

Welcome to

Bramber Brooks

An introduction

Bramber Brooks, to the north of Bramber village, is designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), with part of the land being a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Covering almost 40 acres, this former flood plain has not been managed for many years and the wildlife has been allowed to thrive without interference. As a result, there is an abundance of wild birds and small mammals and a small resident population of Roe Deer.

Riversong Limited bought the land in late 2016 and are committed to improving the biodiversity of the land, protecting and improving the diverse wildlife and allowing local people to enjoy the area, whilst preserving the unique wildness of this land on our doorstep.

Bramber Parish Council has been working with Riversong and have recently formed the **Bramber Brooks Management Committee (BBMC)**. This Steering Group is a sub-committee of the Parish Council and comprises local residents and Councillors. It has been involved in the creation and co-ordination of a new Nature Reserve at Bramber Brooks and other matters relating to the land.

History and archaeology

Land within the Adur valley played a big part in the salt-making industry in the 13th and 14th centuries and Bramber Brooks has some of the only undisturbed salterns in Southern England. Part of the land is therefore designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument to protect these areas. There is also a square moated area with each side of approximately 61m in length. It is likely that the remains of Medieval buildings will be within this moated land.

In more recent history, during WW2 the British Army parked tanks at Bramber Brooks and strengthened the bridge at the entrance to allow access. There is also evidence of brick foundations and a brick floor to a large Victorian greenhouse close to the new orchard, now overgrown by mature trees.

Brighton & Hove Archaeological Society (BHAS) are planning a visit to Bramber Brooks in the near future to carry out a geophysical survey on areas of potential interest.

Bramber Community Orchard

Last year, Riversong set aside an area of land next to the public footpath for a new Community Orchard for Bramber (although this area of land is actually within the parish of Steyning!).

We are pleased to report that the first eight trees were planted in the Bramber Community Orchard in late February and they all produced fruit over the Summer. There is a small information board at the orchard providing information on the varieties of apple trees planted and there are plans to plant more trees later this year. Fencing and a gate has been installed this month which has been paid for with grant monies received from the Rampion Wind Farm Community Fund. Seating and landscaping work will also hopefully follow.

We would like to thank members of the Steyning Community Orchard, who have helped with their invaluable advice, tree stocks and manpower in the setting up of the new Bramber Community Orchard. The orchard is kindly being sponsored by *Graves Son & Pilcher* of Brighton who have paid for the trees and the materials required to protect the trees from damage by rabbits and deer.

Bramber Brooks Nature Reserve

Earlier this year, the BBMC were successful in securing a grant of £10,000 from the Rampion Wind Farm Community Fund. This money will help establish the new nature reserve with a circular walk starting from the central point of the public footpath across the brooks. Five wooden pedestrian bridges have been built this month over wet areas and new seating and information boards will be installed over the coming months.

Although there are no public footpaths over this area of the Brooks and public access was previously prohibited, Riversong have agreed permissive access to the general public. Riversong will be contributing towards the general annual maintenance of paths, ditches, tree works etc.

We hope that schools and other local groups will be able to make use of this quiet space in the shadow of Bramber Castle ruins. It is likely that the new nature reserve will be a completely dog-free area to protect wildlife and ground nesting birds.

Management Plan for Bramber Brooks

Dr Petra Billings of Sussex Woodlands prepared an excellent Management Plan for Bramber Brooks last year on behalf of Riversong. We have been following the recommendations closely.

Other news from Bramber Brooks ...

- We had 27 tons of chalk and 8 tons of stone chippings delivered to Bramber Brooks in November and created two culverted crossings at the wettest points of the public footpath. Unfortunately, there are other areas of the footpath that remain very wet during the winter months.
- In accordance with the Management Plan, we have treated the thistles on the land using a tractor and topper to cut back growth. Hand spraying has been used sparingly.
- A new kissing gate and vehicle access gate was installed earlier this year at the entrance to The Street. This replaced the rotten wooden stile and the old metal gate.
- The Management Plan includes dexter cattle grazing on the two eastern fields adjacent to the river. We hope fencing works will be completed early next year. Dexter cattle are small and friendly and their seasonal presence on the land will help promote biodiversity of plant species.
- We hope to have exciting news later this year relating to the creation of new wildlife ponds within the nature reserve area in 2019. More information to follow

Thank you for your interest and support.

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August 2018