



**Meeting 602<sup>nd</sup> of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS**  
**held at**  
**The Banstead Centre on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2024**

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**MINUTES – Part 1**

<b>Present:</b>	Mr. V. Broad, Chairman	Cllr. P. Harp
	Mr. D. Hatcher	Mr. B. Steele
	Cllr. N. Moses	Mr. N. Mollett
	Mr. J Mill	Mrs. L Shea, Clerk

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Lisa Taylor – Minute Secretary

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<b>Public</b>	Gillian Hein, Rachel Turner, Jane Davis, Karl Tarratt, Ann Dobson, Miriam Maxim,
<b>Gallery:</b>	Catalina Vassallo-Bonner, Jackie Sexton, Rob Sexton, Charles Harvey

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### 1. Apologies for absence

Mr. D Atkins

### 2. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of last meeting held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October were confirmed as correct. No matters arising.

### 3. Quarterly report

Due to the reduced staff team this quarter, grassland and woodland glade management took slightly longer to complete than in earlier years and cut and collect continued throughout October and November.

Livestock are grazing on Banstead Downs and Park Downs. The dedicated team of volunteer livestock checkers have been checking on the sheep on Banstead Downs twice a day and once a day on Park Downs. The flock on Banstead Downs increased from 17 to 27 sheep in January.

A large area of scrub has been cleared with machinery on Park Downs. This has improved the vista at the top of the site and over time will transition to chalk grassland.

In line with our management plan, two large scrapes were created on Banstead Heath to increase lowland heath habitat. Heather seed was collected from the adjacent glade and spread on the scrapes.

Following on from last winter's clearance work on Banstead Heath, we have removed vegetation from south/western edge of the small pond located in the middle of the gallops. Desilting of the pond is scheduled for later this year.

Two meetings have been held with the [Newt Conservation Partnership](#) and plans are underway to restore Sheepwash Pond on Burgh Heath and create a new pond – following the recommendations made in Kevin Morgan's 'Management of Burgh Heath Ponds for Great Crested



Newt' report (2021). The partnership is keen to explore the possibility of restoring the puddle/pond in the middle of the gallops on Banstead Heath and a biological survey of the pond is planned for Spring. County Councillor, Cllr Rebecca Paul, has expressed an interest in supporting pond restoration work on Banstead Heath and a meeting is scheduled for 29/1.

Working in collaboration with Butterfly Conservation, Seven Elm trees (three *Ulmus minor* 'Ademuz' and one *Ulmus Lutece*) and three European White Elms (*Ulmus laevis*) were planted on Banstead Heath to increase suitable habitat for the White Letter Hairstreak butterfly.

The unauthorised bike track on Banstead Heath has been inspected. The BCC has put up notices to inform visitors that the trees' structural integrity has been comprised and the area should be used with care. Media work to raise awareness of the concern is being considered.

Conservator David Hatcher and the Clerk Lucy Shea have both been disappointed at the quality of the Site Management Plans produced by Surrey Wildlife Trust. Seven pages of amendments have been compiled to be sent to Surrey Wildlife Trust. We are hoping to receive revised documents back in time for us to hold a four-week public consultation in March.

Our walk of remembrance was held on Friday 10 November. This walk is led by local historian Timothy Richardson and 13 walkers attended. Cllr. Peter Harp laid the BCC wreath at the Remembrance Service in Banstead.

Five volunteer work parties, three corporate volunteer events and two events with Leatherhead Youth Project (120 volunteers in total) have been held on the Commons this quarter.

Our presence on social media continues to grow and we now have 1,422 followers on Facebook, 334 followers on Twitter and 168 followers on Instagram. A new LinkedIn page has been set up to help us to engage with more corporate organisations to deliver group volunteering on the Commons.

Conservator David Hatcher attended the Surrey Hills November Symposium at the University of Guildford and sits on the regular board meetings.

Grants have been received from: Your Fund Surrey (£1,500) to host 'Wildlife Detective Days' on the Commons; Farming in Protected Landscapes to purchase 8 scythes (£1,812.00) and the Downlands Trust are sponsoring a staff and volunteer day (£492).

#### **4. Matters arising**

##### **Pollution incident – The Sportsman on Banstead Heath**

The clerk shared a letter from the Environment Agency and the Stonegate Group regarding an unauthorised effluent pipe on Banstead Heath. BCC to liaise with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and an letter will be issued to The Sportsman informing them that the pipe is in breach of our Byelaws.

##### **Horse riders on Banstead Downs**

We continue to receive regular reports of horse riders riding away from the permitted routes on Banstead Downs. BCC has increased the amount of finger posts on site, maps of the site are



currently with the printers and will be installed on noticeboards and we have posted on our social media pages. Another letter has been issued to the stables in the local area.

#### **Planning application: 23/01516/F**

Conservator and Cllr Peter Harp provided update regarding the drainage works planned at Lucas Park Drive and proposed outflow that may impact on the pond situated on the Common. The council have agreed a holding pond but eventually could overflow into the main pond. The council believe levels of pollution should be very low.

#### **Banstead Commons Consultative Group**

The Banstead Heath Consultative Group was established in 1998 to provide a valuable two-way conduit for information and exchange of views between the Banstead Commons Conservators (BCC) and the various user groups of Banstead Heath. In 2023 a review of the group was carried out with its existing members and it was suggested the group expand its remit to include representation from all four sites and include participation from volunteers who are collecting biological data for us. The new terms of reference for the group were formally adopted by the Conservators.

#### **Finance discussions with the Leader of the Council**

Meeting was held with Cllr. Richard Biggs on 13 November, 2023. Draft budget has been submitted to Council (balanced budget). Cllr. Biggs was keen to give the BCC financial security on a three year deal up until 2027. Funding has been proposed at £110,000 each year for the three-year period.

### **5. Any other business**

#### **Downs Road / Cotswold Road junction improvements**

Without the authorisation of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and Banstead Commons Conservators, Sutton Council commenced works to install a hard standing by the bus stop (Stop N) on Downs Road. Six Ash trees were felled before the work was stopped by the Clerk. In addition to authorisation from the Council and the Conservators, hard standings on Common Land requires consent from the Secretary of State.

Sutton Council have since submitted a request to install traffic bollards to protect the Commons from proposed junction improvements at the junction of Downs Road / Cotswold Road. The Conservators agreed that timber bollards could be installed. Final plans and specification of the bollards will require formal authorisation before any work on the Commons can proceed.

**Jackie Sexton** raised a query related to the Surrey Hills Natural Landscape Boundary review – the BCC is awaiting to hear if boundary is being extended to include any of the Commons.

**Ian Mockford** emailed to request the support of Banstead Commons Conservators to remove the vandalised bench on the Chetwode Road / Reigate Road footpath (not part of the Commons). The Conservators are aware of the antisocial behaviour and littering in this area and would support the removal of the bench. Cllr Nadean Moses will take this item forward with the Greenspaces Team.



**Jane Davis** mentioned that Jean Clew who is the local historian on the Banstead Commons Consultative Group is in ill health.

**Actions:**

- BCC to work with the Council and issue a letter to The Sportsman to remove the effluent pipe. Clerk and Mr John Mill to draft letter.
- Clerk to inform Sutton Council of the Conservators decision to authorise timber bollards at the Downs Road / Cotswold Road junction.
- Clerk to send email to Jean Clew sending best wishes from the Conservators.

**Meeting closed at 10:45**

**Dates of 2024 meetings to be held at the Banstead Centre:**

- Saturday 20 April, 2024
- Saturday 20 July, 2024
- Saturday 19 October, 2024



**Meeting 603<sup>rd</sup> of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS  
held at  
The Banstead Centre on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2024**

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**MINUTES – Part 1**

<b>Present:</b>	Mr. V. Broad, Chairman (VB)	Cllr. P. Harp (PH)
	Mr. D. Hatcher (DH)	Mr. B. Steele (BS)
	Cllr. N. Moses (NM)	Mr. D Atkins (DA)
	Mr. J Mill (JM)	Mrs. L Shea, Clerk

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Lisa Taylor – Minute Secretary

**Public gallery:** Keith Lelliott, Peter Medhurst Taylor, Rachel Turner, Catalina Vassallo Bonner, Peter Mattey, Miriam Maxim

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Mr. N. Mollett

### **2. Minutes of last meeting**

A proposal by PH that VB be elected Chair for the ensuing year was seconded by JM.

Minutes of last meeting held on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January were confirmed as correct. No matters arising.

### **3. Quarterly report**

Two large areas of scrub have been cleared on Banstead Heath to restore a pocket of lowland heath. Heather scrapes will be created later this year.

The livestock on Park Downs and Banstead Downs have been moved to their final pen for this winter's grazing season. Subject to cost/funding, we are looking to extend our grazing programme on our Downland sites this year to include summer grazing and create two new grazing pens on Park Downs. Permission for summer grazing has been given by Natural England.

Two Ash trees were felled on Burgh Heath. The trees were located next to a busy footpath and had been assessed at health class 4 (less than 25% left of canopy). Thanks to the efforts of Ian Mockford, the historic litter at the back of Hatch Gardens has been cleared and taken off the site. Thanks were given to the JET Team for collecting the rubbish from our depot.

High winds have meant that the team have been out on several occasions clearing trees from public right of ways and popular footpaths. Footpath and bridleway inspections have also been completed on Park Downs, Burgh Heath, Banstead Downs and part of Banstead Heath.

Mat Burnell who is the Trees and Woodlands Officer at Reigate and Banstead Borough Council has supported the Clerk to develop a plan for managing Ash dieback on the Commons. BCC thanked RBBC for the ongoing and specialist support given by Mat.



Six practical volunteer tasks have been hosted on the Commons this quarter and duties ranged from the removal of invasive species, scrub clearance and tree popping. Leatherhead Youth Project volunteered on Banstead Heath for their Making Good Day during the February half term and we have developed a new relationship with Ahmadiyya Muslim Elders Association. In total, 872 volunteer hours have been recorded this year – which is an approx. economic value of £11,000.

Social media presence continues to grow - 1,483 followers on Facebook, 359 followers on Twitter and 170 followers on Instagram.

DH delivered a talk at 'Lunch and Talk' community events organised by the Tadworth & Walton Residents Association (attended by 27). Four articles have also been submitted to Resident Associations and community groups for publishing in their newsletters.

Our Guided Walk Programme for this year is being promoted and we are processing the bookings. Thanks to funding from Your Councillor Community Fund Surrey, we are also introducing three family events this year and a Volunteer Summer Social. Details of all events can be found on [our website](#).

This year's Annual Report is in draft format and the accounts have been sent for auditing.

#### **4. Matters arising**

##### **Banstead Downs Golf Club (BDGC)**

Concerns have been raised regarding the management of the habitats around the periphery of the course on Banstead Downs Golf Course. There are three main areas for concern; herbicide use on the course and lack of safety signage, arboricultural work and scrub clearance and the extensive dumping of green waste in the wooded areas of the site. Natural England and BCC are working with the course manager this year to address the concerns with habitat management. It was suggested BCC and RBBC organise a meeting with BDGC to discuss the removal of the green waste and prevent any further dumping on the Common.

##### **Felling Licence and the Forestry Commission – Moved to Part 2**

##### **Higher Tier Woodland Improvement Grant - Moved to Part 2**

##### **Edward Harris Council Advice & regulating commercial dog walkers – Moved to Part 2**

#### **5. Any other business**

Catalina – the Banstead Federation have their meeting on 26/4. Please send through any matters for discussion with the residents associations in advance of the meeting.

Miriam – raised her concerns regarding the disturbance dogs are causing to wildlife on Banstead Heath. It was acknowledged that this is a concern across the Commons. The BCC put up seasonal warnings on notice boards and other visible locations and also on social media pages.



Rachel – suggested the BCC could consider introducing a volunteer warden role to help inform visitors of the countryside code when visiting Banstead Commons.

**Actions:**

- NM and Clerk to arrange meeting with Banstead Downs Golf Club to discuss removal of green waste on the golf course.
- Clerk to email Catalina Vassallo Bonner, matters to raise at forthcoming Banstead Federation meeting, Commercial Dog Walkers, Volunteers Wardens, Conservation heroes – grazing appeal and Site Management plans.

**Meeting closed at 10:25**

**Dates of 2024 meetings to be held at the Banstead Centre:**

- Saturday 20 July, 2024
- Saturday 19 October, 2024



**Meeting 604<sup>th</sup> of the BANSTEAD COMMONS CONSERVATORS  
held at  
The Banstead Centre on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2024**

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**MINUTES – Part 1**

<b>Present:</b>	Mr. V. Broad, Chairman (VB)	Cllr. P. Harp (PH)
	Mr. D. Hatcher (DH)	Mr. B. Steele (BS)
	Cllr. N. Moses (NMos)	Mr. D Atkins (DA)
	Mr. N. Mollett (NM)	Mrs. L Shea (LS), Clerk
	Lisa Taylor (LT) – Minute Secretary	
<b>Public gallery:</b>	Rachel Turner (RT), Chris Hanson (CH), Miriam Maxim (MM), Bob Ferris (BF)	

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Mr. J Mill (JM)

### **2. Minutes of last meeting**

Minutes of last meeting held on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April were confirmed as correct. No matters arising.

### **3. Quarterly report**

Visitor accessibility on the Commons is a priority during the summer months when vegetation growth could restrict public access if not managed. The frequency of the mowing of Public Rights of Ways, fire breaks and verge management are dependent on seasonal growth. Paths on Banstead Heath are cut more regularly than other sites to encourage visitors to stick to the footpaths to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds (Skylarks).

Natural England has given permission for us to conservation graze during the Spring and Summer months for compartments that are in 'restoration'. Sheep remain on Banstead Downs and Park Downs. The Downlands Partnership Grazing Team continue to monitor the sites and give expert advice to ensure stocking densities are optimal for each enclosure to meet the management objectives set under our Higher Level Stewardship.

BCC has received a donation of £1,806 from the Downlands Trust donation to purchase new straining posts so that we can expand our grazing regime on Park Downs. Thank you.

Japanese Knotweed sites were treated in June. The process will be repeated in September.

Invasive Cherry Laurel has been removed from Bridleway 81 on Banstead Heath. This is the start of a sweep that we plan to carry out on this section of the Heath to eradicate Cherry Laurel from the site. To prevent regrowth, stumps are being treated with herbicide in accordance with the recommendations in our Site Management Plan.

Tree inspections have commenced in line with our Tree Inspection Policy which includes the re-inspections associated with Ash dieback. As a result of the tree inspections, some tree safety





work was carried out on Banstead Heath in June which included limb reductions on two large Oaks and the removal of dead Ash trees.

More rubbish was removed from Burgh Heath and relatively large amounts of green waste and plantings were discovered during a recent inspection. Letters have been issued to all residents.

'No horse riding' signs have been counter sunk into straining posts on Banstead Downs.

Volunteer work parties continue to address woody scrub on our sites. The scythes that were bought earlier this year with thanks for funding from FiPL and the Downlands Trust are now in use. This traditional method of countryside management is particularly useful in sensitively enhancing selected lowland heath glades on Banstead Heath where we know we have reptiles present.

Surveying and research into the pond improvements on Burgh Heath and Banstead Heath continue. Coincidentally, two adult Great Crested Newts were found on Burgh Heath by our Keeper Gary which confirms their presence on the site. The Newt Conservation Partnership has also recorded GCN eggs on Burgh Heath and Banstead Heath.

Surrey Bat Group has kindly supplied us with two bat detectors which have gone up on various locations on Banstead Heath. Species recorded so far have included Barbastelle, Daubenton, Natterer's and Brown Long-eared (Myotis). A findings report will be submitted to the Conservators at the end of the year.

We held our Volunteer Summer Social – attended by 17 people - on Thursday 6 June and first [Nature Detective Day](#) on Saturday 8 June. Our Nature Detective Days are all fully subscribed. Conservator David Hatcher has also led five Guided Walks this season (32 walkers) - a special thank you to David for giving his time and knowledge so generously.

The staff team also attended a Common Therapy meeting hosting at Wimbledon and Putney Conservators at the beginning of June. This network is proving to be invaluable with regards to sharing best practice and legal opinions on Common Land legislation.

#### **4. Matters arising**

##### **Site Management Plans**

The Public Consultation associated with the development of the plans was held in June and useful comments have been received from local Resident Associations, visitors and partners. It was hoped the documents would be ready to be approved for adoption at our July Quarterly Meeting however this will be pushed back to October to incorporate the edits and further mistakes in the text that have been identified.

##### **Banstead Downs Golf Club (BDGC)**

LS continues dialogue with the Chair of BDGC regarding the areas of concern that were highlighted at our April Quarterly Meeting. Natural England (NE) and Reigate and Banstead Borough Council (RBBC) are being consulted. A meeting has been arranged for Thursday 22 August. Representations from BDGC, BCC, RBBC and NE will be present.



### **The Sportsman**

LS is still corresponding with Gosschalks who are the solicitors representing Stonegate regarding the pollution spill and unauthorised effluent pipe that is placed on the Common. We are awaiting further correspondence following a litigation meeting that was held between Gosschalks and their client on 15/7.

At present, The Sportsman has not returned its completed bench licence. The benches will be removed from the Common if The Sportsman no longer wishes to accept the licence.

### **1 The Green, Burgh Heath – encroachment**

The resident at the above property has erected fence on the Common. Land registry documents have been obtained and a letter was issued requesting that the fence is removed by the end of July. It was agreed the fencing should be removed by BCC staff if the resident has not removed the fencing.

### **Scattering of ashes on Banstead Commons**

A request was received to scatter ashes on Banstead Downs. It was recognised that we do not have a statement/policy in place. As the landowner of the Commons, PH has requested RBBC's policy/position. It was agreed to defer any decision until RBBC's position is clear.

### **Annual Report 2024**

Financial accounts have been returned from the auditor and the Annual Report 2024 has been published.

## **5. Any other business**

RT – raised concerns whether the BCC funding from RBBC is agreed and confirmed in writing. LS confirmed there is not a signed agreement in place. VB suggested an agreement/terms of reference should be drawn up. LS to take forward.

RT – made BCC aware of a recent dog attack towards a horse on Epsom Downs. RT is concerned the number of dogs attacking horses are on the increase.

RT – made BCC aware that a Canadian Goose was rescued at Burgh Heath Pond, it had been caught in fishing wire. The bird was taken to Leatherhead Wildlife Aid and has been since released back to Burgh Heath Pond. LS confirmed fishing is not permitted at Burgh Heath Pond.

MM – raised her concerns regarding the removal of scrub around the base of a tree on Chapel Road. LS confirmed the area was strimmed by BCC staff to help assist with tree inspections.

### **Actions:**

- LT to write letter to The Sportsman asking if they would like to renew bench subscription. The benches will be removed from the Common if the licence is not renewed.
- Scattering of Ashes, it was agreed to refer this item to the next Quarterly Meeting once PH had obtained and shared RBBC policy.



**Meeting closed at 10:20**

**Dates of 2024 meetings to be held at the Banstead Centre:**

- Saturday 19 October, 2024





### **Volunteer & public engagement**

Volunteer numbers continue to grow. Tadworth and Walton Residents Association and Trustees from the Downlands Trust joined and supported two work parties.

The Nature Detective Days were a huge success and attended by over 130 children and adults – c.38 different families. BCC gave thanks to all the volunteers who made the events possible and highlighted that an event sponsor is required for next year.

Guided Walks have also been well attended. The BCC received a private donation following one of the walks.

With thanks to Rebecca Paul MP and SCC Your Fund, Banstead Heath Pond Restoration Project commenced in September. Significant clearance work has been carried out to the pond next to The Bell at Withybed Corner and Workhouse pond adjacent to Dorking Road.

## **4. Matters arising**

### **Banstead Downs Golf Club (BDGC)**

BCC had a constructive meeting with BDGC, Natural England and RBBC on 22/8 to discuss the concerns that had been raised related to green waste dumping and parcels under Higher Level Stewardship. Minutes of the meeting have been published. Subsequently, BDGC has now started to address some of the green waste that had been dumped recently and relations between BCC and BDGC appear to be improving.

### **The Sportsman**

The dialogue with Gosschalks Solicitors regarding the illegal effluent pipe on Banstead Heath from The Sportsman's septic tank continues. Most recent update was received on 13/11 stating that investigation works have been undertaken and we have been informed the potential solution has a significant cost. A meeting is being organised to decide the next stage of resolving this concern.

### **Winkworth Road Drainage Improvement Scheme**

To address the flooding concerns on Winkworth Road, it was discovered that SCC had carried out a topographical survey with a view to installing a new Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) on Banstead Downs. Following intervention, work has been paused whilst SCC explore alternative solutions that focus on delivering improvement with the road area itself. Clerk to remain in contact with SCC and provide an update at the next Quarterly Meeting.

### **The Green at Burgh Heath**

Residents have been dumping a substantial amount of green waste on the Common. Clerk liaised with Burgh Heath Residents Association and a short article raising awareness of the concern was placed in their newsletter.

### **6 Mogador Road**

Resident at 6 Mogador Road has installed wooden posts on the Common. It was agreed to issue an encroachment letter and if the posts are not removed by the date specified in the letter our operational staff will remove them.



### **Withybed Corner**

Residents have raised concerns about the access track at Withybed Corner. The Clerk met with Officers from RBBC to assess the current state of the track on 24/10. It was noted that the track is designated as a Footpath 76 and the access road is not publicly maintained. There is no requirement for RBBC or BCC to maintain it to Highway standards for vehicular traffic nor is it designated as a Bridleway. RBBC have committed to carrying out remedial works to the track to level out some of the potholes. It was suggested that advisory signage could be installed to highlight the nature of the track and need for user caution.

### **Banstead Commons Conservators Professional Dog Walking Scheme**

As a result of the growing number of professional/commercial dog walkers operating on the Commons and concerns related to visitor safety and damage to priority habitats because of dog excrement, the BCC obtained legal advice to clarify our authority to regulate activities under our Act. Counsel confirmed that under paragraph 18 of the Act the Conservators can regulate for the prevention of nuisances and the preservation of order upon the Commons, which would include the ability to license, and, by correlation, ban certain activities. Over the past 12 months the BCC has developed details of the Licence Agreement and plan for implementation. One of the requirements of the licence will be for walkers to wear visible photographic ID when operating on the Commons. Staff will be issued body worn cameras to assist with enforcement. Details of the scheme will be published on our website in November and publicised widely using our social media pages, posters on site and local community newsletters in the New Year. The scheme will be formally adopted by the Conservators in Part 2 of the Quarterly Meeting.

## **5. Any other business**

**Cllr. Harp** noted the general issues with dog walkers (Cllr. Harp was recently bitten by a dog on Banstead Heath) on the Commons and suggested whilst it wouldn't be appropriate at present, the BCC should in the future consider requiring dogs on leads in the areas of the Commons where there are ground nesting birds, for example Mill Field.

**David Hatcher** noted the law states you must keep your dog on a lead no longer than two metres between 1st March and 31st July when on any open access land to protect ground-nesting birds.

**Peter Matthey** informed the meeting that a consultation has been launched by Surrey County Council on a proposal to reduce the speed limit on the 'Mad Mile' from 60mph to 40mph. The consultation closes on 28th November 2024. Follow the link to participate: [Brighton Road, Banstead -Speed Limit Proposal - Surrey County Council - Citizen Space](#).

**Rachel Turner** mentioned the concerns related to antisocial behaviour in the community, especially the increase in motorbikes/dirt bikes being ridden in public open spaces.

**Jane Davis** submitted a list of concerns related to highway verge management adjacent to Tadworth Street, Tower Road and New Road. Clerk to investigate.

**Meeting closed at 10:30**

**Dates of 2025 meetings to be held at the Banstead Centre:**

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2025