

- Press Release -

Unlocking the secrets of the trees as Centre adopts Celtic Tree Calendar

14th February: For immediate release

When the Romans invaded Britain they discovered a land of trees held in high regard by the Celtic people as the shelter, energy, food and medicine that the forests provided formed the basis of their society. The Dean Heritage Centre (DHC) celebrates its Spring Festival on Sunday 20th February and will be unveiling a new trail through its woodland to bring to life the wonder of the Celtic Tree Calendar which determined the lives of our ancestors.

The third month of the Celtic Tree Calendar will have just begun; the month of the Ash. In ancient Britain the Ash was associated with new life, making mid-February an ideal time for the DHC to begin their festival schedule. The Spring Festival will bring together a guided walk that will teach you how to spot the first signs of Spring, performances of *The Man Who Named Plants – The Life of Carl Linnaeus* by theatre company Spaniel in the Works and chainsaw carving demonstrations. The new trail will identify different trees and explain their role within the calendar.

The Celtic Tree Calendar will be referenced throughout the year as further events are linked to it. Kathryn Ashcroft, marketing manager at the DHC said, 'Events such as our Fire and Wood festival which takes place each May were inspired by ancient fire festivals and when we looked to build on the popularity of that event, it was suggested that we look to the tree calendar. It's early in the year but there's a lot happening as low temperatures mean sap levels in wood are low and it's the ideal time for woodland management. We want to show people that there's more to the seasons than new buds in the Spring and leaf fall in the Autumn.'

One of the many activities underway at the moment is being led by Site Manager Clayton Ryder who with a team of committed volunteers has been working to prevent bank erosion to one of the many waterways on the five acre forest site. Willow has been taken from the Centre's picturesque mill pond and a faggot (a bundle of branches) created. The faggot is being sunk into a recently cleared tiered bank and as it grows; its roots will provide stability. Further up the bank, established trees provide this function.

In addition to protecting the bank, the new willow will provide a resource for any future bank protection that may be required on site. This is likely as the Dean Heritage Centre is located in a flood plane and the stream regularly goes into spate. Clayton and his team are attempting to reduce this risk by clearing the reeds that produce a wave effect in the hope that a smoother flow of water will lessen the pooling of water and help clear silt from the stream. Clayton said, "The goal here is to be fully sustainable in how we manage the site, planning for the future as we complete our current tasks. We're not just repairing damage; we're being preventative and boosting our willow stock while we're at it!"

The Spring Festival leads into the Spring half-term and there will be plenty of other activities continuing into the week. Nathalie Hall, the Centre Manager said, 'The Dean Heritage Centre is a living centre and we are always happy to talk to visitors and show them the work we're doing on the site. During half term there'll be a trail around the museum and each day we'll have an activity or workshop.'

For more information or if you would like a photograph to illustrate the article please contact Kathryn Ashcroft on 01594 822170 or email: Kathryn@deanheritagemuseum.com

Visit: deanheritagemuseum.com

Notes to editors

- The Dean Heritage Centre is based in five acres of scenic woodland and is home to the 'Museum of the Forest'. It tells the story of the Forest of Dean and its' people spanning 10,000 years of history, from the ice age to present day.
- It is open 363 days a year and offers a full diary of events, activities and exhibitions.
- The Museum is a centre of education and offers tailored educational workshops and activities to tie in with the school curriculum. For more information please call Sarah Fuller on 01594 822170.
- The Centre has been awarded the accreditation of Quality Assured Visitor Attraction.
- The Dean Heritage Museum Trust (DHMT) is a company limited by guarantee and is a registered charity.
- In March 2007 the Centre was awarded the accreditation of Quality Assured Visitor Attraction.