

# GOAT WALK LAND TRUST

Matthews Hall Fore Street Topsham EXETER EX3 0HF  
Registered Charity No 1162973

## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2017

In December we held our first annual general meeting. It was well attended and I was able to report on the tremendous advances that have been made during the year. Mark Dant, the Chairman of the Management Committee also reported on the works which we are planning for 2017 and John Bradley presented our accounts for the year. Three of our Trustees retired and Mark Dant and Peter Gray were re-elected. However, this does leave one vacancy on the Board of Trustees and we are therefore looking for a volunteer to fill the position. There are also vacancies on the Management Committee which looks after the day to day management of the land.

The AGM approved an annual membership fee of £10 to cover the costs of maintaining the land and membership renewal forms are now being sent out. The Trustees were also asked to consider new names for the two fields rather than "Upper Field" and "Lower Field" and suggestions would be welcome.



A lot has been happening on the land since the autumn. The mixture of grasses and wild flower seeds which were sown in October has now germinated and the meadows are beginning to take shape. If you have looked carefully at the grass you will have noticed that it has not been sown as densely as one would sow a garden lawn. This

is so that the wild flowers are better able to establish themselves before the grasses take over and not due to lack of seeds or poor germination.

The two fields have now been separated by the erection of a chestnut paling fence with gates at the north and south of the existing hedgerow. The fence is intended only as a temporary measure until the hedge has grown and become established. A new gate has also been fixed at the southern entrance to the woodland so that the lower field is now fully enclosed and dogs can be kept from straying into it.

We have had some difficulty with the gateway from the Goat Walk. The archway is very low and there is an uneven step at ground level. Several

people have hit their heads on the lintel and, reluctantly, we have had to close the gate for the time being. This pretty gateway is such a feature of the Goat Walk that we do not wish to risk spoiling it, and hope in the long term to reopen it. We have tried notices, with little success, and are now looking at other options to try to prevent further injuries.

Our contractors completed the scrapes and cleared out the ditch in late September. This worked very well during the heavy rainfall that we had before Christmas, keeping the gateway puddle free and the fields accessible. It will be interesting to see what wild flowers become established in these areas over the next few years.



We have also undertaken further work on the existing trees. Some of those bordering Bowling Green Lane were becoming unsafe and needed work on major branches which overhung the road. The trees in the woodland also needed thinning to allow the others to grow properly. This has resulted in logs for firewood and piles of brushwood for wildlife (and for children to make dens). Fortunately the lovely old oak tree between the two fields was not as diseased as we had feared and still has many years of life left.

Our next project is the extension of the woodland. The Woodland Trust is kindly providing us, free of charge, with about 400 trees, which will be arriving in the week of the 6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> March. These will enable us to extend the woodland and plant the new section of hedgerow between the fields. We are intending to plant the trees on Saturday 11 March and all volunteers will be welcome. The trees are of a variety of species, but are only small “whips”, so the work will not be too strenuous. In the near future we will also be planting some larger trees in the woodland which are to be funded by a bequest to the Trust.

We were also fortunate to have received about 20 birds’ nesting boxes from the RSPB. Earlier this month, a joint working party of RSPB volunteers and Trust members placed these in the woodland and hedges for the start of the coming breeding season.

The Management Committee is also progressing with plans for a pathway through the woods which will be accessible by wheelchairs and buggies. The new path will need a shallow base to be excavated so that it remains usable during wet weather. This prevents us from laying it through the existing woodland which would destroy many of the cyclamen and damage tree roots. However, it is proposed to take it alongside the existing wood through the new trees so that, in future, part of it will be within the extended woodland.

If you would like to help with tree planting; would like to renew your membership; or want to find out about being a Trustee or on the Management Committee, please contact the Trust at [info@goatwalklandtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@goatwalklandtrust.org.uk) or at our postal address, Matthews Hall, Fore Street, Topsham EX3 0HF.or see our web site [ [www.goatwalklandtrust.org](http://www.goatwalklandtrust.org) ].

Chris Buckingham - Chairman of the Trustees