

Summary

We once again had fine weather, exceptionally mild for the time of year, but we had to contend with extremely muddy conditions. One group planted whips donated by TCV in the bare area of the northern zone. Species included Field Maple, Cherry Plum, Bird Cherry and Rowan. In addition they planted 250 native Bluebell bulbs in the same area. These should flower this spring and but should do better next spring. Depending on results we may extend the experiment.

The remaining volunteers carried out more dead hedging, mainly to refill a gap on the western perimeter that we closed before but has since been opened up again. This time we used more stakes, which were able to be driven deeper in the soft ground. Also some substantial branches were used for filling, and wire was stapled over the top to hold things in place and make dismantling more difficult (see attached photo). It remains to be seen how effective this will be. Five medium-sized Sycamore trees were felled and used for the dead hedge, and also to plug a gap a little further north. David transported some stones to some of the many muddy areas of the paths.

The consensus was that the paths were muddier than we have ever known them before, and clearly the ground must have been still saturated from rain in recent weeks so that rain the previous night had nowhere to go. Even a stretch of path on the western side that we believe has never been treated with wood chip was in a terrible condition, so wood chip spreading is not entirely to blame. The path up the hill from Peveril Drive was also extremely slippery and we had great difficulty getting the laden barrows up there.