A guide to the history, ways of life, attractions and leisure activities of the North Wessex Downs - an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2007

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- And did those feet... Page 6
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- Need funding for a local project? Page 20
Step inside and discover a way of life that was destroyed by the Romans. The displays give you a vivid impression of what life was like for our prehistoric ancestors who farmed, fought, worshipped and died in Wessex over 2000 years ago. Open Tue-Sat 10.00am-5.00pm. (Last entry 4.30pm). Admission Free. www.hants.gov.uk/museum/ironage

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To advertise in future issues of ‘UP!’, please contact the North Wessex Downs AONB, T: 01488 685440 or E: info@northwessexdowns.org.uk
Facing new challenges in an ancient landscape.

This is my first edition of UP! - on the North Wessex Downs and I am excited about the challenges that face all of us who live, work and visit this very special ancient and nationally-important protected landscape.

Since joining as Director in January, I’ve met hundreds of people who feel as passionately about this wonderful countryside as I do. I was born and grew up in Berkshire, and spent many happy times exploring and learning about the natural world here. It sparked my interest in the environment and I trained as an ecologist. I am very honoured to be leading the challenge to ensure a sustainable future for my home landscape and those who live, work and visit it.

Active management of the landscape makes it the way it is, and we continue to work with farmers, land managers, businesses and organisations to ensure that it is a prosperous place for everyone to enjoy.

Once again this magazine provides a host of interesting news (the latest Sustainable Development Fund projects, pages 20-21) and information (walking through history, pages 6-7) while highlighting beautiful North Wessex Downs views from far and near (actually, right under our feet! pages 4-5), and even personal observations (UP2U!, back page). Our Local Products Directory has grown and is up to date and conservation work on downlands and woodlands (pages 16-17) is fully covered - as, in fact, are most things that are going on in our villages and valleys, and ‘up on the downs!’

Our annual North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Forum in May looks at how this special landscape could be affected by climate change, ways in which we can manage the countryside to minimise climate change, and what that means for all of us. This is a long-term activity and I invite you to get involved.

Finally, please check regularly on our website: www.northwessexdowns.org.uk for latest news and events. You can find out more about the area, where to buy local products grown and produced here, and gain ideas for walks and day-trips.

Fiona Newcombe
Director, North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1972 to give protection to one of the largest and least developed tracts of chalk downland in the UK. It covers some 1,730 sq km (668 square miles) and is the largest AONB in southern England.

North Wessex Downs AONB Office
Denford Manor, Lower Denford, Hungerford, RG17 0UN  Tel: 01488 685440.
Email: info@northwessexdowns.org.uk  Web: www.northwessexdowns.org.uk
Front cover: One man and his dog take in the beautiful countryside and stylised gates to be found on the Test Way at St. Mary Bourne.
SEE THE VIEWS - right under your feet!

Craig Blackwell and Heather White like to let the grass grow under their feet - literally. They are key figures in the ecologically important Downland Restoration Project within the North Wessex Downs.

“Most people go up on the Downs to take in miles of magnificent views, but there are wonderful things to be seen right at their feet. The North Wessex Downs has some of the best chalk grassland in Europe. Within one square metre you could easily find up to 40 different species of flora - some species being nationally rare,” explained Heather, the North Wessex Downs Development Officer.

“Take in the distant views by all means, but don’t miss the marvels at your feet!”

Workwise Heather and Craig couldn’t be busier - since they are working against time and change to protect the important and fragile balance between chalk grassland and arable habitat for future generations to enjoy. And those generations are not all human.

Our familiar downland landscape of gently rolling arable fields and grazed expanses of chalk grassland provides homes and hunting grounds for many hundreds of species. The biodiversity is huge, ranging from micro-organisms and insects right up to large birds of prey. The landscape provides their essential link, just as each species forms a link in their own food-chain.

The Downland Restoration Project emerged from a strategic study to identify the most important and best-suited sites for chalk grassland management and restoration.

“The North Wessex Downs has around 9% of the UK chalk grassland resource, but we found that a lot of it was in less than ideal condition,” explained Heather.

The Chalk Grassland Strategy highlighted areas where targeted restoration would bring the greatest benefits to landscape, ecology and archaeology. These included...
Horton Downs - (around 7,000 hectares), Liddington to Letcombe - (3,000 hectares) and the Hampshire Downs (3,500 hectares).

The North Wessex Downs team is working closely with other rural advisory organisations, landowners and farmers in target areas to encourage greater habitat-conscious land management.

“Many farmers are already part of the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme which supports good land management through grant payments over a ten year period. We would like to see farmers explore the potential of the new Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. This could provide significant incentives for them to become actively involved in maintaining or creating species-rich chalk grassland,” said Heather.

Craig Blackwell, County Ecologist for Oxfordshire County Council added: “The North Wessex Downs is particularly rich for a variety of important species that are dependent on well-drained chalk soils. For example, they are the best habitat for many species of orchids and blue butterflies that are closely adapted to conditions associated with chalk downland.”

“However, without good management much of this important grassland habitat will decline along with many of the species that depend on it. Elsewhere in the country the large blue butterfly was lost in 1979 through a decline in grazing. Thanks to a habitat and species conservation programme it is now doing well, but it is essential that we learn from such experiences.”

Stone-curlews thrive on North Wessex downland

After suffering one of the most severe declines of all UK birds, stone-curlews are mounting a comeback in the North Wessex Downs.

In southern England, stone-curlews were a traditional bird of chalk downland, but declined as this was converted to arable land, where nests are vulnerable to accidental damage in farming operations.

In 2004 the RSPB launched the Wessex Downs & Chilterns Farmland Bird project, a three-year initiative supported by Thames Water and part of Action for Birds in England, a conservation partnership between Natural England and the RSPB. Concentrating on the Berkshire Downs, the project aimed to enhance the populations of stone-curlews and other declining farmland birds, such as lapwing, grey partridge and corn bunting.

Mike Shurmer, RSPB Farmland Bird officer, has worked closely with farmers to protect stone-curlew eggs and chicks and advise on providing habitat for the birds. Agri-environment schemes and management of set-aside have been used to create safe nesting areas, away from agricultural machinery. Farmers have also been encouraged to recreate areas of species-rich chalk grassland, providing essential feeding areas for stone-curlews and a host of other birds.

In the three years of the project, stone-curlews have enjoyed remarkable success. In 2003 only nine pairs remained in the Berkshire Downs, but by 2006 the stone-curlew population had almost doubled to 17 pairs. There has also been significant range expansion, with birds reappearing in some areas for the first time in over 20 years.

Mike is delighted with the results of the project: “Insiprational and important wildlife is being restored to the downland landscape, thanks to the support of Thames Water, Natural England and the farming community. This project is a great showcase for conservation.”

With this increase in numbers, the birds now have a much more secure foothold in this part of the North Wessex Downs, but there is still much to be done. Though the project is due to end this Spring, it is hoped that funding can be secured to ensure that work will continue in the area in future years.

Contact: 01295 253330 or kirsty.meadows@rspb.org.uk

SHEPHERDS GO SURFING

Shepherds, farmers and landowners can now gain the benefits of sheep-grazing 24/7 thanks to the innovative website: www.sheepkeep.co.uk

Traditional grazing of grassland can be hugely helpful environmentally - meanwhile, the sheep earn their keep. Now the sheep and the grass can be carefully managed by their owners simply seeking out their best match via the website.

“With the reduction of sheep numbers and a mandatory requirement to graze areas for the Single Farm Payment, there is a need to match available flocks to ground where they are wanted,” explained the website originator, Wantage sheep farmer Tony Prior (01235 768667 or tony@antsweb.co.uk).

Tony developed his idea with Berks, Bucks and Oxon Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group before creating the website with funding from the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Shepherds and land-owners can register requirements free of charge on the website www.sheepkeep.co.uk or call the sheepkeep hotline on 01993 886567.

Contact: 01993 886567 or kirsty.meadows@rspb.org.uk
Everywhere you walk within the North Wessex Downs AONB is steeped in history.

Whether it is alongside the Kennet & Avon Canal following a pathway trudged by many a barge-pulling horse, or high on the ancient Ridgeway trail of our forefathers, or through fascinating villages such as Pewsey with its Saxon heritage, or Lambourn, home to many champion racehorses - the past walks with you.

Neolithic ancestors erected stone circles in the west. Iron Age villagers fortified their hilltops. Saxons led by Ethelred and Alfred fought the invading Danish Vikings to create the kingdom of Wessex with Alfred as king.

Civil War sites such as Roundway Hill where in 1643 hundreds of Roundheads died in pitch battle with Royalists. The A4 Bath Road coaching route was busy in Georgian and Regency times between London and the fashionable spa of Bath.

North Wessex Downs views inspired poems for John Betjeman, its wildlife sparked a story for Richard Adams at Watership Down near Kingsclere, its trees built Nelson’s ships.

The heritage of the North Wessex Downs is rich and varied, and it can still be enjoyed today.

There is a well-marked network of country footpaths throughout the North Wessex Downs, some linking to longer much-loved ramblers’ routes such as The Ridgeway National Trail, South Downs Way, Test Way, Wansdyke Trail and the Wayfarer’s Walk.

And there are a number of organisations and schemes to help you enjoy the North Wessex Downs countryside and discover its heritage at the same time.

First visit for keen walkers should be the Ramblers Association website. With 140,000 members, the Ramblers’ Association knows all the best walks across England, Scotland and Wales and works closely with AONBs caring for country footpaths and open spaces.

Ramblers’ groups walk whenever they can, with walks varying in length from 5 -12 miles, all hosted by experienced leaders.

Contacts: www.ramblers.org.uk
West Berkshire Ramblers: 01635 281621 / 01488 608108
North East Wiltshire Ramblers: 01672 861359
FOLLOW THE ARK!

Near Silbury Hill, the River Kennet rises at Swallowhead Springs and begins its eastward journey across the North Wessex Downs AONB to join the Thames at Reading. During the summer months, the Action for the River Kennet (ARK) group arrange with local landowners for one or two ‘open-bank’ walks along the upper reaches. The waters of the Kennet used to power seven flour mills in the area, but the river is now famed for its trout fishing.

Look out for local publicity about the ARK walks or contact: 01672 513672 or www.riverkennet.org

TAKING THE ARK HIGH ROAD...

From Avebury to Wantage the ancient Ridgeway National Trail is a literal highway, with magnificent views into Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire from the chalk hills along its 137 kms (85 miles) route. But now you can learn about the natural earth heritage of Britain’s oldest road as you walk along it. The Oxfordshire Geology Trust has produced a series of Secrets in the Landscape trail-guides explaining how the local geology has influenced human activity from the last Ice Age until today.

Contact: www.oxfordshiregt.org

...WITH NO MOTORS!

From May 2006, most of The Ridgeway in West Berkshire and Oxfordshire was reclassified as a Restricted Byway open only to walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and horse-drawn vehicles. New signs indicate the car-free Ridgeway sections.

ROAM WITH THE ROMANS

Surprisingly, the Romans didn’t use the Ridgeway much, preferring to build their own roads, for example, from Silchester to Andover and to Cirencester via Swindon. But there are plenty of areas where you can walk with the Romans.

Tidgrove Warren, near Kingsclere is one such place. It lies close to the Port Way Roman road from Silchester to Old Sarum and its name - Tidgrove Warren - provides an historic clue. In the Middle Ages it was one of 14 rabbit warrens in the area.

Annual archaeology digs in the area by Southampton University students have unearthed Roman coins, nails and pottery which suggests a Romano-British farming community. There is also evidence in the area of an Iron Age settlement, Celtic farming, and a 12th century hall built and used by King Henry II and his successors on their journeys to France and around the kingdom.

More importantly for modern-day ramblers, the Kingsclere Heritage Association has devised a small detour off the Wayfarer’s Walk which takes in much of this historic land.

Contact: www.kingsclere.org.uk

WIGGLE ALONG A WATERY ROUTE

The Kennet & Avon Canal Rural Transport Partnership produces Wigglywalk Guides covering the canal route between Devizes and Hungerford.

En route there are opportunities to visit the Roman Villa and Orpheus mosaic at Littlecote, the oldest working beam engine in the world at Crofton Pumping Station beside the canal, or the famous flight of 16 locks at Caen Hill, near Devizes.

The guides identify separate linear walks and cycling options using the canal and wider footpath network, and provide details of public transport services - for when human-power yields to horse-power!

The K&A Canal RTP provides details of all public transport services in the area on its website: www.visitkanda.com

stride from source to sea

The 49-mile Test Way can take you from source to sea. The Test River rises in north Hampshire, from two main sources. One is at Ashe near the birthplace of author Jane Austen, just west of Basingstoke. Other source waters come from the hills close to Walbury Camp, an ancient Iron Age fort and the highest point in South East England at 297m (974ft). The twin sources join near Whitchurch Silk Mill and the huge nine-arch viaduct at Hurstbourne Priors. Followed southwards the Test Way arrives at the sea at Southampton Water. Northwards takes walkers into the North Wessex Downs AONB through the lovely villages of St. Mary Bourne and Hurstbourne Tarrant and finally to read the murderous tale at Combe Gibbet, near Inkpen Beacon, where the trail links to the Wayfarer’s Walk.

Contact: www.hants.gov.uk/walking/longdistance

...HISTORY GOES THROUGH CYCLES TOO!

The National Cycle Network offers more than 10,000 miles of cycling (or walking) routes on traffic-free paths, quiet lanes and traffic-calmed roads - 75% of the UK population lives within two miles of a route!

Cyclists within the North Wessex Downs are well served by the NCN so there’s no excuse not to explore. As cyclists might say: ‘Where there’s a wheel, there’s away!’

Enjoy the Kennet & Avon Canal across the AONB from Bath to Reading by following NCN Route 4. Travel from Marlborough to Cirencester via Swindon on NCN Route 45; The Ridgeway on NCN Route 44; the Thames from Reading to Abingdon via Wallingford, NCN Route 5; and Reading to Basingstoke, NCN Route 23.

Contact: www.sustrans.org.uk
Green Oak Designs
by Marnie Moyle

Marnie is developing a reputation for her unique English oak garden furniture. Her raw and stylish designs are made to order and the use of carved words for decoration make it particularly special.

Marnie can be contacted at: 1 Catmore Road, West Ilsley, near Newbury, Berks RG20 7AT
Tel: 01635 281786 Email: marnie@outwest.freeserve.co.uk Web: www.marniemoyle.co.uk

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We invite you to Eat, Drink and be Merry! - or certainly 'very pleased' when you buy local products grown, reared or made within the North Wessex Downs AONB. Not only will you be purchasing the freshest, tastiest food, most refreshing beer and wine, and the most skillfully made products available to you locally, but you will also be supporting your local economy.

A MAN AIMING TO BRING HOME THE BACON IN 2007

Royal Berkshire Pork at Brightwalton lies at the heart of the North Wessex Downs AONB and pigs have a special place in the heart of Russell Kilvington.

“Pigs have character, and I enjoy working with them in the freedom of the countryside. Almost every day a new litter is born, and every day it’s as if it is the first time you have seen it happen. I have never got bored, even after 20 years of pig-farming,” said Russell, as he worked with his 300 Landrace large-white sows and pure-bred Hampshire boars at the 50 acres he farms near Beedon.

Russell hopes that 2007 will be the year that gets his business - Royal Berkshire Pork - back in the fast-lane. Having begun pig-breeding in 1993 at Winterbourne Manor Farm, armed with an agricultural degree and financial support from The Prince’s Trust, Russell quickly prospered. He set up farm-sales in Brightwalton and a shop in Hungerford, while also becoming the Meridian TV ‘Young Entrepreneur’ of the Year. Then, in 2001, Foot-and-Mouth struck.

“We were shut down for six months, the breeding cycle was disrupted, some local businesses didn’t recover. We struggled through it with help from friends and experts, like Roger Seed from the Farm Business Advisory Service.

“Ironically, the outbreak allowed us to stop, get off the hamster-wheel and review the business,” added Russell, 37, who has lived in Brightwalton since the age of seven. (“In my teens, I used to pester local farmers to let me work on their farms.”)

Last summer, Russell, an accredited RSPCA Freedom Foods pig breeder, relaunched his business as Royal Berkshire Pork, majoring on retail-packaged bacon and sausages. (See Product Listings for availability.)

Awards have already been won, and at the Royal Windsor Show his products drew the attention of Her Majesty The Queen (see inset picture). “I was just lucky she decided to stop at my stand,” Russell says modestly.

Now, Russell has one simple business objective, “I want to have the most memorable pork brand in the UK.” You read it here first!

This Product Directory makes it easy for you to find out where to find and buy local North Wessex Downs food and home-produced products. Keep it to hand throughout the year so that you can: Eat Up! Drink Up! and Buy Up!

SETTLING HIGH STANDARDS

Many producers working within the North Wessex Downs AONB pride themselves on the quality of their produce and their concern for the environment in which they operate.

They realise that their type of work, the way they operate and the careful management of their local environment are crucially interlinked with the ongoing wellbeing of the AONB and the future success of their businesses.

To affirm and demonstrate this concern and their quest for high standards many businesses become involved with third-party assurance schemes, assessments, and certification processes which cover their field of expertise.

To assist our readers we asked producers to list their environmental links when we invited them to help us compile this AONB Product Directory.

As a guide to their ‘Env-links’:

WFCP: Whole Farm Conservation Plan: detailed, tailor-made management plan for all aspects of a farm, dependent on its farm type, location and habitat, wildlife value.


WMP: Woodland Management Plan: provides tailored management advice for a particular woodland or complex of woodlands.

Org.: Organic schemes: mainly address chemical inputs; fertiliser, pesticide use in crops and veterinary medicines in livestock production. Soil Association Certification Ltd is the largest UK organic certification body.

FAS: Farm Assurance Schemes: voluntary schemes establishing production standards covering food safety, environmental protection, animal welfare, and other important consumer issues. Example: British Farm Standard with red tractor logo.

Demeter: certified food comes from biodynamic farming which is ecological and holistic. It takes account of the soil, plants and animals, and the influence of the moon and stars.

CSA: Countryside Stewardship Agreement: through CSA schemes the government (Defra) makes payments to farmers, land managers to enhance and conserve landscapes, wildlife, history, and help people enjoy them.

LEAF: Linking Environment And Farming: promotes efficiency, transparency and standards throughout the food and farming industry. LEAF marque farmers follow integrated farm management principles.

FSC: Forestry Stewardship Council: international, non-governmental organisation promoting responsible management of the world’s forests. Uses certification and product labelling with its tree-tick logo.

Criteria for Directory Inclusion: Production site must be located or product must be grown, reared or harvested within the AONB or within 5 miles of its boundary. Product must be available locally within the AONB or its near environs. All information in this Directory has been provided free of charge by the producers contacted. As such, the AONB Partnership cannot be responsible for any errors or omissions, and recognises that the Directory may not be comprehensive.
A GUIDE TO NORTH WESSEX DOWNS PRODUCTS

BEER, WINE, CIDER

1. A’Becketts’s Vineyard
   Contact: Paul or Lynn Langham, A’Becketts’ Farmhouse, High Street, Littleton Pannell, Devizes SN10 4EN
   T: 01380 816669  www.abecketts.co.uk
   Products: Award-winning vegan-friendly English wine including: Dry: and Off dry. Red, White, Rose, Red Neat and Sparkling wines. Open 10am-4.30/5pm Fri-Sat all year and Bank Holidays.

2. Arkell’s Brewery
   Products: Award-winning ale range, with New World wine as specialty. Oldest Swindon business (164 years), one of only 29 family breweries in UK. Victorian steam brewery using original methods. Open 9am-5pm Mon-Fri. Deliveries throughout area.
   Outlets: Locally, Arkell’s owns 100 pubs, 3 clubs, 1 off-licence.

3. Boze Down Vineyard
   Contact: Richard Conn, Boze Down Vineyard, Hardwick Rd, Witchurch-on-Thames RG8 7QP  T: 0118 964 4031  www.bozedown.com  Env.-links: WMP Products: Top quality English grapes grown on site. Also provides woodland and wild flower tours, Open Days. Open by prior appointment as or advertised.

4. Brightwell Vineyard
   Contact: Mrs. Carol Nielsen, Brightwell Vineyard, Rush Court, Wallingford OX10 8JU  T: 01491 874358  www.brightwellvineyards.co.uk
   Products: Red and white English wines, six grape varieties on 14 acres. Wine sales, tastings, nature & vineyard walks 12-6pm Fri-Sun, or by prior arrangement. Wine sales also by appointment or mail order.
   Outlets: Wallingford & Oxford Farmers’ Markets: Added Env.-links: WMP, WFCP, Bio, Org., FAS.

5. Butts Brewery
   Contact: Chris Butts, Northfield Farm, Gt Shefford, nr Hungerford. RG17 8BY  T: 01488 648133  www.buttsbrewery.com  Env.-links: Org.
   Outlets: Butts Brewery, Open 10am-5pm weekdays, 9am-noon Sat.

6. Lambourn Valley Cider Company
   Contact: Roy Bailey, The Malt House, Great Shefford, Hungerford RG17 1ED  T: 01488 648441  www.lambournvalleycider.co.uk
   Products: Cider-maker producing natural Berkshire ciders and Perry from local apples and pears growing within 15 miles of Newbury. No visits.
   Outlets: Cider normally sold in Royal Oak, Wantage; Cellar Bar, Highworth; Woodland & Wildflower Tours, Samples available for visitors or by order from Estate Office. Open 2-5pm Sat/Sun & Bank Holidays Easter to end Sept.

7. Moles Brewery
   Contact: Roger Catta, 5 Merlin Way, Bowhunter, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 6TJ  T: 01225 704734/708842  www.molesbrewery.com
   Outlets: Nationally through other brewers, wholesalers.

8. Ramsbury Brewery
   Contact: Darren Gordon or Andy Mellor, Procy Farm, Asford, Marlborough SN8 2HA  T: 01672 410677/4832957  www.ramsburybrewery.com
   Env.-links: WFCP WMP FAS, FSA, FSC
   Outlets: Website sales; pubs, clubs in 35 mile radius of brewery; local shops (bottled beers). Local food festivals at Marlborough, Ramsbury, Alblebourne.

9. Wadworth & Co. Brewers
   Contact: Jonathan Pollock, Wadworth & Co. Brewers Ltd, Northgate Brewery Devizes SN10 1JW  T: 01380 733631  www.wadworth.co.uk
   Products: Brewer, wholesaler and pub retailer. Family business founded in 1875. Owns nearly 240 pubs. Best-known for Wadworth 6X cask ale which is distributed nationally.

10. West Berkshire Brewery
    Contact: Mrs Helen Maggs, The Old Bakery, Yattendon, nr Thatcham, RG18 1UE  T: 01635 202968  www.wbbrew.co.uk
    Products: Micro-brewery est. 1993 celebrating a decade of award-winning ales, notably Good Old Boy, Maggs’ Magnificent Mild. Bottled beers available. Brewery tours by arrangement. Shop: 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat, or by appointment.
    Outlets: Owns The Rising Sun, Stockcross, nr Newbury, supplies pubs in Berks, Hants, Oxon, Wts, Gloucs.

DAIRY

11. Prosperous Home Farm
    Contact: Derek Moody, Salisbury Rd, Hungerford RG17 0RD  T: 01488 672275/07724685338  Env.-links: FAS
    Products: Double Guernsey Cream, whipped cream, milk, full fat, low fat and flavoured yoghurts, crème fraîche, cheese, seasonal shop. Open seven days a week.
    Outlets: Owns Local Farmers’ Markets: PYO strawberry fields, local shops, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants, and Armadillo Café, Notting Hill.

12. Doves Farm Foods
    Contact: Clare Marriage, Salisbury Rd, Hungerford RG17 0BF  T: 01488 682725/07724685338
    Env.-links: FAS
    Outlets: Doves Farm Foods, Camberley, Surrey; Whole Foods Market, London; Waitrose, London; and other major retailers. Delivery by post.

13. Lacock Bakery
    Contact: Jean Sheard, 8 Church Street, Lacock, Chippenham SN15 5LB  T: 01249 730457  E: jean@lacock.com
    Products: Situated in National Trust village. Bread, cakes, baked on premises, breads delivered to local shops. Open 9am-5pm all week. Baking: Mon, Wed, Fri, and three Sat a month.

FRUIT

14. Bourne Valley Pick-Your-Own
    Contact: Daniel Culley, Lone Barn Farm, St Mary Bourne, nr Andover SP11 6AJ  T: 01264 758888
    Env.-links: FAS
    Products: Produces fresh strawberries, raspberries and blackcurrants, when in season. Open 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm weekends.

15. Cross Lanes Fruit Farm
    Contact: Gillian Franklin, Mapledurham, nr Reading RG7 7UJ  T: 0118 972 3167  www.crosslanesfruitfarm.co.uk
    Products: PYO asparagus, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, currants, berries, loganberries, fruits, vegetables in season.

16. Kintbury Fruit & Veg
    Contact: Mrs Brione Cockcroft, Thatchers Yard, Church St, Kintbury RG17 9TR  T: 01491 874471
    Products: Village shop selling locally-grown fruit, vegetables, plants, and locally-made honey, jam and marmalade. Traditional ‘neglected’ fruit & veg varieties often stocked.

17. Marlers Lane Fruit Farm
    Contact: Pete and Avril Harford, Marlers Lane, Bradford South End, nr Theale RG7 6HU  T: 0118 9744274
    Env.-links: FAS, Bio, Org.

18. Mapledurham Watermill
    Contact: Laos Andrus, The Estate Office, Mapledurham RG4 7TR  T: 0118 9723350  www.mapledurhamwatermill.co.uk
    Env.-links: WFCP WMP FAS, LEAF
    Products: Wholesale and retail sales. Award-winning watermill on Thames, available for visitors or by order from Estate Office. Open 2-5pm Sat/Sun & Bank Holidays Easter to end Sept.

19. The Old Farmhouse Bakery
    Contact: Kate or Bessie Bittman, By The Meadow Farm, Steventon OX13 6JR  P: 01235 831230  www.theoldfarmhousebakery.co.uk
    Products: Traditional, old-fashioned bread and specialty breads, cakes, biscuits, scones, lardy cake and Chelsea buns. Organic meat and cheese savouries. Also local honey, jams, chutneys, British farmhouse cheese, gifts and baskets. Open 9am-5pm Wed/Thu/Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat.

MEAT & FISH

20. Brooklees Fish Farm
    Contact: Tim Lobb, Brooklees, East Hendred, nr Wantage OX12 8LN  T: 01235 820500  www.brooklees.com
    Products: Trout farm fed by Ginge Brook from local Downs. Small farm shop and smoker. Children’s fishing pond. Fighting and live trout restocking available on request. A member of the British Trout Association. Open 10am-5pm Mon-Fri.
    Other Outlets: Attends 13 local Farmers’ Markets during year.

If you would like a FREE listing in our next Product Directory, telephone: 01488 685440 or email: info@northwessexdowns.org.uk

www.northwessexdowns.org.uk • for full product details • www.northwessexdowns.org.uk
TAKE HOME A TASTE OF THE COUNTRY!

- Caseley Fields Farm Shop (Vicars Game)
  - Contact: Jo Fielder, Caseley Fields Farm Shop, off Dog Lane, Ashampstead, RG8 7Bj. T: 01635 257962. www.caseleyfieldsfarmshop.co.uk
  - Products: Farm shop and butchery selling high quality local meat at wholesale prices. Beef, pork, lamb, wild boar, venison, poultry, game and exotics (ludla, bison, ostrich, crocodile). Homemade sausages, burgers and bacon. Own-brand smoked meats. Home-reared Aberdeen Angus and Hereford beef. Farm Shop open 10am-5pm T ue-Sat.

- Challow Hill Meats
  - Contact: Lucy Blackwell, Challow Hill Farm, East Challow, Wantage OX12 9PD. T: 01235 765792. www.challowhillmeats.co.uk. Env.-links: FAS
  - Products: Dijon beef, seasonal lamb and rare breed pork. Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Abingdon, Faringdon, Wantage, Didcot, Henley and Hungerford.

- Cherry Orchard Meats
  - Contact: Nick Venters, Cherry Orchard Cottage, East Sands, Burlage SN6 8AN. T: 01793 790460. www.cherryorchardmeats.org.uk. Env.-links: FAS
  - Products: Traditionally reared rare-breed beef, pork, lamb, duck, goose, chicken, turkey and eggs. Also specialist home-cured meats. On-site Farm Shop, please telephone.

- Christmas Farm
  - Contact: Phil Scrivener, Church Lane, Enborne RG20 0HZ. T: 01367 820272. www.christmasfarm.org.uk. Env.-links: CSA
  - Products: Traditionally reared rare-breed beef, pork, lamb, pork, liver, poultry, game, water buffalo. Gluten-free sausages, pates and pies. Organic free-range eggs. Open 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat.

- Dew’s Meadow Farm
  - Contact: Jane & Andrew Bowler, Oxford Rd, East Hanney, Oxon OX12 8HP. T: 01235 866834
  - Products: Pig farmers since 1978, supplying traditional home-produced pork, bacon, sausages, pork, pies. Award-winning dry-cured bacon, and gluten-free products. Shop open 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 6pm–9pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun. Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Pewsey, Marlborough, local caterers and retailers.

- Down Barn Farm
  - Contact: Mrs Penny Reid, Sparsholt Down, Wantage OX12 9XO. T: 01367 820272. E: pendomeffect@aol.com
  - Env.-links: Org., WMP
  - Products: Organic beef and pork (Beef Shorthorn cattle and Tamworth pigs) on 100 acre farm. Horse livery and escorted rides on Downs. Providing agro-tourism via bed & breakfast/dinner for Ridgeway National Trail visitors.

- Eastbrook Farms Organic Meat
  - Contact: Debbie Sharps, Eastbrook Farm, Cues Lane, Bishophot, Swindon SN6 8PL. T: 01793 790460. www.helenbrowningorganic.co.uk
  - Env.-links: Org.

- Greenfield Pork Products
  - Contact: Martin and Dawn Mantindale, Sunnyside, Highbury Road, Anna Valley, Andover SP11 7LU. T: 01264 339422. E: martinanddawn@greenfield-pork.co.uk

- Hampshire Game
  - Contact: Janet Lane, Pollards Farm, Claville, Andover SP11 9JE. T: 01264 730294/07719 613906. www.hampshiregame.co.uk
  - Products: Oven-ready game. Trading since mid 1970s.
  - Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets

- Kiln Meadows Farm
  - Contact: Gordon Hodges, Cox’s Lane, Milford, Reading RG7 3JU. T: 0118 971 2138
  - Products: Prize quality beef from pedigree Highland cattle. All beef hang on bone for three weeks to maximise flavour and tenderness. Visit by appointment.
  - Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Newbury.

- Royal Berkshire Pork
  - Contact: Russel Kivilgoten, Tamarisk, Pudding Lane, Brightwalton RG20 1BY. T: 01488 636153. www.royalberkshirepork.co.uk. Env.-links: FAS
  - Products: Accredited RSPCA Freedom Food pig breeder retailing own-brand pork products - sausages, bacon, gammons. Russell farms 40 acres of free-range pigs and is a former Meridian TV Young Entrepreneur of the Year in South-East. Other Outlets: Local shops, supermarkets, caterers. Also Winstone and Sainsbury’s.

- Laverstoke Park Farm
  - Contact: Ted Anderson, Laverstoke Park Farm, Overton RG25 3DR. T: 01256 771571. www.laverstokepark.co.uk
  - Env.-links: Org., Demeter
  - Products: Meat from 2.500 acre organic and bio-dynamic certified farm; beef, wild boar, pork, lamb, pork, poultry, local game, water buffalo. Gluten-free sausages, pates and pies. Organic free-range eggs, buffalo milk, buffalo milk ice-cream (with Jersey cream from Laverstoke herd). Own cheese available end 2007. Butcher’s Shop: Tues-Fri 8am-3.30pm; Sat 8am-4pm. Other Outlets: Online via website and Laverstoke Park Produce, Kings Lane, Sway, Hants, Sat 10am-4pm.

- Northmoor Trust for Countryside Conservation
  - Contact: Rachel Lee, Little Wittenham OX4 4QZ. T: 01865 408196. www.northmoortrust.org.uk
  - Products: Lamb, born and reared on Trust’s farm where animal welfare, wildlife conservation and environmental best practice are given high priority. Visit by appointment. Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets.

- Sandridge Farmhouse Bacon Ltd
  - Contact: Mrs R. Keen, Sandridge Farm, Bromham, nr Chippenham SN5 2LJ. T: 01380 850304. www.sandridgebacon.co.uk
  - Products: Speciality hams, Wiltshire naturally-smoked, and dry-cured bacon and sausages. Home-reared Aberdeen Angus and Hereford beef. Farm Shop open 10am-3pm Tue-Sat. Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Chippenham, Devizes, Wincanton and independent butchers, deli’s and caterers.

- Sheepdrove Organic Farm
  - Contact: Mrs Hayley Smith, Warren Farm, Lambourne RG17 7UU. T: 01488 674747. www.sheepdrove.com
  - Env.-links: WFCP, Bio., WMH, Org., CSA.
  - Products: Award-winning traditional mixed farm producing beef, lamb, mutton, pork and free-range chicken, available through home delivery service. On-site shop on Farm Open Days only. Visit by appointment.

- Other Outlets: Various wholesalers, website, telesales, and Sheepdrove Organic Farm Family Butchers, Bristol and Maida Vale, London.

- Stark House Farm
  - Contact: Mrs Frances Page, Stark House Farm, Gooze Hill, Headley, Thatcham RG19 9AX. T: 01635 268205. E: francispage@ukr.net
  - Env.-links: CSA
  - Products: Rare-breed Saddleback pork, bacon and sausages. Farm sales available, telephone first. Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Newbury, Winchester, Andover.

- Swan Inn (Organic Shop & Restaurant)
  - Contact: Mrs Mary Harris – The Swan Inn Lower Green, Icknpe. RG17 9DX. T: 01488 668326. www.thewaunnin-organics.co.uk
  - Env.-links: Org., FAS, CSA.
  - Products: Village shop, pub and hotel which serves meals cooked using mainly organic ingredients. All meat organic (hung and butchering on premises). Pub meals all week. À la carte restaurant Wed-Sat, Sunday lunch. Shop I am 2.30pm Wed-Fri, I am 3pm weekend.

- W Cumber & Son (Theale)/Rushall Farm
  - Contact: John Bishop, Rushall Farm, Scratchface Lane, Bradfield RG7 6DL. T: 01189 744547. www.rushallfarm.org.uk
  - Env.-links: WFCP, Bio., WMH Org., FAS, CSA.
  - Products: 350-hectare farm, producing organic lamb, beef. Provides educational environmental visits through the John Simonds Trust and Open Days including lambing, bluebell walks and family events. Other Outlets: Farm sales, Wickworth Farm Shop, Cumbers Farm Shop, Marsham.

EAT UP! WITH TRUST!

The National Trust has a new Food Policy which means that all food in its tearooms and restaurants is locally produced whenever possible. So, don’t be surprised if you visit Trust properties at The Vineyard near Basingstoke or Basildon Park near Pangbourne and you discover you are eating or drinking produce listed in this product Directory.
41 England Garden Centre
Contact: Miss Janet Smith, The Street, England; T: 0168 9364998
Products: Charity-run garden centre providing training for people with disabilities. Provides high quality bedding and herbaceous plants etc. Open 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 12pm-4pm Sun May & June.

42 Flower Farmers
Contact: Bob Anderson, Carvers Hill Farm, Shalbourne, Marlborough SN8 2JQ T: 01672 870782 www.wildflowerfarmers.com
Em-link: FAS, CSA

43 Meadowmakers
Contact: Sue Everett, 122 Derwent Road, Thatcham RG19 1JU T: 01635 847164
Em-link: Locals' Guide to Supplying Nat. Flora
Products: Wild-harvested seed, by contract only, for recreating native grassland (lowland meadow/caulcareous grassland); consultancy for Farm Environment Plans & Environmental Stewardship.

44 Wanborough Herb Nursery
Contact: Bob & Peter Biggs, Wanborough Herb Nursery, Callas Hill, Upper Wanborough, Swindon SN4 0AE T: 01793 790227 E: biggs@wanbherbnursery.fsnet.co.uk
Products: Retail display with nursery displaying promoting interest in herbs and their uses. Also unusual or forgotten plants. Site chemically free since 1983. Garden design service. Other Outlets: Farmers' Markets, shows, garden club talks.

45 Archers Country Chutneys
Contact: Jane Archer, Tanglewood, 1 Emm Close, Baydon, Marlborough SN8 2JQ T: 01672 540534
Products: Gold Award-winning sauces and chutneys, (Guild of Fine Food Retailers ‘Great Taste’ Awards) all using Jane's personally-developed natural recipes. Locally-grown produce used, where possible. No artificial additives, colourings or preserves used. Other Outlets: Farm shops, butchers, and independent local retailers.

46 Atkins & Potts
Contact: Nicola Young, Unit 3, Studland Est, Gore End Rd, Ball Hill, Newbury RG20 8PV T: 01635 241249 www.atkinsandpotts.com

47 Church Lane Food Company
Contact: Jim Semynly, 15 Church Lane, Wallingford OX10 0DX T: 01491 833320 Products: Environmentally-aware producer of homemade traditional fruit and vegetable preserves, jams, jellies, marmalade, chutneys. Most ingredients grown locally, without chemicals. Visit by appointment. Other Outlet: Wallingford Farmers' Market.

48 Lizzie's Larder
Contact: Liz Barlow, 2 Ashen Kenn, Ruskinbury Road, Wallingford RG7 9TU T: 01488 689450 E: lizzy@lizbardenbess.com
Products: Handmade jams, marmalades, chutneys and quiches made in small batches, where possible from home-grown or local produce. Other Outlet: Local shops, shows, markets and monthly volunteer lunches.

49 Rosemary's Preserves & Highgate Jams
Contact: Rosemary & John Tuck, Highgate Farm, Wootton Bassett SN4 6DT T: 01793 859999 E: tuck.highgate@btconnect.com
Products: Wide range of homemade jams, chutneys, marmalades and jellies, also apple juice and elderflower cordial. As much local AONB fruit and ingredients used as possible. Contract Service to press, pasteurize and battle juices from surplus fruit. Visit by appointment. Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets in Wootton Bassett, Marlborough (also Marlborough Arts & Crafts, St. Peter’s Church), Wanborough, Chippenham, Devizes and Swindon.

50 Susie’s Preserves
Contact: Sue Kessett, Cold Ash Farm, Long Lane, Hermitage, Newbury RG18 9LT T: 0790 9993535 www.susiespreserves.co.uk
Products: Hand-cooked chutneys, jams, jellies, marmalades using original recipes created by Susie Kessett and, where possible, using local AONB ingredients. Other Outlets: Village and farm shops, butchers, delicatessens, healthfood shops, selected craft and country shows. Order online via website.

51 SILK & HONEY

52 Newbury and District Beekeepers
Contact: Mike Oliver, Gate Cottage, Forge Hill, Hampstead Norreys RG18 0TE T: 01635 201470 www.newburydistrictbees.beekeepers.btinternet.co.uk Products: Local honey and hive products in Newbury and Wantage areas. Produce sold through local shops, shows, fêtes, etc.

53 Whitchurch Silk Mill
Contact: Stephen Bryer, 28 Winchester St, Whitchurch RG28 7AL T: 01256 821625 www.whitchurchsilkmill.co.uk Products: 200-year-old water mill on River Test weaving silk on historic machinery. Self service tearoom offering range of cakes and sandwiches. Picnickers welcome. Shop sells unique silk gifts, accessories. Open 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, except Christmas. Last admission 4.15pm.

54 Wood & Trees

55 Geordie Medlin Woodwork
Contact: George Medlin, The Medlin Workshop, Little Hidden Farm, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX12 1HU T: 01256 895346 E: hoveyge@hotmail.com

56 Highclose Farm Shop
Contact: Shop Manager, Bath Rd, Hungerford RG17 8SP T: 01488 689070 www.highclosefarmshop.co.uk Products: Wide range of soft fruit and vegetables in season. Farm shop open: 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun. (N.B. seasonal changes). Other outlet: Farmers’ Markets at Newbury, Reading.

If you would like a FREE listing in our next Product Directory, telephone: 01488 685440 or email: info@northwessexdowns.org.uk www.northwessexdowns.org.uk • for full product details • www.northwessexdowns.org.uk
VEGETABLES

64 Billington Farms
Contact: Tim Billington, Pangfield Farm, Stanford Dingley RG7 6DY
Tel: 0118 715 5849 Email: timberbillington@tiscali.co.uk
Products: Grown from certified organic seed and of English asparagus.
Other Outlets: Wickcroft Farm Shop and local stores.

71 Mappleleaf Watercress
Contact: Alison Brown, ’Parrotts’, Greywell Road, Mapledurwell, Basingstoke RG25 2LS
Tel: 0118 930 5159 (Shop), 0118 930 2532 (out of hours).
Email: alisonbrown@npo.co.uk

74 Northdown Orchard
Contact: Mike Fisher, South Litchfield, Basingstoke RG25 3PB
Tel: 01256 771168 Email: northdownorchard.co.uk
Env.-links: WFCP, WMP, Org., CSA.
Products: Wide range of local produce including home-produced free-range chicken, local beef, organic lamb and mutton, free-range and rare breed pork, delicatesse, award-winning local cheeses, cakes, bread, wines, beers etc. Open 9am-6pm Wed-Sat.

Woodborough Garden Centre
Contact: Alison Parker, Nursery Farm, Woodborough, nr Pewsey SN9 5PF
Tel: 01672 852149
www.woodboroughgardencentre.co.uk
Products: PYO fruit, vegetables and daffodils at nursery April - Oct. Garden centre with coffee shop. Plants, shrubs etc. Open 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun.
Other Outlets: Fruit sold at Pewsey Farmers’ Market.

OTHER OUTLETS

67 Little Hidden Farm
Contact: Bill & Sue Acockworth, Little Hidden Farm, Hungerford RG17 0PN
Tel: 01488 683333 www.littlehiddendefarm.co.uk
Env.-links: WFCP, WMP, Org., FAS, CSA.
Products: Mixed organic farm integrating products and services with rural environment. Beef, lamb, honey, wildflower seed/plants, mature trees, hedge-laying, conservation and schools’ education services. Open seven days a week, by appointment.

68 Old Farm Shop
Contact: Mrs Caroline Tyler, Milton Hill, Rowstock OX4 4DP
Tel: 01235 831247 E: Theoldfarmshop@aol.com
Products: Spray and chemical free produce. Own fruit, vegetables, meat, cakes, bread, pies, jams. Free-range eggs. Local cheese, honey, veggie box delivery service. PYO site. Animals to feed, visits on farm (9am-5pm).
Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Didcot, Wantage, Wallingford.

70 Pang Valley Organics
Contact: Brian and Anna Goodenough, Elrig Farm, Hermitage RG18 9XR
Tel: 01635 200021 E: alppingfarm@clara.co.uk
Env.-links: WFCP, Bio., Org., FAS.
Products: Rears and sells own organic beef, lamb and chicken. Farm shop also sells fresh organic vegetables and other organic goods. 9am-1pm Wed/Fri/Sat.
Other Outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Hermitage, Aldworth.

73 Tolhurst Organic Produce
Contact: Ian Tolhurst - West Lodge, Hardwick, Whitchurch-on-Thames, Pangbourne RG8 7RA
Tel: 0118 934 4288 E: hotolhurstorganic@yahoo.co.uk
Env.-links: WFCP, Bio., Org., CSA.

74 Yatesbury Organic Farm
Contact: Richard Garrett, GR Garrett & Son, Yatesbury House Farm, nr Calne SN11 8YF
Tel: 01672 539191 www.yatesbury.net
Env.-links: WFCP, Bio., Org., FAS, CSA.

LOCALLY PRODUCED?
Are you buying locally grown produce? Is that restaurant meal you are eating fresh from the farm? The simplest way to find out is to Just Ask.

As part of its centenary celebrations, the Country Land & Business Association (CLA) is promoting the Just Ask campaign, encouraging people to question the source of the food they eat.

Caroline Ramsey, CLA local field officer for the south-west explained: “The Just Ask campaign helps protect and create local jobs. It keeps money in our own communities and will encourage people to find and eat the freshest, most traceable and in-season produce.”

North Wessex Downs chef Mike Robinson from The Pot Kín, Frilsham, Berkshire is one of many leading chefs joining the campaign, which aims to put more fresh, seasonal and locally-produced food on pub and restaurant menus.

Contact: www.cla.org.uk

UP! MARKET
Modern ‘marketing’ isn’t all stylish logos, consumer surveys and advertising campaigns. Within the North Wessex Downs AONB and its surrounding areas, Farmers’ Markets provide a form of ‘marketing’ that has been popular in the AONB for centuries, while regularly ‘bringing home the bacon’ for all concerned.

Farmers’ Markets not only represent an important commercial activity for many producers listed in our Product Directory, but they also give consumers the opportunity to buy fresh, local produce and support the rural economy.

Farmers’ Markets are held every month normally starting at 8.30am-9am and through till lunchtime (1.30pm). In Hampshire* farmers’ markets run from 10am - 2pm. Most markets are overseen by local authorities and markets’ associations but some are independently run (*)

Farmers’ Markets are held at:
- Abingdon (Old Station Yard) - 3rd Monday of month
- Andover* (High Street) - 3rd Sunday
- Basingstoke* (Top of Town) - every other 1st Sunday (February onwards)
- Calne (Pippin Car Park) - 2nd Saturday (contact Jean Pocock 01249 740202)
- Chippenham (Market Place) - 2nd Tuesday
- Devizes (Market Place) - 1st Saturday
- Didcot (Orchard Centre) - 2nd Saturday
- Hungerford (High Street) - 4th Sunday
- Lacock (Manger Barn) - 3rd Saturday (10am - 2pm)
- Marlborough (Jubilee Rooms) - 2nd Saturday, 1.30pm - 3.30pm (contact Jo Ripley 01672 513950)
- Newbury (Market Place) - 1st Sunday 10am - 1.30pm
- Pewsey (Bouvier Hall) - 2nd Thursday (contact Nick Venters 01672 810257)
- Purley-on-Thames (Big Barn, Beech Road) - 2nd Saturday
- Reading (Cattle Market) - 1st and 3rd Saturday (8.30am -noon)
- Swindon - (Canal Walk) 2nd Friday
- Swindon - (Old Town, Godwin Court) last Friday
- Swindon - (The Designer Outlets) every Sunday, 10am-4pm (contact Made in Stroud 01453 758060)
- Wantage (Market Square) - last Saturday & Dec 22 (contact Wantage Town Council 01235 763459)
- Wallingford (Market Place) - 3rd Tuesday and 5th Saturday (Pat Hayward 01491 824247)
- Wambourne (Village Hall) - 3rd Saturday, 9am-noon (contact Sue Birley 01793 790438)
- Woolston Bassett (High Street) - 4th Saturday

Some useful contact details:
- Hampshire Farmers' Markets Tel: 01420 586671 Sarah Read www.hampshirefarmersmarkets.co.uk Email: info@hampshirefarmersmarkets.co.uk
- Thames Valley Farmers’ Market Co-operative Ltd (All markets FARMA certified) Tel: 0870 241 4762 Ceinwen Lally www.tvfm.org.uk Email: info@tvfm.org.uk
- Wiltshire Farmers’ Market Association Tel: 07775 614790 www.wiltshirefarmersmarkets.org.uk Email: info@wiltshirefarmersmarkets.org.uk
- National Farmers’ Retail and Markets Association (FARMA), FARMA is the result of the merger between the Farm Retail Association and the National Association of Farmers’ Markets in 2003. FARMA Inspects and certifies farm retail and farmers’ markets. The Greenhouse, PO Box 575, Southampton, SO15 7BZ. Tel: 0845 45 88 410 www.farmar.org.uk www.farmersmarkets.net www.farmeshopping.com
BRITISH FRUIT GETS A TASTEFUL REVIVAL

Kintbury-born Debbie Hearn is definitely not on a fruitless quest. She has founded The Big Little Fruit Campaign, which aims to rediscover the edible pleasures of forgotten fruits, the aromatic appeal of ancient apples, the mouth-watering magic of overlooked medlars, the beautiful taste of berries, and the culinary qualities of thousands of fruit varieties that nowadays seldom reach the kitchen table.

"I was the tenth child of twelve and fruit and veg from the garden was an important factor in feeding the family. I grew very used to handling and cooking fruit, and was always very keen to sample different fruits and discover new tastes. Today though, there is far less opportunity for people to enjoy the full range of British fruit," explains Debbie, a member of the Guild of Food Writers, now living in Woolton Hill, near Newbury.

Most supermarkets are preoccupied with appearance and shelf-life and this has led to mass-farming of fewer specific varieties of fruit - at the expense of many, often more tasty. British varieties, Debbie says, "There are hundreds of fruits out there, just waiting to be tasted, or cooked. It's good fruit; it's merely neglected. We need to rediscover it, create awareness and make it available."

"If you have ever tried cooking with a ripe Victoria plum, then compared it with an out-of-season supermarket plum, there are huge variances in taste and quality."

The popularity of Farmers' Markets, local farm shops and organic produce, highlights a growing public search for tastier foods, she believes.

The Big Little Fruit Campaign - highlighting culinary fruits that were big in our past, but are little known today - has already scored some notable successes. Along with national newspaper and TV publicity for the campaign, Debbie has, with the help of the Newbury Weekly News and BBC Radio Berkshire, tracked down several neglected fruit varieties.

Myrobalans (cherry plums), Shepherd's and black bullaces have each been 'rediscovered'. The AONB itself boasts some famous old fruit varieties: Charles Ross apples from Welford Park, Newbury; William's Pear (Aldermaston); Marjorelle's Seedling Plum (Beereham) and Miller's Seedling Apple (Spenn).

"If it's a hardy fruit that grows healthily in the UK climate and soils, then I am interested in it," says Debbie, although she leaves identification of fruits to the experts at Brogdale Horticultural Trust.

The Big Little Fruit Campaign is growing with further TV coverage and tasting events. Contact: www.biglittlefruit.co.uk

READ UP!

...Dine out on us!

Here's your chance to dine out on us, and enjoy the beautiful surroundings of the North Wessex Downs AONB at the same time.

The winners of our competition gain the mouth-watering prize of an AONB Taste-Box full of fresh, local seasonal produce - ideal for a downland picnic, a canal side lunch, or to restore energy levels after a country ramble.

Our Read Up! competition could not be simpler. We've even given you the answers! They are all printed within articles in this issue of UP! So, all you have to do is read the magazine carefully.

During 2007, winners will be selected at random from correct entries received, for Spring, Summer and Winter prizes.

The earlier you enter, the more chance you have of winning - but only one entry per family please.

Simply answer the three questions below and send your answers (marked 'UP! Magazine Competitions'), with your name and address details, to:

By Post The North Wessex Downs AONB Office, Denford Manor, Lower Denford, Hungerford, RG17 0UN,

By Email: info@northwessexdowns.org.uk

By Fax: 01488 680453

Please say if you would like to be kept informed of AONB news and activities. We will then keep your address details on file.

Closure for entries is November 1st, 2007.

The competition winners from our last issue of UP! were: Mr A Dobson from Portsmouth, Mr R A Jenkins from Wantage and Dorothy Marshall from Pangbourne. Each received a box of local produce.
FOR ALL LOVERS OF GOOD FOOD AND DRINK

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www.tvfm.org.uk
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To advertise in future issues of ‘UP!, please contact the North Wessex Downs AONB, T: 01488 685440 or E: info@northwessexdowns.org.uk
Although the North Wessex Downs is famous for its vast sweeping views over rolling arable landscape, it is also blessed with surprisingly rich and varied woodland.

Once, around 300 million years ago, the whole of the North Wessex Downs was covered by a dense tropical forest. Today, although you can still see palms and banana trees at The Living Rain Forest near Hampstead Norreys, and ‘Christmas’ trees a plenty cultivated as a crop by Yattendon Estates, the vast majority of our trees consist of native British species such as oak, beech, ash, birch, holly, aspen, willow, yew, hazel and hawthorn.

Some like the elm have suffered through disease; others like the wild service tree remain relatively rare. However, through the Woodland Accord, recently agreed between the Forestry Commission and the North Wessex Downs AONB, the importance of the conservation and management of all our trees and woodlands has become increasingly high profile.

There are several reasons for this:

**Wildlife** - Trees and woodlands provide homes, habitat, food and refuge to thousands of lifeforms from micro-organisms to mice, bats to badgers, and scarce species such as the Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly and Barbastelle and Greater Horseshoe bats.

**Archaeological heritage** - While ancient buildings and earthworks in open countryside are well-researched, the historical knowledge of and within woodlands is sparse, and many veteran trees remain unprotected.

**Leisure** - Woodlands provide important opportunities for walking, riding and shooting. We need these activities to live in harmony with woodland life and the practical management of these areas.

**Climate Change** - As part of photosynthesis, trees and woodland plants absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, while releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere - which helps to counteract manmade carbon emissions that lead to climate change.

The North Wessex Downs AONB team is currently involved with a number of projects involving woodland, for which nearly half has either national or local designation for its wildlife value.

LIVING ANCIENT MONUMENTS

If you go down to the woods today… you may be surprised to meet some of the oldest living residents of the North Wessex Downs - trees.

Old gnarled oaks that stood when deer ran by pursued by a Royal hunt, youthful yew trees born in Tudor times, holly that has decorated countless Christmases and survived the Little Ice Age of the 1600s, magnificent sweet chestnuts whose fruits may have fed thousands of forest folk throughout the centuries – what tales they could tell, if only they could speak.

Well, in a way they can - if you are able to ‘read’ trees and understand the features of a forest.

Some people will look at woodland and ‘won’t see the wood for the trees’; others will see distinctive features, childhood memories, woodland management, and local history.

Dick Greenaway, for example, a member of the Ancient Tree Hunt and a keen conservation volunteer with the Friends of the Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Valleys, can ‘read’ trees.

“[That veteran chestnut tree has been pollarded for many years, its branches cut down well above the reach of deer and cows that would have been grazed in this wood by the local people. Some animals will walk a long way to graze a fresh tree shoot’]

**HOW GREEN FINGERS AND HALOS ARE HELPING US SEE THE WOODS FOR THE TREES**

“Commoners had the right to use the woods and lop branches, but only the Lord of the Manor could cut down a tree. The wood would have been good for fencing and..."

**“Of all the trees that grow so fair, Old England to adorn, Greater is none beneath the sun, Than Oak, and Ash, and Thorn. Yew that is old in churchyard-mould, He breedeth a mighty bow. Alder for shoes do wise men choose, And beech for cups also. But when ye have killed, and your bowl is spilled, And your shoes are clean outworn, Back ye must speed for all that ye need, To Oak, and Ash, and Thorn! Sing Oak, and Ash, and Thorn, good sirs (All of a Midsummer morn)! England shall bide till Judgement Tide, By Oak, and Ash, and Thorn!”**

An extract from A Tree Song by Rudyard Kipling
firewood, and the nuts would have been a valuable source of food. By the size of it, I can tell that the tree is about 300 years old - a youngster really, but a Veteran for the Future if we look after it,” explained Dick during a scrub-clearing day at Ashampstead Common.

Wood was a vital commodity in ancient communities for building, fencing and firewood, explains Dick, a member of the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners, but it was also valuable for other uses. Alder provided good clogs, piles for wet areas, and the best charcoal for gunpowder. The hardwood ash tree made good tool handles; beech made wooden cups and bowls; the evergreen yew made the best bows; while sycamore wood was used for dairying tools since it doesn’t taint milk.

**Your chance to log history**

The North Wessex Downs team is co-ordinating a Woodland Archaeology Project in the AONB and running free training sessions for people who would like to help with the exploring, recording, and mapping of ancient features hidden in our woods.

The tree canopy makes it impossible to undertake aerial photographic surveys or spot banks and mounds that may reveal an interesting heritage, so on-site visits are required.

Owners of woodlands are invited to become involved in this historical audit, which can assist woodland management planning.

Volunteer ‘auditors’ are also sought. So, if you would like to enjoy a woodland walk with a purpose, research local records, or know the background to any local woodland features, we’d like to hear from you.

Just contact Heather White on 01488 685440 or via heatherwhite@northwessexdowns.org.uk

**HOMES FOR LIFE**

Veteran trees are also venerable - worthy of our respect, care and conservation. Though they may look past their best (and so might we, if we had a lifespan of thousands of years like the yew tree!) the majority play host to a rich community of other lifeforms which might not survive without them.

Trees are the rural equivalent of urban high-rise flats. Life goes on at all woodland levels. Each tree supports its own community and provides an important link in the wildlife food-chain. Some trees play key roles in the breeding pattern of wildlife species.

Even dead, standing or fallen trees provide useful homes and food sources for wildlife such as, fungi (see below), beetles, and hibernating animals.

**VETERAN TREES GET HALOS**

Light and air provides the freedom to grow in woodland - the trouble is that all plants and trees want that freedom. The battle for sunlight starts at ground level with seedlings and continues in the treetops for veteran trees.

To help the old trees survive, woodland volunteers cut back less important surrounding scrub and competing trees to create a halo in the sky around the tree canopy of the selected veteran. The ground-clearing also allows woodland flowers such as bluebells and anemones to flourish.

**GREEN UP!**

Every year Swindon holds its great green family event: The Great Western Community Forest Festival. Stacked full of woodcraft and rural heritage demonstrations, musical and dance displays and local food, the event is fun-packed for all the family - and it is all free! This year the Forest Festival is being held at The Lawn, Old Town on Saturday, 1 September, 10am -5pm.

Contacts: www.forestry.gov.uk • www.forestweb.org.uk
www.woodland-trust.org.uk • www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk
www.pangandkennetvalleys.org.uk • www.british-trees.com

**URBAN GREEN FINGERS LEAD TO WOODLAND LEISURE**

Modern urban development in Swindon and the rural woodland of the North Wessex Downs may seem an unlikely partnership but thanks to the Great Western Community Forest a winning combination has been created.

The GWCF project is one of 12 Community Forests in England and aims to link people to the countryside and provide high quality wooded settings in the urban fringe. The underlined words are small but important, since the GWCF has established rural routes that stretch forwards like ‘green fingers’ to central Swindon and provide a physical link between town and country.

It is now possible for Swindon residents to walk or cycle from their homes and quickly find a tree-lined pathway that will guide them to the countryside or let them travel across the town, woodland setting to woodland setting, among the six forests on their doorsteps.

Swindon, with its railway heritage, has actually benefited from Dr. Beeching’s rail-line closures of the 1960s. Disused tracks converted to pathways have formed the basis for the GWCF extended network of rural links today. Many join existing AONB cycle routes and rambler’s trails - for those with the energy to travel further afield!

For example, GWCF, in association with Sustrans, has established Timberland Trails into the North Wessex Downs AONB from Coate Water Country Park to Wroughton and Chiseldon, the latter crossing the M4 via a ‘curly-whirly’ footbridge which enables wheelchair access. The Trails also join National Cycle Route 45, which links Salisbury Marlborough, Swindon and Gloucester.

“ Apart from good planning and environmental sensitivity, the key reason for our success is community involvement,” says Jon Wilshaw, Projects Manager for the Community Forest team. “We have gained the commitment of local residents, farmers, land owners and businesses to an active Swindon, and specifically the “Woodland for Activity” programme promoting healthy living.

Better access to woodland and the countryside has been achieved with the involvement of more than 200 community groups, the assistance of 100 farmers, and the environmental education of 25,000 schoolchildren. The result is the creation of more than 250km of new or improved access routes and the planting of over one million trees to enhance the landscape.
THINGS ARE LOOKING UP!

Darkness at night is one of the things that make the countryside special. Some of the darkest places in the south of England - making them better for viewing night skies - lie within the North Wessex Downs.

But for many years the encroachment of urbanisation has led to the disappearance of large areas of that darkness, and with it our view of beautiful stars and planets.

Now, thanks to Section 102 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, light pollution has become a Statutory Nuisance.

The North Wessex Downs AONB has been a long-term local supporter of the reduction of light pollution. Retention of dark night skies is a policy within the North Wessex Downs Management Plan.

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In 2003, the Campaign to Protect Rural England began the Night Blight! campaign in conjunction with the British Astronomical Association and the Campaign for Dark Skies.

“We believe that light should only shine where it is needed and wanted, and nowhere else. Thanks to the new law, some people will at last be able to take action if their lives are being blighted by selfish, wasteful use of light. But the only logical long-term solution is to design light pollution out of our lives,” said Tom Oliver, Head of Rural Policy at CPRE.

CPRE hopes to secure strong planning policy on light pollution with the drafting of the forthcoming Annex to the Government’s planning policy on pollution control.

Fiona Newcombe, Director of the North Wessex Downs AONB team said: “Light pollution is not only a visible waste of resources - hundreds of millions of pounds worth of electricity is wasted through poor lighting - it also contributes to global warming.”

She added: “The North Wessex Downs AONB is not only beautiful during the day. Our night skies are among the best in the UK. Get out at night to the hills around Marlborough, Pewsey, Inkpen and Lambourn and enjoy the stars and the ancient darkness of the countryside.”

Contacts: www.cpre.org.uk
www.britastro.org/dark-skies

Satellite data obtained from US Air Force weather satellites, in 1993 and 2000, show that light pollution is spreading into new areas of countryside and increasing in developed areas.

CELEBRATE 1,000

Happy birthday Oxfordshire! Formed around 1007, it is the only county in England to boast three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Much of the ancient landscape of The Ridgeway and the Vale of the White Horse lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB and also in Oxfordshire. The area witnessed battles between the Vikings and Saxons, and King Alfred the Great was born in Wantage before Oxfordshire was created.

Now, a millennium later, Oxfordshire will be celebrating in some style with special events throughout 2007 - many of them free - highlighting the huge range of cultural experiences the county has to offer in arts, sport, science, food and the environment.

Contact: www.oxfordshire2007.com

QUIET SUCCESS

Walkers, cyclists and horse riders were given an autumn boost when the Government published its Regulations on ‘Quiet Lanes’.

Under the Transport Act (2000), local highway authorities have been able to designate minor rural roads, for which they are responsible, as ‘Quiet Lanes’.

Following this latest guidance, local authorities will be able to progress work with their communities and take action to create pleasant, less intimidating and safer country road networks for the benefit of all users.

Designated rural ‘Quiet Lanes’ pay special attention to the needs of walkers, cyclists and horse riders, and reduce the problems that the volume and speed of traffic, and the presence of heavy lorries, can cause. Motorised traffic is not banned from ‘Quiet Lanes’, but shared use and consideration for other road users is paramount.

It is estimated that traffic levels will have increased by 30% between 2000-2010.

THANKS GO TO OUR FUNDING SUPPORTERS

The Council of Partners of the North Wessex Downs AONB draws representation from 11 local authorities, Natural England and 16 other members representing farming and rural business, tourism, recreation, heritage and archaeology, the natural environment and community interests.

We would like to thank the Council of Partners for its strong and consistent support and in particular Natural England, Hampshire County Council, Basingstoke and Deane, and Vale of White Horse District Council for their help with this issue of UP!-on the North Wessex Downs magazine.

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FOCUSING ON A NATURAL ENGLAND

Last October a new governing body - Natural England - was launched ‘to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.’

Natural England is formed from English Nature, the Landscape, Access and Recreation elements of the Countryside Agency and the environmental land management functions of the Rural Development Service. Natural England also takes on the national role of management of AONB’s strategies.

The combining of resources, skills and knowledge under one body, enables Natural England to focus on delivering four strategic outcomes:

- A healthy natural environment
- Enjoyment of the natural environment
- Sustainable use of the natural environment
- A secure environmental future

There is greater focus on the regional role of AONBs (although set within a national core-funding framework) with the promotion of AONBs as landscapes that provide a range of national functions, such as socio-economic, sustainable development, and recreational.

Natural England aims to build stronger relationships between AONBs and associated local authorities to assist the delivery of project-based work. Being an evidence and target based organisation, Natural England assesses project performance values closely.

“Clearly there are strong links between Natural England’s major outcomes and day-to-day activity of AONBs in delivering their primary purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty,” commented Fiona Newcombe, Director of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

THE WHITE HORSE WINS BY A COAT OF PAINT

The Uffington White Horse in the North Wessex Downs was the favourite painting of visiting delegates at Europarc 2006 - which made schoolgirl artist Maddie Cullen (and us!) very happy.

Like all the other Oxfordshire schoolchildren, Maddie, aged 9, from Holy Trinity School, Chipping Norton had been asked to paint or draw their favourite view in the county for the Europarc art competition.

She chose the downs of The White Horse, and her artistic skills won her the top 8-11 age-group* prize of £70 and a year’s free membership to Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (see picture, right).

The Europarc 2006 environmental conference promoting conservation and protected area management came to England for the first time in over 20 years and attracted over 300 delegates from 30 countries, representing 164 organisations.

The theme for Europarc 2006, staged in Oxford (September 20-24) was ‘Living, working landscapes’ and outside the main conference proceedings this was practically explored through site visits to each of the three hosts - the Cotswolds, Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs.

The North Wessex Downs arranged site visits to The World Heritage Site at Avebury; the Great Western Community Forest south of Swindon; The Northmoor Trust near Little Wittenham (picture left), the White Horse of Uffington, and the Lockinge Estate near Wantage.

*The 5-7 age group winner Shakira More (7) of Headington Prep. School painted the Chiltern Hills

MEETING UP!

Landscapes and wildlife habitats don’t end at AONB boundaries and neither does our work.

For the first time, members of the managing bodies of The Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs and their senior staff, met at their shared border along the River Thames between Reading and Wallingford. The historic meeting took place on the Thames bridge linking Goring and Streatley.

Having posed for posterity (left), the two AONB teams spent the rest of the day exploring ways of working together to enhance the beautiful protected landscapes for which they care. “We share much more than a boundary with the Chilterns,” said Sir Charles Nunneley, Chairman of the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners “Together we can do more, and more effectively, than we could on our own.”
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

£72,000 from the North Wessex Downs Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has been distributed to local schemes that reveal the past, protect the present and enhance the future of the AONB.

FUNDING THAT SPANS THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS

SDF grants made to the dozen deserving causes and projects, range from £850 to more than £16,000 and cover diverse schemes from parish plans to improving butterfly habitats. Although vastly different in scope and nature, the schemes have one thing in common: they all benefit the North Wessex Downs.

The projects awarded grants are:

- **North Wessex Downs Local Geodiversity Action Plan**: £16,200 awarded to Oxfordshire Geology Trust. This project fulfils a key action in the Management Plan by building a picture of the geodiversity resource across the whole of the North Wessex Downs. The Action Plan will be launched at a conference (see Rocky Future news opposite page).

- **Grazing animals**: £7,550 awarded to Berks, Bucks and Oxon group of FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group) to collate, monitor and promote information about numbers, types and effects of animals grazing high priority chalk grasslands and promote www.sheepkeep.co.uk.

- **Building new amenities and fresh lives**: £4,720 awarded to BTCV Wiltshire to assist its Summer Challenge project for young people experiencing social exclusion. The youngsters helped build canal-side resources - and their personal skills - while travelling along the Kennet & Avon Canal. (see K&A news on opposite page).

- **Berkshire Earth Heritage**: £5,000 awarded to Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre working on behalf of the Berkshire RIGS Group. (see Stony Road news on opposite page).

- **Fuels and a future from Savernake Forest**: £5,471 awarded to Richmond Fellowship, Marlborough working with BTCV and Forestry Commission to coppice sweet chestnut, open up the old Charcoal Burners Ride, and produce charcoal for sale at market and other public events.

- **Countryside Education**: £10,950 awarded to Hampshire Country Learning to provide CEVAS training for farmers and managers who want to open their farms for educational visits. Also to run in-school sessions (with the Soil Association) linked to on-farm visits, and to improve information for teachers on a new education section of www.northwessexdowns.org.uk.

- **Parish Plans - publication and dissemination**: £850 each awarded to Kintbury Parish Council and Bucklebury Parish Council to produce plans containing policies and actions relating to the conservation and enhancement of the North Wessex Downs.

- **Avebury World Heritage Site Residents’ Pack**: £9,691 awarded to Kennet District Council to research, write, publish and disseminate a comprehensive information pack about issues connected with living and working in the WHS while looking after its very special values. (See Residents make front page news on opposite page).

- **Boosting Butterflies**: £8,065 awarded to Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Valleys Countryside Project (FWAG) to research, collate and map butterfly data in key areas of North Wessex Downs remnant chalk grassland in order to prioritise habitat restoration work.

- **Yatesbury Organic Farm leaflet**: £975 awarded to the Soil Association to design and produce a leaflet about Yatesbury Organic Farm, Wiltshire, one of the farms involved in the Countryside Education project.

- **Flavours of the Thames Valley**: £1,000 awarded to Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire Food Groups to support the trade show, Flavours of the Thames Valley, held at Chieveley Village Hall, near Newbury. Wiltshire and Hampshire producers had stands at the event attended by prospective buyers including chefs and retailers from all over the North Wessex Downs.

**APPLY NOW FOR 2007 GRANTS!**

Grant applications are already being received for the 2007 SDF Scheme so make sure your pet project or village venture gets considered for financial assistance this year. Schemes that address community-based actions from the North Wessex Downs Management Plan are preferred but any innovative, sustainable project that boosts the AONB is welcomed.

For more information about SDF grants, guidelines and the application procedure view the North Wessex Downs website: www.northwessexdowns.org.uk or call the SDF Co-ordinator on 01488 680456.
TRACKING A STONY ROAD…

Down at Spooky Hollow near the edge of Snelsmore Common in West Berkshire people bearing poles, boards and bright yellow tape crouch among the ancient rocks calling out strange words and numbers.
No, not some odd Druid ceremony or protest group, but volunteers who are helpfully measuring and mapping the earth heritage of the North Wessex Downs.

During 2006, Lesley Dunlop from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre led groups of volunteers on field trips to record the geology and natural landscape of the AONB, rocks, stones, and soils that give distinctive character to villages and specific areas each came under their scrutiny and were recorded.

“It’s difficult to take in, but you can walk down the hill from Snelsmore Common car park to Spooky Hollow and as you descend, barely 100 metres in height, you are actually walking back 100 million years in history,” says Lesley.

The plateau gravel at the top of the hill was deposited two million years ago during the Ice Age Quaternary period, she explains. Descending past the Tertiary ‘London Clay’ of 55 million years ago, the chalk of Spooky Hollow is reached, which the skeletons of ancient and microscopic sea creatures created during the Upper Cretaceous period, around 100 million years previously.

Over the years, rainfall running off the acidic peat soils on the hillside has gathered and reacted with the alkaline chalk to create the distinctive hollows, bowl shaped copse and boggy dips in the area.

“Want to know more about Earth Heritage? Call Lesley Dunlop on 01993 814147 or e-mail: lesley.dunlop@oxfordshire.gov.uk

WORKING THINGS OUT ON THE KENNET & AVON CANAL

Groups of young people sampled working life and leisure on the Kennet & Avon Canal throughout last summer and brought conservation and community benefits to canal-side sites between Devizes and Hungerford.
Fishing platforms for All Cannings, access improvements for wheelchair and pushchair users, new picnic benches at Crofton, and nesting boxes for owls were among several construction projects undertaken by the youngsters, led by members of BTCV.

The Summer Challenge programme, supported by a North Wessex Downs SDF grant, not only brought together several groups of young people from troubled backgrounds but combined the resources of BTCV, The Trident Trust and Connections, Youth Action Wiltshire, Wiltshire Young Carers Strategy, Amber Connections, Youth Action Wiltshire, BTCV.

For All Cannings, access improvements for wheelchair and pushchair users, new picnic benches at Crofton, and nesting boxes for owls were among several construction projects undertaken by the youngsters, led by members of BTCV.

While the efforts and skills of the youngsters, travelling in a narrow boat along the canal, provided fresh facilities for others, the tranquillity of their rural surroundings also enabled the young workers to relax, make new friends, and take time out to think about their lives and discuss their concerns.

Some of the youngsters had never been on a canal before; others had rarely been out of an urban environment.

HOLD THE FRONT PAGE!

Avebury residents created their own front-page news when they added a human ring to the ancient stone rings at the World Heritage Site.
The aerial picture will appear on the front page of the new SDF-funded Avebury Residents’ Information Pack.

...PLANNING FOR A ROCKY FUTURE

What lies under our feet? How did the chalk and flint get there? Will the sand wash away?
Oxfordshire Geology Trust is producing a Local Geodiversity Action Plan (LGAP) for the whole of the North Wessex Downs AONB, to provide a framework for the conservation, management and promotion of geodiversity in the future.

“Geodiversity represents the whole of our geological and geomorphological heritage,” explains Jane Worrall who is leading the project.
“…This includes the rocks and stones which have shaped the nature of our villages, the soils which influence our farming practices, the exposed rocks and fossils, and the landscapes which are unique to the North Wessex Downs.”

LGAP objectives will focus on geodiversity as a resource for everyone to benefit from and enjoy, and importantly, how it can all be sustained for the future.

Consultation meetings in Marlborough and Hungerford have already taken place and the project will continue well into 2007.

Contact: Jane Worrall on 07761 095570
**CPRE values landscapes and countryside character – join us today**

Our countryside will vanish forever unless we fight for it!

CPRE believes in protecting our countryside and revitalizing our towns

To contact CPRE call:
- Berkshire: 0118 930 6756
- Hampshire: 01962 843655
- Wiltshire: 01380 722157

or visit: www.cpre.org.uk

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- National Rail enquiries – 08457 48 49 50
- Wiltshire Tourism – 0870 240 5599
- www.visitwiltshire.co.uk

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Evolution is not what it used to be. At least, not when it comes to landscapes. Millions of years ago when the North Wessex Downs was covered in sea, woods, sand, or ice it could take millions of years for the landscape to change. Now thanks to one dominant creature - humans - landscapes can change within a generation.

Change of agricultural use of land, the building of homes and roads, extraction of minerals, diversion of a water course, deforestation or tree-planting, and the effects of manmade global warming can each produce dramatic differences to local landscapes.

Fortunately, the North Wessex Downs AONB team are well aware of this revolution in evolution and are working closely with authorities, landowners and local groups to protect landscapes, control unwanted change factors, and promote public awareness.

UP! highlights three projects promoting the future care of our landscapes.

**ONE MAN’S VIEW IS ANOTHER MAN’S OPINION**

From Blewburton Hill, a small, enigmatic rise near Blewbury, the views across the Downs are distant - and different. It depends upon who is taking in the view.

Blewbury Village Society Environment Group has asked botanists, farmers, historians, archaeologists, scientists, artists, photographers, naturalists, authors and poets to give their “view from the hill”, in an innovative landscape project.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, this award-winning project has produced a fascinating and beautiful book that conveys the knowledge and enthusiasm of these various ‘viewpoints’.

“A View from the Hill” gives a deep insight into the downland environment and events of the distant past in an authoritative yet highly readable style.

While emphasising the value of the countryside, the fully illustrated book will raise funds through its sales to preserve and improve the environment around Blewburton Hill, between the River Thames and the ancient Ridgeway.

The book is sold locally or via: [www.blewburtonhill.org.uk](http://www.blewburtonhill.org.uk)

**CHARACTER-BUILDING WORK**

We’ve got some characters within the North Wessex Downs AONB and Melissa Conway knows them all! It’s not that Melissa from West Berkshire Council has a huge contact-book and a phone-bill to match. She just happens to head up the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project funded by an AONB Partnership, which has mapped the differing types of landscape in the North Wessex Downs.

“Over past centuries there has been a significant yo-yoing of the landscape and we have been trying to understand the development of differing land uses, and the factors that caused them. It’s not so much about the history of AONB people, more the history of the land”.

“By gaining this information and data, we can peel back the layers of time and understand the significance of the landscape as a whole.”

This improved understanding will help highlight management priorities for the future, enabling key partners to identify, conserve and improve important cultural landscapes and to enhance the management of individual sites and features which are central to the character of the area, Melissa explained.

Apart from its administrative and research value, the GIS-based landscape character information may also be used in the future to enable ‘interactive rambling’.

“With communication technology advancing so rapidly, it may soon be possible for walkers to access this information while outdoors and discover lots more about the views they are seeing. We’ll need resources to make the data user-friendly, but interactive rambling really isn’t science-fiction,” said Melissa.

**TIMESCAPE - PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE**

Now everyone can discover how landscapes evolve, thanks to Project Timescape which opens to the public this year (from March 31) at Hill Farm, near the landmark Wittenham Clumps in south Oxfordshire.

Inside the Northmoor Trust’s new purpose-built education and visitor centre, the interactive and visual displays reveal all sorts of secrets for inquiring minds of all ages. Project Timescape’s exciting exhibits have been produced by Fast Forward, the company who designed York’s successful Yorvik Centre.

Hands-on activities with Iron Age, Roman and Victorian artefacts are also combined with ecological tours and nature trails around the 300-hectare estate. There is the chance to visit Castle Hill with its Iron Age fort, walk within tranquil woodland and watch the wildlife, zoom in on birds from a hide by the River Thames, and take in the stunning views from Round Hill near the far-seen Wittenham Clump beech trees.

Contact: [www.projecttimescape.co.uk](http://www.projecttimescape.co.uk)
UP 2 U! - AONB views from AONB people

The Countryside Code which helps everyone to respect, protect and enjoy our countryside started life in the 1950s as the Country Code. Since 2004, Creature Comforts characters have helped popularise The Countryside Code.

The Countryside Code advises the public...
- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals - and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people
...and land managers:
- Know your rights, responsibilities and liabilities
- Make it easy for visitors to act responsibly
- Identify possible threats to visitors’ safety

Contact: www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

“If it was up to me...I would make learning The Countryside Code a compulsory lesson in all schools.

Better knowledge of the right way to act in the countryside would be not only a valuable social lesson but it would open the door (or should that be the outdoors?) to a lifetime of contentment for all concerned - and I mean all.

Walking in the countryside is a pleasure which millions of people enjoy every year - although their pleasure, all too often, causes some element of pain to those of us for whom the countryside is our place of work.

Gates left open, trampled crops, distressed livestock, equipment and signs moved or damaged - they are all problems still faced by farmers and landowners.

I’ve got nothing against public access to our wonderful countryside and walkers’ rights to roam on designated country paths - as long as they keep to them - but I just wish everyone would abide by The Countryside Code. Maybe, not enough people actually know what The Code advises - or importantly, why it does so.

Litter can kill livestock, dogs can wreck breeding periods, wandering off paths can damage crops, get you into fields with dangerous animals, or even lose as the weather turns nasty and night closes in.

The countryside is my workplace and I know that I need to treat it with respect for all sorts of reasons. Safety, wildlife conservation, tourism, product standards, pollution, healthy livestock, commercial value - they are all dependent on personal respect for the countryside.

That’s also why maintaining paths, fences and signs for walkers makes sense to farmers and landowners.

However, too few people, I believe, realise that the words ‘Respect. Protect. Enjoy’ on The Countryside Code logo carry a serious message and a veiled warning to everyone who steps outdoors”.

TIM CARSON
Manor Farm, Alton Barnes

* Views expressed in the UP2U! column are not necessarily those of the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners.
* If you have a viewpoint (max. 200 words) on a topic connected with the AONB send it to the NWD AONB Office. Contact details are on Page 3.
* We’ll publish those that we believe provoke constructive debate of AONB issues.

TO BE KING OF THE CASTLE

Lambourn may be The Valley of the Racehorse, but the high chalk downs of Barbury Castle provide the venue for the main equestrian event within the AONB.

For the past two years, alongside its extensive farming interests the Barbury Castle Estate, three miles north-west of Marlborough, has staged the Maybach Barbury Castle CIC™ Horse Trials (pictured left), one of the major championships on the European equestrian calendar.

More than 100 of the world’s top international riders are among the 300-plus competitors who regularly attend the event, which is now ranked alongside Badminton and Burghley as one of Britain’s top events.

Barbury hosts both a CIC™ event - the most advanced horse trials run on a ‘one-day’ format - and a Novice event, resulting in a packed weekend programme of dressage, show-jumping and cross-country competition.

Set in a natural downland amphitheatre near the chalk-carved white horse of Hackpen Hill, the Barbury cross-country circuit provides excellent spectator viewing; it also sets a testing challenge for novice and advanced horses many ridden by established stars. Last year’s competition featured William Fox-Pitt, Andrew Hoy and the eventual winner Polly Stockton.

Diary dates for this year are July 7/8 but meanwhile Barbury Castle also stages point-to-point races, endurance race-riding and leisurely pleasure rides taking in the nearby Ridgeway National Trail and views from the Iron Age fort that gives the area its name.

Contact: www.barburyhorsetrials.co.uk

STUDYING FORM?

The unique association of the North Wessex Downs with the racehorse industry is the subject of an AONB Study.

The jointly-funded study makes recommendations on how the AONB Partnership can meet the need for a sustainable future for the industry and its communities, while helping to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs.

Lambourn is the second most important racehorse centre in Britain, directly employing over 800 people, and generating an annual income of £20m.