



# The Darwell Area Conservation Society

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## MOUNTFIELD PARISH ASSEMBLY REPORT 2022

DACS exists to **protect, celebrate and enjoy** the special part of the High Weald AONB which has the Darwell Reservoir and Stream as its spine, from Dallington, through Brightling and Mountfield to Robertsbridge.



*Ancient history talking about ancient history  
(with a mine pit, c. 1550, in the foreground)*

Since July 2013, DACS has achieved so much. We have fought planning battles, organised walks, produced publications, organised talks, created a profile to give our voice some authority, and reached out to hundreds of people. Above all, we've spoken up for our special part of the AONB. After two years curtailment by Covid-19, we finally have some positive things to report.

**PLANNING** We have been active on several fronts including next to All Saints, Mountfield, and Watercress Field in Burwash. The latter is not on our patch but any threats or precedents affecting the wider AONB are a threat to our little corner of it.

However, yet again, huge effort has gone into just one site in our area with a history of planning abuse going back to 2009! At a recent presentation to senior Rother execs we made it *very* clear that enough is enough. The ball is now firmly in Rother's court; we must now wait and see.

**CONSERVATION** In addition to the planning items above, I would pick out two collaborations with Brightling and Mountfield PCs: a very successful meeting with British Gypsum, and the successful application to join the wild flower verge cutting trial along Kent Lane/Mountfield Lane. A survey by two DACS volunteers found an

astonishing 116 species of flowering plants. With enlightened management, this could be much more. *That's* worth fighting for — *that's* what biodiversity actually means!

**CELEBRATION AND EDUCATION** In 2021, over 70 people came on six walks and nearly 50 turned up for a talk. So lots of new friends and lots of fun! In the summer, I led the walk *Through Trees & Time* three times to some of the most appreciative walkers since I first did it in 2014. This walk looks at historical clues to our landscape (including plants) so you see our local countryside in a completely new light. *TT&T* also raised £360 for All Saints, Mountfield. (*See below for 2022 walks.*)

In September, James Fraser led a brand new walk, *Hornbeams, Hairstreaks & Hawkbits*, in which he showed his woodland and meadow restoration projects. Even though it was out of season for so much — flowers, butterflies, dragonflies — this was huge success. This raised £200 for All Saints, Brightling. (*See below.*)

In October, I gave a talk to the Rother Environmental Group and locals on the historical background to our AONB particularly the local economy and environment.

### WHAT NEXT?

The threats to our landscape keep coming — development, ignorance, climate change — but so too do the opportunities. So...

- **2022 Walks** We will be repeating both the walks mentioned above, *Through Trees & Time* and *Hornbeams, Hairstreaks & Hawkbits* this year. Both will transform how you view the world. Come and join the fun. Contact me for dates and details
- **New activities** We need new ideas for walks, talks, visits, and other activities that celebrate our landscape: woods, fields, farms, houses, flowers, history — whatever!
- **New members** We welcome new members as the membership is a vital part of our credentials. There is no annual subscription. Just a one-off joining fee. After that, you help simply by showing up in our membership figures.
- **The DACS Committee** We would love to have new members with new energy and new ideas. All that counts is caring.

For more information, to swap ideas, or just to chat, please contact us.

Peter Miles

Chairman, DACS, 01580 880 614, [savedarwell@gmail.com](mailto:savedarwell@gmail.com)



*A local hedge-bank dating from Anglo-Saxon times.  
(Photos by 2021 walker Shelagh Weir)*

## HORNBEAMS, HAIRSTREAKS & HAWKBITS - A Walk

# Landscape restoration in action

Wednesday 22nd and Sunday 26th June 2022

*Other dates may be added*

**Start:** 10.00 am for a 10.30 start **Distance/Time:** Not even 1.5 miles but 1.5 – 2 hours. **Venue:** Banks Farm, Mountfield, directions on booking  
**Terrain:** Easy with a couple of ups and downs but wet grass/mud so wellies or similar; quite a lot of standing so folding stools if a bit creaky.  
**Cost:** £10.00 to include tea/coffee on arrival, take-home packs – proceeds to upkeep of St Thomas à Becket Church, Brightling. **Parking:** Free.

Our host for this walk is James Fraser who will guide us on a tour of the woods and meadows of Banks Farm. The main focus of the walk is to show how James's restoration of the ancient woodland, the meadows and the pasture on the farm is producing such spectacular results in terms of butterflies, other insect life, birdlife, wild flowers, unicorns, hugely enriched biodiversity with dozens of plant species where there were relatively few, greater capacity for carbon exchange and storage, and much more. The entire walk is off any public rights of way.

We offered this walk for the first time last year and it was hugely popular. (NOTE: The walkers who came in September have their own special date, **Sunday 19th June**, for a special follow-up safari — see what turns up on the day!)

*Well behaved dogs on leads welcome; water should be carried for dogs. Not really for children, even if on leads. Numbers limited; first come, first served... If you cannot do scheduled dates/days, please call.*

To book, or for more details, contact Peter on  
[savedarwell@gmail.com](mailto:savedarwell@gmail.com) or 01580 880 614

*Walk sponsored by Darwell Area Conservation Society*

**THROUGH TREES & TIME - A Walk**  
**A magical history tour**  
**explaining our local landscape**

**Friday 13th, Sunday 22nd and Sunday 29th May**

*Other dates may be added*

**Start:** 9.30 am **Distance/Time:** Only 1.5 miles but so rich in history that likely to be 4 – 5 hours so... **Food:** Bring a bite to eat and drink. **Terrain:** Easy but wet grass/mud so wellies or similar. **Standing:** There's a lot of standing so folding stools a good idea, particularly if creaky. **Cost:** £10.00 incl take-home pack, proceeds to All Saints Church, Mountfield **Start:** Mountfield Village Hall, loos at start and finish. **Parking:** Free.

The walk is based in a remarkable area of Mountfield, off rights of way, with features ranging from Romano-British through medieval to 20thC. This is landscape history coming alive under your boots.

After geology and climate, it is human activity that has shaped our landscape. This walk uncovers clues to why our local High Weald looks as it does: a Roman-British site, major medieval earthworks, industrial remains (Roman, Tudor and more), woodland crafts, the old roads in the woods, plus botanical clues including a rare plant population and an even rarer tree, foraging, and more.

The walk is illustrated throughout but is about visible remains and a museum of handleable exhibits. Above all, the emphasis will be on fun — serious history with lots of laughter.

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To book, or for more details, contact Peter on  
[savedarwell@gmail.com](mailto:savedarwell@gmail.com) or 01580 880 614.

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