



THE MUSEUM
OF ENGLISH
RURAL LIFE



University of
Reading

JANUARY – MARCH 2023

WHAT'S ON



Image credit: Romor Designs

OUR GREEN STORIES

Welcome to our new programme!

It is packed full of events and activities inspired by Our Green Stories, a Museums Partnership Reading campaign exploring climate change, sustainability, and biodiversity loss through our collections and local heritage.

Taking the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals as a starting point, we are working with local communities, organisations, and visitors to highlight information about the environment and what we can all do to care for the planet, individually and collectively.

Our new programme explores themes of sustainable production, consumption, and well-being. Learn about contemporary fast fashion in our new exhibition or discover techniques for reusing and repairing books and textiles in our upcoming workshops.

Meanwhile, new monthly family sessions will encourage children to reimagine their relationships with nature, and our half term activities will explore recycling through crafts and play in our magical garden.

We share the history of the English countryside with audiences ranging from under 5s to university professors. However, we have crafted this programme so there's something for everyone, and we look forward to welcoming you to The MERL very soon.

The MERL Team



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

[merl.reading.ac.uk/
our-green-stories](https://merl.reading.ac.uk/our-green-stories)

FREE

COMMUNITY VOICES

The Nook and Community Case



A series of displays showcasing partnerships between The MERL and different community organisations which use the collections to inspire creative projects that bring people together to promote well-being and the sharing of perspectives.



FREE

SEW WHAT?

THE BIG QUESTIONS ON
SEWING AND FASHION

The Nook,
23 January – 31 December

This exhibition uses our collections to explore the history of garment making and showcases artwork from community projects examining the environmental impact of fast fashion.

Image: A Singer 'New Family' sewing machine from the MERL collection. With over 4 million produced, this was arguably the most iconic sewing machine of the 19th century.

FREE

AMONG THE TREES

AN EXHIBITION BY THIRD-YEAR
MUSEUM STUDIES STUDENTS AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

Staircase Hall, Community Case
and Galleries, 14 February – 16 April

This exhibition explores the relationship between humans and trees. It draws on the collections to examine treescapes and the themes of folklore, myth, craft, outdoor learning, and well-being.

M For details and to book, visit merl.reading.ac.uk/jan-mar-2023

FREE

IN CONVERSATION WITH BILL HOOKS

By Alice Blackstock and Philip Crewe

Digging Deeper (Mezzanine level),
31 January – 7 May

This display links to a collaborative project that explores the loss of purpose, material, and skills associated with the billhook.



FREE BOOK ADULTS

OUR GREEN STORIES TOURS

In The MERL Galleries (meet at reception)

Tuesdays, 11.30am – 12.30pm
7 & 21 February, 7 & 21 March

Join MERL curator Dr Ollie Douglas and guests on short conversational tours through The MERL galleries each week, exploring different themes in the collections relating to *Our Green Stories*.

FREE

OUR GREEN STORIES IN THE GALLERIES

Follow our new trail and delve into the stories relating to environmental issues past and present that are highlighted by objects and displays throughout the MERL galleries from February.



OUR GREEN
STORIES

Find out more about Our Green Stories at
merl.reading.ac.uk/our-green-stories



BOOK

FRIDAY FLEDGLINGS

A weekly outdoor session
for toddlers

Every Friday during RBC Term time:
13 January – 31 March, 10 – 11.30am

£4 per participating child.
Pay on arrival.

Now with monthly guests from
local organisations to talk about
improving our environment and
Reading as a place to live.

For details and to book, visit
merl.reading.ac.uk/friday-fledglings

BOOK

THE MERL GREEN EXPLORERS

NEW monthly nature and
bushcraft sessions for families

10am – 12pm, Last Sunday of each
Month from January to June

Age 5+ (accompanied by an adult)
£7 per participating child.

An exciting new opportunity for
children to experience nature and
build their outdoor skills. Led by
Charlotte, a Level 3 Forest Leader, the
activities will be inspired by The MERL
collections and the changing seasons.

For details and to book, visit
merl.reading.ac.uk/green-explorers

MERL
MUSEUM PARTNERSHIP READING

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**FEBRUARY
HALF TERM**

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

11 – 19 February

Workshops, trails, activities, crafts, and more on the theme of fast fashion and 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle'.

- M** Free gallery and garden trails
- M** Meet the chickens in the garden
- M** Play on the wooden tractor
- M** Enjoy drop-in or bookable workshops
- M** Buy a Winter Family activity pack
- M** Get creative with our free colouring sheets



FAMILY ACTIVITY PACKS

A collection of seasonal things to do in the museum, garden and at home, including crafts, colouring, recipes, trails and colouring and a themed story.

WINTER ACTIVITY PACK

26 November – 17 March

SPRING ACTIVITY PACK

18 March – 16 June

£4
FROM THE
GIFT SHOP



DROP-IN

SUNFLOWER AMULETS

Drop-in activity for families

16 February, 10am – 12pm & 2 – 4pm
£3, Age 5+

Join artist, Fong Scott, to make your own Sunflower Amulet using fabric scraps and unwanted clothing. The amulet will contain seeds that you can give as a gift or save and plant yourself. Create your own label and write a message for nature too! All children must be accompanied by an adult.



OBJECT EXPLORATION

FREE BOOK

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

14 February, 30 minute sessions
10.30am – 2.00pm, Age 5+

Please do touch! Explore and learn about museum objects through a range of creative tasks.

All the objects connect with the Our Green Stories environmental campaign and will explore the theme of recycling and repurposing.



COMING SOON

Look out for two exciting creative projects as part of Museums Partnership Reading's Our Green Stories campaign exploring the role of bees and pollinators in our natural environment, and the importance of protecting life in our rivers and canals. As part of 'Create a Buzz' and 'Life Below Water' there'll be free creative activities at The MERL and Reading Museum over the Easter holidays and in the lead up to Earth Day on 22 April.



FREE BOOK

MUSEUMS, MY WAY

Monday 13 February, 10am – 2pm

A session for neurodivergent visitors of all ages, developed in partnership with Autism Berkshire. Facilitated activities on the theme of 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' as part of Our Green Stories.

MR
MUSEUMS PARTNERSHIP READING

ARTS COUNCIL
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**OUR GREEN
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FREE BOOK ADULTS

SPORT IN MIND SESSIONS

In partnership with Sport in Mind, the UK's leading mental health sports charity, these sessions are designed to support positive mental health.

For more information and eligibility please contact Laura (Sport in Mind Local Representative)

07341 267740 • info@sportinmind.org
www.sportinmind.org



Tai Chi

Wednesdays, 3.30–4.30pm
Fun sessions for adults of all abilities delivered by a qualified instructor.

Mums and Babies Yoga

Thursdays (RBC term time only), 1.30–2.30pm
Yoga and movement for mums and babies under 1 year.



BOOKFEST BOOK

A day of family workshops featuring historical craft techniques with an environmentally conscious twist

Saturday 11 March, 10.30am–3.30pm

Inspired by the recycled materials and repair techniques seen in our incredible library and archive collections, you'll be able to try papermaking, inkmaking and bookbinding.

For more information and to book, visit merl.reading.ac.uk/whats-on/bookfest



AN AFTERNOON AT THE MUSEUM MONTHLY CHAT, CRAFT & PLAY

FREE DROP-IN ADULTS

Tuesdays, 17 January, 21 February, 21 March, 18 April, 2–4pm

New informal sessions for adult care-givers and loved ones, supported by friendly museum staff and volunteers. Enjoy a range of crafts and activities and the chance to reminisce and share stories inspired by The MERL collections.



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

OUR GREEN STORIES

Find out more about Our Green Stories at merl.reading.ac.uk/our-green-stories



FREE BOOK ADULTS

CONSERVATION FOR WELL-BEING KINTSUGI BINDING

Wednesdays, 8 February–15 March, 1–3pm

Through the traditional Japanese method of object repair, the MERL library and archive conservator Victoria Stevens will help participants explore the well-being that comes from conserving a damaged book to create something that is patched but perfect.

Workshops are designed for those affected directly or indirectly by mental ill-health and can only be booked at www.compassrecoverycollege.uk



M For details and to book, visit merl.reading.ac.uk/jan-mar-2023



FREE BOOK YOUTH

GARMENT UPCYCLING

A WORKSHOP WITH FASHION AND TEXTILES ARTIST, ANURITA CHANDOLA

22 January, 1–4pm, Ages 14–18

Free (Fully funded by Museums Partnership Reading)

In this workshop, led by fashion and textile artist Anurita Chandola, you'll apply different upcycling techniques to create a unique sustainable item of clothing.



OUR GREEN STORIES



BOOK ADULTS

JAPANESE STITCHING

TRADITIONAL MOYOZASHI SASHIKO AND BORO MENDING

25 February, 10.30am–4.30pm

£65 per person which includes all materials (Part-funded by Museums Partnership Reading)

Learn formal pattern sashiko and boro-inspired mending with tshibori textiles designer, Rob Jones, in this day-long Japanese craft workshop.



Images: Romor Designs

Find out more about Our Green Stories at merl.reading.ac.uk/our-green-stories

FREE BOOK

A HISTORY OF ENGLISH GEORGIC WRITING

PANEL EVENT AND BOOK LAUNCH

2 February, 5.15–6.15pm

Join us to mark the publication of 'A History of English Georgic Writing' (CUP, 2022). Prof Clare Griffiths will lead a panel discussion exploring the literature of working lives and landscapes, and the book's connections with projects at The MERL.



FREE BOOK

ARCHIVES, HISTORY AND MEMORY IN MEMOIR WRITING

A TALK BY MARINA WARNER WITH A DISPLAY OF MATERIAL FROM THE WHSMITH ARCHIVES

23 February, Online and on site
Display & refreshments from 5.30pm, talk 6–7pm

centre for book cultures & publishing

Writer and academic Dame Professor Marina Warner will discuss drawing on archives and the interweaving of history and memoir-writing. In her memoir 'Inventory of a Life Mislaid', Warner uses memory and imagination as well as writing and objects to recreate the extraordinary world of her childhood.

She has recently presented some of her family papers to the University book and publishing collections, relating to her father's work in establishing a branch of WH Smith's in Cairo after the second World War. A selection of artefacts from the WH Smith archives held by the University of Reading will be on display.

Background Image: University of Reading, Special Collections (W.H. Smith Archive). Cover design: Sophie Herxheimer

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VISIT THE MERL

The Museum of English Rural Life's intriguing galleries tell the story of rural England past and present, exploring countryside, identity, environment, technology, culture and health.



Opening Hours

Closed Mondays

Tuesday to Friday 9am – 5pm

Weekends 10am – 5pm



Location

Redlands Rd, Reading,
RG1 5EX



merl.reading.ac.uk/visit-us



0118 378 8660

FREE ADMISSION to the
museum, **donations welcome**



@TheMERL



@the.merl



/MuseumofEnglishRuralLife

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Events and activities
straight to your inbox

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