



wkps

Watch on
the Weald

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Newsletter of the Weald of Kent Protection Society

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Sense of Place – Kith and Kin

A Transcript of the Speech to the AGM on 15th June 2022 by WKPS President, Peregrine Massey.

It seems to me that there are two main aspects to the Society's work. The first is the technical business of vetting planning applications and making recommendations on their scale, suitability, etc. This work is carried out assiduously by our Planning Committee. The second, equally important, is the business of celebrating this Weald of ours, making people aware of its history, its piecemeal development over the centuries, its value to the people who live and work in it, and our emotional attachment to it. This second aspect of the Society's work is sometimes overlooked or at least insufficiently recognised, and I want to take the opportunity this evening to explain why I think it is so important.

Later I want to open up a conversation with you all and hear from you why you feel that the Weald is valuable to you personally, and to hear from you about those parts or aspects of the Weald that give you particular pleasure or speak to you emotionally. And it may be that many of the comments we hear from each other this evening will result in Society visits or events which are designed to appreciate those Wealden characteristics that you bring to our attention and introduce them to a wider audience, even to see them in a completely new light.

But before we get to that open discussion, and while you are thinking about what you might like to contribute to it, I want to give you my own reflections on this concept of place which is so personal to us all. I do so in all humility. No one of us has a monopoly of wisdom in this area. So, what I offer you is simply a personal viewpoint.

Her Majesty the Queen, in a message to us all after the remarkable four-day Platinum Jubilee celebrations of two weeks ago, thanked everyone for 'kindness, joy and kinship'. Those are interesting and deliberately chosen words. And they set me thinking about the phrase 'kith and kin', and particularly the word 'kith'. Originally 'kith' meant what you knew well; or for the Scots among you, what you ken is your kith. That meaning migrated in the 15th century to mean your land, your native land, the land you know well, your homeland. And then that meaning migrated in turn so that now 'kith' is seen as virtually synonymous with 'kin', i.e., friends, fellow countrymen, people from the neighbourhood, or kinsmen or women: in other words, 'our folks'.

In the days when families stayed in the same village, town or community, this sense of 'kith' was more obviously deep-rooted than it perhaps is today, in a cultural climate where different generations of the same family put down roots in different locations all over the country, indeed in many cases all over the world. But I would argue that our sense of place, our sense of kith in its 15th century sense, is still just as strongly felt. Why, after all, do those who emigrated, for example, to far-off corners of the world still retain a strong sense of emotional attachment to their original home environments? I know – and I am sure that you do too – I know people in the Weald who walk the same stretch of footpath on a daily basis, who cherish the same area of bluebell woodland year after year, the same hidden valleys, the same hilltop view, the same farmland or wildflower meadow, the same row of mediaeval houses or collection of farm buildings or oast houses, and so on. In each case these familiar surroundings speak to our sense of kith. I also know how undoubtedly painful it is when that view, that emotional experience, that kith, is challenged or destroyed.

We are at the moment living through particularly challenging times across the Weald with almost all of our towns and villages besieged by developers and builders looking for opportunities to exploit a buoyant housing market in the face of compliant and unsympathetic planning laws and processes. The people who promote these developments do not share your or my sense of place. They do not identify with our kith. And I think we are going to have to redouble our efforts to promote the virtues of many areas of our Weald about the sustainability of which we feel most strongly.

Before I leave this theme, I ought to make one further observation. We are told that the demand for housing, in this part of the country as in others, must take precedence over the value we place on our landscape or our way of life. There are two things in particular about that assertion that need to be challenged. First, what upsets people so often is the scale on which new development takes place, coupled with a feeling of voicelessness at local level. Secondly, every new development that results in large numbers of new inhabitants being introduced from other parts of the country presents a challenge to our local communities, a real challenge to our sense of place.

The first issue I have mentioned, the issue of scale, is a matter that our Planning Committee certainly looks at when it considers each application. Not just scale, but the pressure on local services, road networks, schools, doctors' surgeries, and the like. But the second issue, the dilution of community, the challenge to our collective sense of place, is one where I think we can all help each other. I think that in our representations the history of the Weald and our allegiance to its inherently beautiful characteristics need to be more prominently argued.

I am on record as advocating that it is illogical for the High Weald to have a higher protection designation than the horseshoe of low weald that envelops it. It ought in my view to be treated as a whole. We are not the Low Weald of Kent Protection Society, but the Weald of Kent Protection Society. We speak for the whole Weald; and the whole Weald should enjoy the same degree of protection. I would like that argument to be taken up and trumpeted more widely and more often by us all.

Secondly, I would like to see our Society's social events taking place all over the Weald – and in places suggested in a moment, I hope, by many of you. We currently limit our engagement to this area of the Weald, to Tenterden (where after all the original Society was founded) and its surrounding villages, but if we claim to protect the Weald, we must cover the whole Weald.

Thirdly, I think we should have a pictorial record of the Weald including, if necessary, 'before' and 'after' photographs of developments – both those that we think are positive additions and those which we think are negative. Over time that photo library (easily achievable on Instagram incidentally) could serve our purposes extremely well, just as a generation ago the Destruction of Country Houses exhibition drew attention to the disastrous post-war demolition of so many of our historic houses up and down the country.

And finally, I would like to see the enthusiasm of our current membership taken up by a younger generation in whom the Weald also brings out a deep sense of place or kith. So, may I ask you all please to take up the challenge of introducing at least one new member to the Society by the time we meet again for our General Meeting next year. This will serve to replace 'natural wastage' and help to spread our voice across the whole Weald.

And we should always remember that we are not a Society that seeks to protect the countryside and reject all human interventions and buildings. The Weald is a remarkable patchwork of farmsteads, homesteads and small

communities thriving in a mainly rural setting on the edge of semi-ancient woodland. There are few dominant large estates in the Weald, and the whole patchwork has developed almost accidentally over hundreds of years. That is one reason why scale of development in the modern age challenges our sense of kith so strongly.

May I now invite you to share with us your own thoughts on those parts of the Weald, or characteristics of the Weald, that are especially dear to you or speak to your personal sense of place. Thank you.

Editor's Note: Send in your thoughts to the Society Secretary: secretary@wkps.org.uk and we'll publish them in the next edition.

Fracking and Other Grievances

What I really want to know is why the Government does not listen to its people or to the experts in their fields of the environment and wildlife. And more importantly, why do they not actually care about their own environment and the future environment? These are rhetorical questions of course, but it comes in the aftermath of various Government announcements about lifting the fracking ban in the UK and other backward steps against nature and the countryside.

Fracking was banned because the people wanted it banned. It requires a lot of land use and destroys and devastates the countryside. Our immediate problems of energy sources and their costs will not be resolved by commencing fracking. Brutal interference of the ground deep beneath our feet with known and unknown consequences should be avoided and the ban should remain in place.

The photo shows the Cuadrilla fracking site in Lancashire and shows how the landscape is completely altered and industrialised. Drilling was halted following a 2.9 magnitude earth tremor in 2019. Fracking must stop in the event of earth tremors of 0.5 magnitude or above. Seismic events with a magnitude above 2.0 can be felt on the surface.



Several million gallons of water is needed for a single well, contaminated wastewater must be stored in pits or tanks or disposed of in underground wells. Is there any sense in using a precious resource such as water in extracting a fossil fuel, when it's fossil fuels that we should be avoiding? There is also the risk of contaminating the ground water.

Natural, renewable energy sources are needed such as sun and wind,

although solar panels/arrays/farms and wind farms must be sited in the appropriate locations to prevent the countryside being devastated.

Once energy companies of all types get a green light, a free-for-all commences, planning applications are made in the most inappropriate places...because they can. If refused by a local planning authority, an appeal to the planning inspectorate may well win because it's government policy to secure alternative sources of energy.

It's happening now with solar farms and the investors are jumping on the requirement for renewable energy. All this is at the expense of our land, countryside, rural landscape, agricultural land, AONBs and locally treasured areas.

Then there's the Government proposal to amend or scrap crucial environmental laws including the Habitat Regulations which protect some of our most vulnerable wildlife and green places across the UK and

defend our clean water, clean air, clean beaches, and rivers. The intention is to create at least 38 'Investment Zones' in England which ignore planning rules, leaving us in the situation where nature is of no consequence. And let's not just destroy England with this plan, the Government has

indicated that it wants to deliver these zones across Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

We are in a nature and climate emergency, but the new Government appears to be hell bent on making things far, far worse...

Peta Grant
WKPS Planning
Committee Secretary



Visits to Kent by Queen Elizabeth II

At this time of national mourning and review of the life of the late Monarch, it seems perhaps appropriate to reflect on the visits that Queen Elizabeth II made to Kent during her lifetime.

The late Queen was always known for her compassion and concern for those in distress and this was shown early in her reign - actually before her Coronation - when she visited North Kent in February, 1953, following the disastrous flooding of the East Coast.

Given her role as Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces, and her own military service in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) in the first half of 1945, it's not surprising that many of the Queen's visits to Kent have been to military units and establishments. Her rank of Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Engineers ensured that she visited the Corps six times in 60 years at their barracks in Maidstone and the Medway towns. She was also Colonel-in-Chief of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders from 1947 - further strengthening her Scottish connections - and visited them twice during her reign whilst they were stationed in Kent. The second occasion was shortly after their return from serving in Iraq at which time she presented medals to 15 members of the Regiment and the Wilkinson Sword of Peace to the Regiment for their peace-keeping duties in Belfast.

Although the Queen was primarily connected to the Army, she also visited the Thames Nautical Training College (also known as "HMS Worcester") at Greenhithe in 1961 to present medals to cadets. Surprisingly perhaps, the closest she came to visiting the Royal Air Force was when she opened "The Wing" visitors centre at the National Memorial to the Few at Capel-le-Ferne.

As well as visiting current serving members of the Armed Forces, veterans of past conflicts were not overlooked and the Queen visited the Royal British Legion's village at Aylesford twice during her reign, the second time for the official opening of Appleton Lodge. This, in November 2019, was the Queen's last official visit to Kent.

Her Majesty's Christian faith was always a strong feature of her life, so it is not surprising that she visited the cathedrals of Rochester and Canterbury several times during her reign, often for a Maundy Service.

Whilst at Canterbury in 1964, she took the opportunity to open the new Christ Church College, and in 2015 the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh had the unique experience of unveiling sculptures of themselves at Canterbury Cathedral, complementing the carved statues nearby of a previous sovereign and consort, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

On a separate topic, Queen Elizabeth didn't neglect Kentish infrastructure, and opened the Queen Elizabeth Bridge at Dartford in October 1991. Less than three years later she sped across Kent in the Eurostar to meet President Mitterand of France at Calais and then whisked him back to Folkestone for the inauguration ceremony of the Channel Tunnel, (we assume that both Heads of State had bought return tickets).



Having your mother turn up for your school's prize-giving and speech day can always be a mixed blessing, particularly when she is the sovereign, but this was Princess Anne's lot in July 1968, during her last year at Benenden School. Later that same year, Princess Anne was with the Queen at the Eridge Horse Trials, and had the unusual experience of being awarded a rosette by her mother in the novice under-21s. A sign of the future as Princess Anne was subsequently part of the Great Britain equestrian team in the 1976 Olympic Games.

And to finish on a less formal note, the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh were joined by their two (at that time) children in 1957 for a Grand Day Out for the family on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway, which seems the perfect moment on which to end.

Alec Travers

Solar Farms

Our countryside, our green fields, our rural landscape is under pressure from development and not just for housing. The recent trend is planning applications for solar farms located down narrow rural country lanes and turning agricultural land into an industrial landscape.

WKPS is dealing with four solar farm projects. We have no for or against blanket policy; each site is assessed on its own merits. The decisions are not straightforward.

Applications and proposals at public consultation range from the coverage of 37 acres to 175 acres. They comprise arrays of solar panels, foundations, access tracks, battery storage buildings, the digging of trenches for cables, CCTV, 2.4m high deer-fencing and exterior lighting which may be installed in an otherwise intrinsically dark area. These 'farms' have a permitted life of 37 years after which the land should be returned to agriculture unless permission is extended. At present the equipment is not recyclable and at the end of its life goes to landfill. Solar farms are not central to the Government's Energy Strategy of April 2022, though this position may change.

Most people are supportive of renewable energy but, as with housing, it needs to be in the right place. The CPRE position is that there is sufficient acreage of south-facing industrial and domestic roofs to obviate any use of agriculture for solar farms. However, prices arising from the present energy crisis are feeding the current national wave of applications for the easier installation on farmland.

The recent Government Food Strategy reiterates objection to any reduction in the acreage of the Best and Most Versatile farmland (BMV). BMV comprises the top three classifications out of six in the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC). This is a key determinant in the assessment of each individual solar farm application.

Our assessments take account of but are not limited to the Planning Policies of our three Local Authorities. We consider the proximity of each proposal to the AONB, areas of Special Landscape Value, and the effect on visual amenity. We point out that the Weald comprises deciduous trees which undermine the applicants plans for visual protection of their sites.

The perimeter fence clearly interferes with natural biodiversity. Claims by applicants are that biodiversity will improve by about 25%. Initial results from this recent formulaic requirement shows a reduction of 34%. The biodiversity issue has yet to receive credibility.

This wave of Solar Farm applications is a new phenomenon, for Local Authorities and all commentators. The decisions are not straightforward. We are commenting on each proposal on its own merits to fulfil the commitment to our rural landscape.

Of particular concern are the projects covering very large areas of land driven by speculative 'energy consultants' who open up the options to foreign investments. It is likely that if a planning application is refused, they would proceed to appeal absorbing enormous amounts of local planning resource.

WKPS objected to two applications in Hawkhurst and the Hawkhurst/Benenden boundary, covering approx. 16ha each, located within the AONB. Many people commented and objected to these applications including CPRE and the High Weald AONB Unit. The pre-application advice from TWBC to the applicant was not to proceed because of the sensitive location of both sites. Both applications have recently been withdrawn by the applicant, perhaps in the realisation of the likely refusal.

WKPS Planning Committee

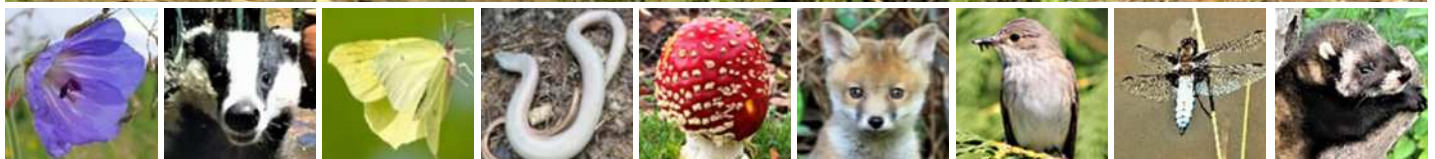


Tenterden Wildlife

Turning the tide for nature

Facing as we are a local, national and planetary crisis in terms of climate change and loss of biodiversity and its seriously worrying impact on our countryside, following a series of public meetings, TENTERDEN WILDLIFE has been formed by a group of motivated local residents, to work with community groups, schools, our councils and our landowners, to halt and reverse the decline of priority habitats and wildlife species in the Tenterden parish and beyond it.

With the support of Kent Wildlife Trust, South East Nature Partnership and other conservation bodies, the new group is hoping to recruit more members to help incorporate TENTERDEN WILDLIFE as an organisation capable of benefitting from a range of charitable funding opportunities – with enquiries for anyone interested in hearing more to be directed please to: tenterdenwildlife@gmail.com. With a number of residents already volunteering to help with individual projects or with fieldwork, the group is keen to ensure that no new member would need to commit to more than they can readily cope with, whilst making every effort to provide them with an experience that's positive, enjoyable, and undeniably worthwhile!



Work already undertaken by TENTERDEN WILDLIFE includes a local Nature Recovery Plan for the restoration or re-creation of a range of habitats and priority species, participation with Kent Wildlife Trust in a DEFRA-funded environmental land management study involving 6 Tenterden farmers, and a bid to to become a KWT 'Wilder Town' – also, in collaboration with Kent County Council, to establish a local tree nursery and plant more trees in the parish through the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, and to participate in KCC's Plan Bee pollinator action plan. Additional projects are to include the sowing and maintenance of more wildflower fields, lawns and verges, the creation of an educational wildlife garden in the town, work with landowners to increase the biodiversity and profitability of their woodland – with further exciting possibilities for nature recovery in our schools, on the Tenterden golf course and elsewhere. In other words there's much to do, with huge rewards to reap for nature conservation in Tenterden and its surrounding countryside, and for the planet.

So if you haven't already done so, please do consider joining TENTERDEN WILDLIFE to help us Turn the Tide for Nature!

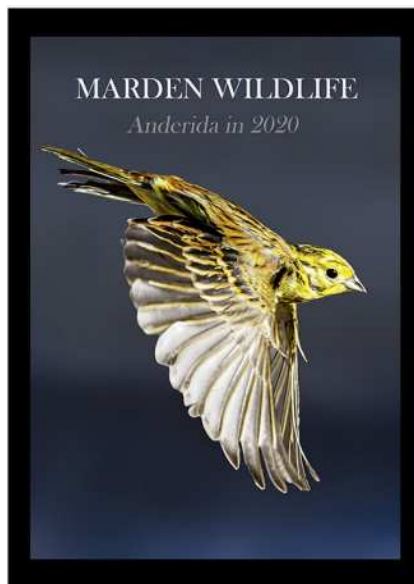
Richard Masefield

Marden Wildlife



With the country locked down in March 2020, starting a wildlife movement should have been difficult. The nascent Marden Wildlife thrived, however, as local experts explored farmland to record species as diverse as dormice and lemon slugs. Within weeks enthusiasts were sharing information on WhatsApp, building a volunteer community that continues to grow. A Facebook page now attracts 600+ followers.

In winter 2020/21, we started a BTO-licensed Yellowhammer study, in partnership with the Marden Farmer Cluster, colour-ringing the birds to identify them individually and track their movement across farms. This summer, a similar study launched to monitor Turtle Doves, gathering vital data to support the survival of these rare birds.



By Christmas, our hardback 'Marden Wildlife, Anderida in 2020' was published and the 300-print run sold out. A website, <https://mardenwildlife.org.uk/> followed and by the end of 2021, we won the National Biodiversity Network's Group Award for our work in species recording.



Until now the Low Weald had few formal species records. This may be why it has historically been undervalued and considered ripe for development, and why it lacks AONB status. Now, farmers and villagers are revealing a complex biodiversity unique to the area, surprising the outside world with what we find living in our soggy woods and meadows.

Lou Carpenter

Nature Recovery Network Barn Owl Project

The High Weald is a wonderful hot spot for tawny owls – round us we hear them every night (female: “twit!”; male “who?”). But barn owls are less common and getting rarer – numbers have halved in the last 25 years. The Wadhurst Nature Recovery Network is an informal group that aims to share ideas, information and enthusiasm with anyone in the Bewl Valley area who cares about nature. We hold bimonthly meetings with guest speakers, and in autumn 2020 we heard a talk about the plight of the barn owl.

We decided that “something should be done” and that we should be the ones to do it – we committed to a barn owl nesting box project. Collectively our group owns about 1200 acres of land south of Bewl Water stretching from Tidebrook to Ticehurst, and Cousely Wood to Stonegate: some plots are a couple of acres, some are farms or large estates. Our goal was to create a ‘wildlife corridor’ of joined up breeding territories about a kilometre apart. Barn owl boxes are very substantial and have a specific design, so we needed specialists to advise, construct and install the boxes – so we selected Sussex Barn Owl Study Group as the obvious group to partner with.



We also needed funding, so with the help of the High Weald AONB office in Flimwell we applied for a grant from the Sussex Lund – a grant programme that supports small-scale practical projects that improve the landscape of the High Weald. Our application was submitted in January 2021 and was approved in July, so work started last summer.

The first phase was to survey potential sites for suitability. There are several critical factors, of which perhaps the most important is habitat. 70% of the barn owl’s diet is voles, and voles like rough tussocky meadow which is not grazed to the ground by sheep. No tussocks, no voles – no voles, no owls. Second, there needs to be at least one large solitary tree nearby (such as an old oak). There’s no point putting barn owl nest boxes in woods as they are out-competed by tawnies. Third, the hole in the box must have a clear line of sight: as it flies past, the owl sees the hole not the box – so where necessary lower branches were cleared out of the way. Where possible we installed boxes in pairs about 50m apart, for the male and female. And of course, the whole site needs to be distant from a road, because barn owls fly at lorry height.



The surveys identified 25 suitable locations and most of the boxes were installed in autumn and winter 2021, with all work stopping by the end of February 2022 for this year’s breeding season starting in March. We have held two zoom training sessions for participants about habitat and box maintenance. The next phase, in autumn this year, will be to conduct the first round of monitoring and ringing visits to evaluate occupation and breeding success. It can take a few years before a box is occupied and we might find boxes empty, or occupied by jackdaws, but hopefully at least some will be housing barn owl chicks!

Barn owls are a “Schedule 1 species” under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), so it’s important to be aware that you need a British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) licence in order to carry out any activities that might disturb the owls. All our monitoring activities will be carried out by the licensed ecologists from the Sussex Barn Owl Study Group.

We plan to video the monitoring activities so we can create a short training and promotional video on habitat, boxes, and breeding cycle, and so we can evidence the success of the project. Fingers crossed. We are already thinking about our next project: Little Owls!

David Field



‘From Root to Tip and Back Again’

Holistic Management of Wealden Woods

When you read the term ‘holistic’, I wonder how you consider the expression and in what context? For the most part, it’s a phrase reminiscent of a whole person approach to healing and wellbeing. However, back in the late 90s, when I was studying for a degree and researching and writing about the role and benefits of a ‘whole woodland’ approach to managing our woodland resource, the holistic philosophy was considered by some as ephemeral, woolly and marginal.

At times on that journey, my musings were met with wry smiles and raised eyebrows from a few that I encountered in a forest industry, that for the most part, was still beating the drum of monocultures and highly mechanised silviculture. How could such a woolly philosophy have any practical application in mainstream, production forestry? Undeterred, I acknowledged those wry smiles,

but continued on my chosen woodland path, admiring the beetles and the lichens for their sake, whilst also calculating standing timber volumes and thinning yields and considering coppice rotations and timber markets.

In 1999, this young forester, with her avant-garde ideas established a woodland management business; Weald Woodscapes (its moniker since 2014) is dedicated to the goal of sustainable, low impact and ecologically appropriate woodland management and the wise use of timber as a renewable resource.

As an Environmental forester, woodland manager and contractor the tenets of ‘whole woodland wellbeing’ are fundamental to my silvicultural practice. It is an ethos characterized by a belief that each element from root and soil, to fungi and leaf and all things in between

are intimately connected. It encompasses a philosophy that, for me, necessitates application to our custodianship of the land we see before us and to the wider global environment.



This ethos has provided the cloth from which my life working with ancient woodlands has been cut. It frames management decisions and objectives and serves to widen the scope and sensitivity for recognising each wooded ecosystem as entirely unique and thereby develop techniques of working according to its 'nature'. The woodland palette is so rich, so vibrant; a medley of trees, plants and animals, that speak to us of soil type, topography, climatic change, prevailing winds, weather and previous management. In our ancient woods, remnant features of archaeology tell their own intricate tales of social history woven from rural livelihoods, wars, political, industrial and silvicultural change.

Today, as global and regional concerns about biodiversity and sustainability have gathered pace, those wry 1990s smiles are waning, and the philosophy and application of holistic management is being embraced. Objectives are changing, in response to a whole host of factors; there is a shift in focus towards Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS) of management, those that favour transformation thinning, natural regeneration and greater structural diversity in order to create a more resilient woodland structure.



Management that serves to enhance and maintain the stability of woodland habitats and secures the protection and sound management of woodland soils and watercourses. All elements that are vital to the health and vitality of the woodland and to the varied ecosystems incumbent upon it. Woodlands now bear witness to our urgency to dematerialise our economy, by producing and consuming sustainably sourced products and services that help to reduce the nation's carbon footprint.

The Weald of Kent is a rare jewel in the nations woodland crown – its ancient woodlands singularly important as one of the most biodiverse habitats in Europe, with its fertile soils of clay, loams and chalk, supporting the growth of robust oaks, fruitful wild cherry and coppices of chestnut, hornbeam and hazel and a wide range of nationally important ancient woodland indicator species (AWIS).

Then there are the riparian woodlands, the network of atmospheric Gill (Ghyll) woodlands, steep sided, with streams that wind their way languidly towards the

sea, flanked by alder, ferns, mosses and a host of shade loving plants. In many Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) an intimate mix of broadleaved and conifer species coexist. Our woodland heritage is profuse, and I believe it vital that sound curatorship and sustainable management nurtures and reflects the nature of our woodlands as irreplaceable habitat and an essential timber resource, now and for generations yet to be.

Finally, when next you walk within a woodland, be enthralled by the bimbings of beetles, the textures of lichens and the wondrous complexity of the wooded habitat. Stop for moments and sense the woodland, its constant state of flux, moving, breathing, supporting a myriad of lives – and then as you leave, promise that fair place that you will source your firewood, BBQ charcoal and timber products from sustainably harvested, local woodlands.

'May the forest be with you'

***Frankie Woodgate
Weald Woodscapes***

David Barham

The WKPS was sad to learn of the death of David Barham of Hole Park, Rolvenden this summer. David had been a founder member of the Society and had supported its causes from the outset and we have been pleased to receive a bequest in his memory. Like so many of his generation, he had an interesting life which his son Edward is pleased to summarise below in this obituary of a fine man of the Weald.

David George Wilfrid Barham was born on 6 October 1926, one of six children of Harold Barham, whose brother Wilfrid had been killed at Ypres in 1915; his mother was Dulcie, née Taylor. The family lived in Bourne End in Buckinghamshire.

David's early years were disjointed, with his Nanny Ellen his constant rock. He attended St Wilfrid's prep school in Seaford, and then Malvern College. In 1942 the school was evacuated to share lodgings with Harrow School, and as head of house and under officer in the OTC David had a fine view of St Paul's Cathedral while on firewatch duties, observing V-1 doodlebugs falling on London.

He was due to join the Royal Horse Guards but was bitterly disappointed to be told, in 1943, that due to a lack of war casualties there was no longer a place for him. He cycled to Combermere Barracks in Windsor in his OTC corporal's uniform and demanded to see the colonel, who was so impressed that his place was immediately restored.

He joined up in September 1944, but with victory in sight it was evident that his cohort would not be required for war. Commissioned in 1945, he arrived for duty at Menden in Germany, where the Household Cavalry was stationed in pre-war barracks in a devastated country.

There was no social life beyond the Mess, no female company and no cars, but there was a very advantageous exchange rate that made any delicacy that could be found very cheap. Among his limited contact with Germans was firing his revolver at shadowy figures infringing the curfew. Appointed Regimental Signals Officer, he left the Army in the autumn of 1947.

He was still only 21 when his grandfather offered him Hole Park; the estate had been the ancestral home of the Gibbon and subsequently Gibbon Money Penny families until Thomas Gibbon Money Penny MP was bankrupted in the middle of the 19th century; it was acquired by his mortgagor, James Morrison MP, at that time one of the richest men in England with the largest single acreage.

But his son Frank did not enjoy the prospect of living there and it was sold in 1911 to Colonel Arthur Barham who, with his father Sir George Barham and brother Titus, had a controlling influence in the dairy trade of the 19th and early 20th century through their family businesses Express Dairies and the Dairy Supply Company, latterly the dominant arm of United Dairies.

Hole Park was a pseudo-Elizabethan house built in 1837 around a Georgian core, and Arthur Barham, like David, devoted his time to improving the house and reassembling the estate, as well as creating the now renowned gardens, one of the first in the National Garden Scheme, which began in 1927.

The house was requisitioned during the Second World War; then, skipping a generation to David, who surrendered a place at Clare College, Cambridge, to read Engineering and went instead to the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. His final year was cut short when the agent at Hole Park died and he was required to return home, completing his course by correspondence.



Farming life was hard graft before mechanisation truly arrived – and with it halcyon days for British farming. Hole Park was in the vanguard, with a wide range of crops and enterprises, and techniques which would not be employed today – hedges grubbed, land drained, meadows ploughed up. Award-winning woodlands were established – as well as crops of Christmas trees, once Barham had convinced his farm manager to release land from arable rotation.

The house itself remained empty until 1959, when David and his wife Catherine demolished much of it, returning it to its former Georgian form. Its 16 acres of gardens, featuring yew topiary and a woodland rhododendron garden, were lovingly rejuvenated.

In 2011 he was trampled by cattle in the park while protecting his Jack Russell. It was his second brush with death, having been hit by a speeding car in 1978, an accident that led in time to five hip replacements.

He served as High Sheriff of Kent in 1974 and subsequently Deputy Lieutenant. He was a JP and had active roles in local government, as well as the with the Country Land and Business Association, the National Farmers' Union and numerous other trusts and bodies, particularly Kent based. After 43 years as custodian of the family home, he handed over to the next generation in 2003 and moved out to a house on the edge of the estate.

David Barham married Catherine Bucknall in 1955; she survives him with their daughter and three sons. His ashes were spread around the obelisk that had been erected in 2011 to commemorate a century of the family at Hole Park.

What Is This Place?

by David Northcroft

What is this place? This Weald of Kent?
From Greensand in the north to Rother below
A thousand years old, evolution on show
In the hamlets, villages, even small towns

From timber and stone, wattle and daub,
Through plaster and brick, weatherboard, tiles
To modern estates, however designed,
And linked by a net of notorious lanes

Of indescribable charm, ridiculous bends,
High hedges and oak trees, small fields you will see...
Adaptable use of desirable land,
Riddled with culverts, the Beult and the Stour

Evolution of farming also on show
Though no longer pigs brought here by the Danes.
Sheep you can find still, but hops in decline,
Apples and soft fruit, now lots of vines.

The Garden of England is a wonderful place
Small scale and historic, but looking ahead.
It's rich. It evolves at a sensible pace.
Come live here, enjoy it. Put a smile on your face.

Everybody loves a Freebie!

We have pleasure in enclosing a WKPS bookmark as thanks for your continued and appreciated support. We have also enclosed a WKPS pamphlet which we do hope you will pass on to a friend and encourage them to join us. The more members we have the louder our voice!

Social Media - An Introduction

Hello, I'm Charlotte and I have just taken over the social media for WKPS. I live in Cranbrook and have lived in the Weald for 16 years. I love walking with my spaniel, being out in the countryside and am very interested in history too. I am delighted to be running the social media for WKPS and to bring awareness of the work of the Society. There is so much to celebrate here in the Weald, and I'll be sharing beautiful pictures and keeping you up to date with events and the work of WKPS. It would be fantastic if you can follow and like us on Instagram, or Facebook if you prefer.



Putting Pen to Paper

Whether you are you a budding journalist or just like writing, do share your thoughts on the Weald and what it means to you.

We hope you enjoy reading Watch on the Weald, all the articles are submitted by volunteers and friends and so have a varied outlook on our beautiful Weald. If you would like to contribute an article, we will pay £50 for those that we publish. Articles should be in the region of 300-500 words and be accompanied by high resolution photos.



Poetry Competition

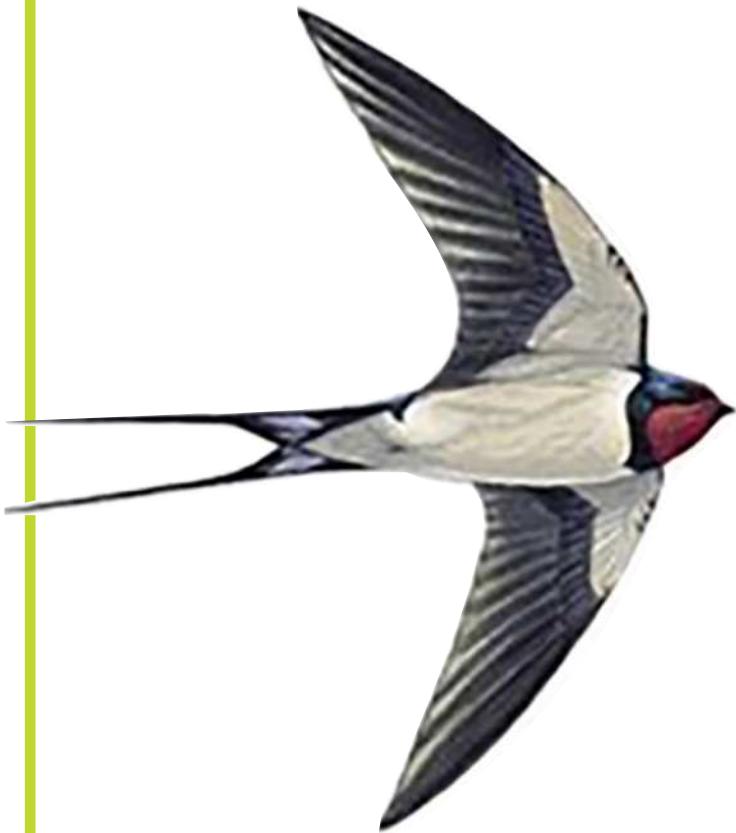
We hope you have enjoyed reading Peregrine Massey's interesting and thought-provoking speech on Kith and Kin. David's poem 'What is this Place' works along the same theme and targets our love of this wonderful Weald. Our competition is about anything Weald related, and the published winning poem and runner-up will receive [to be decided] £50 and £25 respectively. If under 16 please put your age on the poem as these will be judged separately.

Please send your contributions to secretary@wkps.org.uk. Closing date is 30th November. If you would like to submit a picture or drawing to go alongside, please do.

Nature Notes

At the end of this exceptional drought summer, we should reflect on the signs of climate change that have been experienced during the course of the last few months. Kent has consistently missed the rain, as it so often does. With a winter of low rainfall, rivers are exceptionally low and plans for a new reservoir at Broad Oak, near Canterbury, may be resurrected. There have been sightings of unusual migrants and indeed Bee Eaters have nested successfully in Norfolk but, for me, the missing ingredient to the summer west of

Ashford was swallows. Is this because available nesting sites are reducing? Or was their migration affected by adverse weather conditions on the northerly migration in April? Whatever the reason, there is a gap in my part of Kent where we would usually have between fifty and a hundred swallows on overhead wires at this time of year, gathering in preparation for the journey south. This year they can be counted on the fingers of one hand.



able to be so forthright as he has in the past. WKPS will do its best to maintain focus.

Mike Bax
WKPS Chairman

In these troubled times WKPS have been unable to hold any fundraising events, but thanks to generous legacies from members we continue to financially weather the storm. WKPS now has a link on the homepage of its website to make it easier to accept donations directly. We also hope that you consider a charitable bequest to WKPS when you plan your estate.

Dates for the Diary 2022

MEMBERS' DAY AT BOLDSHAVES GARDEN

WOODCHURCH (TN26 3RA)

Friday, 21st October 2022

All WKPS Members and their guests are most welcome.

At 3pm Frankie Woodgate of Weald Woodscapes will give a short talk about sustainable woodland management in the Barn. Tea and home-made cakes will be available to purchase in the Cliff Tea House opposite the Barn from 2.30pm.

After the talk, our President, Peregrine Massey, the creator of Boldshaves Garden, will give a tour of the garden, after which you are invited to return to the Barn for a glass of wine and an opportunity to meet other Members.

Entry to the event is free to all. You are of course welcome to make a donation to WKPS if you wish to do so (Account no 01754514 sort 30-90-28)

Please book into this rescheduled event so that we can cater for the correct numbers, by contacting secretary@wkps.org.uk or by calling 01580 861246/07919 871543, if possible by Sunday, 16 October.



If you have any suggestions for future events WKPS could organise please get in touch with secretary@wkps.org.uk or call 01580 861246



Another fantastic way you can help support the work the Weald of Kent Protection Society does. Please go to smile.amazon.co.uk, the first tab is supporting, go into this and enter the name of your chosen charity as Weald of Kent Protection Society. Then every time you shop with Amazon please ensure you go to the Amazon Smile page and 0.5% of all your purchases will go to WKPS. Thank you!

Disclaimer

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wkps

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