

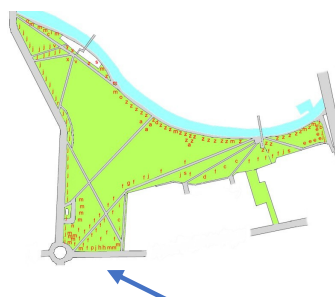


Friends of Midsummer Common Newsletter

Autumn Edition, 2020



Red marks indicate islands where nettles can thrive.



Don't miss the giant elms on Butt Green

The Friends of Midsummer Common (FoMC) are concerned and responsible for the use of this ancient grassland. To join, follow this link: <https://www.midsummercommon.org.uk/Business/FoMCJoin.html>

Nature on the Common – Polarising Nettles and Overlooked Elms

We topped the common this autumn to reduce seeding of Wall Barley Grass and to contain areas left for nettles. Nettles and thistles on the common often divide opinion between those who view them as injurious weeds that should be eradicated or as important native food and nectar sources for declining invertebrates. The management plan has identified specific areas (shown in red on picture to the left) that would retain nettles for the numerous species they host but will manage them in the remaining areas to reduce their vigour allowing the return to a more diverse grass dominated sward.

Guy Belcher, Biodiversity Officer, Cambridge City Council

How can two of the Largest trees on the common go amiss? People are often blissfully unaware they are walking under the largest City owned Elm trees that quietly stand proud on the south end of Butts Green just off the side walk on Maids Causeway. Look for some brilliant yellows this month and take the time to stand next to the trunk and look up. They really do make you feel small!

Kenny McGregor, Arboricultural Officer, Cambridge City Council

The Common in History: Restoring an Historic Link between the Common and Chesterton

Just on the river side of the 15th century Ft. St. George pub, a careful observer will note several descending to the edge of the Cam. Directly across the river, on the Chesterton side, a path abruptly ends as it meets the bank. This is the location of the ferry crossing that, until a bridge was built in 1928, linked Cambridge with Chesterton via Ferry Path. The house just next to the pub, also marks this spot with a plaque above the door that reads "Ferry House 1894".

Recently a group of neighbours on the Chesterton side have partnered with the City and County government to restore the Ferry Path landing area. Brush is being replaced by plants and bee-friendly flowers so the ferry landing is now clearly visible from the pub. In fact, the master plan includes a biodiverse corridor from the Cam to Hamilton street. It might be worth a walk over the bridge to inspect progress on the ferry landing and admire nature as it reclaims a bit of asphalt further up the path. While standing on the ferry landing it is easy to look back at the Ft. St. George and imagine a group of thirsty Chestertonians who were separated from their beer by a just a few meters and a half-pence ferry crossing. [If you are interested in more, we recommend the webinar, "Crossing the Cam" by David Stubbings. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_V8OmCiL4WY]



Passengers waiting on the Chesterton – Cambridge ferry



A view of the Ft. St. George from Ferry Path

Opportunities to volunteer

le clocher d'un village lointain. Jean Valjean pouvait être à trois lieues de Digne. Un sentier qui coupait la plaine passait à quelques pas du buisson.

Trees to watch include . . . slslsj. Slslsl coupait la plaine passait à quelques pas du buisson.

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Time to scrump some medlars? A recollection

I still remember stealing an apple from someone's garden on my way to school - that was over 70 years ago. So I had no qualms when picking up the windfalls in the orchard and delivering them to friends living in quarantine. One man I saw walking around the trees reading a book - he told me he was meditating and did this every morning before returning home with an apple. I saw one young woman practising her ballet movements but on getting closer discovered her throwing her handbag up into the branches to knock down some plums - the plums evaded capture but I wondered what she would do if her handbag remained aloft. There were two men I saw regularly who had boxing gloves on and sparred around the trees - one of them was rather corpulent and he told me he was on a special diet that involved boxing and eating apples, and he told me how much weight he had lost.



The Community Orchard serves to nourish the people of Cambridge but I am often amazed how little people know about the fruit they pick. One man with a small bag of apples told me he was waiting for the pears to ripen - I told him he was looking at a quince tree. Many tell me that they are waiting for the crab apples to fully grow into proper apples. And there was the man who rushed to tell me that the apples on one of the trees were exploding - he was one of many visitors who know nothing about medlars so I offer you a recipe and invite you to pick some.

Recipe for Medlar Cheese

Put some Medlars into an earthenware jar. Stand it in a saucepan with boiling water nearly to the top and keep it boiling gently over a slow fire. When the Medlars are quite soft, pass them through a fine hair sieve. Weigh the pulp and for every pound allow one and a half breakfast cups of coarsely crushed loaf sugar and half a teaspoonful of allspice. Put all the ingredients together in the preserving pan and stir them over the fire with a wooden spoon until thickly reduced, skimming occasionally. Turn the cheese into moulds and keep them in a cold place. When ready to serve, turn the cheeses out of the moulds on to a dish.

Orchard Update

Open Issues for the FoMC

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