



# Friends of Swardeston Common

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## Who are we?

**Friends of Swardeston Common** is an Unincorporated Association set up in 2017 with the primary aim of maintaining the Common Land in the Parish of Swardeston for the enjoyment of the residents of and visitors to the village.

In so far as it is consistent with the primary aim above, Friends of Swardeston Common shall endeavour, through their work, to encourage residents of the village to meet together in a spirit of fellowship and to take pride in their village, its heritage and its local flora and fauna.

## Where are we working?

Initially we have concentrated our efforts in two areas of the Common:-

**Queen Mother's Wood** – the area of woodland to the north of the cricket pitch where 80 trees were planted in 1980 to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of the late Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. This area had become very overgrown with the brambles reaching into the tree canopy in places and only accessible via an occasionally mown path.

**Village Hall Pond** – the area of open common and woodland between the Bowls Club and the Old Rectory, extending across to The Old Bakery. This area was also heavily overgrown with brambles and rosebay willowherb while the main pond was completely choked with reedmace.

## What have we done so far?

Initially, thanks to financial contributions from Swardeston Live and Alan Jones of East Anglian Property Ltd, we engaged a contractor using a tractor-mounted flail to clear both areas of the worst of the undergrowth. Our band of volunteers then set about the task of collecting and burning as much of the resulting debris as we could before new growth caused a halt. In due course, having taken advice from S.N.D.C. and the Norwich Fringe, we set about clearing the pond by the Village Hall. Once again we are indebted to Alan Jones who provided a digger and driver to clear the excess vegetation from the pond and to Swardeston Live who covered the cost of transporting the silt and vegetation off site.

By the end of March all of our cleared areas were showing significant signs of new growth which moved our attention from clearance to maintenance. In an attempt to prevent the brambles, nettles etc taking over again we had been advised to keep the open areas mown frequently and as short as the terrain allows. To achieve this and give us the flexibility to cope with the weather and the availability of volunteers it was decided we needed to purchase our own mower but had no funds to do so. Unfortunately we were unable to apply for any grant funding until the Association had been properly constituted which took time while the nettles and brambles resolutely re-grew. To overcome this problem in the short term four of our founding members, Derek Barber, Simon Pithers, David Rice and Edward Bradshaw, purchased a mower which they have currently loaned to the Association. The above named four members constitute the initial Committee of the Association. Our volunteers continue to clear and level selected areas as necessary to facilitate the mowing and to reinstate some eroded areas.

## What are our future plans?

In order to achieve its aims, the Association has the power to raise funds and apply for, invite, obtain, collect and receive contributions, grants, subscriptions, fees etc.

Although we have gained the loan of a mower and various other items of equipment, we have incurred start-up and ongoing costs. We are therefore offering annual Membership of the Association to individuals as a way to involve local villagers in our activities and generate an ongoing source of revenue to help meet our running costs. In addition, we are seeking contributions to enable us to purchase the items that we have been kindly loaned. We have already received a few contributions from businesses and individuals but still have some way to go and all donations, large and small, will be most gratefully received.

**Membership of the Association** is open to anyone who is at least 18 years of age, lives in the Parish of Swardeston or the immediate surrounding area, and supports the aims of the Friends of Swardeston Common. Annual membership costs just £5.00, renewable on 1<sup>st</sup> January, the membership year running from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December each year. Membership application forms are available from any Committee member.

**Membership Subscription and Donations** may be paid to any Committee Member or to the above address. For further information or to offer help and/or advice please contact any Committee Member in person or via the above address, email or telephone number.

