



Sutton Poyntz Biodiversity Group. Water Meadow Restoration 2012 - 13.



The next phase in a long term plan to restore and improve the natural habitat on the Wessex Water land extending from the pumping station up to the spring basin involved clearing back the bramble that had largely taken over the small reed bed north of the meadow behind the pumping station.

This land has a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation which requires all work to be carefully planned, documented and approved by Natural England. The diagram on the left is taken from the management plan that Pete Sheaves and Dave Emery prepared for approval.

Our broad aim was to expose the stream that was almost entirely overgrown by bramble to increase the insect population and boost the number of bats feeding in the area and hopefully to increase the area of the reed bed to encourage breeding of aquatic warblers. We also hope we can encourage the Yellow Flags and other wetland plants to re-establish themselves.

We are currently in discussion with the Environment Agency and Wessex Water about the possibility of building a small dam and sluice to increase the water level slightly to further improve the wetland habitat.



This series of pictures shows Colin wondering where the stream is and then wading into brambles 3m high with a "slasher".



Jack and John creating part of a pathway through one of the denser patches. Eventually trying to meet up with Colin and Richard who they could hear but not see through the undergrowth.



Because of the SSSI designation all the material had to be removed from the meadow for disposal. Bramble is surprisingly heavy, the most effective way is by large fork loads held high enough to avoid snagging when crossing the stream and walking through long grass. Pete and Andrew hard at work. It quickly became apparent that it took longer to clear material off the site than cut it down.



Clearance at the North end of the site was particularly heavy going.



This is just the beginnings of a considerable mountain of bramble. I know Dave is not particularly tall but the final heap most probably weighed several tons.



Another before and after at the Southern end of the meadow. It all looks bleak to start with but will quickly recover with a better mix of species.

The work ran one morning a week from October through to March with a few extra sessions thrown in to make up time lost due to bad weather, Christmas etc. In all about 40 – 50 man days of community volunteer labour was spent on the project. It was certainly the biggest project we have taken on but hugely satisfying and a lot of good natured fun was had. More projects are being planned for the future so if you want to become involved contact Dave Emery or Pete Sheaves.