



# REED ALL ABOUT IT

## Newsletter for Forest Volunteers

### Woodworks! Some Random memories

- ▶ A peregrine falcon which had been raised in captivity escaped while being flown. It saw a pigeon and instinctively chased it, disappeared over the trees and didn't come back. The exhibitors thought that if it made a kill it would just perch and digest overnight and hopefully return next day.
- ▶ The Clydesdales cancelled but the Vikings and the Ferret Racing each put on an extra show to fill the gap.
- ▶ The Volunteers sales made £427— which is a record!
- ▶ The Ferret Racing man didn't really need a microphone and definitely had the gift of the gab.
- ▶ Venison burgers, chocolate brownies and coffee & walnut cake were all absolutely delicious.
- ▶ The Vikings' battle with the children was fearsome. The little girls in pink scored multiple hits and the Vikings retreated in disorder. Apparently children, particularly little girls in pink, don't pull their punches!
- ▶ Chain Saw Carving drew an enormous crowd and the subsequent auction raised £80 on both days.
- ▶ The music drew good crowds on both days and John did sterling work selling raffle tickets.
- ▶ Overall, with super weather, 3177 people and making a profit, this was our best WoodWorks yet.

Joan Ferguson

Issue 41 - Sept. 2012



Joan, in the Craft Tent, doing what she does best.

### THE ANCIENT MOWER

"Can you get it going"? is a question I have been asked many times about an Allen Scythe that has been "rediscovered" at the Forest Centre where it has lain untouched for 8 years. Prior to that, it had been abandoned in an outbuilding & no one knows why or how long it had been there. It was unearthed by Tony Talbot, our past M.D. when he moved to the property. An Allen Scythe is a primitive yet robust, versatile, motorised grass cutting machine that was in production between 1935 & 1973. A little research indicates that this particular model was in production between 1942 & 1953. A visual inspection seemed to show that all the

bits, pieces & dangly things were in the right place & surprisingly the engine rotated freely so I was encouraged to "give it a go".

So far, progress has been leisurely - I have freed off some rusted bits & probed into the electrical system & some internals. I still can't answer that question with any certainty but I believe there is a fair chance that one day it will fire up & once more do the job it was designed for. In the meantime, if you hear me talking about "The Ancient Mower" please don't be offended, I will be referring to the Allen Scythe & not a volunteer!

Derek Edmunds

### Volunteer Receptionists

The last few months have been gratifyingly busy in the Forest Centre shop and café bar. Reception staff have been really grateful for the help of the team of volunteers who have been helping them cope with their many and varied tasks. The volunteers are there to ease the load so that questions from visitors can be answered fully without the queue getting restive because, at the end of the day, the customer is king! The training given has made this straightforward. Feedback from the volunteers suggest that they find the role satisfying too, so if you are interested in doing this, contact

[joan.ferguson@marstonvale.org](mailto:joan.ferguson@marstonvale.org)

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](mailto:volunteers@marstonvale.org)

## Elm Project Update

The long wait is over, it's all systems go for the elm project!

Having spent the spring and summer diligently attending to our little elm saplings every need (mainly watering, but talking to them as well of course!); happily we can all look forward to getting the little tree nursery we had in mind for the next stage of their development up and running over the next few months. The application to Biffa funding was after all successful, to the tune of £1030; so we can crack on without MVCoG having to dig too deeply in to its own pockets.

Having had a quick look the other day it is about time too, as their roots are bursting to get out of the pots they are in, which shows that they have done well over the summer. As well as working on constructing the raised beds, the Community Tree Trust's Colin Carpenter will be invited over to the Forest Centre to share all his experience of growing young trees with the forest volunteers, so that we are equipped with the necessary knowledge to grow the trees on for another year or so before they are planted out in to the forest.

I'll keep you posted as to when things are likely to get underway, and what volunteer task days are planned.

Andrew Lingard

## Olympics Volunteering Experience

Over the summer, I worked as a volunteer for the London 2012 Olympic Games on the cycling team. I worked as a course marshal, making sure the road was clear up to the point when the race passed through our section, for both the men's and the women's road races. In the time trials, I worked as a spotter for a crossing, standing in the road and checking it was clear for people to cross. Our team was based at Sandown racecourse, where we gathered each day to meet with our teams and get briefed on the jobs for the day. We were taken on buses and dropped along the path - I was placed along Hampton Court Way for the road races and near Esher for the times trails. I was lucky enough to be able to stay with family over the two weeks I was down in London and, being right on the Jubilee Line, it made travelling very

easy.

And lastly the uniform. It may not have been the best colour for me, but it made us stand out and easy to identify during shift times.

Michael Glover

## Olympic Experience

It was about 18 months ago when I first filled in the application form to help at the London Olympics – or to be a 'Gamesmaker' to give the role it's proper title. An interview followed and then four training events in London, before the big day of the start of the Olympics arrived. I was assigned to the Main Olympic site at Stratford, which I was really pleased about as there would be so much to see there. The opportunity to be there was fantastic. The atmosphere was just so very, very friendly and the sports amazing! - I have never posed for so many photographs as people wanted pictures of themselves with a 'Gamesmaker'. I had special attraction because of the surname 'Wiggins' - many people asking if I was related to Bradley, and one guy in his twenties asking for a picture of himself with me showing my official ID with my name prominent as 'his mates would never know I was not Bradley's mum!!!!'. The whole Olympic site is enormous and the gardens beautifully laid out. We were well looked after at the site when working, with frequent chilled water, and a dinner style meal every day. I am quite missing the atmosphere now that I am not there. It is just so good to feel I was part of the Games. People were queuing to get in long before the gates opened at 7am. I spent all my shift time at the various entry gates around the main site in Stratford, welcoming people in, checking they had no bottles of water to take though the security area, queue management (there were no long queues to deal with, but keeping people aware of the shortest queue in the vicinity) and various duties around the 'airport style' security. When our shift was over we were free to go back onto the site (after clearing security of course, just like all the other visitors, as we also had to do when we went on site for our meal break). The main highlights: going to the final dress rehearsal of the Olympic games opening ceremony (and those chimneys depicting the industrial revolution did remind me of the Stewartby chimneys), being given a ticket to see the quarter final of the handball (even though it meant I was not back at my

sister's house until after midnight and had an early start the next morning). Other never to be forgotten highlights: hearing the massive 'roar' of the crowds in the main stadium and other venues when Team GB did well, welcoming people from all over the world, the atmosphere on the hill watching the big screen live; and my husband Alan was thrilled to have the experience of holding a gold medal when he was at the press centre where he was based for some of his shifts.

Elizabeth Wiggins

## Bioblitz at the Forest Centre

On the weekend of 23/24 June the Forest Centre was a hive of activity to find out all that could be learned about all the wildlife that flies, jumps, swims, crawls, hops, slithers and scurries. I was fortunate enough to have taken a walk into the wetlands before the time for the Bird Walk, so had already met Steve Blain (county bird recorder) and Forest Volunteer Martin Green in the hide overlooking the Pillinge. As 4pm came round there were about 10 of us, including baby Benjamin in his carry seat on Dad's back. We stopped in Bramble Meadow whilst our guides identified several calls. We saw kestrels and wood pigeons and heard chiffchaff, blackbird, robin and cuckoo.

We came to the scrape hide but there was very little to be seen as the reeds are well grown. We heard reed bunting and willow warbler. And there were chaffinches and various tits enjoying the seed feeders. A quick peek at feeding station revealed more tits and chaffinches – they must be the best fed bird groups in the whole of Mid Beds!

We finally reached the Pillinge hide and there we were incredibly fortunate to catch sight of a red crested pochard. Steve and Martin set up their powerful 'scopes to let us get really clear views of this striking bird. Amongst the islands and tern raft we were treated to sights of tern chicks on the raft, the adults gracefully flying above, a lapwing sitting on the nest, oystercatchers flying back and forth to feed their chicks, circling kestrels and a buzzard. A moorhen was tidying her nest, and many grebes were busy along the lake.

As we walked back through Little Meadow we came across members of the Beds Natural History Society with butterfly nets. They were catching

mainly dragonflies and damselflies and had just found an Emperor dragonfly. It was an amazing creature, beautifully marked and we knew we were lucky to be there at that moment. Heading back to the Centre we were still hearing many bird calls, but notable by its absence was the Cetti's warbler. Steve and Martin patiently answered all our many questions and I am very grateful to them for giving up their time and sharing their breadth of knowledge with us.

Sue Livens

## National Tree Week, Christmas Tree Festival and Tree Planting

For the first time, we are going to celebrate National Tree Week. The plan is to have a magical Christmas Tree Festival on Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> November & Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> December at the Forest Centre, with large Christmas trees out by the lake (sponsored by big local companies) and smaller trees inside (sponsored and decorated by local organisations such as schools, play-groups, youth clubs, WI, church groups, etc) as part of a competition. A small entrance fee will be charged to cover expenses.

Mulled wine and mince pies will help put us all in the mood to enjoy the lights, decorations, childrens' crafts and Christmas grotto, complete with Santa and his sack of presents. In addition, we hope that our stock of Christmas trees and wreaths will arrive in time to be on sale by the front door. The weekend will culminate with tree planting at Wootton on Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Shuttle buses will run from the Forest Centre from 10.45am to the planting site, returning at regular intervals to deliver more people and take back others when they've had enough.

Joan Ferguson

## Restoration of Fenlake Meadows Nature Reserve Project, Bedford



Fenlake Meadow

As part of ongoing works to deliver Bedford River Valley Park, the Marston Vale Trust is working in partnership with Bedford Borough Council and the Environment Agency to restore an area of floodplain grazing marsh outside of Bedford known locally as Fenlake Meadows. The wet grazing fields are in decline and reverting to fen habitat due to poor drainage and outdated infrastructure to control water levels.

To reverse this process and restore the floodplain grazing marsh, investment is required to fund a suite of works that will involve flood modelling, survey work, analysis of ground conditions and the installation of water level control structures.

Detailed design work will require a topographical survey in order to provide accurate hydrological information to ensure the engineering of sustainable solutions. Detailed flood modelling will also be needed and these works will comprise wholesale restoration and enhancement of the existing derelict drainage network, and the installation of a number of water level control structures so that water flow and level can be completely controlled across the entire site. The ditch restoration works would be phased over 3 years to minimise the impact on any existing ecological interest, in accordance with good practice. In combination, these works would restore the eco-hydrological functionality of Fenlake Meadows, enabling their restoration to Floodplain Grazing Marsh.

In July of this year MVT were awarded a grant of £88,523.00 from SITA with a further £15,000 from Bedford Borough Council. Design work and site investigations are currently taking place in advance of an application to the Environment Agency for consent for works to take place within the flood plain. Once consent is obtained then excavation works will begin in Spring 2013.

Darren Woodward

## In Memoriam

**Don Morris** sadly died on the 4th September after spending the weekend at Woodworks. He was tireless in his efforts as both a volunteer ranger and wildlife photographer. His memory will live on in all the superb photographs of plants, animals and particularly birdlife that he had taken.

We will remember him especially for his gentle, unassuming manner, his happy smile and his wry humour.

The cremation was followed by a wake at the Forest Centre on 18<sup>th</sup> September.

**Paula Krasniqi**, who worked in the catering dept. for the past few years, has died of cancer. She leaves a husband and four children and will be missed by all who know her.

Paula was a very sociable person and never made a fuss, even when really ill. She and her friends raised £14,500 for Cancer Research during her illness and her memory will linger on as "Pink Ladies Night" is a fixture on this year's calendar at the Forest Centre.

Her funeral was held in Marston village church and her wake was also held at the Forest Centre on the 18<sup>th</sup> September.

# Diary Dates

## For more information call:

Stephen 07745 786307, Joan 01234 360178, Anna Charles 01234 762614,  
Darren Woodward 01234 762603, Andy Lingard 01234 762617

Tues. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Oct	<b>BRVP Conservation Task</b>	Contact Darren on 01234 762603
Sun. 7 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Sunday Stroll in Millennium Country Park</b>	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½-2 hours. £1.00 per person payable on the day.
Tues. 9 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Volunteers Meeting</b>	7.00 pm at the Forest Centre
Sun. 14 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Seed Collection</b>	Meet at Button's Ramsey, next to Cross Keys pub at Wood End, Kempston, MK43 9BE at 10.00 am (Please don't park in the pub car park)
Sun. 21 <sup>st</sup> Oct	<b>Apple Day at Bromham Mill</b>	
Mon. 29 <sup>th</sup> Oct	<b>Kids Event – It's a Hoot!</b>	Find out about owls with stories and craft activities. Need to book on 01234 767037.
Fri. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov	<b>Kids Event – Helping hedgehogs</b>	Make a prickly friend with their own hibernation house and find out how to help hedgehogs. Need to book on 01234 767037.
Sun. 4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Sunday Stroll in Millennium Country Park</b>	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½-2 hours. £1.00 per person payable on the day.
Tues. 6 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>BRVP Conservation Task</b>	Contact Darren on 01234 762603
Sat. 10 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Bird Walk – Fieldfares &amp; Redwings</b>	Meet outside Forest Centre reception. 8-11 am. £3/person. £1 reduction for concessions, Volunteers & Friends.
Sat. 17 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Conservation Task</b>	10.15am – 4.15 pm. Ring Anna or Stephen on 01234 762610
Wed. 28 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>Pink Ladies Night</b>	7-11pm – in aid of Breast Cancer awareness. Crafts & gifts suitable for Christmas gifts
Thurs. 29 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<b>MVT Annual General Meeting</b>	5.15 for 5.30pm start. Open to the general public. As light refreshments are provided, please email <a href="mailto:info@marstonvale.org">info@marstonvale.org</a> in advance to let us know if you wish to attend.
Fri. 30 <sup>th</sup> Nov. & Sat. 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec	<b>Christmas Tree Festival</b>	4-8 pm
Sun. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec	<b>Sunday Stroll in Millennium Country Park</b>	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start. 1½-2 hours. £1.00 per person payable on the day.
Sun. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec.	<b>Treeplanting</b>	10am – 3.00 pm. Shuttle buses from the Forest Centre
Tues. 4 <sup>th</sup> Dec.	<b>BRVP Conservation Task</b>	Contact Darren on 01234 762603
Sun. 16 <sup>th</sup> Dec.	<b>Conservation Task</b>	10.15am – 4.15 pm. Ring Anna or Stephen on 01234 762610

## Snippets

### Christmas is Coming!

Don't forget that there are lots of good ideas for gifts in the shop—including our calendars and trolley tokens.

### Food for Thought!

Over the next few weeks, Shirley will be organising some lunchtime sessions on a wide range of subjects including gardening, cooking, art, local history, etc. Watch this space for further information.

### Green Gateway Information Afternoon

Sunday 14 October, 2-4pm

There will be an all day seed collection event happening on this day, and we intend to add another event to it, to attract local people from Kempston, Kempston Rural and Wootton to come to find out a bit more about the 40 hectares of planting that currently makes up the Green Gateway. It's also an opportunity for us to promote the planting day on Sunday 2 December and, hopefully, meet people who might want to get involved in the Gateway more in the coming months - another planting event in February and a summer event in 2013. If you'd like to get involved please contact Guy.

### RAAI Copy Deadline

Please note that the copy deadline for the next issue of Reed All About It is Monday 3rd December 2012.

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