

WEST SURREY BADGER GROUP



NEWSLETTER 69 AUGUST 2014

News and reports

Badger Trust update

Dorset anti-cull march

Local events

AGM report

WEST SURREY BADGER GROUP

www.wsbg.co.uk

Registered Charity No 1100142

Patron David Shepherd OBE



MEMBER OF THE BADGER TRUST



THE MAMMAL SOCIETY



AND SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST

COVER PICTURE

*Keeping out of harm's
way*

by Pat Williams

Welcome to our new members

Maureen Druce
Heather Keith
John Leston
Jessica Smith

FROM YOUR NEW CHAIRMAN

Martin D'Arcy

I am privileged to have been elected West Surrey Badger Group's new chairman. This has come about because of the sad passing of our excellent and much missed chairman, Nick Nickells. His will be a hard act to follow, but I will do my best to maintain the high standards he set.

In lieu of a chairman's report I thought I would introduce myself and explain how I came to be involved with the group.

When I was a boy I wanted to be a zoo keeper or a game park ranger. My favourite author was Gerald Durrell. Whenever the subject of a day out was raised, I would always ask to go to the zoo. As we lived in Brussels during most of my childhood, this involved a trip to Antwerp and so was a rare treat. Probably to keep me quiet my parents bought me a subscription to *Animals* magazine (now *BBC Wildlife* magazine).

I applied to study zoology at university, but was put off when I discovered that I would be required to dissect dogs and cats, and ended up studying botany. This perhaps explains why I later became a vegetarian.

Despite my degree in botany and an MSc in entomology (I was less bothered about dissecting locusts) I somehow ended up working in IT. In 2004, while working at St Peter's Hospital in Chertsey, I moved to Bramley. The garden of my new house, which backed on to woodland, had a patio. I made a barrel pond and filled it with water plants. One morning I noticed a plant had been pulled out and thrown onto the patio. I replanted it. The next day two plants were strewn across the paving. I idly wondered what could be responsible for this vandalism, while replanting them. Next night they were torn out again.

I was intrigued. Clearly something did not want these plants there. But what, and why? The next night I kept watch. A dark, muscular shape appeared, surveyed the scene, then moved briskly and confidently to the barrel. Here it raised itself up and placed its paws on the edge, then drank from the pond. I flicked on the floodlight to reveal the perpetrator, complete with stripy mask. Brazenly, the badger carried on drinking

before nonchalantly trotting away.

From that day on I have regularly watched badgers visit my garden, now encouraged with peanuts rather than water weed. I became intrigued by their behaviour and looked for information on the internet, which is how I came across WSBG. I joined, but initially did not get involved.

The next step on my move back to nature was when I attended Surrey Wildlife Trust's 50th anniversary open day at Newlands Corner. While there I came across a leaflet about dormouse training, signed up, and with my first view of a wild dormouse I was hooked. Five years later I am now a licensed dormouse handler, working with SWT, Surrey Dormouse Group and People's Trust for Endangered Species on the national monitoring programme.

About the same time I started on the dormice license training, I was made redundant. I took stock and decided that what I really wanted to do was pursue my interest in natural history. I started

volunteering with Surrey Wildlife Trust, and after several months was accepted on the Volunteer Trainee Ranger scheme. I spent a year working with the ranger team in the east of Surrey, learning from that dedicated, knowledgeable, expert, and welcoming group. In fact, I enjoyed it so much that I am still volunteering with them.

Through my dormouse, SWT and badger interests, I got to know Dave Williams, mammal guru. I suspect he suggested I vole-an-deer to join the committee to try to stop me foxing him with shrewd questions, weaseling my way into trips to check dormice sites, badgering him about harvest mice, rabbiting on about hares, and stoatally driving him otterly batty.

(Now when I said high standards, I didn't necessarily mean in puns.)

That's enough about me! I look forward to working with all of you over the next year, and assisting everyone at WSBG in carrying on the excellent job this group does for our badgers.

BADGER TRUST UPDATE

Dave Williams

The badger culls

After his April announcement to continue with the pilot culls, Secretary of State for the Environment Owen Paterson was heavily criticised by Badger Trust and many other environmental NGOs. Despite calls from scientists from the Independent Scientific Group who analysed the results and heavily criticised the efficiency and the humaneness of the culls, Paterson insisted on continuing with this failed policy.

After some long meetings with their legal advisers Badger Trust have challenged the Secretary of State, via a Judicial Review, that the pilots should not continue without an independent panel to review the results.

The Trust was granted permission by a high court judge to proceed with the Judicial Review, which will be heard in London on 21st August.

Research report on TB and cattle

A research team of scientists at Warwick University has published a report on TB and cattle. Their exhaustive research concluded from all the evidence available that the biggest problem is cattle to cattle transmission of Bovine TB. Killing badgers would not make any significant reductions in cattle TB. They did suggest that if any herd had TB reactors, then all the herd should be slaughtered. This would be very costly, and probably unacceptable to the government and the NFU, but would

certainly be an excellent long-term solution. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that TB gets left behind in herds in cattle that have been tested.

Meanwhile the rate of bTB in cattle continues to fall, as some of the government's new cattle measures are brought in. In Wales the drop is now almost 50%. Defra have announced new initiatives for badger vaccination, but it is still difficult and expensive with many restrictions put on volunteer groups.

Paterson out, Truss in

In July we had the news that in the cabinet re-shuffle Owen Paterson was dismissed from office. This was good news for the

environmental movement, as he was causing damage in all areas, not just the badger cull. The NFU were very upset about the loss of a sympathetic minister and objected strongly, even trying to visit David Cameron personally to persuade him to change his mind.

The new Secretary of State is Elizabeth Truss. She has no previous involvement in the badger debate, but in her first day in office she announced that the pilot culls will continue. This shows that she is following party lines and not making up her own mind after looking at all the evidence. This has led to the badger cull being re-named as Cameron's Cull. He has obviously chosen someone who will carry out his wishes.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Nigel Mee

Well it's been a busy period since the last newsletter report in April – supporter meetings, committee meetings, AGM, Wildlife Aid open day, Wildlife Rocks event at Guildford Cathedral. The field officers have been busy whilst the badgers have been especially active across the region: in gardens, under sheds, digging out setts, inevitable traffic accidents, plus a renewal in the building trade means more planning applications affecting setts and habitats.

Financial activities in the year started 1st April however have been relatively normal and as expected compared to previous years. Most supporters pay their subscriptions in April so the year always starts with a healthy injection of funds, so often topped up by additional kind donations.

In summary, the income so far has been £2,397 and expenditure £1,842. This is only just over 3 months in of course, so early days. So far, main items of expenditure were £1,000 donation to Wildlife Aid and £520 on a night camera and scope. The committee

intend purchasing more night cameras; the two cameras owned by the group have so far proved invaluable for identifying the activity in the dark of those nocturnal ground-moving creatures. They are useful where we have been contacted by residents worried as to what might be doing damage in their garden or is coming under the fence, and in the continuing study of the badgers released last year as part of the RSPCA project.

The two sales stalls have been financially viable in that combined sales of stock amount to £388 with an additional £55 just from the donation boxes. People are so kind and thoughtful toward us. However, we are not present just to sell stock at these events – it shows people we are out there and what we do, and is great for networking with other organisations and seeing what they do.

Our third and last stall of the year will be at the Rustic Sunday event at Tilford Rural Life Museum on 27th July, when a huge range of crafts will be demonstrated.

I hope your summer period goes well and send thanks to you all for your continuing support and generosity.

PLANNING REPORT

Dave Williams

Camberley

In Camberley a nursing home is due to be rebuilt and modernised. It stands on a plot with a steep slope at one end and, yes you've guessed, there's a badger sett at the bottom of the slope.

I completed a survey of the grounds and found a total of 15 holes, only 4 of which were really active at the time of my visit. I first visited this site in 2008, when the sett was hardly being used, and the planned extension never took place. This time it looked to me as if the new building would be too close to the sett and cause much disturbance.

After some discussion with the architect, the plan was redrawn so that no part of the building would be within 20 metres of an entrance. As the sett is down the slope there should be no chance of breaching any tunnels.

If only all developers took this attitude it would be far easier to protect badger setts.

Byfleet

The development at Murrays Lane goes on and on. The application for the scout hut has been approved, and should not have any impact on the badgers or the sett.

The development on the adjacent field, which will take away a large foraging area, is still rumbling along, with applications being made and then withdrawn.

FIELD OFFICER'S REPORT

Dave Williams

School badgers – 1

I was phoned by Pat from the school that she works at in Shackleford. Amazingly, she said that a badger was in one of the school outhouses and "did not seem right".

By the time I arrived the badger had left the building and was running alongside a wall. It then went into what I thought was a small fenced area with only one way in, so I closed the gate and put in the open cage, hoping to chase the badger into it. However, it found a way out and ran off through the school grounds, eventually going down a small alley with a closed gate at the end (see photo). I was able to corner it and get it into the cage. I could see that it had horrific wounds on the rump.

I took it straight to Wildlife Aid. It was kept overnight and examined closely by the veterinary nurse, but the wound was so deep and damaging that the badger had to be euthanased.



School badgers – 2

I visited a local school who thought they had a badger sett in their wild area used by the school for environment studies. I confirmed that it was a sett, which delighted the parents who help to manage the site. The school caretaker was also pleased but thought the school might want to build on the land.

The parents asked me about fixing a camera at the sett to show the children some film of the nightlife. I set up a camera at the sett, and showed how to check and reset it. On

the first night they 'got' a bird and a cat. I suggested putting down a few peanuts. This worked and they soon got quite a few shots of badgers coming and going.

This was well received in assembly, but the parents were told not to use peanuts as due to nut allergies it is a nut-free school, and this even applies to the wildlife area. They hope to purchase their own camera next term.

WILDLIFE ROCKS

5th May, Guildford Cathedral

Nigel Mee



There is no other event quite like Wildlife Rocks, part celebration of wildlife, part music festival, part awareness-raising.

A great wealth of stalls from all kinds of charitable organisations and individuals concerned about nature, wildlife, the environment; live music of many different genres on two stages; talks by experts; activists giving out information on their own events around the country. This was a truly entertaining day out in the heart of Guildford set out not only in the grounds of the cathedral but inside the

lofty building itself.

It was a warm overcast day but the rain held off, and our stall outside was the best place to be sharing with the Badger Trust and next to Pat Williams displaying many of her wonderful paintings and prints. There were lots of visitors and interest for everyone not just at our stall and the day flashed by.

Wildlife Rocks is organised by Brian May's Save Me organisation (<http://www.save-me.org.uk>) and he and his team certainly know how to put on a good show. I am already looking forward to the next one!

WILDLIFE AID OPEN DAY

Nigel Mee

The weather on 15th June was sunny but not too hot, making a pleasant day for visitors and stall-holders at the annual open day in Leatherhead for Wildlife Aid – this popular and well-regarded wildlife hospital. Music, Morris dancers, a life-size badger and fox cavorting, and a great variety of stalls all contributed to make a fine venue for a great family day out and the atmosphere was friendly and fun.

Our stall had a steady stream of visitors and badger-related items were in demand, especially the fluffy ones. West Surrey Badger Group presented a cheque to Wildlife Aid for £1,000, and our new chairman Martin and dedicated volunteer Jacqui took to the

microphone to speak on behalf of the charity.

There was always a long queue for the area where the public can see some of the patients, and the aviaries dotted around meant people could at least see some wildlife albeit contained securely for its own good.

This is a day out for a wildlife lover and everyone would have gone home pleased to have shown support for such an important organisation, always there to care for suffering animals.

The Wildlife Aid crew certainly know how to put on a good show and this year was no exception. We are always pleased to be at this event and look forward to next year's.





Above: In the middle of Dorchester Dominic Dyer, Chief Executive of the Badger Trust, rallies the several hundred marchers.

Right: The contingent from West Surrey Badger Group. Back – Pat and Dave Williams, Sue Carden and Nigel Mee. Front – Martin D'Arcy and Sue's cousin Nikki. (Photo by Martin's partner Julia.)



DORSET MARCH AGAINST THE CULL

Martin D'Arcy

Throughout the summer the Badger Army, ably marshalled by Team Badger, has been staging a series of protest marches across the country. The West Surrey Badger Group Committee joined one of these days of action held in Dorchester.

The march was hosted by Dorset for Badger and Bovine Welfare who are actively involved in promoting the vaccination of badgers in their county. The day was in support of activists in Somerset and Gloucestershire who face yet another tough summer spent protecting badgers,

but was also to celebrate the cull not being extended to Dorset as had originally been intended. The march was to be followed by a party in the park with music, food and speeches.

We gathered in the Borough Gardens before setting off through the town centre. We were directed by well-organised marshals, some equipped with loudhailers, who led us all in a call and response chant of "Save our Badgers – Stop the Cull!" The several hundred marchers, wearing a remarkable range

of badger-related costumes and masks, included all ages from babes-in-arms to the venerable. We were carrying a variety of colourful and expressive banners, and were accompanied by carnival-style whistling and rhythmic drumming.

We strode down the street, attracting bemused looks, then turned into the pedestrian precinct where curious shoppers stood and stared. Here we halted while the town crier rang his bell and in an impressively powerful voice roared out:

"Oh Yeay! Oh Yeay!

Badgers are beautiful in their striking black and white.

Against their cull in Dorset all decent folk should fight.

There is a better way to fight TB in cattle.

Inoculation's proved to work, come join us in our battle!"

This was greeted with a tremendous cheer and we set off once more, handing out leaflets explaining our case to the onlookers. We stopped further down the main shopping street where Dominic Dyer, Chief Executive of the Badger Trust, gave an inspirational speech which fired us up and renewed our determination to continue this fight. Dominic has been making speeches

at a number of these protest marches, including Bristol, Shrewsbury, Gloucester, Birmingham, Leeds, Cambridge and

Brighton. (He can be seen in action on the internet site YouTube, as can the Dorchester marchers.)

We marched on through Dorchester, receiving encouraging beeps from passing cars before we returned to the park for the fun. There was hot and delicious vegetarian food available which we all tucked into while the sun shone down on us. Once we had eaten, the speeches began. This was followed by music which filled the Borough Gardens with a warm sound and generated a friendly party atmosphere.

People slowly began to drift away, and after relaxing in the sun and resting our tired feet, we said cheerio to Dorchester and set off on the long journey back to Surrey, feeling glad to have shared such a positive experience with like-minded people who care about those creatures we are lucky enough to live among.



It is genuinely uplifting to meet so many people who care enough about the natural world to invest time and effort trying to help defend it. I left Dorset with a spark of hope that we can stop this cruel and pointless cull, and great admiration for those who go out night after night trying to protect badgers from being shot. We can't all be out there, but we can give them support,

encouragement, and make our voices heard. All together now: "Save Our Badgers – Stop the Cull!"

WSBG Annual General Meeting 2014

The charity's Annual General Meeting took place at Wanborough Hall on 27th May, and was well attended with over 40 members.

The evening started with the statutory business of the AGM. Committee changes included the election of Martin D'Arcy as chairman, and Sue Carden as a new committee member; Jacqui Christmas resigned from the committee but will continue her multiple voluntary roles.

Dave Williams gave both a Chairman's and Field Officer's report for the previous year and Nigel Mee a Treasurer's report. The 2013-14 accounts were accepted and Sue Havell reappointed as auditor for a further year. 2013-14 was a busy and eventful year, and both Dave's and Nigel's reports are documented below.

There then followed two quizzes for wildlife in general and badgers in particular with high scores being achieved by the expert attendees and finally a raffle. After refreshments kindly provided by Pat Williams those present then received a most interesting and informative talk by the new Chief Executive Officer for the Badger Trust, Dominic Dyer. His vast lobbying experience left nobody in doubt that Dominic will be a welcome voice to add to the cause for the protection of badgers, especially so with the continuing government threat of badger culls in the future.

(Chairman's and) Field Officer's Report AGM 2014

Dave Williams

First of all I have to announce that there is no chairman's report as such, for as you know we sadly lost Nick in February. Nick was a great servant to the group for many years and he will be greatly missed.

It was a memorable year as we were involved with the **badger cub release at Hindhead**. I know you have read about it in the newsletter, but I think it's worth just outlining the project. The RSPCA had contacted me asking if I knew a group who had a suitable site and would be willing to take part in radio tracking newly released badger cubs. I knew we had an empty unused artificial sett available. It had been built for the A3 tunnel but the nearest sett had not been closed. After a check on the

setts in the area and obviously consultation with Peter and the group, we said yes we would be keen to help.

The site was owned by the National Trust who had already said we could use the sett for a cub release. We met with all interested parties and made the release into the sett with an electric fence to keep them in for the first two weeks, providing them with lots of food.

As soon as the fence was removed, they made straight for a disused sett about 200 metres away. It was fascinating tracking them to see where they were sleeping, but eventually the batteries expired. We are now using cameras to see how they are faring. At least we know they survived through the



winter. We will keep you posted if we have any more news. It would be very interesting if we found that cubs had been born. Some of our members, especially Jackie and Nigel, know that area very well now.

We had the usual crop of **planning applications** that we fought against, the most notorious being the site at Murrays Lane in Byfleet. First of all a part of the site was taken over by some smallholders wanting to graze goats and other animals. Although there was a lot of opposition from locals, there was no danger to the sett area. At the same time local Scouts had applied for permission to build a new Scout hut on the site about 50 metres away from the sett area. The Scout group is very sympathetic

to wildlife and we don't anticipate any problem for the badgers.

Later though came another application from a group of Romanies for a pitch of 3 hard-standings just across the road from the sett. Suddenly everyone in Byfleet was worried about the badgers! The council received more objections for this than for any other application. It was withdrawn before it came to committee.

We continued to have problems with **consultants** not doing a thorough survey and sometimes completely missing setts. We had notable difficulty in Camberley with a notorious consultant, who reported that the habitat was not suitable for badgers so the building could carry on – yet there was a sett in the school next door, and then Rodger found a sett in the garden.

We also had correspondence with Natural England about **setts in gardens**. They seem to give licences to householders to close setts, without stipulating that expert advice should be sought, and we see some attempts at closing setts by the local builder or the gardener. We continued to discuss these issues with Natural England.

A particularly difficult problem is the sett at the back of the small garden belonging to Sue, one of our members, and the neighbour at the end of her garden. There were many problems with failed and bodged sett closures, and we even called the police to attend at one stage. I have a site meeting next week.

Another notable project was the re-instatement of the sett at **The Chantries**, where the fire brigade had dug into the sett to recover two dogs. No action was taken by the police, but the fire brigade offered to help us repair the sett. After obtaining a licence Jackie organised a group of strong firemen to help repair the tunnels and back-fill the sett. You may remember the



newspaper headline "*Restorative justice*". Jackie and I also gave a presentation to the Surrey fire brigade at their headquarters. It's rather ironic that the sett can be damaged, almost destroyed, without a licence and no comeback, yet we have to obtain a licence to repair it.

Our **Ruxley sett** saga carries on. We keep getting potential buyers for the unwanted strip of land, but then each drops out. The sett area is all OK and the sett still active.

We always have quite a few **garden damage** calls and can usually resolve them with a friendly chat on the phone, and maybe a visit and an explanation that the badgers are not just vandalising the garden, they are searching for food to survive.

We had plenty of **incidents**. One was the call Peter attended, supposedly a badger causing real problems; it turned out that a badger was passing through the garden to get to the local chip shop, where they put out food for it.

Martin put up a camera to film a badger in someone's garden, but he got fox cubs on the film.

Last year we encouraged you to sign the **e-petition** started by Brian May. It reached the highest ever total and helped to get a parliamentary debate. Early this year we had the Surrey County Council petition,

which received more signatures than any previous SCC e-petition. I made a 3-minute presentation to the council, and they agreed that in the unlikely event of a proposed badger cull in Surrey, then the council would have a full debate with presentations from both sides of the argument.

Our group was represented at **anti-cull** marches in London, Brighton, Taunton, and elsewhere. During last year the dreadful pilot trials started, and I and a few others visited the two cull zones to join the night patrols. Our champions were Vanessa and David who were regulars at patrols and many events, complete with wonderful hand-stitched banners. You all know what a disaster and fiasco the trials were.



On the **newsletter** you will have noticed that we have moved to colour on some of the pages. I hope you agree it makes an improvement. We get some compliments from other badger groups about our newsletter and some use our articles. I can't mention the newsletter without saying a big thank you to Clare Windsor for all her hard work, especially having to chase up the committee for copy.

We continued with our **evening meetings** with speakers on varied subjects, such as The Fox Project, The Ferret Rescue, our very own Alan Seymour, and last

month Malcolm and his honey bees. (It was excellent honey and he tells me he has more for sale for those who found it very tasty.)

Several group members attended the **Badger Trust Conference** in Derbyshire, which proved to be a very interesting and enlightening experience. We heard a keynote speech by a chap called Dominic

Dyer – little did I realize then that he would be talking to us in May as CEO of the Badger Trust!

I have prepared this report on behalf of our committee members who were all busy during 2013. A big thank you to all of them. And a big thank you to all our members for supporting us.

Treasurer's Report AGM 2014

Nigel Mee

Our normal trading activities have been pretty much as in previous years.

By far the biggest financial news was the Edwin Clements bequest to tWest Surrey Badger Group. The bequest of nearly £40,000 i.e. £39,933 took the charity's income well over a threshold of £20,000, meaning additional accounting and reporting has been necessary for the Charities Commission and creating quite a lot of extra work, particularly for Sue Havell whom I thank.

Basically, if the bequest income is removed then 2013-14 income was £6,393 and expenditure was £6,286.

The special accounts are here but we have circulated the familiar easier to read figures for members and to which I will be referring.

INCOME

The income of £6,393 was considerably up on last year's low figure of £4,610. The increase in income is mainly due to an extra £1,000 for **data search fees** i.e. £1,365 (last year £390) so thanks to Dave for all that extra work researching them, raising reports and invoices etc. We had extra income also from: **donations** (up £300), **sales** (up £200), and **interest** received (up £200).

EXPENDITURE

Expenditure in 2013-14 was £6,286 (down on the previous year's £7,036).

Donations

The donation to Wildlife Aid was £1,000, the same as the previous year. We donated £1,000 to Badger Trust for a laptop and phone for their new Chief Executive Officer Dominic Dyer. (Last year our Badger Trust donation was £2,500 as they urgently needed to build up anti-culling funds.)

If donations given to Wildlife Aid and Badger Trust are taken out, then 2013-14 saw a slight increase of £750 to £4,286 where last year it was £3,536. The increase of £750 is due to: £400 re Ruxley, £100 for postage, and £250 for stock.

Ruxley

We are aware that some parts of Ruxley are sapping our finances, particularly a line of trees running between the bridleway and the bottom of residential gardens. A decision was taken to sell that piece of land, and we have permission from the Charities Commission to do so; however, on two occasions a sale has fallen through.

Equipment

Last year no equipment was purchased, but in April 2014 we bought a Bushnell camera (£220) and a nightscope (£300) which will appear in the 2014-15 accounts.

The badger release project can only be monitored by being on site and/or using cameras. We plan to buy one more camera now and two more later in the year when the model is updated.

FOR EMERGENCIES CALL:

Your local Police Station / 999

Surrey Police Wildlife Crime Officer 0845 125 2222

Wildlife Aid, Leatherhead 0906 1800132

(website www.wildlifeaid.org.uk)

RSPCA 0300 1234 999

Member of WSBG Committee

NEIGHBOURING BADGER GROUPS

East Surrey 0208 660 9827

East Hants 01420 87366

West Sussex 01243 825804

Mid Sussex 01342 870320

Binfield, Berks 0709 2234377

Herts & Middx 01992 589152

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WEST SURREY BADGER GROUP

EVENING MEETINGS

Tuesday September 30

Adam Grogan

Adam is wildlife scientific officer for the **RSPCA** in Horsham. He was instrumental in organising our badger cub release project, and will tell us about the background to the project as well as his work with the RSPCA.

Tuesday October 21

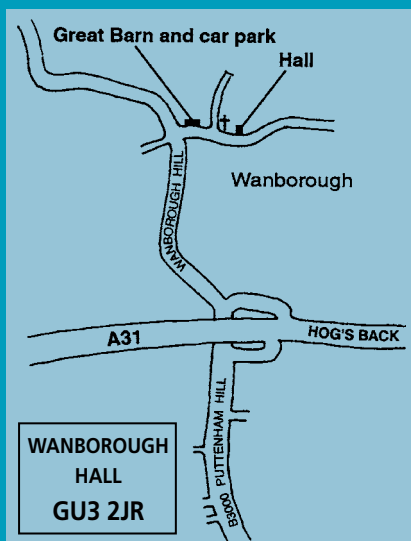
Nigel Reeve

Nigel was head of ecology for the **Royal Parks**, the government agency managing eight historic and ecologically important parklands in London. He has a special fondness for Richmond Park, the subject of this talk.

Tuesday November 25

Frances Halstead

Frances is education officer at Surrey Wildlife Trust and part of the outdoor learning team. Her talk is **Gardening for Wildlife**. Wildlife-friendly gardening is about making a haven for you as well as for nature. We can all garden sympathetically for wildlife and make a big difference as our countryside shrinks.

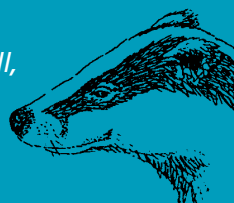


All evening meetings start at 8pm and are held in Wanborough Hall unless otherwise stated.

This is just off the A31 Hogs Back.

Take the B3000 exit (from Guildford it's the first exit) and follow signs to Wanborough. At the bottom of the hill turn right (signposted Great Barn and Church). The car park is on the left next to the Barn.

Walk up to the hall, just beyond the church.



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