



Friends of Midsummer Common Newsletter

Autumn, 2023



COME TO OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING!

23rd October, 7-9:30 pm, at Christ Church, CB1 1HT

There will be a presentation from **Friends of the River Cam** about conservation issues affecting our river, and what we can do to help.

We will send a zoom invite to members via our mailing list. If you wish to attend by zoom, but are not yet a member, please join! Have your views heard! There will also be cake and coffee or wine.

Update from our Committee Chair



*Wildflower areas off
Parsonage Street*



*New signage on the
common*

This year the wildflower areas at the end of Parsonage Street (yellow on map, left) are becoming more established, and the grass across the common has been allowed to grow longer in between events. We believe this has supported an increased invertebrate population this year – anecdotally, there have been many more dragonflies zipping about!

Concerns were raised by residents earlier in the year about the mowing regime, particularly the abrupt mowing of the entire common before strawberry fair. Guy Belcher, biodiversity officer, tells us that the mowing was undertaken not only in advance of the event, but also to control ryegrasses which had begun to dominate, outcompeting other plants and reducing biodiversity. We all agree that mowing in segments rather than the entire common at once would be preferable, and are working towards this.

Regarding scooters on the common – recently you might have noticed signs on the paths urging consideration. We thank Councillor Tim Bick in particular for his help in trying to address this issue.

In September emergency tree works were performed on one of the riverside willows near the cutter ferry bridge. The tree has been pollarded, and despite the cracking should do well as a result. This will preserve both habitat and the tree.

Veteran pollarded willows are a key but underappreciated feature of our landscape in the East of England. They are fantastic for wildlife as pollarded trees are more likely to form tree hollows - essential habitat for saproxylic beetles and other invertebrates. We wish this particular tree a long and happy pollarded life.



Cracked willow



*The willow in question –
near Cutter Ferry Bridge*

COME TO OUR APPLE DAY! 29th October from 12pm- 2pm in the orchard.

There will be an apple press, pumpkin carving, and (possibly) toffee apples!

News from the Orchard



Pomegranates

It has been an odd year climate-wise, with a late, wet spring and warm September. So much so that some of our apple trees are attempting to blossom again (in October!).

Given the drought last year, we decided to take a risk and plant pomegranates instead of traditional hedging species in the orchard. Obviously this year had us thinking we might have made an error, but the pomegranates seem to be thriving in spite of the lack of a summer.



*Wild Service Tree
(Chequers) Blossom*

We also look forward to new planting in the future, courtesy of Kenny McGregor and the Trees for Streets scheme, which will include a Wild Service Tree near the common entrance of the orchard. Wild Service Trees are beautiful, particularly in spring, and the fruit (once bletted) tastes a little like dates.



A daylily

The late spring meant we had hardly any apricots, but the other trees did well – at least until all of the fruit seemed to vanish overnight. Please do help yourself to the fruit, but be considerate of everyone else!

We have also planted some daylilies at the Newmarket Road entrance, and enjoyed the display from the bulbs we planted last year, including some enormous alliums. The herbs we planted last year and the vinca major planted by Susan Stobbs in years past are gradually spreading to give decent ground cover, which hopefully should reduce the need for weeding.



*Unsafe webbing coming
loose at the Common
entrance to the orchard*

We are still waiting for improvements to the orchard promised as part of a section 106 grant awarded two years ago. These include new storage and, importantly, improvements to the paths into the orchard. These paths, particularly the one leading to the common, are currently unsafe. We will discuss this further at the AGM, but you can imagine our frustration at the lack of action, considering that the necessary funds have already been allocated.

Volunteer!

Volunteering sessions in the orchard: every **Sunday from 10:00–11:30 am**.
Contact Kit Holland: Orchard_Manager@protonmail.com, or just turn up!

We also desperately need **help with communications and our website** – do let us know if you would be interested in helping us run our twitter and update our website.

Join!

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