



REED ALL ABOUT IT

Newsletter for Forest Volunteers

Issue 46 - Dec 2013

More Allen Scythe News

Tuesday 22nd October 2013 was such a memorable day that I must remember to send myself a card next year!

It was the day of a trial run for our Allen Scythe. There was a time when I thought I would be more likely to witness Keith Chegwin, dressed in cycling gear, win the Tour de France than see a 65 year old machine move forward under its own power after years of standing idle.

Having poked about internally, removed, repaired & adjusted things, it was time for a test.

With Stephen *The Stig* Gascoigne giving encouragement & a strong arm, we wheeled the thing into the open.

Stephen coaxed the engine into life, I engaged the drive & we moved smoothly forward. Oh! deep joy. I must say that Stig Gascoigne impressed me with his silky operator skills. He negotiated the course & executed a smooth U turn that Barack Obama would have been proud of. The expression on Stephen's face as he finished his run was like that of Mo Farah taking Olympic Gold.

Moving forward with this project is now possible thanks to a generous donation from the volunteers purse.

To satisfy safety concerns, when fully restored, I will fit an emergency stop device which will eliminate any probability of separating dogs from their legs.

While the sight of "Cheggers" wearing a yellow shirt & Lycra shorts with a big



bulge will never be seen (at least not in public!), a working Allen Scythe will one day make an appearance in the

Country Park.

Derek Edmunds, Volunteer

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

Unsung Heroes

The Trustees regularly ask Nigel, our trustee, to pass on their thanks for all the hard work that Volunteers put in to make our Forest grow. People seen regularly at Volunteers meetings get to hear these accolades but, after our last meeting, I was thinking about all the people who labour away quietly without ever getting a pat on the back. I realised that these volunteers work in all areas of the Forest Volunteer Team, both indoors and out. These are our "Unsung Heroes".

Our Rangers do all the jobs that keep the park smart and safe, such as litter picking, unlocking gates, gardening, pruning, watering, hedge laying and a million other things.

The "Let's Go" team load the database and chase up funding to enable the database of walks, audited by Forest Volunteers, to be supported. Not forgetting the people who share their IT expertise in other ways.

Sunday Stroll, bird walk and health walk leaders regularly turn out in all weathers and have an enthusiastic following.

We have a "manufacturing team" who produce an apparently endless supply of ladybird houses, bird boxes, lavender bags, necklaces, etc for sale, the proceeds of which help our Forest grow.

Our Grange estate, which is part of the future Bedford River Valley Park, is supported by volunteers who regularly carry out tasks to maintain and improve the environment so the general public can enjoy the area.

The Woodworks festival, Tree Festival and Children's events all get publicity but the unsung heroes labour on and we tend to forget the wide range we cover. To all these volunteers as well as the "front of house" people, the Trust and Forest Team extend their thanks and appreciation. Without us, all these tasks would be neglected and our Forest would not grow so successfully.

Joan Ferguson

The WREN Project

This summer has seen the completion of a three part project funded by WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd) in the Millennium Country Park. The project involved some exciting enhancements to our Wetlands Nature Reserve which will benefit both visitors and wildlife.

Part one was the construction of an artificial nesting bank for sand martins. Numbers of sand martins have declined over the years due to loss of nesting habitat. They traditionally nest in cliffs and old quarries and dig out nest burrows on the face of the cliff. We have installed an artificial bank/wall to try and replicate a cliff face and offer much needed nesting opportunities for these birds. The wall is constructed using blocks with pipes set into it. The pipes are filled with sand and it is these that the sand martins will hopefully burrow into to make their nests. We will need to be patient and wait until next spring, when migratory sand martins arrive back in the UK, to find out if they approve of our hard work.

The second part was the construction a bird watching hide on the edge of the Pillinge. The 9m x 2.4m timber hide was installed by a specialist company and even incorporates a swallow nesting extension to provide nesting habitat for these birds. The hide has a section suitable for wheelchairs with lower windows, and ramped access with a wide door. The hide is located with excellent views over the Pillinge and across to the new sand martin bank. This new hide is situated close to the main Forest Centre and is accessible via surfaced tracks.

The final part of the project was to install a series of wader scrapes in Bottom meadow. We have been managing this area to encourage wading birds to breed and overwinter for a number of years. This part of the project was designed to increase the quantity and quality of potential feeding habitat in the meadow.

Waders require areas of shallow

Photographic competition!

Can I put a plea out to all those photographers out there? I'm already thinking about our calendar for 2015 and will be looking for stunning images which reflect the seasons—birds, wild life, trees, insects, people enjoying the facilities, etc. The "prize" will be to get your pic printed in the 2015 calendar. So keep your camera to hand whenever you're out and about and get clicking ... send your pics to joan.ferguson@marstonvale.org

I look forward to seeing your photos and thanks in advance.

Jean Sargeant

water with muddy margins for feeding, particularly if they have young chicks in spring. A series of 8 'wader scrapes' have been dug. These are shallow ponds with a maximum depth of 50cm with very gradual sloping sides. The scrapes are likely to take many months, or even years, to mature and become good quality feeding habitat for visiting wading birds but initial signs are very good (they are holding water!)

We are really pleased to have finally completed this project, so please come along and have a look. There is a small entry charge to the Wetlands Nature Reserve and tickets can be purchased at reception. All proceeds are used to continue the management of this special area of the Millennium Country Park.

Anna Charles

Trust AGM—18th November 2013

Approximately 40 people attended in the newly re-furnished Rectory Room. There was a little confusion regarding the start time but at least no-one was late!

The business part of the meeting was dealt with fairly quickly, with last year's minutes accepted. Debbie Hassall gave a review of the work over the last year and Nick Webb summarised the Forest Team's achievements, the principal amongst these being the Barn, the end of WoodWorks! and how new, diverse functions will replace it and the erection of the windmill. The future looks good! The remaining business was to accept the accounts, the re-election of Directors and appointment of Auditors.

The guest speaker was Ian Tubby who spoke about 'Grown in Britain'. This is still a fairly new organisation which grew from the public outcry over the government proposal to sell off Forestry Commission assets. 'Grown in Britain' is heavily involved in promoting and developing wood products throughout the construction, DIY and associated industries. Britain has the capacity to fill a far larger market than is currently being supplied with both hard and soft woods, and still have sustainable reserves and new planting. The softwood situation of both supply and demand is working well, but hardwoods are going to take several years more to close that gap. The major problem at present seems to be matching end user needs to supply from sawmills, growers, etc. Ian told of a sawmill where the skilled staff are already beyond retirement age, but few opportunities are available for apprenticeships and other training of younger people to attain these skills.

Bringing the products to the British market was given a big boost at a recent 'Grown in Britain' exhibition week in the form of a beautifully crafted table and benches displayed in Heal's department store. As the piece cost £2,500 pounds, not too many sales were made, but it put the logo in the public eye. Ian explained that the same wood could have been sent to Korea to have the same pieces made up and shipped back, but the green miles would be horrendous.

He was delighted to know we are using our thinned and coppiced wood to market locally, as this is exactly in line with their ethos.

He finished with a lively question and answer session, and we came away feeling that a lot of new knowledge had been taken on board. Finally, we'd all like to send our thanks to Helen and the café/bar staff who prepared and served a delicious buffet after meeting closed.

Sue Livens

On the right track!

During late summer two new lengths of forest track were installed at Rectory Wood, on Tartlett's Close and Plunder's Hill; thereby completing the overall network of over 3km of year round accessible routes for visitors to the site. A timely move, given that Plunder's Hill is the Forest of Marston Vale's tree planting site for this winter. Importantly, the new tracks link directly to Cranfield village, opening up the whole area to more people, more of the time. Also, the new surfaced routes will make it easier getting around the woodlands to carry out management operations in the future, a key requirement if they are to supply some timber and other wood products as they mature. Funding for the works was provided by Biffa and the Forestry Commission. This year's planting will complete the creation of Rectory Wood, ten years after the first trees were planted. Something worthy of a celebration, so watch this space!

Andy Lingard

Domestic appliance or what?

I was talking to someone the other day—actually, it would be more accurate to say I was listening to someone who was going on about how uneventful life is. Daytime TV is repetitive and dull & the price of eggs had increased so much that he was reduced to just eating "soldiers" for breakfast. I would have lingered to hear about removing milk bottle seals & the difficulty with getting a medical appointment but I remembered that I urgently needed to check the size of this year's conkers, or something equally as important & I made my escape.

As I was (mentally) contemplating my conkers, I thought "how sad when your life is about as exhilarating as a floor mop & probably less useful as well". Anyway, because my thoughts often take me to random places & I didn't have anything more worthwhile to do, I began to consider my own situation.

I have a few interests, including volunteering at the Forest Centre where some tasks may be repetitive but never boring. For instance, returning a broken tool to a serviceable state again is pleasing but **WOW!!** getting a smooth finish on a rough piece of timber is like eating sausages - it is entirely satisfying no matter how many times you do it.

So I have to say "Thank You" to the Forest Centre for preventing me from prematurely becoming like a vacuum cleaner without suction. Now, I wonder what's on the box tomorrow morning?

Derek Edmunds

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 5 th Jan	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.
Tue 7 th Jan	BVRP Volunteer Task	9.30 – 3.30. Ring Darren on 01234 762603
Sun 19 th Jan	Conservation Task – path clearance	10.00am – 4.15 pm. Ring Anna or Stephen on 01234 762614
Sun 26 th Jan	Volunteers' Scrub Bash and lunch	10.00 am start at Barn with lunch about 1.00 Names to Joan. joan.ferguson@marstonvale.org
Sat 1 st Feb	Guided bird walk – the winter park	8-11 am. £3/person, £1 reduction for concessions, Volunteers and Friends. Book in advance but pay the leader. Call 01234 767037
Sun 2 nd Feb	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 15 th Feb	Conservation Task – scrub clearance	10.00am – 4.15 pm. Ring Anna or Stephen on 01234 762614
Mon 17 th Feb	Kids' Event – Rainbow Fish	Indoor activities and crafts for kids. Need to book on 01234 767037.
Fri 21 st Feb	Kids' Event – Mole's Underground World	Indoor activities and crafts for kids. Need to book on 01234 767037.
Sun 2 nd Mar	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 Mar	Conservation Task – willow weaving and garden clear up	10.00am – 4.15 pm. Ring Anna or Stephen on 01234 762614
Sat 5 th Apr	Guided walk – early migrants and wildflowers	8-11 am. £3/person, £1 reduction for concessions, Volunteers and Friends. Book in advance but pay the leader. Call 01234 767037
Sun 6 th Apr	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.

Snippets

I am sad to tell you that Andrew Eardley died on 30th September 2013. Andrew was a Forest Volunteer until about five years ago and the Forest Database, which he set up, is a well used and fitting memorial to him. Jenny, his widow, and all his family have our sympathy and best wishes.

Another, longstanding volunteer has also died recently —Carmela Semeraro. Carmela was involved in the Changing Landscapes, Changing Lives oral history project that took place in the early days of the Forest Centre. She will be sadly missed, but fondly remembered.

RAAI Copy Deadline

Please note that the copy deadline for the next issue of Reed All About It is Monday 3rd March 2014. Any notes, thoughts, articles, pictures welcome—to Joan Ferguson at the Forest Centre.