



January 2023



We don't know what challenges lie ahead this year for our common land here in Chislehurst - the effects of climate change, pollution or diseases like ash dieback - but our team is ready!

The Commons are at the centre of our community, and we are working to ensure that they will continue to be here for future generations.

In our monthly newsletters we aim to show you some of the amazing biodiversity of the wildlife that makes its home here, and also some of the work that goes into managing and maintaining the 180 acres.

Meet the Chislehurst Commons Team

For hundreds of years, Chislehurst's common land has been valued and protected by the local community, and we are all fortunate today that there are so many people willing to give their time voluntarily to help with its preservation.

It provides a valuable amenity for everyone who lives or works here, a haven for wildlife and a green and pleasant backdrop to our daily lives.

Our two wonderful Keepers are out and about every day, and their knowledge, skills and dedication are invaluable.

Our regular working party meet each week under their leadership to carry out a range of tasks on the Common, but there are other volunteers who help in a variety of ways – litter-picking, managing our social media presence, helping with social events, liaising with other environmental groups, providing expert advice, surveying wildlife, putting up and monitoring bird boxes, fund-raising – all part of the team that works to ensure the Commons will remain free and open to all 24/7, now and into the future.



Some members of the team at our annual Christmas lunch.

A huge thank you to them all!

Preserving and enhancing biodiversity



Much of the work undertaken by our working party focuses on preserving and enhancing biodiversity.

This group are cutting back the growth of willows in the Overflow Pond. Willows are attractive pondside trees, but they take up a lot of water. The Overflow is a temporary pond that only holds water during wet periods, but at those times it is a valuable habitat which attracts amphibians and water birds.

By cutting back the willows we hope that the pond will retain more water and for longer.

Will you help to preserve the 180 acres of common land



The 180 acres are protected and managed under an Act of Parliament.

However, the Act made no provision for funding, and we rely on the generosity of the local community to maintain the 180 acres of natural countryside within our urban setting.

We have two full-time Keepers, whose knowledge and dedication are invaluable. Everyone else who works to preserve and maintain the area does so voluntarily.

If you would like to support our work,

you can donate via our website
www.chislehurstcommons.uk
or via [PayPal Giving](#)

Thank you!



Get your bird seed at Champion Wines.

We are grateful to Champion Wines for stocking packets of seed on our behalf. This food is healthier for the birds than bread or products made from flour.

All proceeds go to Chislehurst Commons.

Winter Weather





2022 certainly tested the resilience of the 180 acres—a very wet spell in February, followed by a hot, dry summer and then frost, ice and snow in December which had disappeared by Christmas. The two photos above were taken 10 days apart.

But, whatever the weather, there is beauty and interest to be found.



The frost sparkled in the sunshine, and outlined wonderful patterns on grass, leaves and spiders' webs.



The snow created winter wonderlands, like this one in the Overflow Pond, and changed the contours of the landscape.



Familiar routes were transformed.

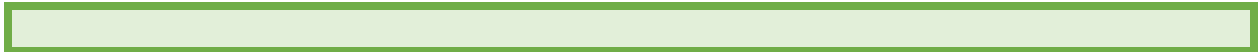
Winter Visitors



Meanwhile, the annual cycle of the natural world continued. This redwing was seen near Rush Pond. Redwings arrive in winter from Scandinavia. They travel in flocks searching for berries, and later, when the berries have all gone, earthworms.



Black-headed gulls are also winter visitors to our ponds. The first usually arrive in September and they have all gone again by February. The two birds in the foreground are black-headed gulls. The mottled birds in the background are juveniles, possibly herring gulls.



Flowers all year round!



As soon as the snow melted, flowers appeared in sheltered spots. This photo was taken on Boxing Day and shows groundsel and red dead nettle under the hedge at the Cricket Ground.

And finally



*“Tis bad enough in man or woman,
To steal a goose from off the common.*

But surely he’s without excuse

Who steals the common from the goose?”

This well-known folk tale is attributed to the actions of Lord Camden, the Lord Chief Justice, who owned Camden Place in the 18th Century. He caused resentment in Chislehurst by his enclosures of common land.

Webb, in his 1899 ‘History of Chislehurst’, tells the story of a man asking Lord Camden, *“Suppose a man were to steal a goose from the common, my lord, what would you do with him?”*

“Bring him to me and I’ll soon settle that!” was the reply.

“Yes, but suppose a man stole the common from the goose?”

“That is quite a different matter – quite different!”

Fortunately for us, local people successfully prevented him from taking any more of the Common, and it is thanks to local people that it continues to be protected and maintained today.

Thank you for your continued interest and support.

Happy New Year!

We will continue to do our best to maintain and enhance the 180 acres for present and future generations.

Don Drage



It is with great sadness that we report the death of one of our volunteers, Don Drage.

Don was an enthusiastic supporter of the Commons and a volunteer for many years, not only at the working party, where he enlivened many sessions with his ready wit, but also at social and community events.

He was a talented photographer, and many of the photos he so generously shared with us appeared in exhibitions, displays, greetings cards, promotional materials, and in our newsletters.

The photo in this issue accompanying the item on Champion Wines is one of Don's.

In 2022, Don and Mavis celebrated their Diamond Wedding with friends and family.

Our thoughts are with her and the family at this sad time.

Thanks for this month's photos to— Don Drage, Peter Edwards, Sally Hayhow, Kevin Jennings and Mary Wheeler.

Thanks also to the Editorial Team – Christine Wearn, Ross Wearn and Mary Wheeler.