



# REED ALL ABOUT IT

## Newsletter for Forest Volunteers

### Christmas Tree Festival

Issue 42 - Dec. 2012

The excitement was tangible. Santa was at the Forest Centre for our first Christmas Tree Festival on the first weekend of December. Excited children saw the sleigh on the roof with a twinkly reindeer (thanks to Dave). The roundabout and swing boats were well used before the youngsters even got into the building.

Inside, the building was transformed into a twinkling grove of trees with stall everywhere – craft stalls, the raffle, charity stalls and, upstairs in the grotto, SANTA!

For the adults, there were minced pies and mulled wine, in addition to all the usual choices in the Café bar, plus handbags and toiletries, candles and photos and ... and ... and ...

The punters were amazingly good tempered, given the crowded conditions (probably helped by the mulled wine!) and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, including the Volunteers.

The Volunteers' stand in the hallway was in the perfect position to catch the eye and did a good trade in calendars, bird boxes and ladybird houses. We also had a children's craft stall, just outside Santa's grotto, where queuing parents could see it and be tempted. The fir cone trees, which the children decorated, were very successful and made £120, bringing the total for volunteer sales over the weekend up to £221.51.

The decorated trees themselves were sited both outside (the larger ones) and inside, along the window wall. The Volunteers had a tree and decorated it with bow saws, spades, hammers, bumble bees, snakes, robins, bird boxes and even a mouse house, like those used in the park, with

resident (felt) mice. The mouse house must have been good as someone pinched it! On reflection, we decided that perhaps we should make some for sale next Christmas as alternative tree decorations.

As well as ideas for next year, the Volunteers received some good suggestions for speakers at the next AGM, which will be followed up. We gained four new volunteers, met up with lots of people we haven't seen for ages and learned some valuable lessons to be applied at a later date.

### In this edition...

- Tree planting
- Trust AGM
- Ash die-back
- Elm project update
- Diary dates

The Centre overall received many more visitors than usual for a winter weekend. So, all in all, the festival is thought to have been a great success.

Joan Ferguson



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)

## Tree planting – Wiles Wood – 2<sup>nd</sup> December

I awoke to a bright, sunny morning - but there was quite a frost on the ground too and it was very cold. I had put my name down to attend the tree planting in Wiles Wood, so I was relieved that it wasn't tipping it down!

I could see from the windows at the back of my house that the advance party had arrived and was busy erecting the marquee, etc. I had watched the site being prepared in the previous days, the rows of canes ready and waiting for their saplings.

By the time I emerged from my house, I had so many layers of clothes on, I felt like Michelin Man! I walked round to the site to join in the fun. Already one or two early birds were busy planting, whilst we awaited the arrival of the first buses.

In order to keep warm, I decided to do a bit of planting, rather than standing around. So I joined Donna and we soon had quite a routine going. She dug the holes, I fetched the saplings and banged in the canes, both helping to refill the holes. As the morning wore on and the sun got to work, the ground became increasingly muddy - although somehow Donna managed to keep one knee completely clean! I wasn't so careful



Photo courtesy of John O'Reilly

and got absolutely plastered! Despite the many other activities taking place over a very busy weekend at the Forest Centre, there was a good turnout of volunteers to oversee the event. And about 250 members of the public came along to plant trees. There were lots of children, including a group of Brownies from Wootton, who clearly enjoyed running about and getting very dirty. And, between them all, around 1500 trees were planted by the end of the day. I'd say that was a successful day ...

Jean Sargeant



Photo of Zara and baby Ivey by Derek Edmunds

## Ash Dieback In the Forest of Marston Vale

To date, there are no confirmed cases of ash dieback in the Forest of Marston Vale, but survey work continues. However, we do have concerns about some trees in Buttons Ramsey and Wiles Wood. In due course, Forestry Commission personnel will take samples of these trees to determine whether the disease is present. In the meantime, to help the Forestry Commission and other Government agencies, our survey work continues. We'll be sharing all results with the Forestry Commission, and will continue to keep up to date with the latest developments.

The Trust has helped plant over 250,000 ash trees in the last 20 years, so the disease is a really important issue for the Forest's future. The vast majority of the trees planted in the Trust's own woodlands have come from seeds collected and grown locally, which could reduce the risk of having introduced the disease. It's too early to say and we await the results of the scientific effort currently underway to provide some meaningful information and guidance.

Should you wish to learn more about ash dieback, please visit <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara> The site includes good descriptions of how to recognise symptoms, including a short video, as well as details of where to report suspected cases. In the meantime, we will not be planting ash this winter. We will increase the proportion of other native tree species to make up for the lack of ash.

# Good News, Bad News!

Let's get the bad news out of the way first. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful with our Awards for All bid which was for the Talks & Walk project. However, we do have fingers in other pies, so watch this space ...

The absolutely brilliant news is that we won Transform Your Patch's East of England award. This will mean that by spring of next year, we will be able to build a new play area at the Forest Centre. If you voted for us, thank you! The new play area will make a huge difference to the Centre and Country Park but, most importantly, to our visitors. Anyone who has charge of little ones will know the value of really good play equipment.

## Elm Project

Andy Lingard reports that work to construct the raised beds for the elm saplings will need to proceed with all haste in order to get them planted out before they start into growth again. He will be getting quotes for materials, etc. in the near future. He will let us know when volunteer help will be needed.

## RAAI Copy Deadline

Please note that the copy deadline for the next issue of Reed All About It is Monday, 18th March 2013. Any notes, thoughts, articles, pictures welcome—to Joan Ferguson at the Forest Centre.

## Synopsis of Trust AGM – Review of 2011-12

The financial year 2011/12 was a successful one for the Trust, in which all aims outlined in last year's report were either completed by the year end or well underway. It was a good year for tree planting in the Vale, (despite a postponed tree-planting day due to the ground being frozen from a prolonged frost!) with over 23 acres of Community Woodland planted.

The final phase of Octagon Wood, near Willington, was completed early in 2012, in partnership with Bedford Borough Council, on their land. The tree planting involved planting of over 9,000 trees/shrubs through 2 corporate, 1 public and a planting event with Willington Lower School. Financial contributions towards tree planting and woodland creation were received from Ricoh, GE Transportation and Network Rail.

The Millennium Country Park achieved the Green Flag award for the fifth consecutive year and they stated in their award documentation "Overall this Park came across as well maintained and enjoyed by those who use it. It is pleasing to see that being aware of some of the tough operating environments with all the associated financial pressures that exist, this one appears to be so well managed." In addition, the ISO 14001 standard Environmental Management System for the Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park were retained, to prove continued good practice within environmental management.

Despite the continuing difficult economic conditions and unseasonal weather at times throughout the year, the commercial activities of the Trust's trading subsidiaries returned significant profits to the Trust, a tribute to the hard work and imagination of the Forest and catering teams in continuing to deliver excellent events, activities, products and services to the general public and in servicing our commercial business customers' needs.

Once again the Trust wishes to record its sincere thanks for the hard work and dedication of approximately 100 Volunteers who gave over 8,000 hours of their time throughout the course of the year. Without this support many of the activities undertaken here at the Forest Centre, Millennium Country Park and our other Community Forests would not have been so successful. Without this dedicated group of volunteers with their multitude of interests and skills, covering areas as diverse as park rangers to children's activities and administration, the Trust would not be as

successful as it is.

Woodworks last year (2011) enjoyed a great day on the Saturday, but succumbed to a real downpour on the Sunday, which adversely affected visitor numbers and meant that the event broke even. The Forest Centre received in excess of 160,000 visits throughout the year, with the Lakeside Cafe and shop sales holding up well; the end of the financial year benefiting from sunny, cool and dry weather which helped improve visitor numbers. Cafe sales, including ice cream and bike hire, all performed better than budget and this, together with cost savings, resulted in a net profit for Marston Vale Services and a donation to Marston Vale Trust of £58,807.

Community engagement continued to go from strength to strength throughout the organisation. Both the Friends of the Forest scheme and Corporate Friends of the Forest scheme were re-launched with new branding and literature, kindly sponsored by NFU Mutual. And new Corporate Friends in 2011/12 were Spectrum Recruitment, Bedford Audi, Vindis, and DHL in partnership with Sainsburys.

An 'Awards for All' Lottery grant was successfully secured to allow major re-design of the Forest of Marston Vale website and the production of a replacement 'Forest' leaflet – all with the purpose of increasing understanding, awareness and community engagement. Through our tri-annual 'Commentree' newsletters and Advertising Wraps on the Beds on Sunday, The Trust was able to reach supporters and visitors with information and news from the Forest of Marston Vale.

Nick Webb



# Diary Dates

For more information call:

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

Thurs. 27 <sup>th</sup> Dec.	<b>Bank holiday birds</b>	Maybe the perfect time for an early New Year's resolution? 8-11 am. £3/person, £1 reduction for concessions, Volunteers and Friends. Book in advance but pay the leader. Call 01234 767037
Fri. 4 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 2013	<b>Kids Event – Winter Wildlife</b>	Indoor activities and crafts to find out about winter visitors to the country park. Need to book on 01234 767037.
Sun. 6 <sup>th</sup> Jan.	<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. 13 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>Scrub Bash and Volunteers Lunch</b>	Meet in Reception at 10.00. Ring Joan on 01234 360178 before 8 <sup>th</sup> Jan. to book your lunch.
Thu. 17 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>Learning Lunchtime – Wildlife Gardening with Jane Perrone</b>	Jane is the Guardian's gardening editor and blogs about organic gardening, growing fruit & veg, etc. 11-12 noon. No need to book
Sat. 19 <sup>th</sup> Jan.	<b>Path Clearance</b>	Clearing scrub and other vegetation encroaching on the paths in the park. 10.00am – 4.15 pm. Ring Anna or Stephen on 01234 762610
Tue. 22 <sup>nd</sup> Jan	<b>Forest Volunteers Meeting</b>	7pm in the Café bar. Ring Joan on 01234 360178 to let her know you will be attending.
Sat. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb.	<b>Bloomin' bitta' birds</b>	It's cold and probably windy and there's a chance that something unusual will turn up in the Park around now. 8-11 am. £3/person, £1 reduction for concessions, Volunteers and Friends. Book in advance but pay the leader. Call 01234 767037
Sun. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb.	<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.
Thu. 7 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	<b>Learning Lunchtime – Age UK</b>	An expert from Age UK will be visiting to talk about what you may be entitled to as years gather pace! 11-12 noon. No need to book
Sun. 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	<b>Hedge planting (to be confirmed)</b>	10.00am – 4.15 pm. Ring Anna or Stephen on 01234 762610
Thu. 21 <sup>st</sup> Feb.	<b>Learning Lunchtime – Writing your Will</b>	Have you written your will or does your will need updating? Experts from Park Wood-fine Heald Mellows LLP will be here to help. 11-12 noon. No need to book
Sun. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mar.	<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.
Thu. 7 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	<b>Learning Lunchtime – The Art of Spoon Carving and so much more</b>	Martin Hazel is a great friend of the Forest and has some very entertaining stories to tell. 11-12 noon. No need to book
Sat. 16 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	<b>Weaving Willow and work in the Sensory Garden</b>	Help reweave the willow sculptures in the Sensory Wildlife Garden, along with a tidy up after winter. 10.00am – 4.15 pm. Ring Anna or Stephen on 01234 762610
Thu. 21 <sup>st</sup> Mar.	<b>Learning Lunchtime – Inheritance Tax Planning</b>	Rachel Efetha will take you through how to plan for the inevitable, without leaving problems for your family. 11-12 noon. No need to book
Sun. 31 <sup>st</sup> Mar. and Mon. 1 <sup>st</sup> Apr.	<b>Kids Event – Easter Trail</b>	Follow the Easter Trail around the Park, answering wildlife questions as you go. Back at the Forest Centre, check your answers and receive a small prize. £2 per child.

*With best wishes for Christmas and  
the New Year to all our readers!*