



Friends of Midsummer Common Newsletter

Summer Edition, 2020



A particularly beautiful summer for the Common



Activities on the Common have changed over time. What do we value now?



The Friends of Midsummer Common (FoMC) are concerned and responsible for the use of this ancient grassland. To join, visit our website or follow the link below:

<https://www.midsummercommon.org.uk/Business/FoMCJoin.html>

Nature on the Common - late summer

The Common looks particularly beautiful this summer. Golden drifts of barley shift with the winds, while butterflies and bees are more abundant than usual. The Common is flourishing in this year's absence of Midsummer and Strawberry Fairs. While the fairs are short in duration, the thousands of attendees that they attract cause damage to the Common that persists for the rest of the summer. Without this pressure in 2020, the Common has returned to a more natural state, with daily benefits to us all.

Point of View – Let's reconsider the Guy Fawkes bonfire.

Can we reconcile a giant bonfire with a concern for health and climate?

Midsummer Common has hosted a number of activities over the centuries that have been discontinued as our attitudes, values and priorities have changed. The FoMC Committee believes it is time to ask if the Guy Fawkes' night bonfire makes sense this year, during the pandemic, and in the future, given the health concerns for individuals and the climate.

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues, the wisdom of a November 2020 mass gathering must be questioned. As to the future, city regulations already prohibit bonfires because the materials burned produce toxic pollutants. These emissions can have damaging health effects for those with lung and heart conditions. In addition, the scorching and scarring of a large patch on the Common remains all year.

As a result of these concerns, the FoMC Committee recommends cancelling the bonfire in 2020 and reviewing future events with regard to their content and scale. Please pass your comments and concerns to the Secretary at fomcsecretary@gmail.com

Orchard Update

The Community Orchard has proved to be a wonderful space in this time of Covid! With the desire to be outside in gorgeous weather, the Orchard has become a haven for socially-distancing family groups, friends meeting, babies learning to walk, yoga and gym meetings.....the list is endless!

The young hops along the wall with Evening Court are progressing well and the more mature plants on the Emmanuel college residence wall have grown with vigour. To better manage their growth, we are considering installing some 'hop poles'.

Volunteer Opportunity

We've had two very 'hands on' volunteer mowers this year, who've tended the Orchard excellently, and received many grateful comments from happy visitors. Other skills are needed and training is available. **Please DO come along and join us to volunteer in the Orchard on the first Sunday of each month, from 10:00 – 12:00.**

<https://www.midsummercommon.org.uk/>



Evidence of streams in documents and as shown on an 1830 map naturally open the question, 'can these be restored'?



A tributary through Logan's Meadow is host to many species. The FoMC Committee would like to revive similar 'ditches' on Midsummer Common



Streams through the Common?



Imagine the biodiversity that would come from flows of water through the Common. In fact, nineteenth century maps show that 'ditches' on the Common channelled water into the Cam and that bridges were in place to accommodate both people and cattle. One ditch flowed eastwards across Jesus Green with its own tributary coming from Butt Green and joining the Cam near the Fort St George. The other started on Midsummer Common and flowed eastwards joining the Cam near Walnut Tree Avenue.

Although these ditches have been covered and underground pipes now conduct the flow of water, the FoMC Committee believes it may be possible to re-expose the ditches in whole or in part. Ample sections of buried pipe would remain as crossing points for people and cattle. This has already been accomplished at Logan's Meadow (see the photo at left), to the benefit of species like the water vole, dragonfly, damselfly, moorhen, kingfisher, soprano pipistrelle and other bats.

As the FoMC investigates the viability of this restoration with city officials, please contact your City Council representative and the FoMC at fomcsecretary@gmail.com to indicate your support or any concerns.

Open issues for FoMC

These are some of the issues engaging the FoMC in 2020:

1. Bramble, nettle, thistle management. These provide benefits for wildlife, but act as barriers to access for both people and cattle. A better management plan is needed.
2. Midsummer Fair week-end. Although the fair was cancelled, impromptu gatherings took place. This year featured widespread littering, broken bottles, urinating in public and a few confrontations with threats of violence. How can management of this weekend be improved for 2021?
3. The committee will refine and complete a Management Plan for 2019 – 2024. New objectives include increasing the number and variety of trees and enhancing the species richness and diversity of the grassland. The latest draft of the plan is posted at:
<https://www.midsummercommon.org.uk/>

Please Join the Friends of Midsummer Common

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