GOATWALKLANDTRUST

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2026

With Spring well and truly here, it's a good time to review the Trust's activities over the winter and early spring.

In January we hosted the annual Topsham Wassail, which this year included Morris dancing and warm cider as well as the usual blessing of the fruit trees. We were delighted that so many people were attracted to the event, despite the weather! A few weeks later, our volunteers pruned the apple trees. Each one is a different local Devon variety: there's a complete list of these on the main noticeboard and on our website at https://www.goatwalklandtrust.org/index.php/photo-gallery/apple-trees

We're hoping for a bumper crop this year!



Topsham Wassail 2026 –photos by Simon Briscoe

We had a very successful and well-attended Annual General meeting in February at which our members strongly supported the revised management plan for the hedgerows. This plan is described in more detail in the Autumn 2025 Newsletter, which is also available on our website at https://www.goatwalklandtrust.org/index.php/2017-09-12-17-09-55

We'll start implementing the plan in the autumn, after the end of the bird nesting season. However, you can get an idea of how the hedgerows will eventually look from the work on the hedge between the two fields which has already been done to protect the overhead utilities cables.

We continue to have problems with individuals sleeping rough on our land. The local Police Community Support Office suggested that we make it clearer that camping is not permitted on our land and make the open areas less attractive for camping. We've put

up notices saying that camping and fires are forbidden and filled the glade in the copse that had been used for camping with brambles. Unfortunately, as many of you will have noticed, these actions haven't deterred rough sleepers from using the copse. If anyone has any suggestions as to what else we can do, or has incidents or images to report, please email them to info@goatwalklandtrust.org

Our volunteer work parties have been very busy over the last three months. The heavy rain in January and February resulted in extensive flooding of the lower part of both fields. In mid-February, volunteers began clearing mud from around the main gate into the lower field and vegetation from the ditch along Bowling Green Road to improve drainage. Devon Highways completed that work in March.



The gate into the lower field, before and after work to improve drainage
Photos by Simon Briscoe

In addition, the volunteers spread nearly two tons of limestone scalpings along the wettest parts of the paths in the upper field to form a causeway. They have also cleared vegetation from the stone facing to the bank beneath the hedge between the lower field and Bowling Green Road. This has revealed the intricate stonework that has been carried out in some places and will make it much easier for us to repair those parts of the wall that are in danger of collapse. We are incredibly grateful to the volunteers for all the hard work they have put into these activities. If you'd like to join them, please email us at goatwalkvolunteers@gmail.com



Constructing the causeway Intricate stonework along Bowling Green Road
Photos by Simon Briscoe

John Harwood Chair, GWLT Management Committee