



BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 184

July / August 2006

Task Reports

28th May – Greenham Common – Neil Frankum (Additional photo by Richard Coles)

We were working in one of the clearings on the south west side of the common (we worked at the other end of the clearing removing birch scrub a couple of years ago). As well as birch, one of the other invasive species is Bracken. Today's task was to clear the thick mat of dead bracken on this area, to give the heather a chance to re-colonise, so lots of raking was the order of the day. Lots of wildlife was seen, with a grass snake, two slowworms, and at least half a dozen toads being the highlights.



Above left – Slowworm. Above middle – toad. Right – Owen rescuing one of the slowworms. Below left – Neil, Owen & David. Below right – Peter, Richard, Jennie & David.



7th May – Wildmoor – Neil Frankum



Mark shifting some of the new planks

You know you've been around for a long time when you get round to helping rebuild something that you helped to install. That was what faced me today, as we were replacing a section of boardwalk that I had helped to build on one of my first ever BeC tasks about 12 years ago. Unfortunately, posts planted



Emma, Mark, Sarah & Richard at the start of the task



Emma (de-nailing old planks), Mark (trying to remove old posts) & Peter (clearing excess soil)

in damp ground do have a finite lifespan, and after 12 years, these had rotted to the point where the boardwalk was beginning to give way. Our job for the day was to dismantle the end section of the boardwalk, dig in new support posts and then rebuild the boardwalk on top. The old boardwalk was dismantled fairly quickly, although it took a while to take



How many people does it take to install a new post?

the nails out to make it safe. After a lot of hard work to remove a couple of the old posts, we decided to abandon the others in situ, and install new supports a bit further along. After a bit of fine tuning to get the levels right, the posts were tamped into place, rails installed and the decking nailed on top. A bit of recycling of old deck planks made a step up onto the boardwalk as the last finishing touch. We also did a repair job a bit further up the boardwalk to prop up a beam that had split.



Right – Emma moving planks as Mark & Peter try to pull a post out of the ground.
 Below left – Sarah, Peter & Emma installing a new post.
 Below middle – Richard doing some chainsaw carpentry as Mark, Mark & Rodney look on.
 Below right – the finished boardwalk.



14th May – Snelmore Common – Neil Frankum

Today's task was a litter pick with a difference. The difference being that the 'litter' had been dumped about 40 years ago by the lorry load, and included amongst other things almost all of a Morris Minor!



30th April – No Task

9th April – Snelsmore Common – Neil Frankum

Another task continuing the birch clearance on the patch of heathland on the right after you go through the gate from the car park.

16th April – Heathlake – Richard Coles

We were replacing a life-expired (i.e. tumbled down) double fence along a planted hedge with a single barbed wire fence, along the busy road, which runs south to Crowthorne. Dave Webster, of Wokingham Wildlife Rangers, was there with their truck, so he protected us by parking the truck upstream of us, and coning off the work area. So we started by demolishing the old fence. This gave me a chance to remove the old fence posts by using a chain. I'm always pleased at using this technique. Lunch break was enlivened by Dave producing a quantity of chocolate bunnies, which were left over from a children's treasure hunt at Dinton Pastures. After Lunch, Sian arrived with her dog, Leo. Because of the busy road, we found a long rope and moored him to a tree. I had to talk to him at first because he whined, but he soon settled down. As often happens, we ran out of time, but Dave kindly stayed on so that we could finish the job. Fencing and chocolate bunnies on a nice fine day. What more could you want?

Below left – Richard & Leo. Below right – Tea break.



Jenny & Peter dismantling the fence.



4th June – Clayfield Copse – Neil Frankum (with additional photos by Richard Coles)

This joint task with the Friends Of Clayfield Copse was another task rebuilding something that was succumbing to the effects of time. We were rebuilding a section of the fence along the north side of the bridleway through Clayfield Copes. Most of the existing support posts had rotted through, and long lengths were in the process of falling over. So after demolishing the existing fence, new posts were knocked in, and rails reattached (some new, and some recycled from the old fence).



Above right – Owen & David nailing on the rails. Above middle – Richard & Owen knocking in a new post. Above right – the finished fence.

23rd April – Yateley Common – Neil Frankum



How to resurface a bridleway – 1) Peter clearing some of the mud. 2&3) Mark & Richard installing the edging boards. 4) Add a layer of brashings, followed by gravel 5) Peter & Nigel barrowing gravel. 6) Richard & David trimming off the posts.



After a bit of confusion over phone numbers, I finally managed to confirm the task with Vicky at about 9pm on the Saturday night! The task was probably the last one resurfacing this stretch of bridleway, as the worst of the mud has now been removed. The task was to extend two of the existing resurfaced stretches. With all our previous practice we got to work like a well-oiled machine. The edging boards were staked in place, brash was cut to act as a base, then a layer of gravel to provide a well drained mid layer, all finished off with a layer of hogging. All in all a good task despite the intermittent light drizzle. We adjourned to the pub just up the road to finish things off properly!



7) Add a layer of hogging to finish off

21st May – Aldermaston Gravel Pits – Richard Coles



Alisdair shovelling mud!

It rained right from the start, and I foresaw a low turnout. Sure enough, I arrived at Aldermaston as the sole BeC volunteer. Fortunately it was a joint task with Windsor and Maidenhead Volunteers and there were no less than three of them, and Ali, the project manager for BBOWT. Remembering the long trek along the towpath to the work site, I had brought two wheelbarrows, so these were loaded and we set off. A digger had recently been engaged to create a shallow pond where the end of the boardwalk curves round, and had made a rough embankment against the boardwalk. Our task for the day was to tidy it up. Just then Alasdair arrived. He had taken the Mick on a previous

task I had led where the work was unpopular. Oh no, I thought, what will he say about shovelling mud in the pouring rain. But not a word of complaint: Alasdair set to and shovelled mud with the best of them. The other Group had a new volunteer with them, but he had been with BeC years before and knew what to expect. Eventually we tidied the mud to a satisfactory state, & thankfully made our way home.

Chairman's Report

At the AGM on 5th June the existing Committee were re-elected unopposed, except for Mark Clay: Mark was co-opted as Assistant Task Co-ordinator during the year to help David's search for Task Leaders, but is leaving the area. I would like to thank him for his past efforts, particularly as a former Task Co-ordinator, but we shall be seeing him again from time to time. I would like to thank the other Officers of the Committee on behalf of us all for their work. There is a lot of work to be done to keep us going. We continue to provide a valuable service for wildlife conservation, and I would like to thank all our volunteers who have come out on our tasks. Currently our numbers are running slightly higher than the same time last year, which is not bad considering that we had some atrocious weather during the Winter: we seemed to have a lot of wet Sundays, despite what Neil says about his Thames Water reservoirs being empty. However, we really need more volunteers on our tasks, because it would make our tasks more enjoyable as well as providing a better service for our clients, and therefore ask everybody to join us a bit more often and give our more distant sites a try. I look forward to seeing you all again very soon and a bit more often!

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.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Lindy, Ilona & Philip, who have all recently got themselves environmentally based jobs.

BTCV Training Courses

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

COURSE	DATE	PLACE	FEE
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	8 July	Woodcote	Free
1 Day Courses	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 show 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



BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Annual Report 2005-6

Introduction

Berkshire Conservation Volunteers (BeC) is a voluntary organisation founded in 1975 to carry out practical nature conservation work in and around Berkshire. We are a "Roving" Group - we do not have a site of our own, but work on a wide variety of sites throughout Berkshire and S. Oxfordshire and N. Hampshire, such as nature reserves, common lands, public open spaces, woodlands, heathlands, grasslands, ponds & wetlands.

We go out every Sunday and work a whole day, from about 10 to 4.30 (depending on daylight). We have a van to carry tools and volunteers. The work involves in many different skills including coppicing, hedgelaying, fencing, dead hedging, path work, pond clearance, heathland restoration etc. Anyone can join, no prior knowledge or skills are required, and people of all ages are welcome.

We are affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, BTCV. We follow BTCV practice for task organisation and methods, and for safety.

This report summarises the group's activities over the period 1st April 2005 – 31st March 2006.

Toolstore

As a result of Reading Borough Council's plans to redevelop Caversham Court, in September 2005 we moved our toolstore to a new location at Edenham Crescent just off Berkeley Avenue.

Socials

Post task trips to the pub were a regular feature during the year, as was the occasional trip to the cinema.

Membership

By the end of 2005 the group's paid up membership had dropped to 29 (a 30% drop on the previous year), partly due to me not being as ruthless chasing people for the money, as the actual number of volunteers was up on the previous year.

Task Leaders

This year's tasks were led by 7 people:
Richard Coles
Philip Allen
Neil Frankum
Mark Clay
David Fiddes
Nigel Mason-Flucke
Owen Lewis

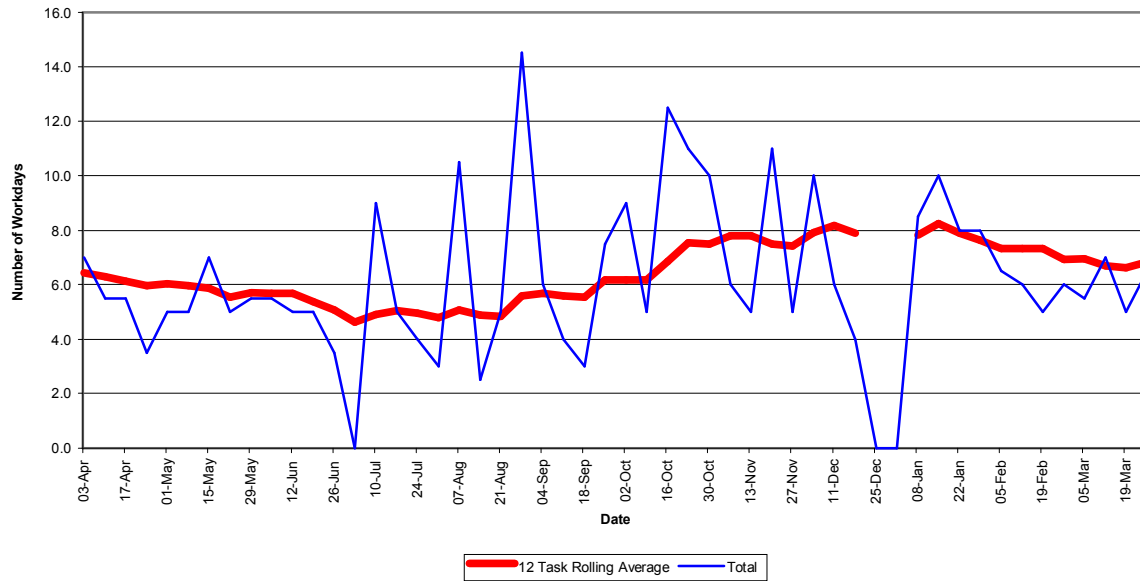
Committee

The committee for the year 2005-6 was:
Richard Coles Chair & Tools
Peter Harrison Treasurer
Rodney Chapple Van Admin
David Fiddes Task Co-Coordinator
Neil Frankum Membership, Newsletter & Website
Nigel Mason-Flucke Social Secretary
Phil Allen Committee Member
Mark Clay Committee Member (co-opted)

Task Attendance

During the period 1st April 2005 – 31st March 2006 we had a total of 47 volunteers out on task. This was 10% up on last year. Top volunteer again was Richard Coles with a total of 47.5 workdays. The year has shown a similar pattern to last year, with peaks and dips in numbers at similar times to last year.

BeC Task Attendance 05 - 06



Tasks

During the year we carried out a total of 49 tasks at 24 different sites. The total number of workdays was virtually the same as last year (320).

Userbody	Site	No. Of Tasks	No. Of Workdays
West Berkshire District Council	Snelmore Common	11	66.0
West Berkshire District Council	Padworth Common	5	38.5
Hampshire County Council	Yateley Common	4	21.0
BBOWT	Aldermaston Gravel Pits	3	20.0
Wokingham District Council	Dinton Pastures	2	16.0
Hampshire Wildlife Trust	North Warnborough Greens	2	15.0
Hampshire Wildlife Trust	Bartley Heath	3	15.0
Dorset County Council	Langton Herring	1	14.5
West Berkshire District Council	Greenham Common	2	12.5
Wokingham District Council	Lavell's Lake	1	11.0
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Wildmoor	1	10.0
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Hayley Green Wood	1	10.0
Wokingham District Council	Highwood	1	10.0
English Nature	Aston Rowant NNR	1	8.0
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Garth Meadows	1	7.0
Arborfield Parish Council	Pound Copse	2	6.0
Ecchinswell Parish Council	Ecchinswell Village (Chapel)	1	5.5
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Englemere Pond	1	5.0
Reading Borough Council	Clayfield Copse	1	5.0
Ecchinswell Parish Council	Ecchinswell Village Pond	1	5.0
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Temple Copse, Binfield	1	5.0
Wokingham Without Parish Council	Pinewood	1	5.0
BBOWT	Kingwood Common	1	4.0
Hampshire Wildlife Trust	Greywell Fen	1	3.5
		49	318.5

Userbodies	Userbody	No. Of Workdays
During the year we worked for 12 different userbodies across Berkshire, north Hampshire, and south Oxfordshire. There was also a weekend away in Dorset.	West Berkshire District Council	117
	Wokingham District Council	37
	Bracknell Forest Borough Council	37
	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	33.5
	BBOWT	24
	Hampshire County Council	21
	Dorset County Council	14.5
	Ecchinswell Parish Council	10.5
	English Nature	8
	Arborfield Parish Council	6
	Wokingham Without Parish Council	5
	Reading Borough Council	5
	318.5	

Task Details: 25th June – 28th August 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 summer 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.

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.

YATELEY COMMON, Yateley

2nd July 2006

Task: Path work.

Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104

Meet at: Meet at 10:15 at the site. There are several car parks along the A30 & Cricket Hill Lane, so contact the leader if you are making your own way to site to find out where we are meeting.

Userbody: Hampshire County Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury

9th July 2006

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

Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104

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

16th July 2006

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

GREENHAM COMMON, Newbury

23rd July 2006

Task: Ragwort pull.
Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580
Meet at: 10:15 at the site. This is a LARGE site, so contact Richard for details if you are planning on making your own way to site.
Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

TBA, Bracknell

30th July 2006

Task: TBA.
Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104
Meet at: TBA.
Userbody: Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

YATELEY COMMON, Yateley

6th August 2006

Task: Path work.
Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528
Meet at: Meet at: 10:15 at the site. See 2nd July for details.
Userbody: Hampshire County Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury

13th August 2006

Task: TBA track repair, drainage, bracken control, fencing.
Leader: Owen Lewis 07740 766517
Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). See 9th July for details.
Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

POUND COPSE, Arborfield

20th August 2006

Task: Bramble control.
Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580
Meet at: 10:00 at Grid Reference 751673. Follow the Shinfield Road (A327) south out of Reading. Cross the M4, pass through Shinfield village, and bear left at the mini-roundabout past the ESSO petrol station. Half a mile after crossing the River Loddon turn right into Greensward lane opposite the signpost to Swallowfield. Pound Copse is 100m on the right.
Userbody: Arborfield Parish Council

LANGTON HERRING, Dorset**25th – 28th August 2006****Weekend Residential Task**

Task: Drystone Walling. Whilst this may sound like hard physical work, it is in fact much more of a mental challenge – a three dimensional jigsaw puzzle with totally random shaped pieces, and no guarantee that even after several hours thinking about it that you'll be able to find a stone to fill that awkward gap. Accommodation is again on the floor of the Langton Herring village hall. This is a perfect location– close to the worksite (assuming we are working in a similar location to the last seven years), with the pub only a twenty yard walk away! We'll probably also fit in an afternoon doing something more relaxing as well (previous years have seen us visiting Portland Bill, doing a coastal walk, and having a BBQ (thanks to Maurice)). Contact the leader by Sunday 13th August to book, thus enabling us to buy enough food for everyone! Let the leader know if you have any special dietary requirements.

Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580

Meet at: Contact the leader for the Friday night pickup times and locations. For the task meet us at the village hall (Grid Reference SY614824), or contact the leader to find out where we are working – mobile reception is fairly poor at the worksite, so phone in advance.

Userbody: Dorset County 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.

Pub Meal & Walk – Friday 23rd June

Meeting at the Beefeater in Finchampstead (SU796631) for a meal. Walk afterwards to try and see nightjars. 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 6th Aug. 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) 948 2681
Membership & Newsletter:	Neil Frankum	(0118) 975 1528 *
Social Secretary	Nigel Mason-Flucke	(01276) 469432

* 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