

MICHELDEVER SPOIL HEAPS WALK

Thursday 25th May 2006

Micheldever Spoil Heaps Reserve situated in woodland north of the A303 and not far from Micheldever Station is in the care of The Hampshire Wildlife Trust. It is a unique open-chalk habitat which has developed on the chalk spoil heaps thrown up during the construction of tunnels on the London to Southampton railway line in about 1840. It represents today an unusual example of habitat conservation from which a number of lessons could be drawn for the benefit of tasks undertaken by the WVC.



The weather was remarkably bright and sunny after a number of days of heavy rainfall and cool temperatures, even at 7-00 pm in the evening when the participants arrived. Michael, who is the site manager, opened up and ushered in 5 cars which were carefully parked away from a patch of rare plants which had unfortunately grown in the parking area! One member, who shall be nameless, attempted to drive over them only to skid to a halt when gestured at!!

The group of 10 members (11 if you count Becky's bump) spent about 2 hours touring the site and asking many questions about the conservation strategy, site history and the flora and fauna. It is probably the first time that most participants had experienced a grown man waxing lyrical about the recent appearance of a handful of pin-head sized seedlings in an otherwise barren patch of chalk. It is also just possible that the WVC members finally came to understand Michael's obsessive preoccupation with Dogwood and scrub!! *"...you've got to remove all the roots, and then come back repeatedly until they finally give up the struggle and quietly go away"*. It also explained why his trousers have always got dirty knees!

Everybody seemed to enjoy the evening and although it had cooled down a little by the time we left at about 9-00 pm, all the participants are seen to be smiling in the group photograph (except maybe Matt who had just driven all the way from Kielder in one go to be with us, but even he managed a grin).

Walk leader: Michael Edwards