



# MAGPI



**The newsletter of the Friends of Mitcham Common**

*Working to protect the Common and its wildlife*

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## Cuts to Mitcham Common funding

The Friends have been looking at the Merton Business plan for 2016-2020 which outlines future cuts in the grant paid to the Conservators that could significantly impact on the way the Common is run and maintained in the future.

The business plan is available on the Merton Borough website here: [http://www.merton.gov.uk/final\\_business\\_plan\\_2016-20\\_v3\\_web\\_version\\_.pdf](http://www.merton.gov.uk/final_business_plan_2016-20_v3_web_version_.pdf) but the page has been reproduced below.

At the moment, it's difficult to know what this might mean for the Common, so we can only speculate. However, perhaps it could mean fewer litter picks, a reduction in the amount of cutting of grass and hedges that takes place, and reduced maintenance of pathways that might hinder people walking on the Common. Magpie Editor (and Acting Chair of the Friends) Darren, raised this at the December Conservators meeting. The Chair of the Conservators, Timothy Godfrey, said that discussions would be taking place between the three Common boroughs and the Conservators on this issue and he would report back to the Friends in due course.

When combined with the uncertainty of the contracting out of greenspace maintenance to company idverde, we can all agree that this probably isn't good news. It could have implications for the Common that we all know and love.

However, maybe it represents a chance for the Friends of Mitcham Common to take an even more active role in the Common, for example by increasing volunteering workdays to fill the gaps, as happened in previous years, and as described by Janet on page 2 of this Magpie.

DEPARTMENT: ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SAVINGS - BUDGET PROCESS 2016/17

Panel	Ref	Description of Saving	Baseline Budget 15/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	Risk Analysis Deliverability	Risk Analysis Reputational Impact	Type of Saving (see key)
	ENV22	<p><b>Service/Section Description</b> Greenspaces Reduction in grant to Mitcham Common Conservators. May result in reduction in grant from LB Croydon and Sutton; would be offset by the income generation of the Conservators through their assets.</p> <p><b>Service Implication</b></p> <p><b>Staffing Implications</b> None</p> <p><b>Business Plan implications</b> None</p> <p><b>Impact on other departments</b> None</p> <p><b>Equalities Implications</b> None</p> <p><b>TOM Implications</b> Consistent with TOM direction of travel</p>	48		24		Low	Medium	SG2

## Janet Morris

As we reported in the last Magpie, Janet Morris resigned as the President of the Friends of Mitcham Common after many years of wonderful service helping to protect the Common. Janet has asked for her letter of resignation to be reproduced in the Magpie, which we have done in full below. Note that this is an addition to the email version. We will circulate a copy to our hardcopy readership in due course.

Dear Friends

I have been involved with the common since 1984, a time when the common was in a bad way and seriously threatened. There had never been enough money to maintain it properly and to raise much needed capital the Conservators had just finished building the hills at the Croydon end of the common. They were now able to employ Martin Boyle as warden to make much needed improvements, but plans for yet more hills in the 7-Island Pond area raised intense public protest. I got involved with a pressure group that successfully thwarted these plans.

The protesters formed the Preservation Society (now the Friends of Mitcham Common) to protect and improve the common for future generations. Much has happened since then and I am immensely grateful to the many people who have joined in our work. Many friends have given practical help to run the society, write, print or deliver 'Magpies' or join in litter and scrub clearance. Others have supported protest against never-ending threats to the common by writing letters, making phone calls, or collecting petitions. Many people have played their part and it is a communal effort to be celebrated.

Many of the threats facing the common then were large and clearly visible like the plans to run a Southern relief Road across the common. Today's major threat is more insidious. The financial crash of 2008 is already having serious repercussions on the funding of the common. Brexit too is likely to have an impact, not just with investments but also with uncertainty over EU grants such as the Higher Level Stewardship grants that play an important part in maintaining the acid grasslands. Council funding is likely to be reduced next year and there are difficult times ahead.

This funding crisis does, however, open up opportunities for the 'Friends' to play a far more important role. Putting pressure on all three local authorities to continue funding would be a good beginning. The 'Friends' have been very effective as a pressure group in the past and they have a essential role now.

Maintenance of these open spaces that are under constant pressure from careless visitors and advancing thorny scrub is not possible without a paid workforce. Fund raising events to finance specific needs may therefore be a way of helping whilst having lasting fun along the way. Valuable practical assistance might also be given by organising work parties (under the guidance of the Warden). Many people love the common and I am sure they will rise to the occasion.

I wish you every success in these new ventures.

Janet Morris.

## Friends of Mitcham Common Christmas party

The Friends got into festive mood and held a fabulous Christmas party in the Ecology Centre on 17 December.

It was mainly organised by Friends' volunteers Clare Riddiford and Paulette Ragan and Friends' secretary Melanie Nunzet, but a host of other people volunteered their time to help out, including Martin Whelton, Friends' resident photographer Martin Sharpe and the ever-present and ever-helpful Norman Chapman.

Melanie started with a walk over the Common and the golf course for some hardy souls, but the mist made it difficult to see the golf balls flying around so they often felt like they were taking their life in their hands!

On arrival at the Ecology Centre, the walkers were joined by another 25 people over the course of the afternoon raring to take part in the Christmas festivities. There were plenty of mince pies, sausage rolls and glasses of mulled wine to go around for all, and some left over to leave in the centre and bring a bit of cheer to Mitcham Common manager Martin Boyle and his team (although not that much...)

It was great to see so many people there, and some very honoured special guests including the Mayor Brenda Fraser, the Deputy Mayor, and former Mayor David Chung and his daughter. It was terrific to see David back after he attended last years' party during his role as Mayor.

After the success of the quiz last year, yours truly the editor, did a follow up this year with 24 mostly Christmas-based questions on French hens, Slade and the *Adventure of the Christmas Pudding*. Winners this year were Christopher's Christmas Crew!

Finally we held a raffle, with the prize being a sumptuous hamper full of festive goodies. The winner this year was Councillor Martin Whelton, who said he would be donating this to a local charity. Hopefully someone will have a little bit of extra Christmas cheer this festive season thanks to Martin's generosity. The Friends will of course give all of the proceeds from the raffle to charity as well.



Mayor and Deputy Mayor in conversation



Cllr Martin Whelton, winner of the raffle!



Friends and the Mayor at the party

## Friends' party in the Mayor's Parlour

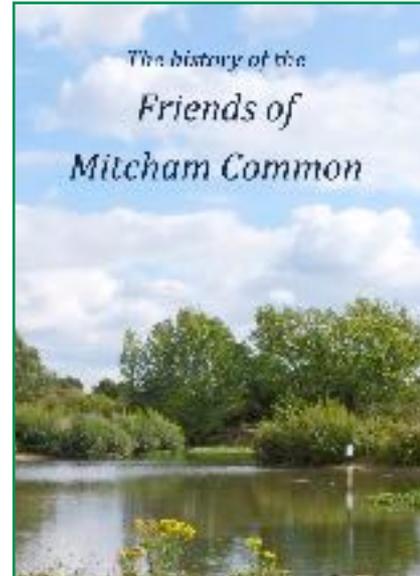
On Thursday 1 December, the Friends had the honour of being invited to the Mayor's parlour for a reception to thank us for the work we had done for the Common over the years.

Around 30 Friends of past and present made the trip to the Civic Centre in Morden for the event. It was truly fantastic to see so many Friends there and catch up. It was almost a potted history of the Friends in one room!

And talking of potted histories, for the event former President Janet Morris wrote an excellent pamphlet for the Mayor that highlighted some of the achievements of the Friends down the years.



*The party in the Mayor's parlour in full swing!*



*Janet's book for the event*

The Mayor gave an informative speech that thanked us for our efforts, and how she was trying to join up likeminded groups across the whole borough and get out and about and see all those groups..



*Party attendees*

She also talked informatively about her own charities, Age UK Merton and the Avanti Club, and then gave a very touching tribute to Sheila Greatwood, long time Friend and former secretary of our society who very sadly passed away recently (see the tribute at the end of this edition of the Magpie).

The company, the wine, the nibbles, and the recognition from an important dignitary made this an important and enjoyable evening for the Friends.

As always, Secretary Melanie was on the ball with the organising, ordering a Minibus from Merton Community Transport to get people to and from the venue. Well done, Melanie, great work!



**Mayor of Merton  
Councillor Brenda Fraser**

**Thank You Reception  
Thursday 1 December 2016  
7.00-9.00pm**

It gives me great pleasure to invite you to a reception and an opportunity to thank you personally, for your support and contribution to the 'Friends of Mitcham Common', a society instrumental in engaging the local community to protect the common, it's wildlife and the green space it offers to the residents of the borough.

The reception will be held in the Mayor's Parlour, Merton Civic Centre, London Road Morden SM4 5DX on Thursday 1 December from 7.00pm.

Entry to the Civic Centre in the evening is via the main entrance. There is limited parking available in the staff car park to the rear of the building. York Close car park would be the nearest alternative; parking is free after 6pm. Morden underground Station is located opposite the building.

I would be most grateful if you could confirm whether or not you are able to attend, to help us with catering for numbers on the evening. Please e-mail my office, [mayor@merton.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@merton.gov.uk) or phone 020 8545 3517 by Thursday 24 November.

I look forward to welcoming you.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Fraser".

Councillor Brenda Fraser  
Mayor of Merton

## A tribute to Sheila Greatwood and Eric Montague

It is with much sadness that we inform you of the passing of Sheila Greatwood, stalwart of the Friends of Mitcham Common, and Eric Montague, local Mitcham historian who wrote one of the definitive guides to Mitcham Common.

### Sheila Greatwood

Sheila (pictured here) was a long-standing Friend of the Common, active Committee member in several roles over the years, and one of the original founders of the first Mitcham Preservation Society in 1978. Sheila moved to Mitcham with her young family almost fifty years ago and loved the Common.

If you read any of Sheila's letters to MP Siobhan McDonagh over the years on fly tipping or any other issues you certainly knew how passionately Sheila felt about the Common!



*Sheila Greatwood*

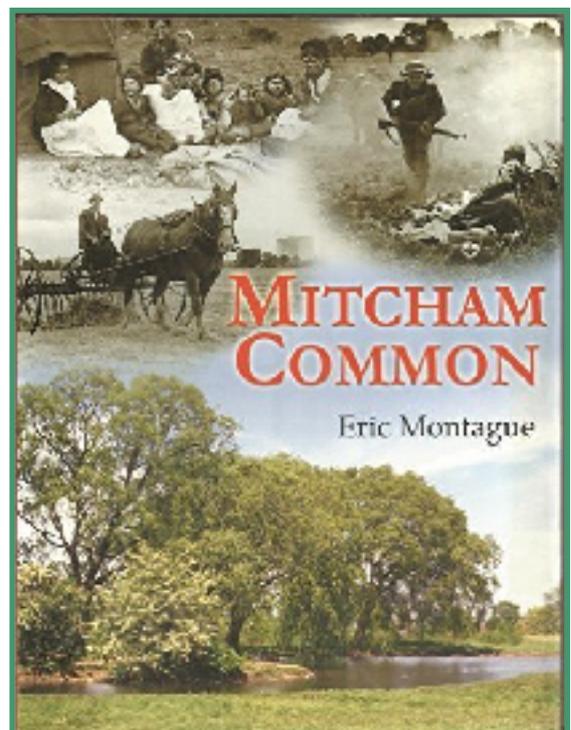
We would like to extend our sincere condolences to Sheila's family and express our gratitude for her very significant contribution to the work of the Friends over so many years.

### Eric Montague

Eric Montague, who wrote so many books about Mitcham's history also passed away this year. His book, Mitcham Common, which was a joint publication with the Conservators, is still the most comprehensive account of the common from prehistoric times to 2001 when it was published.

Eric was on our postal list as he moved to Sussex many years ago. He still retained a great love for Mitcham and would always call me to say how much he was enjoying reading the Magpie newsletter.

Occasionally he would offer some constructive criticism if an article was inaccurate which we would welcome. He will be much missed.



*Eric Montague's book of the Common*

## Melanie's walks and events: autumn/winter 2016

Sun 29 Jan	Mitcham Junction 10.30 am	<b>Wandle Walk</b> along the Wandle Trail via Hackbridge and Carshalton, to include a visit to Wilderness Island. We return to Mitcham Junction via Beddington Park and Beddington Farmlands with a stop at the café for refreshments. 5-6 miles, easy, circular.
Sun 19 Feb	Mitcham Junction 11.00 am	<b>Mitcham Common walk.</b> 3-4 miles, easy, circular.

For all walks starting at Mitcham Junction meet at bus stop on the bridge.

### Health Walks



**Sutton Healthy Walks** - Come and join us for a free and friendly hour's walk around Beddington Park or Waddon Ponds every Friday morning at 10 am. Meet by St Mary's Church, Church Road, Wallington SM6 7NJ (Buses: 407 from Sutton, 463 from Mitcham). Refreshments available at church after walk. Voluntary contribution to church funds. Tour of church possible. Half hour option available.

**Merton Health Walk** – Around Mitcham Common every Thursday. Meet at 11 am Mitcham Junction Station. Refreshments afterwards at Mitcham Golf Club. For other health walks in Merton please visit [www.merton.gov.uk/walk4life](http://www.merton.gov.uk/walk4life).

Two short reports about the orphan girls of **Carew Manor (Royal Female Orphanage Asylum at Beddington)** and an event to mark the installation of a plaque at the former **Tower Creameries on Mitcham Common** are available for a small donation to St Raphaels' Hospice. **Jigsaw puzzle challenge.** Rose Garden - Beddington Park 2011. See me for more details!

Please note that several of the above walks are also on the Sutton & Wandle Valley Ramblers' programme but all are welcome. To be added to the mailing list please email me on [mlnunuzet@gmail.com](mailto:mlnunuzet@gmail.com). Please note the second letter is an 'l', not 'i'. Any other queries please call 07944 833605. Thank you and happy walking!