



Summer Newsletter - August 2021

Brighton and Hove Green Spaces Forum (BHGSF) is a volunteer organisation providing an independent voice and communication hub for volunteer groups working with Brighton & Hove's parks and open spaces.

(ALMOST) A DECADE OF CITYPARKS RANGER VOLUNTEERS By CityParks Ranger Neil Doyle



*.....cancellation of all
volunteer activities with
immediate effect from 17th
March 2020 until further
notice....*

Fast forward to Friday 11th
June 2021, I pull up to St
Ann's Well Gardens with a
van full of tools.....

It's been great to see the parks being so well used for the past year and a half, but as a result every department at CityParks has been flat out. Working with volunteers has alternated between nothing happening at all (just when some extra help would have been especially handy!) to being extremely busy. Interest in volunteering has never been so strong but (up until 17th May) whenever we weren't in a 'lockdown' we were restricted to meeting in groups of six. That was a very busy time. Organising a rota and running a minimum of six work sessions a week in smaller groups, just to give everyone who wanted to, at least one chance to volunteer every month.

.....I park the van and get out to greet everyone. It's a joyous moment, there are a lot of new faces, and a lot of the old regulars (Oi! Less of the old!) It's Friday morning, it's volunteering day and there are 18 lovely people gathered around the well, waiting for me to arrive with the tools so they can get stuck into today's volunteer task. And although 'it' is not yet over, something has definitely changed. We're all outdoors, happy to see each other again, and it's fantastic to finally be able to say we are back!

Back in 2011, after years of working in our parks with various 'friends of' groups, residents associations and external conservation organisations. I began to think why don't we

(CityParks) start up our own group? So, I began collecting email addresses and started the 'CityParks Ranger Volunteers' we've been meeting at 10am every Friday ever since.

I've always thought that whilst being very descriptive, and 'CityParks Ranger Volunteers' does do 'what it says on the tin!' It's also a bit of a mouthful and not very catchy; So, we tried one morning to come up with a new name for the group. The worst suggestion had to be 'Fun Fridays' because "We all meet on a Friday and we have fun!" terrible! "What about 'Neil's Nomads'?" because we're always in a different place every week" the (also terrible!) nickname 'Neil's Nomads' has stuck. But it does highlight the fact that one of the reasons the group has been so successful, is the wide variety of tasks and locations. It's great to be able to take a group of people somewhere that perhaps a lot of them won't have been to before.

Over time the Friday work parties become very popular, so I started the Wednesday sessions as well. We work in parks and nature reserves all over the city, going wherever we are needed, making visual improvements, creating and maintaining wildlife habitats and doing all those jobs that wouldn't get done without the help of volunteers.

One other aspect of how we run the CityParks Volunteers that has made it so popular, is the flexibility. I don't ask for any upfront commitment, I send out an email once a week saying where the task is. To take part all I ask is that volunteers reply to the email so that I know how many people are coming how many tools to bring etc. There are regulars who come most weeks, and there are some people who I might only see once or twice or year. But the main thing that really brings it all together is the people that come. It's a very special thing when all these people come along in their own free time and help make the parks and nature reserves nicer places for people and for wildlife. We at CityParks are very grateful for all the help we receive but a thing that is especially brilliant when it happens, is when a member of the public walks past when we're working, and they thank a volunteer for all their hard work. Fantastic.

I knew I'd be writing this today, so yesterday on the task I asked Mick (75) why he comes. "It's nice to get back home, sit back in my armchair, and think 'we did a good job today' and afterwards I can take my grandkids to the park to show them what we did". Aimee (30) said "It's good to feel like your helping the local community, visit new places and learn new skills". We do get a nice mix of ages (18 or over) and abilities. Students who need the work experience, the recently retired who still want to stay active, nature loving free-lance, self-employed or part-time workers who want to break up the week with some conservation and a chat (every now and again some will even take a day's annual leave so they can come along!). Some people are up for hard graft, they like to come along, raise the heart rate and break a sweat, others prefer their conservation at a more relaxed pace. I will accept no apologies from anyone who ever says that they only managed to get a little bit done. The attitude of the CityParks Ranger Volunteers has always been, do as little or as much as you like. If there are enough of us, then very quickly a little can add up to a lot.

It's been ten years since I started the CityParks Ranger Volunteers. A decade. Something to celebrate. So why stick 'Almost' in the title? The way I see it, we had all that time off, we've got plenty of catching up to do, and that list of jobs hasn't got any shorter!! I'll see you this time next year and maybe, just maybe, after another great year of volunteering, we can then talk about celebrating milestones! I'll let you know!

We meet every Wednesday and Friday at 10am. If you'd like to get involved please email Cityparks.volunteers@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

Also, if you are part of a group that works on CityParks land and you find that you need a little bit of extra assistance, either because you aren't getting the numbers along to your workdays. Or that the task you've taken on is a bit too big, please get in touch, CityParks Ranger Volunteers might be able to help.

Look forward to seeing you on one of the conservation days soon

Cheers

Neil

RE-WILDING THE CITY'S GRASS VERGES

Can you help?

In ecological terms, the links between spaces are vital as wildlife corridors and as part of the city's ecological network. Work is underway with the council and other interested parties about how our city's road verges might be better managed for biodiversity. This being part of a project funded by Natural England.



Simply changing our mowing patterns to suit wildflowers and pollinators a little more would allow our verges to act as highways for wildlife, connecting up larger areas of good habitat, and make nature more freely available to all our city's residents.

During the lockdowns of the pandemic, road verges have often been the only contact with nature that many people have had. And look what happens sometimes when mowing ceases - this Lizard Orchid turned up on an urban verge in nearby Lewes!

Volunteers are wanted now to help in a pilot project identifying biodiverse verges across the city. The project aims to identify some key sites on which to trial different management techniques – such as reduced mowing, or mowing at specific times of year – that might encourage greater species diversity within the verge and be more beneficial for wildlife.

Identifying biodiverse verges is the first step in a larger project to understand how best to support biodiversity across the city's amenity grassland. Watch out for regular updates on this project via the Living Coast website at www.thelivingcoast.org.uk including future volunteering opportunities.

A template has been designed to help volunteers record the results of their surveys. The survey form can be downloaded from here <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Wilder-Verges-survey-form-final.docx>

If you have any questions, contact City Ranger Lindsay on the rangers@brighton-hove.gov.uk : email with the words 'Wilder Verges' in the subject line.

BEAUTIFUL B BANKS

More than 700 different animal and plant species have been found on B Banks at different sites around the city. They are miniature reconstructions of the grasslands found on the Sussex Downs and have been planted with wildflower species important to bees and butterflies.



The first B Bank was constructed almost 20 years ago, and subsequent ones have been created at different sites around the city, including Dorothy Stringer School, Hove Park, Surrenden, Carden, Hollingdean, Crowhurst, Brighthelm, Swanborough, East Brighton and Roedean. Together, the areas measure a total of 1.26 hectares, or around two football pitches.

In a detailed ecological survey on the sites, 554 different invertebrates, like bugs, flies, beetles, butterflies, larva, moths and spiders, were recorded, including 58 with conservation status, plus a bee which is totally new to Sussex. A total of 191 different plant species were also documented.

Most of the banks were constructed as part of the government funded Nature Improvement Area Program by the council's CityParks department which looks after and maintains Brighton & Hove's parks and open spaces.

The survey, carried out last May and July, was commissioned by City Parks, The Living Coast, Brighton & Lewes Downs UNESCO World Biosphere region, and was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) as part of the development of a large conservation project called Changing Chalk.

BEE BUS STOP!

Brighton has its first solar-powered living Roof Bus Shelter in Palmeira Square. It's a roof planted with a mix of wildflowers and sedum plants, which are rich in nectar and a favourite of bees and other pollinating insects. As well as helping pollinators, the shelter will also absorb rainwater, support the city's biodiversity and is powered entirely by solar energy.



The shelter is also fitted with a smart lighting system, which only turns on the lighting when a passenger is present, further minimising its environmental impact.

All elements of the new shelter are fully recyclable as it has been designed with principles of circular economy. This means at end of life nothing needs to go to landfill.

The shelter has been paid for, installed and will be maintained by Clear Channel UK, who maintain the city's bus stops and is the first of its kind in the south of England.

CENTRAL & EASTERN BRIGHTON COMMUNITY GARDEN TRAIL 14th & 15th AUGUST



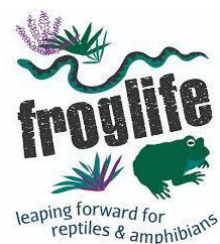
Albion Community Garden are proud to sponsor the first of what we hope will be a new annual event to celebrate the greenspaces, big and small, that can be found in your neighbourhood. Right on your doorstep the growth in new growing areas has multiplied in the last 15 months and now they are mostly in full bloom and looking glorious.

The event this year is only covering eight community gardens in central and eastern Brighton, but we plan to increase numbers in the following years. The trail will take you from London Road Station to St Georges' in Kemptown and includes both established gardens and new starts.

Maps and leaflets can be picked up at each of the gardens and features a challenge for children to collect a sticker from each garden to win a prize. The Community Garden Trail leaflet can also be seen here <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CENTRAL-EASTERN-BRIGHTON-COMMUNITY-GARDEN-TRAIL.jpg>

FROGLIFE

There's good news for the city's amphibian population with the announcement of funding to create nine new dewponds in Froglife's Discovering Dewponds project. Have a look at this link <https://www.froglife.org/2021/07/19/discovering-dewponds-sussex-downland-dewponds-leapfrog-into-a-wetter-future/>



GREENHAVENS NETWORK – WILDER GARDENS

Greenhavens Network is the Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum's neighbouring network of green space volunteer groups. Covering the area from Telscombe to Seaford.

Wilder Gardens is a Greenhavens Network initiative and is growing from strength to strength since launching at the beginning of the year. They now have over 40 Wilder Garden Champions who are creating neighbourhood clusters in Lewes, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Seaford. They have been busily training them to support their communities in creating havens for wildlife in the neighbourhoods and gardens.

Champions have undergone First Aid training, Health and Safety and Risk Assessments. More training is coming up in August and September, including workshops with BugLife, Sussex Butterfly Conservation Society, Sussex Bat Group as well as 'making homes for nature' sessions being run by Jessie the Wilder Garden Co-ordinator.

As part of the Wilder Garden project, Save Seaford Swifts and Save Newhaven Swifts groups have been set up, with additional funding to support swifts across the Greenhavens area.



Photo graph shows moth trapping as part of the Greenhavens Wilder Garden project.

More information about the project can be found on the [Greenhavens Network | Facebook](#) alternatively email greenhavens@yahoo.com to find out more. The Greenhavens Network website can be seen at <https://greenhavens.network/>

PLANT YOUR POSTCODE



Supporting the City's Urban Trees! An update from Plant Your Postcode.

Despite everything that Covid 19 and the weather has thrown at us, we've managed to keep planning and planting in and around the City over the past 18 months. Funds generously provided by the Rampion Community Fund and the National Lottery, now spent, have enabled us to achieve a lot. We've been working with local residents' groups across the city, helping them to plan and plant this year and into next.

We know that greening up the City with healthy green spaces by planting trees benefits everyone and over fifty groups and streets have contacted us hoping to plant new trees or replace trees lost in their streets.

The City Council Arboriculture department has three new members of staff, already super busy and keen to see trees planted. They are all very supportive indeed in helping to get projects off the ground. This is great news! Now we need real creative support from the City to overcome obstacles that are hindering street planting.

For more information on the projects completed by PYP at the Sylvan Hall Estate and West Hove School, current projects they have under way, urban street tree planting and the Brighton & Hove Tree Strategy, see the PYP July Newsletter at <https://plantyourpostcode.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CPRE-Sussex-Plant-Your-Postcode-Summer-Newsletter-July21.pdf>



Greg Sweeney and Michael Roberts – David Archer Associates: Arboriculture consultants at work at Sylvan Hall Community Orchard.

Plant Your Postcode is a volunteer led CPRE project

STAYING IN TOUCH

The Forum has a number of exciting initiatives and events planned for the coming year and we want to make sure members are getting the right information from us!

Please could you ensure your group's contact details are up to date by checking <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/friends-of-groups/>

We would appreciate it if you could confirm your group's details at this link are correct, or supply us with any amendments, by emailing us at bhgsforum@gmail.com .

With your updated information we can keep connecting volunteer groups wherever we can.

We look forward to being in touch with you soon!

MEMBER GROUP UPDATES

Many thanks to the groups that sent in the following updates. Members have fed back that they love to hear what other groups have been up to. To find the contact details for all our member groups, visit <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/friends-of-groups/>

FRIENDS OF HOVE LAGOON PLANTING SCHEME

On a wet Friday in June work got underway on the Hove Lagoon Planting Scheme designed by Nick Dexter. Contractors Dan Boorman and Milo Foster-Prior, alongside a group of dedicated volunteers, got to work rotavating, digging in 6 truck loads of compost and planting over 1500 plants in two borders to the western side of the lagoon.



The naturalistic style of planting uses hardy perennials and grasses suited to the tough marine environment and is already attracting all sorts of insect and bird life into the Lagoon. In the first week or so a dedicated group of volunteers, including students from Brighton College armed with watering cans, ensured the plants were well watered and all the wet weather in early July has allowed them to get established.

The Gather Inn and Lagoon Watersports kindly allowed us to use their water supplies as well as keeping volunteers hydrated during the hot days planting. Southern Water have now installed mains water supplies next to the planted areas.

The project was funded by grants from Sussex Community Fund, West Hove Forum, Brighton & Hove City Council and LagoonFest business sponsors. All these in addition to our own fundraising activities. For more information please visit the following sites..

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsHoveLagoon>

<https://www.instagram.com/friendsofhovelagoonandfest/>

Sussex Community Fund: <https://sussexgiving.org.uk/>

Nick Dexter: <https://www.nicholasdexter.com/>

ART IN THE PARK AT VALE PARK PORTSLADE

Friends of Vale Park had over 50 people come along to their free 'Art in the Park' event on 17 July. This encouraged all ages and abilities to drop in to the park, collect some materials (provided thanks to the generous support of B&H Council) and produce some wonderful art work. There was even some professional advice on hand to help people along. After such an enthusiastic response from the local community we're aiming to run the event every year.



RSAS GARDENING GROUP

Good news 😊 CityParks is supporting the Regency Square Area Society Gardening Group plan to restore the borders in Regency Square's upper garden. Fund-raising is going well.

Bad news 😞 The plan relies on volunteers doing the work, but turnout to recent sessions has been very low.

We need at least four people at every session just to keep on top of the weeding and tidying. The 2019 Green Spaces Forum member survey and our own pre-covid turnout indicate that's achievable. But, over a dozen work sessions from April to July, turnout has averaged a mere 1½ people. The pandemic has altered many of our volunteers' circumstances and priorities, at least for the moment. But the situation bodes ill for the autumn jobs of ground prep and planting, and for ongoing care of restored borders. It also makes planning difficult; whether to invest in more tools (and the facilities to store them), whether the very idea of volunteers restoring a garden of this size is over-ambitious.

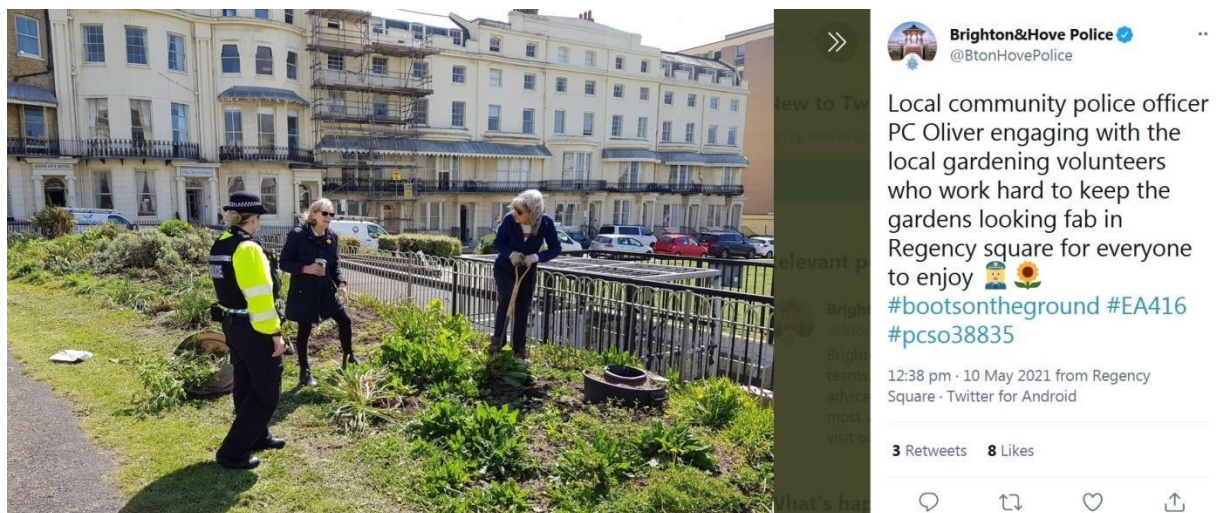
We're trying to raise awareness of the group's work, using various channels to appeal for new members, emphasising that it is about working in a group, not as individuals. Because we do have some secret gardeners, working independently. This can be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, its thanks to secret gardeners that we have some fabulous hollyhocks self-seeding every year. On the other hand, a secretly planted Clematis formed such a thick blanket over established flowering



I'd love to hear about other groups' experiences of and solutions to low turnout? We're trying to raise awareness of the group's work, using various channels to appeal for new members, emphasising that it is about working in a group, not as individuals. Because we do have some secret gardeners, working independently.

More Good news 😊 CityParks Ranger volunteers spent a day in Regency Square. They came bearing gifts: five crates of Lampranthus cuttings, which were planted along the entire length of a 113ft (34m) border, clearing three rubble bags' worth of weeds in the process. Six weeks later the border needed weeding again, but the cuttings have taken and are already flowering. Thanks to 'Lampranthus Day', we now know how many volunteer hours it takes to clear, plant and maintain a border of that size. Hence my nervousness over recent turnout.

More Bad news 😞 We've had some plant thefts in the garden. I think because, at present, our efforts are having too little impact on the general air of neglect. Some folks evidently assume that no one will mind, or even notice, if they help themselves. How ironic, then, that we should find ourselves on the local Police Twitter feed in May:



Gill Wales
RSAS gardening group leader
rsasgardening@gmail.com

WOODINGDEAN WILDERNESS

We aim to bring people together to create biodiverse and sustainable public green spaces that promote our natural ecosystems and its wildlife, people's health, happiness and well-being; and improve the quality of life for those in the Woodingdean area through our activities. Like many other greenspace groups, we had to put our 2020 planned activities on hold due to Covid-19. However, this did not dampen our spirits and work continued but limited to things that could be done as part of daily exercise as individuals and in our bubbles such as litter picking, pruning and watering saplings.

We were successful in securing funding from the **BHCC Carbon Reduction Resilience Fund** for a **Tree planting and biodiversity project**. This will involve working with the community this Autumn to plant 285 native trees and shrubs to create wildlife hedges and wildflowers to increase the biodiversity of the area.



The 1839 Tithe Map showing
The Woodingdean Wilderness Group site.

In February we held our first **Our land, maps, and memories** talk on Zoom which was a great success with lots of interesting facts, photos and maps shared of the area. The site has changed very little in over 182 years, the Old Wood (Warren Plantation) is still there, and the surrounding fields are still used for farming. Now, where Warren Farm once stood, we have the Lawn Memorial Park, the Woodland Burial Site and the Butterfly and Bee Bank. The talk was followed by a fascinating session where people shared their memories, giving us lots more information about the site.

In May we led two wonderful, guided walks to ease us all back into being together in nature. Everyone enjoyed themselves - there was a lot of chatting! We wandered through a buttercup field with amazing views, heard a very loud Wren singing, found English and Spanish bluebells, saw the Bee/Butterfly Bank coming to life and even discovered a woodpecker hotel.

In June we had a fabulous time talking to the Community about wildlife and our greenspaces at the Woodingdean Community Association wildflower event. Over 80 people attended during the day of all ages which was amazing. Lots of chat about hedgehogs and wildlife friendly gardens, exploring greenspaces, good networking and ideas sharing; and looking forward to WWG activities later in the year.

We also had a Woodingdean Wilderness Group open socially distanced community session on Sunday onsite at the green space. We weeded and mulched our young saplings we planted in November 2019; removed dead ash trees to create space for more planting this Autumn; we did a wildlife walk with Ranger Paul through the old woods and saw a Kestrel, many wildflowers, Dead Man's Finger Fungus (!) and a yellow Shell moth; and also led a Families walk with a nature scavenger hunt too. A busy weekend!

To find out more about WWG plans and how you can get involved, please join our Facebook Group and Group

Email info.woodingdeanwilderness@gmail.com

FACEBOOK: Woodingdean Wilderness Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/479812122755043/>

STANFORD AND CLEVELAND COMMUNITY GARDEN

Stanford and Cleveland Community Garden community volunteers continued to work through lockdown, with numbers working together increasing as lockdown restrictions eased. We welcomed 3 new members earlier in the summer, all of whom had seen and admired the garden during 'lockdown walks' over the last 18 months and wanted to contribute.

Weather wise, the summer was very slow to start this year but despite this the garden has flourished. We have planted a wide range of flowers and vegetables with the demand for water always taken into account both environmentally and as we do not have our own mains water supply. We also reseeded the grass surrounding the raised beds which we feel softens and enhances the area that is otherwise surrounded by tarmac.

Maintenance did not stop for the virus, with general wear and tear requiring ongoing attention. To this end, we replaced the hazel fencing, kindly donated by the Stanmer Park Rangers, which supports a very pretty but rampant passion flower climber and more delicate goji berry vine. Our willow arch, an original feature of the garden, has also been successfully pruned and shaped and will hopefully now be more manageable.

As ever, maintaining an income features in all our planning. We opted not to participate in competitions this year that have historically earned us prize money but have been judged for the South and South East in Bloom competition (results not yet known). We did join Octopus Energy in their recent scheme to sign up people to their service. We delivered flyers locally and received a financial contribution for every sign up.

In May we also had a very successful plant sale and are very grateful to the public for their ongoing generous patronage. Last year the money raised from our plant sale was donated to MacMillan cancer support. This year we also participated in the Macmillan Coastal Gardens Trail over the weekend of 24/25th July. As well as people being able to visit and enjoy the garden there was also an opportunity to purchase plants, crafts and enjoy homemade cake.



We know the garden has continued to be a source of pleasure for the community as the comments from passers-by testify.

'It's a delight to stand and linger a while as you walk past.'

'This beautiful community garden delights and inspires me every time I pass by on my dog walks. Thank you to the wonderful team who work so hard so that we can all enjoy it.'

It has also been a source of pleasure for the volunteers, who are so pleased to have been able to continue despite all the adversity of the past 18 months; and who hope that the garden will continue to thrive for all to enjoy.

FRIENDS OF ST ANN'S WELL GARDENS

Notice Board

Call us old fashioned but the FOSAWG thought our gardens' users could do with a notice board, and it seems to be a huge success. We may live in a digital age but a board with an array of notices still catches people's eyes as they stroll past.

Paid for and maintained by the Friends (with council approval) the board is refreshed regularly by Friends with helpful local news and information.

Especially popular is Bird of the Week and other suggested ideas for spotting special trees, plants and wildlife for children and parents wandering around. Fingers crossed it also has a great future attracting more volunteers for the Friends.



Book Swap

This neat but brilliant idea is great for recycling those children books piling up at home, just put them in the box and instantly provide a free library for many local young readers.

Within 5 minutes of this Swap Box going up on the wall, **thanks to the Friends**, it had its first customers! The Swap Boxes come from Collected Works.

<https://collectedworks.co.uk/about-us/> and are highly recommended.

FRIENDS OF BEACON HILL

The Friends spent a lovely sunny morning in July pulling Ragwort from the horse field that runs between Hog Plat and The Recreation Ground in Rottingdean. Ever mindful that the Cinnabar Moth needs this plant as their main food source, some were left for them feed on.

We haven't planned to meet during August due to a combination of Ranger holiday, Lead Volunteer's First Aid Certification running out along with the minor point that there was hardly any Ragwort to pull as previous years pulling and grazing have stopped the spread.

We have, however, noticed that there are several plants sporadically appearing throughout the Nature Reserve but as the Skylarks nest throughout August, we thought best not to trample across their homes. We may well have a Ragwort pull in September once the birds have flown, trying to pull and bag it before it goes to seed and spreads far and wide.



September will see us back on the scrub bash trail and it's a case of many hands make light work so if you are able why not come up and join us for a 2 hour session (2nd Tuesday and 4th Friday of each month).

During October we will be holding some weekend sessions for those that are working during the week. If you are interested in coming along please drop us a line at the e-mail address listed below so we can assess numbers and firm up dates.

The Annual Beacon Hill Nature Reserve Report is being prepared and we would love to include any photos you have taken. Last year we had a great response to this call out with a whole selection of photos making it into the report. Please send any photos to FOBeaconHill@gmail.com

We meet on the 2nd Tuesday and 4th Friday of each month at Beacon Hub. 10am for a 2 hour session. Please also see facebook page, @beaconhillrottingdean, for updates and more info. If you would like to join our mailing list please contact us on FOBeaconHill@gmail.com