



# Explore Your Colne Valley Regional Park

Newsletter

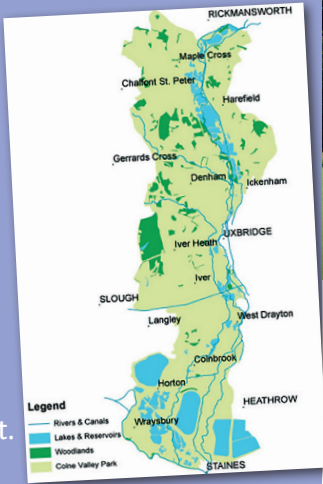
Edition 1  
Autumn  
2019

FREE

## INTRODUCING THE COLNE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK

The Colne Valley Regional Park is the first large taste of countryside to the west of London. Established in 1965, the Park is seen as an important area of land to preserve for leisure, recreation and conservation.

The park covers 43 square miles and stretches from Rickmansworth in the North to Staines and the Thames in the South, and from Uxbridge and Heathrow in the East, to Slough and Chalfont St Peter in the West.



View over the valley from The Old Orchard at Harefield.

## Welcome to our first edition

*In this, and future, editions we aim to share with you the many wonders and attractions the Colne Valley Regional Park has to offer.*

### Explore our hidden gems

**Ankerwycke** – a beautiful historic parkland at Runnymede, with a wonderful array of wildlife and stunning trees. Ankerwycke is the perfect spot for a peaceful and very interesting walk. See the old ruined priory and a 2,000 year old Yew tree.

**The Colne Valley Trail** – An interesting and tranquil walk along the Grand Union Canal. Appreciate a gentler pace to life as you enjoy picturesque locks, historic canal side buildings and stunning views of the countryside. The trail is best started at Denham up to Rickmansworth.

Find out more about the trail and all of these sites on our website – [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk)



**W**e will be introducing some of the people who enjoy, work and volunteer in the park, as well as sharing some of the park's gems with you.

**Whether you are looking for a way to entertain the family, get active in the countryside and closer to nature or simply want a chance to relax, the park can provide the perfect solution. We want you to be inspired to explore more of this beautiful area. So please sit back, relax and read on to find out how you can add more relaxation and nature therapy to your lives.**

The park is a mosaic of lush green countryside with farmland, beautiful ancient woodlands, over 60 diverse lakes, 200km of rivers and canal-side walks. Maintaining a regional park comes with many responsibilities. With each passing year, the Colne Valley has to fight even harder to preserve its precious and fragile landscape against an increasing number of threats. These include projects like the High Speed 2 railway line, and proposals for a new runway and further expansion at Heathrow Airport. The Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company (CIC) is publicly and determinedly opposed to both

due to the direct negative impact on an already vulnerable landscape. We lobbied against HS2, securing some important mitigation commitments.

Last summer, we won Heritage Lottery funding to help us protect and enhance the park. Bringing together wildlife trusts, local authorities, and water companies, this scheme will run until 2021 and is led by community charity Groundwork South. The funding enables us to complete some crucial projects offering many lifelines to natural habitats and wildlife, whilst connecting people to their countryside. You will hear about the projects through our newsletters and they are all featured on our website.

**Many people live, work and visit the Colne Valley, but too few realise the potential it has to make a very positive impact on their own lives. Please do come and explore this vibrant regional park.**



River Colne on Staines Moor.

### Events flowing through the Valley

One of our objectives at the Colne Valley park is to encourage community participation. Fiona Brewer is responsible for managing 150 community activities for the three year project, which is sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Some examples of these have been nature activities for youth groups and organised walks and talks.

The park offers lots of recreational opportunities, from walks to water sports, and from museums to many outdoor activities. Please

have a look at our website [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk) – to see what is on.

#### What has been happening?

Our biggest event is the Colne Valley Festival at Denham Country Park. It was a huge success this summer, with more than 3,000 visitors enjoying some of the park's delights. It was a wonderful day and we had many positive comments from people enjoying the free events, music and craft activities. These included ferret racing, birds of prey, river dipping, learning circus skills, willow weaving and clay modelling. Theresa from Ruislip said: "This was the best local event I have been to, with so many fantastic free activities for

the children and a really lovely atmosphere." Thank you to Affinity water for its sponsorship of the event and the Heritage Lottery Fund.



The crowds enjoying our festival duck race.



# Stocker's Lake – a true gem

**Stocker's Lake is a beautiful, important** nature reserve with a rich variety of habitats set around the large and serene lake. The reserve is in Rickmansworth, next to the aquadrome, and covers 100 acres, fringed on each side by the river Colne and the Grand Union canal. It is owned by Affinity water and nurtured by Friends of Stocker's Lake (FoSL) in conjunction with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife trust (HMWT) which manages it. FoSL is a large and very successful volunteer group, running for nearly 30 years. Stocker's lake is a great example of how a group of people can work together to achieve great things. We spoke to Ian Watson of FoSL, who has dedicated much of his time over the last 30 years to helping make the reserve what it is today.



## Ian please tell us why some people describe Stocker's Lake as the best nature reserve in the home counties?

"Stocker's lake is a very special place, due to the rich variety of wonderful habitats and wildlife that we have. Over 80% of our area is lake, with many species of fish and over 200 species of birds. Sixty species of birds have nested here and so we are a major bird watching spot.

Across the reserve we also have three meadows, over 300 species of wildflowers, a rich variety of wildlife, watery woodlands and some small animals like badgers, deer, foxes and weasels. We have lovely views of the canal, lakes and river and are a natural, historical reserve, which offers a secluded escape.

What also makes it special is all the people involved in our 'Friends' and our working partnership with HMWT. As a registered charity we have seven



hundred members and together we have a number of objectives, these are to conserve, protect and improve the nature reserve and at the same time to encourage as many local people to get involved.

We have achieved many fantastic things together with this great support, including planting eight hedges, 1,500 hedgerow plants and 50 trees to protect the site, as well as installing five bird hides and a number of bird-watching elbow rests, bat and bird boxes and four landing and nesting rafts for the Terns visiting from Africa. We also run regular wildlife walks throughout the year which attract many people and families. Our research and surveys completed by FoSL are very valuable sources of information for both national and county statistics.

For 35 years, we have been completing annual bird reports, as well as surveys on species of wildflowers, butterflies and fungi. We are a very important reserve for scientific research.

**Recently, we achieved a big ambition of mine – to bring cows and traditional grazing back to our meadows.**

Earlier in the year we introduced six Dexter cattle with the help of our

grazier, Nick Maksimovic, and funding of 60% from the Lottery Heritage Fund. The cows will be fantastic for increasing our diversity of wildflowers and wildlife, and we look forward to monitoring this and seeing the benefits for all to enjoy."

## The reserve has been a big part of your life, why do you dedicate so much of your time?

"Most importantly because it is nature, and we need to stand up for it and do all we can to protect it. With so much of the world being covered in concrete, we need to make sure these small pockets of highly important wildlife are not encroached upon.

**We also need to protect the reserve for our children, so they can enjoy and learn all about this special place.** If we don't teach them to care about our wildlife and environment, then what hope have they got? Later this year we will be planting 150 trees in memory of Mahatma Gandhi, and will be involving lots of local children in doing so.

I love this place, and I'm very proud of what we have achieved since we founded ourselves in 1990. Before we began, Stocker's Lake was known mainly to fisherman and birdwatchers, but now, mainly thanks to FoSL it is widely known and used by the people of Rickmansworth and from an area of 10 miles around".

## Great family days out...

**Chiltern Open Air Museum** – With more than 30 historic buildings covering 2,000 years of Chilterns history, including an Iron Age House, cottages, tin chapel and working Victorian farmstead with animals. A special events programme runs throughout the year and family hands-on activities run during school holidays.

**Batchworth Lock Canal Centre** – You can take a short cruise on the Batchworth Ferry or just enjoy this thriving and historic section of the canal. The centre is set in an attractive lock-side location in Rickmansworth and has plenty of information about the history of the canal.

**Rickmansworth Aquadrome** – As well as water-skiing, canoeing and sailing, this popular venue has a number of attractive walks around the lakes or along the River Colne and Grand Union Canal. There is a lovely café and playground, too. Come and visit Stocker's Lake while you are there, and get really close to nature.

**Find out more about all of these sites on our website – [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk).**

Batchworth Lock Centre and canal.





# Welcome to the Colne Valley Visitor Centre and Denham Country Park

**The Visitor Centre is located in Denham Country Park** near Uxbridge and is the central information point for the whole of the Colne Valley Regional Park. Denham Country Park, run by Bucks Country Parks, is a piece of country heaven hidden away from everyday life, but very easy to find. You enter a serene setting with a meadow perfect for picnics, a very well equipped woodland playground, the tranquil river Misbourne with a gravel beach, and a lovely riverside café with covered outside seating. There are lots of meadow and woodland trails with easy access to the lovely, historic village of Denham and the interesting Grand Union canal. There are two car parks (charges apply and the income raised, is used to maintain the park). We spoke to people who work, volunteer and enjoy the park to find out more.



## So easy to be surrounded by nature

Meet Jacinta, a regular visitor to the Colne Valley Park. Jacinta and her family come to the Colne Valley Park regularly for walks and relaxing family time.

### “Jacinta, please tell us why you enjoy the Park so much?”

“We have created so many lovely family memories here, whether it is one of the interesting walks, exploring the local sites or coming to Denham Country Park and enjoying the playground and dipping in the river.

It is very easy to get to and to be surrounded by nature, is so interesting for my daughter and so therapeutic for me.

We love to come after nursery with friends and enjoy being outdoors and seeing the children get lots of exercise and stimulation.

Ellen Jane always eats and sleeps so well whenever we have been. We also love walking and cycling along the canal, there is so much wildlife to enjoy and the locks are fascinating to watch too. We decided at the start of the year we needed to spend more quality family time together, and wanted some ideas of local, outdoor activities that weren't going to break



the bank. So we looked on the Colne Valley website and all picked some things we wanted to do with our whole family over the spring and summer. So far, with grandparents and our wider family, we have been on the circular walks, visited some of the nature reserves, had a boat trip down the canal, and even tried water skiing at Denham water ski club – that time the grandparents gave it a miss!

**It has been fantastic for us all, like a new lease of life, with so much to look forward to at the weekends. We feel so lucky to have this all on our doorstep”.**

## Why I love the Colne Valley

Meet Paul a dedicated volunteer in our Visitor Centre at Denham Country Park and a valued board member of the Colne Valley Community Interest Company.

### Paul, please tell us why people should come and find out more?

“There is so much to come and explore in the Colne Valley Park and the visitor's centre is a great place to start. I volunteer here regularly and really enjoy helping people discover all the wonderful things there are to see and visit here. We have a wide range of information, walks and maps across the whole of the Colne Valley Regional Park. I am passionate about walking in the countryside and really enjoy helping people find a suitable route and new places to discover.”



One of our guided walks at the canal in Denham



### I hear the circular walks are a big hit with people, why do you think that is?

“I think it is mainly due to the variety and flexibility of them all, and of course we reference good places to drink and eat along the way! There are 18 circular walks available to print off from the website, or to pick up here at the visitor's centre for 20p.

**Not only do you get to keep yourself fit and healthy, but it brings you closer to nature and together.”**

It provides you with many opportunities to really appreciate and understand the environment around you.

## Why our park is well worth a visit

### Meet our Café Manager Natalie, to tell us more about what is available.

“The riverside café, is set in a beautiful serene setting, overlooking the river Misbourne and offers a very friendly, relaxed environment, catering for many needs from a light bite to a hot meal or a cup of tea and cake to an ice cream. We offer a great welcome and well-earned treat after a walk, an energetic play or one of many exploring activities.



Our shop makes sure you have everything you need to enjoy your day out, with nets to river-dip, buckets and spades for the sandpit, and outdoor games. The café has become a fantastic social hub with many community groups meeting regularly with us to enjoy the tranquil surroundings. Our meeting room with its natural setting provides a unique venue for team-building events and away days.

### “I understand children's parties are becoming very popular. What do they entail?”

Our parties are a fantastic fun, offering children a very different Green and Wild experience available here at Denham, Black Park and the Iver Environment Centre, with activities ranging from den-building to river-dipping and river duck races, to outside wild crafts. The children really love the outside experience and the feeling of freedom that our parties bring.

We recently had a parent say that the party at Denham was the best she has been to with her child!





# A precious landscape under threat from proposed Heathrow expansion

Harmondsworth Moor is a beautiful and surprisingly serene landscape right on Heathrow airport's doorstep – a wonderful nature reserve that has steadily grown in popularity over the last 20 years. Unfortunately, if Heathrow's expansion plans go ahead, half of the moor will be lost under the new third runway. Harmondsworth Moor Ranger, Stuart Heading, tells us a little more about this unique and tranquil place.

"Harmondsworth Moor is a country park combining flower rich meadows, rivers and woodland to create a beautiful, diverse landscape for wildlife and public recreation. It is difficult to believe that the parkland is on the site of a former gravel working and landfill site. It was opened 19 years ago, following the planting of 70,000 trees, and is the largest public park to be built in the London area in the last 100 years."

A selection of the beautiful sights you can experience at Harmondsworth Moor. The Colne Valley Regional Park is opposed to Heathrow's expansion plans and aims to protect special places like this.



## Why is the moor such a special place?

Wildflower meadows are such a rare, declining habitat, that to find one so close to London is a special thing. The site is home to more than 22 species of butterfly, numerous dragonfly, damselfly and mayfly as well as Bullfinch, Kingfishers and five of the main Raptor species - Buzzards, Kestrel, Red Kite, Sparrow Hawk



and Hobby! The site is maintained with conservation guiding every decision we make - from the annual hay cut, to the areas we allow to become a little 'wild' with minimal intervention. There are very few sites quite like Harmondsworth Moor.

## Why should people visit?

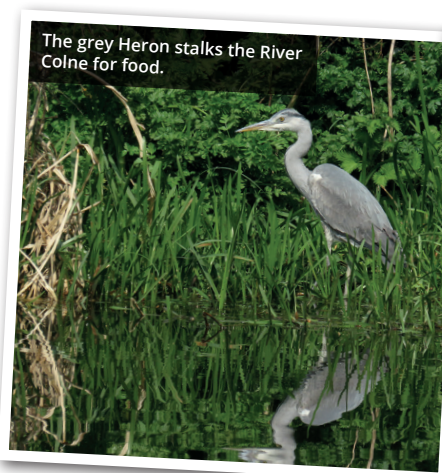
Where else in the area can you come

and feel 'lost in the wild'? Hours can be spent walking through our meadows seeing how many species of wildflower you can identify or watching countless native species going about their day – Long Tail tits 'peeping' to each other as they forage the oak for insects, dragonflies whizzing past your face hunting for a snack above an oceans of grass – sitting atop a hill, Windsor Castle just visible in the distance, a Kestrel hovering overhead, and a cool breeze rustling the grass around you is a feeling we are slowly beginning to forget.

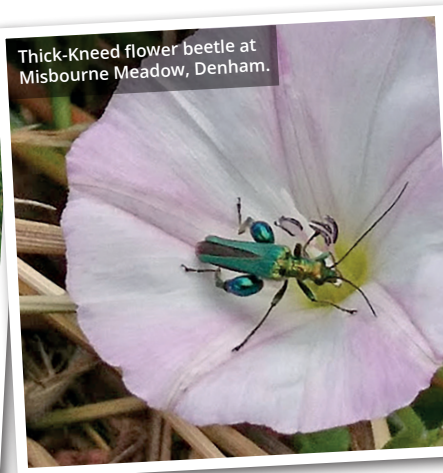
## Nature snaps

Here are a few of the sightings around the park in recent months. Please do send us your nature snaps from around the park, we love to see

them. We also have a special bird spotting page on Twitter, **Colne Valley Birding**.



The grey Heron stalks the River Colne for food.



Thick-Kneed flower beetle at Misbourne Meadow, Denham.



The Chalk Hill Blue butterfly taken at Stocker's Lake



A slow worm crosses the road near to Thorney golf course.

 Colne Valley Birding @CVBirding

## Events

### Are you interested in our wide range of events and activities?

Most of them are free and have included: 'Meet the farmer', guided walks, workshops on our rivers and landscapes (including art and photography sessions), and lots of hands-on creative sessions for families and children, too.

Please like us on facebook and follow us on Twitter, so we can share details of what is coming up. You can also visit our website for all the latest information [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/)

Thank you for reading all about us, we hope you have found it interesting. Please do get in touch if you would like any more information [alex.gaffney@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:alex.gaffney@groundwork.org.uk). Please like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter, and visit our website for some great ideas of things to do and lots of interesting information on the park. We hope we have inspired you to explore more of your Colne Valley Regional Park and get out and about in nature.

With thanks to our financial supporters for their continued commitment to us:

## Volunteer- River Rangers needed

### Are you interested in the amazing network of rivers we have in the Colne Valley Regional Park?

Do you want to play a vital role in protecting them for future generations while learning new skills? If so you may be perfect for our River Rangers Project. We are building a team of dedicated volunteers to keep an eye on our valuable waterways. Email Chloe for more information: [Chloe.Crompton@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:Chloe.Crompton@groundwork.org.uk)

Buckinghamshire County Council, Chiltern District Council, Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council, Denham Parish Council, Friends of the Colne Valley Park, Iver & District Countryside Association, Iver Parish Council, London Borough of Hillingdon and South Bucks District Council

With thanks to our corporate supporters for their continued commitment to us: Thames Water, Affinity Water, Coca-Cola, Heathrow, Ambush, Grondon, Harleyford Valley, Lakeside Energy from Waste and Red Squirrel Brewing Co.

## The Colne Valley Local Tourism Awards 2019

### Are you a business or group in the Colne Valley Park, who supports local tourism?

### Would you like to increase your profile and reach new customers or support?

If so, we are launching exciting new tourism awards and your business may be eligible to enter. We would love to hear from any businesses or groups looking to get involved. Please email Alex for more information:

[alex.gaffney@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:alex.gaffney@groundwork.org.uk)

