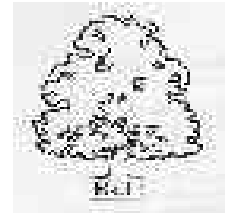


BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 182

March / April 2006

Task Reports

18th December – North Warnborough Greens – Neil Frankum

A cold, but sunny day saw us extending the clearing in the middle of North Warnborough Greens. After a morning of being pyrotechnically challenged we eventually got a good bonfire going to burn the brushings. A full Sunday roast in the Fox & Goose up the road finished the day off nicely.

Right – Nigel, Richard & Mark
Below – In the rain at Padworth



8th January – Padworth Common – Neil Frankum



It was rather a dull, damp day for this task. We were working on the south side of the main road, clearing birch scrub, and thinning out some of the large clumps of gorse. This was partly designed to make the habitat more suitable for Dartford Warblers. These birds have been seen on the site, but it is not currently open enough for them to breed here. We had a nice big bonfire which was perfect for huddling round to dry out and warm up! Arian will be coming back to mow the purple moor grass later in the year, to hopefully encourage the small patches of heather to re-colonise the area.





15th January – Highwood – Nigel Mason-Flucke

It was fairly cold but a sunny day. This was my first task of the new year and it was good to go back to Highwood again. I turned up expecting to be chopping down Rhododendron but surprisingly found out that there weren't many areas on the site now infested by this lovely plant. Luckily when I turned up Richard was leaving the van so I managed to follow him to this new part of the site for me. The task turned out to be removing birch scrub & bramble from a rather small area of heathland. The rangers were removing a lot of the scrub with strimmers, which left the smaller stuff for us volunteers. There was a good turnout of volunteers so we managed to clear a lot of the site. We had a nice bonfire, which did take Alistair a while to get started. A red kite & sparrowhawk flew over us in the afternoon, which was nice to see. Never seen a red kite this south of the M4 before so this was a nice surprise. At the end of the day we had the usual hunt for the missing tool. Eventually Mark realised he had miscounted so we all managed to leave just before nightfall.



22nd January – Aldermaston Gravel Pits – Richard Coles

Access to this new BBOWT site is a bit restricted at the moment – either over a stile from the main road and then lots of mud, and nowhere to park, or park by the station and a long walk along the towpath then down the canal bank. I took my bike in the back of the car, which came in useful during the day for fetching things from where we had parked. The bridge we had built last time had been finished by putting handrails on (pictured on left), and had been incorporated into the site's main feature, which is a long boardwalk - so long that, like the Great Wall of China, it is probably visible from space. We seem to be used for the more technical tasks here, and this time it was building a junction on the boardwalk. So we set to work digging holes for the posts. All construction work involves digging holes. This time through a mixture of hard stones and mud. After lunch, we started the interesting bit, joining up the two bits of boardwalk at the junction, and set Neil to sorting out the problem. I did some chainsaw carpentry, which I always like, and hope I didn't

disturb everybody else too much with the noise. With enough materials at hand for four sections of



Above left – starting work. Above middle – Ali, Peter & Phil, and the T-junction in the boardwalk that we had constructed. Above right – Richard, Jennie, Rebecca & Rodney



Above left – Peter and Philip digging holes for the support posts. Above middle – Rodney, Ali, Philip, Peter & Owen. Above right – Ali drilling the holes for the nails that hold the beams onto the support posts.



boardwalk & all the posts in, we felt we had to finish the job, so we worked overtime. It was 5 o'clock when we finished, & we could hardly see the nails we were hammering

Left – Owen & Rodney nailing on the decking. Right – Rebecca & Jennie measuring up the planks ready for Richard to cut.



Left – nailing on the decking. Top – Rebecca, Richard & Jennie cutting the decking planks to length. Middle Richard & chainsaw. Bottom – the finished boardwalk.

29th January – Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve – Richard Coles



Richard & Mark felling a tree

I gave Mark a lift, because this was a long way, pushing the definition of "Berkshire Conservation" a bit. We carefully followed the directions to the task, but no van, & eventually phoned Neil who told us where the task really was. Moral: never believe the task directions. *(Ed – real moral: read the EMail updates or contact the task leader if you are making your own way to site)* Moral No.2: ignore Mark pointing out Red Kites when you are busy driving. We arrived to find the Oxford Group & a satisfying number of BeC volunteers already at work, including two of our DofE lads, Alastair & Ed. They had a huge bonfire going which rivalled the other Alisdair's best efforts. We were on the edge of the Chil-terns escarpment, & passed part of the Ridgeway on our way to the site, but somebody had built a motorway

nearby so it was quite noisy. Quite a few trees were destroyed during the day, leaving a big pile of ashes.

29th January – Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve – David Fiddes

Here are some pictures from Sunday's task, which was to clear hazel and birch re-growth and build dormouse friendly habitat. The scrub clearance should also help encourage the rare and temperamental juniper bushes that are a feature of this site. After lunch we were given a guided walk around this part of the site, which included a sunken way, a red kite sighting and a stroll through orchid rich pasture - although there were no flowers at this time of year. Most of the brash was burnt on a bonfire, which was also used to bake some lunchtime turnips



Above – tea break. Below – guided walk around the site.



5th February – Padworth Common – Neil Frankum

For this task, we were working on the north half of the site, where we worked about 18 months ago, clearing bracken. This week we were removing birch trees to link this clearing up with the next one along. This was successfully done, and all the brash burnt on a nice big bonfire. Adrian then treated the stumps to ensure minimal regrowth next year.



Richard, Graham, Nigel, James, and lots of cut and burning birch.



Above – Peter, Rodney, Richard, Graham, Nigel & James.

12th February – Yateley Common – Neil Frankum

This was the first rainy task for over a month. We were surfacing another stretch of the bridleway across the common, about 100m east of the last stretch we did.

Above Left – Peter, Richard, ?, Ilona, Philip & James.

Above Right – view across the cleared area at the end of the task.

Right – The bridleway at Yateley. The base layer of brashing is down. Upteen tonnes of gravel and hogging yet to be shovelled on top!



Newsletter

As you may know I've been having problems with my printer not coping with the newsletter print run. It

stopped printing in colour a while back and is somewhat temperamental in Black and White. I'm looking into ways of a) not having the expense of buying a new printer, and b) reducing the print run. For the last few issues of the newsletter I have been putting a pdf version of the newsletter on the website, as well as sending out paper copies. If anyone is happy to download their own copy (in full colour!) and print it out themselves, rather than having a black and white paper copy sent in the post, then let me know. I'll EMail you when the newsletter goes online. I will probably be looking at some way of restricting the high resolution version to members / userbodies only, but the low resolution version will probably be freely available (but not necessarily at the same time).

Membership

Another reminder for those of you who haven't renewed yet - It's membership renewal time. Still at the bargain price of £5 for 2006. Membership form attached. If the envelope this arrives in says "Paid 2006" then you've already paid.

Additional BBOWT Midweek Tasks

Work to improve access is continuing at BBOWT's newest reserve at Aldermaston Gravel Pits in West Berkshire. Join Project Officer Ali on site, where work may include building boardwalks and access ramps, constructing dipping platforms, surfacing paths, erecting screening, installing benches, digging a pond..... Wednesday 15th March. Bring a packed lunch and outdoor clothing. Contact Ali on 01628 829574 for further details, and to book a place.

BTCV Training Courses

Below is a list of training courses being offered by the BTCV:

COURSE	DATE	PLACE	FEE
Hedgelaying	11/03/06	Berkshire	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
How to keep hedges strong and healthy enabling them to provide a rich variety of habitats			
Intro to Leadership Skills	25/03/06	Berkshire	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
Aimed at people who wish to lead groups on practical tasks and community projects			
How to Build Wildlife Homes	8/04/06	Buckinghamshire	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
Construct boxes for nesting and hibernating bugs and beasts			

About the Courses: **Duration** : Courses typically run from 9:30am to 4:30pm. **Refreshments** : Drinks provided, please bring own packed lunch. **Fees** : Course costs are shown alongside the course descriptions. Categories are: (S - Standard cost to individuals not qualifying for discount; B - BTCV Supporters Club or member of an associated group; F - Free for those in receipt of benefit) **Certification** : Certificates of achievement are available to all who satisfactorily complete the course requirements. To book or find out more, contact: BTCV, 16 Bridge Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AA Tel: 0118 947 5049

Task Details: 26th February – 23rd April 2006

To book for task, please contact the task-leader listed below (If possible, by the Thursday before the task). Transport is available from the Tool Store at Edenham Crescent at 9:10am, and from the front of Reading Station (near the taxi rank) at 9:30am. Other pick-up points can sometimes be arranged – please contact the task-leader.

You are advised to wear old clothing, and stout boots or wellies (preferably with steel toecaps). Also bring waterproofs and a packed lunch, BeC will provide Tea/Coffee/Squash and Biscuits. As it is going into spring we could experience any type of weather, so wrap up warm / bring the sun cream??!!

Whenever possible, please do let the task leader know you are planning to come on task. Occasionally task details change at short notice, and we can only let you know of changes if we know you are planning to attend the task. However we do always take enough tools and biscuits for a few extras, so if you get the urge on Sunday morning, but haven't booked, you will still be made welcome.

We usually go to the pub after task, so remember to bring some money (and a change of clothes if it's likely to be a very muddy task) if you want to join us.

TEMPLE COPSE, Binfield, Bracknell**19th February 2006**

Task: Coppicing. A new site for BeC at this ancient woodland on the north edge of Bracknell.
 Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104
 Meet at: 10:15am at Temple Copse (Grid ref: SU853702). From the Coppid Beech roundabout on the A329(M), head east on the B3408. Go straight across the roundabout and traffic lights. At next roundabout take 2nd exit signed "Golf Centre". Take the 2nd right into Boltons Lane. Take 1st right into Dunford Place, and follow this all the way to the top where you will come to a t-junction. The site is straight ahead. Park considerately!
 Userbody: Bracknell Forest District Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**26th February 2006**

Task: Scrub and tree clearance for glade creation.
 Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471
 Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). Snelsmore Common country park can be found north of Newbury and is located along the B4494 road from Donnington to Wantage. The entrance is sign posted from the road opposite the entrance to Mary Hare Grammar School.
 Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

PADWORTH COMMON**5th March 2006**

Task: Scrub clearance
 Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580
 Meet at: 10-15am at the car park (Grid reference SU619648). Head west along the A4 from Junction 12 of the M4 for approximately 3 miles. Just before you get to the roundabout at the junction of the A4 and A340 turn left into a minor road signposted towards Padworth. Follow this road for approximately 2 miles. The car park is on the right just before you reach the T junction with the Burghfield Common to Tadley Road.
 Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

GARTH MEADOWS, Bracknell**12th March 2006**

Task: Hedgelaying using the materials produced on the 19th February task at Temple Copse.
 Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471
 Meet at: 10-15am at the site (Grid reference SU859704). Parking available in small layby at the roundabout at the junction of Harvest Ride and Binfield Road (B3018)
 Userbody: Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

ALDERMASTON GRAVEL PITS, Aldermaston**19th March 2006**

Task: Boardwalk, pond, scrub??
 Leader: TBA
 Meet at: Meet at: 10:15 at Station Rd, Aldermaston Wharf. (Grid ref: SU601672). From here walk back to the main road, cross the canal bridge, turn right and walk along the towpath for about 400m until you reach the reserve entrance gate.
 Userbody: BBOWT.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**26th March 2006**

Task: Scrub and tree clearance for glade creation.
 Leader: David Fiddes (0118) 950 0735
 Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). See 26th Feb for directions.
 Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

PADWORTH COMMON**2nd April 2006**

Task: Scrub clearance?
 Leader: TBA
 Meet at: 10-15am at the car park (Grid reference SU619648). See 5th March for directions.
 Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**9th April 2006**

Task: Scrub and tree clearance for glade creation.
 Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580
 Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). See 26th Feb for directions.
 Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

HEATHLAKE, Crowthorne**16th April 2006**

Task: Building revetments.
 Leader: Mark Clay 07810 838916
 Meet at: 10:15 at the entrance to the site off Nine Mile Ride. Grid reference 828655. Head south from Wokingham on the A321 the Sandhurst Road. At a double roundabout turn left onto Nine Mile Ride (B3430) and the site is on the right after half a mile.
 Userbody: Wokingham District Council Countryside Service.

TBA**23rd April 2006**

Task: TBA.
 Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528
 Meet at: TBA.
 Userbody: TBA.

Socials

Pub – Sundays after task

If everyone feels up to it we sometimes adjourn to the pub after task. We'll usually decide where we are going on task, when we've found out what everyone wants to do.

Visit to Barnes Wetland Centre – Saturday 11th March 2006

Contact Mark for further details 07810 838916.

Cinema Trips / Other socials etc

These get arranged on an ad hoc basis - turn up on task, contact one of us, or sign up for the Email mailing list to find out the details.

Diary Dates

Sun 9th Apr. Newsletter copy date. Any (printable!) contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. Any items for inclusion in the next newsletter should be Email to me on or preferably before this date.

Mon 10th Apr. Committee Meeting at the Black Boy by the M4 bridge on the Shinfield Rd. All welcome
TBA Please contact Richard Coles for dates of tools evenings.

BeC Contacts

Chair & Tools:	Richard Coles	(0118) 976 0580
Treasurer:	Peter Harrison	(0118) 950 9276
Van Admin:	Rodney Chapple	(0118) 986 4438
Task Co-Coordinator:	David Fiddes	(0118) 950 0735
Ast Task Co-Coordinator:	Mark Clay	07810 838916
Membership & Newsletter:	Neil Frankum	(0118) 975 1528 *
Social Secretary	Nigel Mason-Flucke	(01276) 469432
Committee Member	Philip Allen	(0118) 941 0471 *

* Answerphone available

Address for Correspondence: Berkshire Conservation Volunteers, PO Box 165, READING. RG1 4LD

Email: membership@berkshire-conservation-volunteers.org.uk

MOBILE: We have a mobile phone for task use – although primarily for use in emergencies, volunteers can also use it to contact us if they are having difficulties locating the worksite. The number is **07875 262129**. **NB:** this will only be switched on during tasks.

www.berkshire-conservation-volunteers.org.uk
