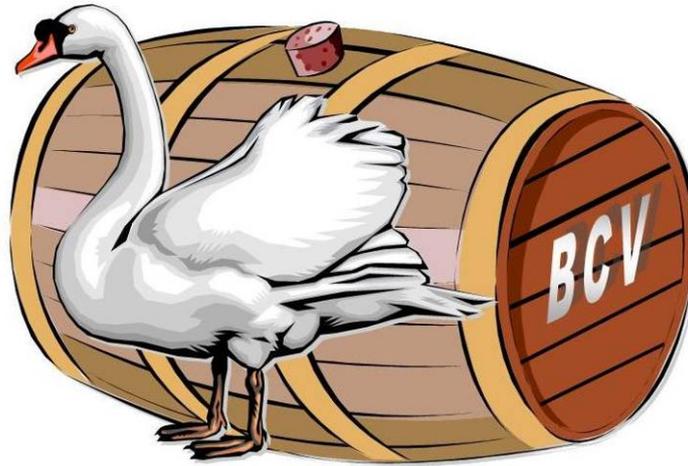


CONSERVATION

BURTON



VOLUNTEERS

www.bcv.org.uk



Students from deFerrers Academy, with Willow sculptures, made as part of their course work, ready to be installed on the Kingfisher Trail, by BCV

Burton Conservation Volunteers Annual Report 2015

Another busy and successful year, despite government cut backs and no work from ESBC, reducing the overall work days in Staffordshire. We again encouraged young people to join in, inc. 2 spending 8 working days, taking their Duke of Edinburgh Award. We carried out a total of 641 volunteer days on 59 different task days, comprising of 470 work days by BCV plus 171 days by others, like local Lichfield, South Derbyshire, Derby City and Burton residents (inc. staff and students from de Ferrers Academy), Parish Councils, various Corporate Volunteers, Trent Rivers Trust, Canal & Rivers Trust, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and staff at Beaumont College in Lancaster. We have led walks for Burton Rotary, Lichfield Wildlife Group, three walks for the National Forest Walking Festival, supported a Climate Change March, for Friends of the Earth, as well as organising a number of walks for the group, including completing the National Forest Way, a route that we started last year and even being given the opportunity to encourage responsible/environmentally friendly gardening at Wyevale Garden Centre at Shenstone.

Of these, 321 volunteer days were within the National Forest, 391 in Staffordshire inc. 79 in the Lichfield area, 249 in E. Staffs, 88 days in S. Derbyshire, 80 in Leicestershire, plus 2 days on a course in Nottinghamshire. We kept the traditional working weekend at Broome Farm in Herefordshire (29 volunteer days, coppicing a section of Hazel and Field Maple hedge and of course, sampling the cider) plus 20 days in Lancashire at Beaumont College, run by Scope, and 31 building a boardwalk on a capped tip in Derby City, so another diverse and interesting year of community and environmental work.

As in previous years we have not counted in time for committee meetings, admin work, site surveys, and general organisation like tool collection or sorting out car share. The many hours of work on the allotment have not been included, not because it is not highly valued, but because we do not have a proper record of volunteer numbers. Nor have we included team-building socials and group walks, manning displays, educational talks etc. so the basic figures do not reflect the total amount of commitment given to the group by volunteers. We did include the Educational walks, as education and raising awareness of local environmental issues is an important part of what we do. Also included were the National Forest Walking Festival walks, as they were organised for others, but not the risk assessment

walks as these were largely social events. We have worked with adult learners with social problems, Schools, South Derbyshire District Council, Lichfield District Council, Parish Councils, a Scope run college and of course Broome Cider Farm. Staffordshire County Council and Derby City Council

BCV have also worked with and provided support for local and national orgs. like Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Trent Rivers Trust, Canal & Rivers Trust, Burton & District Wildlife Group, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Rotarians and The Kingfisher Project, as well as private landlords.

The orchard project at Paget school in Burton is continuing to flourish and we visited the orchard as part of our 12 mile National Forest Walking Festival walk, to show a successful local environmental project, involving many young people.

We have also assisted with events organised by East Staffs Fairtrade Group and One World Week (Burton) as they are in keeping with our overall ethos and also linked up with Burton Inclusive Performing Arts, supporting a couple of projects, including a One World Week event at the Burton Caribbean Associations 'Black History Month'. We have affiliated with Friends of the Earth and attended their 'Climate Change' march in Leicester and hope to link up with like minded people and projects, in the future. We have always been keen to work with others, to learn as well as teach and also to make our work more effective and sustainable and this has led to a variety of organisations contacting us, even a local Garden Centre looking for someone to be their Bank Holiday 'Wildlife Expert' albeit as a last minute replacement.

Thanks also go to the volunteers who help to organise walks, camping trips, theatre visits, quizzes, meals website etc. these help to make working with BCV an enjoyable and social experience, helping us to retain regular volunteers and the skills that they have built up.

Although we are not a 'carers' type group we do care and over the years a number of volunteers with learning disabilities, social or drink/drug related problems have been able to gain a lot from working with BCV. The confidence, acquired skills and improved CV they have gained, has helped a number to find jobs and careers. This is also

proving useful to a number of students, either looking for projects, or gaining practical skills, to help them with widening their experience and through that their employability.

Highlights

The highlights as in previous years are difficult to pick out, from so many exciting and positive projects affecting our environment. The walks, particularly the National Forest Walking Festival ones, enable us to revisit previous projects and monitor their progress. Seeing laid hedges and trees growing, healthy streams and meadows thriving and being invited back to continue working on sites, all helps us to assess how well we are performing. Much of our work is to help to restore the slow pace of nature, to counter the sweeping changes that machines and chemicals can make, and some of our work takes years to develop, so often we need to spot subtle signs of a thriving and returning habitat.

Returning to the Kingfisher Trail, gave us a chance to see laid hedges growing back well and the trees that we planted, with developing fruit on them. This along with the birdsong and other clues of flourishing wildlife, tells us that we got most of it right. The Kingfisher Project was always a community project as well as environmental, so working with art students from a local school, The de Ferrers Academy, helped us to give a new generation a stake in the Trail. The sculpture trail consisting of 7 dry willow sculptures was always going to be very temporary, but the willow forms were only going to be scrapped after they had been assessed, at least they gave Trail users some pleasure and the students some satisfaction that their work was being displayed. We installed them on a Friday and at a YMCA meeting on the Tuesday four people had photos of them on their phones; and I am sure they were not the only people to enjoy them.

Helping to plant up a new SWT nature reserve at Branston Leas, again gives hope for the environmental future in the Burton area and working with a local Lichfield group on a number of sites means that our skills and experience are being passed to others, enabling us to move to new sites and challenges.

A £2000.00 grant from the Co-op Members Relations Fund has enabled us to continue with a project improving an urban brook and

associated land, for local people and wildlife. The extra funding has allowed us to continue our work on the site and this means that people can start to see the benefits and overall concept of the project, not always obvious to the untrained eye, at the early stages of a plan.

Sustainability

We continue sourcing materials locally, and recycling arisings as stakes, binders etc. for different uses like fence posts and rails, hurdles, pea/bean sticks for the allotment and for tools, making our work more sustainable and hopefully setting an example for others.

Use of the PHAB minibus has been mutually beneficial we hope. Giving the bus an occasional decent run, keeps the engine from clogging up, whilst reducing the number of vehicles travelling to our sites and thus our carbon footprint. This also avoids conflict with local residents over parking issues and keeping local opinion positive, is always important to ensure future support for projects.

The metal container that we rented as a tool store started to leak, so we took it over from its owners, the allotment soc. and this has enabled us to invest in repairs and a complete repaint of the container, giving us a secure base for the future.

Awards

[Richard with his award](#)



We did not apply for any group awards this year, but felt that Richard Sanville deserved recognition for running the BCV website so successfully for 10 years. The website is very well run and helps new volunteers get a flavour of what we do and Richard deservedly won the IT Champion for 2015, in the Star Awards.

Socials

We have continued the very enjoyable trips to the Globe Theatre in London, and trips to the London markets, for fun or serious Christmas shopping, plus seeing live music and other theatre companies at local venues. On a similar track, we have also helped with Burton Inclusive Performing Arts, by supporting and performing.

The camping/walking holiday in the Forest of Dean, was a more relaxed affair than previous walks, although on the plus side it gave more chance to study the wildlife and different ecosystems and still included some challenging walks and superb views.

The working weekend at Broome Farm, was great fun, and we coppiced a long stretch of old hedge, mainly Hazel, and stacked or burned a lot of the arisings for other projects, or campers firewood.

Training

It has been a busy year for learning as well as training. Two of us attended an excellent course on coppicing at a reserve in Notts. Two vols. attended the Invertebrate Fair at Stoke, three did a very technical course on Phase 1 vegetation surveys and one person was on a course to promote a management planning software. We also encouraged others, like local Parish Councillors to attend the courses. Lynn and I gave talks and guided walks to a number of groups and at public events, whilst giving other groups advice on the management required for their sites. The Wyevale Garden Centre day allowed us to reach a wider audience, encouraging responsible gardening for wildlife. Along with training young people doing their Duke of Edinburgh Awards, we also had a number of students gaining units for course work, as well as post grad students looking for practical experience and CV enhancement.

We all thoroughly enjoyed the hedgelaying training day we ran for The Canal & Rivers Trust Volunteers on the Ashby canal and working with corporate volunteers like those from Molson Coors, also helps us to educate and enthuse others, who may not encounter this sort of 'hands on' work in their normal lives and careers.

Summary

Despite the recession we have increased the number of workdays carried out by BCV, compared to last year, largely by engaging with new clients, like Derby City and Staffs County Councils.

BCV have continued to value training, encouraging volunteers to attend relevant courses and promoting them to others. This ensures a well trained and motivated volunteer workforce, committed to conserving their environment locally and further afield.

We need to continue to promote the value and genuine cost effectiveness of employing a forward looking, committed, skilled and experienced group like BCV and also the high quality of the groups work. The adaptability shown by the group last year should, ensure, that we are well placed to ride out the recession.

So thank you to everyone who has taken part in the group, making Burton Conservation Volunteers such a happy team and a successful organisation.

Lawrence Oates Chair and Project Officer 27-4-2016.



Working with local volunteers to lay a hedge at Darnford Park in Lichfield

Looking forward to a successful 2016