

Kings Worthy, Disused Railway (DNSR) Footpath 502
Scrub Clearance and Maintenance
Sunday 18th January 2009



**Worthys
Conservation
Volunteers**

On the first afternoon of fair weather after a couple of weeks of bitter cold followed by severe winds and rain, 15 volunteers met near the veterinary surgery on Hookpit Farm Lane, fully togged out to cope with whatever the weather might throw at them. The usual old stalwarts were there together with some new members, not yet altogether put off by the rigours of outside work – indeed a debutante, well-wrapped up just like the veterans, professed her willingness to do anything asked of her, and so it was...

The footpath running along the disused Didcot-Southampton railway (DNSR) has in recent years been steadily improved by the group, who have created several glades, installed 'sleeper' style oak benches, erected nest boxes on trees, and carried out general maintenance such as litter picking. The results have offered greatly enhanced views, improved displays of wild-flowers in the summer months, new habitats, and rest areas for weary walkers.

Our task today was to revisit these sites, to ensure the improvements were properly maintained – nature abhors a vacuum, left to its own devices the clearings would soon start to cover over again with birch, dogwood, hawthorn and bramble crowding out the developing ground-level floral displays of broad-leaved helleborine, twayblade and other beautiful chalk-grassland species.

We split into about 4 teams, spread ourselves along the stretch of the railway path, each equipped with bow-saws, loppers and mattocks, and set-to to remove the fresh encroaching scrub and roots from the clearings. The furthest parties were accompanied all the way to their work-site by Martin and his squeaky barrow, laden down with tools which he distributed as we went along. As usual we were accompanied by the tribe of happy dogs, several of whom thought it helpful to lie down at just the very spot in which we were about to dig. When they weren't keeping an eye on us, our canine helpers raced about looking for more interesting spectacles (or smells perhaps).



Cleared glade / seat area



At the end of the afternoon's work, accomplished in good weather, we gathered up our tools, tidied away the cut-scrub and pulled roots into discrete heaps.

The clearings are now set for another, hopefully warm, summer and the enjoyment which these undoubtedly beautiful settings afford walkers and other visitors during the balmy months of the year.

(Later in the spring some extra wildflower seed will be scattered to give an even brighter look.)

Weather: sunny & chilly, 8°C. *Michael Edwards, Task Leader*

Upcoming task & event dates

Thursday 12 February – Talk by Hampshire Wildlife Trust: 'A History of Nature Conservation', Worthys Local History Group, St Mary's Hall, 7.30pm

Saturday 14 February – Scrub clearance, Worthy Down Halt

Sunday 15 March – Hedge cutting, Eversley Park