

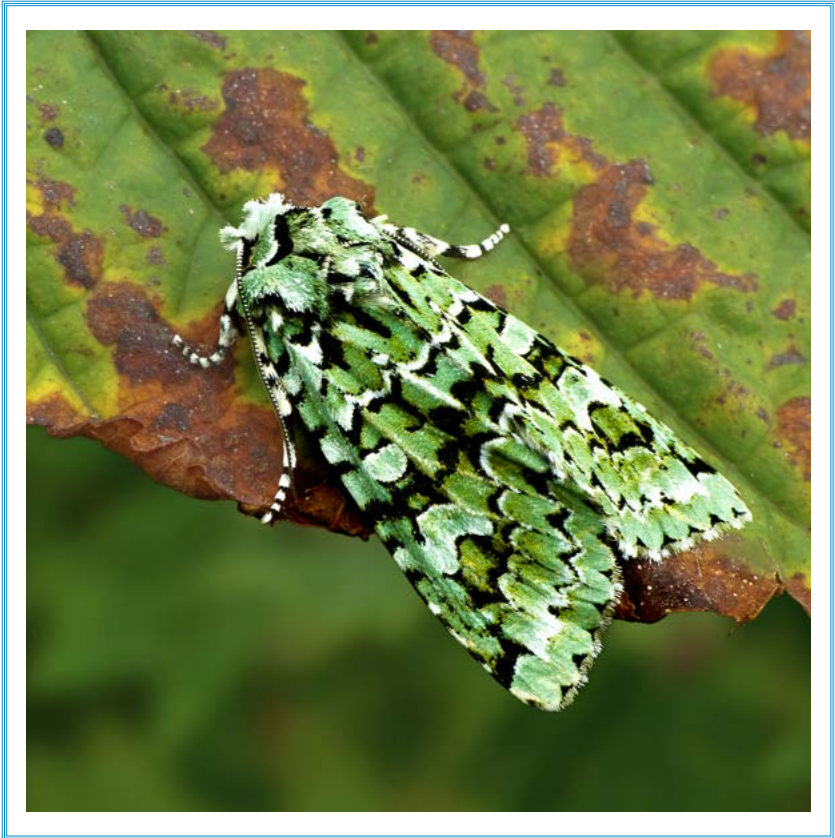
CROMWELL BOTTOM

WILDLIFE GROUP

# MAGAZINE



Issue 21



Merveille du Jour (Wonder of the Day)

credit Charlie Streets

# IN THIS ISSUE ..



**FRONT COVER IMAGE** Merveille du Jour (Wonder of the Day) - from CHARLIE STREETS, CALDERDALE MOTH-ER. This moth was photographed on 8th October 2023. It was resting on the outside of Anthony Arak's moth trap located on the western edge of North Loop. It was special for me, as it was the first time that I had seen a Merveille du Jour, and it was in pristine condition. This site has so far proved to be the most reliable and productive for moths of the whole reserve. This is thought to be due to the wide range of habitats found within a small area on North Loop. The fact that the Robinson trap used there, with its 125 Watt mercury vapour bulb, is acknowledged as being the most efficient at attracting moths.



click on the QR code to the left to check out Charlie's moth website.  
<https://charlielepidopteraofcalderdale.blogspot.com>

## In this issue:

- 5 Around the Reserve
- 10 Spotlight on Volunteers
- 12 A Year in the Life of Cromwell
- 17 Community Links
- 20 Working with Schools
- 23 Cromwell et le Monde!

## FEATURES

- 11 Rearing Painted Ladies  
- butterflies
- 14 Finding Jewels
- 15 Spotlight on Common  
Twayblade

**FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHERS**  
MICK & KATH SHARPE P. 21, 22

**BACK COVER ILLUSTRATION**  
SUE SEDMAN

## Donations

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**[membershipCBWG@gmail.com](mailto:membershipCBWG@gmail.com)** membership enquiries,  
monthly news briefing to members,  
finance

**[@cromwellbottomwildlifegroup](https://www.facebook.com/cromwellbottomwildlifegroup)**

**[@cbwggrp](https://www.x.com/cbwggrp)** (formerly known as Twitter!) ~ login details required by X)

Our website ~ **[cromwellbottomlnr.co.uk](http://cromwellbottomlnr.co.uk)**



Our Youtube channel ~ search the name - including the @ ~  
**[@CBWGmedia2023](https://www.youtube.com/@CBWGmedia2023)** - when you have clicked on channel, click  
'videos'.

If you would like to donate to CBWG using our Just Giving site, please click on the QR code below or visit ~

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Designed and produced by valerieb.

Printed by  **solopress**



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Registered Charity 1176233

# WELCOME

## Chair's Welcome



Simon Day  
Chair of CBWG

Welcome to our Spring/Summer magazine which is rich in articles and photos covering recent events at Cromwell Bottom.

Firstly, a huge thank you to all our dedicated volunteers, whose endeavours and expertise ensure that CBWG remains a thriving charity.

That said, we couldn't achieve what we do without the extremely generous support from the public, not only in terms of donations, but from those who support us on social media, memberships and...bringing bags of empty drinks cans!! We value and fully appreciate every bit of support we receive.



David Langley  
Joint Vice Chair

In this edition, watch out for two very interesting articles in the 'Spotlight on Volunteers', and 'A Year in the Life of Cromwell' pages, also some information about renewable energy and our total raised by collecting cans in 2024!



Hayley Cottrell  
Joint Vice Chair

*Simon*

[CBWGWildlife@gmail.com](mailto:CBWGWildlife@gmail.com)

Every photo in all our publications including our website, are taken at Cromwell Botton LNR by the photographers (unless otherwise stated), who are members, or who visit Cromwell Bottom regularly. CBWG extends a huge thank you to you all.

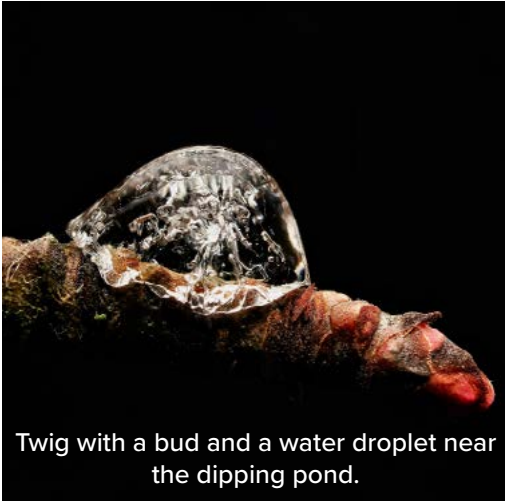
### Editor's note:

If you haven't seen Simon's video of a walk around the reserve, you may wish to hover your phone camera over the adjacent QR code, or click if online.

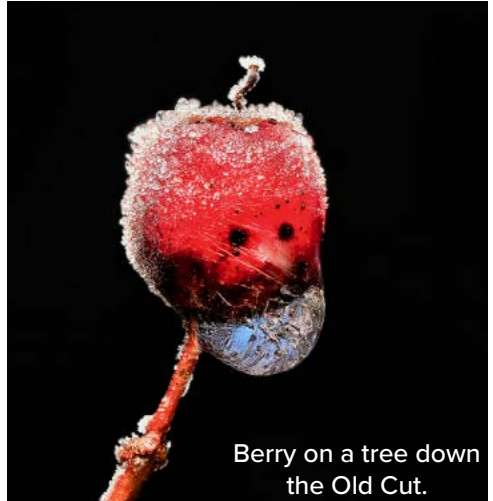


## Around the Reserve

Images captured by photographer **Darren Kenny**, who has been busy with with a macro lens and complicated flash set-up, creating the separation of the subject and black background. Oh, and much crawling around the undergrowth!



Twig with a bud and a water droplet near the dipping pond.



Berry on a tree down the Old Cut.



New display board by the wheelchair platform at the Bird Viewing Area.



I often wander around the reserve hoping to see a fox, so on one of our sunnier days I was happy to find this dog fox basking up the sun.

**Kirsty Collins**



Newly designed feeding line hoping to let birds get food ahead of the squirrels!



I was having a rest at the lagoon when two young Roe deer walked out and started playing on the lagoon, chasing each other and hiding in and out of the long grass. They both stopped to have a nibble before disappearing out of view! Here is one of them ....  
Kirsty Collins



**2<sup>nd</sup> AUGUST  
2025  
10-4**

This family of swans had a walk round Cromwell a couple of summers ago. They actually waited by the kissing gate until I opened it for them! They waddled through the gate, down the steps and back into the canal!

**Judith Vincent**

Taken with a mobile phone, you don't always need a fancy camera to capture those spur of the moment shots!



**Barn Owl images** - "I was looking for the redpoll and was very cold and disappointed when, suddenly, the barn owl came from the trees with backlight and snow and was hunting the perimeter of the top meadow. I watched it for about 15 minutes and got some pictures. I didn't want to leave but was very cold after a long day of walking, However, I walked home with a big smile on my face!"

**Darren Kenny**



Allan Wolfenden, Wildlife Group trustee, along with significant others in the world of Calderdale Barn Owls and Bird Ringing, wrote a book which is for sale in the Visitor Centre, or available for download (please make small donation if you can) on our website [cromwellbottomlnr.co.uk](http://cromwellbottomlnr.co.uk)





**View of Lagoon, Malcolm Salter.**

“Always nice to stand on the platform and look over the lagoon. All the different colours it shows in the sunlight is amazing”.



“I liked the mist and light appearing just above the weir, taken with my mobile phone as it was easier to use this rather than change lenses”.

**Malcolm Salter.**

Editor - that is two people with images from mobile phones - so come on you budding photographers, take some pictures and send to us!

**[cbwgdwildlife@gmail.com](mailto:cbwgdwildlife@gmail.com)**



**Jennifer and Viv -**  
“Litter pickers unite for a morning’s work but there is a limit to how much we can carry!”



**Can Crushing in Action!** In 2024, £1,100 was raised by collecting, crushing and recycling aluminium cans. Figures show that such activities reduces the environmental impact by 97%. Please continue to support us!  
**David Langley.**

## More of the Cromwell Bottom Barn Owl



“There are a pair of barn owls on site at the moment and we are hoping that in the next few months that they will lay. We are using an old Tawny Owl Box and the new Barn Owl Box so hopefully they will take to them”.

Image and info Graham Haigh



# Spotlight on Volunteers

## Stuart Green



Let me introduce myself, Stuart Green, Volunteer at Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve.

Following a long illness my wife sadly passed away just over twelve months ago. She had been housebound and I was her carer. When all the formalities were sorted out, I needed to do something to get me up in the morning and get me out of the house a couple days a week, to help me back into the real world and meet people. Volunteering seemed to be the obvious answer, but what to do and where?!

Opportunities for volunteering are endless, so where do you start! My choice was pretty simple, having always had an interest in birdwatching, outdoor pursuits, and all things nature, Cromwell Bottom was the obvious choice.

After a rigorous and intense initial interview, I was accepted. (ONLY JOKING)!!

Having been in the fire service for thirty years, I have always been a team player and have had colleagues around me, again this fitted in well with Cromwell.

So having got here, what exactly do we do as a volunteer? The jobs and tasks we undertake are varied, interesting and never dull, and are all done at your own pace and within your own capabilities.

We do the basic mundane jobs on the site, emptying rubbish bins, filling bird feeders and litter picking to the more physical jobs of coppicing, haymaking (summer time), can crushing, reed clearance and good old balsam bashing (always a firm favourite) the list is endless.

There is no close season at the site, there are jobs to do all year round.

OK, emptying rubbish bins full of dog poo bags which people have kindly put in is not the most glamorous of jobs, but you are always with a friend and colleague. Retrieving dog poo bags from other unofficial locations is sometimes a bit of a challenge, but we rise to it with a laugh and a joke.

So what have I got from volunteering at Cromwell? Well it gets me out two days a week and I have made some great new friends, ticking the two boxes I set out to do. I see great comradery among the volunteers, there is sometimes serious debate, some chit chat and the occasional joke and mickey taking.

We do the jobs to keep the reserve working and functioning and the thanks we get from the public I think proves we are doing a reasonable job. We do have a bit of a social side also, with the occasional visit to Wetherspoons, our annual summer garden party and our Christmas buffet.

I look forward to my two volunteering days every week and hope my health will hold and I can continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

**FEATURE**

## Rearing Painted Lady butterflies

*Simon Day*

Come and watch an incredible transformation unfold in our Visitor Centre!

Painted Lady butterflies are not native to the UK but can arrive in summer in large numbers, in the south of England, after an incredible migration from North Africa and The Middle East.

Using a company specialising in innovative projects, butterfly rearing kits have been ordered to arrive in April and again in May.

Visitors will be able to view at first hand the stages of development from caterpillar to adult butterfly including watching butterflies emerge from their chrysalis' during April to early May and again from early to late June. At the right time, they will be released into the wild from their hatching pavilion.

**It's a fantastic opportunity to witness one of nature's marvels!**

Images below taken by Allan Wolfenden just after their release two years ago.



# A Year in the Life of Cromwell

Tony Spilsbury

If you go down to the woods today...well, if you go on a Tuesday or a Thursday to Cromwell Bottom all year round, you will likely see hardy souls in high viz jackets doing stuff around the reserve, and also in the Visitor Centre and in the workshop. Each season brings its own enchantment and challenges on a nature reserve such as this. Let's take a look at what that means for four seasons of activity, building on Stuart's article about what volunteering means to him.

## Winter

Whilst most of us crave a mild, dry winter, on the reserve water is needed to fill the wet woodlands and the lagoon, to encourage a wider diversity of wildlife to visit and hopefully raise young. To support this, a lot of winter volunteering is spent coppicing Willow, maintaining perimeters, cleaning and repairing nestboxes, trimming and replanting hedgerows where required. Our volunteers clear gulleys and drainage pipes around the reserve and our talented engineering crew repair signs, bridges, fences etc and construct new bird boxes for the coming season. It's also a great time for schools to visit as the youngsters can experience nature 'out of season' and when the reserve is less busy.

## Spring

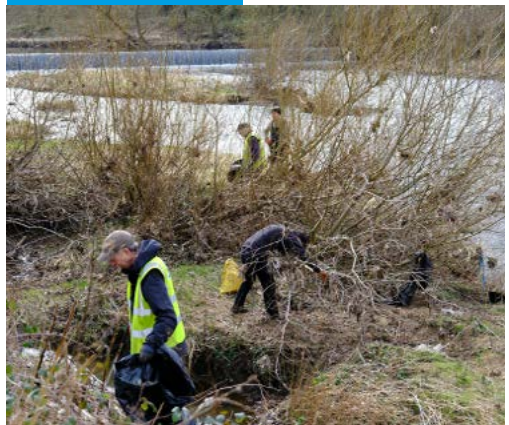
Spring continues the winter activities and also is the season of renewal as we prepare for more visitors to the reserve and cabin. Inside and outside facilities are repaired, cleaned and tubs are planted with wild flowers. Bird feeders are cleaned and renewed and the pond is cleared to remove weeds and encourage oxygenating plants to flourish. It's a busy month for monitoring migratory birds, and animal activity, assessing breeding populations and overall health of native plants.

Spring is also the season to start monitoring and removing early-season invasive plants before they spread.

Constructing new nest boxes



Removing bramble



## Summer

Summer is dominated by the control of invasive species. In particular, we have a running battle to manage Himalayan Balsam which runs riot given the dampness caused by both a river and canal traversing the reserve. Over the past few years we have been focusing on removing Balsam from specific areas of the reserve, for example the Sphagnum Bog, Lagoon, Pond areas and Meadows with good success. But any walk around the reserve from May to October will



highlight just how effectively this plant from Kashmir can propagate itself! Summer also heralds our annual Open Day (first Saturday in August), which our vice-chair David Langley manages with clockwork precision. It's a great day to showcase the reserve and hopefully encourage a few youngsters away from their X-boxes and outside to enjoy the wonders of nature!

## Autumn

Many of you will know how beautiful the reserve is in Autumn as the leaves turn to vivid colours all around the valley. It's the season to get ready for Winter and maintenance activities include reed cutting and clearing in the Lagoon, removing

sapling growth in the Sphagnum bog, selective meadow cutting and raking, removing weeds from ponds and water scrapes, clearing brambles from the bird feeding area pond areas and coppicing willow growth in woodland areas.

Meadow cutting/raking



This is only a taste of seasonal activities on the reserve. Lots of activities happen all year round, for example, capturing trail camera videos which are curated into the wonderful wildlife footage we see in the Visitor Centre.

*We post activities periodically in our newsletters and on our Facebook Cromwell Bottom Community Page. The reserve is also showcased by our talented photographer friends who post enchanting pictures across all four seasons on the reserve, and it is well worth clicking on the link below.*



## Finding Jewels

Lynda Orchard



The Green Elf cup  
(*Chlorociboria aeruginascens*)  
image Jen Landells

Walking around Cromwell Bottom during the winter can sometimes feel a bit gloomy. There is very little colour other than the dark greens and browns. However if you keep a look out you can find tiny jewels scattered along rotting branches, usually on the floor. As there are very few green mushrooms in the fungus world you can bring pretty sure that what you have found is the green elf cup. The fruiting bodies are small, between 2 and 6 mm so if you do see them you have been lucky to be in the right place at the right time. It's more common to find the wood where the elf cups grow as it becomes stained a greenish, turquoise colour. This coloured wood has been used for centuries by woodworkers, dating as far back as the 14th century in Italy and has been highly prized by British craftsmen in the making of Tunbridge ware and other

mosaics. This blue/green pigment xylindein is an organic semiconductor and has potential for use in devices like LEDs, solar cells and fibre optics .

There is also a scarlet elf cup which can be found on the reserve and is obviously a bright red colour. You need to keep your eyes on the ground in places where there are lots of fallen twigs and branches but it's well worth it for that lovely splash of colour on a dull day

This fungus has been used medicinally by some native American tribes. It was dried and ground to a powder and applied as a styptic especially on the navels of newborn babies to aid healing . Scientists are becoming increasingly interested in the hidden properties of natural substances but a lot more research into this particular pigment is necessary. However it is being used to dye cloth and yarn, particularly silk and in some parts of Russia it has been used in salads. In most of Europe it has been used as a colourful addition to table decorations. In European folklore it was said that elves drank the morning dew from the small cup like fruiting bodies and that fairies bathed in them.

**So if you are out and about on the reserve, keep your eyes open, you never know what you might see!**

# Spotlight on the Common Twayblade

Allan Wolfenden

We have four varieties of orchids on the reserve at Cromwell Bottom. Two of the familiar varieties, which many people see, are Marsh Orchid and Common spotted Orchid. These can be found in the meadows on the reserve. Both these varieties are eye-catchingly beautiful. Common Twayblade are not as beautiful or showy in their appearance and are hidden away in an area of mixed scrub.

Common Twayblade (*Neottia Ovata*) is sometimes called Egg leafed Twayblade because of the shape of its leaves. It is a perennial plant which consists of two large green basal leaves which grow in opposite direction to each other. These can vary in size but tend to range from five to twelve centimetres on the reserve. It is these two leaves that gives the plant its main English name, Common Twayblade. Twayblade being the old English word for two. From the centre of these two leaves the plant produces a single flower stem. The flower stem consists of a variable number of tiny flowers that are yellowish green in colour. Because of their camouflaged colouration and the location in which they grow on the reserve, they can be difficult to spot. The two leaves of Common Twayblade begin to appear from March and they begin to flower in late May and June. The flowers are pollinated by wasps, saw flies and beetles, attracted by the scent that these tiny flowers give

off. After pollination the tiny seeds that develop, which are almost dust-like, are distributed by the movement of the stems. These seeds germinate when they come in contact with the soil. The time from when the seeds are distributed to when a plant emerges can take up to four years. It's been found that Mycorrhizal fungi, present in the soil, plays an important role in the establishment and development of these plants.

At Cromwell Bottom Local Nature Reserve we are fortunate to have a colony of approximately sixty Common Twayblade. As noted above, they are found in an area of mixed scrub. This makes them susceptible to being lost to the more dominant vegetation that they are surrounded with. As a conservation group, Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group have been committed to the conservation of these orchids for some years. Every year, I and others from the group, monitor their numbers in the spring and summer. It is delicate work. In the autumn we cut back the encroaching vegetation, a mixture of brambles, ivy and other ground covering plants that potentially threaten our Common Twayblade colony.



image - Wildlifetrusts.org

Common Twayblade, in most books on wildflowers, is noted as being wide spread in the United Kingdom. This may be true, but it is also becoming more localised in its distribution. This, I believe, is due to loss of suitable habitat. Common Twayblade is often found on chalky soils which makes it an unusual and special plant for us to have in here on the reserve at Cromwell Bottom. The reason for their presence here on the reserve, is in part, due to the industrial past that shaped this area. You only have to scratch or dig a few centimetres underneath the surface to discover a dark grey, sand like substance. This is Fly-ash. It was tipped here on the reserve in huge quantities and was a by-product left after the

burning of coal fired electric generators and is highly alkaline in nature. Over the years, the high alkaline nature of the Fly-ash decreased and the trees, grasses and other plants including our Common Twayblades and other orchids got established. Did they get a helping hand, other than nature? Did someone recognising the potential for orchids to grow on the reserve sow some seeds or plant them? I don't have answers to those questions. (Perhaps we will never know.). What I and others do know, is that **we are privileged to have this hidden and well camouflaged orchid on the reserve. Let's treasure and protect it.**

## More pictures of the work of volunteers!

Work has begun on clearing the dipping pond....



Preparing the ground for Calderdale second Sphagnum project





# Community Links *Simon Day*

*Visits from and Links with the community from  
Sept 2024 to March 2025*

## September

We are pleased to offer the use of the Visitor Centre for a visit from **Bradford Botany Group**. Lead by expert Laurence Hutton, they spent the day observing and collecting a variety of ferns from around the reserve, looked at some pre prepared samples and were treated to a fascinating presentation all about ferns.



**Bradford Botany Group**

On the same day, we held a **bat night**, led by Robin Dalton from Calderdale's Countryside Service. Around 40 people of all ages looked and listened for bat activity using bat detectors and torches.

We held two evening den building events for **Greetland Cubs and St Mary's Scouts, Wyke**, which enabled them to achieve one of their many badges.



Greetland Cubs

Still in September, we invited Labour MP Josh Fenton-Glynn to find out about the work of CBWG.



Finally, we were the chosen charity by the newly opened **Co-op in Bailiff Bridge** who

kindly funded our new white mugs for the Visitor Centre. Cuppas taste even better now!! (By the way, we use eco teabags which can be composted and are plastic free!)



## October

Members of Park Tennis Club, Brighthouse enjoyed a guided walk around the reserve and we were joined by members of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, on one of their community days. They were a great help in clearing a section of banking of encroaching vegetation.



Park Tennis Club

## November

A group of secondary school pupils visited the reserve with Nathan McGill, a Youthbase and Community Practitioner from Edshift.co.uk. which is a local Arts organization. They were taking part in a wellbeing workshop involving taking photos on the reserve on the theme of 'let the light in'. Their photos can be seen, along with other exhibits, at Edshift, 7 Harrison Rd, Halifax.

**Students from Media Studies, Calderdale College** visited to make a start on their latest project with us. Their aim is to use digital technology to create interviews, sounds and photos, all based on Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve.

## December

Children, staff and families from **Water's Edge Nursery** in Elland made their annual 'Santa Dash' walk along the canal to Cromwell Bottom. They gathered in our



outdoor marquee after waking up Santa from his sleep and enjoyed singing Christmas songs and tucking in to hot chocolate and biscuits!

## February 2025

After a quiet January, things begin to get busy again!

We have been involved in arrangements with a local community group, led by Steph Connell, theatre producer with a **Northern Broadsides in Culturedale** event, which took place over the final weekend in March. The project is called '**Hidden in the Landscape**' and included several planned immersive performances taking place around the reserve

**Several of our volunteers achieved their Emergency First Aid at Work** qualification, enabling us to be well covered and experienced in treatment as we tackle our manual tasks around the reserve. Many thanks go to Les and Josette from MediTrain for providing the excellent day's training.



For several years we have hosted some bee hives on North Loop which have recently been removed with the permission of the owner. One hive has been kept for educational purposes.

## Regular visitors

We continue to enjoy the company of 'Staying Well' clients and their providers who meet in our Visitor Centre on a monthly basis. We look forward to chatting with them, leading short walks and, most importantly, providing cuppas and cake!

Also, we are joined every fortnight by staff and inpatients from Cygnet Lodge, Brighthouse, a high support unit. They help us out with a variety of activities and we are committed to providing something of value for them to achieve, each time.

## Cheque presentation

We were delighted to receive a cheque from Philippa Smith of Happy Dog House UK. Philippa trains new dog owners and is an expert in dog behaviour and psychology. Her generous donation enabled us to purchase some new trail cameras which have now been placed around the reserve to capture snippets of wildlife. These can be viewed in our Visitor Centre.



## Our commitment to sustainability and the environment ...

### Cans, cans and more cans!

We are extremely grateful for the continuing donations by the public of drinks cans for our ongoing recycling project. Our target for £500 for 2024 was smashed, with £1,100 being raised by the end of the year. Massive thanks to David L, David H and Alistair who oversee can crushing and transportation. It continues. Please see the image on page 9 of can crushing in action!

### Renewable energy – we have the power!

Thanks to funding from Rastrick Big Local Fund, we have been involved with a Rastrick wide project to have the facility to use renewable energy, as we play our part towards creating a greener environment



## Working with Schools Simon Day

### School Visits September 2024 to March 2025

We have continued our offer to local primary schools for nature-based activities since the last magazine, with many schools returning year after year. Our small but dedicated team of volunteers are always willing to assist with delivering a variety of activities, including seasonal walks, nature ID, birdwatching, river study, pond dipping and minibeast hunting.

A group from **Willow Park Community School** visited in September to enjoy an afternoon of pond dipping. They enjoyed it so much that they returned in October for a den building activity and visiting the bird hide!



Year 3 / 4 classes from **Beech Hill Primary School, Halifax**, spent a full day identifying wild flowers and using portable microscopes to observe minibeasts which they had collected in our Education Area.

The Year 1 classes from **20 Primary School** enjoyed a guided walk around the reserve in October, noting and recording observations on a 'signs of Autumn' sheet.

School visits restarted after Christmas, beginning with the Year 3 classes from Old Earth, spending a morning each, armed with binoculars and an ID sheet observing the bird activity in different parts of the reserve. The highlight was seeing a flock of around 50 pink footed geese on migration, as they passed over the reserve.



## Featured Photographers ~ Mick and Kath Sharpe

Kath and myself love Cromwell and make it down as many times as we can, as it is like a medicine to us. Fortunately we overlook the whole area and have gorgeous views

of the setting sun and the variety of clouds. We consider ourselves very fortunate and would like to share a few we have had.







## Cromwell Bottom et Le Monde

Mark Pattison

I started volunteering at Cromwell in 2023 having previously been a volunteer and trustee at the St Augustine's Centre in Halifax. My previous volunteering involved some teaching of English to refugees and asylum seekers and helping shape the overall direction of the charity. It was very fulfilling work but it was almost always inside. I decided I wanted a change and in particular to reconnect with nature - something I had started to do during lockdown.

One of my other main activities since retirement has been to improve my French - we are lucky enough to have a house in France and spend several weeks there each year. I have joined an online french 'academy' and each week I do a range of online activities including reading, grammar lessons and small group conversation classes with a tutor. Each week the academy has a topic and recently the subject was 'la nature'. So I ended up talking about Cromwell to other French learners from Spain, Italy, Ukraine, China, Columbia, the US and Canada. Here is a short extract, in my imperfect French, of the kind of thing I said - and don't worry a translation follows!

*Je fais le bénévolat à une association caritative qui s'occupe et promeut un petit parc de nature près de chez moi dans la région de Yorkshire en Angleterre. Le parc y compris un large éventail d'habitat tels qu'un rivière, des bois, des marais et une prairie. On a beaucoup de faunes y compris des animaux sauvage comme des renards, des blaireaux, des campagnols, des souris et des cerfs.*

*Il y a beaucoup d'oiseaux comme des martin-pêcheurs, des buses, des hérons, des pinsons et des mésanges et beaucoup des insectes différents.*

*Parmi les plantes on a une mousse rare qui s'appelle 'Sphagnum'. En tant que bénévole on maintient les sentiers, débroussaille autour des arbres, nourris les oiseaux ainsi que accueillir les élèves des écoles locales pour apprendre de la nature. Il y a un café pour les visiteurs dans un cabin où on affiche des renseignements concernant le parc. Pour moi je bénéficie des activités en plein air, rencontre autres bénévoles et visiteurs et apprends davantage des faunes et des flores. Je le recommanderais à quiconque.*

I volunteer for a charity which looks after and promotes a small nature park near my house in Yorkshire, England. The park encompasses a wide variety of habitats including a river, woods, marshes and meadows. We have lots of fauna and flora including wild animals such as foxes, badgers, voles, mice and deer. There are a lot of birds such as kingfishers, buzzards, herons, finches and tits and many different insects. Among the plants we have a rare moss called Sphagnum. As volunteers we look after the pathways, clear areas around the trees, feed the birds as well as welcome pupils from local schools to learn about nature. There is a cafe for visitors in a cabin where we display information about the park. For me, I have gained a lot from being active in the open air, meeting other volunteers and visitors and learning more about the fauna and flora.



ILLUSTRATION - SUE SEDMAN

