



DARENT
VALLEY

SEASONS GREETINGS

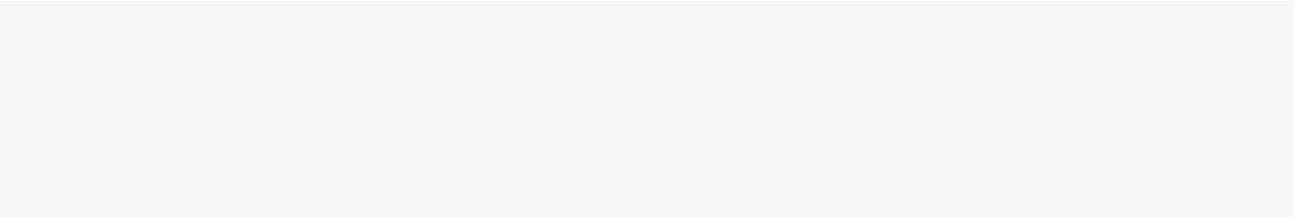
2020 has been a challenging year for us all.

With the backdrop of a pandemic, like many others, DVLP had to change the way we operated, and it has been difficult for a community-based project like ours to do everything we had planned. However, despite enormous challenges, we have all been busy delivering projects and working with partners throughout the year.

This news letter will provide an update on some of the work that has been going on behind the scenes despite the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in.

We would like take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and look forward to a more 'normal' and exciting 2021!

Anne, Antonia, Jen, Rick, Mary and Tim





ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE VALLEY

Although we were unfortunately unable to run our planned community dig at Lullingstone Castle in May, the volunteers were able to work with our community archaeologist and complete a geophysical survey within the castle grounds just before lockdown in March. The results will be made available in due course, and we hope to see the planned dig of the possible Tudor garden area rescheduled for later in the project.

In July the continued community fieldwork at in the fields adjacent to Lullingstone Roman Villa was able to continue, although on a very reduced socially-distanced scale. The volunteers did a fantastic job excavating two large

features (a chalk pit and enclosure ditch) which are likely of early Roman date and provide interesting insight into the villa's early history and wider landscape. Post-excavation work is continuing over the next few months, with the hopes of further work in 2021.

Our new online LiDAR Portal (kentlidar.org.uk) funded by Interreg 2 Seas ICAReS project and the Heritage Fund was also successfully launched in May and has over 250 registered users and citizen records of possible features noted from LiDAR interpretation. This new heritage tool allows members of the public and volunteers to access and engage with the LiDAR imagery from home, recording sites of archaeological potential, which are then assessed in the field. At least one further online training course in how to read the LiDAR and use the Portal will be run in early January, and our team of landscape investigators will begin their work groundtruthing in the New Year.

Anyone who wishes to get involved in these or other heritage projects, including receiving emails specific to archaeology and heritage volunteers and becoming one of our LiDAR landscape investigators, email our Community Archaeologist anne.sassin@kentdowns.org.uk.



Watch our animation, [Peeling back the Layers](#), to learn more about LiDAR

[Read more on the LiDAR page on our website](#)



THE GREAT VETERANS OF LULLINGSTONE

Natural England define veteran trees as “ a tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of it’s age, size or condition” and Lullingstone Country Park is home to many of them.

During the spring and summer this year a survey of the veteran trees at Lullingstone Country park has been completed. During the survey all of the veteran trees were surveyed, assessed and recorded by an arboriculture expert. The results of these surveys will be used to manage the trees across the park and preserve them for the future.

Many of the trees at Lullingstone are over 500 years old and indeed there are a significant number of trees that are over 700 years old. One tree has been aged at 1014 years in 2012 (DR A. MOIR- DENDROCHRONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF OAK TREES AT LULLINGSTONE COUNTRY PARK, EYNSFORD KENT). This tree was also highlighted in a report carried out in 2000 by Ted Green and Jill Butler stating that "...on a world scale this is one of the top fifty oaks for age, size and wildlife value".

As part of the project we are working with KCC Country Parks and Lullingstone Golf Club to preserve and manage the 1,000 year oak as well as others at the country park so that they can be enjoyed by many and provide essential habitat for many species of plant, animal and fungi into the future.

We are also working with Forestry Commission to deliver an introductory webinar on Oak Processionary Moth. The Oak Processionary Moth poses a threat to the Veteran Oak trees in the Darent Valley and it is hoped that a working group and rapid response system can be put in place across the valley to protect the precious oak trees in the future. More on this can be found in the Events Section below.

[Read More](#)

Read more on the [Great Veterans of Lullingstone project](#)



PRESTON HILL FIRING RANGE

If you go up to Preston Hill you are in for a big surprise! The firing range at Preston Hill has been hidden amongst the scrub and grasses for many a year, it would have

been easily missed if walking on the downs in the area. Now thanks to the efforts of the KCC Country Parks volunteers and staff it has been uncovered and is now easy to view from Preston Hill Country Park.

The firing ranges that remain at the Preston Hills rifle range provide a good cross section of buildings and earthworks associated with the development of rifle ranges from the late 19th Century into the 20th Century. Preservation is generally very good (especially in the markers' gallery), although there is structural damage to the 100 yard position and mantelet, while the 500 yard position is in serious disrepair. There is some difficulty in assigning specific periods of construction to individual elements within the range, but certain factors might provide clues to this extent. The main target area, the 100 yard position and the 300 yard position are all constructed with English bond – these three features all have seven firing platforms or targets and may have been built contemporaneously. The Target store, of Sussex bond, with its roof of corrugated tin, suggests a later build date, perhaps related to the Great War or Second World War. The historic maps therefore, provide the best dating of the features.

DVLPS and KCC country Parks are developing a waymarked trail around Preston Hill which will take in the rifle ranges.

Read more on the [Preston Hill project](#)

Interreg 
EUROPEAN UNION
2 Seas Mers Zeeën

EU FUNDED PROJECTS CONTINUING PARTNERSHIPS

Despite the pandemic preventing our meetings in Europe going ahead the projects are still moving forward at pace.

Here at DVLP we are working on two main Interreg 2 Seas (EU) funded projects: [SCAPE](#) (Shaping Climate change Adaptive PlacEs) and [Triple C](#) (Climate resilient Community-based Catchment planning and management)". Both are part of the Interreg 2Seas programme and work with partners from Belgium and the Netherlands. Predominantly concerned with adapting landscape for climate change we are working on a number of projects from chalk grassland restoration and hedgerow planting to river restoration and Natural Flood Management.

Project progress is going well and we hope to be able to report more in the upcoming newsletters.



Watch our [drone footage of the wetland creation works](#) at Preston Farm.

[Read More](#)

Read more about our [Restoring the River Darent project](#)



Nature Recovery Programme

During the summer, The Quadrangle ran a series of nature recovery workshops in the Darent Valley for those communities most impacted by the Coronavirus crisis, supported by the DVLPS. Workshop attendees included families with young children from inner London who have spent lock-down in confined spaces with little access to green spaces, teenagers and young people between 14 to 25 years old who have experienced high levels of stress and feelings of isolation and frontline workers who have experienced high levels of stress and exhaustion through the Covid-19 crisis. The need for these types of workshops continues and we hope to run further nature recovery workshops during 2021. Here are just a few testimonials from those who attended:

“What a wonderful space. We had an amazing time just relaxing in nature, enjoying the surroundings and swimming in the beautiful stream. The kids forgot they even had screens during the time we were there and it was so fantastic to watch them just spending time with each other and exploring the fruitful forest garden. Thank you.”

“Just lying in the grass and falling asleep. Regenerating. Affirming. Aligning. Balancing ... The children, their freedom, their peace of mind...”

“All through this pandemic I've worked with the children of parents who have been sick. I have been away from home living in a block of flats. So getting this space has been a godsend, and answer to my prayers to have downtime for my own mental health and well-being.”

“Retreats of this nature are needed more than ever. They should become a recommendation for all Healthcare worker and highly promoted in maintaining our wellbeing. All sessions were delivered with clarity, love and wisdom and has really helped me to deepen my appreciation of how nature nurtures us daily.”

[Read More](#)

Find out more on [The Quadrangle's website](#)



Jewels in the Downs

Kent Wildlife Trust have been hard at work across their Chalk Grassland reserves in the Valley. Work has included scrub clearance and fencing which will enable grazing to be carried out at several important chalk grassland sites, this grazing will help to reduce scrub regrowth and promote the diversity of chalk grassland species using the site.

Work at Green Hill in Kemsing is set to start in the New Year, new fencing will enable grazing to be continued on the site which will enable the upkeep of this special Chalk Grassland site.

Working with Butterfly Conservation, North West Kent Countryside Partnership and Kent Wildlife Trust, plans are being put in place to clear some of the scrub and install fencing so that White Hill can be looked after in the future. NWKCP volunteers will be on site this winter with Volunteers from Butterfly Conservation to carry out some vegetation on the site.

These vital works are funded by Interreg 2 Seas SCAPE and the Heritage Fund

[Read More](#)

Find out more about our [Jewels in the Downs project](#)



Landscape Apprentices

Supported by funding from DVLP, three Landscape Apprentices have recently completed their placement at Kent Wildlife Trust. They have been working on several projects on Kent Wildlife Trust reserves.

Eddie said: "When I applied for this traineeship, I was hoping to gain the knowledge and experience necessary to become a nature reserve warden. I soon found out the role of trainee warden was multi-faceted and I would be gaining experience in arboriculture, ecology, conservation, leadership, GGIS, livestock management and more! Not only this but developing practical skills involving brushcutters, chainsaws, mowers, hand tools, fencing, trapping and off-road driving. In my opinion the traineeship is an excellent way to start a career in

becoming a nature reserve warden but it also a great way to start a career in variety of other occupations such as ecologist, botanist or arborist"

Suzanne said: "Even when I was cold and soaked through it was still a great experience, you learn quickly that it's not the weather that's the problem it's your clothes! Paul and Susanna and all the regular volunteers were very welcoming and knowledgeable. Everyone made my experience extremely enjoyable and valuable. All I really want to say is a very big thank you to all the Sevenoaks team."

Sylvie said: "Needless to say, my experience as a volunteer trainee warden has more than supported my studies at college. It has helped bring better meaning and context to what I have been learning and, hopefully, I've been able to bring some of that learning back with me to the job. I'd do it all again if I could!"

in 2020/21 we are pleased to be supporting four more landscape apprentices, three of whom will be working with North West Kent Countryside Partnership and one with the KCC Country Parks team. We look forward to hearing about what they learn from their placements.

EVENTS SECTION

We are currently developing our full events programme for 2021. Keep an eye on our website and social media for updates.



WEBINAR

OAK PROCESSIONARY MOTH IN KENT- AN INTRODUCTION

1.

Tuesday 12th January 2021 11:00 – 12:30

Learn more about the distribution, spread and threats caused by Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) with this Free introductory webinar.

[Read More](#)

Find out more about the [Oak Processionary Moth webinar](#) and sign up

For more details on the projects in this email or for more information on working with the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership please email darent.valley@kentdowns.org.uk.



Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme

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DVLPS is a Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Project

