GOATWALKLANDTRUST

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2025

It's been a busy winter for the Goat Walk Land Trust. Our fields were the location for the 2025 Topsham wassail, which was held on 16 January and attracted more than 60 people to enjoy the singing, noise-making and cider which we hope will encourage a good harvest from our apple trees. Those trees were pruned by some of our volunteers in February, under the guidance of Tattwa Gyani. A one-page summary that provides information about the different apple varieties is now displayed on the main noticeboard.

Our Annual General Meeting on 6 February was also well attended. It gave members the opportunity to meet the new Trustees, who are developing a long-term strategy for our land that, we hope, will encourage greater levels of participation and engagement from the residents of Topsham and surrounding areas, and result in increased membership, volunteer numbers and donations.

Members supported a proposal to have a mid-week working party every month. These started in February and have focussed on clearing the brambles, which are threatening to overwhelm the trees that were planted along our hedgerows when the Trust first acquired the fields. The next working parties will be on 24 April and 15 May. If you'd like to volunteer to participate in this work, please email goatwalkvolunteers@gmail.com

We are currently revising the long-term strategy for managing our hedgerows to take account of the need to protect the utility cables that run across our land and allow engineers from National Grid and BT/Openreach to access them. The first stage of this work has been to tidy up the fallen Turkey oak and reduce the smaller branches to chippings that will be used to mulch the fruit trees and suppress brambles.

It's been a good spring for flowers in our hedgerows and copse. The blackthorn, bluebells (although, sadly, they are not our native species) and arums are in full flower, but the spring squills (*Scilla verna*) are beginning to fade. You can see more pictures on our X page (https://x.com/GWLT2015). Goldfinches, greenfinches, wrens, chiff-chaffs and blackcaps are all singing, so we will be postponing any work on the hedgerows until September, when the bird nesting season is over.

John Harwood Chair, GWLT Management Committee



Chipping the branches from the fallen Turkey oak ……. and the final outcome