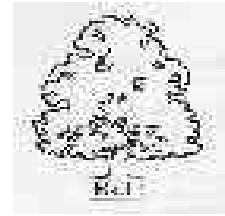


BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 178

July / August 2005

Task Reports

29th May – Padworth Common – Neil Frankum



L-R: Lili, Richard, Anna, Steve, Phil.

I arrived late to find everyone putting the ‘finishing’ touches to the first task of the day – installing a culvert to take a ditch under one of the paths on the site. This was not quite a complete job, as a mix up by the supplier meant that the special gravel fill was being delivered a week late. Adrian was going to come back and finish the job when it arrived.



Above - Almost complete culvert
Below – Local wildlife

We then moved across to a different part of the site and set to work clearing bracken from one of the clearings. This will allow the heather and other heathland plants to recolonise. We even managed to see a Slowworm.
Below - Richard & Steve



Above - View across the worksite
Below – Lili & Anna



15th May – Snelsmore Common – Richard Coles

This time we were clearing drainage ditches along the main circular path from the car park. Two new volunteers joined us, Steve and Lili – Steve works in ground maintenance, so it's a bit of a busman's holiday for him. It was a warm sunny day, as we moved along the path clearing the ditches running off it, perpetually moving the barrow with the tea things. We finished early, and took a walk to where we had cleared birch re-growth in biting winds earlier in the year, and were rewarded by seeing seven of the eight ponies with their new foals. The missing pony was about to give birth too. We then adjourned to the pub at Bagnor.



Above left – Steve & Lili digging a drainage ditch. Above right – New born foal. Below L-R: Nigel, Steve, Lili, Alisdair, & Richard.



5th June – Snelsmore Common – David Fiddes



Alisdair & Nigel barrowing hogging

June's task at Snelsmore involved resurfacing a RUPP / bridle way close to the main car park. Most of us were on barrow duty transferring gravel from the gravel store to the path, whilst Anna raked and tamped it smooth. A small drainage ditch



Anna raking out the hogging

was dug to help alleviate a possible area of flooding. The common has four new foals who were to be found sitting with their mothers in the glade we cleared of re-growth a few months ago.

8th May – Yateley Common – Neil Frankum

We spent today extending the bridleway surfacing we have done on previous tasks here. We didn't quite have time to get all the hogging down. The rangers were going to come back and finish off during the week.



L-R: Before; during; after; and walking back to the van over the path resurfaced on previous tasks.

24th April — Snelsmore Common – Richard Coles

This was my third task in a row leading, and we were doing a task around the roads by the car park, cutting back the vegetation which had crept over the edge of the tarmac, and digging out the drainage ditches. One advantage of being near the car park was that we could use the seats and tables in the picnic area for our tea breaks, breaking all the bye-laws by lighting our stove. Well, we cleared most of the edge of the roads and it looks a lot neater and I hope the motorists appreciate it. And it will make it easier for the badgers to see where they are going, perhaps.



Right – the foal on the June 5th task

12th June – Yateley Common – Neil Frankum

This month's task saw us move a couple of hundred metres further up the bridleway we have been resurfacing to the next muddy patch. We have obviously learnt something on the previous tasks, as everybody set to work on the various tasks necessary in a very slick fashion. We quickly had the boards in place the regulation 3m



Above left – before. Above middle – the base layer of brushings. Above right – Richard knocking in a stake.

Below left – Peter & Anna shovelling gravel. Below middle – all the gravel in place. Below right – Peter barrowing hogging.





apart. The base layer of brushings appeared, and by lunchtime the middle layer of gravel was in place. After lunch the trailer full of hogging was shovelled, barrowed, raked out and tamped down to form a nice solid 'horse motorway'. We were so good that we had finished the task by about 3-00pm. We then adjourned up the road to the pub for a quick drink to say goodbye to Anna, as this was her last task now that she has finished her studies, and is moving on to pastures new.

Above left – Anna & Nigel getting hogging out of the trailer.
 Above middle – putting the finishing touches to the job.
 Above right – Anna trimming off a few of the twigs.
 Right – Ian, Anna & Peter and the finished path.



1st May – Pinewood – Richard Coles

Feeling tired, I wimped out of cycling and got picked up by the van – a much better ride than in the back of the old one, once you find space among the tea things, first aid kits, other people's packs etc. (in the old van the first application of the brakes would clear these to the front out of the way). It was a warm sunny day, and we cleared rhododendron beside the pond, which had dried up mostly. We had not brought the winch to pull the big roots out, but we dug up all the smaller ones and had a good time in the unaccustomed sunshine.

22nd May – Clayfield Copse – Richard Coles (Photos – David Fiddes)

I was not looking forward to leading this one. We had to dig up and re-lay a hogging path which had been laid unevenly, and during the site visit a week ten days before it was as hard as iron and a mattock barely touched it. Only Peter had joined me, & the digger I had requested to attack the path hadn't been brought in.



Richard tamps down the path whilst everyone else works away in the background

However, rain had softened the path so it had become attackable, and soon David and Mark Clay turned up (Laurence arriving somewhat later). Tina Gower was there with Bryan Walker to show us what to



Richard & Tina

do, and we eventually dug up a third of the path with mattocks - David digging tirelessly all day, and Anne Latto of the Friends Of Clayfield doing some too - and consolidated it with a plate vibrator (I bullied Mark into doing some of this, since his back injury precludes mattocking at the moment). When we finished and drove the plate vibrator back along the path, the bit we had done was quite smooth compared with the rest.

Thankyou

At the AGM Phil stood down as Treasurer after almost 15 years in the job. A big thank you goes to Phil for all his work in this role over the years. Peter has volunteered to pick up the financial reins of the group.

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 – Monday 20th June

At the Showcase Cinema in Winnersh. We are planning to see the new Batman film. Contact Nigel for details.

Walk & Meal – Saturday 23rd July

Meet at Snelsmore Common carpark for 10am on the 23rd July for walk. Set off about 10.30am for a guided walk with Keith around Snelsmore Common, and down to the pub in bagnor for a pub lunch. Contact Nigel (07766 523403) for details.

Bat walk at Greywell - Monday 8th August

Meet at the pub in Greywell for say 7.30pm for dinner. Followed by a walk to the Basingstoke Canal & Greywell Tunnel. Contact Nigel (07766 523403) for details.

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.

Newsletter

Apologies for the black and white nature of this edition of the newsletter (and the last newsletter for a few of you). Unfortunately my printer decided to stop printing yellow ink, and despite my best efforts hasn't recovered. If anyone wants a colour copy, I'll put a high resolution pdf copy on the website for you to download and print out. Maybe, I'll have to sort out a new printer (last time it stopped printing yellow, this threat made it start again!!)

Toolstore

The long awaited toolstore move appears to be getting closer. No date has been set yet, but most of the hurdles in the way have now been cleared. Richard will be looking for some helping hands when it takes place to help pack & unpack everything. Contact Richard if you want to volunteer to help out (0118 976 0580)

Task Details: 26th June – 29th August 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 summer we could experience any type of weather, so wrap up warm / 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.

GREYWELL FEN, Hampshire

26th June 2005

Task: Cutting alder in reedbed.

Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471

Meet at: 10:15am at Grid Reference SU722512. Head south from junction 5 of the M3. Take the first on the right in about 100m, towards Greywell. In the village turn left onto Deptford Lane. Park in front of the pumping station on the left in about 300m. The main part of the reserve is on the other side of the road, with a smaller part adjacent to / behind the pumping station.

Userbody: Hampshire Wildlife Trust

KINGWOOD COMMON,

3rd July 2005

Task: Scrub bashing and heathland restoration task.

Leader: Neil Frankum (0118) 975 1528

Meet at: 10:15 at the site. Meet immediately south of Great Davids at ref. SU 696829 From Reading take B481 north. Just after Sonning Common (at the top of the 1st hill) fork L towards Stoke Row. At second junction turn R but go to left of Unicorn pub down Colemore Lane. Follow lane for 1km and park on left.

Userbody: BBOWT.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury

10th July 2005

Task: Gravel / fencing picnic area.

Leader: Owen Lewis 0118 926 4007

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.

YATELEY COMMON, Yateley

17th July 2005

Task: Footpath work.

Leader: Neil Frankum (0118) 975 1528

Meet at: 10:15 at the car park off of the A30 (Grid ref: SU839594). 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. About half a mile after you reach the dual carriageway look for a track on the left. The car park is just down here on the left. (NB This is further east along the A30 than the car park used on previous tasks here). We will be working a bit further into the site.

Userbody: Hampshire County Council.

BARTLEY HEATH, Hampshire**24th July 2005**

Task: Heathland restoration / birch clearance.

Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104

Meet at: 10:15am at TBA. As this is a very large site straddling the M3 adjacent to Junction 5 please contact the leader prior to the task to find out exactly where we are meeting. The most likely place is in the car park about 150m north of junction 5 on the road to Hook.

Userbody: Hampshire Wildlife Trust

POUND COPSE, Arborfield**31st July 2005**

Task: Bramble control, & bench building.

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

DINTON PASTURES, Hurst**7th August 2005**

Task: Revetment work.

Leader: Nigel Mason-Flucke 07766 523403

Meet at: 10-15am at the car park (Grid reference SU724768). Head out of Reading on the A329 until you get to the Winners 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.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**14th August 2005**

Task: Bracken clearing. Joint task with local group.

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.

GREENHAM COMMON, Newbury**21st August 2005**

Task: Bracken clearing/path work. Great chance to see how a cold war cruise missile base is being returned to nature.

Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104

Meet at: 10:15 at the site. This is a LARGE site, so contact David for details if you are planning on making your own way to site. The most likely initial meeting place is at the Control Tower car park on Bury's Bank Road. From the A4 follow the signs to Thatcham railway station. Go across the level crossing, and then in about half a mile turn right onto Bury's Bank Road. Turn left at the mini roundabout into the car park. It is quite likely that we will move on elsewhere on the site (potentially several miles away).

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

LANGTON HERRING, Dorset**26th – 29th August 2005****Weekend Residential Task**

- Task:** Drystone Walling. Whilst this may sound like hard physical work, it is in fact much more of a mental challenge – a three dimensional jigsaw puzzle with totally random shaped pieces, and no guarantee that even after several hours thinking about it that you'll be able to find a stone to fill that awkward gap. Accommodation is again on the floor of the Langton Herring village hall. This is a perfect location– close to the worksite (assuming we are working in a similar location to the last six years), with the pub only a twenty yard walk away! We'll probably also fit in an afternoon doing something more relaxing as well. Contact the leader by Sunday 14th August to book, thus enabling us to buy enough food for everyone! Let the leaders know if you have any special dietary requirements.
- Leaders:** Mark Clay 07810 838916
Richard Coles 0118 976 0580
- Meet at:** Contact the leader for the Friday night pickup times and locations. For the task meet us at the village hall (Grid Reference SY614824), or contact the leader to find out where we are working – mobile reception is fairly poor at the worksite, so phone in advance.
- Userbody:** Dorset County Council

Diary Dates

- Sun 7th Aug.** 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: | Peter Harrison | |
| Van Admin: | Rodney Chapple | (0118) 986 4438 |
| Task Co-Coordinator: | David Fiddes | (0118) 950 0735 |
| Membership & Newsletter: | Neil Frankum | (0118) 975 1528 * |
| Social Secretary | Nigel Mason-Flucke | (01276) 469432 |
| Committee Member | Philip Allen | (0118) 941 0471 * |

* Answerphone available

Address for Correspondence: Berkshire Conservation Volunteers, PO Box 165,
Reading, Berkshire, RG1 4LD

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