

A very Happy Christmas & good wishes to all in Wolvercote for 2022



**Wolvercote
Commoners'**
NEWSLETTER
December 2021

Our November half-yearly meeting was, yet again, held on Zoom. However, we had a good turn-out and much was discussed. As well as routine discussions about the Commoners' role we also invited Michael Buck to give us a talk about the Commons (Port Meadow, Wolvercote Common and Green). One topic was the changes to the area since the various Covid lockdowns. Much has been said or written about how the Commons were much busier and had become the go-to place during the summer of 2020. Sadly some people, who were perhaps new to the area, were not aware of its importance and treated it as a park. But it is definitely not a park!

So our first question to Michael was, why isn't it a park? Historically the Commons were cared for by the Parish Council until it disbanded in 1929, when the Wolvercote Commoners' Committee was formed to act as custodians for two of the areas. In later years it was registered as a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) which guaranteed its future and protection. Together with Natural England a management plan was set up to include controlled livestock grazing. Consequently, although the area was open to all, it could not be treated as a park because the grazing was such an essential element in its health and preservation.

So why is the grazing so important? Cattle have been grazed on the Commons for hundreds of years and, although perhaps not so important in years gone by, it has become more relevant as yet another way to help with carbon capture. The very nature of the way that cows crop the grass promotes healthy soil, and healthy soil holds much more carbon. Being common land also carries the right for Commoners to graze their animals. All residents of the Wolvercote parish are 'Commoners' and therefore by default custodians of the area and have an interest in its future. In fact many of us still have grazing rights attached to our properties and can graze horses, cows or even a donkey or two!! If you no longer have rights, it is still possible to borrow them by arrangement with anyone prepared to loan them (email the Commoners for more information).

Is the grazing on Wolvercote Green the same? The Green is a perfect example of the merits of good management. Cattle stopped being grazed there some years ago and it reverted to scrubland. However, grazing was restarted about 10 years ago when the area was fenced off and we started what is called aftermath grazing. Hay is cut as close to mid-July as possible and then the new growth grazed, which helps the fertility balance. The first cut is done with scythes which allows us to be selective, cutting round some flowers whilst removing the unwanted ones. Since the grazing re-started the area has flourished with abundant flowers, including many new orchids. In fact it is now an established flower meadow. The hay cutting has become a feature of our summer festival when children can get involved and see how we cut the hay, stack it and then take part in a traditional hay making ritual.

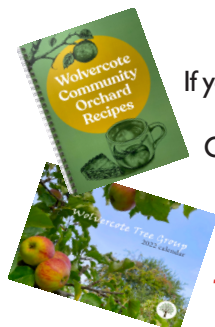
This all sounds very encouraging, but how can others get involved? Well, you could join the Commoners' Committee (go along to one of their open meetings or email them on the email listed below). Or, if you are interested in keeping livestock on the Commons, just drop a line to Michael at: michael.buck1@yahoo.co.uk and he will be happy to give some guidance. We are privileged to live in Wolvercote and we must all try to maintain what we have and care for our Commons which are so valuable.

We could go on much longer about Michael's enthusiasm and knowledge of the Commons but, as you can see, we've run out of space – so, if you want more, you'll just have to collar him when you next see him!!

It's not too late!!

If you're looking for that last minute Christmas present what about the Wolvercote Tree Group Recipe Book or their 2022 Calendar? They are both on sale at the Wolvercote Sunday Market or directly at: wolvercotetreegroup@gmail.com

The perfect Christmas Present



We're Really Sorry!!



We had hoped to hold our carol concert this year but, due to the changing Covid situation, sadly we have had to cancel yet again. Sorry, better luck next year.



Don't forget Village Work Mornings second Saturday of every month

Meet outside the Village Hall at 10am (bring garden gloves, wellies and any gardening tools you have). Children welcome



www.wolvercotecommoners.co.uk – wolvercote.commoners@yahoo.co.uk
Chair: Mary Brown (07799 391816) Secretary: Eleanor Woods (07815 548351)

