

Bromham Conservation Group Newsletter

October 2021



Dear all,

Welcome to our October newsletter. You will find several new things in this issue as we revise our work programme to take on new challenges and try to broaden our appeal to attract a more diverse group of volunteers.

Although Covid regulations have been officially lifted, the virus is still about and we must take care to 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 returned to 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 last Monday of each month. We will now add a weekly Monday afternoon session at the Mill to provide extra effort and to offer the opportunity for new volunteers to participate in what we do.

We are very grateful to everyone who supported our summer programme to smarten up the grounds and outbuildings at Bromham Mill before the café reopened under a new franchise. So far it has opened only at weekends, but the operator will soon open every day except Monday. The museum part of the mill building with the waterwheel and milling machinery is also available to visitors whenever the café is open.

Recently we have been moving our tools and equipment to a new base in the rear barn at Bromham Mill, which we will share with the Bromham Nature Club. This will make the premises we occupied previously available for other use. Many thanks to everyone who helped with the move.

We look forward to working closely with Bromham Parish Council and those responsible for the Mill as the new borough council lease comes into effect. We are starting two new projects at the Mill: building a new "bug hotel" from waste and donated materials to provide a refuge for beneficial insects; and creating a new wildlife conservation area close to the brook to encourage wildlife to flourish free from human disturbance.

We are also delighted that a new conservation project to improve the area around the pond behind the football pitch at Parklands has been approved by the parish council. A group of local volunteers will handle most of the work but other Group members look forward to being involved.

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*

Creating space for nature at the Mill

We all know and love the beautiful grounds behind Bromham Mill, which are maintained as a country park for everyone's use. However, a new project is taking shape to reserve part of the woodland near the brook as a home for wildlife. Public access to this area will be restricted to avoid unnecessary disturbance.

Details of the project and the area boundaries still have to be agreed by the parish council and other stakeholders, but it is likely to cover the wilder north-west corner of the woodland adjacent to the brook and the footbridge into Bromham Park. There are no existing footpaths in this area and visitor access is already discouraged.

The first steps will be to secure the area to prevent unauthorised access and to assess whether any tree surgery is required for good woodland management or to reduce safety risks. Conservation Group volunteers are already involved in creating the plan and we look forward to helping establish what will become a small local nature reserve.

The project has attracted interest from the Great Ouse Valley Environmental Trust, a new charitable body that seeks to co-ordinate and provide advice on environmental and conservation work along the river through Bedford Borough. We look forward to working with the new trust on this and perhaps other local projects in future.



Removing fallen timber in the proposed nature area

Work programme



The pond at Parklands

Morning sessions

Our morning sessions are normally on the first Sunday and Monday, followed usually by the third Wednesday morning each month. Morning sessions start at 10am and finish at 12-12.30pm.

Afternoon and evening sessions

For several years we have held regular evening sessions at the Mill, usually on the last Monday of the month from 6-8pm. From October we will also start new weekly Monday afternoon sessions from 1.30 to 3.30pm, to provide additional support at the Mill and to create a new opportunity for other volunteers to take part. See "Volunteering at Bromham Mill", next page.

Additional sessions at all the sites where we work may be arranged to deal with specific projects and tasks.

Sun 3, Mon 4 Oct, 10-12.30: Bromham Lake Local Nature Reserve

Preparing the tern raft for launch on the lake. Cutting back tangled willow thickets and repairing willow wattle screens.

Mon 4, 11, 18 Oct, 1.30-3.30pm: Bromham Mill

Garden maintenance, cleaning and painting buildings.

Wed 20 Oct, 10-12.30: Bromham Mill

Starting work on a new wildlife conservation area near the brook and clearing nettles and brambles from selected areas to support the growth of spring flowers.

Mon 25 Oct, 1.30-3.30 + 6-8pm: Bromham Mill

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

Sun 7 Nov, 10-12.30: Parklands + Salem Thrift

Working with the Parklands residents group on the new project to improve areas surrounding the pond. Clearing rides to promote new growth and spring flowers. Meet at the vehicle access off the Glade.

Mon 8, Wed 17 Nov, 10-12.30: Salem Thrift

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

Mon 8, 15, 22 Nov, 1.30-3.30pm: Bromham Mill

Garden maintenance, cleaning and painting buildings.

Mon 29 Nov, 1.30-3.30 + 6-8pm: Bromham Mill

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

November evening, date tbc: Group AGM

This may be held in the rear barn at Bromham Mill.

Sun 5, Mon 6, Wed 15 December, 10-12.30:

Bromham Mill

Coppicing small trees, clearing brambles, nettles and other vegetation to promote spring flowers. Laying woodchip waste on paths to improve surface conditions.

Mon 6, 13 Dec, 1.30-3.30: Bromham Mill

Garden maintenance, cleaning and painting buildings.

There will be no afternoon or evening sessions at the Mill on 20, 27 December or 3 January.

Sun 9, Mon 10 Jan, 10-12.30: Bromham Lake

Local Nature Reserve

Coppicing willow thickets and continuing to repair screens.

Mon 10, 17, 24 Jan, 1.30-3.30pm: Bromham Mill

Garden maintenance, cleaning and painting buildings.

Wed 19 Jan, 10-12.30: Parklands Community Orchard

Pruning fruit trees and clearing brambles and other unwanted vegetation.

Mon 31 Jan, 1.30-3.30 + 6-8pm: Bromham Mill

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

Sun 6 Feb, 10-12.30: Parklands + Salem Thrift

Working with the Parklands residents group to improve areas surrounding the pond. Clearing selected areas of woodland to encourage new growth.

Mon 7, Wed 16 Feb, 10-12.30: Salem Thrift

Clearing selected woodland areas to promote new growth.

Mon 7, 14, 21 Feb, 1.30-3.30pm: Bromham Mill

Garden maintenance, cleaning and painting buildings.

Mon 28 Feb, 1.30-3.30 + 6-8pm: Bromham Mill

Garden maintenance, cleaning and painting buildings.

Where we meet

Meet outside the rear (nature) barn at Bromham Mill, at the main entrance to the Nature Reserve or at the vehicle access off the Glade in Salem Thrift. The vehicle gate and car park at Bromham Mill are now open during the day. We hope the outside toilets there will reopen soon, but there are no toilet facilities at our other sites.

Parklands pond

Following an environmental study commissioned by the parish council, a new project is starting to renovate and improve the area around the pond on the brook near the Parklands sports field. A group of local residents who are also BCG members will undertake the work in the coming months. Although they will follow their own local timetable, we have included some dates in our formal programme when other BCG volunteers will help if required. If you would like to be involved in the project, we will gladly put you in contact with project leader Al Barnes.

Volunteering at Bromham Mill

As the Mill café starts opening six days a week, we will continue cleaning, painting and making small repairs to the buildings, helping maintain the mill machinery and keeping the grounds in good order, including the Woodland Fairy Walk. We hold regular sessions at the Mill throughout the year and supplement these with ad hoc sessions to get specific tasks done. Our volunteers have put in a lot of work in the last six months to make the Mill and its outbuildings look as good as we can.

For the past two years we have arranged monthly evening sessions at the Mill, usually on the last Monday of the month. We now want to supplement these with a weekly session each Monday afternoon from 1.30 to 3.30pm, based in our new home in the rear (nature) barn. We have chosen Monday as the café will normally be closed, making it the best day to work inside the building and when the Mill grounds are quieter. We also hope regular afternoon sessions may help new volunteers take part.

We are keen to reach out in different ways to residents in or near Bromham who might be interested in volunteering at the Mill and taking part in either regular or ad hoc sessions. We will continue working closely with Friends of Bromham Mill, Bromham Nature Club and the Parish Council as we plan and undertake work at the Mill.

All scheduled sessions are listed in our monthly newsletter and anyone is welcome to join in. If you are interested in



hearing more about ad hoc sessions at the Mill, please contact Phil Grabham on 07840 140166 who can add you to a new WhatsApp group called **Work at Bromham Mill**.

We do not expect anyone to volunteer for every session. We hope working in particular areas of the village, working at different times or the different types of work undertaken will attract a more diverse community of volunteers. Any time that you can donate to work in any part of the village is appreciated and greatly valued by the parish and borough councils, and by the Mill Trust.

How to join us

Just turn up

We no longer ask you to tell 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 find other jobs that need doing on the same site or elsewhere in the village.

We suggest you provide an emergency phone number to help the team leader get in touch if you should feel unwell or have a minor accident. Basic first aid is always available.

Team leaders

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

To share the workload, 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 collection 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 our store at the Mill.

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

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