

3 Brooks Nature Conservation Group Report on activity 2008-09

This reports on the Three Brooks Nature Conservation Group's fourth year of activity since its official constitution on 13 April 2005.

Workdays and events

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

The group now has an established cycle of regular tasks. Most of the woodland work in the three main woods has now been completed so we have turned our attention to newer plantations.

We decided not to run a stall at the annual Bradley Stoke fair. This was not just because it clashed with a workday this year, nor because they wanted to charge us for attending! Although our stall was very busy last year we found that this didn't translate into more people turning up at our workdays, and since this is the main purpose of the group, we didn't feel the effort was worth it. Instead, we have offered to run a guided walk on the day of the fair this year.

Grants and awards

At last year's AGM we announced the receipt of £9820 from the Big Lottery fund Breathing Spaces grant. The committee, John Morris and Paul Humphreys worked on various elements of the grant throughout the year and achievements include:

- A surfaced path in Savage's Wood
- An orienteering trail, with posts and a map and guide, which had a very successful launch in September
- Wildflowers which we planted in April
- Dawn chorus and invertebrate survey with Rupert Higgins
- 6 bat walks (1 to be rescheduled), an owl prowl, fungi foray and (unfortunately unattended) seed gathering event
- The production of four leaflets (Trees, Birds, Flowers and the Lake) to accompany the main reserve leaflet; and leaflet dispensers to put them in
- The purchase of a noticeboard which will go down by the lake
- Lots of lovely shiny tools, plus insurance.

We have also had a number of other grants during the year as follows:

May - A B&Q Better Neighbour grant worth £163 with which we purchased spades, mattocks, a wheelbarrow and some brushes and paint for birdboxes.

We received a grant of £390.47 from Bradley Stoke Town Council to support "summer activities" of stream clearing and hay cutting – we bought waders, hay rakes, hay forks and grass hooks and topped up the tools insurance.

August - £914 from the South Gloucestershire Environment Grant as a 10% contribution to Paul's work fencing the new pond.

September - £190.63 from the South Gloucestershire Environment Grant for public liability and personal accident insurance.

December – We were delighted to be awarded a Service Level Agreement with Bradley Stoke Town Council. This will provide us with £1500 annually, starting in April 2009. This will cover annual costs such as tools and liability insurance, BTCV membership and the all important biscuit fund, plus some community events such as bat walks and a general walk on the day of the fair.

January – from the South Gloucestershire Environment Grant, £300 for creating storage space in the tool store, £345 for a tools training event with Paul to be arranged later in the year, and £800 for Paul to complete laying a stretch of hedge with his NVQ group.

March – £525 from the South Gloucestershire Environment Grant for the production of 3000 beermats to be distributed to local pubs and community centres; the design is currently being worked on.

Meetings

We held a general meeting in November to plan work and provide a general update.

The committee met in May, July (twice), September and February. Much of the business concerned the administration of the Breathing Spaces grant. We also planned the work for the general meetings and discussed approaches from other groups for our support. We have decided that we will help where we can but the main focus of our activity has to be our practical workdays.

Other events

We had a stall outside Tesco at the opening week of the Willow Brook centre. We were given to understand that it would be a “conservation day” with lots of other groups there but in the event it was only us!

The Green Gym has essentially become independent from BTCV. Both Sara and Dave have received full “leadership training” and ensure that the two groups’ activities do not clash.

Robin and Steven have continued to work on the website and we know people do look at it as we have received a few comments and queries.

Membership

As of 16 March 2008, we have 19 full members – so no increase from last year. 3 of these joined early in the year when we had a flurry of new interest but have not kept coming. While the core membership of about a dozen people remains strong, we still need to work on getting new members and keeping them once they turn up. Notices on the reserve still seem to be the most reliable way of getting people’s attention.

There are a further 22 people on the mailing list.

Concluding remarks

As many of our members are now of long standing and familiar with what needs to be done, we are increasingly able to take on work on our own. Having our own set of tools has really made a difference to this and, assuming we can purchase a few more tools that would make life a bit easier, we might be able to officially go it alone in the next year.

We have achieved a tremendous amount this year and as always, I would like to thank those who made it possible. John Morris continues to be an unfailing support and Paul and Jenny from BTCV have helped both 3BNCG and the Green Gym towards independence. My fellow committee members have all been very busy helping with different bits of the grant, and as Steve is stepping down as Treasurer this year I would particularly like to express appreciation on behalf of the group for his careful management of precious funds. Most of all we would like to thank those who come out and actually get dirty on our workdays, especially the hard-core regulars – you know who you are! – and *particularly* the people who know how to light the storm kettle.

Emma Creasey, Secretary
April 2009

Appendix - Record of workdays/events 2008-09

Date	No. of volunteers	Event
2008		
5 th April	15	Planting 300-odd wildflowers around the Community Orchard, including cowslips, primroses, red campion, yarrow etc., to attract pollinating insects. We also removed a lot of dead wood and waste that was blocking the stream in that area.
3 rd May	12	Stream clearing, starting at the lake and working up Patchway Brook. 3 shopping trolleys this year, only 1 traffic cone and no tyres although got a very big TV.
17 th May	11	Dawn chorus walk with Rupert 6-9 am.
7 th June	16	Arable plant and insect survey with Rupert Higgins – very informative.
5 th July	11, plus 2 adults and 5 children joined in	Made bird boxes in the morning, in the afternoon erected them around Webb's Wood and plantation next to school fence.
2 nd August	7	Haycut next to Webb's Wood
6 th September	10	Haycut/slashing in community orchard, cleared around trees and wildflowers.
4 th October	8	Bramble bashing by Savage's Wood and next to Community Orchard – cut "rides" up to previously smothered trees.
1 st November	14	Felling trees in the plantation next to the school fence.
6 th December	11	Continuing tree felling in the plantation.
2009		
3-4 January	Sat – 11 Sun – 13	Hedgelaying by reserve entrance opposite Tesco. Actually finished our stretch by 4 pm on the Sunday!
7 th February	13	Felling in Webb's Wood – in the snow!
7 th March	12	Completed tree felling in the plantation.