



Epsom Common Association

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

www.epsomcommon.org.uk

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2018

Dear Member,

After a very late, cold and wet spring the Common is now looking lovely with good shows of flowers, butterflies, dragon and damsel flies, and bird life. Sadly there has been some anti-social behaviour particularly late night joy riding on motor bikes and cars. One such incident resulted in a vehicle being abandoned and burnt out on the main green path up from Christ Church towards the central green crossroads. This proved to be very difficult to remove safely without causing further damage. There's also been some conifer dumping near the Christ Church Road entrance.

We have our usual programme of wildlife walks and have added an evening bat walk this year thanks to support from the Countryside Team. Please note because of the expected popularity of this walk we are asking you to book your places.

Martin Gandy, Membership Secretary

Epsom Common Day 2018

As you very likely know, 2018 is the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the spring that, thanks to the purgative effects of the water, led to Epsom becoming a fashionable spa in the late seventeenth century. With the notable exception of the MgSO₄ arts festival, few events seemed planned to mark the occasion, so in cooperation with the Stamford Ward Residents Association, we decided to hold another Epsom Common Day. This will be on Sunday 29th July, 11am - 4pm, on Stamford Green, which does clash with the Prudential RideLondon cycle event, but at least avoids Wimbledon and the World Cup.

Funding was a problem; staging the event costs a few thousand pounds and the Association does not have surplus funds. Crowd funding was suggested and thanks to the generosity of many individuals, several local organisations and some of our county councillors' discretionary funds, we were able to exceed the target of £3500. Thanks also to Chris Massey for setting up the crowd funding.

Now came the difficult part, making the event happen. That is a process still underway, but we have a lot in place. Attractions include: history of the Well, local conservation organisations and craft groups, a falconry display, a mobile farm, Epsom & Ewell Silver band, Epsom & Ewell Riding for the Disabled, and wildlife and history walks. Christ Church are hosting further activities, including several for children. The Cricketers will be providing a BBQ and teas will be available both on Stamford Green and at Christ Church.

Of course the roads around Stamford Green are narrow and parking is very limited, so please, if at all possible, do not travel by car. If you have to drive, please avoid Stamford Green Road during the event and park considerately.

We will need some help in the lead up to the event and in particular on the day: manning the ECA stand, selling raffle tickets and the like; so if you can spare even just an hour or two please let me know - contact details over. We do hope that you join us for what should be a very enjoyable day. Keep your fingers crossed for fine weather!

David King, Chair

Cattle Grazing

With the arrival in May of 20 cattle comprised of Belted Galloways, Dexter crosses and Angus, the grazing on the Common is now under way. Ten of the animals were with us last year and all have settled in and are doing well. 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 continue to experience episodes of vandalism - criminal damage - to the fencing and drinking water troughs although at a lower level than we did last year; if you ever witness damage or have information please contact us at **01372 732000** and ask for the Ranger Service, or call the Police, or you can call Crimestoppers anonymously at **0800 555 111**.

When the animals are with us, their health and security is checked daily. This is a pleasant task – a walk with a purpose. Volunteers from the Association assist with the checking; we are always ready to welcome more volunteers and if you are interested in joining us, please contact Bruce Critchley to find out more. His email address is cattle@epsomcommon.org.uk and telephone **01372 742520**.



400th Anniversary



Bracken Pulling is our Summer task. The bracken is growing fast thanks to some recent spring downpours. We've already started the task but you can still join us! We meet every Tuesday evening during the summer months at 7.00pm and finish at 9.00pm or dusk, and we usually stop for a short break after the first hour. Gloves are provided or you may bring your own. Please see the website for details of meeting places or contact John Turner.

Horton Heath: 26th June; 24th July; 14th and 28th August **Blake's Pond:** 3rd July
Railway Meadow: 10th and 31st July **Hazel Coupe:** 17th July; 7th and 21st August

Our Autumn schedule is slightly different from previous years.

We have ongoing work at Blake's Pond and the Great Pond, clearing scrub and small trees from around the margins.

September 16th and 17th - Blake's Pond October 21st and 22nd - Great Pond

November 18th and 19th - Christ Church Glade

If you're planning a BBQ, why not buy some of our lumpwood charcoal? Made on Epsom Common using oak or hazel timber from Epsom and Ashted Commons. It costs £5 a bag available from The Lower Mole Trust, 2 West Park Farmhouse, Horton Country Park, Horton Lane (phone first in case they're out and about - 743873). The Old Moat Garden Centre also sell our charcoal, but prices may vary - please ask for our charcoal by name as they sometimes sell other brands! Alternatively, contact John Turner direct for supplies.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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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 1st 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.

Sunday 8th 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.

Sunday 22nd 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.

Sunday 9th September 10:30am start – Fungus Foray

After our very popular fungus foray last year Dick Alder, Mike Waterman and the West Weald Fungus Recording Group are returning again this year to lead our walk.

Saturday 15th September 7:30pm start – Bat Walk

Join the Countryside team for an evening bat walk. We expect this to be a very popular family event and we need to limit the numbers so ask you to book on this occasion. Please contact Martin Gandy via the email address membership@epsomcommon.org.uk to book you places. We are also asking non-members for a £2 donation.

Monitoring Report

Thanks to all our amazing volunteers, 2018's surveying is well under way. Our regular volunteers are once again surveying our butterflies, reptiles and dormice. If you would like to get involved with any of our regular surveying, please get in touch.

We are looking forward to welcoming Surrey Bat Group again this year to carry out harp trapping to further our understanding of which species of bat we have on site.

In conjunction with Ashted Common, we have employed an ecological consultant to carry out a breeding bird survey across the whole of Epsom and Ashted Commons Site of Special Scientific Interest, which began in April. The exciting news so far is that he heard a single male Grasshopper Warbler, a bird that we have been hoping would return. It hasn't been spotted in quite a few years so we are really pleased that our habitat management has paid off. Fingers crossed he finds a mate and stays for the summer! The Yellowhammer didn't make a return last year but fingers crossed we may see them again.

Out veteran oak trees are responding well to the work that was carried out on them over the winter. We will also be keeping a watchful eye for the nests and caterpillars of the Oak Processionary Moth and we would ask you to be vigilant as well. Further nests have been found by the Forestry Commission and we will be liaising with them along with Natural England as to how to manage the issue.

At the time of writing, we have seen our first sightings of dragon and damselflies. A welcome sign that summer is not far away. We will be keeping a watchful eye for the Downy Emerald again.

We also plan to carry out a botanical survey of the grazing areas this year to keep an eye on how the plant life continues to develop. We like to survey the vegetation every few years to ensure we keep the grazing pressure right. The cattle are due back on site mid-May, which we are very much looking forward to. Thanks to Bruce Critchley and all the volunteers that make the grazing project possible and assist in maintaining a very valuable habitat, rich in biodiversity

Epsom Common Association

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Committee members (in addition to above) Bruce Critchley, Conor Morrow (LMCMP), Stewart Cocker (E&EBC), Roger Newman, Steve Nevard and Eileen Taylor