



Living by Cove Brook

Mary Yeldham



We feel lucky to live by Cove Brook. In winter we look out of the bedroom window and see the frosted willow trees and green banks glistening in the sun – beautiful. Heavy rain does make us wonder if it will flood again, but much as we might moan, not many of us moved away after the big flood of 2007. The brook path helps us keep fit with a brisk walk or run,

or just a gentle stroll, and there are always things to see - ducks with ducklings, moorhens, swans (four this year), little egrets and our friend the heron (those of us with fishponds know him all too well). We've seen a red kite flying along the brook, looking



for lunch, and for the first time in many years, we've also seen a kingfisher. In the garden we've had a sparrowhawk and grey wagtails (which are actually yellow and grey!) as well as the pied wagtails (black, white and grey). Foxes are more often heard than seen, and in spring they can be very noisy.

Out on a walk, with or without a dog, maybe with a child on a bike or scooter, you can see brambles (meaning blackberries in late summer), garden daffodils and bluebells, and wild flowers such as forget-me-nots, water mint and iris. Our group sometimes has net-dipping sessions, so we know there is a lot of wildlife in the water – damselfly larvae, sticklebacks and bullheads, and the not-so-welcome crayfish. Anglers tell us there are chubb, roach and pike and other biggish fish in the water.

Come rain, or shine, snow or hail, the brook can be an interesting and relaxing place to walk.



CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER - *Hilda Anscombe*

I was reading an article recently about nettles: they proliferate where there is plenty of nitrate available for them in the soil. Where does the nitrogen come from? Apparently a lot of it is caused by us humans, especially those of us who drive cars, or travel by any means that burns fuel, including aeroplanes. It seems that cars etc. give off nitrogen oxides that dissolve in the ground to produce nitrogen fertilizer.

Cove Brook Greenway Group was started by a lot of people who live near the brook and were fed up with seeing it looking a mess. The Group cleared litter, created Birchbrook Reserve from a disused area, planted trees by the brook on Moor Road recreation ground, improved Cheyne Wood, and did a lot of work to improve Southwood Meadows. Since then we have had regular work parties to help maintain these areas. But things change: nature has a habit of taking over. Our regular volunteers do a very good job, but the nettles in particular thrive on the brook bank, so if you cannot get to our work-parties how about adopting a short stretch of the brook (say 20 paces long) and keeping the nettles cut down when you are doing your own garden or when you walk your dog.

People have been telling me for ages that I do too much, and I'm beginning to believe them. I'm in my 75th year and have decided that this is my last year as Chairman of the Group. But I will still come along to work parties and do other odds and ends after that.



COVE, 1917

At our AGM in August, Margaret Taylor gave a talk on Cove 100 years ago. Margaret described how Cove grew from a small scattered settlement of less than 500 in the 1830s into a much bigger, busier village at the start of the First World War. She focused especially on four local men who died in the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917. Using Army, church and census records, she told us about their families, their occupations and where they lived. All the houses she mentioned are still standing. We know that thanks to the name plaques that builders liked to put on Cove's typical red brick houses (or 'villas') around the turn of the 20th century. Interestingly, the local papers of the time hardly mentioned war casualties, perhaps because there were so many. All our four local men had brothers who died within a few weeks of them. Thank you Margaret for an interesting and thought-provoking talk.

WORK BY THE BROOK

This year SouthEast Water has been laying a new water main along Fleet Road, Cove Road, West Heath Road and Prospect Road. Part of the £750,000 scheme has involved putting a U-shaped pipe under the brook beside West Heath Road – a major operation including temporarily damming the brook, diverting it and removing a tree.

At the end of October, a week of maintenance work began one part of the Esso pipeline which runs parallel to the brook and Hazel Avenue, south of Cove Road.

On the greenway path itself, patch repairs and surface 're-dusting' should be happening now, working southwards from Houseman Road. A new section of cycle/footway path to Elles Road is due to be constructed as part of this work.



WORK PARTIES - *Paul Sanders*

August 12th

Ten of us met at Birchbrook Reserve. We mainly concentrated on cutting the hedges and other vegetation on the boundaries. This included cutting the hedge alongside the entrance back to the wooden fence to keep growth off the path. We also cut along the other fences where neighbours had previously asked us to prevent vegetation growing into their gardens, and we attempted to control the spread of bindweed and bramble that threatens to take over the grassland.

September 15th

An excellent morning's work as fifteen of us met in Cheyne Wood to carry out a variety of tasks. We cleared many fallen tree branches out of the now empty pond. We cut the bramble and grass off the network of paths we had created in previous years and cut back all along the fence line along the path that leads to the curly bridge. We also tidied the area and cut back the grass on the viewing slots over the brook.

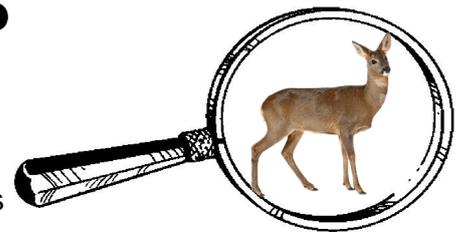
October 14th

There is a large area of bramble on the former allotments site near Blunden Hall. We have had various reports of plans for this area but it has remained untouched for many years apart from one path we created a few years ago. Recently a network of paths has been created through the bramble, providing interesting walks and also access to the large number of blackberries. We tidied up these paths but our main task was to create a clearing in the bramble to create a wild flower glade. The twelve of us quickly cleared an area of about twenty square metres cutting our way in through the dense bramble and small saplings, then the more hardy among us dug out the roots. We raked all the cut bramble and branches to the edge of the glade and made a dead hedge. We then scattered and covered the seeds including bluebells, foxgloves, red campion, wood anemones and others. It will be interesting to see the results in the spring.



Volunteers create a wild flower glade

WILDLIFE CLOSE UP DEER



The deer you are most likely to see locally is the roe deer – red-brown in summer, greyer in winter, graceful and quite tall - about 1.4 metres at the shoulder. If a roe deer sees you it may stand very still, hoping you won't notice it, and then bound away at incredible speed. Roe deer have been in Britain since the last Ice Age. If you have them coming into the garden to munch the roses, you might be surprised to know that they were extinct in England around 1800, due to hunting and land clearance. Thanks to reintroductions and natural spread, they are common and widespread again today.

If you see a deer that at first glance could be a dog, then it's a muntjac. They are also common locally, but are short and chunky (about half a metre at the shoulder), and have pointier, more mouse-like faces. If you get close, you might see the male's Dracula-style canine teeth. Muntjacs were introduced to Britain by the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Park in the 1900s, and have escaped and spread very successfully. They like shrubby surroundings, so they thrive in urban gardens, parks and cemeteries, as well as the countryside.

Deer are doing well. Hunting isn't so popular, and we have no wild wolves or lynxes as natural predators, so there are probably more deer in Britain than there have ever been. Most of us like to see them, but their numbers can cause problems. Good sources of information are Surrey Wildlife Trust www.surreywildlifetrust.org and the British Deer Society www.bds.org.uk.



Cove Brook

GREENWAY GROUP



CONTACT DETAILS



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07510 881939 Please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

TALKS, MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Tuesday 20th February	7.30pm	OPEN MEETING Speaker to be announced At: Blunden Hall, Blunden Road, Cove, GU14 8QP
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WORK PARTIES

Work parties are usually on the second Saturday of the month. Volunteers are welcome. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. We provide gloves, tools and refreshments. Please dress for rough ground and brambles.

Sat 11th November	10 am	LITTER PICK Clearing rubbish from the brook, banks and surrounding open spaces Meet at: Footbridge by Cheyne Way, GU14 8SA (near Curly Bridge and Scout Hut)	
Sat 9th December	10 am	CHRISTMAS SPARKLE LITTER PICK Clearing rubbish from the brook, banks and surrounding open spaces. Mulled wine and mince pies for our fantastic volunteers! Meet at: Blunden Hall, Blunden Road GU14 8QP	
Sat 13th January	10 am	BIRCHBROOK Woodland management on old allotment site plus Birchbrook. Meet at: Blunden Hall, Blunden Road GU14 8QP	
Sat 10th February	10 am	SOUTHWOOD Southwood grassland and path management, including willow and saplings removal. Meet at: Gate barrier on Hazel Avenue GU14 0HB	