

Bromham Conservation Group Annual Report 2020 to Bromham Parish Council

Thank you to all our members, supporters and sponsors. 2020 has been by any measure a challenging year however with your support, enthusiasm and hard work we have managed to maintain our annual programme in our key sites and undertake a couple of useful projects which we will develop in years to come. We have all had to work differently and amend the pattern of our meetings and it has worked well. My thanks to our enthusiastic committee members who have, as always, risen to the challenges. Amazingly despite lockdowns we managed to record 917 hours of volunteering from 66 sessions (2019 was 1,112 hours from 76 sessions) with 22 active members. This however excludes over 100 hours of work in conjunction with Bromham Nature Club on maintenance and crafting new structures for the Bromham Mill Woodland Fairy walk.

Once again, my thanks to Peter Argyle for his excellently crafted newsletters. Even our zoomed AGM will be a first and sharing the Chairman's annual report before the meeting is something I think we will definitely continue.

As I have often said we are very fortunate to live in a village with so many publicly accessible sites and a widespread network of footpaths which have been well used during a year of lockdowns and a renewed emphasis on outdoor exercise. We are all very grateful for the efforts of Roy Horner on behalf of Rupert Skinner for cutting walking paths around Bromham Park and laying down bark on muddy sections. This private parkland is central to our village and links a number of interesting walks.

Clearing the rides at Salem Thrift in November last year and, thanks to urgently rearranged meetings in the first few days of November this year, meant that these beautiful woods were more accessible along the well established footpaths. Laying bark in strategic sections helped in part to preserve the wider rides although the amount of rainfall and footfall has created challenges as well as highlighting the need for further drainage work in 2021. The bluebell and spring flower displays in 2020 were magnificent and the woodland clearing we have done along the edges in sections of the rides have increased the diversity of flora and fauna in those areas. We are very grateful for the support of local residents for the work undertaken in the Community Orchard and to a number of residents who undertook regular litter collection around the village.

In the Nature Reserve we repaired the vandalised remaining bird hide, kept the pathways clear and cut back the blackthorn in the wildflower meadow. After a slow start the wildflower meadow was magnificent this year. We are grateful to the Borough Council for continuing to mow the wildflower meadow in a period of tightening budgets. Thinning the scrubland beyond the meadow has regenerated the area and we hope to do more of this in the coming years. Sadly, the Bromham Mill Nature Club has been suspended during most of this year due to Covid-19 but we look forward to the second half of 2021 when we hopefully can work with them again to restore and replace some of the woven fences around the lake walk. Similarly, due to lockdowns and shortage of funds we have been unable to implement our plans to relaunch the tern raft, but hope to do so in 2021.

At Bromham Mill we have been able to develop the Woodland Fairy Walk in conjunction with Bromham Mill Nature Club, Bromham Parish Council and Bedford Borough. From feedback received we are pleased that visitors and their families have come to regard this as a special area, particularly in this difficult year. There have been spates of vandalism and the response of the public led by Sam Sparkes has been greatly appreciated. This is an area greatly enjoyed by younger children, parents and grandparents and we will continue to develop it in 2021 with the Borough's permission. Many of the structures in the walk, both permanent and seasonal, are made by volunteers from donated materials. However, the funds raised have enabled us for instance to seed and plant the wildflower areas we prepared. Although it will take several years of regular maintenance, we hope that these and other areas will provide greater biodiversity in the site and encourage more pollinators in future years. Similarly, we have undertaken garden flower planting around the Mill itself and will continue with external painting of the Mill buildings.

This does not, however, address the dilapidated state of many of the buildings and the need for a regular and substantial annual maintenance programme. However, as always we are grateful to the Borough for the great support given to us by way of guidance and practical support within the limited allocated budget. The relocation of the second gate from the overflow car park should allow the car parks to be reopened in 2021 but it will need a team of volunteers to lock and unlock the gates to discourage vandalism and the use of the Mill car park as a drug hook up area. In conjunction with the Borough, we hope to undertake major repair work to the "nature" area of the Mill grounds which suffered significant tree damage this year.

Like many in the village we are looking forward to a reopening of Bromham Mill hopefully in 2021. We look forward to working closely with other groups on a range of conservation and educational projects both in the Mill and the grounds.

So in conclusion, my thanks for all that has been achieved. I look forward to working safely with our members and other groups across the village in 2021.

Philip Grabham, Group Chair

January 2021

Category