

Welcome to the 8th Edition of the Forest of Mercia E-newsletter.

Twiglets

Currently there are several sessions of Twiglets taking place across the area in Norton Canes, Hednesford and at the Innovation Centre at Chasewater, after a request to provide holiday activities for the local communities by Staffordshire County Council's Community and Learning Partnership. Sessions to date have proven to be very popular and themes have included farming, things that fly, weather, deserts and leaves. The aim of the initiative is to give the youngsters and their carers a variety of craft ideas and small projects that they can complete and take home and foster an interest in the environment. Additional sessions have kindly been supported by Natural England, the national organisation that conserves and enhances the natural environment.



Staffordshire Children's Trust
Working together to improve the lives of children and young people

Forest Schools

The Forest of Mercia, in conjunction with Groundwork, organised a series of training days for pupils from middle schools in South Staffordshire. There were several long running projects on the go at any one time and some additional one-day activities as well. Students enjoyed the hands on approach and it was very pleasing that the participants were able to complete a coracle and float it, showing that it could take 100kg of weight. Part of the success of the Project was that people with varying backgrounds and from different schools were able to get on together and work as a team.



Forest School Challenge

Tree Wardens

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council has recently established a new Tree Warden programme which the Forest of Mercia Project has been supporting. We assist the Urban Tree Officer every other Tuesday to deliver practical and theoretical activities based around the establishment and maintenance of trees in public places. These sessions have attracted keen interest from Walsall residents who want to have an input in establishing a good tree cover to benefit from the environmental benefits that trees provide.

Forestry Activities

Chris and Barry, the Forest of Mercia Foresters, have been hard at work on a number of sites throughout the area. This has included spot spraying at Clayhanger and Muckley Corner Common, strimming on the Timberland Trail, Wimblebury Mound, Brownshore Pools and Sevens Road, and site surveys at Reedswood Park, Kingswood Lakeside and Barnfield Sandbeds, along with heathland management at Gentleshaw Common.



Gateway at Barnfield Sandbeds

The Forestry Team has also taken on responsibility for the ongoing maintenance at Washery Pool/The Swag near Burntwood on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. This work involves monthly site inspections to ensure the site is safe, undertaking regular risk assessments and, of course, carrying out all of the practical maintenance required.

Common Ground

The group of volunteers working with the Forest of Mercia from the Growell initiative has developed into a regular cohort of keen and enthusiastic team-mates who are able to develop their skills on a wide variety of practical activities. The group are now able to undertake some complex tasks such as making a flight of steps from square one at Christianfields, Lichfield.

Other jobs that the Common Ground Team has completed include footpath clearance, stile repair and hazel coppicing to produce bean sticks and plant supports. They have also done weeding around the growing young trees planted at Muckley Corner Common and in the future will hopefully be helping with the installation of a pond on the site. The group enjoy the sessions as it is something a little different from what many of them have done in the past and the variety of tasks on any one day means that people can work at their own rate and level of ability.



Common Ground volunteers and the steps they have constructed at Christianfields, Lichfield

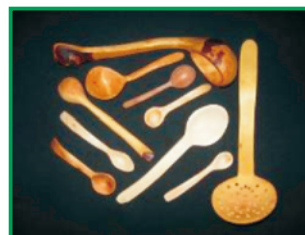
GreenWood Crafts

The Forest of Mercia Team has launched a new enterprise based around utilising the leftover timber that is naturally produced during our woodland management processes. Dave Knowles, Community Liaison Officer with the Forest of Mercia, has been developing his green wood skills over many years and he has produced some wonderful items including spoons, bowls, cups, chairs, stools and willow baskets.

The Foresters are involved in the enterprise by producing natural wildlife habitats for gardens in the form of bird and bat boxes, insect hotels, hedgehog hibernation boxes and ladybird houses. They have also fabricated various items of rustic furniture and some chainsaw sculptures.

Along with Eric Clarke, Countryside Officer at Walsall, Dave has set up a series of GreenWood Craft training courses that provide the opportunity for local people to get involved in learning the skills of working with green wood.

Some of the items for sale are on display at the Innovation Centre at Chasewater Country Park or you can contact Dave Knowles at Forest of Mercia GreenWood Crafts on telephone number 01543 370737.



Carved Spoons



GreenWood Stools

Contact Steve Morris – Community Forest Manager on 01543 370737, or email steve.morris@staffordshire.gov.uk
Based at Chasewater Innovation Centre, Pool Road, Brownhills, Staffordshire. WS8 7NL

Working in Partnership with



Walsall Council



Forestry Commission

