

Tadnoll and Winfrith Heathland Heritage Traineeship



Trainee residential trip to Brownsea Island



SILVERLAKE
DORSET



Since the heathland traineeship started the DWT team has helped new trainee - Seb - develop so many skills already. The first being his brush cutter ticket which is a great introduction into power tools. The next ticket on the list was the chainsaw course. Over the five days the course covers maintenance and theory of chain sawing and how to sharpen the chain properly – there's nothing worse than using a blunt saw! The course then moves on to cross cutting and felling later on in the week practising the different cuts ready for the test on the final day. Trainee Seb was now ready to go with what would form a large portion of the heathland work the team would be doing over the winter period before the nesting birds begin to emerge.

First Aid training was next which was a three day course covering a whole range of topics. The first day started with the recovery position and CPR and moved onto choking, bandaging and other topics ready for the assessment on the last day which includes the use of a defibrillator. This ticket is a valuable skill relevant both in and outside of work and has allowed Seb to use the chainsaw with just one other person at the reserve. This was great as it would also open up opportunities to work with new people in future



The major habitat improvement task that the Heathland Heritage project has been working on over the last few months has been at Winfrith Heath doing gorse clearance. This work has been done to restore the area making it suitable for heathland species. The area that Seb and the team, along with the help of volunteers, have focused on has been near the base of Whitcombe Hill (see photographs below) and after many days cutting and burning the site has seen tremendous improvement. Seeing the difference day by day has been both motivating and rewarding for Seb, however the real reward will come during spring and summer when the area is thriving with wildlife. The traineeship has taught Seb the reasons for and the importance of this project especially as the site is



Gorse clearance, before and after shots

As well as the major project at Winfrith the traineeship so far has offered other opportunities for Seb to visit and work on different sites, so he can bring back new techniques to help at Winfrith & Tadnoll. Seb has also attended a conference talk at Bournemouth University discussing future resourcing for conservation work in Dorset and a river management work day. Seb has said that 'the traineeship has been extremely interesting learning that a few key aspects of our work seem, to the public eye, contradictory. For instance, a common opinion is against cutting down trees on our sites however we are doing this in order to restore heathland and by doing so protecting the wildlife in the area that relies on heathland specific habitat'.



The rest of the year will bring many new tasks and experiences that come with managing the reserve through the different seasons. These will include: 4x4 driving training, visitor and dog walker engagement, the continuation of volunteer days and a variety of habitat improvement projects for the