

Rangers report April 2024-March 2025

Early in April last year the volunteers installed two deflectors and dug out two drainage channels on the Alwins field to Knaves Hill section, these have both proven successful with the deflectors now requiring some remedial work to ensure they flow well into the future.

Other work has seen volunteers concentrate on Brash and Briar clearance in the area just north of the picnic triangle, this area had become increasingly overgrown and having discussed the idea with CBC it was agreed to clear the area and manage it as a wild grassland/ wild flower meadow from now on, following extensive clearance by the volunteers over the winter this work is now complete and has already seen Bluebells growing where they wouldn't have been able before, this work will also allow for further biodiversity in the area with ground and shrub layer growth hopefully encouraging more inverts and butterflies. This clearance will hopefully enable this particular area to dry out quicker as it has always been a notoriously boggy spot not helped by telecom vehicles churning it up to get to the masts. To alleviate this issue some groundworks have already taken place with drainage channels being dug to try and direct the water away from the footpath, though this will require further work to get right.

Ride widening work has continued at the Western end of the new wood that was started last year, with a significant amount of dead Ash and Larch removed, 2 new glade areas have been created along with one that had become significantly overgrown in recent years, going forward these will be managed as wild grassland areas and will hopefully encourage Orchids to grow as I understand were present in the area. Several large habitat piles have been created in this area using some of the brash and cuttings and in recent weeks this has been netted and staked down to prevent its removal for unofficial fires.

Two new waymark posts funded by Leighton Linlade town council have been installed onsite to assist site users in finding their way around.

Official volunteer action day work has focused mainly on Ash removal at the top of the bridleway where due to their proximity to each other meant dieback has taken hold and mature Hazel and dogwood coppicing in the picnic area, this was an area that had been coppiced many years ago and was in desperate need of a cut back, again shielding the ground to restrict any ground flora but also the Hazel was beyond use for hedge laying. As one side of the triangle was cut several years ago it would be nice to get the third side done in the future so we can get the area on rotation.

Unsurprisingly, further benches have been installed at numerous points around the site with several positive comments from site users with regards to the number that have gone in. While several of these may appear to be rather close to current benches it should be pointed out that some of the older ones are getting to the end of their usefulness and as work has been carried out their location has proven to be not so justified, so as and when they deteriorate too far, they will be removed. At this point I should like to remind those present (as there has been some criticism) that not everyone has the benefit of being able to walk miles without aid or due to ground conditions around the site and for some (as I have been told by one individual who cannot drive or walk very far) have found our wood as a sort of haven, a getaway from the madness of normality and in particular this individual was especially grateful for the number of benches that have gone in. I'm quite sure more will go in, in the fullness of time but also with due care and consideration of the distances between others.

And on that I should like to thank all of the volunteers who really have gone above and beyond with the time spent on site this year not just with me but also on their own back to create the Marvelous areas I have just mentioned. And also, a mention of gratitude to the wardens who keep the place in such good condition and to be honest make my life so much easier and meaning I can concentrate on the bigger jobs on site.