



# DANCERSEND 2022

Mick Jones, Volunteer Warden

# JANUARY



**We had grazing right through the Christmas period - Dexters on Anthill, Hebridean sheep in the Crong Meadow and ponies at the Waterworks. No problems until we tried to remove the Dexters!**



There were the usual Scarlet elf-cups and Earth stars to be seen and also a new resupinate fungus on Hazel, *Schizopora flavipora*, only the 2<sup>nd</sup> record for Bucks.





**Work party on Anthill on 9<sup>th</sup> January - clearing scrub and trees to open up the southern section.**



Through January and February Judi led a 'special operations team' hedge-laying along the road boundary of Crong Meadow.



**Ash Dieback**  
is affecting Pavis Woods

Berkshire  
Buckinghamshire  
Oxfordshire

**Ash dieback safety works will be taking place here from January 2020**

**What is ash dieback?**  
Ash dieback is a fungal disease, spread by the wind, which is expected to affect the majority of the country's ash trees. The onset of the disease will result in substantial changes to the landscape, but the work is being done to prevent the impact on wildlife and to safeguard the trees as viable wildlife.

**What is happening and why?**  
Dieback will occur on trees in the woods. The trees, bushes and shrubs will be removed and the site will be replanted with native species.

**Will I be able to see the site as normal?**  
The majority of trees will be removed and the site will be replanted with native species. The site will be replanted with native species.

**When is the work due to start?**  
The work is due to start in January 2020.

**Thank you for your patience and understanding**

[tdawt.org.uk/ash-dieback](http://tdawt.org.uk/ash-dieback)



More Ash dieback safety work around the centre of the reserve and a large fallen Beech meant lots of clearing up for us.



**FEBRUARY**



Primrose



Spurge Laurel

**We saw a very early appearance of some Spring flowers.**



Stinking Hellebore



**We started to reopen the clearing at the northern tip of the reserve - compartment 15.**

# MARCH



High winds resulted in lots of fallen trees and damaged fences.



After the storms - a fantastic show of early blossom and wildflowers.



Sweet Violet



Wood Anemone



Cherry Plum



Endless brash clearance and mowing and raking but the early appearance of a Comma and Bee-fly reminded us why.

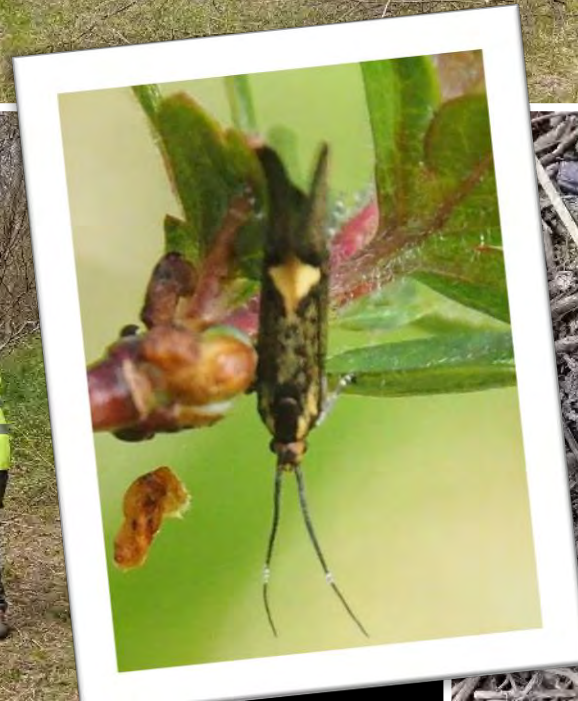


# APRIL



Pear blossom was early and beetles came out to play - Smooth Snail-hunter, Two-banded Longhorn and a Tooth-nosed Weevil.

Further work in comp 15 with a large Chiltern Society group. First Slow-worm of the year and micro-moth *Esperia sulphurella*.





**Contractors started work on a major part of the Rothschild Foundation funded project - replacing old fencing to make grazing easier. We also installed a solar powered donation point.**





The Bluebells were amazing and nice beetles turned up at our work sessions - .





**MJ started monitoring a group of old coppiced and pollarded Beeches and Oaks in a neighbouring woodland for saproxylic beetles - still working on them but already have one new to the valley.**



*Melasis buprestoides*

# MAY



Work sessions in early May were all accompanied by new 2023 sightings for some volunteers - Wheatears dropping in, Brimstones and Green Hairstreaks, Cardinal Beetles and the first Fly Orchids.





**The main May work party was spent mowing and raking part of the Meadow Plots and fencing the very rare Meadow Clary. With trees now well in leaf, the extent of Ash dieback was easy to see!**



Milkwort prolific in the grassy areas



Only the third ever record of Green Tiger Beetle, benefitting from the bare scrapes we created at the Waterworks.

**We started to see lots of results from our work in previous years.**



Common Blues and Dingy Skipper enjoying the Meadow Plots where we have controlled scrub



Bucks Fungus Group began their surveys at Dancersend despite the very dry conditions. The enormous Dryads Saddle was an exception - most finds were very tiny, with a number new for Bucks!



*Lachnella alboviolascens*



*Trichopeziza leucophaea*



Woundwort and Crucifer Shieldbugs



**Small Blues were seen egg-laying in the Extension scrapes, but sadly there were no definite sightings of Duke of Burgundy.**



This Bristle-tail will be a new record for the reserve, if only I can get the species confirmed!



Soldier Beetle



Wasp Beetle



I found, for the second time at Dancersend, a small Red Data Book species of false click-beetle *Eucnemis capucina*, rare in Bucks - a whole colony in a pile of Ash logs from our safety felling.

# JUNE



Ichneumon *Lissonata lineolaris*



Red Admiral

June saw our volunteer sessions devoted to keeping paths and rides clear, mown and raked, and signposts maintained ... meaning there were plenty of insects to find as well.



Ant Beetle



Hazel Leaf-roller Weevil

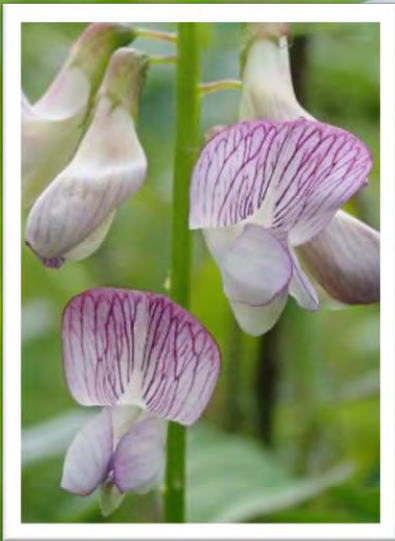


*Stenotus binotatus*



**Massive thanks to Judi and Brian, Linda and Chris for helping me sort out tools and clear up (and out!) in the Forge. It was as much psychological therapy for me as cleaning and organising!**





Wood Vetch



Meadow Clary



Many of our special wildflowers were looking at their best in the second half of June.

White  
Helleborine



Greater  
Butterfly Orchid





**At the end of June the Waterworks was refenced. The Orchard once again supported Bryony Bee and three orchid species.**



# JULY



**In increasingly hot conditions we found housekeeping tasks and tried to save the fruit trees and pond.**





A special meeting of the Bucks Invertebrate Group was held to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> year of Dancersend Reserve. It was great to be joined by Ched George (holding the cake) but no other dipterists as they had given each other Covid at a previous field meeting!



Downland Villa beefly



Acorn Weevil



Ghost Moth



Summer Chafer



**It was definitely turning into a 'Scabious Year' - great for insects.**



**It was a very difficult year at the Extension with our grazier not able to provide cattle. We had sheep instead but had problems protecting the butterfly plants. With the grassland looking increasingly parched our attention turned to planning the new pond.**





Despite the dry state of much of the grassland there were moths and butterflies to be seen, if not in large numbers. In late July it was exciting to see Chalkhill Blues in three parts of the reserve!



# AUGUST



The new earthwork at the Extension (excavated 2020) showed good germination and growth from seed scattered since - Kidney Vetch, Blue Fleabane, Large Thyme and Dark Mullein. The first Chiltern Gentians were flowering but very small plants due to drought.

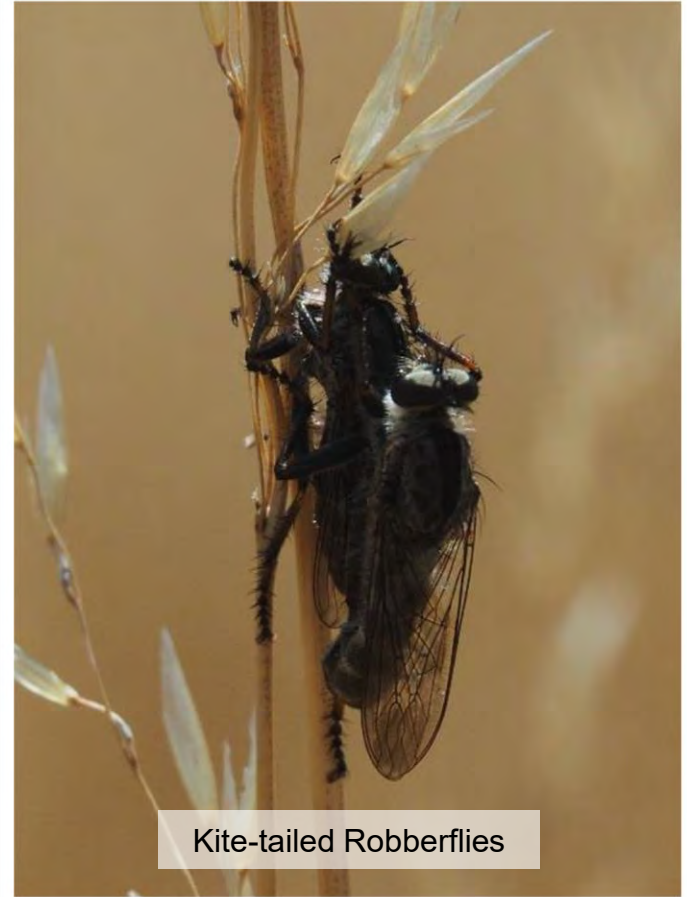
The parched grassland at the Extension was taller than planned due to grazing problems, but made it easier to spot some insects.



Hornet Robberfly



Roesel's Bush-cricket



Kite-tailed Robberflies



**Main work party in the Meadow Plots in glorious weather - counting gentians (still not many!), mowing and collecting thick scrub areas, and enjoying lunch with a special guest, Finley, back from uni.**





We held a number of events for families during the summer holiday in conjunction with College Lake Learning Team and the Tring Natural History Museum.





**Volunteers formed a moving fence to corral our flighty Hebridean sheep so they could be checked and treated for fly-strike ... at least that's what Reserves Officer Chris said he was doing!**



The end of August saw us clearing scrub and carrying out the annual Chiltern Gentian count at the Waterworks. Gentian numbers were surprisingly good in the more humid conditions of the Large Lagoon but there were none in the parched conditions of the reservoir top.



# SEPTEMBER



**Our first work session in September saw us mowing, raking and coppicing in the clearing above Crong Meadow.**



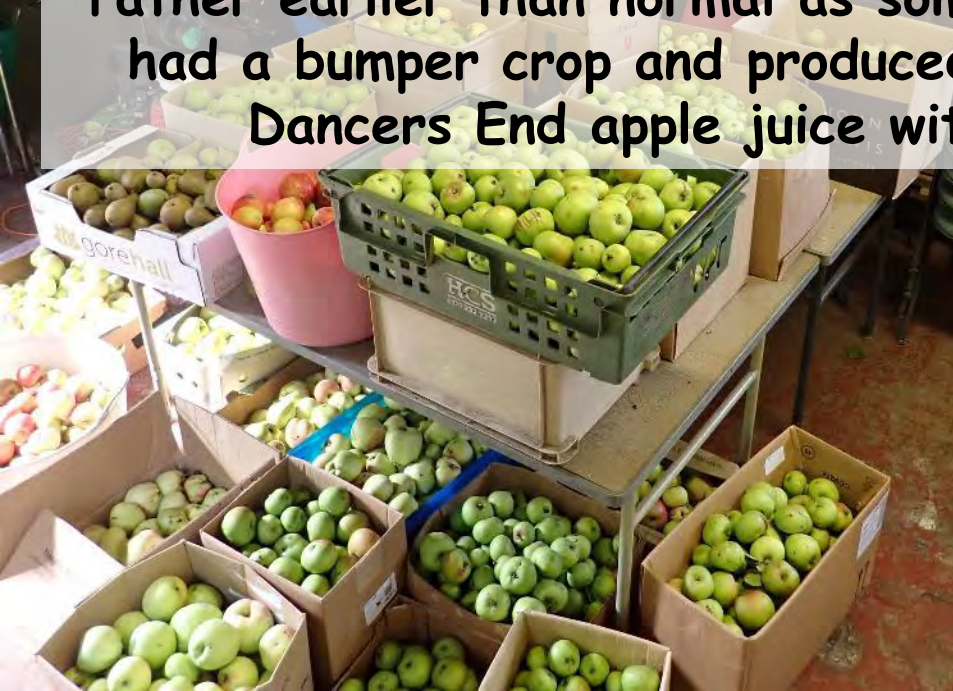
The guided walk "From Arable Fields to Nature Reserve in 20 Years" attracted some new people to the reserve. Although conditions were exceptionally dry we managed to find plenty of interesting wildlife.



Photos: Grace Davis



11<sup>th</sup> September was apple and pear harvesting in the Orchard, rather earlier than normal as some fruit was starting to drop. We had a bumper crop and produced 270 bottles of our very classy Dancers End apple juice with a special 80<sup>th</sup> year label.





**A great turnout on 11<sup>th</sup> Sept so there were also lots of volunteers, including new people, to carry out coppicing on the slope above Crong Meadow. This south-facing slope will get lots of extra light now.**

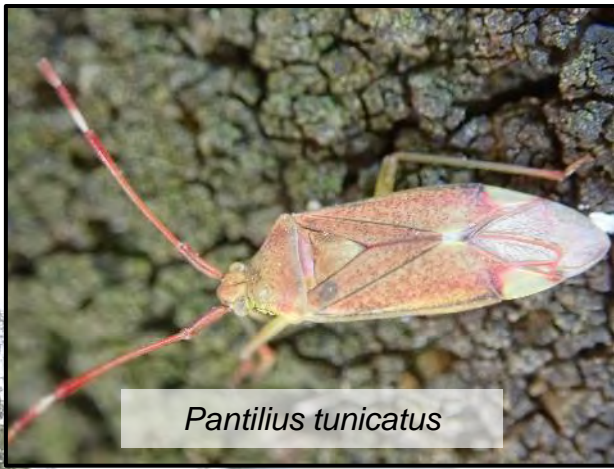


On 12<sup>th</sup> September work started on the massive task of making Pavis Woods safe from Ash dieback dangers.

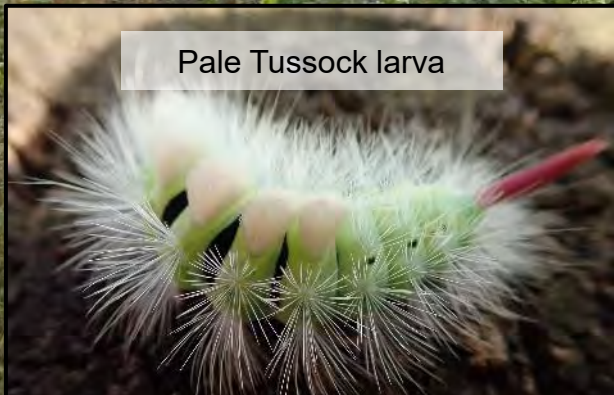
The Large Lagoon at the Waterworks became extensively pockmarked by the burrows of Ivy Bees, which were having a good year. They were hard to photograph but eventually I managed to catch the distinctive striped abdomen of one.



# OCTOBER



*Pantilius tunicatus*



Pale Tussock larva



In October we began opening up the woodland/scrub edge between Anthill and the Meadow Plots, with plenty of insects still present.



**Bucks Fungus Group surveys resumed with some great finds, including a lovely cup fungus new to the UK!**



Magpie Inkcap



Fly Agaric



*Humaria solisequia* – 1<sup>st</sup> UK record

Photo: Claire Williams



The mature woodland was full of fascinating fungi.

# NOVEMBER



November brought a series of work sessions on Anthill and the Meadow Plots - opening up some dense patches of scrub.



The final BFG survey uncovered further fungal riches ...

... including some wonderful slime moulds captured by Barry Webb.

*Craterium leucocephalum*



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*Arcyria cinerea*



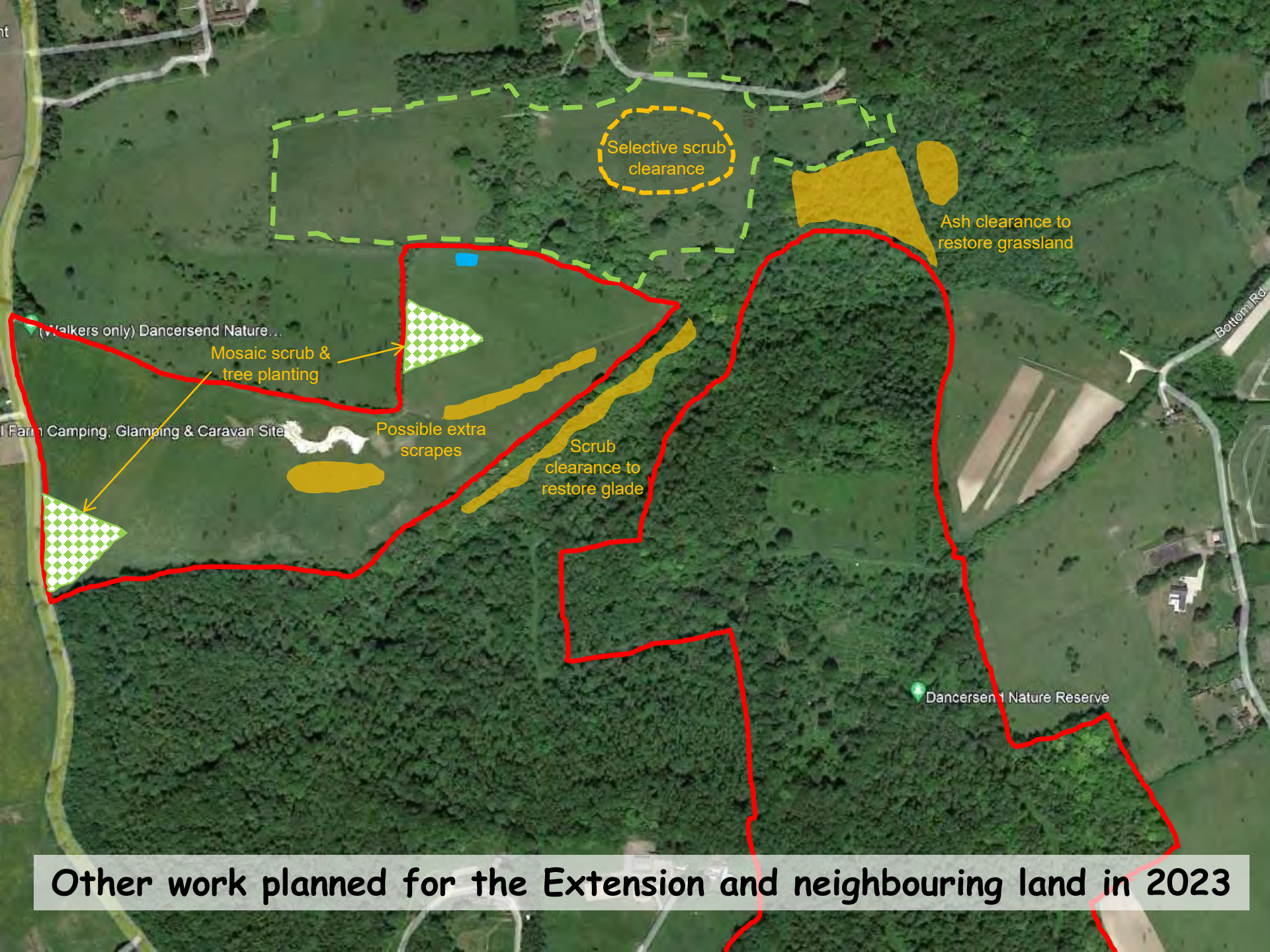
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**Finally the pond was excavated and lined - all in one day.**



The pond has been filling nicely in advance of carrying out further work on the surrounding 'butterfly banks' and enclosing it with stock fencing in the new year.



Selective scrub clearance

Ash clearance to restore grassland

Mosaic scrub & tree planting

Possible extra scrapes

Scrub clearance to restore glade

(Walkers only) Dancersend Nature...

Farm Camping, Glamping & Caravan Site

Dancersend 1 Nature Reserve

Bottom Rd

Other work planned for the Extension and neighbouring land in 2023

An enormous thankyou to all our volunteers



*Season's Greetings*  
From Mick, Judi & Len