

Friends of Sharphill Wood Work Party 27th March 2011

It was a funny day today – not only was it Census Day, but the clocks went forward by an hour, marking the beginning of Spring and light nights. There were 10 of us today, not including 2 children and 3 dogs, so nobody seems to have slept in! This included someone who was involved very early on in the Friends' history and he is very welcome back.

Our main task was continuing the work started by BTCV of reinforcing the hedge down the west side of the Wood, to ensure that people use the rights of way, and the three official entrances. There are several unofficial entrances. The work had to be done without blocking off the routes that the badgers use at night when out to forage and do other things in the fields. Apparently if one of their routes is blocked, they will beaver away at it all night (if that's not an inappropriate metaphor) until they clear it.

Our dead hedge is maybe not so pretty as those constructed by the volunteers under BTCV supervision, but we did our best. We used material that the tree fellers had left for us, mainly cut down because they were sycamores (and therefore unwanted) or unsafe, beside the paths. The large logs went at the base, and the smaller branches wedged in at a 45 degree angle. This dead hedge will rot away within a year or two to be replaced by newly grown hawthorn.

As regards wildlife, the skylarks were in good voice on the way up the hill from Peveril Drive, whilst the green woodpeckers were calling all the time we were working. We had to take care that there was no nesting activity, as it is now nearly nesting season, so this marks the end of hedging work. The bluebells are not yet in flower, but they look as though they will make a good show again. The celandine were out in abundance on the west side, whilst the white and blue violets were lovely.

As always there were many walkers, runners, and also a party of guys who were there to do paintball! We heard the rattle of their guns and went to investigate. They were at pains to point out that they leave no pollutants in the Wood – their ammunition is olive oil. Earlier on we met a man with a metal detector and tools, hoping to unearth long lost treasures. He had found one or two small items, and had also seen a badger, although that was very early in the morning.

Sharphill Wood is all things to all men.