

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2021

When the Trust bought the fields adjoining the Goat Walk five years ago we had little idea of what owning the land would involve and just how important it would prove to be for the community. With the help of the Management Committee and with a lot of effort from our volunteers we have managed to achieve a quiet, rewilded space within the boundary of Topsham. The new housing developments on the fields surrounding the town are leaving little green space in the neighbourhood and as we reflect on the last five years it is perhaps appropriate to thank again the people who donated so generously in 2016 to buy the land.

Covid restrictions and a greater hesitancy to meet in groups has, for a second year, limited the amount of maintenance work that we have been able to do on the land this summer. However, despite our lack of attention, the grass and wild flowers have still grown in the fields and the trees that we planted continue to thrive. One of the goals of our long-term plan for the land is that the overall level of maintenance should be very limited. We had hoped that the rewilding of the fields would reduce the amount of work but initially this did not seem to be the case.

Over the years our volunteers have worked on repointing the wall, planted trees, removed thistles and docks, installed benches and many other jobs but this summer the land has been left very much alone. Only a little weeding of a few docks by individual volunteers was undertaken and, with the paths being mown and the hay cut by our contractor, there has been no need for groups of volunteers to meet.



For the last few years the hay crop has been used by a local farmer but due to a general surfeit of hay this summer our fields could not be harvested in time and the hay has been left to compost on the fields. Removal of the hay encourages the growth and diversity of wild flowers. So we will be trying again next year to produce a crop of hay which can be of use to a local farmer.

This summer the fields did produce one very welcome surprise – a Bee Orchid which was found flowering in one of the meadows. This is one of the most striking of our native orchids and it is the first time it has been recorded in the area. It was very heartening to see the results of all our efforts to return the fields to a natural meadow succeed in this small but beautiful flower. To a

casual observer the meadows remain mostly different grass species but gradually over the years we are beginning to see a greater number and diversity of wild flowers without any artificial seeding programme.

One less welcome event this summer was the storm damage to one of the older trees in the woodland adjoining Bowling Green Road. After a particularly strong gale we found that a large branch had been torn off, fallen over the wall and across the Goat Walk. Fortunately we were able to contact a firm of Tree Surgeons who dropped everything and were able to remove the branch and check the soundness of the rest of the tree that same afternoon. In contrast to this the new apple trees which we only planted two years ago did produce our first three apples.

With the Covid situation still unresolved, planning for our next Annual General Meeting is nevertheless progressing. Once again the Trust will be holding the AGM in January and it is hoped that this year we will be able to meet in Matthews Hall. Failing this it will need to be by Zoom as it was last January. The AGM is the opportunity for members to put forward ideas, ask questions and to hold the Trustees to account. 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 Member Trustees must stand for re-election each year at the AGM. Roger Webster, who is Chairman of the Management Committee was elected by the Trustees to take the place of Chris Finney, one of our Members' Trustees who sadly passed away in March. Roger has been a member of the Management Committee for several years, latterly as its chairman. His knowledge and experience have been enormously helpful to the 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 December, 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 December 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 join us. The Trustees and the Management Committee will also be happy to answer any questions at the AGM and notice of these is not required.

There is still maintenance work to be done on the land so 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