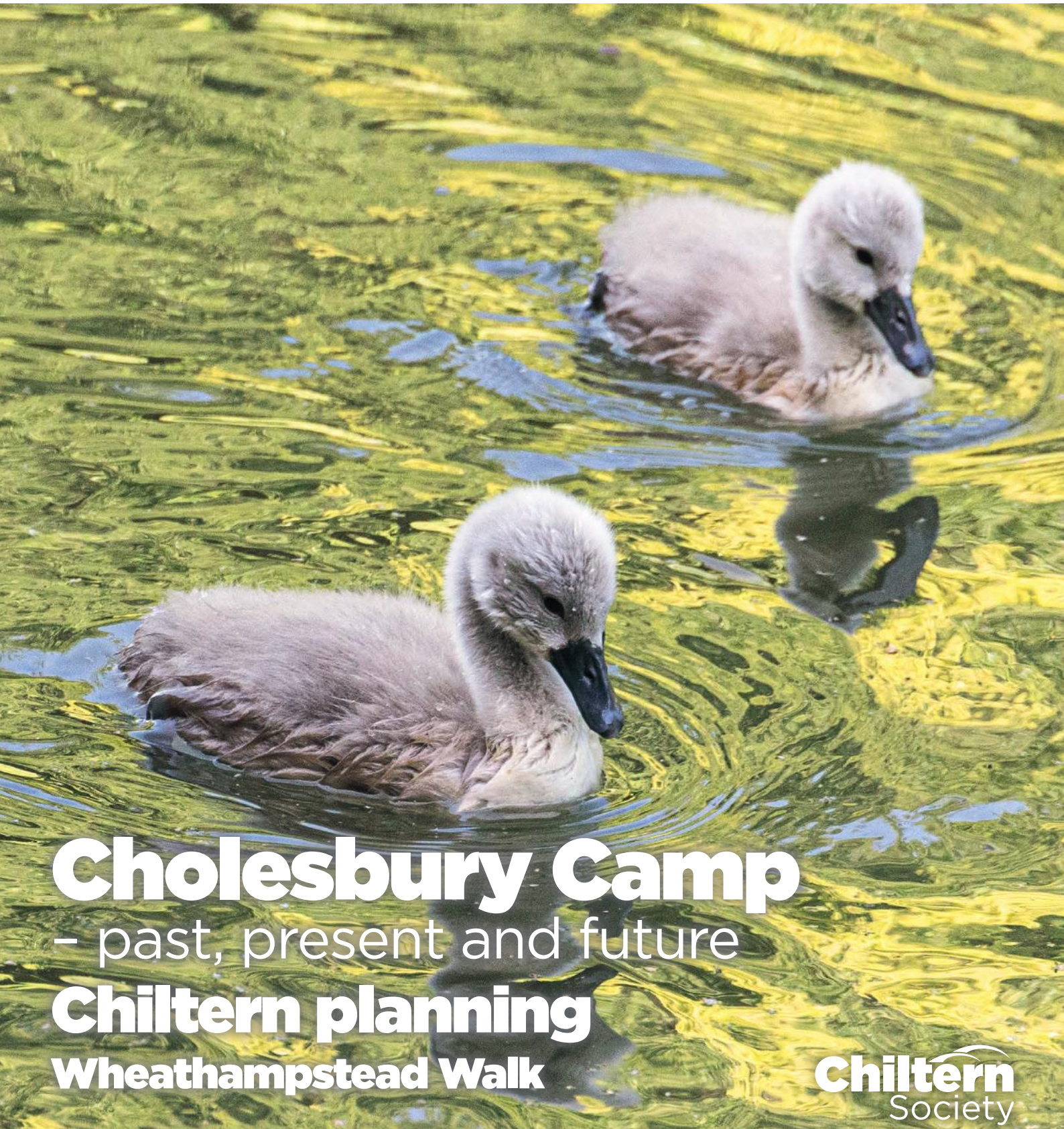


ISSUE 251 • SPRING 2024

# Chiltern

[www.chilternsociety.org.uk](http://www.chilternsociety.org.uk)



## **Cholesbury Camp**

- past, present and future

## **Chiltern planning**

**Wheathampstead Walk**

**Chiltern**  
Society

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Photo: Colin Drake

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# Finding our way

## From the Editor Richard Bradbury

As we look forward to spring, many of us will anticipate getting out into the Chiltern countryside more often, perhaps going on longer and more adventurous walks in areas which are new to us, and enjoying the reawakening of the natural world as it responds to warmer temperatures and longer hours of daylight. If we're venturing into unfamiliar territory, we'll probably be relying on maps and/or walk descriptions to help us find our way and trusting that the paths we're directed to will be clear and accessible.

Sadly, this isn't always so. We may encounter barriers to our progress which, in extreme cases, force us to retrace our steps and find another way. It may be that nature has simply been allowed to run riot across our intended route, or that man-made obstructions have been put in place to prevent us from going any further. The former is often the result of inaction, which isn't necessarily wilful; the latter – unless it's the consequence of a genuine health and safety issue – is more likely to have anti-social connotations. Landowners don't always welcome the public onto their land, and the most unscrupulous may well do whatever they can to deny access. In doing so, they'll probably calculate that the likelihood of an effective challenge from the hard-pressed authorities who should be pursuing them is minimal.

In January a report on the BBC News website carried the headline 'Public rights of way blocked in 32,000 places.' It goes on to say that an investigation had revealed that councils with responsibility for footpaths had 4,000 more access issues in 2023 than in 2022, and that 'funding constraints' were limiting what they could do to resolve the problems, despite the fact that they have a statutory duty to keep the paths clear. By 31 October 2023, according to figures obtained by the BBC from 73 authorities, 31,816 obstructions had been reported. Kate Ashbrook of the Open Spaces Society described the results as 'a shocking and growing abuse and neglect of our public path network.'

The Chiltern Society's Rights of Way Group (ROWG) plays a major role in seeking to ensure that the paths in our region



Photo: Paul Wisdell

are kept clear. It has a large team of path representatives, each monitoring a particular area, identifying problems and notifying the Group's Area Secretaries so that appropriate action can be taken. The ROWG also oversees the work of our Path Maintenance Volunteers (PMV), numbering more than 250, who operate in the North, Central and South Chilterns. Their efforts make an invaluable contribution towards maintaining a properly functioning path network. It's a big job! There are some 2,200 miles of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways to look after. That's why, in the last three issues of *Chiltern*, we've been celebrating what they do and introducing you to some members of the workforce. On page 24 of this magazine, it's the turn of Central Chilterns PMV to be in the spotlight.

Even if you're not a member of the ROWG, you can support its activities by reporting any path problems you encounter either to one of the Area Secretaries, whose contact details can be found in the Society Directory on our website, or by going direct to the relevant county council – see page 43 for advice on how to do this. Happy walking!

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# Chiltern

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### DEADLINE FOR ISSUE 252 (MAY 2024)

Items to the Editor by: Friday 29 March • Published: Saturday 25 May

# Lots to celebrate, but more to do



Sheep grazing on our Brush Hill site



Volunteers inspect our newest site at Northend Common



Wild flowers at Brush Hill

## From the Chair Simon Kearey

Last year was fantastic and it was wonderful to be able to report at the AGM on the Society's many activities and successes, as well as future opportunities. I'd like to focus a little more on the latter, because I know that many members are really interested and also rightly concerned about how an organisation founded by two friends more than half a century ago is set up for the future.

When reflecting on the roots of the Society it was salutary to recall that Conservation was also the key focus of our activities in the 1960s. Recently there's been significant work in this area, not only on the sites we own, but also through collaboration with sites maintained by other organisations, via informal partnership agreements. I believe the way forward is for these partnerships to be more formalised, so there can be mutual benefit from sharing expertise and experience, as well as synchronising to better conserve, campaign and protect this wonderful environment, while looking after those who live and work in it.

To date, partnerships have centred around Conservation, but the vision is to extend them to include areas such as the Arts, Culture, Agriculture and Food,

Heritage and Access. In all these there'd be an aspiration of closer working and maximising shared resources to meet challenges. To that end, the Board drew up a list of the key organisations - which we'll be continually extending - that could be approached to work more closely with the Chiltern Society. Over the next few years there'll be a 'call to arms' to explore and capitalise on these closer ties.

Earlier last year, I was delighted to be part of a work party composed of members from the Society and local ramblers' groups - a powerful alliance - to support access right across the path networks. In late summer, it was my privilege to speak to our volunteers at the pizza party on Whiteleaf Hill and learn from them about their experiences in caring for the network

of Chiltern paths, as well as the Ridgeway National Trail (another key collaboration).

## Michael Rush

Having known Michael and Linda Rush throughout my time as Chair of the Society, I share the sadness that I'm sure was felt by all who knew Michael when they learned of his death a few weeks after the AGM. I was so pleased he was able to attend that day and be part of a celebration of his life. He'll be very much missed as a friend, confidant and as a President who always had the Society's aims and ambitions at heart.



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## Trustees

A number of very experienced and talented people have recently joined the Trustee Board. This means that areas such as Marketing, Legal Affairs, Conservation and Business Development have a lead with relevant expertise. The recent trustees' awayday highlighted a number of areas of work for 2024.

## Our future aims

While much has been achieved in relation to chalk streams and Conservation, there could be more work on Carbon Net Zero, Community Engagement and Diversity of experience and opportunity. It's recognised that these are challenging goals which necessitate working in partnership with a range of organisations, possibly including

Parish Councils and many other local community groups. The focus going forward will be to develop and solidify these links to the benefit of the Society, but even more critically to improve the impact we're having in fulfilling our core aims. These are intended for all people and communities in the Chilterns, and I think we've recognised that for some of them the impact isn't what it should be. One of the obvious limitations is geography. While a good number of our members live in the north and south Chilterns, most of the activity is in the centre. We'd like to see this more evenly spread in future. We plan to report on our progress at the next AGM.

To conclude, many members have identified Planning and Development as being a key aspect of the Society's work, but they're not sure how powerful a voice it has. With planning and the environment being the theme for the 2024 AGM, our hope is to ensure that the Society's influence in this area is strong. Because many of you care deeply about them, the Board would bring issues around planning and the environment centre-stage.

So, we have lots to celebrate but more to do, and I can't wait to get on with it. Thank you for all your support and help over the last few years - looking back at what we've achieved, I know future challenges can be met and overcome by a successful Society that means so much to us all.

## OUR LIVING VILLAGE

# We did it!

## Alan Kell of the Seer Green & Jordans Society has good reason to celebrate

Against fierce competition from many of the largest and longest established societies in Buckinghamshire, the Seer Green & Jordans Society in partnership with the Chiltern Society was awarded the Bucks Archaeological Society's 2023 Prize for the 'Our Living Village' project.

In announcing the winner, Sandy Kidd of Historic England praised our project as an wonderful example of community engagement and ambition, showing the way forward for innovative local history research in the 21st century.

The award was presented by the well-known local historian and author Julian Hunt, and accepted by Alan Kell on behalf of the two villages and the whole project team. Very appropriately, the award comprised a beautiful trophy hand-turned from 'green' wild cherry wood, as well as a certificate and a substantial cheque.

'I'm enormously proud to accept this wonderful recognition and award from the Bucks Archaeological Society,' said Alan. 'It's been an amazing journey,

with so many people from our two villages contributing to its success. But we're not yet finished, as we've still got a number of important village themes to complete and upload to the Our Living Village website. And of course village history never stops, so we continue to seek the active involvement and support of our two wonderful communities.'

Earl Howe, Patron of the Chiltern Society, has previously acknowledged the project's achievements as follows: 'May I just say, having worked my way through the Our Living Village website, that I think it is a triumph.'

Please visit the site and share your thoughts with us.

[www.ourlivingvillage.org](http://www.ourlivingvillage.org)



## VOLUNTEERING

# Would you like to make a difference?

We've got a wide range of volunteering opportunities across the Chilterns and are always looking for new people to get involved and join our ever-growing team of over 750 volunteers.

If you think you'd like to join us, please go to our website and have a look at our Volunteer Vacancy page to see if there's anything that interests you. You can apply online or call our Volunteer Manager, Tracey Read, on 01494 490667 for further information about any of the roles.

**Volunteering with us is great, not just for the Chilterns but for you too! We look forward to hearing from you soon...**



# A hidden treasure in the Chilterns

Geophysical survey of the Camp ©CCB

## Dr Wendy Morrison on Cholesbury Camp - past, present and future

Sitting among the dry valleys which are a legacy of a distant geological past at the top of the River Chess catchment, is the Iron Age hillfort of Cholesbury Camp. It's noticeable that the site isn't on a major hill - this is one of the Chilterns plateau hillforts, with its location selected probably for its position at the top of the Chess Valley rather than for its overall relative elevation. Historic maps for the 19th century show the earthworks were called 'Danish Camp' which was a common misunderstanding from the 18th-19th centuries. Many hillforts across the south of Britain reflect this fantasy of Danish construction in their place names - Danebury (Hants), Danesborough (near Milton Keynes), and Danesfield Camp (near Medmenham in the Chilterns) all derive their names from this misinterpretation.

In reality, most hillforts across England were constructed between the Late Bronze Age (c1100 BC) and the end of the Middle Iron Age (300-100BC). In the Chilterns, our oldest hillfort is probably Ivinghoe Beacon, with a likely construction date sometime around 1050BC. By contrast, at the other end of the chronological range is Cholesbury Camp. Evidence suggests a Middle Iron Age construction (200BC).

The enclosure would have been built by people from surrounding communities, working together to dig the ditch and fill timber supports with the arising soil to make the banks (sometimes called

ramparts) and hold them in place. Today, the ditch at Cholesbury is still nearly 3m deep in places, and the banks 8m wide and over 1m high. While many hillforts around the country show good evidence for permanent settlement within the enclosure (such as Danebury, with its many roundhouses and grain stores), there are a great many which don't seem to have been used in this way. In the Chilterns, we've got several good examples of this sort of site. Pulpit Hill near Cadsden is a tiny but well-made enclosure, with no suggestion of anyone actually living there. Cholesbury Camp does provide us with



Dr Wendy Morrison with the information board

some structures, but they're secondary to the main focus of the site.

In the 1930s, an archaeologist called Day Kimball conducted some excavations which revealed a number of smelting hearths, suggesting that Cholesbury was a major iron production site. Smelting iron requires three main ingredients: ore, charcoal and water. To produce 1kg of finished iron using these types of furnaces, you need about 12kg of raw ore and about 15kg of charcoal. But making that amount of charcoal takes around 115kg of wood. It was a lot easier to produce charcoal in bulk at one site and move the ore to that location. Stands

of woodland were managed for charcoal production, and the large quantities required would have had implications for the surrounding tree cover.

Cholesbury's position along routeways, its water from the two interior ponds (which we assume, though have yet to prove, are contemporary), and the security of enclosure, would have made an ideal spot for making iron for the region. Ironmaking and metalworking tended to be seasonal activities; smelting iron in a clay furnace reaches temperatures near 1,200°C – a downpour of rain can cause the furnace to explode with devastating results! The people who carried out the smelting may have stayed in the roundhouses which have been discovered by geophysical surveys at the eastern edge of the site.

Yet another significant aspect to the location of the Camp is its very important place in the landscape – nearby to the northwest is a segment of the Iron Age earthworks known as Grim's Ditch. Research is still ongoing into the exact dating and function of these remains of linear features – they may well have been more joined up than current surviving segments suggest – but it's possible that they represent a territorial boundary.

The sherds of pottery recovered by Kimball in his excavations suggest that there was a re-use of the hillfort in the Latest Iron Age and Early Roman period (100BC-AD50) – some Samian potsherds, an import from Southern Gaul (France) were found. The use of the site might have been linked to the Romano-British settlement complex and iron production site at nearby Cow Roast.

After the first century AD, the site seems to have had remarkably little use – at least, any that left archaeological evidence – for about 1,000 years. Grazing animals were probably kept here, using both the enclosed space and the access to water, but there's nothing tangible to confirm this. By the 13th century, a church had been built in the southwestern side of the Camp, and the current church of St Lawrence is an 1870s structure on the original footprint, using some of the original building material from the demolished medieval church. In the 19th and 20th centuries some development occurred on the southern side of the hillfort, where Cholesbury Village Hall and some domestic residences now stand. The bulk of the earthworks are undisturbed by modern construction, however, and in 1921 it was designated a Scheduled Monument.

As such, Cholesbury Camp is protected from development, and it's a prosecutable



Cholesbury Camp after volunteers cleared trees and fallen debris

offence to cause damage to the site, or to conduct metal detecting activities. There's a Public Right of Way which allows people to enjoy both the peaceful setting of mature trees and bluebells (in spring), as well as taking in the impressive ancient features. The way is clearly marked, and visitors are asked to respect the privacy of those whose gardens back on to the interior, as well as to keep dogs on leads around livestock.

In 2018, the Chiltern Society generously raised supporting matched funding for the National Lottery Heritage Fund's *Beacons of the Past* project, hosted by the Chilterns Conservation Board. For five years I was fortunate enough to manage and deliver that project, and one of the highlights was helping ensure Cholesbury Camp's legacy for the future. The site was on Historic England's Heritage at Risk (HAR) register for several years as the earthworks became more and more vulnerable to the inevitable damage from wind-felled trees. Some of the trees were reaching the end of their natural lives and, after commissioning a tree health survey through the project and with financial support from Historic England's Monument Management Scheme, we discovered that even some trees that looked fine externally were weakened by fungal infections.

Felling trees in a site of natural beauty is always a hard decision, but in this instance it was the right thing to do for the protection of the ancient earthworks – a wind-blown tree tears up a massive root plate when it falls. No fewer than 40 trees were slated for felling, with a further 30 for canopy reduction to reduce their 'sail' in high winds. This might have seemed too high a price to pay for the sake of archaeology, but in the weeks leading up

to the scheduled felling, Storm Franklin showed us that we were protecting the present as well as the past – several trees and limbs came down all over the hillfort, damaging buildings and only just avoiding injury to people.

With the trees felled, and the arisings sent off to fuel the local eco-brickworks, the site was tidied up by those wonderful custodians of Cholesbury Camp – the Chiltern Society volunteers! These stalwarts regularly keep the holly, yew and bramble at bay, and they helped with the aftermath of the felling too. When the Historic England Monument Inspectors arrived later that summer, they were pleased to report that Cholesbury Camp would be coming off the HAR register!

One final aspect of the work at the hillfort is communicating its importance to the public. To this end, a Defra access grant enabled the Beacons of the Past project not only to install a new interpretation panel, but also to offer an Augmented Reality experience for visitors. At the end of December, with the help of the Chiltern Society's Ranger Nick, we installed the new panel at the Village Hall entrance (a second identical panel will be erected on the northern approach this spring). There are two QR codes – one takes you to a website with further information, including the geophysical survey images, LiDAR, and a short film about the Camp (featuring yours truly). The other takes you into to a digital world – an interpretation of what it *might* have looked like c200BC. I hope you'll be inspired to visit Cholesbury Camp for yourself – a hidden treasure in the heart of the Chiltern Hills.

**Wendy is Heritage & Archaeology Manager for the Chilterns Conservation Board**

*Photos: Wendy Morrison*

# Michael Rush



Left: At a family celebration. Top: A young Michael. Above: With Linda in their motorhome

Since we heard the sad news about the death of Society President, Michael Rush, many tributes have been paid to a man who dedicated much of his later life to our organisation, including years as its highly respected figurehead.

Below is a small sample of the recollections from people who knew him and worked with him. It's no surprise that the theme of 'support' features prominently.

## Tom Beeston:

Michael's support throughout my time at the Chiltern Society has been invaluable. He and Linda always seemed to be able to leave me feeling positive and motivated to do more and better things for the Chilterns. It was great to hear all about his many years of involvement with the Society at our last AGM, something I will never forget. While he was 90, he certainly wasn't an old man, more of a recycled teenager!

## Rob Bethell:

I was co-opted by Michael onto the Executive Council in 1998/9 when he became Chairman. I recall that the EC was having problems choosing a suitable millennium project. When Michael attended, possibly with a degree of desperation, a Rights of Way Group committee meeting to ask for ideas, and I suggested, with no prior thought, a long-distance circular walk around the Chilterns, there was relief all round. The Chiltern Way was born and I was busy for the next few years!

It was during this period that I had close contact with Michael. He insisted, very

pleasantly I might add, that I was Project Manager. I would have preferred the title Technical Manager. I found Michael very easy to work with. He could push hard when necessary, but gave his full support and encouragement. He and Linda were personally very involved in the successful launch of The Chiltern Way in October 2000.

I also recall that Michael and Linda held a party in the grounds of their house to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the founding of the Society, and their organisational skills were again well displayed.

My personal view is that Michael was the best and most effective Chairman of the Society in the 30 odd years I have been a member, albeit he was the only one with whom I had close contact.

## David Harris:

I recall first meeting Michael after I had written to the Chiltern Society asking for their help in raising funds to buy a 250-acre local woodland called Common Wood. He came over to Penn for a meeting with me and the then Chairman of the Penn & Tylers Green Residents Society, Miles Green, to discuss what help they could be.

He agreed that the Chiltern Society

would provide some 'seed funding' for a fundraising campaign and thereafter was always very supportive of any charitable endeavours. However, he did want a 'quid pro quo'! He said 'Now I've helped you raise money for Common Wood, would you reciprocate by becoming a trustee of the Chiltern Society?' Thus began my 20-year stint as a trustee!

## Richard Bradbury:

Throughout my time as editor of the Society's magazine (formerly *Chiltern News* and now *Chiltern*), Michael was nothing but supportive. He would quite frequently email me after the latest issue was published, thank me for my work, and comment on an article that had particularly captured his attention - but, more than that, he often publicly praised the magazine when speaking at Society gatherings. From time to time he'd also make suggestions that he thought might enhance the magazine - but he never forced his opinions on me, instead leaving me to decide for myself whether he was right. It was always a pleasure to meet him at events like the AGM, and I'm very glad that at the most recent one - his last, as it turned out - I was able to spend about 10 minutes alone with him.

I'm going to miss him.



## More about Michael

These words are taken from Michael's funeral service in late November, which was called, appropriately, 'A Celebration of Life'. They begin with parts of the eulogy given by his son, David, and end with a footnote from his best friend, Tony Wallington.

Dad was lucky to have many interests, loves and passions, but by far the most important was his family. He married Janet, my mum, in 1958 and had three children, myself, Sue and Lindy. He later married Linda who he spent 43 years with, and her son Chris joined our family. Dad provided all of us with the best upbringing we could have hoped for. It was always loving. He never smacked us, except for the time I jumped up and down on the brand-new sofa! He was a role model to us all and gave each of us the most precious gift of all, his time.

He was particularly proud of his grandchildren, loved their company, was proud of their achievements and could not stop talking about them. He was delighted this year to become a great-grandfather and a month before he died he learned, to his joy, that he would be a great-grandfather for the second time next year.

He had a keen interest in motor cars from the time he decided to reverse his father's Daimler out of the garage - unfortunately he forgot to open the garage doors! When in Germany, he bought his first car, an old Mercedes, which he drove into a milk float. On returning to the UK he bought a three-wheeler Morgan. He had many adventures driving around Scotland - it regularly became a two-wheeler when the rear wheel fell off.

Like cars, his passion for horses started young. Living on the edge of Richmond Park, his childhood ambition was to be a park ranger. When Lindy was born, Dad took Sue and me on holidays pony trekking in Wales and sailing on the Norfolk Broads. When we moved to Horseshoe Cottage in Burnham it had a field and stables, and he soon bought a horse for himself and Sue. Later when he moved to Kingstreet End with Linda, riding became an even bigger part of his life.

He was also interested in sailing. When I was seven, he bought a mirror dinghy and told me he was going to teach me to sail. At seven you know your Dad is the best in the world at everything, so I knew I was being taught by the best. We launched on the Thames at Marlow. There was no wind, but there was a strong current taking us towards the weir. Dad gave me the only paddle in the boat, pointed to the weir and said if you don't paddle hard enough we're going down



Michael and Linda's wedding

there! He then bought a holiday home in Emsworth and Lady B, a small sailing yacht. We did our Day Skipper course together and he was very proud when later I became a Yachtmaster.

He loved the outdoors. For years he and Linda had annual walking holidays in the UK and abroad, and he loved cycling. Until last year, I regularly went cycling with him in the New Forest. How many sons can say they went cycling with their 89-year-old Dad?

He also loved his time at Kingstreet End in Little Missenden, his and Linda's home for many years. He hand-built a raised walkway along the River Misbourne, which ran through the property, together with a bridge based on Monet's painting. Early every morning he used to walk the dog through the fields, during which he learned and recited poetry, which he credited with keeping his mind young and sharp. At every family gathering he would recite numerous poems off by heart. His favourites were 'If' by Rudyard Kipling and 'The Lion and Albert'. Magic was another passion. He devoted a lot of time to learning and inventing magic tricks, which he performed to family, friends, Probus dinners, Oakhaven Hospice patients and many more.

Of his six grandchildren, Tom and Alex couldn't be here today. I'd like to read a few of the memories they've written. In so doing, they represent all the grandchildren.

'He always listened, never judged and in our darkest moments would always teach us to keep our heads up and stand tall.



Grandpa always managed to put a smile on everyone's face and offer wise words of guidance. The relationship we have been so lucky to share with him goes far beyond a grandpa and grandson relationship and this we will cherish for the rest of our days.'

### Tony Wallington wrote:

'... in Matthew's parable of the talents, Jesus tells us we are given time, gifts and other resources according to our abilities, and we are expected to use them wisely. Michael was gifted with those abilities, which he used to help people and to build good causes and places for all who knew him.

'God bless you, Michael.'

*Michael's own reminiscences about his work with the Chiltern Society and other aspects of his life can be found in Chiltern 248 (summer 2023). Editor*

# Wheathampstead to Brocket Hall

With **Andrew Clark**

A longer than usual walk that includes much local history, rolling countryside, the upper reaches of the River Lea and two lovely pubs.

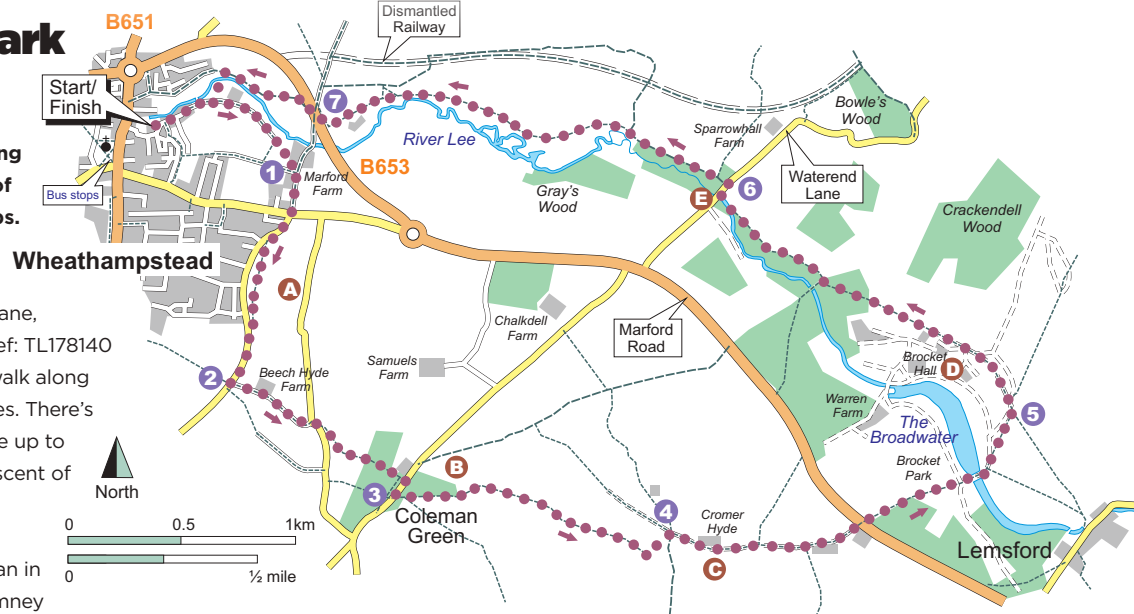
**DISTANCE:** 6.5 miles/10.4km

**START:** East Lane car park, East Lane, Wheathampstead AL4 8SB. Grid ref: TL178140

**TERRAIN:** A moderate stile-free walk along good paths, with a number of gates. There's one steady climb from Devil's Dyke up to near Coleman Green and a total ascent of 330ft/100m

**MAPS:** OS Explorer 182

**REFRESHMENTS:** The John Bunyan in Coleman Green, The Crooked Chimney near Cromer Hyde, pubs and cafés in Wheathampstead



**LOCAL TRANSPORT:** For local bus services please check [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)

Map: Glyn Kuhn  
Photos: Colin Drake

## The route

Turn left out of the car park along East Lane into Meads Lane and follow it into the park. Keep straight ahead following the hedgerow on the right and, where that ends, continue onwards through a series of gates. The path then turns right up to a path junction. Turn left and continue to a lane (Sheepcote Lane).

1. Turn right uphill to a road junction, cross into Dyke Lane and walk along for 130m to the entrance to Devil's Dyke on the left. Go through the ornate gate, walk along the sunken path for 350m and turn right up the steps to rejoin Dyke Lane. Turn left along it for 300m and take the footpath on the left at the entrance to Beech Hyde Farm.
2. Follow the path through the farm and bear right away from the buildings along a wide track to the next lane (Beech Hyde Lane). Continue to the right-hand bend, go straight on past the barrier and through the gate into a field. Follow the path uphill and through the next gate into a wood. Continue ahead onto a gravel driveway and follow it round to the left past The John Bunyan pub to visit John Bunyan's Chimney, a little further along the lane to the right. Walk back along the lane for 160m and take the path on the left.
3. Continue ahead past the barrier into the field. Turn immediately left along the field edge and keep straight ahead through a gap in the hedgerow into the next field. Carry on in the same direction and follow the hedgerow round to the right into another field. Walk gently uphill for 50m, bear left over the field to the other side and turn right to follow the path for 200m to a wide crossing track. Cross it and stay in the same direction to the left of the wood. Where that ends, continue for a further 200m and turn left through a gap in the hedgerow into a field. Follow the path across the field to a lane (Cromer Hyde Lane).
4. Turn right along the lane for 900m to the junction with the B653 Marford Road. On the right is The Crooked Chimney pub. Cross the main road to a pavement, turn right for a few metres and take the footpath on the left into a field. Go straight ahead, follow the path

down beside the golf course to a lake and go over the bridge. The path now runs uphill on the grass next to a driveway. Where the hedgerow on the left ends, follow it round to the left away from the driveway onto a path.

5. The path rejoins the driveway near Bocket House. Turn left along it to shortly bear right over the grass, keep straight ahead past the buildings and across the golf course into the wood. Follow the path down to a junction of tracks and continue directly ahead for 600m to reach Waterend Lane. To the left is Waterend Ford.
6. Turn right up the lane for 50m to Waterend House and take the path on the left signposted to Wheathampstead. The route now follows the River Lea for 2km through a series of gates and then on to one just before the main road. Go through it, turn right and, at the first corner, drop down the steps to a bridleway.
7. Turn left under the main road and immediately right up the steps to a path. Turn right and go through the gate onto a wide track. Follow it for 500m and bear left down towards a bridge over the river. Cross it and turn right to leave the park. Go straight ahead along the lane for 130m and take the path on the right past the barrier to return to the car park



John Bunyan's Chimney



Entrance to Devil's Dyke



Brocket Hall



The Crooked Chimney pub



Bridge at Brocket Hall

## Points of interest

**Wheathampstead:** The walk starts from the car park, then passes through an open area called 'The Meades', where you'll find play and picnic areas, a community orchard, The Dell (a local wildlife site) and the River Lea. The river rises in Luton and flows 42 miles to the Thames at Bow Creek. Its upper sections are classified as a chalk stream. These support a wide range of wildlife, including otters, water voles, kingfishers and many species of coarse fish. The spring 2021 issue of *Chiltern* included a feature by Bob Stuart about Wheathampstead railway station. It's well worth a visit.

**A. Devil's Dyke** is the remains of a prehistoric defensive ditch to an Iron Age settlement and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It's suggested that it was the site where Julius Caesar defeated the resistance led by the local Catuvellauni tribe under Cassivellaunus.

**B. John Bunyan's Chimney:** John Bunyan was a Puritan preacher and the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which became one of the most published books in the English language. The chimney stack is all that remains of one of the cottages where he's believed to have stayed and preached.

**C. Cromer Hyde** is a hamlet just off the main Wheathampstead to Lemsford road (B653). It's divided into three - Lower, Middle and Upper Cromer Hyde - and contains some attractive cottages. Further along the lane is The Crooked Chimney pub, formerly called The Chequers. The building can be traced back to the 1600s when it was a farmhouse. It became an ale house c1756. Note the highly distinctive Z-shaped chimney.

**D. Brocket Hall:** The first mansion on this site was built in 1279. The current house is Grade I listed, was designed by the architect Sir James Paine and dates from c1760. The Hall has been used as a location for many film and television productions including *Pride and Prejudice* with Colin Firth. The classical bridge over the River Lea was built of Portland stone, also to Paine's design.

**E. Waterend House** is a large Jacobean house built by Sir John Jennings in 1610 and is Grade II listed. His granddaughter Sarah Jennings became the First Duchess of Marlborough. The exterior of the house was used in the filming of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. The ford on the River Lea was a crossing point for the Roman Road from St Albans to Braughing.



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# Government plans for the Chilterns and beyond



**Our Chief Officer, Tom Beeston, summarises the latest news**

## England to get a new National Park as part of nature plan?

Over the last few weeks you may have heard that the Government is contemplating the creation of a new National Park, with items in the news suggesting that Natural England will consider a list of possible sites, which might include the Chilterns, the Cotswolds and Dorset. We've done some digging and will update you if something does happen – but I won't be holding my breath!

## More funding for Protected Landscapes?

Recent announcements have promised £2.5m to help more children and disadvantaged young people experience the benefits of the great outdoors, together with an additional £15 million funding uplift for Protected Landscapes. Assuming this is shared among 15 National Parks, 16 National Trails and 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, we're thinking this isn't too much of a game changer, and it's potentially a one-off payment too. At least it's a step in the right direction, however, and hopefully a helpful boost to our good friends at the Chilterns Conservation Board.

## Chilterns AONB Boundary Review spring-summer 2024

We've been having numerous conversations with Natural England regarding the upcoming review and our expert planning volunteers have fed back their initial thoughts. At this stage there's little more we can do and not much to report. Natural England will consult more widely via statutory (and public) consultations, to run for between eight and twelve weeks later this year. We'll tell you more as soon as we know.

## Welcome to living in the Chilterns National Landscape (aka Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)!

In late November the AONB you know and love became a National Landscape. We were told: 'National Landscapes teams have been at the forefront of delivering natural solutions to the main challenges facing the nation for many years. The new brand underscores their commitment to redoubling their efforts

and engaging with a wider audience. In 2019, teams set themselves the most ambitious targets for nature and climate in the sector (the Colchester Declaration) and continue to work to meet them. The rebrand marks the next step in fully realising the National Landscapes' vision to be the leading exemplars of how thriving, diverse communities can work with and for nature in the UK: restoring ecosystems, providing food, storing carbon to mitigate the effects of climate change, safeguarding against drought and flooding, whilst also nurturing people's health and wellbeing.'

We've been working closely with the Chilterns Conservation Board on this and are pleased they've been fighting our corner to get the best possible outcome for the Chilterns. Although the jury is out, with some understandable resistance to change for change's sake, others really like the rebrand/rename. That said, I'm not sure the public will see any great changes soon, because dropping Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty from the legal description will require legislation, and I'm not aware of any big funding stream for a complete rebrand.



Wendover Dean Viaduct (Photo: Keith Hoffmeister)



## Lobby your MP: Nature 2030 campaign

We continue to support the Wildlife and Countryside Links Nature 2030 campaign and the five-point plan created by over 70 environmental charities in the UK to restore nature by 2030. We urge you to talk to your MP about it too. If you've not yet seen the plan, it includes the following five actions that the campaigners want to see reflected in all party manifestos ahead of the next General Election:

- 1. A major increase in public spending for nature**, doubling the nature-friendly farming budget to pay for an increase in ambitious agroecological action and large-scale nature restoration.
- 2. A Nature Recovery Obligation**, legislating for mandatory climate and nature transition plans, and setting new duties to require private sector funding for species and habitat recovery.
- 3. A 30x30 rapid delivery programme**, restoring protected sites and landscapes, and creating a Public Nature Estate to fulfil the promise to protect 30% of the land and sea for nature.
- 4. A National Nature Service**, delivering wide-scale habitat restoration and creating green jobs in urban, rural and coastal habitats, and in species recovery.
- 5. A Right to a Healthy Environment**, establishing a human right to clean air and water, and access to nature.

The UK is one of the worst countries in the world for nature loss, with over one in seven native species facing extinction and more than 40% of species having declined over the last 50 years. The importance of nature continues to be overlooked by decision makers. The Nature 2030 campaign aims to put a stop to the decline and restore nature by 2030.

The more politicians hear this, the more likely it is that they'll act, so please ask if this is in their manifesto when they come seeking your support.

**Sign up to our e-news if you'd like updates on these and other topics.**

# News update

**From** John Gladwin

Here are some of the recent developments on the HS2 route through the Chilterns.

## Sinkholes

Following on from the large sinkhole which appeared in Shardeloes Park, near Amersham, a smaller one appeared under a public footpath adjacent to Hodgemoor Woods to the south of Hyde Lane, Hyde End. Footpath GMI 27/1 was closed and livestock moved. The contractors, Align JV, obtained agreement from the Environment Agency and the sinkhole was filled in with grout. The footpath was then reopened. The Shardeloes sinkhole has been backfilled with chalk, which is being allowed time to settle before the topsoil is replaced and the area regrassed.

## Water into the Misbourne

Just before Christmas, it was discovered that a large amount of water was entering the Misbourne from a pipe north of the Link Road in Great Missenden. The water appeared to have some brown sediment in it. The source was unknown and people were concerned that it contained sewage. After some investigation, it was established that the water was coming from some silt-busters being used to empty the overflow ponds on the HS2 site on the other side of the A413. The contractors, EKFB, confirmed that they were testing the water to ensure it contained no harmful chemicals. The Environment Agency had given them permission to discharge the cleansed water into a ditch beside the A413. That ditch, however, discharges any excess water into the Misbourne via a pipe under the road. It's apparent that there's a small amount of silt left in the water, which may account for the discolouration. We've asked EKFB to let us know what percentage of silt remains in the discharged water.

## Tunnelling

It is anticipated that the two Tunnel Boring Machines will soon finish digging the 10.6

mile long twin-bore Chiltern Tunnel which will emerge just north of Frith Hill in South Heath near Great Missenden. They'll then be dismantled, with work going on around the clock. This will take up to six months.

## Tunnel vent shafts

The head houses which sit on top of the five shafts are now being built and will be the only part of the shafts visible above ground. Although they're probably technically single storey, they're much larger than expected.

## Wendover Dean Viaduct

The supporting piers for the viaduct have been completed. The work of pushing its steel frame over the piers has now begun.

## Wendover traffic

There have been a number of overnight closures of the A413 near Wendover – some are lane closures, others full closures. These relate to the building of the Small Dean Viaduct, which requires an alteration of the route of the A413 to accommodate building the viaduct piers. There's also been a three week full closure of the Ellesborough Road to enable the tie-in of diversion routes.

## Leather Lane

The revised designs for Leather Lane are with HS2 for a decision. It's unclear when they'll be shared with Bucks Council and other interested parties.

## Bowood Lane

The long-running appeal against Bucks Council's refusal of planning permission for the Bowood Lane Bridge has been resolved, with the Planning Inspectorate approving a slightly modified design, ignoring the effect of leaving and entering a single-track sunken lane and the need for green bridges in the AONB.



# Sheds of many parts

## Bob Stuart investigates a rapidly expanding movement that's benefitting older men in the Chilterns and elsewhere

It's a Monday morning. In a brightly lit Portakabin in Amersham, a group of retired men are gathered. The kettle's on, the atmosphere's convivial and the scene is set for the subsequent session of sawing, drilling, sanding, painting and equally important, good-natured banter. Meet the regulars of Amersham Men's Sheds, a place where men of a certain age and disposition can meet to learn new skills or practice existing ones, while enjoying friendship, warmth and camaraderie.

It's a similar picture in more than a dozen Sheds across the Chilterns and, indeed, one that's replicated in groups as far afield as Australia, Canada, South Africa and Europe. From just 30 Sheds in 2013, the UK Men's Sheds Association has grown to more than 13,000 shedders in some 900 groups, with more in the pipeline.

Now with about 20 current members, Amersham Sheds started in 2015. Initial meetings were centred in a church and a cricket pavilion, before more permanent accommodation was found – occupying former shipping containers and based at a local farm. This arrangement avoids the need to set up then dismantle equipment after each session.

The group now meets here twice a week with the focus on woodworking, making a wide variety of items, ranging from bird and bat boxes to children's toys, plant boxes

and household items. These are sold in local markets, at fetes or events such as the annual Amersham Heritage Day, raising useful funds to buy equipment and materials for the shedders. The men's carpentry skills also attract one-off commissions.

It's not all about producing things though, as Chairman and Trustee of Amersham Men's Sheds John Latchford explained. 'The overarching idea is that we get men, particularly older men, out of the house and get them together. Statistics show that while women are more likely to have close friendships, social connections and meeting groups, such as the WI, older men can suffer loneliness and isolation. At the same time, some of our members enjoyed their own sheds at home for years but then had to downsize, losing their sheds with nowhere to practice their hobbies and skills.'

The Monday morning men enjoying



their tea before settling down to the day's activities represent a diverse range of former jobs and backgrounds. For instance, today there's a former quantity surveyor, policeman, psychiatric nurse, chair maker, and an 88-year-old who professes he was previously 'something in the City' – at Lloyds as it happens.

After their refreshments, the group disperses to a collection of former shipping containers that house equipment such as lathes, drills, saws and sanders, not to mention a wide selection of tools. Much of the equipment is donated, while some is bought from the proceeds of sales. Naturally, nothing would emerge from the workshops without a constant supply of wood, which is usually plentiful and welcomed from a variety of sources.

'We use a lot of reclaimed wood,' said John, adding, 'It can come from skips or

we get people bringing in car loads of their spare wood. A local shed maker gives us lots of offcuts and it's the same with local builders. We use almost every last bit and what we can't use goes for firewood - every scrap is turned into something and nothing is wasted. Wood is an amazing material. You can take what seems to be a rotten piece of timber, an old door perhaps, but when it's turned down and rubbed over with a sander it can come up really beautiful.'

What emerges from the workshops is as diverse as the former jobs of their makers. As well as the range of expertly finished toys, there are popular household items such as wine racks, trugs, bowls, boxes, boot pullers and coffee tables. Helping the local flora and fauna is also high on the list for our band of shedders, who can turn their hands to bird tables and boxes for owls, birds, bats and hedgehogs. Also not forgotten are the smaller creatures, and among recent commissions for the local authority were 'bug hotels' to be sited at the county's recycling centres. A number of raised planters to adorn the town centre were specially made for the local residents of Chesham to enjoy during the Chesham in Bloom event.

Such one-off commissions aren't unusual



and in the recent past have included a Punch and Judy theatre for an infants' school in Amersham, which was then decorated by the local WI. Also custom-made to order were owl boxes for the Woodland Trust and, just for fun, Pinnochios for an annual event in Little Chalfont where the shedders occupy a regular stall in the village's Red Kite market. On another occasion the men helped a local school mark its 150th anniversary by constructing a frame and stand for a banner that could be paraded by pupils at the celebration.

Not all the UK's Sheds are engaged in woodworking - typical activities can be wide ranging. For example, a Shed in Hounslow emerged from what was a classic car restoration club. Others may turn their hands

to metalwork, electronics, repairing and restoring, model building or picture framing, as well as gardening and growing produce for their members to sell.

Because workshop space is fairly confined, numbers are currently limited at Amersham. A warm welcome always awaits new members when possible, however, and previous skills aren't necessary. 'This is not a woodworking club, there's no audition to get in here and no production targets,' John emphasised, 'My philosophy is that our Shed gives some older men a sense of purpose and identity after retirement. It's about sharing skills and knowledge, meeting like-minded people and, of course, having fun with friends.'

**Photos: John Latchford**

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# The Colne Valley

## and its relevance to the Chilterns



Colne Valley: Looking north towards Rickmansworth from Jacks Lock, Harefield

### By Stewart Pomeroy, **Managing Agent,** **Colne Valley Regional Park**

The Colne Valley Regional Park was formed in 1965 when local authorities saw the potential of this landscape for people and nature. It's a special place. The Park is of national and international importance for wildlife, from Stockers Lake Nature Reserve down to the Southwest London Waterbodies Special Protection Area. It's also regionally important for recreation, featuring attractions such as Rickmansworth Aquadrome, Black Park and the Grand Union Canal.

The valley sides and plateau around Harefield, Maple Cross and Chalfont St Peter are a network of farmland, hedgerows and more than 40 irreplaceable ancient woodlands, in places rather like the Chilterns in character. This then flattens out from Denham and Iver towards the Thames floodplain in the south, including the amazing hidden gem of Staines Moor.

Now, after nearly 60 years of positive action, the Colne Valley Regional Park is under pressure like never before. Its recent experience is a classic and alarming illustration of what's going wrong with the Green Belt nationally: previously protected land is now seen by the market as a good development opportunity, because there's a vacuum of policy addressing development pressures and 'needs'.

In the Colne Valley there are currently proposals for:

- more than a dozen data centres (20-30m high)

- motorway services
- tens of thousands of houses
- huge film studios, warehouses and many other speculative developments.

All these are sandwiched between two of the biggest civil engineering projects in Europe: HS2 and the proposed Heathrow expansion.

As things stand, the positive benefits of the countryside for people and wildlife are being given insufficient weight when decisions about developments are made. We're witnessing an alarmingly rapid decline of landscapes that are supposed to be under the protection and watchful eye of local authorities. There's evidence of 'planning by dereliction' – areas of precious Green Belt are being deliberately allowed to deteriorate, and this decline in quality is then being used as justification for their proposed loss to development. It also gives truth to the view emerging from some quarters that the Green Belt is merely an obstacle to development.

If no tangible action is taken to address this then, by default, local communities and city populations will be forced to suffer the effects of this uncoordinated development frenzy and landscape decline. It's no exaggeration to say that we're sleepwalking into huge change to the countryside around our cities – no one is planning for this, very few people say they want it, but it's happening.

The Regional Park has done its best to lobby for protection of this precious landscape, but unfortunately our efforts to promote proper political understanding and buy-in aren't yet cutting through with key decision makers.

All is not lost, however. If there's the political will, the Park can be at the forefront of developing pioneering solutions that can then be shared with similar areas across the UK.

### **Campaign: Your Countryside in Crisis – A call for action**

At our annual forum at Brunel University in December we launched a new campaign to *'Persuade decision makers to act now to protect the special landscape of the Colne Valley Regional Park, specifically*



safeguarding it for future generations and enabling it to realise its full potential for the benefit of people and wildlife.'

We're pressing for implementation of a five-point plan to:

### 1. Influence Local Planning

- Ensure policies for the Colne Valley Regional Park and its rivers are included in local plans

### 2. Restore the Landscape

- Tie together the five Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) that are being prepared for Bucks, Herts, Berks, London and Surrey to focus on the landscape across county boundaries (because this is how nature operates)
- Prepare and implement a Local Landscape Recovery Strategy that complements LNRS
- Use this to inform local plans, development briefs etc. It will also guide project development, fundraising and inform design of planning applications and their mitigation.

### 3. Reform National Planning

- Add a sixth Green Belt 'purpose', to recognise the intrinsic value of countryside. In this way the positive benefits of the Green Belt for people, wildlife, climate change adaptation and food production can be recognised in planning policy
- Require any major development in the Green Belt to be led by plan making, not via 'Very Special Circumstances' (when development can avoid strategic mitigation and compensatory improvements to the remaining Green Belt)
- Introduce strategic planning at a landscape scale, beyond Local Authority boundaries, to provide a planning framework for where and how significant development need should be met and green corridors provided

- Ensure that all development close to urban areas leads to better connectivity with generous green corridors - for wildlife and people.

This action is central to the whole campaign. National government must lead the way.

### 4. Establish Status

(specific protection for regional parks)

- The critical countryside role for the 'inner' Green Belt immediately adjacent to cities is often overlooked by government, local authorities and developers. A new third type of Protected Landscape should be created that can sit alongside 'National Parks' (such as the Peak District and the New Forest) and 'National Landscapes' (such as the Chilterns). We suggest this is called 'Regional Landscapes' and that this approach is trialled in the Colne Valley before being rolled out to other areas of countryside right next to major cities.

### 5. Protect Nature

- Create evidence-led wildlife protection that unites existing protected sites and nature reserves, and fills in the gaps between them. This should be done in recognition of the landscape context of the string of hundreds of kilometres of rivers, over 70 lakes and associated wetland habitats in the Colne Valley, on the edge of five counties, as nationally important for wildlife. (Similar to the new Somerset 'Super Nature Reserve' that was created last year).

This is a pro-countryside campaign, not an anti-development one. You can read more about it at <https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/project/campaign/>. We'll be posting updates on this webpage as the campaign progresses in 2024 and we reach out to local authorities, MPs, Government ministers and shadow ministers. Please help us by getting involved and adding your voice to those

already raised in defence of our region - see the section of the website titled 'what you can do to help'.

The Colne Valley Regional Park Trust is the organisation at the 'coal face' and has positive proposals. But this is a five-point plan for everyone. **We need support and action from local authorities and national government if your local countryside is to be saved.** Politicians will be more likely to act if you're active and vocal about the countryside on your doorstep. We'll link up with other organisations in 2024 to ensure this crucially important campaign has national reach.

## What has this got to do with the Chilterns?

All this matters because many of the internationally rare chalk streams of the Chilterns flow into the River Colne (which is also a chalk stream). The system is interconnected and used by wildlife as one - whether it's egrets on the Chess roosting at Broadwater Lake, water voles on the Misbourne linking with populations on the Colne, or eels migrating to the Gade from their birthplace in the Sargasso Sea. (If Heathrow expansion is ever permitted, this 3,000 mile journey will no longer be possible).

The Colne Valley Regional Park sits between London and the Chilterns, serving both as a gateway and protective buffer to the latter. If it's lost to development, the Chilterns are next. If there's no change to planning policy, no landscape restoration and no new protection, the Central Chilterns will take on the mantle of being the first large taste of countryside to the west of London - along with **everything** that goes hand in hand with that.

**For further discussion about the impact of planning decisions and development in the Chilterns, see Mike Sheehan's article on page 26.**



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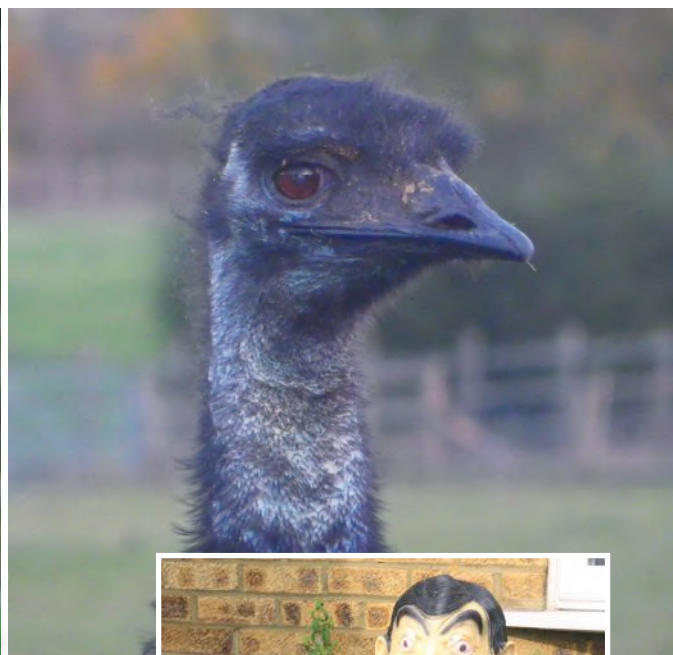
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# Cycling through the seasons



Jelly ear fungus



Mr Bean

## Greg Neal looks back on 2023

Overall, our cycling groups were fortunate with the weather last year. Only a few rides had to be cancelled or rearranged due to forecasts of strong winds or heavy rain. In addition, we were frequently happy to find the weather was better than the forecast. Once again, the Chilterns, and especially the beech woods, provided wonderful, constantly changing backdrops through the seasons: new green leaves in spring, warm and humid summer days, autumn colours ranging from yellow to orange and various shades of brown. Winter may yet bring ice and snow.

We had two encounters with decidedly exotic birds while out cycling last year. Firstly, an emu sharing a field near Chalfont St Giles with a donkey and a pony, and secondly, a man walking along a trail near Little Marlow accompanied by two dogs and carrying an American red-tailed hawk on his gloved hand.

### Spring

After completing several cold, wet rides in January and February, the arrival of spring is always welcomed by cyclists, and 2023 was no exception. The bluebells suddenly appeared in the beech woods, the leaves on the trees began to open and we were able to enjoy riding through the areas around Great Missenden, the Kingshills, Wendover and Princes Risborough. The route from Hughenden Valley to Bryant's Bottom, the Hampdens and on towards Chequers and Ellesborough is particularly attractive and deservedly popular with the Chiltern groups at this time of year.

Springtime rides are also an opportunity to see newborn lambs in the fields. Other farm animals are moved out from their winter quarters and these changes add to the feeling that the year is progressing rapidly. On some warm spring days we were able to sit outside the pub to eat lunch when we returned from our ride.

### Summer

The summer months entice more people to cycle in shorts and short-sleeved jerseys, although some hardy souls wear shorts in all weathers! More and more of the male riders in our Thursday group now seem keen to put hats on as soon as they remove their helmets at lunchtime – at our age we need to avoid the danger of sunburn on the scalp, where less hair protects the skin than it used to.

The cycling group holidays in 2023 were limited to places within the UK. A very enjoyable trip to Lincolnshire in June was based in Market Rasen, a name which will

be familiar to horseracing fans, but less so to most other people. The ride on the first full day headed north to the Humber Bridge and across it to Hessle, before returning to Market Rasen. The following day involved a shorter circular route to visit the historic walled city of Lincoln, with a chance to explore the steep, cobbled climb up Michaelgate in the city centre, with its maximum gradient of 20%, which has featured in numerous professional cycle races. In contrast, the first seven kilometres of our return journey followed the flat cycle path beside the River Witham, where the open countryside felt very rural.

Plans are already being made for a wider range of holidays in 2024, including a tour of the Ring of Kerry in Eire, starting near Killarney; and a trip along the Hebridean Way from Castlebay to the Butt of Lewis in Scotland. In addition, three holidays are planned in England, based in Hereford, the

New Forest and close to the Norfolk Broads in Aylsham.

## Autumn

Scarecrow trails have become a popular feature locally in recent years, with gardening clubs and schools creating figures with a particular theme, such as film and television characters. A subject such as celebrities lends itself to a wide range of interpretations including people in the news, sports stars and fictional characters. Cycling through one area I saw scarecrows based on climate change activist Greta Thunberg, England women's football team manager Sarina Wiegman, and comedy character Mr Bean. Following one of these trails on bikes can provide an ideal route for a family trip, because the distance covered is usually relatively small and there are obvious stopping points along the way.

There were large numbers of fungi growing in the woods and in open spaces such as churchyards, with many being visible from the roadside as we cycled past. It isn't usually possible to identify fungi as we pass by, although the poisonous fly agaric, which grows under trees such as birch, oak and pine, is unmistakable with its red cap covered in irregular white flecks. Other species commonly found in the Chilterns include edible field mushrooms, parasols, cloudy agaric, puffballs, stinkhorn, sulphur tuft, candle snuff fungus, King Alfred's cakes, sulphur polypore and jelly ears.

## Winter

Once the last of the autumn leaves have fallen, balls of mistletoe are clearly visible growing in the trees alongside roads and lanes in the southern Chilterns. The plant is a hemiparasite: its evergreen leaves contain chlorophyll, so it can manufacture its own sugars, but it also extracts fluids, minerals and other nutrients from the host tree. Mistletoe contains toxic compounds and for centuries was the subject of superstitions, although it was sacred to the Druids who believed the plant brought good luck and helped protect against evil spirits. It was included in yuletide celebrations and hence became used as a decoration at Christmas – the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe is well established.

Following the trend which probably began during the lockdowns of the Covid pandemic, the period around Christmas was marked by outdoor decorations almost everywhere. Front doors were wrapped up to resemble presents, natural and artificial wreaths were attached to doors and gates, while houses and trees were outlined with strings of LEDs. A wide variety of inflatable and illuminated figures including Santa



Claus, reindeer, polar bears, penguins and other animals and birds appeared in gardens.

The Cycling Group Christmas lunch took place in mid-December, preceded as usual by a short ride to build an appetite. The day was relatively mild, if damp, in contrast to the conditions in 2022 when the planned ride had to be replaced by a walk through the snowy fields around Penn, as we judged the conditions too dangerous for cycling.

## 'Yarnbombing'

While cycling through the Chilterns during 2023, I noticed a marked increase in yarnbombing in several towns and villages in the area, particularly in Chesham. Various items of street furniture, especially Post Office pillar boxes, have been decorated with colourful knitted or crocheted figures and scenes. Most of these displays have been inspired by seasonal events and national celebrations including the coronation of King Charles III, when crowns and other items of regalia appeared. Spring was marked by ducks on top of a pillar box in Haddenham; during the summer there were beach views; knitted farm implements at harvest festival and poppies for Remembrance Day appeared in several places in autumn; and many Christmas motifs, such as Father Christmas, penguins, snowmen and ice skaters provided imaginative decorations in December.

## The Chiltern Cycling Groups

Having had the privilege and pleasure of writing about the Society's cycling groups since 2018, the time has come for me to hand over the task. In the words of the 1935 song by American folk singer Woody Guthrie, 'so long, it's been good to know you.' While I still enjoy cycling, I was unable to join many of the Thursday rides last year and feel that one of the more regular participants would give a better picture of the current activities. On a personal level, I'd like to say thank you to all Thursday Group members for making cycling with them such a pleasure and, particularly, to the people who made me very welcome on my early rides and introduced me to the etiquette of cycling in a group.

If these thoughts persuade readers to consider cycling through the Chilterns and neighbouring areas with a friendly group during the coming months, they can be sure of as warm a welcome as I received 10 years ago. Anyone who's interested in joining the Thursday morning rides should contact one of the people named in the cycling section of the Chiltern Society website.

**Photos: Greg Neal**

*I'd like to thank Greg very much for all his interesting contributions to the magazine over the last few years. Editor*

# Observing the Hamble Brook



Hambleden flowing 20/5/2021



Hambleden dry 26/5/2022

## Citizen science is a powerful tool, writes David Boorman

The Hambleden Valley between Henley and Marlow is seen by many as one of the most attractive in the Chilterns, and has featured in many films and TV dramas. It's home to the Hamble Brook, a small chalk stream that by its nature is often dry and therefore easily overlooked by visitors. Chalk streams are an integral part of the Chilterns landscape, although globally rare. Readers of *Chiltern* are no doubt aware that approximately 85% of all chalk streams are found in England.

Rain falling on the tops of the Chiltern Hills permeates through the soil, then moves further downwards until eventually reaching the groundwater in the chalk rock below. In the valleys that cut into the hills the groundwater level can reach the surface and, when it does, springs emerge to mark the above-ground source of the chalk streams.

Because the water moves rather slowly on its underground journey through the chalk, groundwater levels normally rise and fall on a seasonal basis, generally peaking in the spring. While in some places the groundwater can sustain the flow in streams over long periods, in others the flow can start and stop over fairly short distances and short periods of time. These are called intermittent or temporary streams. The Hamble Brook is one.

I've been visiting the delightful Hambleden Valley since the 1970s, mainly as a walker. From these rather infrequent visits, I couldn't recall ever seeing the Hamble Brook flowing. That changed in 2020. When the UK went into its first Covid lockdown, I used my permitted period of

outside exercise to cycle into the Chilterns. On reaching the Hambleden Valley, I was astonished to see that the stream was flowing along its entire length from Watery Lane above Skirmett, all the way to the Thames at Mill End. There was even minor flooding of some roads and properties.

At the time, I was working as a hydrologist at a UK research institute (now the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology) and I passed on this observation to one of my colleagues who has a particular interest in temporary streams. They suggested that I should take photographs of the brook and upload them to CrowdWater.

CrowdWater is a web-based platform, hosted by the University of Zurich, that provides a way for citizen scientists to become involved in the collection of hydrological data. Its long-term goal is to obtain a large number of observations that enhance the understanding of river flow: when and where these streams start and stop. This will help better maintain, protect and improve the ecology of the streams, which provide important habitats for many aquatic species. The data posted to

CrowdWater comes from around the world, although most is from Europe, and is freely available.

Observational data from citizen scientists complements more formal data collection undertaken by organisations such as England's Environment Agency. Data collected in the form of photos works particularly well for temporary streams, because the photo alone reveals whether the stream is dry, a series of puddles, trickling or flowing; the beauty being that no specialist knowledge is required by the citizen scientist.

The most useful citizen science data comes from repeated observations made at the same site, so, since that first visit, I've been trying to revisit and rephotograph the same places roughly every 10 days, mostly on my bike – that's now close to 100 visits. I've become much more aware of when and where along its length this particular small stream starts and stops flowing, and the considerable variation from year to year. It's also fascinating to see the changes in vegetation, both the aquatic plants and more generally in the landscape. Regularly visiting the same sites gives a real insight into the phenology of this chalk stream environment. Changes in phenology are, of course, one of the possible impacts of climate change, and long-term monitoring may help to reveal them.

Pairs of photographs illustrate the

dramatic changes in flow conditions that can occur, as shown here for the stream above the bridge at Skirmett and as it leaves Hambleden village. While these still images show extremes in the flows, what's perhaps more interesting is that the part of the stream that flows most reliably is the middle reach close to Bacres Farm. Here, the stream is often flowing when it's dry both upstream and downstream. This can be seen in an animation of the images for the entire period from April 2020 to December 2023, a link to which is given below.

Though the Hamble Brook displays many of the features of a temporary stream, it isn't one of the most natural streams in the Chilterns. As the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project notes: 'The Hamble Brook has been extensively modified over many centuries, through activities such as agricultural cultivation, ornamental landscaping, flood alleviation and even possibly milling, deleteriously impacting its natural function and ecology. The Environment Agency have classified the brook as failing to achieve "Good Ecological Status" and is currently assessed as "Poor".'

The project has been working with Queen Mary University and Nottingham Trent University, as well as the Environment

Agency and the National Trust, on the restoration of one section of the Hamble Brook. It's good to know that as well as the Chiltern Society, so many local, national – and indeed international – organisations are contributing to the better understanding, maintenance, restoration and improvement of our chalk streams.

### Links and ways to get involved

- The animation of Hamble Brook photographs is here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11KOevmeSzHaZejayW DvQlzK8RY528tYB>
- Read about the Chiltern Society's River and Wetlands Group at <https://chilternsociety.org.uk/rivers-wetlands/>
- The CrowdWater website is at <https://crowdwater.ch/en/start/> and as well as providing various ways to explore the data provides a link to the CrowdWater app, which is an easy way to upload your observations
- The Chilterns Chalk Streams Project's page on the Hamble Brook is at <https://www.chilternstreams.org/our-work/chalk-stream-and-wetland-meadows-project/hamble-brook-restoration/>.

Photos: David Boorman



Skirmett flowing 28/2/2021



Skirmett dry 28/7/2022



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# The anniversary picture show



## From Barry Hunt

In 2004 the five-year-old PhotoGroup introduced a dedicated website to serve its Chilterns-based photo galleries. Soon afterwards, the first annual Online Photographic Exhibition was launched. This year's edition marks the 20th anniversary of this popular event, which is open to all Chiltern Society members.

A total of 266 images were submitted by 30 authors for the 2024 edition. To ensure a balanced diversity of subjects, each entrant could submit up to 10 images with no more than five allowed in each of the categories. The photos could be taken anywhere in the UK; this year one third were taken in the Chilterns. The ubiquitous 'Landscape' category comprised 74 images compared with 76 for 2023. Next was 'Buildings' with 56. Both 'Other' and 'Flora & Fauna' attracted 46, while 'Heritage' followed up with 44 submissions.

A new 'Creative' sub-set was added to the 'Other' category, to encourage members to submit more images depicting marked contrasts in, for example, light, colour, shapes or textures. This essentially abstract concept demands an imaginative approach to photography that often involves some in-camera or post-processing techniques. In fact, almost half the images submitted this year reflected these criteria.

The 2024 exhibition was organised by Dr

Peter Brodrick, who took over from Quiller Barrett, the group's web editor. Damon Guy, a camera club judge, author and professional photographer, again supplied the entertaining and insightful comments that accompany the submitted images. If you haven't seen the collection yet it's open until the end of the year at <https://chilternphoto.org.uk/index/category/366>.

As a postscript, here's what Damon wrote: *'This year the entries have covered a wide scope of photographic subjects. I particularly enjoyed the more abstract ones. While abstracts tend to be loved or hated by the viewer, polar opposites do bring out emotions. If one thing is becoming more prevalent in photography it is emotion. Formerly, photographers viewed their work in a technical way, or in a way that sees the picture as a representation of reality. If the beginning of this century has shown any trend in photography, it is toward the more artistic and emotional impact of work from behind lens and sensor. For my part, a more*



Top: Mindset Chapel near St Pauls Walden (C Howe)

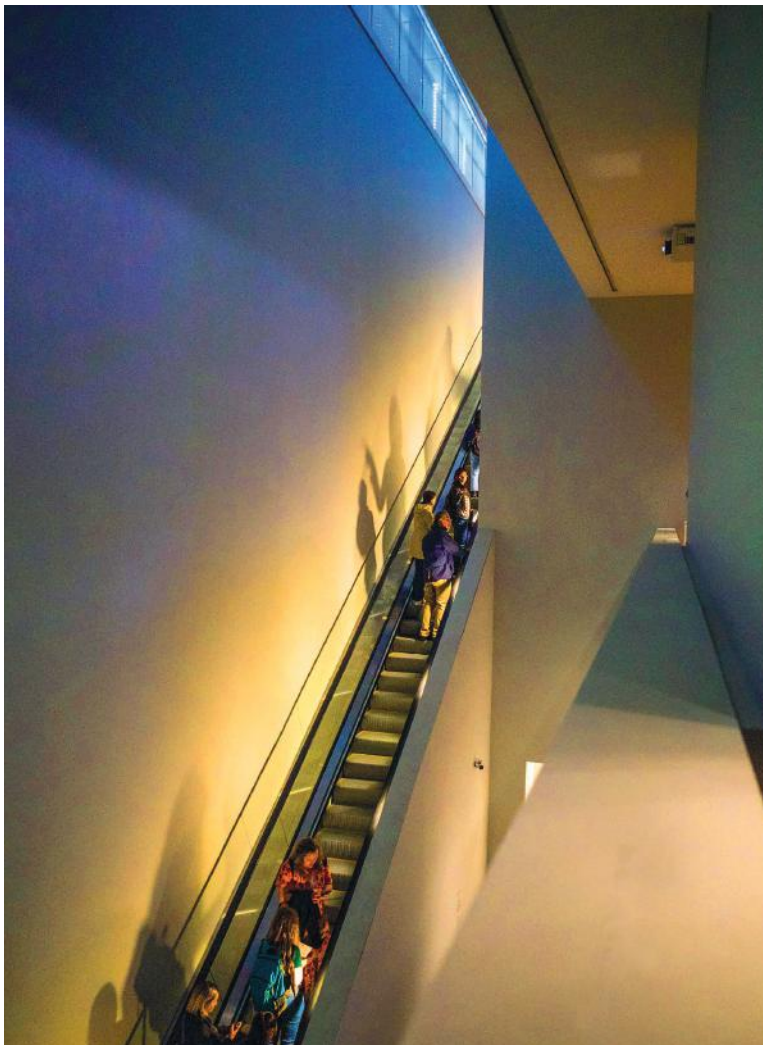
Above: Battersea Power Station (K Hoffmeister)

Right, top to bottom: Stanley Hill Cemetery, Amersham (G Murphy); Common dolphin near Mull (S Cook); National Portrait Gallery (B Hunt)

*visceral approach to photography brings emotion to the image. Emotion increases the connection between the image and the viewer. That is where the greatest impact lies.'*

## Diary dates

A reminder that our three outdoor meetings for 2024 are Wednesday 15 May, Tuesday 16 July and Thursday 19 September. Details to be confirmed.



## Photogroup competition

Puzzle picture: 112

Where might you find this wall painting of St George?  
Send your entries to [puzzlepic@chilternphoto.org.uk](mailto:puzzlepic@chilternphoto.org.uk).  
The draw will take place on 25 March.  
The winner will receive £20.

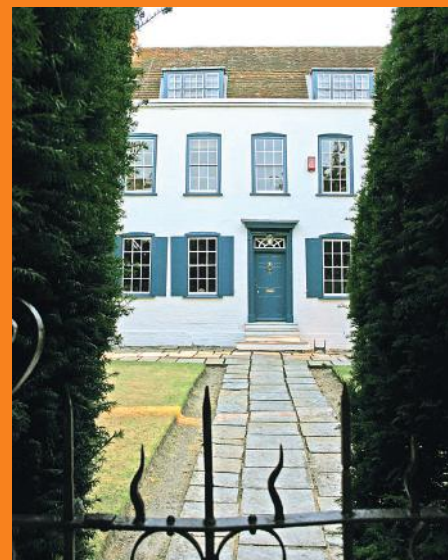
*Photo: Q Barrett*

Puzzle picture: 111

## The answer

Aston Clinton. The Minshulls, London Road was built early in the 18th century. It became the laundry for the Rothschild house and many other Rothschild homes in the area. The winner was T Amsden.

*Photo: D Lonsdale*



# A special group of people

## Geoff Wiggett **watches our Central Chilterns PMV group at work**

Apparently Noah's ark was built by volunteers which, in itself, isn't that interesting. But when I consider that the Titanic was constructed by professionals, it makes me think about volunteering and its place in our lives. The Chiltern Society is proud of its continually expanding army of volunteers who help it achieve so much, enhancing the reputation for which it's so much admired.

On a couple of occasions in December I was lucky to have the opportunity to join, as a spectator, teams of hard-working and dedicated volunteers from the Central Chilterns PMV. The first time was on a bone-numbingly cold morning when they assembled in the car park of The Dashwood Roadhouse in Piddington, a popular old pub steeped in history and dating back about two centuries.

Peter Towersey, the group's coordinator, was just backing up the Society trailer, chock-full of tools, when I arrived with Colin Drake, who was ready to produce another wonderful portfolio of images on his tried and tested Canon R5 camera. Within minutes, the assembled volunteers were swarming all over the trailer, pulling out the tools they'd need for their individual tasks – all done with the minimum of fuss – loading them on board their cars and zipping off to their allocated sites to set about a good morning's work. They all looked fit and happy, so volunteering is clearly doing them a power of good.

In previous editions of *Chiltern*, we've looked at gate installation and work to clear long flights of steps. This time our task was

to record footpath clearance. Colin and I followed one small group to Turville Heath, about five miles away, where they made a start on some bog-standard work, waving brush-cutters over the voluptuously growing bramble to improve pedestrian access.

The session was led by David Foulds, a semi-retired vehicle leasing finance director who told me he and his wife, Dee, have just clocked up 35 years of wedded bliss – a significant achievement in his opinion. He's been volunteering with the Society for almost two years and works with both path maintenance and conservation groups. He's a keen walker and the well-worn but absolutely true phrase 'to give something back' is his motivation. David stands 6' 3" in his stocking feet, but his two younger brothers look down on him as they're taller! A big family.

Chatting one day with fellow volunteer and Society trustee Mark Gardiner, they realised that they'd both attended the same school in Leicestershire at the same time and distinguished themselves in cricket by batting against Jonathan Agnew, former Middlesex and England test match bowler and now BBC cricket correspondent. Small world!



We also met Peter Sichel, a relative newcomer with four or five months under his belt, who, having recently retired from shop management, was 'looking for something physical to do that had a worthwhile end product, ie. not working out at a gym.' Like most of the Society's volunteers, he was learning 'on-the-job' under the watchful eye of more experienced colleagues.

Other teams of volunteers on that day were spread around the area but, try as we might, Colin and I couldn't track them down. It goes to show how remote some of the work locations are. We did, however, meet the group again a week or so later in another pub car park, this time the Boot and Slipper in Amersham. Volunteers like a pub lunch.

A similar process ensued. Peter ran through the day's work schedule, tools were loaded into car boots and volunteers whizzed off in all directions. Once again Colin and I followed a group, who were planning to install a couple of waymark posts and open up an overgrown footpath just behind the Bucks College campus off Stanley Hill in Amersham.

David Hansen was in charge, and within







minutes a couple of volunteers, each in safe control of a brush-cutter, were plunging into the undergrowth and making short work of several month's growth of bramble, sycamore saplings and more, opening up this popular section of path. It's near a built-up area, so is a favourite with dog walkers.

David, together with John Ackhurst, an experienced colleague who also doubles up as a parish path rep for the Society, was getting to work with a post-rammer, a heavy-duty steel pipe which is closed at one end and has handles welded onto the sides. It fits over the top of a post and one or two operatives lift and drop the rammer onto it, driving the post swiftly and securely into the ground, occasionally checking that it's upright using a spirit level. The benefit

of the rammer is that it doesn't split or damage the top of the post and, unlike a sledgehammer, there's no danger of anyone being hurt if the operative mishits the post. Direction roundels were then nailed onto the waymarkers and that particular job was done and dusted.

We met Peter Towersey in these pages a couple of years ago, when he stood down from his role as volunteer coordinator at the Society's stunning site at Bottom Wood near Stokenchurch to take on his present role. You can't keep a good man down! He told me he's motivated by 'helping to promote freedom of movement.' He would also vote for the right to roam, given the opportunity.

As well as heading up the CCPMV, he turns out monthly with other Society conservation volunteers at Whiteleaf and Brush Hill. His other interests include chairing the Civilian Committee of the High Wycombe (332) Squadron, Air Training Corps (RAFAC). He's an allotment holder and also admits to occasionally volunteering as a guinea pig at The Oxford School of Experimental Psychology, part of Oxford University, where research is done into both Parkinson's and Alzheimer's Disease. In the cause of science, he's been tested on cognitive tasks while having his brain scanned, taking medications,

wearing prismatic glasses and having electrodes attached to various parts of the body (including his tongue), as well as several other procedures - not all at the same time, though! Laboratories are familiar to him because he worked for years in technical support in the food industry, so the boot is on the other foot when he's under the microscope.

It takes a special group of people to tackle the volume and complexity of work involved in looking after hundreds of miles of public footpaths and, as we saw at The Dashwood Roadhouse, doing this without complaint in weather which can be challenging is something that deserves real admiration. The effort required in putting together a regular programme of work parties over a huge geographical area and in the most out of the way locations is astonishing, and huge credit should go to everyone involved.

Finally, one of Peter's colleagues did say to me in passing that he had no idea that being a volunteer meant he wouldn't care when his back ached. An admirable sentiment.

*My thanks to Peter for his help in producing this article.*

**Photos: Colin Drake**

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# Chiltern planning in your hands?



## Mike Sheehan **of our Planning Group** outlines some serious issues

**Local Plans, prepared and managed by each local authority through consultation and adoption stages, are a key component shaping the future of the Chilterns. Each local authority is required to produce a Local Plan, a process that can take several years involving two or three consultation stages and ending with approval by the Government's Planning Inspectorate. Plans cover a period typically 15-20 years ahead and present the strategies, policies and key local issues including housing, transport, infrastructure, the environment and sustainability.**

Across the Chilterns there are 10 local authorities, some of which are wholly within the Chilterns area and others which only intersect partially. Nevertheless, the plans and policies of all these local authorities impact the Chilterns to a greater or lesser extent and shape the future of the region.

The recent Government Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill passed by Parliament in December 2023 will affect planning policies, and the overarching National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has already been updated to reflect the changes introduced by this Bill. The NPPF is available for download through the gov.uk website.

Several local authorities across the Chilterns already have fully adopted plans in place, while others are still in the consultation and approval process. For Buckinghamshire Council, which covers a large area of the Chilterns and is now a unitary council, a new Local Plan for the whole county is being produced which will, when adopted, replace the existing adopted plans for the High Wycombe District and Aylesbury Vale areas.

While the recent changes to planning policy and creation of new or updated plans for many local authorities bed down, a state of flux exists which presents a threat from speculative housing developers submitting

plans. This situation is likely to remain for several years until all Local Plans are fully adopted.

The Chilterns area has to meet its own local economic and housing need, but it's also under pressure from the expansion of London, including the building of commuter homes. The likely expansion of the Oxford-Cambridge arc, with the completion of the Oxford-Cambridge rail link, will create an area of high population growth to the northwest of the Chilterns, putting the AONB under pressure as the only nearby designated National Landscape area.

To develop the Chilterns in a sustainable manner and preserve its natural beauty and character, particularly the AONB and Green Belt areas, it's vital to engage with the creation of Local Plans and we urge all members to do this as individuals or through the Chiltern Society as a volunteer.

The illustration opposite shows the status of Local Plans across the Chiltern local authorities and the planned (or already adopted) housing development numbers.

Housing numbers are for the local authority as a whole and, as stated above, several local authorities only partially intersect with the Chiltern Society boundary. The numbers do, however, represent housing development across the Chiltern area and

its immediate environs. With housing comes additional infrastructure in the form of roads, schools, hospitals and commercial businesses.

The numbers in the table are significant, not only because of development within the Chilterns area, but also the pressure put on the Chilterns by surrounding populations accessing the beauty of the region. This generates a need for additional infrastructure and intervention, for example provision of parking; increased maintenance and upkeep of footpaths, roads, rivers, woodland and open spaces; and ensuring sustainable protection of the special chalkland habitats and biodiversity we enjoy today.

The December 2023 version of the NPPF advocates the prioritisation of brownfield sites for development, but across the majority of local authorities meeting housing need will probably require the release of Green Belt or even AONB land. As a basis for planning of homes, local authorities are required to address the Government's so called 'top-down' housing need calculations, which are based on census data and trends on population and housing mix. There's criticism, however, that the numbers from the 'top-down' calculations overestimate the housing need, and many local authorities

are proposing lower numbers in plans now being prepared.

Ultimately, Local Plans are inspected by the Government's Planning Inspectorate before they can be adopted, and a balance has to be struck between development and protection of the Green Belt, the AONB and other issues.

An adopted Local Plan will define housing numbers and specified sites for development, and this will severely limit the speculative housing proposals that we often see today. Without an adopted Local Plan, however, speculative development will become rife. Developers will make planning applications, often in sensitive locations, and appeal against local authority refusal by claiming that national housing need trumps concerns over harm to the Green Belt or AONB. In such cases, decisions are taken out of the hands of the local community.

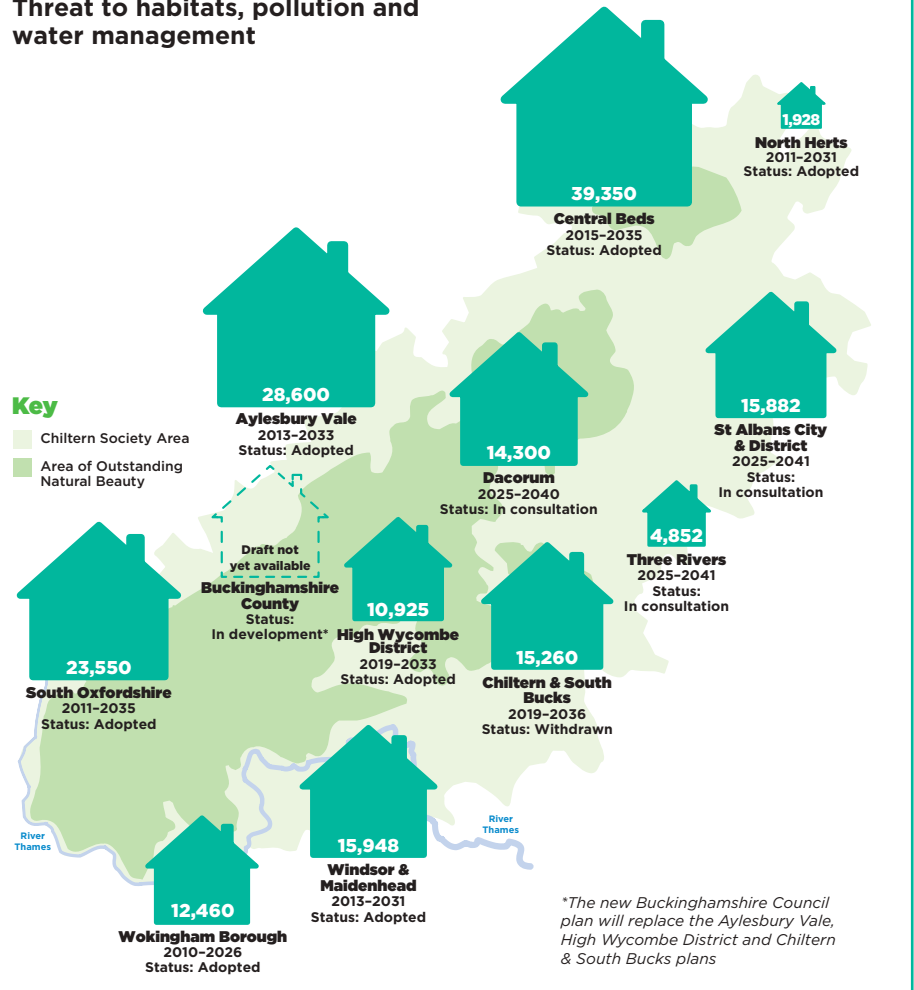
The Government's planning framework thus illustrates the importance of Local Plans which create a firmer basis for local planning, with development focused on specific planned sites. The importance of the Local Plan relates back to the adequacy, comprehensiveness and response to the public consultation phases which require your input, along with the voice of organisations like the Chiltern Society, Chilterns Conservation Board (for the AONB), CPRE (the countryside charity), London Green Belt Council and wildlife trusts, to name but a few.

This article has indicated the scale of planned development across the Chilterns and its immediate environs. It's unrealistic to think that local authorities or campaigning organisations can achieve a ban on all Green Belt or AONB development, but it's important that the voice of those wanting to protect, conserve and enhance our environment have their say in an effective manner, striving to minimise harmful development and supporting brownfield use.

Photos: Chris Howe

## Local authority plans show nearly 183,000 houses planned for the Chiltern area and its environs

**Additional infrastructure required  
Threat to habitats, pollution and water management**



### Can you help us?

Our message is first to understand the extent of development planned for the Chilterns, then become involved by contributing to the Local Plan consultations as an individual, or even better by volunteering with the Chiltern Society.

**The Planning Group would welcome your help to monitor, campaign and scrutinise proposed developments in your area.** We're a team of 25 friendly volunteers, but there are parts of the Chilterns where our coverage could be strengthened. No planning expertise is required – just a desire to protect our precious environment. We provide training and have retained professional planners to support our work. We also run social events during the year. Please contact [office@chilternsociety.org.uk](mailto:office@chilternsociety.org.uk) to register your interest.

## Society footpath maps – don't leave home without them!

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

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 2½ 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.



# Springtime in the Chilterns

Linda Seward **looks forward in eager anticipation**

Writing this in deep and dark December, my heart lifts at thoughts of what lies ahead in just a few months. Visions of tender green shoots, erupting blossoms, hairy bumblebees and the dawn chorus keep me going when the winds howl and darkness descends by 4pm. In fact, I'm writing this on the winter solstice, so will begin to see the days lengthening incrementally as I await my favourite season. In this article, I'll explore some springtime sights that you might find in the Chilterns.

Why does this time of year put a 'spring' in everyone's step? I suppose the idea of new beginnings is foremost in our minds - for example, the sight of birds building their nests and feeding their young is a joy to watch. You can help birds and increase your chances of watching them by putting up a nest box in your garden. I was thrilled to find a family of nuthatches (*Sitta europaea*) flourishing in a box near my front door, because they normally nest in tree cavities. A long dagger-like beak and black head stripe give this bird the appearance of an avian bandit. It swiftly descends headfirst down tree trunks looking for food, and will often crack and stuff nuts in crevices in the bark.

The sight of orange-tip butterflies (*Anthocharis cardamines*) bouncing across a meadow is a joyful announcement that spring has truly arrived. These butterflies have a marbled green pattern on their underwings, helping them to blend into foliage when at rest. When open, their wings are white - the male's being tipped with bright orange. Their caterpillars feed on cuckoo flowers and

garlic mustard, but they've been known to cannibalise unhatched eggs of their own species.

As winter gives way to spring, you may notice that the mainly white and yellow flowers of late winter are gradually replaced by those in shades of pink, blue and purple. Cuckoo flowers (*Cardamine pratensis*) are delicate pink perennials that bloom in grassy meadows and on roadside verges from April to June. Their appearance coincides with the arrival of the birds of the same name.

It's easy to overlook common ground-ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), but look closely to see the small flowers said by Chaucer to make 'our yard so merry'. Despite its misleading name, it's not an ivy but a member of the dead-nettle family, although it does spread vigorously like ivy and is considered a weed by some gardeners. The kidney-shaped leaves are hairy and release a strong fragrance that some people liken to tom cats!

Early bumblebees (*Bombus praetorum*) are spring specialists, one of the earliest bumblebee species to emerge from hibernation. Small, colourful and hairy, they're a delight to see, pollinating a variety of spring blossoms, especially those of raspberries and blackberries.

The bright purple petals of the common dog violet (*Viola riviniana*) are



NUTHATCH IS DERIVED FROM MIDDLE ENGLISH 'NUTHACK' (ONE OF SEVERAL SPELLINGS)



ANOTHER NAME FOR A CUCKOO FLOWER IS LADY'S SMOCK



GROUND-IVY HAS TINY PURPLE FLOWERS



ORANGE-TIP BUTTERFLY, WEARING CAMOUFLAGE ON ITS UNDERWINGS



EARLY BUMBLEBEES LIKE THIS QUEEN HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO VISIT MORE THAN 140 DIFFERENT FLOWER SPECIES



**DOG VIOLETS DON'T HAVE A SCENT**

easy to spot. If you find a nice patch, look around for fritillary butterflies who use this plant as a food source and a place on which to lay their eggs.

Keep an eye out for a bee fly - a tiny fluffy creature that resembles a miniature narwhale. It has a long, tongue-like mouthpart that looks menacing, but isn't a stinger and causes no harm. It hovers like a hoverfly and darts like a hummingbird. Transparent wings stick straight out on each side of its small, hairy body and are sometimes decorated with dots like this dotted bee fly (*Bombylius discolor*) or edged with a dark band. Bee flies parasitise solitary bee nests by propelling their eggs into the nest; the larvae hatch and consume the resident bees.

The dark blue spikes of bugle (*Ajuga reptans*) can be found en masse in damp Chiltern woodlands and grasslands, attracting butterflies, moths, bees and

hoverflies. The small flowers are said to resemble ladies



**BEEFLIES ARE ON THE WING FROM EARLY SPRING THROUGH TO LATE JUNE**

**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**



**BUGLE FLOWERS PROVIDE NECTAR FOR COMMON CARDER BEES**

wearing striped skirts. Bugle is also known as 'carpenter's herb' because it's supposed to be able to stem bleeding.

Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) are eagerly awaited each spring and can truly be called a wild flower spectacle. A walk in a bluebell wood on a warm spring day feels like entering a magical world where fairies might be hiding in the purple haze. The scent can be overwhelming in the sunshine, and the bell-shaped flowers are a rich source of food for many pollinators. Don't be tempted to pick them, because bluebells are a protected species due to their slow growth rate.

Moths get their start in spring as do butterflies - we just don't see them so much because they're mainly nocturnal. When you next walk in a wild flower meadow on a sunny day, search for a flying insect with a brown and white wing pattern - you may have found a Mother Shipton moth (*Callistege mi*). Marvel at the outline of a witch's face with a crooked nose and pointed chin on the wings.

Fungi can be found all year round in the Chilterns, but spring is the time to look for chicken of the woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*). When young, it has a soft velvety texture and grows in overlapping spongy brackets. Although considered edible, with a taste and texture like chicken, it can cause stomach upsets, so should be treated with caution.



**IT TAKES FIVE YEARS FOR A BLUEBELL SEED TO DEVELOP INTO A BULB**



**THIS MOTH IS NAMED AFTER OLD MOTHER SHIPTON, BORN IN A YORKSHIRE CAVE IN 1488 DURING A THUNDERSTORM**



**CHICKEN OF THE WOODS PROVIDES A BRIGHT SPOT OF YELLOW/ORANGE COLOUR IN DECIDUOUS WOODLANDS**

# Events & Activities

## Spring 2024



Botanical Mono Printing



Foraging



Forest bathing

### Smartphone Safari with Jet Black Squares

All you need for this is your smartphone, a sense of humour and a good pair of shoes. While exploring Chesham, we'll share top tips on how to take stunning photos. All our safaris combine practical photography, including how to edit your photos using one of the best free apps around. The course will start with a walk round Chesham and finish at the White Hill Centre for refreshments and a chance to edit some images.

**Saturday 23 March 10am-12pm**  
**White Hill Centre, White Hill, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1AG**

Price: **£30** per adult

### Botanical Mono Printing

This nature craft workshop allows you to enjoy a few hours of creative escapism – a great way to connect with nature and good for your mental wellbeing. It's led by the brilliant Lisa from Growing Bright, who prides herself on using local foliage from our Chilterns landscape to create beautiful pieces of art. Enjoy a guided walk at our Captain's Wood site while gathering natural materials. This is followed by a workshop at the White Hill Centre, where you'll learn the technique of mono printing using your natural treasures. This event is offered at the special discounted rate of £10.50 thanks to funding from the Chess Smarter Water Catchment project.

**Saturday 6 April 10am-1.15pm**  
**Captain's Wood, Hivings Hill, Chesham, Bucks HP5 2EW, then on to the White Hill Centre, Chesham HP5 1AG**

Price **£10.50** per adult

### Foraging for Edible and Medicinal Plants (Choice of dates)

Springtime walks will never be the same again if you come to our foraging day with Fred Gillam (aka Fred the Forager).

He's been foraging for his supper for more than 30 years and will show you exactly what you can safely pick, what to avoid, how to prepare your harvest, and, most importantly, how to make sure this is all done sustainably so that other creatures get their fair share! Fred is also a herbalist and has been running a small community dispensary with his partner in Wiltshire for a number of years. A surprising number of our native plants provide useful ingredients for herbal remedies such as tinctures, teas and balms, and Fred will discuss both this and their edible qualities. Fred has made appearances with BBC's Jeremy Vine and on ITV's *Countrywise*, foraging and cheffing in the woods with Gino D'Campo. His courses were also recommended in *Countryfile* magazine.

**Thursday 11 April or Thursday 16 May 12-3pm**  
**Marlow Common, Marlow, Bucks SL7 2QP**

Price: **£27.50** per adult

### Forest Bathing in Captain's Wood (Choice of dates)

We're delighted to invite you to join us for a calming session at our beautiful Captain's Wood site. Forest Bathing, also known in Japan as Shinrin-yoku, is an enjoyable and restorative nature-based wellbeing practice. Together with other participants you'll be guided on a slow, two hour sensory woodland walk. Forest Bathing can help you quieten your mind, relax deeply, boost your body's natural defences, sleep better and much more. The session offers a naturally therapeutic experience with potentially profound relaxation and time to enjoy the beauty and positive effects of being in nature. You'll also learn about the latest science and research for nature-based healing and nature connection. The guided session will be about one mile long, go both on and off the paths, and will include some gentle inclines, so please bring sturdy footwear.

**Adults only (18+).**  
**Saturday 13 April or Sunday 19 May 3-5.30pm**

**Captain's Wood, Hivings Hill, Chesham, Bucks HP5 2EW**

Price: **£27.50** per adult

### Bat walk

Join bat enthusiast Veritie from North Bucks Bat group on a fully immersive bat walk using handheld detectors to take a glimpse into the lives of the only true flying mammal. Learn more about these amazing creatures and the night time world they inhabit. All welcome – children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

**Thursday 2nd May 8-9.30pm**  
**Whiteleaf Nature Reserve, Peters Lane, Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 0RP**

Price: **£7.50** per person

### Stanley Spencer Walk & Gallery Visit

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

**Monday 20 May 10am-12.30pm**  
**Stanley Spencer Gallery, 16 High Street, Cookham, Berks SL6 9SJ**

Price: **£10** per adult

.....  
**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.**



# The Great Chiltern Come & Sing *Carmina Burana*

This new event will be part of the **2024 Festival, which will take place between 14-29 September.** It will feature Tring Choral Society and other choral societies and singers from across the Chilterns, and will be held on **Saturday 28 September at Deans Hall, Berkhamsted School.**

This promises to be a thrilling experience for both performers and audience. Carl Orff's often bawdy and profane cantata includes some well-known passages used in film, TV and advertisements. Beginning and ending with the instantly recognisable 'O Fortuna' and packed with exciting passages in contrasting styles and hypnotic rhythms, the piece will be performed in the magnificent setting of the historic Berkhamsted School. The 1937 edition for voices, two pianos and percussion will be used. This will be an all-day event, culminating with an

informal performance to an audience in the evening. There'll be professional soloists and musicians, as well as a children's choir from Tring School for the Performing Arts.

The day will start at 9.30am with registration and end at approximately 7pm. There may also be optional sectional rehearsals earlier in September.

Tickets to see the performance will be available when the Heritage and Culture Festival goes live in the next issue of *Chiltern* magazine. **If you're interested in taking part in the performance, please**



**book online at [chilternsociety.org.uk/The-Great-Chilterns-Come-and-Sing](http://chilternsociety.org.uk/The-Great-Chilterns-Come-and-Sing) by 25 June.** If you have any queries, please contact Katy on 07398 700977.



## LETTERS

### The Ridgeway – ancient or modern?

Tim Amsden, by email

May I make two modest comments on *Chiltern* 250? Firstly, may I urge members not to think of The Ridgeway as an 'ancient highway' (p33). It's remarkable how many people assert this, even learned writers like Robert MacFarlane, but it simply isn't true. The southwestern section of this National Trail from Overton Hill to Goring may indeed be ancient, but the Chiltern length from Goring to Ivinghoe dates from 1973, when it was bolted together from existing footpaths, roads and bridleways in order to create a length comparable to other long distance paths. It has no claim to antiquity whatsoever. The parallel Icknield Way has a strong claim to antiquity, disputed in some quarters, but even that is better to be considered not as a highway but rather as a general direction, or corridor, which may well have linked to the Wiltshire Ridgeway at the Thames.

It ought to be self-evident that the indirect and visually indistinctive line of the Chilterns Ridgeway path, heavily influenced by modern practicalities like the need to avoid MOD sites and Prime Ministers' houses, would make a wildly impractical route for prehistoric travellers, compared with the obvious and clear-cut line of the Icknield route, signposted by the Chiltern escarpment.

Secondly, the 'Lionel' Rothschild who started the Tring zoological museum (p24) was always known by his second name, Walter. It was Lionel Nathan who inherited Halton House; not the same man, but his cousin.

### Our trees need you!

Merelene Davis,  
by email

Thank you for your kind 'obituary' in the last issue! It's regrettable that, despite my efforts, our Society's Trees and Woodlands Group couldn't be revived. Now I feel Little Friars Arboretum, with nearly 200 specimens, is somewhere where the broad knowledge of trees can be promoted. So often the single issue approach by some groups has led to misunderstanding about the use of trees in our towns, woodlands and landscapes, and therefore I'd like to invite fellow Society members who can physically help with looking after this small but useful arboretum to contact me by email at [buckstreetclub@gmail.com](mailto:buckstreetclub@gmail.com).

I lack the skills of a campaigner, but want to encourage people in the Chilterns to come together in their own locality, as we'll continue to do at Little Friars Arboretum, to celebrate **Dendro Day** on the first Sunday in March. 'Dendro' is the Greek word for tree, and provides a useful acronym for what tree lovers consider essential at this time of year:

- Do any late planting if ground not frosty or waterlogged
- Examine tree ties, loosen or remove as necessary
- Note tree work you cannot complete until later
- Damaged branches after winter weather should be pruned
- Remedy any loosening of soil around all new tree planting
- Organise your calendar to enjoy, care and learn about trees.

I wonder if by mentioning this in the magazine it will encourage somebody to take over from me in promoting the day in the Chilterns.



# Connecting communities

Photo: Wim Klaucke

## Maggie Templeman reports on the creation of a stile-free route in Oxfordshire

In October 2023, the SCPMV (South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers) completed their most recent gate project entitled 'Connecting Communities'. The project spanned the parishes of Pyrton and Stoke Talmage, and involved replacing 11 stiles with gates and the replacement of three bridges crossing small waterways. There's now a completely stile-free, easily accessible route all the way from Little Haseley, via Stoney Lane, through Clare to Stoke Talmage.

The end result is a stark contrast to what was found when we initially looked at the paths to see if there was potential for improvement. Several of the stiles were in very poor condition, part of the path at Clare was completely blocked by old farm equipment and vegetation, and the bridge and stiles closest to Stoke Talmage were only accessible by the most agile and confident of walkers. It was obvious that the paths were hardly used at all, which was a shame not only because of the loss of a walking route between villages, but also because the paths offer beautiful wide views, particularly from Clare down towards the village of Stoke Talmage and its ancient church.

Earlier this year the Chiltern Society formally adopted a number of new parishes, five of which are in South Oxfordshire – Adwell, Stoke Talmage, Wheatfield, Berrick Salome and Sydenham. This 'adoption' is very welcome, because it helps us to work in and open up new areas of the Chilterns – spreading the footfall away from some of the better known and more

heavily trafficked paths. The Connecting Communities project is a good example of working to achieve these aims.

### Working with landowners

Identifying the landowners (from whom we always need permission to undertake any work of this nature) is never straightforward. Referring to the Land Registry might seem the obvious solution, but this is rarely the case. The quickest and often simplest approach is to just go around the area knocking on doors and asking if anyone knows who might own the surrounding land – as well as asking landowners that we already know if they can help. It certainly worked for this project and all three landowners were identified, as well as the contract farmer, whose input was invaluable because he was responsible for the crops and stock on much of the land on which we'd be working.

### Securing funding

With the approval of all involved, including the commitment from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to undertake their share of

the work, we then needed the funds for the gates and all associated materials, such as posts, stock fencing and sheep wire. We were successful in our bid to Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE), who generously funded eight of the gates (with money from Grondon Waste Management through the Landfill Communities Fund).

Ben Heaven Taylor, Chief Executive at TOE said: 'I am delighted that we were able to award the Chiltern Society a grant for this project. When considering it, the Grant Panel thought it was an excellent application for a real partnership project involving contributions from the landowners, as well OCC's Public Rights of Way team. TOE believes that community groups like the SCPMV play a vital role in keeping rights of way open and accessible. Projects delivered by the SCPMV are good value for money, as the only costs are for materials, the work being undertaken by the skilled team. The work of the volunteers provides a real benefit, enabling the residents of these villages and walkers from further afield to explore this area.'



OCC funded three gates and the three new bridges, and the landowner at Stoke Talmage installed a gate between two paddocks on his land.

## Aspects of the project

One of the most challenging installations was the replacement of the stile closest to Stoney Lane. A great deal of clearance was necessary before the new gate could be installed, but we also had to undertake the temporary repair of a steep flight of steps (leading to Stoney Lane). The ground conditions added to the difficulties, because the volunteers quickly encountered a thick layer of chalk as they were digging holes for the posts.

Another site required the volunteers to secure a passage for electricity under the new gate to help with stock control, while a further site required two separate visits due to the challenge involved in installing the gate corral on a steep gradient. Jess Parker Dax and her family farm the land at this location. 'Having worked with the Chiltern Society before, I had no hesitation in embarking on another project with them. From the first walk of the proposed route to the final gate going in, everything was done professionally and cheerfully. The kissing gates are a great improvement for the

footpaths. They benefit the walkers as they remove the need to climb over stiles and potentially lift dogs over. They also benefit the landowners as they are safer for walkers and are easier to maintain than stiles. The first kissing gates that were put in by the SCPMV at Model Farm (on the Oxfordshire Way in Shirburn some six years ago and described in *Chiltern 227*), have not needed any adjustment yet and are still as easy to use as when they were brand new.'

The majority of the gates installed on this project are metal Woodstocks with a corral (which are ideal for longevity and fields with stock). The choice of gate, however, is always made by the landowner to suit their specific needs, and at Stoke Talmage the landowner opted for a plain wooden pedestrian gate on his side of the new bridge, primarily to avoid a corral taking up too much space in the paddock.

Richard Woodesen is the landowner for this section of the path. 'I am very pleased with the new gates. They are a great improvement on the old stiles and fit very well into the landscape. The volunteers who carried out the work were most courteous and respectful, and completely understood that landowners are a party to all arrangements concerning footpaths

crossing their land. There was no hesitation in complying when I asked for some additional wire netting to be added to the fence and gates so that young livestock could not escape. The whole area where they had been working was left clear and very tidy.' On the other side of the paddock, near the Stoke Talmage road, Richard chose an Oxford wooden kissing gate with corral to complement existing fencing.

With the agreement of the landowner and OCC, the line of the path at Clare, which is blocked by old farm machinery, has been moved slightly to provide a much safer route for walkers.

## A route for all

Early in 2024, Andrew Clark, walks supremo for the Chiltern Society, Maggie Templeman, Area Secretary and the path reps for Pyrton and Stoke Talmage, will be meeting up to plan and design a new circular walk, incorporating these gates and bridges - which will be published in *Chiltern* and on the website. Hopefully many people will enjoy exploring the area, appreciating perhaps more than ever the time, effort and commitment from all concerned that's gone into making this virtually abandoned route accessible for all once again.

## Hampden Herdwicks

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# New exhibition spaces at Amersham Museum



Marie-Louise von Motesiczky and Veza Canetti in the studio at Cornerways, early 1940s (Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Archive, Tate Archives, London)

## Museum Director, Briony Hudson, tells us more

In 1940, Vienna-born artist Marie-Louise von Motesiczky (1906-1996) moved to Amersham with her mother Henriette and their housekeeper Marie Hauptmann. Fleeing persecution in Austria, initially via Amsterdam and London, they settled in Buckinghamshire. She spent time with other émigrés living in Amersham, including the future Nobel prize-winning author Elias Canetti (1905-94), and the composer, pianist and teacher Francesco Ticciati (1893-1949).

Chair of the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust, Frances Carey, notes: 'Amersham was Marie-Louise's real introduction to Britain. She and her mother Henriette bought the house Cornerways at 86 Chestnut Lane and maintained close ties with the area until 1960. Marie-Louise continued painting throughout the war, returning often to visit her mother and use her studio at Cornerways, even after she rented a flat in West Hampstead from 1948 onwards.'

Marie-Louise went on to consolidate her international reputation as an artist, in a career that spanned more than seven decades. Her wealthy background meant that she didn't have to sell her work for a living. Combined with a reluctance to exhibit her work, her output of over 300 paintings remained (and arguably remains) underappreciated. She had a number of solo exhibitions during her lifetime, however, notably at the Wiener Secession in Austria in 1966, and a breakthrough British show at

the Goethe-Institut in London in 1985.

In autumn 2022, with the support of the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust, Amersham Museum began work on the creation of a temporary exhibition space. Opening in March 2024, the space showcases work made by contemporary and historic artists and craftspeople from the museum's collection, as well as works loaned from other museums and private collections. The changing exhibition programme has a particular focus on works that haven't been seen before or which were made by people whose work has been overlooked or underrepresented.

### Marie-Louise in Amersham

The inaugural exhibition, *Marie-Louise in Amersham*, focuses on Motesiczky, after whom the gallery will be named. The exhibition is based around the six paintings by Marie-Louise that the museum holds in the collection, which were generously



Dorothy, (Marie-Louise von Motesiczky, 1945, oil on canvas, Amersham Museum)

donated by the Trust. Frances Carey explains: 'Local people, friends and relatives who visited Amersham, and views of the garden were among her subjects, so it is entirely appropriate that she and her work should have a permanent place in Amersham.'

*Marie-Louise in Amersham* opens on 8 March, and explores her time in Amersham, her direct community on Chestnut Lane and fellow émigrés who visited her there during (and directly after) WWII. Amersham was a refuge for many during the war, and Marie-Louise would have encountered others who'd settled here temporarily. Beyond her own circle of friends, she'd have witnessed evacuee children sent to Amersham to live with local families, a community of Jewish people, mostly from London, and people displaced from the capital and other cities. She'd have

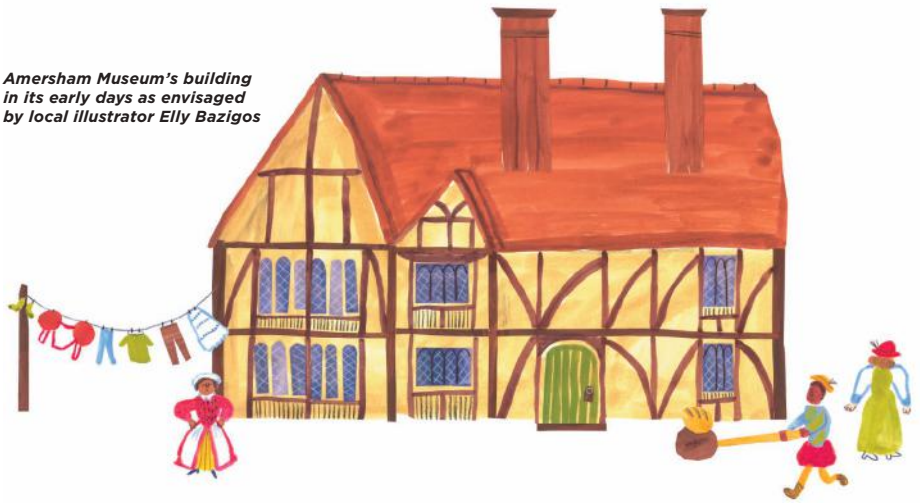
seen the Home Guard on manoeuvres and witnessed soldiers based throughout the town, in transit before missions elsewhere. There was a wider official presence too, with elite naval officers training in old Amersham, scientists establishing a research centre in Little Chalfont and German prisoners of war helping MI5 and MI6 at Latimer House.

Marie-Louise captured some of this wartime community in the portraits she created. The exhibition features copies of some of these works. They sit alongside archive photographs and translations of letters written when she was in the town. It includes a specific focus on the road where Marie-Louise lived, Chestnut Lane, on the border between Amersham and the village of Chesham Bois. In the 1940s the road was unmade, without street lights and featured a mix of large and small houses, a pub and a local shop. At the end of the road there was (and still is) a farm surrounded by rolling hills. We've researched some of the people who lived in the road, their jobs and work to support the war effort, in order to imagine who Marie-Louise saw and knew, and to understand better our town's wartime community.

The exhibition also includes works created through our community learning programme. Through four artist-led workshops, families from the South Bucks Jewish Community have learned about Marie-Louise and her portraiture, and created their own self-portraits for display. We've also worked with 180 children from Chestnut Lane Infant School, which is located directly opposite Cornerways. Artwork created by the Year 2 children about the people and events that took place on Chestnut Lane in the 1940s features in an illustrated map and trail.

Our second temporary exhibition, *Precious Objects* opens in September 2024. Working with artist Elaine Duigenan and a local emerging artist, we'll invite the community to share objects that are

*Amersham Museum's building in its early days as envisaged by local illustrator Elly Bazigos*



precious to them. The exhibition will have at its heart two 18th century enamelled sheep ornaments from the Tate archive; these belonged to Marie-Louise and were among the possessions that she brought with her to England. Through the exhibition we'll explore the reasons why you hold on to certain things, and what makes them special. The exhibition's theme will also inspire a programme of events that explore the museum's role as place for the town's precious objects.

## A new welcome

Through the project the museum has also created a new introductory space, which visitors will experience on their arrival. The display takes a timeline approach, featuring people, places and events, alongside objects from the museum's collection. Did you know that a version of the famous Armada portrait of Elizabeth I hung at Shardeloes, the ancestral home of the Drake family on the outskirts of the town? The Queen was reported to have visited the Tothill family at the house in 1591. Amersham also has a long history of dissent: not least the Lollards martyred for their religious beliefs in the early 1500s, and the strong community of suffrage supporters in the early 1900s, including Margaret MacDonald (nee Gladstone) (1870-1911), wife of Ramsay MacDonald who became the first Labour

Prime Minister in 1924, and celebrity artist and suffragette Louise Jopling (1843-1933). From fossils to a taxidermy dormouse, a 1930s dolls house to a 1980s award for black pudding, and medieval Penn tiles to a range of historical maps, there's plenty of opportunity to explore intriguing objects and their stories from Amersham and the surrounding area.

The timeline has been co-curated with local people, particularly our young curators group. It's illustrated throughout by local artist Elly Bazigos, with her vibrant images taking visitors from prehistory, through key moments in local history, to the present day. The displays also include objects to touch and examine further, prompting visitors to go on to explore the rest of the existing family-friendly displays in the museum's medieval building.

## Visit the Museum and find out more

Amersham Museum, 49-51 High Street, Amersham, Bucks HP6 ODP.

For ticket information, how to find us and details of our wide-ranging events programme, go to our website:

[www.amershammuseum.org](http://www.amershammuseum.org)

Opening hours: **Wed-Sun, and Bank Holiday Mondays, 12noon to 4:30pm**

Contact details: [info@amershammuseum.org](mailto:info@amershammuseum.org); **tel. 01494 723700.**



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# In praise of beef cheeks

## Don't ignore 'forgotten' cuts of meat, urges Martin Pearson

According to a recent ITV News special, we ate less meat in the UK last year than we've ever done before – or at least since records began in the 1970s. Interestingly, the report also highlighted a significant move away from premium products like steak, towards many of the cheaper cuts that went out of fashion towards the end of the 20th century.

These 'forgotten' cuts of meat can be hidden gems for budget-conscious and creative cooks. Consider beef shins or pig cheeks: they may not be as revered (or anywhere near as expensive) as beef fillet or pork loin, but they offer great flavour when slow-cooked or braised. Embracing cuts like lamb breast or shank can yield succulent results, turning a more economical choice into a delicious culinary experience. Cooked correctly, these cuts can shine in stews, soups or roasts, proving that affordability doesn't mean sacrificing taste. Their rising popularity has coincided with a notable shift in attitudes towards sourcing meat, with an increasing emphasis on choosing quality over quantity. You

might think that the 'less but better' approach to meat consumption would encourage consumers to purchase smaller amounts of prime cuts, but, particularly in these tough economic times, the cheaper parts of the animal have come to the fore.

Increased food education has been a key factor. Carnivores are becoming more selective about where they buy their meat. Many of us have moved away from the cellophane-wrapped supermarket offerings and instead choose to go to local farmers and butchers. Locally sourced, organic and grass-fed meats are in demand, and direct engagement with meat producers has helped consumers learn more about what they're eating – and what they're missing out on.

Last year I wrote about the virtues of pork and how it's possible to eat (as I have) almost every part of a pig. At a time when consumers are expressing a preference for sustainably and ethically sourced options, there's surely nothing more sustainable than eating as much of the animal as possible – rather than just selecting the expensive parts and ignoring the rest.

For a long time beef cheeks were one such ignored cut. I first ate them 15 years ago at a wedding in Parma, the gastronomic capital of Italy, where they know a thing or two about flavour. They were delicious and I've cooked them many times since. My recipe features a large single native beef cheek, purchased from the excellent Block and Butcher in Wendover. Not every butcher has cheeks readily available, so it's worth checking before you get your casserole dish out!

### RECIPE

## Chiltern beef cheek

**There's nothing fancy about this recipe, so you don't need to be an expert at cutting uniform slices of vegetables – or be too exact with your measurements – to make this a success. Just cook the beef low and slow, and taste the sauce as you go along.**

**Cooking time – at least four hours in the oven or until the meat starts to fall apart.**

### Ingredients – Serves 2 (with leftovers)

- 1 beef cheek, approx 500g
- 2 large onions, sliced
- 2 cloves of garlic, chopped
- Handful of fresh chopped rosemary
- Handful of fresh chopped thyme
- 40g of butter
- 2 tbsp of oil
- 1 large glass (approx 250/300ml) of decent red wine. Something strong flavoured, like Rioja or Zinfandel works well
- 400ml of beef stock (chicken stock also works)
- 1 large carrot, sliced into rounds
- 1 large parsnip, sliced into rounds
- 1 apple, peeled, cored and finely chopped
- 1 heaped tsp of brown sugar

### Method

- Preheat the oven to 140°C
- Take out a large casserole dish and remove the lid. Add the oil and half the butter, and melt on the hob over a medium heat
- Add the meat to the dish and brown on all sides
- Remove the meat and leave to one side
- Add the onions, carrot, parsnip, apple and rosemary, and cook for five minutes
- Add the garlic and thyme. Cook for a couple more minutes, then return the beef cheek and any juices to the dish and pour in the red wine
- Add the beef stock, which should cover the meat. Ensure that the lid is on tight (or use foil under the lid) and place in the oven for at least four hours
- After three hours check how tender the meat is. At this point add salt, pepper and sugar to taste
- When the meat is tender, cut it into four pieces, drizzle over the sauce and serve on a bed of mash
- If you want a thicker sauce, add a large tablespoon of crème fraîche at the three-hour stage
- If the mixture gets too dry, add water.



*Martin Pearson*

# Gill Kent

## A regular contributor to *Chiltern* is remembered by members of her family

Having met at Reading University, Jim and Gill Kent married in Somerset in February 1962, then moved to North Dean where they lived for the rest of their married life.

In 1971, Gill and Jim formed a partnership (Beechdean Farms) with Donald Campbell, who then lived at North Dean House and had a dairy herd of 100 cows at Home Farm, which they ran in conjunction with their 50 at Old House Farm. Over the years their partnership expanded to include their children, Charles and Susie, the breed of cow changed from Holstein to Jersey, the numbers rose to 350 and they supplied the milk for the fledgling Beechdean Ice Cream business.

Gill was a very active partner and, in the late 1980s, was the prime mover in their decision to purchase the farm from the Church Commissioners, who owned both farms. Probably the best farming decision they ever made!

In addition to her role as a farmer, Gill was also a biology teacher and careers advisor at Pipers Corner School. She loved teaching and watching her students flourish over many years.

Gill loved singing and classical music. She was a very proud member of the Wooburn Singers and was their treasurer and chairman for some time. The choir was founded in 1967 by the late Richard Hickox and has earned a reputation as one of the UK's leading amateur mixed voice choirs. The pinnacle of Gill's singing career was when she and the Wooburn Singers sang Mass at St Mark's Basilica in Venice, followed by a concert.

She had an incredible zest for life, but particularly farming, the countryside and her

garden. Gill had a passion for educating the public about the importance and relevance of farming, as illustrated by her regular articles in the *Speen and North Dean News* and the Chiltern Society magazine. She was also part of a team that set up The Rural Forum, a unique group that enabled improved liaison between town and country.

Jim and Gill organised numerous trips around the British Isles and Europe with fellow farmers and friends, visiting all sorts of different places such as dairy farms, food factories, country estates and historic cities, to name but a few. These were wonderful opportunities not only for companionship, but also for sharing knowledge and experience with like-minded people.

Gill's main passion was her garden – a sanctuary where she found peace, tranquillity and joy. It was a testament to her patience, her unwavering love for life, and her belief in reward through effort. Her garden was a place of gathering, where friends and family would come together to share laughter, stories and the fruits of her labour. It was a place where memories were made.

In February 2022 Gill and Jim celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary, and both took great pleasure in receiving their congratulatory telegram from The Queen.

North Dean (near High Wycombe) was home to Gill for the majority of her life; she felt honoured to have lived in

### GILLIAN RUTH KENT



13th December 1937 – 8th September 2023

such a beautiful part of the country with its undulating land and magnificent woods, and to have had the companionship of so many local friends. She was a woman of strength and resilience, who faced life's challenges with unwavering determination and spirit. Numerous health obstacles came her way, particularly rheumatoid arthritis, but she never complained or lost her faith or ability to find joy in the simplest of things. Her acts of kindness and compassion touched the lives of countless people, and her legacy of generosity will continue to inspire us all.

Gill's funeral took place on Monday 9 October. We'll be eternally grateful to all her family, friends and well-wishers who filled Hughenden church and then joined us to celebrate her life at North Dean Village Hall on the most sunny October day ever.

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# Gathering momentum

## There are signs that Mending the Misbourne is nearer to becoming a reality, says Bob Older

Concerned Chiltern citizens, led initially by the great Vic Wotton, have been campaigning for and working towards substantial improvements to flow in the River Misbourne since the 1970s. Fifty years on, a recent workshop indicated the time is ripe for some radical next steps.

The Chiltern Chalk Streams Project team held a workshop at the end of November as the first formal step of the Mending the Misbourne Project. Present were representatives from a wide range of organisations, including the Chiltern Society, the Chilterns Conservation Board, the Environment Agency, Thames Water (TW), Affinity Water, parish and county councils, Misbourne River Action and other local community groups. It provided an excellent opportunity to get everyone 'on the same page'.

The river is under pressure from, among other things, abstraction for domestic water supply and the construction of the HS2 rail line. There's both a great need and a considerable appetite for coordinated action.

The day began with an excellent overview from Allen Beechey concerning the pressures and issues affecting the river. He noted that it's currently assessed as of 'Poor Ecological Status', going on to point to the opportunities presented by TW's Smarter Water Catchment initiative (SWC), which focuses on its 27 catchments. Bids from these areas will compete for funds towards improvements under TW's Asset Management Planning (AMP) for the periods 2025-30 and 2030-35 (AMPs 8 and 9). The Misbourne is part of the River Colne catchment, and ColneCAN – the Colne Catchment Action Network – is one of 100 key catchment partnerships across the UK included in the Catchment Based Approach framework launched by Defra in 2013.

Under ColneCAN, the River Chess has been the subject of one of three trial SWC projects in the Thames region during AMP 7. The themes of the SWC initiative successfully developed for the Chess were: (1) improving water quality; (2) managing flow; (3) control of invasive

species; (4) improving wildlife corridors; (5) involving people; (6) working together. The other trial areas – Rivers Evenlode and Crane – had different but similar themes. It's suggested that securing meaningful funds for addressing the Misbourne's issues from TW's £48m budget for improvements in AMP 8 will require a similar sub-catchment based approach through ColneCAN. Meanwhile, Affinity Water's own Asset Management Planning provides a complementary opportunity.

Funding decisions, subject to Ofwat final determination, are anticipated in December 2024. TW are, however, currently assessing catchment partnerships' readiness, with a view to a decision (expected in April) about which of them will be included from 2025 onwards. The key criteria for success will be for partnerships to demonstrate that they're developing evidence-based, integrated catchment plans, and the workshop was the very first step.

Having proposed this approach for the Misbourne catchment, Allen went on to describe some of the river's issues in more detail. Rising as a winterbourne stream at Mobwell Pond, it flows 27km to join the Colne in the Colne Valley Country Park at Denham. Falling 90m on the way, it's a notable feature of the Missendens, Amersham, the Chalfonts and Denham.

Key issues are pollution from land drainage and sewage, invasive species of flora and fauna, abstraction and low flows. Due largely to the underlying geology, coupled with abstraction and historic modifications, the river is vulnerable to drying out between Amersham and Chalfont Park. The history of abstraction from the catchment was covered in the last issue of *Chiltern*, but flow below Amersham also lacks the treated effluent



from the sewage works which closed in 1954. In contrast, the river above Amersham has benefitted significantly from the Alleviation of Low Flow Scheme Phase 1 (ALF1) implemented in 1997, but ALF2 between the Chalfonts hasn't progressed.

Following Allen's presentation, delegates worked in small groups to confirm and prioritise the issues affecting each reach. Not surprisingly, the groups unanimously rated low flow and water quality as the main concerns. It helped that individuals with local knowledge were able to draw attention to particular hotspots.

This was just the first stage in developing a Misbourne catchment plan, and a follow up session is planned for early spring, at which potential solutions will be examined. If you're interested in getting more involved with practical efforts to look after the river, Misbourne River Action look forward to hearing from you.

# Early days on The Ridgeway



*Left: Anniversary patron Mary-Ann Ochota pauses on Pitstone Hill  
Above: National Trail officers past and present, Jo Burgon and Sarah Wright*

*Photos: Mary Tebje*

## Recalled by National Trail Officer,

### Jo Burgon

Jo worked on The Ridgeway from 1981 to 1983, so he was a welcome guest at the 50th anniversary event on Coombe Hill last September. Back in 1973 when The Ridgeway was officially opened as a National Trail, there was no such thing as a National Trail Officer. Jo helped shape the role, as well as the National Trail, into what it is today.

'I applied for the post of Ridgeway Officer in 1981 after 10 years with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) as a conservation volunteer and a member of staff. Just before I started, I had gone with Don Gresswell, an active volunteer on rights of way with the Chiltern Society, to the Appalachian Trail Conference in North Carolina. I also went to the White Mountains as a guest of the Appalachian Mountain Club to look at their trail building work. This all stood me in good stead for what was to follow!

'The principal task was to install a Code of Voluntary Restraint for motor vehicles and trail bikes and to make it work! But first I wanted to find out about the scale and range of issues that needed to be tackled. There were some large files with letters of complaint in the Council offices, but that did not tell me enough about how serious the issues were. I began by monitoring use and started talking to the vehicle user groups to discuss a code of restraint. I got help promoting the code by creating a team of volunteers who patrolled sections of the route, while continuing to monitor use.

'I wanted to broaden the activities of

the role beyond the vehicle use issues. The original signs along The Ridgeway that were designed by the Countryside Commission for all of England's "long distance routes" had broken or disappeared, so I made new oak signs to replace them. I arranged for the Oxford Conservation Volunteers to install them, as well as on-site notices about the voluntary code of restraint for drivers.

'Access to water, let alone provisions, is always a concern along the remote stretches of the Trail. A family gave money in memory of their young son, Peter Wren, to put in a water tap near Sparsholt Firs. I installed another two, but these are no longer functioning.

'While there was a variety of guidebooks for The Ridgeway, there was no single accommodation guide, so I produced the first one, which was sent to visitors when they made enquiries.

'During this time the Friends of the Ridgeway was created by Maurice Mendoza and Nigel Forward. Maurice had been CEO of the recently created English Heritage. The Friends came into existence because of the concerns about vehicle use. I had many interesting meetings in those early days

and I am delighted to see they are a key player in the Ridgeway Partnership today. It is also good to note that the Trail Riders Fellowship is one of the partners promoting the current leaflet *Vehicles on The Ridgeway and connecting byways*.

'I understood The Ridgeway was the most contentious issue that the Countryside Commission had to deal with at that time - I hosted a visit by the Countryside Commissioners. I had regular meetings on site with their specialist trail staff from Cheltenham and the regional team based in Reading. I reported to a steering group made up of officers from Oxfordshire and Berkshire County Councils, as well as the Commission.

'Being part of the 50th anniversary celebrations has enabled me to reflect on what I achieved: I helped pave the way for those that followed, so that the task of enabling enjoyment of the route and the landscapes through which it passes can be sustained for generations to come. I believe the way forward over the next 50 years is to build resilience into all our actions and relationships, remain open minded and find ways to solve conflicting interests. When the 100th anniversary comes, I hope The Ridgeway is known as a beacon and flagship for a great time out through a landscape full of meaning for all.'

# Walking in the Footsteps of An Edwardian

Jarrold Publishing £10 96pp ISBN 978-0-85101-673-3

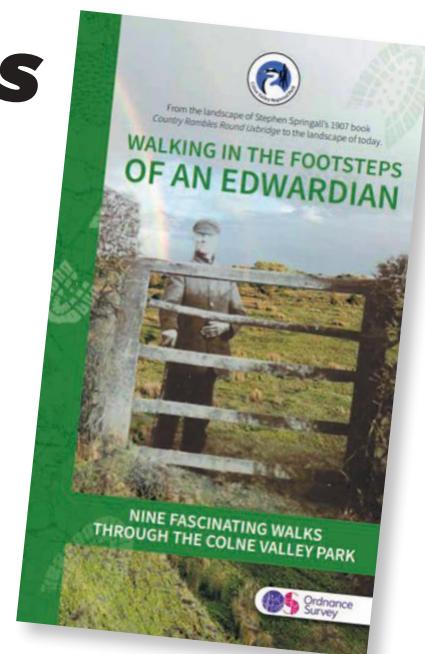
Published on behalf of the Colne Valley Regional Park, this book uses as its inspiration the rambles of Stephen Springall, who walked extensively in the area and recorded his experiences in his 1907 book *Country Rambles Round Uxbridge – A Descriptive Guide to the Neighbourhood*.

Springall was a fascinating character. He came from humble beginnings in Kent, the son of a tailor. He trained in domestic service and spent most of his working life as a manservant, butler and gentlemen's club steward. He nonetheless found time to enjoy the natural world, write books and campaign for the protection of, and access to, the countryside. When he found footpaths overgrown or obstructed he didn't hesitate to speak out, targeting local authorities and landowners alike in regular letters to the local press. In the early 20th century he was heavily involved with the Uxbridge Open Fieldpaths Association. In the preface to *Country Rambles* he wrote: '... many of these byways lie in very backsome places, the owners of the land through which they pass are mostly altogether averse to making them known, and not infrequently show much originality and adroitness in the disguisement of them; and even public bodies, that ought to know better, often show a lamentable lack of interest in their unobscured preservation.'

As well as including background

information about Springall himself and putting his activities into the context of the period in which he lived, this new publication features nine walks of between 2 1/2 and 10 miles. These are much shorter variations on some of those described by Springall, and, rather than starting from Uxbridge, as his walks usually did, they begin from destinations he visited on his rambles. Among them are walks around Chalfont, Denham, Rickmansworth, Iver and Staines. Apart from one, which follows a linear route along the Thames, all are circular. Each of them lists a number of points of interest that offer insights into the history of the places through which the walk passes. In addition, the book not only contains contemporary OS maps with the routes picked out in yellow, but maps dating back to Springall's time with the same route superimposed on them. These, of course, reveal the vast changes that have occurred in the intervening years.

Although I haven't yet tried any of the walks myself, this attractive volume will definitely encourage me to do so. The



route descriptions appear to be clear and accessible, and are illustrated with many photographs, some of them dating back more than 100 years, while others are much more recent. There are also copies of several paintings depicting local landscapes. Towards the end there's a section which gives brief descriptions of other places referred to by Springall. The format of the book means it can easily be carried on a walk.

At £10, I consider *Walking in the Footsteps of An Edwardian* to be something of a bargain! It's available from the Chiltern Society website.

You can read more about Colne Valley Regional Park in Stuart Pomeroy's article on page 16.

**Richard Bradbury**

## NEWS & VIEWS

# Wendover Canal towpath upgrade – Wendover to Halton

Peter Elwin **reports**

**Members of Wendover Canal Trust (WCT) are celebrating the recent completion of an upgrade to the 1.7 mile (2.7km) section of the towpath between Wendover and Halton.**

The high-specification upgrade was supervised by the Canal & River Trust and the work was carried out by its contractors Kier Plc and The Rothen Group. The result is an all-weather, 1.5m wide path, with bank reinforcing, a strong membrane, a solid 100mm foundation and a 50mm surface of Centrack, which is a widely used, highly durable limestone-based material particularly suited to a rural environment.

The improvement will enable people of all ages and abilities to use the towpath throughout the year.

Peter Elwin, Partnerships Director of WCT said: 'This project has been made possible by funding from the HS2 Chiltern AONB Review Group (with the substantial support of the Chilterns Conservation Board), Wendover Parish Council, Wendover Community Board, the Lionel Abel-Smith Trust and Halton Parish Council. We're grateful to all these organisations for their support, which is much appreciated.'

Over the coming months WCT will be replacing the railings at the beginning of the canal at Wharf Road and erecting signage

along the entire route from Wendover to Halton. This is largely being funded by the EKFB joint venture (Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovia Construction and BAM Nuttall).

The upgrading of the towpath will be celebrated with an event on Friday 28 June, to which all will be welcome. WCT are hoping that there'll be music, refreshments and displays along the towpath, and that pupils from John Colet School will play a significant part in organising the day. Final details will be announced later.





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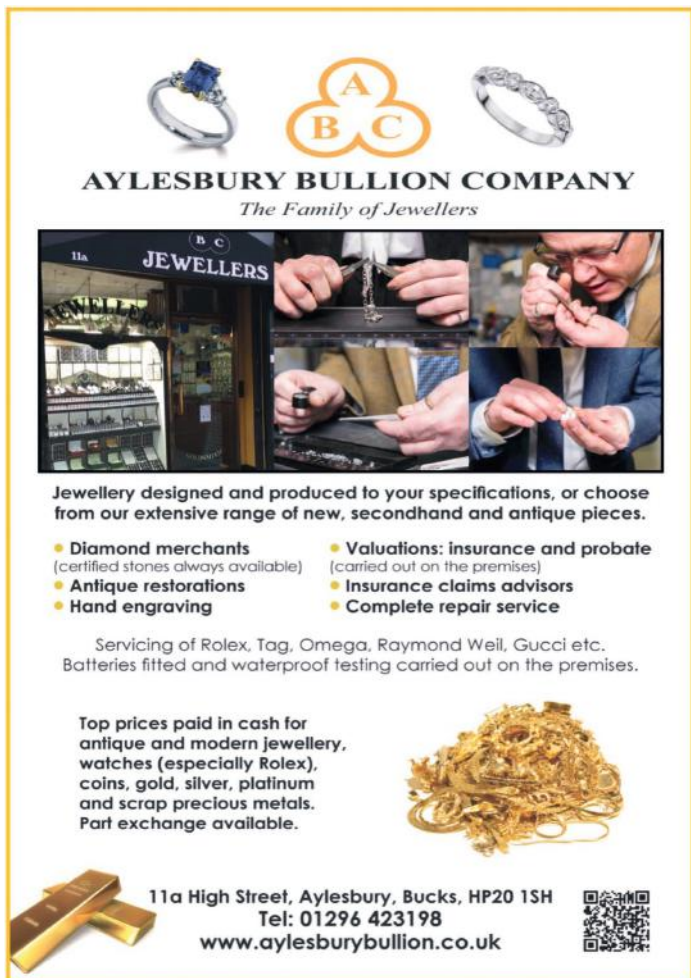
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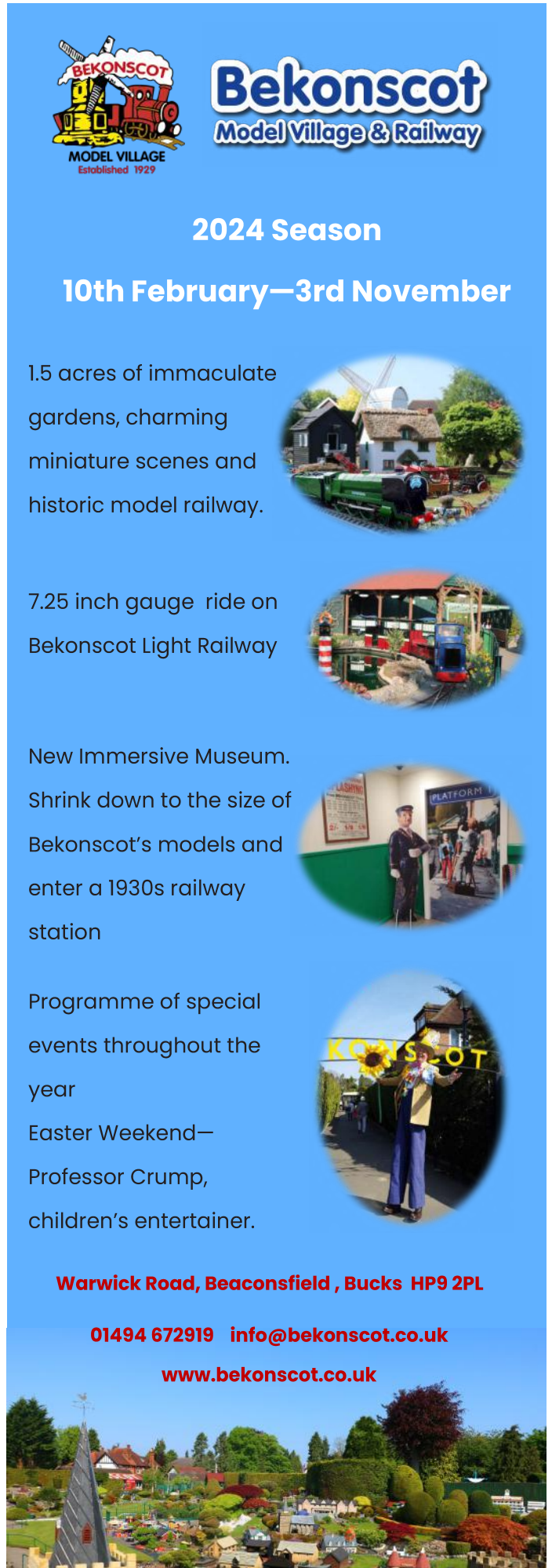
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**Sunday Walks:** The walks, suitable for all the family, start at **10am** (unless otherwise advised). In the unusual event of no bookings being received, the walk leader has the right to deem the walk cancelled.

**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.

| MARCH         |   | O/S GRID REF   | MARCH         |   | O/S GRID REF  |
|---------------|---|--|---------------|---|---|
| <b>Sun 3</b>  | 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 Ibstone 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.<br><b>Sue Brinn 01628 483639</b>  | <b>Explorer 171 GR<br/>SU 783927<br/>CS Map 11<br/>Bucks</b>       | <b>Wed 27</b> | Meet outside The Crown, Ley Hill (nr Chesham) HP5 1UY. Plenty of free parking around the village green. A very scenic 6.2 mile walk around rolling countryside from Ley Hill to Latimer, along the Chess Valley and back. Taking in woodland and open farmland fields, with some quiet lane walking. Two stiles. Total ascents and descents 475ft, including one steepish hill. The recently re-opened Crown does a very popular special meal offer on Wednesdays with two courses for £12.<br><b>Paul Cooke 07901 516342</b>   | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 989019<br/>CS Map 17<br/>Bucks</b>        |
| <b>Wed 6</b>  | Meet outside Ashley Green Memorial Hall, Two Dells Lane (nearly opposite the church), Ashley Green HP5 3RB. Free parking. WC/light refreshments at the popular Glebe Café (rear of the hall) before or after the walk. A 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.<br><b>Jayne Fogg 07941 112863</b> | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 977051<br/>CS Map 17<br/>Bucks</b>       | <b>Sun 31</b> | <b>Easter Sunday - No walk</b>  |   |
| <b>APRIL</b>  |   |  |               |   |   |
| <b>Sun 10</b> | Meet at the Water Gardens car park, Bridge 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 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 <i>More Great Walks</i> book). Total ascent 320ft.<br><b>Shirley Williams 07740 124391</b>                | <b>Explorer 182 GR<br/>TL 053069<br/>CS Maps 5,20<br/>Herts</b>    | <b>Wed 3</b>  | Meet at The Dashwood Roadhouse, Old Oxford Road, Piddington HP14 3BH. Park roadside, or in the pub car park if lunching. A walk of c5.25 miles in the area between the A40 and M40, heading towards Towerage, then passing Wheeler End and Cadmore End Commons. One steep climb near the start. Fine views across to West Wycombe. Five stiles. Total ascent 500ft.<br><b>David Vick 07877 196083</b>   | <b>Explorer 171/2 GR<br/>SU 807942<br/>CS Maps 1,7,11<br/>Bucks</b> |
| <b>Wed 13</b> | Meet and park in the lay-by on the B480 in Middle Assendon (nr Henley) RG9 6AU. If booked for lunch at The Rainbow, the pub car park can be used. A scenic, undulating c5.5 mile walk, with the main hill at the beginning. The route goes along The Oxfordshire Way, down through woodland to Lower Assendon, up past a deer park and joins The Chiltern Way Extension, returning via Bix Common. One stile. (There's a slightly shorter route for the Groovers).<br><b>Patricia Boxell 07847 869506</b>                       | <b>Explorer 171 GR<br/>SU 739858<br/>CS Map 2<br/>Oxon/Bucks</b>   | <b>Sun 7</b>  | Meet outside Henley Town Hall, Market Place, Henley RG9 2AQ. Numerous pay & display parking options, with Kings Road and Greys Road sites being closest (cost £2.40 on Sunday up to 4 hours). A 6.5 mile stile-free walk exploring the hills and woods around the riverside market town of Henley-on-Thames. The route goes up through Lambridge Woods to Bix, down to Middle Assendon, then along the Oxfordshire Way, with a second climb into Henley Park, before descending into the town. Total ascent 650ft. Plenty of refreshment choices in Henley.<br><b>Philippa Sanders 07710 453087</b> | <b>Explorer 171 GR<br/>SU 759826<br/>CS Map 2<br/>Oxon</b>          |
| <b>Sun 17</b> | Meet at Blizzards Yard car park (free on Sunday), off High Street, Chalfont St Giles HP8 4QA. A lovely 6.3 mile walk that passes through woods and farmland, with pleasant distant views. The route heads along The Chiltern Way towards The Swillett, Bottom Wood and Newlands Park (Chiltern Open Air Museum site), before returning to the start. Total ascent 500ft. Refreshments available in the village afterwards.<br><b>Frank Auton 07785 276095</b>   | <b>Explorer 172 GR<br/>SU 991936<br/>CS Maps 6,22,28<br/>Bucks</b> | <b>Wed 10</b> | Meet at Heartwood Forest car park, Wheathampstead Road, Sandridge AL4 9DG (approx 2 miles north of St Albans, off B651). A 5.6 mile stile-free walk exploring new and ancient woodland, managed by The Woodland Trust and understood to be the largest new native forest in England, hopefully including bluebells. Mainly well-defined paths, but possibly muddy in places. No major hills. Total ascent 300ft. Lunch options at the pubs in Sandridge.<br><b>Nigel Seabrooke 07747 552378</b>   | <b>Explorer 182 GR<br/>TL 168108<br/>CS Map n/a<br/>Herts</b>       |
| <b>Wed 20</b> | Meet at the entrance to the National Trust Dunstable Gateway Centre, Dunstable Road, Whipsnade, Beds LU6 2GY (parking fee of £3.50 for non-Trust members). A 5.25 mile walk, descending to the foot of the escarpment, before a very steep ascent (including a flight of steps) to eventually pass through Whipsnade Tree Cathedral and Whipsnade village, before skirting Kensworth quarry on the return. Great views over the Downs. Total ascent 550ft.<br><b>John Lavender 07546 245847</b>                                 | <b>Explorer 181/2 GR<br/>TL 008196<br/>CS Map 21<br/>Beds</b>      | <b>Sun 14</b> | Meet in the car park in front of Little Gaddesden Village Hall, 120m on left-hand side of Church Road HP4 1NX. A 5 mile walk from Little Gaddesden heading downhill to Dagnall, then uphill to Ward Hurst Farm, before a hilltop return via Ringshall. Fine views. One stile. Total ascent 300ft.<br><b>Phil Cummings 07597 989767</b>  | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 995136<br/>CS Map 19<br/>Herts</b>        |
| <b>Sun 24</b> | Meet at Chesham Metropolitan Line Station entrance, Station Approach, Chesham HP5 1DH. This 5.6 mile stile-free walk explores the network of paths in beautiful rolling countryside to the east of Chesham, before returning to the town along the River Chess. We'll pass through a number of gates. Three climbs and some fine views. Total ascent 560ft.<br><b>Andrew Clark 07935 875403</b>   | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 960016<br/>CS Map 17<br/>Bucks</b>       | <b>Wed 17</b> | Meet at the right-hand bend along Park Lane (off the B460) on the way to, and not far from, The Five Horseshoes, Maidensgrove (nearest postcode RG9 6HN). Park roadside along the edge of the Common. A hilly 6 mile stile-free walk with wonderful views heading up to Turville Heath, then on to Southend, returning past Stonor Park and its herd of deer.<br><b>Susan Maguire 07835 872791</b>  | <b>Explorer 171 GR<br/>SU 718886<br/>CS Map 9<br/>Oxon</b>          |
|               |   |  | <b>Sun 21</b> | Meet at Ballinger Common Recreation Ground car park, Blackthorne Lane, Ballinger (near Great Missenden) HP16 9LN. A relatively flat 5 mile walk, with one moderate ascent near the finish, taking in mixed countryside and unspoilt villages. There's a naval point of interest! Four well-maintained stiles.<br><b>Richard Skepper 07772 214503</b>  | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 911031<br/>CS Maps 3,8<br/>Bucks</b>      |
|               |   |  | <b>Wed 24</b> | Meet outside Hurley Village Hall, High Street, Hurley (nr Henley) SL6 5LT. Limited parking at the hall, The Rising Sun if booked for lunch, or at designated parking bays along the High Street. A walk of c5.5 miles from this picturesque village along the Thames Path, before a gentle climb up through woodland to reach the Dew Drop Inn. A sharper descent going back through the village. Attractive countryside and some nice views. Total ascent 320ft.<br><b>Isobel Dorehill 07554 995098</b>  | <b>Explorer 171 GR<br/>SU 826836<br/>CS Map 31<br/>Berks</b>        |

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).**

| APRIL         |  | O/S GRID REF  | MAY           |   | O/S GRID REF   |
|---------------|--|---|---------------|---|--|
| <b>Sun 28</b> | Meet in Wendover library car park (free on a Sunday), High Street (opposite Lucca restaurant) HP22 6DU. A 6 mile stile-free walk that heads out from the town up to Wendover Woods and the café, then on to Haddington Hill and returns down to the town via Boddington hillfort. Some fine views.<br><b>Peter Hetherington 07767 647714</b>   | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 869077<br/>CS Map 3<br/>Bucks</b>   | <b>Sun 26</b> | Meet outside the Red Lion, Coleshill HP7 0LH. Only park in the pub car park if pre-booked for (the popular) lunch, otherwise plenty of street parking. An interesting 5.8 mile, gently undulating countryside walk through woods and farmland. We'll head from Coleshill towards Hertfordshire House, then to Penn Bottom and the Penn Estate, before returning on The Chiltern Way. Total ascent 380ft.<br><b>Frank Auton 07785 276095</b>   | <b>Explorer 172 GR<br/>SU 948952<br/>CS Map 6<br/>Bucks</b>      |
| MAY           |  |   |               |   |  |
| <b>Wed 1</b>  | Meet outside The George and Dragon, Quainton, (nr Aylesbury) HP22 4AR. Parking around the village green. A hilly 5.4 mile walk heading northwards past the village windmill, over Quainton Hill and Conduit Hill towards Hogshaw hamlet and farms. Picking up parts of the Midshires Way and Outer Aylesbury Ring, there are fine all-round views of the Bucks countryside. A final gentle descent over grassy fields back to the village, passing the church. Total ascent 570ft. Lunch option at the coffee shop next to the pub (pub won't be open).<br><b>Sandra Palmer 07512 615037</b> | <b>Explorer 192 GR<br/>SP 746201<br/>CS Map n/a<br/>Bucks</b> | <b>Wed 29</b> | Meet at The Whip Inn, Pink Road, Lacey Green HP27 0PG. Park roadside along Pink Road. This 5.4 mile walk includes a section of The Chiltern Way, passes Hampden House, then crosses Hampden Common on the way back. No major hills. A couple of stiles. Total ascent 250ft.<br><b>Trevor Chandler 07973 886648</b>  | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 818007<br/>CS Maps 7,12<br/>Bucks</b>  |
| <b>Sun 5</b>  | Meet at the free car park on the southwest side of Hill Road/Chinnor Hill where crossing The Ridgeway/Upper Icknield Way, (nearest postcode OX39 4BB). A scenic 6 mile walk that takes in parts of the Icknield Way and Chiltern Way, as well as woodland paths. The escarpment will ensure a couple of challenging hills. Total ascent/descent 1,000ft.<br><b>Deirdre Philpott 07973 271474</b>   | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 760002<br/>CS Map 14<br/>Oxon</b>   | <b>Sun 2</b>  | Meet in the village car park (free in the bottom section), off the High Street/B482 (opposite Church Path), Lane End HP14 3ER. A hilly 5.5 mile stile-free walk on well-defined paths, with lovely views of the Chiltern countryside. From Lane End we'll walk through Finings Wood and descend Hanover Hill into Fingest. We'll then head uphill towards Cadmore End and Wheeler End Common, passing The Chequers Inn on the way back to the start. The Grouse & Ale pub is a three minute walk from the car park, if you want Sunday lunch. (Booking advisable).<br><b>Sue Brinn 01628 483639</b> | <b>Explorer 175 GR<br/>SU 807918<br/>CS Map 11<br/>Bucks</b>     |
| JUNE          |  |   |               |   |  |
| <b>Wed 8</b>  | Meet at West Wycombe public car park, Chorley Rd (at the base of Mausoleum Hill, next to The Walled Garden café) HP14 3AP. A scenic 5.5 mile walk, initially going from West Wycombe to Bottom Wood Nature Reserve (managed by the Society). The return offers fine views of West Wycombe Estate and High Wycombe. Total ascent 700ft. Lunch options include the café next to the car park, or The Apple Orchard café on West Wycombe High Street.<br><b>Jez Lofts 07772 595845</b>  | <b>Explorer 171 GR<br/>SU 826947<br/>CS Map 7<br/>Bucks</b>   | <b>Wed 5</b>  | Meet in the car park adjacent to the cricket pavilion on Harpenden Common, off the A1081 St Albans Road AL5 2JF. A 5.5 mile walk through Rothamsted Park, the agricultural research estate, then on to The Chiltern Way, and down to the River Ver and Redbourn, before returning via the disused Nickey Line railway and passing the c17th century Rothamsted Manor. Lunch options in Harpenden.<br><b>Rob Saunders 07885 663816</b>   | <b>Explorer 182 GR<br/>TL 137135<br/>CS Map 27<br/>Herts</b>     |
| <b>Sun 12</b> | Meet at the Codmore/Botley Road playing fields car park (free), Botley Road (east of Chesham towards Ley Hill) HP5 1XG. This fairly easy, largely flat 4.2 mile walk starts by heading towards Jasons Hill and Lye Green, returning via Hilltop to the northeast of Chesham. Attractive views towards Berkhamsted and Amersham. Four stiles.<br><b>Stephen Groves 07843 381971</b>   | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 972021<br/>CS Map 17<br/>Bucks</b>  | <b>Sun 9</b>  | Meet by the front entrance of Berkhamsted Station, Lower Kings Road HP4 2AJ. Free 4 hour parking nearby at Canal Fields, Broadwater turn-off HP4 1HR, or limited parking on New Road (rear of the castle). An easy 5.5 mile stile-free walk, mostly on level paths but with three short uphill sections. Total ascent 430ft. Plenty of dining/refreshment options in the town centre afterwards.<br><b>Shirley Williams 07740 124391</b>  | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 993081<br/>CS Maps 17,18<br/>Herts</b> |
| <b>Wed 15</b> | Meet outside Ashridge Visitor Centre (free parking), end of Monument Drive, off the B4506 near Berkhamsted HP4 1LT. A 5.75 mile stile-free walk heading out through the Ashridge woodland to reach Pitstone Hill. Fine views. A gradual descent to Aldbury via Aldbury Knowers, before a final steep climb back to the start. Total ascent 650ft. (A shorter route with less incline may be available for Groovers if numbers warrant).<br><b>Chris Shrimpton 07751 701267</b>   | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 993121<br/>CS Map 19<br/>Herts</b>  |               |   |  |
| <b>Sun 19</b> | Meet at Frieth Village Hall RG9 6PR, where there's a small free car park. Further roadside parking can be found along nearby Innings Road. A scenic 6 mile walk via the picturesque Fingest, Turville and Skirmett villages, offering wonderful views and scenery. Two steep ascents, one steep descent. Several short road sections. Three stiles. Total ascent 550ft.<br><b>Stephen McFall 07745 006037</b>  | <b>Explorer 171 GR<br/>SU 796902<br/>CS Map 11<br/>Bucks</b>  |               |   |  |
| <b>Wed 22</b> | Meet outside the Wendover Woods café HP22 5NQ - card payments only in the main car park (£6 for 3 hours, unfortunately). A scenic 5.5 mile stile-free walk going east through Wendover Woods and out to Dancersend Nature Reserve. Numerous farm gates. Total ascent 600ft (two main hills). Good lunch options close by at the pubs in Aston Clinton or Wendover.<br><b>Paul Cooke 07901 516342</b>   | <b>Explorer 181 GR<br/>SP 890090<br/>CS Map 18<br/>Bucks</b>  |               |   |  |

## Reporting path problems

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.*



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