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GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM
newsletter

MARCH – MAY 2017



Biodynamic viticulture in Surrey

ALBURY ORGANIC VINEYARD

Nicholas Wenman

ALBURY VINEYARD is situated on the southern slopes of the North Downs in the beautiful Surrey Hills. The vineyard is adjacent to the Silent Pool, which is considered by some to be a magical site. It is linked to the folklore tale of King John, who tried to abduct a woodcutter's daughter. Fleeing from him, she was forced into the deep water and drowned. According to the legend, the maiden can still be seen at midnight.

English sparkling wine is now competing with the finest Champagnes, winning numerous international competitions. At Albury we produce a range of quality

organic sparkling wines (made in the same way as Champagne), as well as a still rosé – which was first served on the Royal Barge as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The vines are mainly the traditional Champagne varietals of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

There are now more than 500 commercial vineyards in the UK – but what makes us a little different is our commitment to producing organic fruit without the use of chemicals such as herbicides and fungicides. We also use plant and compost teas and biodynamic

preparations, which improve the fertility of the soil. We believe that this approach, which encourages the natural biology of the land, produces premium fruit – and therefore great wine!

There are fewer than 20 certified organic vineyards in England and only a handful that are biodynamic, a practice developed by Rudolf Steiner at the beginning of the 20th century. In response to a group of farmers in Austria concerned about the future of agriculture, Steiner gave a series of lectures in which he developed an ecological and sustainable approach to agriculture: increasing soil fertility without the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. These ideas soon spread throughout Europe, North America, Asia and Australasia.

For us, biodynamics is 'organics plus'. Just like organics, it excludes the use of artificial chemicals and encourages the use of composts and manures. However, it also promotes the holistic interrelationships between the soil, the plants, and the cosmos, including the more subtle rhythms associated with the moon, the sun and the planets. Special manure and herb-based preparations are also applied to the vineyard to enhance and promote microbiological life in the soil and improve fertility.

At the end of last year we buried cow horns, filled with cow manure; these will ferment throughout winter, harmonising with the sub-molecular energies of the vineyard. We will dig these up in the spring and dynamise the contents in rain water,

which will then be sprayed on the vineyard to encourage growth and strengthen the vines, to help prevent disease.

We also add some herb-based preparations to our compost pile including Dandelion, Stinging Nettle, Chamomile, Horsetail, Valerian and Yarrow. Throughout the year we consult the biodynamic calendar to make sure that the moon is in the right phase when we spray the vines and harvest the grapes. Our biodynamic wine ferments happily in the winery, with only the natural yeasts from the vineyard, giving it flavour characteristics with a unique sense of place or terroir.

For some, biodynamics is complete madness! But just because many of its principles cannot be explained by science, it doesn't mean that they are meaningless. Whilst some might think we are crazy, we are in the company of some of the great biodynamic vineyards of the world – including Domaine Leflaive and Leroy in Burgundy, Maison Chapoutier in the Rhône, Coulée de Serrant in the Loire, Beaux Freres in Oragon, Ryneke in Stellenbosch, Henschke in Australia and Jean Pierre Fleurie in Champagne.



John Powell

Glyphosate

The EU has reached a decision on the weedkiller glyphosate, discovered to be present in wheat supply chains. The license has been extended for just 18 months instead of the usual 15 years, pending further safety tests.

(Source: *Living Earth*, Winter '16)

FACTS & FIGURES

Memorable sounds

Dolphins can still recognise the unique clicks of other dolphins even after being separated from them for 20 years.

(Source: *BBC Wildlife*, Spring '15)

Chinese pollution

Air pollution from Chinese factories is suffocating fish, crabs and other marine life thousands of miles away in the tropical Pacific Ocean. Huge quantities of iron and nitrogen are blowing into the Pacific off the coast of East Asia, and being transported east over vast distances by the current almost all the way to Mexico and Peru.

(Source: *i*, 17 May '16)

Early start would be illegal

Fracking company Cuadrilla wants to start drilling in Lancashire four months short of the 12-month groundwater monitoring required by law.

(Source: *foe.co.uk*, 21 Feb '17)

Update on the Small Blue Stepping Stones Project

Adrian Thompson

THE STEPPING STONES PROJECT (as outlined by Steve Wheatley of Butterfly Conservation in our December 2016 newsletter) is continuing to develop. I have offered to be the contact link between Guildford Environmental Forum and the key partners in the Stepping Stones Project who are:

- a. **Butterfly Conservation**, who are providing most of the funding,
- b. **Butterfly Conservation Surrey and SW London**, who have initiated the first trial at Box Hill,
- c. **Guildford Borough Council**,
- d. **The National Trust** and
- e. **Surrey Wildlife Trust**

The initial funding has been confirmed by Butterfly Conservation (BC) and work began on site at Box Hill on Thursday 23rd February. The second stage of grant funding has been applied for by BC and the full extent of the grant will be known at the end of March.

At the same time, GEF have been seeking to work more closely with Guildford Borough Council (GBC) as outlined in our article in the March 2016 edition of our newsletter. Just to remind readers, we wrote in March 2016 that: "We (GEF) are offering GBC the support of GEF in raising the profile of the environment in Guildford and especially in the forthcoming Local Plan. We have learnt from GBC that:

1. As part of the Local Plan, the planning policy team is commissioning a Green Infrastructure/ Biodiversity Strategy.
2. Later this year GBC will be putting forward its Countryside Vision document – a policy and strategy for managing our land holding and working with others to deliver on the landscape scale approach required by government."

Since then, and following two meetings with GBC, we have been

encouraged by an e-mail in early February 2017 from **Paul Spooner, Leader of Guildford Borough Council with Portfolio responsibility for Planning and Regeneration**, which reads as follows:

"The Countryside Vision document is hopefully being adopted at the Executive in March. This is a key document for the countryside service as it aligns the council with key local, national and international policy and thinking to support the continued management and creation of our countryside and wildlife network in the council's ownership and sets the platform to work with others to create bigger, better and more connected habitats as coined by Professor Sir John Lawton who led on the government's policy – making space for nature. It will give the council's countryside service the strategic platform it needs to do the right things. This won't be an overnight fix. As I'm sure you are aware, environmental projects can take many years before the intended benefits are delivered, but we are committed!

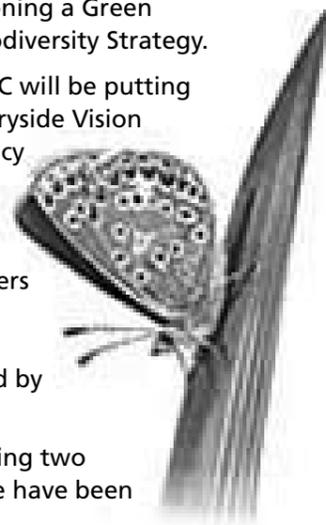
Let me comment on a few key targets in the Council's Corporate Plan which we are working towards to safeguard and enhance the borough's environment and biodiversity:

1. *Work with partners to provide a high quality, diverse environment by ensuring sufficient and appropriate green, blue and open and a resilient ecological network is maintained.*
2. *Work with the River Wey Catchment Partnership to develop a wetland design for Burpham Court Farm for people and wildlife.*

The countryside vision is there to support this aim and as an example of a practical project, this year we have worked with the River Wey Landscape Partnership and Wetland and Wildfowl Trust to create a masterplan for improved wetlands in the farmland around Burpham Court Farm with public access. We have worked with the Dormouse Conservation Trust in various undisclosed locations, developing best practice in woodland management which has seen populations grow. We have worked with the Environment Agency in creating water



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vole habitat at Parsonage Water Meadows. We have a long working relationship with Butterfly Conservation in creating habitat for the Small Blue butterfly at Pewley Down and The Mount.

3. Protect Sensitive Greenbelt land and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and designate new SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces) – We have developed plans for new SANG sites in various locations which will bring existing land into positive conservation management; this includes Tyting Farm where we will have the opportunity to restore chalk grassland as a UK priority habitat.

4. Adopt Biodiversity Opportunity Area Policies and targets and implement a biodiversity offsetting policy through the local plan – Work is underway on integrating these policies which have been developed by the Surrey Biodiversity working group. There is a long way to go with the local plan, but we are aiming to emulate other local authorities who have done so.

5. Support the River Wey Catchment Management Partnership to improve the water quality of the river and the management of its catchment – We have been working with this partnership for three years now; this has brought in external funding for initiatives such as Burpham Court Farm wetland, and trained Riversearch volunteers, funded design and feasibility work for the creation of fish passes at Burpham Court Farm and Millmead island and tackled invasive species.

Aside from these corporate commitments, the Parks Service implements its own initiatives where opportunities arise to support biodiversity, for example in the Green Flag judging process and management plans we have to submit, which include minimising herbicide use, and creating habitat and features that benefit biodiversity. Instances of this are the meadow boundaries to Sutherland Memorial Park, new wildflower plantings adjacent wildwood, the veteranisation

of trees using techniques that support the creation of habitat for invertebrates and bats, a new bee-friendly bulb meadow sponsored by the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice at Stoke Park, and the meadow at Onslow Arboretum and new play area. The conservation of biodiversity is ingrained in the Service's thinking along with many other issues such as enabling recreation. We are seeking to add to our Green Flags by entering Chilworth Gunpowder Mills in 2017 which we hope will recognise the work we have done for the site, its heritage, people and biodiversity.

Conserving and enhancing biodiversity is a long game that can take very many years to achieve, but I am confident our services are willingly and keenly working towards this goal to achieve a net gain, and as set down by the Biodiversity Duty in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. This however relies on partnerships with others which is where our Countryside Vision is key.

It's a complex issue, but I hope this highlights Guildford Borough Council's commitment to safeguard the environment along with all the other pressures we face as we recognise it is essential to both the health and well-being of people and the success of the economy."

GEF is supportive of this approach by GBC, although we have not yet been able to see the "Countryside Vision" document that is expected to be adopted by the GBC Executive in March.

In the meanwhile, as regards the partnership with Butterfly Conservation (that is mentioned in Paul Spooner's e-mail), we would be delighted to learn from any of our members if they are interested in joining me in volunteering for the Stepping Stone Project this summer or supporting this project in any other way.

We will keep members advised of progress with GBC's "Countryside Vision" and look forward to giving further details of this in our June newsletter.

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2017/8 are due on 11th April, 2017. The subscription rate is being maintained again at last year's rate of £10pa (£15pa for a household at one address). For all those who have completed standing order mandates and gift aid declarations, there is nothing more that you need do to renew your membership and we thank you very much indeed for completing both returns in the past.

Most other members will receive

a reminder by e-mail to pay their subscription and/or to complete a gift aid mandate. If we do not have an e-mail address for you, there will be a reminder form with your posted newsletter and we would be most grateful if these could be returned to me by 31st March, 2017.

We encourage members to pay by standing order as it reduces our administration hugely, but if this is not your preference, then

please send me a cheque and the gift aid certificate and I will confirm receipt.

If you know of anyone in the Guildford area who would like to become a member of GEF for £10pa, then please encourage them to apply for membership. This is the very best way in which you could help GEF to grow in the future. We hope you are getting very good value for your membership of GEF.

Adrian Thompson, Hon Treasurer

We congratulate Kathy on her MBE, awarded for services to the Community Energy Sector. Afsheen Rashid, Chair of Community Energy England, said to her, "You have been critical to the success and growth of CEE and the sector and it's great to see that your hard work has been recognised."

Community Energy England

Kathy Smyth MBE



THE CONNECTION BETWEEN energy generation and energy consumption has become detached. Many people take for granted the heat and light available to them at the press of a button and we all know that a consequence is that a great deal of energy is wasted. One way to reconnect people with energy is through community ownership of the generating asset which could be a solar panel array on a school or one or more wind turbines.

Grants and donations don't go far when it comes to raising money to pay for these installations because they take a lot of up-front capital. Social enterprises are businesses trading for social and environmental purposes – they aren't there just to make profits for their members – and profits are reinvested in the community. The introduction of the Feed in Tariff (FIT) in 2010 for renewable electricity transformed the landscape for small-scale renewables and enabled groups of individuals to form themselves into social enterprises, to develop projects and raise the capital required for renewable projects through share offers in which individuals can invest.

Community Energy England (CEE) is the representative body for community energy organisations working in the field of both renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. It has around 200 members. The majority of these are social enterprises operating in the sustainable energy sector, but it also has some local authority and commercial members. It was only formed in 2014 but it has quickly established itself with Government, local authorities and the third sector as the representative national body for community energy organisations. It is a tiny organisation working on a limited budget with a dedicated and very hard working CEO, Emma Bridge.

The idea of a membership organisation for community energy groups had been discussed for a few years. We first saw the need for a representative body during the infamous (in CE circles) 'Fast Track' review of the FIT in 2011 when government announced a drop in the feed in tariff on 6 weeks' notice. This came just as many of the first round of solar projects based on the FIT were ready to launch. This had a major impact on CE groups, which are mainly made up of volunteers, by creating uncertainty and putting many groups under huge stress. Locally, Wey Valley Solar Schools Energy Co-operative was directly affected by the Fast Track review, but happily it has survived and prospered (see www.weyvalleysolar.co.uk).

In 2014 a group of CE grassroots members agreed that

it was essential that a representative organisation was formed to provide a single point of contact, particularly for Government. There was also a need to provide clarity for new entrants into a complex area by linking, signposting and filling gaps in knowledge in an effort to avoid the age-old problem of 'reinventing the wheel'.

I joined the initial CEE steering group before being elected to the Volunteer Board in September 2014, when I was asked to take responsibility for the policy brief. This was clearly a major task given that CEE was a completely new organisation. Most governments are addicted to consultations and the

Coalition was no exception. In the second half of 2014 alone there were eight consultations with a direct bearing on community energy. One other very early priority in late 2014 was to write a short manifesto for the May 2015 General Election.

With hindsight, I can see that those were the good times.

Since May 2015 there has been a myriad of policy and regulatory changes affecting renewable energy which have impacted adversely on the CE sector. I am firmly of the view that community energy can only prosper if there is a supportive policy regime for renewable energy on a commercial scale. This Government's hostility to renewables has had particularly serious repercussions on the small and fragile community energy sector, which is now contracting with job losses amongst the relatively few paid staff which the sector is able to support.

However, community energy enthusiasts are a committed bunch. A friend who helps groups start projects in the West Midlands met a new group last week; after two hours discussing local opportunities for community energy one member turned to him and said, "So, Jon, are you saying that we could work on this for two years and end up with nothing to show or, if it goes really well, with a few small systems on some local schools which are financially pretty marginal?" Jon nodded. This chap turned to the assembled group. "So, are you up for it?" "YES" they all chorused in unison. And that is why, for all the frustrations, I love what I do for my fellow community energy enthusiasts.

You can find out more about community energy though the Community Energy Hub at <http://hub.communityenergyengland.org>.

[Kathy and Mike Smyth are long-term members of GEF]



THE BEST GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE COMPETITION

by Mo Usher, of Guildford Environmental Forum

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM is proud to be associated with the annual Guildford in Bloom Competition, in that it is the judge of the Best Wildlife Garden. The winner of this category in last year's competition was an elderly couple with a small backyard in the centre of Guildford. They had turned a small patch of Guildford into a haven not only for wildlife, but for themselves.

Gardening for wildlife is easier than one would think and it is vitally important for our environment. With modern gardening methods, once common birds are now in danger of extinction, with numbers falling at an alarming rate. The once ubiquitous sparrow, for instance, can now be a rare sight. However, the garden can be a safe haven for many species of bird and insect, which creates endless hours of enjoyment. Encouraging children to get involved in the creation of a wildlife garden leads to an understanding of the need for conservation and creates a respect for nature and the environment that may last for the rest of their lives. In addition, it puts the children in touch with the passage of the seasons and removes fear of creepy crawlies.

Wildlife habitats can be very easily created in a garden. All you need is to give up the concept of weed-free grass areas and accept that pests such as slugs and snails are part of the food chain, providing sustenance for birds such as thrushes. Herbicides and pesticides remove the "good" as well as the "bad" from the land. For instance, ladybirds keep the greenfly down. Pesticides such as slug poison can be harmful not only to birds, but even humans. If you must, use only animal-friendly varieties.

The key to creating a garden for wildlife is keeping it simple and appropriate to your time availability, especially with regards to maintenance, such as ensuring seeds are replenished on the bird table or feeders, watering, planting, etc. Here are some ideas:

Feeder/bird table

Even in urban areas, a feeder is the simplest way to attract birds such as blackbirds, blue-tits, great tits, greenfinches, goldfinches, sparrows, dunnocks, wrens and robins into the garden. Seeds and fat balls encourage a wide range. You can feed birds all year, but they particularly need food in a harsh winter. Take care with nuts if you have a nut allergy.

Bird bath

The bird bath could be either an attractive ornament or a plastic bin lid turned upside down and propped on bricks with plants surrounding it to pretty it up. Water is essential for birds, especially in hot weather, and it's great fun watching their bath-time antics.

Nestbox

A nestbox can be placed high up on a wall or ideally on a tree, away from full sun and predators, to attract tits or other birds (dependent on the size of hole) to rear their young. In spring the garden could be filled with the sounds emanating from the nestbox. If you have a fruit tree you can eat the fruit in the autumn, and leave a few for the birds.

Flower bed

Through the spring, summer and autumn, flowers from shrubs and plants will of course attract countless insects, including pollinators such as bees, and will provide food for other creatures. Herbs and scented plants could be included to make a sensory garden. Buddleia will scent the garden and attracts many varieties of butterflies, and you can enjoy the smell of a lavender bush which attracts many different species of bee. In autumn shrubs, such as pyracantha or cotoneaster, not only look attractive, but their berries give the birds a good feed before the winter sets in.

Grass area

Many ground-feeding birds such as the thrush love a grassy area, while blackbirds stamp on it to get their

worms. In order to create the grass area as a feeding area for birds, it's important not to cover it with weed-killer. Worms, whose major job is to aerate the lawn and flower beds, aren't too keen on herbicides. Bulbs such as daffodils, crocuses, snowdrops and bluebells can be planted in the grass in winter to create a wonderful spring display; however, this must be in an area where the bulbs can be left to naturalise before mowing, and not in an area that is walked on.

Hedge

Unlike a fence, a regularly cut hedge can provide a nesting site for such birds as wrens, robins, blackbirds and sparrows. However, it's important not to trim the hedge until after the nesting period is over. If your hedge is thick enough, it could even make an excellent home for hedgehogs, who love snails and slugs.

Water butt

To save water you can collect rainwater in a butt to water the plants. You'd be surprised how much water can be collected just by putting a gutter and down-pipe into a water butt from a shed roof. This encourages conservation.

Water garden

A sunken half water-barrel or small pond will attract frogs (who eat slugs), newts and dragonflies into the area. Remember though that pond safety is imperative, and if young children are around this area should be kept secure and only entered with adult supervision.

Wild patch

Some grass could be allowed to grow full height to encourage butterflies. You could create a wild patch by sowing a packet of wild flowers in early spring, and get your family to watch what comes up in late spring and summer and observe the seed pods as they mature in autumn. This will help the children be aware of the passage and purpose of the seasons.

Log pile

This is a bit like a mini-beast park and can be created quite easily by making a square with pieces of wood and filling the space with logs. In time the logs will rot and become a home for all sorts of creatures.



Composter

This is an easy way to make compost from plant debris. Plants love home-made compost because it's so nourishing for them and it provides lots of worms for young families of birds. It's the ultimate in recycling. A spring mulch of well-rotted compost or bark chippings on the flower beds preserves the moisture in the soil, so there's less need to water – and it stops the weeds from growing! It also provides a summer home for insects. In autumn you can save yourself a lot of effort, by leaving the leaves on the flower bed. This provides a winter shelter for insects and the worms will take the leaves into the soil as they rot.



Wormery

This is an excellent way of disposing of food waste (not meat or orange peel). The worms convert this to liquid plant food and rich organic compost for the flower bed or flowerpots. The wormery should be kept in a sheltered spot, out of full sun in summer, and in a frost-free location in winter. The liquid can also be used to feed indoor plants.

To get going!

All you need to get going is:

- A feeder/bird table for seeds placed by a wall, window or in a tree
- Water in a large bowl or dustbin lid propped up on bricks
- Flowerpots or bed for pollinating flowers of the season to attract insects and creepy crawlies

Gardening for wildlife makes sense and has many benefits. It creates a safe haven for you and your pets from chemicals. For families particularly it develops practical skills, encourages caring for things, encourages responsibility, encourages observation, identification and an understanding of the need for conservation, encourages recycling, creates protection of the environment and, most importantly, it gives endless fun for young and old alike to watch what has arrived in your garden. You could even take part in the national Butterfly and Bird counts.

Entries for this year's Guildford in Bloom, including Best Garden for Wildlife, opened in March and will close on 18th June. For further information contact Guildford in Bloom at parcs@guildford.gov.uk

The category of Best Garden for Wildlife is open to anyone who has a roof garden, patio, garden, an overgrown back yard, or a communal space or garden. All you need to show is that you have been gardening for wildlife!

WOKING'S PEREGRINES – THE LATEST

John Bannister

WHILE THE TWO juveniles from last year have moved away to new territories we are pleased to report that the adult peregrines have remained at their base on Export House.

We have no information on where the youngsters have gone or if they are alright. The nest box has been "cleaned" and prey remains removed and several improvements added to make the experience of the website www.wokingperegrines.com even more rewarding. That of course assumes that these wild animals will continue to use the nestbox, of which there is never any guarantee. They are free to choose and Woking Borough Council who kindly funded the improvements is taking a bit of a gamble, for which we are very grateful.

The improvements include modifications to the existing nestbox camera to cut out noise and eliminate reflection, which could have unsettled the birds. Even more exciting is the addition of two new cameras outside the box: one pointing south along the concrete ledge running the length of the building, and the



Ringling time for one of the chicks last year



other north-east focused on the north end of the building. These are both places used by the adults and the youngsters. Jason Fathers from Wildlife Windows Ltd and his assistant Alan completed the work on 20th January working from the window-cleaning cradle and from inside the building. So the viewing season will be helpfully extended if all goes well this year.

So far the signs are good. The tiercel (male peregrine) was observed entering the box in late January and made a shallow depression in the pea gravel in preparation for eggs – a gentlemanly thing to do.

Richard Denyer, Woking's Licensed Bird Ringer, has completed an analysis of the feathers, skulls and feet that he found at the site, and positively identified 50 different bird species brought to the site by the peregrines, showing the usual eclectic list of birds ranging from Goldcrest to Mallard. Waders are a favourite, especially Lapwing, Golden Plover and even an Avocet. Thrush species are popular as are small ducks, gulls and a cuckoo. However, their favourite food is feral Pigeons, accounting for roughly 80% of their prey, thereby helping significantly to deter pigeons from the town centre.

The Surrey Bird Club will again be engaging with visitors at their stall in Jubilee Square from the end of May through June, with notepads and telescopes.

RECENT MEETINGS

Professor Chris Rapley's talk on "CLIMATE CHANGE" to the Geographical Association of Guildford in November contained this graphic portrayal of the speed of climate change – <https://www.climate-lab-book.ac.uk/spirals/>.

He looked at dramatic, last-minute options to cut emissions to stay within our carbon budget and the ways our minds mislead us. His full presentation is on our website www.gefweb.org.uk.

Pooran Desai OBE from BioRegional spoke to a very full meeting on "ONE PLANET LIVING" beginning with lessons learned from BedZED, the 10 guiding principles and the latest list of global projects including One Brighton. See the GEF website www.gefweb.org.uk for his presentation.

Plastic
The number of plastic bags found on UK beaches has almost halved since the introduction of the 5p tax. Campaigners now want a deposit scheme for single-use plastic bottles (giving customers a refund on return). British households get through 35 million plastic bottles every day, failing to recycle nearly half of them. In Germany which has adopted the deposit scheme, 98.5% of single-use plastic bottles are being returned.
(Source: i weekend, 26 Nov '16)

FACTS & FIGURES

Wild bees
Despite compelling evidence that neonicotinoids have damaged wild bee populations, the National Farmers Union has again asked Defra to temporarily lift the EU-wide ban on their use on insect-pollinated crops.
(Source: buglife.org.uk, 14 Feb '17)

Chalk streams
There are only about 200 chalk streams in the world, of which 150 are in the UK.
(Source: BBC Wildlife, May '16)

The bird bath
A female sparrowhawk regularly bathes in Adrian Thomas's garden pond. On finding the water frozen in February, the bird chose instead to take a shower under the solar fountain.
(Source: rspb.org.uk, 10 Feb '17)

By Forum member Michael Tanner

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that Surrey has some of the best countryside in England to offer the walker: 422 sq.kms. of AONB – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Certainly, if the brochure of the Guildford U3A is anything to go by, many of Guildford's senior citizens would agree with my statement, for that organization alone offers seven varieties of walking groups to its members, from 'Short' to 'All day'. The countryside around Guildford is

HOW TO

ideal for their purposes: varied and often breathtakingly beautiful, with an abundance of good footpaths, and not a few pubs situated conveniently close to those wanting to rest their weary limbs.

Of course, people walk with different intentions and expectations. Some prefer to walk in the company of others, some with just one other and, not a few, totally unaccompanied. Many are interested in the natural or social history of the areas they pass through; most recognise the health-giving aspects of the activity. It is generally accepted that walking benefits the brain and the body and many have found that, while walking alone, the brain seems to switch into a creative mode.

William Hazlitt, Wordsworth and Coleridge would all have agreed with that; In fact, Hazlitt states quite decidedly that he much prefers to walk alone – that, incidentally, was in the days when it was not uncommon for a walker to cover 20 miles or so between an early start and evening stop. I am referring to non-competitive walking! (Only yesterday, I noticed those

GET LOST IN THE

stalwarts engaged in the annual Pilgrim's Challenge event of two consecutive days of 33 miles on each, along the North Downs Way between Merstham and Farnham. Of course, the pace of most of the participants could hardly be called 'walking'. So, I centre on The Surrey Hills and getting lost in them

and should make clear where I am 'coming from'. I do not consider myself an anarchist. I have always found maps fascinating – in the way that birds may be fascinated by a predatory dancing weasel. I even like maps and sometimes indulge (usually hopelessly) in trying to sketch out a route I have just covered. I am a huge admirer of the Ordnance Survey institution in this country, etc, BUT I have never felt quite in charge, even with a state-of-the-art compass to use in conjunction with a map. To parody one of Robert Frost's lines ('Something there is that does not love a wall') I would suggest, 'Something there is that does not love a map'. (Hope I had that right, Robert.)

To explain what that 'Something' is would take at least a book, even if it were possible: one could stray into



the realms of anthropology, psychology, philosophy, magnetism, possibly the paranormal, for a start.

So, here you are with a Saturday Walkers Club map of a local walking area in your hand, one of the **Crooksbury Common area (1)**, let's say. You have protected it against the weather and clipped it to a board and already arrived at your destination (possibly by Sat Nav). It is a greyish day in mid May, in fact, you already detect something falling, not quite drizzle. Last time you were in the area, you arrived at a different car park and it was December. Now the footpaths are like narrowing arteries; bracken, brambles, nettles encroach; the trees are greening fast; features like a pylon or a building are no longer visible and some paths that were familiar have disappeared.

But you have this incredibly detailed map, even if no compass. The sun is somewhere up there; moss seems not to prefer any particular side of a tree; sounds of traffic no longer indicate a main road – they have been absorbed by intervening vegetation. Your reading spectacles are misted; there are drops of water on the transparent covering of your map. Your companion,



possibly wife, is relying on your infallible map-reading abilities – did you not, in your younger days, navigate the Mount Kenya, and Aberdare Mountains on the equator? But these are the Surrey Hills, Mate! You have several hours of daylight remaining; what could you be worried about? You begin to get my drift?

If you live in Guildford, you can start very close to home, after all, the Surrey Hills start on the High Street. Don't be deceived by all the concrete, tarmac and bricks that cover the Guildford part of them. All you have to do is walk up **Warwick's Bench Road (2)**, follow a little turn eastwards towards Pewley Down, then southwards towards the Pilgrim's Way – of course, take a short cut or two, up or down one of the many intervening footpaths that offer their entrances

SURREY

and you could be back by Debenhams in under an hour – COULD BE!

There you have the first rule of successfully getting lost: 'Take a short cut'.

After that useful preliminary experience, you may now extend your walk into the **Chantry Woods (3)**. Do not take the obvious first path you come to, you would be under-rating your abilities: continue due south from the car park (Pilgrim's Way) and follow the footpath along the southern edge of the woods, the



one that gives a view towards Chilworth. You can't go that far wrong. What does an extra mile or two matter? For goodness sake, the woods are only about 400 metres wide, aren't they – give or take the odd deviation to avoid a slippery slope, a fallen tree or a pack of dogs.

So the second rule of getting lost in the S.H. is 'you can't be that far wrong' in such proximity to civilisation.

You are now ready for the third stage, again not far from Guildford: **Puttenham Common (4)**. How could anything called 'Common' enable you to get lost? Well, you may soon find out, especially if you



remember the first two rules. No, sorry, I mislead you; if you get lost here, you will probably never understand why. I never have. All I can say is try at this stage not to be daunted – after all, remember you are becoming more successful at getting lost. I have my own theories about Puttenham Common: there is something in the soil (a mineral?) which deceives the natural navigating abilities of the human being or, maybe, the whole place was set out by some Neolithic landscape artist who had a Masters in deceiving the human eye (cf. e.g. Capability Brown).

By now, you should be gaining confidence in your ability to get lost and may safely proceed to level 4 via the **Devil's Punch Bowl (5)** experience. One consolation of this area is the National Trust Café (which, do please note, has a closing time). This is a little further from Guildford than the first three, about 10 miles away. If you want to avoid the Hindhead Tunnel, just set your Sat Nav to Boundless Car Park and abandon your car there. I do not possess Sat Nav, as you may already have guessed, although I believe that the technically-minded can enable their next of kin to trace their movements anywhere in the world. Such devices are anathema to the dedicated seeker of Lostness (probably!).

The Devil's Punch Bowl is somewhere you simply cannot go wrong: there are dozens of good direction signs; many belvedere points giving excellent views; plenty of other folk on foot. Remember the Key Phrase here and never forget it: 'You simply cannot go wrong'. These five words are the *sine qua non* of the genuine



seeker after Lostness. Here, especially if you are looking forward to a nice cuppa in the National Trust café, your deeper-felt need will be satisfied. Just that little bit of anxiety to get to a certain place time is all you need to take the footpath which so insidiously entices you in the opposite direction to what you think you are seeking, that you gradually and eventually understand, with supreme incomprehension, that it is your parked car you can just perceive through the

HILLS

intervening twigs and rising mist, not the café. (Sorry, that sentence turned into a footpath.) The café remains just an illusory oasis.

If you should seek even higher levels of getting lost, you might try the supposed perimeter of Hankley Common where numbered pylons proffer their illusory help; walking to and through Winterfold Forest which, seamlessly in your case, merges into Hurtwood Forest (start at the inn in Peaslake); even the forest to the south of the White Horse pub in Hascombe can supply your fundamental yearning to get lost.

You see, in these days of almost universal Sat Nav it is a good thing, just now and then, to become one of the Babes in the Wood or Hansel and Gretel. There are worse and far more expensive addictions. Talking about 'Babes', I think I shall never forget that November afternoon when, carrying a toddler in a frame on my poor back, through the encroaching dusk and no longer having a clue where I was, I heard this little voice saying for the umpteenth time into my bent ear, 'Daddy, I want to be home in my nice warm bed!'

OK, so I'm an addict. Do excuse my ramblings. (By the way, should anyone be interested in one of my weekend guided tours . . .)

Wet wipes

Britain's beaches are becoming increasingly blighted by wet wipes. These should be thrown away with household rubbish because they don't degrade, and when flushed down the toilet the sewerage systems can't cope
(Source: BBC Wildlife, Oct '15)

Going to waste

In recent years household food waste in the UK has been cut by 1m tonnes per annum. However, today Britons throw away a mighty 7m tonnes, over half of which could have been eaten.

EACH DAY we dispose of:

- 5.8 million potatoes
- 24 million slices of bread
- 1.4 million bananas
- 1.5 million tomatoes
- 1.5 million sausages
- 1.9 million slices of ham
- 1.1 million eggs

An area almost the size of Wales would be needed to produce all the food and drink currently wasted.
(Source: i, 11 Jan '17, based on figures by Waste & Resources Action Programme)

FACTS & FIGURES

Domestic gardens – 1

Each year between 1998 and 2008, London lost an average area of domestic garden land (consisting of lawn, tree canopy or other vegetation) equal to two-and-a-half times that of Hyde Park.

Domestic gardens – 2

Domestic gardens are the largest single category of urban land use, typically making up about a quarter of a city's area. Sheffield University's survey of biodiversity in the city estimated that gardens were home to 360,000 trees, 50,750 compost heaps and 25,200 ponds – far more than in other forms of suburban and urban green spaces such as parks and recreational areas.
(Source: British Wildlife, Feb '16)

Impact of LED lighting – 1

Research by the University of Exeter suggests that the growing use of LED lighting will have impacts on the abundance of predatory invertebrates, potentially leading to knock-on effects for other species in grassland food-webs. Predatory spiders and beetles were drawn to grassland patches lit by LED lighting at night, but the number of species affected was markedly reduced when the lights were either dimmed or switched off between midnight and 4am.

Efforts will be made to assist local authorities in managing their LED lighting, used to save money and cut CO2 emissions, in a way that reduces its environmental impacts.
(Source: www.exeter.ac.uk, 6 Feb '17)

Impact of LED lighting – 2

Attaching LED lights to fishing nets off Peru's northern coast reduced the bycatch of turtles by 64%, with no reduction in the target catch of guitarfish.
(Source: BBC Wildlife, May '16)

Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future.

Join us in our work for the town and have this newsletter posted to your door four times a year. Forum membership costs only £10 per year or £15 for a couple, and new members are warmly welcomed.

Please contact Adrian Thompson on 01483 222687 or e-mail adrian@lampcottage.net



CALENDAR



All the Forum's Group meetings are open to the public

Wednesday 26 April

"Managing Our Carbon Emissions" – a talk by Dr Bill Kyte OBE.

Bill lives in Guildford and is a chemical engineer and a founding member and Honorary President of the UK Emissions Trading Group (ETG) Ltd. He was Chief Advisor, International Climate Policy, at the European Electrical Association and also Director of the International Electricity Partnership representing the EU, US, Japan, S America, Canada and Australia on Climate Issues. He has played a critical role working on carbon reduction strategies, local and global, and attended most of the COP meetings that support the regular IPCC Reports on the state of global Climate Change.

Bill's talk will cover the tools being developed to achieve the Paris target of 2 degrees Celsius and keep us within the planet's safe carbon budget.

1900. Committee Room1, GBC Millmead Offices.

Wednesday 3 May

GEF Annual General Meeting, followed by the talk **"Butterfly Monitoring in Guildford, Surveying for Rare Species, and the Small Blue Project"**.

by Bill Downey who is Transect Co-ordinator, Butterfly Conservation Surrey and SW London.

Bill has a wealth of experience in the recording of Surrey's butterflies.

1900. Committee Room 6 (Hurtmore), GBC Millmead Offices.

Saturday 3 June

Scything Course.

For the seventh year in a row the Rosamund Community Garden is running a summer scything course for beginners and improvers. Mark Allery, a scythe champion, bodger and woodsman will give the course and supply you with all the gear you need as well as having items to sell.

The course will cover the history, selecting a scythe and blades, the set-up, the mowing technique, blade sharpening and peening.

You need to bring a packed lunch and appropriate clothing. Refreshments are provided.

The cost is £35 for the day. It will run from 1000 to 1600 at the Community Garden.

Please register with John Bannister – 01483 570468 or 07443 914347.

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

Chair / Biodiversity – Raymond Smith

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Waste and Recycling – Position vacant

(Contact Raymond Smith: see Chair's details above)

Sustainable Building – Position vacant

(Contact Raymond Smith: see Chair's details above)

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Membership – Position vacant

(Adrian Thompson pro tem: see Treasurer's details above)

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Guildford Environmental Forum's newsletter is published in March, June, September and December.

Please send contributions for the next issue to Clare Windsor by Monday 15 May.

The views expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of its contributors and Guildford Environmental Forum.