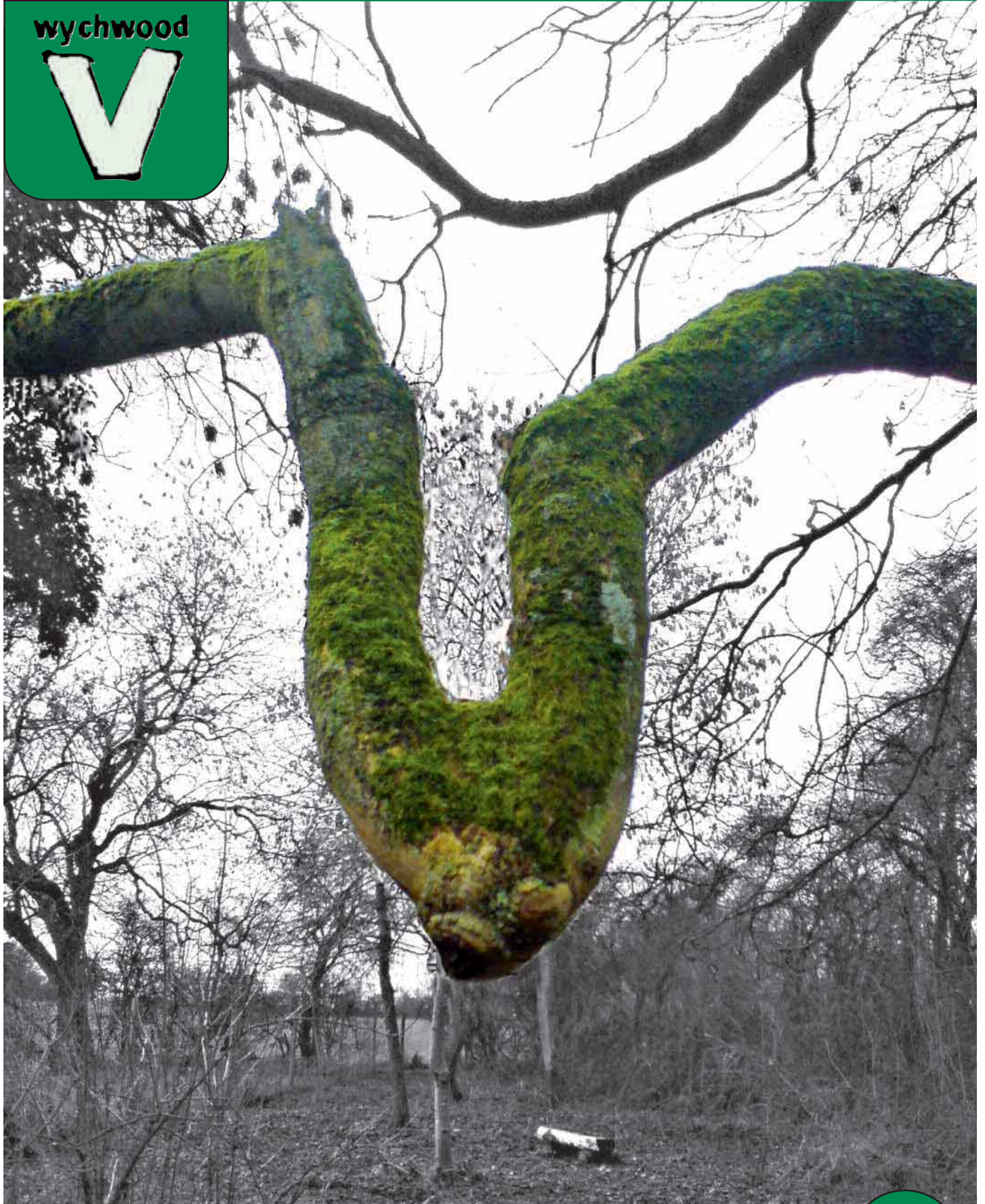


V inspiring a new generation of young volunteers

Wychwood v April 2008-March 2011



wychwood



With thanks to over 200 volunteers . . .





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Two hundred and thirty young people have taken part in one or more activity, from tree planting to dry stone walling.

What is Wychwood v?

When the Wychwood Project secured the grant from vinspired, the national youth volunteering organisation, it started a journey of discovery for everyone concerned. The involvement of young people aged 16-25 up to that time had been incidental and mostly the result of them attending events with other family members. To set out to recruit them intentionally for specific volunteering opportunities was unknown territory.

Two young people have contributed over three hundred hours each to the work of Wychwood v and twenty one have achieved the v fifty awards for over fifty hours of volunteering.

Three years later it was very heartening to see young people make a presentation about Wychwood v activities to the Friends of Wychwood AGM and to hear that the Friends are determined to maintain a focus on involving young people in the future of the Wychwood Project.



Above: Vincent and below: James, who have both completed over 300 hours

Over the life of the Project over two hundred young people have volunteered with Wychwood v on thirty different sites in the area. As well as the visible practical work in the field they have made contributions to the Forest Fair, administrative work in the office and the development of the Wychwood v steering group.

What is Wychwood v to me?

Wychwood v represents the opportunity to make new and lasting friendships. It allows you to try a huge variety of new things and enjoy a wealth of experiences that would otherwise be missed. I have been fortunate enough to get all of this and more from my time with v, and look forward to more to come.



Jacob Briggs, volunteer



All hands to the spade at the Big Dig at Eynsham Fish Ponds

Charlotte Allen; Daniel Allen; Emma Applegarth; Jenny Arthur; Tim Atherton; Steven Ayres; Alex Bamsey; James Bark; Sam Bark; Chris Barker; Guy Batts; Kaeleigh Beddoe; Staci Beevor; Tom Belassie; Khloe Bennett; Chris Berry; Harley Bishop; Connor Bishop; Matt Bickerton; Michael Bloomfield; Adam Bolley; Stephanie Bolts; Will Bowkett; Lee Bowsher; James Boxer; Jacob Briggs; David Brooks; Richard Brooks; Robert Brown; John Bruckshaw





Dan, now at Oxford University



Kyle, now at Oxford Brookes University

Volunteering Really Works!

As it became apparent that there are very few opportunities for unemployed young people to gain meaningful experience in outdoor work we decided to set up the Tuesday Team in 2009. With Carol Foster as supervisor twelve young people have taken part in a wide range of activities.

They have, as a group, developed their practical skills, knowledge of conservation work, as well improving their awareness of team work and their social skills. Four of the twelve have gone on to permanent employment; one to college; two to university, and two are working on additional projects for the Wychwood project and part time work while they look for permanent employment or a university place. The other three people have some learning difficulties that will make it difficult to find regular paid employment but they are developing into a very effective work group that is tackling a wide range of conservation work for local communities and landowners.



Paul Steele, now working at a landscape gardening company

Young people have joined the project at many different stages of their lives. Some come out of interest to improve specific knowledge and skills, others come because they like to work outside or because they are unemployed and have nothing else to do.

"It was the project management experience with Wychwood v that really made the difference to my confidence at the interview and enabled me to get this fantastic dream job."

Paul Furnborough



Paul graduated from Oxford University determined to get into the very competitive world of conservation. He volunteered with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust and Pond Life and spent three months with Wychwood v where he managed the hedgerow survey project for the summer. Following this experience he was finally successful and is now the reserves officer for Froglife at the Hamptons Reserve in Peterborough.





As well as the regular outings there have also been some rather special events. These have included our own archaeological dig and participating in the annual Forest Fair. They represent all the hard work, organisation and laughs that have been shared through all of our activities.

The v Big Dig

A throw away comment from one of our volunteers was that 'The day had felt like we were members of Time Team', digging out the old perimeter ditches on Eynsham Abbey Fish Ponds. From there the idea seemed to take root, and after a little planning and organisation, it resulted in a three day archaeological dig at the Eynsham Abbey Fish Ponds involving most of the current v team at one time or another.

A steering group meeting and also a meeting with Eynsham parish council were set up to plan where and when the dig was going to happen. From this meeting we learnt that there had already been a dig before. This had uncovered what was thought to have been a medieval road and walls. A visit from Twitney (www.twitney.com) was also arranged to highlight what we had found before it would have to be re-covered with earth.

On the days of the 24th, 25th, 26th and 31st the dig went ahead, with the arrival of new recruits and regulars from the different programmes that we run. The group had fun working together on the project, which led them to find many pieces of pottery, horse shoes, nails and even some teeth. We were also able to discover that there were several other small walls that link together. The information we found will help the Eynsham parish council with finding out some more history of the site.

Charlotte Allen, volunteer

Right: Rachel and Charlotte in the shade of the V Tree



Uncovering the buried wall at Eynsham Fish Ponds

v at the Forest Fair

The Friends of Wychwood annual Forest Fair has always been a great success, and Wychwood v have been fortunate enough to attend in both 2009 and 2010.

Their presence has increased each year, with the number and variety of stalls on offer growing.

2010 was a particularly active year for v at the Forest Fair, with stalls offering activities ranging from clay sculpting, to badge making and a treasure hunt, with music being provided by v's very own swing band. However it was the centre piece that caught the eye. Over the summer

several volunteers created their very own tree which was then brought to bloom by the visitors on the day.

Now that Wychwood v's presence has taken root, their presence at the coming Forest Fairs is set to blossom.

Sandra Edwards; Toby Edwards; Amy Elger; Emma Ferris; Lizzie Forbes; Christopher Forman; Lorna Francis; Alex Free; Will Freeland; Siobhan Fuller; Paul Furnborough; Chloe Garrish; William Gorman; Elizabeth Green; James Green; Thomas Hall; Alison Hankin; Thomas Hardiman; Tom Harding; Darius Harris; Ross Harrison; Jed Haynes; William Hazell; Emily Hedges; David Hepworth; Alex Hill





"The opportunity to work at all of the sites has been invaluable and getting the chance to try out so many different things has been wonderful!"



Toria whilst recycling tree guards in Combe

Where v has been . . .

Wychwood v volunteers have carried out conservation projects at thirty sites around the Wychwood area. In some places, such as the Eynsham Abbey Fish Ponds, they have been fairly regular visitors. Different groups have tackled all sorts of work, from clearing the perimeter ditches to improve the flow of water, to clearing encroaching vegetation on the car park, repairing the footpaths and of course the archaeological work at the Big Dig.

Another special place has been Swinford Lock. Here, the six hundred new trees were planted entirely by young people and almost all maintenance since then has been carried out by Wychwood v volunteers. Several nature reserves have benefited from their efforts, including Wigwell at Charlbury, Standlake and Dean Common. The work of v on these reserves makes an important contribution to the regular maintenance required to ensure the continuing improvements for biodiversity at these sites.



From right, Rory, James, Chris and Dan after raking hay at Enstone

Working at all of these different sites has enabled v volunteers to try a range of interesting and varied activities, such as habitat maintenance, tree planting, hedge laying, and dry stone walling to name but a few. They have also been on local radio to promote the project to a wider audience.

Where is v going . . .

A feature of Wychwood v that has been running for two years now is the steering committee. Started in 2009, the steering committee has always taken an active role in deciding the course of the project, be it the next site to go to, v's logo, or how the project should be run in the future.

Now that phase one has finished, Wychwood v is looking to grow and develop even

further. One way in which this will be achieved is expanding the variety of opportunities offered to tie in with the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, and to link in directly with local schools to offer lessons, trips and activities run by our volunteers.

The future is full of opportunities for Wychwood v, and the chance to explore them promises to be very exciting.



Left: The steering committee in action at the Methodist church, Witney



Right: Wychwood v after the Forest Fair in 2010

Rory Hill; Jayfra Hobbs; Job Horgan; Johnny Horne; Jade Hughes; Kirsty Hull; Edward Hutley; Craig Hutson; Adam Hyam; Omorgiade Idedia; Roberta Iley; Eddy Isang; Hanna Jenkins; Lizzie Jones; Matthew Jones; Dom Keenan; Liam Kelliher; Chris King; Sarah Kiss; Penny-Emmeline Kittle; Dajeong Kwon; Gemma Lang; Anthony Langdon; Corum Lawrence; Jenny Learney; Cesare Lee; Hanna Lewis; James Lott; Charlie Lovell; Esme Lucas; Daniel Martin-Thomas





These are the stories of two of our volunteers who have got stuck in away from the mud as well as in it.

It's not all muddy boots

Abigail's story

I have been part of the Wychwood v project for five months. I have joined in with conservation activities on weekdays where I have met many different people and visited parts of the Wychwood area that I would not otherwise have been to. Despite having recently graduated with an MSc in biodiversity and conservation, I had never planted or uprooted a tree, and I can now say that I have done both as part of the v project. I was also interviewed by BBC Radio Oxford at Foxburrow Wood about our tree planting activities there, this was a totally new experience for me.

In addition to the practical tasks that I have joined in with, I have taken on my own project. The Wychwood Project recently acquired an area of land by the River Windrush in Witney called Grimes Mead. This is a lowland flood meadow, which has remained uncultivated and undeveloped and is therefore of ecological value to the area and is designated as a County Wildlife Site. My task has been to carry out research into the history of the land and to perform a survey of the main features of the meadow in order to create a management plan.

By taking part in the Wychwood Project I have gained several skills that will be valuable to me in my future career, and it has been a fulfilling use of my time while I look for a job. I recently gained my 'v fifty', which, in addition to giving a personal feeling of achievement, is an award that I can tell prospective employers about. As I only recently moved to the area, being a part of this project has helped me to feel like I am part of the community.



Abigail receiving her v fifty certificate and hoodie from Jane

Hannah's experience

"I joined Wychwood v this summer and worked on a project about historic ponds. I worked with the project manager to set up a mapping project using the GIS system and original 1880 Ordnance Survey maps of the Wychwood area. The aim of the project is to see how many ponds have been lost or gained over the last 130 years. I gained valuable experience working with a conservation organisation and learnt new skills, such as using the GIS system, which

will be a great asset when looking for jobs in my chosen career. It was also great to contribute to the work of the Wychwood Project; the results of the mapping project will be really useful for future conservation work in the area. I also got to meet other young volunteers who are interested in the environment and conservation."

Hanna Jenkins,
Wychwood v volunteer



Hanna hard at work in the Woodstock office

- Josh Marvin; Dan Mawhinney; Andrew Maycock; Arthur McEwen-James; Matt McWilliams; Luke Merivale; Rebeca Millward; Daniel Morgan; Jordan Morley; Toria Munday; Tim Nash; Ben Nelson; Dan Newton; Will Norman; Diego Nunes; Annie Oliver; Charlotte Orr; Ben Osman; Arthur Palfreyman; Corinna Parker; Sean Parsloe; Kimberley Peck; Joe Perry; Robert Peternorth; Victoria Petkovic-Short; Blair Pollack; Thomas Price; Ruvimbo Pv Kutadzaushe





Abingdon and Witney College STEPS Students from; **STEP 3: Skills for work** **STEP 4: Initial skills for work** have come out with v. Thank you to 30 fantastic volunteers and their amazing support staff!

STEPS

College students from the STEPS programme for young people with learning difficulties have come out on a regular basis to tackle muddy ditches, branches blocking footpaths and tangled hedges. They have made a great contribution to Wychwood v's fantastic tree planting total of 2000 trees and the maintenance of the many sites at which v works.

Some of these students have considerable learning difficulties but it is a great joy to share their pleasure and enthusiasm for their 'Wychwood Project' sessions. They are well supported by brilliant staff from the college who help them to get the most out of their sessions.

In addition to learning the practical skills of handling tools, moving materials around and making bonfires, they have made great progress in team work and awareness of safe working practices. They also derive a great deal of pleasure in visiting places in their local area that they would never visit otherwise. Wherever they have worked they impress everyone with their infectious enthusiasm and energy.



Everyone enjoying themselves on a STEPS outing



'I love it here I want to come again next time'
James



Above: Watch out for Anthony's swing!

'Pass the cake tin round Isaac'
Mandy



Left: Isaac's v fifty certificate and hoody and Mikey and Alex getting their v t-shirts.

- Alexandra Reese; Hannah Roberts; Emily Roden; Abigail Rumsey; Amy Scoins; Russell Scott; Hynck Sebick; David Selby; Ed Sharp; Gemma Shepherd; Sony Shaw; Emma Simmonds; Kate Slivester; Alex Smith; Isaac Smith; Jade Smith; Joshua Smith; Fiona Stanbury; Sophie Stanley; Jess Stanton; Andrew Stear; Paul Steele; Ashley Stevens; Oliver Stevens; Alan Stewart; Lucy Stockwell; James Stott; Kyle Suter; Richard Talbot; Fern Taron; Becky Louise Taylor





Jane having a 'barrel of laughs' at Foxburrow Wood

Interested?
 Find out more on the website, www.wychwoodproject.org or find us on Facebook, Flickr and Twitter for the latest news, events and photos, as well as our blog at www.forestofwychwood.blogspot.com

Reflections on v

Thank You, and roll on Phase Two!

The creation and development of Wychwood v has been the most fantastic enterprise for me over the last three years so a big thank you must go to Nick Mottram the Wychwood Project Director and the Friends of Wychwood for having the vision to secure funding from vinspired. As you can see from this photo of me planting the hedge at Foxburrow Wood it has been a barrel of laughs, actually Chris Berry said that first, and I hope many others have thought it too. Sometimes we have got wet and cold, at other times found it too hot to work. We have met many interesting and amazingly talented people and all found new strengths and qualities in ourselves and others.

The contribution of every one of the two hundred and thirty volunteers has been memorable from those just taking part in one activity or the three hundred hours given by Vincent and James. The impacts of our three full time volunteers Ted, Paul and Jacob have all been distinctive in their own way and helped the Project to take great leaps forward.

Jacob, editor and designer of this report, bandleader and trombonist, dry stone waller, tree planter and.... and....



There is hardly a parish in the Wychwood Forest that has not felt the impact of Wychwood v over 3000 trees have been planted and many areas have had their potential for biodiversity improved. We have also strengthened our community involvement through work with other groups such as the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, the Oxfordshire Woodland Project and SeeSaw. At the end of the first three years it is very much just the end of Phase One – 'Roll on Phase Two!'

Jane Bowley, Wychwood v Project Officer

Well done to Wychwood v

Wychwood v has given a fantastic boost to the work of the Wychwood Project. It has been great for us all at the Project and in the Friends of Wychwood to work alongside these young people with their tremendous enthusiasm and interest in the Project and our work in the former Royal Hunting Forest of Wychwood. Their enthusiasm has been infectious and so rewarding to those of us who have been with the project for many years. We have been amazed at the talents of many of the young people and so impressed to see their perseverance as they have tackled some difficult practical work in the field in weather conditions that have, at times, been less than ideal. It is a pleasure to see them learning new skills and enjoying the time that they have been able to spend in some of the more remote locations of the Wychwood area. Also their contributions to the Forest Fair grow in size and impact every year and we wait with interest to see what they will come up with next.

So well done to Wychwood v, thank you for all your contributions, small or large, and we look forward to working with many more young people on different projects into the future.

Michael Drew, Chairman of the Friends of Wychwood



Michael a little stuck in the mud at Foxburrow Wood



Jamie Thomas; Katie Thomas; Dani Tilson; Kelly Anne Timms; Michelle Timms; Josh Tipping; Dan Tomlinson; Theo Tritton; Sarah Underhay; Grant Walker; Sara Ward; Katie Warner; Rupert Welpley; Zoe White; Jasmine Whiting; Natasha Wilkins; James Wilson; Miles Wilson; Neil Wilson; Ronan Wilson; Natalie Wood; Jade Woodall; Ellie Wright; Polly Wyatt; Jessica Yeates

