

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2022

This summer was the warmest in recent years and many people from Topsham and further afield have taken the opportunity to walk and picnic on the Goat Walk Land. Even though Covid is still very much with us, the restrictions have gone and opportunity to enjoy some fresh air in one of the last pieces of open country in Topsham has been welcomed by many.

Once again we were only able to carry out limited maintenance work on the land, but the grass and wild flowers have continued to grow and our trees are thriving. This year the difference between the lower and the upper fields has become much more noticeable. In spring there was little difference in the vegetation between the fields. Both fields had their docks and thistles removed by one of our working parties and both had a healthy grass crop during the summer. However, by the end of the very dry summer the two fields looked distinctly different. The number and variety of wild flowers has continued to increase, but the wild carrot plants in the lower field, were quite spectacular.



Photo John Bryant

The upper field which is higher and drier than the lower field had much less growth and continued to have a much more open, field-like appearance. Now that the wild flowers have all seeded, the grass in both fields is due to be cut. Like last year, because of the oversupply of hay, we have not been able to secure a contractor who would cut and remove the hay crop in exchange for the bales of hay produced. However, we have now found a contractor with experience in maintaining wild flower meadows and the grass will be taken off the fields and left at the edge. This will continue our programme of reducing the fertility of the soil to encourage the wild flowers. Next year we will aim to

produce a crop of hay which can be of use to farmers, provided there is not a surfeit of hay.

There is always a balance to be achieved in the management of the fields. The thistles are removed from the grassy areas which produce the hay. At the edges of fields the thistles are left as a food source for insects and birds only



for their seeds to blow across the grassy area and germinate into plants which we need to remove next year. With the increase in biodiversity of the plants comes an increase in the variety of insects, with butterflies being particularly noticeable this summer at the field edges.

Photo John Bryant

In June we were able to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of the late Queen Elizabeth by planting an oak tree as part of the Queen's Green Canopy scheme. The tree was planted on behalf of the people of Topsham by a wide variety of representatives of our historic past; its maritime history, the old families of Topsham, its elected Councillors, the people who started the Goat Walk Land Trust, those who manage the land now and, of course, children from Topsham School who will be the ones who will be able to enjoy and look after the land in the future. The tree planting is to be marked with a granite rock carved by Ben Jones who carved the "Welcome" on the granite pillar at the entrance to the woodland.

As Christmas approaches, we are planning for the Trust's seventh Annual General Meeting. This year it will be held in person on 25 January at the Matthews Hall. 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 together with the Annual Report. 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 at least one of our existing Member Trustees must stand for re-election each year at the AGM. Roger Webster is standing down as Chairman of the Management Committee and as a Trustee. Peter Gray who has been a Trustee from the start has now served the maximum term and he too must stand down. They have both given invaluable service to the Trust over a number of years and the Trustees are very sad to lose them. Fortunately they have both been persuaded to stay on the Management Committee so we will not be losing their experience entirely. The result is that this year we will be electing two Trustees at the AGM. If you wish to stand for

election please forward your name to the Trust by noon on 15th 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 15th December at the above address or by email and this 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 always 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 [info@goatwalklandtrust.org] or find us through our web site [<http://goatwalklandtrust.org/>], on Facebook or Twitter.

Chris Buckingham