



BROOK MEADOW CONSERVATION GROUP

NEWSLETTER No.91 APRIL to JUNE 2018

Message from your Chairman: The challenge ahead

Path Clearance

Norse have cut and cleared the main paths. The paths have been cut much wider than in previous years and look a bit like mini-motorways! The cuttings had been blown off the gravel path. No lasting harm has been done and everything will grow again.



There has been vigorous growth this year and already brambles and nettles are starting to overhang paths. These plants will be cut back by volunteer working groups.

It's time for a reassessment of our core purpose at Brook Meadow. Back in the early years of this century, when it was getting established, the emphasis had to be on defining the value of the piece of land and its usefulness in the scope of conservation efforts, as well as making the people of Emsworth aware of the huge potential it offered.

By about 2010, with membership hovering around the 350 mark, it seemed necessary to concentrate on its ecological value: surveys of populations, records of varieties of plant and animal species, management of the whole Meadow to encourage diversity, and so forth. The former emphasis on membership numbers was put to one side.

We now face a new situation, so reconsideration of where our efforts must be directed is necessary. In former times, we could count on Havant Borough Council's practical support. With the present squeeze on local authority budgets, and the outsourcing to Norse of management of all open spaces in the borough, we face a new future. Whereas we could count on various management tasks being done by HBC directly, at their expense, we now find that more and more, if the Meadow is to continue to thrive, we must fund works ourselves.

Here's a small example: the annual cut of areas of grassland which has been done by a local contractor who, crucially, has the right equipment for the careful cut and disposal of cuttings that we need, has been paid for by HBC. No more; last year Norse insisted on doing the cut themselves and it was so poorly executed that our precious grassland was devastated, as their operatives had neither the right machine or the necessary know-how to do it satisfactorily.

So we face a new challenge. If Brook Meadow is to continue to thrive as a local nature reserve, we will have to raise more funds. The committee are considering how this is to be done.

We plan that this year's AGM in early November will have a new format. You, the members, will have an opportunity to help direct the future of our precious Meadow. We look forward to the challenge this presents.

Jennifer Rye
Chairman BMCG

Riverbank Management

At the last AGM the state of the river banks was raised. It was suggested that the banks had become overgrown with vegetation which not only restricted the view of the river but also was of a type unsuitable for encouraging water voles to recolonise the river. The task of clearing the vegetation away was not one that volunteers could undertake as the river in spring was full and fast flowing. The committee decided to employ a contractor experienced in this type of work to clear the banks. It is hoped that during the summer the banks can be managed appropriately by our working parties.



PRACTICAL WORK IN THE MEADOW—2nd QUARTER SUMMARY

Conservation Work Session—Thursday 15th March

Slightly wet morning, but by 11 a.m. the sun was full out and it got really warm. Eleven volunteers arrived including two new ones, Jim and Peter Garland, who we welcomed very warmly. The main task for the morning: to clear the large bramble patch which had established itself round the trunk of the westernmost black poplar, planted on the north edge of the central Meadow by Frances Jannaway some years ago in memory of her mother. ►



Conservation Work Session—Sunday 25th March

Nine volunteers turned out, despite not only by the loss of an hour but also a session a week earlier than the usual Sunday, to enjoy a mild morning's hard work. There was one task, explained by the session leader Maurice, which was to finish clearing away the arisings from the river bank clearance, carried out by Contractor on Friday. ►



Conservation Work Session—Thursday 19th April

Sixteen volunteers turned out on a warm, sunny, cloudless spring morning. Unseasonably mild. The main tasks were to spread gravel on the causeway path, repair steps down to the river at the north-east corner, remove plant growth from the steps to the causeway path connecting the south meadow to the central meadow and to burn piles of twigs and cuttings which have accumulated at the North Bridge. ►



Conservation Work Session—Sunday 6th May

Eleven volunteers turned out on a hot May Day Bank Holiday. The first task was to complete the deadwood surround to the wild flower area in the North Meadow with material saved for the purpose lying nearby. Other jobs were to cut back the overhanging nettles along the north path edges and to cut down nettles and brambles that were sprouting from the recently cleared river bank. ►



Conservation Work Session—Thursday 17th May

Just six volunteers, a cool North wind keeping temperatures down. The main tasks was grass cutting, since everything is growing at a great rate. The growth round all the Rowan trees and the cherry trees was cleared with hand tools: scythes and shears. The power scythe had its first outing of the year, now the ground is dry enough to use it, and Mike trained a new user ►



Conservation Work Session—Sunday 3rd June

Very hot and humid. Nine volunteers. The tasks were to trim the pathways through Palmers Road Copse, and cutting and raking the occasional grass paths around and through the South Meadow. The 'Water Vole' viewing point was opened up to show the view up river and across the meadow, by removing a Hawthorn hedge between the observation fence and the Ash tree. The team moved to the South Meadow to rake up and dump the grass cuttings. ►



WILDLIFE ON THE MEADOW - Flowers, Butterflies and Moths

From Brian Fellow's wildlife blog



Knapweed

Many of the plants will soon be setting seed so now is the time to catch the last of them. Once the seeds are set the meadow will be mown to control the grasses and bindweed.

Flowers on the meadow



Hedge Woundwort

Note.: plant names which end "wort" mean that the plant has medicinal properties.



Pyramidal Orchid

A new flower for this year. Not uncommon but we are not sure how it arrived on the meadow.



Common Spotted Orchid



Meadowsweet

This plant has many medicinal benefits.



Greater Burnet



Saturday 2nd June—My first Common Blue ► today on Brook Meadow While resting on the main seat overlooking the meadow, I spotted my first Green-veined White ◀ of the year fluttering around low in the grasses. This takes the total number of butterfly species recorded on Brook Meadow this year to eleven. The Skippers and the Browns will be out towards the end of this month.



◀ **Mint Moth** (*Pyrausta aurata*) - a small but distinctive moth having deep orange markings on brown-purple forewings. It is referred to as the 'mint moth' because of its liking for minty plants. They are regular on Brook Meadow and I also see them in my garden. **Speckled Wood** ► butterflies seen in Palmer's Road Copse.





Bee Orchids

Bee orchids are hard to find in long grass. I counted five last Sunday, four in the wild flower section of the north meadow and one in the central meadow. As this was casual observation there could be several more, hidden in the long grass. They seem to be doing well. It was pleasing to see them in two locations. See pictures left and right.



Work done by the Volunteer Work Parties

Earlier this year the steps in various parts of the meadow where cleared of plant growth and re-packed with gravel. The pictures below show the results of two sites.

Water Voles Progress

There is still plenty of activity to encourage the re-introduction of water voles in the river. One member of the committee, Dan, is in charge of co-ordinating actions to improve the river bank. To this end Dan and Brian have made a list of forty-five plants growing on the banks and are considering if more are required. Dan is hopeful that we may be able to re-introduce water voles if our habitat is considered suitable. Water levels in the river will be a factor, especially as the summer progresses. Watch this space!



Forthcoming Events

Bank holiday Monday 25th August: Emsworth Horticultural Show.

Photographs this issue: Brian Fellows, Editor

FORTHCOMING WORK SESSIONS 10-12noon:

Meet at the Tool Store, Seagull Lane. Tools and gloves provided.

**Sunday 1st July : Thursday 19th July : Sunday 5th Aug : Thursday 16th Aug : Sunday 2nd Sept:
Thursday 21st Sept : Sunday 7th Oct**

BROOK MEADOW CONSERVATION GROUP—CONTACTS

Jennifer Rye (Chairman): 6 Frobisher Gardens, Emsworth, PO10 7AS. tel. 01243 376926. e-mail jenniferrye01@gmail.com

Debbie Robinson (Minute Secretary): 16 Victoria Road, Emsworth, PO10 7NH.

tel.01243 389005. e-mail debsrobuk@yahoo.com

Pam Phillips (Membership Secretary and Treasurer): 2 The Rookery, Emsworth, PO10 8AH.

tel.01243 377791. e-mail p.phillips367@btinternet.com

Website for photos of wildlife and Brook Meadow news: www.brookmeadow.org.uk