Ready your mice and sharpen your screens: our Citizen Science LiDAR portal is, very, very nearly ready for launch! This website will give you the opportunity to be amongst the first to get a look at this huge dataset of 1400 km² of high-resolution LiDAR data.

Hiding in the dataset is the evidence of human activity in the Chilterns over the last 6,000 years, from Neolithic and Bronze Age burial barrows to World War II bomb craters. We just need your help to find it, and map it, using citizen science analysis.

The web portal will come with instruction guides and tutorials so you can learn about how the data has been collected and processed, and, most importantly, how you can search it to help us find archaeological sites, which might have lain unknown for centuries. Over the next month we will be starting to invite a few people to help us with some “beta testing” of all of the functionality of the website, and once any major bugs have been ironed out, you will all, at last, be let loose on the new dataset. Make sure you are signed up to our mailing list so you don’t miss out!

Do you want to become a Walk Leader? Fancy some free training?

We love leading guided walks—and we hope those attending our hillfort-themed events thus far have had a great time! We get to share our enthusiasm for hillforts and the landscape and spend a day in the sun (or rarely, the rain!)

Are you passionate about walking and getting outdoors? Would you be interested in leading a walk as part of the Chilterns Walking Festival but never done this before?

The Chilterns Conservation Board is organising a half-day Walk Leaders training event to provide an insight into designing and leading a guided walk.

The session will be led by experienced walk leader Stuart Fletcher and will provide lots of useful tips on how to plan, design, and lead walks for different audiences. The morning session will finish with lunch, including the famous Bedfordshire clanger and other Chiltern specialities, and an optional look around the Whipsnade Tree Cathedral afterwards. Further details and booking [here](#).
It’s Festival Season - Celebrate the Festival of Archaeology

*Beacons of the Past*, in celebration of the Festival of Archaeology, and in collaboration with the National Trust, presents Pop-up Prehistory at Sharpenhoe Clappers!

The Festival of Archaeology is coordinated by the Council for British Archaeology and showcases the very best of archaeology around the nation. This year their theme is *ArchaeoTech*, or the archaeological applications of technology. With our LiDAR data as the cornerstone of the Project, we thought it only appropriate to lay something on for the Festival.

Come visit us at Sharpenhoe Clappers, a (possible) Iron Age hillfort in Bedfordshire. We are working with the National Trust Rangers at Dunstable Downs to create a fun-filled day of activities. See displays about the LiDAR and how we turn billions of laser points into exciting images.

Among the attractions, we will have Iron Age Woman Kim Biddulph, spinning, making bone tools, grinding grain and churning butter. You may get the chance to taste Iron Age cooking and wear traditional blue facepaint! David Willis, bushcraft master, will be showing how prehistoric people made rope, string, and textiles. Try your hand at ancient skills and make a bracelet to take home from plants that might surprise you. Visit Dr Pete Hommel to experience the magical transformation of the Metal Ages! Watch as ancient smelting techniques are used to turn copper ore from dull stone to shiny metal. Strike your own Celtic coin to take away.

We will also have guided walks around the Earthworks led by National Trust Rangers, flint knapping, basket making, and much more! The event starts at **11am until 4pm**. More info at the Festival of Archaeology [page](#). Park in the field at **361 Sharpenhoe Road, MK45 4SH** as marked. Follow the signs along a 500m buggy-accessible path to the main exhibition area. Limited Blue Badge parking is available at **351 Sharpenhoe Road**, the main National Trust carpark. Pick up /Drop off is also available here for tired

Rebuilding the Past

*By Mike Fox, Former CCB Chair and Chilfort volunteer*

Whilst we probably didn’t quite manage to build the sort of fencing that our Iron Age predecessors would have needed to control their livestock, an enthusiastic group of volunteers did manage to create an impression of what Pulpit Hillfort might have looked like back then. We had the benefit of beautiful April weather and an advantage that they would not have had in the form of the National Trust Land Rover that was used to transport the ash saplings up the hill.

The trees around the fort itself are mature and therefore of no use for fencing but there is a plentiful supply of the raw material lower down the hill and as Ash Die Back is arriving in the Chilterns we could feel that our efforts were also helping to slow the spread by removing diseased plants.

The building process itself was very easy to pick up even for those of us that had no experience due to expert tuition from the National Trust Wardens and it was quite surprising how far we were able to extend the fence on the day fuelled by a plentiful supply of biscuits and coffee.

I look forward to seeing the whole circuit completed!
What’s coming up?

**What:** Let’s rock the BOAT! - (Byway Open to All Traffic)
**When:** Wednesday 24 July 2019 09:30 to 15:00
**Where:** Pulpit Hill

A BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) running close to Pulpit Hill hillfort has recently been cleared by the landowner to restore access along this historic path. Unfortunately the clearance work has left the way in a sorry state, with brash left in-situ or piled up on historic banks, potentially causing damage. The plan is to tidy up the arisings and make brash piles/dead hedging along the edge of the woodland but behind the banks so these features can be preserved. In time, the BOAT will regenerate and become a lovely wildflower ride through the woods benefiting woodland flora and associated species, and importantly, add to the setting in which our lovely hillfort resides. Limited to 15 participants.

**What:** Introduction to LiDAR for Archaeology
**When:** Saturday 10 August 1000-1230 or 1300-1530
**Where:** Nettlebed Village Club

Join Dr Ed Peveler for one of these 2.5 hour training sessions which will outline basic theory and method behind LiDAR survey and visualisations, as well as how archaeologists interpret the data, and the sites specific to the Chilterns which will be appearing. No previous experience is required. These events are limited to 12 individuals.

**What:** Bash the Balsam – Preserving an ancient watercourse in the Chilterns
**When:** Thursday 25th July 10:00 – 13:00
**Where:** Great Gaddesden

In conjunction with the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project. Infestations of the invasive non-native weed Himalayan Balsam have been found on the River Gade at Great Gaddesden. Left to spread, it chokes out other plant species and can lead to severe erosion. Please come along to our community Balsam Bash and help us to clear the Gade! No experience or special equipment is required, but gardening gloves, wellies, and long trousers and sleeves recommended! The Chalk Streams Team can tell you loads about the state of these ancient water sources, and we Chilfortians will also endeavour to entertain with some (pre)history of the region. No limit on numbers, but please do fill in the form if you plan on coming, so we can be sure there is ample parking.

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A different kind of cutting-edge technology

Based upon current evidence, we believe that although managed woodland was common, much of the landscape in the Iron Age Chilterns would have been cleared for arable and pastoral purposes. Livestock numbers in prehistory were determined by how many head the grass could support overwinter. But then came the invention of haymaking! This would allow prime grass to be stored for animals to eat during the lean months of bad weather. For a long time, scholars believed that the Romans were the first to make hay in Britain, but in the last 10 years, new excavations and archaeobotanical work has shown that not only was hay being cropped in the pre-Roman Iron Age, but the ‘locals’ were using the large scythe thought to have also come over with the Invasion. Of course, the Romans may still have the credit for the innovation—the early dates just show that exchanges of ideas and objects preceded formal conquest! The Hillforts Team thought it would be fun to try our hand at the Large Scythe and so we are hoping to offer a Beacons of the Past free Scything course in the near future. Watch out for emails when we get it organized.
As well as being an outstanding site for nature conservation and recreation, Burnham Beeches is steeped in history; one tangible, although less obvious element of this rich history is Seven Ways Plain, the remains of an Iron Age hillfort at the southern end of Lord Mayors drive.

In 1996, English Heritage (now Historic England) listed the hillfort as a Scheduled Monument (SM). The hillfort is encircled by a 10m wide ditch measuring 140m north to south and 100m east to west, although this is rather variable. Unfortunately, areas of quarrying many centuries ago does mean that the original structure has been modified. Some disturbance was also caused during WWII by military activity when the hillfort was used as the main base for army encampment; this was a time when Burnham Beeches had become Vehicle Reserve Depot No 2 and tens of thousands of military vehicles were stored under the trees in preparation for the D-Day landings.

As the use of traditional management techniques declined around 150 years ago (namely cutting trees for fuel and grazing livestock), scrub and young trees began to grow, shrouding the monument in a cloak of dense holly and young beech and oak trees. You might imagine this would form a protective layer; in reality, large trees and shrubs can cause great damage to monuments as their roots force their way through the buried archaeology or rip it up if they are blown over in strong winds.

In recent years the Rangers team and volunteers have cleared some of the scrub and young trees, making the ditches and banks far more visible and reducing the risk of further damage. By using our cattle and ponies to graze the area we can prevent regrowth and keep the area open.

With physical management and legal protection in place, the next step is to improve our understanding of the monument and increase awareness of it in our local community. Until now these features have not been studied in-depth, despite many being sited in areas with lots of visitors. However, the new LiDAR data will not only help us to understand the subtle aspects of the remaining earthworks, but also help to locate other archaeological features within the whole of Burnham Beeches, which will help us to better understand the ancient landscape around the hillfort.

An exciting element of Beacons of the Past is the potential to use technology to help us interpret the hillfort’s history. We are currently investigating the potential for an augmented reality app which could not only help explain features to visitors but may also become a useful educational tool for local schools.

Watch this space for new discoveries about Seven Ways Plain!