

Happy Easter!

Enjoyment is all the greater when it's unexpected. I don't think any of us really expected to enjoy working on a cold wet Sunday in the wood. If I am free on a volunteer day, I feel it's my duty to volunteer, part of my commitment to the Eternal Forest. It's always good to see other volunteers but on a day like last Sunday... well, I'll put it this way: I wouldn't have chosen to be outside.

But I actually enjoyed it! Despite the rain. And the chill. And the wear and tear on my muscles.

I felt good – not only afterwards, but at the time.

Weird? Maybe not. Spending time outside in the light (even on a dull day) lifts our mood. Being in woodland, breathing woodland air, is good for the immune system. Doing things in a social group, for a common cause, is good for us. And volunteering in the wood brings all these benefits.

Oddly enough, doing this on a wet day could be even better for us than volunteering when it's sunny. I felt proud, and I think the others did too, of being there that day, and proud of what we achieved.

We decided to clean up the Violet Path. There was to be a funeral there and, though Steve had dug a perfect grave, the path near which it lay was so overgrown that it would have been difficult to pull the coffin cart up there. The bearers would have been attacked by brambles all the way up, the cart wheels would have sunk into potholes, and anyone on a mobility scooter would likely have slid all over the place on damp vegetation. It was bad.

Under all that vegetation, I knew there was a well-made path. I knew that because I remember how the path was originally built, though visitors would not have known. I knew that all it needed was scraping and shovelling and raking and pulling out the brambles to reveal the stone underneath. And that was exactly what the Sunday volunteers did. We uncovered a fine slate path, plenty wide enough for the

cart and bearers either side of it.

We'd done most of the work to create a route to the grave by lunchtime and we were all ready for treats.

A beautiful tray of hot cross buns, freshly baked by Tracey (she is an excellent baker!) and a fine big pie, stuffed to the gills with delicious Pwllheli apples and raspberries from my freezer. We deserved the best and that's what we got.

There's something special about sharing food. It's an important part of every culture, it says we care about each other. And caring – for nature as well as human and non-human family members – is what the Eternal Forest is all about. So we share food at every Volunteer Day.

When the work was finished and everyone else had gone home, I stayed behind for a short while to appreciate the wood. The rain had stopped and the birds - robins, tits, blackbirds, wrens - had begun to sing. The afternoon light brought out bright Spring

flowers: mounds of pale yellow primroses, wild daffodils, delicate wood anemones nodding in the breeze. The greens of fresh leaves, so intense, so vibrant. New grass has appeared on bare grave sites, ferns are beginning to unfurl, wild garlic growing in profusion. It is just delightful.

I found something interesting too: owl pellets. I'm pretty sure they're from a tawny owl so, fingers crossed... maybe we'll have owls breeding in the wood again this year. I do hope so.

Our next Volunteer Sunday will be on 3rd May, from 11am till 3pm as usual.

The bluebells will be in bloom and the wood will be beautiful. We're holding an additional volunteer day on Saturday 16th May, so if Sunday is not a good day for you, how about coming then?

Do come and join us if you can!

Bella



Violet — Before



Violet — After



Wood Anemones



Cherry Blossom

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