



Hello Volunteers

Welcome to the Nearly Spring edition (Meteorologically Speaking). Having walked around Rushmere, Stockgrove and Rammamere on Sunday (3rd March) looking for signs of spring for a banner photograph (in the drizzle, I might add) – I have ended up using a picture of the blossom of my flowering cherry tree in my garden. Still working on this newsletter and the Spring Equinox is fast approaching so perhaps “Nearly Spring” should be changed to “Spring”. Anyway, few words on this edition - more a pictorial issue! So, come on people – if you have a contribution, I can promise publication!

In this issue:

Culvert Restoration; Rhodie Bashing in Heron Valley; Local Rainfall Measurements; Bramble Bashing Lord’s Hill and Oak Wood; Volunteers Christmas Task & Lunch.

Culvert Restoration

On Tuesday 30th October the volunteers were tasked with some remedial work on the culvert at the bottom of The Devils Steps/Heartbreak Hill to alleviate the severe drainage problem. Under the leadership of Ranger Gary and after much discussion it was decided that the best we could do for now was to install some deflectors to direct water run-off away from the lowest part. Some investigative digging around the culvert was performed – hence the hole pictured in the first collage to see what else could be done. But the ever-cautious Gary vetoed anything more comprehensive or extensive. Using a few sleeper-type lumps of (new) wood found in the new shed, trenches were dug either side of the culvert and the ground shaped around the wood after being back-filled. We then had time for further discussion on a more permanent solution.



Some additional work around both ends of the culvert was also undertaken involving digging out the supporting wood and the ditch channels along with considerable effort to remove all the sludge from within the pipes. Methods used here included poking through with a large log, various spades and poles and finally using the circular grab on a length of rope to pull through.

We were back the following week (November 6th) with Gary to try and raise the actual culvert pipes to improve the run-through of water draining down the valley. This plan arose out of last week's discussions – but we were only allowed to undertake this task if we could do all the work in one day.



This task involved digging out the pipes, but due the size and weight of each pipe we were unable to lift them out of the trench. Using methods reminiscent of slaves, stones and pyramids (straps and levers) one pipe was rolled on top of the other and then earth filled in the gap left by the vacating pipe. We then rolled the top pipe back on to the newly filled-in earth and rolled the bottom pipe over on the replaced one. Filling in with earth and ensuring we had a slope from one side to the other we back filled the culvert.



The 2 Pictures above taken on December 11th illustrate the culvert is working

Rhodie Bashing in Heron Valley

Wednesday 7th November saw the volunteers tackling some Rhododendron clearance from the steep slope on the far side of Heron Valley towards the culvert (mentioned above) from the visitor's centre. A task that might make some enthusiastic H & S person shudder, especially as there was almost a continuous drizzle making the ground slippery, but we brave adventurous volunteers soldiered on and here are a few pictures of the smiling happy faces and bent backs.



Locally Recorded Rainfall – By Sue & Dave Booth

We have both been GST Volunteer Site Wardens in Linslade Wood for several years, and often receive comments from users about the frequently muddy paths. It is often said that the British are obsessed with the weather, probably because we have such a variety. With climate change forecasts suggesting changes to our weather patterns, we decided to start measuring the local rainfall back in 2012. We live only 5 minutes walk from the wood and at a similar altitude. Here are our findings to date and for interest we have included some other older records we have discovered for comparison.

We recorded these annual rainfall figures at our house located in Linslade at 374 feet (114m) above sea level:

2012	805.9mm	2016	608.0mm
2013	536.3mm	2017	612.0mm
2014	686.5mm	2018	558.5mm
2015	596.8mm	The 7 year average is 629.14mm	

The Met Office 30 year average for 1971 to 2000 was 650mm, for this area.

At Stockgrove House located at 459.3 feet (140m) above sea level they recorded these rainfall figures early last century:

1901	543.3mm	1906	690.88mm
1902	472.2mm	1907	688.34mm
1903	996.2mm	1908	617.98mm
1904	Incomplete Record	1909	749.3mm
1905	541.02mm	The 8 year average was 662.4mm	

Back in the 19th century The Cedars School recorded between 1870 and 1877 an average of 720.6mm located at 300 feet (91.44m) above sea level.

There have been some notable weather events during this period. In August 1879 a thunderstorm swept away the old bridge in Old Linslade Road, and the old Chain Bridge at the bottom of Lake Street. In November 1894 following violent gales and heavy rain over several days The Great Flood occurred which flooded all roads but the road to Brickhill. The bank of the Southcott mill pond burst resulting in 3 feet of water over the railway line between the railway station and the tunnel for a time. While in 1901 and 1902 rainfall was so low that Linslade experienced its water wells drying up. It was still building its first mains water system, and had to pay Leighton Buzzard Council for cartloads of water. The boys of Pulford school recorded just 511.6mm of rain in 1929, with the summer being very dry and December being very wet. However they did record 1.75inches (44.45mm) of rain in one hour during June 1929. Many other events occurred over the years but one that stands out was during Thursday 9th December 1954. Torrential rain started on Wednesday and by the Thursday morning the Ouzel had disappeared under flood water, flooding into the canal, which then flooded into Tiddenfoot Pit. The owners Leighton Brick Co. who were working the pit reported a waterfall thirty to forty feet high roaring into the pit. This did help reduce the flooding of the two towns, although there was extensive flooding all around.

So, the figures all seem to suggest we are getting less rainfall as the years go by, maybe that's climate change, time will tell.

Our monthly rainfall records for Linslade are posted each month on the Friends of Linslade Woods website which Mike Sumpter manages for them. www.linsladewood.info

Bramble Bashing on Lords Hill

On Wednesday 31st October the volunteers performed their favourite task - bramble bashing – here are some pictures. Oh! by the way – you just can't keep some youngsters away from their mobiles even when they are octogenarians!



Bramble Bashing in Oak Wood

Wednesday 21st November



Volunteers Christmas Lunch and Task



The Christmas task (12th December) was to clear more scrub from the New Shire Oak Heath area so while we were working, and a couple of hours before we started, John had built the fire and buried a sack of potatoes (each carefully wrapped in foil) in the ashes.

End Piece

A week later John repeated his culinary skills by providing potatoes and sausages for the Tuesday volunteers and he still had time to relax and catch-up with his personal emails!



Phew! That's caught up with all the photos from 2018 – bye for now!