



the Forest of
Marston Vale

Issue 27 – Dec 2008

REED ALL ABOUT IT

Newsletter for Forest Volunteers

Treeplanting at Rectory Wood Phase 4

On the face of it, it wasn't a very promising day, wet, cold and grey but my memories of Sunday 30th November are, in no special order:

- two little girls mud dancing grinning from ear to ear
- James rolled his sleeves down – a first.
- meeting familiar faces and treeplanting friends again



- amazement at 157 people turning up given the inclement weather
- several under5's, in full wet weather gear, getting stuck into "helping"
- cold girl instantly warmed up and giggling when kitted out with a "Glastonbury Mac" (black plastic bag with head and arm holes).
- my heart sank when I spied the lone rider on the last bus just as we had packed up

Joan Ferguson

Sweatshirts.

Would anyone be interested in purchasing a sweatshirt complete with Volunteer Forest logo for £14.00. each? I have approached our usual supplier, and he has agreed to a choice of 16 colours. Delivery charge has been waived as I will collect from our supplier.

Please let Maggie know before 14th January 2009 if you are interested ali.milne@talk21.com

Disability Awareness Course

An introduction to physical and mental disability with an emphasis on the experience of visiting the Forest Centre and Country Park.

Aim

To increase staff and volunteers' awareness of physical disability and their confidence in dealing with customers who have a physical disability.

Location

Sollars Study – upstairs in the Forest Centre. We will be moving around the building including outside, so please bring a coat.

Date and time

Wednesday 17 December, 9-11am

Likely participants

Any staff member or Forest Volunteer who has regular contact with members of the public

Proposed programme

Classroom

- ~ What is physical disability?
- ~ Who are disabled people?
- ~ What do disabled people want from the Forest Centre and Country Park?
- ~ What are our duties in law?
- ~ What can we do to maximise visitors' enjoyment of a visit to the FC & MCP?

Practical session

- ~ A chance for participants to experience a simulation of a physical disability in and around the Centre and Country Park

Classroom

- ~ Feedback from practical session - discussion
- ~ Recap on whole session
- ~ Ideas and suggestions for improving our service

If you are interested in taking part, please contact me on 01234 762608 or guy.lambourne@marstonvale.org



Butterfly Conservation Funded Conservation Project

We have received sponsorship from Butterfly Conservation to fund clearing an area of hawthorn on the callow mounds. This will help create the ideal habitat for the rare grizzled skipper and dingy skipper butterflies. It also helps restore the balance of having a mix of scrub and open ground. The most efficient way to spend the money is actually to provide hard-working volunteers with a free lunch!

The idea is we provide the volunteers and they pay for lunch and cake (you can basically pick anything you like off the menu for your lunch, then we bring out afternoon cake!) We will provide all tools, training, tea, coffee and food! You just need to be wearing old clothes and sturdy boots. Please let me know if you would like to attend - we will order the lunches that morning but it is good to know numbers for tools. There will be two dates:

Wednesday 4th February 2009 &
Saturday 7th February 2009

Meet at the garage 10am working till 3.30pm/ 4pm-ish.

Alexis

Volunteers' Photos

If you have looked around the Reception area, you may have noticed a photo album which I have put together, showing customers the work that we do volunteering outdoors in the Park and also showing them what fun we have, hoping that it will encourage new people to come and join us. These photos were given to me by Volunteers Don Morris, David Wood and Martin Brown. If you have any photos that you have taken whilst working and you would allow me to put them in the album I will be more than happy to do so.

Many thanks and Happy Christmas to you all.

June Rogers

Marston Vale Trust AGM

On Wednesday 19 November the Marston Vale Trust opened its doors to the public again. Chair of the trustees Fiona Chapman welcomed everybody and particularly noted the sizeable representation of volunteers – 10 of us formed the largest group present.

Presentations were given by James Russell, Alexis Pym and Guy Lambourne on the last year's achievements. These included the one-millionth tree, planted at Shocott Spring, the new wetland creation (funded 10% by the Volunteers) and the building of the new foot and cycle path in the Grange Estate area of the Bedford River Valley Park.

Fiona was particularly keen to acknowledge the stupendous 7700 hours of (recorded) effort from the Volunteers – to put this incredible effort into perspective, this equates to employing 5½ full-time staff and is worth, at adult minimum wage rates, over £44,000! Volunteer effort is vital to the success of the Forest and Fiona expressed the thanks of the Trust for our work.

Andy Brocklebank

Volunteers' Emails

The use of email to contact Volunteers is a great boon. It saves time, it's free and, most important of all for us tree lovers, saves paper! The only problem we have is when we get the "message undeliverable" response. This may occasionally be due to us having the wrong address but the sheer number of such responses suggests that many computers are blocking bulk emails. A recent email, sent to approximately 150 Volunteers was refused by 24 addresses. If you are one of these and you can remove the block we would be glad if you could do so.

In order to check out the system an email with the subject "Volunteers' Test Message" was sent on 02 December. If you did not receive the message, please email us at volunteers@marstonvale.org so that we can capture your correct address.

Andy Brocklebank

To be a Volunteer

Hi! I've lived in Marston Moreteyne for about 30 years. For several years I have biked and walked around the Millennium Park, doing the odd bit of bird watching, and about a year ago I joined the Wednesday morning walking group led by Maggie Milne. A few weeks ago Maggie asked me if I would become a Volunteer and take the Walk Leader course. I had sponged off the Park for long enough so this was a chance to put something back and I filled in the form and handed it in.

On the following Wednesday a large group had assembled in Reception and we were leaderless. Amanda on Reception, knowing that I had submitted my volunteer form the previous week, said "you'll have to lead them". Thrown in at the deep end! It was a mixed group with several stragglers, including one lady who had recently had a hip replacement and occasionally needed to stop for a rest. So I "led from the rear". I was somewhat concerned that she would do some damage to herself and began to regret taking them around the longest (albeit flattest) route, but this also suited the blackberry pickers. Needless to say, we all got back without mishap and I am now hooked!

I am amazed at the number of walks within the Millennium Park, though not all are practical in the wet. I am also surprised at the variety of wild flowers, although this is partly due to varying soils: Oxford clay, boulder clay, lower greensand and valley gravel. A walk to Lidlington along the Greensand Ridge offered a little more exercise and made me think that we should perhaps look further afield occasionally, in and around the Vale, for more variety. There are a number of possibilities which Maggie and I are investigating and, in the meantime, we recommend a look at www.letsgo.org.uk for a large selection of local walks, audited by our Volunteers.

Finally, from what I have seen so far, you are a dedicated, enthusiastic and well-led team and it will be a pleasure to be part of it. I only hope that I can make a worthwhile contribution.

Mike Green

A mug search is necessary

The Volunteers are attempting to save the planet by using real mugs instead of disposables when drinking tea out in the fields. Guy has around 40 mugs in stock. But when we use them at treeplanting, with the general public, the shortage is apparent. So, if you have any spare mugs in your cupboard, why not get them out, dust them off and free up your shelves of mugs you no longer use. (This will make room for more!) Just bring them along next time you visit the Forest Centre or take part in a Forest event. Ideally, mugs of the builder type are good, because pretty bone china ones with fragile fancy handles will not stand up to the rattling about in transit or man-style washing up in the kitchen after use.

Terry Stevens

Bird Box Cleaning

On Sunday 16 November a group of Volunteers gathered to clean the bird boxes in the Country Park. This was overseen by Stephen Gascoyne and Stephen Jones. We took out the nesting material and found a few extras, eg birds eggs, a skeleton, one dead mouse and also a shrew. The boxes had a good spring clean ready for the next breeding season. Thanks, Sven and everyone, for an interesting and good fun day.

June Rogers

Conservation Volunteers, a busy year – come and to join us

This year has been a bumper year for the variety of conservation tasks. A huge thank you goes out to all the volunteers who have been involved in willow weaving, fencing, gardening, sanding and repainting the bird hides. In addition there have been some very wet tasks on very sunny days! The water invertebrate survey gives us a real insight into how our ponds and pools are developing. Next June we are going to survey our bird population – care to join us (experts on hand)? Clearing the wetland islands involved two boats, one fire and luckily no one falling in; this was such a success we will be repeating the work on a different island this September, anyone for a play in a boat? For the first time we will also be trying our hand at the traditional art of hedge laying in November, all training, tools and equipment provided. If any of these tasks sound like your cup of tea (yes we even provide that too!) then do come along. All details on the website.

Alexis

Millbrook Station Adoption

A meeting held on 4th November 2008 was very positive. Ten people were present, of whom five were Forest Volunteers.

Officers were elected as follows: Chair David Thomas; Secretary Stephen Sleight; Publicity Officer James Gleave; "Station Watch" Teresa Cooper. The group will be called "Friends of Millbrook Station". Various ideas were discussed on what could be done to get the group started which were noted for next meeting. The sum of £200.00 is to be donated by Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership to enable the group to open a bank account and register as a charity.

Forest Volunteers would assist where possible but would not be involved in running the group; if you wish to join please e-mail stephens@bedsrcc.org.uk, visit www.marstonvalecommunityrail.org.uk, contact David Thomas at Millbrook Station House or myself via the Forest Centre, for further Information. Safety training will be required which London Midland Trains will arrange before work is carried out.

Date for the next meeting is 21.1.2009 - venue to be announced later.

Robin Watkin



Diary Dates 2008/2009

Alexis 01234 76261 Joan 01234 360178

2008

Sun 7th Dec. **Sunday Stroll** 10.15 for 10.30 start. Just turn up.

Sat 13th Dec. **Conservation Task**. Cutting and burning on the callow mounds. (Bonfires and mincepies)
Ring Alexis

Wed. 17th Dec. **Disability Awareness Training**. See description. Ring Joan if interested.

Mon. 22nd Dec. **Christmas Crafts** for Kids. Bookable sessions £1.00 per child. Volunteers needed.
Ring Alexis

2009

Sun. 4th Jan **Sunday Stroll**. 10.15 for 10.30 start

Sun 11th Jan. **Woodland Wildflower event**. Thinning young trees, preparing area and sowing seed at Dog Field, Cople. 10.00 – 3.30. Ring Andy Lingard for more details on 01234 762617

Sun 18th Jan. **Winter Scrub bash** (our Christmas volunteer event) 10.15 – 1.00 followed by lunch. Ring Joan before 11th Jan to let her know you are coming so there is enough food.

Sun 25th Jan. **Conservation Task**. Dead Hedging around Stewartby Lake. 10.15 – 4.15. Ring Alexis

Tues 27th Jan. **Visit to Bedford School Observatory**. Booking necessary as space is limited. £5.00 per person donation recommended. Ring Joan to book or email joan_ferguson@tiscali.co.uk

Sun 1st Feb. **Sunday Stroll**. 10.15 for 10.30 start

Wed 4th Feb **Butterfly Conservation scrub bashing** on callow mounds. Ring Alexis.

Sat 7th Feb **Butterfly Conservation scrub bashing** on callow mounds. Ring Alexis.

Sun 8th Feb. **Public Treeplanting**. 11.00 until 3.00 Rectory Wood Phase 4. Cranfield

Wed 18th Feb. **Kids Crafts - Flags and Banners**. Bookable sessions £1.00 per child. Volunteers needed. Ring Alexis

Sat 28th Feb **Conservation Task**. Willow weaving the arches and willow huts. Ring Alexis

Sun 1st March. **Sunday Stroll** 10.15 for 10.30 start. Meet in Reception

Sun. 15th Mar. **Conservation Task**. Weeding, deadheading, mulching the flower beds in the Sensory Garden. 10.15 – 4.15 Ring Alexis

Sun. 5th April. **Sunday Stroll** 10.15 for 10.30 start. Meet in Reception

Thurs 9th April **Kids Activity - Explorers trail** with activity sheet. 10.00-12.45 £1.00 per child. Volunteers needed Ring Alexis

Sun 12th April **Kids Activity - Easter Egg Fun**. Follow the trail and perhaps win an egg. £1.00 per card.

Sat 25th April. **Conservation task**. Bridge construction at Rectory Wood. Meet at Rectory Lane Cranfield. Ring Andy Lingard for details 01234 762617