



# Explore Your Colne Valley Regional Park

Newsletter

Edition 2  
Winter  
2020

FREE



## Introducing our new President Lord John Randall

**LORD RANDALL OF UXBRIDGE** has become President of the Colne Valley Regional Park.

Uxbridge born and bred, he represented the constituency as MP between 1997-2015. His family is perhaps best known for running the former Randalls department store in Vine Street, and he has previously served as a director of the CVRP Community Interest Company.

*“The Colne Valley is facing unprecedented threats, and I will do everything I can to protect this precious but fragile landscape for future generations to enjoy.”*



## Welcome to 2020 in the Colne Valley

*This year, we hope to introduce you to more of this wonderful, vibrant Regional park.*



### Explore our hidden gems

**Little Britain Lake, Cowley** – an attractive area, with the River Colne and Frays running alongside the lake. Ideal for walking, fishing and enjoying lots of nature. The site gained its name because of shape of the Lake. Visit to see the winter wildfowl migrants that spend the winter here.

For more detail on this site, other wildlife havens and nature reserves, please see our website. [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk) and go to our *Places to go* page.

**I**n our last edition we showcased some of the beautiful and fascinating places there are for you to explore right on your doorstep and over the next five editions we will tell you about many more.

Your Colne Valley has so much to offer with countryside walks in local woodlands, country parks, nature reserves, tranquil lakes, canals and rivers, outdoor museums, farms, bike trails, water sport and recreational venues, all waiting for you to discover and enjoy.

With so many pressures of modern life piling in on all of us and so little time available for ourselves and each other, our need for outdoor exercise and relaxation has never been more important.

At the Colne Valley we like to think we have the perfect solution for people’s outdoor needs to improve health and wellbeing. We recently upgraded our website and you’ll find it packed with information on the region; listing places to go, things to do, local events and a wealth of detail about the park, it’s history, current activities and important projects which are enhancing local wildlife and the local countryside – [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk)

Unfortunately the Colne Valley is a threatened, fragile landscape and we face a huge challenge in trying to protect it. The highly controversial HS2 preparatory works is causing more destruction by the day and Heathrow’s expansion proposals – including a new runway would wipe out the bottom third of the park, some 900 acres of green space. Please see the back page for more information on threats to the park.



Robin at Stockers Lake.

Sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and other supporters, we are currently running the, Landscape Partnership Project. **Nineteen separate projects are currently under way, protecting and enhancing the countryside, bio-diversity and wildlife in the Regional Park, and helping connect people to their local green spaces.**

Please see our website for more detail. [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk).

### Events flowing through the Valley

**The Colne Valley is always keen to encourage community participation. Events are held throughout the year, and at Colne Valley Park Visitor Centre at Denham Country Park, we have been running numerous activities to engage children, families and groups of people with nature and their local countryside.**

Events have ranged from Halloween trails (getting families out and about in the crisp, fresh autumnal air), crafts and activities to fire creativity and imagination, such as making spooky cobwebs with leaves, twigs and grasses, planting spring bulbs, and painting pottery jack-o-lanterns.

Early autumn also offered something for the grown-ups – photographic and art workshops were held where participants toured the Colne Valley – from Rickmansworth to Harmondsworth – capturing the landscape and beauty of the Regional Park.

Over the next two years we will continue to run lots of events and activities sponsored by the Heritage Lottery fund and other supporters, and you will be able to find the details on our website, Facebook and Instagram pages, and Twitter.

**Please take the time to follow us and keep an eye on the website to keep fully up to date with all the Colne Valley has to offer – [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk).**



# INTRODUCING STAINES MOOR



The River Colne



Short eared owl © Lee Dingain

“Upon visiting the site you will soon appreciate its abundant worth, be that the floral species present (importance for nesting and foraging birds), its historical significance, or its social worth to the local community.

**Staines Moor is a historic and scenic landscape,** covering over 500 hectares of open countryside. The moor is situated next to the Staines and King George VI reservoirs and consists of flood meadows and a pretty stretch of the River Colne. It is internationally important for wintering wildfowl and a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), due to the nationally important habitats and species it supports. The Moor has been common land since 1065 and has a very dramatic and unique feel to the landscape.

### What makes the Moor so special?

We asked Steve Price, Countryside and Commons Officer for Spelthorne Borough Council to tell us more...

Steve Price and Adam Bolton testing the new bird screen.



Staines Moor is the largest area of alluvial meadow in Surrey, and predominately achieves its SSSI status due to the mosaic of floral species found there. Owing to subtle variations in topography, sheer size, and the river Colne, plant communities vary greatly from dry grassland to marshland-dominant species.

**Hugely important to both resident and migrant bird species, more than 200 species have been seen on the moor, a great credit to the site and the numerous dedicated birdwatchers who record such sightings.**

Lapwing, Redshank and Skylark are ground-nesting species, utilising the site from March to July. It's essential that visitors observe the conditions set out on signs on the moor during this time, sticking to the paths and keeping dogs under close control. Summer may bring a rare sighting of a hobby and in Winter, water pipits, snipes and the occasional short-eared owl can be spotted

The moor has remained relatively undisturbed for centuries, allowing the oldest ant hills (the yellow meadow ant) known in the UK to remain for nearly 200 years. **The landscape brings a rare sense of openness and rural surroundings in an otherwise urban setting, it's value and importance continues to grow”.**

## Colne Valley Regional Park

New bird screen and interpretation board



## Making a difference on the Moor

Our Landscape Partnership project has come together with Thames Water Ltd, the London Wildlife Trust and Spelthorne Borough Council to carry out important wildlife improvements in the NE corner where Thames Water Ltd owns the land.

Adam Bolton, our habitats Manager, tells us: 'It's really important to work together on this section of the Moor, to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of this special site has the maximum effect, for both the wildlife and community.

The project will ensure the rare birds, wildflowers, fauna and insects that thrive here are protected, and the special biodiversity will continue to flourish in this corner of the Moor.' Together with the project partners we have;

- Installed a new bird screen and interpretation board.
- Removed rubbish and abandoned vehicles.
- Installed new fencing and introduced grazing cows.
- Protected the biodiversity and historic character through habitat works.

Our River Rangers have also completed health and protection surveys of the River Colne at the Moor.

**To visit,** download, the Staines Moor walk from the *Things To Do* page at [colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://colnevalleypark.org.uk).

The project is funded by Thames Water Ltd, HLF and the Heathrow Community Trust.

## A lifeline for water voles

**It is sad to think that the once prevalent water vole could disappear from our water courses altogether in the future, if current rates of decline in numbers continue. The water vole is an important part of our wildlife heritage and it is now the UK's most rapidly declining mammal.**

By the end of the 1990s we had lost more than 90% of our nation's water voles\*.

Gavin Bennett who works on the water vole project on behalf of HMWT, tells us why this important project has been supported by the



Gavin Bennett © Josh Kubale

Heritage Lottery fund and The Colne Valley Regional Park Additional Mitigation Fund.

“Water voles are very important for all wetland wildlife, as they are at the bottom of the food chain and therefore support many other species in turn. Water voles are one of nature's engineers and a vital part of river ecosystems and biodiversity. Their burrowing, feeding and movements help to sculpt our riverbanks and can create conditions for other animals and plants to thrive. They are under serious threat due to habitat loss, water abstraction and predation by the non-native American mink. **We have been working to try and reduce their decline and together with the partners and landowners we hope to enhance river corridors, expand surveying for water voles, and establish new mink monitoring schemes.**

The good news is water vole surveys during 2019 over 34km of water ways have found evidence of the voles in previous unrecorded areas.”

Please visit our website [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk) if you would like to read more about this and our other projects, which help local wildlife.

\*People's trust for endangered species October 2019.



Water vole © Paul Thrush



Volunteers removing a non-native invasive species (Himalayan Balsam), which destroy the water voles habitats in the winter.

# Let's get walking, let's get exploring...

In our first edition we introduced our 18 circular walks, spread across the valley.

After reading about them, Oona and Stephen Hempenstall from Ickenham, decided to give them a try. "We enjoy walking and wanted some new ideas of places to go, so we decided to try a selection over a few months. It is great to visit different locations across the park and see the wildlife and changes in scenery along the way. It has been good fun following the

maps and learning about local history on the route, especially with the family. **These walks are a great way to get everyone outdoors and active this year**", said Oona.

Ryan Williams on behalf of the occupational therapy team for CNWL Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, told us why walking in the countryside is so important for all of us. 'Walking is a great way to improve your physical and mental wellbeing. It's free, can help burn extra calories and has a low impact on your body. Going for a walk is especially good when you have a lot on your mind, as it has been shown to reduce stress, as well as reducing your blood pressure and heart rate.'

'If you're feeling low, exercise such as walking releases the feel-good endorphins, which can boost your mood and energy levels by as much as 65%. Walking outdoors and in our green spaces is a good way to get away from our everyday stresses and gives you the opportunity to be 'in the moment. This is particularly important in our current society where we are consistently distracted by TV, work and social media.'

Our 18 circular walks are available to print on, *Things to do at [www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/things-to-do-2/walks](http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/things-to-do-2/walks)*

## The Colne Valley Regional Park

Forty three square miles of water, green spaces, woodland, farmland and villages from Rickmansworth in the north of the valley, down to Staines in the south.

The first large taste of countryside to the West of London, with 18 circular walks across the valley for you to enjoy the contrasts in the Regional Park.

Circular walk locations ●



"Stephen, really liked trying the pubs and cafes that are marked on the maps and made sure we picked a different place to try each time, which saved us both cooking, so I was delighted too!" said Oona.

## Seasonal Places to go

### The Colne Valley Trail

Take an interesting and tranquil walk along the Grand Union Canal. You'll see plenty of wildlife, colourful boats and views of the countryside, as well as learning about the many locks and historical buildings along the route. .

You could even take a narrow boat trip to really relax, as well as dropping in at the rural cafes and pubs you will find along the way. The trail is best enjoyed from Uxbridge or Denham to Rickmansworth. Visit our website – you can find the details on [colnevalleypark.org.uk/things-to-do-2/walks](http://colnevalleypark.org.uk/things-to-do-2/walks)



### Winter woodland walks

Enjoy spotting the fungi, animal tracks, colourful berries, woodland wildlife or winter snowdrops you can see along the way and crunch through the piles of fallen leaves. You can create some great art with nature's fallen gifts (see our competition on the back page).

The Colne Valley Regional Park, has many wonderful woodlands, including Bayhurst Woods (Ruislip), Old Park Wood (Harefield), Northmoor Hill Wood (Denham) or Caps Wood, (Denham). Our country parks and nature reserves also have woods. See our *Places To Go* page on our website for more details.

Remember to wrap up warm and take time to soak up the sights, sounds and tranquillity of the woods this season.



### Langley Park

Perfect for a family wander, Langley Park has beautiful green open spaces and is a special haven for lots of wildlife.

You can enjoy the wonderful tree and history trail, burn off some energy in the children's playground, take in the view of Windsor castle, visit the lake and arboretum and finish off with a well deserved treat in the park's lovely café. **Langley Park offers a great day out for young and old alike.** See our website for more detail. Parking charges apply.

### Springtime bluebell walks

There is something very special about the stunning blanket of bluebells in a natural woodland.

We have a number of woods you can visit locally in order to see this gorgeous spectacle, but be warned – they don't last for long. Typically, bluebells appear from mid-April to late May, depending on the weather. Plan ahead and put the dates in your diary so you can capture some unique moments and photos. We recommend any of the aforementioned woodlands for making the most of bluebells.



# Denham walk for wildlife and water

with Chris Packham

**O**n December 29, over 1,000 people turned out for a peaceful protest walk against HS2 organised by campaigners at Denham Country Park, to hear more about the destruction being caused by the controversial railway project. Speakers included wildlife campaigner Chris Packham, Colne Valley Regional Park President, Lord Randall of Uxbridge, Sarah Green and Mark Kier of the Green Party.

They told the crowds of the widespread destruction being wrought by HS2 preparatory work – the loss of thousands of trees, habitats and wildlife in the Colne Valley, as well as the pollution posed to precious chalk aquifers and the drinking water supply by pile-driving work. Lord Randall said the Colne Valley Regional Park has fought HS2 since the beginning, pointing out that not only local environment and wildlife are suffering, but also many businesses. People are losing their homes, and the area is being permanently marred. The protesters walked through Denham Country Park to view the damage caused by HS2, and finished



Local Resident – Sarah Jane

up at Blackford pumping station in Harefield, which faces closure. This was a well-supported protest, with a lively, upbeat atmosphere, and a clear message urging the government to scrap HS2 altogether.

**Sarah Jane from Uxbridge, took part in the protest. She said: “Like so many local people, I know HS2 is coming, but I wasn’t really aware of what the impact could be, so I came to learn. I have to say I’m really shocked about the scale of the devastation to the local environment, and that there is a threat of our drinking water being polluted. I didn’t realise that the tunnel drilling will require millions of litres of water every day. This pressure on our water sources could have**



Lord Randall (right) with Colne Valley Park Directors Paul Graham, Carol Gibson and Tony Booker

**devastating affects on our rivers and fragile chalk streams. When you learn more about the risks of what could happen to our local environment, it really is quite upsetting.”**

If you would like to join the protest, please go to [standforthetrees.org](http://standforthetrees.org). For more information on HS2 in the Colne Valley Regional Park and our opposition, go to [colnevalleypark.org.uk/threats-to-the-colne-valley](http://colnevalleypark.org.uk/threats-to-the-colne-valley)



Chris Packham

## Nature Snaps and competition time...

Here are a few of the sightings around the park in recent months.

Please email us at the address below with your photos and art creations or include

#visitcolnevalley or #explorecolnevalley for Twitter or Facebook.

We would love to see them and will be awarding a prize of tea and cake for four at Denham Country Park Café for our favourite entry, sent in before the end of April 2020.

Please see below the reindeer creation from leaves for some inspiration.



Glistening Inkcaps © Keith Pursall



Kingfisher at Denham Country Park



Tufted Duck at Maple Cross Nature Reserve © Steve Carter

### Volunteer with us

Are you interested in helping to make a difference for nature and the countryside?

Come along to one of our projects, meet new people, learn new skills and enjoy yourself while giving nature a boost.

We have lots of river, woodland and nature reserve projects where help is really needed.

Come and get outdoor active, closer to nature and help your local environment.

Check our website for details or email us at [colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk)

### Become a Colne Valley Friend

Would you like to help us protect and enhance the Colne Valley Park?

There is strength in numbers and your membership adds weight to our endeavours. Please consider joining the Friends benefits include:

- Invitations to events and guided walks
- Opportunities to volunteer locally
- Regular newsletters and information.

Please see our website [colnevalleypark.org.uk/become-a-champion](http://colnevalleypark.org.uk/become-a-champion) or send us an email.

### Events

Are you interested in hearing about our events?

We regularly run events and some are free. They vary from walks and talks to children’s activities and from adult workshops to outside wildlife group events.

Please check our website, Facebook page and Twitter for updates or email us at [colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk) to sign up to our newsletter.

With thanks to our corporate supporters for their continued commitment to us: Lakeside Energy from Waste, Red Squirrel Brewing Co. and



The Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company represents 70 member organisations. Each of these organisations and our financial contributors support the six objectives of the Colne Valley Regional Park:

- To maintain and enhance the landscape
- To safeguard the countryside
- To conserve and enhance Biodiversity
- To provide opportunities for countryside recreation
- To provide a vibrant and sustainable rural economy
- To encourage community participation

With thanks to: 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, for their financial contributions.

Newsletter sponsors



### HS2 Mitigation Funds

Some readers have told us they were surprised to see we have received some mitigation funding from HS2, despite our opposition to the project. HS2 is obliged to provide funding to compensate for its considerable impact on the local countryside, and we make no apology for applying for those funds where applicable. You can find our position statement on HS2 on our website, in the Safeguarding the Countryside section. If you have any further questions, please email us at [colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:colnevalley@groundwork.org.uk)