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Steyning Downland Scheme Newsletter

Welcome to Autumn!

Summer has zipped by at bewildering speed and all of a sudden, autumn is here! Thankfully there's still plenty to enjoy on the Steyning Downland Scheme . . .

Spottings



This Chicken-in-the-Woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) fungus was found by Roger Brown on the logs in our Wild Play Area. Apparently when cooked, the fruiting body (the strange pink and yellow bit we can see sticking out of the log) is said to be juicy, succulent, and meaty with a mild, lemony flavour, rather like chicken. Errr . . after you . . . With thanks to Tony Raw for the I.D.



A wonderful plant to look for at this time of year is the poetically named Autumn Lady's Tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*), our latest flowering orchid, which stays around right into October. It's only found in the very shortest chalk turf. This one was found by Pete Varkala on Steyning Coombe.



Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*)

Amazingly, this tough little butterfly sticks it out through the winter - you may find one of ours in your garden shed, getting ready for hibernation any time soon. They'll emerge again next spring, to lay lots of green eggs on the underside of nettle leaves, ready for the next generation. This one was photographed on the Rife Range by Jean Blemings.



This wonderful Adonis Blue (*Polyommatus bellargus*) was seen on Steyning Coombe by Pete Varkala a few days ago. The females (this is a male) will be laying their eggs on Horseshoe Vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*) into October. The eggs will soon hatch and overwinter as tiny, green caterpillars.



We just couldn't resist dropping in this hefty Privet Hawk Moth (*Sphinx ligustri*)> it was spotted back in July by Phil Godbold, in his back garden, but they almost certainly fly over the Steyning Rifle Range too! They're the Jumbo Jets of the moth world, with wing spans reaching 5 inches or more - in fact Privet Hawks are the largest resident moths in the UK. Too late for this year, but well worth a search for them next summer!

Recent Events

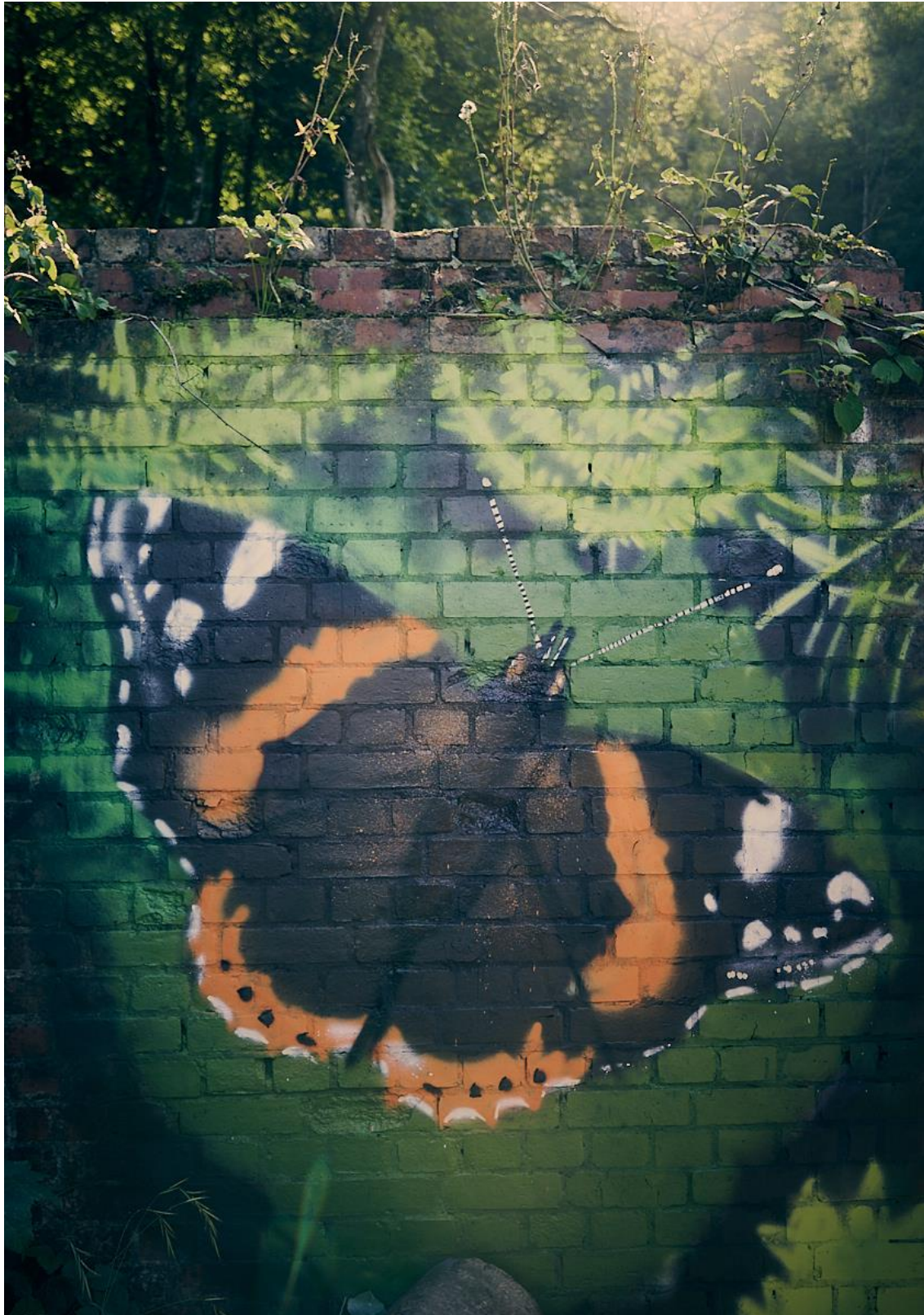
We pulled out all the stops over the summer to engage young people with nature, including a brilliant Bushcraft Day with Christine Humphreys and her team and our first ever mini Big Picnic, specially for youngsters, wonderfully pulled together by the ever youthful Mike and Jane . . .





REAL STREET ARTS

Thanks to some very generous support from The Anchor Foundation we were able to run two solid days of film making and nature-themed graffiti art activities for eighteen very fortunate teenagers, working with a team of professional artists. The final cut of the movie is still in production - watch this space for more info. about the upcoming premier! With particular thanks to Emma Vernon-Harcourt and Sarah Gillings.



Upcoming Events

Missed our events this summer? No problem! You can still join one of our autumn excursions . . .



[Bat Safari:](#) Fri 17th Sept,

6.30pm

Join local bat experts David and Sheila from [Batbox](#) for an illuminating guided tour of the secret lives of bats. £5.00 adults, under 16s go free!

[Book here](#)



Woodland Singing:

We've been having some really special feedback from this one: Professional singer and vocal coach, [Rebecca Askew](#) is back for 3 more Woodland Singing sessions. Join her for a enjoyable Sunday afternoon, singing together in the woods. All music taught by ear, no previous experience necessary.

[19th Sept, 3-5pm: Book here](#)

[16th Oct, 3-5pm: Book here](#)

[20th Nov, 3-4.30\(?\): Book here](#)

Dexters Return



After enjoying their summer holidays on various Sussex Wildlife Trust reserves, our Dexters are returning! We already have six (three mums and their calves) who are literally wading up to their eyeballs in delicious veg. It must be like being dropped into a swimming pool of chocolate sundae. Perhaps it's not surprising that more Dexters are queuing up to join them - they'll be munching through the Rifle Range and Steyning Coombe later this autumn and winter.

All this munching might sound a bit drastic but actually conservation grazing is a crucial part of looking after our

species-rich chalk grasslands. Orchids, Cowslips and old favourites like Round-headed Rampion actually thrive on being munched, provided it happens at the right time of year. If you'd like to know more, Natural England have a useful guide, [available](#) [here](#).

While our Dexters are munching, please make sure you always close gates behind you and please keep your dog under close control at all times while walking through our grazing areas - thank you!

Video of the Month

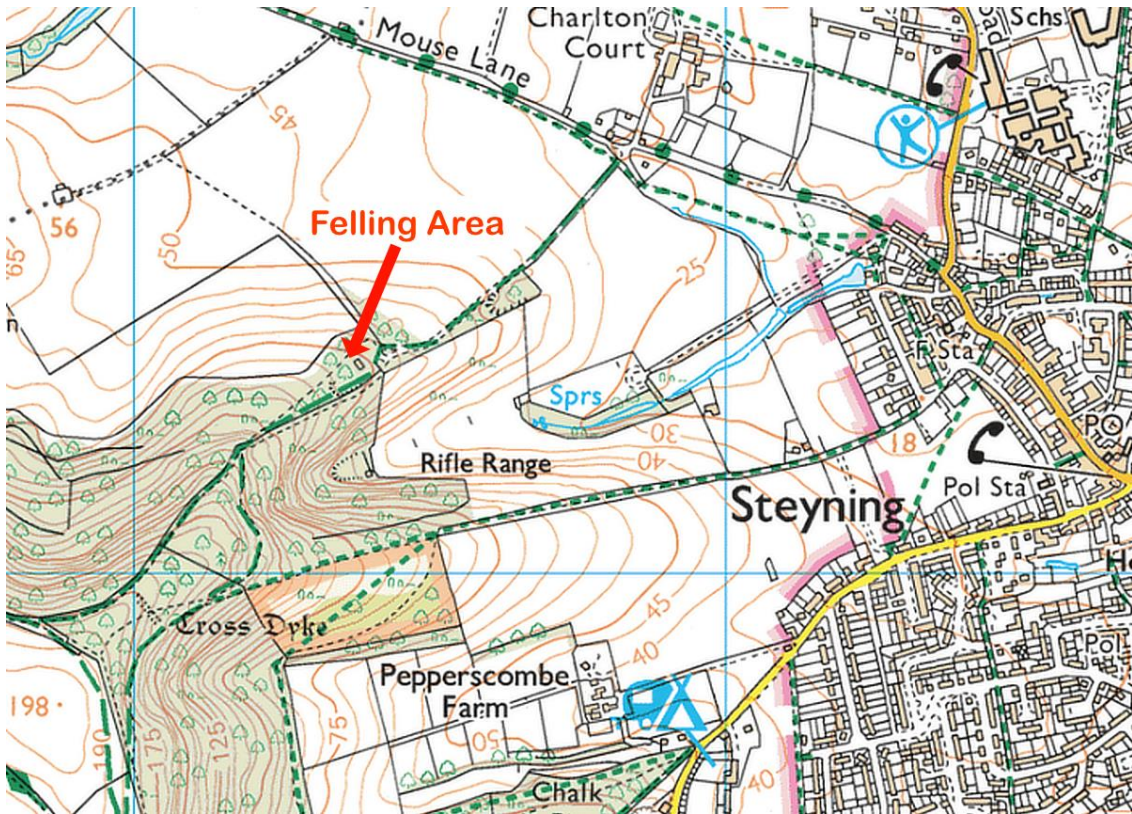


A couple of months back our friends, [Whistlestop Arts](#) filmed a guided tour of Horsham District, including a useful guide to Steyning. But things get really exciting at the 10 min 52 mark, when your Venerable Editor gets a few precious seconds to talk about the Steyning Downland Scheme. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately) much of his weary verbal ramblings have been cut out and most of what remains is a lengthy and somewhat irrelevant digression about Steyning High Street. Mercifully the cause is saved by stalwart SDS volunteers, Vicci Johnson and Justin Russell, who both make special guest appearances soon after . . .

Watch that Ash!



Our battle with Ash Dieback disease is planned to resume later this month, with the felling of several dying Ash trees at the old flint barn, near the log circle in the woods (see map below). The area is close to a Public Bridleway so please look out for site signage, and avoid the area if at all possible during felling operations, which are likely to last well into October.



Wild Play?



Do you have an education background?

Relish the idea of kindling the interest of young minds in the natural world?

Then we'd love to hear from you! Up to last year Steyning Saplings was a brilliant little project run by Jackie Bruce. Jackie ran all sorts of craft and game activities for under 5s and their parents in our Wild Play Area on the Rifle Range. Jackie has since moved to the wilds of northern England and the Wild Play Area has fallen strangely silent. If you're interested in picking things up again, [do let us know - thank you!](#)

Friends



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by joining the Friends of the
Steyning Downland Scheme -
it's only £2 per month!

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Thanks for reading!



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