



Secret Chiddingfold – a visit only possible due to our volunteer's contacts

Volunteering and Collaboration in the Surrey Hills

Volunteering is very much part of the British culture. According to data from a Government survey, a staggering 62% (approximately 28 million people in England) took part in either formal or informal volunteering at least once during a 12 month period across 2019/20 with 41% of respondents doing so at least once a month.

Needless to say, a large proportion of these activities were related to health, social care and other support activities. However, the data also shows that those living in rural areas showed higher participation in volunteering than those in urban areas.

It is also recognised that volunteering helps counteract the effects of stress, anger, and anxiety. The social contact aspect of helping and working with others can have a profound impact on psychological wellbeing.

The Surrey Hills Society was set up with the specific aim of being run by volunteers and we have been incredibly fortunate in sustaining this organisational model. With the exception of a Society Coordinator (who has the specific role of keeping us all on the straight and narrow) and a grant-funded Project & Volunteer Coordinator all our



Some of our many volunteers

activities are undertaken by volunteers – to whom we are exceedingly grateful.

The way that the Society has developed has not gone un-noticed. When we were nominated for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2019, two of the highlighted reasons for our success were: (1) our focus on volunteering and (2) working collaboratively with other organisations rather than trying to do everything ourselves.

Volunteering is clearly 'hard wired' into our lives and it may be that the articles in this newsletter will encourage you to get involved with the Society and its work. If so, please do let us know. We can only achieve those tasks for which we have manpower, so the more volunteers we have access to, the greater can be our contribution to the larger, more complex projects that need specific skills and regular participation. In addition, we need a regular stream of new volunteers

to keep the Society going and help it evolve – for example, coming up with ideas for (and helping with) events, assisting at promotional shows, supporting 'back office' activities and so on.

Many of our volunteers are shy folk who work away unobtrusively in the background – like many of the creatures in our countryside. Whilst most may not be frequently seen by our members or the outside world, they and our wildlife are both essential components of what makes our Surrey Hills a special place. It is therefore no coincidence that we have combined Volunteering and Collaboration with Nature Enhancement in this edition.

We hope you enjoy reading our newsletter and will want to learn more. We are always happy to talk with our members and the wider readership who are interested in our work to support, protect and enhance this wonderful Surrey countryside.



Events Team Workshop

Chairman's Views

Throughout this newsletter you will read of the amazing work done by our volunteers. Indeed, the newsletter itself is testament to the contributions of so many people, with its editor – our Vice-President Ken Bare – deserving particular mention. This will be Ken's last edition as editor and I would like to thank him for the enormous contribution that he has made. We will miss Ken as editor, as under his guidance, the Society newsletter has gone from strength to strength, although he will continue to contribute in many other ways.

As I write this on a beautiful Spring morning, I am really looking forward to our Summer programme, which is packed with events. A big thank you to Sall Baring and her events

committee for all the hard work they do to ensure that there is something for everyone.

We are always keen to emphasise that the Society is not just a walking group, although we of course love being out in the Surrey Hills. We like to do anything that's enjoyable in and around the Surrey Hills. We seek to offer experiences where we can use the Society's extensive network to make them special and a little bit different. Sometimes we go behind the scenes at public buildings – earlier this year we had a fascinating trip to the National Trust's Polesden Lacey and heard about the work of their conservators. We have had many guided tours of our beautiful villages led by knowledgeable local experts. Chairman's Day at Buckland last year was a notable example. We often visit private gardens and houses of particular



interest – Vann at Hambledon was just one of many that we enjoyed during the pandemic.

If any of our readers know of places that Society members might like to visit or activities that they might enjoy please do contact me on info@surreyhillssociety.org. All ideas are welcome, and we know the Surrey Hills provides such a fabulous backdrop for so much. We never stop discovering new things!

Gordon Jackson

Surrey Hills Volunteers

Volunteers make an invaluable contribution to their local communities and Surrey Hills Society volunteers are certainly no exception. Within our Society we have an incredible mix of skills from the artistic and creative through to the practical and administrative. The two things our volunteers have in common is a passion for the Surrey Hills and a wish to give something back.

This is a snapshot of just a few of our volunteers. Our Chairman Gordon Jackson's passion for the Surrey Hills, and love of the arts and heritage led to his involvement. He was a corporate lawyer and former Mayor of Guildford bringing us a wealth of knowledge and contacts.



Peter Salisbury, our Administrator since 2013, enjoys helping organisations from the inside. He is a trustee of Reigate District Scouts and Reigate Sea Cadets as well as a volunteer for the National Trust and the Bluebell Railway. Two other trustees are Stella and Martin Cantor. A keen girl guide,



Stella is still active as a commissioner and leader; it was the girl-guiding promise to be helpful that led her to become involved. Her experience as an IT teacher was invaluable on becoming Membership Secretary whilst Martin's wide experience as a chartered company secretary made him the ideal Finance Director. Martin is also an active member of the Rotary.

Another husband-and-wife team are Jean and Peter Arnold. Peter was an industrial chemist, charity worker and – like Peter



Salisbury – a scout leader. As well as map reading and leading walks Peter, along with Jean a chartered accountant, help man the gazebos at promotional shows. They also volunteer for the National Trust.

Another volunteer with map reading and orienteering skills is Steve Peacock. Steve returned to England from Australia and joined Godalming Operatic Society where he met our President Chris Howard who encouraged him to join the SHS. Treasurer of Southern Navigators, Steve's skills were invaluable, assisting Peter Arnold with his map reading courses, and leading the mapping and walk creation for the Tillingbourne Tales Project.

Charlotte Choi, a scientific illustrator by training, is also a great supporter of our Society. She created our beautiful Surrey Hills Hare, loves meeting members and exploring our area, and uses her artistic talents to help our annual wreathmaking.

And finally, founder member Chris Howard's background in tourism and event management was key to the creation and development of our Society. Chris is the volunteer par excellence using her contacts, experience, knowledge of good governance and understanding of rural challenges, to support several other charities including Surrey Wildlife Trust.

And of course, we are always looking for volunteers with the skills to help us grow and take on new challenges.

Susie Turner

Hedgerow Planting

Some will remember February for storm Eunice, but for over 200 Society volunteers February and March saw happy days out planting native hedgerow in the Surrey Hills. Healthy hedgerows host a thriving wildlife habitat providing homes, food and travel corridors. They also shelter crops and livestock, reduce soil erosion, flood risk and even pollution.

Post war farming practices saw fewer hedges planted and the neglect of existing ones, so the Surrey Hills Society worked in partnership with local farmers and landowners to secure funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' (FiPL) scheme for an ambitious project to plant new and connect existing hedgerows.

The scale of the effort was impressive. Locations across the Surrey Hills from Clandon Wood to Lydling Farm in Shackleford and Manor Farm in Dorking now boast hedgerows planted by Surrey Hills Society volunteers. At the time of writing, over 200 people had planted over 1.5km of hedging. That's a remarkable 8,250 seedlings! In early February, the Rt. Hon Lord Benyon, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Defra, came to see for himself some of the FiPL projects in action in the AONB.

The hedgerow planting initiative attracted an incredible range of volunteers. Local communities were joined by volunteers from as far afield as Chessington and Luton, many of whom were new to horticulture and volunteering. Surrey Hills Champions, rambblers, corporate volunteer groups and a party of students, parents and staff from Guildford High School, all came together on different days to do their bit.



And what was it like to be at a planting day? Led by the Society chair Gordon Jackson, volunteer coordinator Christa Emmett and the landowner, each day started with a safety briefing, planting demonstration and introduction to the site. Species planted included native blackthorn, hawthorn, field maple, hazel, crab apple, dogrose and guelder rose. Volunteers were delighted to be outdoors meeting people from different walks of life all sharing a passion for the Surrey Hills. They came in all weathers; even Storm Eunice couldn't stop the volunteers who braved the wind and rain the day after the storm.

Claire Cobbett, who organised the visit of work colleagues from engineering firm WSP to Clandon Wood, said "it was just a really good day" which was "well organised but informal". Everyone got on and the weather was good. As a water risk management specialist, Claire was particularly interested as hedgerow planting reduces flooding.



Tom Armstrong, having cycled 15 miles from Sutton, was interested to learn that in the clay-based soil of Manor Farm one did not dig a hole but "made a slit in the ground which was widened with a push and pull action on the spade" before the seedling was dropped in and the ground pushed closed.

Sharon Howitt, sustainability lead at Guildford High School, was looking for a local conservation project that would "connect parents and children with the natural world" and "create opportunities to appreciate wildlife". For them, highlights of the day included being outdoors with a group of people, particularly post Covid, and sharing lively conversation about local wildlife. It was especially encouraging in these challenging times to have a very positive and empowering climate change experience.

So what happens next? The newly planted saplings will establish in three years, be fully mature in five and be ready for hedgelaying in ten years' time. It is hoped that hedgerow surveys will monitor the health of plants and wildlife and that species like the skylarks spotted at Lydling Farm and the buzzards and kestrels at Manor Farm will make these hedgerows their home.



As well as hedgerow planting, the Society has coordinated other AONB conservation work. As part of the Surrey Hills Champions' Scheme, it led 120 volunteers on a corporate charity day for Guildford based, Allianz. As a result 1,000 native woodland trees were planted to form a new copse at Knowle Park, a new community parkland in Cranleigh.

Funded by a FiPL grant to the Society, a team from Surrey Choices is working one day a week at Newlands Corner, clearing scrub, restoring chalkland and opening up viewpoints. This benefits the landscape but also gives supported adults the skills they need to prepare for the workplace.

This is just a snapshot of what Surrey Hills volunteers had achieved at the time of going to print. By the time you read this another kilometre of hedgerow will have been planted. As climate change looms, the Society continues to seek collaborative opportunities to improve the AONB's biodiversity and resilience. Volunteers have already returned for further hedge planting days and expressed interest in future Surrey Hills conservation projects. Everyone is keen to do their bit.

Mun-Ling Logue



Making Space for Nature – Partnership in Action

In 2017 Surrey Wildlife Trust published its State of Surrey's Nature Report, which identified that there were 972 species in decline in Surrey and a further 626 now extinct in the county. A key contributor to this loss of biodiversity is the fragmentation and loss of habitat in the latter half of the 20th century.

Funded by the Defra Facilitation Fund, our farmers and landowners have worked together to develop an excellent Nature Recovery Strategy (2021-2031) published by the Surrey Hills AONB Board. This identifies seven key

habitats in the Surrey Hills that can be conserved on a landscape scale and a number of indicator species relevant to each habitat.

The selected habitats are heathland, woodland & scrub, chalk grassland, arable, pasture, hedgerow and water. There are thirty indicator species in total – some are extinct in Surrey but others are relatively prevalent. Each species is an indicator of a healthy habitat. You can download a copy of the strategy by going to www.surreyhills.org/nature-recovery-strategy/



With funding from the Surrey Hills Trust Fund, the Society has commissioned an 'Our Time' artist at HMP Send to draw all 30 indicator species. She takes part in an art programme at the prison delivered by Watts Gallery Trust and facilitated by the Michael Varah Memorial Fund (MVMF). Started in 2017, 'Our Time' is the first UK in-prison exhibition planned by the artists themselves: they curate the work they have created. 70% of the commission

goes directly to the artist, with 20% going to support victims of crime in Surrey and 10% to MVMF to support the programme in future. Beautifully drawn in acrylic and ink, the illustrations have attracted great acclaim and are designed for use in interpretative displays across the Surrey Hills. You will see them appearing on guideposts which highlight habitats where one might expect to see a particular species.

The National Trust has agreed that the whole collection will be exhibited at Leith Hill Place as part of the 150th Celebration of Ralph Vaughan Williams, who composed 'Lark Ascending'. The exhibition will run from Easter until October and form part of an interpretative display about 'Making Space for Nature'. How appropriate that one of the key indicator species is the Skylark!

Pasture – Skylark

The Skylark is known for the flight song of the male, which he delivers on hovering wings 50 to 100 metres above the ground.



Chalk Grassland – Bee Orchid

The fuzzy little bee orchid's flowers look like real bees on three pink petals. These are used to trick bees into pollinating the plant.

Water – Great Crested Newt

The amphibious great crested newt spends most of its life on land, so protecting terrestrial habitat is just as important as conserving water sources.



Arable – Grey Partridge

Cock grey partridges can be remarkably brave (or foolhardy) in defence of their young and have been recorded flying at stoats, weasels and even humans!



Heathland – Grayling Butterfly

The grayling is one of our largest brown butterflies. Heavily camouflaged, it is a master of disguise.



Hedgerow – Hazel Dormouse

Hazel dormice are the only British mammal with a furry tail. They hibernate in nests on the ground over winter.



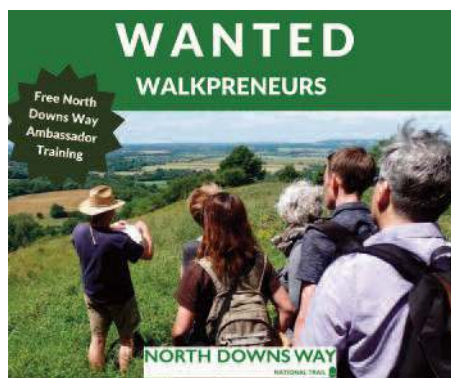
Woodland & Scrub – Marsh Tit

Marsh tits mostly consume spiders and insects during spring and summer and thistle seeds, nuts and berries during autumn and winter.



New North Downs Way Ambassadors trained

The Surrey Hills team are supporting the North Downs Way (NDW) National Trail, the Kent Downs AONB, Visit Kent and Visit Surrey in an exciting new EXPERIENCE project. This €23.3 million project is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.



The aim is to re-invent the way the local economy, the environment, communities and brands interact – focusing on sustainable, low-impact tourism activities that provide employment while protecting the Surrey Hills.

The Surrey Hills AONB has been working with the EXPERIENCE team to develop new experiences and itineraries that connect countryside businesses with public rights of way, improve infrastructure and accessibility into the countryside as well as highlighting the wonderful trails and nearby attractions that we have.

NDW Ambassadors are people who have been selected and trained as part of this project and are dedicated to promoting the enjoyment of the NDW National Trail. They lead walks, runs and hikes covering a wide range of subjects and provide different ways for people to enjoy the trail in a safe and interesting way.



The training consisted of 6 sessions starting in September 2021. The course covered multiple topics about the NDW including nature, history, art, food and drink, family fun as well as practical sessions on insurance, risk assessment and walking tour business development. The lessons were offered online and in person – including trips out onto the trail itself to test skills and knowledge before trainees were assessed and finally let loose in Kent and Surrey as fully fledged Ambassadors.

Chris Howard

Meet the Ambassadors:

Danielle Harris

I participated in the programme as I am a trail runner and spend a lot of time running in the Surrey Hills. I am passionate about the whole area including the NDW. I am a voluntary run leader for 'Surrey Trek and Run' in Shere and also for a local running club called 'Mole Valley Runners'. We frequently run along the NDW.



Last year a friend and I set up a small business (Run2Explore) for social paced guided runs that focus more on the adventure than the running. We want people to appreciate the beauty of the countryside as they run the trails.

I applied to the NDW Ambassador programme not really knowing what would be involved. The actual programme was so informative and if I wasn't already passionate enough about the NDW I definitely was after completing the course. It made me have an even greater appreciation of just how lucky we are to live where we do. I learnt so much.

Everyone that I met on the programme possessed a wealth of information and were some of the nicest, most interesting people, all with a love of the local countryside.

Later this year I am running the Centurion 100-mile event on the NDW (from Farnham to Ashford in Kent) and hope to highlight the beauty of the NDW on my social media when I do it.

Ildi Pelikan

I am a London Blue Badge Tourist Guide. I have always loved the outdoors and the countryside. As there were few tourists during lockdown, I decided to offer hikes around historic areas and mix guiding and hiking. Outdoors was safe and people avoided busy London. Then I came across an advert about NDW Ambassador training and applied. I really enjoyed the course and have met lovely people.



This course has enabled me to offer sustainable hiking tours along the Trail. My tours (historyhikers.co.uk) are a combination of hiking and visiting local villages & historic places. The groups are small so the experience is very personal. As a Blue Badge Guide I am licenced to guide at Dover Castle, in the grounds of Leeds Castle and in Canterbury. My favourite tours include the small churches in the villages of Kent and Surrey. Additionally, some of the history hikes I offer include wine-tasting, brewery or farm shop visits.

Riette Thomas

I have always been an adventurer at heart, so when I saw an advert on social media about the NDW Ambassador training programme I just had to sign up. The Surrey Hills is on my doorstep and by being an Ambassador for the NDW I can confidently take more people along the trail. I use Instagram (@riettet) to tell people more about my rambles and am loving the opportunity to share my hidden treasures of the area with more locals and visitors.



Collaboration – a key strength

One of our strengths has been our success with collaborative projects. In our early years, these tended to be initiatives where we raised funds for specific projects which were then undertaken by other parties. For example, the partial funding of the water trough on top of Leith Hill was done in association with the National Trust and the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain Trust. Similarly, the substantial donation and hands on volunteering by SHS members formed part of the Gatton Trust project connected with Capability Brown's tercentenary.

Over time, projects have increased in scale and complexity with one excellent example



Tillingbourne Tales Puppets

being the Tales of the Tillingbourne where we worked with a wide range of partners to explore and document the industrial history of this valley. We created an ongoing display in Shere Museum, supported Surrey Wildlife Trust in their river water quality survey work, worked with local schools and produced walk leaflets which are still very popular and obtainable from local outlets such as the Tourist Information Centre in Guildford.

Our girl-guiding badge, based on learning about the Surrey Hills AONB, gives us access to a younger demographic through extensive work with local Guides, Brownies and Rainbows groups. The current hedgerow planting work is also a great example of interacting with younger generations to encourage greater involvement in countryside activities.

During Covid, we still managed to add to our range of self-guided walks via a collaboration with the Southeast Communities Rail Partnership. This resulted in a set of four inter-station walks covering some of the wonderful countryside between Shalford and Betchworth.



Another walk-related collaboration, our association with Guildford Walkfest, has evolved into a very successful programme of walks throughout September where we work with many other walking groups in the area.

For the Society, collaborative projects are a major part of our plans. Neither the Society or the AONB own any land so, if we are to achieve our aims of enhancing the area, then collaboration is key. We have several more initiatives in various stages of development – with one common feature: they will all require volunteers to make them work. As noted on Page 1, volunteering is part of our culture so, hopefully, we can harness this to drive forward our various ideas.

Ken Bare

Surrey Place Ambition 2050

The Surrey Future Partnership has recently finished a consultation on their 'Surrey's 2050 Place Ambition' document. However, it seems many bodies and Surrey people have been unaware of it. Yet the document considers it should set the framework for District and Borough Council local plans, so it is important.

The Surrey Hills AONB Board expressed at its meeting on 2 March surprise and concern that the document does not recognise the importance of protecting and enhancing the Surrey Hills. Instead, it concentrates on promoting development growth even extending into the AONB itself. It could be used as a "developers' charter".

It does not accord with the Government's new levelling up ambition or the greater emphasis on promoting nature recovery. To encourage extensive growth in Surrey could undermine the Government's aim to direct development to the more deprived parts of the country. Market demand for development in Surrey does not need encouragement but managing in the overall interests of the nation and county.

The document's map proposes some towns

expanding into the Surrey Hills AONB contrary to Government and local planning policies. The Surrey Hills AONB is one of the County's greatest assets and so this planning strategy should be properly balanced. The ambition should be to protect and enhance the County's environment, AONB, nature and action against climate change.

Clive Smith

Surrey Hills AONB Planning Adviser

Following the discussion of this topic at the AONB Board meeting, the Chairman sent a formal letter to the Chair of the Surrey Future Partnership, copying in the affected Borough & District Councils. The following extracts give an indication of the Board's position on the document.

"The AONB Board ... expressed shock at the way an informal document was being used to seek to influence district councils in their local plans."

"The external world is changing fast and leaving long-running projects such as this looking significantly outdated."

"The AONB is monitored by Natural England who were interested to learn of your



proposals. The AONB, hardly mentioned in your document, should be featuring in it as the most attractive area of Surrey, having a substantial role in well-being and recreation for all of Surrey's residents."

The Board was particularly concerned that in a significant array of places ... the 'Strategic Opportunity Areas' impinged on the AONB, for example on the North Downs around Guildford ... It is simply unacceptable and very surprising to see in a document already in the public domain."

Although consultation on this draft has closed, the full document may be found at www.surreysays.co.uk/environment-and-infrastructure/placeambition/

Events Programme May – September 2022

We are still rebuilding our events programme with new activities being added to the list on a regular basis. **Please visit our website for more information and additional events.**



Booking is essential – even for free ones. Bookings generally open about 6 weeks before each event. Non email users can get more information by calling our phone number.

Sunday 1 May

Explore Forest Green  

Our regular first walk of the month. Walk around Forest Green village, through fields and along undiscovered footpaths to the south of Leith Hill.

Tuesday 10 May

Trees and Flora around Hascombe Village  

An easy 3 mile walk with SHS member Pamela Holt, a plant identification specialist, looking at the trees and shrubs around Hascombe.

Thursday 12 May

Pierrepont Farm – Chairman's Day  



A guided tour of the Farm by the Countryside Restoration Trust with beer and cheese tasting, lunch at the Old Dairy plus a talk by Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Weekend 21/22 May

Denbies Fair  

This event promises to be a real delight for all the senses. A family day out with many artists, craftsmen, food and drink stalls plus music and entertainment.

Tuesday 24 May

Holmwood Common Walk  
Following our February Zoom talk, we will walk around the common visiting some of the historical sites and enjoying the calm atmosphere of this large area with its wide varied wildlife.

Wednesday 8 June

Basingstoke Canal Boat Trip

Discover the Basingstoke Canal on Rosebud and enjoy your own picnic at the Basingstoke Canal Centre.

Saturday 11 June

Surrey Hills Artisans' at Ripley Farmers Market 

Discover the varied stalls and entertainment with Roosters Morris Dancers and Surrey Fringe Chorus at this thriving market event.

Sunday 12 June

Explore Denbies Hillside  



A free guided walk around the Denbies area to discover this section of the North Downs Way. Includes a visit to the new sculptural bench 'Radius' – part of the Surrey Hills Arts project.

Wednesday 15 June

Spurfold Garden, Peaslake




An exclusive return visit to this stunning mature garden with large herbaceous and shrub borders, pond, topiary, beautiful lawns and woodland paths. This is an evening visit with wine and nibbles.

Sunday 3 July

Explore Outwood  

A free guided walk in the Surrey Weald near Horley. Outwood is home to what was once the oldest working windmill in England.

Sunday 3 July

Gatton Park Country Fair   



A great day out for the whole family in these beautiful grounds. Enjoy animal displays, fairground rides and fun activities for children of all ages together with a dog show.

Wednesday 6 July

Visit to Horsley Towers and talk on Ada Lovelace

Join SHS President Chris Howard on this special day in the historic home of Lord Lovelace, once one of the largest landowners in England. Enjoy a lunch, tour and talk on the history of the family and Ada Lovelace, daughter of poet Lord Byron and mother of computing.

Sunday 7 August

Explore Godalming  



A free guided walk around the outskirts of Godalming taking in the River Wey, woodland and a lake. Followed by coffee at a local outdoor vendor.

Tuesday 16 August

Sayers Croft  

Visit this picturesque historic 56 acre site near Ewhurst. Learn about its role during World War II and the work done with children today. Lunch included.

Sunday 4 September

Explore Manor Farm  

A free guided walk through part of the Wotton Estate taking in the spectacular scenery on the slopes of the North Downs.



Dog friendly but kept on a short lead throughout the walk



Family Friendly



Signposting for events where SHS will be present



Easy/flat



Moderate



Challenging



1st Walk of the Month

To join us go to www.surreyhillssociety.org or phone 07530 949302