Out & About
Enjoy the sights and sounds of the landscape with a trip over the North Wessex Downs

Flowers in the chalk
Take a leaf out of Charles Flower’s book on how to conserve wild flowers

Local Products Directory
Where to find the cream of the crop

Diversity in Stone
We reveal the secrets of our rural buildings

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

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Welcome to the 2009 edition of Up! on the North Wessex Downs. This publication showcases the wonderful features in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It describes just some of the many activities undertaken by a range of organisations and individuals to protect and enhance this wonderful landscape.

The North Wessex Downs is the largest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty 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 to ensure this wonderful landscape is protected for the future.

2009 is an especially exciting year thanks to the launch of the North Wessex Downs Leader Programme – an EU grants scheme open to farmers, foresters, businesses, communities, organisations and individuals to undertake a variety of rural activities, including business and community development, tourism, food production, processing and promotion and the production of rural energy. Please see the news pages for further information, and contact the team if you are interested in applying.

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. See our website at www.northwessexdowns.org.uk for the latest news.

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

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The sort of intensive farming techniques that have been employed on UK farms over the past 60 years have come close to destroying what is best about our countryside – the flora and fauna that live within it. But now that trend can be reversed by ‘going by the book’.

**How to encourage wild flowers**

Last year a book was published that was a revelation to all those who struggle to establish colonies of wild flowers on their land. Its title is *Where have all the flowers gone?* and its author is Charles Flower, a more-than-meets-the-eye farmer who, in 1988, abandoned cereal growing on his 175-acre farm near Shalbourne to concentrate on growing wild flower seed crops.

By his own admission Charles Flower was not a farmer in the traditional sense. He spent 10 years in the brewing industry, got bored and switched to become a student at Edinburgh University where, for two years, he studied Ecological Science. He then spent five years as a Director of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. It was while travelling throughout the UK by train in that capacity that he became aware of the damage being done to the countryside in the name of farming efficiency – particularly the removal of miles of hedgerows and other features to create the new corn prairies.

He thought there must be a better way to farm than to pursue a system that virtually guaranteed the destruction of any flora and fauna that got in the way of profit, so he bought his 175 acres and quickly came face to face with the facts of farming life, ie sky-high grain prices that inexorably changed to rock bottom grain prices. His bank manager became restive and he himself became stressed enough to put 150 acres into a share farming agreement with neighbours. The remaining 25 acres he devoted to what by this time had become his overriding interest – the farm scale production of indigenous wild flowers.

Now, some 20 years later, he is arguably the UK’s top authority on all aspects of restoring wild flowers. His encyclopaedic knowledge encompasses not only the establishment of wild flowers but also the provision of habitat for birds, butterflies, bees and every other insect one can think of. He’s the man to go to for advice on creating flower meadows, headlands, hedges, ponds and for learning how to establish wild flowers in domestic and public gardens.

His book extends his role as a guru in the world of rural bio-diversity in as much as it encapsulates his experiences, triumphs and setbacks over the past 20-odd years. He has run restoration workshops since 1993 in which like-minded people experience a sort of outdoor classroom – theory in the morning, practical (a farm walk) in the afternoon. He opened a visitors’ centre in 1997 as well as a wild flower demonstration garden in which 150 species of wild flowers are each clearly labelled (other gardens open to the public for a fee, please note). He is a consultant to the National Trust as well as to many individuals, farmers and landowners. He is also a registered Defra Surveyor for the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme* (HLS), so he is able to help others get into it. In addition, his work in helping others to restore habitat in general and wild flower rich grasslands in particular, means that he tends to have more than his fair share of trial grasslands, field margins etc, which, he says, are jolly expensive if there is no financial help available through HLS.

Every scrap of know-how he has gleaned – or virtually every scrap – is set down in a volume heavily disguised as a coffee-table book by the use of...chalk and wild flowers are natural bedfellows...
sumptuous illustrations, lucid easy-to-read text, quality paper and beautifully designed pages. But don’t be fooled – it’s really a manual with a message: “I’ve done it, and if I can, you can.”

Shalbourne lies directly south of Hungerford within the borders of the North Wessex Downs AONB which means Charles Flower’s 25 acres is ‘on the chalk’. He would be the first to acknowledge that chalk and wild flowers are natural bedfellows but even he was astonished at the results of his first tentative steps towards being a viable wild flower seed producer.

In his book he relates how pleasantly surprised he was to be ambushed by clouds of Meadow Browns, Marble Whites and Common Blues as he walked his fields and he was astonished by the alacrity with which grasshoppers can spread across a distance of 200m.

The piece of restoration work which supports his contention that butterfly colonisation is too precarious a process to be left entirely to nature is to be seen at the Butterfly Conservation’s reserve at Magdalen Hill Down near Winchester where a 30-acre area was seeded with local seed. Within ten years, 31 species of butterfly were recorded on that area and 26 species were recorded on a further extension of 55 acres only two years after seeding. Left to its own devices, nature is rarely so quick off the mark.

THE KEY
So what is the key to wild life reinstatement? “The provision of food plants and nectar plants,” says Charles Flower. “And don’t ignore the importance of linking small isolated fragments of species-rich habitats with 6m field margins.”

Gardeners are denied the luxury of 6m field margins, so what should they do to encourage, for instance, butterflies?

“Provide them with plants yielding high quality nectar. Nectar keeps butterflies on the wing in the same way that petrol keeps cars on the road. Think in terms of bird’s-foot-trefoil, ox-eye daisy, field scabious, lesser knapweed, tufted vetch, devil’s-bit scabious, greater knapweed, salad burnet, yarrow, small scabious, fleabane, wild basil, wild thyme, cowslip, wild marjoram, and thistles.”


For left to right: Bumble bees need tussocky corners for their nests, often using an old mouse hole. Bumble bees pollinate many of our wild flowers, since the tongues of honey bees are not long enough! Greater knapweed is a sturdy plant with valuable nectar which, once established, is long-lived and can take on allcomers. Arable reversion in the North Wessex Downs AONB – this spectacular drift of small scabious was a field of wheat 20 years ago. The field was reseeded and additional species added over the years to create a superb field of wild flowers. Insects such as this meadow grasshopper soon colonise restored meadows. Common Blues – when you create your wild flower meadow, make sure you include plenty of birdsfoot trefoil, which these butterflies lay their eggs on and you can make Common Blues common again. Below: Ragged robin is a spectacular plant of damp meadows but sadly both short-lived and uncompetitive. Growing it in gravel is a partial solution to these problems.

The Higher Level Stewardship Scheme*

The Higher Level Stewardship Scheme provides money to farmers and landowners to enhance the wildlife, historical and access value of our countryside. Under the scheme, the creation of flower rich grassland can be funded, using locally sourced grass and flower seed. See www.naturalengland.co.uk/planning/farming-wildlife/default.htm.
Walk the North Wessex Downs way

DELIGHTFUL, EASILY ACCESSED walks have been identified and publicised in a full colour, sumptuously produced booklet by the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. Each walk is based on a historical object and is routed through some truly gorgeous scenery. Here are three favourites:

• Walk 1: Liddington Hill. This walk takes you into writer Richard Jefferies’ country. Born in 1848 near Swindon, his autobiography *The Story Of My Heart* draws on his early wanderings through the Wiltshire downland. Allow at least 2.5 hours because you will be covering 4.5 miles. There are several viewpoints and no stiles.

• Walk 2: Avebury World Heritage Site (pictured above). The artist David Inshaw has a special rapport with this area and has produced some very fine work as a consequence. Look out for his painting ‘Avebury’ that evokes memory, sensuality, stillness and wonder. This walk will take you at least three hours, the distance being 5.2 miles. There are three stiles to negotiate.

• Walk 3: The Kennet and Avon Canal. The object of interest is the rare and unusual bronze pin that was found in Woodborough in 1993 and can now be viewed in Wiltshire Heritage Museum. Made in Roman times, it and various other finds in the vicinity suggest the area is the site of an important villa. Allow at least 2.5 hours to cover 4.5 miles and six stiles.

The booklet, which was made possible through grants provided by the North Wessex Downs AONB and Kennet District Council, is priced at just £1 from Wiltshire Heritage Museum, www.wiltshireheritage.org.uk.

Out & about

Walks for a set of wheels

IF YOU THINK your leisure walking days are over because you are obliged to push a baby buggy or control a wheelchair, you are wrong.

There are now more than 400 walks in the UK that are accessible to either form of personal transport, fourteen of them in the North Wessex Downs AONB.

They have either been tried and tested by organiser Marie Houlden or submitted to the site by a registered user of which there are 3,000 all of whom have a full appreciation of the needs of those with access challenges.

For full details of individual walks, see www.walkswithbuggies.com or www.walkswithwheelchairs.com.
AT MORGAN’S HILL you’ll experience the sights and sounds of a chalk downland landscape. At this Wiltshire Wildlife Trust reserve there is an ever-changing display of colourful wildflowers – from the first cowslips and violets of spring, to the summer abundance of orchids, wild thyme and bird’s foot trefoil. A visit in late summer will reveal a purple haze of flowers such as devil’s bit scabious and round-headed rampion.

In early summer you can find 11 different types of orchid growing near the old quarry including fly, lesser butterfly and marsh helleborine.

Chalk downland wildflowers are important food plants for butterflies and other insects. The caterpillar of the Duke of Burgundy Fritillary butterfly feeds on cowslips and the adult butterfly can be seen on the wing in July and August. Another butterfly to look out for is the Green Hairstreak.

There are excellent views from the top of the hill. Birds singing overhead include skylarks. To enable the delicate chalk downland wildflowers to thrive the reserve is grazed by Dexter Cattle (pictured below). This hardy breed of cattle is small and light-footed and can withstand grazing outdoors throughout the year, without churning up the soil. The reserve lies just off the Calne to Devizes road to the north of the North Wiltshire Golf Course.

There is parking at the Smallgrain Plantation picnic site car park from where you should proceed across the grass and up the steps at the far end of the picnic area. The main part of the reserve is about 0.25 miles up the track. It’s well worth a visit.

Explore at home…
Websites to help plan your visit
- www.northwessexdowns.org.uk
- www.bbowt.org.uk
- www.croftonbeamengines.org
- www.english-heritage.org.uk (information on Avebury)
- www.hwt.org.uk
- www.katrust.org/information.htm (angling on the Kennet and Avon Canal)
- www.lambourn.info (information on horse racing and Lambourn Open Day)
- www.livingrainforest.org
- www.highclerecastle.co.uk
- www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- www.shalbournegliding.co.uk
- www.swindongliding.co.uk
- www.pooh-sticks.com
- www.ramblers-wilts.org.uk
- www.savernakeestate.co.uk
- www.sustrans.org.uk (details of cycle routes)
- www.visitkanda.com (for walkers, cyclists and boat users on the Kennet and Avon canal)
- www.walkswithbuggies.com
- www.walkswithwheelchairs.com
- www.wberksramblers.org.uk
- www.wiltshireheritage.org.uk (information on Wiltshire Heritage Museum)
- www.wiltshirewildlife.org

The only festival of its kind designed to transform children’s approach to food takes place on 27-28 June 2009 at The Northmoor Trust Farm, near Abingdon. Special food areas with hands-on cooking include a new Chocolate Tent. Raymond Blanc and Sophie Grigson head the celebrity chefs’ demos, with teenage chef Sam Stern and others. Attractions include a Smell and Taste extravaganza, bicycle-powered smoothie making, sushi rolling, food theatre, and tractors galore.

The cost is £10 per car. For details see www.childrensfoodfestival.co.uk or call 01865 407792.

Experience the sights and sounds of a chalk downland landscape

August. The Chalkhill Blue is often seen in large numbers here basking in the sun, and is on the wing in July and August. Another butterfly to look out for is the Green Hairstreak.

There are excellent views from the top of the hill. Birds singing overhead include skylarks. To enable the delicate chalk downland wildflowers to thrive the reserve is grazed by Dexter Cattle (pictured below). This hardy breed of cattle is small and light-footed and can withstand grazing outdoors throughout the year, without churning up the soil. The reserve lies just off the Calne to Devizes road to the north of the North Wiltshire Golf Course.

There is parking at the Smallgrain Plantation picnic site car park from where you should proceed across the grass and up the steps at the far end of the picnic area. The main part of the reserve is about 0.25 miles up the track. It’s well worth a visit.
Anyone who travels the length and breadth of the North Wessex Downs AONB will be struck by the variety of materials used by builders of the area and mightily impressed by the results they achieve. Drive from one area to another and you will become aware of the subtle changes in the local building vernacular, changes that have their origins in the underlying geology of the district.

Neither chalk, flint nor sarsen stone were ideal building materials because they all had their shortcomings. So builders used various combinations of them to achieve the required result. As bricks became less costly they were used for specific functions and the owners of the very grandest of houses could afford to buy Cotswold limestone blocks from outside the area from which were formed doorways, window surrounds, cornerstones and so on.

**CHALK**
Chalk predominates throughout most of the North Wessex Downs AONB, much of it too soft to use as a building material, but there are harder bands of chalk that have proved weather resistant enough to be used for exterior walls of cottages, even a grand house. In Ashbury, on the North Wessex Downs AONB’s northern border, a cottage can be seen that comprises chalk block walls. Observant visitors will note that it has the protection of ‘good shoes and a hat’ – a well-maintained roof of thatch plus a plinth and foundations of brick and sarsen stone.

At College Farm, also in Ashbury, there’s a fine example of the builder’s art. The ground floor walls comprise rough sarsen stone with courses of chalk block and brick framing. The first floor walls are mainly of chalk with the windows framed in brick. The grand house – Ashdown House – is located at Upper Lambourn, about five miles south of Ashbury. It was restored in 2005, using newly quarried chalk blocks from the original Melbourn Rock. By using limestone for the corner stones, window frames and balustrades the original builders were following in the footsteps of those Saxons and Normans who built their churches of flint, but used Jurassic limestone brought from outside the area to form cornerstones and window surrounds.

**SARSEN STONES**
Think ‘sarsen’ and Avebury, in the west of the region, comes to mind because its famous megalithic monuments are sarsen stones. Sarsen stone is a local, hardened sandstone of Palaeogene age. It has been used as a building material since Neolithic times and comes close to being indestructible. It is difficult to cut and shape and for many years sarsen stone was used as roughly broken blocks that builders fitted together as best they could.

A local sarsen-cutting industry was developed in the 19th century and sarsen stones were cut into blocks suitable for walls, corner stones and paving. Avebury’s Church, St James’, proudly presents a...
There’s a lot to be said for brick and tile. Palaeogene clays (Inkpen, Hermitage and Kintbury in particular) but elsewhere in areas where chalk, sarsen and flints were plentiful, builders combined them with brick thus enhancing their capabilities as building materials.

Early brick makers were on to a winner. They could produce an expensive building material because they had access to deposits of clay and – importantly – to small chalk quarries, even chalk mines, from which they secured the chalk needed to ensure that the iron-rich clays moulded well and didn’t break up in the kiln. Different coloured bricks could be achieved by manipulating the clay/chalk mix and by varying the oxygen mix during firing, a blue-grey glazed finish could be produced.

During the 15th century, when brick making started in the area, builders were restrained in their use, but as they became less expensive (but still expensive nevertheless) in the 16th and 17th centuries, they were being used in timber-framed buildings to replace wattle-and-daub infills, and for fireplaces, plinths, cornerstones, windows and door frames.

At St Mary Bourne, a few miles north east of Andover, there is an imposing brick and flint house where the brick has been used for framing and strengthening the structure with flint being restricted to the wall facing. Then there is something equally assertive about the almshouses in Lambourn. Constructed entirely of brick, the entrance tower incorporates diamond patterns of red and grey bricks. Another example of the pleasing effect of red and grey bricks can be seen at Great Bedwyn on the Kennet and Avon Canal and yet another at Chilton in Oxfordshire.

FLINT
Flints that have weathered out of the chalk can be picked up pretty much anywhere on the North Wessex Downs. Knapped and teamed with brick or sarsen stone, expertly laid flints can form a most decorative wall surface. Craftsmen tend to knap only the surface to be left exposed and for good reason, the shiny surface of a knapped flint does not bond well with mortar. There’s a handsome wall built entirely of flint, save for the brick framing, to admire at Ashmansworth. But to see an example of sheer bravado on the part of its builder, drive a few miles north out of Marlborough to Ogbourne Maizey and find Manor Farm. Its front façade comprises alternating courses of cut sarsen and flints and it looks very fine indeed.

Diversity in stone events
LEARN ABOUT THE North Wessex Downs by joining a talk or guide to identify the local building materials and the local geology. Various events will run throughout the year, all funded by the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Events for the spring kick off on 18 March with a talk/exhibition on ‘Diversity in Stone in the North Wessex Downs’ presented by Denise Dane – project officer for the Oxfordshire Geology Trust – in St Mary’s Church Hall, Silverless Street, Marlborough, SN8 1JQ from 7:30pm to 9:00pm. On 28 March a Guided Geological Walk around Lockeridge and the Overtons will be led by Isobel Geddes of the Wiltshire Geology Trust from 10:30am – 12:00pm, meeting at the National Trust sarsen stone field at the southwest end of Lockeridge village, GR SU 147675.

See www.northwessexdowns.org.uk or www.oxfordshiregt.org for details of events throughout the year.
A little big shop

Thanks to Kennet District Council, the Village Hall Committee, a grant from the North Wessex Downs AONB and a vast amount of work, time and energy donated by an enthusiastic management committee, All Cannings village now has its own shop.

All Cannings village sits less than a mile south from the Kennet and Avon Canal, roughly four miles from Devizes to the west and seven miles to Marlborough to the north. Not long distances, either of them, unless you want a newspaper, or a wholemeal loaf or a tin of shoe polish. In those circumstances, even four miles seem a very long way indeed.

The people of All Cannings lived without a village shop for three years, from 2002 to 2005, for a reason that chimes with thousands of small villages throughout the UK; what were once self-sufficient villages because they had shops enough to cater for most people’s day-to-day needs are now just dormitories for nearby towns. In All Cannings’ case, the last shop to go was the Post Office-cum-village shop. Fortunately All Cannings is a village with a very strong community spirit, keen residents who know how to get things organised and hands-on people who know how to get things done. When their efforts come together, there’s not much that All Cannings cannot achieve; a village shop run by the villagers for the villagers seemed eminently achievable. And so it proved, largely thanks to a grant from the North Wessex Downs AONB and other monetary donations, including one from Rural Renaissance.

The All Cannings village shop opened in December 2005 and it has never looked back. Shop cash sales in 2008 totalled £134,000. Not bad from a village population of about 600. It is now in the throes of being extended to twice its original size. Kennet District Council has supported phase one but there are still three further phases to finance.

So what process was involved in getting the shop up and running? A year of committee work, meetings at least once a month at which seven or eight individual committee members were charged with such responsibilities as applying for planning and building consents, applying for grants, organising fund-raising events and thinking forward about staffing levels, opening times and potential suppliers. The enterprise comes across with a sense of purpose and planning; decisions of vital importance were made by the management committee early on – for instance deciding on a Portacabin-based shop, against the attractive but much more expensive brick-built shop. The Portacabin would be cheaper and easier to extend if need be, so that’s what now hunkers down in the Village Hall car park, not much to look at on the outside but a great deal to look at inside – what the villagers regard as the staples of their lives, everything from chocolate bars to wines, jams to washing-up liquid and bleach, bacon and eggs to postage stamps and broccoli spears. “Not that different from Waitrose,” said a grinning wag who had just come in for a packet of cigarettes, “only not quite so much stock and a smidgen less standing room!”

TEAM SPIRIT

The shop is run by the management committee drawn from the 160 share-holding volunteers – one £10 share only, one vote only. Rosy Lock is volunteer co-ordinator, Hilary Antrobus is responsible for green and marketing issues, two paid, part-time managers Sue Allsop and Alison Yeatman plus self-employed Sue Watson ensure everything runs as it should. Hilary is also responsible for shop operations, Celia Gordon for key HR issues and keeping the photo/scrapbook up-to-date, all committee members contribute to strategy issues, Natalie Yates sees to organised events and software, Iain Shaw deals with governance and Health and Safety and John Mead is both secretary, fixer and doer and finance man.

Anyone out there thinking, from reading so far, that the All Cannings village shop appears to have a voracious appetite for people’s time should take into account that it is truly a ‘little big shop’. As a co-operative it has the same legal status as the Co-op. Opening hours are 7am until 1pm, then 3pm until 7pm on weekdays, 9am until 5pm on Saturdays and 9am until 1pm on Sundays. Shop policy is to try to have two people behind the counter at any one time. Extraordinarily, not every villager uses the shop.

Some still travel to one of the towns close by because, they say, the shop doesn’t provide all that they need. The point of the shop isn’t only about convenience. It’s one of the hubs of the village. It will help to keep the village alive by encouraging people to meet, buy local and support their local environment. All Cannings is definitely a going concern – just like the shop.

Above: The All Cannings village shop.

AVEBURY’S ON THE WAY

More than £25,000 of funding, some from the North Wessex Downs AONB, has been secured by the Avebury Community Shop Steering Group that plans to open a shop in Hope Cottage on Avebury’s High Street, that currently houses an Outreach Post Office service on four half days a week. The objective is to set up a shop that is owned and run by and for the village. It will be both a social hub and an essential community service. For progress see www.aveburyshop.co.uk.

EAST GARSTON GETS GOING

With the assistance of local government funding, a grant from the North Wessex Downs AONB, funding from VIRSA and donations, East Garston, in the Lambourn Valley, has started to build its own convenience shop. The shop, which should be open by mid March, will promote the Lambourn Valley and its facilities that include walking and riding. It will also actively encourage and promote local producers to sell their products in the shop. For progress reports, see www.east-garston.com.
A treemendous idea

Sometime in the near future, North Wessex Downs’ trees will be made to feel very special indeed. That’s because of the Tree Council’s Tree Warden Scheme.

If you like trees you’ll like the notion of the Tree Council’s Tree Warden Scheme. It is a national initiative that enables people to play an active role in conserving and enhancing their local trees and woods. It was founded by the Tree Council and is coordinated by the Council with the support of National Grid, local communities and local county councils.

The Tree Council launched the volunteer Tree Warden Scheme in 1990 as a national force of local tree champions dedicated to their communities’ trees in town, city or countryside. It has coordinated the scheme nationally ever since, working with local authorities, voluntary organisations, parish councils and local partnerships to set up and develop Tree Warden networks. Today there are some 8,000 Tree Wardens in communities throughout the UK, devoting a total of more than 1.8 million volunteer hours a year to the UK’s trees.

JOINING THE SCHEME
A Partnership was set up by Wiltshire County Council, The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and The Tree Council to look at introducing the Tree Warden Scheme. The Partnership is the guiding organisation and has involved other environmental organisations such as the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Recording Centre (WSBRC), the Forestry Commission and the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Following successful introductory events in October 2008 at Dinton in the south of the county and at Lockeridge in the north west, it was clear that there was public support for a Tree Warden Scheme in Wiltshire and it was agreed that a formal launch event would take place in early 2009. However, in the meantime, a woodland walk was arranged as a get-together for potential Tree Wardens at Oakfrith Wood, an event led by Wiltshire County Council Countryside Officer Steve Russell and attended by 40 people who got to know each other as fellow potential Tree Wardens.

FORMAL LAUNCH
The formal launch event took place at Lackham House on 31 January 2009. Lackham Estate is set in the rural heart of Wiltshire with more than 700 hectares of farmland, parkland and woodland; it offered a magnificent venue at which to launch the scheme. The Partnership invited all interested parties, particularly anyone who would like to become a Tree Warden, to come along. The event was a chance to sign up as one of the first new Wiltshire Tree Wardens, and to enjoy some practical taster sessions on tree identification, veteran and ancient trees in the landscape, woodland biodiversity and trees and the law.

Tree Wardens in Wiltshire will be as Tree Wardens elsewhere; they will be volunteers who believe that trees are important in their local area and are prepared to put a little time into carrying out or encouraging practical projects. The scheme is supported nationally by the Tree Council, but administered locally by the Partnership. The project is not looking for experts, just people with enthusiasm who care. It will be running a programme of events and training for those who have signed up, and details of these are available from Vicky Roscoe the Tree Warden Co-ordinator. Her email address is: vickyroscoe@wiltshire.gov.uk and her telephone number is 01225 713489.

The aim is to recruit a Tree Warden in every parish, with the individual being proposed by the Parish Council, and supported by them and by an officer based at Wiltshire County Council. The work of a Tree Warden may include planting and caring for trees and local woods, surveying trees and gathering information about them, providing early warning of disease or vandalism, getting together with like-minded people for training and field trips, leading guided tree walks, setting up tree nurseries using seeds collected locally, and above all, getting local communities involved to make trees matter to everyone.

The Tree Warden will be the link between the local community, the Parish Council and the new Wiltshire Council thus ensuring that everyone is aware of the importance of trees and that trees are important for all kinds of reasons.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?
North Wessex Downs AONB intends to roll out this scheme across the whole area – for details call 01488 685440.

...they will be volunteers who believe that trees are important in their local area and are prepared to put a little time into carrying out or encouraging practical projects...
A climate for change

There’s a different air in Marlborough these days; one of purpose and cautious satisfaction as the efforts of a group called Marlborough Climate Pledge make a discernible difference to the local climate.

“Join us, a group of local people, convinced that if we work together we will make a difference. Working together as individuals and as a town, encouraging and informing each other, we can make significant differences to our energy use.”

That plea, addressed to the people of Marlborough in Wiltshire, has resulted in the formation of Marlborough Climate Pledge (MCP) that was launched as a community initiative in 2006 by former Environment Minister Michael Meacher, in response to increasing concern about climate change.

MCP’s main aim as it affects the citizens of Marlborough is to reduce their individual and collective impact on climate change by promoting both a change in their behaviour and culture and a change in the institutions that underpin and mould that culture at the local, national and international level. Promoting renewable energy is a key priority for conserving the North Wessex Downs.

Central to the project is MCP’s pledge booklet (see www.climatepledge.org.uk) with a range of pledges in four major areas: Energy, Food, Transport and Waste. The group follows up pledgers to record and evaluate their impact by calculating the CO2, the pledgers are saving, according to estimates approved by Defra and other accredited bodies.

The first pledge feedback process of 100 households resulted in savings of 125 tonnes (at a conservative estimate) of CO2, i.e. 1.25 tonnes per household. This was calculated through the MCP’s own research linking local pledges to national figures for estimating savings.

MCP organises and runs a varied programme of public events designed to promote awareness and educate, both about climate change related issues and MCP’s pledge process. This also helps build support within the pledger community and to encourage further participation as well as recruiting new pledgers and supporters.

Events have included public meetings with invited speakers to address specific issues, Al Gore’s film An Inconvenient Truth, hosting the play Breaking the Silence (the powerful story about environmentalist Rachel Carson), organising children’s ‘scrapstore’ workshops, holding idea-sharing forums, a ‘solar open houses’ day, energy surveys, the Climate Day in May which saw Marlborough’s seasonal ‘human fruit and veg machine’ humming on the High Street, and – vital to the central process – holding regular information and pledge stalls.

MCP has been instrumental in getting additional carbon savings from Marlborough’s main supermarket. After addressing a MCP meeting, the manager of Waitrose made a commitment to reduce the number of plastic carrier bags in the store. Marlborough’s Waitrose store has, since then, made a very impressive 50% reduction, using 36,000 fewer plastic carrier bags each week, equating to around 25 tonnes of CO2 saved annually. This reduction far outstripped the national voluntary code of practice agreed to by Waitrose HQ.

The group also highlights the importance of the political process as a crucial means of bringing about necessary changes; MCP knows from Marlborough’s MP that people are being encouraged to write to him about climate change issues and, to quote from a letter from him, he “has no doubt that this is in no small part due to the work MCP has done in highlighting the issues”. MCP has encouraged participation in the campaign for a Climate Bill by holding letter-writing stalls and delivering a Christmas card in December 2007 (‘We’re Dreaming of a White Christmas’) to the Prime Minister, with hundreds of signatures calling for a strong Bill.

With support from North Wessex Downs AONB, MCP launched a Community Allotment project for those wanting some help to get started with growing vegetables. The response to this reflects the national growth in enthusiasm, as more people are keen to take control over their food.

The community allotment has now been ‘dug and divided’ in preparation for the growing season. The allotmenteers are organising community tools and a secure lock-up, compost will be made and bought and there will be a range of composting techniques for the wider community to view – it is known there is a healthy interest in worms and compost from the interest shown for the ‘Open Compost Gardens’ day that MCP has previously organised.

MCP shares the concerns highlighted by major environmental organisations about the increasing threat to food security, in part resulting from the impacts of climate change.

In the autumn, MCP invited a geographic information expert who used data and mapping technology to explore the issue of climate change and our food supply and to address the question: can existing UK farmland keep us fed, clothed and housed? Early next year, it plans to show the film The Power of Community: How Cuba survived peak oil, illustrating the transition to less energy-intensive agriculture.

MCP has recently taken over ‘ownership’ of Marlborough’s monthly Farmers’ Market (for details of opening times see www.livingheritagesouthwest.co.uk/main/en/eve-provider-14256.html) and the AONB grant also provides important development support, helping to strengthen local food links and promote the local food economy.

OTHER GREEN INITIATIVES

Elsewhere across the North Wessex Downs other projects are keeping villages green. In Blewbury, Oxfordshire, an energy initiative has reduced domestic energy consumption (see www.blewbury.co.uk/energyfor details); in Lambourn a community forum discusses ways to tackle climate change (see www.lambourn.info for details); and in Hungerford the Hungerford Environmental Action Group is encouraging local residents to reduce their impact on climate change with respect to low carbon initiatives and buying local food.
If you stand on the bank of the river Thames at Goring and look at the water flowing past you are likely to think "That's a lot of water!" And then you might start wondering what the volume of the flow could possibly be and whether or not it could be transformed into useable energy.

When the Goring Parish Council (GPC) looked into the prospect of transforming the energy of the Thames into useable power it was pleasantly surprised; an average of five million tonnes of water flows through the Goring Gap every day, much more after heavy rains. Surely, the Council conjectured, that's got to be enough to do something with?

So back in 2005 the GPC decided to investigate the feasibility of extracting hydro-electricity from the river. The idea took hold and the Council part-funded a feasibility study with South Oxfordshire District Council. They researched specialist consultancies, obtained three quotes and commissioned one of them to do the groundwork. At the same time the GPC added hydro-power to its Parish Plan – an important requirement when seeking funding. The consultancy reported in 2006 stating that it was possible to obtain 170kW (about enough to keep 170 homes supplied with power) from no fewer than 15 turbines at six locations on the weir.

In 2006 the fledgling Goring and Streatley Sustainability Group (GSSG) developed a constitution and appointed a chairman, a secretary and a treasurer, and opened a bank account all of which proved essential when the Group started applying for grants. Independently, Streatley had included hydro-power into its Village Statement in the same year. Fortunately for everyone's morale, no member of the Group knew of the proposed scheme at Romney near Windsor to supply the Queen in her castle; a long-running project to which a Community Fund had been attached to achieve by more mundane means.

The UK's leading expert, Dave Mann of Mannpower, produced an outline design study which indicated that 2.46kW of electrical power could be produced from three 3.5m diameter reverse Archimedes spirals in one location. Added benefits of the scheme include zero pollution, reduction of more than 500 tonnes of CO₂, a year and an expected lifetime of three generations.

To fund this study GSSG has successfully applied for grants from Chilterns Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), North Wessex Downs SDF, Streatley PC and SODC. This phase was completed in March 2008. The quest for cash continues. The process is now part way through the Environment Survey – for which they had to obtain further funds – with the EA funding the baseline flood risk analysis.

More grants are needed to complete these so that the necessary permissions and licences can be obtained from the EA to allow installation of the spirals. To finance the actual construction, local communities have been sounded out regarding a local share issue and the response has been encouraging, but significant funds from the EU will also be needed to make it all happen. John Howell MP and James Elles Euro MP have already visited Goring Gap to see for themselves what is entailed in this ambitious development. They are both very supportive and have offered invaluable advice on where to find EU funding.

It's a long road the GPC still has to travel and much of it is strewn with fund raising to pay for the various studies and analyses. It will be a great educational destination that will increase tourism to Goring by river, coach and train. The GPC has been approached by about nine other communities in a similar situation to Goring already. So Archimedes may soon become a familiar name to school children that live close to UK's major rivers.

**FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES**

The Feasibility Study gave everyone hope but more detailed information was needed. The scale of the engineering works required to install 15 turbines was such that an alternative solution had to be found. Their search took them back about 2,050 years to the invention of the Archimedes screw, a solution suggested by the Environment Agency (EA). The Agency recommended the installation of fish-and-eel-friendly Archimedes spirals, so the switch was made to this ancient-and-modern technology.

Goring and Streatley Parish Councils turned to Archimedes when their plan to turn the flow of the river Thames into hydro-electric power proved too expensive and too cumbersome to achieve by more mundane means.

**GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS**

This project would not have made any progress without the generous contributions from the following organisations: North Wessex Downs AONB SDF, Chilterns AONB SDF, GSSG voluntary fund raising activities, Streatley Parish Council, South Oxon District Council, Goring Parish Council, Goring Amenity Association.

The weirs at Goring and Streatley, 2008.

Above: The Archimedes spiral is the preferred technology. It allows fish and eels to pass through without harm, is low maintenance, relatively easy to install, visually entrancing and audibly relaxing.
The rise of the buzzard

Once threatened, buzzards have a remarkable comeback story, and are enjoying life in the skies above the North Wessex Downs.

The chances of seeing a buzzard are much more likely now than they were 50, or even just ten, years ago. The buzzard is a key example of how in a relatively short time a species can re-establish itself with the ability to recolonise lost territory. Recognisable by its mewing cat-like calls while soaring overhead in wide, wavering, rising slow circles, or perched motionless on telegraph poles, fence posts or dead branches, watching out for any young rabbit, rat or mouse that chances to pass beneath it, there are signs that this once rarely-seen broad-winged hawk is once again becoming more common in the skies over Britain and especially so over the North Wessex Downs. The habitat here is particularly suited to buzzards, with its open country for hunting, and woodland for nesting. The undulating hilly ground in the area also helps generate varied winds and rising air currents that allow them to take full advantage of their skills in the air.

Buzzards are stocky birds of prey – their wingspan can be more than one metre, while their body is about half a metre in size. Their plumage varies from a rich brown to a pale grey, with lighter markings beneath, giving it excellent camouflage. In flight the wing tip feathers spread into ‘fingers’ and have a ragged, moth-like appearance. They have yellow, unfeathered legs and a brownish hooked beak. They find roughly ten percent of their body weight in food daily – mostly carrion, road kill (especially in the winter), small mammals such as rabbits, large earthworms, beetles, and large insects. Buzzards hunt and forage in a variety of ways, either soaring high above with their wings held in a shallow ‘V’ shape looking for movement on the ground below or watching for small mammals from a post for hours at a time, or walking on the ground looking for worms. Spot them on their untidy raggedy nests made from sticks. They breed early in the year so that by the time their chicks hatch and are demanding meat, young rabbits are out and about for food – usually in May.

But they haven’t always been this widespread and easy to see. In Britain’s early pre-history the buzzard was common. It was at its strongest while feudal Britain was undergoing an agricultural revolution, because forests were being fragmented into small copses as the need for land, building supplies and fuel increased. The fields and enclosures encouraged rabbits to flourish, and by 1544 buzzards were regarded as being ‘everywhere’. They were even eaten and used in medicine.

As raptors are towards the top of the food chain, if their populations are healthy it implies other lower levels of the food chain are plentiful. When there are problems in the environment it will show in the raptor populations...

They are relatively social birds – nestlings of one year stay together. But the reason they are more visible than many other raptors is because they are highly territorial. In the UK they are sedentary and will defend a formal territory, within which they will probably have a number of nests. Disputes usually take place in the air, with the birds circling each other and calling. In the spring these aerial dog-fights and calling are more likely to be courtships with mutual soaring, swooping and diving. Buzzards form long-lasting pairs, and traditionally lay their eggs and hatch them in April, although this appears to be getting earlier with climate change. Some are now nest building in early March, and laying at the end of March. As this is taking place before the leaves come out on the trees, it is easy to spot them on their untidy raggedy nests made from sticks. They breed early in the year so that by the time their chicks hatch and are demanding meat, young rabbits are out and about for food – usually in May.

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CHANGE IN FORTUNES

Like most raptors in the UK, the buzzard's change in fortunes came in the 1800s. Country estates began to exploit the profit and sport derived from game birds and with the development of better guns, gamekeepers were able to keep all predators away from the game in a more effective way. This persecution caused their numbers to fall. Their numbers fell again throughout the 1950s and 1960s as DDT and other pesticides that were being used on farmland, travelled up through the...
food chain and affected their eggshells (by making them thin and fragile), as well as making them infertile.

To further decimate their numbers, Myxomatosis wiped out 95 percent of their chief food source, rabbits, within two years (1953-1955). So dependent were buzzards on rabbits for food that there was an almost immediate drop in buzzard numbers by up to 50 percent.

The first glimmer of hope for all of Britain’s raptors came in 1966 when some pesticides were banned and later on, in 1984, DDT was banned too. This action relieved the strong pressures that existed lower down the food chain and enabled food webs that supported more top predators to become re-established. Further legal protection for many species came in 1981 with the Wildlife and Countryside Act and buzzards were placed on the list of protected birds. Rabbit numbers started to increase too, so buzzards’ recovery could begin in earnest. Now there are an estimated 50,000 pairs in Britain.

As raptors are towards the top of the food chain, if their populations are healthy then it implies other lower levels of the food chain are plentiful. When there are problems in the environment it will show in the raptor populations.

NEW LIFE FOR chalk grasslands project

The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust’s New Life for Chalk Grasslands Project is helping the buzzards to recover further. About 80 percent of the world’s chalk grassland is in the UK, and half of this is in Wiltshire, making it an incredibly important resource on the global scale. Catherine Hosie, the project manager says: “Chalk grassland is a very diverse habitat which can support up to 200 plants and thousands of invertebrates on a single site.” But one of the difficulties of maintaining the landscape’s stunning summer beauty and sheer diversity of species is that fewer landowners now keep any livestock of their own so that downland sites are frequently neglected, and the lack of grazing allows them to become overgrown with scrub. The project aims to change that by conserving and restoring this nationally important UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat by knitting together downlands, coombes and valleys stretching from the North Wessex Downs through the Salisbury Plain to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs.

PROJECT RESERVES

Trust reserves that will be incorporated into the project within the North Wessex Downs AONB include Morgan’s Hill, Ham Hill and High Clear Down. One huge element of the project will be to work with Trust partners such as Natural England, the AONBs, RSPB, and Plantlife to name a few, to help wildlife on a wider scale withstand climate change. One aim of the project will be to identify areas between downland sites that could be reseeded with downland species, thereby starting the whole process of linking isolated areas.

The farmland birds project

The South West Farmland Birds Initiative is a partnership project to help farmland birds. It currently covers two areas, the North Wessex Downs and the Cotswolds.

Sarah Dullage of RSPB (right) tells us: “For me nothing heralds the arrival of spring quite like the skylark’s song overhead, or the soaring dance of the lapwing, but for the past 30 years farmland birds have been declining steadily. Here in the South West we have nationally important populations of some of our most threatened farmland species, including lapwing, grey partridge, corn bunting, tree sparrow, turtle dove and yellow wagtail. We want to help those populations to thrive and grow.”

Sarah tells us: “There will be a series of events throughout the project areas, covering what the birds need and how to provide it. We’ll also be working with local farmers and advisors to help them get the best out of Environmental Stewardship. By working together we can provide a range of habitats for our farmland birds to nest and feed in, giving them a helping hand.”

For more details contact Sarah Dullage, on 01380 737008 or 07818 807480 or email her at sarah.dullage@rspb.org.uk.

The South West Farmland Birds Initiative is a partnership project between Natural England, Defra, RSPB, FWAG, the Cotswolds AONB, North Wessex Downs AONB, Cranborne Chase AONB and West Wiltshire Downs and Dorset Downs AONBs, with support from GWCT, National Trust, Plantlife, NFU and the MOD.
Local Products Directory

Eat the view and save the planet!

Many of the beautiful landscapes of the North Wessex Downs AONB have been created by farming. You can really eat the views by using this Local Products Directory to find breweries, bakeries, meat producers, preserve makers, shops and fruit and vegetable growers — all within or very close to the North Wessex Downs.

These days we’re all counting the carbon emissions of what we do, including the processes used to create our food. Use this guide to be sure that you’re doing your bit to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Buy locally-produced food and drink from farmers’ markets, farm shops and delis. At markets you can talk to farmers to discuss animal welfare and find out how many miles their produce has travelled.

Take reusable shopping bags with you to buy loose fruit and vegetables. Re-use old paper bags to keep soil from potatoes off your tomatoes. Only buy as much food as you need, it’s too good to throw away!

**BEER, WINE & CIDER**

***A’BECKETT’S VINEYARD***
Contact: Paul or Lynn Langham, a’Beckett’s Farmhouse, High Street, Littleton Pannell, Devizes SN10 4EN
T: 01380 816669
E: info@abecketts.co.uk
www.abecketts.co.uk

*Products:* Award-winning vegan friendly English wine including: dry and off dry white, rosé, red and sparkling wines. Cider and apple juice available in 2009.

*Opening times:* Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10.30am to 4.30pm all year and Bank Holidays. Vineyard and Orchard Tours are available to organised groups and also for schools for more details please contact us.


***BRIGHTWELL VINEYARD***
Contact: Mrs Carol Nielsen, Brightwell Vineyard, Rush Court, Shillingford Road, Wallingford OX10 8LJ
T: 01491 836586
E: wines@brightwines.co.uk
www.brightwines.co.uk

*Products:* A 14-acre vineyard, the largest in Oxfordshire, producing red, rosé, white and sparkling award-winning English wines. Shop open for wine sales and tastings Friday to Sunday 12 to 6pm. Group vineyard tours by prior arrangement. Wine sales also by appointment or mail order.

***LAMBOURN VALLEY CIDER COMPANY***
Contact: Roy Bailey, The Malt House, Great Shefford, Hungerford RG17 7ED
T: 01488 648441
E: enquiries@lambournvalleycider.co.uk
www.lambournvalleycider.co.uk

*Products:* A former cider-maker now only producing bottle-fermented perry from special local pears.

*Other outlets:* The bottled perry is currently on sale at Cobbs Farm Shop, Bath Road, Hungerford.

***MOLES BREWERY***
Contact: Roger Catte, 5 Merlin Way, Bowerhill, Melksham SN12 6TJ
T: 01225 704734/708842
E: sales@moles-cascade.co.uk
www.molesbrewery.com

*Products:* Est. 1982. Brews traditional ales using locally-malted Maris Otter malt, and ciders from locally-grown apples. Sells through pubs, clubs, restaurants and events. Products include Molecatcher, Tap Bitter, Landlord’s Choice, Molennium, Rucking Mole, Best Bitter and Black Rat cider.

*Opening times:* Brewery open 9am-5pm weekdays, 9am-noon Saturday.

*Other outlets:* Nationally through other brewers, wholesalers.

***ARKELL’S BREWERY***
Contact: James Arkell, Arkell’s Brewery Ltd, Kingsdown, Swindon SN2 7RU
T: 01793 823026
E: arkells@arkells.com
www.arkells.com

*Products:* Bees Organic Ale – award-winning ale range, with New World wine as speciality. Oldest Swindon business (164 years), one of only 29 family breweries in UK. Victorian steam brewery using original methods.

*Opening times:* 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Deliveries throughout area.

*Other outlets:* Locally, Arkell’s owns 105 pubs, three clubs, one off-licence.

***BUTTS BREWERY***
Contact: Chris Butt, Butts Brewery, Northfield Farm, Great Shefford, near Hungerford RG17 7BY
T: 01488 648133
E: sales@buttsbrewery.com
www.buttsbrewery.com

*Env-links:* Org


*Other outlets:* Supplies approx. 60 freehouse pubs, local supermarkets, specialist off-licences.

Visit www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/products
Setting 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 linked with the ongoing well-being of the North Wessex Downs and the future success of their businesses.

Many have joined assurance schemes, these are highlighted in our list as “Env-Links”.

Key

WFCP: Whole Farm Conservation Plan: Dedicated, 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.

FAS: Farm Assurance Scheme: Voluntary schemes establishing production standards covering food safety, environmental protection, animal welfare, and other important consumer issues. Eg. British Farm standard with red tractor logo.

Demeter: Certified food comes with 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 makes payment to farmers and 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.

BREAD, CAKES & FLOUR

DOVES FARM FOODS
Contact: Clare Marriage, Salisbury Rd, Hungerford RG17 0RF
T: 01488 684880
E: mail@dovesfarm.co.uk
www.dovesfarm.co.uk

Env-links: Bio, CSA, FAS, Org, WFPC


Other outlets: Independents, natural and multiple retailers.

WADWORTH & CO. LTD.
Contact: Jonathan Pollock, Northgate Brewery, Devizes SN10 1JW
T: 01380 723361
E: jonathanpollock@wadsworth.co.uk
www.wadsworth.co.uk


Weekday deliveries daily of our products by Shire Horses in Devizes. Stables open to the public. 1.30pm to 3.30pm Monday to Thursday. A master cooper making and repairing wooden beer casks. Visitor Centre – discover the history and heritage of Wadsworth brewing, and understand what makes this local, family-owned brewery so unique in an ever-changing industry.

WEST BERKS BREWERY
Contact: Mrs Helen Maggs The Old Bakery, Yattendon, nr Thatcham RG18 0UE
T: 01635 202968
E: info@wbbrew.co.uk
www.wbbrew.com

Products: Micro-brewery established in 1995 and celebrating 14 years of brewing award-winning real ales, notably Good Old Boy, Maggs’ Magnificent Mild, Mr Chubb’s Lunchtime Bitter. Polypins for parties and events to order. Bottled beers available. Brewery tours by arrangement. Shop open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm, Saturday 10am–1pm, or by appointment.

Other outlets: Owns The Rising Sun, Stockcross, nr Newbury. Supplies pubs in Berks, Hants, Oxon, Wilts, Glos.

BREADS, bread pudding, carrot cake and Lacock Lardies. Also Marshfield moon ice cream, Cottage Delight preserves, old-fashioned sweets.

Opening times: Open all week, 10am to 5pm. Winter opening: from start of Nov until 28 Feb 10am to 4.30pm. Baking: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and three Saturdays a month.

MAPLEDURHAM WATERMILL
Contact: Lola Andrews, The Estate Office, Mapledurham, nr Reading RG4 7TR
T: 0118 972 3350
E: enquiries@mapledurham.co.uk
www.mapledurham.co.uk

Env-links: FAS, LEAF, WFCP, WMP

Products: Wholesome flour from last working watermill on Thames, available for visitors or by order from Estate Office. Open Easter to end Sept: Sat, Sun & Bank Hols 2 to 5pm.

THE OLD FARMHOUSE BAKERY
Contact: Rodney, Kate or Beccie Bitmead, By The Meadow Farm, Steventon OX13 6RP
T: 01235 831230
E: oldfarmhousebakery@bythemeadowfarm.co.uk
www.theoldfarmhousebakery.co.uk

Criteria for directory inclusion: Production site must be located, or product must be grown, reared or harvested within the North Wessex Downs AONB or within five miles of its boundary. Product must be available locally. All information has been provided by the producers and neither the publishers nor North Wessex Downs AONB accept any responsibility for any errors or omissions.
FRUIT

BOURNE VALLEY PICK-YOUR-OWN
Contact: Daniel Culley, Lone Barn Farm, St Mary Bourne, nr Andover SP11 6AJ
T: 01264 738888
E: enquiries@bournevalleyppy.co.uk
www.bournevalleyppy.co.uk
Env-links: FAS.
Products: Grows and sells soft fruit, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, red and blackcurrants. Gladioli, when in season.
Opening times: May-Sept: Mon-Fri, 8.30am-7pm, weekends 9am-5pm.

CROSS LANES FRUIT FARM
Contact: Gillian Franklin, Mapledurham, nr Reading RG4 7UW
T: 0118 972 3167
E: apples@crosslanesfruitfarm.co.uk
www.crosslanesfruitfarm.co.uk
Products: Growing 60 varieties of traditional English apples, plums and pears. Freshly-pressed apple juices and honey. Special Christmas boxes.
Opening times: Seasonal, end August to mid-Jan Wednesday to Saturday 10am-6pm.

MEAT & FISH

BROOKLEAS FISH FARM
Contact: Tim Lobb, Brookleas, East Hendred, nr Wantage OX12 8LN
T: 01235 820500
E: brookleas@hotmail.com
www.brookleas.co.uk
Opening times: Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm.
Other outlets: Farm shop and attends 13 local Farmers’ Markets during year.

CASEY FIELDS FARM SHOP (VICARS GAME)
Contact: Alan or Owen Hayward, Casey Fields Farm, off Dog Lane, Ashampstead RG8 8SJ
T: 01635 579662
E: alan@vicarsgame.co.uk
www.vicarsgame.co.uk
Products: Farm shop and butchery selling high quality local meat.

HILDERD’S
Contact: George Hildred, Spring Leys, Wallingford Road, Goring on Thames, Reading, RG8 0HP
T: 01491 874471
E: georgehildred@hotmail.com
Products: Pick your own asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, red and blackcurrants. Gladioli, when in season.
Opening times: Mon-Sat 8am-5pm.
Other outlets: Wholesale through Vicars Game to local and London restaurants; Fortnum & Mason, other food distributors.

CHALLOW HILL MEATS
Contact: Lucy Blackwell, Challow Hill Farm, East Challow, Wantage OX12 9PD
T: 01235 765792
E: info@challowhillmeats.co.uk
www.challowhillmeats.co.uk
Env-links: FAS.
Products: Dexter beef, seasonal lamb and rare breed pork.
Other outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Abingdon, Faringdon, Wantage, Didcot, Henley, Newbury and Hungerford.

CHERRY ORCHARD MEATS
Contact: Nick Venter, Cherry Orchard Cottage, East Sands, Burbage SN8 3AN
T: 01672 810257/07866 452611
E: nicholasventers@tiscali.co.uk
Products: Pork sausages, bacon, gammon, pork or beef freezer packs. Pig feed contains no GM ingredients or antibiotics (growth promoters). Refrigerated home delivery service within 14-mile radius.
Other outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Pewsey, Marlborough; local caterers; retailers.

DEWS MEADOW FARM SHOP
Contact: Jane and Andrew Bowler, Oxford Rd, East Hanney OX12 0HP
T: 01235 868634
E: bowler.jane@btinternet.com
www.dewsmeadowfarm.co.uk
Env-links: Org.
Products: Traditional home-produced pork, bacon, sausages, burgers, pork-pies, pasties and sausage rolls. Also bread, fruit and veg. Award-winning dry-cured bacon and gluten-free products.
Opening times: Mon-Sat. 8.30am-5pm. Late night Friday 6pm.
Other outlets: 12 Farmers’ Markets.

DOWN BARN FARM
Contact: Mrs Penny Reid, Down Barn Farm, Sparsholt Down, Wantage OX12 9XD
T: 01367 820272
E: pendomeffect@aol.com
Other outlets: Hampshire Farmers’ Markets, local shops.

HAMPSTEAD FARM ORGANIC MEAT
Contact: Carolyn Curtis, Eastbrook Farm, Cues Lane, Bishopton, Swindon SN6 8PL
T: 01793 790460
E: orders@helenbrowningsorganics.co.uk
www.helenbrowningsorganics.co.uk
Env-links: Org.
Other outlets: Sainsbury’s and Tesco under Helen Browning brand.

GREENFIELD PORK PRODUCTS
Contact: Martin and Dawn Martin, Sunnycliff, Highbury Road, Anna Valley, Andover SP11 7LU
T: 01264 359422
E: martinanddawn@greenfield-pork.co.uk
www.greenfield-pork.co.uk
Other outlets: Hampshire Farmers’ Markets, local shops.

KILN MEADOWS FARM
Contact: Gordon Hedges, Cox’s Lane, Midgham, Reading RG7 5UR
T: 0118 971 2138
E: gordon@bynhedges.plus.com
Products: Prime quality beef from pedigree Highland cattle. All beef hung on bone for three weeks to maximise flavour and tenderness. Visit by appointment.
Other outlets: Farmers’ Market at Newbury.

Visit www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/products
LITTLE WITTENHAM BEEF & LAMB  
Contact: Rachael Lee,  
2 Hill Farm Cottages,  
Little Wittenham OX14 4QZ  
T: 01865 408196  
E: rachael.lee@homecall.co.uk  
www.northmoortrust.co.uk  
Env-links: Bio, CSA, FAS, WFCP, WMP  
Products: Beef & Lamb born and reared on Northmoor Trust’s conservation farm where animal welfare, wildlife conservation and environmental best practice are given high-priority. Full range of cuts available throughout the year. Mutton seasonal. Sheepskin Rugs  
Other outlets: Farmers’ Markets. Farm gate, farm/lambing open days, see Northmoor Trust website for details. Visit by appointment.

ROYAL BERKSHIRE PORK  
Contact: Russell Kilvington,  
Tamansik, Pudding Lane,  
Brightwalton RG20 7BY  
T: 01488 638155  
E: info@royalberkshirepork.co.uk  
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 Waitrose and Sainsbury’s.

SANDRIDGE FARMHOUSE BACON LTD  
Contact: Mrs R Keen, Sandridge Farm,  
Bromham, nr Chippenham SN15 2JL  
T: 01380 850304  
E: info@sandridgebacon.co.uk  
www.sandridgebacon.co.uk  
Products: Specialty hams; Wiltshire naturally-smoked and dry-cured bacon, sausages. Home-reared Aberdeen Angus and Hereford beef.  
Opening times: Farm shop open Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm.  
Other outlets: Local shops; supermarkets; caterers; also Waitrose and Sainsbury’s.

STARK HOUSE FARM  
Contact: Mrs Frances Paget, Stark House Farm, Goose Hill, Headley, Thatcham RG19 8AR  
T: 01635 268205  
E: francespaget@uk2.net  
Env-links: CSA.  
Products: Rare-breed Saddleback pork, bacon and sausages. Farm sales available, telephone first.  
Other outlets: Farmers’ Markets at Newbury and Winchester.  

YATESBURY HOUSE FARM  
Contact: Richard Gantlett & Son, Yatesbury House Farm, Yatesbury, Nr Calne SN11 8YF  
T: 01672 539039  
www.yatesbury.net  
Env-links: Bio, CSA, FAS, Org, WFCP  
Products: Pedigree, Aberdeen Angus, Clover fed beef produced in rotation with cereals.

PLANTS & SEEDS

ENGLEFIELD GARDEN CENTRE  
Contact: Miss Janet Smith,  
The Street, Englefield, nr Theale,  
Reading RG7 5ES  
T: 0118 930 4898  
www.englefieldgardencentre.co.uk  
Products: Charity-run garden centre providing training for people with disabilities. Produces high quality bedding and herbaceous plants.  
Opening times: Mon to Sat 9am-5pm, Sun May to June 12 to 4pm.

FLOWER FARMS  
Contact: Bob Anderson,  
Carvers Hill Farm, Shalbourne,  
Marlborough SN8 3PS  
T: 01672 870782  
E: flowerfarms@btinternet.com  
www.charlesflowers.co.uk  
Products: Wildflower seed and plants. Consultancy service available.  
Other outlets: Mail order, brochure available, or order from the website.

MEADOWMAKER  
Contact: Sue Everett,  
122 Derwent Road, Thatcham RG19 3UP  
T: 01635 847164  
E: suejeverett@hotmail.com  
www.meadowmaker.me.uk  
Products: Wild-harvested seed, by contract only, for re-creating native grassland (lowland meadow/calcareous grassland); consultancy for Farm Environment Plans and Environmental Stewardship. Inst. of Ecology and Env. Management, Flora Locale’s Code of Practice for Supplying Native Flora.

WANBOROUGH HERB NURSERY  
Contact: Bob and Peter Biggs,  
Wanborough Herb Nursery,  
Callas Hill, Upper Wanborough,  
Swindon SN4 0DQ  
T: 01793 790327  
E: wanboroughnursery@btinternet.com  
www.wanboroughherbnursery.moonfruit.com  
Products: A chemical free retail nursery promoting interest in herbs and their uses. Also unusual or forgotten plants. We can also undertake plant searches for that special plant for your garden. Garden design/consultation as well as maintenance is available through Peters’ Garden Design an award winning designer.  
Other outlets: Farmers’ Markets; Summer Shows/Fetes; talks to garden club/societies. Food & Drink Fairs.

Visit www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/products
PRESERVES

ATKINS & POTTS
Contact: Nicola Young, Unit 3, Studland Estate, Gore, End Rd, Ball Hill, Newbury RG20 0PW
T: 01635 254249
E: info@atkinsandpotts.co.uk
www.atkinsandpotts.co.uk
Products: Savoury jams, relishes, classic condiments. Hand-made to recipes devised by local Berkshire families. Also wide range of kitchen essentials. Online and site sales. Delivery to the door.
Other outlets: Wickcort, Cobbs, and Wellington Farm Shops; La Petite Fromagene, Marlborough; The Healthy Life, Devizes.

CHURCH LANE FOOD COMPANY
Contact: Jean Semlyen, 15 Church Lane, Wallingford Oxfordshire OX10 0DX
T: 01491 833320
Products: Environmentally-aware producer of home-made traditional fruit and vegetable preserves, jams, jellies, marmalades, chutneys. Most ingredients grown locally, without chemicals. Visit by appointment.
Other outlets: Wallingford Local Producers’ Market.

LIZZIE’S LARDER
Contact: Liz Barnett, 10 Inkpen Road, Kintbury, RG17 9TU
T: 01488 658450
E: jib@snowdonbarnett.com
Products: Hand-made jams, marmalades, chutneys and quiches made in small batches, where possible from home-grown or local produce. Home-made healthy dog biscuits also available.
Other outlets: Local shops, shows, markets, monthly volunteer lunches.

ROSEMARY’S PRESERVES (FJ & R TUCK)
Contact: John and Rosemary Tuck, Highgate Farm, Wootton Bassett SN4 8DT
T: 01793 850999
E: tuck.highgate@btconnect.com
http://rosemaryspreserves.bttrade space.com/
Products: Wide range of home-made 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, pasteurise and bottle juices from surplus fruit. Visit by appointment. Beef sold direct from the farm.
Other outlets: Farmers’ Markets in Wootton Bassett, Marlborough and more, Marlborough Arts and Crafts, St Peter’s Church; V&P Collins Farm Shop, Bromham.

SUSIE’S PRESERVES LTD
Contact: Susie Kessett, Unit A, Cold Ash Farm, Long Lane, Hermitage, Newbury RG18 9LT
T: 07900 995353
E: info@susiespreserves.co.uk
www.susiespreserves.co.uk
Products: Susie’s delicious range of over thirty preserves has Chutneys, jams, Jellies, Marmalades and Pickles. Great Tastes Awards have been granted for the Mango Chutney Silver 2006, Fig Chutney Gold 2007, Pepper Jelly Gold 2008. All the Preserves are created by Susie.
Other outlets: Susie’s range are available from village and farm shops, butchers, delicatessens, garden centers in Berkshire, Oxfordshire and London and other areas. Susie sells at selected craft and country shows. Available nationwide via Susie’s website.

SILK & HONEY
NEWBURY AND DISTRICT BEEKEEPERS
Contact: Mike Oliver,
T: 01635 201470
www.newburybeekeepers.org.uk
Products: Local honey and hive products in Newbury and Wantage areas. Produce sold through local shops, shows and fetes.

WHITCHURCH SILK MILL
Contact: Stephen Bryer, Whitchurch Silk Mill, 28 Winchester Street, Whitchurch RG28 7AL
T: 01256 892065
E: silkmill@btinternet.com
www.whitchurchsilkmill.org.uk
Products: 200-year-old water mill on River Test weaving silk on historic machinery for interiors, stage and screen productions. Visitors welcome throughout the year. Self-service tearoom offering range of cakes and sandwiches. Picnickers welcome. Shop sells unique silk gifts, accessories.
Opening times: Tues-Sun 10.30am-5pm (except Christmas). Last admission 4.15pm.

VARIous

COBBS FARM SHOP
Contact: Tom Newey, Bath Road, Hungerford, RG17 0SP
T: 01488 686770
E: info@cobbsfarmshop.co.uk
www.cobbsfarmshop.co.uk
Products: Wide range of soft fruit and vegetables in season.
Opening times: Monday to Saturday 9am to 6pm, Sunday 10am to 4pm (NB seasonal changes).

EVERLEIGH FARM SHOP
Contact: David Hammerson, 01264 850344
E: info@everleighfarmshop.co.uk
www.everleighfarmshop.co.uk
Products: Online suppliers of local beef and butter.

GARLANDS ORGANIC
Contact: Innes and Hannah Ballantyne, 6 Reading Road, Pangbourne, RG8 7LY
T: 0118 984 4770
E: innesballantyne@gmail.com
www.garlandsorganic.co.uk
Env-links: Org
Products: Over 1,500 organic and natural products including local bread, honey, meat, cheese. Also organic fruit and vegetable retailer.
Opening times: Tues-Fri 9am-5:30pm, Mon and Sat 9am-5pm. Weekly deliveries – order online.

HAMSTEAD GROWERS LTD
Contact: Keith Webb,
T: 01635 254091
E: keith.hg@kwgl.co.uk
www.hamsteadgrowers.co.uk
Env-links: equestrian.org.uk
Products: Plants, equestrian supplies, feeds, bedding, arena hire, leather repairs.
Opening times: Monday to Friday 9am to 5:30pm.

HANNEY COMMUNITY SHOP & POST OFFICE
Contact: Mrs A P Vickars, Brookside, East Hanney, Wantage OX12 0HU
T: 01235 867408
Products: Wide range of local meat, free-range eggs, honey, fruit and vegetables. Also groceries, household goods, stationery, greetings cards and small toys. Post Office and village store established for more than 20 years.

HARROWAY ORGANIC GARDENS
Contact: Mandy Wright and Steve Forster, Kingsclere Road, Whitchurch RG28 7QB
T: 01256 895346
E: hovyeg@hotmail.com
Env-links: Org
Opening times: Thursday to Saturday 9am to 6pm.
Other outlets: Winchester Farmers’ Market (July to November).

LITTLE HIDDEN FARM
Contact: Bill and Sue Acworth, Little Hidden Farm, Wantage Road, Hungerford RG17 0PN
T: 01488 683253
E: enquiries@littlehiddenfarm.co.uk
www.littlehiddenfarm.co.uk
Env-links: CSA, FAS, Org, WFCP, WMP
Products: Mixed organic farm with Riding School for all ages. Birthday party and corporate rides. Selling beef and lamb, pea and bean sticks, rockery stones, dung and firewood. Supplying and/or moving semi-mature trees. Conservation advice and practical work on wildflower meadows, hedges, woodland and ponds. Educational visits for schools, families or other groups.

OLD FARM SHOP
Contact: Mrs Caroline Tyler, Milton Hill, Rowstock OX14 4DP
VEGETABLES

BROMHAM GROWERS
Contact: Ross Paget. Bromham Growers Ltd, Barley Close Farm, Bromham, Chippenham SN15 2JA
T: 01380 859891
E: ross.paget@bromhamgrowers.co.uk

MAPLEAF WATERCRESS
Contact: Alison Brown, ‘Parrots’, Greywell Road, Mapledurwell, Basingstoke RG25 2LS
T: 01256 464221
E: mapleleafcress@aol.com

OGG VALLEY ORGANICS
Contact: Tracy Gough, 1 Westfield Farm, Ogbourne-St-George, Marlborough SN18 1SX
T: 01666 592657
E:oggvalleyorganic@btconnect.com

WOOD & TREES

GEORGE MEDLIN WOODWORKS
Contact: George Medlin. The Medlin Workshop, Little HIDDEN Farm, Wantage Rd, Hungerford RG17 0PN
T: 07891 504310/01672 811686
E: georgewoodworks@onetel.net
www.georgemedlin.co.uk
Products: Bespoke furniture using local AONB, British and European woods. Commissioned work: Specialises in individually designed furniture crafted to suit all homes, styles and client requirements. Medlin-designed traditional specimen pieces available. Visit by appointment only.

MARNIE MOYLE & GREEN OAK FURNITURE
Contact: Marnie Moyle, 1 Catmore Road, West Ilsley RG20 7AT
T: 01635 281786
E: oak@twang.co.uk
www.marniemoyle.co.uk
Products: Marnie’s simple, studied outdoor designs use locally harvested unseasoned green oak, which is expected to shrink or distort to add uniqueness and character. Each piece is additionally carved with words or designs, and the site-origin of the wood used is carved on the underside of the bespoke work. All furniture is made to commission.

STICKS & STONES
Contact: Garp or Lis Flack, North Lodge, Shaw Farm, Lockeridge, nr Marlborough SN8 4LU
T: 01672 852268
E: info@uksticksandstones.com
www.uksticksandstones.com
Products: Bespoke handmade kitchenware such as individually-designed chopping blocks, cheeseboards and salad bowls made from blocks of locally sourced timber and rock.

Other outlets: Sticks and Stones Shop, 2 Thatched Barn, Woodborough Garden Centre, Woodborough, Open: Monday-Sunday, Marlborough High Street market (Wed and Sat); website.
Leader Funding Available

THE NORTH WESSEX Downs Leader Action Group (LAG) was delighted to secure £2.5 million funding for supporting the rural economy of the area between 2009 and 2013 from the Leader Programme. The programme is now open and receiving applications. If you have a project which is in need of funding, now is the time to apply. Projects will be considered for funding if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Creating opportunities to enjoy the North Wessex Downs
   We wish to develop and deliver a vision of the North Wessex Downs as an area for green tourism, with easily accessible information about its wildlife, culture and history, and with many opportunities to explore, walk, cycle and ride. We also wish to build on the existing culture of volunteering and education in the area.

2. Supporting community development and business transformation
   The North Wessex Downs contains some areas of real economic and social deprivation, especially in terms of access to services and opportunities. We wish to generate support in these areas. Tourism will provide an opportunity for economic development, but we wish to support a wider range of activities. We also wish to support activities that enable the farming and forestry sector to connect with community and economic development.

3. Promoting local food
   Food production is key to maintaining the landscape of the North Wessex Downs. We wish to ensure that there is more opportunity for those living in and, more importantly, the two million people living around the North Wessex Downs to buy local food. To this end, we want to support the production, processing, and consumption of local food in the North Wessex Downs.

4. Climate change adaptation and mitigation
   We strongly believe that the North Wessex Downs has a role to play in becoming a place that uses energy carefully, produces renewable energy, and prepares for the changing climate. We will, in particular, be encouraging activities that lead to the management of woodlands in the North Wessex Downs to produce wood for woodfuel, and to encourage the uptake of the technology for the wood to be used locally to provide heating and electricity.

LEADER is a European funding programme. To find out more or to apply visit www.northwessexdowns.org.uk or contact the North Wessex Downs AONB office 01488 685440.

New Management Plan

A NEW MANAGEMENT Plan for the North Wessex Downs AONB will be published in late 2009. The North Wessex Downs AONB 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. The new plan builds on the previous plan. The review process, started in autumn 2007, has involved the local authorities, community and business organisations, farmers, wildlife and environmental groups and parish councils. The draft will be available for consultation in 2009. If you would like to get involved or just to keep up-to-date with progress visit www.northwessexdowns.org.uk or contact the North Wessex Downs AONB team.

Support for Partners

Many organisations and individuals are involved in managing the landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB 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 here give a small flavour of our work. For more information, please see www.northwessexdowns.org.uk.
UP! ON THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS

THE BEST FOOD AND DRINK FESTIVAL IN THE WEST of ENGLAND
Saturday 24 October, 2009
10am-4pm        Entry: £3
Marlborough College, Marlborough
Over 60 stands with everything for lovers of good food and drink
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www.marlboroughcancerresearch.org
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Free car parking/easy wheelchair & pushchair access
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24hr information line: 01635 253204
E: theoffice@highclerecastle.co.uk
W: www.highclerecastle.co.uk

Public Opening – 2009
Easter: Sunday – Thursday (incl.) 29th March to 16th April
Summer: Sunday – Thursday (incl.) 1st July to 3rd September
Bank Holidays: Monday – Tuesday 25th & 26th May
11.00am – 4.30pm (last entry to house at 3.30pm)
Exciting New Egyptian Exhibition – opening Summer 2009
Please telephone or refer to our website for more details
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Information correct at time of going to print; the house is occasionally subject to closure, please check before travelling.

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Open all weekends and daily most school holidays. For a programme of Steamdays and events, write, phone or see our website.
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www.didcotrailwaycentre.org.uk
DIDCOT : OXFORDSHIRE : OX11 7NJ

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01235 831247 • theoldfarmshop@aol.com

How many reasons do you need to come and visit our farm shop?
1. We will be lambing at Easter, you can visit the lambs and feed the sheep;
2. You can buy our award-winning free range eggs and award-winning sausages from our shop;
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