

# CROW NEWS

The Official Publication of CONSERVE READING ON WEDNESDAYS

PRACTICAL MIDWEEK VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION WORK TO  
PROTECT OUR LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE

**EXTENDED EDITION**



Issue no. 22a **SPRING/SUMMER**  
**1998**



*British Trust for Conservation Volunteers*





# CROW Summer 1998

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# TASK DETAILS

## MAY - SEPTEMBER 1998

### Key:



The date of the task



The type of work we will be doing



The name of the site on which we will be working



Ordnance Survey grid reference



Indicates where the minibus is most likely to be parked.



This indicates approximately where the task will take place



Mud rating (1-5)

CROW hold practical conservation tasks in and around Reading (almost) every Wednesday. Anybody is welcome to come along and join in for all or part of the day. We provide transport from the back of Reading railway station (short term car park area) at 9:30am and sometimes do a pickup around midday too. You can also make your own way to the worksite and meet us there. We aim to return people to the station at around 4-5pm. All you need to bring is a packed lunch and wear sensible outdoor clothing and strong footwear. We provide all necessary tools and training and also cups of tea / coffee and biscuits. If you've not been on a CROW task before, please phone (0118) 9477917 to let us know you are coming. You can also contact us during a task by phoning mobile no. 0378 743210.









**20th and 27th May**



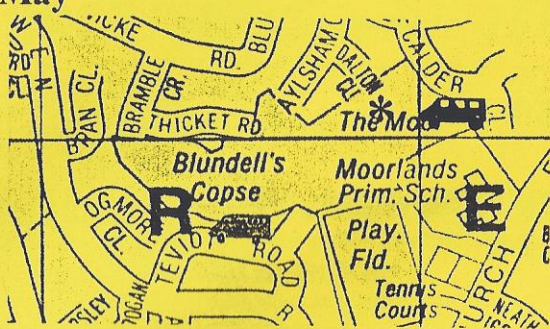
**Footpath work**



**Blundells Copse,  
Tilehurst**



**SU 674735**



These two tasks are part of a major footpath project to improve a muddy section of path alongside the stream in order to keep walkers on the path and stop them from trampling the surrounding woodland whilst trying to avoid 'the boggy bit'.

The first task will involve digging some drainage channels and filling with stones. The following Sunday the Friends of Blundells Copse will start laying the first layer of path, and we will return on the 27th to continue laying the hoggin path surface. NB. It will be muddy! Crow volunteers are welcome to attend the Sunday task, for details contact Martin Drew on 0118 9410361.

## JUNE



**3rd June**



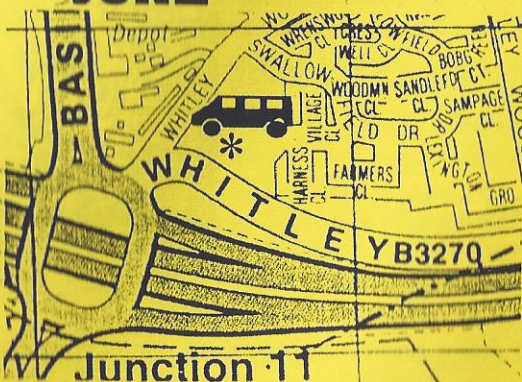
**Tree care**



**South Whitley  
Park, Reading**



**SU 718688**



We will be clearing around young trees and woodchipping.

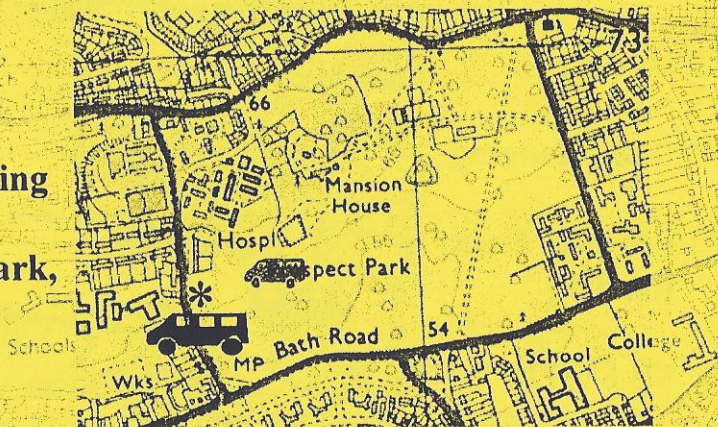


 10th June

 Dead Hedging

 Prospect Park,  
Reading

+ SU 685724



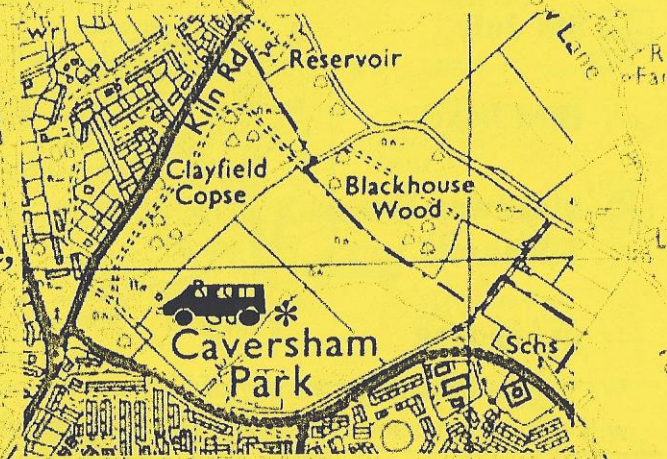
We will be building a dead hedge by Honey End Lane, which runs along the west side of the park.

 17th June

 Footpath Work

 Clayfield Copse,  
Emmer Green

+ SU 727768



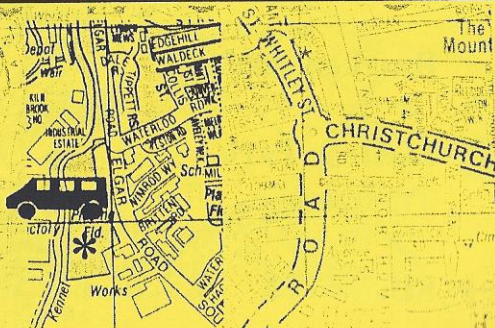
We will be clearing and preparing a footpath which is to be surfaced during BTCV Natural Break

 24th June

 Woodchip spreading

 Waterloo Meadows

+ SU 717722



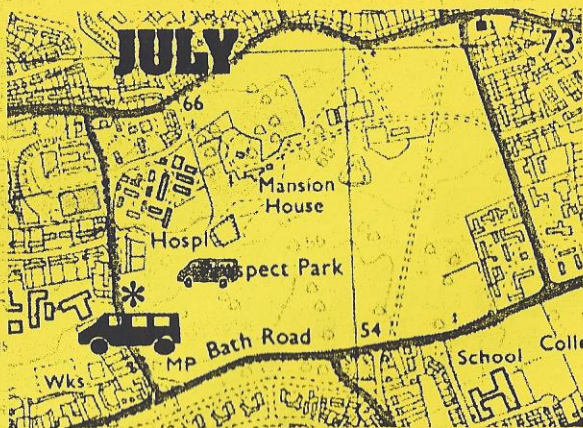


 1st July

 Dead Hedging

 Prospect Park,  
Reading


+ SU 685724



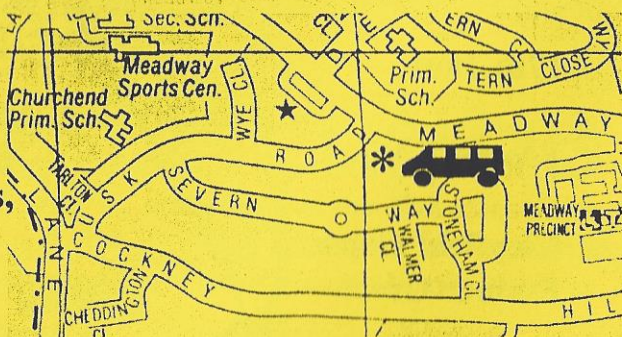
We shall continue building a dead hedge by Honey End Lane, which runs along the west side of the park.

 8th July

 Bird boxes

 Meadway Woods,  
Tilehurst


+ SU 680728



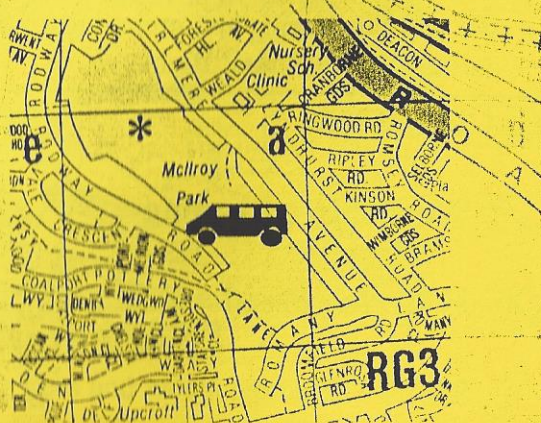
We will be installing a variety of bird and bat boxes up trees. We will also remove some rubbish which has been dumped.

 15th July

 Bracken Bashing

 Mellroy Park,  
Tilehurst


+ SU 785720





 22nd July

 Tree care

 Balmore Walk,  
Caversham


+ SU 714757



We will be clearing undergrowth from around newly planted trees and spreading woodchip.

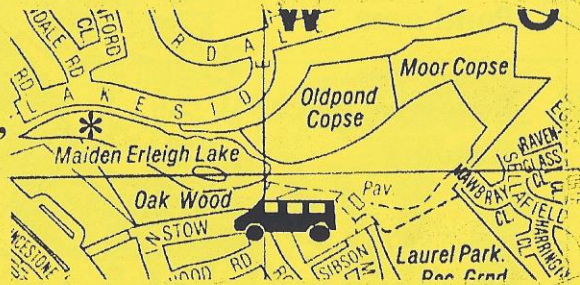
 29th July

 Reed planting

 Maiden Erleigh Park,  
Earley

+ SU 750709


Planting more reeds in the lake.



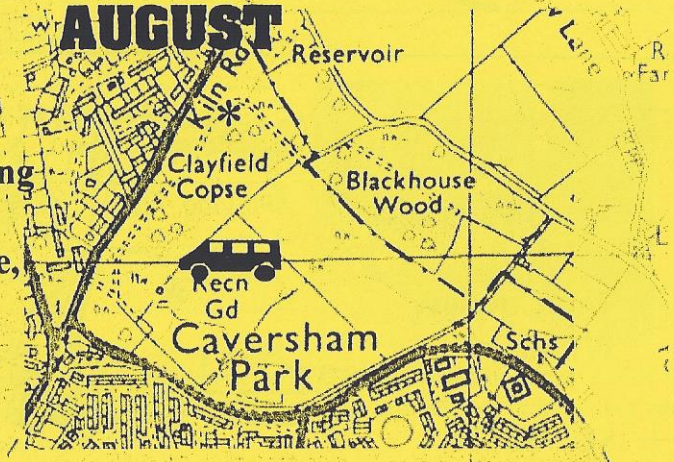
## AUGUST

 5th August

 Bramble Bashing

 Clayfield Copse,  
Emmer Green

+ SU 726773







**12th & 26th August**



**Footpath work**

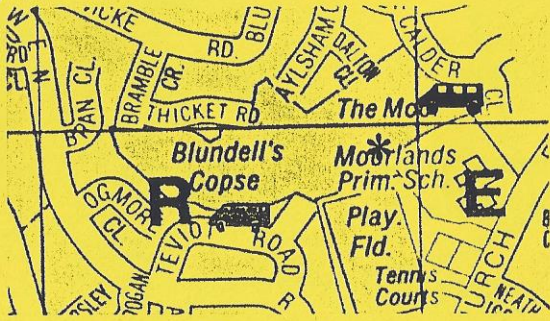


**Blundell's Copse,  
Tilehurst**



**SU 674735**

We will be surfacing another path in the Copse and may also do some grass / bramble slashing.



**19th August**



**Pond area**



**Katesgrove School  
Reading**



**SU 715727**

We will be installing some fenceposts and doing some work around the new pond (now hopefully full of water).



**2nd September**



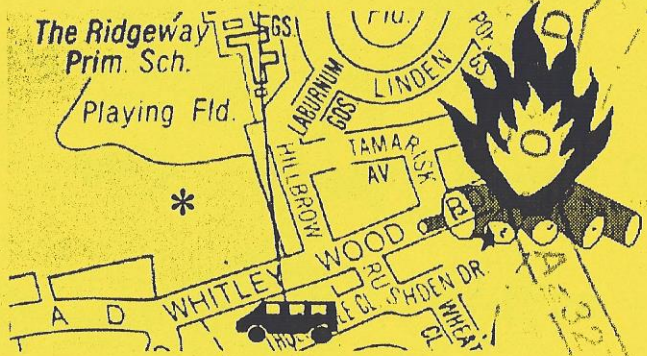
**Scrub clearance**



**The Cowsey,  
Whitley**



**SU 785720**

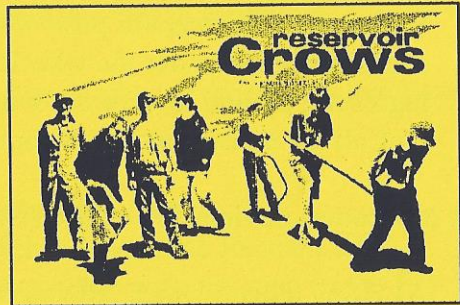
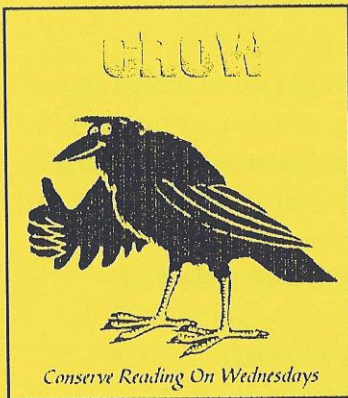




# CROW T-SHIRTS, NOW ACTUALLY AVAILABLE!



Yes, now that the weather is getting warmer, and now that Millets are once again selling cheap plain white T-shirts, now is your chance to own a classic Crow T-shirt with a choice of one of three transfers individually ironed on by an experienced T-shirt transfer ironer. These practical yet stylish and comfortable T-shirts are a bargain at only £6 each or just £4.50 to Crow volunteers. Order on task or use the form below to order by post (add £2.50 or a large bowl of fruit to cover postage).



I want a Crow T-shirt, I want the one that looks like .....(description)  
 in.....size. Here is the money £.....  
 My name is.....  
 and I live at.....  
 .....  
 .....



NB. Due to the extremely dodgy printing process these T-shirts should be turned inside out and washed separately the first few times. DO NOT iron the printed area (why would you want to iron your clothes anyway?)



# Andy B's conservation Quiz

Test your project leadership skills with this simple quiz

You are the leader of a conservation volunteer group carrying out a coppicing task at a local woodland. The worksite is 1/2 a mile from the car park and the fields in between are muddy following recent rain. There are many tools to be carried. Do you:-

- 1      A) Drive the minibus straight down to the woodland.  
       B) Park in the carpark until lunchtime when the ground has dried out a bit.  
       C) Play it safe, leave the minibus in the carpark and make everybody carry everything.

Having chosen an option other than C), on returning to the minibus at the end of the task you discover it has become stuck in the mud. Do you:-

- 2      A) Leave it there.  
       B) Get the volunteers to push while you try and drive it out, shove sticks and grass under the wheels, drive backwards and forwards at high revs, try and lever it out with crowbars under the axle, etc...  
       C) Call for assistance. (from someone with a tank).

When it becomes obvious the vehicle is not going to move, do you:-

- 3      A) Using a hand winch, attempt to pull the van out.  
       B) Tell everybody to make their own way home.

You succeed in moving the van some distance with the winch, but soon run out of suitable trees to use as a winching point. Also it becomes evident that as the van is facing the wrong way, it must be turned round in order to drive it through a narrow gap in the hedge. It is getting dark and beginning to rain again. Do you:-

- 4      A) Give up.  
       B) Come back tomorrow and try again.  
       C) Create a temporary winching point by bashing four fenceposts into the ground, reinforced by having volunteers sit on it, and use this to winch the bus round in a circle.



Having pointed the van in the right direction, it suddenly gains traction and lurches forward. Unfortunately the volunteer driving at the time does not know the route back to the carpark. Do you:-

- 5
- A) Hope he finds the right way and does not get stuck again.
  - B) Run alongside the van shouting directions.
  - C) Leap on the ladder on the back of the van as it drives past, climb across the roof 007 style, lean over the side and direct the driver.

The minibus almost reaches the carpark but becomes stuck again. It is now 3 hours since the end of the task, it is dark, it is raining very hard, there are no trees within winching distance and some of the volunteers are starting to make there own way home. Do you:-

- 6
- A) Give up like you should have done hours ago, It's all your fault for not choosing 1C) in the first place, you fool.
  - B) Two of the volunteers came in their own cars, attach a rope from the van to one car, and from the front of that car to the back of the other car and get everybody not driving to push.

You eventually succeed in returning the minibus to the carpark everyone is now tired and wet. Do you:-

- 7
- A) Leave quickly and take everybody home.
  - B) Apologise profusely and thank everyone for their help.
  - C) Admit that you only took the bus onto the mud in the first place because you wanted to try out the new hand-winch that had recently been acquired.

If you answered 1b, 2b, 3a, 4c, 5c, 6b and 7c then your name is Andrew Noyes and if you ever try this little stunt again you will either be lynched or left to get the van out by yourself.

Andrew Blake © AJCB productions 1998

*7D) Afterwards persuade the only two remaining volunteers to come with you to the tree nursery to dig up thorny bushes in the dark. - Ed.*



# RON'S KNOTS PAGES

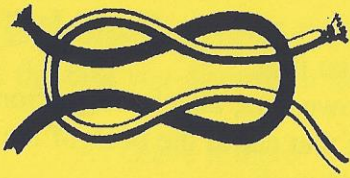
That's right folks, knots, those things that Boy Scouts tie but require a Magician to untie.

For this exercise you will need a piece of thin rope or cord about three metres long (nine feet in old money) and a piece of wood, unless you have a willing , or unwilling , partner who will offer his/her body for you to practice on.; failing that use the broom handle.

Let's start with the simple one that we usually all get wrong and finish up with a Granny Knot.



Ron, Knot Wizard



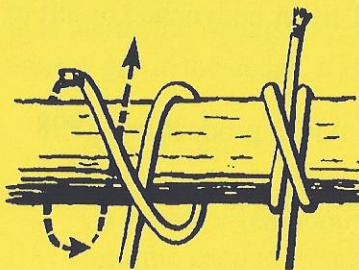
**The Reef Knot.** Take the ends of your piece of rope, one in the left hand and the other in the right hand, pass the left end over the right end then the new right end over the left. You should now have two interlocked loops. This is also called a "Square Knot" as it lays flat and for that reason is used in tying off bandages.

The next one is a variation on the first one.

**The Sheet Bend** no it has nothing to do with that!!!. Having untied the first knot, form a loop in the left hand end, pass the right hand end up through the loop and around the loop if you now pass it back down the loop you have an alternative method of tying the Reef Knot, instead tuck it under the right hand rope and rest it on the loop. If you pull it tight the right hand rope locks itself onto the loop. This is a very useful knot for tying together two ropes of differing thickness.



Having mastered those two lets progress to:-



**The Clove Hitch** This is a very useful knot as it will not slip. The Navy call it a Nelson Knot as it can be tied using only one hand. Get out the broom or ankle and hang the end of it over the table, pass the end of the rope over the handle and continuing in the same direction pass the rope to one side of the bit that is already there then up and over the handle again, the end is then tucked up under the rope to lay alongside the bit already there. Very useful for tying up those bundles of Brash so they don't all drop out before you get to the pile.



Remember all those times you have struggled to pull out that stake that you put in the wrong place, well here's a knot to help:-

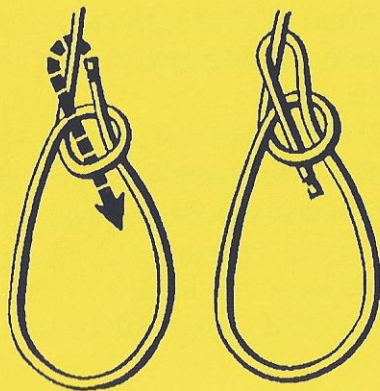
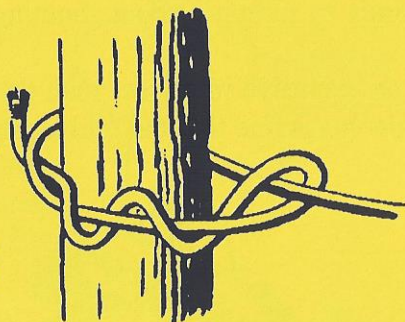


### **The Pipe Hitch or stake hitch.**

Take four or five turns around the handle, cross the end over the main rope and tie a clove hitch onto the rope.

And now the Woodmans friend:-

**The Timber Hitch.** A friendly knot as it simple to tie and just as simple to untie once the pressure has been released. Useful for tying that rope to the tree you are about to pull down. Pass the rope around the tree then loop it over the rope and tuck it around itself at least four times. When pulled tight it will lock onto itself so long as pressure is applied.



**The Bowline.** This is rescue knot that is usually tied around a body as it is a self locking knot that will not slip or slide along the rope and crush ribs. Pass the rope around your body just under the armpits, in the long part of the rope just in front of you form an overhand loop ( a loop that sits on top of the main rope not under it) then pass the end of the rope up through the loop then round the main rope and back through the loop. Aide Memoir.. The rabbit comes out the hole walks round the tree and goes back down the hole... . Adjust the size of the knot by passing more or less rope through the loop. A careful study of the tied knot will reveal that it is a "Sheet Bend" tied in the middle of a rope.

That's all for now.  
The Gnome.



# Teletubbies SAY "CROW"

## COVER STORY

Although members of Crow were shocked to see the colourful antennas of the teletubbies at the back of Reading Station last Wednesday morning, Dipsy, Laa-Laa, Po and Tinkywinky have turned out to be invaluable members of the group. The tubbies are especially good at keeping up volunteers morale by jumping about shouting 'Eh - ooh' throughout the day.

In an exclusive interview with the psychedelic four, Laa-Laa told Crow magazine that the tubbies have a strong interest in environ-

mental issues. In fact, they enjoy a sustainable lifestyle in Teletubbie land where all their electricity is generated by wind-power. Furthermore, the surrounding grassland is sustainably managed by huge grazing rabbits, who keep the invasive Birch and Pine scrub at bay. as a result, wildflowers are abundant in teletubbie land.



When asked how he/she/it enjoyed coming out with Crow, Po replied "Eh - ooo ohh hee hoo Bub by oooo" ... which just about sums it up for all of us.

**WATCH OUT FOR** the new single "teletubbies say Crow" out in May. Also, the new Teletubbies Crow toy featuring billhook and slasher will be in the shops in July.

Yvonne Trchalik.





# Tea Break WARS.

For years the calor gas bottle, burner and dented old kettle have been the undisputed leaders for making the tea during conservation tasks, despite being slow-boiling, needing three hands to carry and running out of gas just at the wrong time.

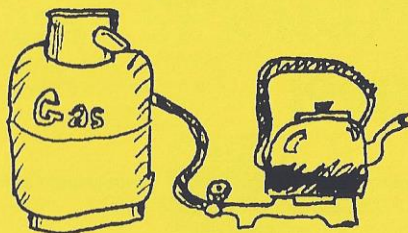
But now there is a new contender, the 'Cumbria Kettle' is a self contained unit which blends old and new technology to achieve superior tea-making performance. Looking a bit like a silver road-cone, the CK is basically a chimney made of space-age aluminium inside of which there is a jacket filled with water through a spout near the top. You light a fire at the bottom, and feed sticks in at the top. It boils ten cups of tea in only three minutes. Ok it takes an hour to light it on a cold wet February morning when you've only got BTCV leaflets and damp twigs, but thats just a minor technical hitch. It's light to carry, it doesn't consume fossil fuels and it looks good too.



*Artists impression*

The Cumbria Kettle is expensive at £80 each (about ten calor gas refills) but this price may fall as more units are produced.

Inspired by this technological advance, Crow boffins (tea science division) are working on an even better kettle, this will employ state of the art satellite technology to boil water all day long whilst burning no fuel at all. Watch this space. (Unfortunately it will weigh 1 1/2 tons)



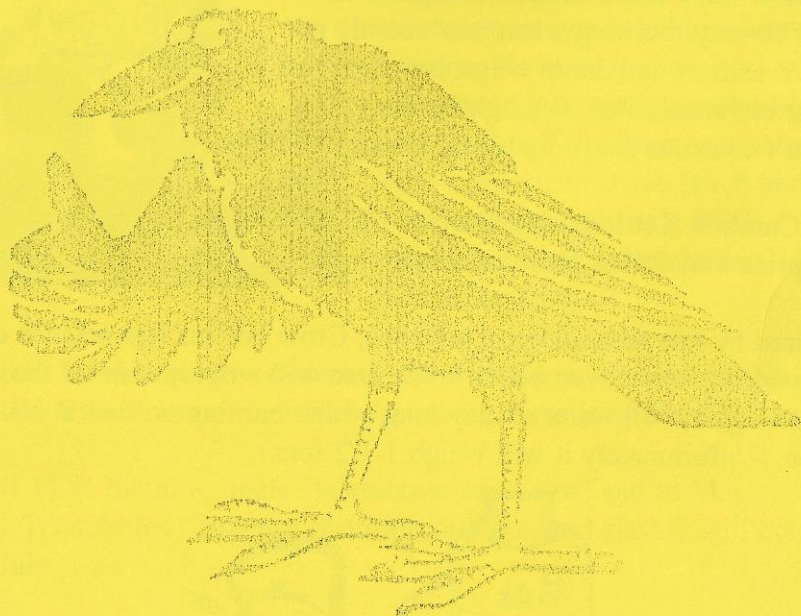
*The Boring Bits will be back when some more boring things happen*



## **CROW** *Social Events*

- 20<sup>th</sup> May**      Ten pin Bowling at Reading Superbowl, from 8pm
- 10<sup>th</sup> June**      The annual CROW Grand Pub Quiz/Crawl, not to be missed! meet at the 3B's at 8pm.
- 15<sup>th</sup> July**      Laserquest. Meet at the Fez 'n Firkin on London Road at 7:30pm. Play at 8pm prompt.
- 12<sup>th</sup> August**    Another astounding social event, details to be confirmed.

(needless to say these are all Wednesdays)



Conserve Reading On Wednesdays, Caversham Court Environment Centre, Church Road,  
Caversham, Reading RG4 7AD.  
0118 947 7917  
[www.crowpage.demon.co.uk](http://www.crowpage.demon.co.uk)