

GOAT WALK LAND TRUST

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

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2017

A year ago the fields looked bare but we now have a very good covering of grasses and wild flowers. The problem is how to prevent the grasses from crowding out the wild flowers. Our agronomists advised us at the start that the high fertility of the soil meant that there was a risk that the grasses would take over. So the Management Committee is looking at various options for encouraging further wild flowers in the fields next year. We will also still need volunteers to pull up the thistles and ragwort whose seeds remain in the soil and which will continue to germinate over several years.

Most visitors are keeping to the edge of the fields but, now that the grasses have covered the soil, walking and picnicking anywhere in the fields will be encouraged and next year we intend to cut temporary paths of shorter grass through the fields to foster the use of the whole fields,

During the summer there have been several working parties repointing the Goat Walk Wall. This is now in much better condition than when the Trust acquired the land and is better able to face the winter storms. We have also undertaken work on both the old and the new woodland. In the existing wood we have started basic maintenance, clearing some of the smaller trees to allow more light to the woodland floor which should help the cyclamen. We are leaving areas of undergrowth for wildlife and there are still piles of sticks for children to make dens.

The Management Committee has also started to identify and number the trees in the woodland. We have completed just under half and have identified 14 different species; do look on our website (www.goatwalklandtrust.org.uk) for details.



The favourable autumn weather has been kind to our 400 newly planted saplings which have not needed to be watered. As first year saplings, it is important to keep the area around them free from plants which would compete with them for water and nutrients. So in early November more than a dozen volunteers cleared the grasses around the base of each tree, turned the soil and applied a mulch of chipped bark. Fortunately we had a large pile of composted chipped bark which came from the shredded remains of the branches from last year's work on the old trees.

The saplings that were planted to form the hedge needed a little more radical attention as the plants around them had grown almost to the height of the young trees. However, they all appear to be healthy and have rooted well.

On Thursday 25th January the Trust will be having its second Annual General Meeting. It will be held in the Matthews Hall, Fore Street at 7.30pm and members will shortly be receiving formal notice. One of our existing Trustees, Peter Gray is due to retire this year at the AGM, under the terms of our constitution, but he is willing to stand for re-election. Peter has been a Trustee and a Management Committee member and is responsible for organising communications with our members and volunteers. The Trustees are very pleased to support his re-election. However, there is still a further Trustee vacancy, so voting for two Trustees will take place at the Annual General Meeting. 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.uk) or at our postal address, Mathews, 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. 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 become a member of the Trust, please contact us at info@goatwalklandtrust.org.uk or find us on Facebook, Twitter, through our web site (www.goatwalklandtrust.org.uk) or at our Matthews Hall postal address.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of the Trust and our volunteers whose hard work during the year has helped keep the Goat Walk Land a place of quiet enjoyment for everyone.

Chris Buckingham
Chairman