

Voted the best community allotment project in the UK by the Kitchen Garden Magazine in conjunction with the National Allotment Gardens Trust.

Moulsecomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project

Annual Report 2008

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Registered company
number: 4334389

Registered Charity
number: 1120073



During this period we have received funds and support from...

The Brighton Community Compost Centre, Eleanor Hamilton Education Trust, National Lottery Awards for All, O2 Community Fund, Brighton Council Disability Grants Fund, Britannia Building Society, Ernest Cook Trust, East Brighton Improvement Fund, Action in Rural Sussex, Sussex Community Foundation/Local Network Fund, Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, Brighton & Hove Business Community Partnership

The Project

Moulsecoomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project is a community food project based on eight plots at the Moulsecoomb Place allotment site in Brighton. The project is situated on the north east outskirts of the city between four housing estates: the Bates,



Falmer students digging a vegetable bed

Hollingdean, Bevendean and Moulsecoomb Estates, all identified as deprived neighbourhoods in the City by Brighton & Hove City Council. The project is a free local resource offering horticultural, educational and social opportunities to all residents in these surrounding built up urban areas. We open three days a week, fifty weeks a year and operate an “open to all, no experience necessary” policy and volunteers get to take home whatever vegetables are seasonally available.

But these aren't your run of the mill allotments. Along with plots growing organic fruit and vegetables we have wildlife areas with a pond full of newts and frogs, a treehouse/outdoor classroom, polytunnel, compost loo, social area with firepit and a kids space including a wattle and daub wendy house. There is also a forest garden, which recreates the different layers of a forest from tall fruit trees to fruit bushes and herbs.

We put on events such as pick and cook, as well as working in local schools running environment clubs and helping to improve school grounds. The project isn't just about gardening but also has a role in being part of the social glue that binds communities together, with all types of people, young and old, youth offenders to people with learning difficulties working together in a safe and pleasant environment.

Aims

Reduce anti social behaviour by involving excluded pupils and youth offenders in the running of the garden.

Improve community health by offering free, organic and locally grown fruit and vegetables to low income families and older people.

Enhance skills and employability by offering practical based training and volunteering opportunities.

Getting children involved in planting, growing and eating healthy food, and respecting nature and the environment.

Creating and enhancing wildlife habitats, protecting bio-diversity including old fashioned vegetable varieties.

Promoting sustainable lifestyles, by encouraging and educating people about composting and the benefits of organic gardening and locally produced food.

WARREN CARTER - PROJECT MANAGER

Winning the best community allotments project award last autumn was a crowning moment for our project and for a couple of weeks there wasn't a day when a radio, TV crew or journalist wasn't at the project. We know what we do is worthwhile, but it's always nice to be recognised and the award helped us cement our work in the community.

However, the award did bring more pressure onto the project. With an ever increasing amount of young adults and pupils coupled with last years wet weather, food production was pitiful. We were also lurching from one funding crisis to the next. So at our AGM we decided to start meeting our partners and asking for them to pay for the services we provide while other organisations started making grant applications on our behalf; our website was completely revamped with a news section added and a donations page encouraging people to support us by making regular standing orders. In the autumn we decided to employ long term student volunteer Katie Turner to work on Tuesdays and co-ordinate the volunteers and students so they could concentrate on learning all about gardening and help us grow lots more food. We also decided to employ our builder Russell Pountney on a Tuesday as well, so that both of us could work with the increasing number of pupils using the project. Being in a more secure financial position helped us do these things and has really made a difference to Tuesday workdays, with lots more work experience opportunities available as well as a great mix of people.

For many pupils and youth offenders school has failed them. We just try to find the skills they are good at and give them confidence and self belief. We offer an alternative curriculum, teaching not just gardening but building and carpentry skills, woodland management and cooking skills, but probably most importantly social skills.

The project is also a great place for a wide range of people who would never usually mix to work together and socialise around the fire with a cup of tea.

I was reminded how successfully we achieve this recently when a student who was studying deprivation in Moulsecoomb sent me the interview he had done with two of the young lads who come for work experience. What struck me most was their attitudes towards people with learning difficulties and those from other countries had seriously changed. Where else would they meet and work with someone from Syria or Iran? Have to help someone with mobility problems, listen patiently while someone who is a slow speaker talk? Where else would they be cooking garlic egg bread for everyone, or showing new people around the project on a tour? One of the boys also said that he hated school and he hated learning, and yet he is one of the most inquisitive people I know who just loves to learn where people are from and ask them questions about their countries.

You would hope that in time, the education system will stop being obsessed with league tables and exam results, and instead concentrate on producing rounded individuals that can play a full role in society.

This is the part independent projects like ours have to play; offering a myriad of opportunities for those struggling at school. We hope that winning the award will encourage others to set up similar schemes in their area.



Katie and Caroline pruning fruit bushes

RUSSELL POUNTNEY - BUILDING SUPERVISOR

Over the last year my work has increased at the Project as has the demand for sessions. I have carried on working with the Youth Inclusion Project (YIP), the Alternative Centre for Education (ACE), and the Youth Offending Team (YOT) on a weekly basis.

Through working with these agencies we are able to reach many of the disaffected youth in Brighton and in particular Moulsecomb.

Our clients particularly the ones that work on the building project have behavioural and emotional problems, this dictates the way in which we have to work to achieve

results and as time has gone on we have refined our way of working. Young people with these problems more often than not have hyperactivity disorders and getting out of the class room and doing some practical work can really help.

Tree house classroom

We have been building our structure for two years and at last it is nearly complete. Work has been slow as apart from the odd shed building day of adult volunteers it has been built entirely with the young people themselves. The balcony has been re decked, all the walls and roof have been boarded inside and out. We have used recycled wood where ever possible and have insulated the walls and roof with a material made from recycled bottles.



Tree house classroom

The young people have learnt to use hand tools and cordless power tools and I also try and teach them how to work with recycled wood.

The next stage will be a paint job (possibly graffiti) and fitting out the inside with seating and storage and a wood burning stove.

Bench building

We have made big improvements to our on site seating in the past year, and have replaced our ropey old benches with solid oak benches that have been made with our young people.

I purchased some big thick waney edged oak boards from the Wood Recycling Project which we planed, sanded, shaped, and oiled to make the seats and backs. We coppiced wood to make the legs and built them into the ground. They have been a great success as a building experience and as the end result. Working with nice big chunks of oak with the young people was a great chance to teach working with green oak. Many of the people who use the Project have mobility issues and the benches have improved the usability of the site and will last for many years to come.

Wattle and daub

Working with a children's group Mosaic at the end of last summer I started work on a wattle and daub roundhouse, which we have worked on in our weekly sessions.

This involved weaving a ringed wall of coppiced hazel rods then plastering on a mixture of clay, straw and sand over the top. I found working with earth a brilliant hands on way of working that everyone enjoyed. Using these natural materials also gives an interesting dialogue for environmental education. We are planning to finish the roof this summer.

Other bits n bobs

Some times we will work on other projects as a means of keeping the attention of our clients and a way of me giving more one on one attention. Last year we made stools to sell at our open day and this year we have been building bird boxes to raise funds.

I have been teaching carving with chisels which has been very successful and has kept the attention of certain individuals for an unprecedented amount of time. We have also carved signs for the vegetable plots and carved names into wood for presents.

I feel my work has gone from strength to strength, we have improved communications and support with the agencies we work with and are providing a valuable service in keeping troubled young people in education. We try to empower young people and make them feel good about themselves while imparting skills and education.

We continue to build strong connections with the local community and a level of continuity to the young people we work with and creating a beautiful place for them to return year after year.

KATIE TURNER - VOLUNTEER, MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBER

In January 2006 I started volunteering at the Project and found it a breath of fresh air from the hustle and bustle of the posh hippy city and intense party/study atmosphere of the first year at University. It felt finally like a piece of home and a slice of the good life. It was somewhere to get to know the real variety of people in Brighton and try to fit in a little.

The allotments were more orderly in those days, less children to be distracted by and plants guaranteed to grow in a straight row. As I watched the seasons of the garden fly by, the Project gradually changed and opened up to a younger audience. I studied this change and how useful the allotment was as an alternative source of education, not only in practical skills but also for broad social interaction. I found that those apparently labelled as socially impaired were happily engaging with people they would have normally made fun of or ignored in the street. Sure, dens were made and destroyed, trees damaged, tools broken and went missing at first. But now more respect has been established amongst most of the young people for the garden, there is less vandalism and far more construction; including a classroom (or treehouse as it's fondly named), fences and new benches.

The allotment has a more buzzy, busy atmosphere and the beds more character, more weird spicy salad, pumpkins, peas, raspberries, and of course biscuits eaten and tea drunk. There are more fire builders, cooks, carpenters, and more newt, frog and bug discoverers.

I work now only every Tuesday, (I would gladly do more if it weren't for my finals!) in rain or shine, to ease off the crowds of curious minds, young and old, who hunger for Warren's endless wisdom of the natural treasure trove before them.

I am on the management team and recently ran a half marathon to raise a few pennies for the place I sincerely hold close to my heart. No swear words, songs from Michael, continuous questions, illness, injury, manure, torrential weather, smoky fire or good old slippery mud can keep me away from the garden and the people that use it, and I know it's been a good day when I have experienced all those things.



Falmer pupil learning how to make a bench

Events

We continue with our hugely successful Pick and Cook events. On these days children (and adults) roam the project, picking whatever is ready to eat, and Erika Alder our amazing community chef cooks it all up. Vegetable soup, salad with olive oil and fresh raspberry dressing, pancakes with raspberries, pakoras, vegetable skewers and smoothies were some of the dishes she served up. The events get children and adults to try food they wouldn't normally eat as well as showing them how to cook it.

Our open weekend during the Brighton Fringe Festival also attracted 300 people.

MOULSECOOMB PRIMARY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT CLUB

Just five years ago the large area that makes up Moulsecoomb Primary school playing grounds was all tarmac and grass. Since then we have helped plant native hedgerows, an orchard and small woodland with a storytelling area. There's an impressive play park, iron age roundhouse and Saxon building.

We continue to run the ever popular environment club during lunch time at the school, with the pupils busier than ever growing then cooking and eating the food they have grown – with garlic bread the winner in the popularity stakes.

We also used vegetables from the Forest Garden and the schools environment garden for the annual harvest festival and sold home grown potatoes in garlic butter at the Christmas Fair. Many of the classes continue to visit the project for various activities.

Work Experience

We continue to offer work experience to pupils who are having problems with school, in addition to the pupils that visit us through our various partners.



Saxon Roundhouse at Moulsecoomb Primary

YOUTH INCLUSION PROJECT

CARLEEN DAVIES

YIP has a caseload of twenty five young people from Moulsecoomb who are referred by various agencies and professionals in the area who feel that the young people are at risk of getting involved in anti social behaviour, truanting, being excluded from school and generally needing some preventative work. We carry out the work by liaising and working in partnerships with local projects/agencies. We also provide support for parents and can refer onto the parenting worker who will engage with the family and work on parenting strategies as well as offering parenting groups.

We have developed the allotment project in partnership with Falmer School and Moulsecoomb Forest Garden and take young people who are on our caseload that are experiencing difficulties at their School or on reduced timetables.

This Project aims to encourage the young people to:

- * Attend School better
- * Raise self confidence

- * Improve communication skills
- * Experience working and socialising with people with special needs and to gain a better awareness of the difficulties they may face
- * Learn about and appreciate the environment and community they live in
- * Feel good about themselves
- * Make Benches
- * Learn gardening skills
- * Use different equipment
- * Build structures

FALMER HIGH SCHOOL

KATHERINE GREGORY - COMMUNITY CO-ORDINATOR

Falmer High School has worked with the Moulsecoomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project for over two years. Some of our disengaged students go to the allotments as part of the Youth Inclusion Programme and really enjoy doing something out of school which still enables them to learn but does not have such an academic focus, which can be more suitable.

With support from the project, Falmer has developed six large raised vegetable beds on a plot of unused land at the school, and Warren runs an afterschool club where the area is maintained. The club gives young people something to do afterschool, lets them learn new skills and teaches them about where food comes from and healthy eating. The produce is used by the school, the Bridge Community Education Centre, which is on the school site, and a local food co-op. With the help of MFGWP we have also built a polytunnel which will provide a great deal more growing opportunities and we also hope to develop an orchard area.

Falmer is a full service extended school and the work we have been doing with MFGWP really fits in with the 'Every Child Matters' aims of the extended school which are staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, achieving economic wellbeing and making a positive contribution. Much of the work we do with MFGWP has a positive impact on young people at the school as well as the wider community. Falmer is hoping to offer an NVQ in Horticulture in the future and all the work we have been doing with MFGWP is a great start to get young people interested.

All staff and students that have worked with MFGWP and Warren have thoroughly enjoyed it and we hope to continue and develop the work we are doing together.



Georgina picking runner beans for Moulsecoomb Primary School harvest festival.

SWAN CENTRE

We have started working with the Swan Centre at Falmer school, who work with pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. They are gardening once a fortnight and working with students we have on our ESOL class, where students get to learn English by doing practical gardening course. Working with people from other cultures will hopefully help to break down barriers and prejudices, as well as introduced new foods to the pupils.

Ground-breaking community allotment project aims to give disadvantaged groups the opportunity to learn new skills



HELPING HAND: The MFG allotment, Ryan, 12, chops firewood, below left, and helps Russell Pountney fix a door, below right



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Different root for troubled recruits

ETHIOPIAN refugees, convicted robbers, pensioners and primary school children have all worked together on a ground-breaking project in Brighton. So with such a diverse roll call, it's hardly surprising the Moulsecomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project has been voted the best community allotment in the country. LAWRENCE MARZOUK speaks to some of those involved.

THE days when allotments were seen as the preserve of the elderly and hippies are long gone. But not many plots of land can boast to have broken the mould quite so thoroughly as the Moulsecomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project (MFG).

This haven of green, squeezed between housing estates and the railway line, has provided an opportunity for those of all ages, abilities and nationalities. And it's not all neatly lined up root vegetables – the project has even involved the creation of wooden classrooms and compost loos.

Purple tomatoes can be spotted alongside carrots and potatoes at the MFG, which last week was awarded the accolade of top community allotment by Kitchen Garden Magazine and the National Allotment Gardens Trust.

The scheme is based around eight allotment plots in Brighton, offering horticultural, educational and social opportunities for its volunteers.

Alongside organic fruit and vegetables, there are wildlife areas with a pond full of frogs, a treehouse and an outdoor classroom being built by youth offenders and pupils from the Alternative Centre for Education, Queensdown School Road, Brighton.

Other features include a polytunnel, a compost loo, a fire pit and a children's space with a wattle and daub Wendy house.

A woodland garden recreates the different layers of a forest, from tall fruit trees to fruit bushes and herbs.

The site backs on to wood and farmland inhabited by badgers, foxes, moles, lizards and slow worms as well as numerous birds, butterflies and insects.

Kitchen Garden editor Steve Ott said: "This is a wonderful project, working with some of the area's most disadvantaged and troubled youngsters to give them the chance to get their hands into the soil."

"It gives them the chance to grow and taste their own fresh vegetables and to have a positive environment in which to interact."

Warren Carter, who runs MFG, added: "For many pupils and youth offenders, school has often failed them."

"We try to identify their skills and give them confidence and self-belief."

"We offer an alternative curriculum, teaching not just gardening but building and carpentry."



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TAKING A BREAK: Warren Carter makes the tea

skills, woodland management and cooking skills. The allotments are also a great place for a wide range of people, who would never usually mix, to socialise around a fire with a cup of tea.

"It's part of the social glue that binds communities together."

This is exemplified by the breadth of people working on the project.

One helper said he was under a cusp for robbery, adding that many of those in his situation found the allotment project a breath of fresh air.

Mr Carter said: "The allotment had been desecrated for 25 years when we took it on in 1984 and but it has always been a beautiful site."

He added that MFG had recently learned that the arguments to extend the new South Downs National Park down to the allotment had been successful.

"These are some of the most troublesome kids in Brighton. We take them and get the best out of them."

"If you are bottom of the class all the time and you are given the chance to build something, it helps you win your self-esteem back."

"The youngsters can mix with different people, including refugees and people with disabilities. It breaks down barriers."

"It makes them more grown up. We all have prejudices but then we meet someone and say, 'Actually, you're all right.'"



THE WILD LIFE: Vanessa Tourle and son Monty have helped to maintain the plot

The growing success of allotments has also fuelled the project, with a constant stream of new recruits willing to come and help.

Mr Carter said many people were keen to take part because it allowed them to work on an allotment for a few hours a week, rather than take on an entire plot themselves.

Officials in charge of allocating allotments are currently looking into whether waiting lists could be turned around more quickly.

Brighton and Hove City Council has pledged to review the system for handing out allotments – a promise which came following a letter by Labour councillor Gill Mitchell.

There are thought to be around 1,700 people on waiting lists in Brighton and Hove.

Councillor Geoffrey Theobald, chairman of the council's environment committee, said: "It's wonderful to see the council's allotments being used in such an exciting and innovative way."

"This is a community working at its best with everyone, from the very youngest to the more senior members, working together to create something really special."

"I congratulate all those involved in winning this prestigious and deserved award."

But funding remains difficult and Mr Carter is asking people to help with donations by visiting www.secdbusiness.org.

lawrence.marzouk@theargus.co.uk



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ALLOTTA FUN: Caroline Watson gets her hands dirty for the project



GREEN FINGERS: Left, Monty Tourle, aged 17 months, helps out with the gardening. A treehouse, above, was built by MFG helpers

ANNA SCHWARZ - WORLD FOOD PROJECT

The World Food project has worked closely with Moulsecomb Forest Garden project to deliver our program of teaching English through group practical activity to people from all over the world.

The World Food Project set up in February 2007 with the aim of providing informal conversation based classes for people in Brighton and Hove who are learning English as a second language and whose needs are not met by current state provision. We work with migrants who have an interest in cookery or gardening and run weekly cookery and gardening sessions which provide chances for students to practice spoken English while cooking and gardening together in a multilingual group.

We are a fairly new project and have found Moulsecomb Forest Garden Project's experience of working in the community invaluable. We run our sessions in the social centre and secondary school of a predominantly white estate which has high levels of deprivation. Throughout our sessions we have found that our project provides opportunities for our students and local residents to mix and creates chances to break down barriers and prejudices. Working with Moulsecomb Forest Garden Project has helped us to make the most of such opportunities because they have worked in the schools in this estate for over 10 years.

For example; the gardens where we work are based at Falmer High school (which has full service extended school status) Moulsecomb Forest Garden Project run the school environment club and know many of the pupils. During all of the World Food Project gardening sessions these pupils come out to help with the gardening, and meet the World Food project students. This has really helped World Food project students to feel comfortable in a part of town where they may not previously have felt welcome.

TONY EDES - INTENSIVE SUPERVISION AND SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMME FOR EAST SUSSEX

I am the coordinator of the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Youth Offending Teams. The ISSP is an alternative to custody project working with serious and persistent offenders resident in these areas.

We have been working with the Moulsecomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project since the ISSP started in this area, over 4 years ago. The project provides the young people with a chance to engage in an activity that is educational, provides a physical challenge and they can see a tangible product at the end of it. We are now providing young people to help at the project three days a week.

The nature of our work is such that our client group may change on a daily basis and it is essential for us to have projects like this to provide an opportunity for offenders to pay back to the community working alongside other groups.

MEGAN WING - AMERICAN STUDENT VOLUNTEER

Megan spent nine months years study at Brighton University and came at least once a week to the project:

In retrospect, I must say that volunteering at Moulsecomb Garden and wildlife Project was a life changing experience. It was not a sudden, bright light transition; it was a pleasing motivating realization of an interest I had to pursue.

I enjoyed myself from day one. I enjoyed working in the 'dirt'. I enjoyed every task from weeding to seeding to planting and harvesting. My days at Moulsecomb reminded me of the human element involved in food production. They helped me to think about the essential importance in local agriculture, organic culture, community and Fair Trade.

I have continued farming and composting, and bringing my own bags with me when I shop. Respectfully, I will remain committed to supporting local, organic, and fairly traded goods. I am thankful for the time I spent at Moulsecomb.



Oriental salad growing in the polytunnel during the winter.

BETH THOMAS-HANCOCK - VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR @CTIVE STUDENT

@ctive Student is the volunteering scheme for current students at the University of Brighton. @ctive Student recruits places and supports students to rewarding, safe and supported volunteering opportunities in the local community, voluntary, statutory and not-for-profit sectors. We have worked with Warren and the Moulsecomb Forest Garden and Wildlife (MFGWP) project since 2003.

Over the last 4-5 years we have placed students in a variety of roles at MFGWP, ranging from getting involved in the maintenance of a community allotment alongside other volunteers, to making a series of short film clips for the website, to working with young people from the Alternative Centre for Education to enable them to participate in the work of the MFGWP and achieve in the tasks and roles they are given.

Indeed, @ctive Student Natasha Clarke won a national Award for the volunteering she had done with young people from the Alternative Centre for Education at MFGWP. She received a Higher Education Active Community Fund Volunteering Award at Pinewood Studios in December 2006.



Patcham House school students building a coppiced fence

The reason that MFGWP is a popular volunteering opportunity for students is that there is good solid support available for students to enable them to really get involved with different aspects of the project. Most students have got involved so they can work alongside young people from the Alternative Centre for Education. In addition to this, I recommended volunteering at the MFGWP to a particular student who had on-going mental health issues, as I knew that he would be properly supported and would positively flourish in this environment.

KATHEN BELTON - PROJECT V, UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX STUDENTS' UNION

Our project provides safe and supported volunteering placements for students from the University of Sussex. Moulsecoomb Forest Garden provides a valuable opportunity for University of Sussex students to gain experience in conservation/environmental work. This is very important for students who wish to pursue a career in this area.

The project is inclusive of everybody in the local community. This gives the opportunity for our students to meet members of their local area who they wouldn't normally get a chance to mix with – for example older residents and school children. This provides a valuable opportunity for students to improve their communication skills and broaden their horizons.

We have always received positive feedback from students that we have placed with Moulsecoomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project. Students have highlighted the rewarding and informative nature of their volunteering and the skills that they have developed through their volunteering – for example organic gardening techniques.

Volunteering provides a vital opportunity for students to develop transferable skills for their future career. Moulsecoomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project is a key provider of such opportunities for University of Sussex Students.

FELIX BRENTON - PROJECT V STUDENT VOLUNTEER

In February, I organised through Project V, a 'taster' day for students. The students worked alongside those who regularly come up to the allotment, the students from Falmer High and a group from City College, planting shallots and moving woodchips.

Project V provided hotdogs for everyone and these were cooked by the students from Falmer. When everyone was sitting around the fire eating food and drinking tea there was great atmosphere with everyone talking to everyone, laughing, smiling and enjoying themselves. All in all the day went really



Belgrave Day Centre student digging around the gooseberries

well with a good mix of people helping each other, talking to each other and creating and sharing the good mood and atmosphere that was apparent throughout the whole session.

CHARLES DAVIES - HEADTEACHER MOULSECOOMB PRIMARY SCHOOL

I have known this group for five years and have worked closely with them to enhance and improve the Moulsecoomb neighbourhood.

The group is very active, working closely with the school to improve our outdoor environment. Some of the activities have included: helping plant an orchard, weekly environment clubs with our children, general maintenance and offering expertise with our green areas. As a result, our school has been awarded prizes such as Best School Grounds in East Sussex and Brighton in Bloom. Because our school grounds are so highly regarded, we were invited to host an Environment and Heritage Week for the whole of Sussex, which was attended by over 600 children and more than 100 adults.

Our pupils regularly visits, with the children helping out with the growing of vegetables and being able to witness first-hand the exciting wild-life areas the group has cultivated.

Crucially, the members of the group are all highly skilled, offering a variety of expertise, as well as being very enthusiastic about the projects they engage in.



Digging up carrots for Moulsecoomb Primary School harvest festival.

FIONA RAS - LEARNING LINKS COORDINATOR, BRIGHTON HOUSING TRUST

Learning Links is a programme for insecurely housed people to help them to develop their skills and explore their options so they can progress into work or learning. It is run by Brighton Housing Trust.

The programme starts with a two week programme which includes interpersonal skills sessions, practical skills sessions, a group project, visit to the career centre and to Moulsecoomb Forest Garden Project. The participants are also able to achieve Key Skills Working With Others Level 1 qualification during this course. After the course the participants have the options to access on going support, literacy and numeracy classes and work placements. The programme has been extremely successful with 89% of people who complete the two week course continuing onto work, learning or voluntary work.

The Moulsecoomb Forest Garden Project visit has been a great asset to the programme. It offers group participants the opportunity to explore what is involved in voluntary work, consider the opportunity of returning to the project to do voluntary work, get an understanding about growing their own food and the benefits of this for individuals and the community. We have now taken 7 groups to the Forest Garden Project and this has been a real highlight to the course which the vast majority of participants have enjoyed. We are very happy that this visit has become an integrated part of the Learning Links programme and have appreciated Warren's interest and support. We will hopefully be developing work placement opportunities for our participants at the project in the near future.

DEADMAN'S WOOD

In March a work party organised by the Brighton & Hove Business Community Partnership organised a group of volunteers from the Brighton Argus newspaper to build steps into the entrance of the woods. Our resident builder Russell Pountney oversaw the project and also had help from various school children.

The steps have now made access to the woods so much easier and we have finally had confirmation that the planning inspector is recommending that the woods be included in the South Downs national park.

We regularly use the woods in the winter to teach students and volunteers woodland skills such as coppicing, which not only provide the project with locally sourced sustainable material (such as the legs for our new benches and roofing material for our wattle and daub roundhouse) but also help to open up the wood and increase its value to wildlife.

In fact over time the woods have become an important extension of the allotments and a brilliant educational resource. If there is one thing that will get a new pupil fired up its getting to cut down and coppice trees!

The Argus, Thursday, February 14, 2008

'Grand' help for woodland project

CONSERVATIONISTS say a £1,000 award will help open up an area of woodland.

Moulsecoomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project won an It's Your Community award from phone company O2.

Warren Carter, the project leader, said the cash would be spent on building steps into Deadman's Wood behind Moulsecoomb railway station.

Children and disabled people work with the project to clear overgrown areas and remove rubbish from the woodland.

Mr Carter said: "It will make access a lot easier for kids and people with mobility problems, and it's good for local residents as well."

WORK UNDER WAY: Some of the teenagers involved in the Forest Garden and Wildlife project with Jayme Albitt from O2

PICTURE: ALAN JONES

AJ120208-A1



TRUSTEES

Duncan Graham-Cameron - Secretary (Illustrators' Agent & local resident)

Tammi Dallaston-Wood - Chair (Manager, Ragmans Lane Farm)

Vanessa Turle - Treasurer (Community Nurse)

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Michael Townsend

Jackie Archibald

Donna Armstrong

Helen Gibbs

Helen Jones

Katherine Turner

Kevin McCarthy

Giles Hippisley

Russell Pountney

Neil Stammers

Kate Morrison



Falmer student learning woodwork skills building a bench

ACCOUNTS

	Balance 01/04/2007	Incoming Resources	Outgoing Resources	Transfer	Balance 31/03/2008
Restricted Funds					
Alternative Education for Young People	0	22,144	22,144		0
General Public Education	0	1,071	1,071		0
	0	23,216	23,216	0	0
Unrestricted funds	-1,640	4,328	2,635	0	53
					0
					0
Total Unrestricted and Designated Funds	-1,640	4,328	2,635	0	53
Total Funds	-1,640	27,544	25,851	0	53

Moulsecomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project

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Tel 079888 37951

Email info@seedybusiness.org

Web www.seedybusiness.org

*To see copies of our audited
Accounts, Equal Opportunities
Policy and Child Protection
Policy please get in touch.*

NEWS

----- APPENDIX I: PRESS CLIPPING -----

An oasis of calm

We all know how therapeutic spending a few hours on the plot can be, but for many youngsters living in Moulsecoomb near Brighton, it can mean much more than that. Steve Ott investigates



Warren's son, Ruben with one of the heritage 'Italian Heart' tomatoes grown in the polytunnel



Self-sown sunflowers add colour to the plots. Birds love them!



Warren Carter - has been running the project for 13 years



Newts love the improvised pond



Over 60 species of birds have been heard or spotted on or around the Forest Garden



Works in progress - a half built canoe inside the shed that local young offenders are currently constructing

For many young people in the area, the eight plots that make up the Moulsecoomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project, winner of the Best Community Project category of the KG allotment competition 2007, are very important. They offer a place to learn important skills, gain some self esteem and have the chance to grow and eat fresh fruit and veg.

The site at Moulsecoomb is run by Warren Carter. Originally from Slough, Berkshire, Warren has lived in the area for long enough to know the problems that young people face in this less affluent part of Brighton.

The nearby Alternative Centre for Education - a school for children excluded from mainstream education - is just one of the schools that regularly send pupils to the project, as does the Youth Offending Service. During particularly difficult times for the kids many of them are brought to the site where, under the watchful eye of Warren or his colleagues and the teachers, they can enjoy some space, fresh air and take advantage of the calming influence that digging with a spade or sowing seeds can bring.

So how did Warren find himself doing what must be a very demanding, if highly satisfying job? "I started with a gardening job in my home town, working in a really posh house. They had a head gardener and I learned a lot. Then I became secretary of Slough Urban Wildlife Group and we were always fighting developments or asking

developers to leave areas of ground, trees and so on, alone. I haven't got any education in gardening; I've just learned as I've gone along. And here we try to sow the seeds with youngsters.

"Now through the project, which I set up with a group of mates, I am involved with the Extended Schools initiative which works to get communities into schools, the schools are open for longer hours, parents come in and do lessons and there are community rooms. It has been found that the behaviour of the kids is better when the parents or relatives are present.

"I gave a talk at a conference in Brighton recently. Half the schools in Brighton have a garden and workshops have taken place in the area to see what can be done based around gardening.

"Growing food, working outdoors, gaining an apprenticeship is on the up these days and is what we are all about. Now we have been going for a while (since 1994), we are well respected and have built up a name for ourselves.

"I have been actively trying to persuade local gardeners to adopt their local school and help run an environment club, not run by teachers, but by the parents and me.

"We run lots of events - such as pick and cook events and a big harvest festival. I went to a harvest festival several years ago and it depressed me - everything was in tins. Last year we did one and had cooks and parents come to the site and we put up

tables and harvested veg from the allotment and school grounds and everyone was trying courgettes on pizzas, garlic and other things they would normally look at and say: 'I'm not eating that!' Garlic bread, for example, is a winner with the kids. Warren explains that fresh fruit and veg is not something that many of these youngsters get much of outside the project.

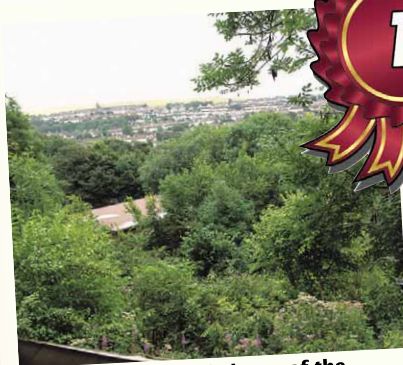
"We try and keep two plots as tidy as possible, but it is difficult and it gets a bit wild towards the top," Warren tells me. However, the site is not just intended for veg growing, it is also a haven for wildlife. "There is a forest garden and fruit area and a pond full of newts. Sixty different varieties of birds have been seen or heard on or near the site," said Warren.

He continues: "The site also plays an important role in being part of the social glue that binds communities together; with all types of people – young and old, youth offenders to people with learning difficulties working together in a safe and pleasant environment."

Warren freely admits that the plots do sometimes get out of hand – but there would be no point in him keeping them pristine as it is the kids who need to become involved and to do the bulk of the work.

Warren's team also teach skills such as carpentry that might come in useful when the youngsters are looking for a career after school. At the top of the site is the shed/outdoor classroom which is currently being built by youth offenders and pupils excluded from mainstream education. When we go inside this substantial building which due to the steep slope on which the site is located, is partly built on stilts, there is a part finished canoe that one of the groups are currently working on, highlighting the many facets of the valuable work that goes on here. All in all, we hope you will agree a worthy winner of our best community project category.

■ **Next month – meet the winner of our fun best shed category**



The view from the balcony of the homemade shed



The shed will act as a classroom for the youngsters on wet days



One of many seating areas – this one near the Forest Garden



This homemade bower is popular with smaller children visiting the site



Warren makes a brew for visitors to the site PICTURE: Kate Howell/ The Brighton Argus



A good crop of pears in the little orchard



The polytunnel is home to a collection of heritage tomatoes and acts as a dry area for practical gardening lessons



The site is on a steep slope with the wildlife area, shed and polytunnel at the top

All our first-prize winners receive a package of great gardening goodies from our sponsors and all winners and runners-up also receive a certificate to hang on their allotment shed wall to commemorate their achievements.

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