

**Headbourne Worthy, Nuns Walk Footpath (FP6 / 701)**  
**Sleeper Bridge Replacement**  
**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2010**



In October last year (2009) the group spent a weekend raising a 40metre section of Nuns Walk beset by flooding. Gravel boards were fitted and eight tonnes of scalping laid and compacted, making a huge improvement to the path.

This month we set about replacing the two sleeper bridges in the same section ...

Planning and preparation for the task was undertaken several months in advance, working closely with Hampshire Paths Partnership; an application to HCC Countryside Access Forum Small Grants Scheme was successful, which together with funds provided by Headbourne Worthy Parish Council covered the cost of materials and equipment.



We started at 10.30am on a chilly winter's day. Seven volunteers arrived, including a young lad on the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

The first task was to shift tools and materials ¼ mile down the path. A newly purchased trolley came in very useful; taking turns to shift eight new sleepers two at a time.

HPP had cut the old sleepers in half the day before; these were used as bearers for the new sleepers. We split into two small teams and after measuring up and marking the position of the bridges with string and pegs we set about with mattocks and spades to dig out the earth – fortunately the ground was very soft, in fact maybe a little too boggy!

The old sleepers were put in place as far apart from the centre of the ditch as possible, at right angles to the top of the bridge, and set deep enough so that the top sleeper would be at ground level. A long straight plank and spirit-level was used to make sure the bearers were level.

Next for each bridge, four sleepers were laid length-wise across the ditch resting on top of the bearers. Using a mallet, pegs were driven into the ground at each corner and secured to both sleeper and bearer with 6inch nails, the exposed tops sawn off. Weld mesh was then stapled on the bridges, with the top wires going across the sleepers. Finally the ground was leveled off at each end, and the bridges and surrounding area were checked to make sure there are no trip hazards or sharp objects.



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**Worthys  
Conservation  
Volunteers**

The job was completed in pretty good time, finishing around 3pm, ... phew, no need to come back the next day! Tools and equipment were loaded into the trolley, and we headed back to our cars.

Materials used:

- Old sleepers, cut in half (acting as bearers)
- Green oak sleepers, qty 8 (4 per bridge) – 206m(l) x 250mm(w) x 125mm(d)
- Pegs, qty eight
- 6inch nails
- Weld-mesh
- Staples

Overall cost of materials for the sleeper bridges and raised section came to £840.

The sleeper bridges and raised-path look **fantastic!** Thanks to Bruce, David, Nick, Jonathan, Wilf, Callum and Morgan for their hard labour, team work and enthusiasm in making sure this was a success.

*Bruce Graham, task leader.* Weather: chilly and dry.