

Bromham Conservation Group Newsletter

September 2021



Dear all,

Although the remaining Covid regulations have been officially lifted, we still have to take care and keep the risk of infection low. Fortunately, working mainly outside on open sites with plenty of fresh air carries a relatively low risk and social distancing is built into most of what we do.

We have now resumed our old working pattern of the first Sunday and Monday mornings and usually the third Wednesday morning and an early evening at Bromham Mill on the fourth Monday of each month. This may change occasionally to avoid clashing with public holidays.

We are very grateful to everyone who supported our work at Bromham Mill in June, July and August to tidy up the grounds and smarten the outbuildings before the café reopened on Saturday 28th August. After a evening session to remove the dust and cobwebs accumulated during the prolonged closure, the museum area of the Mill building was also fit for visitors. More on this below.

We look forward to working with Bromham Parish council and the Bromham Mill Trust as the lease from the Borough comes into effect. We have already agreed two new projects at the Mill: building a new "bug hotel" to provide a refuge for beneficial insects from waste and donated materials; and creating a new wildlife conservation area close to the brook, where public access will be restricted to allow wildlife to flourish free from human disturbance.

Although the parish council has sadly decided to cancel Apple Day in October, we still have work to do at the Mill. We also hope to start a new conservation project at the pond in Parklands with help from local residents, if the plan is agreed by the parish council.

New volunteers are always welcome. If you like doing practical things outdoors, come and join us. It's good fun, a great way to keep fit and you play your part in keeping the local environment in good shape too.

Best wishes,

Bromham Conservation Group

Cleaning up at the Mill

As reported here and in the Bromham Broadsheet, a new Bromham Mill Trust has been set up to manage the Mill building, its grounds and activities on site. However the Trust decides to operate the site, Conservation Group volunteers will continue to help keep the Mill and its grounds in good repair.

The popular Mill café has now reopened under a local caterer and we wish the new enterprise every success. To help get the building, picnic area and nearby grounds in better shape, our volunteers were busy in June, July and August tending the gardens, weeding gravel surfaces, fixing damaged benches and painting the wooden outbuildings. Our final task just before opening day was to remove most of the accumulated cobwebs and dust from the museum area of the building, to give visitors a more pleasant experience. Sadly, as the water level is currently too low to turn the millwheel, visitors will just have to imagine the rumble of the machinery!

We have also taken the opportunity to clear unwanted equipment and general rubbish stored in the barns and other outbuildings. Most of this has been removed by the borough council, allowing the new Trust to consider alternative, income-generating uses for these outbuildings.

Many thanks to all who took part in the cleaning exercise. We have been delighted at the number of volunteers finding time to join in and hope what they have achieved will help the café get off to a good start. Their hard work has certainly helped make the area more attractive for visitors.



Cleaning months of grime from the windows

Work programme

September to November

We have now resumed our old working pattern of the first Sunday and Monday mornings, and usually the third Wednesday morning and the fourth Monday evening (at Bromham Mill) each month. Scheduled morning sessions start at 10am and finish at 12-12.30, while the monthly evening sessions run from 6 to 8pm. Additional sessions may be arranged to deal with specific projects and tasks. Bring your own small hand tools if you can. Meet outside barn 2 at Bromham Mill, or at the main entrance for Salem Thrift or the Nature Reserve. The vehicle gate and car park at Bromham Mill are now open during the day. We hope the outside toilets at the Mill will reopen soon, but there are no toilet facilities at our other sites.

Sun 5, Mon 6 September, 10-12.30: Bromham Lake Local Nature Reserve

Removing blackthorn, hawthorn and ant hills from the wildflower meadow before the annual machine cut to encourage regrowth next year. We also hope to complete preparations to re-launch the tern raft ready for the next nesting season.

Wed 22 September, 10-12.30: Bromham Mill

Launching a new project to create a new wildlife conservation area in the woodland near the brook. This will include restricting public access to provide a better environment for birds and other wildlife to flourish without disturbance.

Mon 27 September, 6-8pm: Bromham Mill

Internal cleaning, decorating and maintaining the mill machinery in collaboration with Friends of Bromham Mill.

Sun 3, Mon 4 October, 10-12.30: Parklands pond

Launching a new project in the area around the pond following a new environmental plan, if the parish council has approved the plan. If we are not yet ready to start, this session may be used for work elsewhere. To be confirmed.

Wed 20 October, 10-12.30: Bromham Mill

Continuing work on the new wildlife conservation area and clearing nettles and brambles from selected areas to support the emergence of spring flowers.



Clearing willow scrub in the nature reserve



The overgrown pond at Parklands

Mon 25 October, 6-8pm: Bromham Mill

Essential garden maintenance. Continuing our cleaning and decorating programme inside the Mill building.

Sun 7, Mon 8 November: Salem Thrift

Clearing rides and coppicing selected woodland areas to promote new growth and spring flowers.

Wed 17 November, 10-12.30: Parklands pond

Continuing the local pond project as laid out in the parish environmental plan. This work may continue during the winter and may be phased in over several years.

Mon 29 November, 6-8pm: Bromham Mill

Essential garden maintenance. Continuing our cleaning and decorating programme inside the Mill building.

And after this...

While the evenings are dark, we will use our monthly Monday evening sessions mainly to tackle repairs, painting and other tasks inside. Here is a quick summary of what we hope to achieve from December to March:

December

Bromham Mill. Coppicing small trees, clearing brambles, nettles and other vegetation to promote spring flowers. Further work on the new wildlife conservation area. There will be no Monday evening session at the Mill this month.

January 2022

Mill and Salem Thrift. Laying woodchip waste on paths to improve walking conditions for visitors.

Nature Reserve. Coppicing willow thickets and repairing wattle screens.

Community Orchard. Pruning fruit trees and clearing brambles and other unwanted vegetation.

Group AGM. Date and details to be confirmed.

February and March 2022

Nature Reserve, Salem Thrift, Parklands. Continued clearing and coppicing small trees.

How to join us

Unscheduled sessions

We often arrange extra, unscheduled sessions to tackle tasks such as garden maintenance, painting buildings or fitting decorative artefacts, mainly at Bromham Mill, but sometimes elsewhere too. We may also arrange them at short notice if we have more volunteers than we need for a scheduled session and can form a second team working on a different task. Volunteers sometimes form their own informal groups to tackle specific tasks such as weeding or watering garden beds at the Mill and agree their own timetable. If you are interested in painting, gardening or maintaining machinery, we will gladly keep you informed.

Other volunteers go out independently to tackle small jobs such as weeding or litter picking in public spaces. This became more common during lockdown when we were unable to organise group activities. Many thanks to all local residents who contribute to conservation in this way.

We need to keep intrusive nettles, thistles and the like under control in and around the play area and fairy walk at Bromham Mill that attract children. You are very welcome to do a spot of informal weeding with your own tools as and when it suits you, but please don't take risks if working on your own.

If you let Peter Argyle know how much time you spend on these tasks, we can count it as part of the overall effort donated by volunteers. Recording time spent can help us apply to local authorities for equipment or other support.

How to volunteer

Just turn up

We no longer ask you to notify us beforehand if you want to join a particular work session. If more turn up than we need for the main task in hand, we will find other jobs that need doing on the same or a different site in the village.

To comply with the official risk assessment, we ask you for an emergency phone number for each session to help the team leader get in touch if you should feel unwell or suffer a minor accident. A basic first aid kit is always available.

Team leaders

A team leader is appointed for each session, usually a committee member or another volunteer familiar with the task. The team leader manages the work done, organises the cleaning and issue of tools, and completes a session log to record who takes part and for how long. This is to record how much of each sort of work we do and does not require sharing your personal data.

The team leader is responsible for ensuring that we follow safe working practice. We may have to observe more safety restrictions when we work indoors.

To share the load, we welcome other experienced volunteers prepared to act as team leaders. Please let us know if you are interested in helping to lead our tasks.

Issuing and using tools

Our range of loppers, secateurs, forks, spades, rakes and other tools is available as required for the task. The team leader or a designated deputy is responsible for cleaning, issuing and returning tools to the store.



The beautiful lake at the Nature Reserve

Volunteers are encouraged to bring and use their own basic hand garden tools, such as trowels, loppers, secateurs and pruning saws. This reduces how much cleaning we have to do, but tools brought from home are for the owner's use and should not normally be shared.

How we use your personal data

We hold your name, email address (and home address and phone number if provided) to send you this newsletter and to tell you about our work and local projects in which you may be interested. We also record your participation in our work sessions to provide statistics on the effort given by volunteers, but no personal data is shared. We keep your details secure and when you no longer wish to hear from us we will promptly delete them.

Group Committee

Chairman:	Phil Grabham
Secretary:	Peter Argyle
Scientific adviser:	Helen Muir-Howie
Others:	Anne Cotton Ted Cotton Lucy Craddock Steve Daniels Ben Lusby John Orchard

Contact us

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