

Abbey Road Project - Progress report. April-Aug 2021

We continue to monitor the site for wildlife, plant life and water levels as per the Management Plan and carry out gentle maintenance around the site.

Calendar of activity

10th April, 17th April and 1st May After easing of the Covid restrictions, the Abbey Rd Conservation Volunteers were able to meet on these three dates under the Covid 'Rule of 6'. 13 Volunteers did at least one session each.

21st May. Two staff from the Ouse and Adur River Trust visited to carry out an invertebrate survey on the Tanyard Stream at Abbey Rd. 3 ARCV volunteers assisted them. (Gerard, Richard and myself)
One Caddis fly and one Mayfly species were significant finds, as they are only found in non-polluted high-quality water. OART use a national system of scoring the finds to give an overview of the quality of the water habitat being tested. The score for this part of the Tanyard Stream was 85. The OART assessment was that this was a very good quality survey. There are a few water courses that score over 100 in their area, but they are the exception.

16th June. OART working party.

Rachel, Linda and Mike from OART, plus Gerard, Richard, Chris and myself from the ARCVs had an exhausting but enjoyable morning fixing hazel deflectors with chestnut posts in the stream channel. This help create new pools and gravel areas to help diversify the habitat, especially for spawning brown trout.

17th Jun. Botany survey.

Bob, Fran and myself carried out the second botanical survey of the site. We have now identified 89 flowering plants/grasses/trees.

5th July. OART students visit. OART bought a group of their environmental students to the Tanyard stream to train them in sampling macrofauna in a chalk stream.

24th July. The ARCVs met again to trim the paths around the site.
We did not meet in August

General.

The site has changed dramatically over the Spring/summer. The amount of growth everywhere has been astonishing; far more than at the same time last year. The weather is the reason for this. Last year the early summer was very dry, whereas this year after a dry late spring, the rains have promoted lush growth especially in the meadow area. This has also benefitted the Meadowsweet in the meadow area that last year barely grew, but this year is in full flower. The plants we transplanted into other areas of the meadow are also thriving. The second and last 'cut and collect' of the meadow grass for this year will hopefully take place in the next few weeks,

Pond area

We have been watching the water levels here for over a year now, and what is clear is how quickly the crescent shaped trench we dug last autumn responds to moderate rainfall after a dry period. It soon dries up again, but it does show how close to the surface the ground water level must be even during the summer months. So the plan to excavate more of this area this coming autumn looks to be a good option. (There is a separate request to carry out this work at tonight's meeting)

About 12 clumps of Purple Loosestrife are flowering on the edges of the pond. There were only 2 clumps last year, so these lovely pond margin plants have definitely benefitted from removal of the goat willows, as they now have more light.

Bird survey

Colin Holter has provided a summary of the birds he has found on the site between January and June 2021. His list now totals an impressive 37 species, including Sparrowhawk, Goldcrest, Swift and Whitethroat. He mentions the dense scrub often in his report, so we mustn't underestimate how important these areas are.

Abbey Rd Advisory Group

An expert Advisory Group is now in place to help guide future development/maintenance of the site. The Management Plan has been agreed by the Parish Council, but there will be many decisions that need to be made as the site develops that this Advisory Group will help with.

I am pleased that the following have agreed to be on our Advisory Group:

Tony Whitbread. Ecologist and President of the Sussex Wildlife Trust

Craig Daters. South Downs National Park Authority lead ranger for our area of the Downs.

Colin Holter. Experienced local birder.

I will arrange a walk around the site with this Advisory Group in early autumn.

Although not part of the group, **Rachel Paget** and **Linda Kerrison** of OART are always available to give advice about the Tanyard stream and its environs.

Tree planting

I've made contact with the Sussex Wildlife Trust who have been working with Wakehurst on the Sussex Black Poplar Project for many years. Black Poplars are a rare native tree that grows on river banks and floodplains. I'm hoping that we can find space for a few of these large trees at the edge of the pond area.

We have many Italian Alder trees on site. Although lovely trees, they are not native and some are in poor condition. So we may be able to find space for a few native Alder as well.

The Dutch Elm resistant Elm donated by the SDNPA and planted by Steyning for Trees in Nov 2020 seems to have died. SFT have asked to leave it until next Spring to see if has any life left in it.

Roger Brown

Abbey Rd Open Space coordinator

31st Aug 2021.