

# RE·B MAGAZINE

Raising awareness  
of sustainable practices

## Summer 2023 Issue #4



### In this issue

- Re-B Wins Community Champion Award 3
- Dates for your diary 3
- Betchworth B-Line 4
- Meadow Journey 7
- Wildflower Experiment 8
- Fraser Down Nature Reserve 9
- Wildflower Wander 11
- Survey of Invertebrates in the B-Line 12
- Betchworth Butterflies 14
- Dragonfly Obsession 15
- Forest School 16
- Dry Hedges 17
- Learning to Scythe 18
- 2023 Community Apple Celebrations 20
- Inspired by Nature, Summer Gallery & Movies 21

## Editor's Introduction

We have now completed our first cycle of seasonal magazines launching in the autumns and travelling through winter, spring and now summer. In each issue we have tried to provide information about the natural environment around Betchworth and offer opportunities to residents to work as a community to protect and help nature and encourage practises that enable us to live more sustainably.

As our cover image depicts – working for a more sustainable future is a journey. We have much to celebrate and appreciate – over the past year our group of supporters has steadily increased (our mail list has 172 members). We are particularly grateful to the people who have participated in our initiatives – the 70 people who pledged and planted trees during our Queen's Canopy campaign, the 40 people who are growing wildflowers as part of our B-Line project, the local businesses that have supported our initiatives, the 20 people who joined our Wildflower Wander walks, the 12 people who joined our apple pruning workshop and the many children and parents who joined our monthly Forest School. It is your active participation that gives meaning to what we are doing. It has also been gratifying to see how our friends in Buckland have seen value in our efforts and they too are trying to gain support in their community for their own mini wildflower meadow project.

To cap it all, we won the Emerging Talent Award at Surrey Wildlife Trust's new Community Champion Awards Ceremony (see page 3).

I am handing over Editorship to James Benn who will steer us through the next 12 months. We can look back with pride on what we have accomplished and look forward with optimism to the year ahead.

Norman Jackson (Editor)

**Re-B team** *Top left to right – Debbie , Hilary, Norman & Sue, Bottom left to right James, Martin. Milla and Claire*



## Re-Betchworth Wins Surrey Wildlife Trust's Community Champion Award

It's always nice to receive recognition and our work for nature with the Betchworth Community, was recognised by Surrey Wildlife Trust through their new Community Champion Awards.

The Oscar styled Award's Ceremony, held on 3 August at West Horsley Place, was attended by over 80 SWT staff and community activists. It's purpose was to showcase nature-based community projects, and enable people to connect with other community groups who are trying to help nature in Surrey.

Re-B was nominated for the Emergent Talent Award, one of three categories. Teams had to show how they connected to one or more of SWT's aims.

- Connecting and protecting land for nature's recovery
- Encouraging others to take action for nature
- Using sustainable practices



Re-B was one of 4 community projects shortlisted for the Emerging Talent Award and James, Camilla and Norman represented the team at the ceremony. We don't mind admitting that we did not think we would win and we were surprised but delighted when our name was announced.

## Dates For Your Diary

### **Wednesday 30 August** Re-B Summer Forest School

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 children from Betchworth and surrounding villages. Next year's Forest School programme will begin March 2024 (*see page 16*)

### **Saturday 7 October** 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 (*see page 20*)

# Betchworth B-Line: A Biodiversity Corridor Rich in Wildflower Habitats for Insect Pollinators

Norman Jackson

## B-Lines and Biodiversity Corridors

It's 7 months since we launched our Betchworth B-Line community project. B-Lines are a simple but powerful idea developed by 'Buglife' to help nature reverse the rapid decline of insect pollinators by encouraging people to cultivate more wildflowers. The B stands for biodiversity and B-Lines are an attempt to focus attention and effort to improve biodiversity within a network of narrow corridors that criss-cross the country connecting different regional scale habitats for wildlife. The idea of a biodiversity corridor extends beyond wildflowers and insect pollinators to embrace all life. Within a biodiversity corridor people concentrate effort and resources to help nature to flourish. In this way a biodiversity corridor provides a framework within which support for the natural world can be organised.



Figure 1 UK-wide network of B-Lines



We heard about B-Lines through a talk given by Buglife Conservation Officer Louis Harrington-Edmans. We contacted Louis to see if Buglife could help us establish our own B-Line and he helped us with advice, encouragement and a donation of wildflower seed. Betchworth Parish Council also provided a grant from which we purchased wildflower seed. With these donations we were able to provide wildflower seed to 40 residents and local businesses who joined our initiative. In the last 6 months we have made a good start in laying the foundations for our biodiversity corridor which currently stretches from Fraser Down nature reserve in the north of the parish, to the River Mole, a distance of 3km (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Betchworth B-Line Our vision for a biodiversity corridor

We are conducting surveys of the plant and animal life within the biodiversity corridor, making maps and recording what we find in photographs and movies. We have helped nature to flourish through a range of projects including building bird boxes and hedgehog shelters, planting 70 trees for the Queen's Green Canopy, cultivating wildflower strips and mini meadows for insect pollinators, and offering workshops aimed at developing skills to look after the natural environment - for example apple tree pruning and scything.

## Increasing Biodiversity by Creating Mini Wildflower Meadows

Our seed mixes contained over 30 species of wildflower – many of these can already be found in our area but some are either rare or are absent. The 5Kg of seed we have sown will contain over 5 million seeds so we are improving biodiversity by increasing abundance, improving diversity and expanding the areas in which wildflowers are growing.

### Three types of wildflower habitat

Within our B-Line we recognise the three types of wildflower habitat.

#### 1) Established Cultivated Wildflower Meadows

There are two cultivated wildflower meadows in the village on Goulburn Green and Potters Farm (Figure 3) These provide excellent illustrations of what can be achieved.

**Figure 3** Potters Farm & Goulburn Green established wildflower meadows.



#### 2) Natural Wildflower Meadows

There are several natural uncultivated wildflower meadows within the B-Line including Fraser Down Nature Reserve, the chalk grassland near the Lime Kiln, the garden wildflower meadows of residents in The Coombe, and Chalklands, the buttercup-rich fields of Pebble Hill Pastures and Holmes Farm east of Pebblehill Rd, and the buttercup-rich meadows of Broome Park, the grassland south of the post office and path by the school, the meadow adjacent to the River Mole and the many road verges that criss-cross the parish (Figure 4). Together, these areas add up to over 50 acres of wildflower rich grassland.

**Figure 4** Some of the natural (uncultivated) wildflower meadows in our B-Line

#### 3) New Wildflower Cultivations

The 40 participants in our B-line project have sown around 1400 square metres of wildflower seed within the northern part of our B-line. This does not mean that all the seeds germinated and flowered this year. The spring weather was not favourable: March & April were cooler than average, and March was much wetter and April much drier than average. As a result of these conditions many participants delayed sowing seed until mid to late April or even May, consequently, some seeds did not germinate and many seedlings did not flower – an example is shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5**

Variability in the growth of wildflowers is sometimes hard to explain. For example, the same seed mix used in adjacent properties on Pebble Hill yielded virtually no wildflowers in one property (Figure 6 left) while the wildflowers flourished in the other property (Figure 6 right).

**Figure 6** Variable responses to sowing the same seed mix in adjacent properties



But there have been enough successes to know that our strategy will, given time, achieve our objective to grow more wild flowers in our biodiversity corridor. Figure 7 provides an example. Seeds were sown in March and while the wildflowers were slow to grow – by mid to late July there was significant flowering and they remain in flower well into August.

**Figure 7** One of the successful new areas of wildflower cultivation covering about 300 sq m. While the wildflowers were slow to grow – by mid to late July there was significant flowering.



### Collecting Seed

By August early summer flowers have gone to seed and they provide a fantastic resource for wildlife and for propagation. By collecting the seed and sowing in other areas we are helping nature to expand its own resources. During August and September the B-Line team will be collecting seed for the next stage of our project.

## Next Steps

We now have a much better idea about the nature and distribution of wildflowers within our biodiversity line and we have begun to identify and record the insect pollinators who inhabit our B-Line. The perennial seeds that were sown in the north of the parish, are now in the seed bank and there is a good chance that they will germinate and wildflowers will flourish in years to come. But this will depend on how well we manage the grasses that will outcompete the flowers if left to their own devices.

We intend to build on this positive start. Re-B will offer more wildflower seed to Betchworth residents in September for an autumn sowing. Our focus will be on the area south of Station Rd to the southern boundary of the parish, but we will also try to help residents in the north of the parish who want to join the project. If you would like to join our B-Line project please email project coordinator Norman Jackson [lifewider@gmail.com](mailto:lifewider@gmail.com) with details of where you live and the size of the area you want to sow.

Visit our wildflower exhibition at: <https://rebetchworth.weebly.com/wildflower-exhibition.html#/>  
and our wildflower movies at: <https://www.youtube.com/@RE-Bmovies/>

*Norman, Milla, Deb & Hilary*  
*RE-B B-Line Team*

## Meadow Journey

### Katie Leak

When we bought our house in The Coombe there was a patch of overgrown grass and brambles at the top of our chalky, full sun, hilly garden. We cut it back and dug out the weeds. I put on a weed and feed mixture but then we had hot weather and the grass scorched black! The next year primroses / field primroses popped up, so the following year we let the grass grow long and i threw down a meadow seed box but nothing came up! The next year we had the odd orchid but now, after a few years of letting nature take its own path, we have lots of orchids. Through the year the patch starts with yellow primroses and common weeds like buttercups. Then the oxeye daisies bloom and we have a sea of white and the little man and common orchids start to appear. Then we move into hot summer and the yellow rattle and pyramid orchids are in bloom. Then the marjoram and field scabious come through to finish the season. The wild flowers attract lots of different butterflies in each stage of the season.

To maintain our patch we mow at the start of the year on a high setting to keep the grass down and we cut a low cut path through. Then in August, once the whole lot looks black and completely dried out, I mow it on a high setting with no bag on the mower (a lot easier than a heavy scythe!). I pick up the grass piles by hand and chuck them on the compost heap. In September, I mow on a low setting.



I can recommend letting your grass grow long and throw down some yellow rattle seeds. It will save you mowing time, and you may get lovely butterflies and orchids.

## Wildflower Experiment

Janick Fielding

The ground on which the seeds were sown was of very poor quality'. Furthermore, due to the poor spring I didn't manage to sow until May, just before the long hot spell. I wasn't sure if I'd left it too late or if anything would come up at all. All things considered, the wildflowers have done quite well. This winter I will turn the soil and add about three inches of topsoil. Things should do better next year. There have been plenty of insects, rabbits and a deer.



### A Nice Endorsement from Buglife

Our B-Line project was inspired by the work of Buglife so it is very nice to receive this endorsement from Louis Harrington-Edmans, a Space4Nature Conservation Officer at Buglife.

*“Never has acting for biodiversity been more important than now! With B-Lines providing a co-ordinated international approach to reconnecting our landscapes for wildlife. Re-Betchworth and the Betchworth B-Line project has personally inspired me greatly. Demonstrating what’s possible when communities take ownership of providing for their local wildlife, with fantastic progress even at this early stage. Making real impacts for Betchworth’s pollinators and other wildlife locally while also providing an important link for the B-Lines insect superhighway network at large. None of this would have been possible without the dedication of Re-Betchworth and their supporters. We look forward to seeing the projects ongoing accomplishments.”*



Louis

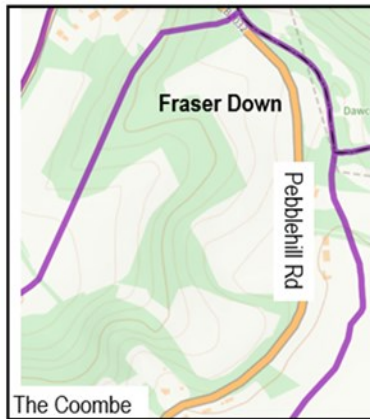


# Fraser Down Nature Reserve: A Jewel in the Betchworth Biodiversity Crown

Simon Humphreys

Fraser Down Nature Reserve is located in the Betchworth Hills at the northern tip of the Betchworth Biodiversity Line on the west side of Pebblehill Road. It's a 30 acre Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) reserve which forms part of the Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment Site of Special Scientific Interest. As an SSSI it is of national importance for wild-life, particularly its chalk grassland, scrub and woodland and the species these habitats support.

**Figure 1** Location of Fraser Down and view from the Down looking south east



When Fraser Down was purchased by SWT in 2008 most of the open chalk grassland had been lost to invasive Hawthorn scrub as the site had not been managed for about 50 years.

The small amount of grassland that had survived was rank and species-poor as a result of decades of not being grazed. So, for example, there were virtually no flowering orchids on the reserve at that time. Since then volunteers from the Dawcombe Conservation Group, which has also managed Dawcombe Nature Reserve on behalf of the Trust since 1982, have cleared approximately 15 acres of scrub at Fraser Down to restore species-rich chalk grassland on the site.

There are now nine species of orchid including some, such as Pyramidal orchid, in their thousands. The same dramatic increase has occurred with other flowering plants. For example there were about six thousand flowering Cowslips this year just in one field and they are still increasing. All of the nearly 200 plant species now found on the site have appeared naturally from the seed-bank present in the soil following clearance of the scrub by the volunteer group and the re-introduction of grazing.



**Figure 2** Some of the wonderful orchids (left) and cowslips (right) on Fraser Down

The profusion of flowering plants now provide essential nectar and pollen for a plethora of invertebrates, including many which are rare in Britain. At the last count 574 species of moths have been found on the reserve. Although often overlooked as pollinators, some plants such as Fragrant orchid have specially adapted flowers where the nectar is only accessible to insects with long tongues, such as butterflies and moths, so these invertebrates are essential for the pollination of such plants.

Over 300 other species of invertebrate have now been found on the site, a quarter of which are classified as being rare and/or endangered. These include many species of solitary bees and wasps, hoverflies, beetles and spiders amongst others. Some of the invertebrates that are able to fly are likely to travel between Fraser Down and the gardens managed by residents along the Betchworth B-Line. Although residents may not get many of the rarer, specialist chalk grassland species found at Fraser Down, you might get some of them so keep your eyes peeled!

Major scrub clearance on the site is now largely complete, so management has mainly switched to maintaining and further improving the grassland. Much of this involves preventing the scrub coming back. At working parties we use tools called "Tree Poppers" to pull scrub seedlings/saplings up to 4-5 ft tall out of the ground, roots and all, with larger scrub being cut at the base using bow-saws and loppers.

To maintain and improve the grassland about 20 of SWT's Belted Galloway cattle are brought in to graze the reserve each year between late July and October. Although they do browse the scrub to a certain extent, grazing alone will not prevent scrub from re-invading the grassland. Instead the main objective of grazing is to limit the dominance of grasses in the sward. This may sound odd for a grassland but doing so allows wildflowers to establish and thrive, especially the finer plants. Grazing also creates bare ground and diversity in the height and density of the sward, something conservationists call "structure", all of which are extremely important for invertebrates. So grazing is preferable to mowing/cutting for both plants and invertebrates, but cutting areas of grass in gardens which have been left for wildflowers is entirely appropriate where it isn't usually possible to have a herd of cows!

**Figure 3** Grazing Belted Galloway cattle (left), clearing scrub on the chalk grassland (right).



Although invasive scrub such as Hawthorn and Dogwood can lead to the loss of grassland if left unchecked, having some scrub is vital for wildlife such as invertebrates and many of the 67 species of bird seen on the reserve. To maintain diversity in the structure of this habitat some mature scrub has been retained and a limited amount of small scrub is allowed to grow back where the soils are deeper. A proportion of these patches are then removed each year and other new patches allowed to develop. This means there's a constant cycle of scrub of all sizes on the reserve to provide the diverse range of conditions which are needed by different plants, invertebrates, birds, etc.

Most of the woodland at Fraser Down has only established through self-seeding since the 2nd World War, although there are two areas of older woodland, possibly ancient woodland, on the steeper slopes. In order to create diversity of structure and habitat within the woodland and to connect grassland on the reserve to grassland on neighbouring land to the west, we have created "rides" through the woodland. In this context rides are nothing to do with horses! They are simply open routes which create diversity in woodland and allow invertebrates to move through it, along with flowering plants to provide nectar.

Due to the sensitivity of many of the species present, Fraser Down is not open to the public. So the site has a much lower profile than many of the Trust's reserves where visitors are welcomed, and it may be that you haven't even heard of the reserve. Fraser Down is managed entirely by volunteers, so if anyone is interested in joining the group then please contact me ([simonhinsurrey@gmail.com](mailto:simonhinsurrey@gmail.com)). The volunteers come from all ages and walks of life, and have a wide range of experience from complete novices to over forty years managing sites. We have working parties on two Sundays each month between Sept and April. Please do get in touch if you would like to join us.

*Simon Humphreys is the Voluntary Reserve Manager, Dawcombe & Fraser Down Nature Reserves, Surrey Wildlife Trust [simonhinsurrey@gmail.com](mailto:simonhinsurrey@gmail.com)*

## Our First Wildflower Wander on National Meadows Day

National Meadows Day, this year held on 01 July, draws attention to beauty and value of our meadows and the wildlife they support. Re-B's contribution to this national event was to organise a wander around some of the beautiful wildflower meadows within our B-Line. The walk lasted an hour and Knights Garden Centre kindly provided a free cup of tea, coffee or soft drink, to all participants.



Twenty enthusiastic, nature-loving local residents, joined our two walks. We selected three different wildflower habitats: a) an unmown lawn containing a rich wildflower fauna including a multitude of pyramid orchids b) a cultivated area that was seeded with wildflowers in March c) and an established wildflower meadow that was planted 12 years ago.



The weather was kind and judging by the chatter, questions, smiling faces and positive feedback we received, the walks were a great success. We all felt we had learned something and most importantly, it brought people who cared about nature together. The walks were a clear demonstration that we care about our wildflower meadows and the wildlife they support in Betchworth.

# Survey of Invertebrates in the B-Line

Josh Brown

One of the goals of the Betchworth B-Line or biodiversity corridor project is to identify the invertebrates inhabiting the wildflower habitats. A baseline survey began in May and will continue through to September. Each of three sites has been visited once a month. To date over 120 species have been recorded at the three sites (Figure 1). The list of species will be documented on the Re-Betchworth Biodiversity website <https://rebetchworth.weebly.com/invertebrates.html#/>

**Figure 1** Sites sampled within the Betchworth B-Line

Survey visits were carried out following guidance produced by Natural England (Surveying terrestrial and freshwater invertebrates for conservation evaluation<sup>1</sup>), to record invertebrate diversity via a range of sampling methods. This has mainly included direct observations, sweep netting, and ground searching, but plans to carry out some moth trapping will add significantly to the species list and give an insight into the diversity of nocturnal pollinators within the B-Line. Visits will continue into September as this is key to ensuring that species emerging both early and late in the season are not overlooked.

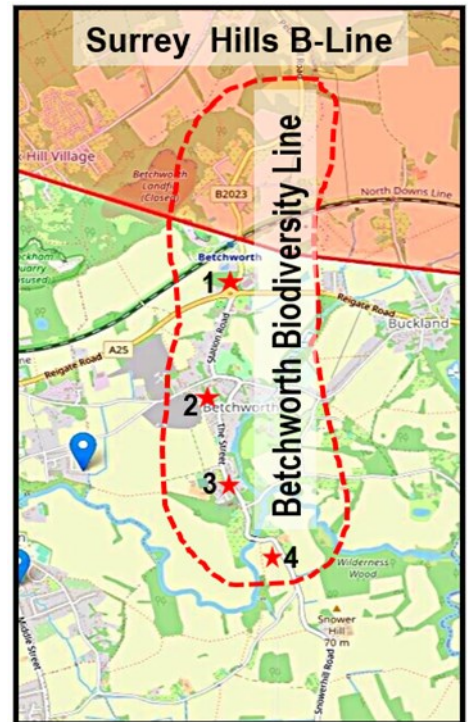
The assemblage of invertebrates recorded to date comprise a diverse range of groups, all with important ecological roles within the food web. This has included members of the following insect orders; Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths), Hymenoptera (bees, wasps, sawflies and ants), Diptera (flies), Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies), Orthoptera (grasshoppers and crickets), Coleoptera (beetles), and Hemiptera (true bugs), as well as 13 species of Arachnid (spiders and mites).

Butterflies are now on the wing in good numbers, and with insect pollinators being the main focus of the B-Lines project, it is great that a total of 19 butterfly species have been recorded within one location along the B-Line alone.

**Figure 2** Some of the butterflies in the Betchworth B-Line (Left to Right): Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*), Comma (*Polyommia c-album*), Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*), and Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*).



Other important pollinators in the form of over 40 species of bee, wasp and fly have also been recorded including a range of eusocial, solitary, predatory and parasitic insects. The provision of other ecosystem services has also been apparent with decomposers (beetles and flies) making up a significant proportion of species recorded.



**Figure 3** Some of the bees in the Betchworth B-Line (Left to Right): Early Mining Bee (*Andrena haemorrhoa*), White-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lucorum*), Gooden's Nomad Bee (*Nomada goodeniana*) and Common Furrow-bee (*Lasioglossum calceatum*).



The majority of invertebrates recorded so far have been common and widespread in terms of their conservation status and distribution within the UK. However, the location and underlying geology of the Betchworth B-Line has meant that a few species known to occur only within calcareous grasslands within the south-east have also been recorded. An example of this is a scarce species of False Firefly Beetle that was recorded within the garden wildflower meadow at Chalklands. This fascinating beetle exhibits one of the most extreme cases of sexual dimorphism in insects. The male beetle is approximately 10mm long, being a complete contrast to the flightless, slightly larger larviform female (see adjacent photos). *'Females are terrestrial, living mostly in the shells of snails which they have killed with a poisonous bite and consumed with the help of injected digested enzymes. Adults appear from late spring until July or early August; males generally occur on foliage, flowers or high up on grass stems but a little later in the season may be seen wandering on pathways or on open areas of soil following the scent-trails of females, a function to which the expanded antennae are thought to be adapted'*. (More information on this species can be found at <https://www.ukbeetles.co.uk/drilidae>)

**Figure 4** Male (Top) and Female (Bottom) False firefly beetle (*Drilus flavescens*).

The more established wildflower areas within the B-Line have certainly yielded a higher diversity of invertebrate life than those more recently sown. This is to be expected, especially considering the poor weather in early spring. This initial survey will provide a useful opportunity to monitor how the assemblage changes as the project progresses and more favourable habitat for invertebrates emerges. The management of these newly created wildflower spaces will be crucial in ensuring that nutrient levels within the soils are kept as low as possible, allowing more species-rich swards to establish and therefore providing opportunities for a greater diversity of invertebrates to colonise them.

**Source**

1 Surveying terrestrial and freshwater invertebrates for conservation evaluation (NERR005) Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/36002>



# Betchworth Butterflies

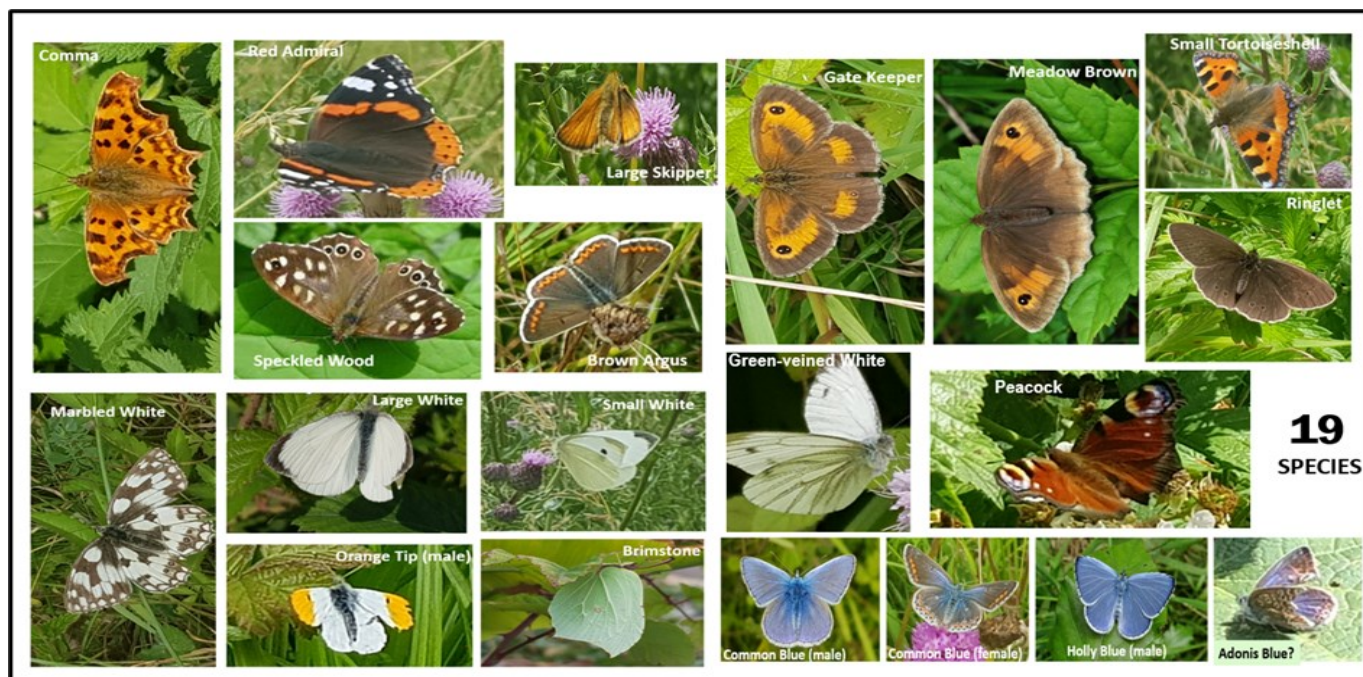
Norman Jackson

The Big Butterfly Count is a major UK citizen science project in which volunteers observe and count the butterflies near where they live over a three week period in July and August. The survey helps assess the health of our environment by counting the number and type of butterflies and day-flying moths. This year the survey took place between July 14<sup>th</sup> – August 6<sup>th</sup> and members of Re-B contributed to the survey.

The UK has 59 breeding species of butterfly but like many of our insects they are under threat from human activities. Long-term trends show that 80% of butterfly species have decreased in abundance or distribution, or both since the 1970s. UK butterflies have lost 6% of their total abundance at monitored sites and 42% of their distribution over the period 1976-2019. This is why, initiatives like Bug's Life B-Line project, and our own Betchworth Biodiversity Corridor, aim to expand wildflower cultivation, to help butterflies increase their distribution and abundance.

As part of our Betchworth Biodiversity Baseline Survey members of Re-B team spent time observing and recording our butterflies this year. Using the excellent on-line resources of the Butterfly Conservation Society <https://butterfly-conservation.org/> we have identified and photographed a total of 19 species (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Summary of the butterflies we have identified



Its not easy to photograph a butterfly so some of our photos are a bit blurry but they do at least give us a flavour of their diversity and beauty. The colours and patterns on the wings have several functions. Firstly, they help protect butterflies from predators through camouflage, or warn predators that the butterfly's body is toxic, secondly they help attract potential mates. A major feature of these wing canvases is that they have two sides and they can contain different messages on each side. In general, butterflies use the upper surfaces of their wings to seduce the opposite sex, whereas they use the lower surfaces to hide from view or to communicate to their predators that eating them would be toxic. Most butterflies sit or feed with their wings closed, the ventral (or bottom) side of their wings, with the subdued colors which often blend into the vegetation making them more difficult for predators to see. Open wings are often a signal to attract a mate.

Watch our butterfly movie at: <https://rebetchworth.weebly.com/butterflies.html#/>

# Dragonfly Obsession

Milla Peterken

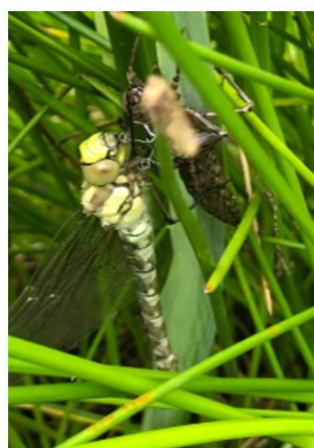
Between June 11-21<sup>st</sup> 2023 I spent most of my days hanging around my garden pond looking for the next dragonfly metamorphosis to happen. I've had a pond for about 7 years but I have never seen so many dragonfly nymphs creep out of the water and up to the safety of my tall grasses or irises and in one case just the wall of the pond. Last summer was very different and the pond was empty of water, and I was devastated! But by the winter a quick pond dip revealed plenty of dragonfly nymphs.

**Figure 1** My pond

Back to this summer. Once the nymphs had found a place of safety they began their mesmerising metamorphosis, pumping their bodies full of fluid and pushing their way out of a tiny hole in the nymph case, drying out their wings before flying off. If you are patient enough you literally see the dragonfly emerge from the nymph body to leave the exuvia (former self body case) behind. On some days I was counting 4-5 exuvia and I collected at least 20 over the period.

**Figure 2** Mesmerising metamorphosis

I have also enjoyed seeing the dragonflies with their partners come back and lay eggs in the pond, so hopefully the cycle will continue in my pond.



Nature has extraordinary ability to cope with change but we need to continue to respect our influence upon it. I would say the best thing to encourage biodiversity in my garden, is my pond. It's not very big, but hosts a wide range of freshwater invertebrates. It's a good place to spend a few hours just looking at it and being filled with interest, wonder and joy.

**Figure 3** I seem to have a multiple birth unit in my pond!!

To find out more about wildlife ponds go to <https://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/act-wildlife/wildlife-gardening/wildlife-gardening-advice/wildlife-ponds>

Watch our dragonfly movie at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xcWcqGBBTs>



# Our Forest School is 1 Year Old

Milla Peterkin

It has been a year since we first ran some taster days and got the programme going. Forest School has been running through the summer once a month, with over 15 different families bringing their children, aged from 4 - 11. We have been fortunate to have a 'magical secret wood' in our village which has given us a rich environment to watch the changes over the seasons in plant and insect life. We have made creatures out of wood, cooked over the camp fire and generally had a lovely time in a wonderful natural space. Above all, children have been able to form curious, creative, informed and appreciative relationship with nature.

Our final summer session of Forest School is on August 30th. We may also try to run a couple of sessions in September to October depending on the weather and then re start the spring programme in March. Every session is different and inspired by our wonderful Forest School Leader Clair (Editor—Clair explained her educational philosophy and the methods she uses in Issue 3 of our magazine <https://re-bmagazine.weebly.com/34.html>)



## What do the children think?

We have been running FS once a month through the summer and have just had the 5th one. I thought it would be good to find out what one of the children who attend FS thinks about it all. Riley is 11 years old and has managed to get to all of the FS afternoons so has a pretty good idea what she likes about it! She likes the fact that what you get to do each time varies, so there is no time to get bored. Her favourite activities are cooking on the camp fire (pretty much everybody's favourite) and wittling wood.

Riley said that she looks forward to learning about nature and new life skills and even though the children range from 4 – 11 years old, there is always something for everyone. She pointed out that one big difference from school is you don't have to sit still and its quite o.k. to go for a wander or hang out in the hammock. There are structured activities like looking for mini beasts or listening to a story but also have the freedom to just make a huge mess in the mud kitchen. Riley thinks we are really lucky with our site, which is hidden in a secret wood.

To find out more about Forest School events please contact Clair Cobbold at: [claircaxton@hotmail.com](mailto:claircaxton@hotmail.com).



# Dry Hedges – The Eco-friendly Alternative to a Bonfire

James Benn

Do you love garden bonfires or loathe them? Or fear them, as asthma sufferers do? Even a life-long pyromaniac now feels guilty about the traditional end-of-season method of dealing with those woody cuttings that are too bulky to compost, knowing the nuisance caused by the smoke and the contribution to the climate crisis.

And why burn when there is an excellent alternative use for those prunings? Dry Hedging (also called Dead Hedging) has been around for millennia, but now coming back to attention as a brilliant way of both capturing carbon and helping wildlife.

Dry hedges are branches and twigs woven to form a barrier. As it rots down, the nutrients are recycled back into the earth below, and carbon captured rather than released into the atmosphere when burnt.



They are made simply by weaving woody cuttings from shrubs and trees between vertical stakes. The stakes are usually sturdier branches cut from trees / shrubs making the dead hedge. It's a good idea to create the hedge very near to where your cuttings are taken so you can top up the shrinking prunings each year.

These hedges are free, robust, easy to make and provide privacy, windbreak, and structure to a garden. They provide a natural habitat for birds, insects, reptiles, mammals and amphibians.

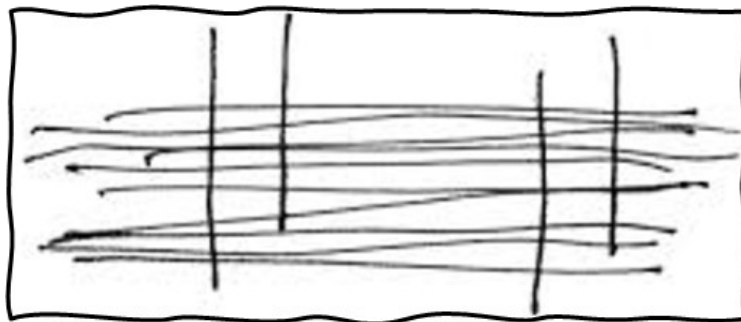
You can get more information from a host of excellent articles and videos on the Web. Here are some tasters:

## Resources

<https://rainwaterrunoff.com/permaculture-the-dry-hedge-also-called-dead-hedge-or-benjes-hedge/>

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/wildlife/dead-wood-compost-heap-habitats>

<https://cropforlife.com/dead-hedge/>



## One Man Went to Mow...

James Benn

Actually two women, and five men went to mow on 11 August... not a meadow, but the wildflower strip on Goulburn Green. Not with noisy strimmers, nor long-armed hedge trimmers, but in relative silence, by hand, with Austrian Scythes as student 'mowers'. Two hours later the strip was cut, and mostly cleared off site.

The silence had not been total. If you watch the video, you'll hear a fair bit of grunting as well as the gentle hiss as our scythe blades cut through the stubborn knapweed, oxeye daisy and other stalks. Blades honed and re-honed every few minutes to maintain their sharpness and efficiency, under the ever-watchful eye of our scything instructor Mary Ellis.

Once established, wildflower meadows are delightfully low maintenance for most of the year; but the old growth needs cutting down after the seed has set and removing as cleanly as possible. Counter-intuitively, to encourage variety in a meadow it is best to cut sections of a meadow at different times throughout the season, even before some flowers have opened fully let alone set seed. Vary the early cut locations from year to year.

In comparative test after test, scything comes out as the best solution. Walk-behind power scythes are no longer available to rent, strimmers make heavy weather of the job as the long stalks often wrap themselves around the strimmer head and inverted long-arm hedge trimmers not much better. With scything the cut is clean, the stalks are left long for easy raking up and little 'chaff' left to inadvertently enrich the soil and encourage grass to grow. It's also safer for the small creatures who may be living among the wildflowers.



As more households join the Re-Betchworth B-Line initiative (see previous articles), there will be more mini meadows to cut in addition to the wildflower strip on Goulburn Green. So Re-B contracted with Mary to run that day's scything workshop. She started on safety, and returned to it again and again as it could be all too easy to inadvertently cut your hand while carrying or sharpening the blade.



Once handle positions on the snaith (the long wooden arm of the scythe) had been correctly adjusted to each student we started learning on the well-mown short grass section of the Green. The only thing missing was some gentle beat-driven rhythms as we were taught to move our bodies, then arms and eventually scythes in a smooth semi-circle. It was remarkably satisfying, as well as clearly demonstrating the difference a sharp blade makes.

Once we had the hang of that, we students moved over to tackle the altogether tougher wildflower strip. That completed, we learnt about sharpening, then moved to practice both our mowing and honing skills on Norman's much gentler meadows above the A25. A very good day with an excellent instructor, who Re-B will certainly bring back if there is a demand next year. Anyone up for joining next year's scything team? Do let us know.



# Get Ready For Our 2023 Community Apple Celebrations

James Benn

Whether you have a splendid crop of apples to press or young children to entertain, make sure you have Saturday 7 October firmly in your calendar. That's the day the Re-Betchworth 'Press Gang' will transform the Village Hall into a veritable carnival of apple related activities for the whole family to enjoy, from 10.30 to 2.30.

**Apple Pressing** - Bring your apples along to have them pressed and bottled (no windfalls please).



We can supply new bottles, or you can save both money and waste by washing and sterilising your own 1ltr plastic milk or juice bottles; make sure you keep the caps as sizes vary slightly. And if you're planning to make cider this year, then bring larger containers and pay even less per litre. Last pressings at 2.00pm.

**Juice sales** – No apple trees? Come anyway to buy the freshest possible juice, pressed in front of your eyes from apples donated by others. Ready for immediate drinking or freezing.



**Children's Activities & Face Painting** - There'll be plenty of fun Autumn crafting activities for younger family members, under the creative eye of our Betchworth Forest School leader Clair. Older children may be welcome to help with supervision. The photo on the left was taken at last year's Apple Press Day.

**Cakes, puds and coffee** - Treat yourself to a slice of scrumptious village-baked apple cake, an apple pud or maybe a specialty biscuit, washed down with coffee, tea and other refreshments. Available from 10.30.

**Lunch (reservations essential)** - With a little help from local suppliers you can enjoy a proper cheese + cider 'ploughman's' in the hall.

**Prior booking for this lunch is essential:**  
email [rebetchworth@gmail.com](mailto:rebetchworth@gmail.com)

## Inspired by Nature and the Environment

### 'Teazle Wood – Living Thread'

Textile artist Caroline Cardew-Smith shared the story of her creation

Teazle Wood is 59-acres of woodland in Leatherhead. The wood was saved from potential development by the Friends of Teazle Wood, who successfully campaigned to save the wood and raised enough money in donations and loans to purchase the wood in 2012.

I wanted to depict the intricacy of the 'wood wide web' of organisms, as well as the complex history of Teazle Wood sitting as it does within the surrounding ancient landscape, and its connections to the local heritage.

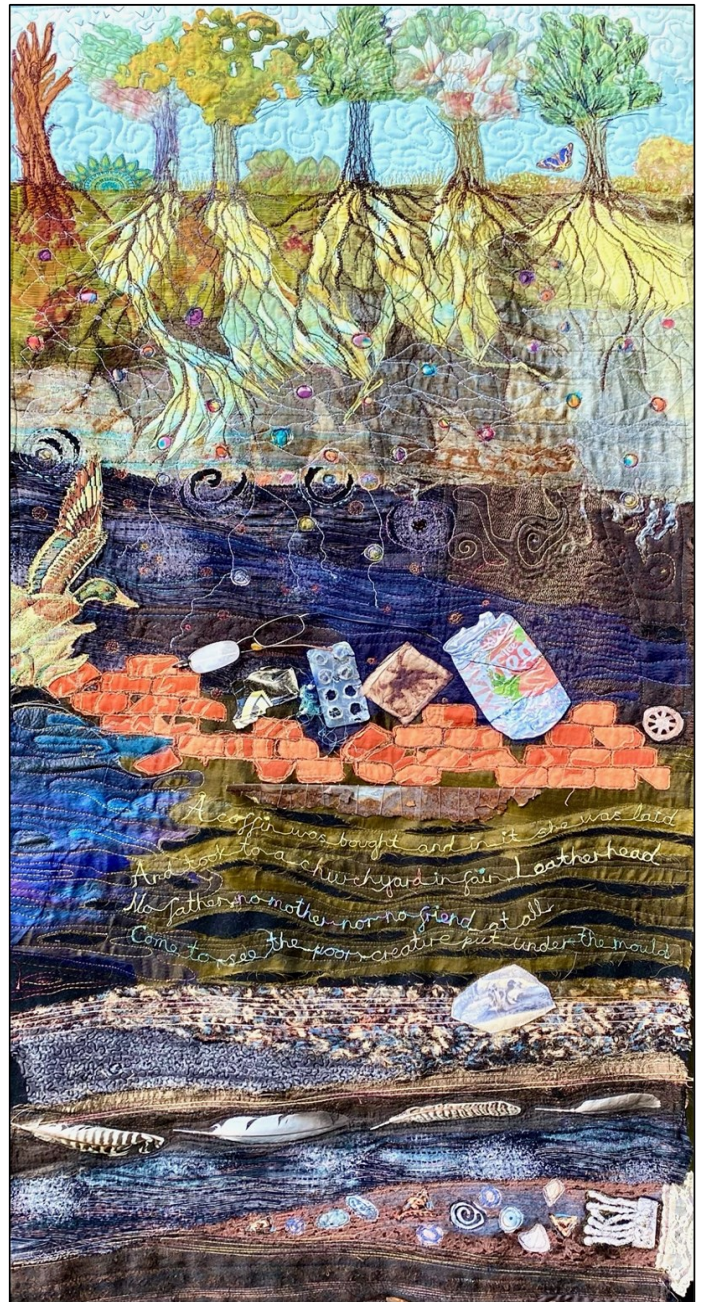
The artwork focuses on the layers beneath our feet, what is hidden and unseen, including an amazing variety of archaeological finds - potshards, tiles, Roman curses, and Iron Age tools. Within the wood was Victorian brickyard which provided the clay for many local buildings, and left a legacy of numerous clay pit ponds. The butterfly is a Purple Emperor one of many species found in the woodland.

The verse is from the ballad of 'The Poor Murdered Woman' who was found in the common field of the parish of Leatherhead on January 15, 1834.

*Her coffin was brought; in it she was laid,  
And took to the churchyard that was called Leatherhead,  
No father, no mother, nor no friend, I'm told,  
Come to see that poor creature put under the mould.*

Teazle Wood Trust. Registered charity no. 1160532

[www.teazlewood.org.uk](http://www.teazlewood.org.uk)



## Summer Gallery & Movies

This issue of the magazine is published in August and our gallery features the wildflowers and insect pollinators that surround us. Our on-line exhibition <https://rebatchworth.weebly.com/wildflower-exhibition.html#/> features 30 photographs. We have also produced 6 wildflower/insect movies for our YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/@RE-Bmovies/videos>

