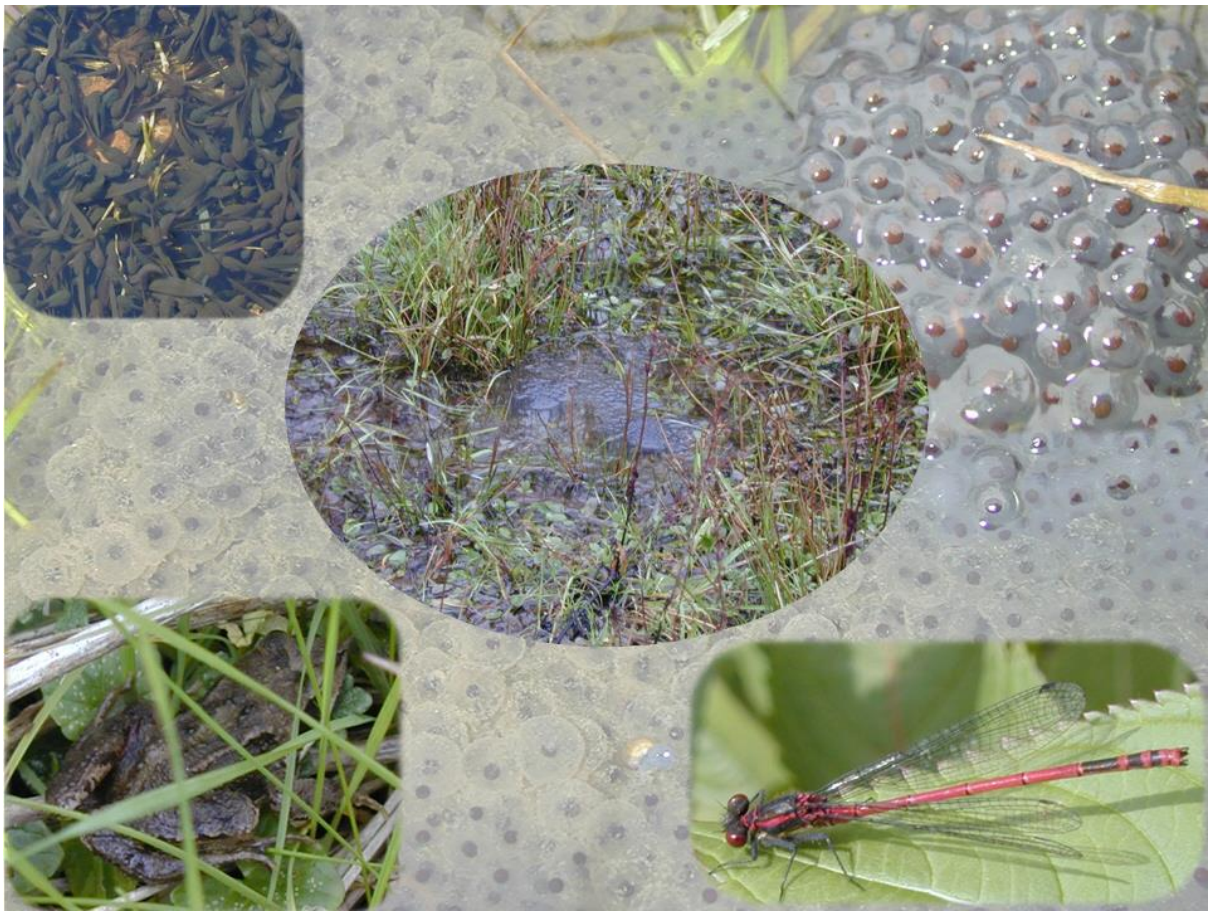
FRIENDS OF THE EMM BROOK

Plans to Restore a Pond in Woosehill Meadows

Roland Ramsdale **3/11/2014**



Abstract: Woosehill Meadows is 17 hectares (42 acres) of public open space through which the Emm Brook flows. It is situated in Wokingham in Berkshire. It contains a pleasant mix of amenity grassland with small areas of deciduous woodland, hedgerows and bramble scrub. Friends of the Emm Brook (FOTEB) recommend that what appears to be an old pond in Woosehill Meadows should be restored to act as a point of interest for the public and to increase the biodiversity of the area.

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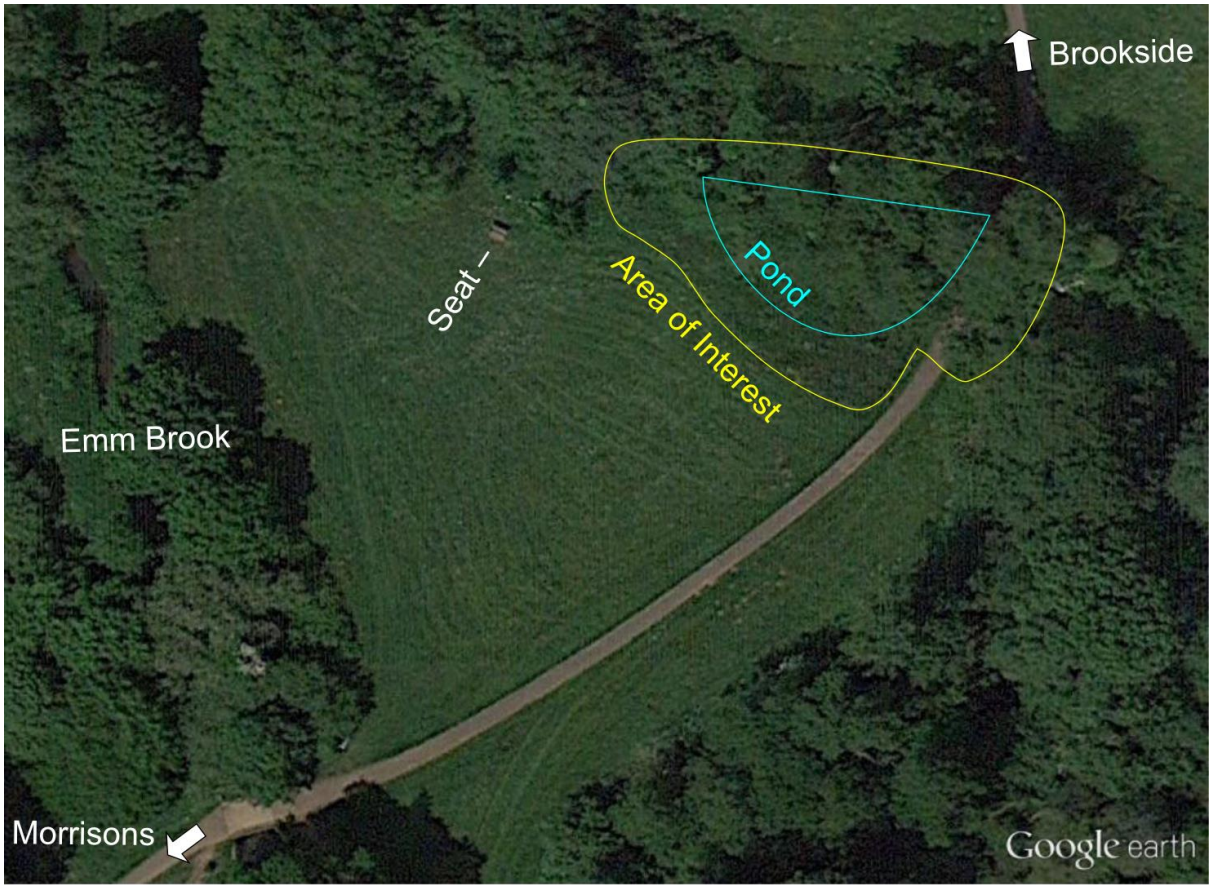
Where?

Woosehill Meadows is 17 hectares (42 acres) of public open space through which the Emm Brook flows. It is situated in Wokingham in Berkshire. It contains a pleasant mix of amenity grassland with small areas of deciduous woodland, hedgerows and bramble scrub.

In Woosehill Meadows follow the footpath from Morrisons towards Brookside. Cross the Emm Brook at Dragonfly Bridge then half way along a ditch passes under the footpath and is flanked on both sides by trees. This ditch is part of the old course of the Emm Brook.

To the left of the footpath is an area of marsh characterised by sedges and Great Hoary Willowherb. It strongly resembles a neglected pond which has been allowed to fill with a mixture of leaves from the surrounding trees and silt from the ditch, causing it to dry out. This is the Area of Interest marked on the satellite photo below. It is within this area of marsh that the Pond should be rejuvenated.



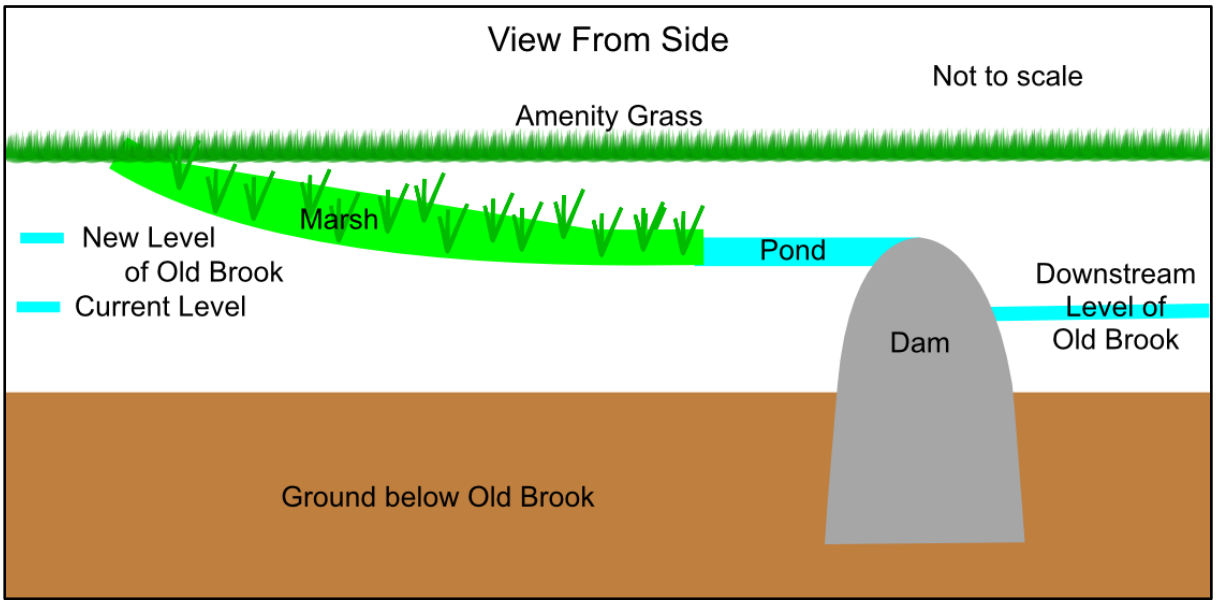
Why?

A pond will increase the biodiversity of the area by providing an area of still water. This will increase the number of species of dragonfly and other aquatic insects and plants found in the area. It is also likely to be of benefit to amphibians.

For the general public it will provide a feature of interest to both adults and children. For those with a keen interest in natural history it will enable a comparison to be made between those species found in the still waters of the pond and those in the flowing waters of the nearby Emm Brook.

A pond that is large enough for the public to notice is probably safer than the current situation where there is sufficient water to drown a small child, but it is sufficiently well concealed that many parents are unaware of the danger.

What?



1. The existing Amenity Grassland will not be affected.
2. An area of Marsh will remain and be a natural boundary between the grass and the pond.
3. The Pond will have a gently shelving bottom.
4. The Pond will go down to a sufficient depth so as not to all freeze solid.
5. The Dam will only raise the water level by a few inches. Its shape may differ from that in the diagram.
6. The downstream level of the Old Brook will be largely unaffected. Its oxygen levels might be increased a little.
7. The upstream level of the Old Brook will be raised by a few inches.
8. Planting scheme for the Pond needs to be determined.

How?

1. Design profile for Pond.
2. Design dam.
3. Remove any saplings/small trees from where the pond will be dug. (Depending which option for size and position of pond is chosen there may be none to remove).
4. If heavy equipment is likely to damage the marsh plants carefully dig some up from the area and place safely to one side (on a waterproof sheet) for re-planting later.
5. Remove sufficient soil from the area of the Pond to achieve a maximum water depth of three quarters of a metre. Some of this depth is achieved by the dam raising water level by 23 cm. Ensure that the edges of the pond shelve gently to avoid danger to children.
6. Removed soil should be disposed of responsibly through dispersal somewhere on site. In the case of smaller versions of the pond bunds within the marsh will suffice.
7. Plant pond plants.
8. Replant marsh plants.

Options

The Area of Interest is shown in yellow. It avoids the footpath and some trees where the ditch/old course of Emm Brook passes under footpath, as it is believed that these trees require some major attention which is outside the scope of the Pond Project.

Alternative Pond Sizes:

Ideal pond (200 m^2)

Smaller pond (100 m^2)

Smallest pond (50 m^2)

The ideal pond of 200 square metres would be large enough to support a colony of Great Crested Newts, but would require a substantial budget to make.

The smaller pond of 100 square metres would be adequate for the purposes of providing a still water habitat for insects, plants and some amphibians. This size was estimated at £3800 to £5000 pounds +VAT by Nigel Jeffries assuming that spoil can be disposed of on site. The cost would probably be twice as much if spoil must be removed from site.

The smallest pond of 50 square metres is not much more than a garden pond. It would need to be situated in the area that gets full sun. My experience with garden ponds is that the smaller the pond the more attention and maintenance is required to

keep water levels up and invasive weeds out. However half the area of the smaller pond would need half the amount of digging and result in half the amount of spoil - hence presumably lower cost (unfortunately substantially more than half the cost).