



Issue 33 – October 2010

# REED ALL ABOUT IT

## Newsletter for Forest Volunteers



*Carpe Diem* as advertising hoarding on the Great Ouse

## Bedford River Festival 2010

This year we took our narrowboat "Carpe Diem" to the Bedford River Festival. As Joan had offered to display banners for this year's WoodWorks! these were draped on the sides of the

boat which was also decorated with flags and balloons. The message was clearly visible from both sides of the river when we joined the parade of arrowboats. An eager band of volunteers joined us on both days to talk to people about the Forest of Marston Vale and to hand out leaflets for WoodWorks! They also encouraged people to vote for us in the Big Lottery Draw and to sign up for eCommentree, which over 80 people did. It was a successful and sociable weekend. The Volunteers

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### Follow us on Facebook

Keep up to date by becoming a member of our new group. Forest Volunteer Kirsty Edwards has helped us into the world of social networks. Why not give it a try?

enjoyed the narrowboat parade, the odd glass of wine (or two or three) and the general ambiance of the festival. (PS Carpe Diem, meaning "seize the day", is Joan's motto for retirement)

Terry 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)*

# New Arrivals

## Anna Charles

Hi, I'm Anna Charles and I started as Head Ranger at the Millennium Country Park on the 12 July. Since being a little kid I have always been interested in wildlife, I was always the one turning over stones and logs to see what was



lurking below! After leaving school I went on to university and completed a degree in Zoology. I started as a full time volunteer at Rutland Water and gained a whole host of practical skills and experience to back up my academic knowledge and after a year gained my first paid position.

I spent nearly 18 months doing short seasonal ranger contracts around the country before moving to Hertfordshire to begin work for the National Trust at Ashridge. I started as Assistant Ranger, and then progressed to Ranger after a few years. I spent 8 years working on a beautiful estate comprising woodland, chalk downland, commons and farmland. This only served to fuel my love of wildlife, of conserving it and, importantly, of helping others to enjoy the outdoors and the wealth of benefits it provides.

I am very excited to embark on my new role. The Millennium Country

Park is a fantastic and varied place with opportunities for everyone to enjoy it in many different ways. I will enjoy learning about a new site and hope the skills and experiences I have gained over the years will allow me to continue the wonderful work that has been done so far.



## Tony Crofts

I was born in Bedford and moved to Stewartby in 1991; I'm married and have two wonderful children. We very much enjoy living so close to the Millennium Country Park and often take a pleasant stroll around the lake. From being a Volunteer since late

2007 I am really excited to join the team as sites Maintenance Officer and hope to contribute to it over the coming years.



## Hannah Braithwaite

I'm Hannah Braithwaite and I joined the Forest of Marston Vale as Fundraiser on 13 September, taking over from Paul Catton.

I live in Henlow and I graduated this year from the University of Sheffield with a degree in zoology. I have been a volunteer for a various charitable organisations including the Sheffield Wildlife Trust and the Darnall Dementia Group. Before I joined the Forest of Marston Vale I worked at Whipsnade Zoo from May to September 2010 as a Presenter.

## National Lottery Awards

As you will probably all know by now, we didn't win the National Lottery competition for best environmental project but lost to the almost unstoppable Bumblebee Conservation Trust. When you realise that they have 7000 paid-up members, it's hardly a surprise that they beat us! However, we did get some excellent coverage on national television on a peak Saturday evening programme, so that was worth the effort in itself. A large amount of that effort was by Volunteers. Several of you gave precious hours to "accost" members of the public as they walked by in the Park or into the Forest Centre, to persuade them to vote for us. And, when the Lottery organisation wanted some film of our work, a dozen or so of you turned out at short notice to

perform for the cameras. On the evening of 4 September the Volunteers were represented on television by Bob Hook, Susan Henderson and Marlies Branston, and Tony and James from the Forest staff and chair of the Trustees Fiona Chapman were also present.





## Bedford River Valley Park update

Works to excavate the wet woodland channels near Danish Camp and the back channel off the main river within the Bulge were completed in August after a final push from the contractor RDT Woodland, as the dry conditions were perfect for excavation work but they made for dusty journeys for the three dumper drivers who were removing the spoil. The spoil generated by the excavations will be used by Lafarge in their restoration of the adjacent mineral extraction sites.

Both channels have already been tested with the heavy rain that fell in August, as the wet woodland channels filled and held back water as expected. So come the winter floods the surrounding wooded areas should fill and retain water that help to create a wet woodland habitat. The channel located at the Bulge was designed to recreate a backwater where breeding fish can spawn and shelter from the main river flows and predators. Large shoals of fish can be seen using the channel and the first signs of colonising vegetation are already taking root along the fringes, which will help to shelter the small fry from predators and seasonal flooding and, we hope, increase fish stocks on the river.

A new pedestrian footpath and new bridge will soon be installed around the edge of the Bulge, crossing the new channel, so watch out for further information on the new access.

A volunteer task took place in August involving thinning out and tidying up

wooded compartments as well as installing tree roots within the ponds on the channel to act as refuges for small fry from predators. Further volunteer tasks will be organised over the winter months so see diary dates for details, keep an eye on the web site [www.bedfordrivervalleypark.org](http://www.bedfordrivervalleypark.org) Or join our Facebook group [Darren.woodward@marstonvale.org](mailto:Darren.woodward@marstonvale.org)

## All weather path for Wetland Trail

The first week of September saw the start of work on a new, hard surface for the two kilometre Wetland Trail in the Millennium Country Park. The all-weather surface will improve access for families with buggies and wheelchairs as well as making the route easier for everyone to use throughout the year; and anyone who has walked the site during a wet winter will know how sticky our clay is.

This exciting project, funded by WREN will allow access to bird hides, feeding stations and great views of different wildlife habitats including reed beds, meadows and young woodland. Eight interpretation boards aimed at families will create a 'Wildlife Safari' packed with information, things to look for and games to play. The pay trail will start from the far side of the Forest Centre Meadow which will be open for people to picnic, fly a kite or kick a ball around. Work is expected to be complete by the end of October.

## WOODWORKS! the festival of wood, woodlands and wood products

After many weeks of preparation, WoodWorks was upon us. Thankfully, the weather was kind, despite a chilly wind. Once again, my main task on Saturday was in the music tent, where a great variety of music was played, sung and enjoyed by so many visitors. We sold the artistes' CD's and ran a raffle. Many thanks to Michele Read who, as usual, organised the tent so successfully.

I came back on Sunday to have a better look around at all the exhibits; the variety was amazing. As always, the wood cutters and birds of prey drew big crowds around the two arenas. The Morris dancers were a huge success, bells a'jingling and giving a lot of pleasure and fun. The Vikings with their blood-curdling yells really got

the kids going and had the adults in hysterics. Chris Puleston had the whole music tent and half the outside area really buzzing with his drumming workshop to close out Sunday – what a great way to end! Each stall had staff who were always happy to chat about their 'products' and answer all sorts of questions. It was lovely to see the new exhibits, like the alpacas and Shetland ponies. Comments on the exit slips were very encouraging again, and we now look forward to next year.....! Thanks to all the very many volunteers who worked so hard over the weekend (and beyond) - it was all worth it to make the weekend such a success.

Sue Livens

## Diary Dates—2010

For more information call:

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

Sat 9 Oct	<b>London Wetland Centre Trip</b>	Ring June on 767037 to book. (Fully booked – June has waiting list)
Sun 10 Oct	<b>Well Being Festival</b>	at Forest Centre. Volunteers needed. Contact Anna
Wed 13 Oct	<b>Volunteer task</b>	at the Grange Estate, Willington, call Darren
Sun 17 Oct	<b>Apple Day</b>	at Bromham Mill – tbc. Call Joan
Sat. 23 Oct	<b>Dead hedging</b>	around Stewartby Lake. Ring Anna
Fri 29 Oct	<b>Kids' Craft</b>	Bananas about bats. Volunteers needed. Ring Joan
Sun 7 Nov	<b>Sunday Stroll</b>	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start
Tues 9 Nov	<b>Volunteers committee meeting</b>	Do come and join in. Ring Joan for details
Wed 17 Nov	<b>Marston Vale Trust AGM</b>	Forest Centre 5.30 pm. Put the date in your diary
Sun 21 Nov	<b>Creating Hazel Coppice</b>	in Wetlands. Ring Anna
Sun 5 Dec	<b>Sunday Stroll</b>	Meet in Reception at 10.15 for 10.30 start
Sun 5 Dec	<b>Tree Planting</b>	Shocott Spring. Contact Joan in November
Sat 11 Dec	<b>Cutting and Burning Scrub</b>	Ring Anna for details
Mon. 20 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>Kids' Craft</b>	Christmas Robins. Volunteers needed. Ring Joan

## Snippets

### Conservation Task

There was a good turnout for the conservation task on Sunday 19 September with some several newcomers including a good proportion of teenagers among the Volunteers. We all had a good time whilst cutting back the hedgerows around the lake and we achieved a great deal on the day. It was hard work but suitably fortified with hot drinks and biscuits the day went well and everyone went home pleased with the results of their toils.

Tony Wilkins

### Bird Walk 11 September

Just a few folk turned out for the September bird walk. We had a lovely stroll and saw quite a few species, including three black terns. They are much smaller than the common tern, with distinct markings. Our thanks once again go to Neil, Tony, Martin and Ralph for putting their vast knowledge at our disposal.

### Olympic bid

Michael Glover has been volunteering through the summer, helping Steve doing the rounds in the Park and doing masses of prep work for Woodworks! Michael's planning to apply to become a volunteer at the 2012 Olympics and needs the hours to prove himself worthy of such great things — good luck Michael.

### Welcome Michael

Michael Chard has started work improving and managing our Access database. This is something of a tall order so we are very pleased to have Michael on board. Hopefully he will take on more computer related tasks in the future.

### Outside Events

Volunteers attended a number of outside events during the summer, informing people about our organisation and telling them about forthcoming events. Apart from the River Festival, which is mentioned elsewhere, we were at the Shuttleworth Open Day in May, Kempston

Fun Day on August Bank Holiday Saturday and The Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership Fun Day at the Marston Club in September. At the time of printing we are hoping to attend Apple Day at Bromham Mill on Sunday 17 October – we'll email out if we need some Volunteers.

## RAAI Copy Deadline

Please note that the copy deadline for the next issue of Reed All About It is **Monday 29 November 2010**. Any notes, thoughts, articles, pictures welcome—to Joan Ferguson at the Forest Centre by then please.

