



Inside this issue:

Our First Community
Excavation— Burnham
Beeches 2

Spotlight on:
Kate Watkins, artist 2

What's on ? -
Workshops & Field-
work 3

Walking Festival!
Come stroll with the
#Chilforts team 3

Featured feature:
Wilbury Hill 4

LiDAR Portal Facts

The [Citizen Science Portal](#) has been live now for just about six weeks! Here are some stats we are really impressed with— Thanks to all our Citizen Scientists!

- ⇒ 943 registered users
- ⇒ 2584 records created
- ⇒ 401 forum posts over 57

Open Day at Burnham Beeches a Great Success



Open Day photos courtesy P. Mitchell

At the midway point of our first ever community excavation (see pg 2) we held an Open Day on September 14th. More than 400 people came to the Beeches and had the opportunity to see the site's history coming back to life.

Kim Biddulph, Sally Pointer, and Gareth Riseborough recreated various aspects of Iron Age domestic life from cooking and weaving to dyeing yarn and working with metal. Drs Pete Hommel and Philly Howarth demonstrated the smelting of copper from raw ore, as well as how Iron Age 'Celtic' coins were

made—and visitors were able to strike their own coins to take away.

James Dillely and David Willis represented the earlier end of prehistory, with excellent displays and demonstrations on flintknapping and ancient bushcraft respectively. Because the Beeches are also home to a Medieval moated site (one that may have bearing on the results of the excavation!), we were fortunate to have Julian and Valerie Rutherford, whose *alter egos* are pair of Medieval apothecaries, on hand to chat about 13th century life and medicine.



Walking tours of the excavation (which was in full swing all day) and the Seven Ways Plain hillfort were given by Dr Ed Peveler and Park rangers Chris Morris and Helen Read.

We hope everyone had a great time— we overheard on young lad declare it was 'the best day EVER'!

We aim to do it all again next year!

Geophysics at Desborough Castle

The first geophysical survey (magnetometry) was conducted at Desborough Castle in July, under the direction of Dr William Wintle and with the help of some of our amazing #Chilfort volunteers. They braved some very hot weather (and some very repetitious work) to complete the exercise (nearly 2.75 hectares) in just four days. You can read William's report [here](#).



Our First Community Excavation – Burnham Beeches

Beacons of the Past, in collaboration with the Corporation of London, successfully held a Community Archaeology excavation to investigate the earthworks of Burnham Beeches.



Volunteers were recently invited to take part in an archaeological evaluation at Burnham Beeches, Buckinghamshire. The archaeological investigation targeted a section of linear earthwork that runs NE-SW from the Victory Cross car park to the intersection with Seven Ways Plain, a univallate hillfort enclosure to the south-west.

The trench was located outside the scheduled area and approximately 600m from the actual intersection of the features. The excavation was undertaken in an attempt

to establish the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of the archaeological remains within this part of Burnham Beeches, and with specific relevance for the prehistoric setting of the Seven Ways Plain hillfort.

More than 70 volunteers participated over the 11 days, all expertly supervised and trained by Robin Bashford, the project's Fieldwork Officer for the dig. Rob has written a summary report with the preliminary findings [here](#). A full report will be out early next year.

Thanks to everyone for all their hard work!



In this feature, we will hear from some of our project volunteers. If you would like to contribute a piece for this column, drop us an email!

Spotlight on: Kate Watkins, Artist

Beacons of the Past was fortunate enough to attract the talents of local Thame artist, Kate Watkins, who documented the Burnham Beeches Excavation. A retired art teacher and furniture restorer, Kate is now a budding archaeologist studying at the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education, albeit more in written form than practical. Kate says the opportunity



to become the dig Artist in Residence was just what she needed to get involved in an excavation. She particularly was inspired by recording aspects of the event such as volunteers in action, and the shapes of the excavation. Roots criss-crossing the trench, different colours of the earth, and the trees of Burnham Beeches all became subject matter. Kate reports that she had a great experience and hopes it will happen again one day. (So do we!)



What's coming up?

Each issue, this area will list opportunities for getting involved in the Project.

(Additional events that arise between editions will be sent out in emails)

What: [Scrub bash at Sharpenhoe Clappers](#)

When: Wednesday 09 October 2019 09:30 to 1530

Where: Sharpenhoe Clappers, MK45 4SH

Team #Chilforts is joining forces with the Chilterns AONB Annual Scrub Bash to clear dying Ash and make the interior of the (possible) hillfort more accessible. This is a big event, with many organisations across the Chilterns sending people to help out. Lunch is provided, and a good time should be had by all! Please come along – no limit on numbers, but do register so we know how many to cater for!

What: [Fieldwalking at Wilbury Hill](#)

When: Friday 18th October & Saturday 19th October

Where: Wilbury Hill, Letchworth, nr SG6 4AZ

Interested in discovering archaeological artefacts that may inform our future interpretation of a hillfort? Ever tried your hand at Fieldwalking? Join us on the 18th and 19th of October for a fun exercise in spatial distribution in the fresh air! We will walk a ploughed field, marked off in grid squares and bag every find we see. Learn to identify worked flints, pot (if we're lucky) and perhaps other finds. No limit on numbers – the more the merrier, but do register so we can send you more details!

What: [LiDAR Mapathon! Chinnor](#)

When: Friday 8th November, 9.30 – 12.30

Where: Chinnor

Join us for our first "Mapathon" – a group of us getting together in the same place to all do some work on the LiDAR portal. Sure we can do it from home on our own, but it's more fun and sociable, and we can learn more, by getting together and doing it in the same place. You'll need to bring your laptop (plus charger, and mouse if you wish) and we'll sit down together in a room to work through some sites. Working in a group we can discuss and share ideas about tricky features. No experience necessary! (A couple of laptops can be borrowed if you don't have one.) Spaces limited.

What: [LiDAR Review Portal Training](#)

When: Friday 29th November, 10.00 – 15.00

Where: Chinnor

We will soon be launching the 'Review Phase' of the project, to start the quality checking process to turn the many citizen records into our neat 'Master Database'. In order to help with this you will need to have some experience of working on the Citizen portal, and demonstrate a good understanding of the process of developing an interpretation of a feature through decoding its morphology, its relationship with its landscape, and by bringing in other data sources. Don't worry, we're not expecting everyone to be LiDAR wizards, but if you feel you have got a bit of experience and a good feel for it, please do sign up!

To participate in an event, fill in the form linked in the title. If numbers are limited, all participants will be entered into a random ballot to fill the spaces. Ballots close dates are on forms.

If you don't get a space, there will be plenty of repeat events, so keep trying!

Come for a stroll with the #Chilforts team!

The Chilterns Walking Festival is now in its third year, and has established itself as a highly popular entry in the AONB's bountiful events calendar. With over 70 guided walks, activities, and events, the 16-day Chilterns Walking Festival has been designed to appeal to different age groups, interests, and levels of fitness. With more walks, more activities, more crafts and more dates, this year's October Festival is set to be bigger and better than ever. The Chilforts team is leading three walks during the festival, but there are many more to choose from at <https://www.visitchilterns.co.uk/walkingfest.html>

Featured Feature: Wilbury Hill Camp

Letchworth Garden City

LiDAR image of Wilbury Hill (Local Relief Model)
The dark curvy E-W lines are the (possible) two-stages of enclosure, whilst the curvy N-S line may be an Iron Age track. See how it curves to avoid one of the two white 'bumps', which are likely Bronze Age barrows. A third can be seen just outside the survey area, on the OS map marked 'Tumulus'

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Wilbury Hill, just on the outskirts west of Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, is one of our "Tier 1 sites" for the project, on which we will be focusing significant work. Positioned on the Icknield Way trail, the site is on a rise of chalk which gives excellent views southwards and westwards along the Chilterns escarpment.

The casual visitor might be surprised to see that there are really no visible signs of the extensive enclosure which shows up so readily in our LiDAR imagery. Indeed, decades of arable farming have levelled the earthworks, and the site has also suffered the indignities of roads and quarries nibbling into its boundaries. The latest assault was a series of adventure biking jumps dug into the north-western corner (an activity

which has gotten the site listed on the Heritage at Risk register)! All of this modern activity means that very few traces of the prehistoric phase are easily spotted.

However, it is the potential for sub-surface archaeology which makes this hillfort such an exciting prospect. Aerial imagery showing cropmarks reveal two adjoining enclosures, separated into an eastern and a western compartment by a bank. The eastern of these two enclosures, roughly 200 m in diameter, has revealed a dense pattern of circles, gullies, and pits, suggestive of relatively intense settlement activity, including roundhouses.

This makes Wilbury Hill particularly special, as it is one of very few in the region offering solid evidence of possible Early and Middle Iron Age settlement.

The LiDAR survey has re-

vealed traces of the line of the southern course of the ramparts, a possible routeway leading from the south to the site, and the remains of two or three possible barrows, suggesting early Bronze Age use of the hilltop as well. Cropmarks, geophysical survey, and excavation in the fields to the west of the site has revealed a wealth of further prehistoric activity in the area, ranging from the Neolithic, right the way through to the Iron Age. Romano-British finds from within the hillfort, and an early medieval cremation, suggest occupation and use of the site in later periods as well.

We have great plans for Wilbury Hill, foremost is getting it off that At Risk register. Working in partnership with Hertfordshire County archaeologists, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, and other landowners and tenants, in conjunction with Historic England, we aim to reinstate the ground damaged by the bike jumps, fence and graze the hillfort, and create a heritage trail with interpretative panels.

We also will be doing some archaeological work, starting with a fieldwalking exercise in mid-October (see pg 3), then hopefully some magnetometry. 2020 will be an exciting year, and we hope you will want to help us out with it!