Out & About
Enjoy a riverside ramble or brisk hike over the Downs

The Wild Side
Get close to and conserve our beautiful wildlife

Local Products Directory
Where to find the best local produce

Silbury Hill
Secrets of the ancient mound revealed

UP!
ON THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS

WILTSHIRE  OXFORDSHIRE  HAMPSHIRE  WEST BERKSHIRE

A GUIDE TO THE HISTORY, WAYS OF LIFE, ATTRACTIONS AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES OF THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS – AN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

2008
Welcome

Welcome to the 2008 edition of *Up! on the North Wessex Downs*. The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated by government as a protected landscape in 1972 to conserve and enhance its natural beauty.

The North Wessex Downs AONB is the largest in southern England, and stretches from Devizes to Reading, and from Swindon to Basingstoke. It includes the Berkshire, Lambourn, Marlborough, North Hampshire and Oxfordshire Downs, and such wonderful sites as Avebury, the Ridgeway National Trail, the Uffington White Horse and Watership Down. A map on the back cover of this magazine shows its full extent.

The natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB is conserved and enhanced by a wide range of individuals and organisations that come together as a Council of Partners. Members of the Council of Partners include farmers, local communities, nature conservation, archaeology and recreation interests, local authorities and Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

I am privileged to lead the North Wessex Downs AONB team that advises and implements the decisions, policies and activities of the Council of Partners that ensure this wonderful landscape is protected for the future.

This magazine contains a mine of information about the history, and current and future management of the North Wessex Downs, ideas for day-trips and walks, and where to buy food and other products grown and produced here. Please visit our website at www.northwessexdowns.org.uk for the latest news and events.

Fiona Newcombe
Director

Contact us

North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Call: 01488 685440
Email: info@northwessexdowns.org.uk
www.northwessexdowns.org.uk

Produced for the North Wessex Downs AONB Office by Fellows Media Ltd
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“clear waters and high alkaline content offer rich pickings for anglers”

**ANGLING**
The River Kennet and River Lambourn are two of the country’s best chalk streams, and their clear waters and high alkaline content offer rich pickings for anglers. The Environment Agency is incubating salmon eggs on the banks of these rivers as part of the Thames Salmon Project, to find out if sustainable breeding is a possibility. If successful, this will be yet another visitor draw. The River Pang, also within the AONB, is a chalk stream winding its way through peaceful countryside. It supports native populations of brown trout and grayling. If you would prefer to cast your line from the towpath of the Kennet and Avon Canal, you can do so throughout the year but you will need to contact the holders of the appropriate lease at the local angling association or fishing club.

**CYCLING**
If you prefer to explore the area’s unspoilt villages and spectacular rolling downlands on two wheels rather than two legs, there are plenty of clearly signposted and well-maintained routes at your disposal.

The National Cycle Network offers 173 miles of routes within North Wessex Downs, including 65 blissful traffic-free miles. The water-loving cyclist could do well to try out the newly improved sections of the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath, Route 4 of the Network. After an invigorating ride along the cool paths of Savernake Forest, why not enjoy a barbecue in the Forestry Commission’s campsite before falling asleep in the shade of its ancient trees. The only privately owned forest in Britain, owned by 31 generations of the same family, Savernake is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest, boasting deer, birds of prey and rare lichen and fungi. The only problem with planning a day’s cycling in North Wessex Downs is deciding which route to take and which of the pretty, unspoilt villages to have a pint and a pit stop in. The three-hour Myths and Magic Ride takes in sights such as Uffington Castle and its famous white horse chalk carving, before climbing Dragon Hill on which St George is said to have slain the beast – no grass grows at the top of the mound, as it is believed that is where the blood was shed.

**CANAL BOATING**
Drifting along the Kennet and Avon Canal in a brightly painted narrow boat, watching the thatched cottages and rolling fields pass by, you’ll wonder why you ever used any other form of transport. Built more than 200 years ago to connect the West Country to the Thames and London, the canal has recently been lovingly restored thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the efforts of thousands of volunteers. It now provides the perfect means of enjoying the countryside and attractive market towns, like Hungerford with its array of antique shops and Pewsey with its quaint timbered cottages, from the comfort of your own home-from-home.

**GLIDING**
You can never really appreciate the beauty of a place until you’ve seen it from the air, which is probably why gliding is becoming so popular in this area. The Vale of White Horse Gliding Centre in Shrivenham, Oxfordshire, and Shalbourne Soaring Society near Hungerford both welcome novices and experienced glider pilots.

**RIDING**
Lambourn Valley, or the Valley of the Racehorse as it’s sometimes known, is rife with equine activity. After Newmarket, Lambourn is the most important centre for horse racing in Britain, with more than 2,000 horses being trained here. The springy turf of the chalk downs, and wide open spaces of the area make it perfect for breeding and training, and perfect too for visitors to head out for a gallop.

You can choose from several long-distance riding routes across the North Wessex Downs AONB to explore the wonderful countryside and marvel at the far-reaching views. Less experienced riders can enjoy a peaceful trek from one of the many riding stables in the area using the extensive network of bridleways.
Explore at home...
Websites to help plan your visit

- www.visitkanda.com
  information for walkers, cyclists and canal boat users
- www.katrust.org/information.htm
  details of angling on the Kennet and Avon Canal
- www.shalbournegliding.co.uk
- www.swindongliding.co.uk
- www.nationaltrust.org.uk
  information on Avebury
- www.wberksramblers.org.uk
- www.ramblers-wilts.org.uk
- www.pooh-sticks.com
- www.savernakeestate.co.uk
- www.sustrans.org.uk
  details of cycle routes
- www.lambourn.info
  information on horse racing and Lambourn Open Day

A national treasure
Here’s a quick rundown of the stunning National Trust properties located within and close to the North Wessex Downs AONB

BASILDON PARK, READING
Benefiting from a second rise to fame in 2005 when it was featured in the film adaptation of Pride & Prejudice, this grand 18th-century house stands in extensive parkland overlooking the River Thames.

ASHDOWN HOUSE, LAMBOURN
The spectacular rooftop views from this 17th-century mansion are not to be missed, nor is the Iron Age hill fort where King Alfred is said to have battled the Danes. The regal charm of Ashdown House could be attributed to its connection with the sister of King Charles I, Elizabeth of Bohemia, known as The Winter Queen.

SANDHAM MEMORIAL CHAPEL, BURGHCLERE
The world-renowned Stanley Spencer paintings, inspired by World War I, have recently been cleaned and sit ever proudly in their home within this 1920s chapel.

AVEBURY, NEAR MARLBOROUGH
For those spiritually inclined among us, a trip to the world-famous stone circle will be a revelation. Now a World Heritage Site, it also offers an interactive Barn Gallery which uncovers the secrets to the stones’ story. The nearby 16th-century Avebury Manor with its tranquil garden is also well worth a visit.

ALTON PRIORS – WOODBOROUGH – HONEYSTREET – STANTON ST BERNARD
Distance: 8.5km
Time: At least 3 hours
This circular walk along quiet paths and tracks is packed with fascinating points of interest. Immerse yourself in history at Alton Priors Church with its buried sarsen stones and 1700-year-old yew tree; and feed your curiosity with the legendary Hanging Stones found en route. A rare Roman bronze pin (or brooch) was found in the garden of a house in Honeystreet, the site of an unexcavated Roman settlement. The brooch, now residing in Wiltshire Heritage Museum, is decorated with two birds and engraved with the owner’s name, ‘Lucianus’.

For more information on this walk and three others in the area, purchase Walking the North Wessex Downs for £1 from many local outlets.
Silbury Hill, close to Avebury in Wiltshire, has long been a powerful but mute challenge to archaeologists. Recent conservation work on the prehistoric site, has now drawn to a close, giving archaeologists a great deal to think about.

People of the Late Neolithic period must have had a very good reason for building successive mounds of chalk to a height of some 40m and creating what we now call Silbury Hill. Unfortunately they left no clues that would help today’s archaeologists discover what that reason was. However, late last year English Heritage archaeologists investigating the Silbury Hill site made a discovery that might at least shed light on how subsequent generations used the place. The iconic shape that we recognise today, they say, may not have been how the hill looked when it was first built. They believe the summit may have changed from a domed shape when it was constructed 4,400 years ago into the current ‘flat top’ hundreds of years later, in Saxon or Norman times.

A series of medieval postholes have been discovered (one of which was very large), on top of the hill, possibly indicating that a huge military building had been there during the Saxon or Norman periods. They have also discovered two iron arrowheads which suggest the building had a military/defensive function, such as a defended lookout post or signal station. They now also believe that the summit of Silbury Hill was also significantly modified and flattened during this period.

Attempts to find out why

Weighing in at a calculated half a million tons, Silbury Hill is the largest prehistoric artificial mound in Europe; it was built around 2,300 BC and appears to be closely associated with nearby longbarrow tombs and the stone circle at Avebury, but what was its exact function? Attempts to find out have been made by at least three men.

The first was the Duke of Northumberland. He marched to the top of the hill in 1776 and dug a vertical shaft by which he explored the centre of the hill before marching down again. A horizontal tunnel was dug in 1849 by the Rev Dean John Merewether and another was dug by Prof Richard Atkinson, in 1968-69. None of the three extracted anything of great significance and none of them did a very good job in refilling the holes they had made – which brings us to a burst of activity in 2007.

Eight years ago a hole about 14m deep fell in at the mound’s summit. Remotely operated cameras revealed that the Duke of Northumberland’s attempts at restoration had proved inadequate and that the two tunnels were also collapsing. At that time English Heritage engaged Skanska Civil Engineering to carrying out a temporary filling of polystyrene blocks beneath a protective capping of chalk. During the summer of 2007 Skanska engineers not only removed the temporary filling from the cap and replaced it with compacted chalk, they also re-entered the Hill via the tunnel dug by Professor Atkinson in 1968, and removed the old packing used by the Professor and his team when they left the Hill. This enabled English Heritage archaeologists to examine deep inside the Hill and take samples from the different stages of building for analysis. The engineers then repackaged the Atkinson Tunnel with compacted chalk to stabilise the Hill for the long term. Silbury Hill is now as close to being as good as new – or old – as possible.

While the engineers were doing their bit, the investigative archaeologists tried to add to their existing knowledge of the mound by further archaeological recording. For instance, Prof Richard Atkinson’s dig suggested that the Neolithic builders first created a circular mound of turf and river gravel.

They then enlarged it with alternating layers of chalk and soil. Finally they topped everything off with a massive third layer of chalk which was gradually covered by wind-borne soils and grass seeds to produce the Silbury Hill as we see it today. Core samples from earlier bores into the body of the mound have provided archaeologists with the means of checking whether the Professor was right.

Archaeologists now have a pretty good idea what sort of landscape originally surrounded the mound. Evidence gleaned from pollen and seed samples, insect remains and animal bone extracted from the soils underlying the mound show that chalk grassland was already established in the vicinity of Silbury before the mound was created.

Few trees

Chalk grassland rich in herbs indicates managed grazing and the lack of insect remains of a sort that were dependent on woodland encourages the thought that there were relatively few trees about. The presence of dung beetle remains is strong evidence of fairly heavy stocking rates of livestock. Thus a picture emerges – a landscape not vastly different from today’s, predominantly grass for grazing animals and cultivated crops. Trees were being cleared and although there were no fields as such, the landscape was being changed to one that met the needs of a sedentary agricultural community.

By the time this article is being read the archaeologists will be back in their offices poring over the new findings that their high-tech equipment has made possible. Radiocarbon dating shows that building Silbury Hill began some time between 2445 and 2190 BC. Given luck, the investigators will have found new organic material that will provide a more precise date. Perhaps they will have a stab at telling us how many people were involved.

“‘Weighing in at a calculated half a million tons, Silbury Hill is the largest prehistoric artificial mound in Europe’

Currently it is thought (carbon dating again) that Silbury Hill took either less than 115 years to complete, or between 140 and 435 years. The finding of new organic material might enable the archaeologists to establish this chronology more accurately.

Silbury Hill is as secretive now as it was when the Duke of Northumberland first clapped eyes on it. The notion that it might be a burial mound has largely been discounted. It could have been constructed for purposes of worship or for ceremonial occasions. The fact that it is part of the Avebury World Heritage Site which includes Windmill Hill and Avebury Henge, the West Kennet Long Barrow and the West Kennet Stone Avenue is surely significant.

As the English Heritage website puts it: “The people who built the late Neolithic Silbury and Avebury were more distant in time from the original builders of the early Neolithic Windmill Hill and the West Kennet Long Barrow than we are from the Normans and their castles. That raises an interesting thought. Did the need to feed a vast labour force over a period spanning many generations oblige the prehistoric organisers to develop their agricultural expertise to a level unique at that time?”

Right: Silbury Hill – built around 2,300 BC with great insight into problems of soil engineering. The sides are thought to be carefully stepped and the interior contains radial chalk walls for added stability. The hill was built to last, and it has.
Evidence gleaned from pollen and seed samples, insect remains and animal bone extracted from the soils underlying the mound show that chalk grassland was already established in the vicinity of Silbury before the mound was created...
The Year of Food and Farming was launched in September 2007, running to July 2008, to promote healthy living amongst children. The campaign aims to provide children with hands-on experience of farming, growing and cooking food.

Memorable firsthand learning experiences are on the menu in farms throughout the North Wessex Downs. Rushall Organic Farm in Bradfield has been hosting school visits since 1983 through the John Simonds Trust, an educational charity that welcomes around 8,000 children a year to the farm and other sites in the Pang valley. The aims and activities of the Year of Food and Farming initiative fitted well with what they were doing already.

Cliff Marriott, Education Officer for the John Simonds Trust, explains the effect these visits can have on children: “Many of the schools that visit us come from urban environments and it is not unusual to meet children that have never seen a sheep or cow. I’ve lost count of the number of children who think all cows are black and white and are astonished to find out ours aren’t.”

As well as arranging visits to the farm, John Bishop, the farm manager, is a SEEDA farm champion for education and has arranged visits to schools to deliver food and farming workshops.

To find farms and estates where children can go for educational visits near your school, have a look on the North Wessex Downs Countryside Education Network website (details below).

It is not just farms that are opening their doors; local food producers are also offering similar classes and workshops. The family-run Old Farmhouse Bakery in Steventon is working with local schools to teach children the art of bread making. Kate Bitmead, who runs the bakery with her husband and daughter, said: “The most important element is that the children don’t just watch us make bread – they make it themselves and they love it! Hands-on experience is always going to ignite children’s interest.”

A vineyard may not seem an appropriate place for children to spend time, but Paul Langham from A’Beckett’s Vineyard near Devizes pointed out: “We have Wiltshire’s last commercial orchard and many children have never picked an apple before; a sad indictment on life today.”

A’Beckett’s Vineyard runs school visits for local primary schools and is open to schools organising research projects and nature trails. The vineyard is

Memorable firsthand learning experiences are on the menu in farms throughout the North Wessex Downs.

All across the North Wessex Downs, children can be found up to their elbows in flour making bread, picking juicy apples in shady orchards and watching in awe as they see farm animals for the very first time. These activities are part of the nationwide initiative, the Year of Food and Farming, aimed at boosting children’s enthusiasm and appreciation of where their food comes from.
The campaign aims to provide children with hands-on experience of farming, growing and cooking food.

Currently in talks with Wiltshire County Council about setting up an outdoor classroom.

Fit2cook Food Education, with support from Hampshire Country Learning, is running food and farming workshops for primary schools in West Berkshire as part of the campaign. The Local Food For All programme, to be run during the Easter 2008 term, will give children the chance to learn about, touch, smell, cook with and finally taste local food, such as unusual root vegetables or crème fraîche from dairy cows grazed on the lush lowland pastures. Local food producers and farmers will talk to them about how these products are grown or produced and the children will then make a simple dish out of the items.

Fit2cook’s Min Raisman explained that the learning doesn’t end with the children: “We will be running a Practical Food Skills Course for teachers, showing them simple ways of cooking with local food in the classroom. We hope teachers will then be able to continue this learning experience well beyond the Year of Food and Farming.”

One organisation with the aim of educating young people about food and farming in a sustainable countryside is Farming and Countryside Education (FACE). Meg Hart from FACE has worked with and supported farmers from the North Wessex Downs who are taking part in the initiative, helping to create links with schools and farms and providing information and sources to teachers and pupils for educational projects.

It is perhaps the dual-pronged approach of local initiatives with national support, which is responsible for the expected success of the Year of Food and Farming. Local children, small-scale farmers and family-run businesses are working side by side with national organisations like DEFRA and the Countryside Foundation for Education (CFE).

As one of the campaign’s partners, CFE puts schools in touch with local farms and organises educational visits. Gary Richardson, Chief Executive, highlighted the enormity of the issue being tackled by this initiative, one that goes further than encouraging children to eat healthier: “There aren’t many sectors which actively go out and explain what they do – farmers do. More and more food is coming from abroad and although food prices are going up, little of those increases are felt by the farmers.”

The support offered through the Year of Food and Farming campaign goes beyond farm visits and continues once the students are back in the classroom. For instance, Garden Organic, another campaign partner, works with schools to develop organic growing areas with a view to using the produce in the school kitchen or cookery lessons.

A HEALTHY FUTURE

Melanie Leech, Director General of the Food and Drink Federation (FDF), sums up the scale of the project’s hoped-for achievements: “The Year aims to improve understanding of the food chain and the role played by farming; increase links between schools, farmers and food producers; develop healthier lifestyles and good nutrition; increase interest in careers in the related industries; and promote a greater appreciation of the importance of the countryside and environmental issues.”

Contact
North Wessex Downs Countryside Education Network
www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/education
For more information on the Year of Food and Farming, contact 02476 853086 or log onto www.yearoffoodandfarming.org.uk

Top: A mixed vegetable display courtesy of Garden Organic
Middle: Kate Bitmead from the Old Farmhouse Bakery in Steventon
Above: Prince Charles is a great supporter of the year of Food and Farming.
MEAT & FISH

BROOKLEAS FISH FARM
Contact: Tim Lidbo, Brooklea, East Hendred, nr Wantage OX12 8LN
T: 01235 820100
E: brooklea@hotmail.com
www.brooklea.com

Products: Trout farm fed by Gringe Brook from local Downs. Small farm shop and smokery. Children’s fishing pond. Fly-fishing and live trout restocking available on request.
Member of British Trout Assoc.
Opening times: Mon-Fri 10am-5pm
Other outlets: Attends 13 local Farmers’ Markets during year.

CASEY FIELDS FARM SHOP (VICARS GAME)
Contact: Alan or Owen Hayward, Casey Fields Farm, off Dog Lane, Abridgehampt Rd RG8 8SJ
T: 01635 796626
E: alan@vicarsgame.co.uk
www.vicarsgame.co.uk

Opening times: Mon-Sat 8am-5pm
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

CHERRY ORCHARD MEATS
Contact: Nick Verity, Cherry Orchard Cottage, East Sands, Burgham 3NA
T: 01672 807766
E: cherryorchardmeats@btinternet.com

Products: Organic Shorthorn beef and Tamworth pork on 100-acre farm. Also home reared game and home reared calves on offer for Christmas and Easter.
Opening times: Mon-Sat
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

DOWN BARN FARM
Contact: Mrs Penny Reed, Down Barn Farm, Spurling Down, Wantage OX12 9DY
T: 01306 827072
E: pennyled@talktalk.net

Products: Free range eggs, organic meat, gluten-free products.
Opening times: Mon-Sat 8am-5pm
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

ENGLISH BEEF
Contact: C S Hill, New Road Farm, High Geddington, Northants NN6 9LG
T: 01335 304233
E: enquiries@britishbeef.co.uk

Products: Organic Shorthorn beef and Tamworth pork on 100-acre farm. Also home reared game and home reared calves on offer for Christmas and Easter.
Opening times: Mon-Sat
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

KILN MEADOW FARMS
Contact: Lucy Blackwell, Creedy Lane, Bishopstone, Devizes and Wanborough; FAS, CSA.
T: 01672 876275
E: lucyblackwell@hotmail.com

Opening times: Mon-Sat 8am-5pm
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

ROYAL BERKSHIRE PORK
Contact: Russell Elvington, Tamarisk, Pudding Ln, Brightwell Capp2 7BY
T: 01488 638155
E: info@royalberkshire.co.uk
www.royalberkshire.co.uk

Products: A accredited RSPCA Freedom Food pig breeder retailing organic brands, beef and organic dairy.
Opening times: Mon-Sat
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

SANDRINGHAM BACON LTD
Contact: Andrew Clark, Sandridge Farm, Bromham, nr Chippenham SN15 2JL
T: 01269 583054
E: info@sandringhambacon.co.uk

Opening times: Mon-Sat
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

STARK HOUSE FARM
Contact: Mrs Frances Paget, Stark House Farm, Coates Hill, Hadleigh, Thatcham RG19 1BA
T: 01635 268205
E: starksand@gmail.com
www.starksand.co.uk

Products: Organic meat.
Opening times: Mon-Sat
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

T HE SWAN INN (ORGANIC)
Contact: Miss Mary Harris, The Swan Inn Lower Coven, Ilminster, TA17 9DX
T: 01884 668826
E: enquiries@theswaninn.org.uk

Opening times: Mon-Sat
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

WEEDHAMPatitis
Contact: John Bishop, Rushall Farm, Scalford Lane, Bradfield RG17 6DL
T: 0118 974 4547
E: suejeverett@hotmail.com

Products: Free range chicken, eggs, and gluten-free products.
Opening times: Mon-Sat
Other outlets: Local Farmers’ Markets.

WILDFLOWER FARM
Contact: Sue Everett, 122 Drewett Road, Thatcham RG19 3UP
T: 01635 847146
E: suejeverett@hotmail.com
www.wildflowerfarms.com

Products: Wildflower seed and native plants. Open daily, May–Aug. Wildflower seed is harvested from nature’s meadows/other habitat, with nature trails. Free admission and car parking. Commercial services by arrangement.
Opening times: Mon-Sat 10am-5pm
Other outlets: Mail order, brochures available.

MEADOWMAKER
Contact: Sue Everett, 122 Drewett Road, Thatcham RG19 3UP
T: 01635 847146
E: suejeverett@hotmail.com
www.meadowmaker.co.uk

Products: Wild-harvested seed, by contract only, for re-creating native grassland (lowland meadow)

PLANTS & SEEDS

ENGLEFIELD GARDEN CENTRE
Contact: Miss Janet Smith, The Street, Englefield, nr Thame, Reading RG8 7ES
T: 01844 993488
E: chaity-run centre providing training in horticulture for people with special learning needs or disabilities. Produces high quality bedding and herbaceous plants.
Opening times: Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun-May-June 12-4pm

FLOWER FARMS
Contact: Bow Anderson, Canaries Hill Farm, Thamebourne, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 3PS
T: 01628 780782
E: flowervfarms@btinternet.com
www.wildflowerfarms.com

Products: Wildflower seed and native plants. Open daily, May–Aug. Wildflower seed is harvested from nature’s meadows/other habitat, with nature trails. Free admission and car parking. Commercial services by arrangement.
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Opening times: Mon-Sat 10am-5pm
Other outlets: Mail order, brochures available.


**WOOD & TREES**

**GEORGE MEDWIN WOODWORKS**
Contact: George Medwin, The Woodworking Workshop, Wickcroft, High Close, Wick, Marlborough SN8 7JY
T: 01635 281786
E: georgewoodworks@onetel.net
Products: Handcrafted wooden items, rustic furniture, individually designed traditional specimen pieces available. Visit by appointment.

**MARIE MOYLE & GREEN OAK**
Contact: Marie Moyle, 1 Catmore Road, West Ilsley, RG20 7AT
T: 0118 984 4770
E: m.morneym@btopenworld.com
Products: Wide range of local oak, free-range and organic produce. Operate a three-size veggie-box delivery scheme in season. Also fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy and eggs. Local cheeses, honey, jam, pickles, marmalade, chutneys and quiches from highly regarded local producers. Visit by appointment.

**HIGHGATE JUICES**
Contact: Jonie Thorpe, Bath Road, Heavitree Barton RG1 0SH
T: 01488 686 770
E: thehighgatefruits @hotmail.com
Products: Wide range of local fruit and vegetables. Operate a three-size veggie-box delivery scheme in season. Also fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy and eggs. Local cheeses, honey, jam, pickles, marmalade, chutneys and quiches.

**HAYNES COMMUNITY SHOP & POST OFFICE**
Contact: Mrs A P Vickars, Brookside, East Wanborough, OX12 7HU
T: 01235 867 408
E: haynescommunityshop@btinternet.com
Products: Wide range of local meat, free-range eggs, honey, fruit and vegetables. Also, groceries, household goods, stationery, greeting cards and household toys. Small village store established for more than 20 years.

**HAMSTEAD GROWERS LTD**
Contact: Keith Wedb, Haynestead Farm, Newbury RG20 0JL
T: 01635 254007
E: keith@haynestead.co.uk
Products: Plants, equestrian supplies, feed, bedding, arena for horse, leather repair.
Opening times: May-Oct Mon-Sat 8.30am-5pm, Sun 10am-4pm; Nov-Apr Mon-Sat 8.30am-5pm, Sun 10am-4pm.

**HARROWAY ORGANIC FARMS**
Contact: Mandy Wright and Steve Forster, Kingfisher Road, Wick, Marlborough SN8 7QA
T: 01256 895 346
E: hogveg@hotmail.com

**VICKRCROF FARM SHOP**
Contact: Mandy Stang, Pangbourne Road, Thiala RG27 7EA
T: 0118 930 5159
E: vickcroffarmshop.co.uk
Products: Wide range of local produce including home-produced free-range chicken, local beef, organic free-range duck and eggs, rare breed pork, delicatessen, award-winning local cheeses, cakes, bread, fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy and eggs. Visit by appointment.

**FOOD RETAILERS’ GREAT TASTE’ AWARDS**
Products: Savoury jams, relishes, sauces; garden club talks. Exhibiting at The Old Rectory Farm, Everleigh, Wiltshire SN10 0DX
E: hogveg@ hotmail.com
T: 01256 46 4221/400368
E: oggvalleyorganic@btconnect.com
Products: Produce from more than 20 years. Organic, farm shop and deli. Suppliers of traditional and unusual produce available from the site daily to trade outlets and the public.

**TOHLURST ORGANIC PRODUCE**
Contact: Ian Tolhurst, West Lodge, Hardwicke, Whitchurch-on-Thames, Pangbourne RG8 7RA
T: 01235 831 448
E: itolhurstorganics@yahoo.co.uk
Env-links: WFCP, Bio, Org, CSA. Products: Local produce, fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables.

**BILLY Goat’s Valley Organic**
Contact: Alison Brown, Farm, Greywell Road, Mapledurwell, Basingstoke RG25 2LT
T: 01264 462 100
E: maplegleicheres@bt.com
Products: Specialty products, largely高出 season, available from the site daily to trade outlets and the general public.

**MAYHEW ORGANICS**
Contact: Tracy Gough, 1 Westfield Farm, Ogbourne-St-George, Marlborough SN8 7SX
T: 01672 595 187
E: mayhevwheat@btinternet.com
Env-links: WFCP, Bio, Org, CSA. Products: Local produce, fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables. Operates three-size veggie-box delivery scheme in Reading and Oxford areas. Operates a small local shop.

**TATESBURY ORGANIC FARM**
Contact: Richard Cartlett, CR Cartlett & Son, Yateley House Farm, Nr Yateley, Hants GU46 2YJ
T: 01252 525 393
E: yateleyorganicfarm @yahoo.co.uk
Products: Local produce, fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables. Operates three-size veggie-box delivery scheme in Reading and Oxford areas. Operates a small local shop.
The North Wessex Downs owes much of its character to farming – over the years it has enhanced and protected the area’s landscape.

The unassuming exterior of a farm near Hungerford, Berkshire, gives nothing away of its celebrated past, and the events which changed British agricultural processes forever, thanks largely to a man named Jethro Tull.

On the A338 about three miles out of Hungerford on the way to Salisbury, you’ll see, on the left-hand side of the road, a neat farm sign saying ‘Prosperous Home Farm’. That’s all it is – a farm sign. There’s nothing about it that signifies the vital part Prosperous Home Farm has played in the history of farming. It was the test bed where one Jethro Tull developed the very first horse-drawn seed drill and the horse hoe. His name is linked with ‘Turnip’ Townshend, more formally known as 2nd Viscount Charles Townshend of Raynham, Norfolk, ‘Turnip’ because he popularised the use of root crops in crop rotations. He, Jethro Tull and a handful of other pioneers at that time in the 18th century, revolutionised British agriculture.

Today’s Prosperous Home Farm is a delightful spot, 300 acres of rolling Berkshire countryside, the home to a herd of pedigree Guernsey cows, the milk from which is sold off the farm either as milk, unpasteurised blue cheese, yoghurt, crème fraîche or cream. The farm has a stall at several farmers’ markets and anyone can call in at the farmyard to make a purchase. If there is no-one about to take your money, an honesty box provides a mute but persuasive reminder.

Prosperous Home Farm is bisected by several footpaths. In the autumn walkers have a good chance of seeing a modern seed drill – a direct descendant of Jethro Tull’s invention – forging across chocolate-brown fields behind a tractor the power of which would have been unimaginable in Jethro Tull’s day.

In the spring, the legacy of this agricultural writer, farmer and barrister is plain to see as rows of green fingers poke through the soil. Before Jethro Tull, crops were broadcast by hand from shallow baskets. Some seeds or grains remained on the surface, others were too close together to allow the efficient eradication of weeds. His unique invention, however, buried every seed in its proper space and allowed the passing of a horse hoe between the rows. Both the farm and the herd of Guernseys are managed by Mr Derek Moody for the farm owners, Mr and Mrs Rod Kent. Acting as herdsman to 130-140 cattle (around 85 in-milk cows, the rest followers) is usually regarded as a full-time job, but Tull lived in that big house or that he spent his entire life at Prosperous Home Farm. In fact he was born in Upper Basildon, Berkshire in 1674. In 1699 he was called to the Bar at Gray’s Inn but never practised. Instead he married and began farming on his father’s land at Howberry, Crowmarsh Gifford near Wallingford. It was there, in about 1701, that he invented and perfected his seed drill and began experimenting with his new system of sowing in drills or rows.

In 1709 he and his family moved to Prosperous Home Farm. From 1711 to 1714 he travelled in France and Italy studying how continental farmers used farmyard manure and how they tilled their various soils. He returned to Prosperous Home Farm to continue his experiments. He died in 1741.

It is thought by some historians that his house was located at the far end of the lawn. There’s nothing there now, but the spot would make an ideal setting for a statue of the great man. He’d look very impressive from the windows of Mount Prosperous and he’d be able to gaze out over the North Wessex Downs countryside that owes him so much.

In the spring, the legacy of this agricultural writer, farmer and barrister is plain to see as rows of green fingers poke through the soil.
Many organisations and individuals are involved in managing the landscape of the North Wessex Downs so that it retains its natural beauty. Many more are involved in researching and helping others to learn about and enjoy this special landscape.

The Council of Partners is the formal ‘Board’ for overseeing the management of this area. It brings together all the interests in the North Wessex Downs. It consists of government agencies, local authorities, land managers, local communities, and conservation, recreation and heritage interests.

The North Wessex Downs AONB team advises the Council of Partners, and implements its decisions and policies. It undertakes activity on behalf of the Council of Partners to protect and enhance the natural beauty of this landscape. Much of the work of the team is in collaboration with a wide range of individuals and organisations. Articles in this magazine highlight several of these projects, and the items below give a small flavour of our work. For more information, please see www.northwessexdowns.org.uk.

LEADER funding bid

LEADER is a European funding programme which could deliver a range of new activities in the North Wessex Downs. Land managers, communities, conservation groups and businesses could benefit from funding for projects such as community–based renewable energy schemes, farm diversification, and landscape and wildlife management projects.

Our bid for funding was shaped by the views of a wide range of people gathered at open meetings, and we submitted it in January 2008. If successful, we will be launching the scheme during the summer of 2008. Please visit the LEADER pages on our website www.northwessexdowns.org.uk for more information.

Arable

ARABLE farming is an important feature of the North Wessex Downs. We are working with groups of farmers to look after our rare arable flowers, such as shepherd’s needle, and wildlife such as harvest mice. Managing hotspots of importance for rare arable wildlife, archaeology, water protection and rights of way will lead to additional benefits for farmers through improved soil management.
Historic Landscape Characterisation

A greater understanding of the reasons behind historic land use decisions can contribute towards better planning decisions today. Looking at the historic elements of our modern landscape the Historic Landscape Characterisation data aims to improve our understanding of where traditional land use, settlement patterns and historic landscape features survive. This will help planning officers, local historians, educators and parish councils understand the special characteristics of our varied and distinct landscapes.

Grants open new vistas for everyone

Hundreds of people and a whole host of wildlife are enjoying the North Wessex Downs AONB thanks to Sustainable Development Fund grants.

During the 2007-2008 scheme, a total of £63,000 was awarded in grants to 18 projects, all of them helping to deliver the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan.

Several projects are helping people to get out into the landscape and find out more about it. These include:

- Walking the North Wessex Downs, a book of four circular walks linked to displays in the Wiltshire Heritage Museum in Devizes (see article on page 5).
- Vale of Pewsey Landscape and Geology Trail shows how the underlying geology affects the natural landscape and way in which people use it. Wiltshire Geology Group provides a detailed interpretation to guide visitors.
- Improved access for all in Lambourn, a project run by West Berkshire Council, installed special gates to enable people with wheelchairs and pushchairs to enjoy a footpath on the Downs at Lambourn.
- Our native wildlife are benefiting too. See articles on page 8 for more information about some of these projects:
  - Wiltshire Wildlife Trust is busy restoring habitats for water voles on the Kennet & Avon Canal and in the River Kennet.
  - Dozens of new nature detectives have discovered bats, beetles, birds and much more with the Richmond Fellowship Wiltshire Outreach group on Mud Lane and in Marlborough.
  - Children in two Wiltshire primary schools raised hundreds of brown trout from eggs, watched them grow and then released them into the River Kennet.
  - Barn Owl conservation projects in the Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Valleys celebrated their success with a series of workshops to demonstrate how the projects work, and encourage more of these graceful birds to local fields and farm buildings in Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Hampshire.
  - Hedges in West Berkshire are shaping up nicely to be new homes for birds and other wildlife thanks to the hedgelaying and coppicing work carried out by Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Valleys Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

Projects run by parish and community groups received grants:

- Goring and Streatley Sustainability Group received funding from the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns AONBs to support the feasibility study into a Hydro-power scheme on the River Thames, which is the boundary between the two AONBs.
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust carried out a project to engage more people in local conservation planning when they are developing Parish Plans.
- Thanks to the efforts of the geology group for Berkshire, there is now a Hampshire RIGS group committed to finding and mapping Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites within that part of the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- Children in West Berkshire have learnt how to cook with local produce and find out where their food comes from in a Local Food for All project run by Hampshire Country Learning and Fit2Cook (see article on page 12).

The Sustainable Development Fund has distributed a total of £223,000 in grants since its inception in 2005. To find out about grants this year, go to www.northwessexdowns.org.uk and click on Funding and Grants.

Management Plan Review

The North Wessex Downs Management Plan is nearly five years old, and we have been reviewing its implementation. The Management Plan is not just for the North Wessex Downs AONB team; it guides the activity of all who live and work in the protected landscape, to help conserve and enhance its natural beauty.

Our review shows that a third of the actions have been completed, with work well underway on implementing over two-thirds of the remaining actions. This is a remarkable achievement by many organisations and individuals in a very short time.

The Council of Partners is now looking to the future. We are building on the firm foundation provided by the current Management Plan, and planning for challenges such as climate change and helping develop a healthier society. The North Wessex Downs AONB team is leading the development of the next five-year Management Plan which will be published in early 2009. If you wish to be involved, please see the Management Plan pages on the North Wessex Downs AONB website: www.northwessexdowns.org.uk.