

'FRIENDS OF THE TOWANS'
SLASH & BURN SEASON 2017-18
(AUTUMN-WINTER NEWSLETTER & EVENTS)

Well, I trust you've all enjoyed another Cornish summer. Can you remember that we actually DID get some hot days – even a 'heatwave'? Seems a long time ago now. I was doing a bird survey on a Welsh hilltop in late June and was sweating just standing still! The car thermo said 36°! Wow. But then we entered the usual August climate and September has been really disappointing hasn't it? But we can take heart from the thought of days just round the corner with fresh air, exercise, good company and bonfires, doing some useful conservation work on the Towans.

I hope you also enjoyed taking part in some of the wildlife recording this summer. Starting with a bird-watch at Gwithian-Hell's Mouth in April, we've also been out looking at butterflies, moths and plants. Grateful thanks to Sally, Dick, Ian and George for leading these and sharing their knowledge – it's much appreciated and helps to give us all a more 'in the round' knowledge as to why we do the work we do. We had an amazing turn-out of 27 people on the botany walk, and it was gratifying to see a range of 'dune plants' coming up in many of the areas we've cleared of scrub in recent years.

Many thanks also to Peter and Margaret and Save our Sand, for running a successful series of beach cleans again through the summer. I think the litter situation is better than it has been at times in the past, but it's an ongoing requirement. I know that a number of local people pick up litter – even dog mess – while on their daily walks, which really helps keep things under control – 'thanks' to you all.

As well as some of our old friends (sites), I've put in some new ones this winter, on both sides of the Bay. So, we'll be able to enjoy views across the towans from either side – stretching our domain ever wider!

I'm especially pleased that we will be working at Godrevy Warren – next to the NT car park – where Sally Foster has advised that if we can help open out some of the scrub there, it will help grazing cattle to move around the site, thereby benefiting the nationally-important colony of silver-studded blue butterflies up there. Thanks to the Thomas family for letting us get involved here – believe me, it will be worth it for the view alone.

We've managed to renew some of the landowner agreements for a year, and still hope to hear a positive response from the Lottery, but in the meantime there's plenty for us still to do. I've also heard from several new people hoping to get involved, so that's great – hope to meet you soon and bring you into our merry gang.

Martin 'the Ranger'

Rainbow over Gwithian Green, 6pm, 30th August 2017



AUTUMN-WINTER EVENTS – Oct 2017-April 2018

All events **start at 10am and run until about 2pm**. I will bring tools, gloves, tea, coffee and biscuits (always plenty, esp for Dickie & Pete..), but please make sure you bring appropriate clothing and footwear suitable for working in the exposed Towans' environment.

It would be useful if you could let me know via text, phone or email if you plan to attend - thanks. martinrule@talktalk.net; mobile - 07854 123 877

Thurs Oct 5th Gwithian Green Nature Reserve

Various work – willow and elm coppicing, pond and stream 'weeding' and raking up and burning bramble cuttings. Come and enjoy the late show of flowers too.

Meet in car park just north of Gwithian Church at SW587/413.

Thur Oct 19th St Ives Bay Holiday Park

Cutting back sea buckthorn from the grassland in the roadside field. Meet in lay-by next to Loggans Moor, just north of entrance to St Ives Bay Holiday Park on B3011. SW 576/389.

Thurs Nov 2nd Gwithian Towans, near the Jam Pot

Working with volunteers from Cornwall Butterfly Conservation, we'll be helping to enlarge an area of short turf being used by the silver-studded blue, by removing scrub and montbretia bulbs. This is an important narrow corridor that links the two main dune areas. If we get this done, we'll move on to St Gothian Reserve, to have a gorse blaze.

Meet in the large council car park at Gwithian. SW 565/384.

Weds Nov15th Steeple Woods Reserve, St Ives – please note this is Weds, not Thurs

This woodland and heathland reserve was designated in 2002, at the same time as our own Gwithian Green. We'll be helping the local volunteers to cut back some of the overgrown heathland on the hilltop, to create some habitat diversity. We hope that some of 'their' volunteers might like to come and help us on the Towans at times in the future.

Access and parking is tricky. Let me know if you plan to go and we can liaise on details.

Thurs Nov 30th Godrevy Warren

Another new site for us, this is the large dune system we look across at when working at Gwithian Green. It's been grazed for quite a few years, but scrub has been encroaching. We will cut areas back, to enable cattle to move around and to restore some short turf areas.

I will try to organise parking in the NT car park, but please check with me before.

Thurs Dec 7th As above – this time, with help from Cornwall Butterfly Conservation vols.

Thurs Dec 21st Gwithian Green Nature Reserve

Come and have a pre-Christmas work-out, raking up cuttings and having some bonfires. I'll bring some jacket potatoes and perhaps we could have mulled wine and mince pies too.. Meet in car park just north of Gwithian Church at SW587/413.

Thurs Jan 4th Mexico Towans

A post-Christmas work-out now, this time clearing scrub from around the Beachside edge of Mexico Towans and Lethlean.

Meet on private road to Beachside Leisure SW 566/388

Thurs Jan 18th Steeple Woods, St Ives

Back at Steeple Woods again, for more heathland work. See Nov 15th details.

Thurs Feb 1st and Thurs Feb 15th details to follow, but will probably be on Upton Towans CWT reserve

Thurs March 1st Gwithian Green reserve

More raking and burning, but also stream 'weeding' in advance of the summer growth...

Thurs March 15th and 29th – details to follow, depending where we can be most useful!

Sorry to be so vague, but I'll let you know as the scrub clearing season progresses. At least you can get these dates in your diaries.

I look forward to seeing you soon

Martin Rule, Towans Ranger 07854 123 877 martinrule@talktalk.net