



# BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 185

September / October 2006

## Task Reports

16<sup>th</sup> July – Greenham Common – Neil Frankum



Happy Volunteers at the end of the task

Today's task was a joint task with the Greenham and Crookham Conservation Volunteers. The task was to clear a vast swathe of ragwort from the north east corner of the site. This is for the benefit of the cattle that graze the site, as ragwort is poisonous to the cattle. It was one of the hottest days of the year and as we were working right out in the open, Andy wouldn't let us work past 2pm on health and safety grounds, to avoid the risk of sunstroke and heatstroke.



Above – Peter, David, ??, Kirsty, and Peter in amongst the ragwort



Peter, Kirsty, ?, & David at work pulling ragwort



Above – view across the site



Above left – in amongst the ragwort. Above middle – frog. Above right – Peter pulling ragwort.

**25<sup>th</sup> June – Lavells Lake – Neil Frankum**

Today’s task was clearing a large patch of Himalayan Balsam. As its name suggests this is not a local plant. Its seeds are carried on the winter floodwaters and spread everywhere. The resulting dense vegetation shades out other growth. Most of the work was on both sides of Sandford Lane, alongside the outflow stream from Black Swan Lake, although in the afternoon we moved over to a different patch on Lavell’s Lake.



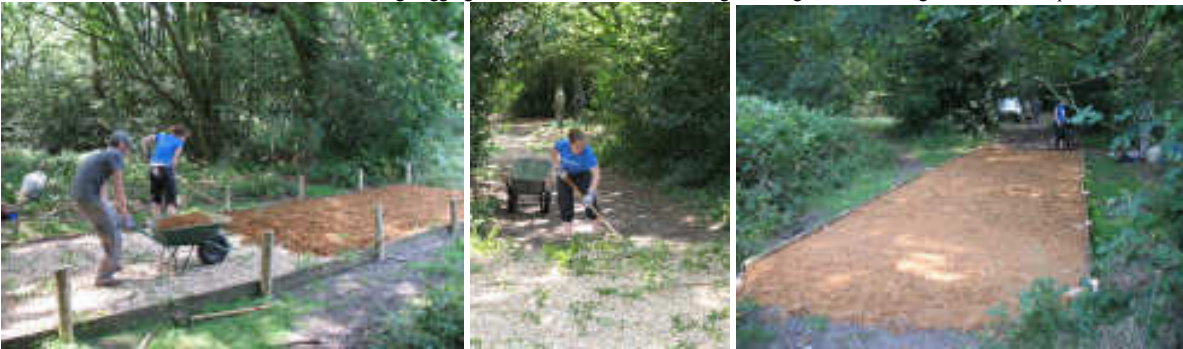
Above left – Bonnie & Lesley clearing Himalayan Balsam. Above right - Bonnie, Emma, Lesley & Fraser

**2<sup>nd</sup> July – Yateley Common – David Fiddes**

Five of us laid about 30 foot of board, gravel and hogging to repair a section of path in the Wyndhams Pool part of the common. Even working in the shade of the trees it was a hot day and not one best suited to shovelling and wheel-barrowing gravel and hogging. Despite the hot weather and small number of us we managed to get the path laid.



Above left – Dom & Peter knocking in stakes. Above right – Peter and Vicky spreading hogging .  
Below left – Dom & Gemma barrowing hogging. Below middle – Gemma raking out the gravel. Below right – the finished path.



**9<sup>th</sup> July – Snelsmore Common – Neil Frankum**

This was a joint task with the local group at Snelsmore Common. We were clearing bracken on the western side of the valley mire. Two new volunteers joined us – H el ene (visiting from France for the summer), and Peter. Good fun doing Grim Reaper impressions with the scythe, and an early finish when we reached a natural artistic conclusion due to general exhaustion!



Above – bracken clearing.



Above – Tea break at Snelsmore.

**23<sup>rd</sup> July – Greenham Common – Neil Frankum**

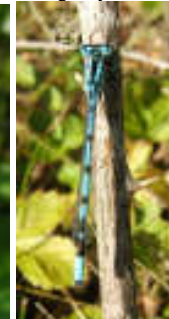
We were back at Greenham for a second week, this time without GCCV help. We carried on where we left off & worked a little longer as it wasn't quite so hot. I went for a walk round the site to see the cows and look at the wildlife, to finish off a nice day.



Above left – Peter, Samantha & Richard pulling ragwort.  
Above right – A full trailer at the end of the task.



Above left – the animals the work was in aid of. Above middle – painted lady butterfly. Above right – fritillary butterfly.  
Below left – ragwort with one of its natural predators, the cinnabar moth caterpillar. Below middle & left – dragonfly and damselfly



**30<sup>th</sup> July – South Hill Park, Bracknell – David Fiddes**

Six of us cleared a tangled area of rhododendron on a wooded slope in South Hill Park. This was continuing work carried out by an E2E team and although we created two large stacks of rhoddy trunks and brash there was still plenty left. It was too dry for a fire so the piles were left for future chipping. Our efforts did expose a clump of birch trees, freed up some space around a large beech and extended the rhoddy free glade that went up the slope from the park proper at the bottom of the hill. The winch was put to good use to remove several stumps, which should be more effective than simply cutting back.



Above left - Peter & Iain at work. Above right – Richard winching out rhododendron stumps as Iain looks on.  
Right – Neil in front of the big beech tree growing next to the worksite.  
Below – David, Iain, Richard, Peter & Peter at work.



**6<sup>th</sup> August – Yateley Common – Neil Frankum**



We were resurfacing another section of the bridlepath across the common. Unfortunately access wasn't brilliant, so I got to do a bit of off road driving in the van, followed by a long walk to where we were working.

Left – Emma, Peter & Richard and the path before we started.  
Right – Emma tipping out a barrow full of gravel.



The path was odd in so far as the bit that was wet and muddy was actually raised up above the surrounding ground. It had also been resurfaced at some point in the past so there was a solid layer down below the mud. We ended up scraping the mud off, and then following our standard resurfacing technique of a layer of brushings, followed by a layer of gravel, all topped off with a layer of hogging.

Left – the gravel layer in place.



Above left – Peter, Richard and Vicky shovelling hogging Above right – Emma raking out the hogging as Peter barrows it across from the trailer



Peter doing a Grim reaper impression with the scythe.

**11<sup>th</sup> June – Snelsmore Common – Neil Frankum**  
A sunny day met us for this task on the quiet northern part of Snelsmore Common away from the hordes of visitors that frequent the main part of the site. The task was to clear some of the invading bracken from a clearing to allow the heathland vegetation to recolonise.



The finished path

**18<sup>th</sup> June – Task Cancelled**  
Below – Bracken clearing at Snelsmore Common.



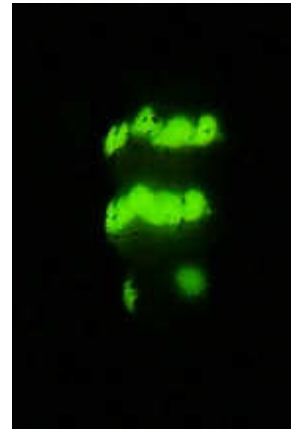
### Socials

**23<sup>rd</sup> June – Castle Bottom National Nature Reserve**



Mark & Nigel at CastleBottom

After a meal at a pub in Finchampstead we went for a nice evening stroll across Castle Bottom National Nature Reserve. The aim was to try and spot the illusive Nightjar, a nocturnal bird. After thinking we wouldn't see one, we eventually heard one calling, followed soon after by having one fly around over our heads, with several others calling in the distance. We also saw half a dozen glowworms, a woodcock, roe deer and several other birds.



No it's not an alien, just a close up of a glow worm!

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## Task Details: 3<sup>rd</sup> September – 29<sup>th</sup> October 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.

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### CLAYFIELD COPSE, Caversham

**3<sup>rd</sup> September 2006**

Task: Raking wildflower meadow, sycamore clearance, path repair.  
 Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104  
 Meet at: 10:15 at the site car park (Grid Ref SU) off of Caversham Park Road.  
 Userbody: Friends Of Clayfield Copse / Reading Borough Council.

### SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury

**10<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

Task: TBA.  
 Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528  
 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.

### WILDMOOR, Crowthorne

**17<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

Task: Boardwalk building & repairs.  
 Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104  
 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 Borough Council.

### TBA

**24<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

Task: TBA.  
 Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580.  
 Meet at: TBA.  
 Userbody: TBA.

### PADWORTH COMMON

**1<sup>st</sup> October 2006**

Task: Scrub clearance  
 Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471  
 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.

### SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury

**8<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

Task: TBA.

Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580  
 Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). See 10<sup>th</sup> September for details.  
 Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

**GREENHAM COMMON, Newbury****15<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

Task: TBA.  
 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.

**ECCHINSWELL VILLAGE POND****22<sup>nd</sup> October 2006**

Task: Controlling the reeds invading the village pond.  
 Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471  
 Meet at: 10-15am at the site (Grid reference SU503606). Head south from the roundabout on the A339 at Kingsclere. Where the road bends round to the left turn right (straight on) towards Ecchinswell. In Ecchinswell turn right, drive north past the church, & the pond is on the right in about ½ mile.  
 Userbody: Ecchinswell Parish Council.

**TBA****29<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

Task: TBA.  
 Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104.  
 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.

**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 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.** 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**

<b>Chair &amp; Tools:</b>	Richard Coles	(0118) 976 0580
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Peter Harrison	(0118) 950 9276
<b>Van Admin:</b>	Rodney Chapple	(0118) 986 4438
<b>Task Co-Coordinator:</b>	David Fiddes	(0118) 948 2681
<b>Membership &amp; Newsletter:</b>	Neil Frankum	(0118) 975 1528 *
<b>Social Secretary</b>	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](mailto: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](http://www.berkshire-conservation-volunteers.org.uk)**