



BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 183

May / June 2006

Task Reports

19th February – Temple Copse – Richard Coles (Photos – David Fiddes)

This is a new site for us, a small wood surrounded by houses. It is a remnant of ancient coppiced woodland, mostly Hazel, and coppicing was long overdue, so we were faced with felling trees rather than coppicing,



complicated by the tree stems being twisted around one another. We layered some of the thinner stems to try to create some new coppice stools in the gaps, because the coppice had become rather sparse, but the deer will probably prevent them taking even in such a built-up area. We also collected stakes and heatherings ready for our task in three weeks' time, which was



hedgelaying nearby. It began to drizzle soon after lunch, and the rain gradually became heavier until everything was soaked, so we finished early and transported the hedgelaying materials to the other site.

26th February – Snelsmore Common – No Task Report

5th March – Padworth Common – David Fiddes



Above - Adrian, Richard & Phil feeding the fire.

Below – view across the site

We spent a pleasant day extending the heather habitat at Padworth Common by clearing and burning birch. It was a fairly small turn out on what had threatened to be a bad weather day, but the fire kept us warm and the rain didn't arrive. Phillip provided the customary potatoes and turnips. The brash was burnt, but most of the logs were



Tree felling

stacked. Phillip made additional stakes for the following week's hedgelaying task.



12th March – Garth Meadows – Richard Coles (Photos – Neil Frankum)



A new road cuts through the fields across the Meadows, and we were laying a hedge which had been panted by the side of it, continuing the work of other Groups. We were working near the top of a hill, exposed to the full blast of an icy wind. I was pleased to adjourn to our previous worksite at Temple Copse, which is about a mile away, in the early afternoon, to finish off the coppicing with the chainsaw. It was much more sheltered in the woodland.

Above left – Mark

Above right – Mark, Phil & Peter working on the hedge.

Right – Phil cutting through one of the stems prior to laying it into the hedge.

Below right – Phil doing the finishing touches as Marie-Anne looks on.

Below left – the finished hedge.



19th March – Aldermaston Gravel Pits – Richard Coles

Another visit to this new BBOVT site saw us laying a section of path with hogging, 3 metres wide to take vehicles, so it was very like building our horse motorway at Yateley Common. It's a long walk along the towpath from where we park in Station Road, but fortunately we remembered to take everything and had three wheelbarrows to carry it, so didn't have to go back to the van. Unlike Yateley Common, we had a plate vibrator for compacting the hogging, but this has the disadvantage that any mud underneath tends to get pumped up through the hogging unless you are careful. The hogging too was in a vast mound, and had been there for a while so it had compacted, so instead of shovelling it out of the back of a trailer, most of us were engaged in an opencast mining operation to get the hogging. A new volunteer, Sian, joined us and brought her dog Leo, a well-behaved animal, but biscuits had to be well-guarded as a precaution.

26th March – Snelsmore Common – Neil Frankum

I arrived at lunchtime to join in a day of digging / chopping birch scrub. Birch is a very good coloniser of the open heathland in the first stage of the natural succession that would turn it back into woodland. Our ongoing task here at Snelsmore is to prevent the natural succession, and thus preserve the rare heathland habitat. The morning had been spent digging up the little birch trees, and the afternoon was spent cutting and treating the bigger ones.

**2nd April – Padworth Common – Richard Coles**

We usually feel we are coppicing Birch rather than destroying it, such are its powers of regeneration, but this time we were intentionally coppicing it, to provide some younger growth in a belt of Birch at the edge of the common. The day provided some remarkable weather, we had a heavy April shower at midday whilst there were blue skies to either side of us. Still, Spring had definitely arrived if had a shower like that.

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).

Tools

We need somebody to sew the handle back on our glove bag, which is heavy canvas. Please contact Richard on 0118 976 0580 if you can help. (An ordinary sewing machine probably can't touch it. It needs something heavier, or somebody who can do it successfully by hand.)

Task Leaders

Due to weekend work commitments and relocation away from the area we are losing two of our regular leaders in the next couple of months. So anyone wanting / able to lead tasks and / or drive the van let one of the committee know if you are interested.

AGM

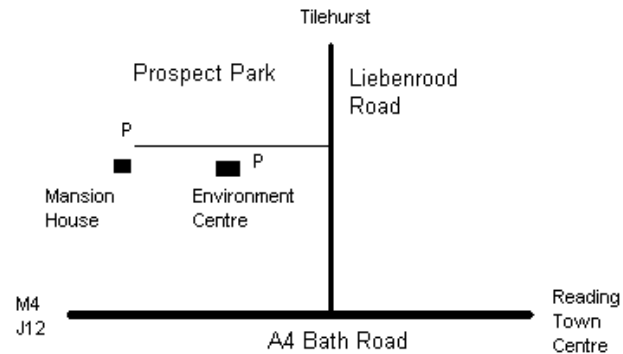
Yes it's that time of year again when everybody runs away and hides from the current committee in case they get 'persuaded' to help out with the running of the group. If you don't actually need much persuasion, and want to volunteer to help out with the running of the group then let one of the committee know.

On a more general note, we are always on the lookout for anyone wanting / able to lead tasks and / or drive the van. Again let one of the committee know if you are interested.

Date: Monday 5th June
Time: 8-00pm
Venue: The Environment Centre,
 Prospect Park, Off Liebenrood
 Road, Reading.

Agenda

1. Officers Reports
2. Election Of Committee
3. AOB
4. Adjourn to pub (Mansion House).



BTCV Training Courses

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

COURSE	DATE	PLACE	FEE
Risk Assessment	27/5/06	Aylesbury	£10
Covers how to carry out a risk assessment for conservation and countryside activities			
How to Build Wildlife Homes	3/6/06	Berkshire	£10
Construct boxes for nesting and hibernating bugs and beasties			
Intro to Leadership Skills	24/6/06	Aylesbury	£10
Aimed at people who wish to lead groups on practical tasks and community projects			
Intro to Env. Conservation	1/7/06	Buckinghamshire	£10
Gain knowledge and understanding to carry out practical environmental conservation			
Practical Tools Use	15/7/06	Newbury	£10
Covers the safe use and maintenance of hand tools used in practical conservation work			
Hedge Surveys	10 June	Woodcote	Free
1 Day Courses	8 July		
	15 July		

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. Free places are available to those who are able to show that they are 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: 23rd April – 25th June 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 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 often 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.

NO TASK**30th April 2006**

Due to circumstances beyond our control we haven't been able to arrange a task for this weekend, so you all get to enjoy a long weekend without any conservation work!

WILDMOOR, Crowthorne**7th May 2006**

Task: Boardwalk repair.

Leader: Mark Clay 07810 838916

Meet at: 10:15 in the car park on the road heading south towards Sandhurst from Crowthorne. Grid reference SU838630. Heading south, as you leave the built up area, the road bends to the left, and goes into a dip. The entrance to the car park is signed on your left.

Userbody: Bracknell Forest District Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**14th May 2006**

Task: TBA track repair, drainage, bracken control, fencing.

Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528

Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). Snelmore 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.

TBA**21st May 2006**

Task: TBA.

Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580

Meet at: TBA.

Userbody: TBA.

GREENHAM COMMON, Newbury**28th May 2006**

Task: Bracken clearance.

Leader: David Fiddes 0118 950 0735

Meet at: 10:15 at the site. This is a LARGE site, so contact David for details if you are planning on making your own way to site.

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

TBA**4th June 2006**

Task: TBA.

Leader: Owen Lewis 07740 766517

Meet at: TBA.

Userbody: TBA.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**11th June 2006**

Task: TBA track repair, drainage, bracken control, fencing.

Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580

Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). Snelmore 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.

TBA, Bracknell**18th June 2006**

Task: TBA.
 Leader: TBA
 Meet at: TBA.
 Userbody: Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

LAVELLS LAKE, Dinton Pastures**25th June 2006**

Task: Construction task with "Friends Of" group
 Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528
 Meet at: 10-15am at the reserve. Access through a gate into a field off of Sandford Lane (Grid reference SU782729). From the main entrance to Dinton Pastures turn left towards Hurst. Take the first left turn into Sandford Lane. Car park on the right across the road from the Sailing Club. Follow the arrows along the footpath parallel to the road to the worksite.
 Userbody: Wokingham District Council.

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.

Cinema Trips – Tuesday 2nd May

Time to be confirmed in the week before when the cinema publishes its programme. To see "Eight Below" if its still on.

Pub Meal & Walk – Friday 23rd June

Meeting at the Beefeater in Finchampstead (SU796631) for a meal. Walk afterwards to try and see nightingales. Contact Nigel (01276 469432) by 16th to confirm you are coming if you want to eat.

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 4th Jun. 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.

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