

REPORT FOR WORKPARTY 3RD OCTOBER 2012

10am to 4pm

PRESENT :- WARDENS Simon Braidman

Steve Bolsover, Denis Vickers, John Hollingdale, Margaret Huitson.

Volunteers John Winter, Dian Cran, Nick Cran, David Green .

Initial meeting to discuss the finalised marking of Bluebell Heath/Flushing Wood.

Marking up the reserve.

All designated areas of scrub control/management according to the Lottery scheme and the map drawn up by John Dobson were discussed in detail.

It was made clear that the path going north south demarcating the eastern edge of Bluebell Heath marked the end point of the project at its eastern end south of Flushing Wood with the exception of the additional block of scrub opposite SMO1. This block was discussed between John Dobson and Simon Braidman on an earlier visit. 51.38.02.06N 0.19.32.96W

There were other additional control areas in Bluebell Heath. Going from east to west:

1. Removal of an Yew in SMO3 at 51.37.59.99N 0.19.34.57W
2. An extra deeper cut west of SMO3 at 51.38.00.51N 0.19.39.63W bringing the scrub belt back to a line just north of the in-stream pond
3. A scrub removal north north west of the orchid field stopping short of the Aspen clumps at 51.38.02.17N 0.19.41.97W.

There was considerable discussion and at times disagreement as to the retention of major trees.

The principles were that significant trees are to be preserved and that includes non –native species. Exceptions were when trees were directly in the flush line.

The greatest dissention was over the direct linking of New Heath with the new scrape.

I believe that a line of trees does allow filtration of organisms from open area to open area. However a direct open link was produced. It was since then agreed (between simon and the contractor) that adjacent lines of scrub adjacent to retained lines will not be poisoned. This will allow a scrub belt to gradually develop which will be coppice controlled

Lines of retained scrub were as defined.

FLUSHING WOOD

Simon had to mark Flushing Wood on the hoof and as a result had a much deeper cut than anticipated in the eastern most section of Flushing Wood to a depth of 30 metres over double the original distance. This was because of pressure and the inability to orientate with the front of Flushing Wood. This has put up significantly the cost of the work but it has been turned into an advantage. It allows the chance to open up the wood here.

This is not clear fell. All significant trees and dead trees are to be kept standing.

This is a thinning. It is not envisaged this area will return to grassland. This area will always be woodland albeit in a more open state.

The area has been visited twice more since this meeting to ensure all the dead trees were identified for retention and that ALL significant trees are to be retained.

Denis, Steve, John Hollingdale and Margaret Huitson left leaving Simon and the Volunteers to continue marking up.

All parties seem satisfied at the amount of scrub removal.

REPORT FOR WORK PARTY SUNDAY 7TH OCTOBER

Attendees

Wardens Simon Braidman, Vanessa Marlow

John Winter, Nick Cran, Dianne Cran, David Green

TASK

Marking up Flushing Wood.

10.30 to 3.30

Marking continued for the Bluebell Heath project.

Going through the taping of the management blocks.

REPORT FOR EXTRA WORK PARTY TUESDAY 9TH OCTOBER

ATTENDEES WARDENS :

SIMON BRAIDMAN AND VANESSA MARLOW

10.30am to 4pm

Simon and Vanessa went to the Common to review the marking up for the Bluebell Heath project on Sunday 7th October.

All areas in Bluebell Heath reviewed plus all areas except the bulldoze area in Flushing Wood were reviewed.

TASKS

1. Notices were put up warning the public of the date of the start of the project. The notice also contained warnings of the Witling Ride Green Grid project.

In effect Bluebell Heath will be sealed from public access over the project period.

Also Witling Ride will be sealed off on the dates of November 22nd, 26th, 27th and December 3rd. with users recommended and with direction arrows encouraged to use Jakes path.

Notices were installed at either end of the car park and on the Horse Ride just before it enters Bluebell heath and on the footbridge at Pynding Mersc. Further signage will be installed at the footpath entrance from Heathbourne Road, and the bridle path entrance onto the Common from Warren Lane.

2. In Bluebell Heath :

No change in SM01

No change in SM02

3. we reviewed SM03 and removed one tree from preservation as it was intertwined with 2 others for removal . We also put in a back cut line and

a extra scallop cut line in the eastern end of SMO3 to remove the Yew tree and its surround.

4. SM04 One tiny clump of scrub selected for preservation
5. No change in SM05
6. No change in SM06 but 2 new cut lines will be put in place either side of the preservation line Rt06
7. No change in SM07
8. No change in SM08
9. No change in SM09
- 10.No change in SM010

A detailed review was done of the trees in the eastern removal section of Flushing wood. Additional trees were selected for preservation

Almost all of these were dead stumps

Additions were made to the existing cut line in SM11 to take in Holly along the flush line The Aspen with the bark lift is to be preserved and the cut line was very slightly changed bringing this tree out of the cut zone

There is no change to the additional cut zone south of New Heath.

Trees were marked again to make it quite clear what is to be retained and removed .

TO IMPROVE VISUAL SIGNAL TO CONTRACTORS

Trees to be kept are all taped and in retention lines trees wrapped with tape are to be kept.

Trees marked for preservation were found outside the cut zones and these were demarked to avoid confusion.

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FURTHER WORK

More taping is required and notices to:

1. Indicate the bulldoze zone
2. To clarify the cut lines in SM06
3. To indicate interblock tree removal and preservation

4. To indicate to users of the contractual work

PHOTOGRAPHY

Fixed point photography is to be established and before photography is to be carried out.

The digital camera has an adapter hole and I have 2 tripods.

Each management zone will have at least 1 fixed point position.

REPORT FOR WORKPARTY SUNDAY 14TH OCTOBER

Attendees:

Simon Braidman, Vanessa Marlow, David Green, John Winter

10.30am to 3.30pm

PHOTOSURVEY

To record what is going to happen better a photographic fixed point survey was set up.

The fixed points were set up with road pins marked with black and yellow sticky hazard tape flags.

In all 18 points were set up covering the entire project areas.

At each fixed point a 360 degree panorama was taken by digital camera mounted on a Cullman tripod via an adaptor.

Each strip of photos needs to be separated so that each point could be determined in retrospect.

The photographs were then analysed by John Winter who used photoshop to link the pictures into a panorama.

The Following was discovered:

1. One needs to level the tripod to get a better fit
2. Better labelling of the photographic strip was required, the best thing is to photo the flag.
3. Due to poor numbering one point was missed out entirely (point 8) and due to getting better coverage on a subsequent photographic visit by

simon and John Winter a's and b's were introduced. And a great deal of effort was required to match the pictures to the fixed point location.

4. Camera batteries ran out (simons) in the end John winter and david green used their cameras.

POINT 1 WAS NOT MARKED WITH A ROAD PIN AS IT WAS IN A ZONE
ORIGINALLY DESIGNATED FOR THE COUNCIL ANNUAL CUT.

(This never happened as the council were slow to get around the reserves
(poor weather did not help)

REPORT FOR EXTRA WORKPARTY TUESDAY 16TH OCTOBER

Attendees:

Simon Braidman, John Winter

10.30am to 3.30pm

TASK

PHOTOSURVEY AND EXTRA TAPING

More photopoints were put in. Plus marking up Block SM06 .

Used John's camera. Concentrated on putting more photopoints especially around bulldoze zone and the eastern end of Flushing Wood.

The tripod was levelled off first.

REPORT FOR EXTRA WORKPARTY FRIDAY 19TH OCTOBER

Attendees:

Simon Braidman

10.30am to 2.30pm

TASK

Matching photograph work

Due to poor numbering simon went back to the project area to match up the pictures.

Also spoke to Council ground maintenance staff. They were on site because of annual cut.

They were keen to get involved in more interesting work in their quiet season on Stanmore Common. I said that there may be a possibility of joint work in the future depending on how the project goes.

We have in the past done joint projects with council staff. They helped put in a new path between Oak mead and Bluebell Heath.

Spoke to contractor who was cutting Hollybrook Rise. He wanted the extra work of cutting the eastern belt of Bluebell Heath but I said he was out of time.

I was disappointed to see it was a cut and a later collect.

Ground conditions very poor and wet underfoot.

REPORT FOR EXTRA VISIT STANMORE COMMON

FRIDAY 19TH OCTOBER 2012

Attendees: Simon Braidman

11am to 2.30pm

Extra visit to match the fixed point photographs taken on 14th and 16th October.

Due to numbering confusion poor labelling and extra points. A re-visit was done to match up the photostrips with the points.

This was successfully completed.

On entering car park saw Council contractor vehicle trailer vehicle plus 2 harrow council vans.

Went off to Hollybrook Rise.

Met contractor cutting Hollybrook Rise.

Towed cutter behind tractor with no collector.

Spoke to him. Very poor conditions. He wanted to continue cut into Bluebell Heath as per the cutting maps.

I said it was too late the contractor for Bluebell Heath is due to start on 22nd.

I asked when the cuttings were due to be collected. He said early next week.

I then asked who was on site from the council he said grounds maintenance were on site but he had not seen them for ages.

I went back to the car park and waited and met council employees from the grounds maintenance team. They were just having a look around and we discussed the possibility of a team from them working at the common some time in the future in the winter season.

They all fear for their future in these hard times.

Then I started the photomatch work which I successfully completed.

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REPORT FOR WORK PARTY WEDNESDAY 12TH DECEMBER 2012

ATTENDEES:

WARDENS : No Wardens available due to Council meeting on Warren Lane lighting.

VOLUNTEERS: John Winter (standing in for Simon Braidman), Rick Cran and Zubair Aziz

10:30am to 2.30pm

- TASKS: 1. To clear the banks on the northern edge of New Heath and bring the banks back to bare soil.
2. To create dips in soil level of cleared area to collect rainwater.

The weather on Stanmore Common was very frosty with a temperature of 04⁰C which made the ground frozen and too hard to dig. Therefore Task No. 2 was not attempted.

All three volunteers worked on the mound on the northern perimeter of New Heath, clearing bracken and brambles and dead leaves as much as was practical. The spoil from this clearing was heaped onto two piles of felled trees to the back of the mound. Where growing plants were found under the bracken such as grasses and heather they were retained with the exception of holly and small trees. The work party finished earlier than planned due to the harsh working conditions.



REPORT FOR WORKING PARTY SUNDAY 16TH DECEMBER 2012

ATTENDEES WARDENS SIMON BRAIDMAN, VANESSA MARLOW

VOLUNTEERS RAJINDER HAYER, JOHN WINTER, DAVID GREEN AND ZUBAIR AZIZ

TASK

It was agreed to proceed on building the steps to the lockup but the wood for the steps, from the large Turkey Oak chopped down on Monday 10th December was just too heavy.

Instead work continued on The Hawthorns the ride between Oakmead and Bluebell Heath.

Much of the work focussed on redistributing the Holly and Yew cuttings produced from the TCV work days on Monday 10th of December and Monday 3rd December .

A number of small to medium piles had been formed which Simon thought to be better used as a single windproof, waterproof pile which could be used by mammals or even Grass Snakes which are known to use the woodland edge nearby..

The idea was to line the north western and western sides of the inlet/light corridor formed by the felling of the large Turkey Oak .

By building on the initial pile of cuttings it was hope to windproof the sides of the corridor

John and Zubair worked on scraping the leaf litter on the area immediately to the west of the construction. Brambles were pulled to open up the scrape , to see what will regenerate. If the same stuff comes back there is to still scope to grasses and plant species within the site

Whilst Rajinder, Simon, Vanessa and David demolished almost all the small piles and constructed the new pile line. The pile line was entended westwards as it was felt wind was still cutting in from the south.

The work was not completed and will be continued in a bid to create a sheltered area just off the ride.

Whilst working in the ride, Simon felt the path is too straight at its southern end and allows the wind straight in.

There is scope to make a new entrance just to the east of the present entrance and with a small amount of clearance to take it in a curve to rejoin the original path line.

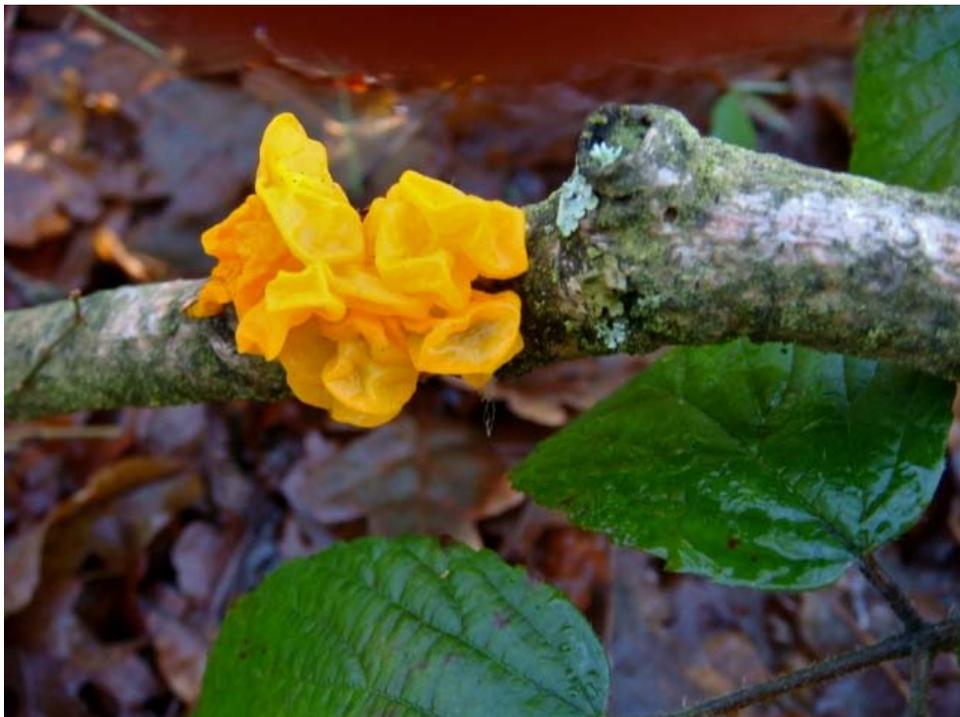
Then the original path line will be sealed by hedgelaying the Sallows which line the western side of the original entrance.

This will create a living barrier of biological vale which will get full sun.

There is an awful lot of Holly and yew in the ride and there is scope for some clearance .

It is important to keep the understorey intact as this will create shelter and bat foraging conditions.

Whilst doing the work Vanessa found a fantastic Yellow Brain Fungus *Tremella mesenterica*



John Winter



Vanessa Marlow

This fungus is parasitic on another fungus of the genus *Peniophora* and Vanessa's picture shows the unfortunate crust fungus as the pink-blue mass in the top right corner of the picture.

Also visible are bluish green lichens of the genus *Parmelia*. Lichens are themselves fungi which combine with an algae to form a mutually beneficial arrangement, so we have symbiosis and parasitism on the same small branch.



John and Zubair said they had uncovered slime mould (not a fungus but a group all of their own) but from the picture it looks like another *Tremella* species perhaps *T. lutescens*.



Whilst moving piles we disturbed this moth. This tiny moth is from a large group called the Tortrix moths there are many species but the cross dark marks and the network marks on the forewings , narrows it down to two species *Acleris ferrugana* and *Acleris lantana*. A careful look at it revealed a few black scales just down from the head which makes it *A. ferrugana* (it does not always have these scales and the alternative is dissection to look at the genitalia). The caterpillar of this species feeds on Oak and it uses silk to bind two leaves together and feeds within, there are two broods per year a midsummer and an autumn brood which overwinter as the adult moth.

We finished work at 2.40pm, slightly early as we wanted to go and have a look at Bluebell Heath.

It is amazing it does not look like the same place. The openness of the area is fantastic , the scrape looks like a scene from WW1 .

They have done a fantastic job. Work will continue in the new year.

We will move many of the piles of timber into dappled light/woodland edge.

T+T Earthworks will start again in second week of January.

We also had a look at Fox Earth mound and it looks fantastic but even better is the light that pours in, it is like shining a torch into the woodland.

We also had a look at the bare earth banks in New Heath which were the work task for Wednesday 12th October in terrible frozen conditions, John said he could see the frost spreading as the temperature dropped. Despite the cold they did a fantastic job with the banks being down to bare soil and the timbers moved behind and covered in bracken.

These south facing banks will hopefully be colonised by solitary bees and wasps and may become snake basking points. Foxgloves now have colonised the eastern bank.

The banks are now definitive features and we will call them Bonzo's Bank East and Bonzo's Bank West after John's dog.

The depressions on New Heath are full of water and with their rushes growing out of them look amazing we all wondered what animal life these ponds have. More will be constructed.

Finally a big thanks to all the volunteers who worked so hard this year .

The reserve looks amazing and we are getting positive comment from the public. We met Marylyn Raymond from the Stanmore Society and the Education Group of what is now called the Harrow Environmental Forum and she said what a good job had been done on the reserve particularly the alternative path we provided leading from Witling Ride to Witling Glade.

Have a fantastic Christmas and New Year. The next work party is Sunday 6th of January for a photosurvey of Bluebell Heath but what we will probably do is carry on work on the Hawthorns as T+T Earthworks have not yet finished.

Finally there is a social event at the Traveller's Rest pub in Kenton on Tuesday 18th December. I will be there from 7.30pm