



# A ROBERT'S REEDS OCTOBER 2014 No. 2



Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to the second newsletter. We had a fantastic turnout on Saturday at Little Meadow, where the volunteers worked incredibly hard cutting and raking up the vegetation in the 3 acre site. The purpose was to increase the biodiversity, it works!



*"They don't like it up 'em!"*

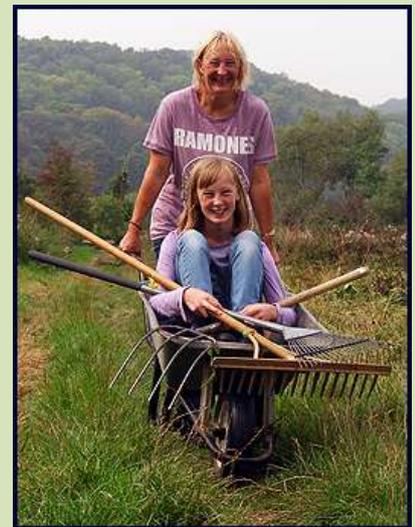
*As Corporal Jones would say.....go careful with those pitch forks, and keep the points down.*



*The work party at Gatehampton's Little Meadow take a short break.*



*Robert loaded up!*



*Shhh don't tell H&S!*

*The fundraising events have gone well. Woodcote Festival went ahead on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September. Tiegan Mansfield raised £52.50 where she sold a variety of Withymead goods; honey, candles and jigsaw puzzles and also organised a fun family game.*



*Kathy face painting at Woodcote Festival.*



*Tiegan with her fundraising stand.*

**Our new conservation volunteers :**  
Children of the Wildlife Club recently completed their first two stints of practical conservation work on Wednesday evenings. They really enjoyed themselves raking up the cut reeds and making some interesting 'nests' and dens.



### **Annual Cut:**

The annual cut of a reed-fen section at Withymead has begun, and Robert has been clearing the cut reeds and other plants so that old plant material doesn't build up and dry the wetland. If it was left un-cut and un-raked, trees would establish quickly meaning that animals including Water Rails, Otters, visiting migrant Sedge and Reed Warblers would soon have no suitable habitat.

### **Cutting Cleeve Meadow:**

Dot, Keith and Richard mowed Cleeve Water Meadow and received a substantial donation which will be used to buy native hedge plants to continue the wildlife hedge on the Withymead Bridleway over the winter.

### **Garage Demolition:**

Sonning Common Green Gym spent a long morning dismantling the old garage next to the house in preparation for a re-build. Builders have started on the base already and it should be completed soon.



### **News from the nest boxes:**

A-level student Stephen was here today volunteering (he mostly comes once a week in term-time - contact us to join him) - removing rhododendron and checking + cleaning the 40-odd bird nesting boxes - it was quite exciting with successful nests, 3 wasp nests, 1 bees' nest & 2 roosting Pipistrelle bats in a Blue Tit box! We keep year-on-year records to monitor the hole-nesters' breeding success & to identify unsuccessful boxes - we then relocate these to better places.

### *Tantalising Task of the Month:*

*Preparing and sowing the seed for what will be the spectacular display of 'Cornfield Annual' wild flowers next spring and summer at Withymead. In the next few weeks we need to rotavate 3 large grassland patches (thanks for the machine Sandra), prepare the seed bed and sow thousands of seeds like Corncockle, Corn Marigold, Common Poppy, Corn Chamomile, Cornflower, Thorow-wax - beautiful native flowers which are now extinct or scarce in the wild. Thanks to Shirley's successful application to the Wallingford Waitrose charity 'Green Token' scheme £330 was raised to buy native seed and also pond plants for the 3 new ponds at Withymead. We can now buy 500 native Bluebell bulbs to plant along the new Wildlife hedge bottom. We need an extra volunteer work party for this task please - please get in touch asap if you can help and we will arrange the session date & time to suit the volunteers involved.*



*Richard, David and Keith cleared the beautiful Withymead river view and the landing stage of impeding Willow, by donated boat (thanks to John P) expertly mended by Richard. Thanks Mike for the outboard too!*



*Water Rails thrive at Withymead. These attractive birds are flattened side to side to slip easily through their reed bed habitat. Come and sit on our landing stage and hear their bizarre pig like squeals.*



*Caught on camera - an elusive otter.*

### **WHAT'S HAPPENING SOON...**

*Saturday 4 October, 10am - 1pm: 1st-Saturday-of-the-month, volunteer session will be at Little Meadow Reserve next to Gatehampton Railway Bridge, where we will be joined by volunteer conservation group Abingdon Green Gym. Tasks will involve:*

- raking,*
- erecting our new notice board*
- coppicing part of the tree thicket*
- putting up bird/ bat boxes and our special dormouse homes*
- sanding & varnishing benches*

*Every Monday from 10am - 1pm (unless specified on the website - please check or phone) Monday Morning Brews Club at Withymead Nature Reserve - light gardening and conservation tasks in a friendly social setting with tea and cake.*

*Regular, 1st-Friday-in-the-month Moth Night from dusk 'til late - join our volunteer moth experts (thanks Paul and Roy) at Withymead Study Centre to monitor these fascinating creatures by a harmless light trap.*



LOCAL WILDLIFE and  
PEOPLE PROJECT...

**CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?**

Wildlife is declining &  
people are becoming less  
connected with Nature.

We work to conserve wildlife and  
inspire people to enjoy it - we now  
have a potential "once in a  
community lifetime" opportunity...

...to extend Withymead Nature  
Reserve & run a community  
events + education programme  
- **you** can make a real  
difference ...

...**help** make this a reality for  
locals...human + mammals  
like otters, water-birds,  
fish, amphibians, plants,  
invertebrates, maybe  
even bring 'Ratty'  
the water vole back!

**You are really needed** on  
a new volunteer team  
researching, applying  
(with backing) for funds,  
& implementing the  
project. Thank you!

Phone or email  
for details - see  
below...