



REED ALL ABOUT IT

Newsletter for Forest Volunteers

WoodWorks!

What an amazing weekend! Despite the inclement weather on Sunday, Anna estimates that we had nearly 2500 paying customers through the gates. This is slightly less than last year but nevertheless, a really good attendance.



Graham White

Over the WoodWorks Festival week-end, we Volunteers put in over 600 hours – the equivalent of nearly six month's work by a full time employee! There is no way that the various entry gates, music sales, safety patrols, craft activities, forest tent and story telling could have functioned as efficiently without us all.

Sales of bird boxes, ladybird houses, scarecrows and all the other craft events in the Forest tent raised over £400 which will go towards tree planting on 4th December and 12th February (the details have still to be arranged but put the dates in your diary). There are lots of pictures of the weekend on the website. And, if you have any bright ideas for items we could make to sell next year, do let me know. Specifically things made from household "junk" (toilet roll middles, yoghurt pots, etc) so that we can save up in advance, or items similar to the bird boxes.

We organised a free prize draw to gather information on how people had learnt about the event and what geographical area they had travelled from. This will enable us to better target advertising next year. The oak bench, which had been made by the rangers, was won by Hilary Campbell from Wiltington.

It was a beautiful day on Saturday, perfect for sitting about in the sunshine, listening to music and being tempted by the delicious smells coming from the hog roast. But there were also lots of activities to entertain people – lumberjacks, willow weaving, wood turning, ferret racing, Vikings, etc.

The Forest Tent looked very festive with all the bunting and flags. It was also awash with information about the Centre. On sale were bags, beads, bird boxes, ladybird houses with pictures and puppets to be coloured.



Graham White

The children were kept busy making table top scarecrows and dream catchers mainly from recycled materials, both natural and household.

Unfortunately, the weather on Sunday was less welcoming. However, those people who did brave

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the rain were also treated to some great music and an equally varied array of activities, including Hemlock Morris. Events were finally brought to an end with music from Xam Xam, an exciting duo from Gambia.



Graham White

If you have any comments, improvements or suggestions about things we should consider for next year, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can feed it back to the debrief meeting later in September.

It was great to see so many of you and thank you again for all your efforts.

Joan Ferguson

Goodbye to Jackie

After 6 years, Jackie Magee, one of our catering managers, left the Forest Centre on 23 September. She will be much missed. Jackie and her husband Gary are going to take over The Cock at North Crawley.

They would welcome visits from the many friends made at the Forest Centre. We wish Jackie and Gary every success in their new venture. Helen Murray, Jackie's management colleague, will continue as catering manager and Sam Bottoms has now been appointed as her assistant.

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

The Blog

For over a year now I've been writing a blog built into the Forest's web site entitled, not terribly originally 'Commentree On-line'. This has been an interesting experience. It aims to promote what has and what is about to happen in the Forest and at the same time allows me to indulge my liking for writing. My aim is to publish eight posts a month (more if possible); although in the first year I averaged only six a month.

There are two reasons for drawing this to your attention now; first, if you use the internet, it's another way to find out what's going on in the Forest. Second, it could indulge *your* liking for writing and offer an opportunity to promote what the Forest is all about. If you've been involved as a Forest Volunteer and are moved to write something about the experience, here's a chance to put your words before the world. Over the last twelve months I've published volunteers' pieces about mammal trapping, hedge laying, gardening and American mink. They are all interesting and none were pieces I would have written myself.

Kite-making and Chasing Dragons!

I have enjoyed two lovely days during the summer helping Jane Lambourne and other volunteers entertain kids at kite-making workshops and chasing dragons – well, dragonflies actually.

The kites were made from recycled plastic shopping bags, drinking straws, fishing line and cardboard. We had very enthusiastic groups of 20 children at a time, all eager to get going. And soon they were flying an array of brightly coloured kites in the meadow.

A couple of weeks later, I arrived at the centre bright and early to help chase dragonflies. Jane

Give it some thought and let me know if you'd like to give it a try. A picture always helps to tell a story, so if you can, keep a camera handy. I reserve the right not to use your work or to edit it before publication. The only serious tests I will apply to the content are:

- Is it interesting?
- Is it news?
- Is it about or relevant to the Forest?

Take a look at www.marstonvale.org/news and let me know what you think. Guy.lambourne@marstonvale.org

Volunteers Out and About

We Volunteers try to put ourselves about a bit! So we try to take the opportunity to appear at appropriate local events when we can. So this year, for the first time, Sue Livens, Terry Stevens and I went off to Bromham village fete, to spread the word about our beloved Forest and maybe persuade some people to part with some of their cash in exchange for bird boxes, ladybird houses etc. It's a surprisingly large event as village fetes go and the organisers even managed to pull off the coup of getting the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's Lancaster bomber

asked for a volunteer to try to find some dragonfly larvae to show the children the various stages in the life of a dragonfly. So off I went with net and fish tank to do some pond dipping. I wasn't very hopeful as the water levels were very low, but fortunately I did eventually manage to find a couple of larvae which the children found fascinating.



Sarah Lucas

to make several low-level passes over the event. What a sight (and sound)!

Kempston Funday, organised by the Lions, takes place on August Bank Holiday Saturday. Maggie Milne, Sue Livens and I were there on this occasion. As is often the case for that particular bank holiday, the weather was, to say the least, temperamental! We had a succession of squalls which blew our brochures all over the place, followed by short, sharp showers. Indeed, the young couple on the pitch next to ours gave up and went home before 2. No stamina, some people! Mind you, by 4 there were virtually no punters left, so we enjoyed early doors as well.

Apple Day on Sunday 16 October is the next event we're going to. Sue Livens and I (notice how the same names keep popping up!) will be flying the flag in Bromham again. We're trying to drag Hannah Braithwaite (the Forest fundraiser) to come along but any other help would be welcome. Even if you can't help we recommend the event to you – it's a great way to celebrate the British countryside and it might even be a nice autumn day (last year's was a cracker!).

Andy Brocklebank

After a trail round the sensory garden, answering questions that had been cunningly placed in trees, etc, the children and their accompanying adults went into the meadow, spotting dragonflies and damselflies on the way. They then settled down to listen to a story from Jane as to the origin of dragonflies – it was wonderful to see their spellbound faces as the story unfolded. Then they each made their own dragonfly – from coloured pipe cleaners, beads for eyes and clear plastic wings. I think I have finally found my level of craft work!

Can't wait now to see what Jane has up her sleeve for the half term holidays.

Jean Sargeant

Change of Lifestyle

About four years ago I retired from a high pressure job, or more accurately was made redundant for the second time in my life. At almost 65 years of age I got the message and decided that it was time to get back to water colour painting, fishing, amateur dramatics and the inevitable house decorating which I had managed to dodge for a few years. Well some decorating got done but I thought that I should be getting some physical exercise so I bought a new bike but more particularly started walking since this gave me an opportunity to indulge my love of nature and the countryside and what better place than the Millennium Park

It's nice to share this with someone and I joined the Wednesday morning walk at the Marston Vale Forest Centre under the leadership of Maggie Milne. The Millennium Park with Stewartby Lake is a wonderful facility not only offering several walks but the chance to see a wide variety of wild flowers, butterflies and birds. It also has a good "watering hole". Anyway I later became a volunteer and got involved in tree planting, scrub clearance and occasional office work, etc.

After a few months Maggie asked me if I would be interested in becoming a walk leader; so I thought why not. I have enjoyed the walks, the company and the après walk socialising so now it's payback time. So I did the Natural England course run by Mike Fayers of Beds RCC. I have lived most of my life in the country and unconsciously gained a great deal of knowledge of nature which I have been pleased to pass on when asked, indeed some of our walks have turned into nature rambles. More importantly I feel so much healthier for the walking and have made new friends. Talking to some of the group over coffee it is amazing how many come along for the social side and to rebuild confidence after a set-back. I am pleased to be able to help, added to which a load of walkers (we frequently have 20 plus each week), contribute to the Forest Centre by using the café and attending events.

Although not everyone's forte I actually enjoy completing the walk descriptions, risk assessments, the weekly register, new walker's details,

Outdoor Health Questionnaires, etc. which I input into the Natural England National Data Base. This is a Government initiative to help monitor the health of the nation and to get more people to take gentle exercise in an effort to reduce blood pressure, heart problems and obesity etc.

There are about 50,000 walking groups nationwide and several use the Park regularly.



More recently we have introduced other walks within the Community Forest area; eg. Lidlington, Marston Thrift and Maulden Woods (slightly outside the area).

Our group really appreciates the Park and I am pleased to pass on their thanks to the team for creating and maintaining such a wonderful facility.

Enjoy your walking!

Mike Green
Walk Leader

MVFCOG

Marston Vale Volunteers Co-Ordinating Group had their regular meeting on 19th July at the Forest Centre. The news in brief was that our Bird boxes are even better than last year. Ladybird houses were selling steadily. Scarecrow bases and Dreamcatcher bases were being prepared for WoodWorks! and prints of photos were going to be re-stocked before Woodworks as the last lot had sold well.

MVFCOG agreed to pay for some tools needed for Volunteer use and to underwrite £3k of the expense of the new website if Hannah's Naturesave bid was not successful.

Our social calendar for the coming year would include a summer walk, a trip to Ashridge in the Autumn, a Winter scrub bash and a Spring walk. Dates would be forthcoming when available.

Joan Ferguson

Story Telling at WoodWorks!

The Bell tent was up, straw bales were in place and cushions scattered. We were ready. We started after the Vikings battle, the sun came out and Mark, Debbie, and I waited. No children. I went out and rattled a bit. We soon had an enormous crowd of three, but we told our stories to a very appreciative audience. The weekend continued with tellings having to fit in with other events and fewer children than we would have liked, but at least the stories were much enjoyed. We were glad to be sitting in a tent while rain was pelting down outside on Sunday. It seemed cosy and safe.... until a Viking came in and leaned his head against the canvas! I had forgotten about touching tent sides when it rains! We soon had a mini flood pouring in but managed to sweep the groundsheet dry before the next telling.

Maggie Milne

New Years Day Walk

As you will be aware, on the first Sunday of every month there is a Sunday Stroll, usually led by me, sometimes by Joan. Now and then the first Sunday in January falls on New Years Day and 2012 is one of these years. The walk on 1 Jan 2006, the previous New Year Sunday, attracted 35 walkers and two dogs, who were entertained by folk tales from Joan and talk about the Park and surrounds from yours truly, finishing up with a glass of hot fruit punch and stollen, served from the back of Joan's car. (I can't help thinking that both of Joan's contributions were more memorable to the walkers!)

Any, the point of all these ramblings, if you'll forgive the pun, is to invite you all to join us at 10.30am on 1 January 2012 for a chance to enjoy a gentle stroll to clear your head after the festive season. Because the Park vehicle entrance will be locked, we're meeting up at the Bedford Road entrance to the Park (at the point where Bedford Road joins the old A421 – map ref TL002427). And our traditional refreshments (this being the second occasion, tradition is now born!) will be served at the end. Joan is already busy searching for seasonally appropriate folk tales from around the world, so it promises to be a fun event.

It would be helpful to know who's coming, so let us know if possible, but if you wake up on 1 Jan fancying a walk, just turn up.

Andy Brocklebank

Diary Dates

For more information call:

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

Darren Woodward 01234 762603, Andy Lingard 01234 762617

Sun. 2 nd Oct.	Sunday Stroll in Millennium Country Park.	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½-2 hours £1.00 per person payable on the day.
Sun. 16 th Oct.	Meet the Ranger Walk.	10.00am start. Need to book on 01234 767037.
Sun. 16 th Oct.	Wedding Fayre.	10.00am to 4.00pm. Volunteers needed for catering. Please contact Helen Murray on 01234 762613.
Tue. 18 th Oct.	Marston Vale Volunteers Co-Ordinating Group meeting.	7.30 in Forest Centre. Ring Joan if you intend to come.
Sun. 22 nd Oct.	Conservation Task.	Island Clearance. Essential to book through Anna or Stephen.
Fri. 28 th Oct.	Kid's Event.	Making Bird Feeders. Need to book on 01234 767037.
Sun. 6 th Nov.	Sunday Stroll in Millennium Country Park.	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½-2 hours £1.00 per person payable on the day.
Sat. 12 th Nov.	Bird Walk.	Winter Thrushes. Booking necessary. Ring 01234 767037.
Sat. 19 th Nov.	Conservation Task.	Hedge laying. Ring Anna or Stephen.
Wed. 30 th Nov.	Pink Ladies Night.	7.00pm at the Forest Centre. Come and support Breast Cancer Awareness and maybe find a few of your Christmas presents.
Sat. 3 rd Dec.	Christmas Disco Party.	For children aged 3 to 10. Volunteers needed for catering. Please contact Helen Murray on 01234 762613.
Sun. 4 th Dec.	Sunday Stroll in Millennium Country Park.	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½-2 hours £1.00 per person payable on the day.
Sun. 4 th Dec.	Public Tree planting at Top Farm Lidlington.	Volunteers needed please. Ring Joan.
Sun. 11 th Dec.	Conservation Task.	Scrub Clearance. Ring Anna or Stephen.
Wed. 14 th Dec.	Marston Vale Trust AGM.	5.30pm for 6.00pm start. Ring Tony Talbot on 01234 762601 if you would like to attend.
Mon. 19 th Dec.	Kids Event.	Making Festive Wreaths. Need to book on 01234 767037.
Tue. 27 th Dec.	Bird Walk.	Bank Holiday birds. Booking necessary. Ring 01234 767037.
Sun. 1 st Jan.	New Year Story Walk.	See separate article for details.

Snippets

Volunteer Catering Staff Wanted

Helen Murray, Catering Manager, is looking for Volunteer help at weekends, from midday to 3pm. The main duty would be in the wash up. Lunch will be provided.

If you would like to help Helen (or find out more about the task), contact her on 01234 762613 or helen.murray@marstonvale.org

Congratulations to Catherine, Michael and Georgina for achieving the necessary grades in their A-level exams to enable them to go to the various Universities that they have chosen. Keep up the hard work and good luck for the future.

Go ElliptiGo...

Do try out the ElliptiGo. It's a unique experience and well worth £5 for half an hour. It's a cross between running and cycling. There's no saddle but unlike running there's no impact on the knees. Great fun for a teenage pensioner says Terry Ferguson.

Volunteers Autumn Walk

Sometime in October – **Walk around Ashridge** to enjoy the colours of the leaves. Details to be decided nearer the time. Ring Joan if you are interested.

RAAI Copy Deadline

Please note that the copy deadline for the next issue of Reed All About It is Monday 28th November 2011. Any notes, thoughts, articles, pictures welcome—to Joan Ferguson at the Forest Centre.