

Pitching in to make Reading a tidier place



Hard at work: Volunteers put their backs into some arduous work.

Picture by Olivia Woodhouse 029713

KEEN conservation volunteers got together to tidy up the entrance to Reading Environment Centre.

Members of environmental group Conserve Reading on

Wednesdays put up cycle racks and created a marsh feature at the Prospect Park centre.

Volunteer Judith Oliver said: "There were about eight of us on the day, and we had three

Kosovan asylum seekers helping us out this week.

"We work on a different project for a day each week."

To get involved contact Tina Gower on 0118 959 0965.

Earley

Have you got a story from Earley?
Call Adam Hewitt on 0118 963 3152



Branching out: Members of Conserve Reading on Wednesdays plant a new hedge.

Conservationists hedge their bets

VOLUNTEERS have twigged a natural way to help out – planting a new hedge.

UP until now, all of Earley's hedges grew naturally, but the volunteers from CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays) planted the first planned hedge at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve to benefit wildlife, birds and walkers.

Team leader John Lerpiniere said: "A hedge maintained in this way is not only visually pleasing but will grow into an excellent wildlife habitat providing food,

shelter and nesting sites for birds and other creatures."

Park ranger Grahame Hawker believes it is the only man-made hedge in Earley, and praised CROW for its good work.

The group is part of the British Trust of Conservation Volunteers, supported by Reading Borough Council. Volunteers of any experience level are welcome, and tools and tea are provided.

For more information on CROW or to get involved, visit www.econetreading.org.uk



YULE BE WANTING ONE OF THESE: John Lerpiniere, Barry Franklin, Dave Barks, Barry Kochanek, Judith Qualtrough and Alan Stevens with a Scots pine

It's time to bring in the greenery

LOCALLY sourced Scots pine Christmas trees will be on sale at Caversham Court Gardens tomorrow.

Volunteers from Econet

have been removing the trees from heathland including Padworth Common and will sell them along with holly, mistletoe, willow and logs, all

from sustainable sources.

The trees start at £5 and the sale will run from 10am to 2pm.

getreading Friday 7th December 2012

28th February 2013

www.readingchronicle.co.uk



Digging in: Campaigners and volunteers ready to plant an orchard at Waterloo Meadows.

Orchard planting is tree-sy peasy

SNOW flurries fell over Reading on Saturday morning but determined gardeners dug deep to bring a community allotment to life.

Waterloo Meadows, in Katesgrove, was transformed when more than 20 volunteers from groups including Friends of Waterloo Meadows, Transition Town Reading and Katesgrove Residents' Association wrapped up warm to plant 50 fruit trees.

Among those lending a hand was borough councillor and Labour Reading East parliamentary candidate, Matt Rodda, who said: "It is fantastic that so many people have come out in this weather to help. The orchard will help children learn

where food comes from and the community can enjoy locally-sourced produce at a time when food is so expensive. It really brings the community together."

Nearby, Philippe Nozay, from Three Mile Cross, was helping two-year-old son Oliver plant a pear tree. He said: "It's been great, Oliver is really enjoying it - I think he is the youngest volunteer!"

Warming up during a tea break, Rich Waring, from Transition Town Reading, said the group had worked closely with Mike Cox, from Friends of Waterloo Meadows, to make the orchard a reality. He added: "We think it is really important for Reading to be full of community orchards, and we have also worked with the council on this, so it is a case of many hands make light work."

The project has been funded by the Forestry Commission's Big Tree Plant scheme, and Mr Waring added: "The funding covers five orchards over three years, and the plan is to build the skills in the community to allow us to plant further community orchards around the town without the need for further grant money.

"We are already looking at future sites and opportunities where the community can meet environmentalism at work again."

To get involved, email communications@transitionreading.org.uk



Growing enthusiasm: Philippe Nozay and his son Oliver plant a pear tree.

Volunteers get to Bottom of hedge laying

VOLUNTEERS have completed more than 300 metres of hedgerow at Bugs Bottom in Caversham.

Members of Conserve Reading on Wednesdays (CROW), part of the Econet group of conservation volunteers, carried out the task, which started last winter.

It was part of a project to restore an ancient hedge which borders the lane at Gravel Hill.

About 20 years ago a hedge was planted running parallel to the original ancient hedge, but it began to overshadow the original and was causing it to die off.

Volunteers believe it had been planted to offset environmental damage caused by the nearby housing development.

The new hedge has helped maintain the site boundary

along with habitats for wildlife, while allowing light and air to the original.

More than 20 volunteers have braved rain, wind and snow to learn and practise the ancient craft of hedge laying.

If you want to volunteer with Econet projects or if you have a project you would like the group's help with visit www.econetreading.org.uk or email info@econetreading.org.uk.



ANCIENT CRAFT: Volunteers have learned traditional skills to work on the hedge

EVENT: plenty of activities at 'Spring into Action' Afternoon of fun at Old Cemetery

SALLY BRYANT

READING Old Cemetery should be one of the liveliest places in town on Sunday, with family fun from walks to a mini-beast hunt.

The 'Spring into Action' afternoon is being organised by East Reading people for anyone interested in the wildlife and history of the landmark plot.

There will be walks, 'spring bingo' and other activities from 2pm until 4pm. And those who turn up will also be able to have their say on how the cemetery should be improved.

The project is supported by Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) 'Get Involved' funding. RVA has pledged £2,000 towards a facelift and Sunday's visitors will have the chance to comment on how it is spent and sign up to a new Friends of Cemetery Junction group.

Sunday's fun is being organised by wildlife expert Teresa Verney-Brookes. She said: "The afternoon should be really fun and enjoyable.



ORGANISER: Teresa Verney-Brookes by the arch at the entrance to Reading Old Cemetery

"It will also be a great opportunity to learn more about this hidden gem in East Reading, its history and the wildlife living there.

"There will be activities for people of all ages, from a family-orientated self-guided walk to historical information to making birdfeeders."

Local councillor Rob White said: "Over recent years, I have been working with local residents and organisations to improve Cemetery Junction. Together we have got a derelict shop brightened up,

installed hanging baskets and planted trees across the area.

"There is still a long way to go, but by working together I'm sure we will continue to make a difference. If you would like to get involved, please get in contact."

Volunteers with all sorts of skills – IT, admin or practical – and people who know about history or local wildlife are needed to help manage the site.

If you would like to lend a hand, call Cllr White on 07985 923 938.

SUCCESS: visitors enjoy a sunny day by the river Gardens are buzzing for Beanpole Day

LINDA FORT

THE sun shone down on Caversham Court on Saturday and brought out the eco-gardeners by the dozen.

Beanpole Day is an annual event to encourage environmentally-friendly gardening, and it was organised by Econet at the Thames-side venue.

Organiser Judith Oliver said: "It was a really lovely day and everyone felt that spring was really here at last."

"The gardeners all came out to buy plants for their gardens and sit by the river and have a picnic. It is such a beautiful place by the river with the sun shining."

Among those taking part on the day were the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Greenshoots, Reading and District Natural History Society, Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, Traidcraft, Reading Urban Wildlife Group, Reading and District Beekeepers, Friends of the Earth, RISC's Food4Families, the Conservation



THE PLACE TO BEE: Anne and John Booth from Friends of the Earth make a plea to protect the bees

Volunteers, and Friends of Harris Garden.

There were also willow workers,



CHOICES: Visitors at one of the plant stalls

Pictures: MIKE ENGLEFIELD (Ref bk20136406)

basketmakers and secondhand tool renovators selling their wares.

Mrs Oliver said: "We like to encourage sustainable gardening which is why the RSPB, the beekeepers and the butterfly society were there sharing their information."

National Beanpole Week is an annual event run by the Smallwoods Association to encourage gardeners to support Britain's coppiced woodlands by choosing eco-friendly, locally-grown coppiced beanpoles instead of imported bamboo canes.

This year the Reading conservation group Econet was selling bean poles and pea sticks from local woodlands managed traditionally.



BEAN THERE: Organiser Judith Oliver, left, sells some bean poles to Diana Hartrup with her dog Woody



TAKING A LOOK: A visitor checks out the plants for sale

1st May 2013



Good weather for Beanpole Day in Caversham Court Gardens, with a reconditioned turfing iron. Right, Barry and Judith Oliver with their beanpoles.

View all our photos at www.readingchronicle.co.uk/photos



Sweet celebration: Right, John and Anne Booth from Reading Friends of The Earth, with Linda Rogerson from Reading and District Beekeepers Association at the Beanpole Day at Caversham Court Gardens. Far right, Elsie, four, and Esme Vugler, six, with their bamboo wands.

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PHOTOS: MIKE SWIFT



Going green for Beanpole Day

THE sun beamed down over Caversham on Saturday when keen gardeners, allotment holders and conservationists showed their support for a popular project.

Groups from across the borough set up stalls at Caversham Court Gardens on one of the warmest days of the year so far for the annual Beanpole Day, organised by conservation volunteers from Econet, RSPB, Reading And

District Natural History Society, Friends Of The Earth, Reading And District Beekeepers and Food4Families were among the organisations at the event, on Saturday, April 20, and visitors were able to tour the gardens and buy vegetables and plants.

Royal Berkshire Hospital's League Of Friends served tea and coffee throughout the day.

Advertising was sponsored by Caversham estate agents Farmer & Dyer. Organiser Jude

Oliver said: "The day went very well, the sun was shining and it felt that spring had arrived at last!

"The gardens were looking lovely thanks to volunteers and stall proceeds from the bean poles and pea sticks will go towards their insurance and other equipment needed for their conservation work.

"A lovely day, thank you to all who supported us."



Dawn chorus walk

THE Econet members are holding their National Dawn Chorus Day walk on Sunday at 4.30am.

Volunteers will meet at the Clayfield Copse car park in Caversham Park Road. The walk will be led by Peter Scudamore, an RSPB member.

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Friday 3rd May
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JUNCTION FUNCTION: neighbours gather to explore a 'hidden gem'

Cemetery springs to life



PAST MASTER: Keith Jerrome delivers a history talk to visitors

LINDA FORT

EAST Reading people gathered in the Old Cemetery on Saturday to share a taste of spring.

The Spring in Action event was a free event organised by people living near the cemetery to share information about its history and wildlife.

Activities planned for the afternoon were walks, Spring Bingo and a mini-beast hunt.

The project was supported by Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) using its Get Involved funding.

RVA has pledged £2,000 towards

improving Reading Old Cemetery. People visiting the event were asked how they would like to see the funds spent and could sign up to a new Friends of Cemetery Junction group.

Organiser of the day and well-known local wildlife expert Teresa Verney-Brookes said the afternoon was "a great opportunity to learn more about this hidden gem in East Reading, its history and the wildlife living there".

Park ward Green councillor Rob White said: "Over recent years, I have been working with local residents and organisations to improve Cemetery Junction.



NET GAINS: event organiser Teresa Verney-Brookes with youngsters as they look for insects
Pictures: STEVE SMYTH (Ref 20136525_6)

"Together we have got a derelict shop brightened up, installed hanging baskets and planted trees across the area.

"There is still a long way to go, but by working together I'm sure we will continue to make a difference."

VOLUNTEERS: group look after the great outdoors

CAROL EVANS

TIRELESS work laying hedges, clearing scrub and generally keeping green spaces tidy has won Reading voluntary conservation group Econet a *Pride of Reading* nomination in the Commitment to the Community category.

The group has been nominated by Oonagh Kelleher, senior project officer at the Reading office of national charity The Conservation Volunteers.

The voluntary group, which is based in Albury Close and is part of the charity's community network, undertakes work for community organisations, schools and local councils.

Ecocet was formed in 2002 and is an amalgamation of four long-established 'friends of' conservation groups in the Reading area – Clayfield Copse in Emmer Green, Mapledurham Playing Fields in Caversham, McIlroy Park in Tilehurst and Waterloo Meadows in Coley.

CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays) is also a member. Friends of Reading Cemetery, whose work was featured on BBC South, joined this year.

Each group meets on a regular basis and does a heap of practical work ranging from clearing footpaths, coppicing and willow harvesting to laying out wildflower gardens. Since 2010, Econet has organised the Bean Pole Event at Caversham Court in April and also holds an annual sale of environmentally-friendly Scot pine Christmas trees there.



Pretty green



CONSERVATION: Econet members Cathy Holwill, Philip Allen and Hannah Graves, standing, and Alan Stevens, kneeling right, who have been nominated for a *Pride of Reading* award by Oonagh Kelleher, kneeling left

Picture: STEVE SMYTH (Ref bk20138314_1)

The trees are harvested locally as part of Econet's heathland management activities.

Ms Kelleher said: "The group is run entirely by volunteers and relies on income from its own activities for its funding."

Econet's volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and include students, those between jobs and retired people, all of whom share an enjoyment of outdoor activities and an interest in the natural environment.

Treasurer Alan Stevens, who maintains the group's website and describes himself as a 'general dogsbody', was thrilled to hear about the nomination.

He said: "That's very nice. It's a very rewarding job. People enjoy coming out with us because it not only keeps us all fit and active but it's good to be doing something for the community too."

The Commitment to the Community category is sponsored by Kyocera.

December 2013



GREEN TEAM: Econet volunteers Hannah Graves, Dave Barks and Alex Siddall

Time to pick a pine

ECONET volunteers will be selling locally sourced Scots pine trees at Caversham Court on Saturday.

The trees are cut as part of the management of heathland, but make great Christmas trees.

Local holly, mistletoe and willow will also be available and you can make or have made your own Christmas wreath.

The RSPB and Wildlife Trust will have stalls and the sale is from 10am to 2pm. Most trees will cost between £5 and £15.

Econet helps care for a number of green spaces in and around Reading including Clayfield Copse, Mclroy Park, Mapledurham Playing Fields, Reading Old Cemetery and Waterloo Meadows.

Visit www.econetreading.org.uk.



BEAN THERE: Lynda Roach, Sheila and Mike Eggleton and June Gabriel pick up some plants; browsing the stalls; and, below, Hester Casey and Michael Lelliott with their beanpole scarecrows

Pictures: STEVE SMYTH
(Ref BK201410631)

Day's terrific fun, old bean

CONSERVATIONISTS helped spread the word, raise money and educate the young as they held the fifth annual Bean Pole Day at Caversham Court Gardens.

Plants, bean poles and pea sticks were sold along with plant supports and items made by local willow weaver Christine Brewster and there was wildlife including bees and slugs which children were able to take a closer look at.

A special hive was brought along where children could see inside and spot the queen bee.

Alan Stevens, treasurer of Econet, which organised the day, said it raised £300 for the group.

He added: "The Woodland Trust started this idea to promote products from small local woodlands and promote their management."



10/14 October 2014.

NEWS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

The Caversham Heights Society is in its 39th year, and was founded in October 1975. It is open to anyone from Caversham and provides a series of lectures on a wide range of topics.

The Society meets on alternate Wednesday evenings at 8pm, from 17 September to 1 April in Caversham Heights Methodist Church. All meetings begin with coffee and chat.

The society also arranges visits to different places of interest within a couple of hours of Reading as well as a mini-holiday in May.

Next year we hope to go to Pembrokeshire. New members are always welcome.

For further details please contact Jill Hodges on 959 5307.

Berkshire Greenpeace is part of a national network of local volunteer groups that support Greenpeace's national and international campaigns.

The group takes part in national campaigns on climate change, forest, oceans, and against war.

There is currently a global Save the Arctic campaign, which is against drilling for oil in this extreme environment and aims to create an Arctic Sanctuary to protect the area.

This year the group has run campaigns to protect rainforests and stop destructive tuna fishing techniques globally and against fracking. Volunteers run a campaign stall in Berkshire in towns and festivals, and get involved in a range of other local, national and occasionally international events.

New volunteers are always welcome, and there is a planning



meeting on the first Thursday on every month at 8pm room 3 RISC/Global Cafe 35-39 London Street, Reading, UK, RG1 4PS. or contact via <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/groups/berkshire>

Friends of Clayfield Copse (pictured above) is a group of volunteers who since 1989 have helped with the care and management of Clayfield Copse and Blackhouse Wood. Since 2002 the group has been part of Reading's Econet Conservation

Volunteers. If you enjoy being outdoors and would like to join the group you will be very welcome. You don't need to be fit or have any particular skills, tools, gloves and all necessary training are provided.

The group meets on the

first Sunday of the month throughout the year. Join us at 10am in the car park off Caversham Park Road.

A summary of planned activities can be found at <http://www.econetreading.org.uk/clayfield/>



Helena Barker and Barry Franklin cutting trees in preparation for the sale

Christmas tree sale

LOOKING for a Christmas Tree this year? Then head to Thatcham's Nature Discovery Centre at the weekend.

Newbury & Thatcham Green Gym will be selling Scots pine Christmas trees obtained as part of the on-going management of local heathlands which would otherwise revert to woodland with the loss of the wildlife such places support.

The sale has been organised with the support of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and proceeds from the sale will be shared with the trust. BBOWT cards and gifts will also be available.

The sale will be held at the centre in Muddy Lane, off Lower Way, between 11am and 3pm.

Newbury & Thatcham Green Gym was formed in 2012 by The Conservation Volunteers, a national charity, and is now supported by Econet, a volunteer-led conservation group based in Reading.

Green Gym undertakes practical wildlife conservation activities every Monday morning at sites in and around Newbury and Thatcham.

More information about the group including its current programme can be found at www.econetreading.org.uk.

4th Decembe 2014