



wkps

# Watch on the Weald

Newsletter of the Weald of Kent Protection Society

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No: 161

## What a Wonderful Weald Help us keep it that way



## A Weald of Kent Treasure: Cranbrook Museum

WKPS celebrates, and seeks to protect, our precious Wealden countryside and its historic buildings. For me, no single building and its setting – but above all, the contents – is more precious than Cranbrook Museum. The splendid listed building, in a green oasis just off central Cranbrook, is leased to Cranbrook Museum and Local History Society on generous terms by its owner, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The huge amount of curatorial work, internal maintenance, collection and care of historic artefacts and documents, local history educational work, response to enquirers and much else, is done by a sizeable group of the Society's volunteers.

With its beautiful garden, lovingly tended by husband and wife members for many years, its visual appeal is immediate, and a walk round the building shows its Tudor jettied, contrasting with the 17-19th century front elevation. You pay nothing to enter, though the volunteer workers hope you will enjoy the tour of its packed three floors enough to make a donation towards the considerable running costs. It is child-friendly, too.



You can see artefacts from Roman Cranbrook, exhibits illustrating the great Tudor broadcloth industry, local crafts and occupational exhibits from the later almost self-sufficient market town, hop farming and the railway used by the London hop pickers. My own favourite though, is the first floor room dedicated mainly to the nationally famous 'Cranbrook Colony' of Victorian artists including Thomas Webster, John Horsley and Frederick Hardy – none of them Cranbrook-born, but all long term and public-spirited local residents.

The Museum's website gives most details. In brief, main opening times are afternoons (2 - 4.30 pm), though not on Mondays, from April to October inclusive. Any local people failing to make a visit are missing, in my view, the loveliest building in the Weald.

**Peter Allen**

# The Weald - Our Sense of Place

Those of you who are regular attenders of the Wealden Literary Festival each summer will be aware of the Festival's tagline, Reading the Nature of Place. This affection for places that hold a special place in our hearts is inherent in each and every one of us, whether it be the Prince of Wales with his affection for the Lochnagar mountain overlooking the Balmoral estate in Scotland, my own love for the small parcels of semi-ancient deciduous coppice woodland that are studded through the Weald, or the couple who had enjoyed the same view from their cottage window all their lives and who, in their late 80s, were reduced to inconsolable tears by the destruction of that view to make way for a solar farm.

So why is the Weald deserving of its very own Protection Society? What is it about the Weald that excites such a heartfelt sense of place in so many of us? And what is it that we are looking to protect?

In the early 1960s, when the Society's predecessor body was set up, those early protectors were alarmed by the loss of listed buildings without any local consultation, the pressure that the Weald was coming under from the incessant demands of industry for space (and cheaper land) to expand into, and the steady demise of traditional forms of local farming.



Today, we have similar (if differently caused) uncertainties within the farming community, an increasing clamour for cheaper and greener sources of energy, and the march of housing development in virtually all our towns and villages.

Taken as a whole, the Weald is a patchwork of small farms, homesteads, woodland and upland pasture, interspersed with villages and small towns where droving roads met and where man has tended to cluster over the centuries for markets and other trading purposes. In his definitive 2003 study, *The Kent & Sussex Weald*, Peter Brandon wrote: '*The individual human scale of almost everything in this landscape is small. All is good to look upon and feels instinctively right and comfortable, making it easy to feel at home and to have the peace of mind that goes with it.*' The writer, H.E. Bates, thought it conveyed the '*friendly tranquillising effect of a familiar room*'. This smallness was implanted on the landscape by the region's traditional small family-run farms and the active management of timber and underwood for centuries in small woods in comparatively small estates. Yet there was no planning as we understand it now and no striving to produce a beautiful effect. Each individual instinctively did what he felt to be right. The result is a great deal of harmony everywhere.

The Weald has always been relatively free from the influence of 'the big house' and the titled estate so that in the Weald proper there is little that is glamorous, bombastic or showy. Instead, small farmers took over a countryside and held it with tenacity and simplicity in relatively adverse circumstances and adapted it in a homespun way to their own hand. As a result, over a hundred years ago, the Weald was described as '**surely in its entirety** one of the most notable pieces of man's handiwork which the world has seen' (my emphasis).

Perversely, for planning purposes, the Weald is now divided into the High Weald (which enjoys Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation) and the Low Weald (which does not). We who live and work in the Weald, and understand its sense of place, should be arguing for it to be seen **in its entirety** as a composite and homogeneous whole with AONB or even National Park status.

Wherever you live in the Weald, I would encourage you not to shy away from your pride in its history and the achievements of those who shaped it; and urge those who live and work alongside you to hold to their 'sense of place' and support the continuing work of WKPS.

Peregrine Massey  
President, WKPS

# Drones

In January 2019 the Government published its response to the 2018 Consultation on Drones in the UK. This can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-future-of-drones-in-the-uk-consultation>. Some of it contains useful information: e.g.

- that as from 30 November 2019 anyone who flies a drone must get an “acknowledgement of competency” from the CAA;
- that the exclusion zone around airports has been expanded: it now comprises
  - a circle of 2.5 nautical miles radius
  - two extensions from both ends of a runway, each 5 km long x 1 km wide.

Away from Westminster:-

- The CAA recorded 120 near-misses between drones and aircraft during 2018. (The Times, 19 January 2019).
- On 19-21 December 2018, drone sightings at Gatwick forced the cancellation of hundreds of flights. Gatwick has spent £5 million on a system to prevent attacks. In February 2019 it was thought that the attack was made by a disgruntled insider at the airport (The Times, 21 February).
- In January a drone was seen monitoring a race at Southwell Racecourse (which it had done for the previous six months). This was said to give punters engaged in “live betting” a two-second edge over broadcasts of the races.
- On 21 January 2019 The Times reported that companies are increasingly demanding anti-drone technology to defend their buildings from industrial espionage.

Drones do have many positive uses (The Times 12 February 2019):

- carrying out aerial surveys of churches and cathedrals; drones “provide high-quality imagery and very accurate data”;
- surveying bridges to detect structural flaws;
- being used by police to search for missing people, photograph crime scenes, and monitor crowds.

Back to the Government Response: it largely concentrates on summarising what people said in answer to the Consultation. This had a total of 79 questions, going into mind-numbing detail on technical matters, such as a Flight Information and Notification System, Police Powers, and counter-drone technology.

Nothing related to the basic question, “do you want to see hordes of drones all over the countryside?”

But the Aviation Minister did say one thing to remember. After mentioning Gatwick, she went on:

“The Government has already acted to regulate this new sector. It is an offence to endanger aircraft, drone pilots must not fly their drones near people or property, and **drones have to be kept within visual line of sight of the operator.**”



The need to keep drones within visual line of sight is highly important. It's what currently stops commercial companies from flooding the skies with drones all over the countryside. Twelve months ago, there were indications that the Government was planning to drop this. So it's important to go on reminding people in Westminster that the Aviation Minister, no less, has focussed on visual line of sight as a key defence against drone attacks.

Those of us who remain concerned about drones flying over the countryside in ever-increasing numbers should remain vigilant:

- keeping an eye out for the Government's Bill on drones, to be published some time this year;
- making sure that the Bill retains the need for visual line of sight of the operator when flying drones;
- getting MPs on side and enlisting their support;
- contacting any peers who might be helpful.

David Carlisle

# Sir Julian Younger

Our previous Chairman, Sir Julian Younger, died in February at the age of 69.

After retiring from his job of running the British Tourist Authority's operations in North America, he returned to the UK and threw himself into voluntary work. He became Chairman of the WKPS in 2010 and served for 3 years. He put to good use his marketing skills to try and increase a declining membership, a problem common at that time to all charities. His innovative efforts included the successful collaboration with Cranbrook School in the making of a popular DVD on the Weald, and a major event launching the DVD, in conjunction with past chairman, Richard King; and a programme of small grants to parishes and other bodies for improvements in the Weald, spreading knowledge of WKPS further. His wide-ranging abilities also benefitted other areas of our work, including support for firm financial controls and good Society governance. He was a good listener and manager, essential for keeping

volunteers at a time when they are hard to come by.

After stepping down as Chair, he continued his interest in the Society as a member of the Planning Committee, looking at planning applications and presenting our views on these to the local planning authorities. His incisive analysis and invariable good humour made our meetings all the more enjoyable.

He will be much missed, and the Society sends its condolences to his wife, Anthea, whose support to Julian and the Society during his period in office was invaluable.



## Kent Byways

Many readers will be familiar with these wide tracks in the Kent countryside. Byways are often un-metalled and larger than footpaths but generally narrower than metalled minor roads. They originated centuries ago as tracks for horse and carts, alongside most other roads, but fell out of use by the general public for everyday purposes when motor vehicles became more prevalent. In the early 1950s they started to become formalised on maps following the introduction of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Nowadays they are shown in the detail of the Ordnance Survey Explorer series. This OS series also has a box that details the various sub-types of byway.

There are essentially three types of byway. The first two have their own specific signage whilst the last are often unsigned. All are present in the Weald.

### Byway Open to All Traffic (BOATs)

These are open to walkers, horse riders, cyclists, horse drawn vehicles and motorised vehicles all year round. There may be a separate sign prohibiting certain classes of user either altogether or at certain times of the year if a separate traffic regulation order has been made.



### Restricted Byways

These are open to all users except motorised vehicles driven by the general public.

### Other routes with public access

These are often not signposted and the precise public access rights may be unclear. Many will hold the same rights as BOATs but need to be checked on an individual basis before being used.

The duty for recording, protecting and maintaining byways rests with Kent County Council. You can find more information on Public Rights of Way (PROW) on the KCC website, which includes a map of all Kent PROWs. It also provides information on the main issues, as follows:

- Report a problem e.g. missing signposts, restrictions being ignored;
- How to change a Public Right of Way - remove, divert, add, upgrade and so on;
- Closures, restrictions and traffic permits - for example for maintenance;
- Landowner's responsibilities and assistance given - overhanging branches, etc.;
- Protection (of your land) against new Public Rights of Way, village greens etc.

And finally KCC provides a contact point for enquiries at [pro@kent.gov.uk](mailto:pro@kent.gov.uk) and on 03000 417 171.

David Northcroft

# Why become a Parish Councillor?

## What can they do?

I have been a Parish Councillor for Great Chart with Singleton for nearly 20 years, one of 11 Councillors and Chair for much of that time, too.

A Parish Council is the lowest tier of local government and is a legally elected body that can only carry out such tasks that legislation allows – but it is also not a political body. Politics has no place on a Parish Council: we are simply there to serve our community and make it a better place for everyone to live. A large percentage of our income comes via a precept that is attached to the Council Tax and this money will be spent totally within the Parish so there is a real opportunity to make a difference.

In this PC there are 6,800 residents which makes it the second largest parish in the Ashford Borough and as such our 2019/20 budget will be approx. £200k. One of our biggest expenditures is wages for our clerk, our parish caretaker and assistant, but a huge proportion of the rest of that budget will be spent on the improvement of our community. Three years ago we were able to say that within half a mile we had spent £1.1 million on a new village hall extension and a new play park. Only about 10% of these funds were raised from our precept and the rest was from various pots of S106 funding provided by developers. More usual for the parish council is dealing with individual planning applications, speeding issues and solving parishioners' problems.



*Our recently unveiled new sign for Singleton*

Our most recent achievement is the creation of a Charitable Trust that has taken over the lease for the Singleton Environment Centre. The SEC was built 10 years ago to support the community and the environment and is owned by ABC. When the former lessees withdrew about a year ago I was concerned that ABC would let the property for commercial enterprises. I suggested to the PC that it should take over the lease and after much discussion a Trust was



set up. We are nearing the end of our first year and the SEC is buzzing and in profit which is a great triumph as the PC could not have taken this on if it had meant a huge increase to our precept.

Other issues of continuing importance are speeding traffic in The Street which is used as a “rat run” by drivers wanting to avoid the hold-ups on the A28 at the Matalan roundabout. We are continually working with the KCC to find a solution. It may be the draconian one of closing The Street to through traffic.

The other big issue has been the development of Chilmington Green on farmland adjacent to the A28 and largely within the parish. Naturally some of the existing residents were strongly opposed to this development but the PC recognised that the government was determined to increase the rate of housebuilding in the country and agreed it was better to have an input into the scheme to ensure that it would be of a high standard. The houses are now appearing.

Whilst all of our councillors are a great team with many different points of view we are not the most important part of the PC. This role goes to our clerk. She is really the Chief Officer for the Council. We can come up with many different ideas for our Parish; it is her task to make sure they are legal, funded and, most importantly, put into action.

In this year of local council elections, this is just a very brief snapshot of how a Parish Council, whether large or small, can have a hugely positive effect on their local community.

**Ian McClintock**  
Chair – Great Chart with Singleton PC

# Barn Conversions

Many of our readers may have noticed with some surprise that many agricultural buildings in the countryside are in the process of being converted into dwellings. This seems to be an anomaly when new-builds are not normally permitted in isolated locations. We have been asked on occasion whether WKPS can do anything about this, and only rarely is the answer yes.

The reason is that these conversions fall within Permitted Development Rights under Class Q of the General Permitted Development Order 2015, which permitted the conversion of agricultural buildings of up to 450 sq m of agricultural building floorspace to a maximum of three dwellings.

An Amendment Order in 2018, in force from 6 April 2018, increases the threshold so that it will be possible to convert agricultural floorspace to create one of these alternatives:

- Up to three 'larger homes', with a combined maximum floorspace of 465 sq m.
- Up to five smaller homes (each less than 100 sq m).
- A mix of both, with a total of no more than five homes, of which no more than three may be larger homes.

Further changes were also made to Government Guidance in respect of Class Q Permitted Development Rights:

- There is no longer a specific requirement for a building to be structurally strong enough to take the loading that comes with the works required to convert it. This suggests that structural reinforcement may be required to enable a conversion to take place.
- Any interior works, such as introducing a new floor or mezzanine, do not constitute development so a proposal may not be refused due to the extent of internal work involved, even if it involves new structural elements.



The revised guidance states that the test of whether a proposal is acceptable is whether it can reasonably be described as a 'conversion' or whether it crosses the line into a 'rebuild'. Of course, ambiguity remains over the point at which a 'conversion' becomes a 'rebuild'.

These changes give a clear indication that the Government is keen to boost housing supply in rural areas. Under Permitted Development Rights the applicant applies to the local planning authority (LPA) for Prior Approval. The LPA decides in principle whether the conversion would be Permitted Development under the legislation. If the principle is agreed, further agreement is sought for the actual proposed design and external appearance of the conversion.

However, Permitted Development Rights for conversions of this type are not permitted in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a National Park or Conservation Area, or a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or other sensitive sites, or Listed Buildings. In these circumstances the usual planning process applies and consent for change of use must be sought. It should be noted that the conversion of stables to residential use is not covered by Permitted Development Rights and the usual planning process applies for their change of use.

This is why WKPS generally has little say in these situations: the local authority decides whether the conditions have been met or not, even if the barn is relatively isolated and the external appearance leaves much to be desired.

It can be argued that the buildings are likely to fall into disuse as they are no longer needed for agricultural purposes, so would become an eyesore in the countryside if abandoned; also they often provide modestly sized housing where demand is high and often hard to meet.

**Rosemary Taylor**



# Country Roads Take Me Home?

When my grandfather bought the family home in 1930 it was on a narrow country lane with a single-track hump-back bridge. Even during busy periods only an occasional car or the odd delivery van or lorry ventured down the hill. Indeed the most common vehicle to be seen was a horse-drawn cart carrying sacks of flour from the mill or hops from the oast house opposite.

Today, from well before six AM, commuters dash down the road heading for the distant station. They're soon followed by bloated SUVs on the school run. Then, throughout the day, a constant stream of cars, lorries and huge agricultural vehicles follow one another, seldom more than 30 seconds apart. The bridge, rebuilt in the 70s, was flattened and widened to two lanes. True, fewer cars now crash through our hedge, but it means they can, and do, take full advantage of the 'unrestricted' speed limit.

While I sometimes hanker for the tranquility of the 30s, I recognise – and generally welcome – progress.

Living in the rural Weald without a car is incredibly restrictive. Cheaper, more accessible motoring has been a boon for most. But my village of Benenden is already pretty congested. We currently have 837 homes. Our draft Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) envisages an increase of at least 12% in the next two decades. That's around 110 new homes each with an assumed two cars – up to 250 additional vehicles on the local roads. The move to electric transport may reduce noise and pollution, but roads clogged with increased traffic are not going away.

So how best to reduce the impact on the Weald? Within our parish boundary are some 30 'dens' – ancient settlements that, over the centuries, have grown into small groups of dwellings often clustered round active or former farms. If each den were to accept three or four additional houses we could avoid the need for the substantial new housing estates envisaged by our NDP. The latter would inevitably lead to hard landscaping, loss of natural habitat, light

pollution and, of course, a concentrated increase in traffic. But our Plan claims that this would be better than dispersing the housing: "The impact (of small sites) on the AONB would be much greater" it says. But would it really?

It's a question we all should ponder. Many farms have pockets of brownfield land suitable for building. Housing associations often seek small sites so social and affordable units could result. The planning authorities deem them 'unsustainable' being so far from amenities. But they seem sustainable enough to those already living there! And, as discussed, most country dwellers do have cars. They have to. Which leads me to my key point. Concentrating 250 extra cars within the village envelope seems a recipe for chaos. Spreading them out over 25 or 30 smaller sites would surely dilute the impact. We're never going back to those halcyon pre-war empty roads, but we could consider mitigating the impact of ever increasing traffic.

**Kent Barker**



# Nature Notes

## The Jay

The Jay is a colourful bird of our Wealden woodlands. It carries a reputation as a nest predator but will tuck into most things if given a chance. In fact, its real speciality is in burying acorns. To germinate, an acorn needs light and it doesn't get much of that when it falls below the canopy of its own tree. So, the oak relies on others to plant it in favourable locations and that is where the Jay comes in. Jays can



carry six ripe acorns at a time in a stacking system down its gullet. It plants the acorns in open areas, but often near a thorn bush which it can remember as a marker for a

snack at a later date. It will work through its store, but during the summer, when other food is available to the Jay, some of the remaining acorns germinate and take root. So, when you next see an oak sapling bursting through a protective clump of thorns, spare a thought for the Jays that have contributed so much to planting our Wonderful Weald.

**Mike Bax**  
WKPS Chairman

## Brede High Woods

Late September, for the past few years, has been a time of hope and disappointment for me, a period spent in beautiful scenery that, nonetheless, carries with it the memory of previous failures, the sense that I've always just missed out, and that if I'd just gone on a little further, a little deeper into the woods, I'd have found what I was looking for. The woods in question are Brede High Woods, the 650-acre patchwork of ancient woodland, heath and marsh that stretches from the ridge between the Tillingham and Brede valleys down to Powdermill Reservoir. These woods are beautiful in any season, but it's in autumn that I come here to prove my special ability, a kind of anti-super power - I'm the world's worst forager.

Brede is known for its wild fungi. Often when I come here, just as the beech leaves are turning russet, the oak leaves yellowing and the whole wood misty and rumourous in the wind, I meet fellow-foragers with panniers brimming over with boletes, stuffed with cêpes and grisettes and wood-ears. They pass by with encouraging instructions - lies, of course - and I set out with my eyes to the ground, looking for the damp declivities where the fungi grow. Maybe that's the problem, though. It's so hard to keep your gaze from moving up: to see the peregrines that wing shrieking between the high conifers, or the Konic horses that look like cave-paintings cropping the grass, or the year's last butterflies flitting across the heathland that opens magically in the centre of the woods. There's also the history of the place, that has me dreaming of the past and forgetting about the mushroomy present.



Brede High Woods is one of the most tranquil places I know, a haven where only birdsong disturbs the silence. This is a relatively recent phenomenon, though. The unusual ecological make-up of the woods is down to its past as a hub of industry. Since Roman times, the woods were the centre of Kent's iron-smelting industry, the profusion of hornbeam providing fuel for the furnaces, the reservoir a source of water. As you walk through the woods, you're walking over pits and shafts, the ruins of charcoal hearths. In the eighteenth century, a gunpowder factory was built in the woods; it exploded, killing many of those inside. For most of their history, these woods have rung with the sound of industry, with the cries of workmen and the roar of the bellows. Now mushrooms - allegedly - grow where once there was all this noise, all this bustle.

**Alex Preston**

# A new Centre for People and Wildlife

It's not often nature reserves make the headlines but the spectacular Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, just over the border in East Sussex, is doing so for all the right reasons.

As any lover of nature in the region will know, Rye Harbour is a special place. The huge flocks of birds aren't Starlings but Golden Plovers; the pond waders Egrets; the yellow flowers not daisies but rare Least Lettuce, found only in this region of Britain.

It is stories like these that is driving the creation of a new Discovery Centre at Rye Harbour, a £4million project which its managers – Sussex Wildlife Trust – hope will transform the way people learn about, understand, and care for wildlife and our environment for generations to come.

The project is borne of necessity. The Reserve is already one of the most visited spots in our region: last year it had over 350,000 visits – from dog-walkers to bird-watchers, families on days out or visitors to Camber Castle, built by Henry VIII to defend the coast but now marooned half a mile inland. Until now, the only facility to tell people about either its spectacular biodiversity, or its centuries of history has been a tiny information centre at a dilapidated former Warden's cottage – a damp, cold and uninviting room prone to flooding. Hardly befitting a place voted Britain's favourite Nature Reserve in 2016.

Four years ago, the Wildlife Trust started working with the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve and the local community to turn things around. A Project Board was set up, a design team appointed and plans developed for a new Centre, located in the only place on the Reserve available – precisely the same footprint of the old Warden's cottage and garden.



The new Centre will be everything the old one wasn't. Bright, with large expanses of glass looking out over the lagoons, it will herald an entirely new way to experience the Reserve, with regularly-changing exhibitions, space for school groups to learn about nature, a new café to relax in and a wildlife garden planted with many of the rare and endangered species found in the Reserve's 1100 acres. It will also be a very 'green' building, constructed entirely from locally-sourced timber, solar panels on the roof, air-source heat pumps and rainwater collected to replenish the Reserve's saltmarsh and lagoons.

It's testimony to how much people love the Reserve – and wildlife generally – that the project has raised some £3.2million of its target already. But the team recognise there's still some way to go, which is why they're launching a campaign to raise £50,000 from the public this month to make sure they can provide all the facilities that visitors – and schoolchildren in particular – will need.

You can find out more about the project by visiting its website at [www.ryeharbourdiscoverycentre.org.uk](http://www.ryeharbourdiscoverycentre.org.uk). And any generous donor able to give £500 or more will have their name – or that of a loved one – inscribed on a special frieze being designed for the Centre in perpetuity. And what will the frieze be of? Those Golden Plovers, of course.

**Alastair Fairley**

## Lunch at London Beach Hotel

At the lunch in February guest speaker Alastair Fairley spoke about the Discovery Centre Project at Rye Harbour (see article above). In addition to the funds of £1,723 received from the Savannah Charitable Trust, £350 was also raised by the raffle organised by Caroline Everett, so thank you to Caroline and Rosemary Taylor for their hard work.



**Alastair Fairley and Fay Merrick receiving the cheque**

# Future Events

**Combined Event**  
**on**  
**Friday 26th April, 2019**

**Accompanied tour of**  
**Boldshaves Gardens**

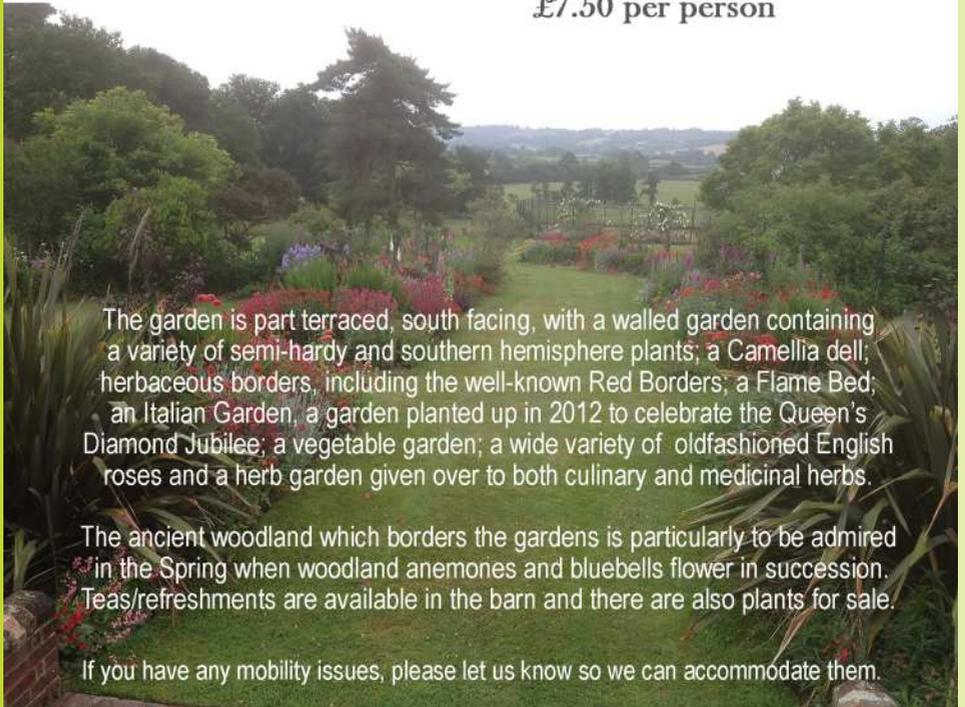
followed by

**Wine Tasting**  
by  
**Master of Wine**  
**John Brownsdon**

**6.30pm**  
in the Barn at Boldshaves

Accompanied Tour of the enchanting  
**Boldshaves Gardens, Woodchurch**

4pm until 6pm  
£7.50 per person



The garden is part terraced, south facing, with a walled garden containing a variety of semi-hardy and southern hemisphere plants; a Camellia dell; herbaceous borders, including the well-known Red Borders; a Flame Bed; an Italian Garden, a garden planted up in 2012 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee; a vegetable garden; a wide variety of old-fashioned English roses and a herb garden given over to both culinary and medicinal herbs.

The ancient woodland which borders the gardens is particularly to be admired in the Spring when woodland anemones and bluebells flower in succession. Teas/refreshments are available in the barn and there are also plants for sale.

If you have any mobility issues, please let us know so we can accommodate them.

This tasting is given by Sedlescombe Master of Wine John Brownsdon whose career was spent exporting wine from France and is expert in these wines. Now retired, he has run May "Boozecruzes" for some years, but looming Brexit may make this impossible. He is optimistic that the UK government won't have enough time to make early changes to existing legislation.



Going to Calais to buy wine really saves money, as the French don't have any "Excise Duty".

High UK wine duties force most retailers to compromise on quality to meet price points. Any wine bought in Britain is now around £7, so a trip to Calais results in better wine for less money. Wine bought in the UK, like a favourite of John's Domaine Petit Soumard (Pouilly Fume) cost around £12 - £15. Go to Calais for it and it will be a little over £8.

There will be an opportunity at the wine tasting to benefit from, or join in, John's forthcoming boozecruzes.

**£7.50 per person**

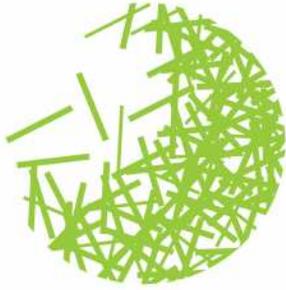
**Wednesday 8th May**

**Nightingale Evening**

Listen to the nightingales sing and hear how the conservation of the land is so important for their survival. (Sorry this is now full).

**Friday 24th May - 10.30am**

**Coffee Morning** at Dunks Hall, Hawkhurst.  
**POSTPONED**  
Come and meet and talk about local issues with members of WKPS over coffee and cake. (Donations of cake gratefully received on the day).



# Weald of Kent Protection Society

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given

Annual General Meeting of the Society

at Weald of Kent Golf Club, Maidstone Road, Headcorn, Ashford TN27 9PT

kindly sponsored by **btf**

BTF Partnership, rural property specialists in Kent and Sussex,

on Thursday, 13th June 2019

7.00 p.m. (Doors open 6.45 p.m.)

Speaker: Helen Whately MP

### AGENDA

1. Welcome from the President Mr Peregrine Massey
2. Apologies and Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting (14.06.18) available at the meeting, or in advance from the Society Secretary
3. Matters Arising
4. Annual Report from the Chairman, Mr Michael Bax
5. Honorary Treasurer's Report (statement of accounts available on the WKPS website [www.wkps.org.uk](http://www.wkps.org.uk) or on request with SAE)
6. Election of the Council for 2019/20
7. Members' Questions
8. Close of AGM

To be eligible for election to the Council a candidate must be a member of the Society for at least 12 months. He/she must be proposed by a member of at least 12 months standing and seconded by two other members, one of whom is a Council member. Nominations must be in writing, signed by the candidate, by the proposer and by the seconders; nominations should be lodged with the Secretary not less than 14 days before the date of the AGM.

Members should be aware that the WKPS general insurance policy does not cover members aged 80 or over. Such members should consider having their own insurance.

Refreshments will be served.

This is an open meeting and members are encouraged to bring guests.

# Wealden Literary Festival

## 29th & 30th June at Boldshaves, Woodchurch

Britain is currently suffering from a surfeit of literary festivals. In the past twenty years, every town, village and country house has set up its own bookish get-together, all of them looking to the templates established by Hay-on-Wye, Cheltenham and Edinburgh Festivals - programming a mixture of novelists, non-fiction writers and, crucially, celebrities, to persuade the punters through the doors. I did 34 literary festivals in the UK in 2017 (the last time I had a book out) and most of them were pretty much interchangeable as far as the format, feel and audience was concerned.

Then, last year, I was invited to speak at a festival not far from my home in the Kentish Weald. The Wealden Literary Festival takes place every June in the grounds of Boldshaves, a beautiful arts-and-crafts-style country house in

Woodchurch. I could tell from the moment I went into the festival that there was something different here, something that set it apart from all the other cut-and-paste festivals I'd attended.

The Wealden Literary Festival is in vibrant dialogue with the landscape around it, an extraordinary and inspiring engagement with nature and tradition that leaves its audience better-informed and inspired. Its speakers are our leading nature-writers, those whose words and ideas have helped shape the way we think about our countryside. I was lucky enough to see Tim Dee, Miriam Darlington, Tim Birkhead, Peter Fiennes. I also had a go at wood-working, left my children in a bushcraft class while I went to a talk, wandered past stalls selling local produce, stunning plants, wonderful food.

Other literary festivals can learn something from Wealden. What it does is to ask what makes Kent and its countryside different from other places? The programming is then structured so that every talk feels relevant to this very special corner of England. This doesn't make it exclusive or only interesting to people with a TN postcode; quite the opposite, in fact. A visit to the Wealden Literary Festival is an immersive, educative and inspirational experience, something that will stay with you for a lifetime. There's a unique magic about Boldshaves and the team there should be congratulated for what they've achieved. I have been telling everyone I know about it and will be back this year and for many years to come.

Alex Preston

To book any of these events please contact [secretary@wkps.org.uk](mailto:secretary@wkps.org.uk)  
or call 01580 861246 / 07919 871543



# wkps

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