



Epsom Common Association

Est. 1974 Patron:- The Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell

www.epsomcommon.org.uk

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016

Dear Member,

After the sad loss of the Ecovols much loved Groundhog vehicle I am very pleased to report that we are now in a position not only to purchase a new low impact vehicle but also a new charcoal kiln. Firstly thanks to Mary Hiles for a generous donation in memory of her late husband Norman, who was a keen volunteer and member of the charcoal team. Thanks also go to Eileen Taylor for her offer of a donation to help with the last piece of funding needed. Eileen was a particular fan of the Groundhog! We have also received awards of £234 from the Waitrose Community Scheme which ran for us in December and £500 from the newly established Epsom and Ewell Community Fund. The latter award is to partly fund the new charcoal kiln and a handover ceremony was held at the kiln site in February with the Mayor, Councillor Chris Frost, Melanie Cox from Epsom Coaches, a founding donor to the scheme, and Councillor Steve Bridger E&EBC representative on the committee.

The new circular path around the Common has now had its first serious test after some very wet conditions over the winter. We are pleased that it has stood up quite well to some really testing conditions. There are still some wet spots but some further work on these areas is planned. Also the sections of the path where it crosses the essential services still need the concrete foundations to be laid.

Thanks to Steve Bridger for completing a redesign of the Association's website. The site is now more easily accessible by small format mobile devices including smart phones and tablets. The Epsom Common book has been scanned and can now be downloaded from the website in a digital format. The digital version is a close representation of the 1992 version of the original book including all the line drawings and old photographs.

As I mentioned some eighteen months ago I will not be standing again as your chairperson. It has been a very enjoyable five years but now is the time to hand over to someone new. I will now be able to focus more on my other roles as road rep coordinator and newsletter editor. I would like to encourage you to think of anyone you could nominate for the chairperson role.

Subscriptions are now due and as some members have enquired about paying by standing order we have produced a standing order bank form and the road reps will have a supply of these when they deliver this newsletter. If you do set up a standing order I would appreciate it if you could let me know via the email address chairperson@epsomcommon.org.uk so we can update the road reps lists.

I look forward to meeting you at the AGM.

Thank you

Martin Gandy (Chairperson)

Cattle Grazing

This year is the twentieth of the cattle-grazing project on the Common. In addition to the interest the cattle provide, there have been clear benefits to the maintenance of a diversity of habitats which is so important to the Common's SSSI status. We are now looking forward to the arrival of this year's herd of Galloway cattle which is expected to be with us from late spring to early autumn.

When the animals are with us, their health and security has to be checked daily, and volunteers from the Association assist with this vital task. We are always ready to welcome more volunteers so that we can share the load and replace those who have stood down. It is a pleasant task – just think of it as a walk with a purpose. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Bruce Critchley to find out more. His email address is bruce_critchley@yahoo.co.uk and telephone 01372 742520.

41st Annual General Meeting

Thursday 21st April 2016 at 8:00pm

Christ Church Hall, Christ Church Road, Epsom

The Woodland Trust

Paddy Byrne, Woodland Trust volunteer, will talk about the importance of woodland conservation and creation. He will cover the aims of the Woodland Trust coupled with current and future projects, with special reference to the Langley Vale Millennium Wood.

The formal part of the evening will be held after the guest speaker's talk, with reports by the Chairperson and Treasurer, and the election of the Committee for 2016/2017. The current Chairperson is not standing for re-election. The other officers and committee are willing to stand again. Nominations for any of the officer posts, or for the committee, seconded by a current member, should be submitted in writing to the Chairperson fourteen days before the AGM.

Refreshments available after the formalities – Doors open at 7:45pm

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Please note, all walks start from the Stew Pond Car Park unless otherwise stated and last for approximately two hours. Wear suitable footwear and clothing, and if possible bring a pair of binoculars.

Saturday 7th May – 7:30am start – Early Morning Bird Walk - Join local bird expert Tony Quinn for a walk across the Common to see and hear a variety of bird species both resident and summer visitors.

Saturday 9th July – 2:00pm start – Butterfly Stroll -The annual search for the elusive Purple Emperor butterfly will be led by Alison Gilry. Join her to find, identify and record other butterflies, moths and invertebrates that inhabit our Common.

Saturday 16th July – 2:00pm start – Wild Flower Wander - Peter Wakeham will lead this popular walk to find and identify many of the more interesting wild flowers and other botanical delights to be found on the Common.

Saturday 23rd July – 2:00pm start – Bush Cricket Hop - Steve Nevard will be leading a walk to detect and hopefully see some of the varied species of Grasshoppers, Bush Crickets and other Insects that thrive on our Common. Duration of Walk approx. 2.5hrs.

Managing Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve.

Spring is here and the Common's wildlife is starting to stir! Another season of monitoring some of the common's more notable creatures is getting under way helping to inform about the effectiveness of our habitat management. In Late February/early March Adders have once again been seen basking in their usual haunts and it's great to know they have made it through winter. Working with the Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group, EEBC staff and volunteers will be regularly checking the reptile refuges that are placed around the site. In early March the Dormouse boxes were checked and running repairs carried out, fingers crossed we get some takers in 2016. Also in March some of the Common's ponds will be checked to see if they continue to host populations of the protected Great Crested Newt. In April the regular weekly butterfly monitoring begins with volunteers walking a set route called a transect, and the results are entered into the national database operated by Butterfly Conservation. As spring progresses local botanists will be out and about recording the rich and varied plant life, always with an eye for new or returning plants that our habitat management work aims to encourage and protect. In some years breeding bird surveys are carried out in spring across both Epsom and Ashted Common and although one is not due this year EEBC staff and local bird watchers will once again be keeping an eye on what is present. This will include for example, checking that the now scarce Yellowhammer has returned to breed in the grazed meadows. Late spring and summer 2016 will also see further monitoring of the commons bat population in an effort to gain a clearer idea of what species/numbers are present and likely roost locations. If you would like to find out more about how we monitor the Common's wildlife or if you would like to assist please do contact the EEBC Countryside Team on 01372 732000.



Our February visit to the Hazel Coupe resulted in extending the plantation and we now have about 140 different aged hazels in addition to the existing mature trees. With the reduction of bracken from our summer pulling, flowers seem to be re-establishing there, with bluebells just about pushing through the leaf litter and evidence of foxgloves spreading throughout.

March, 20th and 21st, we shall be clearing scrub at Horton Heath to encourage heather to recolonise the heath.

April, 17th and 18th, we'll be back at the Grazing Meadows clearing scrub to create islands of habitat for breeding birds.

May, 15th and 16th, we continue with halo work around veteran trees to give them more space to thrive for years to come.

June, July and August we start our summer bracken pulling programme on five sites every Tuesday evening from 7.00pm till 9.00pm or dusk.

Horton Heath (meet at the vehicle access point off the old Christ Church Road): 7th June, 5th July, 2nd, 16th and 30th August

Railway Meadow (meet on railway bridge at the end of Castle Road): 14th June, 19th July

Rye Meadow (meet at the Wells notice board off Wells Road entrance): 21st June

Hazel Coupe (meet at the Stew Pond car park notice board): 28th June, 26th July, 9th and 23rd August

Blake's Pond (meet on railway bridge at the end of Castle Road): 12th July

Don't forget charcoal making on the first Sunday of each month (apart from July which is on 10th). If you can't come and help, you can always go out and buy a bag of charcoal to support us either from The Lower Moles (Horton Country Park) or The Old Moat Garden Centre (Horton Lane).

Epsom Common Association

Chairman – Martin Gandy, 2 Kingsdown Road, Epsom, KT17 3PU. email: chairperson@epsomcommon.org.uk t: 01372-723149; m: 07796-362923; **Vicechair** - David King, 1 Lewins Road, Epsom, KT18 7TL. t: 01372-722457 **EcoVols Leader** – John Turner, 10 Hookfield, Epsom KT19 8JG. t: 01372-721876; m: 07729-235559; email: ecovols@epsomcommon.org.uk **Treasurer** – Marilyn Day, 17 Blackthorn Road, Great Bookham, KT23 4BN. t: 01372-454477 **Secretary** - Cynthea Blunden, 6 Isabella Cottages, Epsom **Council Representative** – Steve Bridger - email: SBridger@Epsom-Ewell.gov.uk **Committee members** (in addition to the above named) – Bruce Critchley, Conor Morrow (LMCMP), Stewart Cocker (E&EBC), Roger Newman, and Eileen Taylor.