



THE MUSEUM
OF ENGLISH
RURAL LIFE



University of
Reading

MAY – SEPTEMBER 2023

WHAT'S ON



Robert Gillmor, *The Running of the Hare*,
1992, colour linocut on paper, UAC/10305



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

merl.reading.ac.uk/summer-2023

WELCOME TO OUR SUMMER PROGRAMME!

Our Summer programme continues to be inspired by our collections and environmental themes as part of Museum Partnership Reading's *Our Green Stories* campaign.

We are excited to be taking part in the Reading Climate Festival in June and launching 'MERL Fashion Week' in May.

Our wellbeing programme includes a new reading course; there are new events for young people, and an exciting range of activities and workshops for families, including outdoor cinema!



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

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



THE MERL 11-18 INFLUENCERS FREE BOOK OBJECT EXPLORER WORKSHOPS

26 July 2023 & 30 August,
10.00 – 11.00, or 11.30 – 12.30

Suitable for young people
aged 11–18 who can attend
unsupervised

Explore the lives of young people
living in the countryside in the past
through investigating and reimagining
museum objects.

Museums on Wheels

Museums on Wheels brings The MERL and Reading Museum to events across Reading with a collection-sharing roadshow offering hands-on activities inspired by 'Our Green Stories'. Join us for surprising and inspiring insights into our collections and community connections.

13 May, 10.00 – 15.30
University of Reading
Community Festival

10 June, 11.00 – 17.00
Waterfest, Forbury
Gardens, Reading Abbey
Ruins, Chestnut Walk and
Riverside Walk

11 June
Whitley Parade 2023,
John Madejski Academy

25 June, 13.00 – 19.00
East Reading Festival,
Palmer Park

2 September
Pride, King's Meadow



Organised and funded by



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ENGLAND**

14-18 FREE BOOK

Museums Partnership
Reading Youth Panel

Reading Festival is rubbish!

Reading Museum, Third Thursday
of every month, 16.30 – 18.30

Join the Youth Panel to gain experience
and transferable skills by working on a
range of activities. Our next project is
literally rubbish! You'll be using debris
and memorabilia collected from last
year's Reading Festival to explore
today's youth culture.

[merl.reading.ac.uk/
youth-panel](http://merl.reading.ac.uk/youth-panel)

stand out
from the herd



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



BOOK

FRIDAY FLEDGLINGS

Weekly outdoor session for toddlers

Every Friday during RBC Term time: 5 May – 21 July (no session on 2 June), 10.00 – 11.30

£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



SUMMER

£4 FROM THE GIFT SHOP

FAMILY ACTIVITY PACKS

SPRING ACTIVITY PACK

18 March – 16 June

SUMMER ACTIVITY PACK

17 June – 22 September



BOOK

THE MERL GREEN EXPLORERS

Monthly nature and bushcraft sessions for families

28 May and 25 June, 10.00 – 12.00

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

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

MAY HALF TERM

HALF TERM ACTIVITIES

27 May – 4 June

Workshops, trails, activities, crafts and more on the theme fast fashion and upcycling.

- 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 Try a Beautiful Butterflies mini craft activity pack
- M Buy a Family or Fledglings Activity Pack
- M Get creative with our free colouring sheets



FUN BUTTERFLY COLLAGE

DROP-IN

WORKSHOP WITH ARTIST, FONG SCOTT

Friday 2 June, 10.00 – 13.00

£3 per child. Suitable for families with children aged 5+.

Create a butterfly collage from recycled materials and learn about butterflies and their life cycle.



BOOK

GARMENT UPCYCLING USING FABRIC PAINTS

WORKSHOP WITH FASHION AND TEXTILES ARTIST, ANURITA CHANDOLA

Wednesday 31 May, 10.00, 11.00 and 12.00

£5 per participating person. Suitable for all, aged 5+ (older children are welcome too). All children must be supervised.

Learn how to tackle fast fashion by upcycling your old clothing using fabric paints!

OUR GREEN STORIES

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

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

SUMMER HOLIDAYS

**Saturday 22 July –
Sunday 3 September**

Workshops, trails, and activities inspired by 'Our Green Stories' and The MERL collections.

- M** **NEW** Summer Screen – family films in the MERL garden!
- 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 Summer Family activity pack
- M** Get creative with our free colouring sheets



DROP-IN

FAMILY PICNIC AND FARM EVENT WITH MILLER'S ARK

Friday 28 July, 10.30 – 14.30

Free, Donate what you can.

Bring a picnic and blanket, enjoy a range of hands-on activities and visit real farm animals from Miller's Ark.

FREE

COMMUNITY VOICES PLAY THROUGH TIME

A CO-CURATED EXHIBITION AS PART OF OUR COMMUNITY VOICES PROGRAMME

August to October

Created with Year 7 students from The Langley Academy, this display uses The Airbib Trust's Childhood Collection to explore how and why children play.

www.airbibeducationtrust.org
[@MuseumLearning](https://twitter.com/MuseumLearning)



OUR GREEN STORIES

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



BOOK

CLIMATE CRUSADERS

LIVE ANIMAL SHOW WITH ZOOLAB

Friday 25 August
10.30, 11.20, 12.10 and 13.00

Adults: £6
Children aged 2+: £6
Under 2s: Free (ticket required)

This lively animal workshop shows how we can all do more to protect animals and habitats all over the world. By seeing and hearing about real animals and insects, learn about recycling, biodiversity, climate change and more.



FREE BOOK

MUSEUMS, MY WAY

10.00 – 14.00

24 July: Summer theme

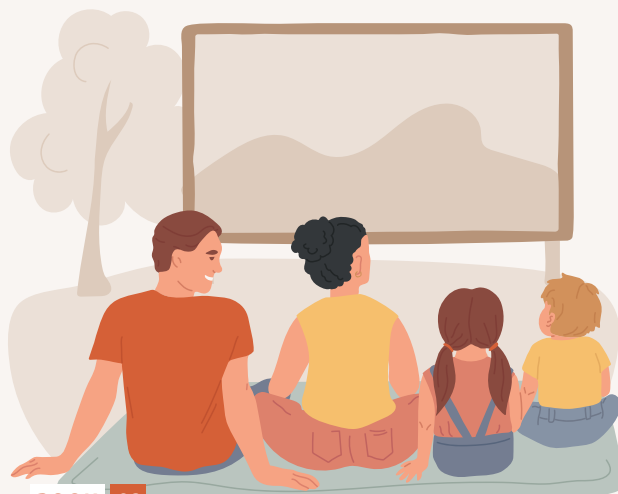
4 September: Technologies theme

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



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



BOOK £6

SUMMER SCREEN

OUTDOOR CINEMA IN THE MERL GARDEN

Enjoy your favourite family films on a big screen in the beautiful garden at The MERL. Just bring a picnic and something to sit on!

Wed 2 Aug, 11.00

A Bug's Life

Wed 9 Aug, 11.00

Wall-E

Thu 3 Aug, 11.00

Fantastic Mr Fox

Thu 10 Aug, 11.00

A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon

Fri 4 Aug, 11.00

Peter Rabbit

Fri 11 Aug, 11.00

Encanto

A
EVENTS



FREE BOOK ADULTS

ROOTS AND ROUTES

CELEBRATING THE ROBERT DAWSON ROMANY COLLECTION

8 June, 17.30 – 20.00

To mark Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month 2023, will be joined by award-winning poet and maker Dr Jo Clement, and Dr Neil Cocks from the Dept of English Literature.



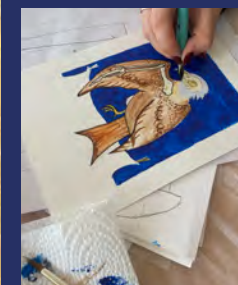
FREE

FROM FEED THE BIRDS TO DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS

A MODERN BESTIARY OF ANIMAL FEEDING

Friday 16 June – Sunday 16 July

Once, everything people knew about animals was collected in 'bestiaries' which were compendiums of 'beasts'. In this display, you can see artwork created as part of the 'From Feed the Birds to Do Not Feed the Animals' project by natural history artists and members of the public to create a modern bestiary with a focus on how and why we feed animals.



FREE BOOK

WATERCOLOUR WORKSHOPS MEDIEVAL BESTIARY

LED BY NATURAL HISTORY ARTISTS

6, 7 or 8 June, 10.00 – 16.00

Suitable for adults, age 16+

Join natural history artists Rebecca Jewell and Sandy Ross Sykes to create your own artwork to add to the modern bestiary being created as part of this project.

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

MERL FASHION WEEK 13–21 MAY

Part of the Barnett project, **MERL Fashion Week** celebrates all things sewing and fashion, with a rural twist. All week, see a special pop-up display of sewing-related objects and join us for a series of special events.



BOOK £8 ADULTS

UPCYCLED JEANS

DENIM COIL POTS

A WORKSHOP WITH ARTIST,
FONG SCOTT

Saturday 13 May, 13.00–16.00

Fast fashion is leading to tonnes of clothing being discarded daily which has a huge impact on the environment.

In this workshop learn how to transform your pre-loved clothing into a beautiful decorative coil pot.

FREE BOOK ADULTS

REMINISCENCE SESSION

Tuesday 16 May, 10.00–13.00

Share your family histories in relation to sewing machines. View some of the sewing machines from The MERL stores and talk about the memories they evoke.

(We would like to collect your reminiscence, which will be turned into an online exhibition)



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

SEW WHAT?

THE BIG QUESTIONS ON SEWING AND FASHION

Open until 31 December

Part of our 'Community Voices' programme, this exhibition uses our collections to explore the history of garment making and showcases artwork from community projects examining the the environmental impact of fast fashion.

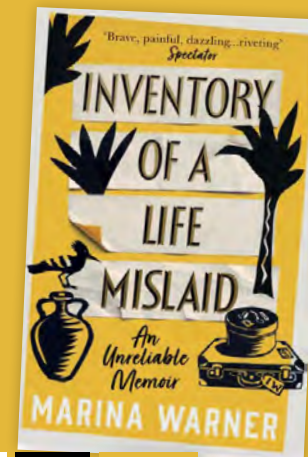
FREE BOOK

FAMILY WORKSHOP TOTALLY TOTE BAGS

Saturday 20 May, 10.00–13.00

Suitable for children aged 9+
Children must be accompanied
by an adult

Learn about the history of sewing machines, the impact of fast fashion and make and decorate your own tote bag. Funded by the Barnett project.



FREE BOOK ADULTS

ARCHIVES, HISTORY AND MEMORY IN MEMOIR WRITING

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

25 May, Online and on site
Display & refreshments from 17.30,
talk 18.00–19.00

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 Misaid', Warner uses memory and imagination as well as writing and objects to recreate the extraordinary world of her childhood.

centre
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Sophie Herxheimer



READING
CLIMATE FESTIVAL

AT THE MERL

10–21 June

Join us for events and activities exploring climate issues at The MERL including a gallery tour, a display of artwork from the Ladybird book of Climate Change and more...



FREE BOOK ADULTS

OUR GREEN STORIES GALLERY TOUR

13 June, 13.00–14.00

Join Curator of MERL Collections, Dr Ollie Douglas and Guy Baxter, Director of Archive Services, for a short conversational tour exploring 'Green Stories' in relation to our collections, followed by a pop-up display.

OUR GREEN
STORIES

FREE DROP-IN

WHITEKNIGHTS STUDIO TRAIL AT THE MERL

10–11 June, 11.00–18.00

The MERL is delighted to be hosting two artists this year: Mark Ripley and Nina O'Connell. These artists have been selected especially to connect with the Reading Climate Festival themes.



Illustration from *Climate Change* © Ladybird Books Ltd., 2017

OUR GREEN STORIES GALLERY TRAIL

Open the drawers and explore the Ladybird publication *Climate Change* written by King Charles, Tony Juniper and Emily Shuckburgh and published in 2018.

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

FREE BOOK ADULTS

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

CREATIVITY UNWRAPPED

11 September
10.30, 11.30 or 14.00

A unique chance to see works of art and archive items from the University's Special Collections and Art Collections that are not normally on display.

Robert Gillmor, *The Running of the Hare*, 1992, colour linocut on paper, UAC/10305



heritage open days

BOOK £25 ADULTS

CHEESE NIGHT

A SPECIAL EVENING OF CHEESE
EXPLORATION AND TASTING

28 September, 18.30–21.00

Explore the story of cheese through The MERL's archives and objects with collections specialists, and share a sociable evening discovering delicious local cheeses, accompaniments, and carefully paired drinks. All guided by the delightful Angela Brown, our Retail Supervisor and resident cheese expert!



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

WELLBEING

FREE BOOK ADULTS

STITCH UP

A WORKSHOP AS PART OF JELLY'S OPEN FOR ART FESTIVAL 2023

27 June, 11.00 – 13.00

Join Jelly's relaxed sewing social. Whether you bring your own sewing project, spending time hand-stitching can help improve your mental and physical well-being.



FREE BOOK ADULTS

READING FOR WELLBEING

Fridays in June, 14.00 – 15.30

Enjoy great stories and explore related museum objects in these workshops designed for those affected by mental ill-health. Suitable for readers and non-readers, you can choose to read aloud, or just sit, listen, and enjoy.

Book via Compass Recovery College
www.compassrecoverycollege.uk

FREE BOOK

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, 15.30 – 16.30

Fun sessions for adults of all abilities delivered by a qualified instructor.

Mums and Babies Yoga

Thursdays, 13.30 – 14.30

during RBC term time (no session on 4 May or 8 June)

Yoga and movement for mums and babies under 1 year.

AN AFTERNOON AT THE MUSEUM

MONTHLY CHAT, CRAFT & PLAY

FREE DROP-IN ADULTS

Tuesdays, 16 May, 20 June,
18 July, 15 August, 14.00 – 16.00

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
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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

donations welcome



@TheMERL



@the.merl



/MuseumofEnglishRuralLife

KEEP UP TO DATE

WITH THE MERL'S EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

Events and activities
straight to your inbox

Join our newsletter at:
merl.reading.ac.uk/sign-up

