SSUE 250 · WINTER 2023

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Tree planting, Aston Clinton Orchard Photo: Amanda Barnicoat, Community WildBelt Project Manager







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From the Editor Richard Bradbury

My grandfather on my mother's side of the family spent most of his life working on farms in Suffolk. When we stayed with him, he would often talk about the state of agriculture in his native East Anglia.

Although I was quite young and more interested in playing with my cousins who lived nearby, I occasionally picked up on what he was saying. I particularly remember him asserting, probably more than once, 'farmers always find something to complain about – but you never see a poor one.'

I doubt he'd be able to say the same thing today. Farmers in the UK are under pressure for a number of well documented reasons. Back in 2016 the BBC reported that more than 1,000 dairy farms had closed in three years; in 2022 City AM carried a story with the headline: 'UK farmers face bankruptcies and closures as £1.8bn in EU cash stops, with MPs warning "blind Brexit optimism" may lead to higher food prices.' Only last July, the Financial Times reported that smaller farms were at risk of closure because the production costs of milk were exceeding the amount that most farmers were paid - largely as a result of Arla and Muller. Britain's two largest dairy processors, reducing what they paid their suppliers (the 'farmgate price'). Small wonder, then, that a recent survey by the Farm Safety Foundation discovered that 92% of UK farmers under the age of 40 rank poor mental health as the biggest hidden problem facing them at present.

For those determined to tough it out and rise to the mounting list of challenges, diversification seems to be a major part of the solution. My wife and I have experienced this for ourselves: for nearly three decades we've been spending a week on a sheep farm in North Wales, where the farmer has gradually been turning more of his outbuildings into excellent holiday accommodation. Much closer to home, the Lacey family in Lane End have successfully embraced another of the most popular ways of boosting their income, with their now well-



established farm shop, where they sell high quality milk from their Guernsey cows, which is also distributed to other farm shops in the region. Farmers' markets have an important role to play for many farmers too – if you look online you'll find them taking place regularly all over the Chilterns.

It's common knowledge that many farmers feel their work isn't fully appreciated by the general public: they're taken for granted, and only come to prominence if there's a bad news story, such as cattle injuring walkers, fertiliser run-off polluting rivers and the like. That's why it's important for the Chiltern Society, and other bodies with similar interests, to seek to redress the balance by helping in any way possible to raise awareness of how valuable - essential. indeed - the farming community really is. Later in this issue you'll find an interview with Will Lacey, a Society trustee and our current Farming Adviser, which explores some of the areas of concern.

In conclusion, it would be remiss of me not to mention the death of Gill Kent, who for many years kept the Society up to speed on farming matters, frequently contributing articles to *Chiltern* written from a farmer's perspective. I hope to include a proper tribute to her in the next issue.

Chiltern

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DEADLINE FOR ISSUE 251 (MARCH 2024)Items to the Editor by: Friday 5 January • Published: Saturday 2 March

New trustees aim to make their mark

Mark Gardiner



I've lived and worked in the Chilterns for over 40 years, and want the area to be conserved so that future generations can eniov its benefits as much as I

have. I was delighted to be asked to join the trustee body.

In December 2022 I retired as a vet and clinical director at a large, mixed veterinary practice. My major personal professional interests were with horses and farm animals, which made me conscious that the Chilterns is still a working environment. Over the years, I was also very fortunate to meet thousands of local people from all backgrounds and situations when being entrusted with the veterinary care of their

I've been a member of the Chiltern Society for a number of years. After retirement, I started volunteering with the Conservation teams and as a citizen scientist on the River Chess. I've learnt much, discovered some lovely new areas and met some inspiring people who have an obvious passion for the Chilterns. I'm a keen dog walker, out in the Chilterns somewhere nearly every day, have been an avid sports player and enjoy music.

Alex Moriarty

I've always had a passion for nature and consider myself fortunate to have grown up surrounded by fantastic woods, rivers, parks and reserves (credit to my dogs for ensuring I was in these environments every day).

Having recently moved to Buckinghamshire, I saw supporting the mission of the Chiltern Society as a fantastic opportunity to help these environments

thrive for many more to enjoy. I've spent the majority of my career in project management. marketing and commercial roles, leading international business



events across aviation, executive leadership and the charity sector. I hope to be able to support the mission of the Chiltern Society in championing the Chilterns.

Robin Storey



I've lived in Thame for nearly 20 years and took the train through the Chilterns every day to work in London. It struck me what a precious

natural resource the Chilterns is - yet within a day trip of the capital and so clearly under enormous pressure. Over time, I've walked the Chilterns extensively and discovered the real value of what we have locally. By

chance, I came across some of the Society's sites. I'm pleased to join as a trustee.

Professionally, I've worked in the international energy industry as a lawyer and seen various countries that lack the civil society and conservation focus we're so fortunate to still have in the UK. In recent years, I've helped directors run these businesses and I'd like to offer this insight, as well as my interest in the landscape, to champion the Chilterns and bring them to as wide an audience as possible.

Andrew Wilson



I've lived in Ivinghoe since the early 1990s and I'm a huge advocate of the beauty and benefits of this very special area. I'm a keen supporter

of the Chiltern Society and over the past couple of years I've contributed to its activities as a volunteer and an enthusiastic member of the Cycle Group.

In my professional life, I worked in sustainability consultancy for three decades, helping large companies develop strategies that deliver tangible environmental and societal benefits through their operations. I retain a link to this work as a Board member of the Institute of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability - the professional body for businesses and practitioners in this area.

I look forward to working as a trustee with colleagues across the Society to make a positive difference.

HEAD OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT: Gavin Johnson



PATRON: Rt Hon The Earl Howe PRESIDENT: TBC VICE PRESIDENTS: CHAIR: Simon Kearey VICE CHAIR: David Harris

CHILTERN SOCIETY OFFICE: Tracey Read White Hill Centre, White Hill, Chesham Bucks HP5 1AG Tel: 01494 771250 Email: office@chilternsociety.org.uk CHIEF OFFICER: Tom Beeston

ACTING TREASURER: Simon Kearev

FUNDRAISING MANAGER: Sam Roberts

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Events & Activities

Winter 2023/24







Wild Winter Art Workshop

This workshop is suitable for beginners upwards and is a great opportunity to learn something new in a fun, relaxed atmosphere. Jay will show you step by step how to create this seasonal piece. With demonstrations and one-to-one time, everyone will leave with a finished piece ready to frame. Jay is a professional artist, illustrator and awardwinning tutor. Price includes all materials and refreshments.

Wednesday 6 December 11am-1.15pm Chesham Town Hall, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1EP

Price: **£30** per adult

Christmas Craft Workshop

Join Lisa from Growing Bright to make beautiful handmade packaging for your special Christmas gifts. You'll decorate three sheets of eco wrapping paper and six gift tags using stunning Christmas stamps and foliage. For extra adornment, you'll also make three mini-wreaths, which can be hung on the Christmas tree, or laid flat to put a candle in as a table decoration. Lisa prides herself on using locally foraged foliage from our beautiful Chiltern landscape. She works hard to try and source other materials and equipment that are either locally made, locally sourced or eco-friendly.

Thursday 7 December 10am-12.30pm White Hill Centre, White Hill, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1AG

Price: £40 per adult

Making Space for Wildlife - A talk by John Tyler

With so many ancient habitats disappearing from our countryside each year, even the smallest garden can provide a vital sanctuary for wild plants and animals. We'll look at a range of simple ways to make a garden more attractive to wildlife (and more interesting for us), including garden design, choosing the right plants, building a

pond, establishing a wildflower meadow and managing your garden in a wildlife-friendly way.

Thursday 11 January 2-3pm White Hill Centre, White Hill, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1AG

Price **£7.50** per adult

HS2 across the Chilterns - 7th update (Online presentation and discussion)

Construction of HS2 across the Chilterns is now reaching a critical stage. Using a mixture of maps, pictures, visualisations and, most importantly, aerial photographs, this talk will show the impact at several locations across the Colne Valley Regional Park and the Chilterns. The talk will last approximately 60 minutes, with plenty of time for questions and discussion. This is the latest in a highly successful series of updates which will regularly show the impact as construction continues.

Saturday 20 January 10.30am-12pm

Price: FREE



Energy from Waste Facility - Overview & Tour

Greatmoor Energy from Waste takes household non-recyclable waste from throughout Buckinghamshire, diverts it from landfill and uses it to generate enough electricity to power 18% of the homes in the county. This visit will begin with a presentation in Greatmoor's fully accessible Visitor Centre, which is designed to inform visitors about the benefits of using waste to produce renewable energy, as well as educating them about waste reduction, reuse and recycling. This will be followed by a tour where you'll see waste being delivered, giant grab cranes moving it and then the waste burning in the grate, before visiting the turbine hall and experiencing the draught under the condenser fans.

Thursday 8 February 10am or 2pm (length approx 2 hrs) Greatmoor Energy from Waste, Greatmoor Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP18 OQE

Price: £7.50 per adult

Country Ramble and Pub Lunch - Swyncombe Snowdrops

This walk will take you to see the wonderful display of snowdrops and aconites at St Botolph's Church in Swyncombe. You'll also experience exhilarating views over Oxfordshire from the old hill fort on Swyncombe Downs. The walk will be about 5.5 miles, with a total ascent of 200m approx. Some sections of the paths and tracks may be muddy. A delicious two course lunch at The Shepherd's Hut, High St, Ewelme, Wallingford OX10 6HQ, is included in the price.

Thursday 15 February 9.45am-2pm Ewelme Recreation Ground Car Park, High Street, Ewelme, Oxon OX10 6PG

Price: **£27.50**

How to book

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.

www.chilternsociety.org.uk 5

Community WildBelt project makes great progress





An update from Amanda Barnicoat

Community WildBelt, a project set up by the Chiltern Society in June 2022 and funded by the Rothschild Foundation and Wendover Community Board, has made great progress in the area of Wendover and surrounding parishes. The project is looking to increase biodiversity and Nature Recovery on a local level, working with parish councils, community groups, farmers and private landowners. Creating the right habitat for our wildlife, even on a small scale, can make a big difference. All those little places we create for wildlife to 'hang out in and do their thing' add up and offer habitats where our declining nature can flourish. Build it and they'll come.

During the first year of the project, we discovered that people, from small groups to parish councils, had a real desire to help nature. They're often under-resourced and lacking the knowledge and experience to know what to do. The WildBelt Project has provided the practical aid and support to achieve their ambitions.

We want to connect people with nature and help them take ownership of where they live. I'm a great believer in the power of nature and how it can improve wellbeing. We've recruited lots of new volunteers, got muddy in ponds and sweaty in meadows! You can't beat getting muddy from head to toe – great for the skin, but not so good for being allowed indoors when you get home! Good fun though, and it's positive progress for Nature Recovery.

We've planted a new orchard using local varieties of fruit trees (we like to keep it local), planted lots of new mixed native hedgerows, managed and created wild flower meadows, and of course worked on muddy ponds. We've also been encouraging local residents to come and join in, and it's great to see people of all ages getting involved. Enthusing people about the nature around

them is key to the project. A cub and scout group came and helped plant the orchard. The youngsters had a great time wielding tools bigger and heavier than them – let them loose I say (with supervision of course)! They were proud of what they'd achieved and learnt about the importance of orchards. Some said they wanted to come back and see how the trees they'd planted grow.

Training is a big part of the project, from on-the-job to a more formal approach. It's important to ensure the volunteers are equipped with the right skills and knowledge. This summer we put some of them on a scythe training course, the grim reaper type, but thankfully no deaths were involved. Scything has really taken off in the conservation world, and the new, lighter European scythes are an effective way of managing meadows and scrubby habitats. A trained volunteer and their scythe that's it: no fuel, no pollution, no noise, easy to maintain, easy to transport and a lot cheaper than a powered machine. It's a win-win situation and the perfect tool for conservation groups.

We've developed a good relationship with a primary school in Wendover and,





looking ahead, hope to further that with a new 'WildBelt School' initiative. One of our aims is to involve kids with what we're doing and help them understand how fragile our wildlife is.

We have exciting plans for the future so we're absolutely delighted to announce that the Chiltern Society has been awarded a £144,989 grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to implement the next stage of the project. **Thanks to National Lottery players,** we will help people make a tangible difference to biodiversity loss. I'm looking forward to the next two years, helping to build a better future for our nature.

If you have a project you'd like to undertake, or know of a patch of land in the area around Wendover that you think could be improved for nature, no matter how small (or big!), we'd like to hear from you.

If you're interested in volunteering on the WildBelt project, have a look at our website or email me.

Amanda Barnicoat
Community WildBelt Project Manager
https://chilternsociety.org.uk/community-

amandabarnicoat@chilternsociety.org.uk

Cancellation of Phase 2

John Gladwin considers the implications

The Government's recent decision to cancel Phase 2 of HS2 from Birmingham to Manchester and pause work between Old Oak Common and Euston raises a number of questions. In particular:

- What's the impact of the cancellation on the Business Case?
- Does this mean that Phase 1 will no longer support a return on the investment?
- Should they continue with the completion of Phase 1?

The Oakervee Review, which led to notice to proceed with Phase 1, found that its costs exceeded the benefits. That was before the latest 20% cost increase, so there's unlikely to be any economic justification for continued construction. Obviously, the Society would like the whole of HS2 to be cancelled and have written to the Prime Minister (see copy) requesting that a proper review is made of Phase 1 because costs continue to escalate. This would avoid the need to build the Wendover Dean and Small Dean viaducts and the Wendover cut-and-cover tunnel. It would also enable the landscape to be returned to its original contours and properly replanted as far as possible.

With so much of the railway infrastructure being nearly completed however, it's unlikely that the Government would decide to cancel Phase 1. The Society will continue engaging with HS2 and its contractors to mitigate the impact on the Chilterns.

We have a number of concerns:

 The Wildlife Trusts carried out a review of HS2's calculations of Biodiversity Loss due to construction and the reinstatement programme. They found that HS2 undervalued the loss of hedges and mature trees, and overvalued their new planting. We're carrying out a detailed calculation of Biodiversity Loss in the Chilterns and the replanting programme. Of the new trees planted, at least 15% have died – lack of water being a main reason. These are being replaced

- There are a number of road and foot bridges in the Chilterns that cross the deep cutting from South Heath to Wendover Dean. The cutting blocks animal migration routes, but 'green' bridges would provide an opportunity for them to follow migration paths. Unfortunately, none of the proposed bridges are 'green'. Bucks Council want the bridge at Bowood Lane be a green bridge. This has been appealed by HS2. The Society is seeking to have as many of the bridges as possible upgraded to green bridges.
- The proposed loss of oak trees along Leather Lane, which has been shown to be a bat corridor. HS2 has been

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considering alternative bridge designs.
Unfortunately, these haven't been shared in order to seek the local community's views.

 HS2 planning applications also include planting schemes for eventual landscape restoration. These would clearly benefit from local knowledge, but there's no sign that HS2 is prepared to engage with the community in planning for this.

It's clear that protection and restoration of the AONB will continue to be a major concern for the Society, whether or not Phase 1 is eventually cancelled.

7







Martin Pearson meets farmer and Chiltern Society trustee, Will Lacey

It's been an extraordinary time for UK farming. The volatility and uncertainty created by Brexit and then Covid was closely followed by the war in Ukraine, leading to the cost of farm essentials such as fertiliser, animal feed and energy hitting record levels. As NFU leader Minette Batters put it, 'there has not been a playbook in history for the events that have unfolded.'

Here in the Chilterns, almost 60% of the land is given over to agriculture. Our farmers not only provide jobs for people in rural communities and put food on our tables, but also play a critical role in protecting our environment and helping to tackle climate change by locking carbon into the soil.

One such Chiltern farmer is Will Lacey. He and his twin brother Ed run the 450 acre Laceys Family Farm in Lane End. Will is a seventh generation Lacey, his family having farmed this land since 1884. Away from the farm, he acts as the Chiltern Society's Farming Ambassador – a role that recognises the impact farming has on the Society's four major work streams: rights of way, nature and conservation, planning and environment, and heritage and culture.

I spoke to Will in October and first asked him how recent UK and global events had affected his business. 'Everything we do is dictated by government policy and global markets,' he explained. 'Our biggest problem in recent years has been the regular changes of leadership at 10 Downing Street. A new PM will appoint a new Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)

Secretary, who may have very different ideas from their predecessor. Recently it has felt like policy changes are being made every six months, whereas farmers need to plan years ahead. To give you an example, it takes nine months before a calf is born, it's a further two years before it provides us with milk and five years before we recoup our investment in that single animal.'

It's been almost three years since the Brexit divorce bill was passed and the UK finally left the EU. Will explained how leaving the EU had impacted on farming at Laceys. 'Previously funding came from Europe and it was clear what funding was available. It's taken a while for Defra to work out their priorities between food production and environments. There was certainly a lull in funding, and gaining access to some of the new schemes has involved us in a lot more office time.'

The volatility of the past five years has led UK farmers to seek out additional income streams through diversification. A recent survey, conducted by Defra, claims that 68% of UK farms now have some form of diversified activity. Green energy generation, renting out buildings and setting up

glamping sites are three options, but opening a farm shop appears to be the most popular choice. Often housed in a previously disused barn or outbuilding, farm shops have become an important part of the rural economy. They offer employment to local people and have placed the control of product pricing and marketing back in the hands of the farmers. Laceys Farm Shop has grown to become a significant part of the overall business. It sells seasonal fruit and vegetables, artisan bread, and a wide range of locally produced honey, cheese and delicatessen products. It also houses an award-winning, on-site butchers, offering meat from Laceys and other local farms.

Central to the Laceys' business is their highly acclaimed milk, produced by their Guernsey herd. Richer and creamier than milk produced by the more common black and white Holstein cows, Laceys' premium product is not only sold in their shop but also at many other farm shops across the region. Will explained the importance of this route to market. 'We sell 50% of our milk to Arla (a major European dairy firm). A year ago we were getting record high prices, but

now factors outside our control mean we are selling to them at a loss. It highlights that there are no guarantees in farming, but being able to sell our milk to the public puts us back in control of our selling price.' According to a recent research project carried out by The Farm Retail Association, Britain's farm shop market is booming, generating £1.4bn in sales last year and employing about 25,000 workers.

Will is sure that increased public interest in where food comes from and how it's produced has helped create this boom. 'We are fortunate that we are in an area of relative affluence, where people are willing and able to pay a little more for a quality product.' He also believes that eating habits are changing. 'People are eating less meat, but want the best they can afford. Consumers are also learning that eating well can make economic sense. If you buy a kilo of our Aberdeen Angus mince you can feed a family for three days. If you buy a readymeal you get one meal.'

Another significant change in UK farming over the past decade has been the widespread adoption of The Farmer Cluster concept. developed by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust in association with Natural England. The scheme is intended to help farmers work more collaboratively in their region, enabling them to collectively deliver greater benefits for soil, water and wildlife at a landscape scale. Laceys is part of the Central Chilterns Farming Cluster, set up five years ago, which encompasses 18 farms stretching from Lane End to Wendover. The early work of this cluster included creating nesting sites for barn owls and kestrels, as well as distributing feed to encourage birds to remain in the area in colder months. During the past two winters, larger schemes have included fencing and hedging projects intended to fill gaps and stop overgrazing by deer. 'On farms, hedges work like motorways connecting the various habitats,' Will explained. 'Working together with neighbouring farms on this project has been a great success.'



Finally, I asked Will about the public perception of farmers, as there still appears to be a view among some sections of society that farming is an activity carried out by privileged, middle-aged men, working behind securely closed gates. The national press has done little to change this view by concentrating on 'bad news' farming stories, including the increased incidence of cows attacking humans and their dogs - and a recent story in The Times, which claimed that farmers were receiving guidance from the Government on how to be more polite to walkers who stray off marked paths. I put it to Will that the old cliché of a ruddy faced farmer yelling 'Get off my land' still endures in the UK.

'I've seen these stories and unfortunately there is no PR department for farmers,' said Will. 'In fact, I would say that the best thing that's happened to improve the image of farmers in the last ten years is *Clarkson's Farm* on TV. At least it's made the public more aware of what we do, how important technology is and how well animals are treated. We're very grateful for the support we receive from our local community. Holding open days, Christmas fayres and other regular events certainly helps – and we regularly use social media to promote and explain what we're up to.'

Farm events give the public, particularly children, the opportunity to visit the land, get close to the animals and establish an awareness and understanding of where our food really comes from. 'It's all about education,' said Will, 'and I don't think farming in general does that very well. People

find farming terminology difficult and it is therefore often misconstrued.' Certainly, since Brexit there have been stories in the media claiming that hormone treated meat could be on its way to the UK from the USA. In fact, using hormones in beef has been banned in the UK since 1989. Similarly, some foods are now advertised as being free from genetic modification - even though this is often an anomaly because the foods being marketed don't have a genetically modified counterpart. 'Unfortunately, until we can clearly explain all this to the public, people will put their own interpretation on the terms they hear,' added Will, continuing philosophically 'It's been a turbulent time for us, but we just have to carry on doing what we do as you can't turn the tap on and off when it comes to farming.' Out of this turbulence, however, have emerged positives. Farm shops and other events, introduced largely out of necessity, have not only produced much needed revenue, but also brought the public closer to farming and provided them with increased food education.

Producing our food and maintaining our wonderful Chiltern landscape depends on our farmers. They deserve our support. In many cases the income from farm shops and other diversified enterprises has provided a lifeline that's enabled farmers to remain on their land. Without this income we might lose their stewardship, then who knows what would become of our countryside? Surely this is reason enough to buy from our local farmers – particularly with Christmas just around the corner.



Distillery of the Year 2021, The Gin Guide Awards

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Chair's SUMMARY REPORT

Campaigning, conserving & promoting the Chilterns

SIMON KEAREY

Financial facts & stats to June 2023 (2022)

Where our £854K (£585K) income came from

	2023		2022	
Subscriptions and Donations	£207,938	24%	£214,155	<i>37</i> %
Legacies	£95,663	11%	£195,922	34%
Charitable Activities & Grants	£524,505	61%	£147,190	25%
Retail Sales & Trading	£8,826	1%	£17,399	<i>3</i> %
Investments/Interest Income	£17,382	2%	£9,969	2%

Subject to audit for 22/23

Headlines for 2022-23 and going forward

Fundraising & Awareness

With a need to have increased impacts, major projects funding is one of our key objectives. This year was exceptional – we grew our projects income to £462K. Our focus was on our WildBelt Project around Wendover, finalising chalk streams work funded by Defra's Green Recovery Fund, establishing a new site at Northend Common, and working with our partners on the Smarter Water Catchment Pilot on the River Chess.

Volunteers

Our volunteer impact continues to grow to enable our increased work. At a very conservative estimate, our amazing volunteers have completed over 90,000 hours of essential work, effectively adding £1million-plus to our bottom line.

This impact continues to increase, while keeping our costs down; we're employing no more staff than we did five years ago, and have trustee (volunteers) leading each of our workstreams.

Access and Rights of Way

This is one of our flagship areas, and again we're working with partners to improve access to ever wider audiences across the Chilterns. We've been fortunate to get funding to review access at two of our nature reserves and along the Chess Valley. Over the coming months and

years we plan to put the outcomes of this work into action

Along with our partners at Buckinghamshire Council and Sustrans, work has been progressing on the Misbourne Greenway. We're hoping the first 4km will be open before we report back next year, and that the partnership will soon find funding for additional stretches, so that one day it links to the Waddesdon Greenway at one end and London at the other – hopefully when both Tom and I are still young enough to cycle the full length!

For me, as its Chair, the celebrations of the Ridgeway Partnership's 50th anniversary have been a highlight. It makes me proud to know the Chiltern Society was there when it was first launched.



Nature & Conservation

As well as the projects mentioned in fundraising, lobbying has been high on our agenda. I've been actively involved in Defra's Protected Landscapes work, following our report on the Glover Review at last year's AGM. It's good to see funding start to come through for this work, and we hope that some will come our way.

I've been pushing Tom as our Chief Officer to ramp up our campaigning before the next General Election in 2024. Lobbying has been high on our agenda this year, both locally with our councillors and nationally at Westminster. Two key recent campaigns include signing up to Nature 2030, along with more than 95 other charities and celebrities like Steve Backshall and Chris Packham, to demand a vote for nature at the election. In the Nature 2030 campaign we're calling on all political parties to adopt landmark policies for nature's recovery.



Asking all political parties to commit to a five point plan for nature

- A pay rise for farmers, doubling the support for them to make sure that 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 requirements 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 widescale habitat restoration and creating green jobs in urban, rural and coastal habitats, as well as 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.

Tom and Cat, our chalk streams trustee lead, recently met the Undersecretary of State for Environmental Quality and Resilience, a number of local MPs and council leaders, and senior water company executives, by the River Chess, to call for more support for our chalk streams and

Chiltern landscapes. As well as funding we're asking for much more action from the senior team at the Environment Agency and from the water companies. We're encouraged by their words and present actions



NORTH CHILTERNS PMV

Planning and HS2

Our central Planning team has gone through some changes this year, as we saw our expert planner retire. We now have someone to take over. Our trustee lead Jane and key volunteers are drafting their updated action plan to increase the impact of our work.

On the campaigning front, HS2 is still a key focus. No one will have missed the sinkhole at Shardeloes, near Old Amersham. Over the last 12 years we repeatedly warned them it could happen. Luckily, we believe it's been resolved. Dr Jim Conboy, one of our chief HS2 volunteers, has been

working closely with the campaigners at the Wildlife Trust, and was invited to join them in presenting a petition to Downing Street on Biodiversity Loss.

Our core
group of planning
volunteers continue
lobbying locally on small
and major developments like

the one proposed in Tring. Our Dacorum Group is supporting a £30,000 appeal campaign with other local groups.



email: office@chilternsociety.org.uk



Heritage & Culture

Our Heritage and Culture Group delivered yet another amazing Festival this year. The group at Lacey Green Windmill has started work on fundraising for major renovations, the first of which will start next spring.

Along with some key volunteers we're reviewing this group's strategy as I go to press, so hopefully at next year's AGM we'll have more news on the results.

Staff and Trustees

I would like to thank all our staff and trustee

workstream leads for putting in new and ambitious plans for each of their areas of responsibility. A number of trustees are moving on, and I will miss them all. Our President, Michael Rush and his wife Linda (they're a single package), are also stepping down. Their support has been invaluable to Tom and me. I'm pleased to say that we have a succession plan in place which will be confirmed by the Executive Council shortly.

News flash



COMMUNITY WildBelt

As we go to press,
we've received fantastic
news that we've been
awarded £144,989 by
The National Lottery
Heritage Fund to
take our Community
WildBelt Project

to the next stage. Piloted in and around Wendover, this project aims to develop a sustainable approach to delivering joined-up nature conservation at a local level through volunteering. The foundation of the project will be supporting and facilitating volunteers in taking practical and positive action to improve

nature recovery in an extended area around Wendover,
Tring and the outskirts of
Aylesbury. It's thanks to
National Lottery players,
the Rothschild Foundation
and Buckinghamshire
Council (Wendover

Community Board), who funded the initial year, that we can continue this project.



WILDBELT

STARGAZING EVENT

250 not out!

As your magazine reaches another milestone, Richard Bradbury delves into the archives

Way back in the mists of time, the six page, typewritten inaugural issue of Chiltern News was duplicated on a Gestetner machine and circulated. The date was September 1965.

Since then it's undergone a few face-lifts and had several editors, although not that many - we seem to have staying power! Here, to mark issue 250, I'm heading back not to the beginning, but to numbers 150 (December 1998) and 200 (June 2011).

In 1998 the legendary Cic Upcott was editor. Her editorial reported that Lord Hunt, of Everest fame, had resigned after many years as a Vice President of the Society, and had subsequently died. On a later page, in a column headed 'New looks', Cic assessed reactions to the Society's new logo, and the recent change in the magazine from black and white to full colour. She sought to placate a reader who wasn't at all impressed and apparently 'nearly threw it straight in the waste bin', while taking comfort from many positive comments, such as 'just right', 'colour puts the magazine in a new class', 'its logo - so appropriate' and 'sure it will increase membership'. She praised 'Andy Wilkinson, our graphic designer, for the main ideas, styling and suggestions.' Andy is still fulfilling the same role in 2023 and doing a fine job!

Elsewhere in the issue, Michael Hardy wrote about 'Sheaf to Loaf Day' at Lacey Green Windmill, explaining 'the principle idea of the day was to turn sheaves of wheat into loaves of bread using historic machinery, and trying to establish a record time for the process.' The day was also used as an opportunity to launch the Society's new logo, with the help of the BBC's John Craven. There was another BBC connection too, because former weather forecaster Bert Foord timed the 'sheaf to loaf' process which, it was hoped, had been fast enough to merit an entry in The Guiness Book of Records. The event attracted an estimated 2,300 people and raised some £2,900, which was distributed among several local charities.

There was also an AGM report, which, as well as announcing the 1998/99 'Building Design Award' - an initiative still alive and kicking today - reveals one or

two of the concerns that were uppermost in members' minds. These included speeding through villages, the threat to smaller town centre retailers posed by supermarkets and illegal developments on farmland, which were springing up seemingly unopposed by cash-strapped councils.

In Chiltern News 200 (by which time I was editor), our then Director, Jenny Gilmore, looked back to issue 100 (spring 1986): 'On the cover there are photographs of the Misbourne with the caption "To rescue a river - an appeal by the Water

Resources Group for the Misbourne". This clearly demonstrates how some issues affecting the Chilterns are a long-term battle.' If you turn to page 30 of this issue, you'll discover that the Misbourne remains firmly on the Society's agenda!

The magazine, as always, included a varied selection of reports and features.

John Morris, who'd contributed an article on the Chilterns Woodland Project to issue 150, wrote about beech trees, and there were items on butterflies, a Hitchin cheese maker, the village of Cookham Dean and clay tiles, plus the regular entries made by our Photography and Cycling Groups. The big news, however, was... high speed rail. There were pages on the HS2 public consultation, which had recently begun; 'Head to head on the BBC', reported a debate between Mike Overall of the Society and the Secretary of State for Transport Philip Hammond; a piece by Marian Miller asked 'HS2 - what of the historic environment?'; and there were two letters, one in favour of the line and one against. Interestingly, the correspondent

A take it or leav fundamentally flawe

the Channel Tunnel Rail Link; he suggested a 20 mile twin-bore tunnel emerging near Wendover and running in a cutting past Aylesbury. Meanwhile, at the end of his 'Head to head' item, Peter Brown wrote that, instead of attempting to rebut Mike Overall's detailed points, Philip Hammond 'returned to the familiar sound bites about "national interest", curing the north/south divide and providing "sustainable solutions" - replies that will not suffice when the HS2 proposals come under more detailed scrutiny.'

Chiltern news

It's ironic that 12 years later, John Gladwin's update in Chiltern 250 is discussing what may happen now that Phase 2 has been cancelled.



www.chilternsociety.org.uk

All about people

From Richard Bradbury

In October the Society returned to its base at the White Hill Centre for the 2023 AGM.

The business meeting was largely conducted by our Chair, Simon Kearey, with occasional interventions from Chief Officer Tom Beeston and others. Simon drew our attention to some of the year's highlights, making frequent references to the invaluable role played by our huge cohort of volunteers, from the trustees to members of the conservation

He pointed out how big a part legacies and grants play in supporting the organisation, with the latter funding stream taking on ever increasing significance; but he also emphasised how much our volunteers save the Society. In talking us through the current financial position, which remains healthy, he told us that the aim was to achieve better returns on the Society's investments. He outlined plans for our new site at Northend Common, and the ongoing Chess Smarter Water Catchment and Community WildBelt projects, which, like so much of our work, is increasing our links with local communities, as well as with partners such as the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB).

He praised the work of the Planning team in scrutinising and responding to developments across the region, including HS2, which was the subject of a display mounted by Jim Conboy for the AGM. Thankfully a replacement has been found for our much-missed planning expert Colin Blundel. In discussing Heritage and Culture (H&C), as well as praising the success of the recent Festival and drawing our attention to the need to raise funds for work at Lacey

Green Windmill, Simon noted that the H&C Group now includes representatives from the Chilterns museums sector.

He also reflected on some of the changes to the Society's structure, priorities and procedures that have taken place since he became Chair, leading to improvements to the working environment and trustee recruitment. He also posed several 'Big Questions', as he called them, including whether we should have a visitor centre and acquire more sites; and how we could achieve greater diversity in the organisation and exert more influence nationally.

Following the election of officers and trustees, during which the possibility of former Chair David Harris becoming our new President was discussed, there was the usual open forum. Among the issues raised were nature recovery along the HS2 route; the value of further increasing our collaboration with village societies and groups; and liaising with the NHS to offer its staff activities that might contribute to their wellbeing.

Before lunch we enjoyed a slide show celebrating the life and work of our retiring President (and former Chairman) Michael Rush. Assembled by his wife Linda, the photographs showed him at work and play. the earliest image being of Michael as a babe in arms! His long career in civil engineering took him all over the world and involved a varied portfolio of work, including a Cold War bunker and radar station by the Berlin Wall. He was also revealed to be a fine horseman and a lover of fancy dress!



Simon thanked Michael for his support in the last few years, and for all he'd done for the Society over the previous three decades. It was fitting, however, that Michael should have the last word. He recalled how a knock on the door from Society volunteer Vic Wotton, asking his permission to work on the River Misbourne, which ran through his garden, led to his long association with the Society. At that time the organisation had no office or paid staff and operated from a converted garage. Despite this, a good deal of valuable work was already being done by volunteers. He spoke of his pride at what had been accomplished since, mentioning among other things the creation of The Chiltern Way and the campaign to save Penn Wood from developers; and his



Rights of Way Highlights: David & Luke THE RIDGEWAY
NATIONAL TRAIL

Heritage & Culture Highlights: **Financial Highlights** Simon & Emma on events Overall income of £883K (£530K) and net deficit of £29k (surplus £61K)





Volunteer Thank you



(Sur Jus EG1K)
Major projects income growth: £462K
Wildbelt £41.7K, Green Recovery £267.5K, North End £11.6K
& SWC £141.6K & SWC £141.6K Subscriptions & retail sales essentially flat year on year. Legacies down from £196K to £96K, as expected, 2021-2 was exceptional Increase in overall costs reflecting higher major project Good control of operating costs across all major spend

categories. £46,410 decrease in net assets as planned.

pleasure at being able to relinquish the presidency with the Society in a healthy state. His words, delivered with his customary good humour, were warmly received, and he and Linda were presented with gifts as tokens of the Society's appreciation. They're not intending to step back entirely, however - they'll still be involved with the Bluebell Guild, which honours our legacy givers, and which Michael was instrumental in establishing.

After lunch, organised by Linda, the afternoon was devoted to Nature Recovery, with speakers from the CCB (Kate Heppell - Head of Landscape), Wild Oxfordshire (Camilla Burrows - Chief Executive) and the Society (Gavin Johnson - Head of Conservation). The session was chaired by Society trustee Harriet Bennett.

It soon became obvious that the speakers shared very similar aspirations and concerns. Their presentations made it clear why Nature Recovery is such a vital concept, and how their respective organisations are seeking to rise to the challenges involved. Frightening figures were quoted from the UK State of Nature Report 2023: 38% of our native species are in decline; 28% are increasing; and 16% are threatened with

extinction. We were warned that climate change, bringing with it bigger temperature variations, more heavy rainfall and more drought, would affect habitats, including chalk streams. Moreover, there's a danger of 'shifting baseline syndrome', or changing perceptions based on experience, which can result in people regarding a worsening situation, such as the loss of wildlife, as the norm. Ambitious plans made at a strategic level to address these issues can be diluted before they take effect on the ground, perhaps because they're not backed by sufficient funding, or because they're not communicated clearly enough.

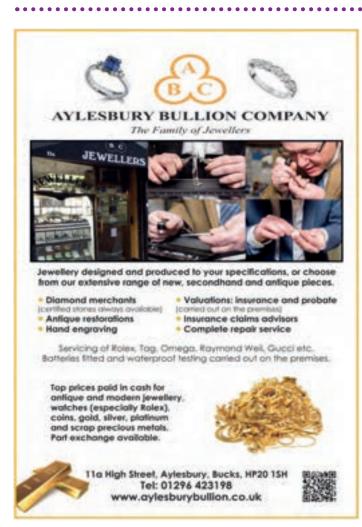
Nonetheless, the speakers gave us cause for optimism, outlining some of the excellent work that's being done and anticipating what may be achieved in future to create a more natural, resilient and biodiverse environment covering a larger area of the Chilterns. They agreed that a 'nature first' approach to decision making is needed, for example when new developments are being planned, and that Nature Recovery strategies should involve stakeholders, be properly financed and based on evidence. They extolled the virtues of partnerships, among both those setting the targets and those implementing them

Engagement
with local
communities
and the use of
'citizen scientists'
to gather data
through activities
like river fly
monitoring, are already
playing a key role, and
there's considerable scope

for expanding this approach, which should raise people's awareness, increase their knowledge and give them a sense of ownership of their green spaces. The hope is that well-trained volunteer workforces will be built up, ready to respond to the needs of their local environment and its wildlife. Organisations like the Society, the CCB and Wild Oxfordshire can help make this happen and ensure its long-term success. There's a feeling that, since the pandemic, more of us have come to appreciate the benefits that the natural world offers us and will therefore be more receptive to the idea of actively caring for it.

GAVIN JOHNSON

In her short summary of what we'd heard, Harriet used a phrase which rang true: 'It's all about people.'





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Geoff Wiggett meets the volunteers responsible

'One small step for man, one giant...' – you know the rest. I wonder if this famous quotation was going through the minds of the Chiltern Society's North Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers (NCPMV) when they tackled two long, steep and apparently never-ending flights of steps in Totternhoe. They're somewhat prosaically named TT29 and TT30. On a sunny day back in August, I joined the work party, together with Colin Drake, wielding his trusty camera.

This particular session was led by another man called Armstrong. Phil Armstrong leads his group of volunteers on regular work parties and has the grand title of North Chilterns PMV Coordinator, Like Steve Feigen, who you met in Chiltern 248, it's Phil's challenging task to allocate outstanding and important jobs on the network of footpaths in the northern reaches of the Chilterns to his group of keen volunteers. He's been volunteering since the end of 2016, his motivation being to get out into the Chilterns and try to get fit, while socialising with others. He's a retired Chartered Quantity Surveyor and was a main Board Partner in an independent global consultancy offering project, cost and management services in the construction industry. A prize for anyone who can tell me what that means. He has a great affection for British engineering, industrial and technological heritage - things that move, twiddle and make a noise, like beam engines, the Vulcan bomber, the English Electric Lightning fighter jet and any engineering aspect of projects.

The aim of the August work party was

to make TT29 and TT30 safe and sound for local dog walkers, as well as those who take on more ambitious treks or enjoy a walk on the wild side. Phil started the session with a very comprehensive talk to the team about the morning's task. He covered all the essentials, including working on steep gradients and being close to a couple of angry-sounding brush-cutters. No one, quite rightly, could have been left in any doubt about the risks involved.

The NCPMV group was established about eight years ago after his predecessor, Les Mosco, was appointed a Society trustee with the specific remit of cementing a Chiltern Society presence in the north Chilterns. His organisational skills worked like magic and, under his leadership, he soon had a small group of volunteers working on footpaths. When Les passed on the leadership baton Phil put his hand up, thinking that others would do the same. Where have we heard that story before?

The group comprises 28 active volunteers, five leaders and an average work party size of 14. The volunteer database is growing all

the time. Clients are Clayton Rae at Dacorum Borough Council and Lindsay Measures at Central Beds Council. The NCPMV work mainly between the A41 and the M1, from Hemel Hempstead to the foothills of the Chilterns that fall within those Council areas, but they often go further north to the likes of Barton-le-Clay or Sharpenhoe. The work is handed down on Ordnance Survey (OS) abstracts and the tasks are surveyed and assessed a couple of weeks ahead of a free date. Work parties take place every first and third Wednesday each calendar month.

Phil says it's a good social group whose members love devouring home-made cake at the mid-morning coffee break and a pub lunch afterwards in a suitable hostelry.

Quentin Palmer is a founder member of the group. He was motivated to help the Society and gain pleasure and reward from the work. Quentin also helps out with a local scout group, and his interest in archaeology makes him an ideal junior digging assistant on exposed sites. He worked as a research and development manager in the soft drinks industry, but has come over to the dark

side and is now a National Champion home brewer and wine maker, as well as a keen fell walker. He recalls being detained by German police when he was carrying a large bag of garlic powder. They'd mistaken it for heroin. One sniff and they released him schnell!

Also helping on that morning, among others, was Greg Wright who has a long list of hobbies including running, gym work, meditation, yoga, chess, quantum mechanics and cosmology... a real man for all seasons. He was an IT manager and fitted the bill when asked if he could be involved with the Society's new GIS project. That was eight years ago and it's still going strong.

Working with him at Totternhoe was Sylvia Barnfather, who also signed up at the beginning of this new venture. She recalls all the kit being taken round the area in the back of Les Mosco's posh Jaguar She's one of Phil's leaders and is also a Chiltern Way path monitor. Sylvia's a former NHS physiotherapist, a member of 'Hedges in Tring' and also leads walks for the Ramblers.

Others getting stuck in were David Colvin, who we met in these pages a year or so ago, John Justice, Chris Robinson and a recent recruit. Nick Smallman, David can

be seen at weekends whizzing around Tring in his beloved MGB GT, and in what little spare time he has after helping three Society groups, he makes models, indulges in motor-homing and is also involved in the scouting movement. John. who was a GP for 35 years, supports Sustrans, the national cycle network,

as a volunteer, enjoys wielding one of the Society's brush-cutters, and benefits from his and others' work in keeping bridleways clear for cycling.

Chris is another retired GP and is now happy to be seen using a pole pruner, a combi-cutter, installing benches and waymark posts, as well as maintaining steps and clearing overgrown footpaths. Trail runner Nick is very new to the team, works full-time in the civil service, and really appreciates the fact that his local patch is kept in pristine condition by Society volunteers. He's slowly catching up with his young daughter, who's teaching him the



pleasures of birdwatching, and also learning the ins and outs of path maintenance the hard way. On his first appearance, he lopped off a branch only for another one to swing up and apply a smart blow to his chin. Ouch! Fortunately only his pride was hurt.

They all, with other colleagues, make up a great group of volunteers, typical of those that help the Society in such a successful way. Phil is always looking for more volunteers, two of which, to create a 'dream team', must be called Collins and Aldrin. My grateful thanks to Phil Armstrong for his help with this article - GW

Photos: Colin Drake

VOLUNTEERING

Alan Futter

- no ordinary volunteer

Geoff Wiggett explains

Alan Futter, an Area Secretary (area 8b) for the Chiltern Society's Rights of Way Group has stood down from his role after 15 years of highly effective and unrivalled volunteering.

He's been a keen walker, leading walks for the visually impaired on behalf of the Reading Association for the Blind (RAB). One day he was enjoying a walk with his grandchildren around the picturesque Greys Court when they were confronted by a bull, looking for opportunities to do what comes naturally, in a field which they wanted to cross. They took sensible precautions and walked in the opposite direction! Stephen Fox, then Area 8a Secretary, gave Alan the name of the farmer responsible for the bull and he offered Alan the chance to ride on its back to demonstrate how docile it was. Alan politely declined the kind offer, but in further conversations Stephen suggested he could take up the role of Secretary for area 8b.

This area includes the bucolic-sounding parishes of Checkendon, Eye and Dunsden, Goring, Goring Heath, Ipsden, Kidmore End, Mapledurham, South Stoke, Whitchurch and Woodcote. Alan's been looking after it ever since.

In his time as Area Secretary, he's dealt with countless issues, recalcitrant farmers and landowners and, on occasions, needed his legendary negotiating skills and sometimes direct way of dealing with people to get results. He recalls a time when he had to point out bluntly to a farmer that a stile which needed urgent attention was 'a disgrace'! The farmer meekly acknowledged

Alan spent 41 years with British Rail and Eurostar, working variously at Euston Station, Oxford, Paddington and Waterloo, and was responsible for planning aspects of the Waterloo International and Eurostan service. At Euston in the late 1960s, during the Nigerian civil war, he had to work hard to prevent a little local difficulty arising



work colleagues.

some of whom were supporters of the Biafran wish for independence and others who were defending the status quo. He's proud of being an influential part of the team that delivered Waterloo International Station, the then terminus for Eurostar services, 'on time and on budget'.

In his time with the Chiltern Society he oversaw the installation of 100 gates in place of stiles, and in 2018 was awarded the BEM for his 20 year association with RAB. No ordinary volunteer!

I'm sure that everyone who knows and has worked with Alan wishes him a long and happy retirement from his role, and the Society would like to place on record its thanks and appreciation for all his hard work and commitment.

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Steph Horn reviews the progress to date

'When we speak of rivers, we should be using the term "river corridor" or "riverscape" instead, to dispel the myth that a river is only as wide as its channel and as deep as its bed.' (2023 Scientific Advances in River Restoration Conference).

What is a Catchment Based Approach (CaBA)?

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, the approach involves collaboration between various stakeholders; it recognises that water-related issues can't be effectively addressed in isolation and require a comprehensive understanding of the entire catchment system. The catchment, which is the land area, is intrinsically linked due to the water which drains through it into a particular water body (in this case the River Chess). It's important to remember that a freshwater's influence doesn't end at the riverbank.

Catchment partnerships (the group of organisations delivering CaBA) have historically been underfunded. The Chess Smarter Water Catchment is a pilot project and is in the fortunate position of having received private funding to develop and deliver projects on a catchment scale.

Now in our third year of funding from
Thames Water, the Chess Catchment
Partnership (Chilterns Chalk Streams Project,
Chiltern Society, River Chess Association,
Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust,
Buckinghamshire Council, Sarratt Parish
Council, Environment Agency, Affinity Water
and Thames Water) is delivering projects that
address six themes across the catchment.

These are: Improving Water Quality; Managing Flow; Control of Invasive Non-Native Species; Improving Wildlife Corridors; Involving People; and Working Together.

Highlights to date

- Using a network of six sensors developed with Queen Mary University, London, we can now see changes to water quality in 15 minute intervals. Visit https://www.qmul. ac.uk/chesswatch/ for more information
- Citizen Science 80+ volunteers help us collect data from nine different survey types, looking at both water quality and ecology. Over 1,342 hours of volunteering have already been logged. For example, surveying for sources of pollution from urban locations such as Chesham and Rickmansworth; collecting samples of water to investigate the risk of emerging contaminants of concern; collecting samples to understand sources of phosphate; collecting riverfly data; water vole surveys; flow monitoring; and other schemes such as 'Tracking the Impact' or even helping us keep an eye on all our data
- Supporting applications for new funding for control of invasive non-native plants (Japanese knotweed) in Chesham
- Funding to support two river restoration plans, one in Chesham and one in Sarratt

- Delivery of an Access Workshop looking to improve access for all within the catchment
- Grant funding for 18 community groups totalling £62,696 to deliver projects such as new planters, rainwater collection, a green festival at Chiltern Open Air Museum, new tools, training and equipment. Funding is still available. See https://chilternsociety.org.uk/river-chess-community-grants-of-up-to-5k-available-now-do-you-qualify/ for projects within the catchment area
- Grant funding for landowners/managers totalling £63,885 to deliver projects such as new boardwalks and woodland management, as well as improvements to river corridor habitat and ponds. Funding is still available for similar projects within the catchment area. Contact stephhorn@ chilternsaonb.org for more information
- Working with 18 farms to develop the 'Chess Farm Cluster'
- Working with schools to develop educational resources relating to chalk

streams and the need to improve water efficiency

Visit from Government Minister Rebecca
 Pow for 'Rivers Week' on the Chess. Allen
 Beechey, Chilterns Chalk Stream Manager,
 received a 'Dedicated Guardian of Chalk Streams' award.

Behind the scenes we're working with local councils to review Sustainable Drainage Systems and Natural Flood Management, both of which can, for example, alleviate flooding downstream of high flood risk urban areas, while also improving biodiversity and carbon capture. Similarly, working with land managers to develop mitigation for sources of fine sediment (a big source of pollution for chalk streams) can help protect fish and invertebrate populations. In addition, we're

working with communities to improve their understanding of, and educate them about, their local landscapes, helping to create stories and advocates that we hope will preserve and protect the Chess Valley for future generations. This type of initiative can only succeed through co-design and collaboration.

Next steps

Delivery of projects will be key for the next few years, with more work to develop understanding of our catchment, working with the new staff we've employed through the project, and building and bolstering the resilience of the Catchment Partnership to adapt to the ever-changing climate (politically and environmentally). We'd like to host a meeting in March 2024

to review the first few years, what we've discovered and our ambitions for the future – watch this space for more information.

We've secured funding until March 2025 and are currently beavering away with Thames Water to provide information to the regulator, with a view to obtaining funding for further investment. Thames Water's ambition is to roll out this initiative to a further 11 river catchments in their business area. At my interview for the role of Project Coordinator I was asked what success looks like. For me this would be other river catchments benefiting from the funding, the lessons learned and the case studies this pilot project can deliver.

Steph Horn - Project Coordinator: www.chesssmarterwatercatchment.org

RECIPE

Yorkshire pudding with pigs in blankets

My family love pigs in blankets. Even my daughter, who's usually a non-meat eater, takes a day off on Christmas Day to enjoy these delicious sausages wrapped in streaky bacon!

Ingredients - serves 2

- Your leftover pigs in blankets
- 1 tbsp sunflower oil

Method

- Heat the oven to 220°C/200°C
- Pour the oil into the base of a roasting tray (approx. 25 x 25cm) and when hot add pigs in blankets. Bake for 15 minutes until browned
- Meanwhile, make the batter. Tip the flour into a bowl with 1/2 tsp salt, make a well

For the batter:

- 160g plain flour
- 2 eggs
- 180ml semi-skimmed milk
 - in the middle and crack the eggs into it. Use a balloon whisk to mix
- Slowly add the milk, whisking all the time until you have a batter. Leave to stand until the sausages are cooked
- Remove the sausages from the oven the fat should be sizzling hot



- Pour in the batter mix, transfer to the top shelf of the oven, then cook for 25-30 minutes until risen and golden
- Serve with plenty of mashed potatoes, vegetables and gravy.

Martin Pearson



The Chiltern Way including the Berkshire Loop

The complete official guide to this circular long distance path through Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire, by Nick Moon.

New edition out now!

£19.95

Available from the Chiltern Society website and other local bookshops.



email: office@chilternsociety.org.uk

Enjoying autumnal sights in the Chilterns

Linda Seward highlights some of the best

Autumn evokes a range of feelings in all of us, from intimations of new beginnings and 'getting back to normal' to sadness that warm summer days are over. Lepidoptera lovers mourn the disappearance of butterflies until next year, while mycologists rejoice in the reappearance of fungi in all its forms and colours. Gardeners perhaps feel a mixture of many emotions as they put away their tools and open the seed catalogues to prepare for spring. Here are some autumnal sights for you to notice as summer flows into winter.

The word autumn immediately conjures an image of the changing of the leaves in all their flamboyant glory. Have you ever wondered why this happens and why some years have different colours from others?

Although leaves appear green for most of the year, they're actually composed of three different coloured pigments that gradually change due to temperature, weather and the sun. A leaf's green colour comes from chlorophyll which is essential for photosynthesis. With the aid of sunshine, water and nutrients in the soil, chlorophyll produces sugars to feed the tree and help it grow.

As the days become shorter and temperatures drop, chlorophyll begins to degrade, revealing the other pigments already present in the leaf. Yellow and orange pigments called carotenes are produced when autumn nights are below freezing. If temperatures remain above freezing and dry weather predominates, leaves will take on red and purple colours due to the production of anthocyanin pigments. Thus, it's temperature and weather that create different palettes of autumn colour every year.

PIGMENTS IN THE LEAVES CREATE THE COLOURS OF AUTUMN

One of my favourite trees in autumn is the Japanese maple (Acer palmatum). Gorgeous specimens in a multitude of colours can be found in public and private gardens throughout the Chilterns. Highly recommended is the Acer Glade in Harcourt Arboretum, part of the Oxford Botanic Garden. The tree's Latin name refers to the hand-like shape of the leaves

While we're on the subject of trees, it's in autumn that apple trees come into their own. After their spectacular spring blossoms fade, apple trees seem to blend into the background all summer, until suddenly their gorgeous red, green and golden fruits beckon to be picked and enjoyed as autumn approaches. Whether or not Adam and Eve ate a forbidden apple, there's evidence that this is probably the world's earliest domesticated fruit. If you have apple trees in your garden, some Chiltern villages have apple pressing days where you can take your bounty to squeeze some delicious nectar. It takes about nine apples to create a litre of juice.

As hogweed (Heracleum sphondylium) plants die back in autumn, their skeletons remain to provide sturdy supports from which spiders can spin their webs. Wait for a sunny morning and marvel at the sparkling dew.

Old man's beard (Clematis vitalba) announces its presence in a big way in autumn. Although it grows all year (and has attractive spring flowers), the fluffy seed heads (beards) are spectacular in autumn. The seed heads are an excellent food source for birds such as goldfinches and also provide



handy tinder for lighting fires. Another common name is 'traveller's joy' because it decorates hedges and banks in the countryside in the drab months leading up to the winter holidays.

The stems of old man's beard are flexible and were often used to make baskets and ropes in days gone by.

I could write an entire article about the many mushrooms you can find in the Chilterns, but if I had to pick the most iconic, it would have to be the fly agaric (Amanita muscaria). A symbol of good luck, this mushroom features in fairy tales, Christmas cards and Alice in Wonderland, and is thought to have been the inspiration for Santa Claus's red and white suit. You'll find it under birch trees in Chiltern woodlands. The white warts on the cap are all that remain of the veil that covers the whole fungus as it emerges from the soil - they can easily wash off in the rain. Its common name refers to the practice of crumbling the caps in bowls of milk to attract and poison flies.

While walking in the Chilterns keep an eye out for wild hops (Humulus lupulus) climbing over hedgerows and bushes. At this time of year, you'll notice the light green, cone-shaped fruits that turn brown when ripe. Take a sniff to smell their garlic/apple/yeasty scent. English hops produce a delicate, mild-tasting ale.



Pheasants (Phasianus colchicus) are easy to spot on country walks. Look for them near woodland edges, copses and hedgerows. These beautiful birds were introduced to the UK long ago for sport shooting. While they can fly short distances, often breaking cover and startling walkers with their loud flapping and screeching, they spend most of their time on the ground.

used medicinally for centuries.

Finally, if you're walking in the rain, look for slugs. They're not high on our list of loveable creatures, probably due to the slimy mucus that covers their bodies, as well as their habit of munching flowers.

Only a small proportion of slugs are garden destroyers however, and they actually have many positive attributes. Slugs help to clean the environment by consuming decaying garden debris, fungi and rotting vegetation. They

SLUGS HAVE MANY POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES IN THE ENVIRONMENT

provide tasty food for many

I post daily photos of nature in the Chilterns on my Instagram page: https://www.instagram.com/quiltmaniac1/ and here's my website if you wish to contact me: http://www.lindaseward.com.

Photos: Linda Seward



animals such as thrushes, hedgehogs, badgers and frogs. They also act as very slow cross-pollinators of fungal spores and plant pollen.

LISTENING ELDERBERRIES NEED TO BE COOKED BEFORE CONSUMPTION





HOPS IN THE HEDGEROWS

High standards maintained



The 2023 Chiltern Society Heritage Festival in September featured 29 events spread over two weeks, showcasing the rich and diverse heritage of the area. It was mixture of old and new events with something for everyone, and its popularity was reflected in the total number of tickets purchased (662), with 22 events being sold out. These photos, and responses from satisfied customers, give a flavour of just some of them.

The organisers and helpers deserve great credit for rising to the challenge of emulating the success achieved by previous Festivals.

De Havilland Aircraft Museum

'It was a most interesting and enjoyable day. The guide... was excellent with an incredible knowledge of all the parts of the museum. He kept us spellbound for over two hours!'

Fawley Hill Private Railway and Museum

"... a big thank you for organising this for us. We had an amazing morning, really really enjoyed it. Even the sun was shining!"

'My favourites were Penn, Tring NHM and Tring Police Station. So much care taken to educate as well as a warm welcome from all. This was really appreciated.'

Wendover Canal - walk & cream tea

Sickness and Health in the Amersham Area

'The event at Amersham Museum was excellent with a superb speaker.'

Private Tour of Lindengate

'The tour was very interesting and the speaker was so knowledgeable.'





email: office@chilternsociety.org.uk



Alison Beck takes us on a short tour

Halton House has been part of the landscape of my life forever, but opportunities to see inside this former home of Alfred de Rothschild have been limited. I visited in 2008 on one of the occasional open days and was lucky enough to go again this year with a local history group. I believe there's a Heritage Open Day every September, and on these occasions you can visit not only the House, but also the RAF Trenchard Museum and the James McCudden Flight Heritage Centre – all for nothing.

The Rothschilds cast a long shadow over this part of the country, once having estates and houses at Mentmore, Aston Clinton, Tring, Ascott, Waddesdon, Eythrope and Halton. I read that, as a foreign Jewish family wishing to break into high society, they were advised to live in proximity so that their combined influence could flourish. They succeeded brilliantly, and many of their estates still exist. When I grew up in the austere 1950s, any request for something deemed extravagant was met by my father asking 'who do you think I am? Lord Rothschild?' The name became synonymous with wealth. Then there was Lionel, who founded the wonderful Natural History Museum in Tring, the destination for many family identification forays in those pre-internet days, and repository of all those amazing (and rather sad) stuffed animals.

Back to Halton. Alfred de Rothschild built Halton House in the 1880s, finishing it in 1883. He wanted a French chateau like his brother-in-law Ferdinand who'd just completed Waddesdon, but Halton has touches of Italian, Scottish, classical and eastern architecture. It didn't please everyone and was widely thought to be vulgar. Alfred's objective was to create a lavish house in which he could entertain Victorian high society, with everything done on an extravagant scale. The house remains a testament to a vanished lifestyle which was ended in 1914 by the outbreak of WWI. Alfred offered the estate to his friend Lord Kitchener for military training. When Alfred died childless in 1918 the estate passed to Lionel, who sold it to the War Office for £112,000. It remains the Officers' Mess for RAF Halton.

There's a resident archivist, Trixie,

who welcomes groups and is a mine of information. She has so many tales to tell, and there is much to see. The guest book is a veritable 'Who's Who' of Victorian society, with visitors from all walks of life in those pre-war years. As you enter, a portrait of Alfred looks down, and as you move from room to room, you get a sense of the opulence of those days.

Alfred had a particular fondness for symmetry, so that the North and South Drawing Rooms mirror each other in every detail. In his day, the ladies used the North Drawing Room and the gentlemen the South, and both have romantic, ornate ceilings

Each room has a different point of interest: The Smoking Room has an amazing gilded ceiling, said to have cost £25,000 in the 1880s. Another spectacular ceiling adorns the Billiard Room, a room of

perfect symmetry. The Boudoir, to which the ladies retired, contains a fireplace thought to have come from Le Petit Trianon at Versailles. The Dining Room is now used as the Mess Bar, and serving officers may be seen lounging on the leather sofas, overseen by a reproduction portrait of Lady Bampfylde by Joshua Reynolds. In Alfred's time the original graced the room, but he left it to the nation in his will, so it may now be seen in the Tate Gallery.

When I visited in 2008 it was possible to walk up the Grand Staircase and admire the salon from above, but for health and safety reasons this is no longer possible. The carpet was red on my first visit, but is now a brilliant blue, and the beautiful bannisters with the Rothschild crests still adorn the stairs with the large electrolier or electric chandelier adding to the elegance.

The Winter Garden was a hexagonal building which Alfred filled with exotic plants, in which the resident orchestra played to visitors. The building was destroyed in the 1930s to make way for the West Wing, which provided additional officer accommodation before the outbreak of WWIL I would love to have seen the gardens in their heyday: I remember my father telling me that Alfred collected and



grew a tree of every species then grown in Britain, and some of these survive. The gardens aren't open, but once boasted such delights as an Italian garden, floral clocks, an Indian pavilion, a grotto, a fountain and a small ornamental lake used as an ice rink in winter. Maybe one day they'll be restored to their formal glory.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

As the house is Grade II listed it has some protection, but the closure of the RAF Station (scheduled for 2022, but now postponed) must mean that the opportunity to see such a fascinating part of local history should be seized while it's still possible.

Photos: Alison Beck

Stephen Hearn TringMarket Auctions

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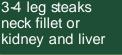
As a result the meat is full of flavour and very tender. Our hogget is now available most of the year and is perfect for winter roasts and stews as well as summer barbecues.

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We supply whole and half hogget freezer boxes, vacuum packed and labelled, direct from the farm. Insulated with wool liners, they can be recycled or returned.

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For more information contact Ian & Fiona Waller 07973 676891 or email info@hampdenherdwicks.co.uk

www.chilternsociety.org.uk 25

Improving the Penn picture





The Society has big plans for its Penn Jubilee Wood site, says David Harris

As a resident of Penn for decades and a trustee of the Chiltern Society, I know first-hand the powerful impact the nature on our doorstep has on our daily lives – and the mounting pressure it faces.

Our charity has taken care of Penn Jubilee Wood, near Beacon Hill, for the last 10 years. The reserve is a mix of woodland and meadows. Its colourful display of wild flowers, and the accompanying pollinators. mammals and birds, have helped ensure it's much-loved by walkers and residents alike. Following a generous donation of neighbouring land, the Society has exciting plans to extend the reserve's wild flower meadows by establishing a herd of native breed cattle for conservation grazing. We believe that by using this centuries-old practice, so characteristic of the Chilterns, we can create the best environment for hiodiversity

A staggering 97% of UK meadows have disappeared due to changes in farming practices, while towns and villages have expanded to swallow up flower-rich fields. They're now one of the rarest habitats nationwide. When wild flower meadows disappear so do pollinators, as well as other insects and the animals that eat them. Their benefits for local flood mitigation and role in carbon capture are also lost.

Conservation grazing mimics traditional forms of land management. By carefully varying the number of animals, the areas they graze and when they do so, we hope to restore the meadows and produce the ecologically rich, open habitats once found more commonly in the area. We've found this approach successful at our other nature reserves, including Brush Hill, near Princes Risborough, and Prestwood. We hope the uneven, low vegetation cover created by the herd will produce prime habitat for the ground nesting skylark, a farmland bird in decline, and one that has the potential to thrive on the Penn reserve.

Chiltern meadows like those at Penn Jubilee Wood form an important part of a diverse habitat mosaic across the whole landscape. To combat climate change and reverse the trends in nature's decline, it's imperative that these habitats and their rare species are given a foothold. Not only will this enhance the reserve's role as a wildlife corridor and a stepping-stone for species in the wider landscape, it will also provide a nature-based solution essential for tackling our global climate crisis.

What we aim to do

From now until early spring we'll be installing fencing, gates, pipes and water troughs to allow grazing across the reserve



and enlarge it by seven hectares. This will create varied meadow areas with an array of different habitat niches that can be exploited by a wide range of species. We're extremely grateful to the Chilterns Conservation Board and the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme which is funding this initial stage.

By next autumn, we hope to introduce a herd of native cattle to the reserve, and with it the grazing practices outlined above. We want to expand our passionate, dedicated team of local volunteers, who work so hard to care for the reserve, to include 'stock watchers' trained to monitor the health of the herd.

In the longer term, we envisage biodiversity at the reserve flourishing; we see it becoming an area for nature, buzzing, humming and rustling with life, as well as providing a resilient corridor for wildlife and a healthy natural world for everyone.

If you choose to get involved with our activities at Penn, you'll be helping us work towards the mission we embarked on over 50 years ago and protect the landscape for future generations. Scan the code to donate to the project or get in touch about volunteering opportunities.

Northend Common - Chiltern Society volunteer day

Geoff Wiggett reports

I recently purchased a dictionary of the origins of English words – a fascinating read, beautifully written and researched by Julia Creswell. The dictionary revealed that the word 'voluntary' came from the Latin *voluntarius* or 'of one's free will'. Out of this emerged, towards the end of the 16th century, the word volunteer – in those days probably associated with the military and the navy.

These days it has much broader associations, the Chiltern Society being one of thousands of UK organisations that benefit from the enthusiasm and expertise of volunteers. On a chilly morning in late August, some 25 of them turned out at our new Northend Common site, set in an idyllic location between Christmas Common and Turville in rural Oxfordshire, to launch the Society's management of this important parcel of land.

Initially there are five main priorities, some of which were kick-started by the team at the first work party. There are plans to establish a diverse woodland, create woodland rides and glades and restore the pond, by enouraging the local community to help our growing team of conservation volunteers connect people with nature. That all sounds easy, but there are real challenges. On that morning, groups of volunteers set about opening up footpaths, clearing bracken and installing waymark posts to help navigation around the site. Some Japanese knotweed was spotted on the day – another seriously invasive plant to get to grips with.

The morning was quite special in many ways. It was the first work party at the site, with volunteers from seven existing Society groups. Three of our trustees attended and worked hard with volunteer colleagues, and the Society's volunteer coordinator, Tracey Read, was also there to work and familiarise herself with the group and the site. Gavin Johnson, Amanda Barnicoat and Nick Christensen from the Society's office team got stuck in as well, and volunteers also had an opportunity to join Gavin on a brief explanatory walk around the site.

This is the thirteenth in an expanding portfolio of sites being cared for by the Society – and you can help! If you're interested in joining the growing team of hard-working and dedicated volunteers, please contact Tracey at the Society office for more details and a friendly chat. You won't regret it. I'm certain you'll derive a lot of pleasure from lending a hand.

Tracey can be contacted on 01494 771250 or traceyread@chilternsociety.org.uk.

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Barry Hunt reflects on changes in photography

Our last outing of the year was to Hurley, a largely unspoilt village in Berkshire on the south bank of the Thames, a few miles downriver from Marlow. Reflecting its often momentous history, the village contains many fine Grade I and Grade II listed buildings, including several large mansions. Its medieval past was dominated by a small Benedictine monastery, whose early priory church is now the site of St Mary's parish church, which has retained some Norman features. Nearby, a footpath between the village's characteristic high red-brick walls leads to the busy Hurley Lock.

We first visited Hurley in 2015, so this time we sought images that allowed us to refresh the existing album in our online galleries (www.chilternphoto.org.uk). In fact, this year's visits to Marsworth and Bulbourne, as well as Cookham, also led to updated albums as part of an ongoing programme. Individual projects have included new albums for Great and Little Gaddesden. By the time this issue appears, we should have a new Berkhamsted album and the first sets for a new series called 'Chiltern Farming Nowadays' which augments the group's set of 'Farming' albums.

Of consuming interest

Capturing past events or things in a brief moment of time is largely what we do as photographers, but we rarely consider ourselves consumers. Yet, this was the theme of a recent radio programme in the BBC's *All Consuming* series. Simply entitled 'Cameras'* it documented our changing

relationships with them. Historically, this began in earnest in the USA when Eastman-Kodak promoted a preloaded box camera with the slogan, 'You press the button and we do the rest' – a slick message any contemporary copywriter would envy.

This late 19th century snap-happy concept, combined with growing industrialisation and subsequent societal changes, eventually heralded a huge global market for all types of roll-film cameras. As the programme explained, however, several decades later film's mass market dominance swiftly eroded as the major camera manufacturers introduced more flexible, highly automated digital models. Photography no longer depended on traditional films and chemical-based processing.

Digitisation was a core consumer-led game changer, but photography was to change yet again, this time with unrelated products: compact smartphones and digital tablets that could take good quality

Top: Hurley Lock's jovial lock keeper (J Fitzgerald)

Above: St Mary's parish church and restored former priory refectory (B Hunt)

Right, top to bottom: An infra-red photo of a narrowboat leaving Hurley Lock (D Jeffrey); Cyclists in a charity event passing The Rising Sun, Hurley (A Beck); The iron man of Ladye Place Boathouse (P Brodrick)

images. A key driving force was that users on social media sites could freely share such images online. In fact, billions of still or video images are uploaded every day, so reinforcing a new aphorism for the age: 'The best camera is the one with you'.

The fact that such images now frequently appear in the PhotoGroup's annual Online Photography Exhibition underlines their ubiquity. From a consumerled perspective, the latest digital devices have arguably squared a circle that began with George Eastman's pioneering work in bringing affordable roll films and cameras to a global mainstream market.

*The programme was broadcast on 24 August and is available on BBC Sounds for a year.

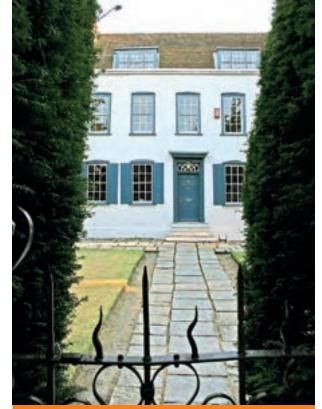
Diary dates

Make a note of the outdoor meetings for 2024: Wednesday 15 May, Tuesday 16 July and Thursday 19 September. Details to be confirmed.









Photogroup competition

Puzzle picture: 111

Where might you come across this house?

Send your entries to puzzlepic@chilternphoto.org.uk.

The draw will take place on 28 December.

The winner will receive £20.

Puzzle picture: 110

The answer

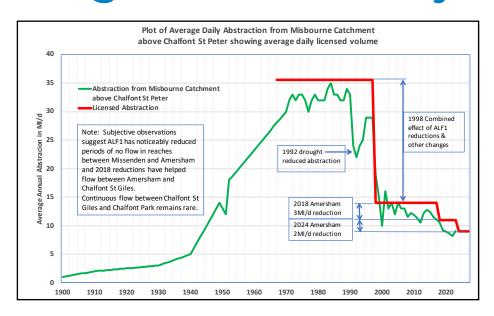
George Eliot. The house is now St Joan of Arc Catholic School in High Street, Rickmansworth, founded in 1904.

The winner was I Sharp

Photo: E Sansom



Abstraction in the Misbourne catchment - a good news story?



Bob Older has been trying to establish some facts

When commenting on the lack of flow in the River Misbourne through the Chalfonts, many people automatically grumble about the dastardly water companies recklessly pillaging the aquifers with their abstraction. These days, is that really fair?

In his remarkable book published in 1997, Vic Wooton presented the case he'd found for the disastrous effects of overabstraction in the Misbourne catchment. In fact, such was his personality, passion and perseverance, that his work encompassed all the Chiltern chalk streams and was in the vanguard of national recognition of the problem.

The first abstraction from the Misbourne catchment, in the order of one or two million litres per day (MI/d), began in about 1900 and increased steadily through the first half of the century to 13MI/d, and then just kept on rising to a total licensed figure of approximately 35MI/d by 1980, when alarms raised by Vic (and others) halted the escalation! According to Vic, abstractions from the catchment above the dry reaches through Chalfont St Peter (there's always flow below Chalfont Park) in 1986 comprised:

- Hampden Bottom and Wendover Dean together: 7.77MI/d
- Great Missenden: 4.09MI/d
- Amersham: 16.09MI/d
- Chalfont St Giles: 3.24MI/d
- TOTAL: 31.2 million litres/day (6.862 million gallons/day)

Following much campaigning relief came in the form of the Alleviation of Low Flow Scheme Phase 1 (ALF1), under which the maximum allowable abstraction from 1998 was significantly reduced.

Matters are much complicated by differences between 'peak licence volumes' for short-term situations, 'average licence' figures for abstraction over a year and actual usage figures, but there's no doubt that total routine abstraction today is a fraction of what it was in 1986. Major changes were immediate with the implementation of ALF1. For instance, the average use licence for Thames Water's Hampden Bottom and Wendover Dean sources was reduced from 5.58MI/d to 2MI/d in June 1998. (To confirm the complexity, it's perhaps worth noting these sources retain a peak licence for 7MI/d, but Thames Water's actual average use has steadily declined from approximately 1.9MI/d in 2003 to an average over the past five years of less than 0.5MI/d).

Other key changes in ALF1 included an 8MI/d reduction (annual average) from Affinity's sources in the Misbourne (Great Missenden and Amersham). Importantly, the licence system post-ALF also introduced individual annual licence volumes for each source: historically there had only been limits on individual daily volumes and a combined group annual total. John Norris tracked the change from Vic's 1986 total down to typically 13MI/d in 2005-08. A further 3MI/d reduction was secured at Amersham in 2018.

Due to the vagaries of the weather and the effects of work to encourage flow along the watercourse, by Misbourne River Action for example, effects of these reductions are difficult to quantify and prove. Certainly, the record low groundwater levels of 1998 haven't been repeated, nor has the river dried above Amersham, even at Little Missenden as it did in 1992 and 1998. Trendlines plotted on groundwater levels suggest a sustained upward trend. Statistically, flow into Chalfont St Giles now has a frequency of 60-70% compared with 30-40% before ALF1.

There's more good news! Affinity Water's current five-year Asset Management Plan (AMP7) will deliver another 2MI/d reduction at Amersham in 2024.

Given Vic's figures for actual usage in 1986, average totals from 2024 in the order of 9MI/d reflect a very big step forward and benefits can be seen. Nevertheless, 9MI/d is 9MI/d more than none, and let's remember that the last time it was 9MI/d (approx 1940), the treated effluent from Amersham STW was still being returned to the stream

Unfortunately, the true winterbourne above Little Missenden won't be affected by any further reductions from these sources. With the propensity for the river to dry up downstream, reducing abstraction at Chalfont St Giles begs discussion as part of the 'Mending the Misbourne' plan and, indeed, is tabled for consideration under AMP8 (2025-30).

The generous assistance freely given by Affinity and Thames Water to the preparation of this article is very gratefully acknowledged.

New Events & Marketing Coordinator appointed

We welcome back Emma Anderson

I've worked in the charity sector on and off for 15 years. I return to the Chiltern Society having worked on the 50th anniversary in 2015. It's been great to come back and see how much the charity has grown over the last eight years and to see some familiar faces! I'm looking forward to focusing on events, social media and email. I enjoy being part of keeping the Chilterns a special place, having lived here for 12 years now, and hope that it continues to be cared for and protected for years to come. When I'm not working, I'm usually running around after my three children or walking the dog. I welcome feedback and suggestions for events as I look to plan for the future. Please drop me an email or give me a call, it's always lovely to speak to members.



Tree campaigner takes a step back

Merelene Davis, an indefatigable campaigner on behalf of trees, their importance in the environment and the threats they face, has reluctantly decided to cut back on her activities following an accident and a deterioration in her health.

Not only was she instrumental in the establishment of Priestfield Arboretum, she also created her own arboretum, Little Friars. In addition, she ran a quarterly newsletter called *The Dendrologist*, published *A Dendrologist's Handbook*, and formed The

Bucks Tree Club for people who shared her enthusiasm. From time to time she also submitted articles and letters to *Chiltern*.

From now on Merelene will be focusing her efforts on Little Friars. She's hoping a new secretary will come forward for the Tree Club, which will continue to have an online presence.

We hope that, despite her health challenges, Merelene will be able to champion the cause of trees for many years to come. She can be contacted at buckstreeclub@gmail.com.

Trustees wanted!

The Chiltern Society is the only registered charity dedicated to conserving, celebrating and caring for the whole of the unique Chiltern landscape. It has 7,000 members and volunteers who work tirelessly to maintain and improve the Chilterns for the benefit of all. Since its foundation nearly 60 years ago, it's contributed well over 1,000,000 volunteer hours; managed and improved nature reserves and heritage sites; created long distance footpaths and cycleways; reviewed hundreds of planning applications, and maintained over 2,000 miles of footpaths and bridleways.

The Society has been undergoing an exciting growth period, having taken over the running of ever more conservation sites; produced guidebooks; increased its efforts to protect our footpaths and bridleways; engaged additional staff to accelerate its conservation and development programmes; actively promoted the heritage of the Chilterns; become more prominent in addressing serious threats to the Green Belt, and offered an extensive programme of walks, cycle rides and events. It has aspirations to increase membership, not only in its central Chilterns heartland but also in other areas and among other demographic groups.

The trustees are keen to find new

recruits who can help the Society achieve its aims.

Are you a potential trustee?

Applicants should care about the Chilterns and have some interest, knowledge or experience in the key areas of Conservation, Planning or Finance. Some experience of working with a charity, ideally as a trustee, will be useful but not essential.

Trustees form the Executive Council and fulfil the roles of Directors of the Society. The Council meets formally six times a year, usually in the evening. There are also one or two full day meetings.

As Directors, trustees are expected

to be actively involved in roles which contribute to the Society's work and the achievement of its goals. The commitment will probably average three or four days per month. Some trustees are additionally involved as regular volunteers in one or more ongoing Society activities. The work is unpaid, but reasonable expenses are reimbursed.

Local interest groups frequently ask the Society to provide a speaker, and trustees are encouraged to act in this capacity from time to time

We'll particularly welcome applications from those who have a disability or are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, as these groups are currently underrepresented in our organisation.

Applications and further information

Please contact the Chiltern Society office (01494 771250) or email our Chair, Simon Kearey: simonkearey@chilternsociety.org.uk.

email: office@chilternsociety.org.uk



From Greg Neal

Most of the regular riders in our Thursday group have retired from full-time work, giving them the time and opportunity to cycle frequently throughout the Chilterns. Other, younger, riders may be self-employed and able to arrange appointments at times which suit them and leave space in the diary for cycling on a Thursday, or may not have activities which conflict with the group rides.

Unlike some more competitive clubs, the Society's Thursday riders always have someone acting as back marker in each small group, to ensure that no one becomes isolated or is left behind. We frequently pause to look at the scenery, which gives an opportunity to regroup or have a drink, and usually stop for refreshments near the half-way point. In general, our aim is for a sociable morning out, rather than a race to see who can cover the route in the shortest possible time.

Refreshments

We're fortunate to be able to start and finish our Thursday rides at friendly local pubs, which serve lunches and are happy to cater for a group of hungry cyclists. Many venues kindly allow us to leave vehicles in the car park for the morning while we're out cycling, and will often open early so we can make use of the toilet facilities before we leave. We normally order our lunches in advance, either online or prior to setting out on the ride.

Many of the rides now also include a stop

for coffee, tea and cakes at local garden centres, village cafés and farm shops. Sometimes, the route seems to have been deliberately planned to pass by one of the favourite venues, but most people appear to be happy with this!

Landscape

The hills in the Chilterns may not be as high as those in other areas of Britain, but they have many attractions, especially where the underlying chalk produces interesting shapes and structures with short, steep sections. Lots of cyclists rise to the challenge of riding up the slope, simply to enjoy an easy and rapid descent from the summit. Many of the regular riders on Thursday have now acquired e-bikes and use their electric motors principally to assist on these climbs, while still enjoying the downhill stretches.

Cycling through the Chiltern beech woods provides an opportunity to see and enjoy the changing seasons. In spring the characteristic green of the new leaves contrasts with the bluebells on the ground.

The woods are cool and shady on summer days, however bright and warm the sunshine may be. Later in the year, there are the spectacular autumn colours before the leaves fall.

In some parts of the Chilterns we're able to cycle close to or alongside rivers, ranging in size from the Hamble Brook to the Thames, or on the towpath by the Grand Union Canal, together with the Wendover and Aylesbury Arms.

Wildlife

I'm sure it's obvious from some of my previous articles in Chiltern that I'm interested in the birds and other animals found in the Chilterns. Riding a bike is a relatively slow and quiet mode of transport compared with a car, and most wild creatures seem to ignore cyclists. In addition to the ubiquitous grey squirrels and rabbits, we've seen foxes, muntjac and roe deer in

many places, and the occasional hare in the area to the north of Watlington.

The Grand Union Canal towpath provides great views of swans, Canada geese and ducks, including mallard, tufted ducks, mandarins and teal, as well as herons and egrets. We also have the pleasure of being able to look down from the higher points of a ride on groups of red kites effortlessly circling up from the valleys on thermals and air currents.

It can be difficult to identify butterflies and other insects as we pass by, but at different times of the year we see common species, including large and small whites, brimstones, commas, red admirals and peacocks. A bike provides ideal environmentally friendly transport to local nature reserves including Holtspur Bank and the adjacent Holtspur Bottom Butterfly Reserve, near Beaconsfield, which aren't easy to approach in a car. Twenty-seven species of butterfly, including the chalkhill blue and small blue, are regularly seen on this reserve, and over 300 species of moths have been recorded. The effects of climate change and the increasing average temperatures in England are affecting the insects in the Chilterns. The brightly coloured Jersey tiger moth used to be confined to the Channel Islands and warmer areas of Devon and Dorset, but it's now spread to London and the Home Counties, including Buckinghamshire.

Heritage

The rich and varied heritage of the Chilterns can easily be explored by bike, using the minor roads and bridleways in the area. Many manor houses dating from earlier centuries are scattered throughout the Chilterns, from Mapledurham and Stonor in the south. to West Wycombe and Hughenden in the central area, and Ashridge further north. Some of the estates, most notably Ashridge and Waddesdon, are surrounded by trafficfree roads where cycling is permitted. In addition, our group has ridden through many of the smaller towns and villages in the area where there are buildings with historical connections, having been home to politicians such as John Hampden, religious leaders including William Penn, and writers such as John Milton.

Ancient highways, including the Icknield Way and The Ridgeway, cross the Chilterns. Some sections of the latter are open to cyclists, although many are more suited to the mountain bikes of the Tuesday off-road group than to the Thursday group. The Icknield Way has two routes as it follows the line of the Chiltern escarpment, the Lower Icknield Way and the Upper Icknield Way. In





the past this was probably necessary for the movement of farm animals at different times of the year. Parts of the Icknield Way can be seen from the steam trains on the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway, which is often referred to as the Icknield Line.

Royalty

Windsor is just outside the Chilterns AONB, but some of the popular routes for our Thursday rides include the Jubilee River towpath, and bridleways near the Thames, as well as the roads and cycle paths through Windsor Great Park. All of these are closely associated with the Royal family and Windsor Castle.

A recent ride on a very warm September morning started by following the bridleway beside Dorney Lake to the Thames at Boveney, then round Dorney Common and across the river into Windsor. Riding along the cycle paths through Windsor, past the football ground and on to a gravel path took us into Windsor Great Park via Ranger's Gate. The steady climb up Prince Consort Drive to Primrose Hill led to the Golden Jubilee statue which was erected in 2003 and depicts a young Queen Elizabeth II on horseback. A brief pause allowed us to pay our respects to the late Queen, almost exactly a year since her death, and admire the amazing

views down to the High Sheriff Memorial, with Windsor Castle in the distance. The route continued to Cumberland Gate and round the Guards Polo Club Grounds, where we watched a game for a while. This must be one of the most exclusive and expensive sports, played on immaculate lawns and requiring a string of well-trained ponies. Having stopped at the outdoor café by the Obelisk Pond for refreshments, we left the park via the Savill Garden car park and rode down Crimp Hill into Old Windsor, taking care to avoid the many potholes. The cycle path beside the busy A308 provided a safe route across The Long Walk, with its views of the copper horse statue at the top of the deer park, and into Windsor, where we took the bridge over the Thames into Eton and returned to Dorney.

The Chiltern Cycling Groups

I hope these thoughts may persuade readers to think about cycling in the Chilterns during the coming months, even if they prefer to wait until the weather improves in the New Year. Anyone who's interested in joining us on a Thursday morning should contact one of the people named in the cycling section of the Chiltern Society website.

Photos: Greg Neal

www.chilternsociety.org.uk 33



By Kate Ashbrook

The general secretary of the Open Spaces Society explains how Britain's oldest national conservation body has been campaigning over the last 158 years – in the Chilterns and elsewhere.

Shortly after midnight on 6 March 1866 a special train left Euston Station for Tring, where it deposited 120 navvies who marched to Berkhamsted Common. There they felled two miles of iron railings, erected by the landowner, Lord Brownlow, to enclose 434 acres of the Common and bar public access. By 6am the fencing had been left in neat piles, and later that morning local people flocked to the Common to enjoy it once more, as they have ever since.

This was the first direct action organised by the Commons Society; it had advised Augustus Smith (Lord of Scilly, Cornish MP and, most importantly, a Berkhamsted rightholder) to use the old law of abatement and remove the unlawful obstruction.

The Society had been formed the previous year to combat threats of enclosure of London commons. Common land has an owner, but others (the commoners) have rights there – to collect wood, bracken and furze, and to graze livestock for instance, all for use on their properties. In defending the commons, the Society provided the legal support to well-heeled commoners (such as Augustus Smith) who were prepared to go to court. Its early victories were the rescue of Hampstead Heath, Wimbledon Common and Epping Forest, and it helped secure the Metropolitan Commons Act 1866, which

prevented the enclosure of any common within roughly a 15 mile radius of Charing Cross.

Experience taught us that the best way to protect land was to own it. This is why the Society created the National Trust in 1895 with our solicitor, Robert Hunter, as its first chairman. The Society then formed local committees to raise money for the Trust to procure land, particularly in the home counties. Thus, the Society helped the Trust to acquire commons at Maidenhead Thicket (Berkshire), Ashridge, and Hudnall (Hertfordshire).

In 1899, prompted by Octavia Hill (a member of the Society's committee and one of the National Trust's founders), we incorporated the National Footpaths Society. In 1927 we added open spaces to our name, becoming the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society. This is still our formal title, though shortened in 1982 to the Open Spaces Society.

Today we're as active as ever, throughout England and Wales, from our office in Henley-on-Thames.

Commons

We're unique in our knowledge of the law and management of common land. The Chilterns Commons Project (2011-15), run by the Chilterns Conservation Board, revealed that there are 170 commons in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and another 88 within three kilometres of the AONB boundary, many of them tiny, and threatened by development, encroachment and neglect. We're ready to fight for these precious gems, vital remnants of a once much more extensive land type.

All commons were meant to be registered under the Commons Registration Act 1965, but only three years were allowed for this, after which it was too late. We led the registration, dashing around England and Wales to record every scrap of eligible land we could. Even so, many commons were omitted. The Commons Act 2006 reopened the registers, allowing the addition of some commons which were missed and the removal of those registered in error. But there was a grave injustice – landowners can deregister commons anywhere in England, while we can only register them in certain counties for limited periods.

We grabbed this opportunity and, thanks to a legacy, employed a re-registration officer, Frances Kerner. In Hertfordshire, one of the lucky counties, she made 17 applications, covering 44 hectares, before the deadline at the end of 2020. The applications are being processed and so

far we've won 10 commons, covering 16 hectares. These include land at Berkhamsted and Boxmoor. It's detailed, painstaking, but worthwhile work, because it protects the land from encroachment. We hope to persuade a future government to allow for registration of lost commons in all counties.

Works on common land, such as buildings or roads, require the consent of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The Society is notified of such applications and we respond to them all, objecting where the public would lose out on access, landscape, nature or archaeological grounds. A flaw in the legislation means that no one has a duty to enforce against unlawful encroachments, but the public has a power to do so and we're ready to support such

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, for which the Society campaigned, granted the right to walk on nearly all commons (although some had pre-existing rights of access), as well as mapped areas of mountain, moor, heath and down. In southern England the mapping of downland was exiguous, and in the Chilterns the greater part of access land is in fact registered common.

Greens

The Society spearheads the campaign to register town and village greens, which protects the land from encroachment and gives local people rights of recreation there. A green is land where local people have enjoyed informal recreation for 20 years, without challenge or permission. All greens were supposed to be registered under the Commons Registration Act 1965, and those which weren't ceased to be greens. Twenty years later, with continued use, they 'became' greens again and, provided there's suitable evidence, the county or unitary council can now register them. Once land is threatened with development, however, it's too late to apply for registration, so we urge communities to identify spaces they've used and to gather and submit the evidence. Our



book Getting Greens Registered tells you how to do it.

It's also possible for a landowner voluntarily to register land as a green, without such use. Local examples include Widmer Fields at Hazlemere (threatened with development, purchased and registered by the Grange Area Trust), Gillotts Field and Freeman's Meadow in Henley-on-Thames (registered by the owner, the town council), and Dyke Hills and Days Lock Meadow at Dorchester-on-Thames (registered by the owner, Keith Ives).

To our irritation, we often see glossy brochures for new houses boasting a village green as part of the development, when it's merely a private open space which could be built on later. The Society encourages developers to register such land as a quid pro quo for development, giving something back to the public. We'll lobby for this requirement to be enshrined in law.

Rights of way

We undertake extensive work on public rights of way, representing all types of user. Our 40 local correspondents respond to path changes in their patches, objecting unless there's clear public benefit. In Nettlebed, for example, our local correspondent is currently fighting the diversion of a path onto a route which is already used by the public –

in effect an extinguishment of a right of way.

We encourage parish councils to exercise their powers to get paths open and to act against encroachments on commons and greens. We've published guidance for them.

From its inception the Society has gone to court in defence of our rights. We remain committed to this, whether it's in support of the Dartmoor National Park Authority on the Dartmoor backpack/camping case, challenging a decision for works on common land, serving a notice on a highway authority for failure to reopen a blocked path, or prosecuting a landowner for obstruction. We've recently upped our game by appointing an enforcement officer.

The Society is small but feisty, able to react quickly and boldly in defence of our rights. We're exactly a century older than the Chiltern Society and are delighted that it's been a member for most of its existence. My predecessor at the Open Spaces Society, Ian Campbell, played a significant part in launching the Chiltern Society's Rights of Way Group. When we work with local organisations, we can pool resources and be even more effective in championing our rights to commons, greens, open spaces and paths, as well as creating new ones. Long may we continue to work with the Chiltern Society to this end.

Society footpath maps

- don't leave home without them!

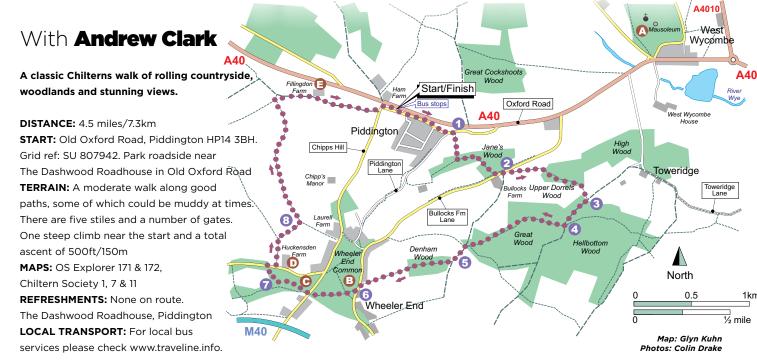
Our 32 footpath maps give comprehensive coverage of the Chilterns, from Hitchin and Hexton at one end to Goring and Mapledurham at the other.

Every kind of footpath, bridleway and other right of way is VERY clearly picked out, so you can get the most out of walking, riding and running in the Chilterns.

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.

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Piddington and Cadmore End Common



The route

Walk along the pavement away from the pub for 400m and take the path on the right shortly after Piddington Lane.

- Cross over the stile, continue straight ahead up the hill and go through the gate into a wood. Ignore the path on the right, continue uphill to a T-junction at the top and then left to a lane (Bullocks Farm Lane). Turn left along the lane, and shortly after the path starts to descend, take the footpath on the right.
- 2. Climb up the bank and through the woodland to a broad track. Turn left and follow it downhill with views to West Wycombe Hill. Where the hedgerow on the right ends, turn right into woods and follow the path to a field. Cross directly over it and go through a gap in the hedgerow to a bridleway.
- **3.** Turn right to join a wide track and continue downhill to a staggered crossing path just after the track becomes surfaced.
- 4. Turn right and stay on this path for 750m as it drops to near the bottom, then runs parallel to the track on the left before meeting a bridleway. Turn right for a few metres to a junction and turn left on a wide track. Follow it downhill and, just before the track turns sharply left, turn right on a path into a wood (Denham Wood). It has a lovely display of bluebells in spring.
- Continue through the wood as the path rises gently to a stile at the edge of a field. Go over the stile and follow the hedgerow on the left

- to leave the field through a gate. Continue to a lane, turn left downhill for 45m and take the path on the right by the telegraph pole.
- 6. Walk along to a crossing path, turn right for a few metres and then left along a sometimes muddy track. Continue straight ahead to the left of the line of trees to meet a rough track. Turn right to the main road (Boulter End Lane) and cross directly over onto Cadmore End Common. After a few metres, ignore the path on the left and continue ahead. Where the path divides, continue straight on and pass a pond on the left to very shortly meet a crossing path.
- 7. Turn right uphill for 100m to a clearing then turn right for a short distance to a lane. Turn right along it for a few metres and turn left through the gate into a field. Stay straight ahead across the field towards a metal gate and go through the kissing gate to its right. Continue ahead, follow the track round to the right and along the field edge to eventually reach the metal field gate directly in front of you.
- 8. Turn left, go under the overhead cables and right over the stile into a field. Bear diagonally right downhill to cross a pair of stiles in the hedgerow at the bottom. Turn right and follow the wide track down to a junction in the valley bottom. Turn right along the wide track past Fillingdon Farm on the left to a road. Turn left and immediately right past The Dashwood Roadhouse to return to the start.





Points of interest

Piddington was only established in 1903 when Benjamin North moved his furniture factory from High Wycombe. As well as the factory, new houses were also needed for the workers. The walk starts from the Old Oxford Road, once part of the road that connected London to Oxford and Wales. In 1924 a new section of the now A40 was built to bypass the village and runs parallel to it. Over the centuries there have been many routes across the Chilterns. It's reputed that there was a Roman Road that ran from London to South Oxfordshire, possibly passing through Upper Dorrells Wood, Jane's Wood and Piddington.

A. West Wycombe Hill: The early sections of the walk afford wonderful views of the hill. It's famous for a number of features – the Dashwood Mausoleum, St Lawrence Church and The Hellfire Caves. The Grade I listed church stands on the site of an Iron Age fort. It was originally built to serve the lost village of Haveringdon and was remodelled in its current form by Sir Francis Dashwood. The crowning feature is the Golden Ball, which is large enough to hold six people and is reputed to have been a meeting place for the notorious Hellfire Club. The design of the mausoleum is based on the Constantine Arch in Rome. It was built to house the urns that contain the ashes of the Dashwood family.

B. Wheeler End and The Common: The origins of the village name are unclear, but possibly come from the Wheeler family who were once brewers in High Wycombe. The main industries in the past were chairmaking, brickmaking and lacemaking. The Common is owned by the West Wycombe Estate and is open access land.

C. Cadmore End Common: The name comes from a person 'Cada'

and 'maere' possibly the edge of a landholding. Once in Oxfordshire, it became part of Buckinghamshire in 1896. Brickmaking was the main industry, but that ceased in 1939 when the clay ran out.

D. Huckenden Farm was once a famous recording studio used by many musicians including Paul Weller, Oasis and Robbie Williams.

E. Fillingdon Farm is home to Fillingdon Fine

Art, formerly Art of Africa. They continue to exhibit exceptional contemporary paintings, sculpture, ceramics and jewellery by artists associated with Africa. They hold two major exhibitions a year and open by appointment at other times.

The points of interest were compiled with the assistance of Simon Cains, a local historian in Piddington.

Nearby walk (Bottom Wood) – Walk 22 of the *50 Great Walks in the Chilterns* book starts from the same point.





Wild man of Cookham

Biographer Conor Mark Jameson on the celebrated naturalist and author William Henry Hudson and his affection for a Chilterns village

He arrived on a ship as a penniless and unschooled immigrant in 1874 but, by the time he died in 1922, WH Hudson was regarded not only as one of our finest ever writers on nature, but also one of our most eminent writers per se. So great was the esteem in which he was held by the public and fellow authors, including John Galsworthy and Virginia Woolf, a bird sanctuary and monument were established in his honour in London's principal royal park. He was also the only man in the room when a small army of women, led by Eliza Phillips, launched what we know today as the RSPB.

In the words of his dear friend the war poet Edward Thomas, Hudson 'did an eccentric thing for an English naturalist: he was born in South America'. Until the age of 32 Hudson had lived on the Pampas of Argentina. Although he spent nearly 50 years in England, this devotee of nature and the outdoors was based in London – which he frequently cursed for its foul air, crowds and noise.

Berkshire retains a special place in the Hudson story, because it became the focal point for his first book about the nature of his adopted homeland. He found that he could get there fairly easily by train and bring his new cycle. 'I hope to get down to the country tomorrow,' he wrote in June 1892, 'and if things go well, and I find myself able to write, I hope to remain some weeks.' He gave his address as Midway Cottage in the village of Cookham Dean.

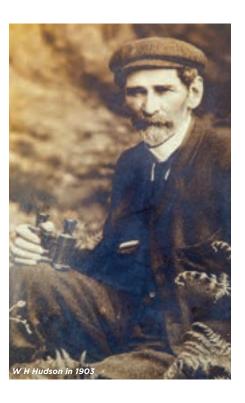
At the outset, Hudson was the only man in the small army of women mobilising to save the birds. In Cookham, he was also spreading the word about the Bird Society, reporting to Phillips that he'd sent out a hundred copies of a letter introducing the cause, focused on ending the trade in wild bird skins and plumage, and was taking another hundred with him to Berkshire. 'If it should result in winning one helper – someone with a name, and able to use his pen, or better still his tongue, it would be a great thing,' he declares.

Hudson was initially unsure of the precise nature of his mission. 'After wandering somewhat aimlessly about the country for a couple of days I stumbled by chance on just such a spot as I had been wishing to find – a rustic village not too far away; it was not more than twenty-five minutes' walk from a small station, less than one hour by rail from London.' His wife Emily was able to join him at Cookham for a time during the Easter public holiday. Their base was close to Winter Hill – which he thought had the finest views of the Thames, and three miles of woodland. 'The woodland birds have it pretty well to themselves,' he was happy to report.

Hudson began to compile notes with a view to writing a book, which would be called Birds in a Village. Fellow author Morley Roberts was with him on one occasion as he began to get acquainted with the place. 'The people with whom we lodged at Cookham Dean were the simple and kindly folk whom Hudson so much preferred to inn-keepers,' Roberts later wrote. He also recalled Hudson's delight when they were able to track down a grasshopper warbler. 'We heard them often but it was only after a long search that I found them in the middle of a thorny thicket. I well remember Hudson crawling into the bushes on his hands and knees.'

Birds in a Village was published in 1893. Hudson called it 'my first book about bird life, with some impressions of rural scenes, in England.' It helped to establish him as a writer on nature in his adopted homeland.

Hudson witnessed the inevitable changes in the village when he returned in spring 1897 with Emily. 'It was dreadful weather – wet and cold,' he reported to Roberts, 'but nightingales were singing and things looked pretty much the same down there.' He was able to reacquaint himself with his hosts of a



few years earlier, of whom he spoke fondly: 'Mrs. Garrett is getting fat, and Mr G. makes bricks and looks well and happy. Would I had been brought up to make bricks!' Roberts recalled Hudson's delight, 'for although he was strangely lacking in every kind of manual dexterity he loved all the primitive arts and handicrafts.'

Seven years later, in summer 1904, the Hudsons lodged with the same family, now expanded in number, and found that many new houses had been built. It was cherrypicking season, and the villagers were busy trying to collect the harvest from their vast plantation. Sheltering from a rainstorm under an oak on the common, they were joined for a time by a red-backed shrike that sat near them. They heard turtle doves purring in the woods and found some boys there, playing with a stag beetle that they called Harry Horner.

Emily's health was poor in later life. In June 1913 the Hudsons retreated from Seaford inland to Maidenhead, near Cookham Dean. 'I have brought her down here as an experiment, the air at the seaside failing to do any good,' he wrote. 'All we wanted was a house with a garden and lawn where my wife could be out of doors all the time in good weather as the doctor ordered, and we found it here.'

The 72 year-old Hudson was now putting his new 14 guinea Sunbeam through its paces on this excursion. He reported 'I've got my bicycle here and take runs about the open spaces – the Thicket principally, which is perhaps the best common in England, as it extends over two miles and is mostly a perfect wilderness and tangle of thorn and

bramble, interspersed with big trees. Our Bird Society is now trying to get it made a protected area, and I think we'll succeed this time. We tried before.'

While roving on his 'wheel' Hudson returned to Cookham Dean, 'a village of pleasant memories for me'. He was surprised at the rate of further urbanisation since his last visit. 'Alas, the whole country round about here is being built over,' he lamented. His troubled young poet friend Edward Thomas cycled with him in Berkshire, the two men also taking photographs with their Kodak cameras. That same summer, the long-running plumage campaign looked set to succeed, but storm clouds were looming in Europe. 'Just when the session is going to end the Government have finally brought out their anti-plumage Bill,' Hudson groaned in August. 'What chance of passing will it have, alas!' WWI brought a halt to many things, including legislation to save the birds.

The Hudsons had no children, but Edward Thomas had been like a son to him, and news of Thomas's death on the western front in 1917 hit hard. It seems that the longer he lived, the more feverishly Hudson worked, terrified by the prospect of losing his own grip on life. As his renown grew, there was renewed interest in his early works. With war over and time running out, he scrambled to buy back the rights to his books, to free them up for republication, and to get as much money from American publishers as he could, to leave to the cause of bird protection.

In 1919 his *Birds in a Village*, first written 30 years earlier, evolved into *Birds in Town* and *Village*. 'It pleased me when its turn

came to be reissued,' he said of this new improved version, as he had 'continued to cherish a certain affection for it.' Some of the original work was out of date, he noted, 'especially in what was said with bitterness... anent... trying to save the beautiful wild bird life of this country and of the world generally from extermination... [due to] the feather-wearing fashion and of the London trade in dead birds.' In the preface, Hudson strikes a cheerful note: 'Happily, the last twenty years of the life and work of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have changed all that, and it would not now be too much to say that all right-thinking persons in this country, men and women, are anxious to see the end of this iniquitous

The reviews were glowing. 'This book is full of his unsurpassed perception and unique charm,' the *Times Literary Supplement* gushed. 'Some of his best passages about birds are equally delightful and vivid sketches of human life.' The *Manchester Guardian* was equally effusive. 'Mr. Hudson loves all birds; they are his work, his recreation, his life; he writes about them as no one else can: he sees what others miss.'

After giving a talk about Hudson's life and times to an RSPB local group nearby, I took the opportunity to visit Cookham. The sight of red kites was beyond Hudson's wildest dreams. He would be gratified that many of the species lost in his day have been restored, and no doubt modest about his own part – alongside his mostly female colleagues – in making these recoveries possible.



Finding WH Hudson - The Writer Who
Came to Britain to Save the Birds
by Conor Mark Jameson
(ISBN 9781784273286 - Pelagic Publishing)
is available now.

LETTERS

A delight

Hazel Barber, by email

I'm writing to you to express my huge appreciation of your constantly stimulating magazine. The various articles are always full of interest and very well written, and the photos of a high standard. The presentation of this magazine is continually a delight to observe, and I congratulate you on your achievement.

More to say on ivy?

Dale Smith, by email

I am unhappy that you feel the need to call a halt to the articles and correspondence about ivy: the subject has not run its course. Not only that but I have been accused of 'repeating all the old wives tales.' Tony Marshall has asserted that the 'best reference for people who want to know the facts' is the RHS's website, although the RHS article has no named author (I have enquired) and it offers no evidence.

My article argued for diversity and for rigorous and objective research and provided references including recent research findings. There is more to say to bring out the facts of this matter, and point to what is actually agreed (ivy as ground cover forms a monoculture) and what is not (about true diversity and control of ivy being essential for trees to thrive). I hope that this important topic

will be allowed further coverage at some future date particularly if further research evidence becomes available.*

*After airing both sides of the debate about the effects of ivy on trees in three consecutive issues of Chiltern I felt it was time to draw the discussion to a close, for the moment at least, and informed Dale of my decision. Editor

email: office@chilternsociety.org.uk



Access for all is a challenge that must be faced, writes Richard Bradbury

In late September, together with Society trustee Luke Jefferys, Gavin Johnson our Head of Conservation, and our walks expert Andrew Clark, I attended a workshop called 'Widening the Welcome' at Missenden Abbey, led by the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) and focusing on access in the Chilterns.

Those present were from a very diverse range of organisations representing many different facets of Chiltern life, including business, tourism, heritage, the environment, wildlife, walking, local councils and disability services. As the title of the session implies, the aim was to explore ways of opening up the region for everyone to enjoy, and identify the barriers that must be overcome in order to do so. There were a number of short presentations, followed by break-out groups which gave participants the chance to exchange ideas about what an accessible Chilterns might look like, with each group reporting their findings at the end of the morning.

Ross Calladine from Visit England approached the theme from a tourism perspective. He reported that the Government aspired to make the UK the most accessible tourist destination by 2025. He pointed out that one in four people in Britain have a disability of some kind; that their requirements are complex and varied, and that it was important to understand individual needs. It's been estimated that, along with their travelling companions, their tourism-related activities generate

some £15.3bn per annum, so there are sound financial reasons for seeking to accommodate them, as well as altruistic ones. Among the local organisations he commended for their efforts in this regard were the Roald Dahl Museum, Chiltern Open Air Museum (COAM) and Countryways at Road Farm. A toolkit for businesses is available from VisitEngland.org.

Lucy Dowson of Visit Buckinghamshire spoke about the Bucks Accessibility Hub, a website with listings of places and activities catering for those with accessibility impairment, and advice on how to create an accessibility guide. Helen Barrett of Moogies, a private company involved in the catering trade, then explained what they were doing to improve accessibility in their pubs, using The Dinton Hermit as an example of good practice.

Val Woods outlined the work of the Centre for Outdoor Accessibility Training, based at Aston Rowant Nature Reserve. They collaborate with groups like the British Horse Society and Disabled Ramblers to make more of the countryside accessible by trialling special gates, demonstrating

mobility equipment and providing bespoke training for organisations and individuals. Established in 2018, they're planning a new multi-functional building, as well as focusing on more new gate designs, board walks, signage and seating, among other things. Val's presentation was followed by Neil Harris of the National Trust, who's also Chair of the Local Access Forum. He told us that the Trust were keen to shed their middleclass image and appeal to a more diverse audience. To this end, they have three major goals: to develop an inclusive and diverse workplace for their staff and volunteers; to improve access and benefit for all their supporters; and to form strong connections with communities. There are plans for a new, more user-friendly toposcope on Coombe Hill outside Wendover, together with an accessible trail to the viewpoint.

g the Welcome

A particularly important contribution came from Professor Gurch Randawa of the University of Bedfordshire, where a project in Luton and Dunstable has explored the levels of engagement with the countryside among Black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities. The largest ever study

of its kind, it revealed that there's limited awareness not only about the Chiltern countryside, but about green spaces in general, such as local parks. The people surveyed were inhibited by problems such as lack of essential facilities in some locations; their ability to travel; and concerns about racism and discrimination, health and safety, and unleashed dogs. The subsequent report recommended the provision of improved information; awareness raising; organised, subsidised trips; clearly signposted areas for dog walking; and a 'Collaborative Targeted Outreach Programme'. Professor Randawa also stressed the need for those trying to encourage greater engagement to listen to the people they're trying to reach and respond with a tailored approach based on what they heard.

Substantial sums of money are available to assist with this work. Annette Weiss from the CCB told us that in 2022/23 they'd received £227,000 from Defra to make protected landscapes more accessible. This had gone towards initiatives like all terrain vehicles, an electric minibus, accessibility surveys at key sites, canal towpath improvements and new facilities at COAM. Looking ahead, they hope that the funding will enable them to finance better access to waterways, widen and resurface paths, install



appropriate signage and visitor information, and acquire more vehicles.

The workshop generated a considerable level of enthusiasm and positivity, but also a degree of realism. Some good work is already being done, but there's still a long way to go and no shortage of difficult challenges ahead. The number of ablebodied white people at the workshop was an indicator of the scale of the task. The starting point for many is surely to assess the position within their own organisation, identify the changes that are necessary and devise a strategy to achieve them, at the same time seeking to gain strength from liaising with other organisations that are on the same path. In notes he made after the event, Gavin Johnson summed up what this might mean for the Chiltern Society:

 'As an organisation that champions the enjoyment of the Chilterns we are well positioned to have an important and prominent role in how this develops across the region

- There are lots of improvements that we can make internally around the way we deliver our services and also at a regional/ strategic level in collaboration with others across sectors
- There is some low hanging fruit for us to consider in the short term, such as internal awareness/training, comms, website, service delivery - walks, volunteering, sites etc.
- At the strategic level there is a need and appetite for a more coordinated and collaborative approach
- Much like sustainability, "access for all" is a broad issue that permeates everything we do, and like sustainability, it should be considered holistically to ensure it is embedded into the way we approach all our work"





www.chilternsociety.org.uk 41

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.

DECE	MBER	O/S GRID REF	JANU	ARY	O/S GRID REF
Sun 3	Meet at Little Gaddesden Bowling Club car park, Church Road HP4 1NU. A scenic 6 mile stile- free walk across fields and woods via Dagnall, Whipsnade Park Golf Course and Mason's Plantation to Studham. In part using the Icknield Way and Chiltern Way. Two hills. Total ascent 580ft. Potential for some soft ground if wet beforehand. Stephen McFall 07745 006037	Explorer 181 GR SP 994135 CS Maps 19,20 Herts	Sun 7	Meet in the Whiteleaf Hill free car park, top of Peters Lane, Princes Risborough HP27 ORP. The 5.4 mile walk undulates along the edge of the escarpment from Brush Hill to Chequers Knap. There are some fine views and peaceful woodlands. Steps and inclines may well be slippery in the winter conditions. Total ascent 750ft. Richard Skepper 07772 214503	
Wed 6	By invitation only: The pre-booked Walk Leaders Christmas Lunch is being held at The Grouse & Ale, Lane End, with an optional walk beforehand only for those attending. No online booking required. Meet in the village car park (free at the bottom section), off the High Street/B482 (opposite Church Path) HP14 3ER. The pub is a three minute walk from the car park. A 5 mile walk across moderate chalk hills, heading east and across the M40 towards Hellbottom Wood, then up to Wycombe Air Park with a first-hand view of the runway, before returning via Millenium Park for Christmas lunch. The odd stile. Total ascent 400ft. Jez Lofts 07772 595845	Explorer 175 GR SU 807918 CS Map 11 Bucks	Wed 10	Wed 10 Meet at The Dashwood Roadhouse, Old Oxford Road, Piddington HP14 3BH. Park roadside or if lunching (recommended) in the pub car park. The 5.2 mile stile-free undulating walk, taken frr Walk 22 in the 50 Great Walks book, straddles the Old Oxford Road, the main London to Oxfor route in days gone by. We'll head to the edge of Radnage via Bottom Wood Nature Reserve (owned and managed by the Society), then onward to Beacon's Bottom and Horsleys Gree Three moderate climbs and one steep descent. Total ascent 520ft. No stiles. David Vick 07877 196083	
Sun 10	Meet at the bus stop near the fire-damaged Kings Hotel, Oxford Road, Stokenchurch HP14 3TA. Park in the side roads opposite the hotel. A 5.2 mile walk heading south from Stokenchurch via the M40 underpass to Wellground and the periphery of the Wormsley Estate, then on to lbstone Common and village. A mix of woodland and tracks, hills and valleys. May be muddy. Five stiles. Deirdre Philpott 07973 271474	Explorer 171 GR SU 760962 CS Map 14 Bucks	Sun 14	Meet at Hambleden village car park, entrance behind The Stag & Huntsman RG9 6RP (parking charge £3 for 4 hours). A lovely, fairly flat 5.5 mile stile-free walk through Chiltern woodlands, attractive villages and along the Thames towpath from Medmenham. The walk will take in a chalk quarry, a Cistercian abbey and Culham Court at Remenham.	Explorer 171 GR SU 784865 CS Map 11 Bucks/Berks
Wed 13	Meet at The Red Lion, Village Rd, Chenies WD3 6ED. Park roadside opposite the pub. A 5.6 mile stile-free walk in the Chess Valley, but be prepared for some mud. The route goes past Chenies Manor and down to the weir below Latimer House, through the village and via Frogmore Meadow Nature Reserve, before returning via the old watercress beds and up through the woods. Patricia Boxell 07847 869506	Explorer 172 GR TQ 021981 CS Map 5 Bucks/Herts	Wed 17	Frank Auton 07785 276095 Meet at The Lilley Arms, West Street, Lilley LU2 8LN. Parking at the pub if lunching, otherwise roadside. A 5.6 mile stile-free walk to Galley and Warden Hill with far reaching views, mostly on well-defined tracks but with several short steep sections. (Based on Walk 3 in More Great Walks book). The ridge is exposed to the weather. Total ascent 500ft.	Explorer 193 GR TL 118264 CS Maps 25,30 Beds
Sun 17	Meet at Watlington Hill free car park, (top of) Hill Road, Watlington OX49 5HS. A 5.3 mile stile-free pre-Christmas walk on good paths and quiet lanes, offering a lovely woodland adventure and a breathtaking hilltop walk going via the aptly named Christmas Common, then Northend, Lower Dean Woods, Watlington Park and Watlington Hill. One long climb and one short, steep climb. Total ascent 600ft. Frank Auton 07785 276095	Explorer 171 GR SU 770935 CS Map 9 Bucks/Oxon		Migel Seabrooke 07747 552378 Meet outside The Whip Inn, Pink Road, Lacey Green HP27 OPG. Park either roadside on Pink Road opposite the pub, or along Main Road opposite the windmill. The 4.5 mile walk goes to Pyrtle Spring on the outskirts of Princes Risborough and continues southwest to reach The Pink and Lily pub, before returning via The Chiltern Way. Open and scenic viewing. One steep	Explorer 181 GR SP 818007 CS Map 7 Bucks
Tue 26	Note: Walk will start at 10.30am (meet 10.20am). Join us on a Boxing Day gathering to walk off the Christmas indulgences. Online booking is required and will remain open until noon on Christmas Eve. Meet at the free car park at the Common, Great Kingshill, (turning off the A4128 opposite the Lounge India restaurant), nearest postcode HP15 6EN. An easy 5.4 mile undulating walk, passing through woods to reach The Pole Cat Inn, then on to Peterley Manor Farm, before returning via	Explorer 172 GR SU 877981 CS Map 12 Bucks	Wed 24	climb. Eight stiles. Total ascent 550ft. Stephen Groves 07843 381971 Meet at The Golden Ball, Golden Ball Lane (off the A308), Pinkney's Green (near Maidenhead) SL6 6NW. A 5.5 mile circular walk heading north towards Cookham Dean on the woodland edge, then back across open countryside. Total ascent 330ft. John Madeley 07592 852780	Explorer 172 GR SU 859830 CS Map 32 Berks
	Latton Alpacas. One stile. Patricia Boxell 07847 869506		Sun 28	Meet at the Thame Lambert Hotel, London Road, Aston Rowant OX49 5SQ (500yds from J6 M40). Unless lunching at the hotel, park along quiet	Explorer 171 GR SU 723982
JANU				roads next to it. A 5.5 mile stile-free walk taking	CS Map 9
	Note: Walk will start at 10.30am (meet 10.20am). A walk to get everyone going again after the Christmas break. Online booking is open until noon on NYE. Meet in Wendover Library car park, High Street (opposite Lucca restaurant) HP22 6DU - WCs available. Free bank holiday parking. A 5.7 mile walk from Wendover, with a long gentle climb up to the highest point in the Chiltern Hills at Coombe Hill via the hamlet of Dunsmore. Marvellous allround views from the monument at the top. A quick descent along The Ridgeway gets us back to the picturesque town, which will hopefully have some refreshment options open. A handful of stiles. Total ascent 570ft. Paul Cooke 07901 516342	Explorer 181 GR SP 869077 CS Map 3 Bucks		us under the M40, then up to Bald Hill, Cowleaze Wood and through the Wormsley Estate. Two main hills. We pass the well-regarded Leathern Bottle pub towards the end, offering a further option for food and refreshments. Peter Hetherington 07767 647714	Oxon
			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 6 mile level 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

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).

FEBR	UARY	O/S GRID REF	FEBRUARY			
Sun 4	Meet at The Red Lion, Village Road, Coleshill HP7 OLH. Only use the pub car park if pre-booked for Sunday lunch, otherwise park roadside. An attractive 6.1 mile stile-free walk (with a short cut option available) around Coleshill, passing Brentford Grange, Hodgemoor Woods, Great Beard Woods, Ongar Hill Farm and Bowers Farm. Total ascent 440ft. Can be muddy if wet beforehand. Frank Auton 07785 276095	Explorer 172 GR SU 958951 CS Map 6 Bucks	Wed 28	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 suitable for all weather conditions. From the delightful village, following the contours of the chalk slope towards Medmenham, the route includes an easy but roped traverse, before heading due south to the Thames (with a short cut option for the Groovers). Returning on the Thames towpath to Hambleden Place, Mill End,	Explorer 17 GR SU 784865 CS Map 11 Bucks	
Wed 7	Meet at the car park opposite Checkendon Primary School, Uxmore Road RG8 OSR. A delightful, gentle 5.5 mile stile-free woodland	Explorer 171 GR SU 665830	GR 665830 5 Maps 15,16 Oxon Sun 3 Sun 3	and back along the Hambleden Valley. GR Jez Lofts 07772 595845 SU 665830		
	walk, heading east towards Ipsden Wood then over to Stoke Row. We'll continue via Braziers Common and then Checkendon Court. Total ascent 300ft. For lunch The Highwayman Inn at nearby Exlade Street is well regarded, as well as pubs in Stoke Row. Susan Maguire 07835 872791	15,16 Oxon		Sun 3	Meet opposite the school in Church Lane, Cadmore End HP14 3PE. Parking is available on the verge. This highly rated and popular 6 mile hilly walk goes through Fingest and Turville, before a steady uphill climb along the escarpment. We'll then descend past lbstone House before a gradual ascent back to Cadmore End. A mix of woods and open countryside on well-used paths, with good views across the valleys. One stile. Sue Brinn 01628 483639	Explorer 171 GR SU 783927 CS Map 11 Bucks
Sun 11	Meet at Hambleden village car park, entrance behind The Stag & Huntsman RG9 6RP (parking charge £3 for 4 hours). A 5.7 mile countryside walk starting with a stiff climb from Hambleden to Pheasants Hill, and continuing on undulating uplands to Rockwell End and Rotten Row, before	Explorer 171 GR SU 784865 CS Map 11 Bucks				
	descending back to the start. A couple of stiles. Total ascent 525ft. Deirdre Philpott 07973 271474			Meet outside Ashley Green Memorial Hall, Two Dells Lane (nearly opposite the church), Ashley Green HP5 3RB. Free parking. WC/light	Explorer 181 GR SP 977051	
Wed 14	Meet outside Ashridge Visitor Centre (free parking), end of Monument Drive, off the B4506 near Berkhamsted HP4 1LT. A 5.7 mile walk taking us down into Aldbury, then out across Stocks golf course to pick up The Ridgeway and on through Aldbury Knowers. Reaching Pitstone Hill there are fine views at Paul's Knob (seriously!). Returning through fine open countryside and woodland of	CS Map 19 Herts		refreshments at the popular Glebe Café (rear of the hall) before or after the walk. A rural 5.4 mile walk mainly over open fields and with a short stretch on a quiet lane. Some lovely views. One stile (negotiated twice). Total ascent 490ft spread over three moderate climbs. As well as the café, The Golden Eagle pub is on the doorstep for lunch. Jayne Fogg 07941 112863	CS Map 17 Bucks	
	the Ashridge Estate. Total ascent 650ft. (A less challenging 5.2 mile route for the Groovers is available starting at Aldbury village sports ground free car park, Stocks Road, Aldbury HP23 5RU. Total ascent 425ft). Paul Cooke 07901 516342		Sun 10	Street, Hemel Hempstead HP1 1EF. Long-stay section costs £2.70 for 4 hours (even on Sunday). A 6.3 mile stile-free walk along urban pavements and country paths around the outskirts of Hemel	Explorer 182 GR TL 053069 CS Maps 5,20 Herts	
Sun 18	Meet by the front entrance of Berkhamsted Station, Lower Kings Road HP4 2AJ. (Free 4 hour parking nearby at Canal Fields, Broadwater turnoff HP4 1HR, or limited parking on New Road at the back of the castle). A 5.15 mile stile-free walk going through Alpine Meadow Nature Reserve, then over Berkhamsted Common before returning through Frithsden Beaches. Great views over Berkhamsted at the end of the walk. Three hills.	Explorer 181 GR SP 993081 CS Map 17 Herts		Hempstead. Initially heading to Hemel Old Town and Picotts End, before turning to reach Field End and then down to the Grand Union Canal by Boxmoor. (Based on Walk 7 of the More Great Walks book). Total ascent 320ft. Shirley Williams 07740 124391		
	Total ascent 420ft. John Lavender 07546 245847		Re	porting path proble	ms	
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	Explorer 180/181 GR SP 708061 CS Map n/a Oxon/Bucks	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			

Explorer 181

GR

SP 845015

CS Maps 3,12

Bucks

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.

The Chiltern Society website contains further information and guidance on the matter:

Discover The Chilterns/Walking/Report a ROW problem.

email: office@chilternsociety.org.uk

Sun 25

we'll walk roadside to reach the very pretty sight

Meet in Memorial Road round the corner from The

Hampden Arms, Great Hampden HP16 9RQ. Park

along Memorial Road beside the cricket pitch, or

heading north past Hampden House and church

in the pub car park if lunching. A 5.5 mile walk

to Little Hampden. Returning via Hampden

Bottom and Monument. Some fine views. No major hills. Five stiles. Total ascent 420ft.

of Haddenham church and duck pond. Similar open countryside on the return. A couple of stiles.

Sandra Palmer 07512 615037

Stephen McFall 07745 006037

Winter at Bekonscot Model Village and Railway

Bekonscot Model Village takes on a magical winter feel with lights and specially created winter scenes to start your festive season .

Santa himself even pays us a visit on the last weekend of the season at our special Santa Weekend.



Bekonscot is open 7 days a week until Sunday 29th October, then at weekends only until Sunday 10th December.

We reopen for our 2024 season on Saturday 10th February



Bekonscot Illuminated

Every weekend between 4th November and 10th December. Lights come on at dusk.



Santa Weekend

9th and 10th December. Tickets to see Santa go on sale online from 1st November

Bekonscot Model Village, Warwick Road, Beaconsfield. HP9 2PL 01494 672919 Info@bekonscot.co.uk www.bekonscot.co.uk