



REED ALL ABOUT IT

Newsletter for Forest Volunteers

Bletchley Park (Home of the Codebreakers) Trip

This trip is on Saturday, 26th March. It is hoped that as many as possible will travel by train as this gives the best value for money. By using the train we can get 20% off our entrance ticket, which works out cheaper than the group prices offered.

Entrance charges are: Adults £10, Concessions (Over 60's & students with a valid ID card) £8, Children (aged 12-16) £6. Children under 12 are admitted free. The admission charge is actually a season ticket giving you free entry to Bletchley Park for a year.

For those travelling by car, on site parking is £3. The off peak return rail fare between Bedford and Bletchley is £5:60 (and is half price if you have a bus pass). If we catch the train that

leaves Bedford at 9:33am, this arrives at Bletchley at 10:16. We could then meet up at the Park entrance at 10:30, which is when it opens.

As the Park closes at 4pm the most likely return train departs at 3:47. Earlier/later alternatives are 3:01 and 4:47.

Note that dogs are not allowed on site (with the exception of registered assistance dogs).

It would be helpful if you could let Joan know if you intend to come, but feel free to just turn up on the day.

Volunteers Spring Walk

This will on Saturday 16th April. The route is still to be finalised but is likely to be around the Green Gateway

Issue 35 - March 2011

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plantings between Kempston and Wootton, possibly also including Kempston Wood.

We will probably start from The Chequers in Wootton at 11:00am and follow a route to include Buttons Ramsey, The Kill, Ridgeway Wood, Wiles Wood and Kempston Wood. The plan being to arrive back at The Chequers in time for lunch.

I'll email you with the details when I've checked the paths and spoken to the landlord of The Chequers. Hopefully he will have a menu which I can send out so that you can choose your lunch beforehand.

Joan Ferguson

Volunteers AGM

The AGM of the MVVCOG will be on Tuesday 10th May (7:30pm start) at the Forest Centre. This will be followed by a speaker (to be confirmed) and a sandwich supper.

Please make every effort to attend as the input of as many volunteers as possible is always appreciated.



Bletchley Park Mansion

Reed All About It is produced for Volunteers by Volunteers

Forest Volunteers work to further the aims of Marston Vale Trust (Registered charity No. 1069229), by freely offering their skills, time and enthusiasm
For more information contact 01234 762608 Or email volunteers@marstonvale.org

Tree Planting in the Bedford River Valley Park

Sunday 6th March was bright, breezy and cold, perfect for tree planting. This was our first session, hopefully of many, where we were planting trees in conjunction with Bedford Borough in the River Valley Park at Willington.

Dave Hodgson, our Mayor turned out as well as more than two hundred members of the public, including the farmer who used to look after the land, and planted trees in as near perfect planting conditions as I have ever seen. The fields had been really muddy at the beginning of the week but the wind had dried the surface. There were still some very muddy patches and on one occasion a lady became stuck in one of them. An intrepid volunteer waded in and helped her out and in doing so became stuck himself. He was in turn rescued by one of the organisers but one of his wellies came off and he sat down in the mud. Fortunately he laughed so we could all have a good giggle. It must have been a bit cold though in the keen wind. I think he was even muddier than the time Maggie slid into June and they both got smothered in mud. The photo will provide a reference point for future mud bath comparisons.

We planted a specially selected mix of trees suitable for the site, which is essentially floodplain, which will eventually be coppiced. These included ash, alder, crack willow and some oak which can tolerate soggy conditions. Because the Borough had paid for the

site to be rabbit fenced we didn't need to use tree guards and stakes which made the task really quick and satisfying.

We also offered an opportunity to suggest names for the wood and the Mayor will make his selection in due course.

Our next planting will be in December 2011 so look forward to that.

Joan Ferguson

Lichens in the Park

In issue 32 of June last year I wrote a short piece about lichens in the Millennium Park. I named 5 species but because lichens are notoriously difficult to identify at different stages of growth and subspecies are sometimes so similar a more knowledgeable friend of Maggie's corrected 3 of the species. So they are: *Evernia Prunastri*, *Parmelia Sulcata*, *Punctelia Jerkeri*, *Usnea Cornuta* and *Xanthoria Paretina*. I have to admit to a little further help from Mike at the British Lichens Society. Thank you internet!



Evernia Prunastri

I know that lichens are used as bio indicators of air quality but did not realise to what extent the scientific community around the world seriously uses lichens for this purpose. They also indicate good environmental management and have great ecological value since they are sensitive to airborne pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen and heavy metals in the form of nano particles which can normally escape chimney stack filters.

Lichens also give shelter to a wide variety of invertebrates which are near the bottom of the food chain. Woodland with lichens generally have a bigger variety of wildlife so they are a valuable asset.

Click Now!

In the current financial situation, fundraising has become difficult, so we have to take advantage of every opportunity. A while ago, I told you about the charity search engine ClickNow, which pays charities and community groups half its income from internet searches. Marston Vale Volunteers are registered on the system and those of us who have adopted ClickNow are already supporting our efforts.

Unfortunately, enquiries suggest that very few Volunteers are signed up to ClickNow. I'm sure that there are very good reasons for this. However, I must stress that considerable amounts of cash are available to us for no outlay and minimal effort. So I beg you, please visit www.clicknow.org.uk/marstonvale right away and sign up – you know you want to!

Andy Brocklebank
Treasurer

Since the run down and final closure of the brickworks in 2008 it has been physically recognised that air quality in the Marston Vale has improved and the recent appearance of lichens has scientifically supported this. This has to be good for flora, fauna and people. What an environmental "crime" it would be if pollution from the proposed EfW stack right next door to the Park destroyed this fragile improvement and all that it represents.



Parmelia Sulcata



Punctelia Jerkeri



Inaugural Disorganised Walk



Wetlands via the superb new path. WOW! What a massive improvement to the Centre's facilities it is! Due to the lousy winter and some etc's I had not been on it until today and if you have still not walked there, then you should go RIGHT NOW!

The day was kind and windless, buds sprouting everywhere, birds singing and the conversation pleasant. We stopped at the funny little brick circle

This idea took a small step forward on 5 March. New Volunteer Jean Sargeant had said she felt a bit uneasy about contacting a bunch of strangers for a walk. Good point, I thought, as I feel the same. So I took Jean's words to heart and decided that an inaugural meet needed to take place ASAP. Spring is here and is a great time to get walking, see the countryside come alive and to enjoy new company. So I decided to contact the eight or so who have supplied their details to say that 11am on 5 March would be a great opportunity to meet and introduce ourselves. It was, unfortunately, too short notice for most, particularly Jean!

Lynne and Pauline were waiting in the café when I arrived and we made the most of the opportunity to get to know each other. We took to the

which had been hidden by overgrowth until the new path was built. It was an eye-opener to realise the pleasure and fun enjoyed by those who made it. Thanks to all of you. We next stopped by an innocuous piece of fence overlooking the Pillinge whilst Lynne told us about building it some years ago. The uprights must have taken considerable efforts to install because they are totally immov-



Eyota



Usnea Cornuta



Xanthoria Parietina

able! This was where I cursed my stupidity in leaving the binoculars in the car – there were cormorants, swans, grebes and many other water birds that I was unable to name. (I bet I couldn't identify them even with my bins!)

Onwards to the hide overlooking the island's lake, and I then had the chance to recall the day Alexis nearly killed me! We called it 'Swallows and Amazons' day. We had to pole the boats as the weed was too thick to row. Sixteen or seventeen of us cut back reed, tree, scrub and undergrowth and had a wonderful bonfire. SO WONDERFUL that Alexis had to warn the Fire Brigade! How did she nearly kill me? Well, mainly age and the wrong shoes – she made me feel my great age by giving me waders size 7 for my size 4 feet! I went at it

hammer and tongs – and could barely walk at the end. Now I stick to making the tea.

We saw a lesser spotted woodpecker and various tits from the hide, then a pair of pheasants, a squirrel and many water birds. It was a really quiet and peaceful scene. We didn't need to chat, just a friendly quiet time as we absorbed this lovely spot. Next was the lookout point. Again, all sorts of tits, chaffinches and probably a bullfinch were here, along with buzzards high overhead and a kestrel, I think. Finally the home stretch and three firm friendships had been made. We were also greeted by many members of the public also out enjoying this great new walking facility.

DISORGANISED WALKS is now well and truly founded and, if any of you would like to join us, please contact me at my.mummy@btinternet.com or 01525 714939 or write to me at the Centre . I will give out your contact **only** to other Disorganised Walks members. Then you mutually arrange a time and place. It's really that simple!

Sue Livens

A Walk in the Park

Sunday Strolls take place in the Park on the first Sunday of every month, normally led by yours truly. This year's January event took place on the 2nd, during the public holiday weekend, so I thought it would be nice if other Volunteers came along too, so I sent out a round robin email.

And very effective it was too. Not only did several Volunteers turn up but at least one of them dragged family members along as well! So a goodly crowd followed me round the Park and listened to me rabbiting on! Unfortunately, my dog Demi had other ideas and managed to get lost, so my wife Jill and a couple of others formed a search party, thus managing to escape my droning on.

The first Sunday Stroll of 2012 will be on New Year's Day. Now, some years ago (no doubt one of you can compute when) the Sunday Stroll fell on 1 January, so we organised a special walk with story telling and ending up with a hot fruit punch with stollen and mince pies. It was very well received and attracted a considerable number and leads me to think that something similar could be offered next year. Any offers of help or suggestions would be welcome

Andy Brocklebank

Diary Dates

For more information call:

Steven 07745 786307, Joan 01234 360178, Anna Charles 01234 762614,

Darren Woodward 01234 762603, Andy Lingard 01234 762617

Sat. 26 th Mar.	Bletchley Park Trip.	Meet there. See separate article for details.
Sun 3 rd Apr.	Sunday Stroll in Millenium Country Park.	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½ -2.00 hours £1.00 per person payable on the day.
Sat 16 th Apr .	Volunteers Spring Walk	Meet 11.00 at the Chequers in Wootton. See separate article for further details.
Sun 24 th Apr.	Conservation in Millenium Country Park.	Sprucing up the Sensory Garden. Ring Anna for details.
Sun. 1 st May	Sunday Stroll in Millenium Country Park	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½ -2.00 hours £1.00 per person payable on the day.
Tues. 10 th May	Volunteers AGM	7.30pm at the Forest Centre. See separate article for details.
Sun. 5 th Jun.	Sunday Stroll in Millenium Country Park.	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½ -2.00 hours £1.00 per person payable on the day
Sat. 11 th Jun.	Wildlife Walk	8am—11am. £2 charge. Book on 01234 767037.
Sun. 3 rd Jul.	Sunday Stroll in Millenium Country Park	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½ -2.00 hours £1.00 per person payable on the day.
Sat/Sun. 3 rd & 4 th Sept.	Wood Works	Details to follow— Put this date in your diary!!

Snippets

Volunteer Trustee

As you are probably aware, the Marston Vale Volunteers have a representative on the board of the Marston Vale Trust. The Volunteer Trustee serves for a term of 2 years. I am the current incumbent and my term expires in November. The Trustee is voted for by the Volunteers and approved by the board...

...You will need to attend 4 Trustee meetings plus an AGM per year and a similar number of MVVCOG meetings. At the Trustee meeting you will give a short report on the activities of the Volunteers and at MVVCOG meetings a short report on what you heard at the previous Trustee meeting. Simple!

Facebook

We've started using facebook to tell our friends about what's happening in the Forest. Why not join us? Search for Marston Forest.

...Now November might seem an awful long time from February but with COG meetings and RAAI being on an approximately quarterly cycle, if I don't bring the matter up now, there won't be time to give it full consideration. So this is a call to all Volunteers – we need a Volunteer to represent us on the Board of Trustees from November!

The job is not particularly onerous...

...If you want to learn more, contact me – even better, if you fancy the job, contact me, Joan or Guy.

Andy Brocklebank

RAAI Copy Deadline

Please note that the copy deadline for the next issue of Reed All About It is Monday 30th May 2011.

Any notes, thoughts, articles, pictures welcome—to Joan Ferguson at the Forest Centre