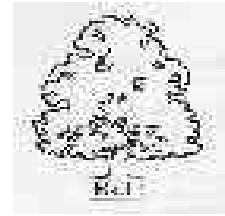


BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter no. 181

January / February 2006

Task Reports

23rd October – Lavells Lake – David Fiddes



Attacking the Crassula in Lavells Lake

This was a joint task working with Friends of Lavells to clear crassula and willow. Crassula is a Antipodean invader that grows lawn-like in shallow water. We helped dig up the weed from the scrape and dumped it in deeper water. Most of the group kept dry and out of their waders by chopping back the willow in and behind the reed bed. James had a small bonfire to burn some of the brush. It was dry and sunny on the day, but recent rain made the bonfire hard work and a good part of it was stacked. The rain also meant the scrape was full of water, which made the crassula removal messier than previous attempts at the same task.



Above left – view back across the lake towards the bird hide. Above right – Mark doing some coppicing work.



Above left – David, ?, Ilona. Above Middle - ? & Ilona. Above right - Swans

30th October – Wildmoor – Neil Frankum

We were working on one of the open areas of heathland about 50m from where we built a boardwalk last year. Another group had cut some of the invading pine trees a few weeks earlier. We had the job of burning the brash that they had left, and extending the cleared area towards the boardwalk. As neither Alisdair or James were there, for one task only I managed to regain my former place as the group’s pyromaniac by taking charge of the fire. In fact, I didn’t end up chopping down a single tree! Richard obviously felt a little left out, so he and the ranger started another fire on the far side of the clearing to burn another stack of brash. Although autumn was here and it had rained heavily overnight, the ground was still fairly dry



and we had to watch the fire to ensure it didn’t spread. Those that were cutting did a good job of keeping the fire supplied, and we made a good impression on the heath. The job was finished off by transferring the contents of a nearby ditch to the fire, to ensure it was well and truly out.

Above & left – the bonfire & heath at Wildmoor.



6th November – Bartley Heath –

It rained.....HEAVILY!!!

13th November – Snelsmore Common – Neil Frankum

This was a joint task with Oxford Conservation Volunteers, held after they contacted us to suggest the idea. We’ll be holding the ‘return match’ at one of their regular sites in January. Today’s task was clearing small birch scrub across the open heath near the car park, and some bigger stuff in amongst the gorse. The usual bonfire and spuds finished the day off.



Above left – Phil mattocking up birch scrub. Above middle – view across the worksite. Above right – No we’re not setting the van on fire!



James putting some of the cut birch on the fire.

20th November – North Warnborough Greens – Neil Frankum

We spent the day creating a new ride through the site, from the footpath to the clearing in the middle. Richard & Alisdair got to play around with the chainsaw. And some nice passer by called the fire brigade when they saw the smoke from our bonfire! They arrived to find us all standing in a circle around the fire munching our way through the baked spuds that had been cooked in the embers.



Above left – tea break. Above centre – David, John & Laurence clearing the path. Above right – Peter, Tom, & James chop up the brash whilst Rachel attaches the bramble with a strimmer. Below – Richard felling a large tree. Below right – Peter barrowing logs through the sunlit trees.



Above – Richard & felled tree.



Above left – Peter cutting up the tree. Above right – Phil, Tom & Hannah keeping warm by the fire.

Below left – Alisdair using the chainsaw to cut up the logs. Below right – enjoying our baked spuds by the fire, just before the fire brigade arrived (L-R John, Laurence, Tom, Alisdair, James, Hannah, Peter, David)



11th December – Snelsmore Common – Neil Frankum

Another sunny day was spent removing birch scrub from the heathland. We were working to the northwest of where we were last month, but using the same fire site. The smoke from our bonfire was somewhat dwarfed by the overhead plume of smoke from the fire at Buncefield Oil Depot, but our fire was much better for the cooking of baked spuds and the heating of the mulled wine that Keith supplied to say thankyou for the year's work on site.



Right – the plume of smoke from Buncefield.
Below – Alisdair, Phil, Richard, James & Owen





Above – enjoying spuds & mulled wine. Below left – watching the fire. Below right – the smoke made for a more atmospheric sunset than usual.



27th November – Bartley Heath – Neil Frankum

We spent today chopping down more of the birch scrub that is encroaching onto the heathland along the edge of Holt Lane on the eastern side of the reserve. For the first time in three tasks here this year it wasn't raining!



Winching rhody roots

4th December – Hayley Green Wood – Neil Frankum

As far as I am aware, this is a new site for BeC. It is a remnant of woodland that is slowly being surrounded by Bracknell's urban sprawl. Our job for the day was to chop down some of the rhododendron bushes that are invading the woods, and burn the evidence. We also spent part of the afternoon playing with the winch to pull up some of the stumps. Nigel and I started this off, but we soon handed over the job of powering the winch to the three new volunteers along as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and stood back to 'manage operations'.



The bonfire

Committee

Mark Clay has been co-opted back onto the committee to help out as assistant task co-ordinator.

Social Reports

Cinema Trip – The Constant Gardener

We went to see The Constant Gardner, which was a good film. Based on a John Le Carré book, it had a good story line, and was well directed. Definitely worth seeing if you haven't seen it, although as Nigel said, probably better to see when you are fully awake with your brain in gear, rather than after a hard day at work!

Christmas / 30th Anniversary Meal

The Mansion House laid on a nice meal for us, although I wasn't too impressed with the party hats or cracker jokes! We were joined by three former BeC members. Hopefully we can entice them out on task again.

Membership

It's membership renewal time. Still at the bargain price of £5 for 2006. Membership form attached. If the envelope this arrives in says "Paid 2006" then you've already paid.

Additional BBOWT Midweek Tasks

Work to improve access is continuing at BBOWT's newest reserve at Aldermaston Gravel Pits in West Berkshire. Join Project Officer Ali on site, where work may include building boardwalks and access ramps, constructing dipping platforms, surfacing paths, erecting screening, installing benches, digging a pond.....
Wednesday 18th January & Wednesday 15th March. Bring a packed lunch and outdoor clothing. Contact Ali on 01628 829574 for further details, and to book a place.

BTCV Training Courses

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

COURSE	DATE	PLACE	FEE
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 beasties			

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: 8th January – 26th February 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 Edenham Crescent 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 / 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.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

PADWORTH COMMON

8th January 2006

Task: Scrub clearance

Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528

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.

HIGHWOOD, Woodley

15th January 2005

Task: Rhododendron bashing.

Leader: Mark Clay 07810 838916

Meet at: 10-15am at the reserve on Kingfisher Drive, Woodley (Grid reference SU753725). Heading out of Reading on the Wokingham Road, turn left at the Three Tuns traffic lights. At the mini roundabout turn right into Woodlands Avenue, and then first right into Fairwater Drive. Kingfisher Drive is the first on the right.

Userbody: Wokingham District Council.

ALDERMASTON GRAVEL PITS, Aldermaston

22nd January 2006

Task: Boardwalk, pond, scrub??

Leader: Owen Lewis 07740 766517

Meet at: Meet at: 10:15 at Station Rd, Aldermaston Wharf, then follow directions to the site (Grid ref: SU601672). Contact the leader for more details if you are making your own way there!

Userbody: BBOWT.

ASTON ROWANT NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

29th January 2006

Task: Scrub control with bonfire and guided walk at this very large reserve on the Chiltern escarpment. Chalk grassland, juniper scrub & beechwoodland. Joint task with the Oxford Conservation Volunteers.

Leader: Philip Allen 0118 941 0471

Meet at: Meet at: 10:15 at the reserve main carpark (Grid Ref SU731966). Head north from Reading on the B481 to Nettlebed. Left at the roundabout, and then right to continue north on the B481 towards Watlington. In 2½ miles turn right onto the B480, and immediately left onto the minor road towards Christmas Common. Carry straight on through Christmas Common towards Stokenchurch. Take the first on the left after you have crossed over the M40, & the car park is at the end of the lane.

Userbody: English Nature.

PADWORTH COMMON

5th February 2006

Task: Scrub clearance

Leader: Neil Frankum 0118 975 1528

Meet at: 10-15am at the car park (Grid reference SU619648). See 8th January for details.

Userbody: West Berkshire District Council.

YATELEY COMMON, Yateley

12th February 2006

Task: Path work.

Leader: Richard Coles 0118 976 0580

Meet at: Meet at: 10:15 at the site. There are several car parks, so contact the leader if you are making your own way to site to find out exactly where we are meeting.

Userbody: Hampshire County Council.

TEMPLE COPSE, Binfield, Bracknell**19th February 2006**

Task: Coppicing. A new site for BeC at this ancient woodland on the north edge of Bracknell.
Leader: David Fiddes 0780 191 7104
Meet at: 10:15am at Temple Copse, off Dunford Place, off Boltons Lane, Binfield (opposite the Blue mountain golf course). Follow Dunford Place all the way to the top where you will come to a t-junction. There should be parking straight ahead. Grid ref: SU853702
Userbody: Bracknell Forest District Council.

SNELSMORE COMMON, Newbury**26th February 2005**

Task: Scrub and tree clearance for glade creation.
Leader: TBC
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.

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.

Walk – Saturday 7th January 2006

10-00am at the Simons Wood car park (SU812635). Walk around Finchampstead Ridges, Moor Green Lakes nature reserve. Pub stop for lunch. Contact Mark for further details 07810 838916.

Walk – Saturday 11th February 2006 Location TBA

Contact Mark for further details 07810 838916.

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 5th Feb. 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.
Mon 6th Feb. Committee Meeting at the Black Boy by the M4 bridge on the Shinfield Rd. All welcome
TBA Please contact Richard Coles for dates of tools evenings.

BeC Contacts

Chair & Tools:	Richard Coles	(0118) 976 0580
Treasurer:	Peter Harrison	(0118) 950 9276
Van Admin:	Rodney Chapple	(0118) 986 4438
Task Co-Coordinator:	David Fiddes	(0118) 950 0735
Ast Task Co-Coordinator:	Mark Clay	07810 838916
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. 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
