



September 2020



Summer is all but over, with the colours of autumn ahead. We hope you have been enjoying all that our wonderful common has to offer – the shade of the

trees, the flowers and butterflies of the grasslands, the pathways that lead into sunlit glades and the opportunity for a quiet interlude in our busy lives.



It has always been a popular place to come for recreation and relaxation, as shown in this photo from a Bank Holiday in days gone by.

This has been an extraordinary year so far, with challenges from the natural world we would not have imagined when it started - the weeks of enforced lockdown, an unusually wet winter, and a prolonged period of hot, dry weather.

This has been particularly obvious at Prickend Pond. Water levels have been exceptionally low, as they have been in many ponds in London and elsewhere. Climate change may result in more extreme weather events in the future, and we are looking at ways of managing the pond to cope with these.



But first, some exciting news for everyone who enjoys visiting the pond. Plans are well-advanced for a new path from the Queen's Head, in line with the High Street, to the seat near the inlet stream reedbed. This was in planning until delayed by the lockdown but, subject to any last-minute snags, work is now due to start in the autumn. This bank becomes very muddy in wet weather and access to the pond is difficult. The new path will be accessible to all and will end in a viewing area with two seats. This is also where the geese and ducks come out onto the shore, and there will be a pebble beach so that the bank does not become so slippery. We are very grateful to the Chislehurst Society for helping to fund this initiative which should be of great benefit to the community.



The condition of the pond this summer has been a concern to all of us. We have been in contact with the Environment Agency, Thames Water and the London Borough of Bromley and will continue to follow their advice. There are no viable options for adding water, and it is in short supply generally. We are advised that aeration would not be effective and would stir up the sediments too much.

The low water levels and the hot weather have produced the growth of a bloom of blue-green algae. This can cause skin irritation in humans and liver problems in dogs. The pond is currently fenced off to prevent humans and pets coming into contact with the water.



We are monitoring the welfare of the wildlife closely. Many of the larger carp were removed last year, with Environment Agency advice, and this will be a regular strategy to reduce their numbers. The water birds come and go through the year, and many of the smaller pond creatures are adapted to survive varying water levels.



On the positive side, we are already seeing an improvement in the water levels with the recent rain, and we have plans in place for some further developments this autumn.

The island was constructed in 1930 as a refuge for the water birds. Its base is mainly building rubble, some of which is visible when the water is low. Until recently, it supported four willows. But over the last few years they have all come to the end of their lives, and we have been looking at possible replacement planting. This presents difficulties, not least of access. Any planting is at the mercy of the geese which destroy most vegetation not only by eating it, but by trampling over it. It would be difficult to replace the existing soil, and we are anxious that any planting should enhance the biodiversity of the pond. There is also the uncertainty of the outcomes of climate change.



Last year, coir rolls, containing carefully-chosen plants, were placed around the island on the Pond Path side. Unfortunately, many of the plants did not survive the high water of the winter, but we will re-plant this autumn. We also plan to add some height to the island, and are investigating whether conditions continue to be suitable for a tree or whether a variety of native shrubs would be better. Three of the fallen willows will be left for the moment as roosting and perching places for the birds. A heron and a cormorant often use them as vantage points, and they have been well-used by the Egyptian goslings this year.



Marginal planting will continue at the High Street end and along Pond Path.

Prickend Pond is at the centre of Chislehurst, and we recognise how important it is to everyone who lives here. It is also home to an amazing variety of wildlife, and we will do our best to ensure its survival. We will keep you informed as we move forward.



There is beauty and life around us, even at a time when the pond is undergoing a seasonal low, as shown in this photo of a Willow Emerald Damselfly taken recently at Prickend Pond.

Chislehurst Commons Needs More Friends – a reminder that we rely on your generosity to fund our work.

The 180 acres of common land in Chislehurst is the backdrop to our daily lives, and the reason so many of us choose to live and work here.

In our Newsletters we aim to show just how precious it is - its biodiversity, its unique habitats, its history - and the work involved in maintaining it.

Chislehurst Commons is the organisation that has responsibility for managing the local common land under an Act of Parliament.

We have two Keepers, Jonathan Harvie, our Head Keeper, and Peter Edwards, our Assistant Keeper, whose knowledge and dedication are invaluable. Everyone else involved in the administration, maintenance and development of the area does so on a voluntary basis.

The Act made no provision for funding, and we depend on donations and our wonderful Working Party to enable us to continue to preserve this precious natural resource.

Will you be a true friend of the Commons? You can donate now by cheque or via the [Donate link](#) at the end of this Newsletter.

Thank you!



Meanwhile, there is plenty to enjoy at our other two ponds. Egyptian and Canada Geese take time out at Rush Pond.



The Overflow Pond, which was full of water until May this year, is now aglow with purple Loosestrife. This attracts butterflies like the Small White (top), and the Common Blue – another wonderful habitat in the world on our doorstep.

We have prepared some "Out and About" guides to enhance your experience of the common. The latest is "Family Leaf Hunt". They are available on our website under the Activities tab:- www.chislehurstcommons.uk

[Click here for a direct link.](#)

And finally another example from Nature's Art Gallery.



The two photos above show Rose Bay Willow Herb in flower and its seed-head.

Our next Newsletter will be at the beginning of October. In the meantime, we hope you continue to enjoy our beautiful commons, the vibrant and precious centre of life in Chislehurst, now, in the past, and for the future.

[You can catch up on any missed newsletters by clicking here](#)

Thanks for the photos in this Newsletter to Don Drage, Peter Edwards, Kevin Jennings, John Stiles and Mary Wheeler.

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



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

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

[or donate online here](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)



Copyright © 2020 Chislehurst Commons, All rights reserved.
You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website

Our mailing address is:
Chislehurst Commons
The Old Fire Station
Hawkwood Lane
Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5PW
United Kingdom

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

