



West Berkshire
Countryside Society



Revitalising a Wetland Common in the Lambourn Valley

Marsh Common, in Weston near Welford, has undergone a considerable transformation since Welford Parish Council voted to take on its maintenance in November 2020. Unfortunately, over time this important habitat and area of Open Access Land had become rundown, inaccessible and, in one area, illegally used as a place to dump and burn waste.

When this was brought to the attention of the Parish Council in 2020, it was decided the council would carry out cleanup and maintenance works to facilitate public access. The vital importance of access to open space could not have been more clearly highlighted than it was during the recent pandemic, so this made restoring the common a greater priority for the Parish Council. Since then, work has been carried out to preserve this special place,

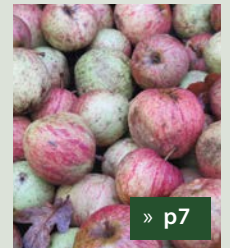
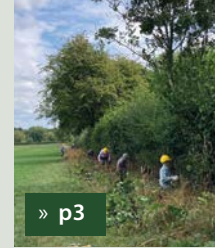
to support the environment and to facilitate public access.

Wet woodland habitat such as this is increasingly rare nowadays and provides an important home to an array of wildlife. Paul St Pierre of the Environment Agency explains:

‘In addition to creating and supporting the River Lambourn itself, the springs which feed the river along its length also create important wetlands adjacent to the river. These wetlands are generally labelled as “fen/swamp” or as “wet woodland”. Depending on the strength of the spring, these wetlands can be seasonal or permanent. Most commonly they just fluctuate in extent and degree of wetness.

The wetlands within the valley bottom support a wide range of plant and animal species, including amphibians and reptiles, a multitude of rare and sensitive invertebrates, and many grasses,

Inside this issue



- 3 Volunteers Round Up
 - 4 Dark Skies
 - 6 Deadly Disease
 - 7 Harvesting Hedgerows
- Plus lots more...**

wildflowers and fungi. One particular species which occupies these calcareous wetlands is Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*). This species is often locally called the “Newbury Bypass Snail” as it was the protected species which held up the construction of the A34. Desmoulin's are a very small species with a max shell size of about 2.5mm.

These wetlands are so important that many are also designated as separate SSSI's and SAC's within the valley. They play an important role in supporting the river ecology – for example, many of the juvenile fish species will take refuge in these areas, especially during high flows – and in water management, storing water during high flows, reducing flood risk downstream, and also storing significant quantities of carbon. Restoring healthy wetlands is a key objective of the UK's approach to tackling climate change.

[Continued on page 5 >](#)

West Berkshire Countryside Society

The aim of the West Berkshire Countryside Society is to promote the understanding, appreciation and conservation of the West Berkshire countryside... furthering these objectives through practical conservation work and guided walks and talks from local experts. It was formed in 2012 by amalgamating the Friends of the Pang, Kennet & Lambourn Valleys; the Bucklebury Heathland Conservation Group; the Pang Valley Conservation Volunteers & the Barn Owl Group.

Upstream is our quarterly publication designed to highlight conservation matters in West Berkshire and beyond and to publicise the activities of the Society.

Chair & Enquiries:	Nick Freeman (enquiries@westberkscountryside.org.uk)
Membership Secretary:	Stewart Waight (membership@westberkscountryside.org.uk)
Upstream Editor:	Margery Slatter (editor@westberkscountryside.org.uk)
.....	
Hon President:	Dick Greenaway MBE RD

Initial contact for all above and for the Barn Owl Group, Bucklebury Heathland Conservation Group and West Berks Conservation Volunteers should, unless otherwise stated, be made via enquiries@westberkscountryside.org.uk

Volunteers' Task Diary

Date/Time	Venue	Details
January 2023		
Tue 3rd Jan 10:00	Redhill Wood	Clearing woodland floor and glade creation. Parking SU420 642 off road, park on entrance to the main ride. SU420 642 inserted.stable.homecare
Sun 8th Jan 10:30-1:00pm	Bucklebury Common	Join the Bucklebury Heathland Group to help maintain this important heathland habitat. Meet at Angels Corner. SU550 688 offices.bucked.tradition
Tue 10th Jan 10:00	Bucklebury Common	Clearing birch and gorse. Meet at Fanny's Lane off Burdens Heath, (continuation of The Ridge), SU534 693. Nearest postcode RG7 6SS. SU534 693 climber.purified.logged
Tue 17th Jan 10:00	Holt Lodge Farm, Kintbury	Meet at Holt Lodge Farmhouse near Kintbury. Coppicing, cutting back brambles, thinning sycamore and general woodland maintenance. SU387 648 skid.comments.tripling
Tue 24th Jan 10:00	Sulham Farm	Coppicing & stool protection. Park along the track adjacent to Sulham Church. SU645 742 across.influencing.spots
Tue 31st Jan 10:00	Hockets Field Bucklebury	Continuing earlier work along hedge line. Park on the hard standing at SU548 687 . Nearest postcode RG7 6RY. blurs.paraded.producing
February 2023		
Tue 7th Feb 10:00	Paices Wood	Coppicing & stool protection. Park entrance: SU590 635 splints.pesky.branch . Parking and meeting point – Lower car park: SU587 639 unscathed.lines.legs
Sat 11th Feb 10:30-1:00pm	Bucklebury Common	Join the Bucklebury Heathland Group to help maintain this important heathland habitat. Meet at Angels Corner. SU550 688 offices.bucked.tradition
Tue 14th Feb 10:00	Sheepdrove, Lambourn	Continue with hedge work. Park near the red barn SU349 816 . DO NOT use sat nav guidance to locate this site. SU349 816 connected.ranges.over
Tue 21st Feb 10:00	Malt House Farm	Hedge laying. Parking is at SU408 639 . This is at the NE end of the hedge, away from the Farm House. eminent.states.sweetener
Tue 28th Feb 10:00	Furze Hill	Woodland and butterfly habitat management on this parish wildlife site. Ample parking at village hall, through double gates off Pinewood Crescent. SU512 740 simmer.equipping.casual
March 2023		
Tue 7th Mar 10:00	Cold Ash	Maintenance work on the Parish Wildlife site. Park on the access track to Westrop Farm off The Ridge SU514 701 . Vehicles carrying tools should park in the layby off The Ridge just by the allotments at SU514 699 newsstand.consumed.eruptions
Sun 12th Mar 10:30-1:00pm	Bucklebury Common	Join the Bucklebury Heathland Group to help maintain this important heathland habitat. Meet at Angels Corner. SU550 688 offices.bucked.tradition
Tue 14th Mar 10:00	Hillgreen, Leckhampstead	Scrub clearance. Park along the track by the common. SU452 767 windpipe.bedroom.comically
Tue 21st Mar 10:00	Rushall Manor Farm	Hedge work. Parking: SU584 723 telephone.brink.crate
Tue 28th Mar 10:00	Malt House Farm	Hedge laying. Parking is at SU408 639 . This is at the NE end of the hedge, away from the Farm House eminent.states.sweetener

(The three-word code after each grid reference is the "What Three Words" listing for the task meeting point).

Conservation Volunteers Round Up

Our mid-August task at **Furze Hill** marked the transition from a very hot summer to something more like traditional English weather. We scythed and raked grass, brambles and other growth in the meadow, the very dry conditions meaning we could not use brushcutters because of the risk of sparks. A mid-morning light shower was pleasant but a steadier one at lunchtime halted our efforts, as it made the growth too wet to cut. The following week saw us continuing to cut back vegetation alongside paths and placing logs from felled trees for collection by residents. The logs soon disappeared.

Two months later, it was still unseasonably warm for our visit to **Winterbourne Wood**, where we made further progress with coppicing and protecting regrowth on very mature hazel stools around the north-eastern edge of the site.

We have taken on the regular task of reducing overgrown hedges to a manageable state at **Hockets Field**. This land is owned and maintained by Bucklebury Parish with the aim of promoting natural habitat for wildlife, balanced with providing open space for parishioners to enjoy. In September we made our second visit this year and, with drought conditions still prevailing, stacked all the cuttings.

On our August visit to **Rushall Manor Farm**, we continued the extended programme of widening rides to let in sunshine that will encourage flora on the verges, which in turn attracts butterflies, moths and other insects. In late October, a record thirty-one volunteers (including a team from Newbury company Passiv UK) removed a substantial amount of bramble from woodland paths popular with visitors. Our brushcutters covered

swathes of the area, aided by manual workers using shears and pulling up the less tenacious plants.

At **Malt House Farm** we continued to prepare a hedge for laying, removing unwanted growth. The actual laying, employing traditional skills, will start on our next visit – the beginning of a project that should keep us occupied on our visits here for at least two years.



Working on the Malt House Hedge © M Slatter



Magpie Fungi, Malthouse Farm © M Slatter

We made two visits to **Bucklebury Common** to remove invasive silver birch and gorse, cutting the plants close to the ground, and burning the brash to reduce the risk of unplanned heath fires. On the second occasion we were joined by five of AWE's Fire Safety Team on a company volunteer day. It proved to be a very wet event and we all got thoroughly soaked.

Maintenance continued on the popular **Eling Way** that runs along the former track of the old railway line between Hermitage and Hampstead Norreys. On the stretch between Hermitage and 'Graffiti Bridge' we removed vegetation encroaching onto the path that, had it

continued to grow, would have impeded walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and disabled access. We pushed the arisings back from the path into the bordering vegetation where they will quickly rot down and disappear.

On **Ashampstead Common** we cut growth from around several ancient trees to ensure that they were less challenged for the nutrients that sustain them. We also uncovered the 'pillow mound' - an artificial rabbit warren introduced by the Normans to provide alternative food resources. It had become so overgrown as to be difficult to identify, but work with shears, grass-hooks and loppers brought it back into view.

At **Redhill Wood** we continued to maintain areas adjacent to the paths. Our first visit concentrated on the upper part of the wood, where fallen trees and branches 'hung up' near the path were removed to provide safe access. Our second visit took us deeper into the wood where we, again, made sure of safe access by clearing and stacking fallen timber and began to identify possible locations for creating glades. This will let light reach the woodland floor and encourage the development of a ground flora for greater wildlife diversity.



Sticky Coral Fungus, Redhill Wood © M Slatter

Compiled by Terry Crawford

Dark skies are outstanding, natural and beautiful... So, look up!

Winter is definitely upon us, and as well as enjoying winter walks and hot chocolate, we can also look forward to dark, starry skies without staying up late!

The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) has significant areas of dark skies which add to the beauty, tranquillity and sense of remoteness of a place. 15% of the North Wessex Downs skies are as dark as any in the country and an additional 58% are significantly dark. As many as 3000 stars can be seen in the darkest areas. For instance, the Triangulum Galaxy (M33), lying 3 million light-years from Earth, is the third-largest member of the local group of galaxies behind the Milky Way and Andromeda.

So, now is the time to look up! With the rolling chalk hills and expansive views in the North Wessex Downs, there are plenty of 'big skies'. With a bit of information and advice, going out on a clear night to see the stars can be a truly magical experience. We all love looking at the moon, but to really see the stars you need a clear night with little or no moonlight.

Top Tips to get you started

- **Wear warm clothes** – it gets very cold standing or sitting still
- **Adjust** – take about 20 minutes for your eyes to get used to the dark
- **Seating** – take a chair to be comfortable, or a blanket to sit on
- **Snacks** – take some food and a hot flask
- **Stay safe** – don't go alone, always tell someone where you are going, and take a fully-charged mobile phone
- **Take a torch** – with red film across the lens or use a red bike light
- **Take binoculars (if you have them)** – they will show 25 to 50 times more than the naked eye

The North Wessex Downs website gives information on when and where to go



The Triangulum Galaxy (M33) © George Sallit

stargazing. There is also a downloadable leaflet (see Stargazing – North Wessex Downs AONB¹).

Why not go along to a beginner's session at a local astronomy group? You can find links for local groups on the webpage.

Light Pollution

We all rely on artificial light to live our lives but wasting light wastes energy and money. The human eye can pick out light from a distance of about two miles on a flat landscape, so light can have far reaching visual effects beyond that intended.

Unfortunately, unintended light pollution is taking a silent toll.

Increasingly, it is eradicating our access

to the wonder of beautiful night skies. Excessive artificial light can disrupt our sleep and potentially lead to serious health issues. It also plays havoc with the feeding and breeding cycles of bats, birds, insects and nocturnal animals.

The North Wessex Downs AONB is working to preserve dark skies, primarily through helping everyone play their part in minimising light pollution. Our Guide to Good External Lighting is for everyone, with sections aimed specifically at Local Authorities and Parish Councils (see Dark Skies – North Wessex Downs AONB²).

If you are installing new external lighting, the key things to remember are:

- Install lights only IF needed
- Shine lights only WHERE needed
- Use only AS MUCH light as needed
- Use lights only at times WHEN needed

By increasing our awareness and following these simple principles, we can all help to minimise light pollution and protect dark skies. The more of us that experience the magic of the night sky, the more value we place on it and want to protect it for future generations.

Jacky Akam

The North Wessex Downs AONB

More opportunities for Stargazing

- Stargazing walks at Uffington White Horse Hill in November, December and January. White Horse Hill Evening Stargazing Walk Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite
- Stargazing events map – find stargazing events near you – Go Stargazing. They even have information on Star Camping, and a free app!
- If you are travelling further afield, several of our national parks hold dark skies festivals in February. To find out more, see Dark Skies Festival: Dark Skies Festival (darkskiesnationalparks.org.uk)

¹ Stargazing – North Wessex Downs AONB www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/stargazing

² Dark Skies – North Wessex Downs AONB www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/our-work/our-current-projects/dark-skies



Fen Swamp, Marsh Common

© Harry Ellard

Continued from page 1.

Marsh Common at Weston is an excellent mosaic of deep and shallow pools, with an extensive population of swamp and fen plant species such as the impressive Greater Tussock Sedge. There are stands of willow scrub, which are very attractive to many of our migrant and resident warbler species such as willow warblers, whitethroats and blackcaps. It is also a perfect habitat for the rare and declining nightingale. It's a very beautiful and sensitive area within the Lambourn Valley. Since clearing the common, footpaths have been created to facilitate access and two benches have been installed to enable visitors to sit and enjoy the tranquility of this magical place. Numerous nesting boxes have been set up, including seven bat boxes and an impressive bug hotel. The Parish Council



Bug Hotel, Marsh Common
© Harry Ellard

has also planted a 200-tree wildlife hedge to celebrate The Queen's jubilee and to form part of Her Majesty's Green Canopy. Our aim has been to provide, at the heart of the parish, an important and cherished open space for all creatures – great and small.

The common is accessible via the footpath which heads north from Weston Mill (WELF/27/1), via the five-bar wooden gate on the Lambourn Road. Alternatively, it can be accessed via the footpath heading east from Elton (WELF/16/2).

Martyne Ellard
Chairperson Welford Parish Council



Greater Tussock Sedge, Marsh Common

© Harry Ellard

A Date for your Diary



Sun 19th Feb 10:30am
A Winter Walk with Charles Gilchrist

Join Charles for a 4 mile walk around Hermitage parish. Meet at the car park on Everington Lane at **SU519 737** ranged.hunk.shrugging. Expect to see ancient tracks and coppiced trees, water meadows, a rebuilt C13th church and unusual railway-style farm buildings.

Ever thought of becoming a member?

Looking for that last-minute gift for someone who has everything?

How about considering membership of the West Berkshire Countryside Society!

Our Society is dedicated to promoting and conserving the fascinating countryside of West Berkshire.

We would welcome your company on our walks, our barn owl activities and on our conservation tasks, and your support in funding the important work that is carried out in our countryside.

If you would like to join our society or gift a membership to someone, there is a modest annual subscription (currently £15) which covers family as well as individual membership, plus copies of 'Upstream' – our quarterly newsletter.

Please cut out, fill in and send the membership application form, which you will find overleaf to:

WBCS, 31 Little Heath Road
Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 5TY

Personal details including email addresses will not be shared with any other organisation.

Further information can be found on our website at www.westberks countryside.org.uk

A Deadly Disease with a Crippling Cost

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is facing a bill of more than £1 million to tackle the impact of devastating ash dieback disease. BBOWT is not alone. In December 2021 the National Trust warned that it was expecting to spend £3 million tackling ash dieback in that winter alone. Many landowners, charities and organisations are faced with huge bills for removing dead and dying trees, like those at Furze Hill, Hermitage – a regular volunteer task site.

Like other land managers, BBOWT has had to make the decision to remove thousands of ash trees across its nature reserves in areas where falling dead branches pose a significant risk to the public, buildings or road users. It is launching a major



fundraising appeal to help cover the cost. BBOWT manages more than 80 nature reserves which are open to the public, and the disease is now present at more than three quarters of those reserves. In Berkshire, staff have done significant work at Moor Copse and Snelsmore Common.

Estelle Bailey, Chief Executive of BBOWT, said: "As we launch our ash dieback fundraising appeal, we want to thank everyone who is able to spare any amount to help us. We are tackling the effects of this disease in order to keep our reserves as safe places that can inspire people's love of nature and to provide safe havens for wildlife. We hope that one day in the future we will have a new generation of ash trees that are resistant to this dreadful disease ripping through our reserves."

BBOWT has spent £360,000 on tackling ash dieback since 2019. The money is spent on hiring specialist contractors, who have already safely removed thousands of trees. In a few areas, the Trust is looking to sell the timber it has cut down to offset some of the expenditure, but the condition and inaccessible location of many affected trees means it would often cost more to extract the wood than it is worth, so there is limited opportunity. The work is being timed to minimise the impact on wildlife, such as nesting birds, and the Trust is also retaining trees that have bat roosts.

Not all the ash trees in the woodlands are being felled. As many trees as possible are retained to maximise the opportunity for genetic resilience to be expressed, and to preserve existing woodland habitats where dead and decaying wood is a vital component for biodiversity. Where the Trust does remove trees, this can have the benefit of creating areas where more light can reach the ground, allowing dormant plants to flourish and tree seedlings to germinate, helping the woodland to naturally regenerate. This can create new habitat for woodland insects and birds.

BBOWT is set to spend more than £200,000 in the 2022/23 year, and by the end of 2026 managers estimate they will have spent £1.2 million. But the problem will not end there, and the Trust will keep having to spend to mitigate it.

To give to BBOWT's urgent ash dieback appeal visit: www.bbowt.org.uk/ash-dieback-appeal

Find out more about how BBOWT is managing the disease at: bbowt.org.uk/wildlife/nature-matters/ash-dieback

To join us or to make someone a member of *West Berkshire Countryside Society* for the annual subscription of £15.00, please complete this form and send it with your cheque or the completed banker's order to the address below:

1. Member's Details

Name of New Member
Address of New Member <i>(To which quarterly magazine will be sent)</i>
Postcode
Tel
Email

2. Payment

Cheque

Cheques should be made payable to the 'West Berkshire Countryside Society'.

Standing Order

To: The Manager	(Bank/Building Society Name)
Address	
Postcode	

Please pay to the order of 'West Berkshire Countryside Society' at HSBC plc, Pangbourne, Reading, RG8 7AH (Sort code 40-36-03, account number 71099698).
The sum of £15 (fifteen pounds) on the 1st of January 2023 and thereafter annually until cancelled by me.

Account No.	Sort Code
Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Email	
Signature	

In signing this document, you are giving consent to the Society to retain your contact details in a secure file for the purposes of administering the membership and making contact. We do not retain your bank account details for any reason. These are forwarded direct to the bank.

Please send completed form to: WBCS, 31 Little Heath Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 5TY

Harvesting the Hedgerows – a conservationist's perspective

A little while ago, someone in Hermitage approached me and gave me a disc of 50 or so images of plants, that he had photographed around the village, and asked me to identify them. Having done that, he then asked if I would give a talk to our horticultural society. I realised that I could not just go from slide to slide saying this is a buttercup/dandelion etc. so I looked up the plants. The information formed the basis for my talk in Hermitage and the presentation that I gave at the Society's 2022 AGM.

Having undertaken some research, what struck me was that every single plant had either a practical, medicinal or edible use. In other words, all plants have a use (not just in folklore and herbalism) and are still vitally important to mankind today. For instance, 40 - 50% of all over-the-counter prescription drugs are still derived from plants and the diversity of their use ranges from food and medicines to construction and clothing materials. That is why conservation of all plants, weeds included, is a vital, long-term objective.

The following plants are just two examples of the sort of diversity that plants can provide:



Field Horsetail

© Charles Gilchrist

Equisetum arvense, Equisetaceae Field horsetail

This spore-producing ancient plant that pre-dates flowering plants is a direct descendent of the trees that formed the coal measures 3-400 million years ago. Boiled in water, it is a useful fungicide against mildew. Boiled for 3hrs, it can be used for stomach ulcers, acne, eczema, almost any urinary tract inflammations, and prostate and lung disorders. It has a high silica content used to heal wounds. Cotton wool soaked in the liquidised stems can be used to stem nosebleeds.

Malus sylvestris, Rosaceae Crab apple

This was an important food plant before *Malus domestica* (the eating or cooking apple) was developed. The fruits contain high levels of vitamin C, as well as being good for health, with medicinal properties: the malic and tartaric acids in apples neutralise the acids produced by gout and indigestion, converting them into alkaline carbonates. Apples can cure both diarrhoea and constipation!

Plants are vital to us, not only for medicine, food and fuel, and other practical uses, but also as the basis of the greater environment. Conservation is a bottom-up process which aims to protect and manage the habitat upon which all else depends. As can be seen from the success rates of Barn Owls, you can put owl boxes on every tree and lamppost in the county but, if you haven't looked after the grassland, the invertebrates or seeds that the small birds and mammals feed on will not be available, so the owls, that in turn feed on those small birds and mammals,



Crab Apples

© Charles Gilchrist

cannot survive. As well as acting as carbon capture sinks, the importance of downland, unimproved grassland, moors and coppiced woodland ecosystems must far outweigh any benefits claimed by turning to a plant-based diet, for which land is used where no insects, weeds or animals are permitted on heavily managed, barren soil.

The husbandry and rural crafts that created the British countryside ended, mainly, because of the first and second world wars, when the population expanded and industrialised agriculture was essential to feed the population. Rewilding may have its place, but a managed landscape is needed to maintain biodiversity alongside food production. Landscape maintenance is now largely left to volunteers.

Because of the importance of plants in our food and medicine, the future of mankind rests on our shoulders. Each of us in the society plays a part – the future of the planet is in our hands.

Charles Gilchrist




Don't forget our website!
www.westberkcountryside.org.uk




A modest walk on Ashampstead Common to wear off the Christmas Excesses

About 4.7km (3 miles)


Starting and finishing at the car park on the eastern side of Ashampstead Common. SU5857 7510. One modest hill. One short length of road walking.

 1. Ashampstead Common was pasture woodland and became a Deer Park when the Lord of Bradfield Manor built a bank and ditch around it in the late 13th century, most of which can still be seen. The small glade beside the carpark is very species rich. It is maintained by our Volunteers.

Facing the glade take the third path from the left up the right-hand side (Path 6).

 2. Years ago, in 2001, the glade to the south of the path was a trampled, muddy log depot. It was restored by our Volunteers. Since then, it has been mown annually by the owners – Yattendon Estate – in late summer, and the cuttings raked off by the Volunteers. This encourages the grasses and other plants which are beneficial to butterflies, moths and other insects.

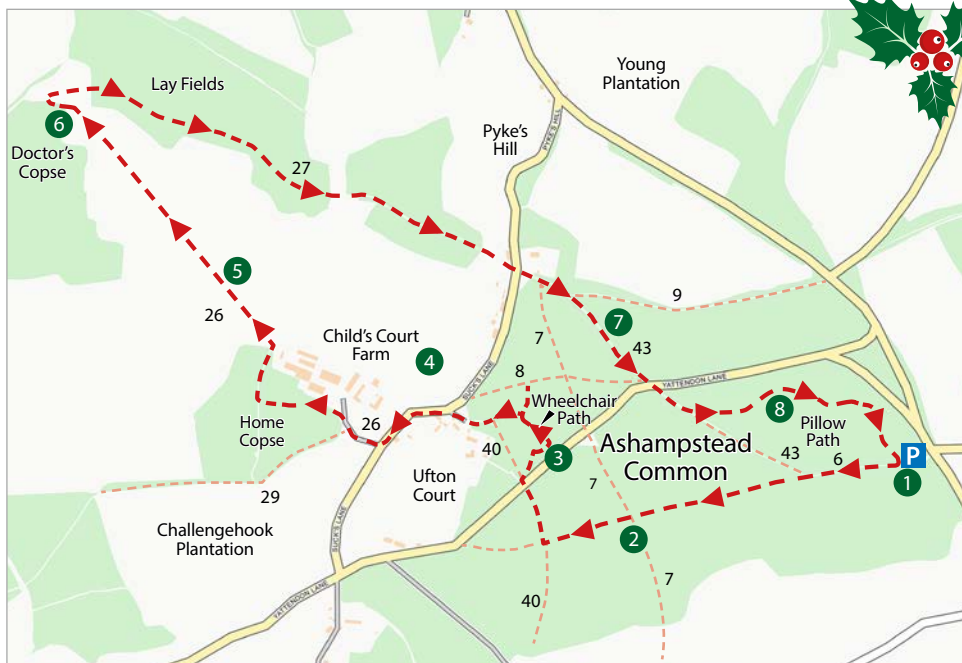
Cross Yattendon Lane and turn immediately right, at the small sign, along the Wheelchair Path.

 3. The soils under the path are very thin and lie on hard gravel. They drain quickly, even after heavy rain, allowing wheelchair users to admire the Veteran Trees – oak and sweet chestnut pollards, a magnificent standard oak and a towering Wellingtonia. The pit is a pre-1889 road material quarry.


The path re-joins Path 40. Continue along the gravel track to the road. Turn left keeping close to the verge in single file.


 4. Childs Court Farm was built in the late 1600s and the farm buildings converted to workshops and offices at intervals in the late 1900s and early 2000s. Kate Middleton's parents run 'Party Pieces' from here.

Follow the farm drive to Home Copse. Ignore the wide track to the left and look




for the finger post a few yards further on leading into the copse. Look to the left as you leave the copse for a gate into the plantation.

 5. The ancient name of this field was 'Heaven Field'. The 157,000 Christmas trees were planted a year ago. Thinning and harvesting will start when they are eight years old. Another 40,000 were planted in pots. Some of these were harvested for Christmas 2022. They are grown from seeds from a particular hillside in European Georgia.


 6. The open area where the route bends sharply onto Path 27 is known locally as 'the Primrose Patch' because the Volunteers maintained an open area so that the spring flora could flourish, particularly Primroses and False Oxslips. The Estate used to mow it to control the scrub. Sadly, this ceased some years ago. The wood bordering the area is called Lay Fields because it was arable fields until the mid-1700s.

On reaching the lane, cross over. The first mark in front of the houses is for Path 7.

A short way past this, the path forks around a glade.

 7. The glade is 'William's Glade', named for the tractor driver who created it. It is dense with bluebells in spring.

Take the right-hand fork (Path 43) and continue, crossing Yattendon Lane. About 100m beyond the road a path leaves to the left. This is 'Pillow Path'.

 8. 'Pillow Path' was also created by William to open up an area that had been difficult to access. The 'pillow' is the low bank where the path turns sharply to the left before sloping downhill. It was probably an artificial rabbit warren. Rabbits are not native to Britain but were introduced. They were often farmed, from Norman times onwards, in artificial warrens containing a network of tunnels from which rabbits could be driven into nets by ferrets.

Continue downhill, following the path to return to the car park.

Dick Greenaway and Terry Crawford

Many more interesting local walks are available on our website: www.westberkscountryside.org.uk