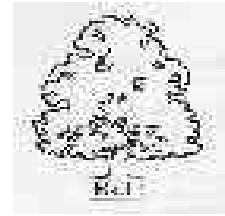


BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 180

November / December 2005

Task Reports

16th October – Padworth Common – Neil Frankum



?, Peter, Ilona, Tom, Jennie, Richard, Lee, Suzanne, Alisdair, Phil & Nigel working in the pond

For the second week in a row we were pulling up reedmace in a dried up pond. Lots of pairs of hands made light work, and the reedmace was soon knocked back to slightly less overwhelming proportions. Unlike last week though, the mud was somewhat deeper – thigh deep as demonstrated by Tom! In the afternoon, we switched to a bit of tree felling. Richard gave a lesson in how to fell trees to the newer volunteers, and then everyone set to work. We were taking out some birch trees around the pond to increase the size of the clearing, preventing the pond from getting shaded out. Overall, thirteen of us enjoyed a nice task.



Above left - Ilona, Alisdair, Tom, Jennie, Lee & Phil working in the pond.
Above right – Richard giving tree felling lessons to Ilona, Suzanne, Tom, Tom, Jennie & Lee



2nd October – Snelsmore Common – Neil Frankum

We had a lovely nice sunny day - a last taste of summer, although the chill when the sun disappeared behind the occasional cloud was indicative of the approaching autumn. Nine of us had fun pulling up birch scrub, and burning it on a nice bonfire. This was with the aim of maintaining the heathland habitat on the side of the valley mire on the site.

Left – Laurence, Peter & Phil look on as Jennie fells a large birch tree at Padworth Common.

Below – James & Peter feed the fire at Snelsmore Common



Tea break – L-R: Nigel, Richard, Peter, Lindy, Rodney & Mike



Before & after shots of Snelsmore Common, showing the area cleared.

11th September – Kingwood Common – Neil Frankum

Today's task was to continue extending one of the heathland clearings on the site that we have worked in on previous tasks. We were mainly cutting birch and gorse. After being a bit pyrotechnically challenged, we were eventually able to get a good bonfire going & cleared all the brush that had been cut before we left site.



Above left – before. Above right – Richard & bonfire. Below left – Amanda & Peter cutting down the gorse. Below right – Peter, Richard & Amanda



9th October – Ecchinswell Village Pond – Neil Frankum

We had a nice sunny day for the annual pond clearance task at Ecchinswell Village Pond. Unfortunately, due to the lack of rain over the summer, the pond had dried up. Not so good for the wildlife, but it made our job a bit easier, as you could actually see what you were doing. Although there was no open water, in places the mud was knee deep! The main task of the day was to pull up some of the large areas of reedmace, as if it isn't controlled it tends to take over totally. When we first worked here, the reedmace covered approximately 90% of the pond's surface area. We were joined by quite a few of the locals, and over the course of the day



Above left – the dry pond. Above right – Owen, Peter, & Phil enjoying the barbeque. Below – at work in the pond.



approximately 16 people helped out. To top things off, a barbeque was laid on for us at lunchtime. The hot dogs were definitely an improvement on the packed lunch I had brought with me! On the wildlife front a Southern Hawker dragonfly spent the afternoon flying back and forth over where we were working, and in the morning I found a water scorpion (a large bug that looks a bit like a scorpion thanks to it's pincer like front legs). Those that got there early also had their fifteen minutes of fame, as a reporter from the Newbury



Above left & right & below – at work in the pond. Above centre – local publicity for the event.



Above - View across the pond. Right – At work in the pond.



Weekly News turned up and took a photo of the work in progress, which appeared in the following week's paper. If we're lucky it'll be a good bit of publicity. At least one person saw it (Adrian, the ranger at Padworth).

4th September – Snelsmore Common, 18th September – Pound Copse, 25th September – Greenham Common
No task reports.



Above – copy of the newspaper article

Social Reports

Cinema Trip – Wolf Creek

A bit too realistically brutal for my liking. Ok to see once, but probably wouldn't go and see again.

Cinema Trip – Serenity

A good sci-fi film. Well worth seeing.

Cinema Trip – Wallace & Gromitt

A good fun cartoon. Worth seeing, even if like us, you do it as two separate groups! At least we all met up for the trip up the road to the George for a post film pint.

Toolstore

We've now moved in to the new toolstore at Edenham Crescent (off Berkeley Avenue, at the western end). There will no longer be a pickup at Caversham Court on Sundays, but we shall still be at the Station at 9.30am and will have a new pickup point at Edenham Crescent at 9.15am.

30th Anniversary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY BeC!

It's BeC's 30th Anniversary at the end of November. We are planning to combine the celebrations for this with our Christmas Meal.

The plan is for a meal at The Mansion House in Prospect Park on the evening of Monday 5th December. The cost of the meal will be £12.99. There is a choice between a fish option (salmon), vegetarian, roast dinner and something else. The menu can be seen at <http://www.brewersfayre.co.uk/Campaign/festiveFeast.asp>. We will need to let them know the choice of food a week I believe before we go. This I will also confirm at a later date.

However, there is a catch. The restaurant won't take a firm booking without confirmed numbers, but they are currently free on that day. There is therefore a fairly short deadline of Monday 31st October for letting us know that you want to attend.

Please contact Nigel on 07766523403 / 01252 835919 or socials@berkshire-conservation-volunteers.org.uk if you want to come.

If there is no room at the inn when Nigel comes to book table on the 1st November then we can try to book a different day or alternatively try elsewhere. Let's have Tuesday 6th December as a backup plan or alternatively Monday 12th December. When you reply can you also let Nigel know if you can make any of these days as well. Saves him having to ask for this at a later date if we have to implement Plan B.

If people want to book at a later date then we can try to book extra space, but this will be dependant on space being available.

We will require a £5 deposit per head given to Nigel (or one of the other committee members on task).

Hope to see you there!

BTCV Training Courses

Below is a list of training courses being offered by the BTCV:

COURSE	DATE	PLACE	FEE
Risk Assessment	22 / 10 / 05	Berkshire	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
Covers how to carry out a risk assessment for conservation and countryside activities			
Willow Work	29 / 10 / 05	Berkshire	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
Use locally sourced willow to create features in the garden and local environment			
Tree Felling with Hand Tools	19 / 11 / 05	Gerrards Cross	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
Gain useful skills for involving communities in local woodland projects			
Intro. to Env. Conservation	04 / 02 / 06	Buckinghamshire	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
Gain knowledge and understanding to carry out practical environmental conservation			
Hedgelaying	11/03/06	Berkshire	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
How to keep hedges strong and healthy enabling them to provide a rich variety of habitats			
Intro to Leadership Skills	25/03/06	Berkshire	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
Aimed at people who wish to lead groups on practical tasks and community projects			
How to Build Wildlife Homes	8/04/06	Buckinghamshire	S=£60, B=£30, F=£0
Construct boxes for nesting and hibernating bugs and beastsies			

About the Courses: Duration : Courses typically run from 9:30am to 4:30pm. **Refreshments** : Drinks provided, please bring own packed lunch. **Fees** : Course costs are show alongside the course descriptions. Categories are: (S - Standard cost to individuals not qualifying for discount; B - BTCV Supporters Club or member of an associated group; F - Free for those in receipt of benefit) **Certification** : Certificates of achievement are available to all who satisfactorily complete the course requirements. To book or find out more, contact: BTCV, 16 Bridge Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AA Tel: 0118 947 5049

Task Details: 30th October – 1st January 2006

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 (will be ceasing some time in September), 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 moving in to autumn 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.

WILDMOOR, Crowthorne**30th October 2005**

Task: Birch and pine clearance on the heathland.
 Leader: Mark Clay 07810 838916
 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. **Clocks go back 1 hour!**
 Userbody: Bracknell Forest District Council.

BARTLEY HEATH, Hampshire**6th November 2005**

Task: Heathland restoration / birch clearance / broom making.
 Leader: Mark Clay 07810 838916
 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

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**13th November 2005**

Task: Birch scrub or tree felling, bonfire and baked vegetables. Joint task with Oxford Conservation Volunteers and the local group.
 Leader: Phil Allen 0118 941 0471
 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.

NORTH WARNBOROUGH GREENS, Hampshire**20th November 2005**

Task: Sycamore clearance.
 Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471
 Meet at: 10:15am at SU729529. Exact location to be confirmed with the leader, but rough directions are as follows: Head south from junction 5 of the M3. Take the first right in about 100m towards Greywell. The reserve is then on your left.
 Userbody: Hampshire Wildlife Trust

BARTLEY HEATH, Hampshire**27th November 2005**

Task: Heathland restoration / birch clearance. Joint task with Basingstoke Conservation Volunteers and the HWT local group.
 Leader: Owen Lewis 07740 766517
 Meet at: 10:15am at TBA. See 6th Nov for details.
 Userbody: Hampshire Wildlife Trust

HAYLEY GREEN WOOD,**4th December 2005**

Task: Rhody bashing.
 Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580
 Meet at: 10:15am at TBA. As this is a new site, and I have no idea where it is, please contact the leader prior to the task to find out exactly where we are meeting!
 Userbody: Bracknell Forest District Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**11th December 2005**

Task: Birch scrub or tree felling, bonfire and baked vegetables AND mince pies.
 Leader: Mark Clay 07810 838916
 Meet at: 10:15 at the site (Grid Ref SU463710). See 13th Nov for details.
 Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

NORTH WARNBOROUGH GREENS, Hampshire**18th December 2005**

Task: Sycamore clearance.
 Leader: Laurence Herniman 07731 972296
 Meet at: 10:15am at SU729529. See 20th Nov for details.
 Userbody: Hampshire Wildlife Trust

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

AT YOUR HOUSE

25th December 2005

- Task:** Enjoying the festive period (or recovering from the previous night's over indulgencies!). Relaxing and having a week off from conservation work. Drinking tea made without wood-smoke in it and eating an entire packet of your favourite biscuits without having to pass them round a group of people who would rather be munching fig rolls / Hob Nobs / Bourbons etc etc but as there are not any will have one of what is on offer and deprive you of it.
- Leader:** Yourself
- Meet at:** All morning, in bed with a pot of tea / coffee / squash, the Sunday papers and your favourite radio station. Or anywhere else you fancy really. You could even visit one of your BeC favourite sites and wander round it without a Billhook or Bowsaw in hand and give the invasive species a day off.
- Userbody:** Yourself.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

REPEAT OF LAST WEEK

1st January 2006

- Task:** A second Sunday to be spent enjoying the festive period and definitely recovering from the previous night's over indulgencies as you welcomed in the New Year!
- Meet at:** Wherever you keep the patented hangover cure, at whatever time you deem that you have had a suitable lie in.

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 Trips / 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.

Diary Dates

- Sun 4th Dec.** 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