



## **Hello Volunteers**

**On trying to put together another newsletter after such a long gap from volunteering, inevitably will be a conglomeration of bits and pieces gathered throughout the year since the April issue. I have a few photographs provided by volunteers, taken during their excursions out and about in Rushmere and Stockgrove during lockdown. Also, a few from tasks that were permitted (both Tuesdays and Wednesdays). Some of the photographs are weather affected – I use any excuse – bad light etc. Some tasks were undertaken without any photographic evidence gathered and will remain unreported – Swampy Meadow, Stanbridge Meadow, Apsley Guise, Stockgrove Walkway, Kings Wood, Oak Wood Plateau; Lord's Hill and Shire Oak Heath.**

**The picture above was taken from the track leading to Cuff Lane and shows some of the contrasting autumn colours.**

**In this edition: Rushmere Ramble; Rannamere Ramble; Grass Raking at Stockgrove; Grass Raking at Sandhurst Lane; Graham's Swans and Dragonfly; King Street Meadow Steps; Buzzard Meadow; Some Tuesday Tasks; Stockgrove Swans Update; Derek's Pond Dragon; John's Heath Wood Eyes and Autumn Contrasting Colours.**

**Rushmere Ramble 24th April 2020**

After just a few weeks of not being able to do any volunteering and getting slightly stir crazy and missing my weekly dose of Rushmere and Stockgrove, I decided that a trip round the country estate was a priority! Here are some photographs that capture the essence of the woods in spring.



**Greensand Ridge Walk Footpath**





**Rushmere Bluebells**



**Rushmere Spring Flowers**



**Cuff Lane (meadow needing our attention)**



**Early Butterflies**



**Stockgrove (rather poignant – the car park with no cars)**



**Finally - A Stockgrove Swan**

**Rannamere Ramble 29th April 2020**

**Continuing my ramble around the country estate a week later**



**Rannamere and Braggenham Wood Bluebells**



**and a Stockgrove resident pinching bird seed!**

**Grass Raking at Stockgrove 19th August 2020**

**This day saw the return to some semblance of normality and the first volunteering task since the aborted one on the plateau in Oak Wood on March 11th; and to the delight of all – the task was raking! Here is a selection of photographs of the “happy to be back” rain-soaked volunteers doing what they do best.**



**A week later, on 26th August saw us at Sandhurst Lane Nature Reserve doing the same thing! Here we all are waiting to be issued with our own tools – loppers & bow saws!**



But that's not all, over the coming weeks we were given a bag to put them in, a metal water bottle; protective goggles if you wanted them; gloves and last of all – a hard hat; all because of covid-19!

Early June 2020 – Photographs by Graham Legge

How does the song go – “7 swans a swimming” – Ok if Dad's not there!



2 more from Graham's collection

**Wednesday 23rd September 2020 – King Street Meadow River Platform**

This task had been under discussion for some time after doing some running repairs last year. The decision was made, and the A-Team were sent in. The rest of the Wednesday group were working in the Avery's Nature Reserve just up Plantation Road – raking grass and cutting back. After some discussion on where to start on the steps, we started by digging out the old wood while Derek was let loose with the strimmer on the steep bank beside the steps and in the fenced-in portion between the steps and the bridge. New steps were cut into the bank and boards marked out. Stakes were driven in to support the boards and some earth back filled. The task would take longer than the time we had, and the team returned the following Tuesday to finish the job. Because of the need to work 2 metres apart some of us spent some of the time raking grass on the meadow (cut previously).



As well as repairing the steps the platform boards were checked, cleaned and repaired where necessary, which included new mesh chicken wire on the surface.





**Not long after finishing this task – the platform was underwater and the steps too wet to finish off with hardcore surfacing!**



**Song and Dance Ranger singing – yes! You guessed it – “I’m singing in the rain”**

**Wednesday 30th September 2020 – Buzzard Meadow**

Just for a change we did some more raking - this time in the small fenced-off Buzzard Meadow that sits at the end of Heron Valley and below the main road up to the Visitor Centre. The grass was damp which made its gathering heavy – especially when you need to lift the grab bags over the fence to dump the spoil in the conifer trees beside the meadow.



During the lockdown the Visitor Centre had some new bench tables installed



**Tuesday Tasks 13th, 20th & 27th October 2020**

Whilst Alan finished cutting and recutting the banks either side of the road by the Lower Meadow at Rushmere we did some more raking (13th) and the following week (20th) we were in Stockgrove, in Boathouse valley pulling bramble and birch in between the heather. This task was continued on next Tuesday (27th).



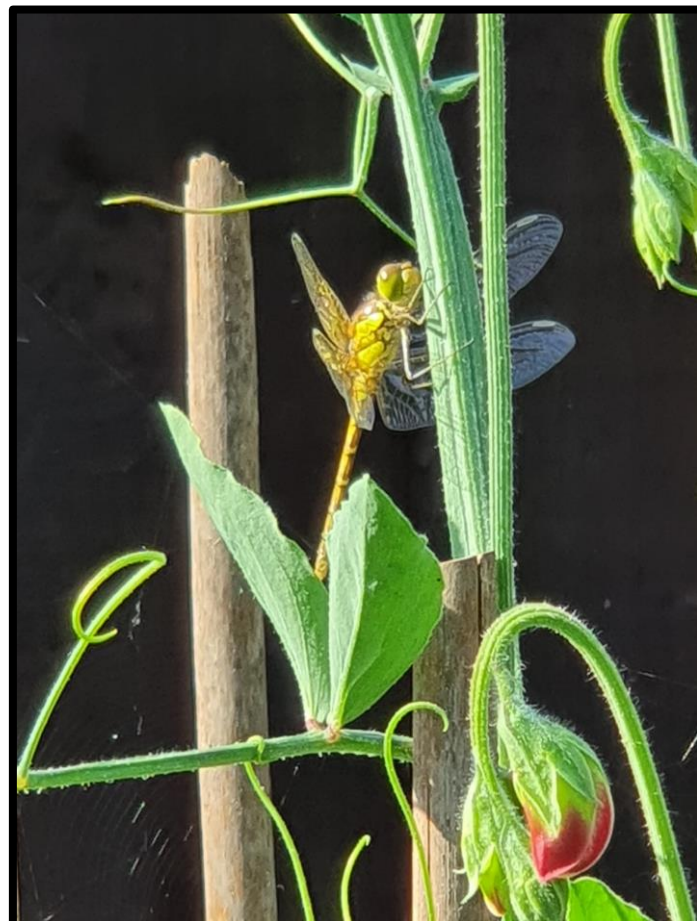
And the task on Tuesday 24th November, more cutting and raking with a volunteer or 2 trimming the blackthorn hedge on the Stockgrove House Meadow



**Below is an update on the swans with photographs taken 10th October before, sadly, we lost 2 signets due to (we suspect) lead poisoning.**



**Derek Gower took the photograph (30th June) below and commented “This emerged from our pond the other day. I think it might be a female ruddy darter but not certain.”**



**Tuesday 1st December 2020**

During the lockdowns, and in between, Rushmere and Stockgrove saw their car parks stretched to the maximum. And although this was probably good for the Trust's coffers the parking habits of some thoughtless visitors saw the rangers pulling their hair out. The area set aside for horse boxes etc became unmanageable at times and it was decided that measures were needed to prevent cars parking across recognised footpaths and tracks. The A-Team, using Ranger Gary's design set about putting in rustic fencing and posts to keep the footpaths clear



**Autumn Contrasting Colours**



**And finally, a photograph from John Pask**

**Taken during the Heath Wood Holly Bash Task on 2nd October 2020**



**Here's Lookin' at you kid!**

**(Is this vandalism or a Banksy wannabe?)**

**Happy Christmas and New Year to all Greensand Rangers,  
Office Staff and Volunteers!**

**Remember - Photographs from other vols always welcome – this is not the Mike  
Sumpter's Newsletter!**