

3 Brooks Nature Conservation Group Report on activity 2005-06

Workdays and events

We had a full and varied programme this year. During the summer we had a number of educational events, including tree identification (led by Sharon Ubank), wildlife recording (John Mortin of BRERC) and an overview of the reserve (Rupert Higgins). Our thanks go to all of them for their support. We also ran a stall at the annual community fair, which went reasonably well but we learnt a few lessons for next time, such as how to make the stall more eye-catching.

During the winter we continued our coppicing and clearing work in neglected areas of all three of our woods, including Sherbourne's Brake for the first time. This will open up more areas to the light and increase wildlife diversity. Our two-day hedgelaying event was well attended and several residents have commented on our smart new-look hedge.

We held a general meeting in September at which we agreed a work plan for the following six months and agreed the first Saturday of every month as a permanent workday fixture.

A full list of the year's activity is attached as an appendix.

None of the work we do would be possible without Paul Humphreys, who brings expertise, tools, insurance and occasional sarcastic comments. Thanks are due to him for all the time and effort he puts into helping us keep our group going - not to mention the tea and biscuits.

Committee meetings

Since last April we have held 4 committee meetings in May, June, July and December. A further meeting was planned for January but had to be cancelled due to unavoidable absences at short notice. Committee business has included the following:

Setting up a bank account.

Signage in the reserve.

Planning and running the Community Fair stall.

Planning a website. We have registered a site name, www.three-brooks.info. This currently links to a basic page on the Bradley Stoke Town Council website, which has been set up as a first stage and carries information about forthcoming events, meeting papers etc. We don't have direct access to this - it is updated for us by Lesley Osbourne at the Council offices. In the longer term we wish to set up our own website to which we will have access and we are looking into getting quotes from different providers. We have also drafted text for the website and are looking at how best to structure it.

Designing publicity. We are working with John Morris to produce a fold-out leaflet about the reserve. This will include a map, a bit of information about the different habitats and a guide to some of the common wildlife. Rachel Callow has been doing some drawings and artwork for us, including a logo.

Tools/storage. We would like the group to own its own set of tools and may be able to obtain some via a B&Q grant. However there is no point in getting tools unless we have somewhere safe to store them. The town council unfortunately do not have anywhere to offer. John is currently looking into the possibility of getting a metal freight container - if we find one, we have to first be able to purchase it and then find somewhere to put it!

Membership

As of 12 March 2006, we have 25 full members plus a further 23 "friends" on our mailing list. We have built up a "hard core" of members who attend regularly and the group continues to grow, although there is still work to do in raising our profile in the town.

This report marks the end of 3BNCG's first year as an "official" group since its first AGM on 13 April 2005. The Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members and friends of the group who are helping us to maintain the reserve for the benefit of wildlife and residents.

*Emma Creasey, Secretary
March 2006*

Appendix - Record of workdays/events

Date	No. of volunteers	Event
2005		
23 April	6	Pulling off tree guards from the new plantations next to Ellicks Close and Ormonds Close, across the brook from Savage's Wood. We all got very wet, and mutinied at lunchtime.
28 May	6	Remedial work tidying up the outdoor classroom and a fallen tree. Spoke to the community police officer, PC Sean Oliver, about vandalism in the woods. Used deadhedging to block the unofficial entrance next to the skateboard park.
11 June	6	Stall at Bradley Stoke Community Festival. Made animal masks for children and some batboxes - though the Hawk and Owl Trust's birdboxes were more popular!
18 June	7	Fascinating walk round the reserve with Rupert Higgins (who prepared our management plan). Noted some areas for future work and identified some plants and birds.
9 July	12	Sharon Ubank organised a tree identification trail for us in Savage's Wood. It was quite difficult to tell hazel from wych elm and beech from hornbeam! Sharon showed us the great spreading oak that might have been the foundation of the wood.
30 July	14	Savage's Wood - Batbox making, clearing paths and planting wildflowers at the corner near the skateboard park, under the oak.
3 Sept	10 adults, 2 children	Introduction to wildlife recording with John Mortin of BRERC, followed by a walk to record some of the reserve's wildlife.
15 Sept	8	Evening bat walks led by Paul, through Savage's Wood and the grasslands to the north of it, crossing the brook and walking down to the lake. The first two outings detected pipistrelles and Daubenton's bats on the lake, using bat detectors. The second two were less successful!
19 Sept	15	
29 Sept	8	
3 Oct	7	
1 Oct	18 adults, 2 children	Very successful day "bramble-bashing". We cleared the path approaching Savage's Wood (from the lake direction) and on the other side of the wood, cut a large swathe through the brambles next to the new plantation.

5 Nov	13 adults, 3 children	Coppicing in Sherbourne's Brake - opening up an area of the wood, cutting back derelict coppice and felling some unsafe trees. We created a deadhedge with the felled timber.
3 December	9 adults	Working around the new access gate into Savage's Wood, felling trees for stakes, deadhedging and planting up the gaps.
2006		
7/8 January	Sat - 17 adults Sun - 11 adults	Hedgelaying weekend next to Ellicks Close - this also involved bramble clearing and cutting out an old hedge laid about 15-20 years ago. We didn't complete this in two days - Paul's NVQ group went back a few times to finish it off.
4 Feb	10 adults	Coppicing and deadhedging in Webb's Wood.
4 March	9 adults (4 from Patchway)	Coppicing in Sherbourne's Brake.