

Task Reports 2003 Feb – Mar

2 February – Bowdown Woods – Neil Frankum

Our first task at this nice BBOWT reserve caused a bit of confusion as BBOWT have decided to merge two of their reserves into one and change the name. We were actually working on the part of the new enlarged reserve that used to be called the Baynes Reserve. The task was to coppice some hazel trees to create more butterfly friendly scallops along a straight ride. Stakes and heatherings were collected for use in a bit of hedgelaying at the GO Reading event the following weekend at Brookfields School in Tilehurst.



Right – Steve at Bowdown Woods

9 February – Clayfield Copse – Richard Coles

The site was not as muddy this time, as we continued our campaign to remove large Sycamore trees from this ancient woodland site, and a good number of volunteers turned up. However, I had to tackle two problem trees with the chainsaw, both of which hung up, and the second one required removal of part of the fence beside the path – partly unplanned! Things will be easier next Sunday, I hope.

9 February – Clayfield Copse – Marie Cunningham

I can only report on 9th February, which was my first task. What can I say....we cut a load of trees down!! Was I with the right group?

Anyway...official thanks to the man with the chainsaw (Richard). He cut me a new chopping board for my kitchen, which is the envy of south Oxfordshire.

16 February – Bowdown Woods – Richard Coles

On our second visit to this large BBOWT reserve, we continued our coppicing, and obtained more stakes and heatherings for Philip's hedgelaying activities, plus some bean sticks for which my brother paid £10 (this is the going rate, apparently, so we could exploit these tasks commercially a bit more!). The turnout for this site has been low on both occasions, and it's a good site and one of our quiet ones, so please consider joining us the next time we are there; despite the distance, the journey does not take long, because it's straight down the A4 and not far off it at the far end.

23 February – Lavells Lake – Richard Coles

Laurence led this task next to the lake, and we had a good day laying Blackthorn and removing scrub. Most of the volunteers were either new faces or ones we had not seen for a while, and the young volunteers for Dinton Pastures joined us during the morning. A large fire consumed the cuttings. I bullied Laurence into doing a Risk Assessment, the rest of you Leaders please make sure you write one before the task starts!



2 March – Warburg Reserve – David Fiddes

Task: Sycamore clearing at BBOWT Warburg reserve near Bix

Spring seemed to have sprung for our sycamore clearing day at Warburg. The snowdrops were blooming and the sun was out.

We were continuing work from a few weeks ago to clear out the sycamore trees and coppice to establish an area of chalk grassland. The pleasant weather, a reasonable turn out of volunteers and Richard C's chainsaw, and a large fire ensured that good progress was made.

Left – the cleared site. Below left – snowdrops in full flower. Below right – Fran hard at work



9 March – Pinewood – Neil Frankum

A nice sunny spring day met us for another reed clearance task in the pond at Pinewood. After battling with the mud we were able to create a large extension to the area of open water in the pond. Quite a change from when we first started work on the pond last year, when it was totally clogged with reeds with no more than a couple of square metres of open water! Right – in the pond at Pinewood. Next page Phil and Mark pulling reeds from the pond. Nigel waiting for the kettle to boil.



16 March – Clayfield Copse – Phillip Allen

Dry & warm day at Clayfield Copse felling large Sycamore and felling not so big ones before Richard arrived with the chainsaw. Six of us turned up to keep the dog walkers a safe distance away at least two tree lengths away from the ones been felled, as bits go flying off when the tree hits the ground. The rope & winch were utilised to get trees to fall away from others.

23 March – Lavells Lake – Phillip Allen

Good day for sunbathing. We were working with the Friends of Lavell' s Lake to control reed and remove silt from the channel where they have the pump to control the water level on the scrape, for wading bird such as snipe, knots & plovers. We were surprised to see a Bittern take off from amongst us. Numbers were into double figures, and we even had a bonfire to burn the scrub from a previous task, so it was a very enjoyable, if hot day.

30 March – Pound Copse – Phillip Allen

We were tree felling to get material for bench installation. Just me in the van, with half the tool store, including winch, warning signs, cones and shoveholers. Richard was already on site and fortunately Alisdair turned up shortly after, as we needed him to free the partially uprooted sweet chestnut from the entangling side branches before Richard could get it down. We piled the branches along the fence line to help catch the drift of chemicals from the corn fields where the rest of the woodland used to stand. After tea break Alisdair & I took up station to stop the traffic as Richard felled another up rooted Sweet Chestnut towards the road. Six motorists had to wait as the tree came down reluctantly. Rodney joined us for lunch & helped dig the 3 foot deep holes for the trunks that were to form the uprights for the bench. This was installed by the pond to enable people to sit among the bluebells & watch the ducks.
