FRIENDS' REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 2026 CONSERVATORS' MEETING

1) Our Open Day on 4th July at the Ecology Centre went well. A plant and tree walk was ably led by Johnathon Miller-McCall, a conservationist, science communicator and storyteller. Emma Onyejekwe did a wildlife survey walk. In the Ecology Centre we had a stall by the RSPB. The mayor of Merton attended, the mayor of Sutton couldn't attend, the civic mayor and mayoress of Croydon were going to attend, but couldn't and so a previous civic mayor of Croydon came in their place.

2) Our AGM was held on the 4th June at the Toby Carvery on Commonside West.

3) We were again unable to attend the Mitcham Carnival due to lack of volunteers.

4) We regret to announce that Melanie Nunzet is stepping down from her role as Membership and Social Secretary after 14 years of dedicated service. We extend our sincere gratitude for her many contributions. At the request of the Chair, Melanie has agreed to continue as an ambassador for the Friends, serving as the official face of the organization.

5) We would like to present our views on the need to de-silt the Seven Islands Pond.

I refer to the book, “Mitcham Common”, by Eric Montague, published in 2001.

Montague (2001, p. 41) records that surface-water drainage from Pollards Hill and the intervening farmland once helped sustain a high water table across much of the Common; in the inter-war years the Seven Islands Pond was deep enough that there were even boats for hire. After the Second World War, housing and related drainage works around Pollards Hill replaced much of that farmland and put watercourses into culverts, changing how water reaches the Common. The ponds are now more dependent on rainfall, more exposed in drought — as in 2026 — and more quickly diminished by silt and leaf litter (a member has reported a sulphur smell at Seven Islands Pond, typical of anaerobic mud). Montague also notes the long angling history and repeated fish removals when low water and anti-social behaviour made the ponds hard to manage: a pattern still familiar after the 2020/21 destock and ongoing risk of illegal carp and similar introductions.

The Friends ask the Conservators, in the Five Year Management Plan review, to allow phased desilting of the larger ponds with external funding, so open water remains resilient under today’s hydrology and development pressures.

The Friends would consider helping to seek external funds for phased desilting, but any bid should include public education so the wider community understands why the work is needed and how to protect the gains. That would mean clear on-site information (silt, drought, leaf litter, why carp and discarded fishing line harm wildlife), a simple web or short-film update, a few guided walks or Open Day talks, and light engagement with anglers and local schools via Mill House.