

Report by Daniel Randall

On the 29th of February 15 adventurers started their journey to France. By the time you come to read this you will know why we were going and what our goal was. Below is a short diary of what we did each day, Hope it gives an insight into what we did what it was like and helps you decide whether you want to do it to.

29/2/08

Met at the station around 17:30

We drove to Portsmouth, picking up others along the way.

We met the rest at a pub in Portsmouth.

We had a meal which was good and later left for the ferry.

Unfortunately Aaron forgot his passport and had to go home, we later departed.

The sea was fairly rough so it was hard to sleep.

1/3/08

We arrived in France at 6:30 and got straight on the road.

We made two stops on the way, which was good since not all of us had shaken our jelly legs or sticky stomachs.

When we arrived at the gite there was a festival going on.

After we parked and we're shown our rooms, we unloaded the van and trailer, then had tea.

Later in the evening we went to Tony's reserve, where he gave us a brief talk about the reserve and the area.

We returned to the town to have a three course meal at the restaurant across the road.

2/3/08

We spent most of today exploring the surrounding visiting two reverses and their hides.

We had dinner at the gite prepared by Ross.

I accidentally ate a bay leaf, oops.

Later some of the group played hide and seek.

3/3/08

First day of work!

We arrived at a new part of the reserve and half the group were shown what to do at the first site.

I was in Nigel and Julian's group finishing what was done last time.

The French volunteers joined us at lunch, I'm guessing the time of day and food being present attracted them.

In the evening we ate at a restaurant called le flamb'e, I had a lovely tagliatelle.

Aaron and Heather shared a snail platter and Hayley had frog's legs.

4/3/08

Our original plan was to do some work with special needs people, unfortunately they had to cancel so we ended up visiting three sites in three groups and getting a lot of work done.

I was at the site with the fallen willow tree.

Unfortunately Julian's saw broke early on, leaving Wren to saw on his own.

It was impressive watching him work inching the tree to the ground.

Lots of large logs luckily it was willow not a thicker wood like oak.

Ross again prepared the evening meal which was beef curry.

Everyone seemed to enjoy it and a good evening was had by all.

5/3/08

We met some adults with special needs at the park and had our picture taken with them.

We then divided into two groups; one group continued making the ride in the woods,

it needed two saws men (Wren and Nigel) and they cleared a lot.
My group cleared scrub in a field, raised that there were a lot of other "better" ways to do what we did the this site, regardless we cleared a large area thanks to the cutters (Aaron, James and Kathy).

6/3/08

An early start.

We went to see the fishing of the lakes, it was drained really low and the fish were sorted.

A lot of the catfish were thrown away and left for dead.

Some of the group put them on sticks and cooked and ate them.

We returned to the gite before leaving for our picnic, some things for it were brought at the Thursday market.

The picnic was near a castle, after the picnic we went to La Blanc and saw a museum and explored the town.

I discovered the public toilets are stupid and crap, the automated ones are opened by a single button...

We had dinner at a pub not too far away, three courses, mostly pork.

7/3/08

We went to a site and finished at three.

We saw some frogs born and I helped start the second fire.

When we got back some of us went to the pub and Nigel got everyone that was there a drink.

We played pool until dinner which was prepared by Ann and Richard,
the dessert was prepared by James and Heather.

8/3/08

We did a half day at the ride and got a lot done.

After lunch me and Hayley went on an estimated eight hour walk, and were late back for tea at the restaurant.

9/3/08

Me and Hayley cycled to Rosney on hired bikes from the gite, we had a picnic in an abandoned barn behind the camp site then then headed back.

It rained half way on the journey which was unpleasant but worth it.

The rest of the group went to a catholic chanting session, then to a goat farm and then had a pub lunch.

Later on we had a soup prepared by Ross, then went to the cinema in La Blanc to see into the wild.

10/3/08

sadly the weather was too bad to work.

We went to the centre and saw the display, had a group discussion and lunch.

We later left for La Blanc.

While we were there some of us visited the supermarket, I brought some presents to take home.

We later met in a cafe before setting off to the largest lake in La Brenne.

We had a French lesson with Mrs Williams an hour after we returned.

After we went for dinner at the restaurant.

The meals were good but the desserts were amazing.

11/3/08

We finished the ride in the new woods.

All that remained is to thin out some trees which Wren will do on Thursday.

After work we come back and relaxed and Ross made spaghetti bolinase.

12/3/08

It was a day off, ten of the group went horse riding, five were beginners, five were experienced.

Some of the rest of the group slept in and some went out.

Five of us later hired bikes and rode the green walking route, which in some parts was knee deep in water .

We'd planned to go to the restaurant where we had the great desserts, but for some reason they were closed.

There was a cafe slightly further up which was advertising great icecream but said they had none only calypso which was really disappointing but we had a good journey and the drinks were good. In the evening Wren, Aaron and Richard made dinner and it was good.

13/3/08

I was with the small group and went to two sites.

At the first site we felled some trees, the woodland had loads of creepy crawlies the ground looked like it was twitching.

We went back to the main site to have lunch, then my same group went to a pond that was overgrown, we cleared about a third of it, we saw a tortoise there.

After work and a stop at the gite we went to the reserve and met Jake the director and some other people and had champagne and wine.

We had dinner at the carpe diem (the local bar) it was great I had duck.

14/3/08

We went to a site we'd been to previously to tidy and finish, when we finished we had a meal at the second centre paid for by Jake the director.

There was an optional slide show at the first centre by Jack.

Later Ross made dinner again and it was fantastic.

In conclusion, if you are still asking yourself whether or not you want to go let me answer that for you, yes. Regardless of your background you will gain a lot of knowledge, skill, understanding and hopefully some respect and appreciation all the while contributing to a good cause and enjoying yourself.