



THANET COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

Registered charity No. 285972 Founded: 1971 Charitable Status: 1982

Conservation and Education



Members Newsletter

**Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!**

December 2015

Christmas and New Year opening hours: Please note that we will be closed from 24th until 28th December (open again from Tuesday 29th) and we will be closed on 1st January 2016. Otherwise we are open as usual, from 10am to 3pm until the end of March. There's still plenty to see in the winter. Walk the nature trails and have a browse around our museum and second-hand bookshop. If the flag is flying we are open!

News from the reserve

As winter draws in we are still out and about working around the reserve. Brambles need to be cut back, hedges are trimmed as the paths must remain visible and be kept clear for our visitors. We are lucky enough to do all this while seeing the trees change from their various shades of green to reds, oranges and yellows, until the branches are bare. We hear the chaffinches, have even seen a small flock of goldcrests, and can now watch the goldfinches that have recently arrived feeding on the niger seed. On the ground we still see our own home-grown moorhens around



the reserve and, if we look up to the sky, we can often spot a kestrel or sparrowhawk. In the dusk a lucky few volunteers out and about have seen a barn owl flying noiselessly overhead.

Even in winter, there's so much to see, and we count ourselves lucky that there's something different here every day. So get out those winter woollies and come and see for yourself!

Monkton Nature Reserve, Canterbury Road, Monkton, nr Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 4LH

www.monkton-reserve.org e-mail: monktonnaturereserve@hotmail.com phone: 01843 822666

Supported by Thanet District Council

Supported by Boys and Maughan Solicitors

Supported by Neville Weston Chartered Certified Accountants

Conservation - why it matters

In November we were privileged to have environmental biologist Clive Nuttman give a presentation on "Conservation - why it matters". He summarised the main factors contributing to the loss of the earth's biodiversity and introduced us to how conservationists are trying to persuade governments and policymakers of the importance of conservation. He was even able to show that we need conservation to ensure we have coffee in our coffee cups, raspberries on our plates and chocolate for our treats! An interesting and varied discussion kept us talking until the reserve closed for the day.



Clive has research interests in pollination ecology and has worked in the eastern Mediterranean, Central America, east Africa and in Madagascar. As we found in his recent talk he can take a broad, seemingly distant problem and show how it is relevant to our everyday lives. We hope to tempt Clive back for some more talks next year, so watch this space!

Monkton Stargazers

Despite having to cancel the scheduled viewing evenings the Monkton Stargazers have enjoyed several impromptu sessions. We saw the globular cluster M15 in Pegasus, a group of about 100,000 stars estimated to be 12 billion years old. The Summer Triangle of three stars, Deneb, Vega and Altair, is setting in the west. We could see the Ring Nebula, a ring of gas ejected by a dying red giant star which will be the fate of our Sun one day. The Andromeda galaxy was an awe inspiring sight, 2.5 million light years away. Finally we set the telescope to view M45 Pleiades, more commonly known as the Seven Sisters. We could see a dazzling array of hot blue stars.

Tim Long's observatory is nearly complete with the electronics and controls all working.



We are looking forward to the Launch Party on the 15th December to celebrate British astronaut Tim Peake's (opposite) lift-off off to the International Space Station. The Hilderstone radio club will be demonstrating how we can download data from a satellite which will be passing over moments before. We will watch the launch live at 11am while enjoying rocket biscuits and coffee! In the evening we will wave at the ISS as it goes over at 17.13 to 17.18 and if we miss it we can try again 90 minutes later at 18.49.

John Hislop

Our new Trustees

Over the past year the management of the Trust has had quite a few changes and you may have seen in our last newsletter that we were looking for some new Trustees to help us take our work forward. Since then, John McPherson has resigned as a Trustee for health reasons, and we have appointed two new Trustees. So, this seems an opportune time to introduce everyone.



The chair of the Trustees, Trevor Shonk (left), is a long-standing member of the Trust and has lived in Thanet all his life. He has served as a Trustee for several years, is a town and district councillor and was elected Mayor of Ramsgate in May 2015.

Les Shonk (right) has been a volunteer and member of the reserve for many years and has previously served on our management committee. He became a Trustee in 2015.



Geoff Orton (left) joins us as a new Trustee - he's the Secretary of Margate Civic Society and mis-spent 30 years at the Ministry of Justice. He looks forward to working closely with our new Treasurer on fundraising possibilities (he did some of this with Thanet Citizens Advice Bureau). He is also Treasurer of the Trust for Thanet Archaeology and thinks the reserve has an enormous amount to contribute to the wellbeing and environmental education of East Kent. He is developing an interest in hedgehogs!

Our other new Trustee, Steve Villette (right), recently retired from social care and special educational support. (*The Monkton paparazzi are currently on his trail - Ed.*) He has a BSc degree in chemistry and environmental science. He is a past treasurer and chairman of Margate Civic Society, and is currently chairman of Drapers Windmill Trust. His particular interest is in science education, and says that a second-hand bookshop inside a nature reserve is his idea of heaven!



We are also pleased to announce that Andrew Ogden, formerly our Fundraising Education and Marketing Officer, is temporarily standing in as Treasurer.

We are all looking forward to working together in 2016, to progress the good work that has been achieved so far in conserving the wildlife and geology of the reserve, improving our facilities for our visitors and building on our education work for the local community.

Happy Christmas, Volunteers

I am sure it is appreciated that, without the help of our volunteers, both past and present, Monkton Nature Reserve would not be the wonderful wildlife oasis that it is today. The many hours that they freely give to conservation work, to the maintenance of its infrastructure, to the presentation of the museum exhibits, to running the bookshop and the Monkton Stargazers astronomy group, and to its administrative operations, all means that the reserve can fulfil its charitable function to the community. Therefore, I am sure all our Members will join with the Trustees and staff in thanking our volunteers for all their hard work this year, and to wish them all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Martin Squire

Dear Members,

We are delighted to announce that we have more members than ever before this year, and have been very pleased to welcome new faces along with our long-standing supporters. However, it's that time of year to renew your membership for 2016 and we enclose a membership form for your convenience.

You will see that there is no increase in membership price this year. As usual, you get free entry to the reserve all year round, membership of Monkton Stargazers, four newsletters each year, tea and coffee available, and reduced entrance fees to some of our events. And of course you get a warm glow from knowing that you are supporting this local little gem, helping to preserve it for future generations.

Thank you all for your continued support, and we hope to see you again soon in 2016.

New year, new resolution?

If you're looking for a New Year's Resolution, why not forgo the usual doomed diet or new fitness regime and do something worthwhile for a good cause? For example, here's a taste of some of the things you could help us with:

- sorting, pricing, tidying and restocking books in the bookshop
- outdoor conservation work
- looking after our plants for sale
- gardening
- looking after our geology and archaeology artefacts
- helping on reception and in the shop
- office administration
- IT work
- organising events
- helping with publicity
- fundraising

We always need a helping hand, you won't need experience and you won't have to commit to hours and hours of hard labour. We even provide tea and coffee! For more information call Dave or Martin on 01843 822666 or drop in for an informal chat.

*Coming soon from
Easter 2016:*

**Hedgehog Trail
All-new Fairy Trail**

Watch this space!

Wanted!

**(or all I want for
Christmas is...)**

- Table-top fridge to keep our milk cold
- Free-standing bookshelves
- Lockable filing cabinet

Please contact Dave or Martin at the reserve if you may be able to help.

• • •

Don't forget that we can provide a slide show on the wildlife and work of Monkton Nature Reserve for clubs and societies. Costs are around £40 for an hour-long presentation. For more information, call Dave on 01843 822666.

• • •