**REPORT ON THE WASHPOOL AREA RESTORATION PROJECT**

Last year, the Washpool Area Restoration Project (or WARP for short) celebrated its tenth anniversary. Over the course of the last decade, a team of local conservationists has transformed this valley, which lies at the very heart of Chiseldon, from an overgrown dumping ground into an accessible green space enjoyed by villagers and wildlife alike.

Anniversary celebrations included a display at Chiseldon Museum, an early-evening bat walk, an afternoon concert and stands at several village events. A small orchard was also planted at the foot of the valley, using native apple trees.

Chiseldon Parish Council continues to be an invaluable supporter of the Washpool project, providing advice, insurance, and funding for any heavy-duty maintenance work that is required. During our anniversary year, this work was ably carried out by local businessman, Chris Morgan, who has now handed the contract to another local, Lee Wells from Allbuild. However, the vast majority of work on site is still carried out by volunteers, more of which in a moment.

The other notable event of the past twelve months was the attack, last May, on Eric the Washpool sheep. Eric’s injuries were severe and the owner of the dog in question, most likely a terrier, did not come forward. However, the public response to WARP’s fundraising appeal was extraordinary and around £2,000 was raised in just one week – allowing Eric to receive the veterinary treatment that he needed and sparing the volunteers the agony of having him put down.

We are pleased to report that Eric is now fully recovered, with the only signs of his attack being a slight limp and a worrying addiction to publicity! The funds that were left over after his treatment have been deposited in a separate ‘sheep fund’ and they will be used for routine medical treatment and further improvements to the sheep paddock. WARP would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank everyone who helped with this appeal, turning a shocking event into a truly heartwarming tale.

Our plans for the coming twelve months include clay lining the top pond, removing the ineffectual middle pond and creating a seasonal water garden on the site of the lower pond. This work will also mean the creation of a level area at the foot of the valley, perfect for picnics or village events. In addition, we intend to introduce a ‘Friends of Washpool’ scheme to encourage residents to support our project with a small donation - in return for regular newsletters and an annual ‘Friends’ event.

Finally, we would like to end with two pleas. Firstly, although the Washpool is left looking deliberately untamed, it is a carefully managed wildlife refuge and not open countryside. When using the area, residents are asked to take any litter away with them, and pick up after their dogs, which should be kept on a lead around the livestock! In addition to the attack on Eric, there have been a few incidents of petty vandalism over recent months so it’s vital that people can see the site is cared for and valued.

Secondly, and in conclusion, we desperately need more volunteers if the project is to continue to succeed. We welcome villagers of all ages to our bi-monthly Conservation Days, which generally run from 10am until around 3pm. You can come along for as little as half an hour and no experience is required. WARP provides tools, training and tea, and helpers can also learn more about the wildlife that shares this beautiful valley. The next two Conservation Days will take place on **Sunday 21 May and Sunday 16 July.**

We are also looking for one or two people to join the Management Group for the project. We meet for an hour, once a month, and the timing of that meeting is entirely flexible. We would particularly welcome anyone with public relations, conservation or project management experience, but enthusiasm for nature is the key criteria. If you think you can help then please come along to one of our events, or contact us via email at **washpool@gmail.com**

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to WARP over the last ten years. We hope you will agree that Washpool is a special place that deserves to be loved for many years to come!