



Friends of Midsummer Common Newsletter Autumn Edition, 2022



Friends of Midsummer Common (FoMC) is a group concerned with the use and good management of this ancient grassland. To join us, please follow this link: <https://midsummercommon.org.uk/join/>

FoMC AGM

Please join us at the FoMC AGM at **6.30pm on 11th October 2022** in person at Christ Church, 16 Christchurch Street, Newmarket Road, CB1 1HT, or online at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85491936047>
Meeting ID: 854 9193 6047
Passcode: AGM@CCC

Update from our Committee Chair

It seems that the drought has finally broken, and the Common is returning to its normal colour. However, there are bare patches and we will be monitoring this and discussing with the Council if necessary. Our three recent tree plantings have survived, and continue to grow well, thanks to regular watering by our volunteers, to whom we are very grateful, both for this and for the regular work they do in the Orchard every Sunday morning.

We have had a full calendar of Events on the Common during the summer, including Strawberry Fair and Midsummer Fair. My thanks to those involved, who have helped these take place with little damage and disturbance. There was also 'Our Place in Space' which was a scale model of the Solar System, though I don't suppose that many of us managed to see all the exhibits, which stretched out to Waterbeach!

In our spring 2022 newsletter, I mentioned that a Cambridge student, Anna Gardner, was writing a thesis on the importance of open spaces in cities. She has summarised her findings for us: 'My research investigates how the urban commons matter in people's lives through a case study of two areas of common land in Cambridge: Midsummer Common and Jesus Green. Urban commons provide leisure, wellbeing and ecological services, filling the gaps left by inadequate market or state provision. They matter not only for what they do, but also for what they stand for, contributing to heritage, identity, and an attachment to place that inspires volunteers to be involved in protecting them. They will continue to matter in people's lives in the future, especially at a time of unprecedented change to social systems'. I hope that you all continue to enjoy the Common even in its present state, and I'm sure that most of you would agree with Anna's summary that it provides us with leisure and wellbeing, as well as ecological benefits.

Jeremy Francis, FoMC Chair

Update on Electric Vehicles (EVs) on the Common

In the spring 2022 edition of this newsletter, I provided an update on our discussions with the Council and the Police about managing the danger posed by scooters and other electric vehicles using the paths on the Common. Unfortunately, despite some initial progress, the Council seem disinclined to take any action, preferring to wait for the government to make decisions on this. Maybe the new Prime Minister and her new Cabinet will grasp this issue after much delay.

Jeremy Francis, FoMC Chair



News from the Orchard

It finally started raining! After a long summer of drought spent watering new plantings, this could not be more welcome. It has been a challenge to keep our new mulberry tree (which was kindly donated by Steve and Koda), two new metasequoia, and soft fruit such as raspberries and a redcurrant alive in the absence of rain.

The cherry trees did get significantly water stressed as the wildflowers and grasses growing around them used too much water. Next year we will mulch round the bases of these trees to suppress other plant growth and help the soil to retain moisture.

Our mature trees were not only resilient in the drought but also very productive. Some of the excess fruit made its way to Abbey Food Hub in the form of donations, but our volunteers and visitors to the orchard have been able to enjoy the vast majority of the produce.

The new wildflower area was a qualified success – plenty of yellow rattle germinated, along with scabious, knapweed, white campion, cowslips, poppies and many other species. However, the grasses were still quite dominant. Hopefully this will improve next year as the yellow rattle continues to make space for other flowers.

We mowed the wildflowers the old fashioned way - with scythes! They were surprisingly effective and user-friendly tools (although perhaps it seemed easier because of the excellent instruction of Vic Smith, Council officer). We used the mowings to mulch the Newmarket Road area of the orchard, which is always in need of more organic matter.

Of course the dry weather this summer leads us to wonder what the future has in store and how best to respond to a changing climate. The installation of rain water butts is a welcome addition and very helpful in spring, but these were dry by early summer. Perhaps all of our trees will require mulching in the future, and new plantings should focus on drought tolerant species such as vines, figs, or olives.

We have made progress with accessing our section 106 grant to repair the paths in the orchard and install new benches among other things – Rob Martyr from the council's biodiversity team has been appointed as project manager and he is keen to get started.

We look forward to our **Apple Day on the 9th October** from midday in the orchard, as well as the **FoMC AGM on the 11th October**. Hopefully see you all then!

Kit Holland, Orchard Manager

Open Issues for the FoMC

Events on the Common

The goal is a plan that minimises impact on the Common and ensures the safety of both the community and participants.

Electric Vehicles (EVs) on the common

We continue to monitor the issue of EVs on the Common.

Contacting your City Councillor

Protecting the Common is best assured by voicing your concerns to your representatives. You can find your City Councillors contact information at the following:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?FN=WARD&VW=LIST&PIC=0>

Opportunities to Volunteer

Routine Orchard tending takes place each Sunday from 10:00–11:30 am. Please direct any questions to Kit Holland: Orchard_Manager@protonmail.com

Please Join the Friends of Midsummer Common

Members receive our newsletter via-email and are immediately informed of any new developments on the Common. <https://midsummercommon.org.uk/join/>

