



# BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 171

April / May 2004

## Task Reports

25<sup>th</sup> January – Yateley Common – Neil Frankum



Above – The view across the site before we started. Below – The same view after we finished.



The biggest challenge of today's task was trying to find the entrance to the car park – I drove past twice, before eventually finding it on the third attempt. This was our first task at this site, and came about by pure chance thanks to me meeting Vicky (the warden) on a walk along the River Avon between Bath and Bristol!

On arrival at the site we were met by a wall of young birch regrowth. The area had been cleared a couple of years ago, but the stumps were not treated, so the trees had regrown vigorously from the stumps. However, undaunted, we got stuck in and soon had a roaring bonfire going, and rapidly cleared a large area of birch. Vicky came around with a can of herbicide to ensure that the birch doesn't regrow as strongly.



**1<sup>st</sup> February – Clayfield Copse – Phillip Allen Photos – Maurice Budden**

Joint task with Friends Of Clayfield Copsetidying up the woods where the trees were felled for the horses to drag out last May as part of the Woodlands Day event. The day was dry so we decided to drive along the new path that we helped to lay last April, and along the edge of the wood, which was not as good a surface as I thought!

Brian had got a bonfire going before we arrived to help drag out the brash from the wood. The area where the bundles of birch had been placed to improve the surface of the path was a pool of water as the bundles of birch had been removed.

When Richard arrived we were able to cut the logs into manageable pieces which we moved



to demark the edges of paths, and secured them in line with the old fence line to hold back the road scrapings used to surface the path. Anna, Steve & I took it in turn to bang in the stakes that Maurice supplied from the material gathered for the fire.

It started to rain heavily when we were putting the fire out. As the rain came down it made it difficult for the van to get a grip and move along the path. In the end, a dog walker got his 4 wheel drive car from the car park to pull us out.

**18<sup>th</sup> January – Greenham Common – Richard Coles**

This was our first task at Greenham Common, working with a local group to cut birch regrowth. It's a quiet site, and big, so we shall have many more tasks here, usually arranged so that we work on the same date as the local group. It will be good in the summer, because although it is mainly heathland there is some woodland to give shade.

It's also nice to see how the site is being turned back from a major cold war military base, into a wildlife site. However, the reminder of the cruise missile silos was always visible behind the barbed wire fences adjacent to where we were working.

**15<sup>th</sup> February – California Country Park – Rodney Chapple**

I managed to arrive well before lunch - bad timing! Where the bottomless stream had been, a large (and presumably also bottomless) pond had been dug, considerably reducing the area of rhododendron to be cleared. The task involved cutting

regrowth, pulling it up, digging up the roots and burning it, in fact, using every available means to exterminate it, as usual!

A cautionary note; as I lent on a small birch tree, it fell over, narrowly missing an unsuspecting BeC volunteer. Apparently one of the Duke of Edinburgh's award volunteers who were out in the morning had sawn almost through the tree and left it standing.

Another hazard was caused when an elderly lady tried to drive her car along one of the footpaths, and had to

be helped to reverse out by the Ranger.



### **8<sup>th</sup> February – Warburg – Richard Coles**

The snowdrops were out in the woods near the car park to show that spring was on the way. We spent the day clearing some thorny scrub at the top end of the reserve. I took the chainsaw, but it was a long way to go and fetch it from the car, so I decided to give everyone a quiet day.

### **28<sup>th</sup> March – Lavell's Lake – Mark Clay**

A return to leading after a long absence saw just four of us gather at Lavell's Lake for a lovely messy task as we were digging out a channel on the scrape by the hide. Phil in his typical insane enthusiasm donned his wetsuit and jumped in at the deep end. We were removing reedmaceto enlarge a channel where they pump the water off the scrape. It was back breaking work, and everyone got well and truly plastered in mud, but it was good fun. Phil looked like something out of the Black Lagoon at the end of the day.

### **29<sup>th</sup> February – Old Burghclere Lime Quarry – Nigel Mason-Flucke**



Arrived at Phil's house to pick up the van to be greeted by a heavy snow shower. Fortunately the weather improved as the day progressed to the point where we were bathed in glorious sunshine by mid afternoon. Upon arrival at the site we were greeted by the local warden who informed us about the site and the nasty rabbit population, which was over-grazing the reserve. Knowing that Watership Down was set just down the road this might just be the last outpost of rabbits in the area. The site is an old chalk quarry and is now a site of special scientific interest. Being a quarry it just happened that we had to climb a rather

steep slope to get to the work area. At the top of the incline we were greeted by a bank of hawthorn. It was our task to clear this. It took ages to clear an area large enough for a fire but by the end of the day we had cleared a considerable area. The only hiccup we had was the van getting in the mud and needing a good bit of off roading by Richard to ensure that we got home safely and didn't have to spend the night outdoors in the cold.

### **22<sup>nd</sup> February – Pound Copse –**

No report.

### **21<sup>st</sup> March – Greenham Common**

No task report.

### **7<sup>th</sup> March – Warburg – Neil Frankum**

For today's task we were working about 100m further along the clarge clearing in the middle of the reserve than we had the previous month. The task involved removing all the scrub from this area in order to allow the chalk grassland to recover. The day was a mixture of wintry showers and sun, with the occasional Red Kite circling overhead.





### 14<sup>th</sup> March – Snelmore Common – Richard Coles

This was another wet day. The ponies were grazing near the path, steaming gently. We joined the local friends of group cutting birch re-growth and cleared



a good area. It was the local group's 1st birthday (and Phil's 40th!) which they celebrated with a large cake, and we had a big bonfire to keep Alisdair happy, and baked potatoes too.

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## AGM

The AGM will be held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June at 8-00pm. Venue will be announced in the next newsletter / on the website.

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## 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.

### Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May – Rounders v Basingstoke CV

We've been challenged to another game of rounders by Basingstoke Conservation Volunteers. Meet at Silchester village green from 6pm. Afterwards we will be having drinks at the Calleva Arms. Contact Sally on 0118 9292304 for further details.

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## Task Details: 2<sup>nd</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> May 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 spring 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.

## **YATELEY COMMON, Yateley**

**2<sup>nd</sup> April 2004**

Task: Footpath work.

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!

Userbody: Hampshire County Council.

## **EASTER – NO TASK**

**11<sup>th</sup> April 2004**

As most people are away over Easter, there's not going to be a task today.

## **SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**

**18<sup>th</sup> April 2004**

Task: Scrub clearance & probably a bonfire. Wellies a good idea if it's been raining! Joint task with the Friends Of Snelsmore Common.

Leader: Laurence Herniman 0118 954 9620

Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). Snelsmore Common country park can be found north of Newbury & is located along the B4494 road from Donnington to Wantage. The entrance is sign posted from the road opposite the entrance to Mary Hare Grammar School.

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

## **TBA**

**25<sup>th</sup> April 2004**

Task: TBA.

Leader: Laurence Herniman 0118 954 9620

Meet at: Contact Laurence for details if you are coming.

Userbody: TBA.

## **DINTON PASTURES, Hurst**

**2<sup>nd</sup> May 2004**

Task: Revetment work.

Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471

Meet at: 10-15am at the car park (Grid reference SU724768). Head out of Reading on the A329 until you get to the Winnersh cross roads (next to Sainsbury's). Turn left here and continue for three quarters of a mile. Just after crossing the motorway, turn left into the car park. Look out for arrows at the entrance, which may direct you further along the road to one of the other car parks on the other side of the site. If in doubt phone the mobile, or ask at the visitor centre.

Userbody: Wokingham District Council Countryside Service.

## **POUND COPSE, Arborfield**

**9<sup>th</sup> May 2004**

Task: Woodchipping the footpath through the site to improve access.

Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580

Meet at: 10:00 at Grid Reference 751673. Follow the Shinfield Road (A327) south out of Reading. Cross the M4, pass through Shinfield village, and bear left at the mini-roundabout passing the ESSO petrol station. Half a mile after crossing the River Loddon turn right into Greensward lane opposite the signpost to Swallowfield. Pound Copse is 100m on the right.

Userbody: Arborfield Parish Council

**SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury****16<sup>th</sup> May 2004**

**Task:** Bracken clearance. Wellies a good idea if it's been raining! Joint task with the Friends Of Snelsmore Common.

**Leader:** Nigel Mason-Fluke 0118 984 4177

**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 opposite the entrance to Mary Hare Grammar School.

**Userbody:** West Berkshire District Council.

**WILDMOOR, Crowthorne****23<sup>rd</sup> May 2004**

**Task:** Bracken cutting.

**Leader:** Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528

**Meet at:** 10:15 in the car park on the road heading south towards Sandhurst from Crowthorne. Grid reference SU838630. Heading south, as you leave the built up area, the road bends to the left, and goes into a dip. The entrance to the car park is signed on your left.

**Userbody:** Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

**GREENHAM COMMON, Newbury****30<sup>th</sup> May 2004**

**Task:** TBA. Great chance to see how a cold war cruise missile base is being returned to nature.

**Leader:** Mark Clay 07810 838916

**Meet at:** 10:15 at the site. This is a LARGE site, so contact Mark for details if you are coming.

**Userbody:** West Berkshire District Council.

**Diary Dates**

**TBA** Committee Mtg 7-45pm. The Land's End, Hurst. All welcome.

**Mon 10<sup>th</sup> May.** 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**

<b>Chair &amp; Tools:</b>	Richard Coles	(0118) 976 0580
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Philip Allen	(0118) 941 0471 *
<b>Van Admin:</b>	Rodney Chapple	(0118) 986 4438
<b>Task Co-Coordinator:</b>	Laurence Herniman	(0118) 954 9620 *
<b>Membership &amp; Newsletter:</b>	Neil Frankum	(0118) 975 1528 *
<b>Social Secretary</b>	David Fiddes	(0118) 950 0735
<b>Committee Member</b>	Peter Harrison	

\* 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](http://www.berkshire-conservation-volunteers.org.uk)**