



BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 169

December 2003 / January 2004

Task Reports

14th September – Warburg Reserve – David Fiddes, Photos by Neil Frankum



Above left – the rare breed sheep grazing part of the Warburg Reserve. Above right – view along the ride we were widening.

We spent a sunny September Sunday cutting out scallops of scrub along one of the shooting ranges at the Warburg reserve. I managed to pull a back muscle after about 30 minutes of bow sawing, which meant I was reduced to tea making duties for the rest of the day. Apart from this the day was a success and the rest of the group managed to clear three clumps before retiring to the Flowing Spring near Sonning.

The reserve was playing host to some sort of orienteering event and, aside of the conservation activities, the most memorable moments of the day were a seemingly endless stream of people with maps wandering by. And not one of them believed Maurice's directions!

28th September – Warburg Reserve – Richard Coles, Photos by Maurice Budden

Back again to Warburg, to do more scrub bashing. This time it was a bit cooler, and Autumn colours were beginning to show on the trees. Also, we were being more selective in what we cut down, which means you have to think. On a Sunday. On a Sunday all I want to do is destroy things.

On the way home down the lane, I saw the van up ahead had stopped, and pulled up to join them in watching about 10 Red Kites circling around a field.



Above – clearing scrub on the area being converted back to chalk grassland.

5th October – Ruscombe Ponds –

No task report received for this task, and I wasn't there either, so can't write one myself.

12th October – Ecchinswell Village Pond – Photos by Maurice Budden



Above left – Brenda 'stuck' in the mud.
Above right – Nigel wheelbarrowing out some of the muck from the bottom of the pond.
Left – Hard at work in the dried up pond.



Below left – The willows at Beale Park before we started.
Below right – The last of the big willows we tackled bites the dust.

21st September – Maiden Erleigh Lake – Richard Coles

Our first suburban task since July was to plant bulbs (in the land surrounding the lake, not in the lake), but after weeks of dry weather the ground was too hard. So, not being equipped with rock drills, we raked up some cut grass instead. It was a bit hot even for that.

19th October – Beale Wildlife Park – Richard Coles, Photos - Neil Frankum

A long dry Summer had lowered the water in the pond, so the site had become quite tame – no squelchy bits and no chance to get any good photos of people falling in, because what we would have fallen into was only ankle deep now. We were continuing with clearing the Willows around the pond, or pollarding them, to let more light in. I took the chainsaw and made a lot of noise. The Railway bridge was closed, so after a long detour we stopped at the Swan in Pangbourne on the way home. Our mistake was to order food, which took so long to come that Neil had nearly finished his first pint when it arrived.





Left – Richard tidying up one of the willow stumps.
Right – Amanda and Phil standing in the middle of the sedge bed.



26th October – Charvil Meadows – Richard Coles

This wasn't at Charvil, but down by the Land's End pub at the ford at the back end of Woodley. WDC has taken over a large lake near the road, and we cleared vegetation from a track beside it to provide the Rangers with access. (I often cycled through the ford in summer when I worked at Woodley, and never realised there was a big lake there.) We were joined by the Rangers, and three of their Duke of Edinburgh volunteers. With a chipper going continuously and occasionally a chainsaw, it was a bit industrial. I brought Mark Clay along (who was around for the weekend) and he lost one of our billhooks. Fortunately, Andy Morton had joined us after a long absence and found it again. We couldn't not go to the pub, since we were parked in their car park.

2nd November – Ruscombe Ponds – Neil Frankum

I arrived at lunchtime to find everyone else just finishing their cups of tea. We soon got stuck in again, clearing the willow regrowth that was threatening to invade the pond. We finished off with a bit of a litter pick, to leave the pond looking a lot nicer than when we started. It just needs a few days of heavy rainfall to refill it to its normal level for the restoration to be complete.

Newsletter

As you can see, I've managed to break another printer, so this issue has reverted to good old black and white. Moral of the story – Epson printers give fantastic print output whilst they work, but unfortunately they have a design life measured in days, not months or years!

Social Reports

Cinema Night – 4th November

I suppose I should have read the description of this film before I went to see it, as it was not at all what I expected. Uma Thurman doing a Bruce Lee impression, with lots of samurai swords, and a short stretch of Japanese cartoon animation in the middle. OK to watch if you have a bloodthirsty streak, as the body count is quite high.

Pub Night – 23rd October

Five of us met up for what we thought was going to be a quiet night's drink in the Lyndhurst Arms. This idea was rather abruptly shattered when 20+ students on a fancy dress pub crawl turned up. Pity that I had just finished my pint, so had to wait for the huge queue to die down to get the next round.

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 – Monday 15th December

This will be at the Restaurant Je t' aime on Friar St. £17.95 for the set menu. Let David (0118 950 0735) know if you can make it. Book early to guarantee a place.

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.

2004 Membership Renewal

Yes folks it's that time of year again when I ask you all to part with a nice crisp new five pound note (or cheque) in order to guarantee your copy of six further issues of this wonderful newsletter of ours, as well as all the other delightful benefits of being a member of the group. A membership form is attached.

Task Details: 30th November 2003 – 25th January 2004

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 winter 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.

TBA**30th November 2003**

Task: TBA – Task changed from that previously advertised.
 Leader: Laurence Herniman 0118 954 9620
 Meet at: 10:15 TBA
 Userbody: TBA

PINEWOOD, Crowthorne**7th December 2003**

Task: Rhododendron & bamboo control with possibly a bit of reed and bullrush clearance too.
 Leader: Laurence Herniman 0118 954 9620
 Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU840660). Head west from the junction of the A3095 and B3430 (Nine Mile Ride) south of Bracknell. At the next roundabout turn right. In about 200m turn left into the site. Park in the carpark, and follow the arrows to the worksite (somewhere in the woods behind the leisure centre buildings and allotments). Take

care crossing the (minature) railway if the steam trains are running!

Userbody: Wokingham Without Parish Council.

BEALE WILDLIFE PARK

14th December 2003

Task: Coppicing to thin out invading willows in the third largest reedbed in Berkshire.

Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471

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.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury

21st December 2003

Task: Birch pulling/clearance in rich valley mire. Snelsmore Common is a 100 ha. Site of Special Scientific Interest and contains rich areas of heathland, valley mires and woodland. It' s also been a CountryPark since 1972 and contains rare species such as nightjar, heath spotted orchids and round-leaved sundew. It' s managed under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme by West Berkshire Council. Bonfire & baked spuds promised!

Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528

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 and is located opposite the entrance to Mary Hare Grammar School.

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

AT HOME

28th December 2003

Task: Extreme self-indulgence, enjoying a relaxing day at home recovering from all those additional calories you will have consumed over the last few days (or alternatively eating the last of the turkey and Christmas pud), and preparing your New Year resolution to come out on more BeC tasks in 2004!

Leader: Yourself

Meet at: Your own sitting room, at whatever time you manage to crawl out of bed after your long Sunday morning lay in.

Userbody: Yourself.



PADWORTH COMMON

4th January 2004

Task: Birch clearance & bonfire. Come and get a bit of fresh air to blow away the New Year hangover!

Leader: David Fiddes 0118 950 0735

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 District Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury

11th January 2004

Task: Birch pulling/clearance in rich valley mire.

Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471

Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). See 21st December for details.
 Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

GREENHAM COMMON, Newbury

18th January 2004

Task: Birch clearance. Working with a group of local volunteers. This is the first time we've worked at this site. Great chance to see how a cold war cruise missile base is being returned to nature.

Leader: Nigel Mason-Flucke 0118 984 4177

Meet at: 10:15 at the site. The meeting point has yet to be confirmed. This is a LARGE site, so contact Nigel for details if you are coming.

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

YATELEY COMMON, Yateley

25th January 2004

Task: Birch & pine pulling/clearance. This is the first time we've worked at this site in my time in the group, and may even be the first time we've been here ever, although I'm sure Rodney will correct me if I'm wrong! Big turnout wanted to show the new userbody what we can do! We'll be working with a local group in the morning.

Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528

Meet at: 10:15 at Wyndhams car park off Cricket Hill lane in Yateley (Grid ref: SU821596). If you're coming from Reading, then you need to come down the A327 and take the B3272 left towards Eversley and Yateley. Once in Yateley, turn right at the second roundabout (just after the Royal Oak pub and signposted to Fleet) into Cricket Hill Lane. You will go past the Cricketers pub on the right and a right hand turning into Handford Lane. Shortly after this on the left is the entrance to the car park, just before a phone box. It is not well signposted and very easy to miss so keep your eyes open! You can also reach Cricket Hill Lane from the A30 (signposted ' Cricket Hill').

Userbody: Hampshire County Council.

Diary Dates

Mon 12th Jan. Committee Mtg 7-45pm. Black Boy, Shinfield Road. All welcome.

Sun 4th Jan. 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

Chair & Tools:	Richard Coles	(0118) 976 0580
Treasurer:	Philip Allen	(0118) 941 0471 *
Van Admin:	Rodney Chapple	(0118) 986 4438
Task Co-Coordinator:	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