
BeC Task Reports 2002 (January – March)

6th January - West Green Common

Thirteen of us saw in the new year with a task coppicing task along the edge of one of the main rides through the wood. The brashings were used to construct a dead hedge along the top of an old earth bank running parallel to the ride. We adjourned to The Phoenix on the A30 in Phoenix Green for the post task social.

13th January – Balmore Walk – Neil Frankum



The team.

Nigel's first task as leader was a success. We had the tasks of building a dead hedge to prevent the local kids running up and down a steep slope, and eroding away the main path through the site. Material for the hedge came from felling a number of trees that were overhanging the path, and from a block of scrub. Two rows of stakes were firmly knocked in, and lots of brashings woven in between to form as sturdy a hedge as possible. However, several of the locals walking past gave it

two weeks at most before the kids would have removed it. We've not been back yet to see if its still there!





The other parts of the task involved clearing some invading bramble from one of the grassland areas at the north of the site, and wood chipping around some recently planted trees in one of the open areas in the middle of the site.

Above L – Neil & Richard C lining up the stakes.
 Centre – Nigel knocking the stakes in. Right – Neil weaving some of the brushings into the hedge.
 Photos by Maurice Budden



18th - 20th January – North Standen Estate

No report for this one except that due to the rain Sunday was changed to a social trip to Avebury.

Warburg Reserve - 27th January – Richard Coles

We came, we beat hell out of the scrub, and cleared several big areas.

Mapledurham Playing Fields - 3rd February – Neil Frankum

Rain, rain and more rain. In amongst this, we worked with one of the Friends Of group members and expanded an existing clearing adjacent to the Chazey Road entrance to the site, and built some dead hedges to protect the newly created clearing.

West Green Common - 10th February – Richard Coles

An unusual task on this site, making a new path through the undergrowth, much of it Hornbeam regrowth. Philip pulled these up and stuffed them into all available plastic bags, as a present for Tina at Caversham Court Environment Centre. In the afternoon we cut and pointed stakes for the Userbody to make tree guards.

Warburg Reserve - 17th February – Richard Coles

Fog still lingered in the valleys as we arrived at the Reserve. The Userbody greeted us with the transmission shaft of his Land Rover in his hand, which did not auger well for the transport arrangements, but he succeeded in taking our tools to the site by driving on the remaining two wheels.

Unusually, this was quite a nice hedge to lay, well under the usual 30 years old, and we were quite lost for a while. We are not used to laying nice hedges. Nigel applied the heatherings, and after dropping a few stitches at the beginning, soon got the hang of it. The weather was fine for a change, and although our numbers were few, we laid 40 yards in the day.

Lavells Lake - 24th February

This was the wettest task of the year (so far), helping the Friends of Lavell' s Lake remove trees from the bank of the lake. The Park Rangers were using chainsaws, so Richard C. made a nuisance of himself by using ours, and a happy time was had by all for a while. However, two of our members' cars were broken into, although nothing was taken. We shall arrange for our members to park in a safer place in future, because this is a valuable site with interesting work to be done. This was Laurence' s first task as Leader, and congratulations to him for not losing any tools or volunteers.

Hartley Wintney - 3rd March – June Wilson



We had almost perfect weather for the pond clearance at Hartley Wintney, warm with the occasional sunny spells. There were six BeC attendees and a about the same from the local user body. The pond was surrounded by a number of very mature, very large oak trees and as the pond had not been cleared in the last 20 years there were a lot of leaves to remove. Unfortunately because of 20 years worth of decaying leaves the pond was covered in an unpleasant looking green algae and the smell was equally unpleasant. Once the off-spring of the local

residents (frog spawn) had been removed work began. Everyone took part in dredging the pond with the exception of Richard, our social secretary, who obviously didn' t want to get his feet wet. Not sure why, the waders didn' t leak, maybe it was something to do with the silt at the bottom of the pond acting like quick sand. If you stood in once place for too long you ended up wondering if you would

ever be able to pull your foot free! Anyway he didn' t get a better deal because he had to transport all of the removed leaves to a make-shift compost heap in the woods. The pond still looks a little murky but give it a few weeks and we should be able to see the results of what was very hard and enjoyable work. While dredging we found half a concrete bollard, Nigel and Phil had to put their backs into removing it from the pond. Considering that the pond is 50 feet or so



from the road, we couldn' t understand why anyone would want to lug such item so far just to see the splash! Six hours, one ironing board, a set of bicycle handlebars, a fire grate and two sheets of corrugated iron later the pond was cleared.

Mcllroy Park – 10th March – Neil Frankum

Ten of us turned up today, having managed to dodge the town centre road closures resulting from the Reading Half Marathon. Blackthorn and bramble at the Norcott Road end of the site was bashed, to open up an area of grassland on the south facing slope. The brushings were made into a dead

hedge at the top of the slope. We adjourned to the Griffin for a quick drink..... that became several and a meal!

17th March – Warburg Reserve – Neil Frankum

A long walk from the car park along the main track took us to one of the further corners of BBOWT's largest nature reserve. Our task for the day was to take some of the brashings created by a recent coppicing task on the site, and stack them into a dead hedge running alongside the main track through the site. The main aim was to try and discourage deer from going into the coppiced area, thus allowing the trees to regrow without being nibbled. It was mostly a warm sunny day, with the first butterflies of spring fluttering about, although the carpet of bluebells was not yet in flower. We adjourned to the Flowing Spring at Playhatch, but as this wasn't serving food we ended up in our more usual haunt – The Griffin.

24th March – North Standen Estate Pinewood Pound Copse – June Wilson



We were moved on from Pinewood by the Police, some serious crime, details unknown. Richard took us to Pound Copse where we bashed some brambles.

I always seem to catch Nigel standing around, bad luck on his part?

Left – Nigel
Below left –Richard C & Laurence
Below – Laurence on tea making duty. (Photos by June)





31st March – The Warren – David Fiddes

Easter Sunday saw a small turnout on what turned out to be a better than forecast spring day. It was spent felling sycamores behind The Warren in Caversham. After a quick tour we quickly realised that the sycamore there came in two sizes: small & spindly and large & heavy. So we set Richard

loose on the latter with the chainsaw whilst most of us tackled the former, together with a few dead elms. Small and spindly was good for making repairs to the dead hedge (apparently a BeC relic), which has been built to keep dog-walkers on the path and off the badger setts. The badger setts and steep slope (and tree felling!) were the main risks, but despite one felled tree twisting unexpectedly everything went to plan. A good area of large sycamore was cleared



Tea break at The Warren (Photo by Richard C)

leaving space for the native species to spread. The reinforced hedge should stop most wanderers from straying. I was assured that the badgers will think nothing of forcing their way through.
