

Bromham Conservation Group Newsletter

November 2021



Dear all,

Welcome to our November 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 are now less strict, 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 of each month. We have also started 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. However, we have decided to suspend our monthly evening sessions at the Mill during the dark winter months.

After new concern about the condition of the roofs on the two large barns, both buildings have been fenced off to reduce accident risks. Having recently moved our tools and equipment into the rear (nature) barn we will need access, but there may be some restriction on who and how many volunteers can enter the building.

Sadly, there are also new safety concerns about emergency exit from the Mill building itself that may restrict access to the museum areas housing the millwheel and milling machinery. However, we are pleased that the newly reopened café is not affected.

We look forward to 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 adjacent to the brook to encourage wildlife to flourish without human disturbance. See more on this below.

We are also delighted that work has now started on improving the area around the pond behind the football pitch at Parklands and look forward to working closely with the local volunteers who are handling most of the work.

New volunteers are always welcome to our activities. If you like doing practical things outdoors and have a little spare time, 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 a new area 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 pleasure. 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 be in 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. New native tree saplings may also be planted where there are suitable spaces. Conservation Group volunteers are involved in creating the plan and we look forward to helping establish what will become a small local nature reserve matching the area across the brook maintained by the Bromham Park Estate.

The project has attracted interest from the Great Ouse Valley Environmental Trust, a new charitable body that aims to co-ordinate and provide advice on environmental and conservation work along the river through Bedford



Clearing fallen timber close to the new nature area

Borough. We look forward to working with the new trust on this and perhaps other local projects in future.

If you have a particular interest in this or any other Conservation Group project, let us know and we'll keep you informed. Some work to establish the new nature area may be done outside the scheduled programme published in these newsletters. As volunteers we are all welcome to take part in the activities that most interest us.

Work programme

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

Our monthly Monday evening sessions at the Mill have been suspended for the winter months, when there is no natural light to support painting and other indoor tasks. We hope our new weekly Monday afternoon sessions from 1.30 to 3.30pm will attract enough volunteers to get the indoor work done.

Sun 7, Mon 8, Wed 17 Nov, 10-12.30: Salem Thrift

Clearing rides and coppicing selected woodland areas to promote new growth and spring flowers. Meet at the vehicle access point off The Glade.

The plan to spend some time on Sunday 7 working with the residents group on the new Parklands pond project has been cancelled. Work on the pond will continue.

Mon 8, 15, 22, 29 Nov, 1.30-3.30pm: Bromham Mill

Essential garden maintenance, cleaning and painting inside the Mill buildings.

There will be no Monday evening sessions at the Mill from November to February.

November - date to be confirmed: Bromham Lake Local Nature Reserve

Re-launching and anchoring the existing tern raft on the lake with kind support from a local canoe club. Volunteers needed: let us know if you wish to take part.

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 Monday afternoon 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 repairing screens.



Clearing rides in Salem Thrift



Creating a new garden area at Bromham Mill

Mon 10, 17, 24, 31 Jan, 1.30-3.30pm: Bromham Mill

Essential 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.

Late January evening: Group AGM

Date, time and venue to be confirmed.

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

Working with the Parklands residents group to improve areas surrounding the pond. Coppicing and clearing selected woodland areas to encourage new growth.

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

Coppicing and clearing selected woodland areas to encourage new growth.

Mon 7, 14, 21, 28 Feb, 1.30-3.30pm: Bromham Mill

Essential garden maintenance, cleaning and painting buildings.

Where we meet

We 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. With temporary safety fencing now surrounding both barns, access to our tool store may be temporarily restricted. The vehicle gate and car park at Bromham Mill are now open during daytime hours. 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 has started to renovate and improve the area around the pond on the brook near the Parklands sports field. A group of local residents will undertake the work in the coming months, following their own timetable. We have scheduled a few dates when other BCG volunteers will be available to support the work if required. If you would like to be involved in the project, we will gladly put you in touch with project leader Al Barnes.

Volunteering at Bromham Mill

With the Mill café now open 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 working parties to get specific tasks done. Our volunteers have put in a lot of work in the past few months to make the Mill and its outbuildings look as good as we can.

Although we normally hold a Monday evening session at the Mill each month, these will be suspended during the winter. However, we now hold weekly sessions at the Mill every Monday afternoon from 1.30 to 3.30pm, to maintain the gardens and carry out painting and cleaning inside the building. We have chosen Monday as the café is closed, making it the best day to work inside and also when the grounds are less busy. We also hope these regular afternoon sessions will attract new volunteers to take part.

We are keen to reach out in different ways to residents in or near Bromham who may 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 develop our plans and undertake further work at the Mill.

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



learning 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 different areas of the village, working at different times or the varied types of work included in our programme will attract a more diverse group of volunteers. Any time that you can donate to work in any part of the village is appreciated and greatly valued by both the parish and borough councils.

How to join us

Just turn up

We do not 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 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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