

# Marlborough Big Dig - March 7<sup>th</sup> 2019

After three days of preparing the grounds in the persistent rain, the Marlborough March 7<sup>th</sup> 2019 Big Dig dawned sunny and bright! This was the first Mariners (parent/guardian) -led Big Dig, meaning each teacher had directions for their class of where to be and when, and activities were run by Mariner volunteers. The children arrived dressed in their outdoor clothes eager to discover what was to transpire, and a record number of Mariners arrived to set up the grounds and get the activities into place.

A massive thank you to Vicky Sanderson, the Interim Head, who placed her faith in us! Vicky gave an introductory talk to the Mariners in the playground, as the Creative Corner was being built around us (phew, thankfully we managed to get the Book Gazebo up in time). At 9.15 all the Mariners joined the school assembly, where a sea of enthusiastic and keen children had gathered. Having expressed our excitement for them to enjoy their day, and to get their hands dirty whenever possible (remembering to clean them in between!), the children set off on their Big Dig adventure experience.

Watching the Big Dig day unfurl was truly magical. There was lots to discover. Creative Corner gave children a vast choice to create: making dreamcatchers; using clay; making Falmouth Flower Show entries; making music at the Busk Stop; doing street art on the playground walls; or painting a picture on full size artist easels.



"I loved the painting because I felt like I was a real artist" (smiley face) Olivia Yr5

"I loved creative corner because we had so much to do" Roxy Yr5

As it was World Book Day, the Book Gazebo enabled children to browse donated books, and then take one home at the end of the day. The book theme included a Speakers Corner with a mike (unplugged!), which the younger children in particular enjoyed, and Matilda's Book Trail that Matilda (Year 5) had planned and laid the trail for!

In the top playground, one of the school mums, an experienced yoga teacher, gave every child the opportunity to try this calming and mindful movement – what a sight, to see the children doing sun salutations in the outdoor sun. Alongside the yoga were traditional playground games such as French Skipping (with elastics), skipping ropes (including doubles) and circus equipment such as juggling balls and flower sticks.



All the children had the opportunity to go on a Nature Walk led by Falmouth Marine School and their students. This included an informative talk about the fauna and flora of Swanpool. The Marine school also provided help to the older children with pond dipping, with special identification handouts and equipment.



"I enjoyed pond dipping because I found dipping in the pond fun" Lex Yr5

At the school field Traditional Games were being held, such as sack races and tug-of-war. It proved great fun; a special highlight was seeing the children take on some of the grownups in the tug-of-war!





There were opportunities for actual gardening amongst this fun, with the car park the main point for emptying of old pots and replanting, so now the school grounds are adorned with lots of brightly filled pots. The older children contributed to the clearing and planting of the school vegetable beds. The main gardening highlight was, unsurprisingly, the huge pile of bark chippings that required shifting from the car park to outside of the reception class. At points this was bustling with activity as the children helped to wheelbarrow the chippings – thankfully we had lots of wheelbarrows. This mountain was reduced considerably with the help of the Falmouth Fire Crew, who gave us a surprise visit!



The highlight of the day - according to the majority of children - was den building, surely an essential for every Big Dig. There were two sites for this activity, with two Mariner forest school leads and a host of great Mariners (including ex-students) helping here. A number of dens were built – then dismantled for the next group – then rebuilt, and it's great to see some of the dens still standing after the recent March winds!



*"Please do it again I LOVED IT so much so please. It was great because we could do what we want and my favourite thing was ... DEN building"* Marley Yr5

The Year 5s and 6s had greater scope for choice, meaning they could be involved in helping clear and plant the vegetable beds, help to make a new rag rainbow (great job!), do pond dipping, and plant floral teepees (when the sweet pea plants have grown they should indeed be floral)/fairy rings. The older children once again commented on their desire to be able to free roam the school site...

*"I thought Big Dig was epic because everyone can join in! Next time I think you should let us go to an activity when we want, where we want. But it was still good!"* Matilda Yr5

What made all of this possible, was the incredible school community: the massive number of Mariners who gave up their time to make this event happen. Using their creative, gardening, forest school and movement skills, the commitment and enthusiasm shown by all ensured the children made the most of the opportunities on offer, and had a great day, having new experiences and learning new skills.

Alongside the children being busy, the school grounds were bustling with a core of Mariners intent on transforming the school grounds. Plants had been donated, beds were fixed, one was built, others were weeded, so they all now look great. The tonne of bark chippings, that had looked impossible to clear, was all wheelbarrowed through to transform the muddy areas into a sea of bark. There were three carpenters onsite, so a beauty of a seedling shed has been put up, hanging baskets outside of the kitchen, and posts for a future vegetable bed – thank you carpenters. One Mariner even constructed the deck of a ship for the Year 4 courtyard. And some very tall willow was dug deep to become a willow walkway. By the next day outside of Year 0 and 1 was looking awesome!





In amongst the hive of activity, the school kitchen provided delicious cake and cooked pasties ready for everybody at lunchtime. Mariners organised tea/coffee deliveries to all workers throughout the morning, including a delivery to the field with a basket filled with flasks of hot drinks and cake. The day was rounded off with a seriously delicious hot chocolate for all children and grownups in the school hall, where everybody gathered in a sea of tiredness alongside contentment.

A couple more quotes from the Year 5's:

"The Big Dig is amazing and all the activities are great, but maybe make it a bit more muddier because it is a Big Dig" Lilia

"Nothing was bad!!!" no name!

Thank you to so many local businesses who donated many different things to enable us to make big improvements to our school grounds, and an especial thank you to Cormac who donated plants, bird boxes, their trailer of tools and several volunteers, as well as constructing superb new steps up to the mud kitchen.

Thank you to our ex-Marlborough students who were committed in their roles to help the children enjoy den building and traditional games. Thank you to our school kitchen for providing scrummy food and ensuring everybody was well fed. Thank you to our wonderful school community of Mariners for their commitment and enthusiasm, giving the children a completely different experience to the norm, and helping to transform the school grounds. Thank you to the Marlborough teachers for putting their faith in us all. And finally thank you to the Marlborough children, who threw themselves into the day and made the most of every second!



*If you have any comments, or ideas for future Big Dig's please email: [mariners@marlborough.cornwall.sch.uk](mailto:mariners@marlborough.cornwall.sch.uk)*