

**Kings Worthy, Path 502
Worthy Down Halt – Habitat Enhancement
Proposed Task 15th October, 2006**



Task Leader: Michael Edwards

As has been discussed on several occasions Worthy Down Halt includes a fairly unusual dry habitat in which grows an interesting suite of small ground-hugging flowering plants and lichens etc. A recent visit by the BSBI (Botanical Society) recorder has revealed further interesting plants including Sea Mouse-ear (*Cerastium diffusum*), Rue-leaved Saxifrage (*Saxifrage tridactylites*) and Zigzag Clover (*Trifolium medium*). These are of course in addition to the extensive list already circulated, making this an important habitat to preserve.

We have it appears successfully put off the cyclists from further damaging the ashy and very dry area near the Camp fence where these plants flourish, by building a dead-hedge to block their exit from the nearby scrub. However both this area and an equally interesting strip of lichen-covered rail-bed alongside the old platform a little further north, are steadily being encroached on by scrub and principally by our old friend Dogwood as well as isolated Hawthorn bushes etc. This encroachment is also steadily swamping the White Helleborine site atop several ash piles beneath the platform.



The plan is to try to achieve the following:-

1. Remove creeping Dogwood encroachment from Ashy area near fence.

There is also an amount of large dead branches near this area which should also be removed as they can tend to cause an unwanted build-up of dead leaves and eventually soil.

Care must be taken not to drag branches or overly damage the surface when walking about or when digging the Dogwood out.

As usual as many roots as possible should be removed.



2. Remove Dogwood encroachment and several stray Hawthorn bushes from near platform.

The lichen surface is quite fragile and is being severely damaged by the Dogwood, Hawthorn shade and in places by shade from overhanging Sallow and tall Dogwood.

The intention is to work along as much of the platform vicinity as is possible in the time available.

All traces of creeping Dogwood are to be removed whilst judiciously cutting back over-shading branches and also some of the smaller encroaching Hawthorn bushes.



3. Clean up the area on top of the White Helleborine habitat ash-piles.

On our last visit here we cleared much of the suffocating Dogwood. As is usual, further Dogwood has grown and this new encroachment now requires removal.

In removing the roots it important not too damage the ash-pile structure as there are many White Helleborine bulbs within it.

Once again care must be taken with the ash habitat and the ground lichen.

4. Open up along path towards north of platform.

Further along the platform the path is severely narrowed by overhanging Sallow etc. These should be cut back to open up the area and to give “breathing-space” to a very attractive Sweet Chestnut sapling growing on the western side of the path. *See the right side of photo.*

This action is also required to give overhead clearance and side-room for horse-riders and the like along this public bridleway.

Some of the scrubby etc to the right hand side of the path will require “lashing-back” to increase path width and discourage path-wander near to the platform.



5. Open up the area around the principal Liquorice plant site.

The main Liquorice plant site is in danger of swamping by nearby scrub and Dogwood. As much as possible should be cleaned out to provide an open sunny spot for future seedlings. Some overhead clearance will also be required a little further along the side path to the north where the secondary Liquorice plants are situated, both for their welfare and for the safety of walkers.



All scrub and brash removed during the operations is to be removed with as little ground disturbance as possible and used to rebuild the dead hedge at the southern point of the ashy area. Some effort will also be made to remove any more obvious litter and the more dangerous stray concrete work on or near the paths, especially near the “Bike Dips”.

Some of you may wonder at the wholesale removal of Hawthorn, Sallow and Dogwood etc. But please remember we have many such habitats in the area but extremely few dry open ashy habitats harbouring such an interesting collection of flowering plants and ground lichens. The scars of our activities will soon heal over!!

TOOLS:- Mattocks, Bow-saws, Loppers, Spade, Rakes (garden), Secateurs, Lasher, Axe or Chopper, Litter-pickers, Gloves etc.