



**April 2023**



March, it's said, "comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb", but this year the month has brought a real mixture of weather and shows little sign of calming down.

The photo above was taken in a brief sunny spell on 25<sup>th</sup> March, the one below on 8<sup>th</sup> March, and at the time of writing it is drizzling.

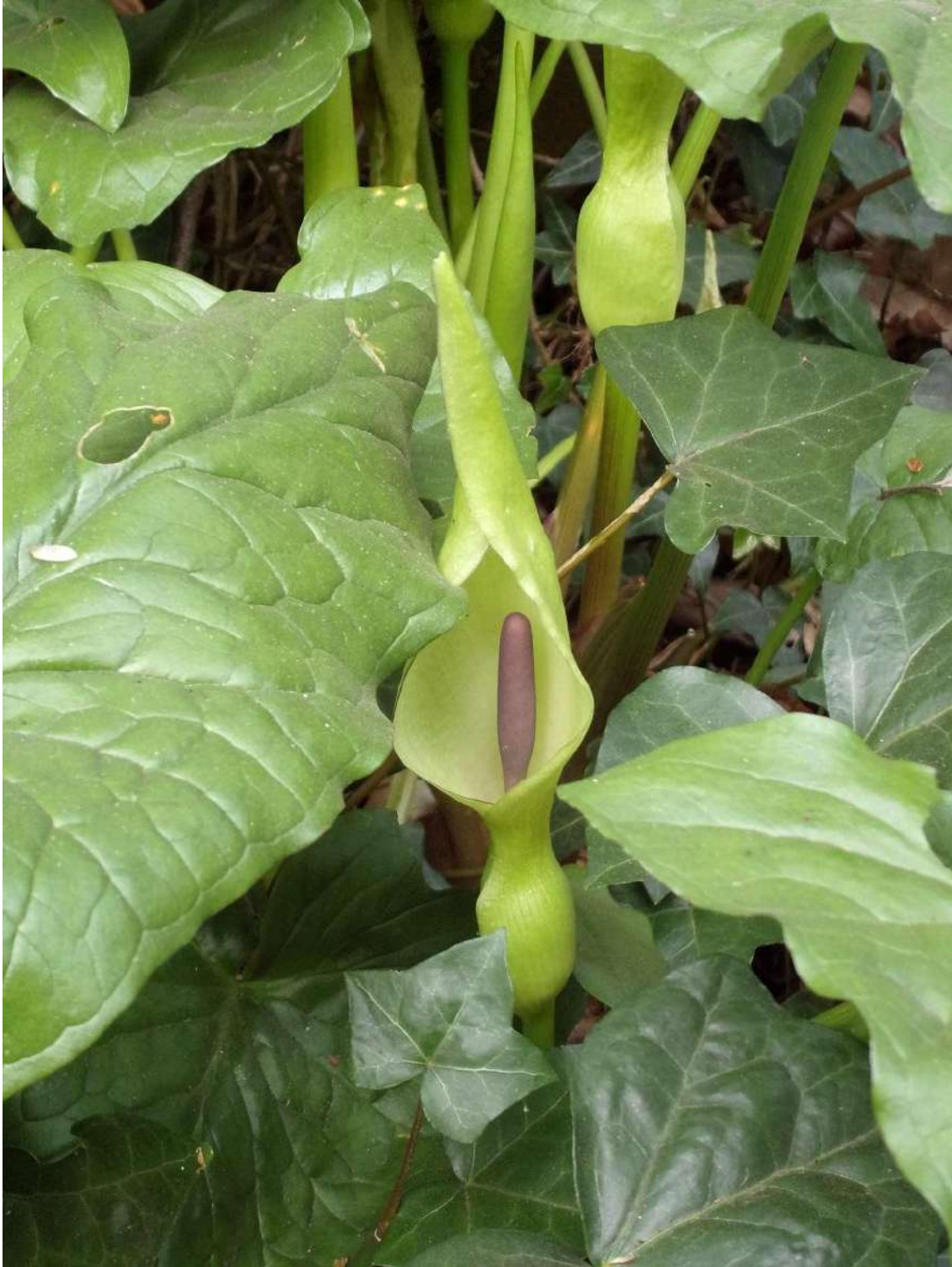
The rain, however, has been welcome after a dry winter.



Now that the clocks have gone forward and the days are getting longer, there are plenty of sights to enjoy on our beautiful Commons here in Chislehurst, whatever the weather - the trees are in bud, flowers are beginning to appear, and the first mallard ducklings have been seen at Rush Pond.

David Attenborough's Wild Isles, on Sunday evenings on BBC 1, is currently showcasing "the spectacular and important British wild life on our doorstep", and in our monthly newsletters we aim to reveal some of the amazing biodiversity of Chislehurst's own wild 180 acres, right here on the doorstep of BR7.

**What to look out for in April**



Arum lily, otherwise known as lords and ladies or cuckoo pint, grows on the woodland floor.

Plants that flower early in the year are a vital nectar source for bees and other insects that pollinate them.



Orange tip butterflies start to emerge in early spring, having over-wintered as pupae. The caterpillars like garlic mustard plants, which will soon be in flower along the verges and pathways of the Commons.



These common dog-violets are beautiful but have no perfume, unlike the sweet violet. They can be found in the dappled shade of trees in several places on the Commons.



You might spot birds with food in their beaks, to take back to the nest to feed their young.

This is a grey wagtail at Prickend Pond.

## **The Team**

The Chislehurst Commons Team of Keepers, Trustees and Volunteers undertake many varied tasks – attending our regular working party, litter-picking, managing our social media, helping with social events, liaising with other environmental groups, providing expert advice, surveying wildlife, installing and monitoring bird boxes, fundraising – ensuring that the Commons remain free and open to all 24/7, now and into the future.



This month the working party moved to St. Paul's Cray Common, to remove laurel which is a non-native invasive species. It is an evergreen shrub which creates dense shade and inhibits the growth of native woodland plants.



Some volunteers have begun this year's surveys to monitor the quality of the grasslands. The records will inform management decisions and track any changes. Our aim is to increase their biodiversity and to attract a greater variety of butterflies and other invertebrates. Last year, the grass at the Ramblers Rest and the small area near the Crown (in the photo above) were mown three times. The cuttings were raked off and removed, to reduce the nutrients in the soil, as poorer soil produces more flowering plants.





Recently, Toby, our Assistant Keeper, was pleased to be able to help the Shaw Trust, based at Scadbury, with a gardening project. They needed something to make the paths less slippery and muddy after rain, and to keep the weeds suppressed. A group met Toby, and collected some of the wood chippings left

in piles where we had been cutting down holly.

We look forward to seeing how the project progresses.

## Another Date for your Diary



Chislehurst and West Kent Cricket Club was given the right to use the Commons in 1822 by the Lord of the Manor, Lord Sydney, and the club has played on the Cricket Ground ever since.

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> April at 12pm – 5pm

The Club will be holding a Funday Fundraiser at the Cricket Ground. There will be games and activities, and the official opening of the new nets at 1 pm.

It promises to be a great afternoon out!

**There is a full timetable of this year's events on the Common at**

**the end of this newsletter.**



**The 180 acres of common land in Chislehurst is well-used by the community and is free and open to all at all times,**

within the bye-laws.

**Will you help us to maintain it and develop its biodiversity?**

**We are very fortunate in Chislehurst that the 180 acres of local common land are protected 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,**

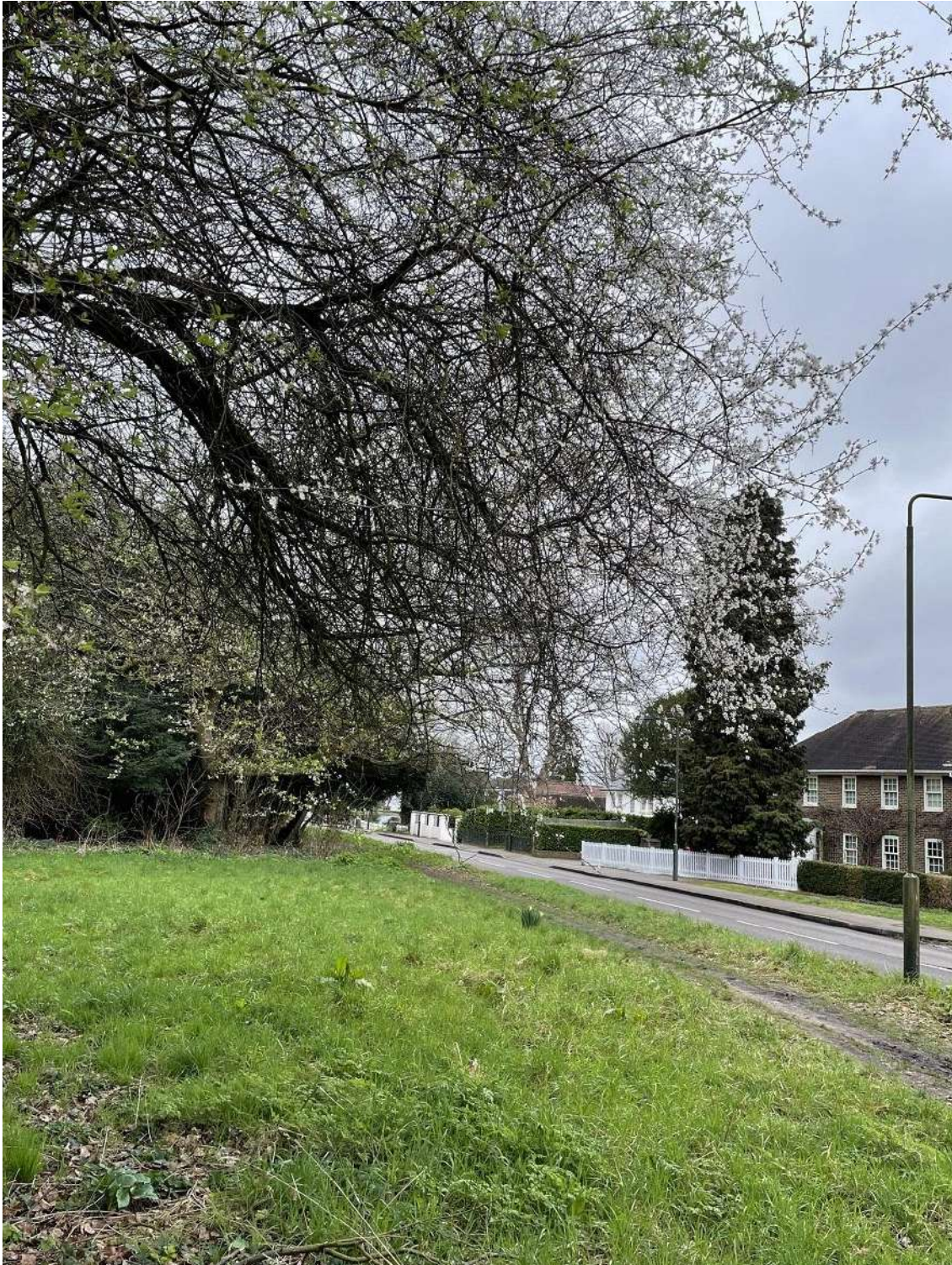
**you can donate via our website**

**[www.chislehurstcommons.uk](http://www.chislehurstcommons.uk)**

**or via [PayPal Giving](#)**

**Thank you!**

## Blossom



There is a number of trees of the plum family on the Commons, including

cherry and blackthorn, and at this time of year they are covered in blossom.



## Life at the Ponds



A pair of Egyptian geese have been at Prickend Pond since February 20<sup>th</sup> with their family of goslings. Sadly, only three remain from the original seven. They are often on the bank or walking on the grass with one parent, while the other keeps a sharp lookout for danger.





Although they are quite adventurous, the goslings often nestle under their mother's wing.



The first mallard ducklings of the year were reported recently at Rush Pond. There were four, and they were very active, scudding hither and thither on the surface of the water.



Two years ago, three mandarin ducks visited the Overflow Pond in spring when it had water in it. This year two males and a female were again visitors to the site. It is impossible to tell whether they are the same trio.



Another newcomer, a hybrid mallard, has been at Rush Pond for several weeks.

## **A Brightly Coloured Crow**



Jays are shy birds of our woodlands and grasslands. They are members of the crow family, but they have a pinkish tinge to their grey-brown feathers and, as this photo shows, there is a blue flash on their wings. They eat caterpillars and beetles, but are also known for collecting acorns in autumn, and storing them for later.

## **King Alfred's Cakes**



This fungus is known as King Alfred's Cakes, a reference to an old legend.

Alfred the Great was King of Wessex from 871 - 886, and King of the Saxons from 886 – 899. It was a time when the Vikings were invading from the north, and, although ultimately victorious, Alfred and his forces suffered several setbacks.

Legend has it that, on one occasion, when he had been defeated in battle and was hiding out with a farmer on the Somerset Levels, he was left in charge of cooking some cakes. Unfortunately, with his mind on other things, he let them burn.

Our wonderful Commons continue to entertain, amaze and inspire us. They are the wild 180 acres at the heart of the community, full of wildlife, and the green and pleasant backdrop to our daily lives.

We will continue to do our best to maintain and enhance them for present and future generations.

### You can now Support Us when You Shop Online

We are now registered with [easyfundraising](#) which means you can support us when you shop online.

Over 7,000 retailers and services will donate to us when you connect to their websites via [easyfundraising](#) to shop with them – at no extra cost to you, and you earn all your normal loyalty benefits!

All you need to do is sign up and remember to use [easyfundraising](#) to select your shopping site of choice.

It's easy to use and these donations really mount up, so please sign up to support us by clicking [here](#)

Simplified instructions on how to use [easyfundraising](#) can be found by clicking [here](#)



You can also support us by using the easyfundraising app available below

[Google Play](#)

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[Click here to access a map of the Commons](#)

**Thanks for this month's photos to – Don Drage, Peter Edwards, Kevin Jennings and Mary Wheeler, and to the Shaw Trust.**

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



## Timetable of Events on the Commons in 2023

We will be offering walks on the Commons throughout the year which will be advertised, as usual, via email. Click [here](#) to download a listing of upcoming events.

**Crowning of the May Queen on Centre Common    Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>  
May 3 - 4 pm.**

This year is a special one for the Chislehurst May Queen Society. It is 100 years since the Society was formed to continue the tradition of crowning the May Queen. The colourful ceremony is one of the highlights of the year in Chislehurst.

**Rotary Summer Fair on Centre Common    Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 10 - 4  
pm.**

This is always a great event, in a long tradition of fairs on the Common, and we will be there with a display – please come along and visit us.

**The Big Picnic at the Cockpit                  Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June 11 - 4 pm.**

**This is now an annual community event organized by Visit Chislehurst. Bring a picnic and join in the fun and games.**

**Chislehurst Creates at the Cockpit Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1-5 pm.**

**The Big Draw was a popular and much-loved community event that brought art to Chislehurst, over many years.**

**Chislehurst Creates will be a similar event, with activities to sample and entertainment.**

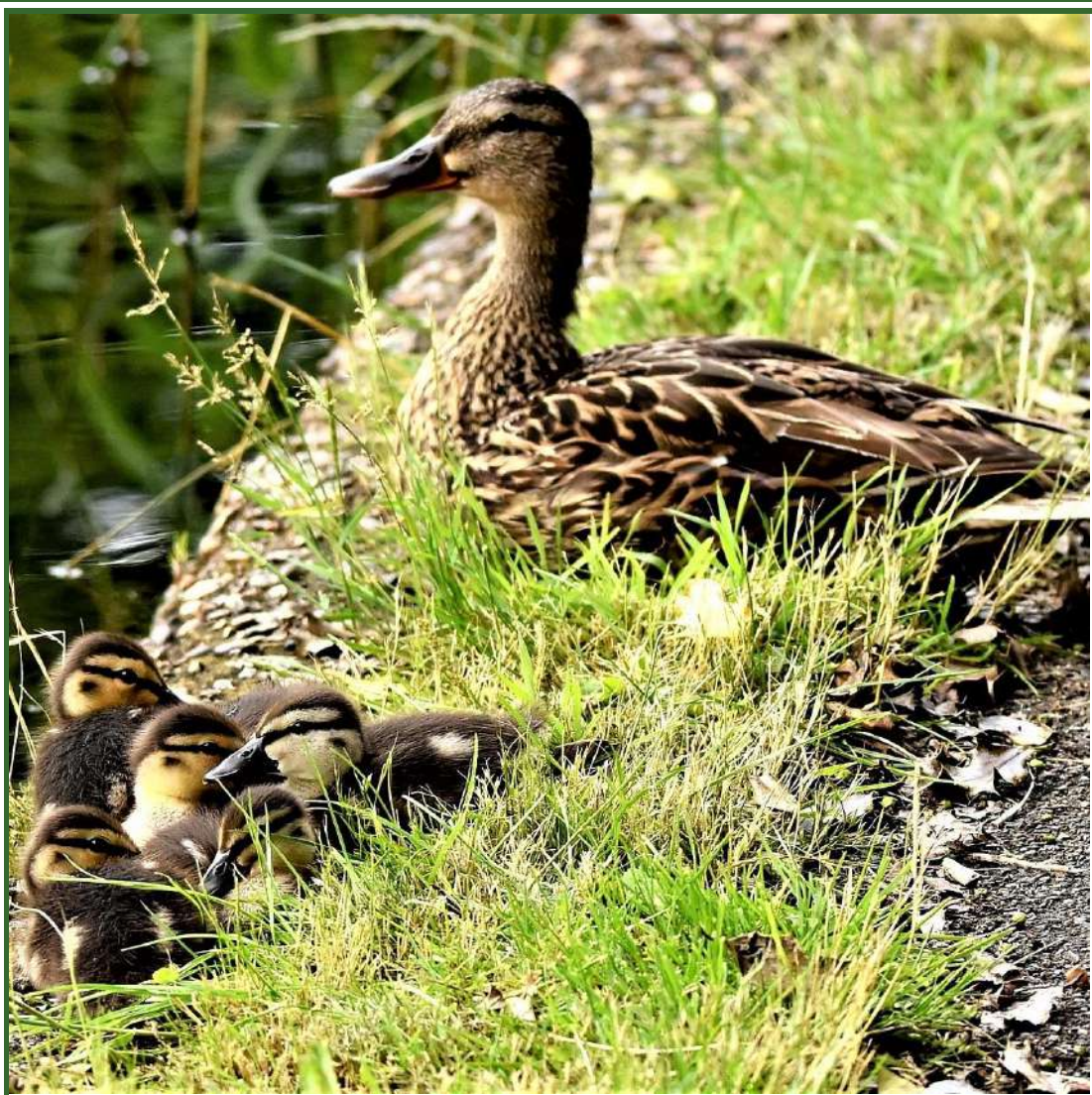
**We hope to see you there.**



**Chislehurst Christmas Market in Chislehurst High Street Date TBA**

**Organised by Visit Chislehurst. The Market offers an opportunity to**

**shop locally for Christmas presents.**



**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.**



**Chislehurst Commons are proud to display the Green  
Flag Award logo.**

**[If you would care to donate, please click here](#)**

**[or donate online here](#)**

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