

GOAT WALK LAND TRUST

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2019

In February we held our third Annual General Meeting at which two new Members' Trustees were elected; Chris Finney and Russell Osborn. The meeting was, once again, well attended and in addition to the formal business of the accounts and the annual report we were pleased to have John Freeman to give a talk on the Great Trees of the Clyst Valley Project and Professor John Bryant, one of our Management Committee, to talk on Glyphosate. The Great Tree Project highlights the significance of old trees in the environment and, in particular, in our part of East Devon where there is such loss of trees and woodland for development. At a time when we are becoming increasingly aware of the contribution made by the numerous micro-habitats provided by old trees and the benefits of locking up carbon in trees, it was good to hear that in East Devon, at least, funding is being made available to identify and investigate the existing stock of old trees. It was also very reassuring to members to hear from Professor Bryant the facts on glyphosate which the Trust has used as a weed killer on the land. Thank you to all who attended and made it such a successful evening.

Work has progressed at a pace on the land in the last few months. In the woodland, we have removed some of the smaller and non-native trees and undergrowth to open up the canopy. Further thinning may be necessary in the future to allow our remaining



trees room to reach their full size. In the upper field a working party planted 20 new native oak trees, (*Quercus robur*). These are about 9 feet tall and will establish a woodland corridor along the north of the upper field. Although only planted recently it is good to see their leaves are already beginning to open.

The Trust was able to purchase these trees, with the help of a generous donation from the D K Clarke Trust for which we are extremely grateful. The 400 small saplings which were provided free by the Woodland Trust, and which we planted two years ago, are now growing well and are also beginning to shoot but it will be a few years before they reach the same size.

The week after the tree planting, our contractors started work on improvements to the scrape in the upper field. As the hedge between the two fields has begun to grow, the path between it and the upper scrape has narrowed and become very muddy. Concern had also been expressed at slope of one of the sides of the scrape. Our

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contractors have now widened and stabilised the path by installing some large rocks to form a new edge to the scrape and a gravel finish to the path making it much more accessible to visitors and buggies in particular. The contractors have also regraded the northern edge of the scrape so that there is a more gentle slope, making it easier for any dogs or small children that venture into the mud to climb out again.

It was good to see so many people having picnics on the land during the last bank holiday break but few strayed away from the edges of the fields. The Goat Walk Land is there for everyone to enjoy, however, with the long grass and our natural tendency to walk round the outside of agricultural fields, almost everyone stays at the edge of our land. The grass is now growing well and so we have recently cut paths of shorter grass across the middle of the fields. It is hoped that by putting paths across the fields this will encourage visitors to use more than just the well-worn tracks around the edges.

Last year's thistle and the dock seed-head removal was very successful in reducing the number and spread of these plants but they are still present. Further intervention will be necessary during the year as part of our programme to produce a wild flower meadow. However, this season we are expecting to have our first cut of grass that can be properly used for hay without contamination by perennial weeds.

More working parties will be held during the year and volunteers are always welcome. Please see the Trust's Web Site (<http://goatwalklandtrust.org/>) or contact the Trust at our email address (info@goatwalklandtrust.org) or at our postal address, Matthews Hall, Fore Street, Topsham EX3 0HF if you would like details.

Chris Buckingham
Chairman

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