

Harlow Conservation Volunteers

Newsletter



October 2010 – March 2011

Newsletter and task programme

(HCV) was founded in 1985 to give local people the chance to participate in nature conservation work in and around Harlow. HCV is affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and the Harlow Voluntary Sector Forum.

Our group has been funded by Grassroots Grants, which is funded by the Office of the Third Sector.

BTCV

Conservation Centre,
163 Balby Road, Doncaster,
South Yorkshire. DN4 0RH.
Tel: 01302 572200
Email : information@btcv.org.uk
Web : www.btcv.org

TASK INFORMATION

Tasks start at **10.00am**. Most end at about 4-4.30pm. Everyone is welcome and your help will be valued for whatever time you can spare. However, if you are between 16 and 18 years old your parent or guardian must sign a consent form – please contact the HCV Secretary. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult who must be responsible for them at all times. No previous experience is necessary. Instruction in techniques and safe working practice will be given.

WHAT TO BRING

You'll need a packed lunch and a mug, strong footwear (work boots, walking boots, or wellies for wet tasks), old warm clothes, and waterproofs. Sun protection is advisable (even in winter). We provide tools and protective gear, as well as tea and coffee.

HEALTH AND INSURANCE

Insurance cover is arranged for the group on task. An up-to-date anti-Tetanus injection is strongly advised for most outdoor activities. If you think you may not be covered on this or other health issues, you are advised to consult a health professional.

CONTACT US:

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Web : www.harlowwildlife.org.uk

GROUP ORGANISERS

Andrew Tomlins ☎01279-434322
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Colin Lincoln ☎01279-635574
Gary Dobrin ☎01707-375216

HARLOW COUNCIL CONTACTS

Darren Fazackerley,
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Glenn Mulleady
☎01279-430005

Chairman's Chat

By Andrew Tomlins

Back in 1985 the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) was trying to expand the network of conservation volunteer groups from the hitherto predominantly county-wide groups like the Essex Conservation Volunteers to groups based in districts and towns. I myself had been involved in setting up a group in Basildon the previous year and, as a member of the BTCV East Anglia regional committee attended the very first introductory meeting on 24th September of that year at Parndon Wood to establish a group in Harlow; the first task took place the following Sunday 29th. Both the Essex and Basildon groups have long since ceased to exist and the BTCV no longer has regional committees, so it is quite an achievement for HCV to still be here 25

years on. In that time we have shifted our emphasis from the countryside around Harlow to the nature reserves, wildlife sites, and schools within Harlow; we have changed the transport we use to tasks, going from cars to a minibus to a trailer and back to cars; the equipment we use has evolved, e.g. we moved from a gas burner to a Kelly kettle for tea, and we've got a bit more pragmatic about using power tools; but essentially HCV is still doing pretty much what it was set up to do.

That leads me to reflect a little on why what we do is important and what value we bring as a group. Our flora and fauna survived very well with the traditional agricultural and forestry practices that continued up

till the 2nd world war. One can trace the dramatic declines in all kinds of species to the changed methods and economics and the priority of production over anything else after the war. Back in 1985 most nature conservation work was being undertaken by the wildlife charities with quite a bit of help from conservation volunteers. Things have improved in some ways since then with the term biodiversity being coined and recognized at UN level at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the government no longer pays farmers to rip out hedgerows but rather has stewardship schemes to encourage leaving field margins for nature, and local authorities now have a statutory duty to take account of biodiversity in what they do. BUT with the decline of species continuing, e.g. recent concerns over bees, the need for nature conservation work is as great as, if not greater than, in 1985.

So, why volunteer, why not just make a donation and sit back and let the professionals get on with it? Well for a start many people don't have much in the way of spare cash, but above all things would be pretty boring if all you could do was do your paid job and then just consume leisure activities in your spare time. Oh dear, I sound like an advocate for the "big society", but long before politicians coined that phrase HCV has been offering the opportunity for anyone to do something a bit different and have a positive impact on their surroundings for the benefit of all. Many volunteers have learnt things about the natural world up close, as well as practical skills; some have discovered and used talents they could never do in the normal world of work; and some have used it as a stepping stone into a field of work they really want to get into.

But why HCV? Many large "corporate" wildlife charities run volunteer "work parties", as do many local councils run countryside management volunteers or similar. I believe that HCV as an independent group offers volunteers something these larger organisations can't, that is the ability of the volunteers themselves as a group to choose which projects to work on and how we go about that work. We are not just restricted to a single site or set of sites, if we don't think as volunteers a project is worth doing we don't include it in the programme, and we can offer help to other types of groups with one-off projects as and when they arise. As an independent group we can undertake more ambitious projects that larger organisations would only allow their professionals to do. Some larger organisations are so risk-averse that they have blanket rules for example stopping volunteers from using edge tools like billhooks. We take safety very seriously, but choose to reduce risk by proper training and instilling a safety culture of careful working and watching out for each other.

Will HCV still be around 25 years from now? It is possible that government regulations to tackle climate change will bring about a huge increase in wood-fuel use and lead to long neglected coppice woodlands once again being managed on a commercial basis. Maybe mainstream farming will become a lot more wildlife friendly out of necessity say to preserve nature's pollination services. If all that happened, our work might be done, but I suspect there will still be a need for voluntary conservation work for a very long time to come. Hopefully HCV will be around to celebrate its 50th anniversary!

Recent Success & Future Projects

At the third attempt with extra deep steel cofferdam sections in place the dam at Marshgate Spring is now holding - this should raise the all important water table back to its earlier level and reduce scrub encroachment on the marsh. The relined pond by the Parndon Wood Conservation Centre is looking a whole lot better. On the HCV task we managed to clean out the old liner, level off the edges, and install the new liner on top. Since then, Colin and the Tuesday Wildspace volunteers have finished the edging and diverted the roof drainage to fill the pond directly. The pond has been named Kings Pond in honour of Danny who after a couple of years of volunteering has just completed his 6 month apprenticeship with the Council.



Danny and Glenn

The coming programme, as well as the usual coppicing, should have some hedge-laying which is always a really satisfying task, but something we haven't done for a while. The reed-cutting tasks at Parndon Moat and Marshgate Spring offer a chance to pitch the Austrian scythes against the powered scrub cutter and the new-fangled super-strimmer.

Looking ahead, 2011 could be the year of three bridges. We never got the materials sorted out in time last summer to widen the vehicle access bridge to one of the meadows on the Stort valley water meadows (Town Park stage IV). There is a clear need for this because since the contractor could not get his baling machine on to the meadow the grass cuttings were left uncollected to rot down, effectively fertilising the soil. This is particularly detrimental to the site since this meadow is the only one with orchid colonies which will only thrive if the fertility level is kept low. The little bridge on the path to the zigzag bridge from Edinburgh Way that HCV built in 1995 looks like the main bearers could do with replacing in the not too distant future; the rest of the bridge looks fine. If the funds can be found we'd still like to put in a second bridge across the Toddbrook at Netteswell Plantation, this time overlooking the weir and "stepping stones" at the eastern end of the wood. Another potential project, which at the moment is really just a twinkle in my eye, is to build a charcoal making retort (more efficient and less smoky than the ring kiln we have) at Parndon Wood, perhaps substantially out of earth something along the lines of a clay oven. What do think about these ideas? This is the time to start planning such projects -if you'd like to help perhaps with the design or fund-raising or project planning lets have a chat.

Harlow Wildlife Projects Update

The group's Stort Valley meadows Access for All project was accepted at stage 1 by the Big Lottery funded Community Spaces scheme at the end of last year. After many bureaucratic twists and turns the group is very close submitting the final stage 2 application. Jenny Spelling has very kindly done the ecological survey voluntarily. The group secured a development grant to pay for professional drawings of the proposed new footbridge for approval by the Environment Agency which has now been given.

In the meantime, the group has just received formal confirmation of the £33,333 grant from the Essex County Council £100k Community Chest to spend on access and biodiversity improvements at Brenthall and Barnsley Wood near Church Langley and Newhall. Two of the main rides and a link between will be upgraded to 2m width and made Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. There will be some information/interpretation boards at the entrances, a run of information leaflets, and some kind of sculpture. There is also some money for some conservation work: dredging ponds, glade clearing, and removal of some of the invasive sycamore to supplement what volunteers can achieve.

The group is looking for additional trustees and anybody else who would like to help draw up projects of value to wildlife and tap into the various funds out there. Please get in touch.

Harlow Wildlife Projects

Harlow Wildlife Projects is a newly formed organisation with the aim of securing funding to support wildlife conservation projects within Harlow. We aim to support a range of projects, large and small, within Harlow to improve biodiversity and encourage awareness of the rich variety of wildlife within our Town.

Telephone: Andrew Tomlins (Chairman) 01279 434322
Email: harlow_wildlife@yahoo.co.uk
Harlow Wildlife Projects, c/o Parndon Wood Nature Reserve,
Parndon Wood Road, Harlow, Essex, CM19 4SF.

REMINDER Tuesday 19th October **AGM + Social. 19.30**

All members welcome to review the group's activities for the past year. This year's AGM will follow a meal at the Fish & Eels Pub, Dobbs Weir Road, Hoddesdon, EN11 0AY

Task Programme October 2010 – March 2011

October

Sunday 3rd October Parndon Moat Marsh Sedge cutting

Task leader: Andrew T.
Annual thinning of vegetation to preserve diversity of habitat. Parndon Moat Marsh is an important site for Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (Essex Biodiversity Action Plan species).

Directions and times as below.

Sunday 31st October Parndon Moat Marsh Bank cutting and tree aftercare

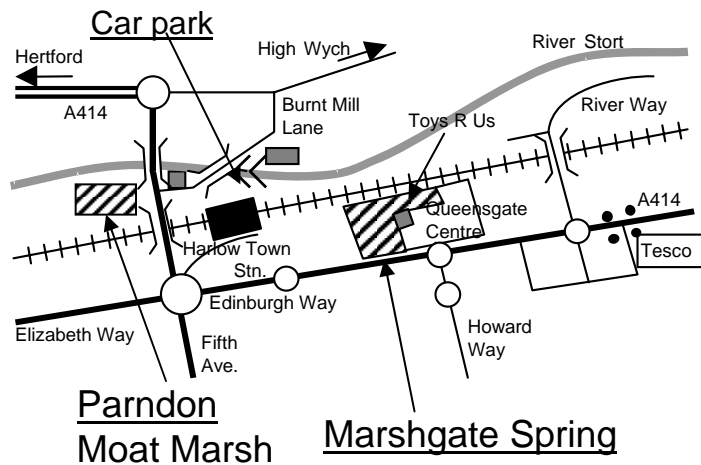
Task leader: Colin L.
Today we will be cutting the flower bank to the west of the A414, followed by attending to some of the planted trees within the marsh.

Directions: Meet at Burnt Mill Lane car park 10.00am, off A414 between Harlow Town Station roundabout and High Wych roundabout. From Harlow turn right into Burnt Mill Lane then turn right after the Centre for Outdoor Learning but before the bridge. Site grid ref, TL 443 112

Sunday 17th October Marshgate Spring Reed cutting

Task leader: Linda H.
A change from the original Spring/Summer programme. We will now be reed cutting at Marshgate Spring.

Directions and times as below.



November

Sunday 14th November Stewards School Annual meadow cut

Task leader: Gary D.
Today we will be carrying out the end of year meadow cut to control the coarser grasses and scrub and allow the wild flowers to grow next year.

Meet at 10.00am at the school entrance on Pincey Brook Road off Parnall Road off Southern way behind the Staple Tye Shopping Centre. Grid Ref. TL 445 079.

Sunday 28th November Brenthall and Barnsley Wood Tree planting

Task leader: Andrew T.
As part of the £33,333 grant awarded to Harlow Wildlife Projects by the Essex County Council £100k Community Chest, HCV will be carrying out two tasks to plant a number of new native tree saplings to enhance the biodiversity of this local Wildlife Site. The second task will be in March next year.

Meet at 10.00am on the track located to the west of Brenthall and Barnsley Wood. Grid Ref. TL 475 100.

(Map and directions on page 7)

Task Programme October 2010 – March 2011

December

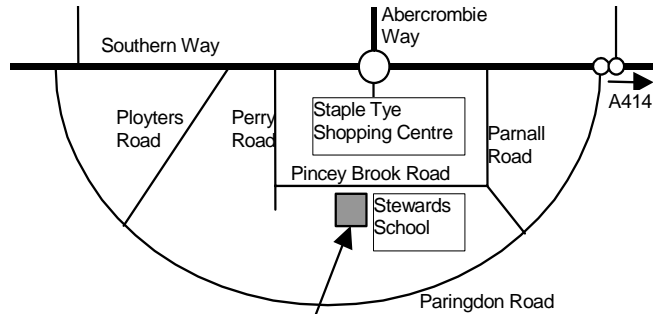
Sunday 12th December
Stewards School

Scrub bashing and hedge-laying

Task leader: Andrew T.

Today we will be controlling the scrub habitats around the edge of this species-rich meadow. We will also be attempting to lay the blackthorn hedgerow to create a barrier.

Meet at 10.00am at the school entrance on Pincey Brook Road off Parnall Road off Southern way behind the Staple Tye Shopping Centre. Grid Ref. TL 445 079.



Stewards School Meadow

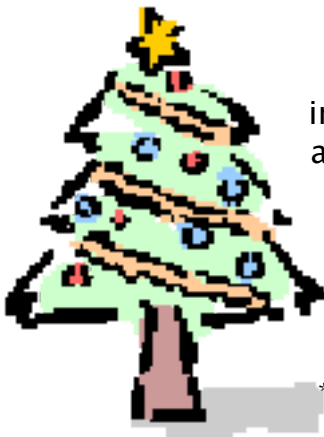
HCV laying a hedge

Saturday 18th December
Christmas Social

Please come along for a pre-Christmas celebration and some training for the inevitable over-eating that Christmas brings at the all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet at the Watergardens in Harlow.

Meet at 20.05* at The Water Margin:
Civic Walk | The Water Gardens, Harlow
CM20 1AQ, England. 01279 422088

*The Watergardens/Asda car park costs £1.20 for 2 hours/£2 for 3 hours before 8pm, but only 20p all night after 8pm so forgive us all for being a few minutes late to take advantage of this!!

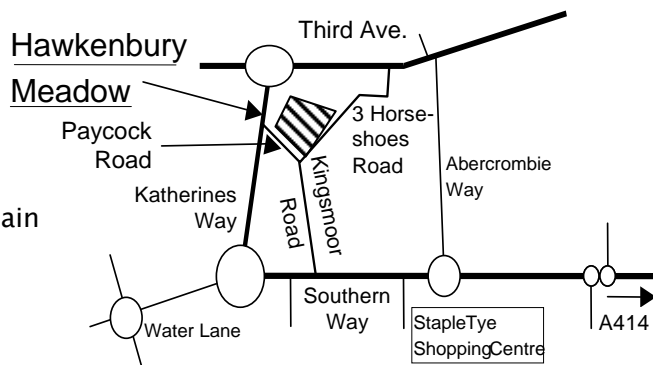


Christmas Stodgebuster
Monday 27th December (bank holiday)
Hawkenbury Meadow
Willow coppicing/Sycamore removal

Task leader: Andrew T

Burn off a few of those Christmas calories by joining us for the coppicing of mature willows and removal of Sycamore to maintain this small local nature reserve.

Directions: Meet at 10.00am road-side on Paycock Road, just off Katherines Way. Grid Ref. TL 434 088.



Task Programme October 2010 – March 2011

January

Sunday 9th January

Marshgate Spring

Coppicing

Task leader: Gary D.

Our first task of 2011 will be to coppice some Alder, Willow and Hazel.

**Meet in the Toys 'R' Us car park at the shop front, Edinburgh Way at 10.00am.
Grid Ref. TL 454 114.**

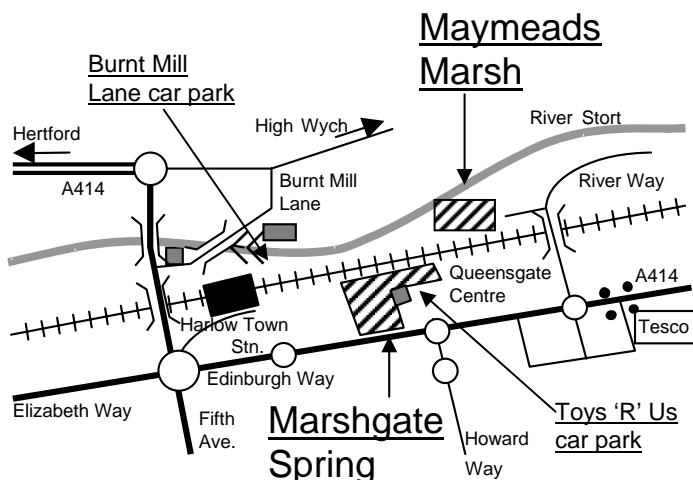
Sunday 23rd January

Maymeads Marsh

Coppicing and tree care

Task leader: Colin L

Today we will be coppicing some Willow and clearing some vegetation to create some additional room and light for our planted trees to grow.



Directions: Meet at Burnt Mill Lane car park 10.00am, off A414 between Harlow Town Station roundabout and High Wych roundabout. From Harlow turn right into Burnt Mill Lane then turn right after the Centre for Outdoor Learning but before the bridge. Site grid ref, TL454 118

February

Sunday 6th February

Parndon Moat Marsh

Coppicing

Task leader: Colin L.

Today Colin will be leading the task to coppice an Alder next to the large pond.

Directions: Meet at Burnt Mill Lane car park 10.00am, off A414 between Harlow Town Station roundabout and High Wych roundabout. From Harlow turn right into Burnt Mill Lane then turn right after the Centre for Outdoor Learning but before the bridge. Site grid ref, TL 443 112

Sunday 20th February

Stewards School

Pond lining

Task leader: To be confirmed

In 2010 we helped to create a new pond within the meadow. Today we will be lining the pond and helping to create even more wildlife habitat for this small local Wildlife Site.

**Meet at 10.00am at the school entrance on Pincey Brook Road off Parnall Road off Southern way behind the Staple Tye Shopping Centre. Grid Ref. TL 445 079.
(Map as above)**

**Tuesday 8th February
HCV Planning Meeting
Come along and give us some ideas
for the future task programme.
Parndon Wood Nature Reserve
19.30pm**

Task Programme October 2010 – March 2011

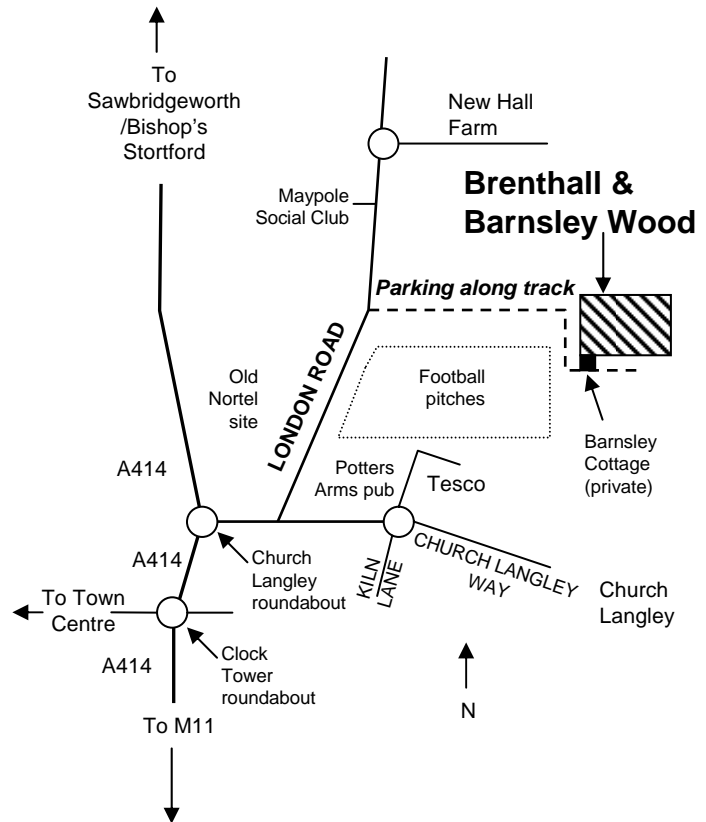
March

Sunday 6th and 20th March Brenthall and Barnsley Wood Sycamore removal & tree planting

Task leaders: Danny K (6th March)
Andrew T (23rd March)

Over the course of two tasks we will clear some Sycamore to enable the continuation of native tree and shrub planting to enhance the biodiversity of this woodland (begun last November)

Meet at 10.00am on the track located to the west of Brenthall and Barnsley Wood. From the A414 turn onto Church Langley Way then take the first exit on the left. Drive approx. 450 metres (500 yards) along London Road until you reach a junction on the right. Turn right and parking will be along the track. The woods are at the far end of this road. There are a number of football pitches adjacent to the woods, which are likely to be in use on a Sunday morning so it may be better to park further along the track towards the woods (please park considerately to allow other site users to pass). Grid Ref. TL 475 100.



Greenteam Tasks

This programme of midweek tasks is organized by the Harlow Wildspace! team with help from HCV. The tasks concentrate on local nature reserves & county wildlife sites. The tasks are held twice a month on Wednesdays, 10am - 2pm.

- 6th October – Markhall Wood: Coppicing
- 13th October – Latton Woods: Hazel coppicing
- 20th October – Vicarage Wood: Hazel coppicing
- 3rd November – Burnett Wood: Hornbeam coppicing
- 17th November – Latton Woods: Pollard creation and scrub clearance
- 1st December – Maunds Wood: Hornbeam coppicing and tree planting
- 15th December – Parndon Wood: Christmas task

FORTHCOMING HCV TASK DATES

- 3rd April
- 17th April
- 1st May

Dear Volunteers, It is with pleasure that we prepare and deliver this newsletter and programme to you. However if you are no longer able to come along to a task every now and then, please let the HCV secretary know and we will remove your details from the mailing list