



CROMWELL BOTTOM

WILDLIFE GROUP

MAGAZINE

Spring/
Summer
2026

Issue 24

River Calder at Dawn in April
credit Kevin Lockwood

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Registered Charity 1176233

A warm welcome to our Spring/Summer magazine!



This edition has some of the usual features and a fascinating piece by Darren Kenny about fragments of pottery found by the River Calder on the reserve (see page 16).

Despite what seemed to be continuous weeks of rain in the early part of the year, our determined volunteers have not been put off by the inclement weather and soldiered on with the many winter maintenance jobs completed. We can now look forward to the warmer months and enjoy the bounty of spring flowers, insects and wildlife which are abundant in the reserve.

Our bird sightings board outside our visitor centre is again filling up with sightings. Recent, less common sightings include greenfinch and shoveler duck. At the time of writing, the much-photographed kingfisher continues to make timely appearances further down the canal, attracting visitors from far and wide to the reserve.

You may have noticed the refurbished wooden information board at the entrance to the reserve. It has information and old maps about Cromwell's history, particularly Tag Cut. The board will be a starting point for a small number of QR codes which you can visit around the reserve to listen to or read about Cromwell Bottom.

At the time of writing, CBWG has been shortlisted in the Calderdale Community Spirit Awards. Some of our volunteers will be attending the event and by the time this magazine is published, we will know the outcome! Once again, many thanks to our magazine team and contributors involved in this edition.

Simon Day, Chair CBWG

Useful Contacts

for treating injured wildlife

ANIMALS IN DISTRESS

(any wildlife)

07462 2103554

01706 371731

HIRD & PARTNERS VETS

01422 364999

WILDLIFE RESCUE (MELTHAM)

07846 344894

YORKSHIRE SWAN RESCUE HOSPITAL

07157 554554

CALDERDALE BADGER PROTECTION GROUP

07894 479544 (24 hrs)]

SHIBDEN VALLEY FALCONRY (Kevin Ryan)

07902 905036

HEDGEHOG RESCUE (Steph)

07787 314590

RSPCA (Hx/Hudds)

01422 365268

Dedication



It is with deep regret that the magazine team report the passing away of our stalwart Sunday Visitor Centre volunteer, Brian Moran, after a short illness. He died in May 2025 and our team have just found out from his wonderful wife, Lynda. Brian was 81 when he passed away and had worked 3 days a week up until then. We wish Lynda all the very best and are delighted that she feels able to continue her Sunday afternoons in the VC.

Around the Reserve

An accolade from Mick and Kath, photographers, avid walkers and nature lovers.

In all the years we have walked and got total pleasure in all sorts of ways at Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve, the last few years have really been amazing. The different species that we see, whether it be a bird, a tree, a plant or even a fungus or animal, it is nature being allowed to develop and be itself, as nature should be. The hard work is put in by so many people whose only reward is the end result. The digging, felling, planting, teaching and things like passing the information on through the internet, is all so very important for the benefit of people who haven't any idea that nearly all this is voluntary. From our point of view we can only thank you all and hope you all get great satisfaction from the time you have all dedicated to give us the pleasure we have got from it. A couple of photos from this year that show Cromwell for what it is are overleaf. Once again, thank you all very very much.

Male banded demoiselle



Goldcrest



images credit Mick Sharpe

Mute Swan - *Mike Lynch*

You often see mallards and mute swans on the canal at Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve. The swans can be quite territorial and will often see off any wildlife, such as geese, that they take a dislike to.

This swan unusually was on its own and cast a beautiful reflection as it glided along the canal. See image overleaf.

The mute swan is the largest of the swan species and is so called as it's allegedly quieter than the whooper swan. They mate for life and are considered to be the romantics of the bird world as pairs of swans can perform a perfect heart with their necks. Look out for the mute swan next time you're down at CB.



Mute Swan and reflection on the canal next to Cromwell Bottom

image credit Mike Lynch

Cromwell Kingfishers! Lucy Embley

It can't have escaped your notice that it was Kingfisher Central down at Cromwell a couple of months ago. Many of you will have seen the report on Calendar News and our Facebook Community Page, which was inundated with excellent photographs. In particular below is a short report and image from one of the few lady photographers our team became acquainted with one Sunday!



“I have been taking wildlife photos for about 3 years now and I've experienced many special moments along the way. This is the first kingfisher I have ever encountered that isn't skittish or scared of people. That's what makes her so special and why many photographers, from far and wide, have come to see her.

She happily sits for long periods of time in close proximity to photographers, children, cyclists, dogs running free and the pop up cafe which is running a noisy generator! Nothing disturbs her as she sits and goes about her business, diving into the water before landing back on her perch and devouring her catch. Such a treat to see and watch, she's a very obliging, beautiful girl who has captured the hearts of so many who have never seen a kingfisher before. The opportunity to not only see one, but watch one in full action, is a very special experience that I myself and many others will never forget”. *Lucy Embley.*



images credit Lucy Embley



Nest Box Surveys - Jeff Milne



Jeff and Michael

In the past we have used open fronted boxes preferred by birds like robins, but have never recorded any nesting activity so have ceased siting those. Similarly, we have a small number of nest boxes of a type preferred by treecreepers, but so far have not had any success. Results from this year's nest box survey showed 31% had full nests, 20% partial nests and 49% no nesting material. This is down on the 49% full nests last year, but is in line with results from 2023

Over the last few years we have also put up some swift boxes and last year had evidence of successful breeding for the first time. These boxes are not checked, so this assessment was observation of the adults returning regularly to feed young. Swifts often return to the same locations to nest, so we are hopeful for another successful year this year and have put up more boxes in the hope of increasing the size of the nesting colony.



Fingerposts and Signposts Around the Reserve

Paul Keenan makes fingerposts and signposts all around the reserve, as well as for the wider Calderdale MBC.

All the posts you see have have been made by Paul. At the moment he is creating a new Information Board for Calderdale Countryside Service in our workshop.

We are sure you will agree - what a talent!



SAVE THE DATE ...

1ST AUGUST 2026
10.00 - 4.00

Dead Hedges

Shelagh Brooke



Dead Hedge adjacent to steps at Lagoon - image credit Josh Perkins.

'Dead hedge' is the name used by conservation groups like the Woodland Trust for a fence-like structure made by weaving fallen or pruned tree branches between a double row of vertical stakes (see photo). Over time, further branches (known by CBWG volunteers as brashings) can be added.

The term dead hedge doesn't sound at all encouraging for a nature reserve, but in reality these structures become filled with life. In natural environments, dead logs and branches form a complex and essential ecosystem. They attract a whole variety of insects, and the dead-hedges also provide wildlife corridors, protection, shelter, feeding and nesting sites especially for birds and small mammals such as hedgehogs.

Some dead hedges have already been created at Cromwell, because they can also discourage people (and dogs) from entering ecologically sensitive sites on the reserve. One such location is the reedbed - the only one in the area - which is used as a nesting site by a whole range of birds and has attracted some unusual winter visitors. Further strategically-located dead hedges will also be used to deter the creation of inappropriate reserve access points, such as from canal towpath.

It's time to look down ...

Macro photography by Darren Kenny

Macro photography is a great way to spend some time standing still and noticing the small things in life.

It doesn't require expensive gear (although it helps) and you don't need to walk miles to find a subject. Go into your garden, or visit Cromwell, pick a little spot and sit down or stand and look around under leaves. After a few minutes you start to see a whole world beneath you and around you.

It's also great for photographers who can't carry heavy gear anymore who still want to be out in nature.

The small things are where the whole food chain begins. Fungi and decay feeds the plants and the plants feed the insects and so on. You might take these small things for granted until you start to see them on a bigger screen. There is so much beauty and colour in the tiny worlds of nature.

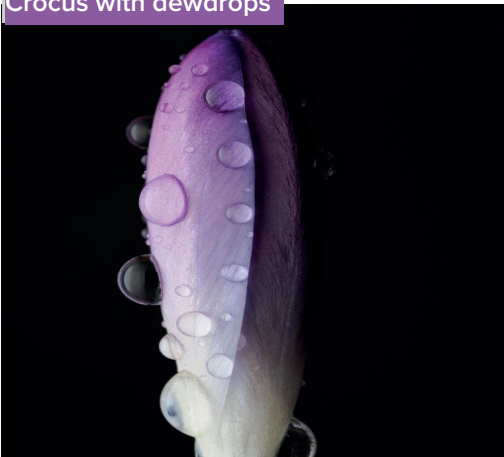
Wasp



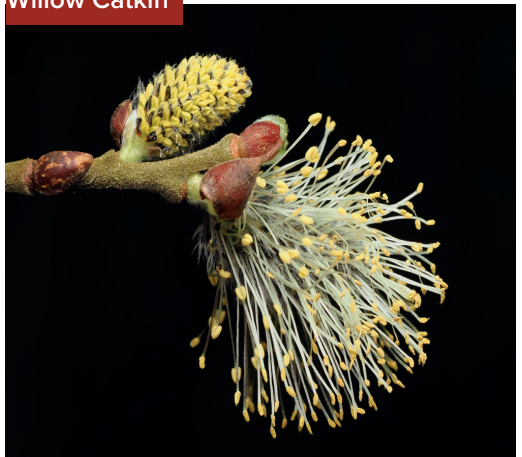
Feather hanging on a bud



Crocus with dewdrops



Willow Catkin





Red Campion flower



Harlequin ladybird on a seed pod



Hazel bud



Wintergreen barberry berries

St. John's-wort (Tutsan)

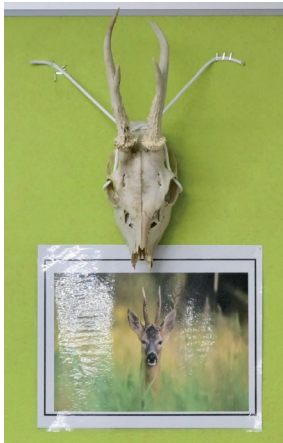


Note from the Editors | we are sure that you will agree these macro photographs are stunning and we have never seen anything like them. All this at Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve!

FEATURE

Skullduggery!

Lynda Orchard



**Wall display in the
Visior Centre**

Whilst engaged in the never-ending task of balsam bashing with some of the volunteers, Simon, our chair, spotted something half buried in the undergrowth. The group were working on the track by the dipping pond when something different came to light. The object looked like a skull. Time to call CSI? Fortunately not. On further inspection it turned out to be an animal skull. Simon dug it out and took it to clean it up. It was largely in one piece complete with antlers. It was identified as a roe deer skull and it is now on display in the visitor's centre.

The roe deer is our most common native species. It's a slender medium-sized deer with short antlers and no tail. They begin to grow antlers in November, shedding the velvet in spring. By summer they are ready for the rutting season and shed antlers after mating. They eat buds and leaves as well as ferns, grasses and heather. They seem to be thriving here at Cromwell Bottom and have been photographed many times by both regular photographers and our trail cameras. Please check out our Youtube channel for good footage.

google @cbwgmedia2023

Here is a live one!

DEER at lagoon credit Kirsty Collins



Reserve Management - the pictures!

Tony Spilsbury



Volunteers building a brush fence to stop the spread of invasive species, such as *Crassula*, around the reserve.



Our wonderful engineers building a shrub nursery for growing native species to plant around the reserve.



Proud volunteers having erected a new gate at the lagoon, again to prevent the spread of Crassula.



Clearing bridges for visitors to better access the reserve



Our wonderful litter pickers keeping the reserve spick and span. They also maintain the flowers around the reserve.

FEATURE

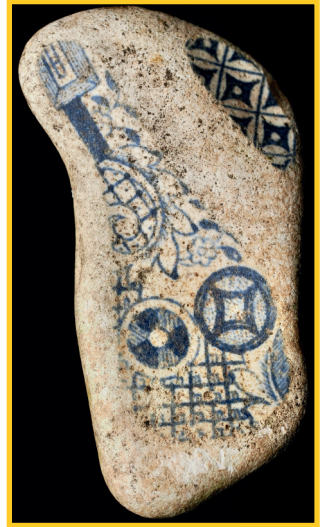
A History in Pieces!

Darren Kenny

An introduction to a new Cromwell project to find and document the history of the river running through our community. Pieces of history and industry discarded over a hundred years ago are left for us to find and research. Below is a small sample of my findings. More to come in the Autumn issue of this magazine. Anyone with an interest

or information etc should please contact Simon Day at CBWGwildlife@gmail.com

Your contribution is vital to the success of this project. We have names of websites where you can try to identify pieces. In our opinion the historical importance of this project cannot be underestimated. Thank you.



Collected and photographed by Darren Kenny (scaled and lightened for display here).

QR Codes Project - coming soon!

Brief synopsis ...

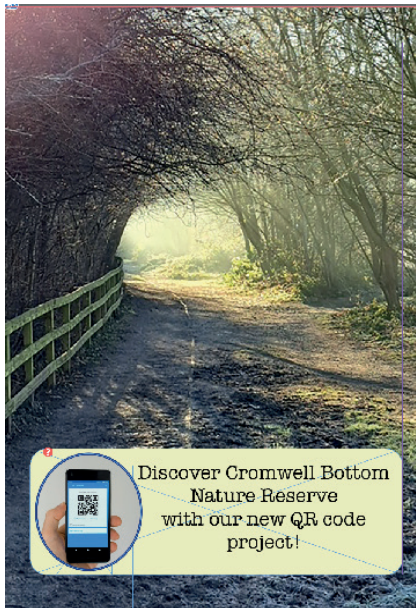


*scan me!
(just a little
practice
before launch!*

You will soon be able to discover all that Cromwell Bottom has to offer - by scanning the QR codes around the Reserve!

Pick up your phone and follow the route around the reserve and see if you can find seven posts with QR codes on. Scan the code and either read all about that particular location or listen to an audio recording of it. It will be best if you had your phone earpods to get the best result from the audio. The QR code you are scanning links directly to the page on our website. You can do them in any order, we merely suggest a route.

This project has been a year in development and we know that many visitors will love having a new way to learn about the reserve. You will even be able to plug a headphone or earpod (should you need to, that is) into your phone and listen to the audio recording from our own Simon Day telling us about the wildlife and history of that particular location. Or, of course, simply read about it and even download and save to your device! Happy hunting! We will advertise widely when the project is ready!





POETRY

Live Poets Society

A Flash of Blue

Alder, Willow, trees bursting into bud,
Celandines, sparkling yellow in the hot morning sun.
A flash of blue!
A Kingfisher alights on a dry stone wall.
In no time at all, a photographer makes a call.
It's Headline News.
A Kingfisher has been spotted at Cromwell Bottom.
And she's willing to pose for the nation!
Day after day, the Kingfisher returns to her station.
Perching and preening for much adoration!
The clicking of cameras disturb her not.
A shower of rain, a flash of blue, and she is gone!

Jennifer Wolfenden. 2026.



Illustration: Sue Seddon