



Epsom Common Association

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

www.epsomcommon.org.uk

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2015

Dear Member,

At the time of writing this newsletter the circular path restoration project is nearing completion. The developers at West Park were contracted to provide a dual-use pedestrian and cycle path from Epsom Station to Malden Rushett and we were fortunate to be able to use some of their funding to restore the part of the circular path from Stamford Green to the Stew Pond car park. The project has been several years in the planning due to the need to acquire sufficient funds and get various permissions for works to take place.

The circular path had become badly rutted in many places and was a hazard to all users. The contractors are using similar inert sandstone material to the Fittleworth Stone which was laid on the Bridleway 38 part of the circular path some years ago with great success, and is considered to be the ideal material for a nature reserve. The Committee are confident the project will benefit all users, including walkers, horse riders, runners, dog walkers and indeed cyclists. There was a significant risk of injury to horse riders, runners and cyclists because of the poor state of the path before the restoration project started.

There are several locations where important services go under the path and further work involving the installation of underground protection for the services will not be completed for several months and the temporary protection will remain in place to ensure vehicles do not damage the services.

The construction of the new hard surfaced path starting at Stamford Green Road and which joins the circular bridleway behind Christchurch is part of the restoration of 3 km of the 4km circular path around Epsom Common. This part of the path does follow an existing path line but does look rather stark at present, but will soon blend in with the surroundings. I have walked round the entire circular path several times recently and I asked everyone I met what they thought of the path restoration work and everyone I spoke to was very pleased with the improvements. One of our members did express concerns about speeding cyclists but the new path is 2.7m wide, which is significantly wider than some parts of the old path. This width was a significant upgrade to the old path to ensure that cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians could pass more safely. From my experience as a cyclist the large groups

of cyclists now so familiar on our roads at weekends on lightweight racing cycles much prefer paved roads and usually avoid off road routes. I do expect some increase in cycle commuting to West Park but these users would typically have small wheel folding cycles which should pose no threat to pedestrians.

The heathland associated plants that are appearing in Rye Meadow at the moment are causing a lot of interest. Also a Southern marsh orchid has been found on Railway Meadow in addition to Adders Tongue and the large Common Spotted/Southern Marsh Orchid hybrids that are there.

Our web site has had a makeover thanks to Steve Bridger. The site is now mobile friendly so is now easier to read on smart phones and tablets.

Vicki Rees has reported rather a lot of problems with deer at the Epsom Common allotment site at the moment both in terms of the crops they've been eating and the ticks people have had to remove from themselves! The following link: <http://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk/> gives some useful advice on dealing with ticks. I am not aware of any occurrences of Lyme Disease from ticks on the Common but it is a good idea to take precautions. If you unlucky enough to have a tick bite I find a very effective way to remove them is the Tick Card which I obtained from Cotswold Camping in Kingston.

I would like to draw your attention to the opportunities for volunteer work on the Common. In particular we are now very short of volunteer cattle checkers. Those who take part do find it a very rewarding and enjoyable activity. The task involves a leisurely walk around the three areas where we have cattle, and is normally carried out by two people, and includes testing the electric fence and a simple visual check of the cattle. Any problems are reported to the rangers. Further details are given in the Cattle Checking report.

And as always I would welcome anyone who feels they could spare a little time as a committee member to help with the important tasks which support the good work of the Association which has built up over the last 40 years.

Thank you

Martin Gandy (Chairman)

Cattle Grazing

The cattle grazing on the Common is now a regular feature from late spring to early autumn and helps to maintain the diversity of habitat which is so important for the Common's SSSI status. This year we have a herd of 27 steers and heifers. The animals arrived in June and are comprised of pure Galloways and Galloways and Dexters crossed with Irish Moiled; they look strikingly different from the Friesians that we have hosted for many years - do come for a look. The health and security of the animals is checked daily, and volunteers from the Association carry out the task on several days each week. However, we have lost volunteers since the end of last season, and this has increased the load on those remaining. We therefore urgently need new volunteers. Those already involved find the task a rewarding exercise so if you think you might be able to help, please contact Bruce Critchley to find out more. His email address is bruce_critchley@yahoo.co.uk and telephone **01372 742520**.

Nature Report Spring 2015 from the Countryside Team

It's been a late spring this year for both plants and animals with flowers, butterflies and other insects making a late appearance. May and June have revealed continuing signs of improvement in the grazed areas. In Rye Meadow heather has been found and it has been a blaze of wildflowers with Ragged Robin, Heath Speedwell, Greater and Lesser Stitchwort and Heath bedstraw, all benefiting from the efforts of the cattle and volunteers! High Low Meadow is a stunning sight during June with a sea of Corky Fruited Water dropwort, vetches and yellow Tormentil. This spring a Nightingale was heard singing in Rye Meadow for the first time in many years and Yellow Hammers area regular sight in High Low Meadow which is alive with bird song. Great Spotted Woodpeckers are known to have nested and fledged and Buzzards and Red Kite have been seen regularly with a suspicion that Buzzards may be nesting on site (keep a look out!). Adders and Grass Snakes have been seen regularly by staff and volunteers and at Blakes Pond a survey for newts caught 29 Great Crested Newts which is a very significant result. Why not join one of the wildlife walks over the summer and discover what an amazing place Epsom Common is for our local wildlife!

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.

Sunday 12th July – 2:00pm. start – Wild Flower Wander

Eileen Taylor 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 15th August – 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. Meet at the Stew Ponds car park Christ Church Road Epsom (B280) - Duration of Walk approx. 2.5hrs.

Saturday 3rd October – 10:00am. start – Fungus Foray

Join local expert Andrew Smith in a search for interesting and unusual fungi on Epsom Common. This year we will meet in the Christ Church car park and not the Stew Pond car park, to cover some different areas. We recommend you wear stout shoes and trousers to cope with mud, nettles and brambles. Return to the car park around 12.



Bracken pulling is already well under way, and anyone is most welcome to join us for the remainder of the summer (we've left a bit of bracken just for you). We start every Tuesday night at 7.00pm and finish at 9.00pm or dusk if sooner. In the coming weeks, we'll be at:

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

Hazel Coupe on 21st July, 4th and 18th August (meet at the Stew Ponds car park noticeboard)

Horton Heath on 28th July, 11th and 25th August (meet at the vehicle access point to the common off old Christchurch Road between the roundabouts)

In the autumn we traditionally turn our attention to the ponds on the common. However this year we are still without a vehicle and so, with no likelihood of getting a replacement in the next few months, we will have to abandon our published autumn programme. We shall be using the task days to work at sites close to the charcoal site in order to avoid having to ferry the tools too far by hand.

Our autumn work dates will remain unchanged:

September - Sunday 20th & Monday 21st

October - Sunday 18th and Monday 19th

November - Sunday 15th and Monday 16th

For all these dates meet at the charcoal kiln site at 9.30am.

Epsom Common Association

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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.