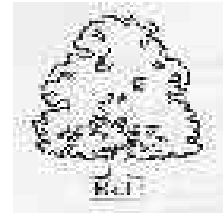


BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 177

May / June 2005

Task Reports

3rd April – Aldermaston Gravel Pits – Richard Coles (Photos – Neil Frankum)



This is BBOWT's newest site, a series of flooded gravel pits near Aldermaston station. They have a grant of £40000 for access work, so we were there to help spend some of it by building a bridge.

Grundon's are still extracting gravel, so the main entrance is closed on Sundays: After vainly trying to park on the high verge next to the van and graunching my exhaust, I parked in Station Road and got the bike out, meeting David coming off the towpath after he had cycled all the way from Reading.

The first job was carrying the main beams 1/4 mile to the work site - BBOWT's Ali is in charge of the site, and her bridge design follows the respectable engineering philosophy "there's no harm in overdoing it", so those beams were HEAVY, even with a wheelbarrow under each end. Alasdair cast envious eyes on a huge Grundon's excavator - "If you gave me the keys, all this would go in its bucket".

After an early lunch, we began building, under Neil's direction as Leader and chief arbitrator (get seven BeC volunteers together, and they will tell you 8 different ways to build a bridge). The bridge spans a wide, deep ditch next to the canal bank at the edge of the site, where it will allow access from the towpath via a ramp, and a boardwalk will cross the boggy bit towards a hard pathway. Fortunately, a temporary bridge of logs allowed us to cross, with some trepidation, and some of the boardwalk had already been built.



Above – Nigel & Peter cross the log bridge as Ali looks on.

Top – The team on the finished bridge. L-R Peter, Nigel, Alisdair, David, & Richard. Sitting L-R James & Neil



Above – Alisdair crosses the first plank as David, Nigel & Richard prepare the foundations for the bridge

One of the bearers that the beams sit on was already in place, so we made and dug in the other one, lifted the beams on and started to nail them down to the bearers. At this point we found



Above – Richard, Ali, & James prepare the second bearer

we had to saw 40 treads to go across the beams out of long planks, so I went off to get the chainsaw (I found it was much easier to cycle along the towpath to where I parked).



Peter kept us supplied with tea as Alasdair, David and Nigel nailed the treads on, while James squatted on beam ensuring squareness and somehow contrived not to fall in.



Above – various construction shots.
Left – Tea break.

After working into overtime, we finished, and took lots of photos like Japanese tourists of us all on the bridge. We're quite proud of it, really. Poor Ali had to sit and watch and hope while we built it, but I think she had a good result.

27th February – Pamber Forest – Richard Coles / Neil Frankum

The main problem at this site is to find the right way in, which needs careful map reading. The van managed it after one drive-past. This was a joint task with the Basingstoke Group, clearing back scrub from one of the rides and burning it.

Luckily the snow and blizzards that were hitting south London in the morning gave way to nice sunshine on the drive across. Nice work, nice site, and baked spuds done on the bonfire too! We finished off with Dave giving us a guided tour of the site.

6th March – Englemere Pond – Neil Frankum (Photos by Neil Frankum and Lindy Thompson)

This was our first task at Englemere Pond for many years. The site consists of a large lake, one of the largest

reed beds in Berkshire, some conifer plantation, and a small area of heathland. The site is owned by the Crown Estate, and managed by Bracknell Forest Borough Council.



Above- L-R Richard, Nigel, Neil, Mike, & Laurence. Below – Nigel in the reedbed.

Our task for the day was to clear invading trees from the reedbed area, and use the cut brush to reinforce an existing dead hedge.

Whilst it was a nice sunny day, it had been cold over night, to the water in the reedbed was frozen over. Unfortunately one of the wellies I was wearing had a hole in it, as did the second one I swapped it for! Luckily, the wetsuit effect kicked in and my toes didn't get too frozen. Those without wellies went

to work on the dead hedge.

The aim of this was primarily to keep dogs out of the reedbed to reduce disturbance of nesting birds. We used the hazel stakes that we had brought with us from last weeks task at Pamber Forest, to



Above – the existing deadhedge
Below left – cut stumps in the reedbed

provide the main structure, & then wove in the cut branches to form a strong dead hedge.

After the task several of us went up the road to the Royal Forresters pub for a drink and meal. I think the guy serving us needs to go on a customer service training course, not because of bad service, but because he spent most of the time telling us how bad the food was!!



Right – Nigel cutting some of the invading willow
Below right – Lindy, Mike & Nigel



13th March – Snelsmore Common – David Fiddes

A large group turned out to celebrated the second birthday of the Snelsmore Common work party. To celebrate, Keith, the ranger, provided a cake, and Philip baked potatoes on the bonfire. BeC were heavily outnumbered by an impressive turn out from local volunteers, but it was nice to see a good sized group, which was able to cover a large area.

The task was clearing birch regrowth from the heathland clearing. Mat-tocks and forks were used to uproot these before they were put on the fire. Tina grabbed some specimens for planting elsewhere. The quality of the heathland at Snelsmore was demonstrated by the variety of wildlife spotted during the day including a slow worm, a common lizard, a wild bee, and a field mouse. In the morning the sun shone and the ponies came to see what was going on - they had probably heard about the cake! Later the weather clouded over and we even had a hailstone or two; the group dwindled but it had a been a successful birthday bash.



20th March – Yateley Common – Neil Frankum

This task was a continuation of the work started back in January. We were clearing back birch & dense gorse that was invading the heathland at the edge of the site next to Blackbushe Airport. Probably the last bonfire task of the season, as it was almost too dry to prevent the fire spreading. I ended up spending the entire day



Above – bonfire
Right – Tea break L-R Vicky, Ellen, Phil, Nigel, Peter, & John

keeping the raging inferno in check, as copious quantities of birch and tinder dry gorse were chopped up by the good turnout of volunteers. A low cloud deck meant that there was virtually no flying from the airport, which gave us a quiet morning. As the sun came



out in the afternoon the planes did start up again, as did the jobs on motorbikes tearing around the common. After the task we adjourned to the pub just up the road on the edge of the common.



L-R David, Laurence, Vicky, Ellen, Phil, Nigel, Rodney, John, & Peter

10th April – Dinton Pastures – Neil Frankum

Fence building near the main car park. I'm afraid I only turned up mid afternoon to heckle, take a couple of photos and knock in a few nails, prior to adjourning to the Wheelwright's Arms over the road, so not much of a task report!



17th April – Ecchinswell – Neil Frankum

This was a new worksite for us, a short way down the road from the village pond where we usually work. It consisted of a footpath running through a small open grassy area adjacent to the stream in the middle of the village. It was formerly the site of a chapel, evidenced by the grave of one John Dicweed Esquire. The task was cutting back bramble and dogwood that was encroaching into the clearing and across the footpath. A big

thankyou goes to Ron, the Parish Clerk, for the very generous contribution to the drinks kitty. After the task, this was carefully reinvested into the local economy in the pub 100m down the road from the worksite. Nigel managed to prove that he was the only one of us with any real skill on the pool table!



Phil clearing brambles at Echchinswell

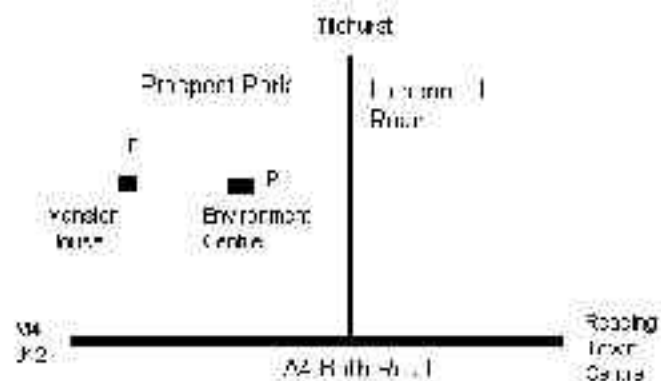
AGM

Yes it's that time of year again when everybody runs away and hides from the current committee in case they get 'persuaded' to help out with the running of the group. If you don't actually need much persuasion, and want to volunteer to help out with the running of the group then let one of the committee know. On a more general note, we are always on the lookout for anyone wanting / able to lead tasks and / or drive the van. Again let one of the committee know if you are interested.

Date: Monday 6th June
Time: 7-45pm
Venue: The Environment Centre,
 Prospect Park, Off Liebenrood
 Road, Reading.

Agenda

1. Officers Reports
2. Election Of Committee
3. AOB
4. Adjourn to pub (Mansion House).



Social Reports

Cinema Trip – Tuesday 8th March

A small turnout to see "life aquatic with steve zissou". Good film!

Pub Quiz – Monday 28th February – 9-00pm - Red Lion, Mortimer West End

From my point of view this was the quiz that almost didn't happen, as my car battery chose that day to die (second one in the space of a couple of weeks!) Luckily I was able to get hold of Phil and get a lift in the van. The quiz itself was in two rounds, one of which we did very badly in, the second where we got every question right. It was an honourable draw with BCV, but both teams were a long way behind the winners.

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.

Cinema Trip – Tuesday 3rd May

Meet at the Showcase Cinema at Winnersh at 7-05pm for the 7-20pm showing of "The Interpreter".

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.

Task Details: 24th April – 19th June 2005

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.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury

24th April 2005

Task: TBA.

Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580

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.

PINEWOOD, Crowthorne

1st May 2005

Task: Laurel bashing.

Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104

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.

YATELEY COMMON, Yateley

8th May 2005

Task: Footpath work.

Leader: Neil Frankum (0118) 975 1528

Meet at: Meet at: 10:15 at the car park off of the A30 (Grid ref: [SU833592](#)). If you're coming from Reading, then you need to come down the A327. Turn left when you reach the A30. Go across the first roundabout, past Blackbushe Airport, straight across the next roundabout. Just after you reach the dual carriageway look for a track on the left. The car park is just down here on the left. We will be working a bit further into the site.

Userbody: Hampshire County Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury

15th May 2005

Task: TBA.

Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471

Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). See 24th April for directions.

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

CLAYFIELD COPSE, Caversham

22nd May 2005

Task: Footpath work.

Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580

Meet at: 10:00 at the carpark off of Caversham Park Road (OS Grid Ref: SU725767).

Userbody: Reading Borough Council.

PADWORTH COMMON**29th May 2005**

Task: Access work

Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471

Meet at: 10-15am at the car park (Grid reference SU619648). Head west along the A4 from Junction 12 of the M4 for approximately 3 miles. Just before you get to the roundabout at the junction of the A4 and A340 turn left into a minor road signposted towards Padworth. Follow this road for approximately 2 miles. The car park is on the right just before you reach the T junction with the Burghfield Common to Tadley Road.

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**5th June 2005**

Task: TBA.

Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104

Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). See 24th April for directions.

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

YATELEY COMMON, Yateley**12th June 2005**

Task: Footpath work.

Leader: Neil Frankum (0118) 975 1528

Meet at: Meet at: 10:15 at the car park off of the A30 (Grid ref: [SU833592](#)). See 8th May for details.

Userbody: Hampshire County Council.

ENGLEMERE POND, Bracknell**19th June 2005**

Task: TBA.

Leader: Mark Clay 07810 838916

Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU901684). Head east from Bracknell on the A329. Turn right towards Bagshot onto the B3017 at the traffic lights next to the Royal Foresters pub. The site is on the left just before you go over the humpbacked bridge over the railway.

Userbody: Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

Diary Dates

Sun 5th Jun. Newsletter copy date. Any (printable!) contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. Any items for inclusion in the next newsletter should be Email to me 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:	David Fiddes	(0118) 950 0735
Membership & Newsletter:	Neil Frankum	(0118) 975 1528 *
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Committee Member	Peter Harrison	

* Answerphone available

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

MOBILE: We have a mobile phone for task use – 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 **07875 262129**. **NB:** this will only be switched on during tasks.

www.berkshire-conservation-volunteers.org.uk