

eNews from Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

April 2015 issue

Summer's on its way!

A very warm welcome from Cannock Chase AONB Partnership as summer arrives!

We are very much looking forward to the year ahead and would like to have this opportunity to give you an update on the last few months of 2014/15, as well as what's going to be happening this year.



Bundle Beech Collection Shoal Hill September 2014

IRONMAN is proud to protect the AONB

The Organisers of one of the ultimate tests of endurance, IRONMAN 70.3 Staffordshire, have been awarded a 'Proud to Protect Cannock Chase AONB' certificate.

This shows a commitment by IRONMAN that it will work with Cannock Chase AONB to look after the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty when it holds its event on the protected landscape in June.

The Proud to Protect certificate was launched by the Cannock Chase AONB partnership earlier this year, as part of its 'We ♥ Cannock Chase AONB' pack.



Kevin Stewart, IRONMAN Regional Director

Aimed at event organisers, the pack explains how the AONB Partnership is working to balance a fantastic selection of events with the need to look after the protected landscape.

It includes a tool kit, which features a publicity section and information about how to achieve the 'Proud to Protect Cannock Chase AONB' certificate and stamp.

This stamp can be added to publicity material to show visitors that event organisers are working with Cannock Chase AONB to look after the area for future generations to enjoy.

It requires event organisers to sign up to a set of standards to achieve it, including working with the Cannock Chase AONB team to lessen the impact any event has on the fragile habitat.

Kevin Stewart, from IRONMAN UK, commented: "It's important to us that our events have a good local impact, not just economically, but also in helping to protect the environment. We are keen to demonstrate our commitment by signing up to the Proud to Protect set of standards and working closely with the AONB."

"IRONMAN 70.3 Staffordshire has really embraced the We ♥ Cannock Chase initiative and

we're delighted to have awarded the event organisers their Proud to Protect certificate.

“We look forward to working with IRONMAN in the run up to this eagerly anticipated event,” said Emma Beaman, Assistant AONB Officer for Cannock Chase AONB.

To find out more about the ‘We ♥ Cannock Chase AONB’ campaign and to download the pack, please visit <http://www.aonb-blog.co.uk/love>



Call for Volunteers for WWI project

Following the news that the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded the Friends of Cannock Chase in partnership with Cannock Chase AONB nearly £10,000 to fund a First World War project, volunteers are now being urged to get involved.



WW1 Hut at Marquis Drive

The Reaching Out Arms – The Story of WW1 on Cannock Chase is a project to mark the centenary of The Great War.

It will involve guided walks and tours as well as the publication of an information leaflet.

Lisa Davenport, Reaching Out Arms Project Officer, said: “It’s really important that we remember our local history and this project aims to keep it alive.

“Many visitors are not aware that in 1914, two large camps were constructed on Cannock Chase capable of holding up to 40,000 men and probably trained upwards of 500,000 during the First World War.

“The camps had their own church, post offices, a bakery and even a theatre. One of the training trench systems still survives on the Chase, as well as extensive archaeological remains of both camps, including hut bases, former roads and railways that survive fossilised within the existing footpath network or as earthwork features.

“We are now looking for friendly, enthusiastic volunteers who are willing to share the little-known history of Cannock Chase during the First World War with our visitors.”

There are two ways to get involved, either as guided walk leaders or as Great War Hut guides.

Guided walk leaders will take people on walks, telling them about the camps and the people that lived and worked on them.

Great War Hut guides will be indoors opening up, welcoming visitors and sharing information in one of the original huts used on the training camp during the war.

All volunteers will be given full training and are invited to attend a coffee morning or afternoon to find out more and register their interest.

Coffee mornings/afternoons

- **Saturday 18 April**, 11am – 2pm
Museum of Cannock Chase, Valley Road, Hednesford, Staffordshire, WS12 1T
- **Monday 27 April**, 1pm – 3pm

The Gatehouse Meeting Room, The Wolseley Centre, Wolseley Bridge, ST17 0WT

To confirm your attendance or to find out more, please email cannockchaseww1@outlook.com or call the Project Officer on 07444171032.



Hero Dogs Remembered at Special Ceremony

People and their dogs attended a Remembrance ceremony on the 11th November 2014 at Cannock Chase to celebrate working dogs.

The annual event, now in its fifth year, was inspired by Freda, a Dalmatian-type dog that was the New Zealand Rifles' mascot, when the regiment was stationed on Cannock Chase during the First World War. She died in 1918, while the regiment was training on Cannock Chase and is buried there.

In memory of Freda, and dogs like her the AONB held a ceremony at her grave which is off Chase Road, near Stafford.



Photo by Paul Massey

Last year, 61 people and 27 dogs gathered at Freda's grave to take part in the ceremony. The event included listening to readings and poems, and laying wreaths on the grave.

Freda's grave is 0.6 miles south east of Brocton Village, near Stafford. It is marked 'Meml' on the Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 244 – Cannock Chase and its grid reference is SJ978188.

The Milford Common Trail passes the grave. A leaflet is available from the nearby Cannock Chase Visitor Centre at Marquis Drive in Cannock Chase Country Park.

This year the service will be held on the 11th of November at 2pm.



Dog Behavioural Work on Cannock Chase

In November and December 2014 Cannock Chase AONB worked with Natalie White (Dog Behaviouralist) to educate people about the correct codes of conduct on Cannock Chase AONB, and at the same time have the opportunity to have your dog trained by a professional.



Cannock Chase is a fantastic place to bring your dog for a walk as it gives them the chance to have a good run about in a large open space.

However, we know it is sometimes difficult to manage dogs when they are excited to be let off the lead, so we offered this free dog training session to give some useful tips about how to keep dogs under control even when off the lead.

The two events were a success and a report can be found on our blog at www.aonb-blog.co.uk

For more information about dogs in the AONB please contact Emma on 01785 619186 or email emma.beaman@staffordshire.gov.uk

Cannock Chase AONB Dog Work Featured in Your Dog Magazine

Cannock Chase AONB is pleased to announce that the dog training sessions were mentioned on page 92 of Your Dog magazine, February 2015. Keep a close eye out for us in the future.

The sessions were funded by the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) group.

What is a SAC?

Cannock Chase forms part of the Cannock Chase AONB, includes the largest surviving area of lowland heathland in the English Midlands. A significant part of the Chase was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1987 because of its rare heathland and associated woodland habitats.

Over time the extent of the heathland habitat has reduced in size, in common with all other lowland heathland habitats in the UK, but Cannock Chase supports such a unique and scarce range of wildlife that it was given enhanced recognition as a Special Area of Conservation in 2005 under European legislation because of its high nature conservation importance.

Plants such as common heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*), western gorse (*Ulex gallii*) and wavy hair grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) support a wealth of butterflies, beetles, birds and mammals, including the European nightjar and 5 different species of bat found in the associated woodlands.

If you would like more information on the SAC or you know of anybody or can suggest a business that would be willing to sponsor the AONB to continue to work with dog owners in the AONB please let us know.

Contact Emma on 01785 619186 or email emma.beaman@staffordshire.gov.uk



Tolkien Walk Launch

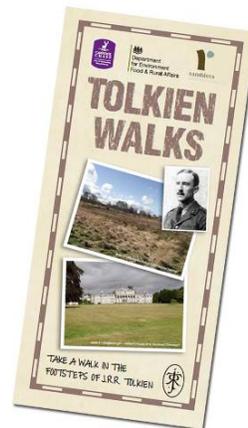
Three self-guided short walks which give an insight into Tolkien's experiences when he was stationed in the area 100 years ago, were unveiled this February.

Cannock Chase AONB team and Walsall Ramblers have joined forces to develop the Tolkien Walks leaflet. It is a guide to three short walks across Cannock Chase to encourage more people to take up this healthy pastime.

The walks have been inspired by the author of The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings, J.R.R. Tolkien. The famous writer lived in the area 100 years ago when he was in the army and stayed in the officers' quarters at the camp in Brocton.

The three self-guided walks are aimed at inexperienced walkers, so are simple to follow and not too challenging. Each walk gradually increases in length, starting from one mile and working up to three miles.

Emma Beaman, Assistant AONB Officer, said: "Cannock Chase AONB is the perfect location for walks and we are delighted to be launching these three new walks that we've put together with



Walsall Ramblers. They offer a chance to walk in the footsteps of J.R.R. Tolkien and are perfect for beginners who want to build up their confidence and stamina, while enjoying a variety of beautiful views and healthy exercise.”

The Tolkien Walks leaflet was launched at a special event running at Haywood Sport and Social Club in February. It included a buffet lunch and the chance to be guided on the first walk.

The AONB Team and Walsall Ramblers also led the third walk in the series later in February. The three-mile walk started at Chase Road Car Park.

The Tolkien Walks leaflets are available from libraries and visitor centres in and around Cannock Chase.

Join Cannock Chase AONB Membership Scheme from just £2 a month

If you love Cannock Chase AONB, and wonder how you can give something back to help conserve and improve the beautiful but endangered landscape, you might be interested in becoming a member of the AONB.



Volunteers hard at work.

There are lots of memberships to choose from - including individual, partner, family, group and corporate, as well gift memberships.

Ruth Hytch, AONB Officer, said: "Cannock Chase AONB is part of 8,000 square miles of protected landscape across England. It is important that we manage this distinctive and precious habitat well. Becoming a member of the AONB is a great way to be kept up to date about any developments, surveys or conservation work in the area and to give something back to a place you love.”

Find out more: To become a member, or to find out more, please contact Emma on 01785 619186 or email emmabeaman@staffordshire.gov.uk

Upcoming events

- **Friday 17 April 10am**– Birch removal on Shoal Hill Common
- **Tuesday 21 April 10am**– Crown lifting (the removal of the lowest branches and preparing of lower branches for future removal, normally to give a uniform height from ground level) at Chasewater Innovation Centre
- **Friday 21 April 10am** – Woodland walk - meet at Coppice Hill car park
- **Wednesday 6 May 10:30am**– Woodland management at Beacon Park
- **Thursday 7 May 10am** – Tick surveying. Location to be confirmed
- **Monday 18 May 8am** – Bird walk led by the West Midlands Bird Club, meet at Seven springs car park
- **Thursday 21 May 10am**– Woodland management at Shoal Hill Common
- **Monday 5 June 10am**– Woodland management at Shoal Hill Common
- **Friday 10 July 10am** – Shoal Hill walk looking at the bundle beeches planted by volunteers followed by the annual volunteer lunch at Shoal Hill Tavern at midday (booking essential)



Birch removal at Hednesford Hills, photo courtesy of Roger Marsh

For all practical tasks, tools and equipment is provided. Please wear suitable clothing and footwear. Contact Emma on 01785 619186

Peace and tranquillity work

A study in 2010 was undertaken by volunteers to map the peace and tranquillity of Cannock Chase AONB.

This year we are repeating this study over a twelve month period, surveying people on the Chase to find out their views on which areas are most peaceful and those that are less so.



Photo courtesy of Ian Jones

Volunteers have been surveying people at various times of the year, at different locations of the Chase. The survey consists of just two or three questions. To find out more about the methodology behind this or to become involved contact Emma on 01785619186 or email emma.beaman@staffordshire.gov.uk

To view the previous report visit our website www.cannock-chase.co.uk and look under publications.

Fixed point photography 10 year anniversary

2014 marked the tenth anniversary of our 'fixed point photography monitoring project'. The project was developed in 2004 to monitor landscape change throughout Cannock Chase AONB over a period of time.



Over 40 volunteers are actively involved in taking photographs twice a year from 56 points in the AONB.

This year a number of the photos have been printed and displayed in the visitor centres throughout the Chase. If you would like to get involved in the project contact Emma on 01785619186 or email emma.beaman@staffordshire.gov.uk.

Tick Collecting in Cannock Chase AONB

Public Health England is planning to carry out a survey of ticks in National Parks and AONBs throughout England and Wales, to determine the prevalence of Lyme's disease-causing bacteria in ticks in these areas.

Last year, with the help of volunteers, ticks were collected from 16 National Parks & AONBs around England and Wales, giving information which will be used to assess the risk to humans of being infected when bitten by ticks in different regions of the country.



A tick

The project is being repeated in 2015 and as it covers a considerable part of the UK, Cannock Chase AONB is getting involved in this.

Volunteers are needed on Thursday 7 May at 10am to help collect around 100 ticks from vegetation, then to send them to us for testing.

As ticks are numerous at this time of year, it hopefully will not take up much of your time. Instructions and materials required for tick collection will be provided as well as containers

for sending ticks back to us.

If you would like to help us in this important work, please contact Emma on 01785 619186 or email emma.beaman@staffordshire.gov.uk



Focus on Diane Nelson, AONB Volunteer

Q1 What is your role within the AONB?

I volunteer to help complete surveys, take photos and provide information for visitors in the hut at Milford Common.



Diane Nelson, AONB Volunteer

Q2 How long have you volunteered with the AONB and what exciting things have you got up to?

I have been a volunteer since I retired, about 6 years ago. I have especially enjoyed helping at “The Living Symphonies” project and taking photos for use by the AONB. I also liked completing a survey with photos of “Ancient and Notable” trees in the grounds of Shugborough Hall.

Q3 What is the best part of volunteering?

I enjoy meeting other visitors to the Chase and discovering parts of it that I wasn't aware of before I became a volunteer.

Q4 What is the worst part of volunteering?

Completing surveys in the winter when it is very cold! However, we have found a place where we can get a hot drink part way through the survey which is invaluable!

Q5 Favourite place?

I like where the old trees are at Brocton Coppice and being able to spot deer nearby.

Q6 What makes you important to the AONB?

Hopefully my help in providing information both to the AONB and to visitors.

Q7 What one thing would you change about the AONB if your fairy godmother appeared?

I would like the Milford Hut to be used more by the public!

Q8 If you were Prime Minister for the day, what law would you pass?

To continue to support those organisations which look after our countryside.
To suggest all bikes have a bell fitted, to make others aware of their presence when approaching people on foot.



To find out more about the work of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Visit: our blog at www.aonb-blog.co.uk or our corporate website at www.cannock-chase.co.uk

Sign up: For e-newsletters email emma.beaman@staffordshire.gov.uk