



# THANET COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

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

## *Conservation and Education*

### **Annual Report to the Members 2016 Presented to the AGM on 24 September 2016**

The Trust has continued to benefit from the refurbished Field Study Centre and remains exceedingly grateful to the Veolia Environmental Trust for funding this project. The work was finally completed in July 2015. This has secured the building and its contents from the ravages of the weather, and enabled us to reach out further to vulnerable groups who appreciate the oasis of wellbeing that the Reserve provides.

The on-going support of the Allan Willett Foundation has meant disabled access to the upper pond (Damsely Pond) has been installed. In addition, the plantings in the Willett Educational Garden have been completed, as well as some necessary renewal of perimeter fencing.

For the future, our on-going relationship with local employers Cummins means we are able to continually increase the facilities and level of amenities at the Reserve. Their remaining projects will include the provision of further access to the upper levels of the Reserve.

Monies from Kent County Council and the Allan Willett Foundation will provide mains electricity for the first time! It is the staff's regular hospitality to the Walmer Disability Group that has prompted KCC to find developers' community funds to help develop the Reserve. As a consequence, we look forward to installing a new building to serve as a cafeteria and classroom in the near future, as an annex to the Field Study Centre. This will promote our educational and social outreach objectives: we believe that 'Nature' has an enormous therapeutic potential.

Disabled toilets, more accessible paths, and a complete refurbishment of the Frenken Museum Room are also planned for the coming year, with the aid of the Allan Willett Foundation and KCC funds.

We continue to build links to promote our philosophy of conservation and education. Our initial aim is to liaise with fellow ecologists and conservationists in the district and we have started by beginning to explore possibilities with the Dane Valley Woods Project in Margate.

We are also hoping to network with other tourist attractions in Thanet to increase the opportunities for an improved 'visitor experience', particularly in the west of the Isle.

In short, Thanet Countryside Trust is looking at a 'step-change' for the next year.

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Supported by Thanet District Council

Supported by Neville Weston Chartered Certified Accountants

Our membership has increased to 522 (not including children) and visitor numbers show a steady increase to some 4,500 per annum. We have hosted visits from a significant number of groups throughout the year, including 14 local school trips. Our Open Day was the most successful ever, having decided to run the event over the whole weekend. We publish a quarterly Newsletter that is archived on our attractive new website: [www.monkton-reserve.org](http://www.monkton-reserve.org). Bookshop sales make a vital contribution to overheads, thanks to the efforts of our dedicated team of volunteers upon whom the Trust relies so much.

There have been a number of changes in the people supporting the Trust over the past year. We were deeply saddened by the sudden death of Tony Harman, one of our long-standing Trustees, in late September 2015. Tony was a great asset to us, having a tremendous knowledge of wildlife, in particular butterflies and moths.

The Trust owes a great debt of gratitude to retired Trustees John McPherson and Ros Facey, who both resigned in 2015 after four years in post, and very many years' prior support to the Trust and the Reserve. They have left a legacy on which we continue to build.

We also saw the departure of Julia Batchelder, our Treasurer, after five years' dedicated service to the Trust. The Trustees were pleased to appoint Andrew Ogden in Julia's stead and are most grateful for his taking up the reins so swiftly and competently.

We have been particularly pleased to appoint Kashmir Flint as our Education Officer on a part-time basis with the aid of the Nineveh Trust. She has run Holiday Nature Clubs and is fast developing services to schools and voluntary groups.

The Monkton Stargazers and their Observatories remain a steady community asset and our Bat and Moth evenings prove popular.

As ever, we remain indebted to the staff – Dave Edgar, Martin Squire and Kashmir Flint – and the volunteers (too numerous to mention), who through their dedication and commitment enable the Trust to prosper, and the Reserve to be enjoyed by our many visitors, throughout the year.

*Thanet Countryside Trust Trustees*