



COMMON GROUND

Registered Charity No. 1013975

WARDEN'S REPORT

September 2019

Legends of the Rocks

The Summer seems to have gone in a flash and Autumn is already upon us, with the leaves starting to change colour and blackberries, cobnuts and rowan berries ripening. Although the ground is still very dry, there has been enough rain to keep everything green and the grass growing and without last years searing heatwave, the Commons looked much better for the Britain in Bloom judges visits. The orchids put on a good show near Cabbage Stalk Lane and I was ably assisted by Lynne Lane and John Barber as we toured the Commons for the Conservation section of the competition.. The judges were very interested in the works funded by the Friends, as well as the close relationship between the Friends and the Conservators and it was good to have Lynne with us to talk about the hugely successful Wild Child days held earlier in the year.

We have had quite a lot of problems again with broken glass and fires at Wellington Rocks over the Summer and this year, the same problems have been occurring on the Lower Cricket Pitch, around the seat and bin on the London Rd side of the field. The Common has of course, always been a meeting place for youngsters; indeed, it is interesting to read the old minutes from Conservators meetings of bygone years, the problems were remarkably similar, although thankfully, we do not have so many problems with people hanging their washing from gorse bushes in unsanctioned areas as it appears we used to!

Sadly, our rather more serious current problems of broken glass and antisocial behaviour have definitely been on the rise in the last few years and it has been very difficult to keep the rocks in particular safe for the many young children who love to play on them. Our litter contractor does a great job but both he, and our budget are stretched.

A few weeks ago, I had a site meeting with our local Chief Inspector, Peter Steenhuis. It was a very positive meeting, during which we took a walk around the problem areas and talked about possible solutions. The Chief Inspector thought that we needed to provide more litter bins in these areas and if we did so, he would put these areas on what I believe is called a Red Route, which get increased patrols and monitoring. The idea being that although the youths have every right to be on the Common, if they don't behave more responsibly and respectfully, the Police will make their lives more uncomfortable, confiscating their alcohol if necessary. This seems like a good deal for the Common, so using some of the remaining Section 106 money that we received from the hospital site development, we have ordered an extra bin for the worst affected area of the Wellington Rocks and two double bins for the Lower Cricket Pitch, which will allow us to relocate the existing bins from there elsewhere. The new bins will be arriving soon and will be in position for next Summer, so it will be interesting to see the results. Fingers crossed.

I am sure many of you will have seen that we have cleared most of the reeds and silt from the Eastern end of Brighton Lake. All enclosed waters gradually silt up and revert to slid ground if this process of succession if left unchecked. This work, which was kindly funded by the Freehold Tenants, has added many years onto the life of the lake.

We have also carried out some substantial holly clearance, also funded by the Freeholders. Several areas adjacent to the Racecourse have had holly scrub cleared to allow more light into them, as well as creating access for users of the Common. This will be of great benefit in increasing biodiversity in these areas, which are currently a virtual monoculture. We have carried out further holly clearance at Happy Valley, which will have the same benefits to wildlife, as well as helping to open up the view across the escarpment

The machine carrying out this work will finally go back over to Rusthall to clear blackthorn and willow scrub around the site of the second Marlpit Pond, which has been dry for several years. Hopefully, we will be able to restore this pond in the next few years.

The same machine has cleared quite a lot of cherry laurel at Happy Valley in the last two years. Rusthall Common is very heavily infested with cherry laurel, which like holly, has come to dominate sections of the Common to the exclusion of other plants. When we bought our Tree Poppers last year, the chap who supplied them demonstrated the system he has devised for injecting herbicide into invasive scrub and he offered us a free days labour to help with our cherry laurel problem. We obviously accepted his generous offer and have just had a very good day treating laurel adjacent to the old drive to the Rusthall Elms site on the Western boundary of Rusthall Common. Several hundred laurels were injected and these have been marked with orange paint; the effects of this treatment will not become apparent until next Spring.

Many of you will have noticed the numerous brightly coloured paint markings that have appeared across Tunbridge Wells Common, some of them with wooden pegs driven in the ground. I was quite alarmed when I returned from holiday in late August to see these, I thought at first that someone was setting up an unauthorised orienteering course but I quickly discovered that they were from a topographic survey of the Common, being carried out by KCC. This is in relation to the possibility of creating shallow depressions that would hold back water during extreme weather conditions, to allow it to soak away into the ground, rather than flood the Pantiles. We were aware of these ideas and had some talks with KCC regarding

them but it was rather annoying that they initiated this survey without telling us in advance. I hope this hiccup does not affect further talks adversely, we do of course wish to assist the Pantiles if we can but any solution must offer benefits to the Common as well.

We are now well into our Autumn work of cutting and clearing the meadows and glades, along with the cutting back of all our minor tracks and paths. Our volunteers start work again in October and will again be concentrating on our heather areas and rock outcrops. We will be benefiting from a couple of visits from the Kent High Weald Partnership's volunteer group as well.

The effects of Ash die-back are currently clearly to be seen, especially along the Langton Road, around the junctions with Coach Rd and Tea Garden Lane. We will be undertaking pollarding work on the worst of these to make them safe, whilst retaining as much as we can for their habitat value. It is encouraging that one or two trees within the stands of Ash appear to be much less effected. Hopefully some resistant trees will emerge to allow us to replant in future. This unplanned work will of course make quite a hole in our budget, so I hope we do not have too many other unexpected problems to deal with this Winter.

Steve Budden



Wellington Rocks

NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN

OCTOBER 2019 - WITH CLIVE EVANS

We had an excellent and well attended Summer Tea Party at The Spa Hotel in July. The feedback we received was very positive.

Our next get together will also be at The Spa Hotel for lunch on Sunday 17th November. We are able to keep the cost at £25 (the same as last year, due to a generous anonymous donation). See details in this issue.

As you may have seen at the top of Coach Road Rusthall, we have funded the placing of large stones to stop people parking on the Common instead of the layby provided nearby.

Last year we funded the clearance work that took place in the Harmony Street area of Rusthall. We will do the same this year to complete the job.

Our work parties have been a huge success and will be



Welcome to

THE FRIENDS OF THE COMMONS

WINTER LUNCH

at The Spa Hotel

We look forward to seeing you and your guests

Sunday 17th November 2019

From 12.30pm

The Spa Hotel

Tunbridge Wells, TN4 8XJ

Please find booking details included in this newsletter

starting on the first Saturday in October (details in this issue). A big thank you to Steve Budden and all our volunteers.

Very recently a spraying and clearance of cherry laurel on the Rusthall side of The Commons took place with an expert and volunteers, who pre-marked laurel to save time.

In the Autumn we will be planting an oak as a tribute to Patrick Shovelton (one of the founders of The Friends). This will replace the one planted some time ago which has not flourished.

Finally, we must thank Julia Woodgate for all her sterling work over the years for The Commons Conservators, Steve Budden and The Friends. Julia is standing down from the position at the end of the year.

Clive Evans

WORK PARTY DATES

2019

Saturday 5th October

Saturday 2nd November

Saturday 7th December

(10.30am at Firtree Road Car Park)

2020

Saturday 4th January

Saturday 1st February

Saturday 7th March



22 Spot Ladybird

Ladybird spotting - Ian Beavis (see back Cover)

The Friends Officers & Committee Membership 2019

Officers:

Chairman:	Clive Evans	Tel: 01892 534040
Treasurer:	Donald Clarke	Tel: 01892 615306
Mem. Secretary:	Chris Gurr	Tel: 01892 542408
Secretary:	Terry Coulthard	Tel: 01892 548785

Committee:

Sally Balcon	Tel: 01892 515741
Dr Ian Beavis	Tel: 01892 523007
David Wakefield	Tel: 01892 523983
Lynne Lane	Tel: 01892 533493
Clive McAllister	Tel: 01892 532817
Peter Miall	Tel: 01892 517599

LEGENDS OF THE ROCKS!



Claque Theatre in association with Rusthall Community Arts presented Legends of The Rocks The Heroes' Journey. Performed on and around Toad Rock, Harmony Street Rusthall.

The Play marked Claque Theatre's 40th anniversary and celebrates Rusthall's iconic home landscape.

Held in July, a big thank you to Jon Oram, Becca Maher, the cast of 50, the volunteers and the audience which made the event a big success.

Dressing the Toad



Rusthall Community CINEMA

Films we all choose, watch, then discuss together

- All films screened in 4K resolution with surround sound where media permits.
- Licensed bar open before the show and at interval.
- Dress in costume or come as you are.
- Post film discussion group for those who can stay.
- Free transport for locals unable to reach us under their own steam.
- Air Conditioned.
- Induction loop for those with hearing difficulties.

**Typically screenings take place every other Saturday evening
and one Sunday afternoon a month
in Sunnyside Community Hall, Rusthall Rd, Rusthall, TN4 8RA**

Sign up to our email list to get a reminder plus trailer before each film.



Find us on Facebook
Rusthall.Community.Cinema



£5 on Saturday or
£40 a year for 26 films
£8 on Sunday Film Society



Follow us on Twitter
Rusthall Cinema



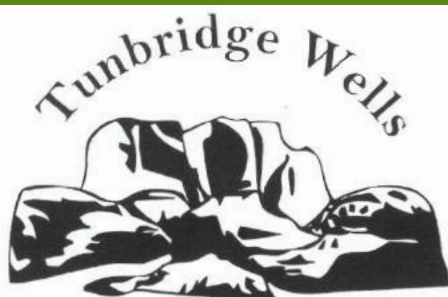
Telephone: 0845 0743399
Email: Enquiries@rusthallcinema.club
www.rusthallcinema.club

Sunnyside Hall ☘ Rusthall Road TN4 8RA

Autumn Winter Season

The Favourite	Sat 21 Sep
Midnight Cowboy	Sun 29 Sep
Blade Runner (1982)	Sat 5 Oct
Wild Rose	Sat 19 Oct
Billy Liar	Sun 27 Oct
Woman at War	Sat 2 Nov
Fisherman's Friends	Sat 16 Nov
8 1/2	Sun 24 Nov
All is True	Sat 30 Nov
Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid	Sat 14 Dec
Henry V	Sun 22 Dec
Fiddler on the Roof	Sat 28 Dec
Cold War	Sat 11 Jan
Mon Oncle	Sun 19 Jan
Yesterday	Sat 25 Jan
In Bruges	Sat 8 Feb
The Prince and the Showgirl	Sun 16 Feb
The Lion King	Sat 22 Feb
Colette	Sat 7 Mar
Rocketman	Sat 21 Mar

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE



Commons Conservators

Job opportunity

Assistant to the Director of Tunbridge Wells Commons Conservators

An experienced and pro-active assistant is required to support the Director of the Commons Conservators, working in a small team with the Treasurer and Commons Warden and liaising regularly with the Conservators. The Conservators of Tunbridge Wells & Rusthall Commons are the statutory body with responsibility for conservation and management of the two Commons.

The successful applicant will assist the Director in preparing agendas, taking and distributing meeting minutes, organising meetings, dealing with correspondence, collating expenditure and other records, updating the Commons website, liaising with interested parties, supervising contractors in the Warden's absence and seeking out funding opportunities.

This is a part time position of 12 hours per week (to be agreed). The salary has been benchmarked at £8,432 (£26,000 pa pro rata).

For further information please contact the Conservators by email
at info@twcommons.org



CALLING ALL MEMBERS

Would you like future copies of your common ground sent digitally to you?

If so, please email: chris.gurr@yahoo.co.uk and your next copy will be sent to your email address or you can obtain your copy from our website: friendsofthecommon.co.uk, clicking on newsletter (please inform Chris Gurr if you wish to do this). This will save The Friends time and money and make us more eco friendly.

Thank You



It has been another successful year for Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom and The Council at the recent South & South East in Bloom awards ceremony held at The Amex Stadium.

For the seventh consecutive year Royal Tunbridge Wells received a Gold award in the large town category and Dunorlan Park also received the overall winner of its category.

The town's other parks also won awards: Calverley Grounds - Silver Gilt.

Grosvenor & Hilbert, Gold & RHS Parks & Greenspaces Award. The Grove - Silver Gilt.

Other green spaces in the Town took their share of the awards too, with Tunbridge Wells Cemetery receiving a Gold award, and Woodbury Park a Silver Gilt. Tunbridge Wells Common also took Gold and winner of the category. A special discretionary award was made by the judges to Sherbourne Close, for maintenance and community involvement.

Congratulation to all involved!

Noteworthy Buildings Facing the Common

PHILIP WHITBOURN

Wellington Place, 63-65 Mount Ephraim

It would probably be fair to say that throughout the 20th century the title “Duke of Sussex” was not one likely to arouse much in the way of public interest. It is true that the first holder of this 1801 creation was the uncle of Queen Victoria and son of King George III, and that the Duke has the distinction of giving away his niece, the young Queen Victoria, when she married her beloved Prince Albert at the Chapel Royal, St James’s in 1840. When the Duke died three years later the title became extinct for a century and three-quarters, and its memory thus faded.

However, with the re-creation of the Dukedom of Sussex in 2018, and the grant of it to Prince Harry on the occasion of his high-profile to Meghan Markle, there has been rather more interest in the title than had previously been the case.

The relevance of all this is our Common here in Tunbridge Wells is that the first Duke of Sussex, six times great uncle of the present Duke, is understood to have stayed overlooking the Common at Wellington Place on Mount Ephraim, shown in my sketch here. Characterised by its elegant Regency bows, Wellington Place was originally built by Sir George Buggin who, in 1815, married Lady Cecilia Gore, daughter of the Earl of Arran. Sir George died 10 years later, and in 1831 his widow Cecilia married the first Duke of Sussex, albeit in contravention of the 1772 Rpyal Marriages Act, which required royal permission. It appears from old maps and engravings that Wellington Place originally has two bows and a single central doorway, and that the link between the bows was originally a floor lower than at present

Philip Whitbourn

2019



ACCEPT NO IMITATIONS!

The annual mini beast safari day on Tunbridge Wells Common in August was dull and rainy, but that didn't stop us finding a species new to the Commons. This was the **False Ladybird**, bright red with four large black patches. We found several under logs near Fir Tree Pond. Like true ladybirds, the **False Ladybird** is a beetle, but it is differently shaped and has a different lifestyle, breeding under the bark of dead timber and feeding on fungal growth as the wood decays. The similar colour scheme is an example of mimicry, the process whereby innocuous insects have evolved an imitation of the 'warning colouration' that advertises to potential predators that a creature is distasteful or capable of stinging.

True ladybirds are a useful model for mimics as they are so widespread. If threatened, they produce a distasteful and strong-smelling yellow liquid to deter predators. Although there are over 50 ladybird species on the British list, only about half display warning colouration, the remaining smaller forms relying more on camouflage. Ladybirds are well-known as 'gardener's friends' for eating aphids and other related plant pests. This is the diet of most adult ladybirds and their elongated soft-bodied larvae. However, there are two ladybirds that eat wild plants, and three that feed on powdery mildews on leaves. One of the herbivorous species, the 24-spot, distinguished also by being hairy, is found on the Commons, as are all three of the mildew feeders: the **Orange Ladybird**, often found on sycamore, with white spots; and the tiny inconspicuous 16-spot and 22-spot which are yellow or yellowish with black spots.

Many people still believe that widespread piece of folklore which claims that the number of spots on a ladybird denotes its age. That of course is not so. Like most insects, ladybirds live no longer than a year, and they do not grow or change once they emerge from the chrysalis stage as adults. They pass through their life cycle from egg to adult during the warmer months of the year, and the adults hibernate through the winter, often clustering together in some favoured spot.

One of the ladybirds most often seen on the Commons is the **Seven-spot**, which is red with three black spots on each wing case and one where they join at the top. This is one of the larger species, similar in size to the invasive **Harlequin**, originally from the Far East, which either has many more spots on a red background, or has large red patches on a black background. The much smaller **Two-spot**, which used to be equally common, has declined greatly in recent years, perhaps due to competition with the Harlequin.

Britain's largest Ladybird, the **Eyed** with black spots ringed with yellow on a red background, has been recorded occasionally on the Commons. The less conspicuous **Water Ladybird** may be found in damper areas: reddish in summer, it changes to straw colour when it is ready to hibernate.

Ian Beavis



14 Spot Ladybird



22 Spot Ladybird



24 Spot Ladybird



Eyed Ladybird



False Ladybird



Harlequin Ladybird
(Black Form)



2 Spot Ladybird



Harlequin Ladybird
(Red Form)



Water Ladybird



7 Spot Ladybird