



BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 168

October / November 2003

Task Reports

13th July – Beale Wildlife Park – Neil Frankum

Today we were continuing the thistle pulling task we had started two weeks earlier, in the field by the church. After the previous two years efforts, the thistles were much shorter and therefore harder to find than previously, but at least we had had an obvious impact. The hand pulling is necessary as Alasdair doesn't want to use herbicides on the rich meadow land. Lawrence vanished mid-morning, to be found mid-afternoon fast asleep under a tree!



Left – Nigel, Nancy & Philip pulling thistles.

Below – one of the rare breed sheep.



17th August – Pound Copse – Neil Frankum

After a mornings work at Pound Copse the fourteen of us on task today moved up the road to install a bench. The latter was very much a case of lots of supervisors and only a couple of workers!



10th August - Pound Copse – David Fiddes

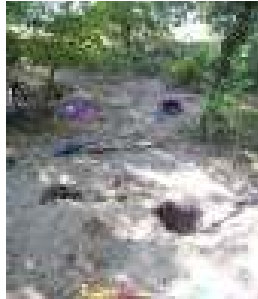
Or - How to make a bench (on the hottest day in recorded British history!)

Instructions for one self-assembly bench:

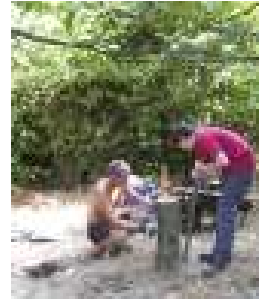
Contents - two 4 ft long sweet chestnut logs (left over from a previous task), one thick plank of sycamore, six 6-inch nails

Tools required - spade, post-hole digger, tampers, spirit-level (or bottle of squash), marker-pen, chain-saw, drill, hammer, wheelbarrow.

Step 1 - Dig two 2 ft deep holes about a foot wider than the bench posts.



Step 2 - Place a log in each hole and gradually replace soil, tamping well as you go.



Step 3 - Mark posts so that the seat top will be level and about 19 inches above ground.



Step 4 - Remove excess post with chain-saw.

Step 5 - Drill nail holes at an angle in seat top, at least three per post. Nail bench top onto bench posts.

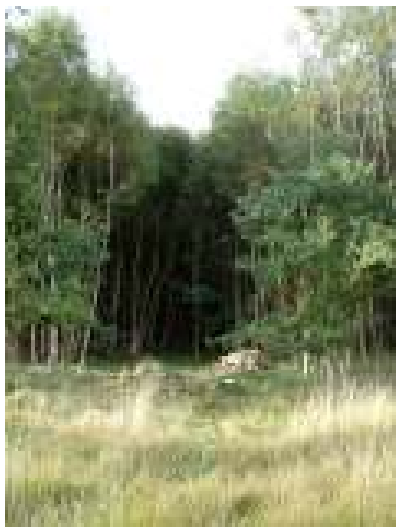


Step 6 - Sit on bench whilst Alastair puts the kettle on!



Below left – one of the glades created. Below right – James, Alisdair, Peter, Richard & Phil

7th September – Hook Common – Neil Frankum



Felling large birch to increase the area of heathland at the site by up to 100 acres. Alistair manned the fire assisted by James while Neil; Maurice; Philip & Peter felled cut up & dragged the brash Richard used his Chainsaw on the bigger trunks. Three Buzzards were circling around the clouds. The ditches on the site were bone dry so had to get water from the cricket pavilion next door to extinguish the fire after eating our baked potatoes.

22nd - 25th August – Langton Herring – Neil Frankum



Above L-R – June, Phil, Clive, David & James looking at the state of the wall prior to starting work; Richard, Clive, Nigel, Sarah, Phil & James working on the wall; David, Richard, Clive & Nigel.
 Left – Clive, Richard & Nigel.
 Below – David, Richard, Nigel & Neil in front of the finished wall.
 Right – David, Richard & Phil at work.
 Bottom left – June, Sarah, James, Phil Richard & Nigel. Bottom right – Phil, John, Nigel, Richard & David.



Apart from a few very light and short showers of rain we had a lovely sunny weekend for our annual drystone walling resi. We were working on the same wall as the last couple of years, but a bit further up the hill. The section of wall we were to do had been started the previous week by another group. However, as we were going to be there for the weekend, John (the warden) decided that we should extend the section to be done to include the next few metres of wall, as this was looking a bit shaky.



We thus had the target of probably the longest section of wall we've ever done. Luckily though, John had had a delivery of nice new stone, so we had a bit more to work with on our three dimensional jigsaw puzzle. Saturday saw us demolish the extension to the worksite, and lay new foundations. Sunday saw the wall rise ¾ of the way to the desired height, and by Monday lunchtime we managed to top out and get the coping stones on to successfully complete the task. Saturday evening's pre-dinner

entertainment was a trip to the beach in Weymouth, Sunday saw a trip to the beach at West Bay near Bridport, and on the journey home we stopped off to look at an old BeC resi site at Chilbolton Common. Thanks to Richard for cooking and providing the wine! Thanks also to John for organising the work and accommodation for us.



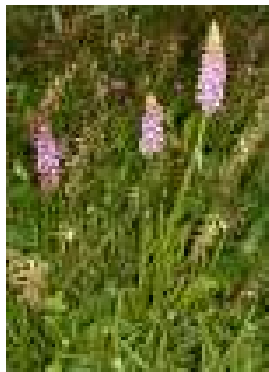
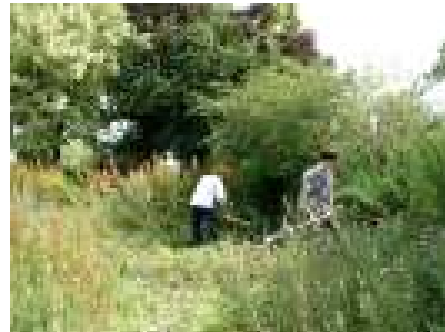
20th July – Greywell Fen – Neil Frankum



Top left – Nigel, Sarah, James, June & Phil at West Bay. Top right – the finished wall. Above view over the worksite.

Left – Nigel. Right – Tom & Patrick

Below left – common marsh orchids. Below right – marsh heleborine.



A double figures turnout on a sunny day at Greywell Fen saw us replacing the post and wire fencing along part of the southern boundary of the reserve. We had to hack our way through the fairly verdant undergrowth to get to the fence line, but managed to replace all the fenceposts. Unfortunately, trying to reuse the existing wire was not a brilliant idea, as it had become brittle in a number of places and kept snapping when we tried tensioning it. The warden will need to come back with some new wire to complete the job before the highland cattle can come back



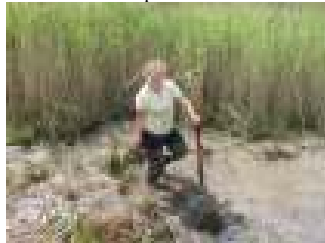
to graze the reserve. We finished the day with a walk up to see the Marsh Hellobrine and Common Marsh Orchids that were in full flower at the other end of the reserve, before adjourning to the pub up the road (Dog & Goose?) for a nice roast dinner in the evening sun.

31st August – Ancells Farm – Philip Allen (Photos – Maurice Budden)

Pond Clearance work. My new neighbour - Helen came out with us after putting a note on the van. We loaded the van & picked up Peter, before going to the station where Sally from South Africa joined us with a copy of the newsletter so I could get the directions from Fleet to the site. We picked Maurice up on the way but Richard was not ready when we called in (as he worked until 3am). Chris the warden showed us what he wanted done then left us for the morning to wade about in the mud/water up to knee depth to remove some of the reeds. It was a nice muddy task throwing the reeds on to the bank - if uncomfortably wet to sit down when the reed's roots suddenly snapped but the sun dried us as we watched four species of dragonflies dart over the patch of open water we had created by lunchtime. After lunch the warden came back to give us a guided tour of the reserve which used to be only 5 acres but now is 150 acres of acid heath. This was interesting even though the other pools for dragonflies had dried out we did find some froglets hopping around the sundew plants.



Richard, Sally, Helen & Phil in the pond.



27th July – Waterloo Meadows – Philip Allen

Haymaking among the trees. This task had been changed from the planned task at Pinewood Pond as the main area at Waterloo Meadows was due to be cut the next day. As this was holiday season it was only Me & Mike until Amanda and a group of six friends came to help just as we were thinking of giving up. Using scythes & slashers in the hot sun we managed to clear under the trees and around the posts so the tractor driver could see them and also spread the cuttings over the main field so that they could be collected with the rest.

3rd August – Snelsmore Common – Philip Allen

Bracken bashing to restore heathland. No one booked and no one at station and after discussion with Richard agreed to go ahead to help Keith the ranger & John (a member of the friends of group who was going to miss their work party due to holidays) clear the area started by CROW midweek we also cleared the area by the pond where the rare adder's tongue fern grow (normally on chalky soil)

Social Reports

Rounders Match v Basingstoke Conservation Volunteers – 16th May, 1st August, 29th August

The first attempt at the rounders match got rained off back in May, so we re-arranged it to the 1st August. However, the heavens weren't kind, and although it was not actually raining at 6-30pm, it was too wet to play (although I think we deserved a moral victory, as Basingstoke had been sending round Emails earlier in the day saying that they were going to go straight to the pub!). A third attempt was made a few weeks later, and we actually got to play, although due to a small turnout from Basingstoke,

we played an individual game. Nigel got a bit annoyed that I always seemed to be standing exactly where he hit the ball, and caught him out a few times. Mind you, he did then get his own back!

Skittles v Basingstoke Conservation Volunteers – Wednesday 6th August

We won again!

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.

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.

Christmas Meal

Contact David to confirm the details of this, and to book a place. The target is for a Monday evening in December in Reading, with the 15th being the preferred date.

Visit To Museum Of English Rural Life at Reading University

We've been invited to have a look round the museum at some point. Contact David for details.

BBOWT Training Courses

BBOWT, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham District Council have teamed up to run a series of training courses at Dinton Pastures Country Park in Hurst. Book a place with Andy Glencross (0118 9342016). For more information contact Andy, or Teresa Verney-Brookes (BBOWT – 01628 829574)

Small Mammals

Saturday 18th October 2003, 10am – 4pm. We will be learning about small mammal surveying and identification (including Water Voles) and should hopefully be able to set up some Longworth traps to see what we can find in the local area.

Managing Woodlands to Increase Diversity

Sat 15th November 2003, 10am - 4pm. This course looks briefly at woodland ecology and will then explore various ways of managing woods to help maximise their wildlife potential.

Task Details: 5th October – 30th November 2003

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 Caversham Court 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 autumn we could experience any type of weather, so wrap up warm, and 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 usually 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.

RUSCOMBE PONDS, Ruscombe**5th October 2003**

Task: Pond clearance/willow pollarding.
 Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471
 Meet at: 10-15am at the Ruscombe crossroads (Grid ref: SU796763). From the traffic lights in the middle of Twyford, head east along the A3032. In about 300m, fork right onto the B3024 towards Ruscombe and White Waltham. The pond is on the right in about 600m next to the crossroads. We may be working at a second pond, which is about another 300m along the road.
 Userbody: Ruscombe Parish Council.

ECCHINSWELL VILLAGE POND**12th October 2003**

Task: Our annual task to control the reeds invading the village pond and some bramble clearance on the banks.
 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, and the pond is on the right hand side in about ½ mile.
 Userbody: Ecchinswell Parish Council.

BEALE WILDLIFE PARK**19th October 2003**

Task: Coppicing to thin out invading willows in the third largest reedbed in Berkshire.
 Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528
 Meet at: 10-15am at the wildlife park car park (Grid reference SU618782). From Pangbourne take the A340 northwest. The entrance to the park is on the right in about 2 miles (just before you get to the bridge with the traffic lights). NB Access to the worksite may be through the wildlife park itself.
 Userbody: Child Beale Trust.

CHARVIL MEADOWS**26th October 2003**

Task: Scrub cleaance along the access tracks.
 Leader: Laurence Herniman 0118 954 9620
 Meet at: 10-15am at the site. Confirm details with the leader, as this is my best guess as to the location of the entrance! (Grid reference SU778761). Head east from Reading on the A4. Turn right onto the A3032 towards Twyford at the roundabout at Charvil. Follow the road through the village. The site is on the left just as you leave the built up area.
 Userbody: Wokingham District Council.

RUSCOMBE PONDS, Ruscombe**2nd November 2003**

Task: Pond clearance/willow pollarding.
 Leader: Nigel Mason-Flucke 0118 984 4177
 Meet at: 10-15am at the pond. See 5th October for details.
 Userbody: Ruscombe Parish Council.

DINTON PASTURES, Hurst**9th November 2003**

Task: Hedge planting around the children' s play area.
 Leader: Laurence Herniman 0118 954 9620
 Meet at: 10-15am in the main car park.
 Userbody: Wokingham District Council.

BEALE WILDLIFE PARK**16th November 2003**

Task: Coppicing to thin out invading willows in the third largest reedbed in Berkshire.
 Leader: David Fiddes 0118 950 0735
 Meet at: 10-15am at the main car park (Grid reference SU618782). See 19th Oct for details.
 Userbody: Child Beale Trust.

PADWORTH COMMON**23rd November 2003**

Task: Scrub bashing / Pond Clearance / Tree Clearance.
 Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471
 Meet at: 10-15am at the car park (Grid reference SU619648). Head west from Burghfield Common towards Tadley. In about 2 miles turn right towards Padworth. The carpark is on the left almost immediately. The worksite is the other side of the main road.
 Userbody: West Berkshire Council.

XMAS TREE TASK**30th November 2003**

Task: Christmas trees!
 Leader: Laurence Herniman 0118 954 9620
 Meet at: Meet at: 10:15 at the gate at the end of Kings ride. Grid Reference SU875621. Head east from the roundabout at the junction of the A30 and A321. In about 1½ miles turn left at traffic lights into Kings Ride. Keep going up this road till it bends to the left. Straight ahead is a gate leading onto the site. Follow the arrows for approximately 1 mile! For those not wanting a long walk it may be possible to park closer to the worksite. Contact Laurence for details. Free tree for volunteers!
 Userbody: Ministry Of Defence

Diary Dates

Mon 12th Jan. Committee Mtg 7-45pm. Black Boy, Shinfield Road. All welcome.
Sun 2nd Nov. Newsletter copy date. Any (printable!) contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. Any items for inclusion in the next newsletter should be sent to the P.O. Box on or preferably before this date.
TBA Please contact Richard Coles for dates of tools evenings.

BeC Contacts

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|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Chair & Tools: | Richard Coles | (0118) 976 0580 |
| Treasurer: | Philip Allen | (0118) 941 0471 * |
| Van Admin: | Rodney Chapple | (0118) 986 4438 |
| Task Co-ordinator: | Laurence Herniman | (0118) 954 9620 * |
| Membership & Newsletter: | Neil Frankum | (0118) 975 1528 * |
| Social Secretary | David Fiddes | (0118) 950 0735 |

* Answerphone available

Address for Correspondence: Berkshire Conservation Volunteers, PO Box 165,
 Reading, Berkshire, RG6 4LD

EMail: membership@berkshire-conservation-volunteers.org.uk

MOBILE: We now have a mobile phone for use on task – 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 **0780 3360654**. **NB:** this phone will only be switched on during tasks.

www.berkshire-conservation-volunteers.org.uk
