



FRIENDS OF BROOMHILL

www.friendsofbroomhill.org.uk

Registered Office:

69 Brompton Farm Road, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3QX

Annual Report & Accounts 2025

for the period of 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

prepared by Susan Fletcher (Treasurer)

7 May 2025

Introduction

The Friends of Broomhill ("FoB") are dedicated to the improvement and enrichment of Broomhill Park situated in Strood, Kent, ME2 3NB. The FoB own the Old Orchard, a nine-acre woodland site, adjacent to the Park which was purchased for £45,000 in May 2018. This area was purchased with donations from the general public, companies and match funding from Medway Council. Our aim was to incorporate the Old Orchard into a unified and extended Broomhill Park that will be protected from development to stop the loss of irreplaceable habitat and to enhance it for both community use and nature. Our Management Plan (revised in 2021) sets out our proposals, projects and recommendations to guide improvements to the Old Orchard. Without management, woodlands become overgrown, dark and will eventually die. It is not clear when the land ceased to be managed as an orchard, but it had become an area of scrubby woodland with mature hawthorn being the dominant species. Very few of the former orchard trees remain. Our recent project to create a pocket orchard (a small group of fruit trees) has been undertaken to maintain a link to its past use.

Structure

The FoB were inaugurated in May 2007, registered as a charity in 2013, and became a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) in February 2020. The charity is registered with the Charity Commission under registration number 1188060 and we are governed by our Constitution dated February 2020. Our Constitution does not allow us to sell the Old Orchard so it is listed in our Accounts with a historic value of £45,000. If the FoB were to dissolve at any time, this land would be gifted to another Trust to be protected for all time. The day-to-day management is undertaken by all of our seven trustees who meet six times per year to review and plan future activities, oversee finances and deal with any ongoing matters. The purchase of the Old Orchard has increased responsibility for the charity and therefore robust management arrangements, insurances, liabilities and health and safety have been fully considered. Our membership currently stands at 115 members.

Trustees

David Park (Secretary)

May Draper (Chair)

Susan Fletcher (Treasurer & Membership Secretary)

Barbara Harrison (Trustee)

John Lawrenson (Trustee)

Andrew Millsom (Trustee)

Colin Pearson (Grants Officer)

Bank

CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4TA.

Public benefit

Our valuable greenspace in Strood has many public benefits. We aim to maintain and preserve the Old Orchard as a healthy habitat for wildlife and for people to enjoy the benefits of improved physical and mental wellbeing. Woodlands are also vitally important in the fight against climate change as trees remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and release oxygen back into the air.

An extensive amount of work has been completed over the last seven years. We began by improving pedestrian access through the Old Orchard by clearing and widening the main paths, some of which were completely overgrown with brambles, whilst leaving some areas relatively undisturbed to provide sanctuary for wildlife. This task greatly improved sightlines for the safety of our visitors. Signage was put in place, entrances from the Park into the Old Orchard were improved to make them more accessible with handrails and steps on steep slopes, wood chippings laid on paths, benches installed and a variety of Spring bulbs planted. We are planting trees, scrub, wildflowers and bulbs to increase biodiversity. 1,000 English Bluebells in the green were planted in May 2024, and we recently received two donated chestnut trees. We are carefully controlling some of the dense scrub by means of removal to create pockets of light. Overcrowding causes insufficient light to hit the woodland floor which limits the diversity of the ground flora. Sunlight enables a more extensive range of vegetation to grow which supports a wider range of insect life and this will in turn support birds. Improvements for wildlife were also made by the installation of a bug hotel, bird boxes and hedgehog boxes.

The FoB secured two separate grants to help us establish a pocket orchard in the lower glade of the Old Orchard for the benefit of the local community. With assistance from LumberZac Tree Services, and a lot of painstaking work by our volunteers over many months, we prepared the ground. We sourced 26 apple, pear, plum and quince varieties with Kentish connections from a local nursery, and the first batch of 14 fruit trees were planted in January 2025. This is the first stage of this exciting project. Raspberry, redcurrant, blackcurrant and gooseberry plants were also planted in the vicinity. Birds, butterflies and insects will greatly benefit as their habitat will be increased with these new additions.

We applied to the Woodland Trust for free tree packs (dog rose, hazel, crab apple and dogwood) and were very grateful to receive 60 saplings in March 2025. We also received a very kind donation of saplings which were left for us by an anonymous donor. All of these were planted as hedging for the pocket orchard which will provide some new woodland growth and structural diversity for the benefit of wildlife.

Our volunteers assist with maintaining both the Park and the Old Orchard. Our Thursday morning workgroup (10am to 12pm) focuses on the Old Orchard with tasks such as path clearing, pruning, bulb and tree planting, clearing vegetation and removing fallen branches or trees. Our Sunday morning workgroup (10am to 12pm) focuses on the Park and is held on the first Sunday of the month from September until May (excluding January). If this falls during a bank holiday weekend, we postpone to the second Sunday of the month. We carry out light gardening tasks such as pruning, clearing vegetation and litter picking. Our task days benefit the public in many ways. They are a great opportunity for more social contact with others who share the same interests, they encourage physical activity, and also provide a sense of community spirit with team work to achieve a common aim. During the course of the last year, our task days have resulted in over 1,200 hours of work by 23 volunteers with an average of 13 volunteers attending each session.

Broomhill Park and the Old Orchard also provide a great opportunity for local children to take an interest and pride in their surroundings. The FoB hold task sessions for Further Education students and staff from Abbey Court Community Special Foundation School. This is a special school for pupils between the ages of 3-19 with severe and profound learning difficulties. We meet for an hour a week during term time with a group of older students and carry out tasks such as litter picking and sowing wildflower seeds.

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty to have regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charities Commission in determining the activities undertaken by the charity. We understand the charity's purposes as set out in our Constitution. The Trustees are able to explain how its activities support its purposes, and understand how the charity benefits the general public. To underpin these activities, the FoB have public liability insurance.

Awards Achieved

The FoB were delighted to be awarded “Outstanding” from the RHS South and South East in Bloom Awards and “Gold” from the Kent Wildlife Trust Wilder Kent Awards in 2024. A fantastic achievement by our hard-working volunteers to improve the habitat and environment for both our community and also wildlife in the area. We are also very proud to say that Broomhill Park has once again received the Green Flag Award for the 13th consecutive year.

Income

Total income for 2024/25 was £2,955.51. We were extremely grateful to receive three separate grants. £1,000.00 from Tesco Stronger Starts, which we added to the fund for our pocket orchard project, and two ward grants from Medway Councillors Zoe van Dyke (£149.00) and David Field (£200.00) for work to be undertaken by FoB in the Park to mend a safety barrier near the Hillyfields Close area. Our membership income (£482.38) has remained steady with renewals ongoing throughout the year and we are very grateful to members who have made a donation with their subscriptions (£143.75). Many thanks also to members who have raised £397.25 in 2024/25 by using Easyfundraising for their online shopping. Easyfundraising is a free fundraising platform where retailers send us a free donation based on the amount the shopper spends and with no extra cost to the shopper. Claims for Gift Aid were made to HMRC in respect of subscriptions and donations received between the period of 1 January 2024 to 31 October 2024. We received a total of £111.73 of Gift Aid during 2024/25. The opening of a savings account with CAF Bank has vastly increased the amount of bank interest received (£441.40).

Expenditure

Total expenditure in 2024/25 was £4,946.54. £3,895.24 was spent on the first stage of our pocket orchard project by purchasing fruit trees (£361.00), tree stakes, tree guards, compost etc (£128.07), tools (£618.27), fencing (£1,077.90), and assistance from LumberZac Tree Services (£1,710.00). This expenditure has been covered by the grants we received from Orchard Community Energy (£4,960.00) awarded in financial year 2023/24 and from Tesco Stronger Starts (£1,000.00) awarded in September 2024.

Our aims and plans for 2025/26

Care and maintenance of the fruit trees and the pocket orchard area will be ongoing. A further batch of 12 fruit trees will be planted in November/December 2025. We have the remainder of the grant money (£2,064.76) to cover the cost of the second stage of this project. The main paths in the Old Orchard will be kept clear with regular cutting back of vegetation for access and safety reasons. We will continue planting native bulbs and sowing wildflower seeds to increase biodiversity. Work is continuing on providing handrails on one of the entrances into the Old Orchard which will make it more accessible. We have continued to work closely on the planning for the landscaping of the extended parkland area at the top of Broomhill Park around the communications mast that had once been owned by Southern Water and contained two underground reservoirs. This land was then in private ownership until being purchased for development. The new parkland area will link up the Park and the Old Orchard. The reservoirs have been infilled and we are hopeful that the hard landscaping of the paths will begin in the Summer followed by planting in Autumn this year.

Conclusion

Support from the general public can make a huge difference to our work either through volunteering, becoming a member, making a donation, giving a grant, or leaving a gift in a will. Membership of the FoB benefits all our community as well as future generations. The membership fee provides vital funding to purchase tools, trees, plants, seeds and bulbs. The completion of the projects will greatly improve the area for the enjoyment of all and also provide a vital habitat for wildlife. Many thanks to all our members and hard-working volunteers for their continued support. All our work is ongoing and can only happen with donations and help from our wonderful volunteers.



Susan Fletcher, Treasurer

on behalf of the Trustees of the Friends of Broomhill

FRIENDS OF BROOMHILL**ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT - 1 APRIL 2024 TO 31 MARCH 2025****STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES**

	2023-2024	2024-2025
	£	£
Income		
Subscriptions (net)	481.01	482.38
Donations from members (net)	238.34	143.75
Easyfundraising	176.81	397.25
HMRC Gift Aid	266.27	111.73
CAF Bank interest	46.21	441.40
Medway Council ward grants for repairs to Park safety barrier		349.00
Tesco Stronger Starts grant for Pocket Orchard		1000.00
Tree planting donation		30.00
Grants*	14710.00	
Orchard expenditure refund	58.80	
KADAR (King Arthurs Drive Association) donation for event	75.00	
Medway Council donation for funding events	200.00	
Total Income	16252.44	2955.51
Expenditure		
Website	127.73	136.78
CAF Bank fees	60.00	60.00
AGM costs	40.00	51.54
Stationery	21.99	7.00
Sundries		20.00
Refreshments	79.89	94.85
First aid supplies	3.85	8.18
Old Orchard Insurance	402.22	402.22
Pocket Orchard project (trees, tools, fencing, tree surgeon etc)		3895.24
Old Orchard planting	39.90	217.95
Old Orchard signage	16.80	52.78
Old Orchard entrance improvements project	9322.36	
Tools & Equipment	166.19	
Events	213.03	
Total Expenditure	10493.96	4946.54
Excess of income over expenditure	5758.48	-1991.03

* The Kent Community Foundation - £8,750.00

Orchard Community Energy - £4,960.00

Medway Council ward grant - £1,000.00

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ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT - 1 APRIL 2024 TO 31 MARCH 2025

BALANCE SHEET

	2023-2024 £	2024-2025 £
Cash at Bank		
Balance brought forward	19439.67	25198.15
Excess of Income over Expenditure	5758.48	-1991.03
Total Cash	25198.15	23207.12
 Balance at 31 March represented by:		
CAF Bank Current Account	25097.17	704.06
CAF Bank Gold Account		22429.71
Cash held by PayPal	100.98	43.35
Cash held by JustGiving		30.00
Balance carried forward to the next financial year	25198.15	23207.12
 Current Assets		
Old Orchard (historic value)	45000.00	45000.00
Tools	350.00	900.00
Total Current Assets	45350.00	45900.00
 Current Liabilities	0.00	0.00

