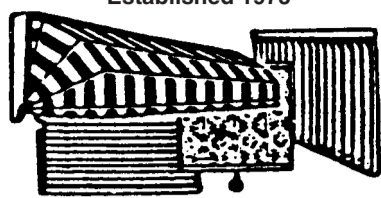


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NATURE CONSERVATION NEWS

Cleaning up the Town Mill Pond

... at last!

Virginia Wilson-Smith

I never expected to see a Hovercraft on the Town Mill Pond - but last month, it happened. Able to hover all over the pond, it was possible for a thorough clean-up to be carried out and many years of rubbish was deposited in the HBC lorry.



Hovering up the Rubbish

Amongst the large objects retrieved were scaffold poles, a large petrol canister, many tyres, bollards, road signs, crates, bottles and crockery. It is possible to see how some of these objects fell into the pond, but crockery?

Apart from removing the unsightly rubbish, it is hoped that the stream will be able to flow more freely along its course through the pond.

EMSWORTH MILL POND GROUP

John Mant

Since the publication of the July EMS and circulating a letter to the residents of Bath Road and Bridgefoot Path, 36 people have volunteered to help remove floating rubbish from the pond.

An inaugural meeting held at the Emsworth Slipper Sailing Club was attended by 20 of the volunteers. Councillor Gibb-Gray outlined the help that Havant Borough Council would provide and areas of the pond needing most attention were detailed.

It was unanimously decided that the Mill Pond Group will be a sub-section of the Emsworth Residents' Association.

The volunteers have now been divided into three separate working parties and it is hoped to carry out the cleaning process twice monthly during the summer months and once a month during the winter. Each working party will, therefore, only have to operate four times in the summer and twice in the winter.

Further volunteers will be most welcome.

**COME FOR A WALK IN
HOLLYBANK WOODS**

Pauline Bond

A lot of research has recently been done to evaluate the links between green space and health. It even has its own name - biophilia. It has been proven that access to green space is beneficial to health and well-being, so get out and hug a tree! Or just join our free 1-hour walk, exploring Hollybank Woods and feel the benefit of walking in this remnant of the ancient Forest of Bere.

The walk is safe and goes at the pace of the slowest person. One aim is to encourage people with a health problem to get back to walking, it is also for anyone who just wants a friendly, no pressure walk. For information ring Pauline 01243 376302 or Lorraine 02392 248807.

We meet on Wednesdays at 10am at the SYRCH Centre.



**NEW FARMING COOPERATIVE
HELPS WILDLIFE**

A new scheme, Three Harbours Beef Scheme organised by a Langstone farmer, is helping to preserve wildlife and the rich coastal landscape. Several farmers are working together as part of a scheme to graze cattle on more than 710 acres of environmentally valuable grassland around Chichester, Langstone and Pagham Harbours. Many of the marshes in the area are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), providing important habitats for Lapwings, Redshank, Barn Owls, Water Voles and Southern Marsh Orchids. All the cattle are reared naturally on local grazing marsh and pasture where they are allowed to mature slowly. This scheme benefits both the environment and local farmers.

**Brook Meadow Conservation Group
celebrates its 5th anniversary**

Frances Jannaway

It doesn't seem possible that it was five years ago this autumn when the Brook Meadow Conservation Group (BMCG) was formed. During this time, the group has improved the wildlife habitat of the meadow and enhanced its biodiversity whilst making it an increasingly pleasant place for the quiet enjoyment of the general public. This lovely open space is owned by Havant Borough Council and managed on their behalf by BMCG.

Starting from scratch with just a few volunteers, the group has now grown to more than 400 members at the end of its 5th year. Most of these members are Emsworth residents but we also have members from Wales and even Australia.

Improving wildlife habitat

Much of the group's work has been for the benefit of the wildlife. Our main conservation task is to organise the annual cutting of the main part of the meadow in late summer to encourage the more delicate wildflowers to grow.

In the first two years, the whole meadow was cut at the same time. This looked pretty drastic but was necessary to discourage rank vegetation such as stinging nettles from dominating the whole meadow. The next stage in the restoration of Brook Meadow is now underway. To encourage a wider range of wild flowers and minimise the impact of the cut on wildlife such as insects and other invertebrates, we are now cutting some areas in July and others at the end of September.

A variety of surveys are carried out to keep a record of the wildlife of Brook Meadow, such as the Water Vole population - the most endangered mammal in Britain.

Public enjoyment

Public enjoyment of the meadow has been enhanced by volunteers resurfacing all the main paths with new gravel to improve access. The four sign cases at the main entrances provide up-to-date information and photos about the wildlife and the work of the group. Interpretation boards - a pictorial map painted by local artist Marian Forster at two entrances and several Brook Meadow signs have definitely helped to put Brook Meadow on the map.

Events

Each year, a series of events are organised, which are now well established in Emsworth's calendar. They include:

- The increasingly popular Brook Meadow Wildlife Funday in May each year as part of the Havant Borough Arts Festival;
- Children's Wildlife Art Workshops during the autumn half term;
- Field study days are put on for schools - five schools, all three local schools and two Portsmouth schools, visited Brook Meadow this year
- Herb walks/storytelling afternoons are given by Steve Taylor, local medical herbalist, during the summer months.

In March-April 2005, the group put on a major exhibition, 'Brook Meadow Through the Ages' at the Emsworth Museum. The group is currently working towards publishing a book as a permanent record of the history of this very special place - a very appropriate way to celebrate the group's fifth anniversary. This book project is made possible by a very generous legacy from one of our members.

Funding

All the main events and improvements described above have been financed from grants. Our biggest award being the Peoples Places scheme (approx. £10,000), which dispenses mainly lottery money. Membership subscriptions and donations provide about a third of the group's income enabling us to pay for all our regular expenditure. However, the group still needs to find funding to continue putting on the annual public events such as those mentioned above.



Brook Meadow from North Bridge

Future plans

Together with Havant Borough Council's Open Spaces Development team, we are currently working towards:

- gaining Local Nature Reserve status for Brook Meadow;
- improving disabled access at the South entrance;
- improving the entrance gate at the North bridge.

The hard work and dedication of all the volunteers and the support of its members has enabled this community group to succeed. Thank you all very much.

If you would like to support the Brook Meadow Conservation Group, you can pick up a membership leaflet from the leaflet boxes on Brook Meadow or visit the group's website: www.hants.org.uk/brook-meadow/ or contact me, Frances Jannaway, membership secretary, tel. 01243 430314.



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