

THE CHILTERN NEWSLETTER

Wildlife Trust news, views and event information from the Chilterns Group, College Lake and around Buckinghamshire.

Issue 105 Autumn - Winter 2021

Join us again in helping Chilterns wildlife

It now really feels like we are starting to emerge from the awful pandemic. I'm so pleased that within this edition of the Chilterns Newsletter we are finally able to publicise events again.

I know many of you have missed the social engagement offered by our BBOWT events. However, I also speak to people who have valued more solitary enjoyment of nature during this time, not only at our nature reserves but also using the amazing network of footpaths we are blessed with. Some people have spoken of the revelation of getting to know their surroundings better and discovering nature close to home.

If you have discovered the importance of local nature, now is the time to build on that – perhaps before the attractions of honeypot sites elsewhere in the UK or abroad tug you away! Take up more opportunities locally to help us to keep our patch of the UK one of the best areas of the country for nature.

The Trust is also getting back to full strength after some staff losses and changes. Check out www.bbowl.org.uk to find out about new projects and a growing range of events. There have also been some changes in Chilterns Group. I would like to thank Rodney Sims for extraordinary long service as our treasurer and Julie Pomfret, especially for her crucial input to fundraising, as she and Alan move to Yorkshire. We are very pleased that David Atkinson has returned to join the small committee, but we are still looking for more people to join us. If you are interested in helping with publicity, fundraising, running events or practical conservation work please contact me for a chat.

**Mick Jones MBE, Chair of BBOWT Chilterns
Volunteer Group** jonesmick365@gmail.com

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News from College Lake Reserve.

Since the reopening of College Lake we have received a wonderful number of positive views from visitors, such as:

'I never knew there was somewhere so lovely near me,'

'My family and I are enjoying the fresh air and the scenery as well as learning from the displays.'

'After spending lockdown in a third floor flat, it is so nice for my wife, son and I to enjoy the open space.'

Work is underway to improve the 'meet and greet' entrance which should be finished before the winter sets in. The education side is slowly getting back to normal. Information sheets produced in the form of an 'I Spy' sheet have been given out to our younger visitors and we are welcoming back visits from schools although with reduced activities at present. Our weekly work parties have continued to do a marvellous job in keeping the site safe and enjoyable for all visitors by ensuring vegetation is cut back, paths renewed and hides painted. All these tasks, along with 'meet and greet', reserve guides, minding the shop and snack shack could not be achieved without the help of our wonderful band of volunteers for whom we are very grateful. We are so pleased to see that more volunteers are putting their names down and we look forward to seeing them in due course.

Go to bbowt.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer to enquire about opportunities to help.

Gillian Thompson, College Lake Volunteer.

College Lake Visitor Centre Update

We have had a great start to the summer with Summer Nights - opening late on a Wednesday - coming back again. Both the shop and cafe are now open to the public which is a good result, and the café is now in the process of having a lovely makeover. We also have had some exciting new items on the menu for summer and in September we will be planning ahead for our winter warmer menu.

The shop has some exciting new ranges including products from the Chiltern Brewery which have been flying off the shelves, a great new addition to our shop. We also have an attractive new range of tea-towels from Ulster Weavers that make excellent presents for your loved ones.

In August we sadly said goodbye to Sam Nichol. Sam is now following his dream to live by the seaside in Brighton and we wish him well. Although it has been a tough time recently we are looking forward to a successful autumn here at College Lake.

Toyah Baulk, Visitor Centre Manager

News from Finemere Wood

Finemere Wood is lush, green, and thick with vegetation. Butterflies flutter along the sunny woodland rides, the elusive purple emperor has been spotted on a number of occasions. Dragonflies and damselflies dart through the long grasses, and the volunteers are back in force. The whole team may now gather, and following the recent relaxation of Covid rules, the making and sharing of cake is permitted once again. Lemon drizzle cake was on the menu this month. Having been denied Finemere cake for the last 18 months, there was a celebratory mood at tea break.

The summer is a time for repairs around Finemere Wood. As nature unfurls in all its glory, the volunteers have turned their attention to a fencing project out in the meadows. The rotting, collapsing fence line is now sturdy and sparkingly new. The expertise, and energy, within the team is second to none. No sheep will escape from here again!



Centaury

The plant life at Finemere has been stunning this year. Common spotted orchids and wood anemones in particular have been more numerous than ever before. Now, we are enjoying purple blooms of tufted vetch, clouds of meadowsweet, and clusters of centaury with their pretty pink flowers. The devil's bit scabious is yet to come, it is a glorious floral time.

Autumn will be upon us in no time, and although I always feel a little sad as the flowers and butterflies disappear, it is a fantastic time to be a conservation volunteer. The winter work of cutting back large areas of trees and scrub is the job many of us enjoy the most. And this year, the Finemere woodland workers will clear another section of the ancient drovers' track, a project which generates much excitement.

Charlotte Karmali, Volunteer Warden

More glorious orchids at Aston Clinton Ragpits

After what seemed like an eternally cold and wet spring, the chalk grassland flowers began to emerge. There was a spectacular display of horseshoe vetch, a critically important food plant of the chalkhill blue butterfly. Many plants were later emerging than usual but it meant that by the time of the annual orchid count most of the early and midsummer flowers were all showing well. There was an amazing display of orchids again this year, the rain had certainly helped produce some tall and robust specimens

Once again we had a number of white flowered pyramidal orchids and a hybrid between common spotted and chalk fragrant orchid.

What was noticeable was that since we had roped off certain areas to prevent the plants being trampled, the orchids had begun to recolonise the now unused paths in those enclosures - nature abhors a vacuum so they say! Further good news has been the increase in the numbers of two rare species on the reserve - basil thyme and clustered bellflower. Broad leaved helleborines have been found flowering in a different part of the reserve - one that was cleared of scrub over the winter.

Finally, as we speak, the orchids have mostly gone over but they have been replaced by a sensational explosion of colour in the form of knapweed, scabious, agrimony, St John's wort, marjoram and burnet saxifrage. In the 15 years since I have been looking after the Ragpits I don't think I have seen so many late summer flowers - it's a truly uplifting sight.

Many thanks to all who helped with the orchid count, The numbers for this year were as follows;



Burnet saxifrage

fragrant orchid	10960
common spotted orchid	4458
common twayblade	7873
pyramidal	850

greater butterfly orchid	74
bee orchid	20
white helleborine	70
broad leaved helleborine	37

grand total 24342.

Phil Townsend, Volunteer Warden

Picking up the pace on Bacombe Hill

The pandemic has certainly had an effect on all of us. On Bacombe Hill there has been an increase in visitors taking their daily exercise, with a consequent pressure on paths and increased litter. As working parties were suspended, hawthorn, dog rose and brambles have taken the opportunity to put on a growth spurt. Some



essential work continued, the steps were repaired, and ragwort pulled, but not much else got done.

Working parties have now fully resumed, subject to BBOWT's Covid risk assessment at all times, and as restrictions start to ease what better place to be than outdoors in the fresh air.

A new bench has been installed where you can pause for a rest with a fantastic view out over the Vale of Aylesbury. This summer we have been blessed with a superb show of spotted and pyramidal orchids. A BBOWT guided plant walk in June admired the flora and was privileged to see two elusive juniper shield bugs on the same tree. Let's hope they felt a bit amorous!

The Bacombe Hill team has had several new recruits since lockdown, and our friendly hard-working group continue to do their very best to ensure this beautiful reserve thrives, helped as always by the cattle grazing on the hill for the summer.

We meet on the second Thursday of each month, and you are very welcome to come and join us. Please contact the BBOWT volunteering team on volunteering@bbowt.org.uk

Paul Niddler, Volunteer Warden

Buckinghamshire Environmental Resources are on the up!

The county has one of the best resource centres in the country commonly referred to as BMERC. BMERC and the Ecology Team work side by side in the new Buckinghamshire Council's Environment Team which now includes Urban Design & Landscape, Heritage and Archaeology, Arboriculture, Ecology and BMERC. One of the priorities is to push forwards with the Biodiversity Net Gain system for ensuring developers contribute to improving the health of wildlife under the new environmental legislation. If you'd like to keep up with the progress of this and many other projects please sign up for the BMERC newsletter at www.bucksmkerc.org.uk. There is a great deal going on including projects supported by BBOWT which not everyone gets to hear about...

Richard Birch, Volunteer

Wildlife to watch

Late summer is a great time for wildlife and the sunshine really helps to bring out the best of some of our native species! Here are some of my favourite wildlife highlights:

Swifts and Swallows - These summer visitors can often be seen congregating in groups before heading back to Africa. Watch out for swifts on a summer evening with their distinctive curved wing profile. Swifts prefer to stay in flight, catching flying insects in preparation for their long journey. Swallows have long forked tails and often fly lower and more acrobatically! Both species are fantastic to see during the warmer months and are an iconic part of our summer wildlife.

Dragonflies and Damselflies - Swifts and swallows aren't the only species eating insects! Dragonflies and damselflies are spectacular winged predators to see during early autumn.

It's believed that dragonflies and damselflies are some of our oldest species with early remains being dated back as far as 300 million years. Dragonflies are also one of our fastest insect species reaching up to 30mph as they zip around our ponds and rivers. Watch out for brilliant flashes of colour as they whiz past.

Butterflies - August is perhaps one of the best months to see butterflies. Species like the painted lady, peacock and red admiral are common garden visitors and will be drawn to a variety of plants. Some species prefer more specific habitats such as the Adonis blue which is only seen on chalk grassland.



Male Adonis Blue

Ed Turpin, Bucks and Berks Community Officer

Dancersend gets an 80th birthday present

Dancersend Nature Reserve, which helped inspire Charles Rothschild to start the UK's nature reserve movement, has received a special birthday gift to celebrate its 80th anniversary – a grant of more than £90,000.

The money will be used to further develop Dancersend Reserve which was one of the first nature reserves in the UK. The 211-acre site is where a young Charles Rothschild discovered his love of nature. He went on to help found the conservation society that eventually became The Wildlife Trusts. He secured the core area of the nature reserve in the 1920s when the Halton Estate was being broken up and sold off.

Now, the Rothschild Foundation has given the funding to the **Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)** to develop the site which was formally established as a nature reserve in commemoration of Charles Rothschild's achievements on 1 November 1941.

The donation will provide new equipment, help create a mosaic of new habitats, including a large wildlife pond, improved signage and display boards telling the little-known story of Dancersend. We are also planning a series of events to celebrate the anniversary and will increase our work with neighbouring landowners to help protect and enhance the natural environment in the wider area around the Dancers End valley and Aston Hill. The two-year program of works started on July 1.

BBOWT CEO Estelle Bailey said: 'Dancersend is like the mother of all nature reserves – one of the foundation stones on which The Wildlife Trusts were built. This beautiful place inspired the man who became a pioneer in the UK's nature reserve movement, so it has an important place in history as well as in our hearts.'



Chalkhill blue

The Rothschild Foundation commented: 'We are proud to continue the work that Charles Rothschild started on the site, which represents a historic turning point in the way that our society interacts with the natural environment. As our entire planet rallies to tackle the problems of global climate change and ecological damage, there has never been a better time to recognise the importance of this modest patch of woods and grassland in the English countryside.'



Wood vetch

Under BBOWT's care, Dancersend has nearly trebled in size to 211 acres of woodland, chalk grassland and scrub stretching across three parishes - almost all of it open to the public. The reserve boasts 390 species of flowering plants and ferns, over 800 species of fungi and more than 770 species of butterflies and moths. Part of the new funding will be used for specialist surveys to uncover additional species from some of the more difficult to identify wildlife groups.

More will be revealed when I give the November talk in Great Missenden - 'Dancersend, Cradle of Nature Conservation, and how it has grown up' (Memorial Centre, 23 November, 7.45pm).

Mick Jones, BBOWT Volunteer Warden (jonesmick365@gmail.com)

Plant and Produce Market – Sunday 17 October

The Chilterns Volunteer Group traditionally holds two fundraising Plant and Produce Markets each year, in May and October. The Covid pandemic meant that we were unable to hold the event in either May last year or May this year. However, it's looking good for this October so please make a note in your diary: **Sunday 17 October from 11:00am to 1:00pm** at its new venue, **College Lake**.

The big draw, as always, will be the plants generously donated by keen local gardeners. To complement the gardening theme, Workaid will be there selling reconditioned tools. After being absent last year, the produce stall will be back with scrumptious home-made cakes and biscuits along with a strictly limited quantity of BBOWT's very own apple juice from trees on Dancersend reserve! Excellent refreshments can be enjoyed in the Badger Café.

As always success depends on your support through donations of plants and home produce, so could you please:

- a) pot up and label any excess plants (especially the rarer ones) you may have as you divide them in the autumn and / or
- b) bake a cake (or two), and some biscuits, make jams and marmalades, perhaps conjure up some fudge or pick late fruit from your garden and
- c) spread word of the Market nearer the time.

Details of the events are on the BBOWT website. If you would like to help us in any way, or have any queries please contact John Catton on 01494 726616 or on richard.catton1@ntlworld.com

John Catton, Chilterns Group Events Organiser

Spare a thought for the Weston Turville Reservoir litter patrollers.

It is now over a year since we refocussed the 'watcher' group to concentrate on getting on top of the litter problem at Weston Turville Reservoir. This BBOWT reserve has open access to the increasingly urban local community and is well used by long established sailing and fishing clubs. Hot summer weekends have meant that the picturesque lake is a magnet for picnickers who frequently leave their food and drink refuse behind for others to clear up - like Dave Evans (right). We believe that by patrolling throughout the year in our hi vis BBOWT jackets we can gradually improve the situation because we are seen to be taking action, including giving suitable advice to those who want to have a barbecue (dangerous) or go wild swimming (even more dangerous). If you live locally and would like to take some exercise while doing something useful for the community, please get in touch with volunteering@bbowt.org.uk. Thank you sincerely to all the



present gang of helpers who between them have clocked up 132 hours of voluntary work from January to July.

Richard Birch, Rota Organiser.

Walking through Covid and walking for Climate Change

Despite the restrictions, we enjoyed a full programme of walks in small groups mostly on local reserves. Mick Jones, Phil Townsend, Gill Cornelius, Steve Hawkins and Chris Trew all gave us their insights into the plentiful wildlife that has helped us get through these difficult times. We were also happy to be part of Climate Day Sunday at St Mary's Church, Wendover. John Tyler led short walks in his inimitable style starting in the



churchyard and taking in the Hampden Pond, the Community Meadow and the chalk stream. As one supporter commented, 'climate change in a graveyard – the perfect combination'.

To follow up, there will be a community climate-themed evening in Wendover Memorial Hall on Friday **24 September** with doors opening at 6pm and a series of short talks from 7pm. Bucks councillor Ed Gemmel will be there and Climate scientist Dr James Rae will be joining us via a live link from St Andrews University. We hope that MP Rob Butler will be in attendance. There will also be stalls for Climate Action Wendover and Bucks Community Energy.

What can I do as an individual to reduce my environmental impact?

From <https://www.bbowt.org.uk/nature-based-solutions>

- Reduce, reuse and recycle – the less you consume, the smaller your carbon footprint
- Meet with or write to your MP and ask him to speak up about climate change
- Avoid single use plastics and choose reusable alternatives
- Go energy efficient – switch to a renewable energy supplier, insulate your home and choose A+++ appliances
- Choose locally grown and sourced food where possible
- Eat less meat and ensure the meat that you do eat is locally sourced and grass-fed
- Plant a wildlife garden, and grow some of your own food
- Walk, cycle or take public transport instead of driving whenever you can
- Take fewer flights – and particularly short haul flights
- Support the work of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust

Restarting Education events

You may have been wondering how this important part of the Trust's activities has been faring – in a normal year all our facilities between them give educational support to over ten thousand children!

Claire Garrity, in charge of the education programme at College Lake, has sent us this report:

Schools have been returning to College Lake for some time now – in fact we have been pretty busy delivering whole day trips to more than 1000 children. Considering that was only between late April - July, we can be really pleased and proud, as that's approx. a third of our average numbers without Sept - Oct or Feb/March/early April included at all. We were also only allowed, for most of that, to deliver to single class bubbles, and with reduced adult support.

Nature Tots is up and running again too – with two sessions per month. We're still on reduced numbers and will maintain our post Covid delivery style/protocols for now...

Both schools and Tots will restart from September and at October half term we shall be running a 'spooky trail' – details will be on www.bbowt.org.uk/events.

Over the summer we've been running some self-led trails and guided pond dips. The Outlook Inn, our hands-on explorers hut, had to close due to Covid restrictions and will be undergoing a facelift. We hope to have it back open and in use in the autumn.

Claire Garrity, Education Manager, College Lake

Happy botanising

BBOWT has a programme for surveying all its reserves to help decide on management strategies and see if they are working normally. Volunteers who have got in touch with the Reserves Ecology Officer will be invited to join teams carrying out habitat assessments each year, visiting each reserve in a 3 yearly cycle. When the epidemic hit these visits were curtailed but this year a few of us regulars were invited to get out with our quadrats to survey Bacombe Hill, Grangelands and the Rifle Range. It was so lovely to be out in the open air on the beautiful chalk grassland and get a worm's eye view of the wonderfully diverse plants which grow there. We were given a list of key plants which are indicative of a healthy chalk grass sward which included some of my favourites: squinancywort, fairy flax, clustered bellflower and lady's bedstraw to name but a few and we examined about 25 socially distance quadrats each to see if these flowers were present. The top of Bacombe Hill looked stunning, being studded with the blues and purples of self heal, harebell, knapweed and scabious intermingled with yellow wort and lady's bedstraw. We spent several happy hours doing quadrats all over the hill and enjoyed the wonderful view (only marred by the scar of HS2 excavations in the Vale below.) whilst eating our packed lunches. The stars of the show were the chalk hill blue butterflies which were enjoying nectar from the bird's foot trefoil flowers. Several males were apparent (they emerged before the females and are far more colourful and conspicuous.) We were quite surprised to see them as the food plant of the caterpillar is horseshoe vetch, of which there is very little on that site. We suspected they may have flown in from another site or there is a good patch of the food undiscovered during our survey. I was so happy to have met up again with a few of the survey team to spend a day doing what I love most and a bit of botanising on a beautiful BBOWT reserve.



Squinancywort

Sylvia O'Brien, Volunteer

BBOWT in the community

In recent years there has been a shift in the way the Trust gets its message over and gets its work done. From a baseline of acquiring land for nature reserves or taking on responsibility for existing reserves, then managing these with a mix of professional staff and motivated volunteers, the Trust has moved into engaging energetically first with farmers and landowners and then with the wider community. This has been possible owing to the increasing availability of grants and a willingness to work in association with other organisations. The reason for doing it is simple. Through nature reserves we can only improve the habitat for biodiversity in a tiny fraction of the landscape but to give nature a secure future we must influence what happens throughout the countryside, get all the stakeholders onside and build enthusiasm for nature everywhere.

Let's look at a few examples of work going on in our area. **Rough Around the Edges** is a project sponsored by BBOWT in association with the Chilterns Conservation Board as part of the overall National Lottery funded **Chalk, Cherries and Chairs** operation. It spans multiple activities as Katie Horgan explains in the blog linked below. Ed Turpin has been responsible locally for other aspects of the strategy since joining as Community Officer for Bucks and East Berks early this year. He's organised and presented a Zoom course on wildlife gardening and has also worked with the Education Team to hold a successful **Youth Summit**. Now he's about to reveal a new project code named **Team Wilder**. Meanwhile our friends at Lindengate have announced a scheme funded by The Rothschild Foundation, with BBOWT as a partner. It is **The Nature Alliance**, 'a partnership of nature-based organisations that will support 'green prescribing' in Buckinghamshire and lead the way in establishing nature-based health promotion and green care, first for young people and subsequently for adults.'

BBOWT Chilterns Group reports to the community management team through Ed as befits our long-established role pushing out the Wildlife Trust message through our public talks at Great Missenden, our guided walks introducing people to our nature reserves and our appearances at local festivities like Heritage Fairs and Wendover Celebrates. We now have two new gazebos and shall be working alongside Kate Sheard and Ed to go on improving visibility and engagement for BBOWT. If you are tired of Zoom and want to enjoy real 'facetime' with real people maybe you could help us?

Richard Birch, Deputy Chair, Chilterns Group

Chilterns Birds in winter, spring and summer 2021

It's a big subject so here are just some highlights first from two well-known localities. Thanks to Adrian Baylis and others we have a good record of birds at College Lake and several visitors to Weston Turville Reservoir also enter their sightings on the Bucks Bird Club system. Then Nick Marriner's surveyors on Chilterns farmland give another picture of what's going on in that very different habitat so overall we can get a feeling for what has been seen.

College Lake breeding birds are of particular interest as Leo Keedy's team work hard to get the conditions right and we are happy to say that redshank and oystercatcher both hatched young this summer. So did common terns and gadwall while the indications are that sedge, reed, Cetti's and garden warblers will have bred too. On passage in the spring notable species were yellow wagtail, garganey, dunlin, Mediterranean gull, little gull, goosander and both common and green sandpipers.

At **Weston Turville Reservoir** summer breeding birds included grey wagtail, great crested grebe and water rail while a great white egret frequented the reservoir and adjoining canal in July. Some other possible breeders include firecrest, which are being seen more widely than in their traditional haunts in Wendover Woods. In spring there was a regular passage of sand martins from 24 March, while in winter there was one observation of bittern and a new phenomenon - a roost of corn buntings in the reedbeds.

As for the **Chilterns Farmlands**, these have tended to be neglected by birders so the data coming from Nick Marriner's team is very interesting and new. The survey work is another part of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Project. Here is an edited summary after three years of recording based on a cluster of 18 farms by very dedicated surveyors:

100 species recorded since we started farm surveys, running total for 2021 now at 1,730 survey records

Range of species count per farm topping at 55, highest count for a single visit

Average species count per farm a healthy 40 with 8 farms recording 40+ species

Supplementary feeding over winter appears to be working: star of the show, yellowhammer, was recorded on 16 farms, corn buntings breeding on 4 farms, linnet seen on 12.

Spring migrants have been a bit slow this year but we recorded blackcap on all 18 farms; chiffchaff on 17 farms; whitethroat on 15 farms; garden warbler on 5 farms; lesser whitethroat on 4 farms; willow warbler on 4 farms



Great to see some locally scarce breeding birds like yellow wagtail (2 farms), meadow pipit (2 farms) and marsh tit (2 farms) with confirmed/probable breeding records, Hirundines have been a bit thin on the ground this spring but we recorded swallow on 13 farms, swift on 9 farms and house martin on 3 farms

6 new species have been added to the cluster list this spring (Cetti's warbler, spotted flycatcher, cuckoo, little owl, reed warbler and ring necked parakeet). Great also to see some big mixed tit parties including one of 52 blue tit, 42 great tit and 12 long tailed tit

The real rarities and champagne birds have to be the short-eared owl (the only ever Bucks record for June) and firecrest (now expanding their range across the Chilterns)

Outside of corvids and wood pigeons, skylark was the most numerous species which is fantastic with 13 counts into double figures and 75 on one farm

Really heartening to also record two counts of 50+ house sparrow

If you'd like to hear more come to Great Missenden Memorial Centre on Tuesday 19 October at 7.45pm when Nick and farmer Will Lacey will explain how the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Project, run by CCB and supported by BBOWT, is shedding new light on Chilterns wildlife and helping us understand how to help it thrive in the wider countryside.

Richard Birch

Our Winter Season of Talks is Back !

Welcome back to the BBOWT Chilterns Group Winter season of talks. We are restarting our popular evening talks at Great Missenden Memorial Centre with our usual selection of interesting wildlife subjects. Since we last gathered there the hall has had an extensive makeover giving us a much brighter, smarter venue.

Many of you may have logged in to our Zoom talks held last winter during the dark days of lockdown. These proved very popular with Phil Townsend's talk on Aston Clinton Ragpits attracting over 250 viewers. We know these online talks introduced many new people to our talks programme and we hope they will be encouraged to come to our live events at Great Missenden.

With this in mind we are having a couple of taster online events that might expand our attendance at Great Missenden evening talks. We have chosen the two deep dark winter months of January and February for these online talks because they are the least pleasant time to venture out at night. Far better to pour a cuppa, or something stronger and keep warm at home and enjoy an interesting night's wildlife entertainment on screen.

The autumn talks will start at 7.45pm but doors will be open earlier with refreshments available for you to catch up with friends prior to the talk. For the new season admission will be £5 including drinks and a raffle ticket and we shall have a card reader at the door. Seating will be moderately spaced out.

Monday 20th September The Future of Farming and Wildlife.

Our speaker is Giles Strother who heads up BBOWT's Land Advice Service.

Farmers are soon to be given public money to help enhance Britain's wildlife and environment. This has enormous potential to not only increase the amount and variety of wildflowers, butterflies and birds but also to noticeably change and hopefully improve the landscape. Giles Strother and BBOWT's Land Advice Service are actively supporting local farmers to help them achieve these aims.

Note this talk is not held on our usual 3rd Tuesday evening of the month.

Tuesday 19th October The Return of the Skylark

Tonight we focus on how our local Chiltern farmers are responding to the government's initiative to increase natural diversity. Nick Marriner from the Chalk Cherries and Chairs project is instrumental in helping the Chiltern Cluster Group of farmers. Much has been achieved already and I'm sure Nick will give us an update. Alongside Nick we'll hear from a working farmer Will Lacey from Lane End. The Lacey's family farm has dairy cows and arable crops as well as a successful farm shop. Will is heavily involved as a pilot farmer in this project and is tasked with giving feedback to government on how to balance the needs of wildlife and his responsibility as a partner in the family farming business.

Tuesday 16th November Dancersend - Cradle of Nature Conservation and How it has Grown Up

This large reserve high in the Chilterns above Tring was gifted by the Rothschild family as a Wildlife Trust reserve 80 years ago and is home to the Chiltern Gentian and the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly along with many other species, each with their own fascinating story. Reserve warden for 40 years, Mick Jones, will tell us of the historical connection to the Rothschilds and the development of conservation. The Trust has recently been given considerable funding to develop the wonderful habitats found here, including digging a new pond, and to explain the site's history to visitors

Tuesday 21st December Ancient Trees and all that Rot

Rotting trees are an important and often overlooked habitat for insects that live on rotting or dead wood. Author of books and many papers on this subject Dr Helen Read, Burnham Beeches Conservation Officer, has plenty of examples of ancient trees within her reserve to bring to life the intriguing world of rotting trees, the creatures who live on them and their importance to other species. As well as being a Site of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserve and Special Area of Conservation Burnham Beeches has an interesting history. The added bonus is that it is on our doorstep.

Tuesday 18th January 2022 Online Talk TBA

Tuesday 15th February Online Talk TBA

Tuesday 15th March Reading the Countryside

Well-known local naturalist John Tyler takes us on a visual walk through our countryside pointing out how humans and animals have shaped the landscape we see. How old is that hedge? Why was it planted there? What is the significance of this particular hornbeam. Why is this lane twisting and turning so much? John will tell us the answers in his usual humorous way illustrated with his excellent photographs.

On **Saturday 19th March** we have arranged with John for him to lead a guided walk to visit some of the sites mentioned in his talk. Once details have been confirmed we will let you know at our future talks and on the BBOWT website.

Steve Hawkins, Chilterns Group Talks Organiser

Farewell from a long standing member of the Chilterns Group.



Julie, right, with volunteers Gill and Georgina at a plant sale

We have been very lucky to have the support of Julie Pomfret over many years. First she was a regular member of the WTR work party under Diccon Procter, then she became our walks programme organiser and finally she took charge of the plant and produce market. Her husband Alan and grandson Jack were also regular helpers at the sales, which led to Alan taking a starring roll in our March 2019 music and poetry evening with a stirring rendition of Albert and the Lion. We bid them farewell with many fond memories and many thanks for their important contribution to BBOWT activities.

Julie writes:

Having finally acted on a long-held wish, Alan and I are moving to Old Malton, North Yorkshire.

BBOWT has been a lovely part of my 31 years here in Aylesbury, for the most part as a member but in the last few years, as a volunteer with the Chilterns group and as a committee member, being "dragooned" by Richard Birch.

Most of this has been contributing to the biannual Plant and Produce Market, such fun working with a great group of people, preparing, organising and selling the plants. There are lots of happy memories, even when soaked in the pouring rain, but importantly making friends and the satisfaction of raising a significant amount of money for BBOWT.

I cannot recommend highly enough the pleasure from volunteering for the BBOWT Chilterns group.

I shall miss everyone but we will be visiting the area regularly, so won't lose touch completely. Thanks to all for the friendship.

Julie Pomfret, Volunteer

Our Unique Geological Features

When in the late 1960s the curator of geology at the Bucks County Museum entered the emerging Pitstone Quarry 3 he was astounded at what he found. Along the eastern face of an excavated channel, for a distance of nearly a mile, he observed beautiful and fascinating features.

Weird shapes in different colours and textures called involutions adorned the quarry wall. As he walked along admiring them he noticed special sections which seemed to be infilled river beds. He realised these were something very special. The whole suite was the result of permafrost in the ice age. He made entries in his notebook and returned to the museum in a happy frame of mind.

It was nearly 10 years later when preparing to quarry fresh chalk that one of these river beds was exposed. A small area of deposit was found which contained bones of creatures such as rhinoceros of Ipswichian times one hundred and forty thousand years ago. The whole of this deposit was excavated under controlled conditions with many samples taken for the scientists.

Between these deposits and chalk bedrock more involutions were found which implies similar conditions to those of the times when the previously observed involutions were formed.

In 1980 a strange coincidence brought two fish tooth collectors to see the museum conservator with a tooth to identify. That tooth (of a woolly mammoth) was evidence that the quarry workings had found another channel. It was most pleasing that the management of Castle Cement appreciated the importance of the site and granted access. For the next four years excavations of this riverbed contents were carefully and methodically exhumed and recorded.

During the ensuing years the involutions became covered with erosion products with very little still visible. Then a guided walk and talk brought contact with professional geologists who were shown photographs taken in earlier days and expressed the wish that more should be visible.

With their contacts and help, feelers went out to Natural England. They were well received so we were encouraged to put a formal proposal together and send it to Natural England who suggested a trial exposure. This was done and a report prepared. Approval followed quickly.

A team was formed from those interested to gather finance for the work and interpretation. Finance was obtained from the Geologists Associations' Curry fund, the Quaternary Research Association and the Chilterns Group. We are exceedingly grateful to these organisations for their support and assistance in making this project an important feature of College Lake reserve. Most of the work was accomplished before lockdown.

The original plan was to have a small ceremony to open the site but this was delayed by the pandemic. Once we were released from lockdown we invited those who gave such unstinted help to a small ceremony to formally open the exhibit. Twelve guests, who included a professor and seven doctors of science, were entertained with



coffee and a cake specially baked at College Lake, with a few word of thanks from Leo and an odd reflection or two from Rodney. Finally Dr. Eleanor Brown showed us how this feature sat within the overall plan for the SSSI. It was a very good day blessed with sun. The party went well with everyone sharing experiences and thoughts. Much knowledge was distributed and received, as one would expect from such an erudite gathering. We hope our guests got the message of how much we appreciate their help in adding this feature to our reserve. By keeping this exposure open for all to see, we have made College Lake a unique site certainly in United Kingdom and possibly the world. We hope it will prove a special site for teachers at all levels for many years to come.

The original plan envisions the possibility of three other sections of involutions being available so the site continues to be useful as natural erosion moves the face towards the east.

Rodney Sims, Volunteer



Bloomin' Marvellous

The BBOWT Chilterns Group has played an important party in protecting a very rare orchid, enabling it to flower in relative safety.



The Red Helleborine is currently known to grow at just two sites in the UK, one in the Cotswolds and one here in the Chilterns. It's not been found at a third site, in the South Downs, for a number of years. If that isn't special enough, the small colony that grows on private land, which BBOWT manages under a lease-agreement, is the **ONLY** one that has successfully flowered in the last five or six years!

This all adds up to a very real vulnerability for the orchids, in the form of deer and rabbits eating them or humans accidentally trampling them. A safeguard lay in a renewed and much improved, 2-metre-high, double-wired enclosure. But that would come at a cost... £7,500!

The Chilterns Group got the ball rolling with a crucial and very generous donation of £2,500, monies raised by organising talks, walks and their famous plant sales. The balance was made up from the Red Helleborine Restoration Group (funded by Natural England) and part of an individual legacy to the Trust.

The work was carried out by contractors on the steeply sloping site (rather than me!) back in March, in time for this year's plants....

.... the photos speak for themselves. Another BBOWT success story! Thank you!



Chris Trew, Reserves Officer Bucks

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

We are covering topics from around the county to encourage members to spread their wings. The Trust's reserves north of Aylesbury have year round interest but are less visited, so please explore them and support the hard work of local staff and volunteers.

We are grateful for everyone's contributions to the newsletter. If you have ideas for the next issue, **covering April to August please submit them by mid February to juliebirch60@yahoo.com. To be put on the mailing list for this newsletter please contact membership@bbowt.org.uk** **Photo copyright**, Colin Williams, Mick Jones, Conwy community.rspb.org.uk, Steve Chilton, BTO & Google

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust.

HANDS - ON CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Work parties are sociable and satisfying local events with opportunities to learn new skills. Beginners are particularly welcome and you can stay for whatever time you can spare. Please wear stout footwear and work clothes, including gloves, and take care on steep slopes and uneven ground. Tools and instruction are provided. Children (10+) are welcome but please contact the organiser if you wish to bring them. Parents must supervise children at all times. We welcome all new volunteers who are invited to email volunteering@bbowt.org.uk for registration. The contact information below is for queries from members of existing teams.

DANCERSEND (near Tring) 10 - 4pm - Second Sunday of month plus some mini sessions on weekdays

- 12 Sept** Entrance to Extension fields, between Aston Hill and Chivery SP 891097
10 Oct Meet at western end of reserve near Chivery. Turn south off B4009 Wendover - Tring Road towards St Leonards for approx 1.7 miles. 150 yds S of Chesham Fencing
- 14 Nov, 12 Dec** Meet at Thames Water pumping station. SP 905088, HP23 6LB. Where Wendover - Tring Road B4009 meets old A41 turn right after 1 mile and continue for 0.75 miles to car park on left by waterworks. Team Meeting 10 - 11.30 on 14 November
Contact Judi Fisher 01494 722073, judiandbryan@yahoo.co.uk

ASTON CLINTON RAGPITS (near Wendover)

For information please **contact** Phil Townsend 01923 353410,
philjtownsend@yahoo.co.uk or volunteering@bbowt.org.uk

FINEMERE WOOD (near Quainton) Work parties: 9.30am - 3pm on second and fourth Thursday of the month: 23 Sept, 14 Oct, 28 Oct, 4 Nov, 18 Nov, 9 Dec.
Contact Charlotte at charlottekarmali@outlook.com.

WESTON TURVILLE RESERVOIR (near Wendover) 10am - 2.30pm, last Thursday of month 23 Sept 28 Oct, 25 Nov **Contact** Stacey Hewitt staceyhewitt@bbowt.org.uk

COLLEGE LAKE (near Tring) 10.00 - 4pm
Please call or email **Leo Keedy** - 01442 826774 or leokeedy@bbowt.org.uk

PITSTONE FEN (near Tring). Apply to volunteering@bbowt.org.uk

YOESEN BANK (near Princes Risborough). Apply to volunteering@bbowt.org.uk

BACOMBE HILL (near Wendover) 10am on second Thursday of month
For more information on joining this group, please contact the BBOWT volunteering team on volunteering@bbowt.org.uk

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www.bbowt.org.uk / 01865 775476

College Lake: 01442 826774

**Conservation: Leo Keedy,
leokeedy@bbowt.org.uk**

**Visitor centre: Toyah Baulk,
toyahbaulk@bbowt.org.uk**

**Education: Claire Garrity,
clairegarrity@bbowt.org.uk**

**Volunteering Information:
www.bbowt.org.uk/how-you-can-help/volunteer**