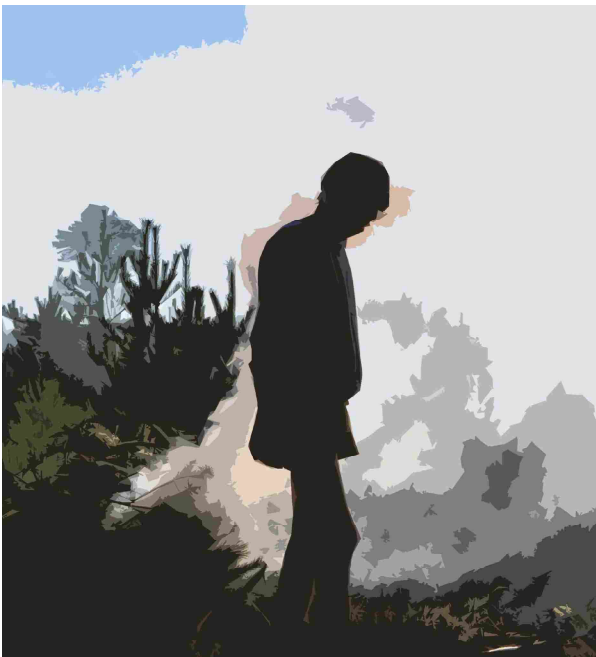


Dorset Countryside Volunteers



No 166
November 2013 - January 2014
Reg Charity No 1071723
www.dcv.org.uk



Who we are, what we do, where, why and how . . .

DCV is . . .

- A practical conservation group run by volunteers since 1972 doing practical work in the countryside that would not otherwise be done
- Volunteers are male and female, from all walks of life and from all over the county
- Work is seasonal, e.g. woodlands in winter - hedgelaying, coppicing; in summer dry stone walling, clearing ponds, footpath work
- Organisations we work for include: Dorset Wildlife Trust, Heritage Coast Project, Natural England, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation
- We work at weekends throughout Dorset
- No super-human strength or special skills needed, or attendance on every task or even for the whole weekend - any time is a bonus

DCV offers . . .

- Practical care for the environment
- Opportunity to learn new skills - training given
- Use of all necessary tools plus training
- Accommodation on weekend tasks
- Beautiful countryside, social events, fun & companionship

YOU should bring . . .

- Stout footwear (steel toecaps if you have them)
- Old clothes (wear layers)
- Tough gloves (we have some to sell/lend)
- Waterproofs, sun block, sun hat, insect repellent
- Lunch
- If staying overnight – a change of clothes, sleeping bag (air bed/camp bed if you wish)
- Up to date tetanus jab

Reaching a task . . .

- If you need / can offer a lift, phone Peter Warren 3 days before a task

- Lifts from Wool station (toolstore is nearby)

A DCV day lasts . . .

- 10.00a.m. – 5.00p.m. approximately
- Breaks for lunch and drinks are included

FINDING DCV . . .

- Maps with the task programme (at the back of this newsletter) show the locations of task sites
- Look for DCV's yellow arrows near the worksite or red and white tape or the DCV information board may show an explanatory note
- If unsure of the worksite try to arrive by 10.00 to meet other volunteers. The worksite may be some way off. Lost? give us a call on **07929 961532**

FOOD, DRINK & ACCOMMODATION

- Occasionally, we hire a village hall, cook supper, visit the local pub and sleep overnight - karrimats available! **N.B.** Book with Peter a week in advance
- The charge for a weekend, including Saturday evening meal, lunch Saturday and Sunday, breakfast on Sunday and accommodation, £3.00
- DCV provides free hot/cold drinks and biscuits during the day - bring your own mug if you wish
- On residentials, all volunteers are welcome to come for the evening meal and pub whether working both days or just one
- Halls offered by DCV provide separate male and female toilet/washing and changing facilities
- **Note:** If you have a medical condition or allergies of any sort, please carry a card and bring necessary medicines. If you wish, bring this to the attention of the task leader. Please complete the "in case of emergency" details at the end of the newsletter, and bring on task.
- All youngsters are welcome, but should be

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the slash and burn season! This is the time of year when we really do need to be able to rely on large numbers of volunteers out on task to help with the valuable work of habitat management on some of the most beautiful sites in the county. Whether you can manage a whole day, a half day or even a few hours, your efforts will be of value to the long term maintenance of the wonderful biodiversity found in Dorset's habitats. In return, benefits to be gained are numerous - social contact with like minded people, exercise in the fresh air, a sense of purpose. Attendance on some tasks recently has been disappointingly low - with just a few more people, we could achieve so much more - help us to do that. DCV is a working group and relies on boots on the ground.

Once out on task, whether it is a warm day or a cold one, best to dress in layers. Even on a cold day once we are working and dragging to the fire site we often get warm inside and need to take off a layer. Don't come out with your best fleece, it will soon become your worst fleece full of holes. It is unusual for any rain to last all day and often the weather forecast is more pessimistic than the actuality.

Thinking about last winter, with a number of cancelled tasks, in case of bad weather and to save an unnecessary journey, please check the DCV website, or phone Richard or Peter for the latest information.

Back DCV now !

FREE
CHRISTMAS
TREES



Coordinator's Report

Richard Meatyard

The last quarter sees the end of our construction and invasives activities for the year and the beginning of scrub bashing activities for the forthcoming Winter.

As always I first need to catch-up on the two tasks that didn't make my last report.

The first of these was a return to Osmington to start building a section of boardwalk on the Coast Path. A combination of good weather and a respectable turnout meant that we managed to complete a number of sections. Because Nick the ranger was leaving DCC to work for NT and it would be several months before work could continue, we had to ensure that the sections we started were finished.

The following weekend was a couple of days drystone walling at Swyre. The Saturday saw an early finish as from lunchtime onwards the rain set in, getting progressively heavier and making the site too slippery to work safely. However, a fair section was completed and a larger section cleared out in preparation for a couple of later visits.

The first task of the new newsletter was the final session of Himalayan Balsam pulling for the year. It was originally planned to be a split task, Bere Stream and Hooke but because the Balsam on Bere Stream has started to seed it was decided to concentrate on Hooke. Sadly even two days enthusiastic effort

failed to clear the whole area.

Our only pond task of the year was once again at Tyneham. With a combination of good weather and good turnouts, following last year's rather tentative efforts, this year's effort was a much more determined affair with a good third of the pond being cleared of silt. Although plenty of visitors took an interest in our work only one family took up the offer to join in and help. On Saturday evening there was a barbeque followed by an opportunity to join in with bat and moth trapping and recording activities.

The following weekend took us to a new site, Slop Bog. Plans to extend grazing meant we had been called in to help fence round a wooded area and the boardwalk, continuing the work started by the regular volunteers who also work on the site. Despite a rather damp forecast we largely escaped the showers and completed the fencing in the woodland and a significant section alongside the boardwalk.

Unusually the following weekend was single day at Swyre to continue the section of wall started earlier in the year. After a initial low turnout, numbers grew by lunchtime and work finished early when we ran out of stone.

Then came the first of two visits to the toolstore. The priority on this occasion was to make good the damage done to the hard standing in front of the toolstore by the railway contractors who had been using the yard around

the toolstore. Most of the preparation work for our second visit was completed along with the long outstanding completion of painting the toolstore roof and the usual round of tool maintenance.

The following weekend a rather ominous forecast suggested that we might not achieve much during our annual visit to the Symondsburys Sheepwash. However, two generally dry days aided by the strategic deployment of plastic bags during the occasional heavy shower gave us an opportunity to complete most of the repositioning and repointing of the flag paving damaged by the heavy rains last Winter.

Then we were back to Swyre for a Sunday to continue the work on the wall along the lane. A small turnout of experienced wallers and a new supply of stone made for a productive day and while initially thinking we might have been over ambitious, the section was completed, capped and the trailer packed minutes before the heavens opened.

The following weekend was the return visit to the toolstore. With ballast delivered and a concrete mixer hired for the weekend we were at last ready to start making good the hard standing. By the finish on Sunday the hard standing was complete, the trailer had been given a spruce up and the store a much needed "Spring clean". So for the first time this year the trailer was able to be stored in the toolstore.

The final weekend of September saw us at Townsend for the first slash and burn session of the Winter season. On Saturday we were joined on task by our colleagues from across the Channel, Association Orchis. The combined turnout, DCV 16 & Orchis 9, meant a huge amount was achieved in just one day before adjourning to Church Knowle Village Hall for a joint meal. The Sunday, while our friends from Orchis took the opportunity of some hosted sight seeing, was a more subdued affair although a good deal was still achieved. Although plenty remains for future visits.

The first weekend in October and the 2nd bonfire of the year. This time on Fontmell Down where two unseasonably warm days along with the stunning views more than compensated for the rather intractable combination of gorse, thorn and clematis. While

we have been to Brandis Down in recent years this is the first return to Fontmell proper in some considerable time.

A slightly earlier Newsletter deadline and my absence, leading a National Trust working holiday means that my report on the last 3 tasks of the last programme will appear in my report in the next newsletter.

If you are wondering why this programme included two toolstore tasks rather than the one that has been standard in previous years, the reason is that toolstore yard was let for the latter part of 2012 and the first part of 2013 to the contractors doing the signalling upgrade on the local railway line. Their activities caused considerable disruption during this time as they took to filling the yard with their vehicles which meant that most weekends the toolstore was only accessible on foot. A combination of the heavy

vehicles, the dumping of surplus materials and the continual wet weather left the surface of the yard so uneven when they vacated that it was no longer possible to get the trailer near to the toolstore, let alone in to it. Hence the need for two tasks to give us the time needed to resurface the area in front of the toolstore.

This newsletter brings us firmly into the Winter "*slash & burn*" season and once again it is a very full programme with us being offered more work that we can undertake. This places a heavy load on our regular leaders and it would be great if this load could be spread more widely. We are planning to organise an evening leader training session in the next few months. This will be open to both existing leaders and prospective leaders. Details will appear on the website and be circulated by email.

Fontmell Down in Autumn

For some of us townies we can't wait to get out into the great Dorset countryside at weekends. One Saturday in October we drove to Fontmell Down to help out on the gorse bashing task. The weather forecast was as usual rather gloomy but to our surprise the sunshine and warmth were a real treat.

I am always amazed at the small things that surround us, some might say minutia. There were a large number of ladybirds (not really birds and some might not be ladies). Plenty of bees and butterflies (white, yellow and brown) and unseasonably cowslips in flower.

The cutting went well and the fire took no time to start, and so to our first cup of gorse flavoured tea, what an amazing taste (my taste buds must have been on good form that day). Even our sandwiches tasted better for being outdoors. Do we humans suppress some of our senses when in town and suddenly find that when we are in the countryside they come alive again. I certainly felt more alive that day than any the previous week at work. I really do think there is a feel good factor for being outside whether it is working with DCV or walking, cycling or even in the garden.

Don Simcock

Hazards of the Winter Work Site

The cutting season is upon us and with it, the possibility of a few accidents. Some of these incidents are genuine accidents that just happen and seem unavoidable, whilst others are just waiting to happen.

It is the responsibility of everyone out on task to think about safety - their own and that of others around them. Here are some tips and advice to help us all have an accident free winter . . .

- ◇ Wear stout boots or shoes, gloves and a protective jacket to prevent injuries to your feet, hands and body.
- ◇ Wear protective goggles (ask task leader) if you are concerned about your eyes.
- ◇ Wear non flammable clothing especially when working near to the fire. Many new volunteers are now wearing fleece jackets and leaving the site with burn holes in them.
- ◇ Wear a hat when working on or near the fire. Its quite easy for sparks to land in your hair and singe it.
- ◇ Cut stumps of gorse, young pine and scrub as low to the ground as possible. This will prevent others from tripping and doing themselves a nasty injury.
- ◇ Carry and use tools safely as instructed.
- ◇ Do not over exert yourself.
- ◇ Always be aware of what is going on around you, are trees about to come down and are others working too close to you. When felling trees, let other volunteers know before your tree is falling, then shout out "Timber"
- ◇ Be aware of the terrain, is it slippery or undulating. Never rush, you may trip.

Tips on how to get a fire started and keeping one going

Fire needs three things

1 Fuel

2 Heat

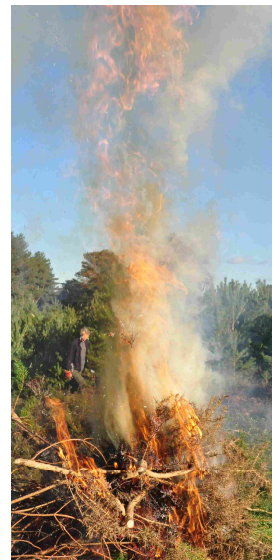
3 Oxygen

Fuel. DCV can supply plenty of this in the form of cut material such as pine trees, gorse and scrub. Almost all of this will not be dry seasoned wood capable of burning straight away. We usually ask all volunteers to scour the area for dry dead wood. Some of us even bring our own dead wood in the shape of dried twigs, fence panels or old Christmas tree.

Heat. We can supply in the form of a match, lighter or even the gas stove. Keeping the flame going can be a problem. Some newspaper or a firelighter might help here. Never use petrol, it's explosive.

Oxygen. Well there is plenty of that about, 20.9% in our air. If there is not a good hot ash base and the cut material is put on too quick, this can starve the fire of oxygen.

Make a raised platform of logs and a layer of paper with a fire lighter and some dry wood or twigs. Shield the match if it's windy, ask a volunteer to hold something like a plastic sack. Once there is a flame this will need constant feeding of dried wood to create hot ash. Gorse twigs and leaves burn very well but only last a few seconds. The first 5 or 10 minutes are the most critical for a fire. Have everything you need nearby. Only later with a roaring fire can we let our guard down and throw on wet or large wood and pile the fire high.



It's time for . . . SLASH & BURN

A new quarter, a new task programme, but time for an old favourite. Loved by many DCV members, it's time for the slash and burn tasks. A quick look at the task programme confirms that we have plenty of them again this winter, but the question has been asked, why so much scrub bashing?

Well, as we know, scrub occurs as a stage in development from open habitat to woodland. Woodland is lovely and a certain amount of scrub is good, but on this tiny, crowded island, habitat management is vital to maintain the amazing diversity of our wonderful landscape.

For many of our clients, getting rid of unwanted scrub is a priority and who better for the job than a flock of enthusiastic Dorset Countryside Volunteers whose light touch protects the habitat in a way that no contractor can hope to do. In addition to which, although numbers on task have been known to be unpredictable, on a good day, with a very healthy turnout of DCV members rising to the challenge and enjoying a day in each other's company, not to mention a blazing bonfire, it's hard to beat us for getting the job done.

However, before the enthusiasm takes over, just a few points to remember . . .

- ◇ Stumps should always be cut as close to the ground as possible. This allows machinery to be brought over the area later if needed (e.g. for mowing); it avoids tripping people up (particularly near the fire site) and looks tidier
- ◇ It may be easier to cut the trunk higher and then trim the stump afterwards
- ◇ If the diameter of the tree at base is greater than **8-10 inches** the trunk should be cut at **waist height** and left for the chainsaw operator to clear later
- ◇ There is a tendency to leave stumps far too high, this is very dangerous, even more so around the fire site

Snedding: (removing side branches from the main trunk)

- ◇ Use a billhook for smaller branches, a bowsaw for larger
- ◇ Cut from the butt of the tree towards the tip
- ◇ Stand on one side of the tree whilst cutting branches from the other side – keeping the tree trunk between the billhook and your legs

- ◇ Large branches growing up from the trunk should be felled in the same way as trees
- ◇ Always sned as close to the trunk as possible to produce “clean” logs which are easier to handle, transport and stack
- ◇ Beware of a branch taking some of the tree's weight – the tree may move as the branch breaks. Roll the tree over before snedding

Brash: (as the cut material is now called)

- ◇ Pile cut material butt ends together, ready for dragging to the fire or stacking area
- ◇ Clear away brash from a large tree as you go, you may prefer to pile up several smaller trees before dragging it away
- ◇ Either way, if you cut the tree it is up to you to clear it – don't leave brash, either tidy or in a mess, for someone else to clear away

How tidy:

- ◇ Clear the site but don't over tidy it
- ◇ Dead wood, both fallen and standing, is an important habitat and twigs, small branches, even larger pieces of wood will add to the biodiversity

URBAN WILDLINK

Dorset Wildlife Trust has launched an urgent appeal for donations towards the purchase of important wildlife sites in south-east Dorset, with the aim of working in partnership to create a network of wildlife-friendly land.

The project is Urban Wildlink.

The partnership comprises: Dorset Wildlife Trust, Erica Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, Poole Harbour Commissioners, Borough of Poole and Dorset County Council. The partners will work with local communities to link people and nature across the area, creating a landscape rich in wildlife enjoyed and nurtured by everyone, with opportunities for people to enjoy and learn about local wildlife and play a part in its conservation.

South-east Dorset is one of the most special areas for wildlife in the country. Natural England describe this area as 'one of the most important areas for wildlife in the country' and 'an undoubted centre of biodiversity'. We have internationally important heaths and harbours, ancient woodland, grassland and rivers. The whole area is linked to a large urban conurbation and makes a massive contribution to the quality of the natural environment, quality of life experienced by local people and to the local economy.

Recently the Canford Estate came up for sale, which contains

some internationally important wildlife sites. These are remnants of the habitats that once formed the landscape of this area, which have been lost on an unprecedented scale, leaving many wildlife species in long-term decline. These sites are highly susceptible to the impacts of urbanisation, misuse and neglect and the wildlife they support could potentially be lost. Many are already familiar DCV work sites – Ferndown Common, Parley Common, Dunyeats Hill, Upton Heath, the Castleman Trailway, a nationally important trail that spans the entire Wildlink area. If this project succeeds, it will produce a 'living landscape' across south-east Dorset, the area covered by the historic Great Heath, and act as stepping stones between the New Forest National Park and the Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area.

The Canford Estate accepted a

*Living Landscape -
A recovery plan for nature
championed by the Wildlife Trusts
since 2006.*

*Living Landscapes restore, recreate
and reconnect wildlife habitats on a
vast scale in harmony with the way
people live, work and enjoy the land.*

bid from the partnership for the purchase of 581 hectares (1435 acres) of land, subject to finding sufficient funds over the ensuing months and a guaranteed deposit. The partnership has received Stage 1 approval from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop the project further.

All donations will only be used for the Urban Wildlink project. If the partnership is unable to

reach its full fundraising target, donations will be used to purchase and manage as many of the target areas as they are able to buy.

Money is needed for

- ◇ Land purchase
- ◇ Habitat restoration to link sites
- ◇ Habitat management
- ◇ Educational and interpretation materials
- ◇ Public engagement initiatives
- ◇ Match funding for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant application

For more information visit:
www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/urban_wildlink

At this year's AGM, following a talk by Gary Powell of Amphibian Reptile Conservation Trust, it was suggested that DCV might wish to donate funds towards Urban Wildlink and following extensive discussion at the recent planning meeting, it was agreed that we would do that. The reasons for the decision were that it would help to secure land ownership and hence, long term management. The sites in question are of high quality, some holding international importance. DCV already has a long history with many of the sites and would hope to continue helping in the management of them.

It was agreed that we would donate the sum of £200 now which will help towards a deposit, and similar donations over the next few years.



ASSOCIATION ORCHIS Visit DORSET



As arranged 9 members of Association Orchis arrived at Poole Ferry Terminal on Friday evening 27th September. Unfortunately not all of them had enjoyed the ferry crossing!!!

Never mind, Saturday morning saw everyone bright eyed and bushy tailed trying to find the DWT worksite at Townsend, Swanage. Despite several wrong turns people duly arrived ready for the day's cut and burn task. The weather forecast had been quite poor, so the first job for several members was to erect the gazebo and this is not the easiest site in which to find a level sheltered piece of ground. However this was all achieved successfully. Fortunately the weather forecast was wrong with no rain and as the day wore on it became brighter and warmer.

A good turnout of 16 DCV and 9 Orchis members meant several areas were cleared and a good smokey fire kept going all day.

Late afternoon several of the ladies left to start preparing the meal and hall at Church Knowle for our use in the evening whilst others enjoyed a walk around Swanage before travelling to the village hall. After enjoying an aperitif we ate our 1st courses (followed by seconds) and then enjoyed a choice of desserts. Volunteers soon disappeared into the kitchen to wash and dry

crockery and cutlery etc. We were now ready for the games! We had two children's games designed for the garden but just right for grown up (?) members of DCV and Orchis in the village hall. We split into 2 groups each playing the games in turn and an entertaining and absorbing time was had by all with everyone having a go. At the end of the evening honours were even with the Frenchies and English each having won (and lost) 2 games.

Ten o'clock Sunday morning saw us at Kingston Maurward where Head Gardener Nigel Hewish had agreed to give us a guided tour. This was very pleasant with Nigel happy to explain the layout of the grounds and gardens, describe the plants, shrubs and trees with Latin and popular names and patiently answer questions which arose in French or English. Nigel was proud to show us the national collections of over 100 Penstemon and 270 Salvias. We were also privileged to go behind the scene to look in greenhouses at plants needing to be protected including banana and pineapple and cuttings and seeds being produced for next year's displays.

Again the weather was very kind to us but by the time we had prepared tables, chairs and food for lunch a few drops of rain caused us to adjourn to a large greenhouse close by but

inevitably as soon as we were established in the greenhouse the rain stopped never to be seen again. Nigel joined us for our picnic after which and several votes of thanks we again took to our cars. The plan was that we would each take our guests to any particular places they would like to visit. Several Orchis members wanted to see the Cerne Abbas Giant both because of his outstanding features and as some had helped clean and re-chalk him a number of years ago. People also walked round the village, visited Lulworth Cove, Durdle Door and Tesco etc.

Sunday evening was spent at Helen's where DCV members took food and drink and enjoyed a pleasant relaxed time. Unfortunately time once again passed too quickly and it was necessary for us to leave ready for an early start next morning.

Monday morning 7.30 am saw us all standing at Poole Ferry Terminal ready to say goodbye to our French guests with promises to meet again next year. After a final round of kisses and au revoirs we watched them disappear through the gate.

They enjoyed a good journey home with no unpleasant experiences.

Terry

Socials

A highly enjoyable evening was spent with our French guests on their recent visit. Following a tasty meal the group divided to play games- a giant pick-up sticks and giant Jenga. The involvement of all was intense and great fun as everyone waited tensely for that final crash!!

There is a proposed cook out meal on 23rd November following the task at Kingcombe Meadows. Please contact Viv if you wish to attend.

The annual Christmas meal will take place on Saturday 14th December. Please join us for the customary good food, good company and games as part of the seasonal celebrations. The cost will be £5, please also bring a bottle and small gift (value £2) to be part of the Secret Santa. Please inform Helen if you would like to attend.

23rd January there will be a pub meal at The Silent Woman, Wareham at 7.45. Again please contact Helen if you would like to attend.

DCV Promotions 2013 **Sweatshirts with DCV Logo**

Orders ready for collection in approx 30 days from date of ordering

Cost only £ 17.50 all sizes

Collared Sweatshirts available at £18.95

Also available - Polo Shirts men sizes up XXL

And, ladies fit available sizes 8 to 24.

Both at £13.50

T-Shirts at £9.50

Baseball caps £7.95

Children sizes are available. On all above items

Sweatshirts £10.50

Most Colours Available

(only one order for pink in the last 15 years but the person changed their mind)

Orders to Brian Thompson **with cheque payable to: Dorset Countryside Volunteers**

Hi

All the Orchis members arrived home safely in France and without any further problems after the recent Orchis visit. I have today received a card signed by everyone saying how much they enjoyed the week-end.

Anne-Marie had already suggested that they would prefer to visit us in the Spring and that we should visit them in the Autumn. No-one has raised any objection to this and Anne-Marie has today confirmed that Orchis members would like to visit us the 3rd weekend in May namely Friday 16th 2014. We will aim to visit St Vaast on Friday 26th September 2014.

Please put these dates in your diary.

Again thank you everyone for your help and contributions.

Terry

DCV DIARY Nov 2013 – Jan 2014

DATE	TASK SITE	CLIENT	WORK
3 November, Sunday	Wytch Moor, Purbeck	Rempstone Estate	Pine & gorse cutting
9 & 10 November	West Bexington West Dorset	National Trust	Scrub cutting
16 & 17 November	Ferndown Common East Dorset	Amphibian Reptile Conservation Trust	Birch cutting
23 & 24 November	Kingcombe Meadows, West Dorset	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Scrub cutting / hedgelaying
<i>23 November Saturday</i>	<i>Proposed cookout following task</i>		<i>Contact Viv if interested</i>
1 December Sunday	Wytch Moor, Purbeck	Rempstone Estate	Pine & gorse cutting
7 & 8 December	Newton Gulley, Purbeck	Amphibian Reptile Conservation Trust	Pine cutting
14 & 15 December	Tadnoll, Central Dorset	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Birch & willow cutting
<i>14 December Saturday</i>	<i>Christmas Dinner Cost £5 + bring a bottle + Secret Santa gift £2</i>	<i>Church Knowle village hall</i>	<i>Contact Helen to book</i>
22 December Sunday	Haydon Hill, West Dorset	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Gorse cutting
29 December Sunday	East Gore, Wareham Forest, Purbeck	Amphibian Reptile Conservation Trust	Scrub cutting
4 & 5 January 2014 Happy New Year!	Powerstock Common, West Dorset	Dorset Wildlife Trust	Scrub cutting
<i>9 January Thursday</i>	<i>DCV meeting</i>	<i>Chris Huggil's place 7.45 p.m.</i>	
11 & 12 January	Stonebarrow, West Dorset	National Trust	Scrub cutting
18 & 19 January	Studland Heath, Purbeck	National Trust	Coppicing
<i>23 January Thursday</i>	<i>Pub meal @ 7.45</i>	<i>Silent Woman, Wareham</i>	<i>Contact Helen if interested</i>
26 January Sunday	East Gore, Wareham Forest, Purbeck	Amphibian Reptile Conservation Trust	Scrub cutting

DCV mobile: 07929 961532 (task hours)

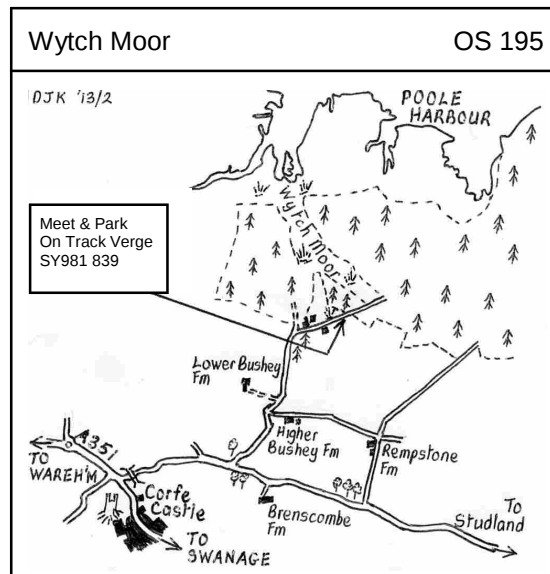
Remember to keep a note of the DCV mobile phone number, or check out the website - www.dcv.org.uk There could be occasions when tasks may have to be cancelled at the last minute, or may have to finish early, e.g. in adverse weather conditions. If you are coming out later in the day, it may be wise to phone to check the task is still running.

DCV TASK PROGRAMME : November 2013 - January 2014

Sunday 3 November: Wytch Moor, Purbeck

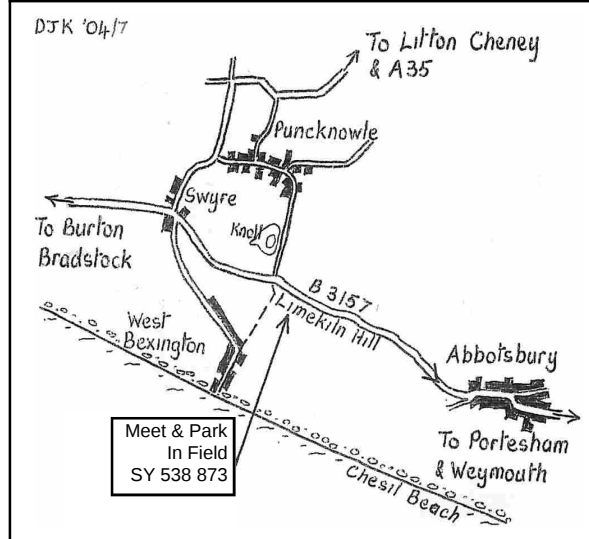
A new month and it takes us to a new task site. The wet moor occupies a small valley that runs through the depths of Rempstone Forest, before merging into saltings on the southern margin of Poole Harbour. The valley is little visited. It is also poorly drained. Past attempts at draining the land had little success in establishing worthwhile plantation. We shall be making a start on restoring some open heath along part of the valley, between the wet valley floor and plantation pines on drier land above. Young self sown pines and gorse are overwhelming the heathers to the detriment of heathland wildlife. There is plenty to cut and a bonfire is promised. And we have lots of very sharp bowsaws and loppers. All that's needed is you, with energy and enthusiasm, and a love of fire brewed teas and coffees.

NB: Wellies will be useful on the wetter ground but working boots should be fine elsewhere. If coming late look out for DCVs yellow arrows pointing the way to the parking area on a track verge and the task site further along the track beyond the plantation pines.



Limekiln Hill

OS 194



9 & 10 November: Limekiln Hill, West Bexington, West Dorset

This task takes us to high ground overlooking Lyme Bay with panoramic views of the Dorset coast, from Portland Bill in the east to Lyme Regis snuggled between landslip cliffs in the west. Across the bay, on a clear day, more distant land can be seen along the horizon extending as far as Start Point in south Devon. The hill is on limestone and the countryside character reflects the geology. The cottages are stone built and the fields bounded by old drystone walls. Many of these walls have become hidden among thorn scrub, bent and clipped in height by the prevailing winds off the bay. Left unchecked the scrub soon spreads into the fields. We shall be tackling one such situation where thorny scrub is invading grassland important for wildflowers. All must go, its remains burnt on a bonfire. And that's where DCV comes in, to prove once again our scrub busting reputation.

NB: Look out for DCVs distinctive yellow arrows on the road verge for our parking place in a field. This part of the coast is very exposed to whatever the Atlantic might throw our way. And the weather can change during the day. Come prepared with warm, windproof and waterproof layers.

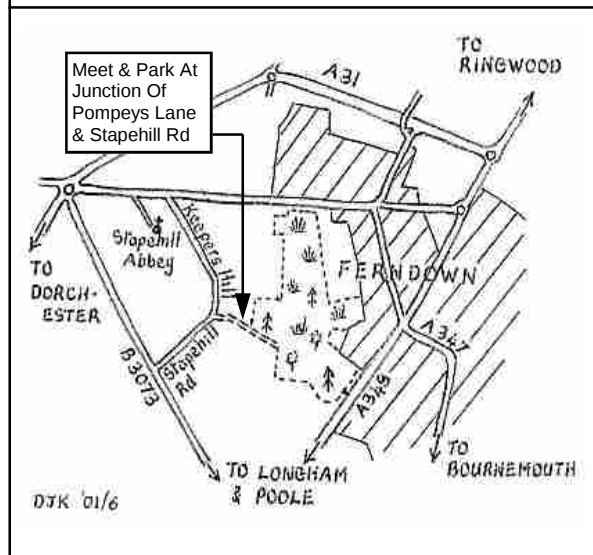
16 & 17 November: Ferndown Common (west), East Dorset

In the past we had regular tasks at this site from its early establishment as a heathland nature reserve. But for some years our tasks have taken us elsewhere. So this is an opportunity to see how the reserve has progressed. The Common covers a sizeable area of heathland that escaped the urban expansion of Ferndown during the 60s and 70s. Housing now abuts the east side but the west side bordering farmland and small woods still retains a rural tranquillity. It is here on the western slopes that we shall be working. As on many of Dorset's heathlands, birch has invaded in abundance and threatens to overwhelm the heath vegetation and its special wildlife. Large amounts of the tree invasion have already been cleared, still more remains. We shall be cutting the offending invaders and burning them up on a bonfire.

NB: Look out for DCVs distinctive yellow arrows for the parking site off Pompeys Lane.

Ferndown Common

OS 195

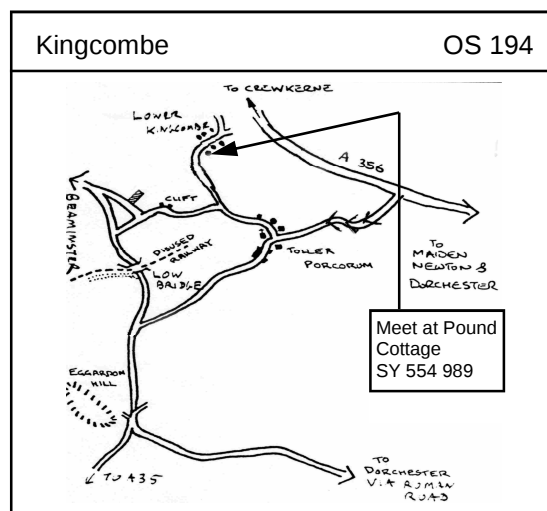


DCV TASK PROGRAMME : November 2013 - January 2014

23 & 24 November: Kingcombe Meadows, West Dorset

This is a fascinating area of Dorset countryside where an old patchwork of unimproved fields, thick hedgerows, ancient trees and small woods provide a glimpse back to an agricultural landscape of the past. The farm was saved in its historic state through a national appeal back in the 1980s. Now it's a nature reserve. In past centuries manual labour was abundant. Today managing the land to retain the diversity of habitats provided by past practice is a big demand. We have been involved with conservation tasks almost from the beginning: hedge laying, scrub cutting, fencing, path laying, ragwort pulling and more. On this occasion we may do some hedge laying but scrub cutting is much more likely. Whichever, it will involve cutting out unwanted brushwood which we can use on a bonfire to warm ourselves against the winter cold.

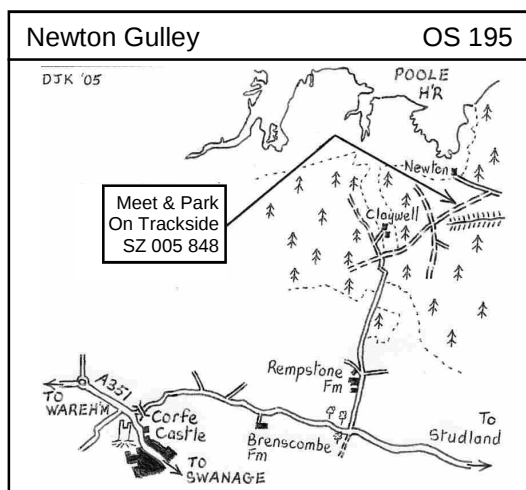
NB: Rendezvous at Pound Cottage. We may move from here to park at the farmyard at Cliff if working on the southern fields. See task map for locations, and look out for our white instruction board at Pound Cottage and yellow arrows to the task site.



Sunday 1 December: Wytch Moor, Purbeck

We return to this heathland valley hidden away within Rempstone Forest. Here young pines and gorse are replacing heath vegetation. This is bad news for reptiles and other wildlife that require sunny and warm conditions among heathland plants. We shall be continuing our onslaught on the invading scrub and burning their remains on a big bonfire. **See task and map for 3 November for further details.**

NB: Wellies will be useful on the wet ground but working boots should be fine elsewhere. If coming late look out for DCVs arrows pointing to the parking area on a track verge and the task site further along the track beyond the plantation pines.



7 & 8 December: Newton Gulley, Purbeck

With Christmas fast approaching here's a chance to cut your very own Christmas tree. The gulley runs through a remote area in Rempstone Forest. It was dug for clay but is now long abandoned and has returned to heathland. Surrounding conifer plantation has been cleared back creating a wider heathland reserve. Many of the specialist heathland animals are present like sand lizard, as well as a host of uncommon insects and other creepy crawlies. But the conifers are staging a big comeback. Many hundreds, probably thousands, have emerged from among the heathers as a spiky rash across the reserve.

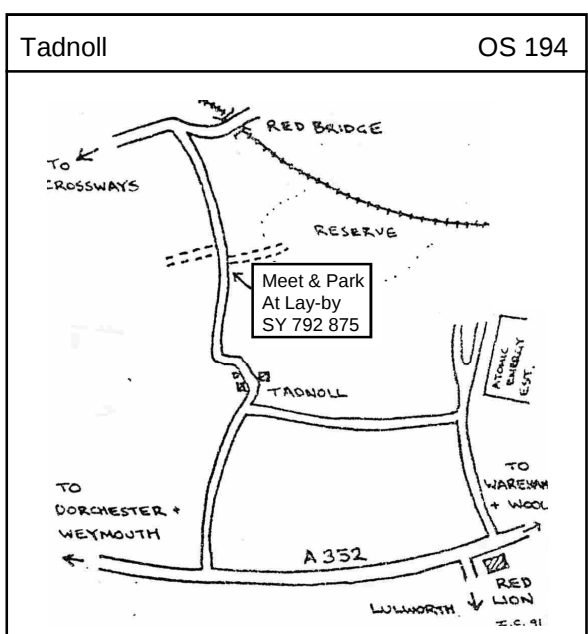
With loppers and bowsaws we shall be taking on these pines. They make great Christmas trees as the needles don't drop. And there is a very big selection indeed to choose from. Just remember to protect your chosen tree, two or more from the bonfire burning enthusiasm of fellow volunteers. Some seasonal fayre along with teas and coffees will no doubt appear at various times. So take a break and come along for all or part of the day.

14 & 15 December: Tadnoll, West Dorset

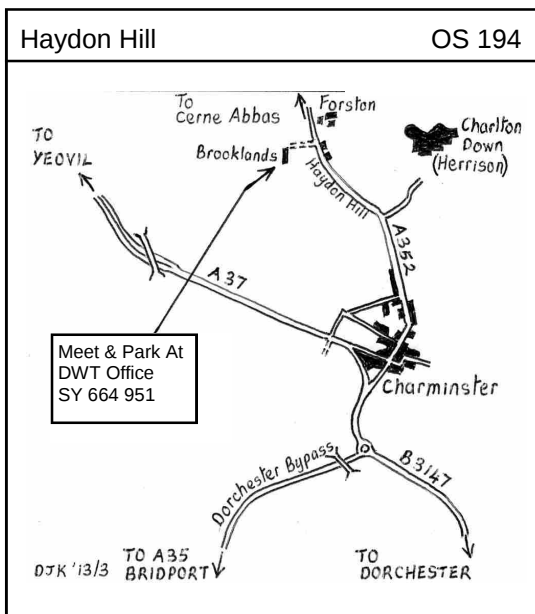
Once again our Christmas task is at this wonderful tract of heathland and grass wetland in the heart of the Purbeck countryside. From the high points there are views in every direction. Wading birds, fast declining as breeding species in the English lowlands, still frequent the cattle grazed grassland on the valley bottom. While on the slopes many of the special plants and animals of heathland can be found. Two lanes that pass through the area have now been fitted with cattle grids. Ponies and cattle can wander freely over all the heath, helping to keep scrub invasion in check and also opening up rank vegetation for more delicate species. But even the ponies and cattle have a job keeping back some of the scrub. In places the growth of young birch and, on wetter ground, willow, is getting out of hand. We shall be tackling the said scrub with bowsaws and loppers, and with a hot fire to enjoy drinks, lots of festive fayre and catch up on all the gossip.

NB: The task site is likely to be wet in parts so bring wellies if you have them. Meet at lay by parking. And look out for DCVs yellow signs to the task site.

Another NB: Don't forget our traditional Christmas dinner and party on Saturday evening at a local village hall (not to be missed - see Newsletter for details). There's overnight accommodation and also free breakfast and lunches for those working on task. Please book your lunches, Christmas dinner and overnight accommodation with Helen.



DCV TASK PROGRAMME : November 2013 - January 2014



Sunday 22 December: Haydon Hill, West Dorset

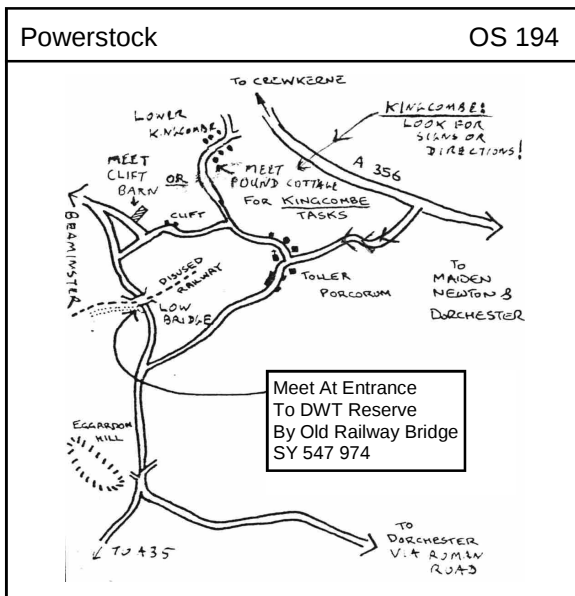
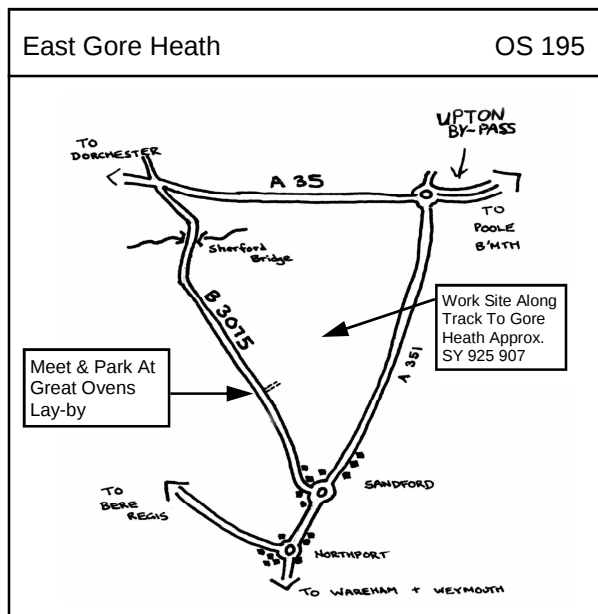
This year we are running tasks each weekend right through the Christmas and New Year period. So there's plenty of chance to get away for a whole day or even a few hours, and do something different in some tranquil spot in the Dorset countryside. On this occasion we are going somewhere new - a new task site. This small reserve covers a steep slope on downland overlooking the Cerne valley. The geology is chalk and the reserve covers a fragment of unimproved chalk grassland rich in plant species and butterflies. Such grassland used to carpet the Dorset Downs but now only fragments remain, mostly on the steeper slopes. These slopes were less suited to the agricultural improvement which converted large areas of downland to more productive grassland types and arable cropping. On part of the reserve gorse scrub has become a problem, reducing the more important plant rich grassland. We shall be clearing as much as we can with our arsenal of bowsaws and loppers, and consigning the remains to a bonfire. So come and enjoy - and for our breaks around the bonfire there should be lots of Christmas goodies too.

NB: Parking space at the reserve entrance on the A352 is very limited and will be needed for our tools trailer. Please park at the DWT office just up the valley and stroll back down to the reserve.

Sunday 29 December: East Gore Nr Sandford Wareham Forest, Purbeck

If you're looking for some time out from the Christmas frenzy then here's an idea to fill part or all of your day. This is the first of two tasks that takes us to a heathland reserve among the conifers of Wareham Forest. It is one of several pockets within the vast plantations that were secured by conservation organisations for rare reptiles and other heathland wildlife. At the time, back in the late 20th century, Dorset's heathland was rapidly losing out to neglect, development and other land use pressures. Fortunately attitudes have changed and heathland is now appreciated and protected for its distinctive wildlife interest. And in places areas of conifer plantation are being returned to heathland. The reserve is important as a sanctuary area and needs managing to keep the heath in an open condition for its reptiles, rare birds and other wildlife. But a mix of scrub is threatening to take over. We shall be cutting it out in our usual ruthless way and consigning it to a hot bonfire for our teas and coffees, and for a warm glow on a winter's day. There will be lots of Christmas fayre too.

NB: Parking is likely to be on a ride off the B3075 road. The work site is East along a track. Look out for DCV signs on the roadside.



4 & 5 January: Powerstock Common, West Dorset

We start the New Year with a task at a very familiar site for the DCV 'long-timers'. For more recent folk this is a site like no others that we visit and well worth getting to know. Its history extends back centuries to an old Royal Forest and then unenclosed common land where local villagers had rights to graze stock and gather wood. In the mid 19th century the railway came and rural industry in the form of a brick kiln. Soon after, the common rights were extinguished. Ambitious plans for agricultural improvement floundered and more recent forestry proved uneconomic. The railway closed. Now the land is secured as a nature reserve, and being returned to its historic state as unenclosed rough pasture where cattle roam among scattered trees and native woods. The time when local villagers gathered brushwood for their home fires is long gone, but not the scrub. It keeps on growing back. And so the need for a modern replacement - DCV. We shall be cutting an area and creating one very large 'away-from-home' fire. It will brew great teas and coffees and warm us up on a cold winter's day.

DCV TASK PROGRAMME : November 2013 - January 2014

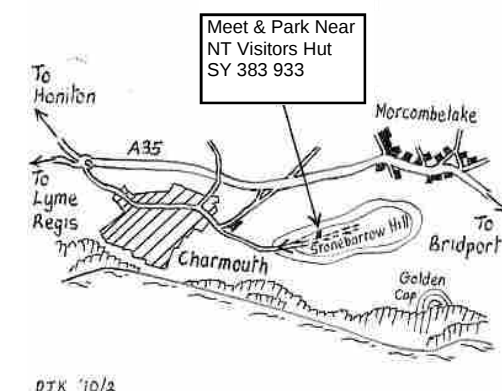
11 & 12 January: Stonebarrow, West Dorset

A mid-winter trip to this lofty ridge has become a regular part of DCVs task programme. And this year is no exception. We continue our battle with swathes of thorny scrub and bracken which has colonised areas on the seaward slopes overlooking Lyme Bay. Scrub in moderation provides shelter and diversity as wildlife habitat. But it can replace valuable grassland for wildflowers, butterflies and other small beasts. Such is the situation here. And that's where we come in, with our bowsaws and loppers, and our pyrotechnic skills with a bonfire for teas and coffees.

NB: The narrow lane up to the NT car park is easily missed. Look out for the entrance just beyond the motel/holiday park as the road bends right to Charmouth. The task site is very exposed to weather off the Atlantic. We have had some gloriously calm and sunny days but the weather can also be harsh. Come prepared with warm, windproof and waterproof layers.

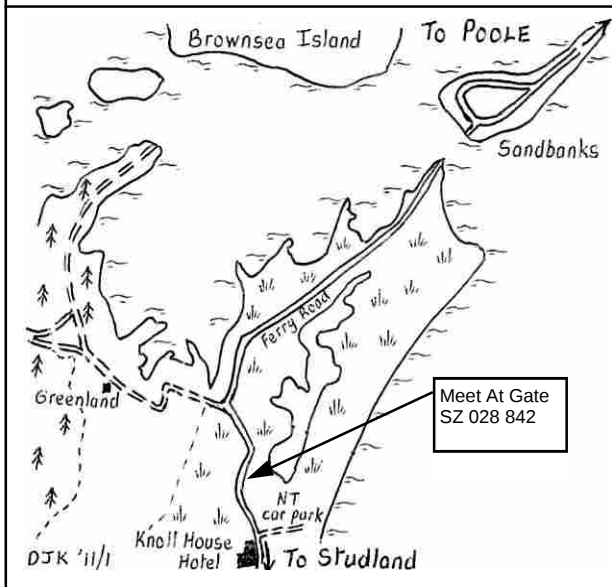
Stonebarrow

OS 193



Studland Heath

OS 195



18 & 19 January: Studland Heath, Purbeck

This large National Nature Reserve is best known for its heath, coastal dunes and wide sandy beaches. Over the years we have done all sorts of tasks, from scrub clearance to dune management. But this is possibly our first visit to work in the woodlands. These occupy the richer soils, adding another aspect to the rich and varied wildlife on the reserve. Stands of hazel, willow, oak and birch provide habitat for spring flowers and woodland birds and butterflies. Open glades and other breaks in the tree canopy are important for many of these species, giving sunlight for the flowers and sheltered warmth for reptiles and insects. Without management the sunlit areas would soon close over. So we shall be cutting some of the hazel and other woody growth. This will provide a succession of conditions from sunlight and back to shade as the hazel re-grows, each condition suiting different aspects of the woodland biodiversity. Deer can be a problem browsing the tender spring shoots. So we shall be using the cut hazel to build protective wig-wams for its re-growth. Thus no big bonfire. Instead a comforting blaze on which to brew our beverages and sit around for lunch.

NB: Meet at gate on east side of Ferry Road near a bend in the road (grid ref: SZ 028 842), about 1 km beyond the main NT car park and Knoll House Hotel if travelling towards the ferry. Look out for DCV's distinctive yellow arrows.

Sunday 26 January: East Gore Heath Nr Sandford Wareham Forest, Purbeck

We return to this small heathland reserve hidden away in Wareham Forest. Once again our target will be scrub that is closing in and shading out the warmth loving rare reptiles and other wildlife. Our bowsaws and loppers are razor sharp. All we need is lots of enthusiasm to turn the scrub into a blazing bonfire. Warmth, to keep the January cold at bay, for congenial chats, and to boil our kettle for lots of tea and coffee. See task and map for 29 December for further details.

NB: Parking is likely to be on a ride off the B3075 road. The work site is East along a track. Look out for DCV signs on the roadside.

East Gore Heath

OS 195

