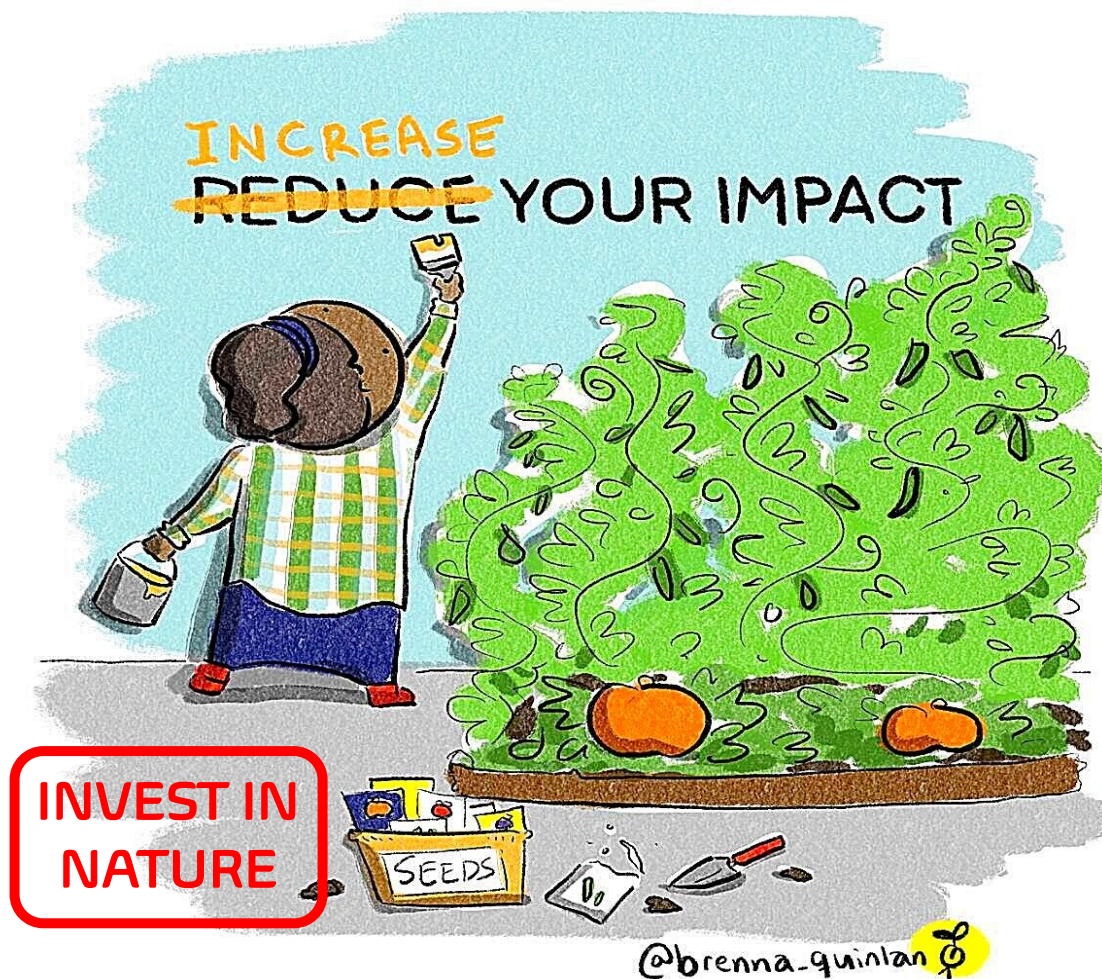


RE-B MAGAZINE

Raising awareness
of sustainable practices

Spring 2023 Issue #3



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Important dates for your diary

Re-B Forest School Programme

Forest School as a monthly event in a wonderful local woodland. All sessions are run by Clair Cobbold a qualified teacher and Forest School leader and they are open to 5-10 year old children from Betchworth and surrounding villages.

Next Forest School sessions: Saturday 29 April, 3 June and 1 July

Village children £10 per session, or £40 for the programme. **Book or find out more by contacting Clair Cobbold: claircaxton@hotmail.com or 07799 305 378.**

Wednesday 7 June 7-8pm Zoom Meetup

Creating New Wildflower Mini Meadows – B-Line Update

We began our community project to create more wildflower habitats in January. Six months on we invite those who have participated to share their experiences. We will also report early results of the insect surveys we are undertaking with the support of ecologist Josh Brown. **To register your interest please email Norman at lifewider@gmail.com**

Saturday 1 July

‘Wildflower Wander’ on National Meadows Day

It may be a year or two before the new Betchworth ‘B-Line’ mini wildflower meadows in north Betchworth look their best, but there are several already well established in the village including the strip seeded on Goulburn Green in 2021. National Meadows Day offers a chance to celebrate our community effort to create more wildflower habitats to help insect pollinators.

Join the Re-Betchworth organised Wildflower Wander around Station Road and enjoy the flowers, the insects and learn more about this precious habitat while enjoying discounted refreshments at Knights Garden Centre. **To register your interest please email Norman at lifewider@gmail.com**

Saturday 7 October

The Re-Betchworth Apple Press Day

Plan ahead now to join us for a day of family fun as we celebrate the apple harvest.

Bring your crop of apples to have it pressed and bottled. Come anyway to buy the freshest possible juice, pressed in front of your eyes from apples donated by others. We’ll keep the younger family members well occupied, under the creative eye of our Betchworth Forest School leader. Older children will be welcome to help with the pressing of your apples, under supervision. There’ll be cakes, coffee and other refreshments – and even a ploughman’s lunch. **To register your interest please email James at rebetchworth@gmail.com**

Introduction

This is the third issue of the digital magazine from the Re-Betchworth Action for Nature, Environment and Sustainability Charity, whose aim is to encourage awareness and habits that will lead to a more sustainable future for the Earth and all the life it supports.

We are deliberately publishing this issue on 'Earth Day' a movement of environmental activism that began in the US in 1970 and which has grown into a global phenomenon. Its mission is formed around investing in our planet. Re-Betchworth embraces the message of investing in the bit of the Earth where we live and the events we run and projects we support embody the way we try to achieve this goal.

But at the same time as investing in our own environment whether that be our home and garden or the countryside and wildlife around us, we also need to reduce the adverse impact we have on our environment to create a future that is more sustainable. Our cover image by Australian environmental activist Brenna Quinlan embodies this message.

We welcome your feedback on what we are doing and suggestions for future articles and projects. If you would like to contribute an article, please get in touch with the Editors James Benn & Norman Jackson rebetchworth@gmail.com



Creating New Wildflower Habitats to Form a Betchworth B-Line

Norman Jackson

Over 40 of the households in north Betchworth have now volunteered to join the community project to create a Betchworth Biodiversity Line or B-Line, as outlined in the January issue of the magazine.

This simple but powerful idea to help nature halt the massive decline of insect pollinators encourages people to cultivate more wildflowers. Flourishing populations of pollinators are essential for crop production for both human and animal food and wildflower habitats not only provide food for pollinators but enhance their ability to migrate.



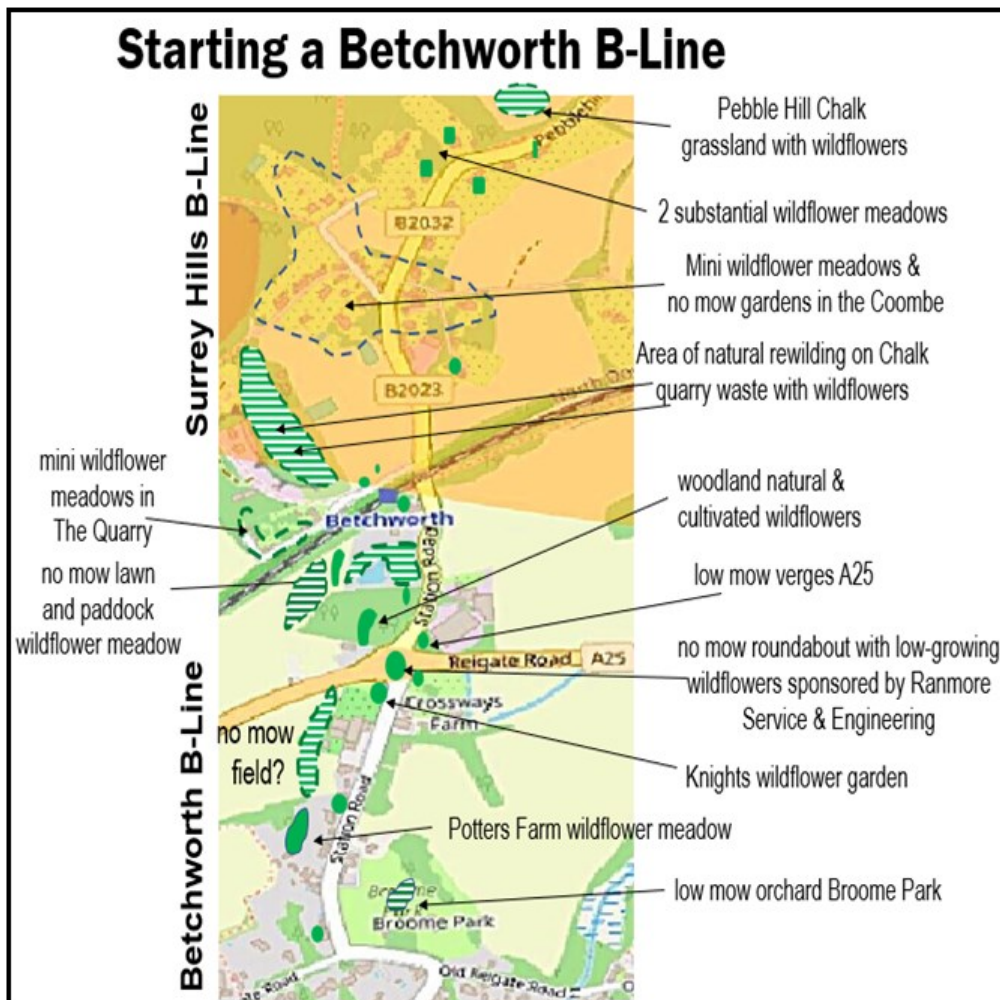
Our efforts to engage our community were recognised by Buglife – the organisation responsible for the B-Lines - who donated 1.3Kg of wildflower seed. We also received a generous grant from Betchworth Parish Council to purchase another 4Kg of wildflower seed for residents of Betchworth who are willing to cultivate wildflowers.

Re-Betchworth B-Line team members Deb and Milla packaging seeds for distribution to our B-Line residents

We concentrated our resources in North Betchworth. Our small team went door to door with the message that any contribution was valued from sowing seeds in a large pot to dedicating a few square metres of garden. We are delighted that so many of the residents agreed to take part especially as this was the first community project that many had joined.

RE-B volunteer Milla helping a neighbour prepare their garden

March and April are the prime slots for sowing seeds and some members of the team helped their neighbours to prepare their gardens for seeding. We estimate that the new area sown with wildflower seed is over 1000 sq metres. In addition, if we include existing wildflower meadows (like Potters Farm) and a number of no-mow gardens and fields in which wildflowers are allowed to grow, we estimate that by mid-summer we will have well over 2000 square metre of wildflower rich habitat in north Betchworth. The map below summarises what we hope to achieve, and we are still receiving offers of further contributions. And that is the point... once we have established our B-Line we can continue to develop new wildflower gardens and meadows within it.



A number of local businesses are supporting the community project. Ranmore Engineering and Services, who sponsor the roundabout on the A25, agreed to sow low growing wildflowers on the roundabout, and Knights Nursery agreed to cultivate a wildflower garden at the junction of A25 and Station Rd.

We are also delighted that North Downs School in Betchworth wanted to participate in our B-Line project. We provided a small packet of seeds to each pupil and helped prepare the ground for sowing.

Outdoor education teacher Rona Ottaway told us that the children “had a great time raking the ground and sowing seeds. They were very interested in what we were planting asking many questions. We are all looking forward to seeing what happens over the next few weeks. It’s a great learning experience for the children.”

RE-B volunteers Navid Tomlinson and James Benn removing the turf on the school’s field ready for the sowing of wildflower seed.



Wildflower and Insect Pollinator Surveys

Over the next few months we will do our best to map the wildflower habitats we have created and create a photographic/video record. But the most important part of our work will be to study the effects of what we are doing on populations of insect pollinators. We are delighted that ecologist Josh Brown has agreed to help us with this aspect of our survey work. We have chosen 6 sites along the B-Line and we will conduct a survey at each site once a month between May to September to identify the insects we attract.

No Mow May

During May we encourage all residents to let their lawns flourish. By leaving them uncut in May you will give wildflowers in your lawn a chance to grow and feed those insect pollinators. By June the benefits will be apparent, and we anticipate that Betchworth will be buzzing with pollinators as they feast on our wildflowers. We invite all residents to send us their photos of wildflowers and insect pollinators for inclusion in an online gallery to celebrate our community effort in July.

If you haven’t planted your seeds yet it’s not too late. If you need help to dig a patch just ask. If you have any photos of wildflowers or insect pollinators please email them to project coordinator Norman Jackson lifewider@gmail.com

Preparing for the Next Dry Summer: Janet Manning explains why a healthy soil is key to water storage

Far too wet in March... but too dry in the summer... How can anyone best manage the increasingly erratic rainfall we receive as our climate changes? That was the theme of the excellent March Re-B Zoom talk when Janet Manning – the first RHS Garden Water Scientist – shared her professional knowledge.

A recording of Janet’s highly informative presentation can be found on our YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvtkPpPTURQ>



In a nutshell, Janet said: we talk a lot about saving water and I'm sure we can all find ways to do that better, but really it's more about managing water than saving it. If we think about the way the climate is changing, we're going to see more extremes; we're going to see longer, hotter, dry spells, we're also going to see longer spells of heavier rainfall that is going to cause flooding. More surface water too, which in itself can cause as many problems. We need to hang on to some of that excess water when it's about and then use it during those dry spells.

The most instant and obvious thing that everybody thinks of to save rainfall is water butts. But the natural world doesn't have water butts. What it has is deep organic, healthy soils. And that's where we can store lots and lots of water. By adding organic matter to our soils, by not digging the soil and maintaining an open structure it helps the rain infiltrate the soil to recharge the groundwater and be taken up by the plants growing in it.

Water the way nature intended: how to make soils healthy

What you can do

- 1 Add mulch around new plants
- 2 Choose the right plant for the right place
- 3 Avoid watering the lawn
- 4 Add homemade compost to your soil

When you want roots to grow in your soil, they need water, but they also need oxygen to respire. And so you've got to have that balanced mix of water and oxygen in your soil. And to get that you need those open, air spaces, you need the pores in the soil. And what happens is that when you've got healthy soils with lots of invertebrates, earthworms, springtails, wood lice, and many other organisms inhabiting it, they create those little pore structures. The bacteria that live in the exude what I call bacterial poo that's like a natural swell gel. It creates the sticky sort of glue that helps to glue the crumbs of the soil together, which then opens the soil up. But when you've got those air spaces, the soil particles themselves can capture a layer of water. And then you've got a really great environment for the roots to grow, that can get all the water they need, and all the oxygen that they need as well.

Among other things Janet went on to talk about was choosing plants that will thrive in the increasingly challenging climate, and the importance of matching their root structure to your soil conditions. There's far more available on the YouTube video, so do watch the recording, together with her Water Use in Gardens leaflet which can be downloaded from the link given below.

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Water the way nature intended: how to collect rainwater

What you can do

- 1 Use a water butt
- 2 Place drip trays beneath pots to collect drainage
- 3 Add mulch around new plants
- 4 Add homemade compost to your soil
- 5 Choose the right plant for the right place
- 6 Swap paving for plants
- 7 Avoid watering the lawn
- 8 Use self-watering containers
- 9 Choose permeable paving

Reference

Water Use in Gardens <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/gardening-in-a-changing-world/water-use-in-gardens>

Helping Children Connect with Nature

The Editor Interviews Forest School Leader Clair Cobbold

Re-Betchworth Forest School, led by Betchworth resident Clair Cobbold, is up and running well. In this interview we explore what Forest School means to Clair.

Clair in action surrounded by participants at RE-Betchworth Forest School



What is a Forest School, and who is it for?

A Forest School is a way of getting children to learn together outdoors, in a natural environment. It's called a school but it's very different to a traditional school, the main idea being that it is child led. I usually have some pre-planned structured activities, but the children can go off and play in the woods if that's what they want to do.

We do lots of things like making and using tools, exploring for bugs, looking at and listening to the birds and the wildlife and playing in trees. We cover a huge variety of different things, but all outside. Forest School is for anyone from pre-school aged children all the way through to teenagers and even adults, although we have limited our Forest School to children up to 10 years old, at the moment.

What are the benefits to participants?

Forest School helps build resilience and encourages children to be curious and resourceful. Through experimentation they find different ways to approach a task; if they can't do it one way, they can try another. When you're outside in nature, you've got a whole host of loose objects that can be used often suggesting different ways of doing things. You can keep trying a task, keep practising it in different ways and eventually you'll learn to do it.

Experiencing nature is fantastic for mental health; so many studies show that just being immersed in nature reduces anxiety and stress, especially important after Covid in children. We have many issues relating to sustaining our planet, so we need our children to grow up connected to and wanting to help nature. If they haven't got those positive experiences of being in nature, then why should they try?

Why did you become a Forest School Leader?

Being in nature is second nature to me as I grew up on a large estate where I wandered freely and knew every inch of it. I decided I wanted to be a Forest School leader because when I trained to be a teacher, I could see that children often found the classroom difficult, and I felt that the children didn't get enough time outside. I believe if a child finds a task difficult, if you take them outdoors, they can often find a different way of doing it – being outside stimulates imagination.

For example, at the school where I teach, the children tried to write a story about a pebble but they were finding it hard to imagine. So we all went outside and found our pebble and we came up with lots of ideas about what the pebble might have done, where it lived and so on. Just being outside and immersed in nature helped the children who find writing more difficult to imagine the possibilities.

What did you have to do to become a Forest School Leader?

I had to do a wide-ranging training course to become a leader – covering the benefits of Forest Schools, lesson planning, safe use of tools, fire making and things like that. I also learnt how to manage a

woodland area because what you don't want to do is go into a space and inadvertently destroy it ending up with no bugs, no insects, no wildlife and plants for the children to study.

What experiences have you had in setting up Betchworth's Forest School?

It's been brilliant to meet families in the local area who have that passion for nature as well, and it's also been a joy to see how giving people are. Someone even gave us a mud kitchen and brought it over to the Forest School site for me. As a teacher it's been fantastic to see the looks on children's faces as they find bugs, learn new skills and make new friends out in nature. The main challenge has been the weather; but we live in England where it rains as much as it's sunny, so it's kind of important to get outside in all weathers. My hope is that what we do is exciting enough to make people want to come out, whatever the weather.

What would a typical session in a Forest School look and feel like?

We usually start off by spending some time exploring the site, looking for anything that we might need to be aware of; like if there are mushrooms we need to know not to pick them, and to avoid brambles and stinging nettles. Obviously, I will have looked around the site beforehand to make sure it's safe, but it's important to involve the children in that risk assessment because learning to assess risk is an important skill.

Then we usually spend time doing an activity. So we might make a bird feeder or do a bug hunt or a scavenger hunt. There will be things available to try using for example the mud kitchen, or we might have a hammer, or some arts and crafts materials as well; children can join in with the activity, but they can also be independent and do their own thing as well. As long as the weather is on our side the children will have a go at lighting a fire. We spend some time sitting around the fire and usually cook something on it - popcorn, maybe some dippy cheese or marshmallows – and we might share a story or sing some songs, then spend a little time thinking about what they might want to do next time. What ideas do they have? Is there anything they would like to do? Bringing in those child-led ideas so we can go wherever the children want to go.

At our last session we created a wildflower patch as part of Re-B's B-Line mini wildflower meadow project. The children started off by digging some holes - all kids love to dig - then they made some soil balls mixed with wildflower seeds and chucked them towards the bare patch where they had been digging. They loved it! We had explained what we were doing and why we were doing it and we read a story around the fire about insects and what the wildflowers would do. So it made a lovely connection to helping nature.

Forest school participants making and throwing wildflower seed bombs



What is your vision for the future of the Forest School?

It would be wonderful to get enough take up so that we could have sessions for different age groups. At the moment we have a mixed age group stopping at about 10, but the age range means that we sometimes have to split to do different things: some tool work with the older ones and crafting with the younger ones.

And I would love to set up a group for older teenagers because they are often forgotten. There are a lot of mental health issues at this age and getting out into nature and spending time in nature has been shown to help mental health. Above all I want Forest School to help build that really important connection with nature so that as children become teens and then adults, they want to help the planet and nature.

Editor: It's inspiring to hear Clair talk with such passion and conviction about what she is doing. Helping young people to develop the physical and emotional connection to nature is essential if we are to stand a chance of meeting the enormous challenge of creating a sustainable future for all life on this planet.

Next Forest School sessions: Saturday 29 April, 3 June and 1 July

Village children £10 per session. Book or find out more by contacting Clair Cobbold: claircaxton@hotmail.com or 07799 305 378.

Apples, Trees and Safety

James Benn

Isn't our weather something else? A year ago Re-B hosted an apple tree pruning workshop in glorious sunshine; this year, when we got together on 10 March for the repeat event, there were snow flurries and a bitterly cold wind. But no one froze, no one was injured and all six viable trees in the Village Orchard off Goulburn Green had their second year 'regeneration' pruning.



Betchworth Village Orchard

The 3-year programme – supported by the Parish Council – was begun last year to demonstrate how the fruiting branches of the many large, mature apples trees present in village gardens can be progressively brought within safe reach. Injury is all too common when you have to clamber up unsuitable ladders to harvest the crop, and scramble around in the upper branches of trees planted by previous householders many decades ago.

This year’s workshop was led by Alessandra Valsecchi who, until recently, was in charge of the fruit collection at RHS Wisley and is now working with Albury Vineyard. Her run through of the theory and best pruning practice was excellent, and wide-ranging – including suggestions for those apple varieties bred in Surrey and Sussex for local growing conditions. Anyone fancy trying a ‘Crawley Reinette’? Moving into the orchard, Ales then put theory into practice, demonstrating the recommended pruning on one of the trees. Working in small teams, attendees then tackled the others, under supervision.

Alessandra will be back again next year to complete the regeneration work. If you are lucky enough to have apple trees in your garden – whatever their age – let me know if you would like prior notice of that event. Whether you do or not, make sure **Saturday 10 October** is in your calendar – that’s the date for this year’s community Apple Press.



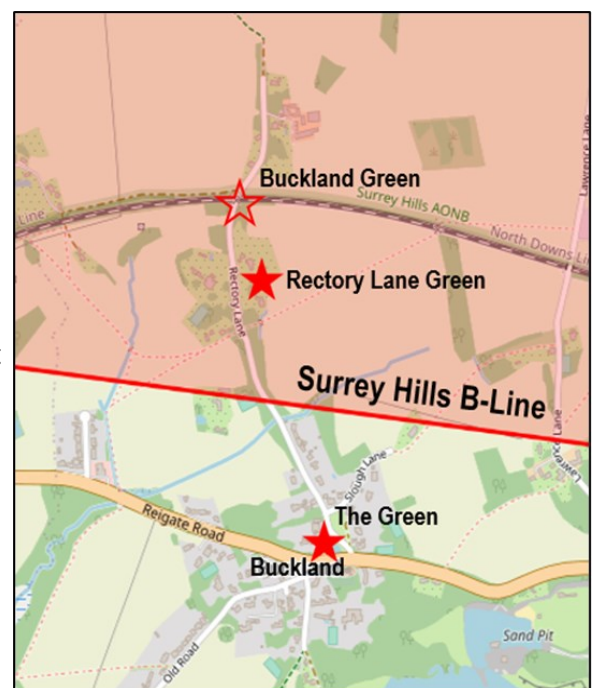
Buckland’s Three Greens Catriona Martin

Unbeknown to many, Buckland has historically boasted not one, but three Village Greens:

The Green, visible from the A25, *Rectory Green* the grassy area opposite Glebe House on Rectory Lane and *Buckland Green* which has undergone several name changes – on the east side of Lawrence Lane (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Buckland’s 3 Greens

‘**The Green**’ with its pond and closely mown lawn, is the focal point of the village and it looks as if it has always been so, but this is not the case. The 1653 estate map shows both the pond and the grassy area surrounding it. In 1933 the Parish Council discussed the levelling of the Green to make it suitable for games, which was not done for lack of funds until 1936. In the late 1940s, residents recall that grass was still mown only twice a year for hay, and the meadow was full of poppies, clover and other wildflowers. From the 1950s until the school (now the Old School House on the left-hand corner) closed in 1981, an area of grass was cut to provide the school with athletics lanes in summer and a football pitch in winter. The Green only became a registered ‘Village Green’ in 1967 when the maintenance was transferred from the Buckland Estate to the Buckland Parish Council.



The Green, Buckland



Rectory Green was previously known as Parson's Green in 1653 & Parsonage Green c.1762. An archaeological dig of 2013 suggested that Rectory Green was in fact the centre of Buckland village from Domesday and before through to c. 1350 and it may have been the site for the first church in the area. Rectory Green is still largely intact with the Buckland Estate rough cutting it twice a year to optimise the opportunity for wildflowers to set seed – truly a glorious sight in mid-summer. This is particularly important as this area lies within the Surrey Hills Biodiversity Line (B-Line) shown in Figure 1.

Right- Rectory Green at the end of Rectory Lane, opposite Glebe House

Buckland Green (Lawrence Lane)

Buckland Green was formerly the site of the Workhouse until 1829 (now Orchard Farm) and a pub (now a house) called The Harvesters. Buckland Green was cut in two by the railway in 1847 and has now been turned over to farmland.

(Referenced and adapted from 'Buckland 1000-2000' Second Edition with permission from Duncan Ferns)



Editor— we welcome contributions from our readers and we are delighted that Sian Winter accepted our invitation. In her article she describes one of the ways in which we might REDUCE our adverse impact on our environment. If you would like to contribute please email the editor at rebetchworth@gmail.com

RE-DUCE **Sian Winter**

I suspect that many of you, like me, have little faith in our recycling systems. So as well as recycling, let's try **reducing** the volume of rubbish too.

Let's start with junk mail. I have no idea how much junk mail is delivered to the 500 households in Betchworth each year, but I imagine that a very conservative estimate would be five or six items a week.....that is a staggering **2,500 items per week** to Betchworth alone.



I have managed to reduce our junk mail significantly over the last few years by using three simple steps.

Any unwanted marketing mail which arrives in my letter box, I cross out my address but leave it still visible, circle the return address and write PLEASE UNSUBSCRIBE. I collect up this pile of mail and every now and again pop it all in the post box. You don't need to put a stamp on it, the retailers will be charged for its return postage - a good incentive for them to stop sending unsolicited mail. This has been remarkably effective.

Register your address at mpsonline.org.uk. You can also unsubscribe from mail for previous occupants or someone who has died.

Unaddressed leaflets delivered by the Post Office can be stopped by sending an email to optout@royalmail.com and/or by printing out and filling in a Royal Mail Opt Out Form.

I'm not sure how effective a notice near your post box saying 'no leaflets please' is, but it's probably worth a try. It's only a start but every little helps. **No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.**

Jubilee Tree Update

Our Jubilee Tree campaign is coming to an end. Knights have informed us that about 90% of the vouchers have been redeemed, which is a fantastic response. If you have not yet fulfilled your pledge to plant a tree, don't fret, there is still time to redeem your voucher. With spring upon us many of the trees planted for the Queens Jubilee are coming into leaf and in some cases early blossom. Here we celebrate a few more of the trees that have been planted. If you have planted a tree as part of the Re-Betchworth Jubilee tree campaign, please send us a photograph for inclusion in our gallery. A great big thank you to everyone who has participated in our community project that will benefit our environment and the people who will inherit this legacy. If you have not yet sent a photo of the tree you have planted please email it to Normanlifewider@gmail.com



Spring Gallery

This issue of the magazine is published in late April and our photo gallery reflects the annual spring renewal documented by the wild flowers, blossom and green leaves and shoots everywhere. It is the part of the annual cycle that is loved by many people. The gentle unfolding will continue until May when it will merge into summer. This year we are focusing on wildflowers and how their presence gives meaning and substance to the idea of spring. Please email your photographs for inclusion in our summer gallery to Norman Jackson lifewider@gmail.com



Our Spring gallery can be found on our YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5roHVQf43-s>

