

REED ALL ABOUT IT

Newsletter for Forest Volunteers

River Valley Park Volunteers

Improvements at the Grange

Work continues on the Grange Estate. At the beginning of March pupils from Willington Lower School planted over 100 trees in the five hectare tree compartment. Eighteen children had great fun splashing around in the puddles! Later in the month four Volunteers constructed two oak benches supplied by Podington saw mills and six bird boxes were installed. Then in May another two benches were built and a new pedestrian gate was installed, which will allow access to the new woodland compartment once the entrance path has been resurfaced in the autumn.

In June three Volunteers installed two oak slabs either side of the haul road to warn users about vehicle movements. They also erected a section of fencing to make the field where new bird scrapes will be excavated stock proof.

Darren Woodward,
Project Officer
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Commentree online

The Forest's online news pages have just been launched.

'Commentree online' will be kept up to date with all the latest from the Forest Centre, Country Park and Forest sites. If you'd like to receive regular updates from us by email, simply visit the site and register your address. Please let us know so that we can avoid sending a paper copy too. www.marstonvale.org/news



The BRVP Volunteer Team in action
L-R Gerald, Terry, Mervyn, Tony & Nigel

Cetti's warbler

Bird walks led by Volunteers, have proved successful in terms of birds seen and heard over the last year. Leaders reckon that there have been eight Cetti's warblers on site, - regularly heard but rarely seen. This little bird is an elusive "little brown job" with an explosive voice. Do look on the website to see Volunteer Don Morris's excellent picture.

The programme of walks continues throughout the year; they always see something of interest. Do come and join them – dates on the web site.

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AGM

Volunteers' AGM

The Volunteers' AGM on 10th May followed the time-honoured pattern. Guy as Chairman reviewed the past year with pictures of us in action and Andy gave both his Treasurer's and Trustee's Reports. The officers were unopposed to continue in office, Guy as Chairman, Andy as Treasurer and Joan as Secretary. AOB was an opportunity to publicise the Woburn garden trip and the London Wetlands trip in October. It was suggested that a list of telephone numbers be compiled of Volunteers who like walking with other people, so if you would like walking companions email joan.ferguson@marstonvale.org with your name, phone number and email and I'll add you to the list.

Denis suggested that a motorised wheelchair would be a boon to people like himself who can't get about easily. It was agreed to raise this with the Trustees and our fundraiser.

After all this we loaded Denis into the Park's push-wheelchair and went for a walk around the Wetlands before returning to the Forest Centre for drinks and sandwiches.

Comings and Goings

Two of the Trust's staff are moving on. Alexis Pym, the Park's Senior Ranger since 2004, has landed a new post with the *Northmoor Trust* in Oxfordshire and leaves us at the end of June.

Alexis must be known to just about every Volunteer who has ever set foot in the Millennium Country Park; she has been responsible for getting Volunteers involved in all sorts of work with huge success. She has also taken a lead in the Park's brilliant Green Flag success and more recently the organisation's ISO 14001, Environmental Management System accreditation. Alexis's replacement, Anna Charles, joins us on 12 July.

Paul Catton, our Fundraiser may be less well known than Alexis but has played an equally important part in the Forest's successes over the last four years.

It has been through Paul's hard work that many hundreds of thousands of pounds have been brought into the Trust for use in all manner of projects. Paul is joining Sue Ryder Care as their fundraiser for the Midlands and South and leaves us at the end of August.

Both Paul and Alexis will be missed. The Volunteers wish them well in their future careers and look forward to welcoming Anna Charles and Paul's replacement to the team later in the year.



Visit to the London Wetland Centre

A trip is planned for Saturday 9th October 2010 to this excellent site. Barely a frog hop from the centre of London, and yet teeming with wild action, from water birds to water voles, dragonflies or foxes. The coach trip is being organised by June Rogers, and costs approximately £22 which includes entrance fee and bus fare. Departure time is 09.30am.

Refreshments can be purchased on the site or you may choose to take your own packed lunch. Please contact June to book your place.

A deposit of £10 is being taken with the balance due by 30th June. Seats are limited, so you need to contact book as soon as possible. **June Rogers on 01234 767037**

Support the Forest at Waitrose!

Waitrose in Ampthill is giving you a chance to support the Forest of Marston Vale through their **Community Matters** scheme. Each month everyone who shops there can vote for one of three local charities. At the end of the month £1,000 is split proportionately depending on the votes the charities received. During June the Forest of Marston Vale is one of the charities, so please show your support.

Volunteers' Spring Walk

We were fortunate that the rain, which we had had all winter, eased off a week or so before our Spring Walk and the ground had dried off a bit. The day dawned bright and clear and we caught the train to Ridgmont where we waited for the Milton Keynes people to arrive. The train came – and left without Graham and Andy getting off! This caused consternation but we set off without them, hoping that we would meet up. Robin led from the front and I puffed along at the back, first to the Round House, then across the fields and the railway line, up the hill on to the Greensand Ridge, then who should we meet but Graham

The Wonders of Woburn

On a beautiful day in May, a group of Volunteers met to discover more about the Woburn estate. One normally associates Woburn with the Duke of Bedford's stately Abbey and safari park, but there is so much more to Woburn to discover.

Martin Towsey, Gardens Manager, led us on a fascinating tour of the Abbey Gardens, including areas not open to the public. A mine of information, he told us about the history of the gardens, created by the famous landscape gardener, Humphrey Repton (1752 - 1818). Amongst some of the things we saw were a hornbeam maze, herbaceous borders, ponds, a woodland garden, the Chinese Dairy overlooking a pool and the curved camellia greenhouse, and, if you want to hire it, a cocktail party and dinner area. Martin also taught us about a range of trees. We won't be forgetting the international cedars in a hurry. It was a day of tranquility, learning, beauty and fun.

2010 is the 200th anniversary of the completion of Repton's plans at Woburn Abbey. We would highly recommend that you take some time for yourselves to experience and discover the wonders of the Woburn estate.

Susan Henderson

and Andy! Such joy (and relief) and so on to the Royal Oak. After a nice lunch, some of us taking advantage of the sunshine to eat *al fresco*, it was back to the train for our return journeys.

Non work events like this happen when Volunteers want them to. They are usually organised by members of the Volunteers' Committee but if you'd like to get involved or make a suggestion for an outing, visit or something similar, please let us know.

Joan Ferguson

Conservation tasks

It's been a busy spring for the Conservation Volunteers. They have been hedge laying both at Rectory Wood, Cranfield and in the Millennium Park. It is an ancient craft but still pays dividends in terms of renewing hedges when they get straggly.

The Sensory Garden was given a good tidy up in March and early May, on lovely sunny days and now looks attractive as summer approaches. Sowing wildflowers is always a satisfying job that will eventually beautify the Park and increase its benefit to wildlife.

It is good to see new, young faces among the regular participants, so feel free to come and join us.

All dates on the web site

Joan Ferguson

Follow us on Facebook

Yes you can now keep up to date by becoming our 'Friend'.

This is quite new for us, but with one of our newest Volunteer recruits, Kirsty Edwards, we have taken this bold step into the world of social networks. It will only work if you join us, so why not give it a try?

Lichens in the Park

About 18 months ago, while working on a scrub bash on the callow mounds, I found a lichen called *Evernia Prunastri*. It was growing on a hawthorn bush. I was quite pleased to see it because lichens, and particularly this one, are known to be bio-indicators of clean air and to the best of my knowledge this had only appeared since the brickworks had closed.

More recently various other species of lichen are growing in the hawthorns near the boardwalk.

These are: *Usnea Cornuta*, *Ramalina Canariensis*, *Parmeliopsis Ambigua*, *Hypogymnia Physodes* and *Xanthoria Polycarpa*.

I hope that I have named them correctly, since different lichens can be quite difficult to identify but, in any case, this is a good sign that air quality has improved substantially in the last two years, which must be good for flora, fauna and humans. We must all work to preserve this improvement and to ensure that nothing is allowed to jeopardize this fragile environmental improvement, such as pollution from further chimneys or heavy traffic on the roads bordering the Park.

Mike Green



Evernia Prunastri
photo Mike Green

Diary Dates—2010

For more information call:
Steve 07745 786307
Joan 01234 360178
Darren Woodward 01234 762603
Andy Lingard 01234762617

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| Sun 4 th Jul. | Sunday Stroll. Just turn up at Reception 10.15 for 10.30 start. |
| Sat & Sun 17 th & 18 th Jul. | Bedford River Festival. Volunteers needed both days. Ring Joan. |
| Sun 18 th Jul. | Otter Survey in Millennium Park. Ring Steve for details. |
| Sun 1 st Aug. | Sunday Stroll. Meet at Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. |
| Tues 10 th Aug. | Volunteers Co-ordinating Group Meeting. All Volunteers welcome. Ring Joan if you wish to attend. This is the meeting when we discuss the social calendar, so do come. |
| Sat 21 st Aug. | Wetland island clearing. Ring Steve for more details. |
| Sat 28 th Aug. | Kempston Funday. More Volunteers needed. Ring Joan. |
| Fri 3 rd Sep. | WoodWorks! setting up. Volunteers needed. Ring Joan. |
| Sat & Sun 4 th & 5 th Sep. | WoodWorks! More Volunteers needed to help. Ring Joan. |
| Sun 5 th Sep. | Sunday Stroll. Meet in Reception at 10.15 for a 10.30 start. |
| Mon 6 th Sep. | WoodWorks! clearing up. Volunteers needed. Ring Joan. |
| Sun. 19 th Sep. | Hay Raking in Little and Bramble Meadows. Ring Steve for more details. |
| Sun 3 rd Oct. | Sunday Stroll. Meet in Reception for 10.30 start. |
| Sat 9 th Oct. | London Wetland Trip. Ring June Rogers on 01234 767037 to book your place. |

Marston Vale Trust Policy on development

There's no doubt that the Vale is an area of current and future change. One doesn't have to think hard to list some pretty major developments either current or proposed; the A421 dualling, the western bypass, the eco-town, Centre parcs, Covanta etc, etc.

Our Board of Trustees have made a clear statement relating to development within the Forest area, originally as a result of the Ecotown proposal in Lidlington/Marston in 2005.

The policy applies equally now and is worth repeating here...

"While the Trust will support development that directly meets the objectives of the Forest, the Trust is neutral on individual planning applications that do not directly conflict with the aims of the Forest of Marston Vale. Where development is planned the Trust will work with developers and planners to secure a contribution to the Forest that is consistent with the Forest Plan and with the impact of the proposed development on the Vale".

(adopted 8th September 2005)



The Marston Vale Trust
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