

# GOAT WALK LAND TRUST

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

## SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2017

After less than a year since we were digging the scrapes and sowing the grass seed the Goat Walk land is beginning to take shape and it was good to see people taking advantage of the fields over the Easter break.

Spring was one of the driest on record so early growth was relatively slow. However, rain at the end of April has helped and the fields are now covered in grass with many wild flowers coming into bloom. The grass is still a little sparse so there is room for the wild flowers to grow and multiply. The rain was not enough to fill the scrapes which are once again largely mud. They have yet to grow any distinctive vegetation at their edges but are working well in draining the fields and access ways.

Once again there is much to report on works that have taken place since the Spring Newsletter. The path, which will provide a route through the woodland accessible for wheelchairs and buggies was constructed in March with the help of very generous funding from the Market House Trust. It follows a route along the edge of the current woodland and then out into the field at its northern hedgerow. We also have sites for two benches and the Management Committee is looking at designs. Unfortunately our idea of having a seat cut from a single tree trunk will have to wait until one of our trees falls down which is unlikely at present!

Twenty bird nesting boxes provided by the RSPB were erected in trees and hedgerows by volunteers from the Trust and the RSPB earlier in the year. Now the trees are in full leaf you may have difficulty seeing them but at least one has been visited by blue tits.



Our volunteers were also very busy on the weekend of 11 March when more than twenty people helped plant trees for the extension of the woodland and to complete the hedgebanks between the upper and lower fields. The Woodland Trust had provided 400 saplings, in a variety of indigenous species, which we were

able to plant by the end of the day.

Further work has also been undertaken by our volunteers on the meadows. Wild seeds, disturbed by the ploughing, have taken the opportunity to

germinate, as well the seeds we planted. Unfortunately the thistles, ragwort and sycamore seeds blown in from the woodland, will cause problems if left. Our volunteers have been walking the fields and removing hundreds of these in order to give the grasses and wild flowers a chance to establish. Many thanks to all those who helped with tree planting and weed removal.

We were advised that there were two options for encouraging the growth of the wild flowers at the expense of problem weeds. One was the application of fertiliser, but as this would also have resulted in further growth of the grasses, we decided in favour of an early cut of the fields with the blade set at 4 inches. This would not reduce the growth of the flowers that we are trying to encourage too much, but would cut back the more vigorous weeds. The fields were cut earlier in May and this seems to have had the right effect as the flowers are still very evident amongst the grass.

We have always tried to keep the fields as free as possible of signs and notices, particularly those of a "Don't do ...." variety. However, the Management Committee agreed that it would be useful to have a notice board on the land so that details of open days, volunteering etc did not need to be pinned to the gateposts. We have therefore installed a notice board, made by local craftsmen, inside the main entrance opposite Riversmeet Cottage.

With more people using the land the path through the wood was beginning to show signs of wear. The route had become established by use rather than any plan and unfortunately it passed through several patches of cyclamen. With the closure of the gate on to the Goat Walk and the creation of the new path, there has been a substantial reduction in the use of the path through the wood and in places the plants are beginning to recover. The Management Committee has therefore decided to keep this gate closed for the rest of the year to help with the recovery of the plants and while we try to resolve the problem of the low lintel over the gate. We are also looking again at the entrances into the upper field from the road, neither of which is accessible to buggies or wheelchairs.

With summer now upon us we are looking for volunteers to help finish the repointing of the wall and to help maintain the trees which we have planted. If you would like to volunteer or become a member of the Trust, please contact us at [info@goatwalklandtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@goatwalklandtrust.org.uk) or find us on Facebook, Twitter or through our web site [ [www.goatwalklandtrust.org.uk](http://www.goatwalklandtrust.org.uk) ].

To help raise funds for the Trust, Triff and Mary Lambert have kindly offered to open their beautiful garden at Wixels in Ferry Road on 15<sup>th</sup> July so please make a note in your diary and look out for details nearer the day.

Finally I would like to thank all the members of the Goat Walk Land Trust who have continued their membership for 2017 and remind anyone who has not joined this year, that application forms and details of membership are on our web site [ [www.goatwalklandtrust.org.uk](http://www.goatwalklandtrust.org.uk) ]. You can also contact the Trust at our postal address, Matthews Hall, Fore Street, Topsham EX3 0HF or by email at [info@goatwalklandtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@goatwalklandtrust.org.uk).

Chris Buckingham