farms are aware of the Japanese Knotweed (in a field nearby, but not on YH common). It is a small patch and has not spread. Gatley farms will deal.

What was previously identified on Yatton Hill as Himalayan balsam may be rose bay willow herb. An important distinction to be re-examined.

9. **Purpose statement and constitution**

Aims and arrangements are essential if APCA is to apply for grants, have a bank account and have a voice as well as for internal operation.

Draft purpose statement and constitution has been produced by Dan Hurcomb after previous discussion (see website). DH was thanked for his time and expertise. All to consider with a view to adoption at the next public meeting.

10. **Communications**

Chairman has written and will continue to write updates a news for Aymestrey Matters.

The website (apca.aymestrey.org) is being populated – species information is already posted under the named commons ‘dropdown’.

11. **Open meeting in Spring**

Aim to hold an open meeting in the Spring with the aim of adopting the constitution, but also ‘selling’ APCA to local public. A sort of Annual General Meeting but involving display and presentation. May 10 is a possible date.

12. **Work parties: next dates, times, places.**

Ballsgate Common, to create entry. **18 February 10.00a.m.** on the track at the top of the hill.

Yatton Hill: MD will assess route and difficulty. He will email results and call for work party as necessary.

Yatton Marsh: speak to neighbours first. Any access will be by foot only and its creation will minimise disturbance of flora and fauna.

13. **Other action points**

Idea to plant a Coronation Tree on Yatton Hill was accepted. Discussion on species, probably not oak, and site, possibly where the firs came down. To investigate site and species suitabilities.

14. The **next meeting** will be at 7p.m. 1st March at the Parish Hall.

Ian Goddard, Secretary.