

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our summer newsletter. We are currently taking a break from our volunteer days and the new season, starting with Twickenham Junction Rough on October 8th, is announced in our programme below. We are also preparing for our 2017 AGM, to be held on Wednesday 20th September from 8pm at the Twickenham Club.

If you would like to hear what we are up to on a more regular basis check out our web-site, Facebook and twitter pages – links below – we recently went past 1000 followers on Facebook and post regular information there through the week.

River Crane Low Flows

The low rainfall over many months this spring and early summer resulted in little or no river flow going into the Lower Crane over the Mereway Road Weir and the river suffering, with stagnant water and areas of dry river bed over several kilometres.

Last October the Environment Agency carried out a one day test to see if more water could be released into the lower Crane at times such as this and the results reported <http://www.cranevalley.org.uk/news/post/mereway-weir-level-test-report.html> The Agency are now proposing a 12 month test, releasing more water into the river during low flow periods and evaluating the effects on both the Crane and the Duke's River, due to start later this autumn.

Community Learning Programme

The latest programme of volunteer events, managed by TCV and providing practical experience of various river and land management techniques, is well under way. A series of river management days were completed in July and the meadow series is running through August and September, including training in scything techniques and surveys of flora and invertebrates led by experts.

The autumn and winter events, including coppicing of riverside trees and hedge laying and management techniques, are scheduled and all can be seen in the programme below.

Shire horses from Operation Centaur were employed in the Crane valley for the first time in many years as part of this work programme. They will be returning in November (and again in 2018) to help deliver a natural wild flower meadow on the Willow Way site in Crane Park.



Richmond Green Gym

In 2016 we helped fund the Richmond Green Gym, operated by TCV in Mereway Nature Park, Meadway Orchard and along the Duke's River. Unfortunately this had to close last October when the funding ran out. We are therefore pleased to announce the re-launch of the Green Gym on Wednesday 13th September, and weekly thereafter, funded by Thames Water.

Planning Responses

In the last three months FORCE has submitted responses to consultations on the Heathrow Third Runway, and proposed new turnstiles and access arrangements at the RFU, both of which can be viewed on the planning pages of our website. We are liaising with Thames Water regarding their proposals for new fencing at Mogden Sewage Works and have worked with LB Richmond to develop their Twickenham Village Plan proposals.

Crane Valley Partnership (CVP) brings together over 20 organisations with an interest in the Crane valley including five London boroughs, the GLA, Heathrow, Thames Water, the Environment Agency and FORCE.

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Mayday Genealogy

Family History & Genealogy Research Services
89 Third Cross Road, TWICKENHAM, TW2 5DY
Telephone: 020 8894 0488
Info@maydaygenealogy.co.uk
www.maydaygenealogy.co.uk

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Registered Charity No.: 1155971
Registered Company No.: 8383410
Website: www.force.org.uk
E-mail: info@force.org.uk

We are currently working with CVP and external consultants to develop a ten year vision for the Crane valley, which will also include proposals for how CVP might be re-structured to better meet future demand and opportunities.

Walks and Talks

The programme of walks and talks are proving to be very popular, with 20 people joining the Butterfly Walk in Mereway Nature Park led by Jack McCrickard from TCV. Although the weather was a bit windy for butterflies, we spotted six species as well as several species of dragonfly and damselfly.



A mindfulness walk around Crane Park Island, led by Andrea Hosfeld provided a wonderful insight into how to experience the park in a very different way. Many left the walk with a new fledgling skill for tackling daily stresses.

The next few walks and talks are in the programme below and more details are available on our web-site. All walks are free but booking is essential. The 2018 programme is currently in development, so if you have any suggestions for walks and walk leaders to explore an aspect of the Crane valley, please let us know.

Crane Park Usage Survey, July 2017

This July, with the help of volunteer members, we completed our fifth year of usage surveys, monitoring every summer and winter at Dragonfly Terrace and Meadway. We counted our second highest ever number of visitors – over 2000 in total over the day – with more people continuing their visit through Crane Park and into Kneller Gardens than ever before. Numbers of women, children and toddlers were also at near record levels, indicating that people view these parts of the lower Crane as safe for all to use.

These data are extremely valuable to show the importance of these open spaces, and to compare with other parts of the Crane which are much less well used, illustrating their potential with further attention and investment.



Volunteers Needed

FORCE is run entirely by volunteers and we are always on the lookout for members and others who might like to become more involved. If you are interested please get in touch or come along to one of our volunteer days or other events. We currently have a specific need for a book keeper and a data analyst, though support in all activities and project work would be welcome.

AGM

Our fourteenth Annual General Meeting will be held from 8pm on Wednesday 20th September at the Twickenham Club. All members are welcome. Following formal business there will be a talk by Katie Cox about the history of Hounslow Heath. We look forward to seeing you there.

Regards,

Rob Gray,

Chair of FORCE



Volunteer Days and Activity Programme

Date	Event and Location	Activities
6 th September	TCV Community Learning Meadway Orchard:10.30am	Scything of the meadow and management of the orchard
10 th September	Kneller Dog Show and the FORCE Duck Race: Kneller Gardens from 1pm	An afternoon of free events and entertainment with Friends of Kneller Gardens and FORCE
13 th September	Richmond Green Gym at Mereway Nature Park: 10.45am	The first of an ongoing weekly series of green gym events based at Kneller Gardens pavilion
16 th September	Citizen Crane Walk and Talk from 10am at Mill Road in Crane Park – led by Rob Gray	An introduction to the Citizen Crane project, viewing the river invertebrate and water quality sampling process and walking through the park to see how the project helps the river
20 th September	FORCE AGM: 8pm at the Twickenham Club in Church St Twickenham	Formal business and a review of the year followed by a talk on the history of Hounslow Heath by Katy Cox
7 th October	Walk and Talk: eels on the Duke's River. 10.30am at Kidds Mill in Isleworth – led by Joe Pecorelli	Hear about the amazing life cycle of the eel and how they have been able to get back into the river with the introduction of new eel passes
8 th October	FORCE Volunteer Sunday Twickenham Junction Rough 10.30am	Working on this new site to plant hedges and improve its environmental value
18 th October	Fungi walk: 10am at Crane Park tower – led by Andy Overall	Andy will help find and identify the fungi of Crane Park and tell you of their fascinating life.
8 th November	TCV volunteer day with Operation Centaur at Willow Way 10.30am	Improving the meadow on this site with shire horses supported by volunteers
12 th November	FORCE Volunteer Sunday Willow Way from 10.30am	Maintaining the hedge and pathways and planting more marginal plants along the river
22 nd and 23 rd November	TCV community learning days: coppicing trees in Crane Park	Continuing the work to let more light into the river – and using the cut trees to create dead hedges and poles for hedging
6 th and 7 th December	TCV community learning days: hedge laying in Crane Park	Continuing the management of the 1000 metre hedge line, laying the live hedge and building more dead hedges
10 th December	FORCE Volunteer Sunday Twickenham Rifle Club 10.30am	Maintain and improve the Rifle Club site, Craneford Fields and Marsh Farm Lane
16 th December	Walk and Talk from Silverhall Park to Kneller Gardens from 10.30am	A walk to celebrate the work done on this four kilometre route

Walk and talks events are free but registration is essential. To register go the events page on the FORCE website <http://www.force.org.uk/calendar/view> and follow the links. More information will be provided following registration