

# OUTSTANDING CHILTERNNS

FREE

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a guide to inclusive outdoor  
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**VOLUNTEERS AT  
THE HEART OF  
THE CHILTERNNS**

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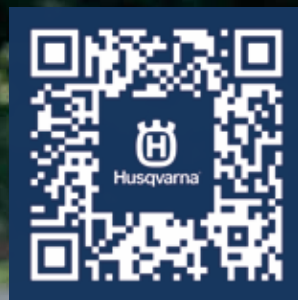
The Chilterns farmer  
**LEADING THE WAY  
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**CHILTERNNS**  
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# WELCOME

## A note from the Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of Outstanding Chilterns magazine. We had some lovely feedback from our readers about last year's magazine and, as a result, are delighted to be printing many more copies and placing them in new areas. So, if you are reading this magazine for the first time, I hope you enjoy it and that it inspires you to get outside and explore the beautiful Chilterns landscape and all it has to offer.



In this issue we focus on some of the amazing people who are making a difference to the Chilterns landscape and its communities. Take a look at pages 8–9 to be inspired by some of the brilliant volunteers who are giving their time to enhance the landscape, whilst improving their own wellbeing. On pages 16–17 you can find out about the Chilterns farmer who is successfully combining a viable, working farm with providing a haven for wildlife. Also, I encourage you to read about the inspirational Dr Geeta Ludhra on page 18–19, who is developing more inclusive ways of connecting diverse communities with the Chilterns countryside, and has set up an intergenerational walking community, Dadimas CIC.

You can also discover the delights of Wallingford on pages 20–21 and be inspired to learn something new with the Butterfly Conservation's free ID guide on pages 23–24.

I hope you enjoy this year's magazine as much as we have enjoyed producing it. As ever, your feedback is welcome and if you have ideas for subjects to include in the next issue, drop me a line at [vpearce@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:vpearce@chilternsaonb.org)

Vicki

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Sign up to our monthly e-newsletter for the latest news, events and exclusive reader competitions: [bit.ly/CCBsingup](https://bit.ly/CCBsingup)

## ABOUT THE CHILTERN'S CONSERVATION BOARD

Outstanding Chilterns magazine is published annually by the Chilterns Conservation Board. Established in 2004, the Board is a public body with two key purposes:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
- To increase understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB

The Board also has a Duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the AONB. It has 27 board members drawn from across the Chilterns and a staff team of 26 based in Chinnor, Oxfordshire. More information: [chilternsaonb.org](http://chilternsaonb.org)



Please recycle this magazine when you are finished with it – don't forget to share it with your friends and family first!

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# CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S LETTER

Welcome to Outstanding Chilterns magazine, it's been wonderful to read through this year's edition and see all the practical work, events and festivals happening, especially as so much of our work had to stop during lockdown.



As part of our work to support the wellbeing of local communities, we've been working closely with many Chilterns-based businesses over the past year, and were delighted to run a series of workshops helping them to create their own immersive experiences. Do read our guide on pages 14–15, and discover some of the fantastic adventures on offer.

Our Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership is also now well underway and into its third year. The team have been working on some fantastic community-based activities, as part of its "Rough around the edges" project; from amphibian and reptile surveys, hedgehog projects and orchard restoration, it's a great example of how our projects are helping people connect to the landscape and learn new skills. The team were also delighted to run its first art exhibition, which brought together artists of all ages and abilities to celebrate the beauty of the Chilterns Landscape. You can read all about it on pages 12–13.

In April 2022 we were pleased to offer our thoughts on the Government's response to the independent review of Protected Landscapes (the Glover review). The review had set out a once-in-a-generation opportunity to understand and improve the vital role of Protected Landscapes in England. The Chilterns Conservation Board welcomed many positive proposals in the Government's response, and in our submission we recommended improved and strengthened powers and resources. We are now talking to the Government about how this might be achieved.

In addition, you may remember in 2018, we agreed to request a review for National Park status. However, when the Government published its response to the

Glover Review, it became clear that the creation of National Parks in England was off the table for the foreseeable future. AONBs ultimately offer much better value for money and having reviewed this carefully, we now see this as an opportunity. Natural England announced in June 2021 that it would explore extending the Chilterns AONB boundary and work with us on enhancing how the landscape might be managed in the future, in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders. This demonstrates a recognition of the area's unique circumstances, and could prove more effective than having National Park status.

**"With everything going on locally and nationally, we certainly have a very busy year ahead, and I'd like to thank our team, partners and volunteers for all they are doing, I am very grateful".**

I hope you enjoy reading the magazine and that it inspires you to visit and care for our glorious Chilterns countryside.

**Dr Elaine King,  
Chief Executive**

# A DIFFERENT CHILTERNNS FOR EVERY PERSON

Incoming Chilterns Conservation Board member Joe Stewart considers how the diverse landscapes of the AONB contribute to its beauty – and how an ongoing proposal might yet see other landscapes designated as part of a more connected whole.

Think of the  
Chilterns landscape

Perhaps you're picturing a green valley where patchwork fields run up to high beech hangers. Maybe you're imagining a steep escarpment criss-crossed by chalky paths. Or, you might be seeing a sparkling chalk stream meandering past a brick and flint village.



Credit: Emma Chappell. Brick and flint cottages in the picturesque hamlet of Hambleden

These are the defining landscapes of the Chilterns. Their beauty resulted in the area's designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965, and they continue to inspire visitors and local people.

There are other landscapes in the AONB, however, that diverge from the typical Chilterns scene. These places may differ in their features and feel, and yet they form part of the diverse whole of the area. Even better, they can be explored on long distance routes like the Chiltern Way footpath and the Chiltern Cycleway, allowing walkers and cyclists to compare and contrast during day-long trips or week-long tours.



Beech woods are a feature of the Chilterns landscape

Take the landscape in the southwest corner of the AONB. The dense beech forests and high hedges which envelop small villages like Checkendon and Woodcote on the Chiltern plateau suddenly give way to a vast, open plain as the hills slip away. This is the 'Ipsden prairie': a sparse area of huge, hedge-less arable fields; isolated barns; trundling single track roads; and lines of crooked Scots pines. It's more Nebraska than Nettlebed, and closer in its characteristics to the North Wessex Downs AONB, which stretches into the distance on the opposite bank of the Thames.



The landscape around Ipsden – more Nebraska than Nettlebed

Head to the northern Chilterns on the Cycleway, meanwhile, and you'll encounter two more contrasting landscapes. The first is the Grand Union Canal as it cuts through the hills between the historic market towns of Berkhamsted and Tring - the only section of canal in the Chilterns. Coupled with the railway line, it follows an old drovers' route, highlighting the area's long history as a transport artery for commerce and explaining the peculiar hamlet of Cow Roast (formerly 'Cow Rest'!) Two-wheeled transport now joins the mix as the Cycleway crosses the canal and follows the towpath to Berkhamsted train station, creating opportunities for cycling adventures by public transport.



Credit: Al Maceachern, Stag Walkers The Grand Union Canal cuts through the landscape linking historic market towns

Keep cycling or walking north and you'll reach the lesser-known landscape of the Pegsdon Hills, which mark the 'end' of the Chilterns AONB. These beautiful hills have a more undulating feel than the dramatic escarpment to the south and overlook a subtly different landscape of large arable fields and low hedges. In summer, they are carpeted with fragrant wild herbs and flowers, supporting a large population of rare butterflies. Take a pit-stop in the area's tranquil villages like Pirton and Shillington, which are built from clustered, colour-washed cottages and buff-brick terraces, and it's no surprise you're on the edge of East Anglia here.



Credit: Ken Barley. The beautiful cottages of Shillington, by Ken Barley

The unique beauty of these landscapes – combining natural and cultural heritage – means they are protected as part of the Chilterns AONB. They also provide a valuable context for 'classic' Chilterns landscapes, highlighting their special qualities through the contrast they provide. After all, we only understand a hill to be so because of the flatter land around it; protecting this land is therefore equally important.

Discussions of landscape diversity, difference, relationships, and beauty are especially relevant as the Chilterns are currently subject to a boundary extension proposal. Part of Natural England's Landscape Designation Programme, the proposal is responding to the landmark Landscapes 'Glover' Review and an application made by the Chilterns Conservation Board in 2013, which focussed on extending the Chilterns AONB boundary to bring it in line with the Chilterns National Character Area – one of the 159 areas defined by Natural England which subdivide the country into natural areas based on an assessment of their character covering landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, and economic activity.



The rolling Pegsdon Hills at the very north of the Chilterns AONB

The project is ongoing and, while it has not yet identified specific landscapes to put forward for designation, is likely to include land close to urban areas. Chalk landscapes and associated features and habitats are also prime candidates, as they are interconnected with the current AONB in ecological, visual, recreational and economic terms.

Local authorities, town and parish councils, local people and landowners will all be involved in developing the proposal, with Natural England making the final decision based on objective criteria, leading to it making a recommendation for designation to the Defra Secretary of State.

The Chilterns and the wider region have changed dramatically since the AONB's designation in 1965. Whatever the outcomes of the proposal, it's time that we consider, cherish and protect landscapes as a connected whole rather than cherry-pick the most special places – not least because all landscapes share in the impacts of climate change. This wider view also means welcoming in the communities who seldom visit the countryside, so they can share in its beauty and advocate for its protection.

It's high time to unearth the Chilterns' many designated landscapes and decide which speak the most to you.

# 2022: A BIG YEAR FOR CHILTERN CHALK STREAMS

“Chalk Streams First” puts forward proposals to cease or reduce groundwater abstraction from the Colne and Lea chalk streams. A coalition of conservation and river organisations is working together to tackle a major threat to our chalk streams in the Chilterns: the abstraction of groundwater for our water supply.



Did you know that chalk streams are amongst the planet’s most rare and threatened habitats? They have suffered from low flows for over half a century due to the impact of drought and water abstraction. The Chilterns has one of the highest per capita, domestic water usages in the UK. Chalk streams are fed by water stored underground in the chalk aquifer. Pumping water from the aquifer (abstraction) to supply homes and businesses can cause low flows and in combination with drought, even cause these streams to dry out completely, threatening the rich diversity of plants and animals they support. In 2019, 67% of the total length of chalk stream habitat in the Chilterns AONB was dry as a result of the combined effect of drought and abstraction.

The Chalk Streams First coalition is proposing a regional solution that would involve the almost complete cessation of groundwater abstraction in the headwaters of the Chilterns, allowing the chalk streams first use of the water, and relocating water extraction to the bottom end of the Colne catchment, into which these streams flow, for treatment and re-supply back up into the Chilterns.

Chalk Streams First (CSF) proposes a reduction in groundwater abstraction that would enable a flow recovery of approximately 80% in the Chiltern chalk streams. A planned pipeline scheme, “Supply 2040”, which already forms part of Affinity Water’s long-term plans, could move the water from the lower Thames to homes and businesses in the Chilterns formerly supplied by the chalk aquifer.

The proposal would effectively restore chalk streams flows and improve their resilience to climate change,

protecting the delicate ecology of the streams, whilst ensuring the resilience of public water supply.

Launched in October 2020, CSF is supported by The Rivers Trust, The Angling Trust, The Wild Trout Trust, WWF UK, Salmon & Trout Conservation, the Chilterns Conservation Board, Chilterns Chalk Streams Project, River Chess Association, Ver Valley Society and the Chiltern Society.

Chilterns Conservation Board CEO Elaine King said: *“We’re pleased to be part of Chalk Streams First, a galvanised approach to tackling one of the most urgent threats to these rare habitats. Tackling abstraction must happen now, to ensure the survival of these streams for future generations.”*

The proposals have been included in the National Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy as a flagship project tackling low flows in chalk streams. It has also won the recognition and conditional support of water regulators such as Ofwat. The CSF coalition is pushing for the proposals to be included in the Water Resource South East Regional Plan.

The Chalk Stream Restoration Group’s chair at CaBa, Charles Rangeley Wilson, said: *“Chalk Streams First is the best chance we’ve had to undo the damage caused to our precious chalk streams by decades of over abstraction. Future generations will judge us harshly if we don’t take it.”*

Chilterns Society Chief Officer Tom Beeston said: *“We are delighted to be able to work with everyone involved in Chalk Streams First, it a great opportunity for us to be part of reversing the damage we have been doing to chalk streams.”*

**25 YEARS**  
OF THE CHILTERN  
CHALK STREAMS  
PROJECT

The Chiltern Chalk Streams Project has reached a huge milestone – 2022 marks the 25th anniversary of the Project’s dedicated work to conserve and enhance the chalk streams of the Chilterns. An increase in partner funding in 2020 has enabled the Project’s team to increase from one to six, and greatly increase the scale of its efforts to conserve and enhance these special features of the Chilterns landscape.

From advising landowners on managing chalk stream habitats to overseeing award-winning river restoration and conservation projects; educating school children as part of the annual ‘Trout in the Classroom’ project to creating a

network of citizen scientists monitoring river health across the Chilterns – the CCSP has brought together statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, local authorities and research partners to form a real force of change and advocacy for these rare and precious local habitats.

To celebrate the big 2-5, there will be a series of guided history, heritage and wildlife walks by project staff and partners, a celebration event on the 28th of September, plus the launch of a rejuvenated Chess Valley Walk. In addition, a State of Chilterns Chalk Streams report, will be published in Autumn 2022.

For the latest 25th anniversary events, visit: [www.chilternsaonb.org/events.html](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/events.html)







## SAVE WATER TO SAVE OUR STREAMS

The Chilterns Chalk Streams Project and the River Chess Smarter Water Catchment (SWC) Initiative are asking people both in the Chess valley and the wider Chilterns to save water to save our chalk streams. Low flow in chalk streams is a huge threat to their health and is partly caused by the high levels of water use here in the Chilterns. By saving water in your household or business, you'll be helping to ensure we are using water sustainably and protecting chalk streams for future generations.

## START NOW: SIMPLE WATER SAVING TIPS

- Take a 4-minute shower instead of a bath.
- Install a water butt to collect rainwater to water your garden. Use a watering can instead of a hose.
- Let your lawn go brown – it will recover.
- Turn the tap off while you clean your teeth.
- Only run your dishwasher or washing machine when it is fully loaded.
- Get a water meter - it will help tell you how much water and money you are saving!
- If you need motivation, think of those water voles and brown trout thriving in beautiful chalk streams with full flows and think of all the extra money that you'll have in your pocket!

The SWC initiative is also working in partnership with water companies, regulatory bodies, NGOs, landowners and farmers to explore all avenues for increasing water efficiency within the River Chess catchment. This includes exploring upstream source control which aims to slow the flow of rainwater, and optimising and enhancing existing infrastructure. Together with your water-saving help, we can make a difference!

For more water saving tips visit: [www.chilterns.aonb.org/chalk-streams/save-water.html](http://www.chilterns.aonb.org/chalk-streams/save-water.html)



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# THE HEART OF THE CHILTERNERS: VOLUNTEERS

Behind every beautiful, protected landscape is an army of volunteers! Volunteers are key to caring for the Chilterns' special habitats and heritage sites and making sure they survive and thrive. This may involve hands-on physical work, but did you know there are less strenuous ways to volunteer, from carrying out plant and wildlife surveys to being an 'armchair archaeologist'? We interviewed four Chilterns volunteers who shared their experiences and tips.



## HAZEL BOUNDY: CITIZEN SCIENTIST: TRACKING THE IMPACT

Hazel spent a year training in wildlife and plant ID and survey methodology and is about to take on her first one-kilometre square survey area. She'll undertake bird, butterfly and plant surveys throughout the year to collect population data that will inform conservation decisions.

**WHAT I'VE ENJOYED AND LEARNT:** "I love all of it! Particularly memorable was going out the first time to Dancersend Nature Reserve, coming out of the car park at sunrise and seeing goldcrests and marsh tits; all these bird names and calls you've been listening to in training are suddenly all around you. I drive my family mad now, always stopping to listen to the birds. It's with me all the time. It's like I've got new receptors that I didn't know I had. It's exciting!"

**BACKGROUND:** I did A Levels, got married, then brought up three boys. At 40 I trained as an English teacher at university, and later did an art degree and Masters in community sculpture. I got involved after hearing Nick Marriner, the CCB's Landscape and Engagement Officer, talk at a U3A group.

**TIPS:** If you're thinking about it – do it. You couldn't have a more friendly and helpful group of people. It's a real environmental force. Nobody tries to give the impression that they know more than you do and no question you ask is too foolish.



## JACOB PESTANA: CHILTERN RANGERS VOLUNTEER

Jacob is a regular volunteer for Chiltern Rangers, going out twice a week or more into the Chilterns to help look after the chalk grasslands, the woodlands and the river Wye.

**WHAT I'VE ENJOYED AND LEARNT:** "I really like being outside in the fresh air and working as part of a team. I have autism and dyspraxia and volunteering for Chiltern Rangers has massively helped me. I am now far more confident and independent. It's quite a physical role and I have learned how to use tools like loppers and bow saws to safely fell trees. I have learned how to use a hammer and nails to put up rails on a fence and how to use a drill when building a bird box. I have also planted hundreds of trees over the years! By far my proudest moment has been learning how to safely put branches through the woodchipper. I can do things now that I never thought I would be able to do. I now also volunteer as a Porter at a hospital."

**MEMORABLE MOMENT:** "Winning the Chiltern Rangers Volunteer of the Year Award for 2020. I was awarded it because I am consistent and reliable and if I can do extra to help, I always do."

**BACKGROUND:** Joined Chiltern Rangers in 2014 at age 17 for a weekly work placement as part of a foundation course at Berkshire College of Agriculture. 8 years on he still volunteers regularly.

**TIPS:** "Be confident and embrace new challenges – if you don't like it, you don't have to do it. Be prepared for any weather! I have been soaked to the skin and roasted in hot weather, but I love volunteering and will keep coming back."



### NIGEL ROTHWELL, LIDAR INTERPRETER, BEACONS OF THE PAST PROJECT



Nigel was one of more than 1000 volunteers interpreting data from the biggest LiDAR survey ever flown for archaeology in the UK, carried out as part of the CCB's Beacons of the Past project. LiDAR uses plane-mounted laser scanning to create a digital terrain map, enabling identification of archaeology hidden under vegetation. Nigel also reviewed other people's findings, helped analyse submissions to the Historic Environmental Records\*, took part in community archaeological excavations and involved Chilterns Young Archaeologists Club in the project.

**WHAT I'VE ENJOYED AND LEARNT:** "The excitement of gaining new insights into the history and heritage of the Chilterns and helping shape a view of what's important to recognise and preserve. There was a great sense of communal achievement, and a meaningful sense of purpose during Covid-19 lockdowns. Gaining expertise in LiDAR interpretation has also helped me integrate geographic data for other local history projects."

**BACKGROUND:** Geology. Helps run Chilterns Young Archaeologists Club (YAC).

**TIPS:** "The project is very accessible – don't worry that it's all complex computing or interpretation skills. LiDAR interpretation is essentially about pattern recognition and there are simple tutorials available."

*\*regularly updated public records of local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes*

### SUSAN HOLMES, RESEARCHER, WOODLANDER'S LIVES PROJECT



Susan researched a Victorian lace dealer from High Wycombe and a Holmer Green-based tambour beading family business (a form of luxury embroidery for glamorous fashion from WW1 to the 1960s). She listened to 50-year-old recorded interviews, searched newspaper archives and ancestry websites, and visited museums to find examples of the crafts. Susan also contributed a series of articles for [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)'s News section.

**WHAT I'VE ENJOYED AND LEARNT:** "Finding about women's craft and skills. I feel part of a skilled community doing original research. Little was known about the Chilterns tambour beaders' businesses, yet it's proved a strong story to tell. As I have Woodlanders amongst my ancestors, I was fascinated to learn more about their lives, understand how they fed their families, and to have the opportunity to handle the types of tools that they used."

**BACKGROUND:** Susan had spent time already tracing her ancestry from the 1400s and researching the history of her 1830s house.

**TIPS:** "Try it! Some activities will appeal more than others. If you've always wondered how your local ancestors lived, this is a good way of finding out."

If you've been inspired or would like to get involved, visit: [www.chilternsaonb.org/volunteering](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/volunteering). Watch our News page for a monthly blog featuring these volunteers' full experiences and more volunteers' stories. Tracking the Impact and Woodlanders Lives are part of the CCB's Chalk Cherries and Chairs project and, along with Beacons of the Past, are both funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund. Watch our News page for a monthly blog featuring these volunteers' full experiences and more volunteers' stories.

# OUTDOORS FOR ALL

## A GUIDE TO INCLUSIVE OUTDOOR OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHILTERN

When it comes to walking and outdoor recreation there is no 'one size fits all' – a gentle amble to one person can be a marathon for another.

We all have different needs and motivations when visiting the countryside, and sometimes people can be put off by uncertainty about the state of the paths and terrain, the availability of accessible transport, worries about getting lost, lack of confidence or simply not feeling like the countryside is a welcoming place. For certain physical or mental health needs, the challenges can feel greater still. Yet we are lucky in the Chilterns to have a huge variety of outdoor groups aiming to make the Chilterns countryside more accessible and welcoming to all.

### HERE'S A FLAVOUR OF WHAT'S ON OFFER:

#### Natural Inclusion

Andy Shipley of Natural Inclusion invites you to join a Nature Sense Session and immerse yourself in the season's sounds, smells and sensations. Building on his perspective as a visually impaired person, Andy works with groups and individuals in natural settings to explore the power of their non-visual senses to open a deeper connection with nature.

*"The very act of closing our eyes ignites our other senses, setting the stage for them to come into their own. We'll take time out from the daily hurly-burly to refocus our attention on the textures beneath our toes, the chatter of the birds and the breath of the breeze."*

[www.natural-inclusion.org](http://www.natural-inclusion.org)

#### Wild Song Walks

Paula Tait of Wild Song Walks is a professional singer and harpist by background. Now a certified nature connection guide, Paula leads gentle Wildsong Walks in the woods around High Wycombe, combining music and nature as a powerful way to help us connect and relax!

*"Come and walk the songline of conkers, acorns and hazelnuts and re-enchant the land with summer songs, spells and stories."*

[www.paulatait.com/events/wildsong-walks](http://www.paulatait.com/events/wildsong-walks)

#### Oasis Partnership



Oasis Partnership charity supports mental health and addiction issues in the Chesham and Amersham areas. Supporting people of all ages, it offers a range of services including free weekly walks for health and wellbeing. The walks take place on Fridays, 11am-1pm from the Bagnall Centre in Chesham.

*"Our mission is to improve quality of life by reducing disadvantage, isolation and loneliness and increase skills, confidence and wellbeing."*

Contact [bagnallproject@oasispartnership.org](mailto:bagnallproject@oasispartnership.org) or call 0300 6662747 to book your place.

#### Reading Association for the Blind



Reading Association for the Blind's rambling group offers country walks followed by a pub lunch, every other week, for visually impaired members and sighted volunteers. Some hikes will require you to be guided over a stile. Free with a suggested donation of £5.

*"Our rambling club was set up nearly 30 years ago by a member who missed being able to go for country walks."*

[www.rabsightloss.org/supporting-you/our-activities/](http://www.rabsightloss.org/supporting-you/our-activities/)

#### Walk Works

Walk Works was set up by experienced walkers Liz and Caroline, inspired by a love of walking and nature and a deep belief in the importance of both for peoples' wellbeing. They offer one or two hour weekly walks in the southern Chilterns and Thames Valley countryside within easy reach of Reading. The focus is very much on sociability, meeting new people and having fun! Usual price £10 person.

*"If you love walking and prefer not to go alone, please join us!"*

Search for Walk Works on Facebook or call 07825 251955 or email [lizbrad1@googlemail.com](mailto:lizbrad1@googlemail.com)



## Dudes & Dogs



Dudes and Dogs is a friendly walking group which aims to improve men's mental health and wellbeing. Designed as a safe place for men to get together, walk and talk (if you feel like it – no pressure!). The weekly 60-minute walks take place in the Henley and south Oxfordshire area. Walkers are welcome to bring friendly, well-behaved dogs, but do not have to own a dog to join.

[www.dudesndogs.co.uk](http://www.dudesndogs.co.uk)

## Lindengate

Lindengate Charity near Wendover invites you to wander through its six acre garden and nature reserve. Discover, learn, relax and reconnect with nature on its free Rest & Reflect sessions. The charity also runs a Women's Wellbeing Group supporting women from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, and a green volunteer programme for under 18s.

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



## Books in the Woods

Books in the Woods is a weekly woodland playgroup, inspired by children's books, child-led activities and free play. The group is based in Hertfordshire and meets in various locations around the Ashridge Estate and Tring/Berkhamsted area.

Books in the Woods can be found on Facebook

## Chiltern Rangers

Chiltern Rangers run a volunteer conservation group every Thursday in green spaces around High Wycombe which is open to all. Volunteering has been consistently shown to improve mental wellbeing and can be a great way of getting outdoors, meeting like-minded people and improving your own skills.

[www.chilternrangers.co.uk](http://www.chilternrangers.co.uk)

## Path Hill Outdoors

Path Hill Outdoors at Goring Heath is a skilled team of outdoor educators and bushcraft leaders who work with young people who find the classroom environment a challenge. Working with people living with trauma, anxiety disorders or those on the autistic spectrum, they run a pre-school group, family camps, activities for schools and community groups, as well as bookable activities for adults' wellbeing including a wild women's group and forest bathing. Get in touch if you feel your school, community group or family would benefit.

[www.pathhill.com](http://www.pathhill.com) or [www.pathhilladventures.com](http://www.pathhilladventures.com)

## Wheelchair and pushchair friendly walks

The Chilterns has a number of sites with wheelchair accessible trails and it is possible to hire mobility vehicles at some, including the National Trust's Dunstable Downs and the Ashridge Estate. There are currently few organised wheelchair walks, but we are working on this and hope to offer such walks as part of future Chilterns Walking Festivals. Please check our website for updates.

Are you an experienced wheelchair or mobility scooter rambler or walk leader who could lead walks for us? Have we missed an opportunity that should have been included here? Please get in touch! We would love to hear from you.

## Adapted outdoor activities:

**WYFOLD GROUP RIDING for the Disabled** is an independent charity that provides horse riding facilities for people with physical or mental disabilities in the south Oxfordshire and Reading areas, with access to beautiful parkland. [www.wyfoldrda.org.uk](http://www.wyfoldrda.org.uk)

**SOUTH BUCKS RIDING for the Disabled** offers similar activities in the central Chilterns. [www.southbucksrda.org](http://www.southbucksrda.org)

**MARLOW ROWING CLUB** offers adaptive rowing, enabling members to access the water safely and easily no matter what their age, experience, ability or disability. [www.rowability.marlowrowingclub.org.uk/](http://www.rowability.marlowrowingclub.org.uk/)



Please let us know of other providers we've missed and we'll add them to our website.

# ARTISTS FROM THE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

COME TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE THE CHILTERN'S LANDSCAPE



In spring 2022 local artists from the past, present and future gathered for an art exhibition at Wycombe Museum, inspired by the beauty of the Chilterns landscape.

Developed by the team behind Chalk Cherries and Chairs – a five-year, £2 million landscape partnership hosted by the Chilterns Conservation Board and funded primarily by the National Lottery Heritage Fund – the event was held over the course of a week and attracted almost 1000 visitors! The exhibition was designed to raise awareness for the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project and to celebrate the environmental and cultural heritage of the central Chilterns.

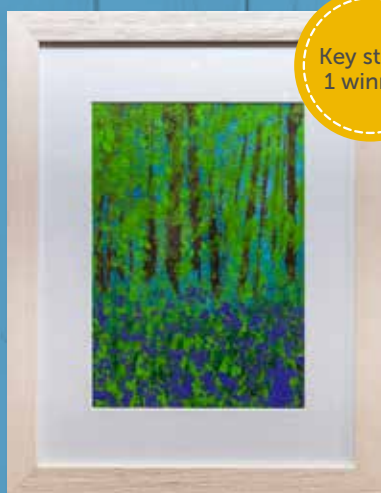
**The exhibition comprised three strands; past, present and future.**

**THE FUTURE** was represented by an art competition run in ten local schools, with visits and support to teachers from Maddy Baskerville, our school's engagement consultant. We were delighted to receive around 250 entries and found the process of selecting only 30 winners for the exhibition extraordinarily hard. On the opening day, we were joined by the Mayor of Wycombe Andrea Baughan, who awarded all the winners their prizes and arty goody bags. It was wonderful to see over 100 local visitors enjoying the exhibition and spending time in the beautiful Museum gardens. The pupils' work was selected and judged by Jane Peacock, the exhibition's artist in residence, who also showed her own work, *'Chalk Contours'*.

One undoubted highlight of the week was five-year old Spencer's extraordinary oil painting *'Bluebells in Hervines Park'*, which generated huge excitement among visitors to the gallery. Spencer's painting was reproduced in a full page spread in the Bucks Free Press and shared on social media by Wycombe MP Steve Baker!

The second strand of the exhibition, representing **THE PRESENT**, invited competition entries from professional, semi-professional and amateur local artists. The final selection included 16 artworks from more than 50 entries, supplemented by two commissions from artists whose work we felt exemplified the project's work. These were Anna Dillon's *'View from Lodge Hill'* – a Site of Special Scientific Interest and our biggest habitat restoration project – and Elizabeth Debenham's *'Orchids at Aston Clinton Ragpits.'* We are grateful to both artists for their enormous generosity, as well as to all the other artists who loaned us their original work.

The contemporary art category winners were independently judged, by Catherine Griggs, the curator of Wycombe Museum. Graham's *'Into the Light'* – a stunning representation of the iconic sunken lanes and hedgerows of this area, deservedly won the first prize, which comprised a beautiful wood engraving designed and produced by local pyrographic artist Hannah Baker of Knots and Embers.



Key stage  
1 winner

*Bluebells in Hervines Park*  
By Spencer, age 5



Art  
winner

*Into the Light*  
By Graham Jefford



Art  
2nd prize

*Gap in the Hedge*  
By Stuart Lloyd



We have several festivals planned for the coming months, such as 'Chilterns Stories' in November 2022 and 'Chilterns Drama' in June 2023. Visit our webpage at [www.chilternsaonb.org/projects/CCC](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/projects/CCC) for more information and booking details.

Each of the eighteen contemporary artworks were used in the exhibition catalogue to introduce one of the 18 projects in the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs partnership. For example, Stuart's runner-up submission 'A Gap in the Hedge' helped introduce exhibition visitors to our hedgerow laying project work in 'Landscape Connections.'

The third strand, **THE PAST** comprised six artworks drawn from local and national Museum collections. These depicted scenes from around the Chilterns and illustrated outdoor activities planned for the summer, including guided history, heritage and wildlife walks, "bodgers" pub tours and workshops where you can learn new skills such as scything and bushcraft. Find out more at [www.chilternsaonb.org/art](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/art)

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Participation and supervision ratios apply – please see our website.

# MAKING MEMORIES

## A GUIDE TO COUNTRYSIDE EXPERIENCES IN THE CHILTERN

Immersive leisure experiences are very much in vogue, providing the opportunity to learn a new skill or try something new, meet the local community and come away with unforgettable memories.

This increasing desire for activities that are meaningful and original has led to an exciting array of immersive experiences right on our doorsteps in the Chilterns! So many quirky and special activities are now on offer, from blacksmith experience days and trying your hand at other rural crafts to nature walks, bushcraft, and chair bodgers pub tours.



### FORAGING AND FEASTING!

Escape to hidden woodlands tucked away in the Chiltern Hills. Enjoy a spot of foraging followed by a feast cooked over an open flame – all inspired by the wild ingredients that grow in abundance around us.



Join herbalist and forager Justine Gens of **Secret Adventures** in rural Oxfordshire learning to identify and forage plants in the woods and open glades, gather wood, light a campfire and enjoy a spot of outdoor cooking.

Just a short trip out from London, **Nomadic** offer "hidden woodland feasts inspired by nature" and have curated four course woodland feasts celebrating the seasons.

*"Our aim is to use food and nature to reconnect our guests with the world around them. Our restaurant without walls has no boundaries other than the stars and the sky."*



### LEARN, MAKE AND CREATE!

Get hands-on with a range of rural crafts at the **Chiltern Open Air Museum**, home to 30 reconstructed and restored buildings from the local area on a beautiful estate. You can experience being a blacksmith for the day in their Victorian forge, learn the ancient craft of willow weaving and sculpture, or try your hand at the niche craft of working with straw. All the tutors are highly knowledgeable and experienced, so you don't need to be!

Join professional photographer **Matt Writtle** for a half-day walk from Chesham. Feel a sense of calm and wellbeing as you walk the hills and rivers around the Chess Valley, capturing the mood through photography under Matt's expert guidance and discovering many interesting facts about the local area at the same time.



### FOOD & DRINK TOURS AND TASTINGS

The Chilterns has seen a food and drink renaissance in recent years, with growing numbers of new artisan producers making award-winning cheese, wine, gin, ales and charcuterie. Many offer events, tastings and tours or will teach you a new culinary skill. For example, in the vineyards, there are opportunities to roll your sleeves up and help with grape harvesting and other volunteer tasks throughout the year, from winter pruning to bud rubbing! And you can learn more by meeting the vintners and enjoying lunch among the vines, accompanied by their own sparkling wine.

**Daws Hill vineyard** is a boutique vineyard nestled in the beautiful and tucked away Radnage Valley near West Wycombe. In addition to regular tours, the vineyard hosts many special events including cheese and wine pairing and local heritage crafts. They also offer regular volunteer days.



Jazz enthusiasts should head for **Oaken Grove Vineyard** near Henley-on-Thames for their Sunday afternoon jazz on the terrace with sweeping views across the vines. Pocket size gin distilleries can also be found in the Chilterns, offering tours, tastings and special events, from cocktail making at **Puddingstone Distillery** to **Gin School at the Henley Distillery**, where you get to choose from over 100 botanicals to create your own unique gin.

*"We are very proud to look after our vines by hand and care for each of them individually. Join us for a day in the vineyard and experience what it's really like to own a vineyard."* Holly Morgan, Daws Hill Vineyard



## SEEK FUN & ADVENTURE

**Path Hill Adventures** offer family-friendly activities in the extensive beech woodlands of the Hardwick Estate near Reading. You can test your mettle on an adventure course or learn how to survive in the wilderness.

For walking tours with a difference join the formidable and entertaining **Mary Does Marlow** for a theatrical exploration of historic and literary Marlow-on-Thames. Or head to **Amersham Museum** to join one of their popular costumed guided walks for a fascinating insight into Amersham's past and present.



Looking for adventures on the doorstep? **Wild Cycles** was born out of a passion for cycling and a love for the Chiltern Hills. Whether you are new to cycling and just want to give it a go, or are a battle-hardened lycra-lover, their rides will leave you grinning from ear to ear.



Visit our website for further information on all these experiences as well as many more bookable leisure activities throughout the Chilterns.  
[www.visitchilterns.co.uk/chilterns-experiences](http://www.visitchilterns.co.uk/chilterns-experiences)

## PUDDINGSTONE DISTILLERY – THE HOME OF CAMPFIRE GIN

With over 25 international spirits awards, plus accolades of 2021 Gin Distillery of the Year and winners of the 2019 World's Best Martini challenge, Tring based Puddingstone Distillery continues to fly the flag for gin distilled in the Chiltern Hills.

Head over to their distillery shop on Fridays and Saturdays for gin tasting or order gin and gin gift sets online at [www.puddingstonedistillery.com](http://www.puddingstonedistillery.com).

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[www.peterleymanorfarm.co.uk](http://www.peterleymanorfarm.co.uk)

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THE GIN GUIDE  
 DISTILLERY OF THE YEAR 2021  
 WORLD'S BEST MARTINI WINNER 2019

# PATIENCE, PERSISTENCE & CREATIVITY: MANOR FARM AWARDED LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE STATUS

*"My father always said to me, you are custodians of that land. You've got to keep it going and hopefully when you quit, you'll have left it in better condition than it was when I quit."* Andrew Stubbings' father inspired his approach to farming with nature and wildlife in mind. Tenants of the National Trust's Bradenham Estate, the pair began reverting their least productive arable fields back to chalk grassland more than twenty years ago, backed by advice from Natural England's Countryside Stewardship scheme. *"My father first started trying to create a corridor through the farm for nature and wildlife – he was way ahead of his time."*



Andrew's persistence over time has paid off. The entire 225 hectares of Manor Farm has recently been designated a 'Local Wildlife Site' – a recognition given to the most exceptional and valuable wildlife areas in the UK. Manor Farm is now one of the biggest Local Wildlife Sites in Buckinghamshire and one of the best sites for species rich chalk grassland, a habitat that has suffered a 97% loss in the last century. *"They found 286 different plant species on my farm which is unheard of! I was quite shocked. I knew what was on my farm, but getting involved with the Chilterns Conservation Board and having wildlife surveys done highlighted what was there, and it's now bringing it to the bigger public."*



Barn owl box installed by Bucks Owl and Raptor Group

Julia Carey from the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre, who carried out the surveys, said *"We couldn't believe the scale of what Andrew has achieved. Field after field of our surveys throwing up so many important rare arable flora and chalk grassland species."*

***"Manor farm is a powerful example of how species and habitat conservation can be built into a working landscape."***

The farm has a fine assemblage of arable plants, including the diminutive Venus's looking-glass, just one of several threatened plants found in the arable field margins. Wildlife on the farm includes breeding barn owls, common lizards and breeding corn buntings – a locally scarce and endangered farmland bird. 35 species of butterfly have been recorded at Manor Farm – that's half the total butterfly species found in UK - including Duke of Burgundy, Chalk Hill Blue, Adonis Blue, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper and the Silver-washed Fritillary. The impressive Great Green Bush Cricket has also been found on the farm.

Andrew's an energetic talker with a big laugh. We're sitting in the anarchic, colourful kitchen of his Grade II listed farmhouse building, surrounded by bold colours, photos and artefacts from travels in Africa in his younger days. The living room is full of his own artwork. He says this creative streak inspires him to farm with the beauty of the land in mind. He's created neatly mown paths for walkers around each field and broad margins around crops for arable plants. We've just taken a whistlestop tour of the farm with an ITV Meridian news crew and a photographer and it is truly stunning: the wildflower fields brim with bee orchids, pyramidal orchids and cowslips, backed by long views of Chilterns valleys and woodlands.

What's especially impressive is that Andrew has achieved all this whilst running a commercially viable working farm. He grows barley for brewing because it suits the nitrogen poor, chalk soil and doesn't need much fertiliser. He leaves the stubble in winter which supports overwintering birds such as skylarks and meadow pipits. "I specialise in low input farming, not using as much chemicals and fertiliser and farm machinery – you're only using as much as you need. I won't grow crops that need insecticides. So, despite leaving some fields for conservation, your return is better than you think as you're not spending a fortune. You end up with a landscape that benefits everyone." Andrew credits his father with inventing the 'tramline' farming



Chalk grassland meadow

system back in the 1970s which is now used worldwide for efficient and accurate application of fertiliser and spray chemicals.

Andrew also grazes polo horses. Rather than damaging the grasslands, the tread of the horses' hooves has penetrated deeper into the seedbed, encouraging long dormant wildflower seeds to grow. *"We've already got Chiltern Gentian, the rare one – it's supercool, that comes up in September, we've got thousands of them! Five years ago I never even saw that. It's taken 20 – 25 years to get some of these plants to come through. I saw my first bee orchid five years ago – I was so excited! In the surveys, one field had 650 skylarks and the surveyors found 250 in the one next to it. They found lots of yellowhammers, insects, butterflies, lizards, and slow worms."*



Winter bird feeder

He's part of the Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster, a network who share ideas and encourage each other to attract wildlife to their farms. He's concerned about post Brexit-cuts to farming subsidies, due to be halved by 2024. *"If you're a small tenant farmer like me, you've got an outlay before you even do anything. It's going to be tough, so farming alongside conservation is a bit of a concern. Small farms will start vanishing – we don't want that. Farmers are going to have to diversify."* He's started renting out barn space for weddings and hosts a small charity fundraising music festival.



Bee orchids

*"Have fun, work hard, be healthy – that applies to farming as well."*

Andrew's 21-year-old daughter, Astrid, comes into the kitchen and banters with him. She's studying Agriculture at Reading University. *"In ten years time I hope the farm will still be here with Astrid running things, keeping all the conservation work as it is and improving it. I wouldn't take any more fields out of production now, but we can do more hedge planting, put up more owl boxes, and hopefully other interesting plants will come up. Life is a balance; farming is a balance. It's about surviving, making a living and then giving back to nature. Have fun, work hard, be healthy – that applies to farming as well."*



Newly planted hedgerows



# CHAI IN THE CHILTERN HILLS: CHANGING THE NARRATIVE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

Lecturer in Education, academic and writer, Dr Geeta Ludhra, joined us as a Chilterns Conservation Board member in July 2021, appointed by the Secretary of State. A dynamic addition, she's been working with other members to identify new, more inclusive ways of reaching out to diverse communities to access the Chilterns countryside.

Geeta has generated huge enthusiasm for her Chilterns-based, intergenerational walking community, Dadima's CIC. The group's social media buzzes with joyful representations of people of colour enjoying the countryside, often from South Asian heritage, but not exclusively – everyone is welcome.

## Geeta shared some special moments from Dadima's walks:

"One of the Indian grandmothers started singing a bhajan (a Hindu spiritual hymn) as she walked with a young mum – this connection made my heart melt. Another time, a group sat drinking Indian chai and sharing savoury spicy snacks in the magical fog, on a cold morning. A talented young girl, who's a brilliant gymnast, started somersaulting on the Chiltern Hills! I said: 'Some of us are a bit too old for somersaults, but we're young enough to jump with you ... and so we did – all three generations laughing and feeling young again!'"

## Why is it important that Dadima's walks are intergenerational?

"Walking with the young helps older people feel nourished and an integral part of society, valued and respected for the richness of their experiences and life wisdom. It combats the loneliness agenda." Geeta described an active grandmother in her seventies as inspirational – a role model for fitness to younger walkers, as she hiked up hills and stepped over stiles. "She always comes with Indian savoury snacks, made with love and heritage culinary skills. A young man said, 'What a cool grandmother – she talks about such interesting topics!' Walking together in nature creates special connections between strangers."

Geeta and her daughters were brought up in multigenerational households, with grandparents living with them during their early childhood years. "As I got older and we moved apart from the extended family unit, I better appreciated the conversations across three, even four generations. Dadima's walks have opened up new conversations for those without family connections."

## What was it like for Geeta coming from the education sector onto the Chilterns Conservation Board?

"My experience has been a steep learning curve. I've enjoyed the excitement of feeling like a child returning to school again, learning about nature and conservation topics that connect to my everyday life, at a community, national and global level. I've learned so much about what happens behind the scenes to keep National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty surviving and thriving, and how much work and funding is needed. Behind the scenes is far more complex than I expected, and I've loved talking

to nature experts across fields, asking questions and sharing my new knowledge with the communities I walk with".

Dadima's walks have featured a range of expert collaborations, including our CEO Elaine King, who led a butterfly count, geologists Dr Anjana Khatwa and Professor Clare Warren (@jurassicg1rl & @geologyclare on Twitter), and John Mason, a birder, photographer and geographer (Instagram: @theearlybirder). Geeta is also one of Natural England's new Countryside Code Ambassadors [www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en\\_GB/service/geeta-ludhra/](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/service/geeta-ludhra/)

## So, why is it important to increase diversity and representation in the countryside?

"Research studies show that there are huge inequalities in access, participation and representation in nature spaces, including environmental organisations and Board recruitment. Important nature decisions do not always reflect the diversity of nature voices out there. Diverse voices need to be authentically embedded in national dialogues and decision-making processes.



“The language of nature and conservation can exclude some communities from participating. Those without technical and scientific nature language may feel that their voices are less valued. We need to build a safe sense of belonging for all. Recent research from our (CCB) Chalkscapes Project showed that many Luton residents don’t know what AONB stands for and what it means, despite their close proximity to the Chiltern Hills. We need to think differently about how nature knowledge is generated, embracing more diverse interpretations and cultural stories.

“The people on Dadima’s walks share rich cultural stories connecting to nature: folk tales about trees, Indian Ayurvedic medicinal knowledge, stories of soil, crops and farming in India. When we walk and talk with diverse communities, we notice nature differently, particularly if we listen and respect each other’s knowledge bases and personal connections with nature.”

**What are Geeta’s future plans for Dadima’s CIC?**

“I’d like to see Dadima’s walks being co-led with passionate Ambassadors and experts across all walks of life and cultural backgrounds, and to include one charity event per year. This May, seven Dadima’s hikers did the breast cancer overnight marathon powerwalk. This motivated us to train and walk longer distances, and make lifestyle changes. I’m keen to promote the health and wellbeing benefits of community walking, including mental health and menopause bone health for women.”

The National Science Festival have invited Geeta and her husband to run workshops on how to set up your own walking group – Dadima’s would like to support people to set up their own walking groups in their local areas. Dadima’s worked closely with Open University geology experts this year, to develop their subject knowledge of natural landscapes.

What are Geeta’s top three tips for someone from an under-represented group who is thinking of applying for a Conservation Board position?

1. Put your imposter syndrome aside. Focus on the richness of experiences you bring to the table, including cultural heritage, community-based nature knowledge and transferable skills from your work.
2. Reach out by email or social media to someone whose work you admire – ask for advice. People are generally kind and giving, and genuinely keen to explore inclusive ways of working.
3. Ask someone to mentor you through the process. Two people who were amazing at encouraging me were Dr Anjana Khatwa and Dr Elaine King.

Dadima’s 2022 walking programme is at: <https://www.chilternsaonb.org> (search: Dadimas)

Sign up ...

Instagram: @educatinggeetachilterns

Twitter: @educatinggeeta

email: [gludhra@gmail.com](mailto:gludhra@gmail.com)



# A WANDER ROUND WALLINGFORD

Visit the ruins of one of England's most important castles, browse the independent shops, swim outdoors by the Thames or take a Midsomer Murder's walking tour in the fun-loving market town of Wallingford.

Billed as a 'fun-loving town' with a 'lively community spirit' in The Times newspaper's 'Best Places to Live for 2020', Wallingford is also a great place for a day trip, a weekend break or a walking and cycling base for exploring the Chilterns.

## CENTRE STAGE IN ENGLISH HISTORY:

Some people joke that Wallingford people were traitors because, in 1066, Wigod, Lord of Wallingford, let the Norman William the Conqueror and his army cross the river at Wallingford, fresh from victory over King Harold at the Battle of Hastings. Newly crowned King William I built Wallingford Castle, which remained one of the most impressive and powerful castles in England throughout the Middle Ages.

Wallingford Castle was a Royalist Stronghold in the English Civil War and the site of the Royalists' surrender to Oliver Cromwell and the Roundheads. The castle was destroyed by Cromwell in 1652.

Walk from the town centre to the tranquil Castle Gardens to see the castle ruins, let the kids have a roll down the slopes into the dry moat, then cross beautiful Castle Meadows to the river Thames, returning to town along the towpath via Wallingford Bridge.

Visit Wallingford Museum to see a scale model of Wallingford Castle as it would have looked in the 1330s, plus local bronze and iron age finds, a skeleton from a local Roman burial site, plus Agatha Christie and Midsomer Murders displays. Pick up the leaflet, *A Walk around Wallingford's History* for a self-guided tour of historic locations.

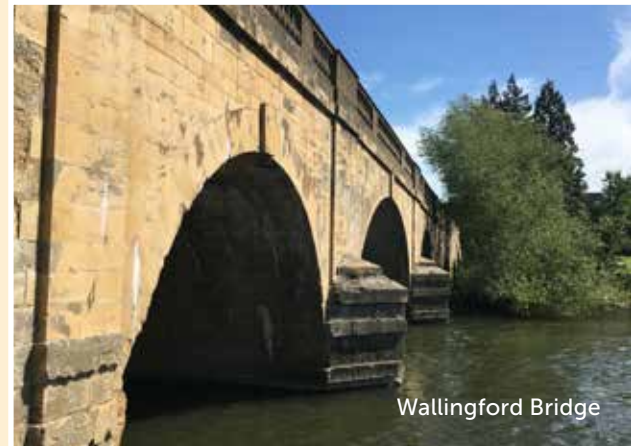
## MURDER MYSTERY:

Wallingford is the original location of Causton, the fictional town in TV's Midsomer Murders. For fans, Wallingford Town Council website provides a Midsomer Murders locations map and driving tour.

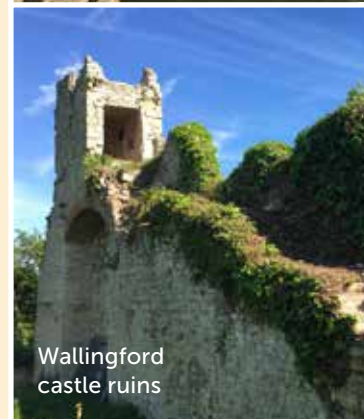
Renowned crime author, Agatha Christie, lived and wrote here. A six-mile Agatha Christie self-guided walking trail takes in her grave at Cholsey village and passes her home on Winterbrook. (Wallingford Town Council website)

## INDEPENDENT SHOPPING:

Wallingford is known for independent shops and cafes. Try Wildwood for upcycled furniture and homewares and Harta for a scandi style-fix. Visit Rides on Air for your cycling gear and repairs, friendly Wallingford Bookshop, plus the community-run Just Trading fair trade shop - great for gifts, foods, fair trade and eco products. Eco-shoppers will also enjoy Bee Zero refill shop. Village Fabrics is an 'Aladdin's cave' for quilting fabrics and patterns.



Wallingford Bridge



Wallingford castle ruins



Boathouse pub on the river

## FOOD AND DRINK

With a diverse choice of eateries and coffee shops, from Thai to Indian to pizza, you can enjoy brunch or dinner at The Old Post Office, tapas and wines at Le Clos, seafood or steak at Shellfish Cow or Italian at family-run Avanti. The new Five Little Pigs restaurant, named after the Agatha Christie novel, has a creative seasonal menu championing local suppliers. There's also a vegan daytime café, Ribizli.

Newly opened 1920s style cocktail bar, Soiree, has started hosting live music. For traditional pubs try The Coach and Horses on the Kinecroft town green. Or visit the Boathouse, which offers family pub grub with a river view and self-drive boat hire.



St Marys Street



Bunkfest  
Credit: Stuart Emmerson



Wittenham Clumps

## 10 THINGS TO DO:

- 1 Take a heritage steam train ride on the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway (selected dates).
- 2 Visit the Charter Market on Fridays or Wallingford Local Producers market on Saturday mornings.
- 3 Picnic by the river Thames, then walk three miles to Benson Lock. Or venture further along the Thames Path National Trail. There's also boat hire, canoeing and paddleboard hire at Benson.
- 4 Visit Wittenham Clumps or Swyncombe Hill for panoramic short circular walking routes and longer hikes with beautiful views. Our leaflet on [www.chilternsoanb.org](http://www.chilternsoanb.org) details three cycle rides into the Chiltern hills, ranging from 11 – 25 miles long.
- 5 Swim outdoors at Riverside Pool (June to August) or take the kids to the free Splash Park. [www.better.org.uk](http://www.better.org.uk)
- 6 Visit Ayres House Studios by appointment to see and buy local artists' work. [www.ayreshousestudios.co.uk](http://www.ayreshousestudios.co.uk)
- 7 Party at Wallingford Bunkfest, a fantastic free music festival with family activities, street food and stalls, workshops, open mic sessions and musical train and boat trips. Event camping available. Every September. [www.bunkfest.co.uk](http://www.bunkfest.co.uk)
- 8 See a film or show at the Corn Exchange independent cinema and theatre. [www.cornexchange.org.uk](http://www.cornexchange.org.uk)
- 9 Take a Salter's Steamers river cruise to Goring, Beale Wildlife Park, Mapledurham or Reading. [www.salterssteamers.co.uk](http://www.salterssteamers.co.uk)
- 10 Try pottery painting or decopatch at Busy Brush café. [www.busybrushcafe.co.uk](http://www.busybrushcafe.co.uk)



Splash Park  
Credit: Stuart Emmerson

### VISIT NEARBY:

**Ewelme Watercress Beds Nature Reserve** – see the Chiltern Society website for open days and visit the nearby cloistered Almshouses dating from 1437.



**Nuffield Place (National Trust)** – former home of Lord Nuffield, founder of Morris Motor Cars. In April/May enjoy the stunning bluebell woods behind the house.

**Dorchester Abbey** – the large church of a medieval abbey which hosts classical concerts and Dorchester Festival in May. Visit the tearoom and museum in the 16th century Old School Room.

**Didcot Railway Centre** – offers a 1930s engine shed, a collection of steam engines, coaches and wagons, and steam train rides.

**Brightwell Vineyard** – Chilterns grown white, red and rosé wines, open for sales on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 12-6pm.

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Please contact **01491 835373** or email [senioradmin@wallingfordtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:senioradmin@wallingfordtowncouncil.gov.uk) quoting *Outstanding Chilterns* for more information. [www.wallingfordtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.wallingfordtowncouncil.gov.uk)



*They say a picture speaks a thousand words so please take a look at our 'Saying I do' gallery on our website for some ideas and inspirations for your special day.*

# A GUIDE TO CHILTERN BUTTERFLIES

Pictured: Chalk Hill Blue Butterfly



The open chalk downlands of the Chiltern Hills are a marvellous place to see butterflies. If you've ever seen a kaleidoscope of butterflies making the most the wildflowers in bloom on a sunny day, you will know that it is truly a remarkable sight.

There are plenty of other places that you can spot butterflies too; in your garden, in the park, or on a countryside walk. Every species of butterfly has its own habitat, which provides it with food, shelter and place to breed and lay eggs. Spotting butterflies is not only a beautiful sight, but also an important sign that the environment and other wildlife is thriving too.

## HOW TO SPOT BUTTERFLIES

It may sound silly but spotting butterflies can be trickier than it sounds. Some are shy, so you need to approach them with caution and be patient, perhaps sit and wait for them to come to you and never try to touch or pick them up.

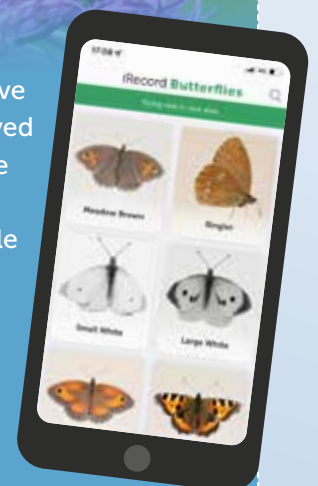
Spotting butterflies is an enjoyable pastime, but it is also very important. Recording the butterflies you see can help reveal the impact of climate change and other environmental pressures on our butterfly populations. The charity Butterfly Conservation has a free app that will guide you through the identification of any butterfly that you see, anywhere in the UK, and allow you to add your sighting to millions of other valuable records. Simply by recording some basic information about the butterflies that you enjoy watching, even if just from your garden, you can make a real contribution to their conservation.

Find out about other ways you can get involved on the Butterfly Conservation website: [www.butterfly-conservation.org/how-you-can-help/get-involved](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/how-you-can-help/get-involved)



Pictured: Marbled  
White Butterfly

Time is running out to save some of the UK's best loved butterflies! Download the iRecord Butterflies App from iTunes or the Google Store today and provide the essential foundation for much-needed conservation work to help the UK's declining butterflies.



If you are passionate about protecting wildlife and want to improve your knowledge of local birds, plants and butterflies, then our "Tracking the Impact" volunteering programme could be for you! You can learn new skills and benefit from a wide range of free online and in-person training before taking on your own 1km square, to monitor and record. To find out more visit: [www.chilternsaonb.org/tracking-the-impact](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/tracking-the-impact)





## BUTTERFLY GUIDE

Did you know, 39 species of butterfly have been recored in the Chilterns?! We have compiled a selection that can be found throughout the Chilterns, including where and when you are likely to see them.

### Common widespread whites



**GREEN VEINED WHITE** Damp, lush areas. Similar to other whites but has streaked, greeny-grey lines on underside. Can be spotted from Apr – Sept.



**LARGE WHITE** Largest black marks at wing tips, continuing along the outer edge. in an unbroken, L shape. Can be spotted from Apr – Sept.



**SMALL WHITE** Grey/black marks/smudges at the wing tips, don't extend along outer edge. Can be spotted from Apr – Aug.



**BRIMSTONE** Buttery or greeny-yellow colour. Pointy wing-tips. No black. Female is paler. Can be spotted from Apr – Sept.

### Grasslands



**ADONIS BLUE** Iridescent blue. Black 'spokes' in white border. Female is brown, not blue. Can be spotted from May – Sept.



**COMMON BLUE** Blue, clear white border. Often near its foodplant. Female is brown, not blue. Can be spotted from May – Sept.



**CLOUDED YELLOW** Uncommon migrant. Looks golden in flight with black wing tips. Can be spotted from Apr – Sept.



**MARBLED WHITE** Large. Black and white chequerboard pattern. Can be spotted from May – Aug.



**BROWN ARGUS** Small Brown with strong orange 'lozenges' on all wing edges. Can be spotted from May – Sept.



**MEADOW BROWN** Medium. Dusty brown with orange 1 white dot in black circle. Can be spotted June – Sept.



**CHALK HILL BLUE** Light, sky blue. Thick black wing edges. Female is brown, not blue. Can be spotted July – Sept.



**DARK GREEN FRITILLARY** Large, orange and black, white dots on underside, On chalk grass with scrub Can be spotted June – Aug.

### Rough, scrubby or sheltered grassland or glades



**SMALL COPPER** Tiny, orange, triangular. Very similar to Essex Skipper. Underside of antennae tips is orange. Can be spotted May – Sept.



**DUKE OF BURGUNDY** Very Rare. Netted wing pattern. On scrubby chalk grass with Primula. Can be spotted April – May.



**SPECKLED WOOD** In sun-speckled wooded clearings with grasses. Can be spotted May – Sept.

### Scrub hedgerows and gardens



**HOLLY BLUE** Pale blue. In gardens, parks, churchyards. No orange on underside. Can be spotted from May – Sept.



**COMMA** Our only butterfly with a wavy edge. On scrub woodland edges. Can be spotted from May – Sept.



**PAINTED LADY** Migrant. Big, orange w/black and white tips. Grey-ish underside. Can be spotted from May – Sept.



**PEACOCK** Migrant. Big, orange w/black and white tips. Grey-ish underside. Can be spotted from May – Sept.



**SMALL TORTOISESHELL** Migrant. Big, orange with black and white tips. Grey-ish underside. Can be spotted from May – Sept.



**RED ADMIRAL** Anywhere with nectar. Rich orange and black markings. Plus blue dots. Can be spotted from May – Sept.

### Trees woodlands, glades and rides



**WHITE ADMIRAL** Big. On woodland and clearing edges. Can be spotted from June – Aug.



**SILVER-WASHED FRITILLARY** Large and orange. Usually in sunny oak woods and rides. Glides in flight. Can be spotted from June – Sept.



**PURPLE HAIRSTREAK** Small, grey triangle at top of sunny oaks. Can be spotted from June – Aug.

# AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR RICHARD FORTEY

by Linda Seward



When I became interested in fungi, I discovered a mycologist living right on my doorstep in the Chilterns who was also the President of the Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire (FSO). What could be more fortuitous? Professor Richard Fortey has done a huge amount of research on the natural world in the Chilterns, chronicled in his book *The Wood for the Trees: One Man's Long View of Nature*. He spent his working life in London's Natural History Museum, researching trilobites, but nurtured a special love of fungi from his early days. His book, *A Curious Boy: The Making of a Scientist*, describes a fungus foray he took as a 13-year-old, and his fascination with fungi has grown over the years. He invited me to his home to discuss his work on fungi in the Chilterns.

**LS:** *What do you like best about living in the Chilterns?*

**RF:** I'm just a few minutes away from being in proper countryside, so I don't have to drive far to be in a wonderful, varied landscape.

**LS:** *You've been President of the Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire (FSO) since 2010. Tell us about it.*

**RF:** The Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire was set up by Arthur and Marion Warland in 1987. I joined when I came to live in Henley in the same year. Oxfordshire is a big county, and most members were based around Witney, so I covered the southern Oxfordshire lobe in the Chilterns. After the mycologist Terence Ingold died at the grand old age of 104, I took over as President. The FSO consists of volunteers who identify and record the frequency and distribution of fungi in Oxfordshire. Fungus walks in woodland, grassland and wetland parts of the county are led by experienced mycologists. Newcomers are welcome.

**LS:** *How has the work of the FSO contributed to our knowledge of fungi in the Chilterns?*

**RF:** The FSO has added a considerable number of first-time fungal records to

Oxfordshire's list. We have also found a handful of species that were British firsts. In addition, we discovered a few species that have never been recorded before—anywhere! Because there are so many different kinds of fungi and relatively few people studying them, even amateurs can make important discoveries.

**LS:** *What would you say to people if they encounter an amazing mushroom?*

**RF:** If it's really striking, they should take a photograph of it while it is still fresh—phone cameras are handy for this. Be sure to photograph the underside of the cap to show gills or pores; a photo of the stem can also be diagnostic. They should make a note of what it was growing with and where it was found. It's best to try to get someone with a bit of knowledge to have a look at it. Armed with a photo, habitat and place name, they should contact the FSO.

**LS:** *Have you made any exciting discoveries in the Chilterns?*

**RF:** We had a new species near Grey's Court that I discovered on burdock, named *Ceriporiopsis herbicola*—a bit of a mouthful. Most people would have just walked by, not noticing, but if you've got your eye attuned, you

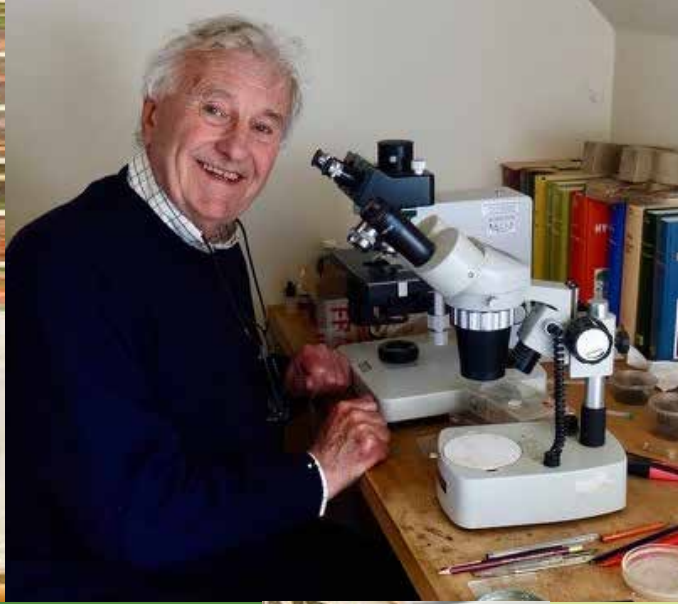
swoop on these things as soon as you see them. In my own wood, which I've been studying in depth, we had the first British occurrences of several species and some nationally and internationally rare fungi.

**LS:** *Why is it important to carry out fungus surveys in the Chilterns?*

**RF:** It's very hard to judge what effect climate change is having on fungi. Some species are moving in from southern Europe and others are moving northwards. Fungi are bellwethers - extremely sensitive to atmospheric pollution - so if a species disappears, we need to find out why. Similarly, if a new species appears you need to assess the reasons. For example, Crimped Gill mushrooms used to be uncommon in the Chilterns, but now I see them every year. Change is now the norm, but unless these changes are catalogued, explanations will never be found. Our surveys provide mycologists with the data they need to get answers.

**LS:** *What is the purpose of a mushroom?*

**RF:** The purpose of a mushroom is to propagate the species. All mushrooms produce a prodigious number of microscopic spores that are carried in the wind. They must land in exactly the



right place before they can germinate into mycelium - the vegetative part of the mushroom. The mycelium then carries on to produce another mushroom (or fruitbody) to disseminate the species.

**LS:** *Would you compare a mushroom to an apple?*

**RF:** It is more like a dandelion which is also spread by wind. But imagine the dandelion seeds scaled down to a minute size and multiplied. There are more spores in one Giant Puffball, found here in the Chilterns, than there are known stars in the universe.

**LS:** *What would you say to the people who always want to know if a mushroom is edible?*

**RF:** I don't resent people eating mushrooms but there is much more to know about them than whether you can put them in a frying pan or not.

**LS:** *Why should fungi be protected?*

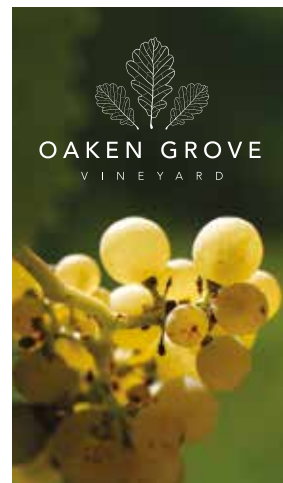
**RF:** People are beginning to realise that fungi are an essential key in the whole interaction of life. Without fungi, organic material wouldn't be recycled back into soil. Virtually all plants, especially trees, have an association with fungi in their roots that help them grow healthily.

**LS:** *Do you think that fungi should be added to "flora and fauna," making a third classification of funga?*

**RF:** There is already a word called mycota which I like. Funga has come about because it starts with F, and I would be pedantic to disagree with it. But in fact, if I were being pedantic, the Latin word fungus is masculine, not feminine.

**LS:** *Thanks for talking to us, Richard!*

**RF:** You're very welcome.



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To join the FSO, contact the secretary via the website who will be pleased to welcome new recruits. [www.fungusoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.fungusoxfordshire.org.uk)

Photos by Linda Seward  
 Website: [www.lindaseward.com](http://www.lindaseward.com)  
 Instagram: [www.instagram.com/quiltmaniac1](http://www.instagram.com/quiltmaniac1)

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# CHILTERN YOUNG EXPLORERS



## FOCUS ON: fabulous wild flowers



Did you know there are over 50 native species of orchids in Britain? We're lucky in the Chilterns that our chalk grassland is home to several species – they're not the same as the ones you see in pots in peoples' houses but ones that grow wild in the open air. The Chilterns is also one of the few places you can find the rare Chiltern gentian, Pasqueflower and red Helleborine.

There are many nature reserves where you can spot these distinctive wild flowers, please visit the websites of the organisations below to find out where to see them:

- Chiltern Society: [www.chilternsociety.org.uk](http://www.chilternsociety.org.uk)
- Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust: [www.bbowl.org.uk](http://www.bbowl.org.uk)
- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust: [www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk)
- Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northants Wildlife Trust: [www.wildlifebcn.org](http://www.wildlifebcn.org)
- National Trust: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

### Did you know:

- Orchids have been around for a really long time – they are thought to date from 76 to 84 million years ago.
- British species of orchid vary from common and widespread to extremely rare, like the Red Helleborine.
- Some orchids are pollinated by insects, others pollinate themselves or reproduce via plantlets or offshoots (a bit like strawberries)
- Orchids need to be infected with a particular fungus to grow, otherwise they can't obtain the right nutrients.
- Chalk grasslands can support up to 40 species of wildflowers per square metre.
- Having lots of different types of flowers is really good for butterflies, as it provides them with a source of food – like the rare Duke of Burgundy and more common butterflies such as the Chalk Hill Blue and Brown Argus.
- Why not ask your parents if you can leave a patch of your lawn unmown for a while and see what pops up?

### A cut-out-and-keep guide to some of our special Chilterns wild flowers

Last year's butterfly guide was so popular that we've made another one to help you spot some of our beautiful wild flowers this summer. Please remember that orchids and other flowers are protected by law so don't pick them, and do follow the countryside code when visiting the Chilterns or other natural areas.



#### CHILTERN GENTIAN

**LOOK FOR:** Five-petaled, trumpet-shaped flowers

**WHERE:** One of the UK's rarest wild flowers and it is only found at a few sites, mostly in the Chiltern Hills.

**WHEN:** Late summer



#### BEE ORCHID

**LOOK FOR:** Pink petals with what looks like a bumble bee sitting on them.

**WHERE:** chalk grassland, particularly if disturbed, so can be seen in former quarries, railway embankments and even lawns!

**WHEN:** June/July



#### PYRAMIDAL ORCHID

**LOOK FOR:** Distinctive pyramid shape with bright pink flowers

**WHERE:** Chalk grasslands but also sometimes in manmade environments such as by the side of motorways!

**WHEN:** June/July



#### COMMON SPOTTED ORCHID

**LOOK FOR:** Tall pink spikes with deeper pink/purple spots. Leaves have dark spots.

**WHERE:** Common in chalk grasslands

**WHEN:** June-August



#### WHITE HELLEBORINE

**LOOK FOR:** Up to 16 white flowers on a stem that can reach 60cm, these grow on their own or in small groups.

**WHERE:** woodlands, especially beech woodlands with underlying chalk soils, also more open areas.

**WHEN:** Early May until the end of June



#### PASQUE FLOWER

**LOOK FOR:** Purple five-point star with a yellow centre, considered "vulnerable" in the UK.

**WHERE:** Chalk and limestone grasslands, especially in the northern Chilterns.

**WHEN:** Flowers at Easter time which gives it its name.



## RED KITES & BUZZARDS: SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Red kites and buzzards can be hard to tell apart when they're flying high. Both birds like to glide in circles – they're catching a ride on the thermals (columns of warm air which help the birds rise higher).

### RED KITE

Has longer 'fingers' on its wing tips.

Holds its wings fairly flat when it flies

Wingspan: 1.8 metres - as tall as some adults!

A forked tail

Intense reddish-orange-brown.



### BUZZARD

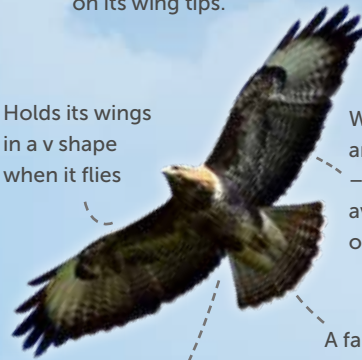
Has shorter 'fingers' on its wing tips.

Holds its wings in a v shape when it flies

Wingspan: around 120 cm – as tall as an average 7 year old!

A fanned tail

Vary in colour from pale to dark brown & can sometimes look very white underneath.



**Where to spot buzzards & kites:** both birds sometimes like to perch on telegraph poles, fence posts and the top of trees.



Buzzard



Red Kite

**Listen to their calls:** and get to know other bird calls on [www.xeno-canto.org](http://www.xeno-canto.org)

## Young Artists in the Chilterns

In April 2022 Chalk Cherries and Chairs ran our first ever Chilterns Landscapes Art Exhibition at Wycombe Museum, featuring local artists. Pupils in years 1 to 6 were invited to send their art into our Schools' Art Competition, showing what the Chilterns means to them.

Our Education Consultant visited local schools, helping them to explore how the Chilterns was special and different in the past, where people lived and worked, and what kind of things people did and made. We were delighted to receive 250 schools' entries! 30 were selected for the exhibition. Here are the winners – can you spot a picture by someone at your school?



KS1 WINNER  
Spencer,  
age 5



KS2 WINNER Pippa, year 3



KS2 WINNER Sawera, year 5

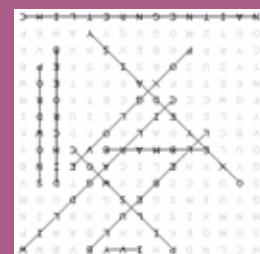
Under 18s, send your pictures, photos and writing about Chilterns landscapes or wildlife to [vpearce@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:vpearce@chilternsaonb.org) – you could be featured in next year's magazine or our social media!

## Wildflower Word Search

bee orchid      cowslip      oxeye daisy  
bluebell      foxglove      snowdrop  
bramble      ivy      wild garlic  
chiltern gentian



### Word Search Answers





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**Toddler Takeover**  
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### 2023 Season

Bekonscot re-opens for the 2023 season on Saturday 11th February. See our website for details of special events for next season.





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Monday - Saturday: 9am - 4pm, Sunday: 10am - 4pm

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