

**WOOD  
CHIP**

CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

[thewoodchips.org.uk](http://thewoodchips.org.uk)

Winners of the  
Community  
Woodlands  
Award

# Activities in 2021 and plans for 2022

**T**HE work of the WoodChips Conservation Volunteers was severely impacted during 2021 due to the Covid pandemic, resulting in the loss of working parties from January until the first of April and then again from mid-December to the end of the year. To a much lesser extent, work was also



*Wading in to thin out in the Lagoon*

interrupted by the particularly wet summer and autumn, resulting in further task cancellations. However, due to the increase in volunteer numbers, we were able to amass 2,273.75 hrs worked in 2021 – a new annual work hours record for the group! Well done to you all.

As expected, the majority of task hours were spent in Banstead Wood where we have carried out our usual tasks – removal of fallen/dangerous trees, path edge clearances, litter picking, coppicing, scything of the orchards and the elm glade. This year we also carried out some planting of native trees in the Knoll, and some extra maintenance in the Lagoon: thinning and clearing the excess growth of the water plants, especially the clumps of rampant Bulrush.

In addition, we have added new projects during the year which will lead to ongoing work to be carried out.

The first of the 'new' projects was the creation of a new glade where we scythed, raked and removed dense bramble and bracken to open out an area to benefit the woodland wildlife. This glade will require further scything to control the bramble and bracken, but as we have noted from the annual scything programme at the elms glade, this enables an increase in the flora and fauna as the bracken and bramble cover reduces.

A second project, encompassing the entire site, is an annual bird survey in an attempt to identify changes to the avian populations. This survey is already raising concerns over the changing avian



*Clearance around the old Granary*

community where we have recognised the potential loss of the Tree Creeper population and the collapse of the Chaffinch population during 2021.

The last of the 'new' tasks was to clear the rank vegetation from around the old Granary next to the Ramblers Rest – a task we carried out on a rather hot day! This will need to be completed on a regular basis as the bramble patch has enlarged dramatically – good for the Blackcap and Wren population, but not so good for those wishing to use the path!



*After pruning fruit trees in the Orchard*

The orchards have had their ground flora controlled by scything for a number of years, but during the autumn of this year we have added fruit tree pruning to our skill set. The trees certainly have benefited from the work done with much dead, diseased and damaged growth now having been removed. The picture at left shows the current state of part of the large orchard: note the large pile of prunings (hopefully soon to be removed).



*Building the autumn dead hedge in Banstead Wood*

We have coppiced two smaller, ad-hoc areas of hazel in Banstead Wood, one which had been commenced in the previous year, and the second where there was very serious danger that the majority of the hazel would have suffered from wind-throw in any storm. Some of the stumps have considerable areas of fungal damage, while others have been partially ripped from the ground. The tallest hazel stem here was estimated at 17 metres height and had not been coppiced for about 47 years. The arisings produced our first dead hedge of the season, stretching for 129 metres.

Apart from the work carried out in Banstead Wood, we also took on a new project at Stagbury Field, where we started a coppice cycle on the oldest patch of scrub. We have coppiced approximately one



*Scrub clearance on Stagbury. Arisings removed by RBBC.*

half of the chosen scrub patch and will do the remaining area in a few years – once the coppiced area shows some regrowth. We may also further manage the scrub at Stagbury Field to prevent enlargement of the scrub areas.

It is pleasing to note that the drainage channels directing surface rainfall off the Banstead Wood path surfaces and into the woodland have been very effective through a very wet summer – the reduction in surface water flowing through the Holly Lane car park is a testament to their effectiveness. Unfortunately, these channels are in need of clearance before more heavy rain, an early task for 2022.

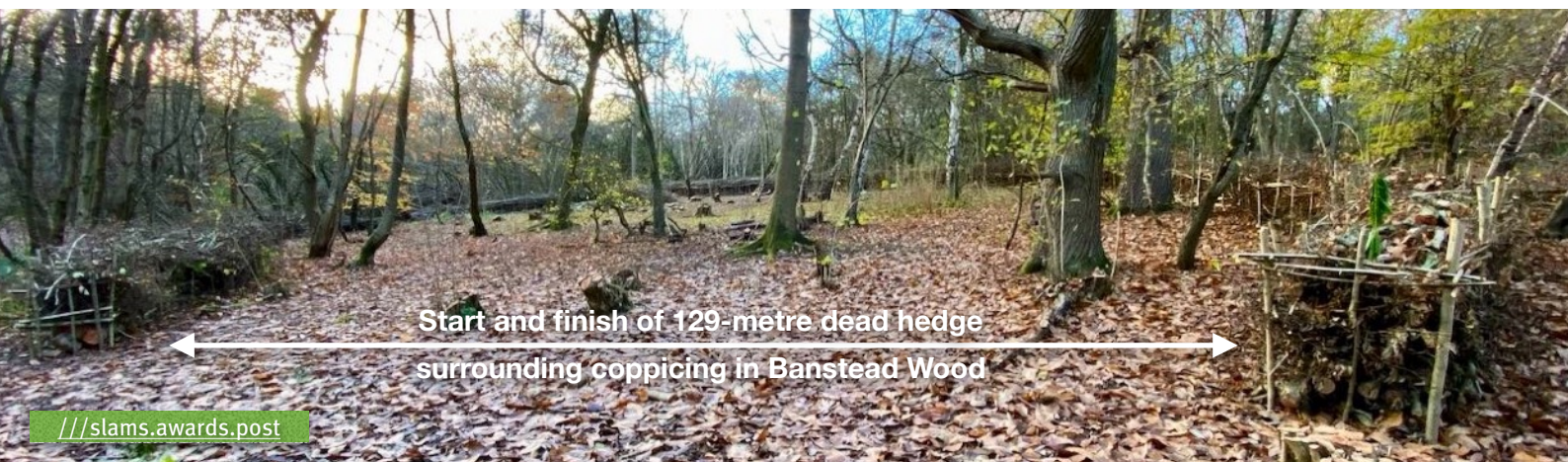
## THE YEAR AHEAD FOR THE WOODCHIPS

We can look forward to another full year with plenty of work to do, perhaps with some element of invasive species control (awaiting further information from David at RBBC) and I'm certainly looking forward to making a start ... Covid permitting. The Bird Survey will continue this year (records to Richard Carter please), as will the Ladybird Survey and the regular Butterfly Transects.

New for this year will be survey work on some of the Diptera families – we'll be looking at Hoverflies, Craneflies, Blowflies and Horseflies. Hopefully we'll find lots of rarities! One task that I am looking forward to is planting the five disease resistant Elm trees purchased from money donated by our friend Joe. Once grown, these will be a major factor in the preservation of the local colonies of White-letter Hairstreak butterflies.

Our work tasks, as usual, will be determined by urgency, weather and Covid restrictions. In a change from previous years, we now have a bank account with a small amount of cash available for tools, etc. If you can think of something that we need, then speak to either Graham Harris, Graham Kenward or Geof Haseler who can organise the purchase of such items.

*Andy Keay*



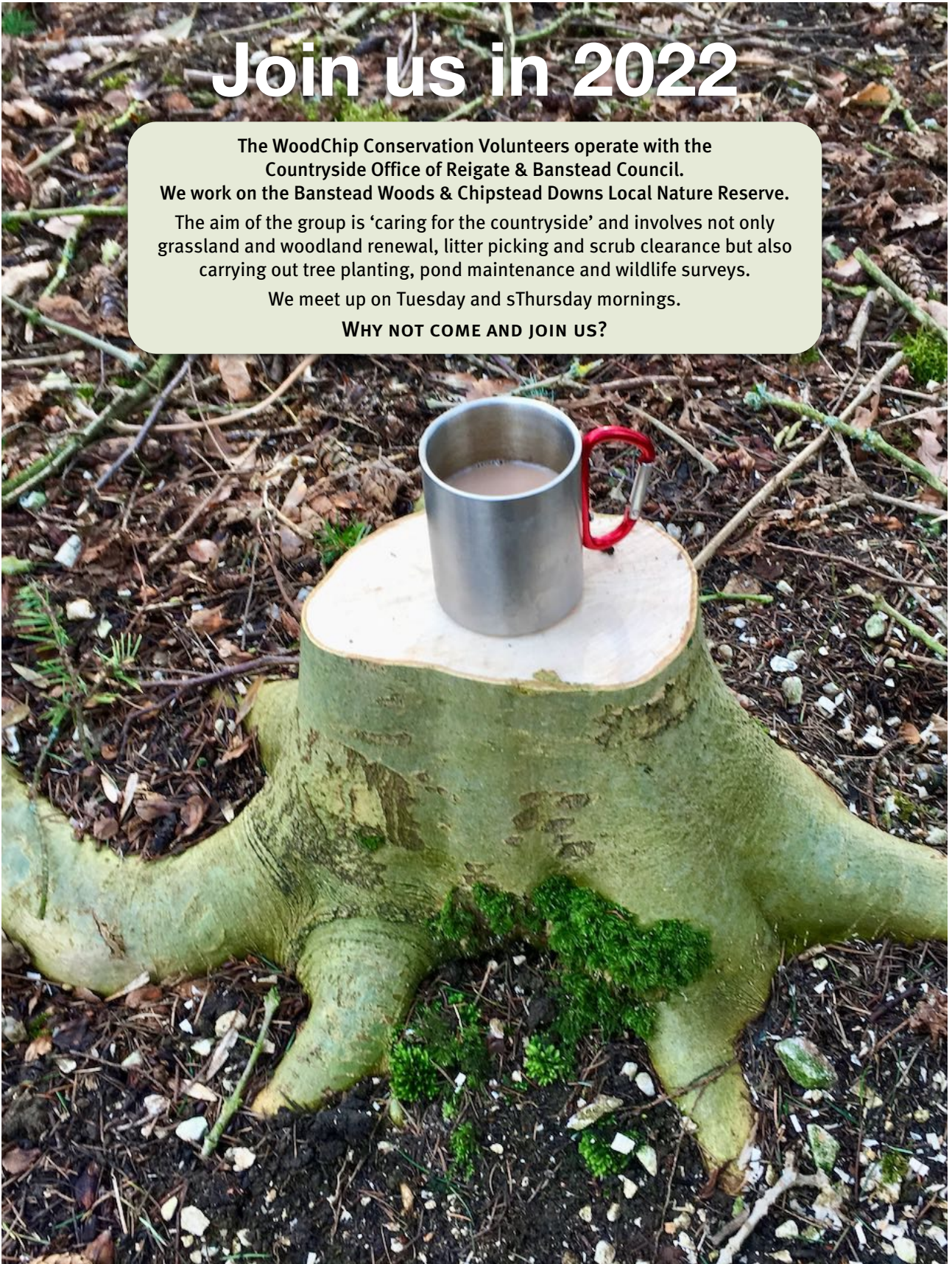
# Join us in 2022

The WoodChip Conservation Volunteers operate with the  
Countryside Office of Reigate & Banstead Council.  
We work on the Banstead Woods & Chipstead Downs Local Nature Reserve.

The aim of the group is 'caring for the countryside' and involves not only  
grassland and woodland renewal, litter picking and scrub clearance but also  
carrying out tree planting, pond maintenance and wildlife surveys.

We meet up on Tuesday and sThursday mornings.

**WHY NOT COME AND JOIN US?**



Report produced by **ANDY KEAY AND GRAHAM KENWARD**

For more details of WoodChips activities visit [thewoodchips.org](http://thewoodchips.org)  
or contact [woodchips1@btinternet.com](mailto:woodchips1@btinternet.com) or phone 01737 363013.