

ISSUE 252 • SUMMER 2024

Chiltern

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Summer at Lindengate
(Photo: Colin Drake)

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Sidetracked

From the Editor Richard Bradbury

I was recently asked if I'd organise a short walk starting and ending in Chorleywood. I quickly decided that, given its proximity to the Chess Valley, it would make sense to include the river in my route. As it was some time since I'd ventured through the grounds of Chorleywood House and down into the valley, I felt it was important to refresh my memory and ensure that there hadn't been any changes which would affect my plans.

I discovered that there were no substantial differences to concern me. As I strolled along the paths and tracks, however, it occurred to me that in a relatively short distance I was being confronted with several major issues that are uppermost in the consciousness of many of us today.

Much emphasis is being placed on the availability of green spaces that people can enjoy as a way of enhancing their wellbeing. The Chorleywood House Estate is a serial winner of the prestigious Green Flag Award, which celebrates the country's best green spaces. It also contains, to quote from its website '... a network of semi-natural chalk and neutral grasslands which support a variety of wildflowers, insects, small mammals and birds. The most important grassland areas are within The Dell and Dell Field, which are grazed each year to help maintain and enhance the diversity of the areas. The area is special because it has unimproved grasslands which support a diverse mix of chalk-loving plants, something which is now quite rare.'

So far so good – but when I passed the information boards by North Hill Field, I noticed that the positivity of the website wasn't shared by all. There was graffiti accusing the Estate of 'greenwashing', referring to the fate of the livestock used to graze the land, and urging passers-by to embrace veganism. When I reached the river, it had been seriously swollen by the huge amount of rain that's fallen in the last few months – almost certainly evidence of the impact of climate change – and in one place I crossed a footbridge only to find that what should have been a path on the far side was a knee-deep lake, forcing me



Photo: Colin Drake

to retrace my steps. Excessive rainfall has, of course, led to other serious consequences for the river – one of the world's few chalk streams – with sewage being discharged into it over many years by the Chesham Sewage Treatment Works (CSTW) when its storm surge storage tanks are full, or groundwater gets to a particularly high level. The effects of this on the river are monitored regularly by volunteers, including Chiltern Society members, and the CSTW is being upgraded, which should bring about some improvement. River pollution is, of course, the subject of a nationwide campaign which is unlikely to slip off the agenda in the foreseeable future.

On returning to Chorleywood Common it took some time to cross the main road. The endless line of vehicles reminded me that pollution caused by the internal combustion engine is a matter still being inadequately addressed by governments across the globe.

These issues may arise again when I lead the walk – but I hope they won't stop us from appreciating what is still, nonetheless, a very attractive corner of the Chilterns.

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Chiltern

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DEADLINE FOR ISSUE 253 (AUGUST 2024)

Items to the Editor by: Friday 28 June • Published: Saturday 31 August

Where there's muck there's money

From the Chief Officer Tom Beeston

That's what my dad and grandad told me. Unfortunately for my siblings and me it wasn't the case in our family, who were small-scale dairy and pig farmers living on the breadline. Fortunately, however, they had a passion for nature which they passed on to me.

It seems they were also wrong when it comes to rivers and in particular chalk streams, because there seems to be more muck than money around when it comes to sorting out our river pollution, water supply and sewers. Having been knee-deep in it, I feel it's not just the water companies to blame, it's all sectors of government, including County Councils, the Environment Agency and the good folk at Westminster.

As I write this, it's uncertain whether we'll receive the April 2024-March 2025 funding for the restoration and community initiatives planned as part of the Chess Smarter Water Catchment project, or for other projects further afield. This doesn't mean we'll stop working and campaigning for them, it just means we'll have to tailor our activities accordingly.

With regard to sewage in the streams, we've been stirring things(!) where we can with the Government, although I'm not sure all the relevant departments are

taking responsibility. We're also playing the longer game, however, and collaborating with partners across the conservation and chalk stream sector to develop planning guidance for developers and others building in chalk stream catchments. As many of you will know, chalk streams have little or no protection at present. I hope we can report back more fully about this later in the year.

On a different note, as we approach the end of our financial year (30 June), we're starting to review our progress, and I'm pleased to see it's looking promising: costs are down, delivery is up, and plans for the future are progressing well across all four of our workstreams: Conservation, Planning, Heritage and Access (Rights of Way).

Last but by no means least, I've got a small request: when the election is called, perhaps sooner rather than later, and prospective MPs from all parties are knocking on your door for support, please ask whether they're committed to nature.



Tom speaking at the celebration of the installation of the South Chiltern PMVs' 400th gate

If so, will they support the Wildlife and Countryside Links commitments to nature as set out below?

Here's to a beautiful summer, hopefully a bit drier than the spring, but with no hosepipe bans, a little less muck in our rivers and more money for nature.

The commitments we need for nature:

We're calling on party leaders to commit to our five actions for nature ahead of the next general election. Together, these policies would give the UK a real opportunity to meet the targets to protect and restore our wildlife and wild places by 2030, support local communities across the country and help to turn the tide against the nature and climate crisis. We want to see:

A pay rise for farmers - doubling the support for farmers to make sure they can

deliver nature-friendly farming and nature restoration.

Making polluters pay - ensuring that businesses have nature and climate plans in place and setting new duties to drive private investment in species and habitat recovery.

Making more space for nature - restoring more protected sites and landscapes by 2030, and creating a Public Nature Estate across England with the support of local and national partners.

Creating more green jobs - delivering



wide-scale habitat restoration and creating green jobs in urban, rural and coastal habitats, and in species recovery through a National Nature Service.

A Right to a Healthy Environment - establishing a human right to clean air and water, and access to nature.



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In the footsteps of Ermintrude

Path maintenance team install their 400th gate

In early April, our South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers (SCPMV) celebrated the installation of their 400th and 401st kissing gates. At Merrimoles Dairy Farm on the Nettlebed Estate at Bix on The Chiltern Way, volunteers removed stiles, laid surfacing and installed two Woodstock gates as part of a 12-gate project, appropriately named 'In the footsteps of Ermintrude'. The team of 14 included two volunteers, Stephen Fox and Peter Harden, who'd worked on their first ever gate 15 years ago.

To mark the event, the team and invited guests celebrated with wine from Fairmile Vineyard in Henley and cheese toasties at the Cheese Shed in Nettlebed.

The Chiltern Society's core objectives include the improvement and maintenance of access to the Chiltern's extensive network of paths and bridleways, and one effective means of achieving this is by replacing stiles with kissing gates. Steve Feigen, the SCPMV leader, estimated that over the years the volunteers have invested about 20,000 hours in achieving this milestone. He thanked the volunteers and task leaders who've contributed so much of their time to this cause, but also the Society's Area Secretaries and path reps, who identify the opportunities for stile replacements, negotiate with landowners and secure funding for the gate materials. He specifically thanked Maggie

Templeman, the Area Secretary responsible for the Dairy Farm project, who'd also organised the celebrations.

Steve also paid tribute to the many landowners who've supported the installation of the gates on their land and taken responsibility for their ongoing maintenance - specifically Diggory Laycock, now running the Nettlebed Estate, Lucy and Simon Williams, and Josette Feddes, the Dairy Farm manager, who in return expressed her gratitude to the PMV for their hard work in all weathers.

All gate installations require support and cooperation from a number of parties, and while the Society's unpaid volunteers do the work, other sponsors pay for the necessary materials - typically in excess of £500 per gate. It was therefore very appropriate that representatives of the regular project funding partners Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment



(TOE) and Chilterns Natural Landscape (CNL) supported by Defra, as well as members of The Ramblers, participated in the celebrations. Rachel Sanderson, on behalf of TOE, and Gareth Clay for CNL spoke about their work supporting voluntary groups and thanked the SCPMV for their continuing contribution to improving access for all.

SCPMV also work hand in hand with Oxfordshire County Council who help fund the group, as well as overseeing and approving its activities as the statutory body responsible for the County's rights of way.

Our Chair, Simon Kearey, Chief Officer, Tom Beeston and new President, David Harris represented the Society. Tom reiterated the importance of improving access to the countryside, and the key role that the path maintenance volunteer teams play in helping the Society promote and protect the Chilterns.

SCPMV organise three work parties a month, clearing paths, removing fallen trees and replacing stiles with gates, as well as installing waymark posts and occasionally steps. They're always on the lookout for new able-bodied volunteers and leaders.

Photo: Howard Dell

CHILTERN NATURE

Community WildBelt

An update from Amanda Barnicoat

WildBelt school

We've been working with John Hampden School in Wendover, our first ever WildBelt school. While learning all about bats and wildflower meadows, the children enjoyed making batty bats and getting hands-on, sowing wildflower seeds. All this is great to connect children with nature and give them an appreciation of how fragile our wildlife is. We've got great plans for this year, including a rainwater garden project, restoring a wildlife-friendly vegetable plot and installing cameras in birds' nest boxes.

Conservation work

WildBelt volunteers have had a busy

winter planting trees, hedges, carrying out scrub management, pond management and planting wildflowers. One particularly nice project we completed was at Stoke Mandeville railway station, working in partnership with Chiltern Railways and Stoke Mandeville Parish Council to improve an area of green space. We planted fruit trees, a new native mixed hedge and wildflower plants, and installed nest boxes. We hope in time it will become a peaceful spot for commuters to enjoy and soak up the nature it attracts while they wait for a train. The area will be now looked after by a group of locals formed under the 'Adopt a Station' scheme. This is a good example



Bat talk at John Hampden School

of what the WildBelt project is all about - empowering locals and helping them achieve their aims to improve nature where they live.

The Community WildBelt project is made possible by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and the Rothschild Foundation.

Summertime... and living in the Chilterns is easy

Says Linda Seward

There's no place on earth I'd rather be in summer than the Chilterns. Swathes of wildflowers decorate chalky downland and roadside verges. Days are long and lazy, with the buzz of insects and the sight of colourful birds and butterflies flitting across blue skies. The natural world at this bountiful time of year is simply breathtaking. Here are some of the sights you may encounter in the Chiltern countryside this summer.

It's hard to miss ox-eye daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) in a grassland meadow. On midsummer nights, you might see these moon daisies (their vernacular name) glimmering in the soft light - perhaps a good time to play 'S/He loves me, s/he loves me not'.

Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) is thought to be the rat attractant that the Pied Piper of Hamelin hid in his pocket. Its leaves contain actinidine, which is also appealing to cats. The clusters of tiny, rounded flowers can be pink, red or white.

Rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*) lines road verges and fields all over the Chilterns. Magenta flowers burst from tall spikes that wave in the wind. Each plant produces about 80,000 tiny seeds that spread far and wide on a breeze, enabling it to colonise vast areas.

Common eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*) semi-parasitises grasses by attaching to their roots, weakening them and enabling other wildflowers to grow readily. In ancient times, a 'Doctrine of Signatures' was produced by herbalists who believed that plants resembling body parts could be used to treat those same parts. Because this flower resembles an

eye, traditional herbalists used extracts to treat eye ailments.

Nothing says 'summer' better than the common poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*), delighting the eye with masses of glowing red petals. It's perhaps best known as a remembrance flower for those who fought in the two world wars. The poppy is an important medicinal plant and is also widely used by bakers and cooks - first for its seeds, then for the oil pressed from those seeds.

The bird that epitomises summer for me is the yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*). It can be seen flitting in hedgerows and trees near farmland, particularly where cereal crops are sown. If you hear the yellowhammer's rapid and unmistakable song, which sounds like 'a-little-bit-of-bread-and-no-cheeeese', look for a high spot along a hedgerow or telephone line to find the bright yellow male bird, who learned the song from his father.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) is omnipresent in Chiltern grasslands. Its delicate feathery leaves precede gorgeous white (sometimes pink) flowers. The flowers grow in tight umbrella-shaped clusters and have a spicy smell when crushed. Carry a sprig to prevent illness and bad luck.



OX-EYE DAISIES ARE THOUGHT TO KEEP LIGHTNING AT BAY, SO HAVE SOME IN THE HOUSE



EYEBRIGHT GROWS IN SHORT GRASSLANDS



POPPIES ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SEDATIVE PROPERTIES (REMEMBER WHAT THE WICKED WITCH DID TO DOROTHY AND THE LION IN THE WIZARD OF OZ)?



THE FEMALE YELLOWHAMMER CHOOSES HER LIFETIME MATE BASED ON THE EFFICACY OF HIS SONG



VALERIAN'S VANILLA-SCENTED FLOWERS ARE A MAGNET FOR POLLINATORS LIKE THIS HUMMINGBIRD HAWKMOTH



ADD YOUNG LEAVES AND FLOWERS OF ROSEBAY WILLOWHERB TO A SUMMER SALAD



YARROW IS NAMED AFTER ACHILLES, WHO USED THIS PLANT TO TREAT BATTLE WOUNDS



THE PETALS OF A FOXGLOVE ATTRACT BEES; THE LOWER LIP PROVIDES A LANDING PLATFORM SO THEY CAN CLIMB UP THE TUBE, THUS POLLINATING THE FLOWER



RED-TAILED BUMBLEBEES OFTEN WALK BETWEEN FLOWERS RATHER THAN FLYING TO CONSERVE ENERGY

A red-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*) is large, with an eye-catching crimson tail at the end of its black velvety body; males have a yellow collar. This short-tongued bumblebee frequents flowers with a platform on which to land, such as thistles, dandelions and daisies. The bee will lazily probe the tiny florets to get a drop of nectar.

Foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*) could kill you or save your life. They produce digitalis, used in the treatment of heart failure and high blood pressure. Conversely, if consumed directly, foxgloves are poisonous to humans and animals. Bees feast on the nectar hidden inside their tubular, bell-shaped flowers clustered on tall stalks.

One of my favourite summer butterflies is the comma (*Polygonia c-album*). It has mottled brown outer wings that contrast sharply with bright, rusty-coloured upper wings. Look for the small white comma on the outer wings that gives this butterfly its name.

Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) was described by Tudor herbalist John Gerard as the 'Queene of the medowes', a plant that 'delighteth



MEADOWSWEET LEAVES ARE MUNCED BY MORE THAN 16 SPECIES OF MOTH

I post daily photos of nature in the Chilterns on Instagram: www.instagram.com/quiltmaniac1/ and you can contact me through my website: www.lindaseward.com.

Photos: Linda Seward



THE COMMA'S MOST DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTIC IS THE SCALLOPED WING EDGE, MAKING IT RESEMBLE A DEAD LEAF

the senses'. Its creamy flowers which grow on tall red stems were used to flavour vinegar, wine and beer. Elizabeth I had the flowers strewn on her chamber floor. When the flowers are steeped in water, the brew relieves headaches, especially from a hangover.

You might spot the flower crab spider (*Misumena vatia*) not in a web, but on a flower where it lurks to pounce on insects. It's named for its front crab-like legs and an ability to run sideways. When a juicy insect moves into range, the spider will snap its legs around the prey, injecting a paralysing venom with sharp fangs that then inject digestive enzymes into the body, turning it into a tasty broth. After sucking up the soup, the spider discards the husk.

Study the base of woodland trees and you might discover a lovely surprise like these glistening inkcaps (*Coprinellus micaceus*). They're also known as mica caps because of the powdery mica-like granules that sparkle in the sun, but wash off in the rain.

Marmalade hoverflies (*Episyrphus balteatus*) are identified by the 'thin cut' and 'thick cut' bands on their marmalade-coloured bodies. They migrate thousands of miles, with up to four billion crossing the Channel to and from the UK each year. After mating, the females seek aphid colonies for their egg-laying. The larvae hatch quickly, gobbling up to 300 aphids a day until they pupate, helping farmers and gardeners alike.



FLOWER CRAB SPIDERS OFTEN CAMOUFLAGE THEMSELVES TO MATCH THE FLOWER ON WHICH THEY HIDE



GLISTENING INKCAPS DON'T LAST LONG BECAUSE THE CAPS DELIQUESCE INTO A BLACK INKY LIQUID AS THEY MATURE



ADULT MARMALADE HOVERFLIES DRINK NECTAR FROM FLAT-TOPPED FLOWERS

Save our ponds!

Volunteers at Braziers End

These important freshwater stores need our help, writes Nick Christensen

'Whether found in a garden or part of an agricultural landscape, ponds are oases of wildlife worth investigating. Even small ponds can support a wealth of species and collectively, ponds play a key role in supporting freshwater wildlife.' *The Wildlife Trusts*

Ponds are fresh or brackish bodies of water, ranging from one metre to two hectares in size with varying depths. This identification is itself a point of debate in academic circles on differentiating between lakes, ponds and wetlands. Globally there's no scientific consensus for distinguishing what a pond is. In academia, the word pond is commonly used to describe small and shallow water bodies of impermanent water source, with important biogeochemical and biological functions, found globally and of both human and natural creation.

Many are man-made, but they can also occur naturally – one example includes 'pingos', which were formed by the receding ice caps across Northern Europe. Ponds are isolated water bodies fed by either groundwater or rainwater recharge, which are able to hold water for at least four months of the year. This gives rise to a common misconception that when there's no water, the pond is no longer there. Even with their ephemeral nature, ponds are not only potential habitat to over two thirds of freshwater species, notably amphibians and aquatic invertebrates, and a hunting ground for Daubenton's bats, but also for many other plants and animals. Freshwater pond species include the great crested newt, the common frog, common toad, common

great diving beetle, pond olive mayfly, blue-tailed damselfly, medicinal leech, teal, broad-leaved pondweed and pillwort [[species directory Freshwater Habitat Trust: https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/species/](https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/species/)].

Over time, small and man-made ponds have a tendency to 'disappear' as a result of erosion (infill and silt deposition), leakage and evaporation. These temporary ponds are important for specialised species, allowing different types to survive and thrive by preventing invasive species from establishing. Small ponds are susceptible to disturbances, whether from invasive non-native plants, pollution, sediment 'churn-up', or neglect. In the last 100 years approximately half the UK's ponds have been lost, with 80% of the remainder in poor condition. In addition to biodiversity and protecting freshwater wildlife, ponds serve an important function within water catchments (ecosystem services) as additional water stores, mitigating the risk and severity of flooding.

The distinction between a lake and a pond is important because ponds aren't afforded the same legal protections – a contributing factor in their decline nationally. Ponds were historically used for livestock on commons, or for other public use but, without ongoing maintenance



Great crested newt

by private groups or council stewardship, they've declined along with their associated species. Ponds are afforded the general protections many habitats have been granted since the 20th century, but there are few specific protections to prevent their degradation or ensure their upkeep [see: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/uk-wildlife-law>]. Great crested newts are a European Protected Species, meaning the animal, their eggs, breeding sites and resting places are protected by law. Finding one in a pond can be used to obtain funding or afford legal protections for the habitat as a whole by virtue of its presence.

The Chess catchment, covering only 94.98 km² of the Chilterns, has over 249 ponds, identified through a desk-based study. Historically under studied, and a critical stepping stone for species across the catchment, more information was needed to understand the state of these ponds. Research conducted by citizen scientists has been used to gather baseline data in the form of a preliminary survey of some of them. One success story from this project is Braziers End Pond, near Cholesbury in Buckinghamshire.

Following an initial survey in September 2023, some issues were identified. A phased improvement plan, developed by the Chess

Going with the flow

Bob Older reflects on factors affecting winterbournes

With the river flowing strongly from end to end, water meadows inundated with groundwater and sewers overflowing, many people have recently been more worried about possible flooding than lack of flow.

Chiltern readers will probably be well aware of the basic principles of chalk streams and their 'winterbourne' elements (see issue 249). The welcome return of the Misbourne upstream of the Chiltern Hospital's grounds, heralded by springs last December and now in full flow all the way from Mobwell Pond, provides a prime example of the classic ephemeral winterbourne flow. And, as the model (right) suggests, there's strong, steady flow from the hospital downstream through Little Missenden, Shardeloes and Amersham.

At the time of writing (March), exceptionally strong flows continue through the Chalfonts and on to the confluence with the Colne at Denham. Unsurprisingly, groundwater levels all along the valley are high or exceptionally high, with some possible indication that the most extreme – for example at Chalfont St Peter – are downstream of Amersham, and the least noteworthy are upstream of Great Missenden. These high levels are unusual, however.

Observations of groundwater level along the valley over 30 years show a clear picture of the sort of variation that might be expected in a winterbourne reach above the Chiltern Hospital and more steady flow down to the Amersham bypass. Strangely, that flow doesn't continue steadily on downstream. Further substantial variations – with a winterbourne characteristic – are recorded in the next section from Amersham to Chalfont Park, from where constant flow continues to Denham.

It appears intuitive to match the transition in Misbourne behaviours downstream of the Amersham bypass to the change in outcropping chalk. The further transition from 'Lewes Nodular' to 'Seaford Newhaven' chalk shows about two miles later at Chalfont St Giles.

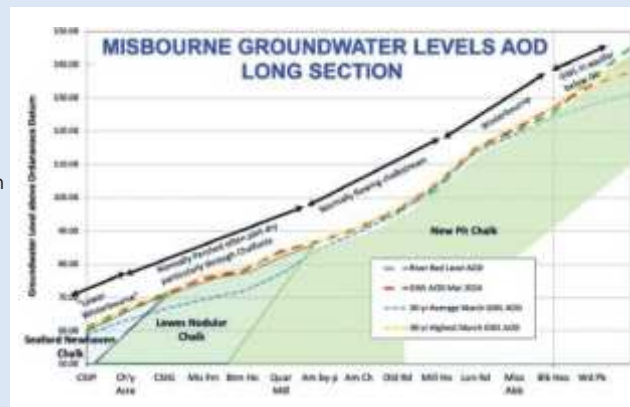
No-flow conditions between Little Missenden and the Amersham bypass are rare – possibly more so in recent years due to reductions in abstraction. From the bypass to Chalfont St Giles flow is more usual than not, again apparently more so in recent years – possibly due to the same reductions

in abstraction and also clearance activities by Misbourne River Action and others. The next section to Chalfont St Peter typically suffers from heavy water loss.

A Google search on 'chalk in the Chilterns' or similar, finds some amazingly detailed articles describing the succession of chalk strata in the Chilterns and the nature of the various chalks. Principal of these is by Dr Haydon Bailey, a foremost expert, and geology adviser to the Chiltern Society. For example, a wealth of information can be found at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370106623_Bailey2023Chalk_aquifer, particularly describing the chalk types mentioned above.

It's tempting to look for clear, simple differences in the properties – porosity, permeability or transmissivity – of the relevant chalk types, bearing in mind that the older strata outcrop further up the valley than the younger. Published data shows significant variability within the defined strata and confusing similarities between them. Other factors such as depth of any overlying alluvium drift deposits, local patterns of fractures and karst features, and even bed gradient, preclude any quantitative analysis.

Nevertheless, a correlation between stream behaviours and the underlying strata is apparent. This is well documented in the case of the 'low flows', which are a first consideration in mending the Misbourne. Surprisingly, in these times of high groundwater levels, it seems the reaches that lose flow in normal times are also those which are first to show adjacent groundwater flooding.



Smarter Water Catchment Project, aimed to deliver habitat improvements by managing the trees surrounding the pond in order to increase light and by removing invasive non-native species. A community day organised by the Chiltern Society and the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project in partnership with the parish council has not only seen new members signing up to the Society, but has also reinvigorated and enthused local interest in the long-forgotten site. The dead-hedge created by volunteers will provide a much-valued home for amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates and other creatures. Future works will include more volunteer days, as well as investigations into the water quality and species in the area. Braziers End Pond is just one of those which the Society is helping to manage across the Chilterns. Thanks to all the volunteers who assist us in managing these wildlife havens.

As part of the Smarter Water Project, a joint initiative between multiple organisations aims to make significant improvements to the Chess Water Catchment, Braziers End Pond was one of the first to be improved by this joint effort. In Chesham, work has already begun on projects to restore Skottowe's Pond in Lowndes Park and, just a stone's throw away, the pond at Bury House in the Pednor Valley. Both feed into a headwater of the River Chess, which emerges in Chesham's Old Town. Many other projects have already been or are being undertaken downriver between Chesham and Rickmansworth.

If you're interested in learning more about helping to manage ponds, the Freshwater Habitats Trust in cooperation with UCL have made a guide publicly available to promote the protection of small water bodies and help wildlife: <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/news/new-guide-help-landowners-bring-ponds-back-to-life/>.

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- <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/habitats/ponds/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/great-crested-newts-protection-surveys-and-licences>

Chesham Museum finds a new home



Emily (left) and a volunteer sorting through old photographs



The new museum

Bob Stuart **reports**

After a six-year absence from a permanent location in the town, Chesham Museum is back with a new home and a mission to again become the focal point for recording and displaying the town's life, times and rich history.

Although some might remember the museum's humble 2004 beginnings in the stables of a local pub, many more will no doubt fondly recall its busy Market Square location, established in 2009. Sadly, a change of circumstances forced its closure in 2017. The future looked uncertain – that is until earlier this year when local MP Sarah Green signalled the dawn of a new era for the museum with the unveiling of premises in Chesham Town Hall.

For all those involved in keeping the spirit of the museum alive during its dormant phase, it's been an engrossing if lengthy journey. 'Market Square was very successful as a museum, but running costs made it financially challenging,' recalls Emily Toettcher, a consultant who's been involved in the development of both Amersham and Chesham Museums. Thankfully, a local company provided free and secure storage for all the museum's hundreds of valuable artefacts until new premises could be found.

Out of sight was not out of mind, however. As trustees sought a new home, the museum kept its presence alive, developing a wealth of regular pop-up exhibitions and activities featuring 'satellite' displays in locations such as the local library, art gallery and theatre. There were also historical information panels dotted

around the town and regular stalls at the town's produce market. With help from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Arts Council, such activities later expanded to encompass community involvement projects. These included the distribution to local schools of 'handling boxes' – collections of exhibits aimed at giving youngsters hands-on experience of historical items from the town's past.

Equally popular were workshops and guided walks through the town's historic streets, where former workhouses still remain. 'In some ways, museums are like a kind of antidote to modern life,' said Emily. 'The idea that everyone wants something digital doesn't always apply. We show things that people have made, that people before us used and left behind. For a younger person, we can perhaps tell what it was like to be a teenage boy 100 years ago.'

As the fourth largest town in the county, Chesham owes much of its stature to an industrial past spanning – in some cases – several hundred years. Among a diverse array of businesses were what are often summarised as the four 'Bs' – beer, boots, brushes and Baptists (who were a thriving community). During the 18th and 19th centuries it's believed the town boasted a pub or beer shop for every 100

people – the beer often brewed on site, with sales frequently topping little more than two dozen bottles a week. The town's largest brewery opened its doors in the 1840s, a deep well of spring water lending a distinctive flavour to the brew. By 1872 Chesham Brewery owned 11 pubs in the town, taking over rival How's Brewery along the way.

With regard to brushes, by the early 20th century, Chesham had 10 factories, their output ranging from paint brushes to brooms, including those used to clean barnacles from ships' hulls. Attaching the bristles, which originally came from Russia, Poland and China, was delicate, intricate work and women were employed for the process. One brush business, opened in 1840, is still in production, operated by the sixth generation of owners and now producing specialist brushes.

The plentiful supply of water from the River Chess had always attracted people to the town, powering mills and enabling industries such as boot making to thrive. As fashions changed from heavy boots to lighter footwear, however, the trade declined and after more than 200 years Chesham's last factory closed its doors in 2005.

Another element to the town's growing prosperity in the 19th century was the

arrival of the Metropolitan Railway in 1889, providing a direct link to London and enabling locally produced goods to be sold in the capital.

As with most museums, available space is of the essence, meaning that only a fraction of Chesham's impressive collection can be on display at any one time, the remainder currently being in storage with another local company, again free of charge. 'We're at the concept stage, seeing what works,' explained Emily. 'We want people to tell us what they want to see, whether it's about the local football club's history, watercress picking or the pencil factory. At the heart of displays will be the development of key themes to Chesham life - work, home and play.'

Bringing these to life in an attractive new environment is thanks in no small part to the army of 40 volunteers who helped decorate and fit out what was a former council meeting room. 'We spent little, but had some great help,' said Emily. Some of the showcases, 30 years old and originally in Amersham Museum, were painted and rejuvenated, while volunteers built and painted a mini store room, installed blinds and developed the layout and artwork adorning the new premises.

For all those involved, the icing on the museum's cake was official accreditation from the Arts Council. A standard that all museums aspire to, this recognition spans such criteria as proper governance, professionalism, care for the collection and how the displays involve and appeal to visitors.

As the museum settles into its new home, interest in the town and its industrious and colourful past shows no sign of slowing, thanks in part to the efforts of the local history research group in publishing detailed books on the subject. 'People regularly come in to donate a variety of objects to the museum, offering everything from photographs and domestic items to, in one case, a large collection of ancient beer flagons,' said Emily. 'Visitors, and not always just local people, want to know about what work was like in the town. They might also be particularly interested in the history of their home and street, what it was like in the past, what the shops and pubs were like and what people did in their spare time. In other words, who walked those steps before me.'

With the opening of its entertaining and thought-inspiring new museum, Chesham's rightful place in the history of the Chilterns is assured for the present and the future.



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Ashley Green

With **Andrew Clark**

This walk explores hidden corners of Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. It includes a ruined chapel, a moated farmhouse and a historic wood that the Chiltern Society helps to maintain.

DISTANCE: 4.8 miles/7.75km

START: Ashley Green Memorial Hall, Two Dells Lane, Ashley Green HP5 3RB. Grid ref: SP977051

TERRAIN: An easy stile-free walk along good paths with a number of gates. There are three short climbs and a total ascent of 250ft/76m

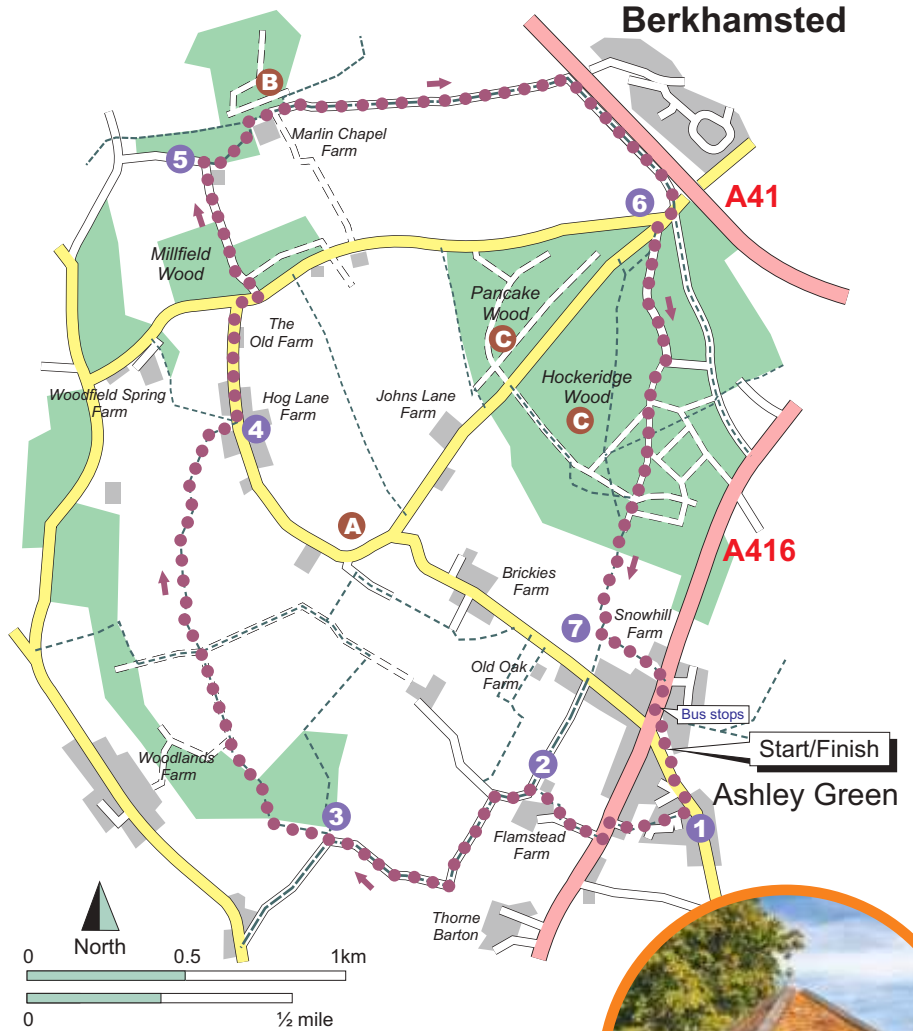
MAPS: OS Explorer 181 and Chiltern Society 17

REFRESHMENTS: The Golden Eagle on Chesham Road and The Glebe Café at the Memorial Hall

PARKING: As above or locally

LOCAL TRANSPORT: For local bus services please check www.traveline.info

Map: Glyn Kuhn
Photos: Colin Drake



The route

From the car park entrance, cross the road, turn left along the pavement to Paddock Way and turn right into it.

1. Walk to the end and through a gate to the left of The Stables. Cross the gravel driveway and go through the gate into a field. Follow the path through two further gates and continue between the fences to the main road (A416). Turn left along the pavement and, a few metres after the bus stop, cross the road to the entrance to Flamstead Farm. Walk down the driveway for 130m and go through the gate on the right onto a gravel driveway. Walk towards the wooden building (Flamstead Yard), take the path on the right directly behind it and continue through the gate to a crossing bridleway.
2. Turn left, ignore the path on the right at the left-hand bend and carry on down to a sharp left-hand turn at the bottom of the hill.
3. Turn right towards a metal field gate, then left immediately before it through a gap into the corner of the field. Keep straight ahead uphill to the top, turn right through a gap into the wood and continue along to a field. In spring there's a wonderful display of bluebells in the wood. Continue ahead to the right of the hedgerow and through the middle of two fields to a crossing bridleway. Keep straight ahead to the left of a line of trees and go through a series of gates and fields to reach a double gate. Pass through it, turn right, head towards the houses and through two further gates to a lane (Hog Lane).
4. Turn left along the lane to a T-junction, turn right into Northchurch Lane and take the lane on the left immediately after Clamber Cottage. Just after Marlin Chapel Cottage, follow the now unsurfaced track (bridleway) round to the right.
5. Continue for 200m and take the path joining from the left (signed to Heath End) to view the remains of the chapel of St Mary Magdalene. Return to the bridleway, turn left past Marlin

Chapel Farm and its moat, and continue to the edge of a field. Stay on the path as it winds between the fields, heading towards the water tower in the distance. At the end of the fields, turn right down a concrete track (signed to Dennys Lane) that runs parallel to the A41.

6. At the road junction at the bottom turn right, fork left along Johns Lane for a short distance and go through the gate on the left into Hockeridge Wood. Follow the wide track up and along for 1km, ignoring all paths to the left and right, until it drops down out of the wood into a field. Continue up the hill ahead. Follow the hedgerow round to the left and then to the right and through a gap on the left into a field.
7. Keep straight ahead along the right-hand side of the hedge, go through the gate into the car park of The Golden Eagle and onwards to the road beyond. Cross the road, turn right over the grass and bear left to return to the start.





View from bridleway to Chesham Vale



View into Chesham Vale



Remains of St Mary Magdalene Chapel



Clamber Cottage

Points of interest

Ashley Green: The word Ashley is derived from the Old English words 'æsc' (ash) and 'leah' (forest glade). It was once a hamlet within Chesham parish, but is now joined with Whelpley Hill to form its own. There are many historical features in the village – around the green are a replica wellhead, a puddingstone and the old school which is now a community hall. In 1940 the school featured in a Ministry of Information film which can be found online by searching for 'Ashley Green goes to School'. Nearby are St John's Church built in 1874 and the Grade II listed Golden Eagle pub. In 2019, a metal detectorist found a hoard of 12 rare coins from the Roman era in a local field.

A. Hog Lane: Although the walk doesn't pass along the whole of the lane, there are some notable buildings. These include the Grade II listed Old Oak Farmhouse and its barns, and the Old Farmhouse. Also of architectural interest are Hog Lane Farm and the former brickworks at Brickies Farm.

B. The chapel of St Mary Magdalene and Marlin Chapel Farm: All that remains of the ruined chapel are its four corners. It was probably constructed for Sir Laurence de Broc in the 13th century as the chapel to the manor house. The noticeboard at the site has more information. On the right just after leaving the chapel is Marlin Chapel Farm. Marlin is a derivation of Magdalene and the

current buildings are on the site of the old manor house. The most notable feature when walking past is the moat. The majority of moated sites were built as a status symbol rather than for defensive purposes.

C. Hockeridge and Pancake Woods cover some 74.43ha. The site has been woodland for more than two centuries and is classed as ancient semi-natural woodland. There was a thriving timber industry during the 19th century but major felling took place to help the war effort. In 1952 the woods were bought by Mary Wellesley, great great-granddaughter of the Duke of Wellington. She was a keen arborculturalist and set about restoring the woods. In 1986 she gifted the woods to the Royal Forestry Society, who still manage them to this day. The Chiltern Society's Hockeridge & Pancake Woods Conservation Group are working in partnership with the Royal Forestry Society, organising conservation work parties to support the management of the woods. Activities include ride restoration, tree planting, pond clearance, footpath improvements and managing invasive species in order to help enhance the conservation value and access opportunities throughout this interesting and diverse woodland.

Grateful thanks to Neil Rees for his assistance with the points of interest.

Society footpath maps

– don't leave home without them!

Our 32 footpath maps give comprehensive coverage of the Chilterns, from Hitchin and Hexton at one end to Goring and Mapledurham at the other.

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The maps are 2 1/2 inches to 1 mile (approx. 1:25000) scale, and even come with up to four walks detailed on the back. Most of them are in colour, and prices range from £1.95 to £2.99. The maps are available direct from the Society and in outlets across the Chilterns, including garden centres, pubs, shops and tourist information centres.





Building stronger communities

Ivinghoe (Photo: J Fitzgerald)

Chris Granville **highlights the opportunities for engaging with Neighbourhood Planning**

The planning system can feel ‘top down’ – a maze of national legislation, local authority plans and policies, planning applications, decisions and appeals. Neighbourhood Plans (NPs) enable communities to set their own planning policies to ensure their ‘sense of place’.

We feel the impact of inappropriate development most acutely in the Chilterns, a precious and rare landscape of chalk grasslands, hills and chalk streams. It’s an area that offers recreation and calm, celebrating nature and biodiversity in an increasingly hectic world. Unfortunately, the demands for greater housing development and infrastructure put severe pressure on the landscape. Chiltern Society members and volunteers work to ensure the landscape is protected through our campaigning, promotion and conservation activity. You can also help us by making your voice heard about future priorities for your community by being involved in developing an NP.

At a very local level such plans offer your community the opportunity to influence the local authority planning process. NPs enable residents to set local planning policies to determine appropriate development in their neighbourhood, designate protected green space and heritage assets, and identify potential Assets of Community Value such as pubs, libraries and museums. The Society believes NPs are a valuable opportunity to define and protect precious sight lines and views across our valued landscape, promote local nature recovery and biodiversity, and define

a ‘sense of place’ for communities across the Chilterns.

Neighbourhood policies cannot contradict national and local authority policies, but they add weight, ensuring local views are taken into account in planning decisions. Importantly, NPs can identify areas in the community that are appropriate for future housing and commercial development, as well as establishing local design guides for new and extended buildings, which ensure appropriate development and maintain the local character.

NPs are only adopted when agreed by residents voting in a local referendum. An adopted plan, often referred to as the ‘made’ plan, provides a vital voice for communities, and is underpinned by legislation requiring Local Authorities to take account of the NP’s policies in their local plans and in determining planning applications. There’s also a financial incentive in having an adopted NP, because it increases from 15% to 25% the share of the Community Infrastructure Levy funds which are raised from new development that can be invested locally in communities.

National legislation for NPs was passed in 2011. Although normally set at parish or town council level, any community

can apply to their local council for their immediate neighbourhood to be recognised. Of 128 parish and town councils that are located, all or in part, in the Chilterns National Landscape (AONB), 27 (21%) have adopted (‘made’) NPs, seven (5.5 %) have plans currently being examined, and a further 16 (12.5 %) have been designated as neighbourhood areas and are working to develop their plans. This means that 78 (61%) of our towns and parishes in the Chilterns currently don’t have an NP.

Preparing an NP helps the community to come together to determine what is important to them, and what their priorities are when considering future development. It’s a rewarding process, giving residents the opportunity to participate and learn more about the history and geography of the place where they live, as well as the pressures on the landscape, heritage, transport, amenities and biodiversity.

Technical support and grant funding is available from government grants managed through Locality, a government agency established with the specific purpose of supporting Neighbourhood Planning. This can include consultants to support landscape character assessment studies, the preparation of local Design Guidelines,

Housing Needs Assessments and local development opportunities. The NP process is managed by the local planning authorities, who provide support and advice, as well as access to local mapping and data to assist Neighbourhood Planning Groups.

Communication is key. Initially the community is surveyed to gather views and priorities to inform the preparation of the plan. Once an NP is prepared, a pre-submission local consultation of the proposed plan is undertaken to gain feedback and amend it before it's submitted to the local authority, who will undertake their own formal Section 16 Consultation of the submitted plan and appoint an 'examiner' to ensure it conforms with legislation and aligns with their plans. Once passed by the examiner, the NP will be subject to a local referendum and adopted or 'made' if agreed by a majority of local voters.

Have a look at your NP - if there is one, it will be published on your parish or town council website. Any neighbourhood can apply to their local authority to become a designated area for an NP. Daws Hill, on the outskirts of High Wycombe, for example, has a Community Neighbourhood Plan, as do Ivinghoe and Wendover. If your local



Wendover (Photo: J Harrison)


community doesn't have one, explore the opportunity. It can ensure you have a voice in deciding the priorities for your community.

If you're interested in learning more about planning issues affecting the Chilterns National Landscape, the Society's Planning team is looking for

more volunteers. Together, we comment on planning policy and monitor planning activity at a local level to protect the Chilterns. We can be contacted at getinvolved@chilternsociety.org.uk.

Chris Granville is a member of the Society's Planning Group.


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Lacey Green Windmill

– a Chilterns icon

Geoff Wiggett **meets the volunteers whose work is vital to the historic building's wellbeing**

Windmills have always played an important part in our lives. Many artists and even musicians have been inspired by them. Rembrandt and Van Gogh painted very moody images of windmills, and poor old Don Quixote thought they were hulking giants. The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow gave us *The Windmill*, in which he imagined the giant inanimate object having a personality. Robert Louis Stevenson, Shakespeare and Hilaire Belloc (who owned his own), among others, were inspired by their picturesque quality and their harmony with the countryside in which they stood.

Ronnie Hilton, a decent British crooner who had a good following in the 1950s, recorded *A Windmill in Old Amsterdam*, one of a series of novelty songs written by Ted Dicks and Myles Rudge; and Rex Harrison's son Noel was responsible for grinding out *The Windmills of Your Mind*, a song with somewhat impenetrable lyrics by Michel Legrand and the Bergman brothers which featured in *The Thomas Crown Affair* starring Steve McQueen. More recently, youngsters could enjoy watching on television the antics of Windy Miller who ground corn and barley at his home, Colly's Mill, in the village of Camberwick Green. Then, of course, there's the iconic red windmill (moulin rouge) in Paris, atop a world-famous cabaret.

The equally inspiring Lacey Green Windmill stands in a dominant position on the Chiltern escarpment and has been a feature of the landscape for a few hundred years. Much has been written about its history, the major restoration work which started in 1971, and its subsequent part in the

Chiltern Society's journey, but we hear very little about the people who look after it. Colin Drake and I met a small group of volunteers on a wet day in March to see what makes them tick, hear their stories and, of course, take some photographs.

Michael Hardy, a former budget control manager with BT, is indelibly linked to the Windmill. He started as a volunteer in 1984 and, by his reckoning, he and his colleagues have clocked up an incredible 150,000 hours carrying out a variety of tasks, including helping with the restoration, ongoing maintenance, administration and acting as wardens, as well as hosting about 200 visits. In his spare time, he's volunteered with the National Trust and the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, lectured on church and cathedral architecture, and is still heavily involved in a local horticultural society. An astonishing achievement!

There are currently 30 volunteers who can be called upon to help on a rota basis as both wardens and assistants. The mill is



open to the public every Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday from the beginning of April until the end of September. Other volunteers help with ongoing maintenance. Some travel miles to do so, such is their passion and commitment.

Colin and I also met the delightful Cherry Lane, a retired legal and medical secretary and nutritional therapist who's been helping for three years. She's a keen horse owner and rider, and helps with her local Riding for the Disabled charity. The Holmer Green Sensory Gardens and Village Society also benefits from her help and she's a church electoral roll officer. She's a keen walker and chorister, and has, with husband Roger, a big family including six grandchildren. She told me she's 'always appreciated our surroundings and the heritage that exists in this exceptional area,' and feels strongly that 'we must actively

continue to nurture our heritage or risk losing it forever.' She's also a firm believer in serendipity which, she says, 'has succeeded in opening up so many timely opportunities throughout life.'

The Windmill has about 1,000 visitors each year. You can understand why. The internal wooden machinery is brilliantly constructed and much of it dates back to about 1650, a period of turmoil in British history. Visitors are given a hugely informative tour of the workings. Colin and I were fortunate to have a short taster session accompanied by Michael Howarth and Chris Boll, two very experienced and lucid volunteers who make a visit extremely memorable.

Michael, who lives in Radnage, has been helping for 12 years, but has been a Society member for over 30 years. He's also helped as a volunteer at Bottom Wood and dabbled in footpath monitoring. He and his brother acquired an old water-powered olive mill in Aups, High Provence, in the foothills of the Alps and, wanting to learn more, sought an appropriate education at Lacey Green. He's had a long career acting in the theatre, films and commercials, and was 'the man from Del Monte' for three years. He still plays wicketkeeper for his local cricket club, a tribute to the skills of the surgeon who replaced both his knees. His interest in fine foods encourages him to make home-made feta cheese, marmalade and ginger beer. That would make an eclectic choice if eaten as a meal!

Chris's volunteering timeline goes back 22 years. He's also helped with footpath maintenance and been a path representative. He's a retired mechanical engineer and you can quickly be absorbed in his enthusiasm and knowledge when you listen to him explaining the intricate workings of each stage of the milling process - a real 'tour de force'. Chris is a radio-controlled aircraft enthusiast, loves gardening and walking, and can be seen with his bird-watching binoculars at any number of nature reserves.

Jane Hervé, a Society trustee and chair of the Lacey Green Windmill Committee, who organised our meeting and helped with the arrangements as well as this article, was also in attendance. She's currently the trustee link for the mill, as well as Ewelme Watercress Beds. She's been associated with the Society for just over five years and has a strong desire to protect the countryside and its 'special places' and 'maintain the Windmill as an historic site to share with local people'. She's a retired midwife and nurse, and admits to having a great sense of humour which helps her deal better with all kinds of situations. She told me of a time when she was flying in a hot-air balloon over the Masai Mara in Kenya, only to be 'told off' by a



juvenile elephant for flying over its territory! A keen gardener, Nordic walker, swimmer and pilates exponent, she also finds time for more conventional country walking, travelling and house renovation. And, daringly, admits to very occasionally dancing on tables.

Maintenance is always required to keep this iconic structure, the oldest surviving smock mill in England and a Grade II* listed building, in good condition. At the time of writing, there is an appeal for funds to cover the costs - £53,000 - to replace the stocks to which the sails are attached, as well as a string of other essential repairs to preserve the Windmill for future generations. Please dig deep. Any donation will be much appreciated.

This year, visiting youngsters will be able to hunt down mice hidden around the workings and there'll be quizzes for older children. Not that they'll need distracting. Anyone visiting will be amazed by the incredibly intricate workings, not to mention the prospect of climbing up and down the four floors while imagining a single miller working flat out on all aspects of the grinding process to produce a staple food for villagers and their animals alike. And they'll be mesmerised by volunteer colleagues revealing the secrets of flour making, something too often taken for granted. Go visit! You won't regret it.

Photos: Colin Drake

Fundraising appeal

Thank you to everyone who has donated so far to our appeal for the specialist repairs to the mill. *With works set to cost our charity over £50,000, every donation makes a difference.*

You can help us reach our target by donating online using the QR code or by following the links from the Chiltern Society website homepage.





Chorleywood Village Day (Photo: M Parry)

My Chorleywood

Richard Bradbury meets a long-standing resident

Jill Leeming is a remarkable woman. Now aged 91, she's a Quaker, peace campaigner, prison visitor, published author, trained horticulturalist and former shop owner, among many other accomplishments. Despite failing eyesight, some hearing loss and an inevitable reduction in her mobility, she remains an enthusiastic member of the local community and exudes an irresistible positivity. She's been living in Chorleywood since the 1960s.

'We were in a flat in Kilburn with a very active eight-month-old and we needed more space,' she tells me. 'Houses were much cheaper then, so it seemed sensible to stop paying rent and buy one.' Her husband worked in London so they looked for a property on the Metropolitan Line, choosing Chorleywood because he remembered camping on the common when he was a Wolf Cub. The River Chess and the Chilterns were additional enticements. Their three-bedroom home near the station cost them £5,000. They had a big garden, too, 'but I should have tested the soil - it's solid clay!'

They soon discovered that there were lots of other people in the village with young children, and before long they had a wide circle of friends. 'Some of them are still around 60 years later,' she's pleased to report. 'It's difficult - even for me at 91 - to walk down to the shops without meeting

someone I know. It must be a good place for longevity!'

Social life was vibrant in the 1960s and 70s - she and her friends were full of energy, and Chorleywood became something of a cultural hub, with a film society, a choir, a dance group, a discussion group and other arts activities, many of which took place in the library, the Memorial Hall or people's homes. Writers, poets, artists and musicians (including the singer Julie Felix) were attracted to the village. Eventually the Primitive Methodist Chapel came onto the market, and for the princely sum of £3,000 was acquired for use as an arts centre. With the help of local architect and artist Clive Roberts, a team of volunteers carried out the necessary conversion work, which included creating more space by constructing an upper floor. The building has flourished ever since, life drawing

and pottery classes being two of its most popular current uses. On Sunday mornings it hosts the Chorleywood Quaker meeting, which Jill attends regularly.

Although the village was (and still is) served by an impressive range of shops, running along both sides of the high street, in 1966 Jill and her friend Betty saw a gap in the market. 'We were pushing prams along Lower Road one day and decided that what Chorleywood needed was a bookshop. Six years later we started one.' At the outset, finances meant they had to keep things simple. 'We used tables, because we couldn't afford shelves. The rep from Oxford University Press said "I'll give you six months."' They proved him wrong - they sold the business some 14 years later and it's still going strong, complete with a regular programme of talks and book signings featuring guests such as Julia Bradbury, Alan Titchmarsh and Alan Johnson. Not content with founding and minding their shop, Jill and Betty also wrote books of their own - for children in Jill's case, while her friend produced both *A Portrait of the Chilterns* and *A Picture of Buckinghamshire*, the latter with illustrations by their shop assistant, Elizabeth Ogan.

Although the population has doubled since she first arrived, and now stands at just over 12,500, Jill still feels that 'it's the right size of place.' There are fewer shops, but more cafés and restaurants, and no public toilets! She fondly recalls the old telephone exchange 'where you could watch the operators plugging wires in.' Her age hasn't dimmed her enthusiasm for travelling into London, so she can report with authority that the train service continues to be good. Buses, however, are few and far between. One form of transport now dominates, of course. 'Those with cars complain bitterly that there's nowhere to park - frequently true - but those who can walk think it's fine! And the A404 [which borders one side of the common] is frequently blocked with drivers waiting to get onto the M25.'

All in all, Jill believes that Chorleywood still has much to commend it. The common is undoubtedly a huge draw, with its 76 hectares of grassland and woodland plus a new cricket pavilion and café, as well as the challenging nine-hole golf course which was an important factor in the village getting a railway station at the end of the 19th century. The common is also the setting for the annual 'Village Day', an event which brings in hundreds of people to visit the



many and varied stalls stretched out along one of the avenues of trees. Other assets identified by Jill include Chorleywood House estate, with its beautiful grounds leading down to the River Chess; Carpenters Wood; and three sets of allotments for those inclined to 'grow their own'.

'Three generations of my electrician's family have lived here,' she tells me, 'and his

view is "why look for anywhere else?"'
I'm hoping to turn 'My Village' into an occasional series in *Chiltern*, so if you're aware of any long-standing residents in your community who might be willing to be interviewed for a future article, please let me know by emailing me at rbradbury.cnews@btinternet.com
Editor

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Broadening our appeal

Our new President David Harris shares some thoughts about the Society

I joined the Society on retirement about 25 years ago and immediately started to volunteer for Don Millar's Conservation Group, working in the central Chilterns, including at Chiltern Open Air Museum.

After a few years I was invited onto the Society's Executive Committee as a trustee and was soon asked to chair the Rights of Way Group, which I've been doing ever since. I also moved from the Conservation Group to join the Bucks Path Maintenance Group, where I spent many happy years until ill health caused me to retire a couple of years ago. Along the way I also became Vice Chairman (Conservation), before becoming Society Chairman for six years from 2012. This period coincided with the local County Councils wanting to dispose of many of their land holdings, and we decided to take the opportunity to expand ours, acquiring nine new sites.

Over the years our support team in the office had grown from one part-timer to three, led by Tracey Read. The expansion of the number of sites and the desire to increase our membership, which had been fairly static for several years, prompted us to take on professional Marketing and Conservation support staff. This was something of a gamble, because our 'unique selling point' as a Society has always been that we're volunteer-led. The thinking behind having professional staff was that they'd support the Trustee Board and Group Leaders, rather than lead the work themselves, as happens in other conservation charities like the National Trust and Wildlife Trusts.

While I was Chairman I spent two or three days a week 'keeping the show on the road'. After my six-year term, it became evident that we couldn't find a replacement with equivalent spare time, so we decided to bolster the support staff with the addition of our Chief Officer, Tom Beeston. With Tom's connections in the conservation world we've been able to take on a number of externally funded projects, and with them even more support staff. Over the years our activities and footprint in the Chilterns have expanded considerably, along with our staff team. The big challenge facing us in coming years is to broaden this growth in the south and north Chilterns, and also to appeal to a broader demographic, such as younger supporters with families. I look forward to the Society acquiring more sites and holding events such as our Iron Age roundhouse construction at Wendover Woods to support these aims.

It now gives me great pleasure to take on the role of Society President, following the sad passing of Michael Rush. In this latest role I plan to pay particular attention to supporting our legacy income stream and especially the Bluebell Guild, whose members have pledged to leave donations to the Society in their wills. Such legacies can provide funding for specific projects, such as the van and trailer recently purchased by the South Chilterns Path



Maintenance Volunteers, or general funding to support the work of the Society across the Chilterns. If you feel unsure about leaving a legacy and would prefer to see the benefit in your lifetime, you might even consider a 'living legacy', whereby you pass the money immediately for a specific purpose, which could carry a personal dedication.

I hope you continue to enjoy your membership of the Society. Remember, we're usually happy to support any relevant activities, so if you feel there's something lacking in our portfolio of interest groups, do share your thoughts with us. One asset the Society does have is members who all generally share a common interest in the outdoors and the environment - it's just a question of assembling a group of like-minded members.

Lastly, if you have any thoughts or comments about the Society, please let me know.

Above all, have fun!



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Berkhamsted Castle (Photo: Martin Evening)

Festival Programme

12-29 September

Come and join us at this year's much anticipated Heritage & Culture Festival, it has something for everyone: walks, talks and exclusive tours showcasing the rich and diverse heritage and culture which has shaped this ever-changing region. Explore new places or discover a different side of old favourites. Heritage is not just the past, it's a living, breathing part of everyday life!

We hope you enjoy our range of events. As well as supporting heritage in the Chilterns, by attending you are also helping us to protect this special place now and in the future.

Wonders of the Dark Sky

The Chiltern Society, in association with the West of London Astronomical Society (WOLAS), Woodoaks Farm and Colne Valley Country Park invites you to marvel at some of the most beautiful sights in our September skies visible from this dark sky location. Join the knowledgeable team of WOLAS astronomers as they guide small groups to observe the crescent moon low in the southern sky along with the beautiful Saturn; the Milky Way with its many clusters and nebulae overhead; and the Andromeda Galaxy rising in the east. The International Space Station should also be visible.

No experience required, all welcome.

Thursday 12 or Friday 13 September
(depending on weather) **7.30-9.30pm**
Maple Cross WD3 9XQ

Price: **£10** pp

Private Tour of John Lewis Partnership's Odney Grounds

John Spedan Lewis first purchased land in Cookham in 1926, with the revolutionary purpose of creating a country club retreat for the Partners who worked in his busy London shops. It opened in 1927 as The

Odney Club. Join us on a walking tour of its grounds, exploring the history of the club and its beautiful gardens.

Saturday 14 September 1.30-3.30pm
Cookham SL6 9SR

Price: **£7.50** pp

Guided Tour of Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital

This specialist hospital is dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of all British wildlife. They take in and treat over 13,000 sick, injured or orphaned wild animals every year. On this guided tour you'll have the chance to meet some of our permanent residents, hear and see some of the work we do behind the scenes, and find out how you can help the wildlife in your own garden. Helping and supporting wildlife in the Chilterns is now more important than ever.

Saturday 14 September 10.30-12.30pm
Haddenham HP17 8AF

Price: **£10** pp

Private Tour of Penn House

Enjoy a guided tour by Earl and Countess Howe, exploring the rich history of Penn House and the successive generations

of the Curzon, Penn and Howe families who've lived there for many centuries. You'll see family portraits, naval paintings and memorabilia associated with the family. The exclusive tour will be topped off with tea and cake.

Sunday 15 September 2-3.30pm
Penn Street HP7 OPS

Price: **£15** pp

Guided Tour of Berkhamsted Castle

Enjoy a guided tour of this much-loved Norman motte and bailey castle. Hear about its fascinating history and all those who resided there until the late 15th century when the castle fell into decline.

Monday 16 September 10am-12pm
Berkhamsted HP4 1LJ

Price: **£10** pp

Guided Walk & Cream Tea with the Wendover Canal Trust

Join the Trust on this walk, using the newly surfaced towpath from Halton to Wendover. See the Wendover Canal brought to life with stories of its restoration, biodiversity and heritage, followed by homemade scones and



Homefires & Havens



Tring Museum



Hilary Bradt

tea at Rothschilds Halton Club House. The walk is fully accessible for wheelchair users.

Monday 16 September 1.30-4pm
Halton HP22 5PD

Price: **£12** pp

Homefires & Havens – A Talk at Amersham Museum

Enjoy an insightful talk by local historian Alison Bailey, as she shares the experiences and achievements of the local community, especially women, in Amersham during the 1940s. Refreshments included.

Monday 16 September 2-3.30pm
Amersham HP7 ODP

Price: **£10** pp

Chilterns Landscape Walk and Talk

Join our Head of Conservation on a guided, general interest walk through two of the Chilterns finest nature reserves. You'll be introduced to a diverse range of habitats, and see how they're managed to support an array of flora and fauna throughout the year. Whiteleaf Hill is also well known for the 100m high chalk hill figure – the Whiteleaf Cross – on its northern slope, and is home to several other interesting archaeological features, including a Neolithic barrow, WWI practice trenches and The Ridgeway National Trail, reputed to be Britain's oldest road.

Tuesday 17 September 10.30am-12pm
Princes Risborough HP27 ORP

Price: **£7.50** pp

Private Tour of Chenies Manor House

Join us on a guided tour of this Grade II listed Tudor house and garden steeped in history, that overlooks the Chess Valley. It boasts original 13th century features including a medieval well, a dungeon and a reputed priest hole, as well as beautiful gardens. Discover the house's fascinating history, enjoy the gardens and conclude your visit with a cream tea.

Tuesday 17 September 11am-1pm
Rickmansworth WD3 6ER

Price: **£25** pp

Heritage Tour of Old Tring

Join us on a tour through the historic market town of Tring with our guide and former mayor Tim Amsden. We'll learn about life in and around Tring from prehistoric times through the ages to modern day. With a rich history to explore, discover interesting buildings and tales of fascinating people. The tour begins at Tring Local History Museum where you can enjoy the story of Tring exhibition, which includes the replica 14th century Tring Tiles.

Tuesday 17 September 2-4pm
Tring HP23 5ED

Price: **£10** pp

Dorney Court – Private Connoisseurs Tour

Enjoy a fabulous visit to a stunning Tudor manor house, home to the Palmer family for over 500 years. Experienced and informative guides will delve deep into the history of the house and adjoining church, and everyone will find something memorable among the art, furniture and architecture. You'll be welcomed with delicious refreshments and can then enjoy a tipple of either sloe gin or Pimm's at the end of the tour.

Wednesday 18 September 2-4pm
Windsor SL4 6QP

Price: **£33** pp

Planning Talk: Water – A Planning Perspective

This talk will look into the issues the Chilterns area faces in tackling the water crisis in housing and infrastructure development, and explore options for the future.

Wednesday 18 September 2-3pm
Chesham HP5 1AG

Price: **£7.50** pp

Tour of Chinnor Windmill

This unique mill in Oxfordshire was demolished in 1967 but is being steadily rebuilt by volunteers with the aim of grinding flour again. Enjoy a guided tour of the mill and browse presentations of the mill's history and restoration process.

Wednesday 18 September 2-3pm
Chinnor OX39 4QU

Price: **£7.50** pp

Hilary Bradt – Taking the Risk

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Bradt Guides, the world's leading independent travel publisher. Join Hilary as she relives the engaging, insightful, amusing and sometimes alarming story of one of travel's greatest modern pioneers – and a highly successful Chilterns-based business.

Thursday 19 September 2-3pm
Chesham HP5 1AG

Price: **£7.50** pp

Private Tour of Bledlow Manor Gardens, Carrington Estate

Join us on a private tour of these beautiful and diverse 12-acre gardens, that feature a mixture of different terrain and styles, including a Japanese-style water garden on converted former watercress beds, a walled kitchen garden, parterres and a selection of sculptures. The house and gardens have been owned by the Carrington family since the 18th century and Lord Carrington will give an introduction to the tour, while the Head Gardener will be present to answer any questions. Followed by refreshments.

Thursday 19 September 2-4pm
Bledlow HP27 9PB

Price: **£19.50** pp

A 'Behind-the-Scenes' Visit to Tring Natural History Museum

This exclusive visit is back due to popular demand! Step behind the scenes and explore the museum's world-renowned bird collection. This is an opportunity to look at research specimens, discover how they were prepared and conserved, and find out how they're used by scientists today. This rare and irreplaceable collection isn't usually available for public viewing, so book your ticket now.

Thursday 19 September 6-7pm
Tring HP23 6AP

Price: **£15** pp

Private Tour of Quanton Mill

Join us on an exclusive visit to this 188-year-old mill that sits proudly above the green in

the picturesque village of Quanton. Over the last seven years a team of volunteers have completed major restoration works, with much of the original machinery on display throughout the six storeys of the mill. After the tour, there will be refreshments at the George & Dragon coffee shop & tea room.

Thursday 19 September 2-4.30pm
Aylesbury HP22 4AR

Price: **£20** pp

Ashridge History Walk

Join us on this delightful five mile walk, starting at the National Trust Visitor Centre, which takes you past Ashridge House, where our experienced walk leader will give an overview of the house's history and the monastery that preceded it.

Friday 20 September 10am-12pm
Berkhamsted HP4 1NS

Price: **£7.50** pp

Guided Tour of Ewelme Watercress Beds

A hub of the watercress industry in the 20th century, Ewelme is a picturesque and historical 6.5-acre site that's been owned by the Chiltern Society since 2001 and is beautifully conserved by our volunteers. It's now a nature reserve with a unique aquatic habitat that provides a haven for a wide variety of rare and interesting British wildlife. In addition to watercress, dozens of other plant, bird, mammal and insect species exist in the hay meadow and reed beds, further contributing to its natural beauty.

Friday 20 September 10-11.30am
Ewelme OX10 6HH

Price: **£7.50** pp

Stanley Spencer Walk & Gallery Visit

Join Ann Danks and our own walks leader, Andrew Clark, for an easy stile-free four mile walk around beautiful Cookham, seen through the eyes of Stanley Spencer, the local artist who became well known for depicting biblical scenes as if they were in Cookham itself – the place where he was born and spent most of his life. We'll visit places that inspired many of his paintings. Ann is the Gallery's archivist and an authority on the life and works of one of the 20th century's most important British painters.

Friday 20 September 10am-12.30pm
Cookham SL6 9SJ

Price: **£14** pp

Private Tour of Lindengate

We're thrilled to invite you to a guided tour of this beautiful converted allotment, led by Lindengate's Horticulture Specialist. Lindengate is a leading nature-based health and wellbeing charity in Wendover, at the foot of the Chiltern Hills. The site



Lindengate

has been transformed from a six-acre disused allotment into a unique secret garden with a nature reserve, ponds, heritage orchard, kitchen garden and sensory garden, together with sculptures and heritage-based art. The tour will finish with refreshments and a Q&A session with the horticulturist and wildflower expert.

Saturday 21 September 10.30am-12.30pm
Wendover HP22 6BD

Price: **£15** pp

Hemel Hempstead Old Town Walk

Join us for a historical tour of Gadebridge Park and Hemel Hempstead Old Town, where the buildings have retained the atmosphere of a pre-1960s High Street. Many of the buildings are Grade II listed and have Tudor or later Georgian frontages. View one of the tallest church spires in Britain and hear about an eminent surgeon who was involved in body snatching!

Monday 23 September 10.30am-12.30pm
Hemel Hempstead HP1 1LS

Price: **£7.50** pp

Glammersham – A Talk at Amersham Museum

From dinner dances and theatre outings to weddings and trips to London, this fascinating talk by Museum Director, Briony Hudson explores how and why Amersham residents dressed their best in the 19th and 20th centuries. Refreshments included.

Monday 23 September 1-2.30pm
Amersham HP7 0DP

Price: **£10** pp

British School Museum

Enjoy a personalised tour of this unique education museum based in original Edwardian and Victorian Grade II listed school buildings. Browse the vast and varied collection at the museum telling the story of early education and childhood and enjoy a Victorian lesson.

Tuesday 24 September 10.30am-2pm
(with a lunch break)
Hitchin SG4 9TS

Price: **£15** pp



Glammersham



Nether Winchendon



Trail Run

Supper and Walk at Dusk – College Lake

Join us at College Lake Nature Reserve near Tring, the flagship reserve of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. The visit begins with supper – shepherd’s pie with vegetarian option – in the café, with magnificent views of the lakes. This will be followed by a guided walk around the reserve as the sun sets to take in the beautiful setting and spot the resident wildlife.

Tuesday 24 September 5.30-8pm
Tring HP23 5QG

Price: **£25** pp

National Paralympic Heritage Centre

Embracing the excitement of the 2024 Olympics and Paralympics, we’ve arranged a private tour of the Heritage Centre where the charity aims to enlighten and inspire future generations by celebrating, cherishing and bringing paralympic heritage and its stories of human endeavour to life.

Wednesday 25 September 10.30am
Aylesbury HP21 9PP

Price: **£15** pp

Private Tour of Nether Winchendon House & Gardens

Join us for a tour of this enchanting medieval and Tudor manor house, where time stands still. Nether Winchendon House is a stunning country manor house set in seven acres of tranquil gardens and surrounded by 600 acres of parkland on the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire border.

Thursday 26 September 11am-1pm
Aylesbury HP18 ODY

Price: **£27.50** pp

Milton’s Cottage – Private Tour

This year marks the 350th anniversary of Milton’s death and we invite you to explore his remarkable legacy at his only surviving residence. It was in this 16th century cottage that he completed his epic masterpiece, *Paradise Lost*, and was inspired to write

its sequel, *Paradise Regained*. Today, the cottage retains the charm of the 17th century home, while housing one of the world’s most important collections on open display relating to the writer.

Thursday 26 September 6-7.15pm
Chalfont St Giles HP8 4JH

Price: **£12** pp

Bekonscot Model Museum – Exclusive After Hours Tour

During this private event you’ll have exclusive access to the site, see it lit up at dusk and go behind the scenes of the world’s oldest model village. Short talks about Bekonscot’s history and how the models are created will be given. Bekonscot Light Railway will be running, and an engineer will be on hand to answer any questions.

Thursday 26 September 6-8pm
Beaconsfield HP9 2PL

Price: **£20** pp

Drawing Evening with artist Jane Peacock

Join experienced artist and tutor, Jane at Amersham Museum where you’ll be able to draw heritage items from the museum’s collections under her guidance. Suitable for everyone, from beginners through to experienced artists.

Thursday 26 September 6-8pm
Amersham HP7 ODP

Price: **£15** pp

Chiltern Ridge Tour

Join us on an exclusive tour to see how this local family-run farm produces apple juice.

Friday 27 September 10.30-11.30am
Chartridge HP5 2TB

Price: **£7.50** pp

Tour of Lacey Green Windmill

This is the oldest surviving smock mill in England and has an Engineering Heritage Award. In use until 1915, some of the timber machinery dates to the 1600s. It’s undergoing renovation works, and we invite you to join our knowledgeable and dedicated volunteers on an in-depth tour of the windmill.

Friday 27 September 11am-12.30pm
Lacey Green HP27 OPG

Price: **£7.50** pp

Carmina Burana live at Berkhamsted School

Come and enjoy the Great Chiltern Come & Sing Choir performing *Carmina Burana* in the historic setting of Deans Hall, Berkhamsted School. Singers from across the Chilterns will join Tring Choral Society for a day’s intense rehearsal of Carl Orff’s famous work, culminating in this informal concert. It will be directed by Colin and Anna Stevens and will be accompanied by a children’s choir from the Tring Park School for the Performing Arts plus professional soloists and musicians. This will be a relaxed but exciting concert (participants won’t be dressing up in concert dress) and promises to be a thrilling finale to this year’s Festival.

Saturday 28 September 6-7pm
Berkhamsted HP4 2BB

Price: **£10** pp

Trail Run – Whiteleaf Hill

Join Runaway Racing on this run through the magical woodlands of Whiteleaf Hill Nature Reserve. The route will take you on an undulating 15k loop around the surrounding footpaths including sections of The Ridgeway and Chiltern Way. There will be two pace groups.

Sunday 29 September 10.30am
Princes Risborough HP27 ORP

Price: **£10** pp (**£8** CS members)

How to book

Booking is essential as we have limited places available. To book, scan the QR code or visit our website <https://chilternsociety.org.uk/heritage-festival/>.



Please be aware this programme is subject to change. Check the website for more detailed and up to date information.

Your chance to explore Paralympic history



Among the many captivating events being staged at the Chiltern Society's Heritage and Culture Festival this year is a unique opportunity to delve into the living legacy of the Paralympic Movement. On 25 September the National Paralympic Heritage Trust (NHPT) is inviting guests to join them on a special tour of the National Paralympic Heritage Centre (NPHC) and the National Spinal Injuries Centre (NSIC).

Stoke Mandeville is widely recognised as the birthplace of the Paralympic Movement, and the NPHC boasts a fascinating museum which explores that heritage and breathes life into the stories of human endeavour behind the Paralympics. Step into the museum and you can immerse yourself in the rich display of objects that chronicle the inspiring history of the Paralympics.

You can learn about the very first Paralympic Games at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in 1948, arranged as part of a programme of rehabilitation through sport, which saw 16 injured servicemen and women taking part in an archery competition. Through the wide range of fascinating artefacts and medals, you can explore the local origins of the Movement and discover how it developed into the global phenomenon of the modern Paralympic Games.

In collaboration with Buckinghamshire NHS Trust, the NHPT is also offering tours to the NSIC at Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

Bringing together rare historic exhibits and photographs, and personal recollections of both staff and patients, this exhibition tells the story of the NSIC. From the life-changing advances

in treatment developed by the tireless research of medical staff to the inspirational tales of patients, it will give you a unique insight into the remarkable history of the most famous spinal injuries centre in the world.

There'll be a tour of both sites on 25 September at 10:30am. To book, see the Chiltern Society's Heritage and Culture Festival programme on pp 21-24 of this magazine. Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to get a glimpse into sporting history!

National Paralympic Heritage Trust

The NHPT has been a unique feature of the local heritage landscape for nearly a decade, having been established in July 2015 with the express ethos of protecting and sharing the British Paralympic heritage. In the last five years it's reached half a million people in the UK and overseas, established an accredited museum in Stoke Mandeville and built a collection of international importance. It's also crafted tailored learning programmes that have broken new ground in D/deaf and disabled access, as well as digital engagement.

The Trust has grand ambitions for the

future, with a five-year plan to extend its physical and digital offerings, and to deliver a range of activities across the UK and abroad. It's pledged that between 2023 and 2028 every £2 it spends will positively broaden somebody's understanding of disability and transform heritage access.

You can visit the museum all year round - no booking is required, simply go to the website to find out opening times and see what facilities are available at Stoke Mandeville Stadium. The Trust also hosts a number of children's events to engage younger guests in Paralympic history in new and interesting ways - the recent medal making workshop being a particular hit.

Unable to visit in person?

There's an online virtual tour which gives you the chance to 'walk through' exhibition spaces and zoom in on specific artefacts or artwork. You can access video, British Sign Language, text caption and audio-description options at points of interest.



Scan the QR code for link to Paralympic website

Bottom Wood 40 years on

Toothill glade

Brown argus



John Morris marks a noteworthy anniversary

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Chiltern Society ownership of Bottom Wood, which was generously donated in 1984 by Mrs Cynthia Ercolani, who lived nearby. Bottom Wood is run as a nature reserve, and I've been involved in organising its management since September 1983. From then until 1988 much of the practical work was carried out by the Society's Small Woodlands Project team. This evolved into a separate charity, the Chiltern Woodlands Project, which I led until it was wound up in March 2020.

Bottom Wood covers 14.5 hectares, of which 11.5ha are classified as ancient semi-natural woodland, with many of the ash, oak and wild cherry trees being the result of natural regeneration following wartime felling in 1940. There's also the 3ha of Toothill, with trees including Scots pine, spruce, larch, beech and poplars which were first planted by the Scouts in 1951.

The Wood lies on the boundary of the parishes of Radnage and Stokenchurch. Toothill has a boundary with West Wycombe parish to the south. The main access through the Wood is a muddy public bridleway in the valley bottom. A stretch along the bridleway at the bottom of Toothill has old hazel, which has been coppiced and laid on a number of occasions to form a thick hedge. We've created a couple of permissive paths, but one of these on the hillside is currently closed while felling takes place of ash suffering from ash dieback (a new wind dispersed fungal disease that attacks ash trees). The felling has been disrupted by the wet winter, but we plan to remove the cut trees for firewood when conditions are

dry enough. Many of them were dying and collapsing pole-stage ash trees that had regenerated following earlier felling in 1987 and 1992. Felling operations have been approved by the Forestry Commission, who issued licences for the work.

In the autumn of 2021, contractors from Wessex Woodland Management helped with a larger harvesting job to remove most of the remaining sickly conifers and deteriorating poplars in the valley bottom of Toothill. They also felled trees already suffering from ash dieback. A team of Chiltern Society volunteers then helped remove cut branches and replant the cleared area with a mix of over 700 native broadleaved trees to supplement coppice regrowth and natural regeneration. Forestry work at scale produces a small income for the Society from timber and firewood sales, whereas felling dying trees individually is an expensive operation.

In the last year or two a few mature beech trees have died suddenly. We're retaining those away from paths as habitat, but a couple of big trees by the

bridleway had to be felled for safety reasons.

Back in 1990 I organised the removal of about 900 poor Scots pine at Toothill, and this led to the development of the chalk grassland glade which now has a wide range of wildflowers, including common spotted and pyramidal orchids. It's a good place to see butterflies, such as small blues, brown argus, small copper, grizzled and dingy skippers, marbled whites and more.

Much of the wildlife was recorded in a booklet on Bottom Wood produced in 1994 by the volunteer team that included John & Sue Stidworthy, Christopher Starey, Ched George and Roger Figg. Some things have changed since then, with red kites, ravens and buzzards now being common. Glis glis, the fat dormouse, has now been found and the hazel dormice have declined.

Challenges facing woods in the Chilterns include the changing climate, with drought, storms and diseases having an impact on the trees. We now want to grow a wider range of trees than the

usual Chilterns beech. Deer eat tree regeneration and coppice regrowth, and their numbers have increased – particularly roe and muntjac. They also browse on wildflowers such as orchids. Grey squirrels strip bark causing damage and sometimes death to many species of native broadleaf trees.

Bottom Wood is actively managed by Society volunteers. The current team of myself, David Glen and Peter Towersey, meet most Tuesday mornings at 10am to check the Wood and carry out tasks. If anyone would like to join us, please get in touch. A major annual job is cutting the Toothill glade in early autumn, so that wildflowers, butterflies and other flora and fauna can thrive.

If you want to visit Bottom Wood, the best place to park is at the top end of the Old Dashwood Hill, just off the A40 at Studley Green, then follow the path down the hill. There's an information board with a map at the entrance to the Wood.

See the Bottom Wood page on the Society website: www.chilternsociety.org.uk/oursites/bottom-wood/

Photos: John Morris



Peter Towersey with collapsing ash



Felling a dead beech by the bridleway

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Refreshing memories



War memorial at The Lee



Admiral Howe

Alison Beck revisits The Lee and Ballinger

From time to time my partner and I lead short walks in various Chiltern locations for our local ramblers' group. It had been a while since we'd walked around Ballinger and The Lee, so we returned to refresh our memories.

We parked in Ballinger, with memories of The Pheasant pub, once a destination for people who enjoyed a good meal and wine list, but now a private house. The walk to The Lee crosses some lovely countryside, and on an early spring day the birds were in great voice. The Lee is an interesting village, with links to the Liberty family, some very sad losses in WWI, a good pub, a Jubilee well, two churches, an impressive manor house and some fascinating buildings – many little changed in years.

As we walked, I remembered a story we'd discovered when we visited almost 15 years ago, about a local man who'd walked down to the main road to join his regiment in July 1916, only to be killed on 19th July at the Battle of Fromelles, along with eight other men from The Lee. At the time, there was a handwritten notice about it: needless to say, there was no sign of that, but I felt sure we were standing at the right spot. The author had included his anxiety about the impending HS2 line and how it would change this beautiful landscape. We sat on a bench, looked at the map and decided we must be in the wrong place, and over the next couple of weeks walked most of the surrounding footpaths without success. I found a photograph of the notice at home, but there wasn't enough background to confirm the location. Then we realised that the bench on which we'd been sitting

had a small plaque to Emily Morris and her three children – problem solved. It was the right spot, and Emily was the widow of that soldier we'd remembered: Private Arnold Morris, a gamekeeper who lived nearby. I can remember imagining Emily watching him walk out of sight, with her children clinging to her skirts and the baby in her arms, born only a few months earlier. A powerful, poignant memory of what so many families endured.

The Grade II listed war memorial is very fine, standing on land given by Lady Liberty, and the wording reflects the pain and loss suffered by so many in this small Chiltern village – the 2nd Bucks Battalion lost half its men at Fromelles. Apart from Arnold Morris, the other eight Lee men included the vicar's son, while Ivor Stewart-Liberty sustained a leg wound in that attack which subsequently led to amputation. Few small communities could have suffered quite such heavy losses.

The Lee surprisingly boasts a wonderful ship's figurehead of Admiral Lord Howe, which looms by the roadside, something I remember from decades ago when we first had a car. He's been sensitively restored and now looks very fine. The story of his ending up in The Lee is fascinating: he came from HMS Impregnable, the last wooden warship built for the Royal Navy in 1860. When the ship was scrapped, Arthur Liberty purchased the timbers, which he used in the

construction of his famous Regent Street store. The figurehead was erected at The Manor House in 1926, but in 1953 it was moved to its present location at 'Pipers', the house Arthur built in 1913 for his nephew, the aforementioned Ivor Stewart-Liberty. I don't think when I first met him the Admiral had a roof over his head, but I'm sure he'll last much longer with one. There's plenty of information on the internet about his story, and that of the Liberty family.

The church of St John the Baptist was opened in 1869. It's usually open and has an atmospheric overgrown churchyard with a splendid Liberty memorial, as well as some interesting details inside. The other church, now known as the Old Church, is still used for local events from time to time, and again has interesting old graves and features. It isn't usually open, but dates from about 1200, and is thought to be the only Anglican church to have a window depicting Oliver Cromwell.

Nearby, a footpath runs close to Park

Metal horrors

Chris Hall, by email

At the age of 92 I find that stiles occasionally challenge my agility.

Kissing gates are the alternative – but not if they are the shiny metal horrors which are now becoming common. I was sorry to see these being installed by the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers on the route between Pyrton and Stoke Talmage (reported in *Connecting Communities*, *Chiltern* 251 pp 32-3). Gleaming metal is perhaps tolerable in a municipal park, but is shockingly at odds with its surroundings in the country, and we have too much of it. If wooden stiles are beyond the skills or budget of the volunteers, let them take the advice of the distinguished and versatile artist John Piper, who lived for more than half a century at Fawley in the Chilterns, and who valiantly but vainly joined our fight against the gashing of the escarpment by the M40. John always advised that if you want an intrusion to blend into natural surroundings, it should be painted black, because black does not reflect light. And he was right.

Anybody walking from Hambleden to Turville as I often do, will see elderly but elegant iron kissing gates, unobtrusive in black, on Hambleden footpath 16, and stout wooden ones lately installed on Hambleden footpath 49 (GRs SU 783869 and 766904 respectively). Both are functional and discreet, and they fit the ethos of the Chiltern Society which was founded (by me among others) to enhance our countryside, not to suburbanise it.

On an unrelated matter, Northend Common is indeed 'set in an idyllic location between Christmas Common and Turville' (*Chiltern* 250, p 27), but is not in 'rural Oxfordshire'. Christmas Common is in that county, but Northend Common is in Turville parish which is in Buckinghamshire. The county boundary runs along the western edge of the Common.

Luke Jefferys of the Chiltern Society Rights of Way Group replies:

The gates installed by Chiltern Society volunteers are chosen by the local landowner/council. They can be wood, but metal is the predominant choice. The reasoning varies, but tends to be longevity, security for livestock and being less edible! Some members of the public prefer metal and others wood, although most would choose a gate over a stile.

As far as the colour of metal gates is concerned, we do offer a choice. Some have chosen black and others green, but most prefer unpainted metal. I think the reason is that many of the standard farm gates are plain metal, so they match.

Thanks to Chris for sharing his views and for his contribution to the Chiltern Society over many years.

A planning failure

Ben Bergonzi, by email

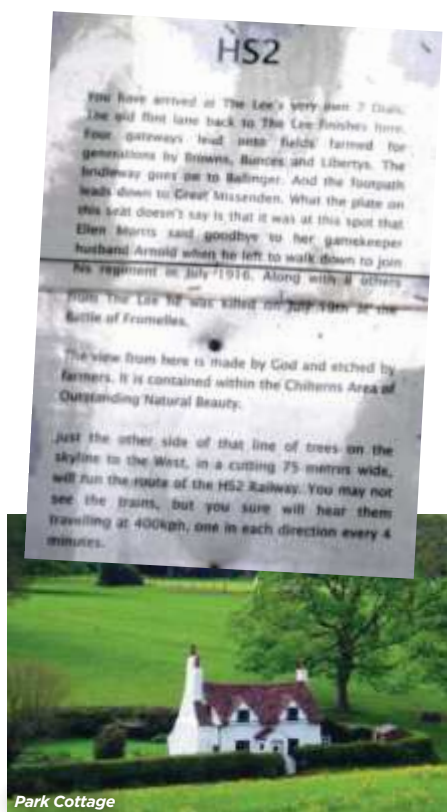
Mike Sheehan's article about the incomplete state of Local Plans (*Chiltern* 251) warns of the danger of decisions being taken out of the hands of the local authority. That is exactly what has happened in Little Chalfont, where a proposal for a very large housing estate was unanimously opposed by most local residents and by Buckinghamshire Council, but eventually approved by the Planning Inspector.

Save our pubs – a success story!

John Pierce, via email

I'm delighted to inform you that following over 200 objections to the Planning Application 23/02482/FP, Change of Use for The Plough PH, Kings Walden to residential, the application as been withdrawn by the owners, Admiral. The local community group are now at an advanced stage in securing the purchase of the pub.

My sincere thanks to the Chiltern Society Save Our Pubs Group who supported the campaign to save the pub.



Park Cottage

Cottage, which must be one of the most photographed properties in the Chilterns, and the subject of the only photograph I could ever have made money from: it appeared on the Chiltern Society website and someone asked if they could use it for their promotional material. I agreed but felt a donation to Society funds might be more appropriate (and realistic!) than a large fee.

There's a wonderfully stocked village shop in the Parish Hall, owned and run by the community – a sort of Tardis which seems to contain everything. I was pleased to find *A History of The Lee* which was published in 2011 and contains a wealth of local information. We had a good lunch in The Cock and Rabbit, admiring the great chunks of puddingstone adorning the green, wondering how long they'd been there. Further along there's a memorial bench to Susan Cowdy, a stalwart of the local naturalists' trust years ago when it was BBONT, not BBOWT. Her name may be familiar because at College Lake Nature reserve there's a Susan Cowdy Centre, which forms part of the environmental education facilities. I hadn't known that she was one of the Stewart-Liberty family before her marriage.

It was time to retrace our steps to Ballinger. There's a delightful little church, St Mary's, once a Mission Room, just near the car park, which always seems to be open. During a walk of less than five miles, we discovered that there's so much to this special Chiltern area. And the subsequent walk was so enjoyable that we're doing it again!

Photos: Alison Beck



Biodiversity and restoration

CFA9 habitats, post-construction

Blue denotes the track, roads and buildings. Green areas are original retained habitat, pink and orange are designated as newly created habitat. The yellow areas are coded as original habitat, but also assigned a 'Time to Completion' factor, so are in fact to be recreated or restored. This increases the area to be restored to over 50% of the total.

Jim Conboy questions the claims made by HS2 Ltd

HS2 claim that construction of the railway will result in a net increase in biodiversity along the route – that is, more and better wildlife habitat. Last year, the Wildlife Trusts issued a report examining the basis for this claim and found HS2 had employed an out-of-date methodology and made errors while doing so. As the Trust's report covered the entire route, and contained few examples, I decided to examine the biodiversity calculations for the AONB. The extensive photographic record compiled by Keith Hoffmeister and others was a great help in assessing the situation before construction commenced.

Biodiversity measurements use a metric to assign values to landscape features – fields, woodlands, ponds and so on – and separately to hedgerows and other linear features, with scores awarded for condition and connectivity. The assessment is made using only static features, but is intended to reflect the attractiveness of the habitat for mammals, birds and insects which are less easily counted. The biodiversity score for newly created features is reduced to take account of the time taken for them to become established, and the difficulty – risk of failure. For a 10-year delay, the reduction is typically one third.

Part 1 of the report (at <https://chilternsociety.org.uk/hs2-biodiversity-claims/>) considered Community Forum Area 9 – land between Frith Hill and Leather Lane, which contains the North Portal of the Chiltern Tunnel. The claimed increase in biodiversity, from 380 to 415 units is surprising, given the destruction currently under way, and the severance of the

landscape by the railway. Closer inspection shows that this unexpected uplift arises from a claimed 80% increase to 690 units in 10 years' time, before the reduction factors are applied. There's no indication of how this significant improvement in habitat condition is to be achieved over the decade following construction.

Another less obvious factor relates to habitat types. Some habitats are explicitly identified as newly created grassland or woodland, and these have reductions in biodiversity due to uncertainty and time to completion, as described above. A significant area of habitat, however, identified (or perhaps mis-identified) as pre-existing also has these factors applied, and it's clear from the maps that most of these areas will also require recreation after construction – see figure above. This increases the area in need of restoration from 30% to 50% of the total – which is unsurprising, given the mountains of spoil which have been distributed across the

construction site during the past year or so. This will clearly be a major undertaking.

Restoration

The works currently in progress have been authorised by (Schedule 17) 'planning' applications – which Bucks are unable to refuse under the HS2 Act. In addition to describing the destruction currently under way, there are also sections on proposed landscaping, for information only at present. This is worrying, because there's been little or no public consultation regarding the proposals, and HS2 are known for their reluctance to alter any details. The landscaping plans have been refused, as these are 'in the course of completion' – the phase at which public consultation and engagement might most usefully be sought.

The above ground section of the line in the AONB (South Heath to Wendover) has been divided into half a dozen separate areas, managed by two consortia – EKFB and Align. There's no recent (published) overview of the entire AONB works and the intended final result. Nor is it clear how the 80% long-term increase in biodiversity can be achieved with a similar mix of landscape elements as were present before construction, while also compensating for the removal of well-established historic features.

News update

From John Gladwin

Tunnelling and the North Portal

The main event of the spring was the breakthrough by Florence and Cecilia, the tunnel boring machines, at the North Portal of the Chiltern twin-bore tunnel. They're being stripped down and reusable parts are being returned to the manufacturer. Local residents are concerned that there'll be noise and light disturbance from this work. Align JV are monitoring the situation and have visited those houses likely to be affected. So far there haven't been any complaints. The latest addition to the North Portal is a concrete batching plant, which will provide concrete for the tunnel walkways being built from both ends.

Water into the Misbourne

Due to the high winter rainfall, EKFB have continued to pump water out from settlement ponds at the North Portal into a ditch by the A413 which is, unfortunately, connected to the Misbourne, one of our Chiltern chalk streams. Concerns have been expressed that this is adding to the flooding in Chalfont St Giles and Chalfont St Peter.

Align JV transfer their excess water via a pipe in the tunnel to the South Portal, where there's a water treatment plant.

Sinkholes

Two further sinkholes appeared beside Sibley's Coppice, South Heath. They've been fenced off and are being restored in agreement with the landowners.

Viaducts

Towards Wendover, the Wendover Dean

and Small Dean viaducts are progressing, with most of the piling completed. The steel frame at Small Dean is being extended further.

Change of contractors

HS2 Ltd have decided to change the contractors for the Wendover 'Cut and Cover' tunnel and the Leather Lane Bridge from EKFB to Align JV. This has delayed the start of construction. The handover is expected in June. The Leather Lane Conservation Group and the Chiltern Society objected to the bridge design, because too many oak trees were being lost and there was no adequate provision for a bat corridor across the railway. As part of the handover, Align JV are revisiting the design and consulting the local parish councils, the Leather Lane Group and the Society. There have been some positive proposals, but these need to be approved by HS2 Ltd before they can be shared publicly.

Wendover traffic

The area around Wendover is still heavily impacted by road alterations, with regular night closures of the A413 and the Ellesborough Road. The good news is that the latter will be open from the middle of May.

Biodiversity restoration

As Jim Conboy's article opposite explains, the impact of construction has been devastating for the AONB.



Wendover Dean viaduct site
(Photos: Chartridge Photographic)

The last time these matters were considered was November 2017, when the AONB review group published an 'Enhancement and Integration Plan', which was largely concerned with the design of structures such as bridges. Vegetation 'outside operational limits' (beyond the security fences) was covered in two pages of a 113 page report. Since the scale of destruction inflicted is now evident, it's time this report was revisited and updated, in collaboration with other environmental organisations. Landscaping of the tunnel North Portal is currently scheduled for autumn 2025, so planning should start now.



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The end of an era

Barry Hunt reflects on Quiller Barrett's contribution to the group

Earlier this year, Quiller Barrett stepped down as the PhotoGroup's long-serving web editor and more recently as treasurer. In early 2004, he and John Harrison pooled their respective publishing and IT expertise to develop jointly a dedicated website for the group's photographic library relating to all aspects of the Chilterns. It was a pivotal moment for the group, which had been founded in 1990. It not only reflected the ascendancy of digital photography, but also aided the conversion and cataloguing of the group's existing film and slide photos, while simplifying members' projects for new and updated albums.

Twenty years later, our website at www.chilternphoto.org.uk hosts a comprehensive archive comprising nearly 8,000 captioned photos, roughly half of which cover towns and villages, while the remainder depict many aspects of Chiltern life, history, buildings and industries. Commenting on his contribution, Quiller said: 'It has been great fun editing the PhotoGroup website and getting to know so many of our members over the last 20 years. Long may it, and they, last.'

For the record, the committee made the following changes: Barry Hunt web editor (and chairman), assisted by Peter Brodrick (organiser of the Online Photographic Exhibition and PuzzlePic competition), while John Harrison remains as web

support manager. Sheila Crouch is the group's new treasurer. A vacancy exists on the committee.

The Great Exhibition

The images shown here were taken in the Chilterns, which accounts for one third of the 266 images shown in the PhotoGroup's Online Photographic Exhibition 2024. The rest depict a variety of scenes from all over Britain.

It's worth repeating that the Exhibition is open to all Chiltern Society members using any digital device that has a camera function. If you'd like to share your favourite images – and there are five categories for this – it's a good idea to set them aside for the 2025 edition in time for the late



Top: St Mary's Henley chancel ceiling (D Jeffrey)

Above: It was soon after his 89th birthday that Quiller decided to step down. And since it was his last committee meeting, both events were celebrated with a small birthday cake

Right, top to bottom: Sunset with balloons, Coombe Hill (G Murphy); Walking grandad home (P Wood); Tulips at Waddesdon Manor (M Miller)

November deadline. Our website not only shows the current Exhibition, but also gives details on how to send your pictures to the PhotoGroup.

Diary dates

The remaining outdoor meetings for 2024 are Tuesday 16 July, Chalfont St Giles; and Thursday 19 September, venue to be confirmed. Full details for each event, including the popular pub lunch, will be publicised via an emailed newsletter.



Photogroup competition

Puzzle picture: 113

Where can you find this building?

Send your entries to puzzlepic@chilternphoto.org.uk

The draw will take place on 24 June.

The winner will receive £20.

Photo: J Harrison

Puzzle picture: 112

The answer

All Saints Church, Little Kimble. A very large painting of St George and the princess he's rescued from the dragon.

The winner was Robert Hawkins.

Photo: Q Barrett



Benefitting body and mind



Cycling in the Chilterns is very rewarding, writes Andrew Wilson

I spent some time thinking about the title for this short article – not enough, some of you might now be saying! But, at the risk of sounding pretentious, it does capture for me the rewards of riding with a genial group of cyclists through the beautiful Chilterns countryside.

Since I started riding with the Society a little over a year ago, I've had the opportunity to make new friends, get fitter and discover so much more about the area. I try to join the rides twice a week, exploring different corners of the four counties, from Herts and Beds in the north, to Bucks and Oxon in the south.

One of the pleasures of these adventures is stumbling upon interesting sights that are familiar to some, but new to me. Among these perhaps lesser-known places, some of my favourites include those below.

The airport monument at Cublington:

This little spot is a poignant reminder that back in the late 1960s, Stewkley and the surrounding villages of Cublington, Creslow and Soulbury were in danger of being completely destroyed to make way for what might have become London's major airport. The plans faced huge opposition, and a concerted grass roots campaign lasting 2 1/2 years eventually won a permanent reprieve. To mark the success of the campaign, a small monument was made in the shape of Concorde and trees planted to create a spinney where information about this early environmental fight took place.

The Admiral's figurehead: Cycling along the quiet lanes near The Lee, perhaps one of the last things you might expect to encounter is the half-length wooden figure of Lord Howe in full admiral's uniform. The piece is a ship's figurehead, dating from 1860, that was saved from the Admiral Lord Howe, the last wooden warship built for the Royal Navy. The ship was broken up in the 1920s and used to provide the timber framing for the Liberty store in Regent Street. The figurehead was placed at the entrance to what was then the Liberty family home.

Vicar of Dibley's St Barnabus: The beautiful little village of Turville, near High Wycombe, is an attraction in itself and well worth a visit. But for many, an additional cachet comes from the fact that the church of St Mary the Virgin in the village was used as a location in the TV series, *The Vicar of Dibley*. For me, however, the charm of the place lies in its other buildings, with many of the cottages dating back to the 16th century. Also worthy of investigation is Cobstone Windmill, a stunning sight on the high ridge just behind the village.

Marsworth Polish Hostel: Although there's little to see at this local site, there's a fascinating commemorative board that details the history of the Marsworth Polish Hostel. This explains how, for more than a decade after the end of WWII, Marsworth was home to several hundred Polish families. They were unable to return home while Poland remained under Soviet occupation. These Polish servicemen and their families (who together numbered around 700 people) had made a major contribution to the Allied war effort and needed support for the future. The families were housed in former military bases previously occupied by American and Canadian servicemen operating out of Cheddington Airfield. The stories of these families, and their impact on the local community, offers a positive message of peace and happiness after the trauma of the war.

One of the real advantages of the Cycle

Group is benefitting from the knowledge and experience of a great group of people, several of whom have been riding the roads and lanes of this area for 20 years or more. Although there are many long-standing members, it's important to say how inclusive the group is - I received a very warm welcome when I started riding with them. Happily, this welcome is being enjoyed by others, as more and more people are now cycling with the group.

Members organise different rides each week, catering for road and off-road bikes alike. We truly are a mixed bunch of men and women of varied ages and abilities. There's nothing competitive about the way we approach our outings. I really appreciate how we look out for each other and aim to ensure the pace is manageable. That said, while we don't race, I soon noticed the benefits that cycling a couple of times a week has on my fitness, stamina and general wellbeing.

It's this last aspect - wellbeing - that I feel is worth emphasising. This can come from the friendship and fun of exploring new areas at a relaxed pace. On occasions, it's the intangible beauty of nature you stumble across, while at other times it might be the pleasing architecture of buildings old and new that captures the eye and the imagination.

Above all, it's the sense that while pedalling away, your mind can easily wander. Sometimes there are moments as you're rushing along, when time itself seems to stand still. It's a feeling captured far more eloquently in a short poem by Louis MacNeice, called appropriately enough, 'The Cyclist'. He describes how the moment feels for a boy on his bike, freewheeling down an escarpment: '... to-day a parenthesis between the horizon's brackets; the main sentence is to be picked up later but these five minutes are all to-day and summer.' The poem manages to describe those rare moments in life when you're so attentive to what you're experiencing that no other thoughts intervene. I'm reluctant to use the word 'mindfulness', but I believe that's what people mean when they advocate this sense of being.

I hope I haven't oversold the benefits of riding in a beautiful part of the countryside with a group of strangers who've become good friends. It may be that others in the Cycle Group would provide a different list of things they enjoy most about the rides, but for me, the positives are clear - camaraderie, fitness and wellbeing. I'd encourage anyone who has an inclination to get involved, to join us and find out what advantages they might derive from a simple bike ride.

Photos: Phil Bartlett and Nicola Walker



HS2 Tunnel Boring Machine (Photo: Keith Hoffmeister)

Events & Activities

Summer 2024

Glow in the Dark (choice of dates)

If you haven't seen glow-worms before, come and witness this magical display of nature's very own fairy lights with expert John Tyler.

Saturday 29 June, 6 or 13 July 9.45-11pm
Whiteleaf & Brush Hill, Princes Risborough
HP27 ORP

Price: **£8** per adult **£4** per child

HS2 Across the Chilterns - 8th Update (online presentation & discussion)

Following on from the update in January, we're pleased to invite you to the latest in a series of updates showing the impact as construction of the HS2 high speed railway line continues across the Chilterns. A mixture of maps, pictures, visualisations and, most importantly, aerial photographs, will be used.

Saturday 13 July 10.30am-12pm
FREE

John Hampden Talk & Private Viewing of the Exhibition 'A Wycombe Man with a Global Impact'

Join Beth Rogers, Chair of The John Hampden Society for a talk on the Chilterns squire who became a beacon of liberty for the American Founding Fathers and the Chartists. Find out how he opposed King Charles I's arbitrary taxes, escaped arrest for treason, fought in the Civil War and died for his cause. There'll be an opportunity to browse the exhibition, which includes some fine items

of Civil War armour and armaments, as well as Wycombe Museum's general display. Dr Howard Simmons will be available to explain their use and provenance.

Thursday 4 July
5.30-7.30pm
Wycombe Museum,
High Wycombe HP13 6PX

Price: **£10** pp



Piccotts End Paintings

Join us for this exclusive private viewing of pre-Reformation Catholic wall paintings that date back to the early 16th century, as featured on *Celebrity Antiques Road Trip*. This is a rare opportunity to explore the Grade I listed building, view these unique paintings up close and hear the story behind them in a fascinating talk by historical researcher Karen Murphy.

Tuesday 10 September 10.30am-12pm
132 Piccotts End Road, Piccotts End,
Hemel Hempstead HP1 3AU

Price: **£18** pp

.....
Booking is essential as we have limited places available. For more information



and to book scan the QR code, visit our website, or for enquires about events call Emma Anderson on 01494 490746.

Marshcroft appeal decision



Trevor Standen, **Society Planning Field Officer for Tring, Aldbury and Wigginton parishes, reports**

The Chiltern Society Planning Group are an active band of volunteers with people ‘on the ground’ keeping a vigilant eye on proposed developments. We work with other like-minded groups to help shape and influence development plans, and to intervene where these are detrimental to the precious Chilterns environment. A recent example of our activity involved a large, speculative proposed housing development on Green Belt land and within the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape/Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty outside Tring – the proposed Marshcroft development. This is the story.

In March 2022 a planning application was submitted by Redrow for 1,400 houses on land east of Tring between Bulbourne, Pendley and Tring Station. This was despite the fact that the Local Plan for Dacorum was adopted in 2013, albeit that a more recent consultation draft had identified the site. As a result of consultation responses, however, Dacorum Council concluded that the site was inappropriate for development and refused the application in October 2022. It proceeded

to an appeal.

Although active in the Chiltern Society, I was professionally engaged in advising Tring Town Council (TTC) and couldn't play a leading part in the Society's opposition, which was coordinated by David Gardiner as the Society's Area Planning Coordinator covering Dacorum. TTC were happy for me to talk to other like-minded groups which included CPRE Herts, Grove Fields Residents Association and the Chiltern Society (the

Combined Objectors Group, ‘COG’) and the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB). Although TTC had opposed the development on a number of grounds (including impact on the Green Belt), for the purposes of presenting evidence, I advised the Council, for financial considerations, to concentrate its efforts on the impact of the proposal on the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) and other reasons relating to the landscape.

In opposing an application at an appeal, a group can become a Rule 6 Party, which means that it can examine, cross-examine and re-examine relevant witnesses. This, however, brings with it many procedural requirements, and to be an effective Rule 6 Party inevitably incurs a greater financial burden at the inquiry. Fortunately, the Society's landscape witness was called to give evidence by the COG and I

liaised with them. The TTC landscape witness was called by Junior Counsel engaged by the COG.

In the run up to Christmas 2022 I lobbied hard for the jurisdiction to be 'recovered' by the Secretary of State. This means that the Inspector makes recommendations to the Secretary of State, who decides the case. Dacorum appointed a Kings Counsel to lead its team. The local MP Gagan Mohindra gave evidence against the development and an enormous number of people objected.

The proposal, entailing an increase in the population of Tring by one third and being situated a considerable distance from Tring town centre, would have had an adverse effect on the Green Belt, the setting of the CNL, particularly when viewed from public vantage points of the high scarp. It would also have entailed a loss of high quality farm land.

The Planning Inspector chairing the appeal recommended that it be granted, but the Secretary of State later overruled this and dismissed the appeal.

There's a six-week period in which the appellants can legally challenge this decision, although in so doing they would have to show that the Secretary of State was flying in the face of the evidence or incorrectly applying policy – a very high hurdle to surmount. Such a challenge would take several months to come before the Courts, during which time it seems likely that Dacorum's Emerging Local Plan (which broadly seeks to concentrate its residential development nearer to Hemel Hempstead) would become more certain – reaching what is termed Regulation 19 stage in the autumn of this year and heading for adoption in early 2026, with the Inquiry in 2025. Moreover, even if the appellants were successful on, say, one or more grounds of appeal, the effect of this would then entail a redetermination of the appeal, but this would occur against the backdrop of a firmer Emerging Local Plan.

Had this development proposal been allowed, in my view it would have completely undermined Dacorum's Emerging Local Plan, providing a precedent for developers to apply in other equally and less sensitive parts of the borough. From the standpoint of the Chiltern Society, the decision is crucial because it held that there would have been harm caused to both the Green Belt and the setting of the CNL, as well as the loss of agricultural land.

We always welcome volunteers to the Planning team so that we can continue and expand our efforts. No planning experience is required – just a passion to protect the Chilterns. Training by our professional planners is available.



The enigma of Bledlow Cross

Restoration and investigation may unlock some of its secrets, writes Nick Christensen

Bledlow Cross is a carved hill figure, cut into the northwestern flank of Wain Hill ridge, above the villages of Bledlow and Chinnor, and was once visible from the B4009. It's also accessible from the Chinnor Hill BBOWT Nature Reserve car park. The Cross differs from the larger, Latin-style Whiteleaf Cross, in that its arms are in the Greek style of an equilateral cruciform – in this instance, each arm measuring 9m long by 4.5m wide.

Chinnor Hill is also home to two of the four Bronze Age barrows situated above the ancient Icknield Way. The third is south of the car park (not accessible) and the fourth is on Kop Hill northeast of the Cross. These burial mounds are legacies of a prehistoric tradition that spans northwestern Europe and was prevalent in the Chilterns from around 2200-1500BC. The barrow on Kop Hill was re-used in the early Saxon period (5th-8th century AD) with a burial inserted into the original grave, and this has led to some speculation about the date of the Cross itself.

There's plenty of obscurity about its true age and origin; one source first mentions its existence in the early 19th century. Other literary evidence suggests it was cut in the late 1700s (one source claiming even perhaps the 14th century), possibly altering a previously existing chalk hill figure, either enhancing or changing the design. One common bit of folklore is that the entire ridge and cross, was named after a deceased warrior called Bledda (pronounced Bleh-tha): Bledda's Mound, Bledda's Cross, Bledda's Ridge – and this comes down to us as Bledlow. A nice story, but with little support in fact.

Dr Wendy Morrison, Heritage & Archaeology Manager for the Chilterns National Landscape, hopes to provide a more accurate picture of its true history. Her project, 'Crossing Paths with History', will attempt to shed some light on the issue of the Cross's age. Using core samples taken from the figure

itself to determine scientifically when it was first carved, it may be possible to speculate more accurately on the origin of the Cross and its intended purpose. She approached the Carington Estate with a proposal to investigate and restore the historical feature, as well as to create a heritage trail walk (following Bledlow Ridge), complete with interpretation materials to explain the findings. This is a cross-organisational partnership project funded by Defra's Farming in Protected Landscape initiative, bringing together the Carington Estate, the Chilterns National Landscape, the Chiltern Society, the Chiltern Rangers, BBOWT, and a host of volunteers dedicating their time to the restoration of the Cross.

Work has already been carried out to clear the overgrown vegetation and fell trees in order to exposing the feature. The next stages, in line with permissions and methodologies approved by Historic England, will be core sampling, followed by scraping moss and grass from the Cross itself, and eventually re-whitening by tamping fresh chalk onto the surface, in much the same way as is done at the Uffington White Horse in Oxfordshire.

The exposed slope has now been visible since February 2024, after the Chiltern Rangers and Chiltern Society staff and volunteers removed the dead ash trees. The benefits won't solely be to the archaeology, because the opened canopy will encourage a patch of open meadow, promoting chalk grassland species of flora and fauna.

Sources of inspiration

Amanda Barnicoat, **our Community WildBelt Project Manager**, introduces a selection of her favourite nature books



Gone: Stories of Extinction

Michael Blencowe • michaelblencowe.com

Michael Blencowe is an excellent storyteller; he brings wit and humour to lighten the rather depressing subject of extinction. The book spans five centuries, from the last sighting of New Zealand's upland moa to the 2012 death of the Pinta Island giant tortoise, Lonesome George. Featuring striking artwork, each chapter covers 11 species, unearthing fascinating information about them, the places where they lived, the people involved in trying to conserve them and those who contributed to their demise.

Michael's passion for the subject takes him to many places where these species used to live, or to museums where they're preserved for eternity. In each chapter you're not sure if you're going to the urban sprawl of San

Francisco, a dusty museum in central Europe or Brighton's Widewater Lagoon with its inflatable crocodile!

An excellent, easy read, and like me you'll find it very difficult to put down.

The Offing

Benjamin Myers
benjaminmyerswriter.com/

Set over a summer in the aftermath of WWII, the book follows 16-year-old Robert Appleyard as he leaves his Durham colliery village to search for any work that isn't coal mining: 'an act of escapology and rebellion'. On reaching the east coast, he encounters Dulcie Piper, a woman three times his age who lives alone in a rambling cottage. They form an unlikely but symbiotic relationship, in which he gardens while she provides food, shelter and intellectual sustenance.

Benjamin writes beautifully about the countryside in a way that feels at once both timely and timeless, perfectly capturing the ephemeral feel of a glorious English summer. 'The tiniest details came into sharp focus: the skeletal architecture of a small dead leaf that had lain untouched since winter, or the quiver of a solitary blade of wild grass where others beside it were still. The gentle panting of the dog too fell into the rhythm of my own heart as it beat a gentle pattern of sweet coursing blood in my eardrums. A single drop of sweat ran down my left temple. I felt alive. Gloriously, deliriously alive.' (pp 45-46).

The Offing is a lovely gentle read that will transport you to another time so vivid you'll practically taste it. It's about our relationships with nature - the sea, the meadow and the wild - and the way these elements impact our lives, as well as the human relationships that shape and mould us. It's beautifully written, and entirely immersive.

Butterflies of Britain & Ireland: 3rd edition

Jeremy Thomas (author) and Richard Lewington (illustrator)
richardlewington.co.uk/index.php

Written by one of Europe's most accomplished butterfly experts, this is THE butterfly bible and widely considered the best butterfly book ever published.

Stunningly illustrated by Richard Lewington, *Butterflies of Britain & Ireland* provides a comprehensive study of all our resident and migratory butterflies, including the latest on newly discovered species. It gives excellent but concise information on the appearance, behaviour, life cycle and ecology of our wonderful butterflies.

I first discovered this book 20 years ago when I was an up-and-coming Ranger. It was invaluable in helping me increase my

knowledge and understanding of butterflies. They really aren't just fluttering around aimlessly! Each species has its own specific way of doing things; perchers/searchers, night-time egg layers and spectacular ariel courtship battles high in the tops of oak trees are just some of the things you'll learn about.

A must for anybody interested in finding out more about butterflies. It's not highly technical and is easy to read, so is suitable for amateur enthusiasts and professionals alike.

The Last Tree: A Seed of Hope

Luke Adam Hawker
lukeadamhawker.com

An exquisitely illustrated graphic novel that's beautifully depicted through Luke's drawings and his connection with nature. From the mind and pen, *The Last Tree* is a powerful story of the fragility of our natural world and a magnificent celebration of its beauty. Imagine a world without trees. A world that's in many ways like ours, but where magnificent canopies, tree climbing and leaves rustling in the breeze are now only distant memories – until a young girl comes along, a girl who is brave and spirited and willing to follow where her imagination takes her. Through Olive's adventures in the world of trees we're reminded of nature's extraordinary power and beauty, and her actions ultimately sow the seeds of new life in her own real world.

I was lucky to get to know Luke as my allotment neighbour and it wasn't long before I discovered the beauty of his books and incredible artwork. He's also quite good at growing vegetables!

The Last Tree certainly provides food for thought and makes you appreciate the world around you. It's touching, heart-warming and uplifting. A book for all ages to enjoy and one to return to time and time again, to look deeper into the intricate detail of the illustrations.

Green Festival at Chiltern Open Air Museum

The Chiltern Society will be one of many organisations represented at this event on 9 June, which promises a fun-filled day with the emphasis on having a positive impact on the environment.

You can enjoy an independent market, showcasing a wide range of eco-friendly products and services offered by local businesses. From organic food to upcycled crafts, there'll be unique, sustainable treasures – something for everyone, in fact.

Other attractions include activities to enhance your wellbeing. You can join in Tai Chi and Qigong sessions led by experienced instructors which are designed to help you find balance and connect with the natural world around you. There'll also be talks on nature and the environment delivered by expert speakers. Find out about chalk streams and see how you can help to save water. Learn about the importance of bees from a keeper. Meet members of local conservation groups and organisations who'll be

on hand to tell you about their work and how you can get involved.

Children will be able to participate in activities that teach them about the importance of sustainability and taking care of our planet. From water saving initiatives to nature walks, there'll be plenty of opportunities for young minds to learn and grow.

Chiltern Voice radio will be broadcasting live from the event, and live acoustic music performed by local musicians will add to the ambience.

The event is supported by a River Chess Community Grant. COAM Annual Pass Holders will be admitted free.

Wendover to Halton towpath upgrade - grand opening Friday 28th June 2024 10am to 3pm

Robbie Cumming of BBC 4's Canal Boat Diaries to cut the ribbon

- A community celebration of the upgrading of this towpath
- To be held on the last day of John Colet's 'Focus Week'
- Holding of a 'canal fair' in Walnut Tree Meadow
- A teddy bears' picnic for primary age children plus treasure trail
- An equivalent challenge for secondary schoolchildren
- A quiz along the towpath for pupils on ecology and environment
- Talks by experts on water safety, environment and ecology
- Talks at sites of particular interest along the towpath
- The giving out of a 'passport' which is stamped & earns a certificate
- A sponsored walk for a local charity
- Stop-off points at heritage sites, with experts on hand
- Kayakers and paddleboarders along the canal
- Musical participation, refreshments and displays along the way
- Morris dancing by local group Cracklewick Morris
- Join where you like: at Wendover HP22 6HF, Halton HP22 5NS or between
- A shuttle bus at either end of this 1.7-mile towpath to take people back
- No entry charge for the event, bus provided free.

All welcome! Bring your family and friends!

Organisers: John Colet School, Wendover News, Wendover and Halton Parish Councils, EKFB and Wendover Canal Trust. The above may be adapted prior to June.



Heroes of the hill fort

Back in March a team of Society volunteers descended on Wendover Woods to apply their skills and energy to clearance work at Boddington Hill Fort. As is typical of our volunteers they carried out their tasks with a smile, and by the time they'd finished the positive results of their efforts were clear for all to see. Power to the people, as Citizen Smith used to say!

Photos: Colin Drake



Discover Boddington Hill Fort

Stretching out before you are the remains of Boddington Camp, which is an Iron Age hill fort. It covers an area of ten hectares, equivalent to around twelve football pitches.

What is a hill fort?
A hill fort is a settlement defended by banks and ditches often constructed on a high vantage point. Boddington Hill Fort is surrounded on three sides by steep chalk slopes. The main entrance would have been where you are standing now, and there may have been another entrance in the south-western corner. When originally constructed, there would have been a four metre timber palisade fence on top of the banks. Boddington Hill Fort is called a 'univallate' hill fort, which means it has one ditch and bank.

Who lived here?
Hill forts were constructed and lived in by the tribal communities which lived in Britain during the Bronze and Iron Ages, which is approximately 2000 years ago.

What is there to see?
Although you can't see much remaining at this point, if you go around to the eastern edge of the hill you'll find the banks are very well preserved and up to 3.5m high in places.

Boddington Hill Fort Trail
1.3km/0.8 miles 45 mins. Easy access. Follow the marker posts and you'll find another panel showing how the hill fort may have looked on the way back! Discover an amazing view over the vale of Aylesbury.

Other hill forts...
The most likely to visit is the largest hill fort in Britain. This and other details about the hill fort are available on the website.

Information Panel

The Chiltern Society - Wendover Woods Conservation Group





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 Sun 9am - 2pm

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Please contact us for more information:
www.inveniotraining.co.uk
info@inveniotraining.co.uk
0800 9991064

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Explore the Chilterns countryside by electric bike and enjoy a cream tea. Tours from Apr-Oct. Limited places, book early. Groups welcome.

Book 2 Tickets - Save £10

For more information
0771 9926660 electricbiketour.co.uk

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We're delighted that, for every walking holiday booked with **Ramblers Worldwide Holidays** (www.ramblersholidays.co.uk/home), the Society will receive a small donation to assist in the promotion of walking in the Chilterns. Please remember to nominate the Chiltern Society when making your booking.



2024 Season

10th February—3rd November

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 Tues, Wed, Thurs in summer holiday—
 Greg Chapman,
 Magician

Warwick Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks HP9 2PL

01494 672919 info@bekonscot.co.uk
www.bekonscot.co.uk



Our free guided walks are usually 5-6 miles long and c2.5 hours should be allowed. Please arrive at least 10 minutes before the departure time. ALL OUR WALKS NOW REQUIRE ONLINE PRE-BOOKING. **The booking window for each walk closes at noon on the day prior to the walk.**

Sunday Walks: The walks, suitable for all the family, start at **10am** (unless otherwise advised). In the unusual event of no bookings being received, the walk leader has the right to deem the walk cancelled.

Wednesday Walks: Due to their popularity we often operate two groups. The first group (the Groovers), walking at a relaxed pace and/or over a shorter distance, departs at **10.15am**. The second (the Movers), is slightly faster and/or covers a longer distance, departing at **10.30am**. To assess overall demand and arrange both groups, online advance booking is required.

JUNE		O/S GRID REF	JUNE		O/S GRID REF
Sun 2	Meet in the village car park (free in the bottom section), off the High Street/B482 (opposite Church Path), Lane End HP14 3ER. A hilly 5.5 mile stile-free walk on well-defined paths, with lovely views of the Chiltern countryside. From Lane End we'll walk through Finings Wood and descend Hanover Hill into Fingest. We'll then head uphill towards Cadmore End and Wheeler End Common, passing The Chequers Inn on the way back to the start. The Grouse & Ale pub is a three minute walk from the car park, if you want Sunday lunch. (Booking advisable). Sue Brinn 01628 483639	Explorer 175 GR SU 807918 CS Map 11 Bucks	Sun 30	Meet at the free public car park adjacent to Frieth Village Hall (next to the school) RG9 6PR. A hilly 5.5 mile stile-free walk in woodland and across open countryside. The walk starts out along The Chiltern Way through Mousells Wood, then descends into Fingest. We'll walk across two wildflower meadows next to Watery Lane, with a good chance of seeing wild orchids, to reach Skirmett, and then climb steadily uphill on an old sunken lane to Parmoor, before returning to Frieth. One uphill section. Sue Brinn 01628 483639	Explorer 171 GR SU 797903 CS Map 11 Oxon
Wed 5	Meet in the car park adjacent to the cricket pavilion on Harpenden Common, off the A1081 St Albans Road AL5 2JF. A 5.5 mile walk through Rothamsted Park, the agricultural research estate, then on to The Chiltern Way, then down to the River Ver and Redbourn, before returning via the disused Nickey Line railway and passing the c17th century Rothamsted Manor. Lunch options in Harpenden. Rob Saunders 07885 663816	Explorer 182 GR TL 137135 CS Map 27 Herts	JULY		
Sun 9	Meet by the front entrance of Berkhamsted Station, Lower Kings Road HP4 2AJ. Free 4 hour parking nearby at Canal Fields, Broadwater turn-off HP4 1HR, or limited parking on New Road (rear of the castle). An easy 5.5 mile stile-free walk, mostly on level paths but with three short uphill sections. Total ascent 430ft. Plenty of dining/refreshment options in the town centre afterwards. Shirley Williams 07740 124391	Explorer 181 GR SP 993081 CS Maps 17,18 Herts	Wed 3	Meet at The Plough, Dunny Lane, Belsize (near Sarratt) WD3 4NP. Park in the pub car park if lurching, or roadside near the pub if not. A 5.75 mile scenic walk from Belsize via Commonwood to Sarratt and back, passing through Chipperfield Common woods and along part of The Chiltern Way. A mixture of woodland and open fields. A couple of stiles. Total ascent 400ft. Paul Cooke 07901 516342	Explorer 182 GR TL 034008 CS Map 5 Herts
Wed 12	Meet at The Flowering Spring PH, Henley Road, Playhatch (near Sonning) RG4 9RB. Park at the pub. A lovely 5.8 mile walk, that heads north over open countryside to Shiplake, then joins the Thames Path for a long stretch along the river, and finally heads south back to the start. Total ascent 250ft. Walk 44 in the <i>50 Great Walks</i> book. John Madeley 07592 852780	Explorer 171 GR SU 746767 CS Map 4 Oxon	Sun 7	Meet at Cholesbury Village Hall, Cholesbury Lane (near Chesham) HP23 6ND. Limited parking available on the verge in front of the hall, with further parking nearby roadside opposite The Full Moon (or in the pub car park if booked for lunch). A relatively flat, 6 mile figure-of-eight walk to Lee Gate and back via Erriwig Farm. The route, over quiet, rolling scenic countryside, passes through fields and woodland. Two stiles. Total ascent 270ft. Stephen McFall 07745 006037	Explorer 181 GR SP 930071 CS Map 8 Bucks
Sun 16	Meet at Hambleden village car park, entrance behind The Stag & Huntsman RG9 6RP (parking charge £3 for 4 hours). A lovely 5.5 mile stile-free walk through Chiltern woodlands, attractive villages and along the Thames towpath. The walk takes in a chalk quarry, a Cistercian abbey and Culham Court, as well as the pretty villages of Hambleden and Medmenham. Total ascent 350ft. Frank Auton 07785 276095	Explorer 171 GR SU 784865 CS Map 11 Bucks	Wed 10	Meet in Nettlebed by the bus stop on the A4130, near Nettlebed Kiln RG9 5AX. Park either by the common on The Green or in the large Village Club car park off the High Street (RG9 5DA). A lovely, undulating 5.7 mile stile-free circuit, mostly in woodland, and passing past the ruins of St James Church, Bix. Fine views. Total ascent 630ft. Susan Maguire 07835 827291	Explorer 182 GR SU 702867 CS Map 2 Oxon
Wed 19	Meet at The Cock and Rabbit, The Lee (near Great Missenden) HP16 9LZ. A 5.5 mile walk, initially heading fairly steeply down towards Wendover (overlooking the HS2 works), then following The Ridgeway through Great Widmoor Wood, before a steady return climb towards Swan Bottom and back to The Lee which has both an old, and a very old, church. Note: The Cock and Rabbit has recently changed ownership, been refurbished, and received good reviews. Isobel Dorehill 07554 995098	Explorer 181 GR SP 900042 CS Map 3 Bucks	Sun 14	Park and meet in Christmas Common along Northend Road near its junction with Christmas Common Road. (Room for about six cars). This is very close to The Fox and Hounds OX49 6HL. Park at the pub only if booked for lunch. A c6.8 mile walk from Christmas Common through woods towards Russell's Water, then back via Pishill church (where there may be DIY coffee in the porch). Total (gentle) ascent 800ft. Deirdre Philpott 07973 271474	Explorer 182 GR SU 715932 CS Map 9 Oxon
Sun 23	Meet outside the ticket office entrance (main car park/London trains side) at Chalfont & Latimer Station, Little Chalfont HP7 9PR. Parking at the station £3. An easy, very scenic 5.5 mile walk along the River Chess from Neptune Falls by Latimer House as far as the watercress beds, before returning via Chenies Manor. One climb out of the valley. Total ascent c300ft. Andrew Clark 07935 875403	Explorer 172 GR SU 996975 CS Maps 5,6 Bucks	Wed 17	Meet and park (car sharing where possible) at the overflow car park of The Flower Pot, Aston Lane, Aston (off the A4130 near Henley) RG9 3DG. A 5.5 mile walk with gentle inclines giving fine views of the Thames Valley. The route takes us through open countryside and Remenham Wood to reach Henley, before returning along the Thames Path, passing Temple Island and via Hambleden Lock, where the traditional rowing skiffs, manned by uniformed Swan Uppers, are scheduled to be passing through. (A shorter option is available for the Groovers). Lunch will be available in the pub garden. Patricia Boxell 07847 869506	Explorer 171 GR SU 784842 CS Map 31 Oxon
Wed 26	Park and meet at the SE end of Rocky Lane RG9 4RE, just south of Greys Court. Limited roadside parking spaces, but NT members may prefer to use the Greys Court car park (RG9 4PG) and walk the 500m down to Rocky Lane. This 5 mile walk begins by crossing some traditional grazed downland then traverses Lambridge Wood following an ancient 'Grim's Ditch'. Finally we'll pass through the outer reaches of the Greys Court Estate and the Nettlebed Estate. Almost stile-free. One significant hill. Bob Parry 07722 350210	Explorer 171 GR SU 722832 CS Map 2 Oxon	Sun 21	Meet at the roofed pump, on the small green, in the centre of Chenies village, just off Latimer Road WD3 6ER. Limited parking on the side roads around the green, or further along Latimer Road by The Red Lion. The scenic 5 mile walk will pass historic Chenies Manor, head west through woods and down to the Chess Valley, and follow the valley to the east towards Sarratt, before returning through rolling countryside back to Chenies. Two stiles. Total ascent 440ft. Richard Skepper 07772 214503	Explorer 172 GR TQ 016984 CS Map 28 Bucks/Herts

Our walks and walking guidelines have been risk-assessed to ensure the safety of our volunteer leaders, those attending and the wider public. Participants must be equipped with appropriate clothing and footwear, and bring their own optional provisions including refreshments. Well-behaved dogs on a lead are welcome. The instructions of the walk leader must be followed at all times.

The walks outlined below should be considered provisional, because they may be modified or cancelled post-publication. **Please refer to the Society website for definitive details and to register for a walk.** ('Discover The Chilterns/Free Guided Walks' section). If you have no internet access, call **Emma Anderson** on 01494 490746, Tuesday-Friday during normal office hours to make a booking.

For any additional enquiries, or to volunteer to be a Walk Leader, please contact our Walks Coordinator, Paul Cooke (01494 778024).

JULY		O/S GRID REF	AUGUST		O/S GRID REF
Wed 24	Meet at Maharajah's Well, Main Street, Stoke Row RG9 5QE. Parking available roadside along Main Street (or at The Cherry Tree, if pre-booked for lunch). This mainly flat, c6 mile stile-free walk takes us through Busgrove Wood, Peppard Common, Kingwood Common (look out for the pig!) and Bear Wood. Plenty of shaded woodland to provide respite in the event of hot weather. A couple of short, steep inclines. Sarah Hunter 07855 313697	Explorer 171 GR SU 679840 CS Maps 2,4 Oxon	Wed 21	Meet in Cattle Market car park, off North Street (B4445), Thame OX9 3FP. Pay and display £2.60 for 5 hours (exact cash or card). A 6 mile level walk from Thame (Oxon) to Haddenham (Bucks). From the centre of Thame, the walk soon heads out along a country lane to field footpaths and bridleways. Nearing Haddenham railway station we'll walk roadside for 3/4 mile to reach the pretty sight of Haddenham church and duck pond. Similar open countryside on the return to Thame. A few stiles. Sandra Palmer 07512 615037	Explorer 180,181 GR SP 708061 CS Map n/a Oxon/Bucks
Sun 28	Meet opposite the village school in Church Road, Cadmore End HP14 3PE. Ample parking along the verge, or in a small parking area next to the school. A hilly 5.3 mile walk with attractive woods, country lanes and rolling hills. We'll walk downhill towards Fingest and then north of Frieth, before returning via Hanger Farm. Twelve stiles. Total ascent 650ft. Stephen Groves 07843 381971	Explorer 172 GR SU 783927 CS Map 11 Bucks	Sun 25	August Bank Holiday Weekend – No Walk	
Wed 31	Meet at The Red Lion, Thame Road, Longwick HP27 9SG. Park in the pub car park if lunching, otherwise adjacent in Chestnut Way. The level 6 mile walk has fine views of the Chiltern escarpment and takes in part of the Phoenix Trail, plus the villages of Horsenden and Saunderton. Four stiles. Trevor Chandler 07973 886648	Explorer 181 GR SP 935069 CS Map 8 Bucks	Wed 28	Meet at The Crooked Billet, 88 High St, Colney Heath AL4 0NP (approx 3 miles east of St Albans off A414). Park on a side road if not lunching at the pub. A level 5.5 mile stile-free walk over heath, farmland and woodland to the landscaped Albans Lakes – originally gravel pits – before returning via the Watling Chase Trail. Total ascent 90ft. Nigel Seabrooke 07747 552378	Explorer 182 GR TL 202060 CS Map n/a Herts
AUGUST					
Sun 4	Meet at Holy Trinity Church, Church End, Bledlow HP27 9PD. Park roadside or in the small lay-by. A 6 mile walk offering excellent views. We'll head out along The Ridgeway to Lodge Hill Nature Reserve and prehistoric site, before returning along The Chiltern Way, and finishing with a walk around the sunken aquatic Lyde Gardens, created by Lord Carrington, which are opposite the family home. Refreshments/lunch available in The Lions of Bledlow afterwards. Peter Hetherington 07767 647714	Explorer 181 GR SP 776021 CS Map 14 Bucks	Sun 1	Meet in Knotty Green, near Beaconsfield, on the grassed area beside The Lion of Beaconsfield (formerly The Red Lion), at the junction of Forty Green Road with B474 Penn Road HP9 2TN. Park on the road alongside the cricket ground, or in the pub car park if lunching. A fairly flat 5.5 mile stile-free walk to the edge of Seer Green, mainly through woods. It involves crossing the busy A355 main road twice. Total ascent 400ft. David Vick 07877 196083	Explorer 172 GR SU 933926 CS Maps 6,13 Bucks
Wed 7	Meet outside the National Trust Ashridge Visitor Centre, end of Monument Drive, off the B4506 near Berkhamsted HP4 1LT. Plenty of free parking. Toilet facilities/refreshments available at the NT café, and further lunch options at nearby pubs in Aldbury or Little Gaddesden. A 5.25 mile stile-free walk over Northchurch Common, taking in the National Trust Ramblers Walk and parts of the Ashridge Boundary Walk. A couple of small inclines. John Lavender 07546 245847	Explorer 181 GR SP 971131 CS Map 19 Herts	Wed 4	Meet in the large Waterhouse free car park at the rear of Latimer House, Latimer village HP5 1UJ (enter via the St Mary's Church turn-off from Church Lane, passing by the manor on the left, then next right into the car park). A 5.8 mile walk along the picturesque Chess Valley, heading along the top of the ridge from Latimer to Chenies, then across the valley and up to Sarraat church, before descending to return along the valley bottom. Total ascent 450ft (a shorter, flatter option is available for the Groovers). Lunch options just a five minute drive away in Chenies (Red Lion or Bedford Arms) or Ley Hill (pre-book The Crown). Paul Cooke 07901 516342	Explorer 172 GR TQ 000989 CS Map 28 Bucks
Sun 11	Meet outside Ashley Green Memorial Hall, Two Dells Lane (nearly opposite the church), Ashley Green HP5 3RB. Free parking. WC/light refreshments at the popular Glebe Café (rear of the hall) before or after the walk. A scenic, c5.5 mile stile-free walk, initially going uphill before descending and entering Hockeridge Woods to see giant redwoods and other specimen trees. After a short stretch along Hog Lane, we'll reach open fields with some lovely views. Total ascent 530ft. Apart from the prize-winning café, the highly-regarded Golden Eagle pub is on the doorstep for Sunday lunch (pre-booking recommended). Colette Hayward 07504 856821	Explorer 181 GR SP 977051 CS Map 17 Bucks	Sun 8	Meet on the grass area alongside the fire-damaged Kings Hotel, Oxford Road, Stokenchurch HP14 3TA. Park in the side roads opposite the hotel. A hilly 6 mile walk heading north to Sprig's Alley and Sunley Wood, then east to Radnage, before returning to Stokenchurch along The Chiltern Way. A mixture of woodland and open countryside on well used paths. Fine views. Eight stiles. Three steep inclines. Total ascent 770ft. Stephen McFall 07745 006037	Explorer 171 GR SU 760962 CS Map 14 Bucks
Wed 14	Meet at Hambleden village car park, entrance behind The Stag & Huntsman, RG9 6RP (parking charge £3 for 4 hours). A gorgeous and popular 5.7 mile walk from the delightful Hambleden village, following the contours of the chalk slope towards Medmenham, including a roped traverse, before heading due south to reach the Thames (with a short cut option for the Groovers). Returning on the Thames towpath to Hambleden Place, Mill End and back along the Hambleden Valley. Jez Lofts 07772 595845	Explorer 171 GR SU 784865 CS Map 11 Bucks	<h2>Reporting path problems</h2> <p>The legal responsibility for rectifying public rights of way problems resides with the relevant county council and any issues encountered must be reported to them. Each of the county councils in the Chilterns has its own online reporting system to log and track problems raised by members of the public. As website links frequently change, we recommend using a search engine (eg. Google) to locate a current page by entering '[county] report a rights of way issue'. You'll also need to note precisely where the problem was encountered and, if possible, provide photos taken on a smartphone.</p> <p>The Chiltern Society website contains further information and guidance on the matter: <i>Discover The Chilterns/Walking/Report a ROW problem.</i></p>		
Sun 18	Meet outside The Greyhound, 19 Stocks Road, Aldbury HP23 5RT. Limited street parking outside the pub, but more free parking a little further along Stocks Road at the village sports ground. An undulating 6 mile walk from the pretty village of Aldbury, following the ancient Ridgeway up through Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve to enjoy stunning views from Pitstone Hill. Returning through the woodland of the NT Ashridge Estate to the Bridgewater Monument, and back down to the start. Total ascent 720ft. Refreshments/lunch in either of the two village pubs (but pre-book). Frank Auton 07785 276095	Explorer 181 GR SP 965126 CS Map 19 Herts			

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