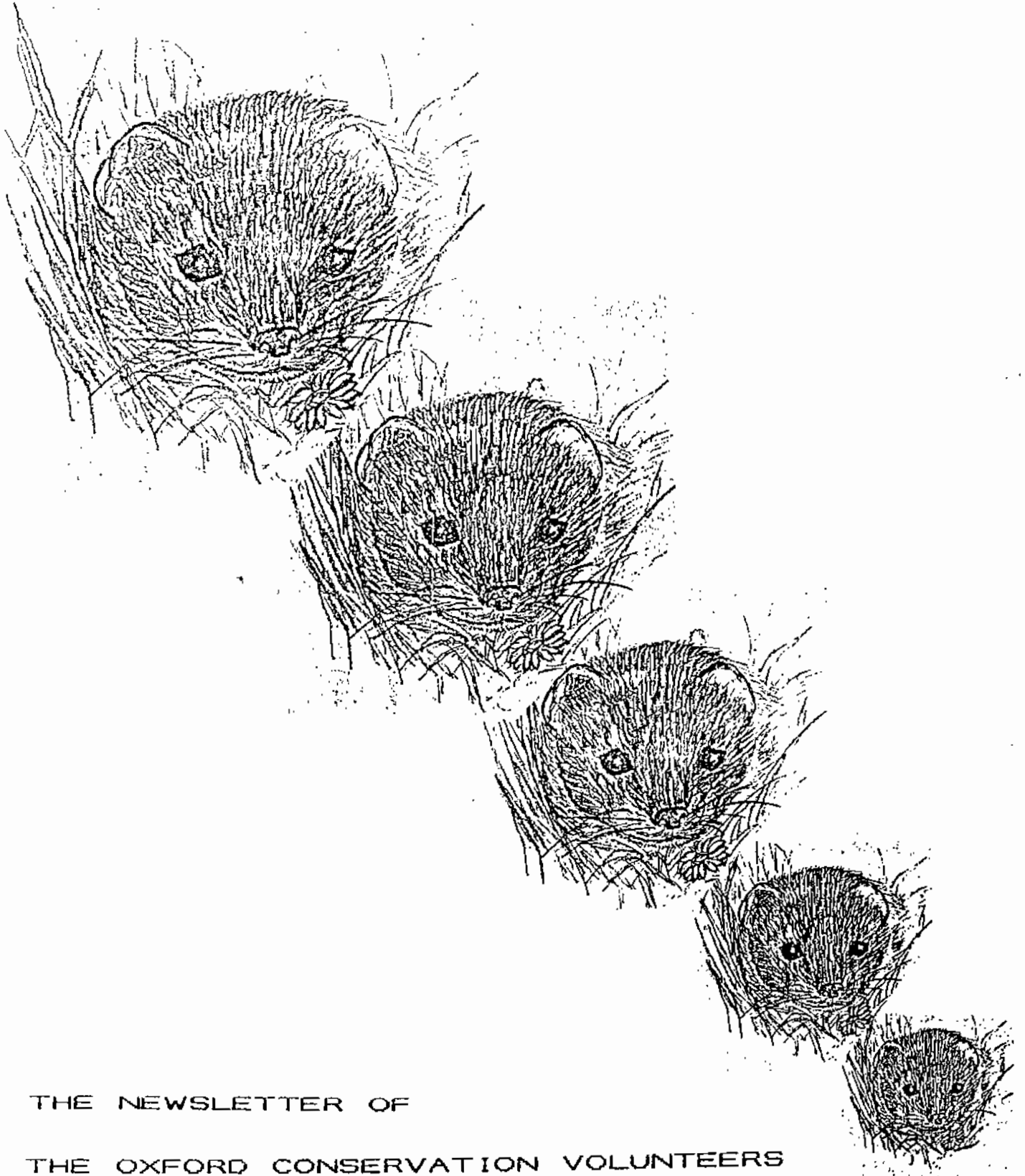


THE

WEASEL

JUNE 1991



THE NEWSLETTER OF

THE OXFORD CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

THE OXFORD CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

The Oxford Conservation Volunteers (the OCV) is a voluntary group which, since 1977, has been involved with conservation of the wildlife and traditional landscape of the Oxford area. The group organises work parties (tasks) most weekends and covers a wide range of nature conservation work. This can range from maintaining the woodland habitat of the rare Black Hairstreak butterfly to clearing rubbish filled ditches in urban Oxford; from laying traditional Cotswold hedges to digging out silted ponds and from continuing ancient coppice cycles to planting new trees. Work is carried out for a variety of organisations (user bodies) such as local authorities, local and national conservation trusts and private individuals. The group is one of over a hundred local conservation groups affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV).

WHO'S WHO IN THE OCV

	<u>since AGM 9 May 1991</u>	<u>prior to AGM</u>
Chairperson	Kim Polgreen	Kim Polgreen
Deputy Chairperson	no post	Andy Norman
Secretary	Lynne Doy	Bob Wyatt
Task Programmer	Colin Pulham	Steve Gamble
Treasurer	Roger Heath-Brown	Roger Heath-Brown
Fundraising	Roger Heath-Brown/Helen Dignum	Roger Heath-Brown
Publicity	Jo Goode, Mike Slater, Bob Wyatt Andy Norman, Gavin Kennerley	Steve Barlow, Paul Hatcher Andy Ward, Andy Norman
Van officer	Robin Dale	Robin Dale
Tools officer	Andy Norman/Mark Squires	Andy Norman
Training Officer	(Kim Polgreen)	Lynne Doy
Librarian	Anita Unwin	Anita Unwin
Social programmer	Anita Unwin	Anita Unwin
Weasel Editor	Steve Unwin	Lynne Doy/Emma Durham

Contacts:

Colin Pulham (Oxford 272672), Anita Unwin (Oxford 841062), Steve Gamble (Oxford 249658)

INFORMATION FOR NEW OR INTENDING VOLUNTEERS

You do not have to join the OCV to come out on a task for the first time; simply come along to one of the pick-up points on a Sunday morning and look out for a small group of other volunteers waiting for the minibus (they're usually scruffily dressed so shouldn't be hard to find!). You don't have to book in advance but if you want to check the details, telephone one of the Contacts listed above.

The minibus leaves from opposite Tesco's on the Cowley Road at 9.20 am sharp, and from outside the Lamb and Flag pub in St.Giles' at 9.30 am. If you intend making your own way to the task, please telephone to check that the task hasn't been changed and to arrange where to meet.

You should wear old clothes with stout boots or wellingtons and bring waterproofs and gloves (if you have them). You will also need a packed lunch; we stop for about an hour at lunch time at the worksite and tea and coffee are provided (and chocolate hob-nobs if you're lucky!). We usually return to Oxford by around 5.30 pm. You don't need rippling muscles or any previous experience. Tools and instruction are provided on task.

We have an annual membership fee of £2 which we ask you to pay when you've been out a couple of times if you decide you would like to join the group. This ensures that task programs and copies of the Weasel are sent to you (free of charge) and entitles you to apply for a subsidy on various training courses. It also entitles you to have a say (and to volunteer to help) in the running of the group.

SOCIAL DIARY

- Thursday 25 June Cherwell treasure hunt (for the Trophy). Pick-up 6.15 pm at the Lamb and Flag or meet at Banbury Cinema at 7 pm
- Monday 1 July Clearing up BBONT drive, meet at toolstore 9.30 am
- Tuesday 2 July Business meeting, 8 pm Friends meeting house St.Giles
- Thursday 4 July Five-a-side football, 6.30 pm Christchurch sports ground Ifley Rd
- Tuesday 9 July Site visit - Little Wittenham, meet 6.15 pm at the Plain
- Tuesday 16 July Business meeting, 8 pm Friends meeting house St.Giles
- Sunday 21 July Bar-B-q, croquet & boules at Maz's: Apple Tree House, 2 Boults Lane, Old Marston 7 pm. Bring your own flesh and booze (or veg if you're a veggie)
- Tuesday 23 July Site visit to the Chilterns
- Tuesday 30 July Theatre/cinema visit - contact Anita for details
- Tuesday 6 August Business meeting 8 pm at Ruskin College
- Tuesday 13 August Punting. Meet 6.15 pm at Cherwell Boathouse. Bring your own drink and food for shared picnic.
- Tuesday 20 August Business meeting 8 pm at Linacre College
- Tuesday 27 August Rounders on Port Meadow. Meet Walton Well Rd entrance 6.15 pm
- Sunday 1 Sept After Task supper at Nikki's 8 pm 63 (?) Statford Street.
- Tuesday 3 Sept Business meeting, 8 pm Friends meeting house St.Giles
- Tuesday 10 Sept Bicycle picnic, meet 6.15 pm at The Plain. Bring your own drink and food for a shared picnic
- Tuesday 17 Sept Business meeting, 8 pm Friends meeting house St.Giles
- Tuesday 24 Sept Pub Crawl, meet 8 pm at The Nag's Head
- Sunday 29 Sept After Task supper at Steve and Anita's, 2 North Street, Islip, 8 pm. Meet 7.20 pm at Tesco's or 7.30 pm at the Lamb and Flag for minibus pick-up

If anyone has any special requests or good ideas for the next social program, please let Anita know (Tel Oxford 841062).



All you social conservers, don't forget to go out on task as well!

Chairperson's letter

Hi - it's me again, back for another stint in the chair, with lots of new faces amongst the old stalwarts to help run OCV.

The AGM was a great success: well attended, the main business of the evening being easily despatched, and leading on to a very lively and fruitful discussion on the direction in which the group is going. The decision to draft a constitution arose mainly from my trying to find a copy of an existing one of which some of the longer standing members claimed to have a vague memory. I turned up no evidence of its existence and having organised the AGM without one it seemed that to lay down some guidelines as to how such things were done would be useful. It was generally felt that we are now a large group, are holding significant assets, are dealing with professional bodies (potentially more so if we extend our fund-raising activities) and therefore need a written statement of our aims and objectives, of how the group is run, and our responsibilities in terms of insurance etc. or in the event of dissolution. A draft will be presented to a meeting when completed.

One of the points to be in the constitution will be the intent to have an operational plan of our longer term aims to be reviewed from time to time. The kind of thing this might include may be a commitment to a scheme suggested at the local groups forum that we get involved in a joint, long-term project, similar to the way in which OCV is currently involved in the management of several the reserves that we work on. It has been suggested that the network of footpaths that link the various reserves round the edge of Otmoor could be opened up to greater public access. Such a scheme could possibly help the objective of the Local Groups Forum, which at present only actively includes the OCV, RAT, Vale, and Cherwell groups, to forge links between all fourteen of the groups affiliated to BTCV in Oxfordshire. (Since we won the cricket, OCV is looking for fresh blood!) To this end the local groups newsletter is to be revamped. On the subject of the Forum, perhaps I should remind people that the joint training fund that we all contribute to will cover a third of the cost of training courses for local group members.

Looking over the past three months, OCV has had surprisingly high turnouts for the time of year with quite a lot of newer faces turning into regulars. The work has been mainly construction: improving access to sites with stiles, steps, and bridges, and putting up stock-proof fencing on reserves where hay meadows will be grazed after the July/August cut. We did however get into waders and water (mostly mud) on a satisfying number of occasions (see Colin for details). All this enthusiasm has been channelled into OCV presence on most of Maz's recent training courses, and a record presence at the National Local Groups Conference in Cheshire in April, which was great fun and from which we got a lot of new ideas to help our group.

The next three months will see the joint tasks: Ragwort pulling, and grass cutting on Iffley Island, as well as the long Resi. on the Isle of Wight. Please get your name to me early for the latter. And if you are burning to get more involved the publicity committee is always looking for people-power, and there are lots of fun and exciting social events coming up. Who cares if it rains all summer?

See you around,
Kim

THE WEASEL

The Weasel has been going almost since the OCV was founded (in 1977). I've been trying to track down the 'official' collection of Weasels which is rumoured to exist but so far with no luck. Please could everyone, especially past and present Chairpersons and Weasel editors, check that they haven't got a musty box of archives lurking somewhere which might contain this elusive collection!

Assuming that we can't find an existing collection, I would like to try to put together as complete a collection as possible (preferably of originals as some editions are too faint to photocopy well). We have already located quite a few but there are a number missing and we need duplicates of most editions. Could everyone please look out their own collections and let me know if you have any of the missing issues or have any duplicates so we can build up a new official collection.

The copies found so far are listed below and we would be particularly interested to locate copies of any Weasels falling in the gaps indicated '-- ? --'. There have been a number of gaps when no Weasel was issued and they haven't always been issued at 3 month intervals. To add to the confusion some editions are not dated (although the date can usually be deduced from the contents)!

LIST OF WEASELS LOCATED SO FAR (JUNE 1991)

-- ? --

March 1979 (the earliest we've found so far).....duplicate required

(no Weasels apparently issued between March 1979 and June 1980)

June 1980.....duplicate required

-- ? --

June 1982 (Weasel revived after a gap).....duplicate required

-- ? --

January 1983

-- ? --

June 1983 ? (undated) weasel cycling in Bernwood on cover!.....duplicate required

October 1983

February 1984

-- ? --

June 1984 ? (undated) cover lists 'Features'

October 1984

-- ? --

June 1985

-- ? --

June 1986.....duplicate required

-- ? --

December 1986.....duplicate required

Spring 1987.....duplicate required

-- ? --

October 1987.....duplicate required

January 1988.....duplicate required

Spring 1988.....duplicate required

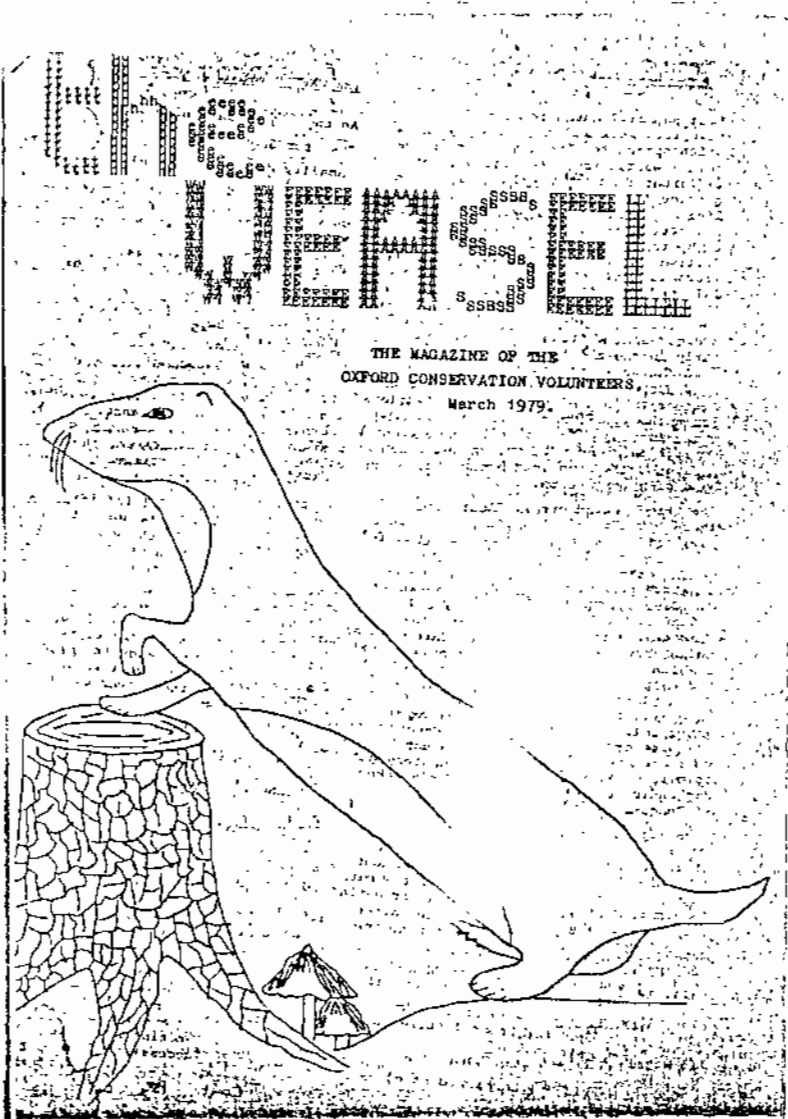
Summer 1988.....duplicate required

Autumn 1988.....	duplicate required
Winter 1988.....	duplicate required
Spring 1989.....	duplicate required
Summer 1989.....	duplicate required
Autumn 1989.....	duplicate required
-- ? --	
Spring 1990.....	duplicate required
Summer 1990.....	duplicate required
Autumn 1990.....	duplicate required
Winter 1990-91.....	duplicate required
Spring 1991.....	duplicate required

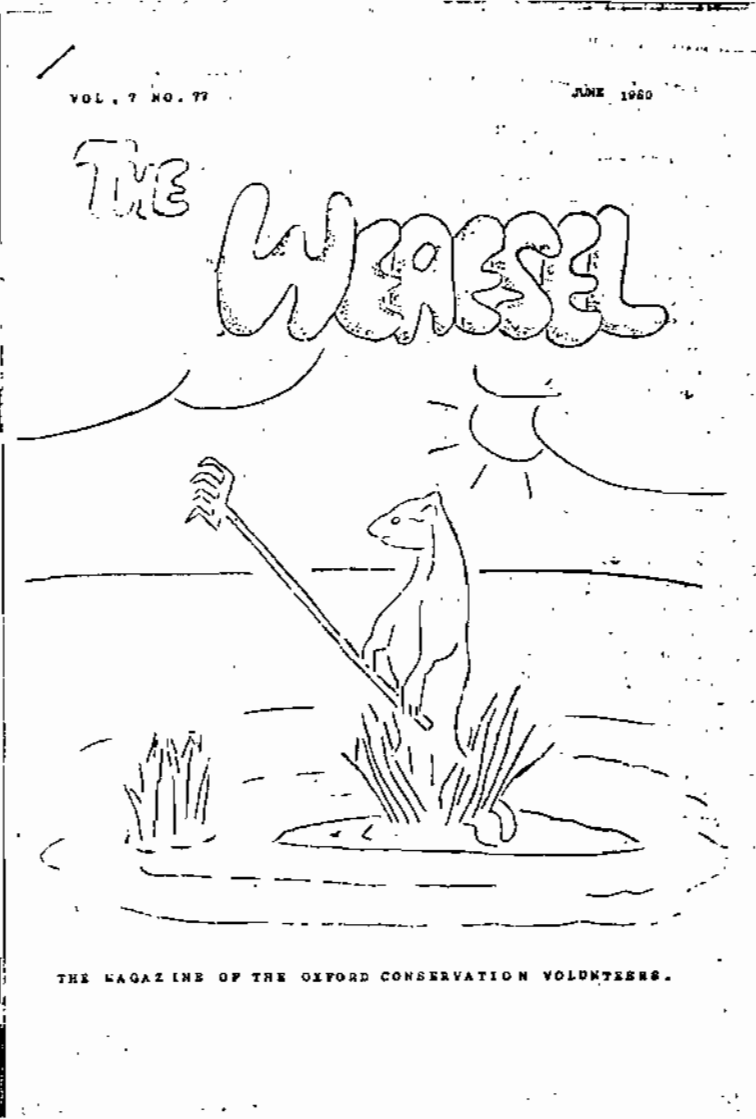
WEASEL COVERS

Following on from the above, I thought it might be interesting to publish some of the earlier Weasel covers as there have been quite a few variations and some inspired designs. Pictures of weasel have been a recurring theme (not surprisingly!) but these have come in all shapes and sizes, from drawings of a variety of other animals and birds masquerading as weasels.

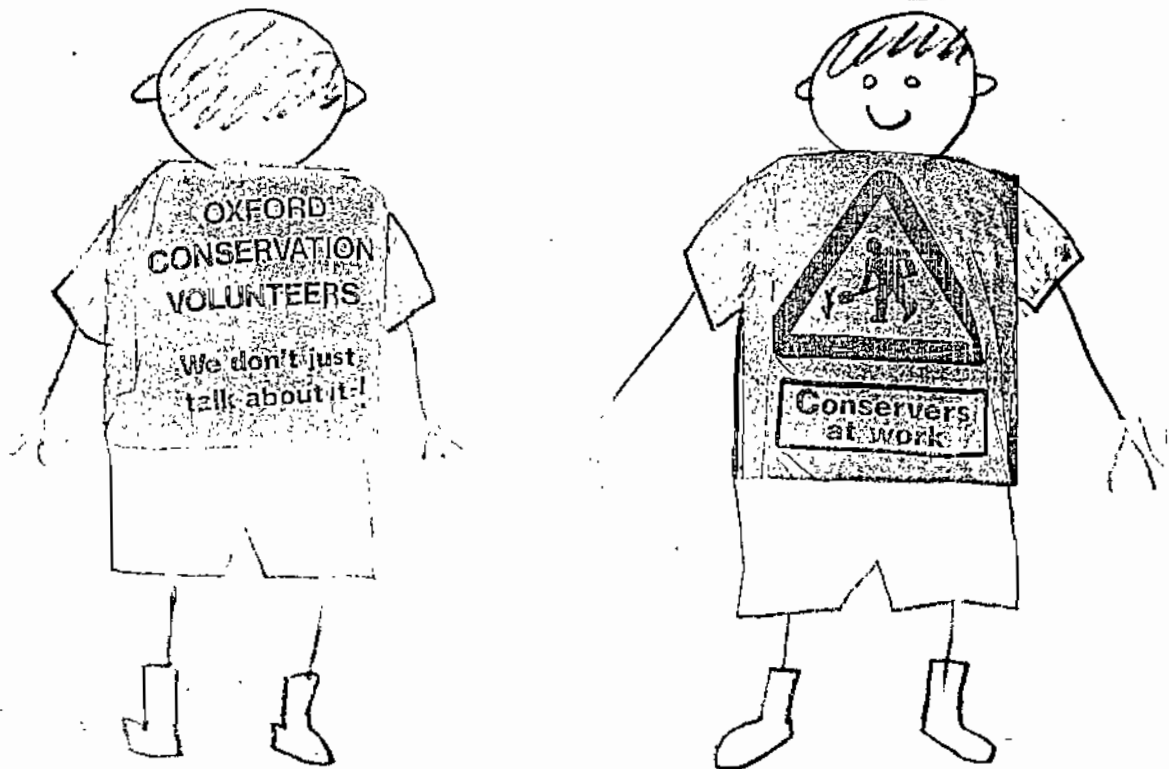
I'll start with the oldest ones not only because this is logical but because they include some of the most imaginative (mostly due to John Gorrill who was editor at the time). I've prepared the cover of this edition of the Weasel using a drawing by Victoria Clare. However, if you fancy trying your hand at Weasel drawing and/or cover design, read on ...



THE MAGAZINE OF THE
OXFORD CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS
March 1979.



THE MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS.



Cricket Match OCV v. the Vale (2.6.91)

Cotteslowe Park 2 p.m. start
Toss won by: Mark Davies (Vale)

Cricket was not the ideal sport on a dull, oh alright, downright miserable afternoon, but this did not deter twenty two cricketers and Roger from attending. The Cotteslowe wickets may not be as fast and true as those of Sabana Park, but a decent score was amassed by the Vale openers despite some brave OCV fielding.

It was however in our first innings that our cricket talents truly flourished. A brief calypso innings by yours truly set us off well, but it was Brian who pushed the total along. Without doubt the star of the innings was Steve, 'I get kicked off all cricket teams' Gamble, who was forced to retire because he was too good for the Vale. After eleven overs we had a 25 run lead.

Conservation cricket is possibly the only sport in which beer consumption is compulsory. Given the way we maintain the Gardeners Arms profits, it is perhaps not surprising that our fielding performance improved radically for the second Vale innings. Indeed, we only needed nine runs to defeat the Vale. Perhaps this monumental victory will inspire an editorial comment, as did England's win over the West Indies in the daily papers.

Thanks to all those that turned up, got cold and wet, and still won. The next "sporting" event is a 5 a-side football (see social Diary), so sharpen those studs, dust off the clichés, and we'll definitely beat the wallys this time.

Mark Squires.

N.B. For those who are unaware of football clichés, Marky's Cliché Clinic will be held at the Gardeners Arms, from 9 p.m. onwards, all Sundays.

As I know next to nothing about cricket (although I did manage to score 2 runs), and have not been reading the papers recently, I'm afraid I can't really provide any intelligent editorial comment other than to say that Roger obviously did a very good job with the scoring! - Ed.

Asham Meads - an adopted reserve.

Asham Meads is one of three reserves that the DCV has 'adopted' in recent years. The practical effect of this adoption is the concentrating of tasks and the spending of some of the DCVs' hard-earned cash on particular projects on the reserve over a number of years. So what is the reserve, and to what use have this time and money been put?

The meads comprise nearly sixty acres of ancient hay-meadow lying on the eastern edge of Otmoor. For many centuries they have been managed as farmland, with a hay crop taken off sometime around July and cattle put on to graze the regrowing grass in autumn or winter. Apart from an occasional load of manure or a going-over with a harrow, nothing else has been done to them and they have developed a rich community of grasses and flowers with butterflies and bees prominent among the insects feeding on them.

Before the second world war, most of our hay-meadows would have looked something like this. But agricultural intensification; the move to grain crops, drainage, artificial fertilisers and herbicides, and the change from hay to silage, have combined to reduce their area to something like 1% of what there was fifty years ago.

Because of the scarcity of these meadows, and because, particularly, of the range of plants found on it, Asham was designated an SSSI (site of special scientific interest) by the then Nature Conservancy Council. To appreciate it at its best, a visit in June or early July is called for, when flowers like Ladies Bedstraw, Sneezewort, Devils-bit Scabious and Dyers Greenweed are at their peak

Obviously, the DCV can neither make the hay nor graze the grass, but there still remains much to be done. About half the reserve is bounded by old hedges which are no longer stock-proof. Indeed, in places they look more like scrapyards, with old bedsteads, sheets of galvanised iron and loops of rusty barbed-wire bunged-in to try and fill the gaps. Where the hedge is still reasonably thick, we have been laying it in the traditional manner to make a good stock barrier again. Where it has been in worse condition, we are coppicing it down and replanting with young hawthorn, so that the combination of coppice regrowth and new plants forms a strong new hedge for laying in the future. Over the past two winters we have laid about a quarter of a mile and coppiced nearly two hundred yards on the western and northern boundaries.

The other major job, mostly carried out over the summer, has been the construction of two small footbridges on the public right-of-way and the rebuilding of the post and rail fence around the car park. Provision of visitor access is a very important, but often neglected, feature of reserve management, and the DCVs' financial contribution to the cost of materials has been vital to the progress of this side of the work.

Although the footpath and fencing work is now nearly complete, the hedging will take up several more winters and future summers may see us moving on to pond management or even pond creation. In another ten years or so the first of the laid hedges will be ready for relaying, and the work will have come full cycle.

Brian Williamson

FROM
OUT
OF THE
GUTTER
COMES...



THE CYCLING CAMPAIGN FOR OXFORD

Cycling is quick, cheap, clean, quiet, efficient and invigorating. Did you remember to keep this in mind the last time you were nearly killed on your bike? Oxford cyclists are confronted with congestion, illegal parking, potholed roads and occasionally murderous road layout. A huge number of would-be cyclists are put off by these conditions.

It doesn't have to be like this. Many European cities have comprehensive networks of cycle routes, with private vehicles strongly discouraged from using unsuitable streets. Oxford is to be designated a 'Cycling City': CYCLOX is to make a reality of this ideal.

Specifically, we intend to:

- Ensure that the proportion of roadspace and transport funding allocated to cyclists reflects the importance of cycling in Oxford.
- Improve the safety of cycling in Oxford, by pressing for enforcement of current traffic regulations, protection of cyclists from vehicular traffic wherever possible, and greater traffic restraint and calming.
- Promote cycling as an essential part of the solution to Oxford's transport problems.
- Promote cycling as a healthy and enjoyable pastime in its own right.

If you want to support us, become a member of CYCLOX. If you want to get really stuck in, come along to one of our campaign meetings - these are held at 8:00 pm on the first Thursday of each month at the East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford OX4 1DD. Tel. 794577.

CYCLOX contact: Mark Davies (Tel: Oxford 726615)

Discounts are available to members of Cyclox at a number of bike shops :

10% at Harper's, Pennyfarthing, Cycle King, Beehive, Unibike and Broadribs
5% at Walton Street Cycles and Bicycles



THE CYCLING CAMPAIGN FOR OXFORD

ONE-LINERS

This is a new section of the Weasel for quotes from tasks, excuses for not providing a Weasel article or just about anything which is likely to amuse and/or embarrass. Contributions may be submitted anonymously but the editor reserves the right to omit (or add) anything he considers necessary to maintain standards!

To kick off, we have a number of answers to the question 'WHY DID YOU JOIN THE OCV?'

ANSWERS:

- * To get some fresh air and to do something positive for nature conservation and to meet like minded people.
- * To get muddy in places where I've never been muddy before!
- * So I could dress up in kinky rubber gear without being branded a pervert (well, not much of one)!
- * To get out into the countryside, do practical conservation work and to meet members of the opposite sex (but not necessarily in that order)!
- * To save pretty flowers and little furry creatures
- * To tend mother nature's garden, care for Gaia's health and welfare, to meet interesting birdwatchers (contradiction in terms? - Ed) and because I (mistakenly) believed I'd meet some fit lasses.
- * To see if it was true that the RATs did all the best tasks (it isn't).
- * So I could get p.**.d at Bix Bottom.
- * Because its such wonderful fun riding in the back of the OCV minibus.
- * To meet other bird watchers (not another one! - Ed)
- * To mutilate innocent trees and indulge my megalomania.

All the above were provided anonymously! I wonder why?

Some late extras:

Overheard in pub: There's only so much information you can store in your underpants (apparently this had something to do with cheating in exams!)

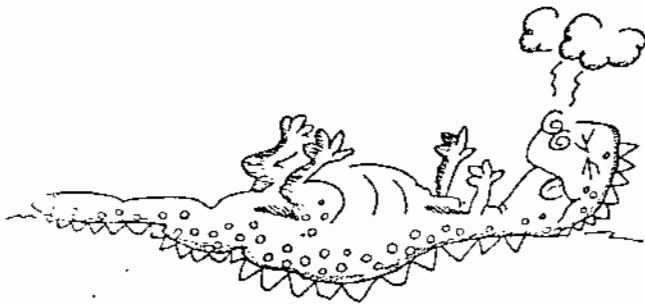
In another pub (near Bix Bottom), an enquiry (by a young lady) as to why Newcastle Brown was not sold met with the response that there was no call for it - and that you need to go to a working mens club to find some!

At a recent OCV meeting, the question was asked whether the secretary's box had been handed over to the new secretary. Someone asked whether this was the one he had worn at the cricket match!

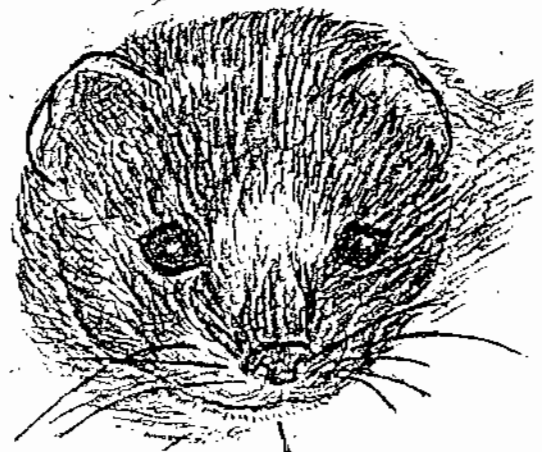
WHAT DO YOU CALL A DINOSAUR WITH ONE EYE? ANSWER: D'YERTHINKYSAURUS !
(This joke is repeated courtesy of Nikki and several bottles of Pils)



SMOKING



... the real reason that
dinosaurs became extinct?



THIS IS ONE
PEL OF A
WHEEZE!

WHAT THE TREASURER DOES

The OCV spent £3879 last year. Running the minibus cost £647, printing our programmes and Weasels accounted for £467, and materials (fence posts, trees to plant etc.) for our adopted reserves came to £816. Other expenses include tools, insurance, and training subsidies. The treasurer's jobs are principally to keep track of all this expenditure and, not least, to find the matching income.

We charge our "user bodies" for a proportion of our costs, bringing in some £1266 last year. Our other two big sources of income are the Countryside Commission, which meets 35% of many of our expenditure items, for a total of £1056 last year, and other grant giving bodies, such as the Oxford City and County Councils and the Oxford Preservation Trust, who contributed £1025 in total.

Overall the books just balance. We have a minibus replacement fund of £4000 set aside, but that has remained static for the past few years, so there is nothing left for expanding our work on adopted reserves, for example. Thus, in addition to the day to day business of writing cheques and dispatching bills, the treasurer, along with the fundraiser, is concerned with money raising schemes. We are currently sending out begging letters to a number of grant giving trusts in the hope of improving our financial situation. A sound financial base will ensure that the OCV can continue and expand its work in the years to come.

Roger Heath-Brown.

WILD FOOD

If you've any recipes which you'd like to share with the rest of us, please send them to the editor.

This month's it's Elderflower Champagne which we successfully made last year (hic). It's now the right time to collect Elderflowers so get out there and give it a go. One beauty of this recipe is that it's ready within a few days and needs to be consumed quickly otherwise the bottles tend to explode! Seriously, though, do NOT put it into ordinary glass or even cider bottles - they will explode with potentially very nasty consequences. Stick to proper beer bottles or plastic containers.

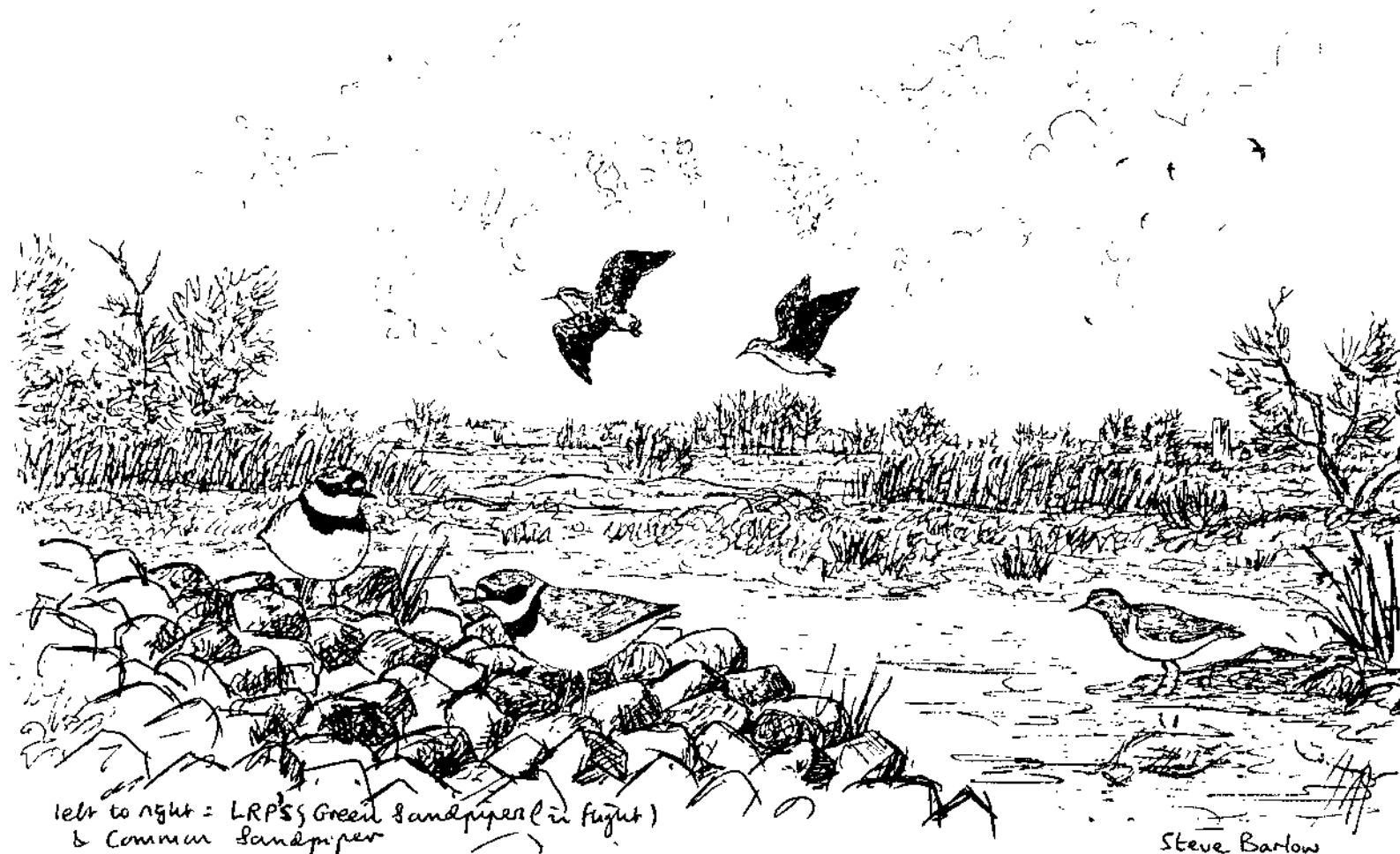
Ingredients:

4 elderflower heads in full bloom (preferably picked on a sunny day)
1 gallon of cold water
1 lemon
1½lbs sugar
2 tablespoons of white vinegar

Dissolve the sugar in a little warm water and allow to cool. Squeeze lemon and cut rind into pieces. Put the juice, rind, sugar solution and the elderflowers into a large container and add the vinegar and the rest of the cold water. Leave to 'steep' for 4 days (you may get some mould on the top but this doesn't seem to matter). Strain off the liquid and bottle. It should be ready in 6 - 10 days but check after no more than 6 days to make sure its not too fizzy.

It really is very simple and ideal for drinking on summer picnics!

Steve Unwin (hic)



left to right = LRP's, Green Sandpiper (in flight)
& Common Sandpiper

Steve Barlow

THE CONSERVATION VALUE OF THE RECENT OCV TASK AT PINKHILL MEADOW

On the 14 April the OCV had an unusual task at Pinkhill Meadow. This involved digging up *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed) from one side of the Thames, transporting them across by boat, and planting them in a pool on the other side. What, you might wonder, was the point?

Farmoor reservoir is good for birds. Various ducks winter in large numbers and Common Terns breed. But it lacks mud, which severely limits its attractiveness to waders. Besides being an essential fashion item for every OCV fetishist, waders are also a group of birds, well known examples including Curlew and Oystercatcher. Waders generally have longish legs and (with certain deviant exceptions) require muddy places to feed on invertebrates. Some run around, picking food from mud surfaces (e.g. = Plovers), some probe the mud with their beaks (e.g. = Pintail), and still others sweep around in the water (e.g. = Avocet).

Various species pass over Farmoor on their spring and/or autumn migrations and are often attracted down by the mud. However, its usefulness as a bird "service station" is limited by its rather unproceedable concrete shore, so their visits are often brief.

Hence, last summer Thames Water and the National Rivers Authority, advised by Pond Action, created a "scrape", or shallow pool, between the river and the reservoir. This is cunningly designed to allow water levels to be manipulated, so the area of mud available during migration periods may be optimised. So long as it is prevented from becoming overgrown the scrape should prove attractive to species such as Common and Green Sandpipers, Green Bank, and Ruff.

Gravel islands provide a potential breeding habitat for little-ringed Plover, a wader breeding in Europe and wintering in Africa, but absent from Britain before large-scale gravel extraction provided suitable, if temporary, habitat. A pair of "LRP's" were already investigating the scrape during our task.

A remaining problem was to screen the scrape to avoid disturbance to birds using it by people and dogs on nearby footpaths. This was partly solved by planting a plethora of willow bushes, and by excavating more pools to be planted with reeds.

This is where the OCV came in, our task being to plant an experimental reedbed. Despite being a John Selwyn to get rid of when you don't want it, reed is also difficult to get started, apparently. If the experiment succeeds more will be planted.

In addition to its screening rôle, the reedbed should also provide a useful habitat in its own right. Whilst not rivalling the vast reedbeds of East Anglia with their bearded tits, Bitterns and Marsh Harriers, it should provide nest sites for Reed Bunting and Reed and Sedge Warblers.

Steve Barlow.

Who do you know
who drives like this?



THE OCV 10 YEARS AGO

The idea was to include a relevant article from the corresponding issue of the Weasel from 10 years ago, ie summer 1981. However, as you will appreciate from the article on our collection of Weasels, we haven't managed to locate a copy of the Summer 1981 Weasel. In fact, there probably wasn't one. Just my luck! Instead, I've read through the earliest Weasel we've found so far (March 1979). This contains a variety of (mostly rather peculiar) articles so rather than copy one completely, I'll simply provide a list of the titles and a few extracts to give you the general flavour:

Born to Run - account of BTCV publicity campaign along North East coastal resorts

The Oxford Mystery Plays - an ongoing situationism ...

SCENE I - Hook Norton Railway Cutting

A dark misty landscape in outer space. It is almost pitch black but a faint intermittent line of fence posts can be discerned in the middle distance. The voice of the narrator can just be heard over the clash of blades and the weird distorted shouts, screams and moans of a typical intergalactic task force.

Narrator: Good God! Isn't it pitch black! The weather's absolutely awful! I've never known such awful weather in all my life. It's absolutely terrible. There were two supernovae yesterday. Two.

A stange figure appears in the centre of the stage. A vast, half woman half man, half Huxley, clad in a weird garb of a helmet and metal-tipped boots. In one hand she wields the mighty chain-saw, in the other the treasured symbol of power over the universe, the awesome TOOLSTORE KEY.

(Hiss from audience)

Camality (for it is she): Heh! Heh!

This is said to be continued in the next issue so, if anyone has a copy, please let us know!

The kindest Cut - contrary to expectations (!), this is a fairly innocent article about coppicing.

A drinking person's guide to OCV Tasks - As we're not now allowed to drink alcohol on tasks without invalidating our insurance, I thought I'd better not quote too much from this article. Anyway, it's pretty out of date as it mentions things like the village of Beckley (near Sydlings Copse) having several quaint rural Inns. In fact, it now has only one and that's up for sale! Also, for Bix it says 'As yet untried'. From the one-liners article above, it seems this is no longer the case! (and certainly not after the recent residential!)

Weasels are taking over the World, (along with squirrels, hedgehogs, and bunny rabbits).

Beware! You could be next - Manifesto of the Grand Revolt Paradox Alliance p.6 Vol 11

Speaking in my capacity as a disinterested fruit-eating bat.....

There are 40,000 weasels massed against you

Squirrels have your home in constant view

The black eared rabbit cavalry awaits

We'll conserve you down to the roots of Hell

(Well, I told you some of it was pretty peculiar!!)

The Law as a Conserver - about the Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act

Account of Skittles match with Oxford Friends of the Earth - Oxfoe won and gained a valuable trophy described as 'looking suspiciously like a piece of Cornflake packet covered in silver foil'

The present state of the OCV - account of who was doing what

The BTCV - Nothing changes (or rather things were still constantly changed then as well)

It starts 'Many people get confused with the administrative set-up of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.' !

BBONT - an invitation to join BBONT (annual subscription £3.50 or £1.00 for those in full time education)

A Bridge Too Far - account of footpath building in Scotland.

Conserving in Iceland - three tasks were apparently undertaken: building a wall of lava blocks to shield a warden's house, painting murals on a playground wall (and chasing sheep) and extending a golf course to 18 holes. As they said, these hardly merited description as conservation projects!

Phew! That was a fairly action packed edition. If it gives you any ideas or makes you feel you could do better, please put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and let me have your contribution for the next issue. You never know, someone might be quoting you in 10 years time!

LETTERS

Well, as nobody has sent any letters in yet, I thought I'd contribute some myself:

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Yawn! Well, if you reckon you can do any better, let me know!!

All you new volunteers out there, how about letting us know what your first impressions are, whether complimentary or critical, here's your opportunity to tell us.

If you've been around a bit longer, let us know how it was in the 'good ol' days'.

Has anybody got views on commercial sponsorship? Should we accept donations in return for providing good publicity for businesses? How about offering firms the chance to sponsor an issue of the Weasel in return for some green PR? Whether you're for or against, let us know.

Someone even suggested allowing advertising by 0898 numbers! What do you think?

THE LOCAL GROUP'S CONFERENCE

Go to the local group's conference next year! You're certainly find a nice crowd of like-minded people. You'll learn an enormous amount about local conservation groups and you may even find romance.

This year's gathering of the green welly movement, the BTCV, was at Crewe and Alsager College. Just to prove how much I got from this conference, I'm writing this piece without my notes or any of the literature (mainly because they're still in Maz's minibus - hint, hint.)

The journey up was so uneventful that Colin fell asleep despite travelling with members of the OCV, the Vale of White Horse group and a RAT (Rural Action Team) - what more could you ask for?

When we arrived, the good news was that the beds were wonderfully comfortable and the bad news was that the bar was not properly stocked (and a conservation conference is not complete without a proper range of drinks.)

As well as being the AGM of the BTCV (try saying BTCV ten times in a row without making a mistake - a point raised at the conference), there were also a number of workshops. The workshops were led by conservation workers experienced in that particular aspect of local conservation work. They were usually discussion groups with about twenty delegates. Unfortunately, the sessions were often not long enough to fully explore the subject of the workshop.

My first workshop was on leadership and I was left at the end wondering how anybody could possibly have all the qualities it takes to lead a task. My second session was on management plans. After a brief introduction, we were asked to present management plans for a hypothetical reserve. Each group acted as a different land owner; the RSPB or a furniture maker. The two groups gave totally different ideas, although both were beneficial to wildlife. My last workshop was on local conservation areas and showed how the local people can (and should) be involved in conservation work in their area.

Saturday night was notable for the excessive amount of alcohol (are there any teetotal conservation groups?) I can remember being in a pub in Crewe singing everything from the Animals (a favourite of conservation groups) to Bruce Springsteen; then I was being thrown to the floor by Adrienne from the Vale group during a violent barn dance; then the bop ended early at midnight and we talked for most of the night in one of the accommodation blocks. Outside a very drunk fire juggler was dropping his clubs on his feet.

During the weekend, there were also business meetings for the BTCV and guest speakers. The BTCV meetings included a local area meeting which, for the Midlands area, was largely dominated by Oxfordshire groups! The most memorable guest speaker was a lady from a cult who believe that landowners should have no rights and people every right to free access of all private land. She got a rather stony reception from the delegates, but then again the BTCV were accused of not being political enough.

The tedium of the journey home was lessened by a sports trivia quiz won by Brian and an interesting thigh-slapping game which seems to be catching on during OCV tasks (so, come out on task to discover more.)

MIKE SLATER

WANTED: long thin illustrations, ^{jokes} or cartoons to fill these annoying little gaps

The OCV LIBRARY

The OCV has a small but comprehensive library. Members may borrow any of the books or leaflets for a period of 1 month. The library is present at the Tuesday business meetings.

Listed below are the books/leaflets presently in the library (or green box!).

BTCV Manuals:

Footpaths)	each manual gives detailed
Woodlands)	advice on variety of topics.
The Power Chainsaw)	Very useful for both
Drystone Walling)	volunteers and leaders
Hedging)	
Waterways and Wetlands)	
Fencing)	

Other books:

Know your Conifers -	useful identification guide, both descriptive and pictorial.
Know your Broadleaves -	as above.
Nature conservation in G.B. -	Gives a history of nature conservation + details of various projects.
Wildlife Conservation in Woodlands -	covers aspects of conservation for both fauna and flora.
The Management of Grassland & Heathland in Country Parks -	details a number of projects.
First Aid -	a useful guide for practical first aid.
Farming & Wildlife -	how conservation & farming may work more closely together.
BBONT Nature Reserves -	guide to BBONT reserves.
Oregon -	chain saw maintenance manual.
Save the Village Pond -	(by British Waterfowl Assn and Ford)
Warburg Reserve Species Handbook -	everything you ever wanted to know about Bix

Leaflets:

Variety of NCC leaflets covering such topics as: butterflies, hedges, dragonflies, fens and marshes, lakes, mountain and moorland, tree planting, SSSIs, Aston Rowant, woodlands, ponds and ditches, estuaries, coastal shingle, heathland, chalk grassland and the law.

BTCV leaflets : Why dig ponds?, Why bash scrub?, Why Coppice? and on dry stone walling.

There are also various leaflets on training courses, conservation holidays, copies of Conserver (the BTCV Newsheet) and copies of newsletters and annual reports of other conservation volunteer groups.

Anita Unwin.

OCV A. G. M. THURSDAY, 9TH MAY 1991

This year's AGM was held at Linacre College, courtesy of Kim Polgreen, who was in the chair.

There was a new format for the meeting this year, which helped to separate the formal business from the more general discussion. We also managed to avoid the previous tendency to discuss routine business which should more properly be dealt with at the regular meetings. The formal business of receiving the annual report and accounts and electing a new committee was despatched quickly, therefore, and was followed by an "open forum", in which members were able to review the work of the group and explore ideas for future action.

Probably the most important decision taken was to write a new constitution for the group, as nobody now knows where the old one is, or what was in it. Colin Pulham agreed to set up a working party to draft a new constitution.

It was also proposed that an operational plan should be devised, once the constitution has been accepted. This will be a long-term plan, reviewed annually.

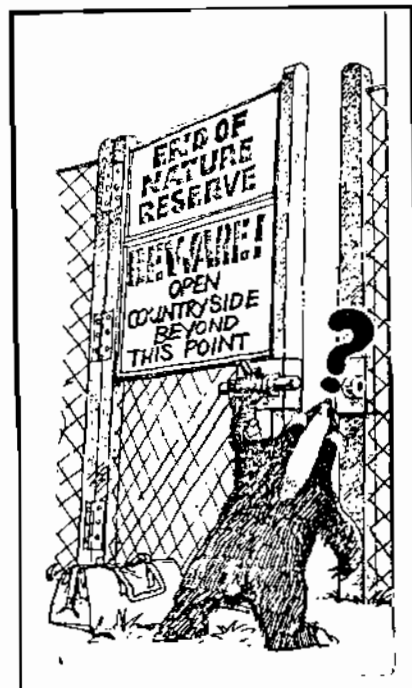
A review of fund-raising practices is also needed, so Roger Heath-Brown and Helen Dignum agreed to do some work on this. There was a discussion on fund-raising methods and agreement that fund-raising activities need to be stepped up, although a major campaign is not necessary for the moment.

Other matters for discussion included publicity, in particular ways of reaching a wider constituency of potential volunteers, and user bodies.

It was an excellent meeting, as we had a chance to discuss important issues which sometimes get neglected at regular business meetings because of the necessity of sorting out short-term matters (leaders, drivers, equipment, etc.). The new constitution and operation plan should allow us to focus our minds on what we think the group should be doing, and how we intend to achieve our aims.

Thanks are due to Kim for chairing the meeting very effectively.

Lynne Doy.



TRAINING COURSES AND OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

- July 5-7 BTCV weekend residential, Chinnor Hill. Scrub bash to reclaim chalk grassland (contact Maz).
- July 6-11 The Sunday Times Environment, Wildlife and Conservation Exhibition at the Grand Hall, Olympia, London.
- July 12-13 The 4th National Organic Wine Fair to be held at Ryton Gardens (the National Centre for Organic Gardening) near Coventry.
- July 13 Green Party Green Fair, Oxford Town Hall 10.30am - 4pm.
- July 20 Possible chalk grassland plant identification day at Chinnor Hill (contact Maz to confirm)
- July 25 Dry stone walling tuition; professional instructor, near Banbury. This is the first day of a Natural Break week, room for a few extra local people to come along for tuition.
- July 26-28 BTCV weekend residential, Hardwick organic farm (Whitchurch). Building steps through woodland to create an eco-trail for visitors (contact Maz).
- Aug 19 Local groups forum, 8pm, East Oxford Community Centre.
- September 6-8 Dry stone walling weekend with professional instructor. This is a BTCV Natural Break: contact Maz for bookings.
- October 12 Tree felling and ropework course: Steve Holdsworth (Cherwell)

Coming up later:

- October ? Chainsaw refresher course
- October 11-13 Basic hedgelaying course, professional instructor.
- October 25-27 Megatask Oxfordshire: clearance and revetment on Thames towpath, beautiful site near Whitchurch.
- November 1-3 Advanced hedgelaying course, professional instructor.

General:

NATURAL BREAK conservation working holidays - all sorts of types of work in all sorts of places. Some are for a week, some for a weekend and some foreign trips are also now available! We have a copy of the summer program 1991 and further details can be obtained from the BTCV (Wallingford (0491) 39766)

BTCV MIDLANDS training program. The present program we have runs until the end of June but it refers to the following forthcoming courses:

- Photography - August
- Brushcutter course - October
- Advanced Hedgelaying - October
- Tree Felling - November

For further details contact Oxfordshire office (ie Maz) on Oxford 810215

The editor would like to thank all those who contributed to this issue of The Weasel and would remind you that contributions for the next issue should be submitted by the beginning of September. All articles are welcome whether handwritten or typed. Drawings or cartoons are also welcome (how about a caption competition?). Please send your contributions to: Steve Unwin, Weasel editor, 2 North Street, Islip, Oxford OX5 2SL.



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