

**Kings Worthy, Path 502
Worthy Down Halt Scrub Clearance
Sunday 15th October, 2006**



The autumn this year has been surprisingly mild, and often sunny. Today was no exception and boded well for the designated task of enhancing the dry-habitat conditions of the old track bed and sidings site at Worthy Down Halt. Among the first to arrive was Rachel Moroney, BTCV Community Project Officer, who had attended our recent meeting and had been invited to our task. Including Rachel some 12 members, plus Rosie the dog, turned up outside the Vets in bright sunshine for today's task.

After everyone had signed the attendance sheet, Rachel kindly gave us a short highly informative insight into the background of BTCV and their relationships with local conservation groups. The address was very well received and helped us all understand the potential of the partnership between BTCV and WCV in training and many other ways. Michael Edwards, task leader for the afternoon, went on to read the Risk Assessment and we then all trooped enthusiastically off to the Halt to commence work, laden down with tools!



The task primarily involved the clearance of encroaching Dogwood and several other scrub species from a number of sensitive areas around Worthy Down Halt. In particular a great deal of encroaching Dogwood was removed from the dry siding area near the camp fence which has been identified as an important site for a number of ground-hugging arid soil loving flowering plant species, otherwise unusual in our chalky area. There are also large areas of interesting ground lichen.

Dogwood, Old Man's Beard and some Hawthorn was also removed from several areas of Lichen habitat alongside the dry influence of the surviving station platform. Both here and alongside the siding area overhanging and shading Hawthorn and some Sallow was also removed to further enhance the important parched conditions. Overhang of Sallow, Birch, Dogwood and other obstructions were removed for a stretch along the bridleway along the western side of the platform and the view of the platform structure from the bridleway was enhanced.



As much as possible of the Dogwood and Ivy was dug off of the heaps along the platform which have been the home for a considerable number of White Helleborine over the past few years. Some of the remaining Helleborine seed pods were opened and the fine seed scattered onto the now-broken heap soil surface.

We also attended to the site containing several Wild-liquorice plants near the edge of the base of the dismantled signal box. Dogwood, Ash and other scrub was removed to improve conditions and Liquorice seed was scattered on the broken ground both here and near the main station platform.

A quantity of large branches and other material was removed from the sidings to help prevent the build-up of soil, important when trying to maintain impoverished dry conditions, and dumped with most of the scrub and general brash collected from the other operations, onto the existing dead hedge. The dead hedge had survived well and had clearly been instrumental in preventing bike riders and the

like from continuing to damage the sensitive sidings “arid zone”. As if to emphasise the general enthusiasm of the participating members at the task, Lizzie Laird turned up breathlessly and apologetically half-way through the afternoon’s proceedings, having been at an important appointment else, and set-to immediately cutting and removing Dogwood. At the end of the day we almost had to drag her away and wrench the tools from her hands. A great example to us all!! And that made 13 participants in all including two very enthusiastic participants’ children.

A small foray was arranged by Maureen during the afternoon, between her cutting and pulling sessions, to collect some rubbish, but surprisingly little appeared.

Several participants attended already suffering from various aches and pains in the lower limbs but seemed to improve following their hard work this afternoon. Some fun was had by Martin hiding Bruce’s rather smart walking stick out of his reach and David seemed intent on learning all there was to know about “toadstools and mushrooms”, especially their edibility (was he planning something?).

We closed the proceedings at about 4-30 pm and returned home to welcome pots of tea and other refreshments, happy, very tired and satisfied with our work.

Leader: Michael Edwards.



Old station platform



Painted Lady