



Newsletter

Bracknell Conservation Volunteers

Newsletter No. 16

15 March 2017

What we've been doing

14 March 2017

Hayley Green Woods

***(somewhat belated)* Christmas outing – bushcraft activities with David Willis**

We had a very enjoyable day with David Willis. 13 volunteers attended with Ranger Alison Levy.

David started by building a fire to put the kettles on, using tinder scraped from the outer side of birch (*Betula pendula*) bark. Birch is commonly available in our woods, it's not particularly good for burning as logs, but the bark and twigs make good tinder and kindling.

Whittling

We started our whittling clearing the bark from large lime (*Tilia* sp.) sticks to use in baking bread, and from smaller sticks to use as skewers for kebabs. David recommends Mora knives, made in Sweden:

<https://morakniv.se/en/>

Bread making

We made unleavened soda bread using flour, sugar, salt and baking powder. The dough is made into a "sausage" and wrapped around the peeled end of a large stick. You then have to sit over the fire for some time turning the bread on the stick until it is cooked. The bread tasted very good, many of us were surprised how successful it was. It's hot and uncomfortable sitting over the fire, but the bread was worth it.

Kebabs

We made kebabs using our smaller peeled sticks to skewer pieces of lamb and vegetables. We also had salad of watercress and wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*) which David had foraged. Again, we had to hold these over the fire and turn constantly, which was hot, smoky and uncomfortable. The wind kept changing direction, which made things even more uncomfortable. Again it was worth it, the kebabs were very good indeed

Whittling butter knives

We all whittled a butter knife from lime. Green lime wood is soft and easy to whittle. Some of the results looked more like Bowie knives. We all enjoyed this job, I think it could be quite addictive, and is certainly therapeutic.

Hammock/tarpaulin

David showed us how to sling a hammock and a tarpaulin between trees. Some of us got into the hammock. It's very comfortable!

The group were very interested in the knots used for hammocks/tarpaulins.

Firelighting

David showed us various methods of lighting fires, which included:

- fine wire wool with a 9V battery: touch the battery to the wire wool, which ignites instantly
- fire steels, rods of ferrous metals with a steel striker, as used by Ray Mears
- parabolic mirror to focus sunlight (there wasn't any at the time)

He showed us various kinds of tinder and kindling:

- cotton wool balls (light instantly if dry, but don't stay alight for very long, no good if wet)
- cotton wool balls impregnated with Vaseline® petroleum jelly, which stay alight for longer
- old man's beard (*Clematis vitalba*) down [*the downy fruits of this common hedgerow plant*]
- rose-bay willow herb (*Chamerion angustifolium*), again the downy fruits are used
- thistle down
- King Alfred's cakes (a fungus *Daldinia concentrica* which grows on dead ash branches, when dried makes very good tinder material)
see: <http://www.first-nature.com/fungi/daldinia-concentrica.php>
- honeysuckle bark (*Lonicera periclymenum*), the bark of this native species can be peeled off in strips
- charcloth (see David's website, below)
- strips of cardboard impregnated with candle wax

We all had a very enjoyable day, many thanks to David for his time spent with us.

David Willis

David's website is at:

<http://www.davidwillis.info/>

Coming up next

21 March 2017

Snaprails

Surfacing work, rhododendron clearance and willow weaving

Spring flowers

Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) are now fully out. This member of the primula family (*Primulaceae*) is suffering from habitat loss and overpicking, but thankfully is still quite common. We planted primroses and other wildflowers in Domesday Copse on 27 October 2015, with ranger Alison. Next time you're queueing for Twin Bridges Roundabout along the A3095 you should have plenty of time to admire the flowers.

<http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/species/primrose>

What's on

South Hill Park

Community Litter Pick

Thursday 23 March 2017 10:00-11:00

Meet at courtyard in front of SHP reception, Ringmead, Bracknell RG12 7PA

Westmorland Park

Warfield Environment Group

Native Snowdrop Planting

Sunday 19 March at 2.30pm, meet in car park in Westmorland Park

Contact Bracknell Conservation Volunteers

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