

# Friends of Midsummer Common Newsletter

Summer Edition, 2021



Future peacock butterflies



New Dawn Redwood  
planted and doing well



City workers started as  
early 5:30 AM



Wild in Art cow sculpture

Friends of Midsummer Common (FoMC) is a group who are concerned with the use and good management of this ancient grassland. To join us, please follow this link: <https://www.midsummercommon.org.uk/Business/FoMCJoin.html>

## Nature on the Common

### A Wilder Common

It has been particularly moving to view the Common this summer because the City allowed grasses to grow. As a result, when gentle winds blow, the Common is in constant motion. In addition to being beautiful, taller grasses serve as a refuge for peacock caterpillar larvae and other insects. A more natural, less manicured, Common provides more biodiversity for all of Cambridge.

### Trees

The Dawn redwood has arrived and is doing well. We have three more to be planted in September as their cattle protection cages are ready. In addition, the City will soon be replacing some of the downed horse chestnut trees close to the Ft. St. George pub and Midsummer House.

Kenny McGregor, Arboricultural Officer, Cambridge City Council

### The June 2021 Gathering

From January to June of this year, Friends of Midsummer Common (FoMC) took a number of steps to help the City and County prepare for the June 2021 gathering. First, to base our planning on data, we joined the De Freville Neighbourhood Watch Group to survey members regarding their experience of the 2020 gathering and to ask how 2021 preparations could lead to a better outcome for both visitors and neighbours. After processing ~120 responses, we submitted the following requests.

1. Close the Ft. St. George bridge (as we do during the Midsummer Fair.)
2. Limit road traffic into the neighbourhood and professionally signpost
3. Provide Car parking
4. Provide a visible security presence.
5. Provide toilets and rubbish containers

From this list, the City addressed numbers 4 and 5. According to County Council, the footbridge can only be closed for a “formal event,” and as the 2021 Fair was formally cancelled, the footbridge could not be closed. Apparently, an unofficial crowd jamming onto a footbridge is subject to less control than an “official” crowd.

While official crime statistics are not yet available for these dates, the consensus among neighbours is that the effect of this year’s gathering was worse than 2020. As usual, broken bottles and gas containers littered the Common. There were also, many reports of anti-social and aggressive behaviour. With regard to improvements, the City provided a more visible police presence, toilets, rubbish bins and mobilized a team on Sunday at 5:30 AM to begin to clear the debris, so considerable progress was evident by 9:00 AM. Another bright spot was the on-the-street presence of Counsellor Jamie Dalzell who helped to direct resources and field complaints.

## Cow sculptures on the Common – and around Cambridge:

Wild in Art is supporting Break, a children’s charity, through its installation of *Cows about Cambridge*, a spectacular public art event that will install 90 cow sculptures. They choose our Midsummer cow sculpture with a nod to the Red Poll cattle that graze on Midsummer Common. These cows will only be present until September 4<sup>th</sup>, so do take a look soon. <https://cowsaboutcambridge.co.uk/>



Thanks to volunteers, an orchard thrives.



Herbs thriving in a raised bed



A volunteer thins an apple tree



## News from the Orchard:

Summer has come to the orchard in instalments this year, with a warm patch in May followed by a rather disappointing late June/early July. Nevertheless, our wonderful volunteers have been busy pruning the plums and gages, watering new plantings, and keeping the grass mown.

Speaking of which, if you would be interested in getting involved with the orchard, we really need people who would enjoy helping with the mowing. This tends to be done in 30-40 min chunks, so please don't be put off by the size of the orchard – you don't have to do the whole lot at once! Interested parties can contact me, Kit Holland, at [Orchard\\_Manager@protonmail.com](mailto:Orchard_Manager@protonmail.com)

There are lots of new projects in the orchard this year. The herb bed is flourishing, and we have planted some rootstock near the allotment gate. We will mound the latter next year and then use said rootstock to graft some new fruit trees. We also plan to plant some wildflowers along the cherry tree avenue near the Newmarket Road entrance next spring. In September, we will sow Yellow Rattle, a plant that is semi-parasitic on grass. This will weaken the grass a bit and hopefully give the wildflowers a chance to outcompete the grass next spring.

Finally, Susan Stobbs has done an amazing job with the area nearest the entrance to Newmarket Road, by clearing it of noxious weeds this summer. There are several different possibilities for this area going forward; from a hands-off, wild approach, to a more managed woodland garden, to a small food forest. Since the space is important to many, we will discuss further at the FoMC Annual General Meeting (Tuesday the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, 7:00 PM). I hope to see many of you there!

Kit Holland, Orchard Manager.

## Open Issues for the FoMC

### E-Cycling through the Common

It is great that Cambridge is a cycling city and is also at the forefront of developing the use of electric micro-transport. However, the increase in use of electric bikes and electric scooters across Midsummer Common, dramatically increases the probability of an injurious collision. Physics tells us that mass and, especially, velocity are the key variables in determining the impact of a collision. An e-bike with, typically, twice the average weight of a bicycle and traveling just 50% faster will deliver 4.5 times more energy to a pedestrian. Of course, faster speeds also decrease reaction times and make crashes more likely to occur.

With regards to managing these new vehicles, the City has yet to fill the long-standing Cycling Officer vacancy. This position is critical as the Chisholm Trail and other new infrastructure come to completion, and Cycle Route 51 across Midsummer Common sees even more use. FoMC and other groups wish to engage with the Council on how these vehicles use the Common. We recognise the urgency as currently, the City is trialling VOI scooters and developing guidelines. As an information source, we recommend Cambridge Cycling Campaign" (CAM Cycle) and their draft policy on "micromobility" (see link below). If you wish to share your point of view, please contact the FoMC Secretary. [fomcsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:fomcsecretary@gmail.com)

[https://www.camcycle.org.uk/images/blog/Camcycle-Policy\\_Micromobility\\_PUBLISHED-DRAFT.pdf](https://www.camcycle.org.uk/images/blog/Camcycle-Policy_Micromobility_PUBLISHED-DRAFT.pdf)

### Orchard Volunteer Dates :

Volunteer opportunities occur 10:00 -12:00 AM each Sunday. From September on, work sessions will reduce to the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month only, 2:00 to 4:00

Please direct any questions to Kit Holland: [Orchard\\_Manager@protonmail.com](mailto:Orchard_Manager@protonmail.com)

### Annual General Meeting – September 28, 7:00 PM. Don't miss it:

The public is invited to this Zoom-only session. Please watch your email or the FoMC website for details on how to join the session. <https://www.midsummercommon.org.uk/>

### Please Join the Friends of Midsummer Common

Members receive our newsletter via-email and are immediately informed of any new developments on the Common.

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