

The experience of a Duke of Edinburgh Volunteer Attending a FORCE volunteer day



FORCE welcomes the help of students working towards their Duke of Edinburgh award at volunteer days. We asked one student to write about her experience working on Twickenham Junction Rough. Here is her report:

On 8th October 2017 I helped out for my first time with the Volunteer Sunday at the Twickenham Rifle and Pistol Club. As I entered through the gate, a little after 10:30am, I was met with a friendly group of volunteers, who equipped me with a pair of gardening gloves and a shovel before leading me down the path to our patch for the day. Our mission was to remove the brambles and weeds from either side of the path, and then towards the end of the day, the soil would hopefully be ready for us to plant some grass seeds. Ultimately, we hoped to make this path easily accessible and usable while still supporting the nature and habitats surrounding it.





Removing the weeds was hard- but extremely rewarding to see the progress we were making. As well as this, the volunteers were so supportive that no matter whether you were the one barely managing to scrounge out a few small weeds, or the one using the huge tools and getting far down into the roots, you felt you were a fundamental part: it was a team effort. We worked until about 1 o'clock, when the person overseeing the whole process called a lunch break. We trooped along to the club house. This, from the outside, looked almost abandoned, making the warm and furnished interior even more welcoming. We sat down on a bunch of chairs around the room and ate. There were hot drinks all round; despite

my dislike for tea and coffee, I also had a hot drink- I was allowed to make hot chocolate! We gradually dispersed back to our previous jobs after we'd finished our lunches, spurred on by our motivation to reach the final goal. By half past one, the majority were back outside.



The following hours (until around 3:15) were much similar to the first; weeding and raking in preparation for seeding. Morale was high, as we all knew we were close to completing the harder part of the task. Then the time came at last for us to plant the seeds. Plastic tubs containing grass seed were distributed, and the experts showed us the best technique for evenly distributing the seeds. At first this seemed a more stressful exercise: it seemed the whole day's work depended on this being completed well. However, these worries soon left when I was reassured I was doing a good job, and that there was no way to do it wrong anyway!



Grass seeds scattered, and tools loaded into the wheel barrow, we headed back to the clubhouse in triumph. The people heading up the day expressed their gratefulness for our help, and I believe I can speak for the whole team when I say that I left feeling happy and satisfied at what we had accomplished. I would definitely recommend that anyone reading this and considering whether to come along does- you are almost certainly guaranteed a fulfilling time, and no doubt with really great people!

If you would like to help out we'd love to see you at one of the volunteer days, but if you are under 18 please bring a responsible adult with you.



For more information see:

<http://www.force.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer-sundays/>

All photos © Paul Leonard