



# The Downlands Trust Newsletter

SPRING 2020



## From the Chairman

Welcome to the first 2020 issue of the Downlands Trust Newsletter in which we provide updates on the activities of the Trust, including the conservation work that we have helped to fund. Most notably, this includes the work of the Downlands Partnership across a wide area of Surrey stretching from Chipstead Downs in the west to Saltbox Hill near Biggin Hill in the east.

We are also pleased to have been able to provide assistance to local conservation groups and we will welcome grant applications in the future from these smaller organisations. Special thanks must go to Fidelity International whose enthusiastic sponsorship of the Trust has made such a difference to our achievements over the past year and we were delighted when we heard that this sponsorship has been extended until the end of 2020.

The last year has been a busy one for the Trust and three additional trustees, including myself, have joined the Trust. In October, I was delighted to be given the opportunity to succeed Irena as Chairman and I hope to build successfully upon her splendid work for us.

For the foreseeable future, our main objective will be to further enhance our profile in order to maintain and increase our income, so vital to the conservation work that we support. This will be achieved in several ways. Our website is currently being redesigned and we continue to increase the effectiveness of our use of social media. Also, we are now giving presentations about our work to other organisations and are extremely grateful to Fidelity for funding the necessary marketing equipment. We will, of course, continue to have a stall at summer fetes and fairs. In addition to providing updates on our activities, the newsletters will include articles on wildlife and the local countryside. I hope that you enjoy the content and layout and any feedback that you may wish to provide or suggestions for inclusion in future issues can be sent to us via email [info@downlandstrust.org.uk](mailto:info@downlandstrust.org.uk).

*Peter Wakeham*

## 2019 AGM held on 22 October at the Banstead Centre

Irena Postlova opened the meeting and welcomed over 20 attendees. She announced that she would be relinquishing her position on the Trust due to work pressure and that Peter Wakeham would be the new chairman.

Noreen thanked Irena for all her hard work over the last 3 years in leading the Trust to its current strong position. Noreen also thanked John Powdrell who coincidentally joined the Trust at the same time as Irena.

Members also voted in favour of a proposal to allow the Trust to send out AGM notices and newsletters by email. This is not only good for the environment but will also save the Trust the cost of printing and postage.

For those who do not wish or are unable to receive electronic communications, we will continue to send paper copies to you by post.



Noreen thanking Irena at the AGM

The Trust was presented by Fidelity International with a cheque for £1,280 at the Downlands Trust's AGM in October which will be used to support conservation work on chalk grassland.

The Trustees from left to right are:  
 Geof Haseler (Newsletter)  
 Pam Mascall (Grants)  
 Richard Marston (Website & Social Media)  
 Noreen Siba (Marketing)  
 Peter Wakeham (Chairman)  
 Roger Findlay (Treasurer)  
 Sarah Milan (Membership)  
 Irena Postlova (outgoing Chairman)



## Dates for your diary - fairs and talks

- May 6 Talk by Dr Stuart Downward on "Landscapes of Surrey" at Banstead Community Hall. 7.30pm. This lecture is Banstead Area U3A's contribution to the Banstead Arts Festival which takes place that week and will feature the chalk downlands and the work of the Downlands Trust. **Postponed**
- June 6 Green Spaces Open Day, Croydon Clocktower, 11.00-4.00
- July 4 Old Coulsdon Village Fair **Now cancelled**
- July 18 Chipstead Show 11.30-4.30, "Elmore" Chipstead, CR5 3SB
- August 31 Carshalton Environmental Fair 10.30-8.00, Ruskin Road, Carshalton, SM5 3DD
- Sept 19 Sutton Community Farm Harvest Festival 11.00-4.00,




**U3A**  
University of the Third Age  
BANSTEAD AREA  
Registered Charity No. 1049024

in association with  
**Banstead Arts Festival Society**

U3A Banstead Area presents  
**Landscapes of Surrey**  
 – Understanding the formation & diversity of Surrey's countryside –  
 A presentation by Dr Stuart Downward, Associate Professor of Geography and Environment,  
 Kingston University

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020 - 7.30pm**  
 Banstead Community Hall, Park Road SM7 3AJ (free on-site parking)



Dr Downward will illustrate his talk with photographs of our varied and beautiful Surrey landscapes, including chalk downland, heathland, ancient woodland and rivers

There will also be stands displaying local environmental initiatives and USA activities

**National Trust - Surrey Hills Society - Downlands Trust**

Tickets £7 from Banstead Library, at the door, or at [www.bansteadarts.co.uk](http://www.bansteadarts.co.uk)  
 Tea/coffee/soft drinks and biscuits will be served in the interval

[www.u3aarts.org.uk/banstead](http://www.u3aarts.org.uk/banstead)

## Forthcoming walks this year to which you are invited

- May 2 CFBW Spring walk, meet 9am at Canons Farm, Canons Lane, KT20 6DP **Now cancelled**
- May 16 Festival walk, Park Downs and Banstead Woods - Butterflies and Flowers of Park Downs. Meet 10.30 at Holly Lane car park **Now cancelled**
- May 30 Visit to Park Ham SSSI, chalk grassland, Chaldon, led by Sean Grufferty. 10.00-12.00. Meet at Warwick Wold Road layby, near Spring Bottom Lane, RH1 3DE **TBC**
- July 25/26 CFBW butterfly walk, meet 10am at Holly Lane car park (two dates in case of rain) **TBC**
- August 29 CFBW bird walk, meet 9am at Canons Farm, Canons Lane, KT20 6DP **TBC**

## Grants paid to volunteer groups

### Kenley Primary School Pond

The Trust recognises that ponds are an important part of the environment for wildlife, especially frogs, toads and newts. Kenley Primary School contacted the Trust for a contribution towards a replacement wildlife pond and dipping platform that they wanted to construct in their grounds. The Trust and Fidelity International each donated £1,000 with a further donation to cover costs coming from the school's Parent Teachers Association.



The wildlife pond under construction, showing the butyl liner

A grant of £1,022 was made by the Trust to Blanchman's Farm volunteer group to purchase a brushcutter and heavy duty mower which will help them keep down the scrub in this LNR and allow the grassland to recover.



A grant of £1,750 was made by Fidelity International for contractors to clear trees inside the grazing paddock at Manor Park. This will open up further areas for the grassland to spread and increase the light reaching the ground creating the right conditions for chalk grassland plants to flourish.



The Trust also made the following grants with much help from Fidelity International:

- Benches at Long Hill (Woldingham) and Hamsey Green pond
- Grant towards the reprint of the leaflet "Green Croydon For All"
- Blackthorn clearance at Hooley Meadows. Brown Hairstreak butterflies will lay their eggs on the resulting new growth and this will help to maintain the local population of this uncommon species

Grants were also made to the Downlands Partnership's conservation work for equipment, sand ladders, trail cameras and items for the grazing team

## Fidelity's continued support of Downlands Trust - Noreen Siba

Great news, Downlands Trust is Fidelity International's Environmental Charity of the Year for a second year running!

In 2019 Fidelity donated over £12,000 through the Downlands Trust to projects such as the wildlife pond at Kenley Primary School, making and installing benches, marketing and fundraising equipment and clearance and conservation work at several sites.

Fidelity staff themselves raised £4,000 for Downlands Trust through their quiz nights, bake off, smarties challenge and softball tournament.

Not only did the Fidelity staff fundraise, many helped on volunteer work days with the Downlands Partnership culminating in over 50 coming on Sheep Management and Wreath Making days in December.

This year Fidelity has committed to provide a monthly team of 12 staff to work as volunteers with the Downlands Partnership undertaking conservation work in a variety of locations including Riddlesdown and at sites in the Whyteleafe area. The volunteers will be engaged in essential maintenance work including scrub clearance and this will help to safeguard the future of high quality chalk grassland in these places.

Also 60 staff will be given the chance to meet the lambs at Old Lodge Farm in May and help whilst there, with ragwort and thistle pulling and hurdle making.

In December we plan to organise two Sheep and Activity days to introduce even more of Fidelity's employees to the Downlands countryside.



Fidelity staff with their completed wreaths

## The Bee Orchid, the flower on our card - Peter Wakeham

You may know that the flower that appears on the Trust's business card is a Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and it is one of the most colourful of the orchids to be found in Surrey. It grows mainly, but not exclusively, in good quality chalk grassland but also appears as an early colonizer of disturbed ground such as quarries and road excavations.

The Bee Orchid gets its common name from its main pollinator, a particular species of bee, which is thought to have driven the evolution of the flowers. The velvety lip looks like a female bee and the flower emits the scent of a female bee, attracting male bees to fly in to mate and so inadvertently pollinating the flower. However, the relevant species of bee lives in continental Europe but not in the UK, hence our Bee Orchids are self-pollinating. The generic name *Ophrys* comes from the Greek name for eyebrow, derived from the hair-like markings on the edge of the flower lips.

Like most orchids, the seeds are minute and consequently can be dispersed by the wind over a distance of several kilometers, germinating in spring and taking as long as six years before they reach flowering stage. June is the best time to see Bee Orchids in flower, although many of the plants bloom only once and apparently thriving colonies can suddenly vanish.



Help conserve our Downlands for future generations

## A not-so-sleepy Lagoon - Graham Kenward - Woodchip Conservation Volunteers

In 2019 the Downlands Trust made a significant contribution to a major conservation success by the WoodChip Conservation Volunteers in the Banstead Woods & Chipstead Downs Local Nature Reserve. Over the spring and summer the volunteers worked on the drainage Lagoon beside Outwood Lane and transformed it from a lifeless body of water to a species-rich wildlife habitat.

The deep-set Lagoon is 95 feet long and was designed to prevent flooding in Outwood Lane by taking the run-off from the road. Although the amount of water fluctuates with the weather, the liner ensures a consistent level throughout the seasons.

Thanks to funding from the Trust, the WoodChips were able to install a variety of native pond plants in a special growing medium around part of the water's edge. These plants have since grown substantially and encouraged a wide range of wildlife to make the Lagoon their home.



Shallow end of lagoon before planting



Shallow end after planting - June 2019

Over just a few months, the species included dragonflies, damselflies, frogs, newts, aquatic insects, pond snails, mayflies and several types of bats. The Trust also funded a supply of oxygenating plants which have now colonised the whole length of the water area, and will help to enrich the biodiversity of the site further in 2020.

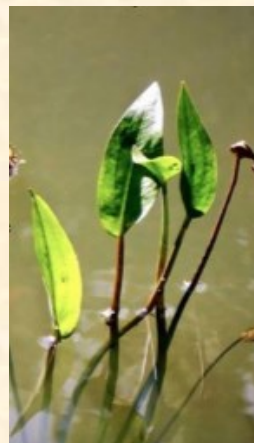
The WoodChips are currently developing wildflower planting in the surrounds of the Lagoon: successes include rare species like Cut-leaved Germander, Broad-leaved Cudweed and Basil Thyme, together with butterfly friendly plants like Kidney Vetch.

After this positive experience, the WoodChips look forward to co-operation with the Downlands Trust on future conservation projects.

More details of the WoodChips conservation activities can be found on their website: [thewoodchips.org](http://thewoodchips.org).



Purple Loosestrife



Water Plantain

## The Downlands Partnership Over 30 years of local countryside management work in action

The Downlands Partnership was established in 1988 and provides an urban fringe countryside management service, maintaining and enhancing the local environment for biodiversity, people and wildlife.

The Partnership area contains a variety of habitats and features, but is dominated by the rare chalk grassland habitat found on the scarp and dip slopes of the North Downs. Its area of operation covers N.E. Surrey and adjoining parts of Croydon and Sutton, many work sites are Local Nature Reserves or Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The Partnership is hosted by Surrey County Council, with core funding contributions also coming from Reigate and Banstead BC, Tandridge DC, London Boroughs of Sutton and Croydon, plus the Whitgift Foundation (who contribute towards the Sanderstead to Whyteleafe Countryside Area). The core funding pays for the small staff team, with any work we carry out being covered by additional charges to the landowner (public or private), or grants and donations. Here we must say a big thank you to the Downlands Trust, who have provided us with grants for a wide range of equipment, materials and training over the years.

The Partnership runs a volunteer task programme, 4 days per week throughout the year, for local communities to help look after their local countryside. During the autumn/winter the work tends to be related to habitat management, eg restoring chalk grasslands or woodland management, while during the spring/summer improvements to public access dominate. Nearly 9,000 hours of volunteer time are put in each year.

The Partnership also runs an extensive conservation grazing programme across its area, run from Old Lodge Farm, a Surrey County Council owned farm near Carshalton. The Partnership has its own flock of sheep, Sussex cattle and British feral goats, and manages its own lambing every spring. The livestock rotate graze chalk grassland sites to maintain open grassland, which supports a huge diversity of plant and insect life. A team of over 100 volunteer stock checkers put in nearly 4,000 hours per year to assist the team.

Our team comprises:

Alan Brown	Senior Countryside Partnership Officer
Sarah Clifford	Countryside Project Officer, SWCA
Tom Thorn	Countryside Project Assistant
Sean Grufferty	Grazing Project Officer
Connor Harrison	Grazing Project Assistant



Chipstead fence repairs group - April 2019



One of 8 new signposts on the North Downs Way



Sheep at Hutchinsons Bank



Alan at Addington Hills with Downlands Trust funded loppers



Monitoring species at Caterham Viewpoint

Find out more about our work and volunteering opportunities on the Downlands Partnership webpages. Volunteering in the glorious local countryside is great for happiness, health and habitat.

Find us at [www.surreycc.gov.uk/land-planning-and-development/countryside/partnerships/downlands](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/land-planning-and-development/countryside/partnerships/downlands)

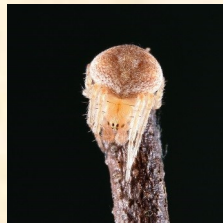
Or come & join our happy conservation crew very soon!

*Helen Cocker* Operations Manager, Surrey Countryside Partnership Teams

## Insect corner - Andy Keay



A rarely seen Pseudoscorpion from composting herbage at The Orchard, Banstead Wood



Araneus alpien - an immature male of this rare, south of England, species



Helix pomatia, the Roman Snail - internationally protected species of great value to certain restaurants!

Two rare butterflies suffering serious declines



Small Blue



White-letter Hairstreak



Temnothorax nylanderii - A reasonably rare ant in the UK - found in leaf litter at The Knoll and Banstead Wood

## Dear Member

We appreciate that this Newsletter may appear to concentrate on the western side of the area covered by the Trust but this is purely down to pressure of time for this edition. We would love to hear from volunteer conservation groups across the whole area and also be involved in projects where the Downlands Trust can provide support.

We hope that you like the format of this new feel Newsletter which we will publish twice a year in Spring and Autumn, keeping you up to date with what the Trust is doing.

If you have any comments or suggestions for improvements, we would love to hear from you. You can contact us by sending an email to [newsletter@downlandstrust.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@downlandstrust.org.uk)

Editor

## Membership reminder

Thanks so much to all those who have renewed their membership for 2020. This enables the continuation of the important work of the Trust in supporting conservation of the natural environment. If there are any members who haven't yet renewed, please can we encourage you to do so by sending your subscription to:

Membership Secretary, 71 Warren Road, Banstead, SM7 1LG.

If you are not a member and would like to join, please fill in the form on page 8.

Sarah Milan Membership Secretary : [membership@downlandstrust.org.uk](mailto:membership@downlandstrust.org.uk)

## Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

The Downlands Trust Facebook and Twitter pages include forthcoming events, funding initiatives, the most up-to-date news and views on the practical tasks runs by our partners and a whole lot more.

And if you already follow us, please share us amongst your online friends to help us spread the word about our valuable work.

[www.facebook.com/downlandstrust](http://www.facebook.com/downlandstrust)

[www.twitter.com/downlandstrust](http://www.twitter.com/downlandstrust)

## Dormice in Happy Valley - Dominic North, Countryside Warden

The Chandos Choir is a community choir who are based in Coulsdon. In July last year, they approached the Downlands Trust in search of a local project that they could support by performing two charity Christmas Carol concerts during December, one in St Peter's Hall Woodmansterne and a second concert singing at Tesco's in Purley. The Downlands Trust supported both events and attended with an information stand and helpers.

Thanks to the wonderful efforts of everyone involved, £250 was raised to support important nature conservation and management work at Happy Valley in Coulsdon. The money raised will be used to fund nest boxes for the rare dormice which live in Happy Valley, and to purchase new pads for the defibrillator (AED).

Happy Valley has a resident population of Hazel Dormice, which are a nationally rare and protected species (see picture). These are monitored every summer using 50 wooden nestboxes, which are sited throughout the woodland. Unfortunately the boxes have a lifespan of only 5 or 6 years, and are currently in need of replacement. The money raised by the choir, along with other recent donations, will allow us to replace all 50 nest boxes this year.

I carry a defibrillator (AED) in my 4x4 in case of any cardiac emergencies in remote areas of Happy Valley as it would take an ambulance a long time to reach the site, and access is often only possible by a 4x4. The pads for the AED are due to expire soon, and this funding will allow us to purchase a new set, which will help to ensure the safety of visitors in the coming years.

As Countryside Warden for Happy Valley, I would like to extend my great thanks to everyone involved in the fundraising and for the fantastic effort to raise money for Happy Valley. It is very much appreciated.

Happy Valley has been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest and was also designated in summer 2019 as a National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Congratulations to Dominic and his team!

Editor

Shown left to right are Graham Lomas and Pauline Payne (Friends of Farthing Downs and Happy Valley), Dominic North and Cllr. Margaret Bird. The defibrillator was originally purchased thanks to a donation by Cllr. Margaret Bird from her communities budget.



A hazel dormouse photographed in a nest box  
(Photo: Dominic North)



## A Surprise Arrival at Old Lodge Farm - Peter Wakeham

SES Water recently routed a major new pipeline through the Woodcote area, part of which passed through Old Lodge Farm. This created a large stretch of disturbed ground and last summer a variety of previously buried seeds germinated. Most were common weed species such as Mugwort and Fat Hen.

However, Sean from the Downlands Partnership spotted amongst them some plants that were of a much paler green and on closer inspection revealed themselves to be Henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), of which up to 30 were present. Henbane is very rare in Surrey and these are the only plants to have been recorded in the county in the last few years. The seeds are long lived and at Old Lodge Farm they probably date from when this was once a dairy farm.

Henbane is noted for its high toxicity and the entire plant contains a variety of alkaloids, notably hyoscyamine which was Dr Crippen's poison of choice. In carefully measured quantities, the plant has been used in traditional medicine to treat a variety of ailments and it also has strong hallucinogenic properties.

Careful handling is advisable as the active chemicals can be absorbed through the skin. Bartolomeus, a Franciscan monk, was well aware of its properties and wrote in 1398 that "If it be eate or dronke, it breedeth madness, for it taketh away wytte and reason".



Photo: Sean Grufferty

## Support us with memberships, donations or a legacy

### DOWNLANDS TRUST MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

If you are not a member or if you know anyone who would like to support our valuable work in the countryside, we would be delighted to receive the following application form and subscription. Alternatively, you can join via our website

#### TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (please tick)

- Individual (**£10**)  
 Senior /student /unwaged (**£5**) Please delete as applicable  
 Family (**£15**)  
 Group /company /school (**£15**) Please delete as applicable

Please note: Memberships are due for renewal annually on 1st January. However, any memberships taken out after 1st September in any year are covered for membership for the following calendar year.

#### PAYMENT OPTIONS (please tick as applicable)

- I enclose a cheque for £..... to cover the subscription. You may like to add an additional donation to aid our work.  
 I have made an online payment of £.....to your bank account, Downlands Trust 40-09-04 31439820. Please use your name as the reference so that we can connect the payment to your membership.

#### GIFT AID Please tick the box below if you are in a position to do so

- I agree to the Downlands Trust claiming tax under the Gift Aid Scheme on all my donations and subscriptions until I advise otherwise. I confirm that I am paying an amount of UK Income and/or Capital Gains Tax that at least equals the amount that the charity will reclaim.

#### YOUR DETAILS

Title:		Full name:	
Address:			
		Postcode:	
Email:			
Telephone:			
Signature		Date	

**Please return completed membership application to:  
Membership Secretary, Downlands Trust, 71 Warren Road, Banstead, SM7 1LG**

### Shopping Online

Shop on [AmazonSmile](#) and Amazon will donate to Downlands Trust, at no cost to you.

Or support us by signing up to **easyfundraising** - it takes 2 minutes & 4,000 shops will donate to us for free every time you shop with them! [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://easyfundraising.org.uk)

#### Downlands Trust

Registered address: 46 Wilmot Way, Banstead, SM7 2PY

Registered Charity No. 1126535  
Company No. 6661092

Email: [info@downlandstrust.org.uk](mailto:info@downlandstrust.org.uk)

Website: [www.downlandstrust.org.uk](http://www.downlandstrust.org.uk)



#### Leave a legacy

Increasingly, people leaving legacies in their wills has become crucial to securing the future of many charities in these difficult economic times.

Just a small bequest can make a big difference, so please consider the Downlands Trust when writing or reviewing your will.

Thank you!