Celebrating 50 years of the Chilterns AONB

Micro-breweries multiplying
The growth in local craft beers

Summer walks, bike rides and events

SUMMER 2015
The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1965 and covers 833 sq kms. It is one of 46 AONBs in the UK which, along with National Parks, are protected as the finest landscapes in the country.

The Chilterns Conservation Board is the public body established in 2004 to conserve and enhance the Chilterns AONB. Its 27 members are drawn from local communities and it has a staff team of 10.
Countryside and Food Festival

With tasty local food, hand-made crafts, rural skills demos, children’s activities and musical entertainment on offer the Chilterns Countryside and Food Festival on Sunday 13th September is not to be missed. This popular annual event is taking place at the National Trust Ashridge Estate Visitor Centre near Berkhamsted between 10am and 4pm. Organised jointly by the Chilterns Conservation Board and the National Trust it is a real showcase for all the best producers and craftsmen of the area, and the beautiful surroundings of the Estate are an added bonus!

Wildlife-watching trips

If you fancy letting a boat or a train take the strain while you relax and enjoy spotting wildlife then join one of the Conservation Board’s special trips.

We have teamed up with the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway and Hobbs of Henley to offer wildlife-themed train and river trips during the summer. Volunteer naturalists will help you identify what’s about!

Check www.chilternsaonb.org/events for more information.

New circular walks

Several new circular walking routes have been devised through some of the Chilterns’ commons. There are new walks from Ewelme and Nettlebed in south Oxfordshire and Little Chalfont and Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire.

Browse the Long Walks category on the AONB interactive map at www.chilternsaonb.org/walks-rides for full details of all the walks.

Ridgeway breaks

A couple of new two-day walking itineraries using the Ridgeway National Trail and other waymarked routes are being promoted by the Conservation Board. Both are in Oxfordshire: one from Henley to Wallingford and the other is from Lewknor to Goring-on-Thames. Both involve about 10 miles of walking each day and pass through markets towns and beautiful scenery including sections along the River Thames. There are excellent transport links at either end and information on where to stay and where to eat is also provided. Each itinerary makes a fantastic, relaxing two day break exploring some of the most scenic and tranquil parts of the Chilterns as well as some of its historic towns.

Download them from www.chilternsaonb.org/ridgeway

Walkers near Turville
Summer cycling for all

Why not take advantage of long days and (hopefully) good weather by getting out for a gentle spin through the beautiful countryside? Whether you want to do your own thing or join a group ride there are plenty of options this summer.

The Cycle Chilterns Project is running women-only guided rides every month from May through September. If you’re a bit rusty or nervous, or just fancy some good company, join one of these gentle hour-long guided rides which start from Great Missenden, Wendover or Amersham.

If you don’t have your own bike, or you’d like to try something a bit different, why not hire an electric bike from one of the hire points which have sprung up around the Chilterns? E-bikes take much of the effort out of cycling and make those hills so much easier! You can go further and see more in a day. You can hire them (as well as non-electric ones) from the Cycle Chilterns Bike Hub in Great Missenden and Lovelo Cycle Works in Berkhamsted.

Full details on everything mentioned above can be found at www.cyclechilterns.co.uk, as well as lots of information on summer cycling events, bike routes to try and much more.

Women’s Tour comes to Chilterns

Hard on the heels of the Tour of Britain, which saw the top male professional cyclists racing through the Chilterns last September, the Friends Life Women’s Tour is holding the final stage of its five day 2015 race through the Chilterns on Sunday 21st June.

16 teams of top women cyclists will be racing from Marlow to Hemel Hempstead to reach the finish line in Gadebridge Park. Buckinghamshire County Council and Dacorum Borough Council, which saw the great benefits their support of the Tour of Britain brought last year, are supporting the Women’s Tour and encouraging residents and visitors to come out again in big numbers to cheer on the competitors.

The Women’s Tour starts in Bury St Edmunds on June 17th and has four stages through eastern England before arriving in the Chilterns.

Full details of the route and the teams can be found at www.womenstour.co.uk
What do you think of Chalk and Trees?
Complete our very short readers’ questionnaire and you could win the chance to experience the Chilterns in a completely new way!
We’d love to know what you think of this magazine, and have put together a few simple questions in an online questionnaire. Everyone who completes the questionnaire will be entered into a free draw to win electric bike hire for 4 people for a day from the lovely little town of Great Missenden in the heart of the Chilterns. Electric bikes are great fun and make cycling around the lovely Chilterns countryside really easy – hills are a doddle!
To find the questionnaire go to www.chilternsaonb.org/chalk-and-trees
Are you a Chilterns mastermind?

How well do you know the Chilterns, its wildlife and special features? Would you like to test yourself and have a bit of fun?

A free online quiz about this area has been developed, as part of the Our Land sustainable tourism project. Anyone can have a go at the quiz, although it is mainly aimed at tourism businesses, to help them develop their knowledge and understanding of the Chilterns AONB and pass it on to visitors.

Taking the form of multiple-choice questions, the quiz covers a wide range of topics, from wildlife, landscape features and historic buildings to famous people. It’s full of stunning images, and quite a lot of quirky facts! Everyone who successfully completes it can print out their own ‘Landscape Ambassador for the Chilterns’ certificate.

If you’d like to have a go, visit the quiz website www.knowour-land.co.uk. You’ll need to register, which is very simple, then log in and away you go!

New guide to managing box

For the last two and a half years the Chilterns Box Woodland Project has been researching and promoting the rich heritage of box trees and woodland that we have here, which includes the largest native box woodland in the country. In the past, timber from box trees had a great variety of uses, from printing blocks and lace-making bobbins to furniture inlays and musical instruments. Trees were grown in the Chilterns for the box wood trade – the earliest reference to this is from 1748 when the Duke of Bridgewater supplied boxwood from his Ashridge estate to turners in London. Over time, the growing, harvesting and use of box wood has declined and the remaining stands of native box woodland have been left to get old and neglected.

Practical advice

To help conserve and improve these valuable woodlands the Project has put together a first of its kind: a practical guide to managing box trees and box woodland in the countryside. The publication includes the results of trials the Project has run in box woodland at Wendover Woods, in conjunction with the Chiltern Society, to test out techniques for propagating box. It also has detailed advice on looking after ancient and veteran box trees, managing pests and diseases including box blight and managing box woodland to produce timber.

Find out more and download the management guidance at www.chilternsaonb.org/box
A golden year for the Chilterns

2015 is a landmark year for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – it is 50 years since it was first designated as one of the finest areas of countryside in the UK. We look at how the designation came about, what life was like 50 years ago and what’s happened since.

How did the Chilterns become designated?

It might seem odd to us now but there were no National Parks or AONBs in the UK before the Second World War. Momentum to protect the best countryside was building though and in 1949 The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act set out the statutory framework for creating the new designations of National Park and AONB.

The Chilterns and other areas were earmarked for the emerging designation of ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ – places with very high landscape quality but which were generally closer to urban areas than the Parks. In 1956 the Gower peninsula in south Wales became the UK’s first AONB. Two years later the designation of the Chilterns began to be considered in detail, and that summer a number of survey visits were made to start drafting the boundary. It took several years to refine it, but finally, in 1964, the Chilterns AONB (Designation) Order was submitted to the Minister for Housing and Local Government. It got bogged down by other departmental business but eventually, following pressure from local amenity groups, the process sped up. On 16th December 1965 the Rt. Hon. Richard Crossman MP confirmed the Order and the Chilterns AONB came into being.

The Chilterns was the 19th AONB to be designated. 800 square kilometres of countryside, from the River Thames in south Oxfordshire up through Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire and into Bedfordshire were included within its boundary.

What’s happened in 50 years

The world was a rather different place back in 1965 – far fewer people had cars, more people were employed in traditional rural industries like farming and forestry and families generally had less disposable income to spend on leisure time. In the last 50 years rapid changes have put great pressures on the Chilterns but, despite some inevitable impacts, in many places its essential character is the same.
A 50-year view

John Willson of Downley near High Wycombe has lived in the Chilterns all his life and has always been actively involved in caring for the area. He helped found the Chiltern Society and was a member of the Chilterns Conservation Board for 10 years. Here’s his take on the last 50 years:

“As a boy growing up in the 1940s and ’50s I developed a real love for the Chilterns countryside – I went to school in West Wycombe and spent a lot of time outdoors, cycling and wandering the woods. By the 1960s, when the Chilterns became an AONB, I could see there were a lot of pressures on it. There were plans to build the M40 through the area, proposals for a third London airport in north Buckinghamshire and increasing pressure for building land. Those of us interested in the self-sufficient ‘good life’ tried to stem this tide of development, and from this came the formation of the Chiltern Society and other local groups.

A vital cordon

Looking at the Chilterns today I see much the same landscape of woodlands, valleys and villages as before. But looking closer I see that the AONB and Green Belt boundaries are just holding on, a bit like a police cordon at a riot. Nowadays we have added pressures like solar farms and greatly-increased traffic. On the plus side I think we have much better access to the countryside and a better understanding of rural issues.

The return of the red kite is a huge achievement of the last 50 years

The Chilterns AONB has proved to be a good home for many wildlife species, though others have suffered the same declines seen in the rest of the country. The most spectacular achievement of the last 50 years has to be the enormously successful re-introduction of red kites between 1989 and 1994. The international importance of some of the Chilterns’ beechwoods was recognised in 2005 when woodlands near Tring, High Wycombe, Wendover and Watlington were designated as Special Areas of Conservation by the EU.

The world in 1965

- Harold Wilson was Prime Minister
- The average house price was £3,400
- A loaf of bread was 8p
- The comprehensive education system began
- The death penalty was abolished
- World population was 3,334,874,000
- The UK no. 1 single on 16 Dec 1965 was the Beatles with Day Tripper/We Can Work It Out

A few of the changes, for better or worse, over the last 50 years:

- The AONB has become extremely popular for walking, cycling and other leisure activities and now has 55 million visits a year.
- The Ridgeway National Trail opened in 1972 and the Thames Path National Trail in 1996.
- Other new attractions include the Chiltern Open Air Museum (1976), Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway (1994), Roald Dahl Museum (2005) and the Chilterns Gateway Centre at Dunstable Downs (2007).
- Between 1967 and 1974 the M40 was built through the Chilterns, passing through a deep cutting at Aston Rowant.
- Traffic has filled the skies as well as the roads: for example Luton Airport’s passenger numbers have gone up from 213,000 in 1965 to nearly 10 million a year now.

Huge numbers of people around the world have (inadvertently) enjoyed the beauty of the Chilterns as it’s become a favourite amongst film and TV location managers. Films across the decades include: The Dirty Dozen (1967, Ashridge, Aldbury, Bradenham), The Princess Bride (1987, Burnham Beeches), Four Weddings and a Funeral (1994, Amersham) and Fury (2014, Watlington).

These days the countryside offers fewer jobs and rural living is unaffordable for many. But there is still a huge love and concern for the Chilterns, made clear by the fury over the proposals to build HS2 through the AONB. Local voluntary body the Chiltern Society, coincidentally also founded in 1965, has over 6,000 members and is one of the biggest groups of its kind in the country. The Chilterns AONB also has its own statutory body, the Chilterns Conservation Board, set up to conserve and promote it, one of only two such bodies in the UK.

The return of the red kite is a huge achievement of the last 50 years

The world in 1965

- Harold Wilson was Prime Minister
- The average house price was £3,400
- A loaf of bread was 8p
- The comprehensive education system began
- The death penalty was abolished
- World population was 3,334,874,000
- The UK no. 1 single on 16 Dec 1965 was the Beatles with Day Tripper/We Can Work It Out

As a boy growing up in the 1940s and ’50s I developed a real love for the Chilterns countryside – I went to school in West Wycombe and spent a lot of time outdoors, cycling and wandering the woods. By the 1960s, when the Chilterns became an AONB, I could see there were a lot of pressures on it. There were plans to build the M40 through the area, proposals for a third London airport in north Buckinghamshire and increasing pressure for building land. Those of us interested in the self-sufficient ‘good life’ tried to stem this tide of development, and from this came the formation of the Chiltern Society and other local groups.

A vital cordon

Looking at the Chilterns today I see much the same landscape of woodlands, valleys and villages as before. But looking closer I see that the AONB and Green Belt boundaries are just holding on, a bit like a police cordon at a riot. Nowadays we have added pressures like solar farms and greatly-increased traffic. On the plus side I think we have much better access to the countryside and a better understanding of rural issues.

What would the Chilterns be like now if it hadn’t been designated as an AONB? I believe the cordon would have broken, and the area would be well on the way to becoming a series of semi-urban country parks, overwhelmed by the tide of expanding London development. The cordon must be maintained and strengthened and it is vital that the philosophy of the AONB is made known to all.”
As we celebrate 50 years of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it’s interesting to look back and see what’s changed, or not changed, over the last five decades. We have trawled the archives for photos of the area from the 1950s and ’60s and present a selection here.

**Watercress beds at Sarratt in 1965**
These watercress beds in the Chess Valley near Sarratt are still run by the Tyler family who are the only commercial watercress growers left in the Chilterns.

**Old Amersham High Street 1959**
The Market Hall and Crown Inn are clearly visible on a tranquil-looking High Street.

**Bradenham Valley 1962**
This view of the Bradenham Valley from near Averingdown Farm has hardly changed in 50 years.

**Turville village, Bucks 1960**
The picturesque village of Turville is still a Chilterns’ gem, though there are a few more cars these days.
The Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve on the Chilterns escarpment in 1970, just before the M40 was cut through.

The distinctive notch of the M40 cutting today.

This windmill near Princes Risborough is the oldest smock mill in the country and was derelict by the end of the 1960s.

The mill has been fully restored by the Chiltern Society and is now open to the public on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays (2–5pm) from April to September.

We are very grateful to the Chiltern Society’s PhotoGroup for supplying many of these old images.

For more historic images of the Chilterns, and many up-to-date ones, visit:

www.chilternphoto.org.uk
How long has your family farmed in the area?
My great-grandfather moved down from Scotland in 1912 to take on the tenancy of a farm near Thame. His son started farming at Hill Farm near Lewknor and we have been in the village ever since, at Church Farm and now Field Farm where I live with my wife Sue and two teenage boys. We rent 400 acres from All Souls College Oxford and own another 400 acres.

What do you do on the farm?
Three quarters of our land is arable and we grow peas, oil seed rape and milling wheat. We’ve also got 200 acres of grass on which we raise beef cattle – we usually have about 100 cattle at any time. At the moment there are also 80 ewes owned by my nephew. As part of looking after the farm I’ve always cared for the environment and nine years ago we joined the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) run by the government body Natural England. We have margins around the arable fields full of wildflowers and manage the hedges for wildlife.

You have a lot of school visits to the farm – how did you get in to that?
Because we are part of the HLS scheme we have access to grants to carry out educational work with local schools. Our farm actually borders the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve which is looked after by Natural England and they were keen to work with us to get school children out onto the farm and up onto the reserve. Through them we got a grant to convert a barn into a classroom in 2010. We have to do a minimum of six visits a year but we have far more than that – up to 25 a year. Last year 920 children and teachers visited the farm!

Describe what happens on a typical school visit
Up to 35 children come on any visit, usually a class from a primary school - they might be from a local village or a town like High Wycombe, Marlow or Aylesbury. We do a session in the classroom first where I talk about how the food they are familiar with is produced, for example, how bread is made or where milk comes from. We then go out onto the farm and they meet animals like cows, pigs and chicks. The children sit in a large covered trailer pulled by a tractor and we go round the fields looking at the crops.

A great aspect of the school visits is the opportunity we have to take the children up to the Aston Rowant Reserve to learn about some of the Chilterns’ wildlife. Cathy Rose of the Chilterns Conservation Board leads this part of the day and gets the children doing all sorts of activities like mini beast hunts, identifying wild plants and building red kite nests! It’s great to see the children running around in the outdoors.

You took part in Open Farm Sunday last year?
Yes, that was quite a day. With a lot of support from the Conservation Board and Natural England we decided to open the farm to the public as part of this national event. We had no idea if anyone would turn up but we had over 800 in the end! We’re doing it again this year and the date is Sunday 7th June.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?
I love the opportunity to interact with children and help them understand where the food they eat comes from and how the countryside works.

More information at www.fieldfarm.co.uk
Helping hand for good work

The Chilterns Conservation Board is keen to support projects which conserve wildlife, promote local history, get people involved in caring for the area and have other benefits for the Chilterns AONB. Here are some recent examples of support.

Boards for the Bank

Thanks to a successful public appeal, the Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust was able to purchase Yoesden Bank last November, a beautiful swathe of chalk grassland overlooked by beech woodland near High Wycombe. Yoesden is home to a great array of chalk grassland wildflowers and insects and the Trust plans to run guided walks and events to give many people the chance to enjoy it. The Conservation Board contributed £3000 to the Trust to install two interpretation boards and a sign at the new reserve.

Woolly workers encourage flowers

Aldbury Nowers near Tring and Alpine Meadow near Berkhamsted are two of the finest chalk grassland sites in Hertfordshire and are looked after by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The Conservation Board contributed £725 to the Trust for a project to cut back scrub on the reserves, increase the amount of grazing by sheep and install information boards. Sheep grazing keeps down scrub and coarse grasses, which means chalk-loving wildflowers and their associated insects, including many butterfly species, can thrive. Work parties of volunteers have had quite a few productive days on the reserves, removing encroaching trees and bushes to increase the areas of chalk grassland.

Building volunteering in Bucks

A pilot project to assess how volunteers can make a bigger contribution to the conservation of wild plants and animals in Buckinghamshire has been taking place this spring. The Chiltern Rangers have led practical work days on a number of important sites including the Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust’s Gomm Valley reserve and Penn Wood owned by the Woodland Trust. The project is building links between organisations and volunteers and identifying the best ways of getting more people involved in conservation volunteering. It’s led by the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership and funded mainly by Natural England plus a contribution of £1500 from the Conservation Board.

Trees commemorate soldiers

36 men from the villages of Chinnor and Henton who lost their lives during WW1 were commemorated last October in a community tree planting project. Nine specimen trees were planted in various spots around the villages and some saplings were also planted in school grounds and a wildlife area. A map board next to the war memorial on Chinnor High Street shows the locations of all the trees. The Board supported the project with a contribution of £300.

If you are interested in getting support for a project contact Neil Jackson at the Board on 01844 355523 or njackson@chilternsaonb.org
Environment Training

Flies are good for river health

Gaze into one of our clear, sparkling chalk streams, where brown trout may be hanging in the current between lush aquatic plants, and you might think it looks a picture of health.

It is possible though that the stream has recently suffered a pollution incident and what isn’t visible to the naked eye is the fact that a crucial part of its ecosystem – the riverflies - have been completely wiped out in this stretch.

Riverflies are invertebrates that spend most of their lives beneath the water’s surface as larvae – they include caddisflies, stoneflies and mayflies. Upon reaching maturity they emerge as short-lived adult flies, often en masse – a cloud of dancing mayflies epitomises a warm summer’s day by the river. Riverflies are a very important source of food for fish, birds and mammals but there is evidence that their numbers are declining which is causing concern to anglers and conservationists.

River canaries

Riverflies are called the ‘canaries of the river’ because they are sensitive to pollution. They are also relatively sedentary, long-lived invertebrates and any local pollution incident, such as sewage overflow or pesticide run-off, will have an immediate impact on their numbers and diversity. This impact can be especially strong in chalk streams which naturally have high water quality and large populations of riverflies.

Recognising that riverflies’ sensitivity to pollution makes them excellent indicators of a river’s health, in 2007 the Riverfly Partnership launched the Anglers’ River Monitoring Initiative. It uses a simple but robust method of measuring the numbers and diversity of riverfly species on a stretch of river, requiring only a day’s training.

Regular monitoring allows potential pollution incidents to be identified through the detection of changes in riverfly populations.

Volunteers are allocated a site on a river and visit it each month to record the presence and relative abundance of eight target groups of riverfly larvae. This generates an overall score for the site – if it is below the ‘trigger’ score for the site pollution may have occurred. The Environment Agency is informed and, because the data is collected to a standard agreed by the Agency, it will investigate.

Local training hub

Riverfly monitoring has proved such an effective and widely-accessible technique it has quickly been taken up by voluntary groups and conservation bodies as well as anglers. Responding to the increasing demand for training, last year the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust set up the Chilterns, Herts and Middlesex Riverfly Hub. So far 50 new monitors have been trained.

The Hub is now supporting a network of over 100 volunteers monitoring 15 rivers including seven of the nine chalk streams in the Chilterns. More monitors are needed though as the coverage of some streams is very limited. It’s all about lots of ‘eyes on the ground’, and there is great potential to get a very clear picture not just of pollution issues, but changing flows in our streams, the spread of invasive plants and more.

You can find out more about riverflies at www.riverflies.org and the Chilterns Riverfly Hub at www.colnecan.org.uk.

If you’re interested in being trained in riverfly monitoring contact Allen Beechey at abeechey@chilternsaonb.org
Local beer going down a storm

The popularity of locally-brewed craft beer has shot up in recent years, and there’s been a great expansion in the number of micro-breweries in the Chilterns, matching what’s happening nationally. Across the UK the number of breweries has nearly tripled since the millennium, reaching around 1500 now.

Overall alcohol consumption may be going down, but people are becoming more interested in the quality and provenance of what they are drinking. Many beer drinkers are moving away from the mass-produced brands to the more distinctive and varied tastes of beer brewed locally in small-scale operations by brewers who are passionate about their product.

In the Chilterns AONB and adjacent towns there are currently nine micro-breweries and another about to open. This of course is tiny compared to historical times when almost every village would have had a small brewery, usually in the village pub, producing a local brew for the population. Their modern counterparts are just as rooted in their location though, and this is usually reflected in the names of the beers. Did you know that in the Chilterns you can buy John Hampden’s Ale, Ridgeway Bitter, Prestwood’s Best and Lock Keeper’s Ale among many others?

John Lomax of the Mid Chilterns branch of the Campaign for Real Ale has noticed the growing interest in local beers: “People are definitely looking for quality and variety in the beer that they drink. Some of the local breweries offer a very wide range of different beers. Our membership has gone up a lot – CAMRA now has over 160,000 members nation-wide.”

The most recent brewery to open its doors, Haresfoot Brewery in Berkhamsted, was launched a year ago by a group of eight friends and businessmen who wanted to revive the town’s brewing heritage after a gap of 100 years. “We have a passion to produce authentic craft beers for the local community and beyond,” says Nigel Oseland from Haresfoot. “We are supplying around 200 pubs across the Chilterns and south east now. We employ local people and have also turned the brewery into a destination for music and charity events.”

Farm animals in the Chilterns are benefiting from the growth in brewing too as the waste barley from some breweries goes to feed pigs and cattle.

(Left) Adding hops to the copper at Haresfoot Brewery

Micro-breweries in the Chilterns

From oldest to newest, the current list is:

- Chiltern Brewery, Terrick, near Aylesbury (1980)
- Chiltern Winery and Brewery, Hambleden, near Henley (1990)
- Tring Brewery, Tring (1992)
- Loddon Brewery, Dunsden Green, near Caversham (2002)
- Lovibonds Brewery, Henley-on-Thames (2005)
- Malt the Brewery, Prestwood (2012)
- Haresfoot Brewery, Berkhamsted (2014)
- Paradigm Brewery, Sarratt – due to open in 2015

You can buy their products direct from the brewery and some also sell their beer in local pubs, at farmers’ markets and supermarkets. Check out their websites for more information – in some cases you can book tours or drop in for a ‘tasting’ session. The Red Squirrel Brewery Shop in Chesham sells a wide range of craft beers from the Chilterns and across the UK.
Lots to enjoy on the commons

Over the last four years the Chilterns Commons Project has done a huge amount to improve and promote our local commons. As it draws to a close we look at what it’s achieved and what you can now enjoy near you.

The Project was launched by the Chilterns Conservation Board in September 2011. Its main aims were to raise awareness of the treasure trove of commons in the Chilterns, get more people involved in caring for them and carry out works on selected commons to conserve wildlife habitats, restore historic features and improve access. These big ambitions were possible because of a £400,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and contributions from the Board, Chiltern Society and other organisations to fund the Project.

Commons are special spaces because they have never been intensively managed and so are often rich in wildlife and historic features. The Chilterns has over 200, many at the heart of local communities and for centuries they were an important resource for the poorest people in the village.

Huge activity

The last four years have been a whirlwind of activity for the Commons Project with much more achieved than originally planned. Led by Project Officer Rachel Sanderson and with help from hundreds of volunteers the range of work has been huge, from archaeological surveys to practical conservation work, training for commons volunteers, local history conferences and a big public event at which 1400 people experienced life on a 19th century common for a day.

Project by numbers

- 43 training workshops with 800 attendees in total
- 5,700 hours of volunteer time
- 38 projects to improve wildlife habitat, historic features or access on 31 commons
- 47 entries to the commons art competition
- £72,748 in grants to commons groups
What’s happened near you?

It’s impossible here to list everything the Project has done but we’ve picked out some highlights – why don’t you go and check some of them out?

► A fun natural play trail for children has been installed on Nettlebed Common.
► 13 circular walks developed through commons including Ewelme, Ibstone, Marlow, Great Hampden, Chipperfield and Ivinghoe.
► Restoration of the ancient Five Knolls burial mounds on Dunstable Downs.
► Mapping of WWI practice trenches on Berkhamsted Common.
► A film about West Wycombe Hill made by local school children.
► Improved access to Coleshill Common near Amersham.
► Restoration of the dipping well at Woodcote which provided water to local people until the 1930s.
► Surveys of rare chalk downland plants and butterflies at Totternhoe Knolls and tree work to preserve the medieval motte and bailey castle on the site.
► 17 information boards have been installed on 12 commons including Ley Hill, Cadmore End, Naphill, Pitstone and Sheethanger Common near Hemel Hempstead.
► Scrub clearance on Galley and Warden Hills near Luton has opened up areas of chalk downland.
► School children used Chorleywood Common as inspiration for an art project.

There is lots more information about everything mentioned above, plus an interactive map of all Chilterns’ commons and much more at www.chilternsaonb.org/commons

The future

The Project may be finishing this July but there is lots of ongoing activity to conserve and promote local commons, not least by the many commons groups around the area. The Chilterns Commons Network has regular events – if you would like to find out more contact Neil Jackson at the Conservation Board:
njackson@chilternsaonb.org

CONTACT:
Roselle 07989 947316 or roselle@outofthedoghouse.co.uk or visit www.outofthedoghouse.co.uk

Do you want to give your puppy or rescue dog the best possible start in your home?

Does your dog:
• jump up
• pull on the lead
• bark excessively
• display nervous, obsessive or aggressive behaviour
• chase joggers, bicycles or livestock
• destroy carpets or furniture when left alone
• have issues with food?

Dog Listening uses a simple non-confrontational method, suitable for all dogs, regardless of size, age or breed, through which you can address all undesirable behaviours and build a rewarding relationship with your dog.

CONTACT:
Roselle 07989 947316 or roselle@outofthedoghouse.co.uk or visit www.outofthedoghouse.co.uk

COMMONS PROJECT

Volunteers on Kingwood Common

A winning entry in the art competition – ’Studham Common’ by Barbara Scrivener

Ash rattles by John Willson
’Trees on Nettlebed Common’ by Maisy Hillier
Awards and more in Society’s 50th year

Do you have a favourite pub that you like to call in to when out walking or cycling in the Chilterns? You could nominate it to win an award in a competition being run by the Chiltern Society.

The Chiltern Society, the charity dedicated to caring for, conserving and celebrating the Chilterns, is keen to promote pubs which offer a warm welcome to walkers and cyclists. Other important criteria for nominated pubs include being dog-friendly and offering delicious food at reasonable prices. Of course you may also have your own criteria for what makes your chosen pub a great pit stop when out and about on two feet or two wheels.

Visit www.chilternsociety.org.uk to send in your nomination by May 31st 2015.

A team of judges will visit the pubs with the most nominations and three winners, in the north, central and south Chilterns, will be announced later in the summer. This award is the latest in a series offered by the Chiltern Society to highlight the best local food producers and suppliers in the area. Previous awards include the Farm Shop Award 2013 (won by Seasons farm shop near High Wycombe) and the Tea Shop Award 2014 (won by the House of High Tea in Berkhamsted).

This year the Society is celebrating its 50th anniversary and has organised a wide range of events for members and the public. Guided walks, family activities, outdoor skills courses and plenty more are on offer. It has also had a special new variety of rose developed, with beautiful red flowers, to mark its golden jubilee. You can order the Red Kite Rose, and browse the calendar of events, by visiting the Society’s website (address above).
FARM SHOP
Open all year – home grown and local produce from small independent suppliers

WILD STRAWBERRY CAFE in the YURT
Open Easter to Christmas – fresh cooked breakfast, lunch and cakes using seasonal home grown and local produce

HOME GROWN BEDDING PLANTS
Spring and Autumn

PICK YOUR OWN
Seasonal fruit and veg, June–October

HOME GROWN CHRISTMAS TREES
December

Peterley Manor Farm
Peterley Lane, Prestwood, HP16 0HH
Tel 01494 863566
Opening times: Tuesday–Friday 8.30–5.30pm, Saturday 8.30–5pm, Sunday 9am–1pm
Closed: Mondays

www.peterleymanorfarm.co.uk

FARM SHOP
Open all year – home grown and local produce from small independent suppliers

WILD STRAWBERRY CAFE in the YURT
Open Easter to Christmas – fresh cooked breakfast, lunch and cakes using seasonal home grown and local produce

HOME GROWN BEDDING PLANTS
Spring and Autumn

PICK YOUR OWN
Seasonal fruit and veg, June–October

HOME GROWN CHRISTMAS TREES
December

Peterley Manor Farm
Peterley Lane, Prestwood, HP16 0HH
Tel 01494 863566
Opening times: Tuesday–Friday 8.30–5.30pm, Saturday 8.30–5pm, Sunday 9am–1pm
Closed: Mondays

www.peterleymanorfarm.co.uk

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE UTC

WHAT WE OFFER

Bucks UTC offers a new concept in education for 14–19 year olds who have an enthusiasm for either Construction or IT.

Alongside the national curriculum, our students gain practical skills as well as work experience with global companies.

These are just some of the benefits:

• State of the art facilities
• Innovative projects and courses
• Half-price bus travel (if you live over 3 miles away)

Come to one of our drop-in sessions, every Tuesday 5–6pm. We even have Construction and IT taster sessions!

Visit our website for more information:

www.buckinghamshireutc.co.uk
01296 388451
info@buckinghamshireutc.co.uk
Twitter: @bucksUTC

Based in Aylesbury
H.G.MATTHEWS IS PROUD TO OFFER A UNIQUE RANGE OF HAND-MADE, WOOD-FIRED BRICKS AND TILES, IDEAL FOR AUTHENTIC CONSERVATION WORK ON PRE-19TH CENTURY BUILDINGS