

On the Common

NEWSLETTER OF THE

FRIENDS OF BARNES COMMON



Winter/Spring 2021



New Look for our Woodland



Over the past few months, Will Dartnell, our general manager, has been working hard with LBRuT to create a brand new woodland conservation management plan for the Common (*The full details can be found on our website*).

This will ensure the restoration, maintenance, and longevity of biodiversity within our woodland habitats, at the same time, increasing the levels of learning and engagement across the community and beyond. We want our management to provide a leading example for woodland conservation of Common land and a Local Nature Reserve within an urban environment.

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From the Chair, Mike Hildesley

As you will see, FoBC is starting 2021 in good health and brimming with news and actions. Those of us with good friends in the world of music, entertainment and hospitality know just how hard the pandemic has been for so many people. We especially remember good friends like Derek Senhenn whom we have lost, but even in these dark times let us look for silver linings:

Wellbeing: it's becoming clear from national surveys that people are increasingly more concerned about mental and physical health as well as human relationships than the economy. If the pandemic has proved nothing else, it has demonstrated just how vital our open spaces are for everyone's wellbeing.

Friends: We welcome all those who have discovered the Common, Leg o' Mutton and Vine Road Rec and who have become Friends – since last April our number has more than doubled to over 700, while our donor base has doubled to around 300.

Conservation: We are soon to begin our new woodland conservation plan with LBRuT. This is the first time a Friends group has been able to take on this responsibility in Richmond. We have demonstrated that we have the skills, qualifications and knowledge, as well as being able to offer good value. Our remit goes beyond the normal, safety driven tree management, although you will have seen that the Council's contractors have recently undertaken a major programme catching up on several year's backlog in this regard.



The walk beside Beverley Brook during the recent snow.

Helping conservation within the community: We are now able to advise and undertake work on trees in gardens – so please do contact Will if feel your garden trees are in need of attention. Our pricing for Friends will be good value! We are also developing ideas to help conservation friendly gardening and will be making our knowledge and experience available for courses and consultations.

Elsewhere on the Common: We have coped with unprecedented numbers of visitors and litter. For the first time our hay was accepted for the Centaur Project horses in Richmond Park, while we have attempted seeding a large section of Maisie's Meadow to see if we can restore more wildflowers in the sward.

Website: Please do keep an eye on our website. Our 'virtual world' is constantly expanding with new information and is where you can find the first of our new 'self-guided walks' along with plans for more walks, courses and events, looking ahead to better times.

New Member of Staff: We are very pleased to announce a new member of staff, Jackie Marie who joined the team in November as our Development Officer. Jackie lives locally and will be working two days a week where her role will be to help with our fundraising and to increase the number of Friends that support FoBC.

And the best silver lining is that, so long as we stay calm through the next few months, there is every reason to believe that by the summer, we may once more be able to socialise again – and that will be cause for a big celebration!

Best wishes Mike



The Orchard during a very fiery morning in January. Below: Pollarding beside Van-Burens Meadow.

New Look for our Woodland

Indeed, work has already started removing invasive species such as tree of heaven, restoring our hazel coppice and providing better light conditions and a healthy soil environment for our veteran trees so that they continue to survive and thrive.

We have also been creating 'veterans of the future', identifying trees that have the right conditions, characteristics and location to become ancient trees for future generations to enjoy. Part of this programme includes the numerous pollards that have been created across the Common, with the help of ancient and veteran tree specialist, Jamie Simpson.



Black Poplars – DNA testing

The importance of the borough for these trees has become significant with the realisation that 50% of the entire clonal diversity in the UK black poplar population is found here!

Funded by LBRuT, Jamie Simpson has been DNA testing trees across the borough and potentially found several new clones with genetic makeups that are not similar to any other already identified in the UK. We hope to take cuttings of these, but in the meantime our current BP nursery has expanded to over 200 whips with the arrival of another 120 saplings from 12 different clones. Hopefully, by the time you are reading this we may have even planted one of the bigger, first year clones out onto the Common.



The current crop of Black Poplar Whips can be found on the Common beside Vine Road.

Derek Senhenn Tribute

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to the wonderful success of the Derek Senhenn Tribute which has now topped £5,000. Thanks too to Esther and Derek's family for choosing this way to celebrate a life with such strong links to the community in Barnes. Proceeds are being used to purchase equipment for vital species monitoring and being put aside to help create a woodland crafts course once restrictions are finally lifted. The Tribute will remain open for a while longer so if you would like to contribute please click on the Support Us page on our website: <https://barnescommon.org.uk/support-us/make-a-donation/>

#takeawayyourtakeaway

None of the waste in our bins is currently recycled due to contamination. With more of us than ever enjoying our amazing green spaces, our bins are overflowing with recyclable takeaway containers. But the good news is that you can help! As part of our SLOWER Sustainability policy, we have launched our #takeawayyourtakeaway campaign. Please spread the word and share the hashtag and of course, #takeawayyourtakeaway and add it to your own household recycling.

Leg o' Mutton

Prior to lockdown, our volunteers had been hard at work coppicing Norway maple, creating woven, dead hedging to protect the reed bed areas from disturbance and removing the expanding amounts of buddleia across the site.

We've added two tawny owl nest boxes to help compensate for the loss of cavities from the safety works on the hybrid poplars as well as adding two shelduck boxes, although typically the shelduck haven't been seen since we put the boxes out!

New notice boards at either end of the reserve now contain a regular bird sighting list with over 40 species seen in December. A particular highlight being a visiting kingfisher on several occasions.



Above Left: Looking south across Leg o' Mutton. Right: Some of the new dead hedging.

Barnes Conservation & Treework - at your service!

We are very pleased to now be able to offer our tree management services to you.

In addition to tree surgery, with our conservation hats on (they never come off!), we can assess your trees and garden as a whole, discussing how best to help you, the trees and the surrounding wildlife. Whether it's carving bird nesting cavities, retaining areas of deadwood, creating green corridors or planting new trees and hedges, your gardens are an incredibly important resource to help our dwindling wildlife.

All of the income that is generated from our residential tree work operations goes straight back to FoBC. By employing us to care for your trees, you also help support the management of Barnes Common and Leg o' Mutton. We're fully insured and qualified so please do get in touch with Will if you would like a free quote at manager@barnescommon.org.uk.



From our new Development Officer – Jackie Marie

'Thanks for the very warm welcome to Friends of Barnes Common. It has been a busy start and I am slowly finding my feet.

One of my aims is to double the number of our 'Friends' and I need your help! I would love to know what being a Friend of Barnes Common means to you? Why did you become a friend? This would provide valuable feedback to help me with increasing our Friends, but also with future funding.

Please do contact me at development@barnescommon.org.uk, but also remember to give me permission to use your comments. If you have a friend who is interested in conservation, outdoor learning, Barnes Common, Leg o' Mutton reservoir or any of our work please invite them to join us, remember it's free! I am looking forward to working with everyone and to meeting you all in person once Covid allows!



Pop-up Café

The pop up café based at the Pavilion has been going from strength to strength. Huge thanks to John and his team, who have now made this a very popular and welcoming sight at Vine Road. Please support this great addition to our community and help spread the word.



The café runs for 6 days a week and is always open at weekends. Opening hours are generally Monday - Friday 8.00am - 4.00/4.30pm and weekends 9.00am - 4.00/4.30pm but can vary so please refer to our website for exact timings each week.

Holiday Sessions / Little Sprouts / Yaffles

Please do keep an eye on our website / social media for updates. We are very much hoping to be able to resume some sessions this summer and have lots of great new ideas planned! In the meantime, why not visit our Informal Learning Page to see a few video clips of our little superstars in action. <https://barnescommon.org.uk/learn-with-us/informal-learning/>

Are you receiving our Monthly Email Newsletter?

Within the first half of every month, everyone should receive our electronic newsletter full of snippets on all the latest happenings. Please do check your spam/junk if you have not received it, particularly if you have a gmail account. Please contact Sharon if you are not receiving our newsletters at all but would like to: education@barnescommon.org.uk



'Travels with my Camera'

Local photographer and Friend of Barnes Common, Andrew Wilson, brings us up to date with what's been catching his eye on the Common recently. You can follow Andrew's 'travels' on Twitter and Instagram @WildLondonPics



Winter is an excellent time to observe the birds that we have on the common, without the leaves getting in the way. Above, goldcrest, below top left, long-tailed tit, right, kestrel - bottom left, redwing (a winter visitor) and right, a male chaffinch.



Address Label

The Vine Road Project: Crowdfunding towards the Master Plan

We are making good progress despite lockdowns, having appointed a lead architect to help create a Master Plan for the whole site which will be used for presentation to the Council and support our applications for both planning and funding. We aim to hold wide public consultations using virtual channels and then mount a display/event in the summer.



The Master Plan looks to create a vibrant social hub for the local community, providing for a range of lifelong learning opportunities, including additional play and recreational facilities for a wider age range, such as a pump track and alternative water play areas to enjoy in hot summers. It will all be set in a diverse landscape, offering scope for quiet relaxation and enjoyment, and taking full advantage of the site's natural assets such as the brook.

However, we need funding to help us run the public consultation phase of this project, as well as test and develop some of the ideas and concepts gathered so far.

We have therefore applied to the GLA resilience fund but we now need your help!

To secure this funding, we have to show our community's interest and involvement by crowdfunding some of the bid. The actual campaign launches on Feb 11th and the hope is to have 30 plus pledges of support by then to ably demonstrate to the Mayor, our community's commitment to the project.

Please use the link below to show your support by liking our project page and sharing far and wide!

<https://www.spacehive.com/vineroadproject-engagingthecommunity>

Can You Help?

Do you have green fingers? As days grow longer and warmer (honestly!), Sharon is looking for a local volunteer to help with planting and growing in the polytunnel. If you have some experience in propagating plants please contact education@barnescommon.org.uk to find out more.
