

GOATWALK LANDTRUST

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2020

This summer has proved again just how fortunate we are to have the Goat Walk Land. In the years since the community came together to buy the land many of the other fields around the outskirts of the town have been built on. But our fields have grown grass, wildflowers and trees and how we have needed them during the current restrictions. Throughout the last months of lockdown and covid restrictions, residents and visitors alike have escaped to our fields for picnics or just somewhere to get out of the house for some peace and quiet. The fields have been such joy to so many of you and we are so lucky that they are there for the community.

During the restrictions our volunteers have not been able to undertake much in the way of maintenance on the land. Occasionally a single person has been out cutting off the head of the odd dock which has shown itself, but fortunately this year, due in no small part to the “dock workers” last year, the number of docks, thistles and ragwort have all been much reduced. We were therefore again able to produce a sizeable crop of hay amounting to some 18 large bales which will be used as fodder or bedding. This is slightly less than last year due to it being cut later in the season and a larger area of the fields being occupied by the trees. It is also likely that some of the reduction is due to a gradual



decrease in the fertility of the soil as a result of previous years' crops being removed from the land without any fertiliser being spread. The reduction in fertility will, over time, further reduce the grass growth and encourage more, natural wildflowers to become established which is part of the long-term strategy for the meadows.

The fields had paths cut through them again this year, opening them up for wider use. With a greater number and variety of wildflowers this summer the fields were, by general consensus, a picture.

The trees that we planted two years ago along the edge of the wood are now beginning to look like an extension of the woodland. The larger oak and apple trees planted in the Upper Field are mostly growing well and will be added to

this winter. The scrape in the lower field has seen a considerable growth in the small willow trees around its edge. These have self-sown and in due course will need to be managed or the scrape will fill up with debris and cease to drain the lower field. In the meantime they add to the variety of habitats at the margin of the scrape and will remain until we are able to arrange a working party to dig up their already vigorous root systems.

During the covid restrictions the Trustees and the Management Committee have still been holding meetings, albeit from behind our computers, and six of us were able to undertake an inspection of the land to update our maintenance programme.

In January, the Trust will be having its Annual General Meeting and this is the opportunity for members, to put forward ideas, ask questions and to hold the Trustees to account. If it is not possible to hold the meeting in the Matthews Hall we will hold a virtual meeting by Zoom. Members will shortly be receiving formal notice, and an invitation to any virtual AGM will be sent by email to members. Please let the Trust know your up to date email address so we can ensure you receive an invitation.

Under the terms of our constitution one of our existing Trustees, is due to retire this year at the AGM. Russell Osborn has been a valuable member of the Trustee Board for the past two years and he has agreed to stand for re-election. His hard work for the Trust is much appreciated by the other Trustees and we are very pleased to support his re-election. If you wish to stand for election please forward your name to the Trust by noon on 1st January, together with a brief statement of up to 80 words about yourself which we will send to members with the formal notice of the AGM. If you need any further details about what is involved in acting as a trustee please contact the Trust at our email address (info@goatwalklandtrust.org) or at our postal address; Matthews Hall, Fore Street, Topsham EX3 0HF.

Members are also entitled to submit resolutions for consideration at the annual meeting. If you wish to have a resolution put to the AGM you should also submit it to the Trust by noon on 1st January at the above address or by email and these too will be circulated with the notice of the AGM. The Annual General Meeting is your opportunity to hear what has been happening so please do come along or join the Zoom Meeting. The Trustees and the Management Committee will also be happy to answer any questions at the AGM and notice of these is not required.

If you would like to help and are not on our list of volunteers or if you would like to become a member of the Trust, please contact us by email or find us through our web site [<http://goatwalklandtrust.org/>], on Facebook or Twitter.

Chris Buckingham