

Stroud Valleys Project

Celebrating 30 years

Enriching lives, transforming place



30 Stroud
Valleys
Project

Celebrating Thirty Years

Stroud Valleys Project - Celebrating 30 Years

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www.stroudvalleysproject.org

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Designed, written and picture edited by Deborah Roberts

Cover Image: View of Stroud and the Slad Valley from Swift's Hill
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FOREWORD

The following pages illustrate the range and diversity of our activities. That such a small charity can undertake so much is a tribute to the expertise and dedication of our staff together with the exceptional contribution made by our volunteers.

The book is not intended to be a detailed historical account of everything that Stroud Valleys Project has achieved. The organisation has engaged in so many projects, initiatives and developments in the last 30 years, it has not been possible to provide details of all the activities and people involved. However, we hope that this publication provides an engaging overview, conveys a sense of celebration and a rich visual account of the impact that Stroud Valleys Project has made on local communities and individuals.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has had a connection with our organisation over the last 30 years for their contribution. All the staff, trustees, volunteers, learners and friends who supported the organisation have enabled us to achieve a huge amount to benefit Stroud over the last 30 years.

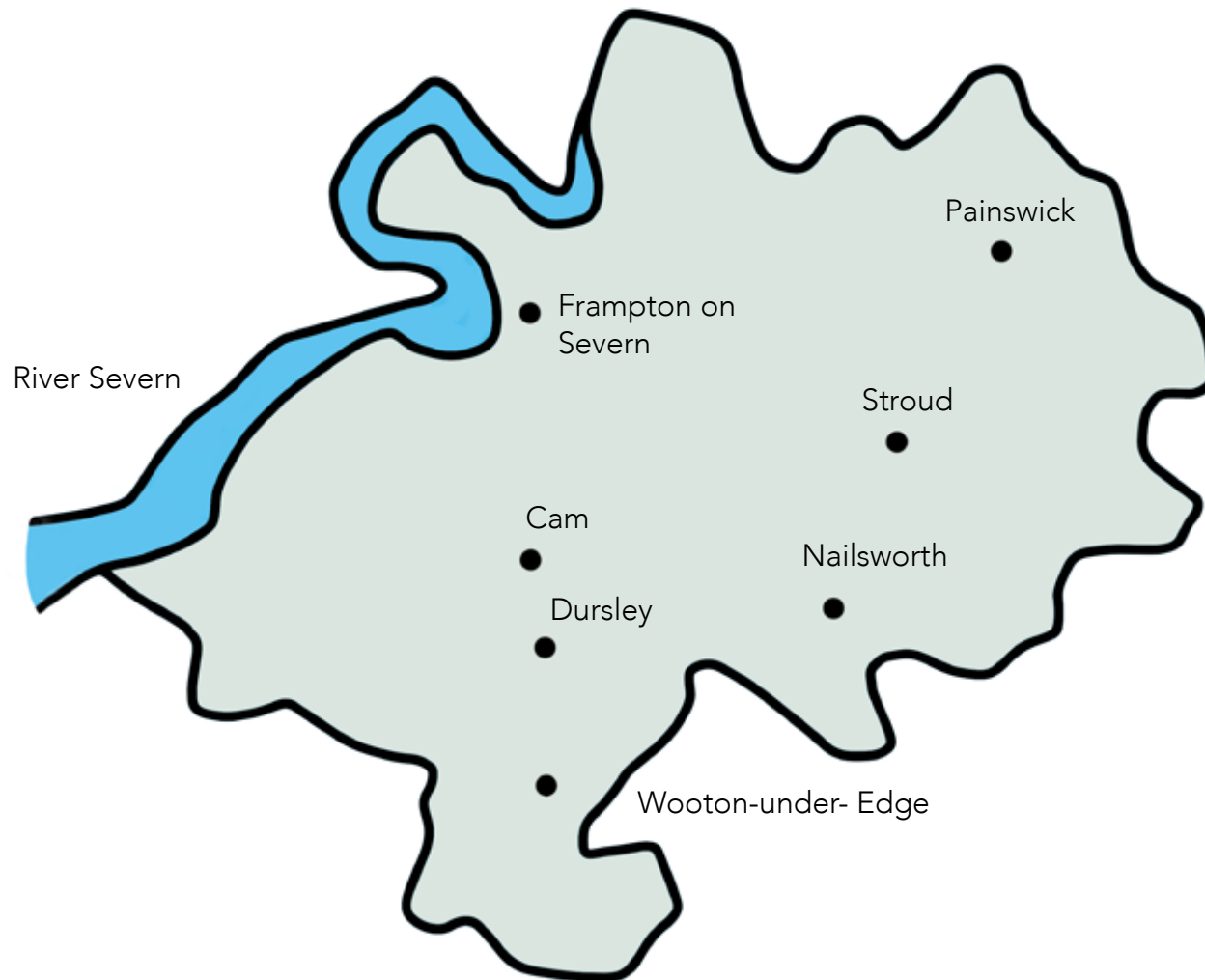
Special thanks to Deb Roberts for the production of this beautiful book

Clare Mahdiyone and Leonora Rozee
CEO and Chair of Trustees
Stroud Valleys Project



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Stroud Valleys Project has worked at an extensive range of sites across the Stroud District over its 30 year history.

Celebrating the First Thirty Years

2018 marks the 30th anniversary of the foundation of Stroud Valleys Project. Thirty years! Such longevity is worth celebrating in itself. Community-based organisations constantly struggle to obtain the funding they need, and for Stroud Valleys Project to maintain continuity for so many years is a remarkable achievement.

For three decades this environmental charity has played a key role in many projects to preserve and enhance the uniqueness of this area. If you consider some of the things that make the Stroud District so special, such as the beautiful and diverse natural environment, the rich industrial and social heritage, you will find that Stroud Valleys Project has frequently made a contribution to maintaining and developing them.

Stroud Valleys Project is itself one of the vital forces that contribute to the unique character of these valleys.

This book is a celebration of the major achievements of the first 30 years and the difference the organisation has made to lives of local people. However, more than a look backwards, it is also intended to provide a view of the many projects, initiatives and activities that Stroud Valleys Project is currently supporting. A record of where we are now and where we may be heading in the next 30 years.

Stroud Valleys Project chief executive, Clare Mahdiyone, outlines the organisation's current aims:

Originally founded in 1988 to help protect the industrial and natural heritage of Stroud and its five valleys, we have since established a reputation for our work with local community groups and volunteers: helping, inspiring and training them to discover and nurture the wildlife and green spaces on their doorsteps. In this way, we are opening up opportunities for a much wider group of people to become involved in environmental improvement, reaching out to young and old, as well as to those previously cut off from such activities by disadvantage or disability.

Our strategy in pursuing these aims and objectives is to continue to:

- 1. Forge a greater awareness of environmental and biodiversity issues so that local people are able to influence local planning and policy-makers to ensure sustainability is at the heart of the local agenda.*
- 2. Engage as many people as possible in the work of sustainable development by working with local partner agencies and health providers*
- 3. Provide a lively learning resource for local people of all ages.*

One of the reasons that SVP is still acting as an organisation is that it has evolved with the times. Over a 30 year history there have been many changes and developments, however the central themes of environment, education and community run throughout everything that SVP has done.



Georgian Bridge



Arundel Mill Pond Sluice Gate



Upper Wallbridge Lock

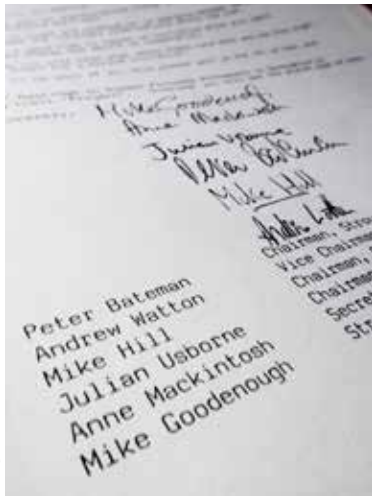
images from SYP picture archive

The Early Years

Stroud Valleys Project was established in 1988 as a charitable Community Development Trust with the aim to protect and enhance both the local built and natural environments by working with local communities around Stroud. It also aimed to embrace sustainable development and biodiversity. During the 1980s, campaigns of local action in Stroud had saved the town from unsympathetic developments and one of the incentives behind the formation of Stroud Valleys Project was to provide local people with a voice in future developments.

Members of the local community that led to the set up of Stroud Valleys Project included Anne Mackintosh, Peter Bateman and experienced campaigner Mike Goodenough. They went on to form part of the management committee for the organisation in its early days. They represented Stroud Preservation Trust, Stroud Chamber of Trade and Stroud Action Group. The 12 directors also represented a wide range of local organisations including the District and County Councils. Other groups represented were Stroud Civic Society, Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation, Stroud and District Civic Society, Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology and Stroudwater, Thames and Severn Canal Trust. A detailed account of the foundation of Stroud Valleys Project is provided in the publication *Stroud - a Town Changed by Community Action* by Camilla Hale, a former trustee and Dominique Shead.

The aims of the organisation from the outset were to protect both the built and natural environment and to encourage a greater sense of awareness and pride in the uniqueness of the area. In the early years there was an initial focus on



SVP launch proposal letter 1987



Chris Smith and patron, Prince Michael of Kent



Installing boardwalk at Frome Banks

encouraging owners to take better care of older properties by promoting new uses, particularly for redundant industrial buildings. Encouraging the sensitive development of the area's recreational and tourist potential and providing greater job opportunities were also key aims.

Chris Smith was employed as the first Project Officer for SVP in 1989. He was Chairman of the Association of Conservation Officers and brought to the organisation valuable expertise, knowledge and experience as a buildings professional. He acted effectively as a planning consultant, with the interests of the community uppermost. The 'String of Pearls' document of the 1980s had acknowledged that it was not just the old mills of the Stroud Valleys that needed protecting, but also the green spaces around them. One of the early projects taken on was the pond and area around Arundel Mill, which Stroud Valleys Project volunteer groups still manage today.

Other achievements, projects and developments over the years include:

- 1990** - Raised funds for the Wallbridge Upper Lock, restored masonry and brickwork and installed new gates.
 - Repair and Reinstatement of the balustrade at the Georgian Bridge at Lodgemore Mills
- 1991** - Frome Banks. A new Nature Reserve along the River Frome working with Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation (which became Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust)



Mobile Clean Energy Classroom, 1995



Staff, 2001 Deb Pearson, Clare Honeyfield, Caroline Aistrop, Chris Lewis, Karen Saunders, Paul Trimby, Tony Metcalf, Alex Fornal



Reed transplanting work at Stratford Park

Images from SVP picture archive

- 1992** - Launch of the Countryside Programme, moving the focus from the built environment to the natural environment with greater community involvement and volunteering.
- 1995** - Mobile Clean Energy Classroom, a specially converted trailer taking the latest non polluting technology (wind and solar power) to primary schools in the district.
 - Caroline Aistrop started working as Countryside Management Officer with Jagdish Patel co-ordinating projects. Caroline later became Director of Projects for Stroud Valleys Project.
 - The Kings Stanley Initiative. Putting ideas into practice with the planting of a community orchard, tackling the village's traffic problems, restoring the mill and managing Penn Wood.
 - Slad Valley Action Group - advised this campaign group on planning, community involvement and publicity.
- 1996** - Invited Greenpeace to bring its solar energy generator lorry to Stroud - used by Stroud District Council to power the council chamber, the first time a local authority had powered a council meeting with solar power.
 - Free Tree Scheme – native trees donated to 12 community groups.
 - Greenways Report for Stroud Town Council. This project involved identifying greenspaces and routes of value for amenity and wildlife. It also identified areas later to become community pop-up parks.
- 1997** - People and Ecology Project - combining adult education with biodiversity survey, strategic planning and practical action involving a number of parishes.
 - The Wildlife of Cam, Environmental Capital. Planning and mapping with communities at parish level. Created a parish map, installed kissing gates and surveyed for wildlife.
- 1999** - Helped local residents to set up Stroud Farmers Market, launched with funding from Stroud District Council. *"The Farmers Market is an excellent example of SVP working with local residents to develop local initiatives for the benefit of the wider community"* Clare Honeyfield, Market Organiser, 1999



Caroline Aistrop, SVP Director of Projects



View of the Slad Valley toward Summer Street



Shop sign at Threadneedle Street

- 2000** - The Stanley's Energy Initiative was set up to help local people to save on their energy bills.
- 2001** - Stroud Community Land Trust was set up to lease or buy green spaces and ensure long-term protection of sites.
- 2003** - The Social Inclusion Programme was set up to work with groups of socially excluded and disadvantaged people.
- 2004** - Severn Vale Biodiversity Project to create a network of wildlife rich parishes connected by wildlife corridors throughout 42 square miles. Work was in partnership with councils, communities, landowners, schools and other environmental organisations.
 - Ecoworks! Advisory service for business to help save money and the environment
- 2004** - Adult Education - a 10yr contract helping people with English and maths in an environmental setting.
- 2006** - Clare Mahdiyone became Chief Executive for the charity
- 2008** - Stroud Valleys Project became a lead partner for hedgerows in the Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan and trained up volunteers to survey hedgerows for the Severn Vale Hedgerow Survey.
- 2009** - Frampton on Severn Aggregates Levy Biodiversity Project with funding for a 2 yr project with 2 project officers.
- 2010** - SVP eco shop launched, opening the doors of the organisation to the general public. Overseen by Operations Manager, Deb Coleman; all the staff, when not out at sites, help out at the shop. They provide advice and support on volunteer opportunities, sustainable development, wildlife gardening and other environmental issues. Carloyn Buckley is the Project Office Manager and part of her work includes encouraging sustainable practices. The shop provides a wide range of environmentally friendly brands of cleaning products and sustainable goods.
- 2011** - Green Team: Open to all – a new project supporting people with mental health issues and tackling the stigma associated with mental health issues. This has lead to continued funding to the present day.
- 2011** - Get Growing! Supported by Big Lottery to encourage and support children in 20 schools across the district to grow, harvest and sell their own food.



Images from SVP picture archive

2009 - 2013 working to increase the biodiversity of the urban greenspaces in Stroud and Cainscross, new habitats were created at Hamwell Leaze, Lake at the Lawns, Summer Crescent and the Long Ground.

- 2012** - Connect and Create – continuing work in the Severn Vale focusing on hedgerows on the flight paths of Lesser Horseshoe bats.
 - Stroud Apple Town, a partnership of local organisations promoting local varieties of apple and organising apple events.
 - European Social Fund and South West Community Project, helping local people furthest from the job market find volunteering and/or paid work.
- 2013** - Received Octavia Hill Award from National Trust for Green Space Guardians.
 - Started to create The Walled Garden with Museum in the Park
- 2014** - Capel's Mill Community Project- we created a new green space in the centre of Stroud with volunteers and continue to manage the site with Stroud District Council
 - The Big Tree Plant – funding for 1000s of trees to be planted by different community groups around the district
- 2015** - Wild About Kingswood – in partnership with the parish council we created a wildlife area for people and Great Crested Newts.
- 2016** - Started work to create a Sensory Garden in Stratford Park.
 - Wild Classrooms encouraging children to get outdoors, teaching children about nature and the environment
- 2017** - Appointed a Navigator Developer, working in partnership with 50 charity partners.

Able to continue our work helping local people overcome barriers to enable them to volunteer and/or move into employment. Funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery in partnership with the Going the Extra Mile (GEM) project and the Gateway Trust.
- 2018** - Sarah's Field – partnership with Berkeley Town Council working to create a green space for the community.



images from SVP picture archive

Stroud Valleys Project celebrated its 21st anniversary in 2009. To show appreciation for their hard work and dedication, volunteers were taken on an outing to Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre.

Since its launch in 1988, the focus of the organisation had changed from buildings to the natural environment, with a keen aim to promote sustainability and protect biodiversity. Along

the way strong links were developed with other organisations, farmers, local schools, councils and with other charities through working together on joint projects. Work had been done with many dedicated volunteers throughout the Stroud district on an exciting variety of projects, including caring for wild green spaces, creating pocket parks, clearing ponds and waterways, saving neglected orchards, surveying hedgerows,

protecting wildlife havens - always with the idea to bring people closer to nature on their doorstep.





illustrations © S. Hazeldine

The Wildlife of Cam

In 1998 SVP adopted a new approach to protecting biodiversity, working with parishes to integrate local action with national and international strategies.

The 'People and Ecology Project' (PEP) encompassed all SVP's work with local wildlife groups to protect the biodiversity of their neighbourhoods. Cam PEP holds a special place in its history as it was a pilot project which developed good practices, showing the way for other parishes. With Cam Wildlife Survey Group taking a very active part, local residents were trained to survey and

monitor the biodiversity to help draw up a parish management plan outlining the practical conservation work needed to protect it.

One of the many other pieces of work organised during the project was the creation of a set of wildlife postcards to help people identify wildlife spotted in their area. Sightings were recorded in Cam's Domesday 21 Book of Wildlife. Other things to come out of the project was the set up of community radio station and a parish map recording the history, biodiversity and memories of local people.



illustration © Gill Littleford

Cam residents took part in the process of mapping the flora and fauna of the Parish. What was important to people about the area they live in and their memories were recorded. The image shows a small part of a large map - an artist's interpretation of the Parish of Cam and its history, illustrated by Gill Littleford in 2000



Image from SVP picture archive



Holywell Orchard

The images show volunteers on an Outdoor Learning course at Holywell Orchard receiving training in pruning fruit trees from Martin Hayes of the Gloucestershire Orchard Trust.

The site is featured as an orchard on maps dating back to 1888. However, the area had been neglected for many years. A project to restore it was launched in 2004 with a community theatre event aimed at bringing new life to the old orchard by re-enacting stories and legends about the site. Juicing has taken place on 'Apple Days'.

Stroud Valleys Project worked with the Council and volunteers to restore the orchard to a flourishing green site, more in tune with what local residents needed and a haven for wildlife. New apple trees were planted and dedicated to local residents. Two interpretation boards were made, one telling the history of the site, and the other explaining the apple varieties.

When houses were built around the site, a balancing pond was created to take flood water. The area was de-silted and replanted with new pond plants. The grassland around

the trees was also managed. Compost bins were made on site for cuttings of grass. During a return visit in 2012 orchids were found to be growing there.



Images © Deborah Roberts



image from SVP picture archive



Images from SVP picture archive

A quadrat prepared for surveying

Surveys, Hedgerows and Planting

A large part of our work has involved training up volunteers from local communities to survey wildlife. Surveys are based on standard survey techniques such as the DEFRA hedgerow survey or the Phase 1 land use survey, used by environmental consultancies. Surveys have ranged from hedgerow surveys, land use surveys, pond and Great Crested Newt surveys to surveying a particular path, such as the Nailsworth cycle path.

Surveys help us map what is there but more than this, they also enable us to engage, train and inspire local people. By taking people out into their local environment and experiencing nature together, an immediate bond with landscape and nature is made. Learning about the local environment is the essential first step in starting to care

for it. After that comes the preserving of areas and the creation of new ones to connect up wildlife from one area to another, helping species to move if they need to.

Many surveys have fed into parish plans and informed decisions about the importance of a local wildlife area, or have led to connecting up important wildlife corridors by gapping up hedgerows or planting new ones.

Nadine Smykatz-Kloss,
Project Officer



Surveys of stiles led to the replacement of many by kissing gates. Wooden waymarkers were also installed by volunteers.



CAM PARISH HEDGEROW SURVEY SHEET

Surveyors name _____ Date _____ Hedge No: _____

Don't forget to mark the hedge you are mapping on your map. Also mark the following on the map if appropriate: X if the hedge has been removed and A where access to the land has been denied.

1) Condition of the hedge: Tick the correct box.

☐ Stockproof	☐ Non-stockproof	☐ Derelict	☐ New

2) Is it being managed? YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes what type of management is it? tick the correct box.

☐ Laid	☐ Coppiced	☐ Clipped	☐ Flailed

3) If it's obvious that management was different in the past what was it?

☐ Laid	☐ Coppiced	☐ Clipped	☐ Flailed
-------------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------------------

Put a tick in the boxes which correspond to the hedge.

	YES	NO	YES IN THE PAST
4) Are there any gaps for a farm gate? Mark on the map.	☐	☐	☐
5) Is there a small gate? (ditch or kissing gate) Mark on the map.	☐	☐	☐
6) Is the hedge on a bank?	☐	☐	☐
7) Is the hedge on top of a stone wall?	☐	☐	☐
8) Is there a ditch beside the Hedge?	☐	☐	☐
9) Is there a pond within 10m (11 yards) of the hedge?	☐	☐	☐
10) Is there a wood within 10m (11 yards) of the hedge?	☐	☐	☐
11) Is there a big tree/ trees in the Hedge?	☐	☐	☐
12) Are there any shrubs on the boundary?	☐	☐	☐

Please turn over to list the plant species in the hedge.



image © Richard Lewis

images from SVP picture archive

Working across the Severn Vale



Volunteers were trained in plant ID. Surveys of pondlife monitored numbers of the rare Great Crested Newt found in the Vale.

Biodiversity and Community

In 2004 Stroud Valleys Project started working on the Severn Vale Biodiversity Project. This assisted 12 parishes in the Vale to create a network of wildlife-rich areas across 42 sq. miles. It forged partnerships between Parish Councils, landowners, farmers, the local aggregate company, environmental organisations local communities and interested parties to create a network of wildlife-rich areas. This promoted understanding between different groups ensuring commitment for the long term. This work helped increase wildlife-rich sites, connected by wildlife corridors stretching throughout the Severn Vale, for the local communities and others to enjoy, whilst enhancing it to leave an equally wildlife rich parish for future generations.

Social Inclusion

A number of projects have been set up aimed toward those experiencing mental health difficulties, young people and the disabled. Some people have gained experience

in the office; others have engaged in existing biodiversity work, particularly in areas identified as being of geographical disadvantage. Projects such as 'Green Team' have created open, socially inclusive groups for people from all walks of life, who enjoy working outdoors and learning new things. Working together in an open group helps reduce the stigma attached to mental health issues. Stroud Valleys Project has built a reputation for its practical work with communities and volunteers: bringing them into contact with their local environment, and providing inspiration and training to do something positive about wildlife and green spaces. There is good evidence that being out in the natural world can have positive effects on health and wellbeing. Many of our volunteers tell us that interacting with nature is instrumental in helping manage their mental health and we are pleased as an organisation to be able to offer opportunities to aid this.

Julie Wickham, GEM Navigator



image from SVP picture archive

Planting Trees and Hedgerows

District-wide tree planting projects have seen thousands of native trees planted at a range of sites, from Slimbridge in the west to Thrupp in the east. Community orchard groups have been supported and community woodland has been established. Other projects have included training volunteers to survey hedgerows and learn the art of hedgelaying.

In 2009, Stroud Valleys Project was made lead partner for hedgerows in Gloucestershire for the Biodiversity Action Plan, which involved checking the health of hedgerows in the parishes. Results of surveys informed the laying of new hedges and the maintenance of existing ones, filling gaps where appropriate.



Volunteers particularly enjoy planting trees and there have been several large planting schemes they have engaged in.



Education

Education and enhancing our volunteers' skills has always been a vitally important part of what Stroud Valleys Project does and in 2008, we started working formally in schools.

We became involved with the Extended Schools programme, set up by a cluster of local primary schools and started a pilot scheme running environmentally themed after school clubs and summer holiday activities. Around the same time we also began working with Gloucestershire County Council's Adult Education Department

to provide a number of courses, from family learning courses, which embedded literacy and numeracy in environmental education, to hedge-laying and permaculture courses. From this initial work it became apparent that there was a need to support outdoor learning in schools.

In 2010 we received funding for our project 'Get Growing'. This aimed to support school gardening clubs so that children could follow the journey of their food from the seed to the plate and encouraged them to

eat healthy, locally grown food. This later grew to include other aspects of outdoor learning in our education project, Wild Classrooms.

Tamsin Bent

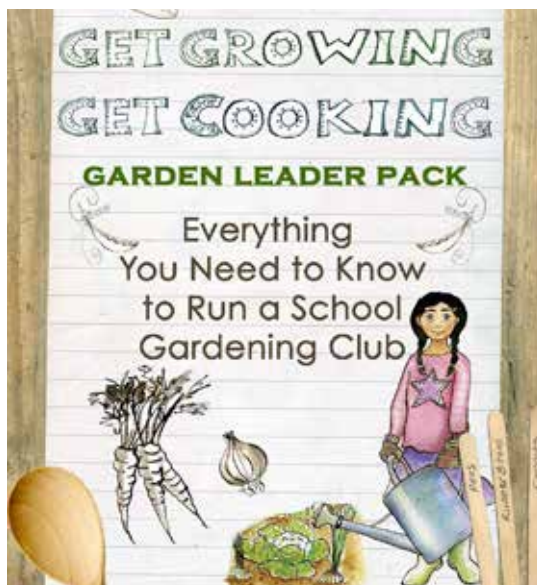


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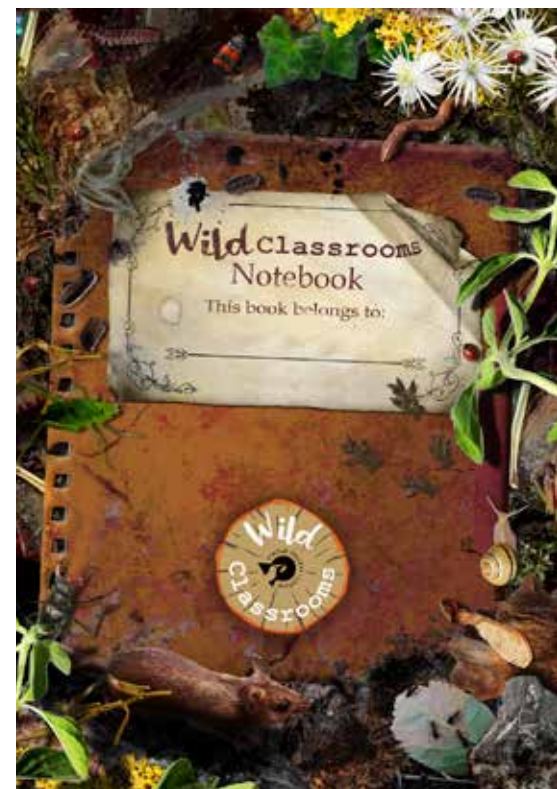


Get Growing, Get Cooking

We have been working with primary schools to encourage children to grow their own food. As well as growing everyday produce such as sweet-corn and strawberries, they have also grown wheat which they milled and then turned into bread. Hundreds of bread rolls have been made over the course of the project! Schools have been supported to run gardening clubs and 'Get Growing, Get Cooking' posters and garden leader packs have been produced, aimed at providing school staff with all the information they'd need to set up and run a club.



images from SVP picture archive



artwork by Sean Knox

Wild Classrooms

The Wild Classrooms project aims to support children's outdoor learning and builds on the foundations laid by earlier educational projects.

Launched in 2017, Project Officer, Tamsin Bent developed learning sessions and resources to focus outdoor learning. These resources have included seasonal posters and notebooks and, in 2018, a set of 5 themed

calendars were launched, aimed to help children learn about one plant or animal a month that they will hopefully be able to see locally.

Over the course of the project, in addition to work with schools, there has been work with other educational groups including Woodcraft Folk, Guide and Scout groups and the National Star College. There

Partnership work with local organisations has included Stroud Farmers Market, the Museum in the Park and Cotswolds Canals Trust. Since its outset, the project has created 2,300 learning opportunities

In the summer, nature-themed holiday activities have been provided with 'Wild Wednesdays' focusing on mini-beasting, pond dipping and walks.



Part of the Wild Classroom project has also involved primary schools visits to various Stroud Valleys Project sites, such as Capel's Mill and the Bisley Old Road allotment. These images show children from Stroud Valleys School, visiting the allotment during the summer, 2018. As part of the visit, they learnt about the types of food growing there and explored further using touch, smell and taste.



images © Deborah Roberts



images from SVP picture archive

The events calendar includes educational walks throughout the year. Projects have included training guides to offer the visually and hearing impaired opportunities to explore the countryside through specifically designed walks.



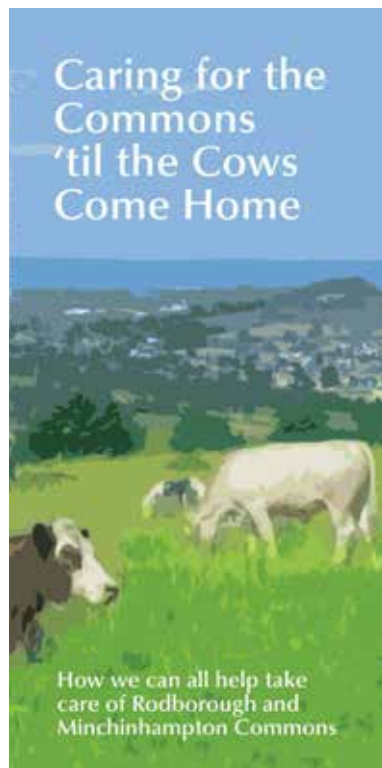
image © Deborah Roberts

A Garden Tiger moth at an ID event with one of our partners, Butterfly Conservation. An example of one of many educational events, talks and workshops held each year.



image © Deborah Roberts

Caring for the Commons



images © Deborah Roberts

Rodborough Common Conservation Project

Since 2016 Stroud Valleys Project has been working with Stroud District Council, National Trust, Natural England and Commons Graziers on strategies to help conserve Rodborough Common. In 1935 almost 40% of the Cotswolds were covered with wildflower-rich grassland. Since then, this type of grassland, found on Rodborough Common, has fallen to just 1.5% of the Cotswolds.

Because of its particularly rich diversity of flora, fauna and rare species, Rodborough Common receives European protection as a 'Special Area of Conservation'. As the population has grown around it, there has been concern about

the loss of flowering grassland due to increased pressure on this site. Stroud Valleys Project has been helping to raise public awareness of the issues and produced a leaflet advising people of steps they can take to help protect the Common. 'Marking Day' events have also been held with partners to celebrate the important role grazing cattle play in conserving this precious grassland.

An aerial survey conducted in 2017 showed that the extent of footpaths appear to have doubled compared to images from the 1950s. Botanical surveys of footpaths were also undertaken to monitor narrow paths that appear to be widening.



Cowslips and orchids on Rodborough Common and an SVP Orchid Walk on Edge Common with commoner, Paul Griffiths. SVP is doing work to help conserve cowslips, as this is the larval food plant of the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly.



images © Deborah Roberts

Wild thyme plays an important part in the lifecycle of the rare Large Blue butterfly. With the Back from the Brink organisation, SVP volunteers have been working to increase the amount of this plant growing on commons around Stroud.



Capel's Mill Community Planting Project



images © Deborah Roberts

A bare soil site transformed into a showcase of biodiversity



images © Deborah Roberts

Volunteers constructing a pond and swale at Capel's Mill under the supervision of Project Officer, Fred Miller, in 2014.

A Wildlife Haven beside the Stroudwater Canal and River Frome

Following the redirection of the canal through Capel's Mill, volunteers transformed this site into a thriving wildlife haven. Since 2014, they have planted over 500 native trees, maintained a wildflower meadow and canal banks, managed woodland, installed bat and bird boxes and constructed a pond.

Wildlife rapidly moved in to the diverse habitats created and the area has become a showcase for increasing biodiversity. Volunteers have recorded more than 80 botanical species, which in turn attract numerous pollinators. In addition to the birds, bats, reptiles, small mammals and amphibians, there is also a thriving community of freshwater and terrestrial invertebrates.



image © Paul Green

Members of Nailsworth Rotary Club planting trees, Winter 2014



Walk leaders Barbara Wood and Denise Gibbons sharing their enthusiasm for birds and insects at an event in 2018.

The network of footpaths and towpaths that run through the site makes this wildlife corridor very accessible to the public. Picnic tables and benches have been installed and interpretation boards provide information about the wildlife and history of the area. Wildlife workshops and events take place at Capel's Mill throughout the year. These include scything workshops, willow work, bug hunting, pond dipping and bat walks.

Over 100 volunteers have played a part in the transformation of the site. These include people from the general community, Nailsworth Rotary Club, Stroud Valleys Project Outdoor Learning groups and school pupils. Staff from companies, such as Ecotricity and the Ecclesiastical Society have also contributed on corporate volunteer days.



images © Deborah Roberts

Members of Nailsworth Rotary Club, managing the glade, Summer 2014



images © Deborah Roberts

Volunteers from Ecotricity at Capel's Mill scything the meadow to encourage the growth of wildflowers.



images © Deborah Roberts

Volunteers working at Capel's Mill. Children bug hunting and pond dipping during an open day event.



image © Deborah Roberts

QE II playing fields, Winter 2015

Ponds, Wetlands and Fields



image © Deborah Roberts

Volunteers on a teabreak by the new pond-dipping platform, Summer 2018

Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields, Cainscross



images © Deborah Roberts



images © Tamsin Bent

Before and After 2016 - 2018

QE II Playing Fields - Green Spaces for People and Wildlife

Since 2016, Stroud Valleys Project has been working with Cainscross Parish Council to improve Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields in Dudbridge for both people and wildlife.

From the 1920s the field was used as a playing field for the staff of a local paper manufacturing company, Copeland Chatterson or 'Cope-Chatt' to locals. However, by the end of the 1990s it had fallen into disuse and was sold in 2002, but with the condition that some of the field be used as a community outdoor space. The field was finally transferred to Cainscross Parish Council in 2011.

A pond was put in at the site to allow excess water to drain from the field, but over time, the area became so overgrown that few people even realised there was a pond there at all!

Stroud Valleys Project's volunteers carried out considerable work to clear the pond area of brambles and other invasive species, as well as reducing the amount of reeds which threatened to choke the pond. Other work at the site has included the installation of a dipping platform, planting a wildflower bank, making and installing a green oak bench and planting a native hedge.



image © Paul Green

Rackleaze Wetlands, Cam



SVP runs regular habitat workshops and wildlife surveys to monitor wildlife species and the effects of the work carried out, with the aim of improving habitats for insects, small mammals reptiles and birds.

As part of the management of the site, areas of bramble have been left to provide nesting areas for birds. The leaves are an important food source for moth species; the flowers provide food for butterflies and the fruit attracts birds. The reserve is a wetland area and inundated with water for at least half the year. Frogs, toads and grass snakes inhabit the reserve and the rare Southern Marsh Orchid can also be found growing here.

Rackleaze Wetlands - an Oasis for Wildlife

Stroud Valleys Project has been involved at Rackleaze since 1998, during which time, two in-depth ecological surveys have been carried out to establish what types of vegetation are found on the site. The surveys established that areas of the reserve are remnants of rare grassland and wildflower communities known as neutral grassland (National Vegetation Classification, MG11). These types of grasslands include enclosed and managed grassland such as hay meadows and pastures. Rackleaze also supports a number of other vital wildlife habitats, such as a small wetland area and pond, a mature species-rich hedgerow and a variety of mature trees. Running along one boundary of the site, the River Cam offers a further wildlife haven for a host of species.





images © Deborah Roberts



images © Paul Green

Boardwalks have been installed and managed by volunteers. Comfrey supports species of bees, but as it can be invasive, it is cut back once a year.



Images © Paul Green



images © Paul Green



image © Deborah Roberts

Reeds growing in the damp loam rich soil

Sarah's Field, Berkeley



Work in Progress - Creating Wildlife Habitats at a Community Site

In 2017 SVP commenced a wildlife project for Berkeley Town Council to develop and conserve land donated to the community, known as Sarah's Field. Work with volunteers is being carried out to create an orchard, pathways, hibernacula, ponds and a dipping platform. Benches, picnic tables and bird boxes have been installed. Visitors have had the opportunity to use an apple press, make a hibernaculum and see progress on making ponds and the orchard. Volunteers working at the site have learnt about pond construction and the community have been further involved, helping to provide old carpets to protect the pond liners. A management plan will be drawn up for the council to maintain the site for the future..





Images © Paul Green

Wild About Kingswood

The wildlife habitats that make up the 'Wild About Kingswood' project are owned by Kingswood Parish Council and managed on their behalf by Stroud Valleys Project. Green spaces in or on the edge of urban/rural areas are valuable refuges for wildlife. They have become increasingly important as habitats in the countryside continue to be lost. An important aspect of these habitats locally is that they support a small but significant breeding population of Great Crested Newt. These animals, their eggs, breeding sites and resting places are fully protected under UK and European law.



images © Paul Green

Project Officer, Richard Lewis retrieving overnight traps at the annual Great Crested Newt survey event. Other popular events include bat walks, pond dipping surveys and beginners scything workshops.



Image © Paul Green

A frog found perched on a volunteer's shoulder during a tea break.

The various wildlife areas at Kingswood are sensitively managed to maintain, restore and enhance habitat that is particularly supportive for Great Crested Newts. Grassland areas are cut at particular times of the year, creating varied sward heights and good foraging habitat both for newts and other wildlife.

Volunteers manage the hedgerows and new ones have been planted. Since starting our work at the site, over 150 feet of hedgerow has been laid. Volunteers have really enjoyed the project and passersby have described the lengths of newly laid hedgerow as 'A work of Art!'

Richard Lewis, Project Officer



images © Deborah Roberts

There are two orchards on the Kingswood site. One is a remnant of a farmland orchard before development and the other a newly planted, linear orchard. Among the apple, plum and pear trees there are 14 varieties.



images © Deborah Roberts

Allotments and Gardens



Bisley Old Road Allotment, Stroud

Stroud Valleys Project has been working at Bisley Old Road Allotments since 2011. Our plot was in an area that had been left uncultivated for several years and when we took it over, the grass and nettles were nearly waist high.

Initially work there was carried out by our women's group, Women Outdoor Working (WOW), a group started in response to a need expressed by some of our female volunteers. Other volunteer groups went on to join them in the work at the site, helping to put in a shed, raised beds and a polytunnel. After seven years of hard work,

the allotment is now very productive, with nearly thirty different types of fruit and vegetables being grown in 2018 and the produce shared out among volunteers. As well as growing food, the allotment has also been used to grow wild flower plants for other sites around Stroud and has been a venue for formal and informal learning by a variety of groups from schools to Woodcraft Folk.

Tamsin Bent, Project Officer



images © Deborah Roberts

The Bisley Old Road allotment is enjoyed by groups of all ages and abilities throughout the year.

image left © Deborah Roberts



images from SVP picture archive



image by Ruth Davey

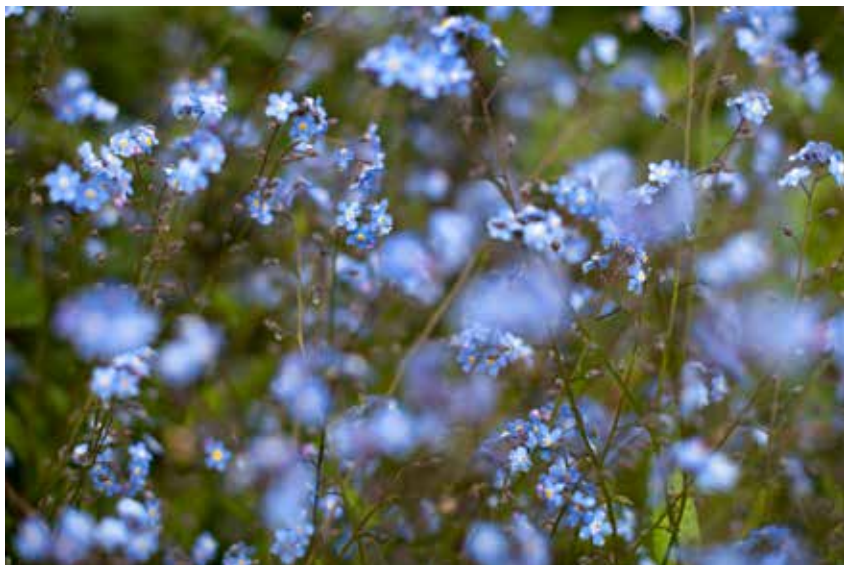
Regenerating the Walled Garden

The Walled Garden, tucked away behind the Museum in the Park, had become an abandoned and wildly overgrown, 'secret' space for many years. In 2015, a team of volunteers from Stroud Valleys Project, led by Katherine Hallewell, began working together with Museum volunteers to commence its transformation into a beautiful place for visitors.

When the ground that had lain buried beneath brambles, elder, sycamore and nettles since the end of the last century had been cleared, volunteers moved in to do

further groundwork. Paving slabs from the original garden were revealed and a meadow area and raised beds were created. Local varieties of apple tree were also planted in the orchard area.

The garden was opened in 2017 and Stroud Valleys Project are proud to have played a part in bringing this area back to life for the benefit of the community for years to come.



images © Ruth Davey

Part of the funding for work in the Walled Garden came from the Arts Council. Photographer, Ruth Davey was commissioned to record the early stages of the restoration project between 2015 and 2016.



Images © Deborah Roberts

Growing and Making



Work at The Beeches

A volunteer group has been working at The Beeches Day Care Centre for adults with disabilities, run by Gloucestershire County Council. The team has taken on the management and restoration of the market garden area that had fallen into disrepair. The group, led by Richard Lewis, have transformed the whole space, rotavating the polytunnel, restoring the greenhouse and preparing heightened raised beds. A 'Growing, Making, Selling' project will culminate in volunteers gaining experience of selling their produce at a market stall.

The group have been empowered by taking over this site, which has encouraged them to have more input into the work. It has been a great opportunity to gain skills and increase confidence working in this sort of environment. Lunchtimes can be particularly satisfying when meals and chutney are made outdoors there by volunteers, using produce from the garden.

This project is an example of one of the many places where Stroud Valleys Project has worked in partnership with another organisation to help them get the best out of their green spaces.



Images © Deborah Roberts



Bats, Birds, Boxes, and Benches





Making boxes for Swifts at The Beeches

Working with Wood

Volunteer groups have worked with Adrian Leaman at the woodyard in Tetbury to make a number of high quality wooden benches. They have enjoyed working at the outdoor site and have learnt a range of carpentry skills. Benches made using hardwood oak have been installed at various green spaces managed by SVP

Volunteers have also been working with wood at the large garden

shed at The Beeches. They have produced a range of habitats for wildlife, including hedgehog boxes, bug hotels, bat boxes and various sized boxes for different species of bird. The boxes are sold through the SVP eco shop.

Boxes have been primarily made from recycled materials and volunteers have learnt a range of techniques, using a variety of tools. Volunteers working on these projects say they have got a great deal out of the experience -

I've always thought I wasn't a particularly practical person, but with a bit of instruction and encouragement you find you can actually do these sorts of things. It's been a nice environment to learn in too. People of all ages and abilities work at their own pace, enjoy each other's company and there's a great spirit of teamwork.

Orders have been coming in for our swift boxes, particularly since SVP have been involved in helping to set up a local Swift Group. As the number of swifts has been declining, it's satisfying to know that you're doing something to help.

SVP Volunteers



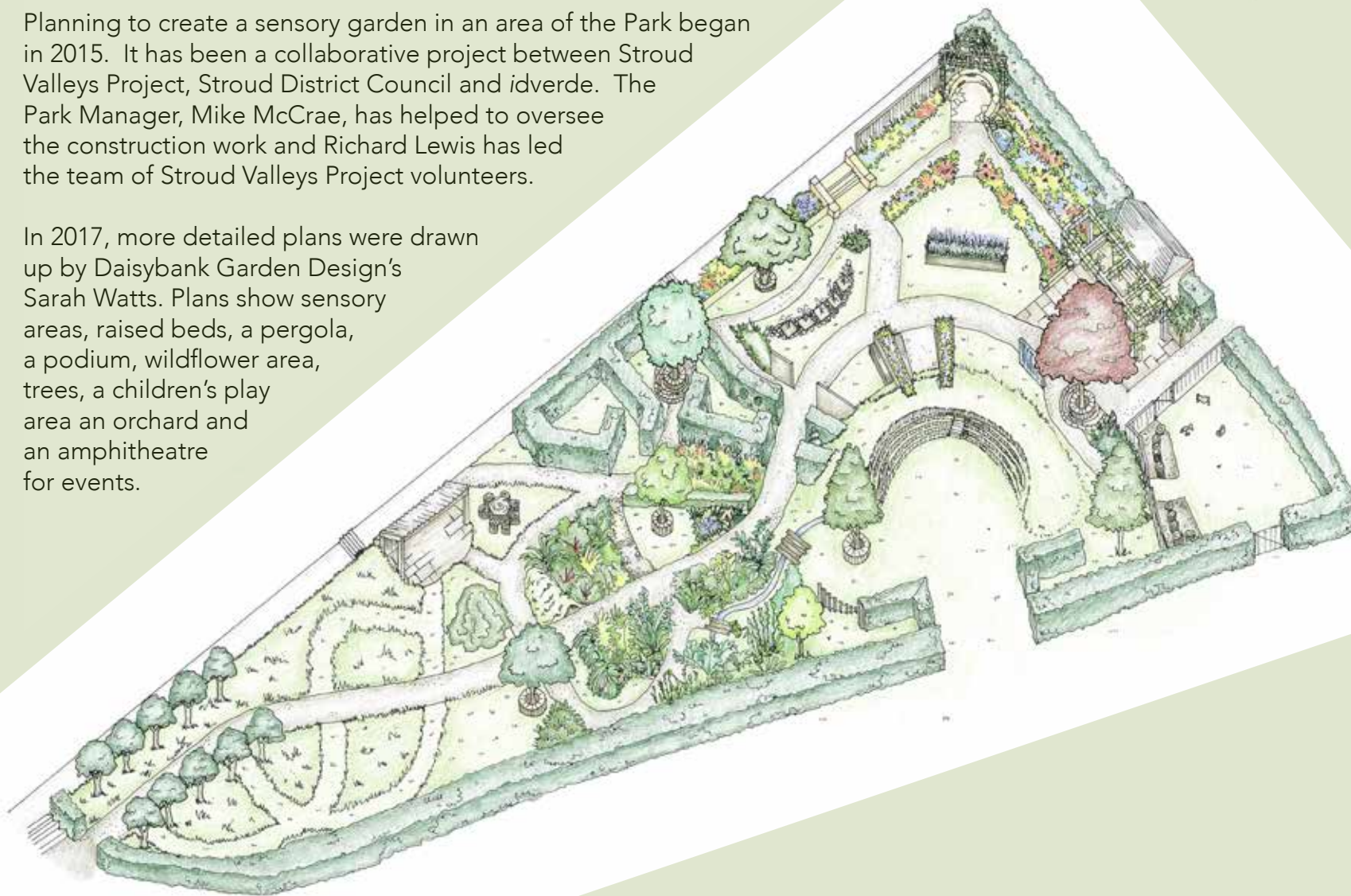
image from SVP picture archive

Numerous bird box making sessions have also been run at schools, community sites and events.

The Sensory Garden, Stratford Park

Planning to create a sensory garden in an area of the Park began in 2015. It has been a collaborative project between Stroud Valleys Project, Stroud District Council and idverde. The Park Manager, Mike McCrae, has helped to oversee the construction work and Richard Lewis has led the team of Stroud Valleys Project volunteers.

In 2017, more detailed plans were drawn up by Daisybank Garden Design's Sarah Watts. Plans show sensory areas, raised beds, a pergola, a podium, wildflower area, trees, a children's play area an orchard and an amphitheatre for events.





images © Paul Green

Creating the Sensory Garden

This has been a great opportunity for volunteers to learn a wide range of skills. These have included stonewalling using Cotswold stone and the construction of pathways through the sensory areas, suitable for wheelchair access. Planting has included six varieties of Gloucestershire apple trees which will provide fruit, blossom and extra colour to the garden.



image © Deborah Roberts

Stroud Valleys Project Volunteer Picnic, Summer 2018

The Sensory Garden at Stratford Park was an ideal place to hold the annual summer picnic to thank our volunteers for their hard work and commitment to the wide range of projects they have been involved in.

Following on from work at The Sensory Garden, we are starting to develop other sensory gardens across our local

community. We are just at the start of this exciting new project for our staff and volunteers with funding secured from the Lottery for four years. We will be working in partnership with local groups, supporting their volunteers and beneficiaries, to design and develop their own sections of the garden in the park. Our volunteers will be able to share their skills and experiences from the work undertaken



Gloucestershire Oak benches and a raised bed made with cedar from the park have been installed. Work on extending the pathways continues.



images © Deborah Roberts

so far with the new groups. One of the ambitions of the project is for people to use this work as a vehicle to improve their own sense of wellbeing. Additional support will be available to those who need it so that as many people as possible can access volunteering and experience the benefits that volunteering can bring.

Clare Mahdiyone, Chief Executive



Outdoor Learning with Julie Wickham



Friends of SVP on a Sponsored Bike Ride



Wildflower grassland conservation work

Community Fundraising - Supporting Wildlife and People

Julie Wickham has worked with Stroud Valleys Project in a variety of roles since 2005. She currently works both as a fundraiser and in a role helping volunteers who are furthest from the jobs market. Throughout its history the charity has provided valuable opportunities to vulnerable individuals with complex needs, enabling them to develop confidence, new skills and friendships.

Working with people whose wellbeing benefits so much from the charity's work, Julie is particularly aware of the difference funding of the organisation can make both in transforming green spaces at the same time as enriching people's lives.

We run a variety of fundraising activities and run an extensive events programmes each year. Local companies support us and we have collection boxes with sympathetic, environmentally friendly organisations. Walk leaflets are also available for a donation

Friends' contributions really help us and we have some brilliant local people who also give us larger donations and this is invaluable to our charity. We are also grateful to people who undertake sponsored events for us, such as sponsored bike rides and running the Stroud Half Marathon.

Julie Wickham





Volunteers in their own words

Volunteering is a brilliant way of not only helping the environment practically, but also helping you to keep fit, reducing stress levels and bringing people together.

I like coming out with you to help because I learn new things and always feel valued. It makes me feel better about myself.

Volunteering with SVP is the best thing that has happened to me in my life.

When you're retired, the days can seem to merge into one. Volunteering helps give structure to your week. It's good to be doing something that's worthwhile and see the results of things you do. Things are very easy going and you can work at your own pace. You can either work quietly or chat, nobody minds - there's a great sense of camaraderie.

When somebody has a bad day, the others in the team make them feel better.

Thank you all at SVP for the help and support you have given me in the last couple of years, which has helped me get back into employment.

Thank you so much to everyone who was so supportive towards me in a time of my life where I was finding it very difficult. I will always remember you all very dearly and how kind you have all been.





Grasslands of the Stroud Valleys exhibition by Deborah Roberts. Museum in the Park, Stroud, 2017. A family engaging in the picture quiz activity.

Nature and Art

Volunteering with Stroud Valleys Projects has inspired a number of exhibitions.

Drawing on his active involvement volunteering with the organisation since 2000, photographer Paul Green has worked at a range of sites including Rackleaze Wetlands and the newt ponds at Stonehouse. In the joint exhibition with portrait photographer Helen Green, *Lives Light and Biodiversity*, Paul featured images evoking a sense of these places and the work that goes into managing them to encourage biodiversity and make them accessible to the public. Other work Paul has exhibited includes his *Through a Hedge Darkly* project, featuring pinhole photography taken during a hedgerow survey.



Lives Light and Biodiversity exhibition by Paul Green and Helen Green at the Lansdown Gallery, Stroud, 2015.

Grasslands of the Stroud Valleys is a touring exhibition by Deborah Roberts that celebrates the wildflower-rich grasslands of the area and the work done by local organisations to conserve them.

I am one of the many SVP volunteers who feel that their lives have been enriched through their involvement with the organisation. I was particularly inspired by an Outdoor Learning course, volunteering at Capel's Mill, photo-documenting projects and events and doing display work from the office. I've discovered skills I didn't know I had to the extent that my career has completely changed. Now working as a photographer, designer and environmental conservationist, I'll always be grateful to SVP for the array of things I've learnt and for their encouragement and warm support.

Thank You to Long Time Friends

Some of our supporters have been friends of Stroud Valleys Project since the organisation began 30 years ago.

Tony Burton started volunteering during the early days, working for many years to conserve Frome Banks and the area around Arundel Mill pond. He is still an active volunteer and did more work this year with one of the Stroud Valleys Project teams, helping to restore an orchard in a neglected garden.

Mary Oram is another of our oldest friends. She was a pivotal figure in the Cam Wildlife Group and a supporter of our first work in the wider Stroud district. We have always appreciated her enthusiasm towards our organisation. When the wildlife group closed, its funds were donated to our Rackleaze Wetlands project. This funded the boardwalk that was constructed to improve access to the site, which was opened by Mary, shown below.



image © Ivi Szabo ova

At the overgrown garden restored by Tony Burton and other SVP volunteers.



image © Deborah Roberts



image © Helen Green



Some of the Stroud Valleys Project staff
outside the SVP eco shop in Threadneedle Street



The Chief Executive with Stroud Valleys Project trustees, the volunteers who take responsibility for the organisation.



Credits

Images:

Tamsin Bent

Ruth Davey / www.look-again.org
Look Again - Mindful Photography for Wellbeing

Helen Green / helengreenphotography.com

Paul Green / info@thresholdsphotography.com

Richard Lewis

Fred Miller

Deborah Roberts / www.deborahroberts.biz

Chris Shields / naturepl.com (Swift illustration, p.5, p.65)

Shutterstock (Bat and Newt illustrations p.3, p.5)

Ivi Szabo'ova'

Stroud Valleys Project Picture Archive

Thank you to the staff of Stroud Valleys Project for their contributions to this book and to the following people for their assistance:

Daryl Carpenter, Erin Downey, Marie Farquharson, Stephen Gillingham, Paul Green, Colin Grossmith, Mark Hewlett, Kel Portman

