



Greenham Common – 18th February - Neil Frankum

At the start of today's task we were faced with an almost impenetrable wall of gorse filling a large clearing on the north side of Bury's Bank Road. Our task was to cut down as much of the gorse as possible, to open up the clearing and allow the heathland flora to recover to its previous state. There was still a moderate amount of heather clinging on under the gorse. The oldest gorse bushes were probably 6 or 7 years old. All the cut gorse was burned on a nice big bonfire. We also removed a few of the holly bushes in the clearing, leaving those with berries on for the birds to feed. The holly made a lovely crackling sound when it went onto the fire, adding to the flames from the gorse. At the end of the day the nine of us that had turned up had created a reasonably large dent in the gorse, and had a satisfyingly large pile of ash to show for our efforts. Andy (the ranger) appeared to be quite pleased with what we had done too. The Greenham and Crookham Conservation Volunteers had been at work in the next clearing and had matched our efforts there.



Above – Amy cutting down a gorse bush
Top – Nigel feeding the fire



Above - Daniel about to tackle a gorse bush with a pair of loppers



Above left – Amy, Daniel & Rhodri starting work on the big stand of gorse. Above right – Amy & David in the area cleared of gorse. Below left – Daniel putting some gorse on the fire. Below right – Andy standing by the big pile of ash as everyone else takes the tools back to the van. This entire area was covered in gorse at the start of the task!



Hayley Green Wood – 17th December

Neil Frankum

This was our second task at this site on the north side of Bracknell, a year after our first visit. The woodland has been invaded by a large amount of non-native rhododendron, and our task for the day was to cut it down and winch out some of the roots. The evidence was to be burned on a



Nigel winching out rhody roots

bonfire. Unfortunately we were just a little bit pyrotechnically challenged so it took a while to get the fire going, though it ended up being big enough for Chloe to have fun playing with it later in the afternoon. A new group pyromaniac in the making! It almost seemed a pity to put it out at the end, just as it was going properly.



Chloe & Daniel demolishing the biggest rhody bush

Mince pies were in evidence thanks to Rhodri & Daniel. Richard from the council provided us with hot sausages and onions (cooked in the oven in the pavillion, as the fire wasn't going well enough at lunch time!



Above left – view across the site. Above right – Phil and the pyrotechnically challenged fire.

Ecchinswell – 7th January

Neil Frankum



Above left – James. Above middle – Alisdair, Nigel, Peter, & Chloe. Above right – Amy

We got off to a good start to the New Year with ten of us and about a dozen locals tackling a bit of scrub bashing and chainsawing at a site called Digweed's in the middle of Ecchinswell village. It was the site of the original village church. Rumours of the church being haunted were prompted by banging noises from the graves under the nave during services. However, this was actually caused by the stream next door flooding, and the coffins floating up and banging on the floor of the nave! One of the graves is still visible at the edge of the site, and it is the person buried here that gives the site its name – one Mr. Digweed Esq.



We all got our fifteen minutes of fame at the start of the day as we were photographed by a reporter from the Newbury Weekly News. Unfortunately I didn't pick up a copy of the paper to see the picture. The locals put on a BBQ at lunchtime (nice hotdogs), & we finished off by adjourning to the village pub 100m up the road as the rain arrived mid afternoon. A good day all round!





Above left – Alisdair playing with the chainsaw. Above right – view across the site near the end of the task
 Below – lots of volunteers at the end of the task. L-R: Richard, a local, David, a small local, James, Alisdair, Nigel, Amy, 2 more locals.



Yateley Common – 28th January

Neil Frankum

The Yateley task saw another double figures turnout. We were clearing undergrowth and a few bigger trees to improve access along one of the brideways across the site. Richard and Vicky got to play with chainsaws, and I got to play with the winch pulling up tree stumps and helping to un-hang a tree that had barely moved when Richard went through it with the chainsaw. Good task, finished off up the road at The Ely for a quick half.



Above - views of the brideway.

Heath Lake – 21st January

Richard Coles

The day started with rain, so not very many people came, but the weather soon improved and we had a fine day, cutting small birch regrowth and pine from an area of heath. The local "friends of" group were there, and Mark Clay came back to visit us which helped to increase our numbers, and we finished clearing the area. One of the Rangers, Emma, is getting married soon, and being a Young Farmer will have a guard of honour of pitchforks, and leave the church behind a tractor in a converted muck spreader! We expressed the hope that the muck spreader would not re-activate all over the wedding guests.

Wildmoor – 14th January

Richard Coles

In the past we have often regretted that girls sometimes join our tasks and find they have no female company. This time, it was 9 girls and 4 blokes! Such a large party cleared a big area of heathland of birch regrowth and pines, and I think I was the only one to get a wet foot from the hidden ditches, which cross the site.

Padworth Common – 4th February

Neil Frankum



Chloe tackling the gorse

Thirteen of us spent a nice warm sunny day clearing birch and gorse on the southern part of Padworth Common. In the middle of one dense patch of gorse I found a small pond that Adrian didn't know was there.



Phil putting spuds into the fire to bake.

Nice bonfire too if you were feeling cold. It was another task where the women almost outnumbered the blokes too!



Snelsmore Common – 11th February

No task report.

2007 Membership

Reminder for those who have not yet renewed - Its that time of year when I ask you to part with a fiver to guarantee another six issues of this fantastic newsletter and membership of the group through to the end of 2007.

RESCUE - Rivers and Environmental Spaces Clean Up Event

This annual event will take place again on 10 and 11 March, where many local groups and individuals join in clearing rubbish, primarily from our local river banks and rivers. BeC do not take part as a group because this is a bit outside our normal activities (we can't do everything), but individuals are welcome to take part. Contact: Summreen Sheikh, Level 7, Civic Centre, Reading RG1 7TD Tel: 0118 9390100 email Summreen.Sheikh@reading.gov.uk.

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.

Social Reports**Film – Blood Diamond**

Good film. Set in war torn Liberia in west Africa, telling the stories of three people wrapped up in the illicit diamond trade – a local forced to work in the mines after being captured by rebels, a south African diamond trader, and an American reporter investigating the illegal trade in diamonds.

Film – Babel

Good film. Made up of three initially apparently unrelated stories set in Morocco, Mexico, & Japan, that as the film goes on are shown to be linked. Good idea, well presented.

Film – Miss Potter

Another good film. This one told the story of Beatrix Potter, and how she went from making up stories and doing cartoons for her younger brother to being a best selling childrens book writer.

Film – Eragon

Good fantasy film, with the stage set for a sequel to follow at some point.

Film – Pan's Labyrinth

This was my personal favourite of the films seen recently. A mixture of live action and CGI graphics very well put together. It told the story of a young girl in Spain during Franco's repressive regime, and the make believe world she created to escape from the rather brutal reality.

Task Details: 4th March – 25th February 2007

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 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.

PADWORTH COMMON**4th March 2007**

Task: Scrub and gorse 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.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**11th March 2007**

Task: Probably scrub bashing.

Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104.

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.

GREENHAM COMMON, Newbury**18th March 2007**

Task: Probably scrub bashing.

Leader: Owen Lewis 07740 766517

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

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

TBA**25th March 2007**

Task: TBA

Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580

Meet at: TBA.

Userbody: TBA

MOOR COPSE**1st April 2007**

Task: Deer fencing repairs

Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471

Meet at: 10-15am at the car park (Grid reference SU633738). Head west along the A4 from Junction 12 of the M4. Turn right at the second roundabout onto the A340. The car park is on the right just after you go over the M4 bridge.

Userbody: BBOWT.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**8th April 2007**

Task: Probably scrub bashing.
 Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471
 Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). See 11th March for directions.
 Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

WILDMOOR, Crowthorne**15th April 2007**

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, & goes into a dip. The entrance to the car park is signed on your left.
 Userbody: Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

TBA**22nd April 2007**

Task: TBA
 Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528 / 0793 225 8788
 Meet at: TBA.
 Userbody: TBA

YATELEY COMMON, Yateley**29th April 2007**

Task: Path work.
 Leader: Nigel Mason-Flucke 01252 835919
 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.

Diary Dates

Sun 8th Apr. Newsletter copy date. Any items (task reports etc) 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	Address for Correspondence: Berkshire Conservation Volunteers, PO Box 165, READING. RG1 4LD
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	(01252) 835919 * Answerphone available	

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
