

## Task Reports 2002 October (Part 2)

### 19 October - Ruscombe Ponds – Philip Allen

This was an extra task because Ruscombe Parish Council wrote to us, after the programme had been finalised, asking for help to do autumn work to enhance their ponds for Great Crested Newts. Tasks in the next programme might be too cold for us especially as I remember from 92 & 93 that the pond shelves from knee high to chest high within one step.

Mark & I met one of the Parish Councillors and had walk round both ponds while we waited for Richard to arrive before starting



to pull up bull rushes & prune the willows that were shading out the vegetation in the pond.

June & Neil joined us in the afternoon of this overcast but dry & mild day with the water level at the lowest level the Councillor had seen - 2 foot down on 93's level.

I of course got muddy carting the reeds around to pile at the other end of the pond and fishing out the traffic cones that had been dumped in the pond to replace the two of our cones that got nicked by a passing motorist.

Above – The pond before. Left – The pond after.

### 20 October – Beale Wildlife Park – Richard Coles

Mark Clay returned to lead this task, which was felling small and quite big trees around a pond close to the car park, to let some light in. It was another wet day, but we had a good number of volunteers despite the weather. Two new Duke of Edinburgh volunteers, Tom and Pat, were on their first task. The cut material was to be used by the Iron age camp that had been set up the other side of the water.

### 27 October – High Wood – Richard Coles

It was not raining for once, but we had high winds instead (the tail end of the previous night's gales), so our Rhody bash – sorry, rhododendron control – had to be abandoned. Helmets had to be worn all the time though. We spent the morning on a small patch of heathland away from the trees, raking up grass, which had been cut and lopping birch regrowth among the heather.

Right – Mark & clipboard at Beale. Below – Lisa and Neil at High Wood



We went back to Dinton Pastures for lunch, expecting to use an electric kettle for once, and discovered that there had been a power cut and the café was closed, so instead we lit up our wood-burning stove and sat on the benches to eat our lunch.

In the afternoon, a new volunteer, Owen, exercised his artistic talents marking out signs, while Neil, myself and Peter sorted out a pile of wood into separate piles of posts and planks. We discovered several hibernating queen wasps, which were carefully moved into safe hiding places.

Left – Lisa & Neil haymaking.

Below left - Lisa and Richard haymaking.

Below - Peter and Owen clearing birch regrowth.

