

GOATWALKLANDTRUST

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2021

As we emerged from a very cold spring and from the Covid restrictions, so did the fields of the Trust. The coldest April for many years meant that many plants were late coming into leaf and there were fewer butterflies and other insects about. The chiffchaffs and house martins have been with us for a while but, as I write, no swallows or swifts.

Our Annual General Meeting was held online this year due to the Covid restrictions but 34 members were able to attend. Russell Osborn, who has been a great support to the Board over the last two years, was elected as a Trustee by the members for a further term. However, it is with great regret that I have to report that Chris Finney, who was a member of the Management Committee from the start, a volunteer on our working parties and latterly was one of the members' Trustees, died in April. With his background in agricultural economics Chris was a sure pair of hands on the Board and we will greatly miss his insight and expertise.

Managing the woods and fields requires regular maintenance work but Covid has restricted much of what we have been able to do for the last year. Individual members of the Management Committee have planted four more local apple trees in the lower field and some wild plums in a section of hedge which was previously all elms. The grass is now growing well and the paths through the fields have been cut. The Committee has also been able to organise work by our volunteers and in the last months we have been able to undertake three socially distanced working parties. The first was to cut back the edges of the access path where the grass was reducing its width. Although only a limited number of volunteers were able to take part, it was managed successfully and a second working party was mobilised to plant some more trees which we received free of charge from the Woodland Trust.



These were only received late in April but with little notice several members volunteered and the trees were all planted in one day. These new trees are one year old whips, the same size as those which we successfully planted in 2017. Their small size means that they are more likely to survive a dry first

summer than larger trees. The great success of our previous tree planting,

when only a handful of the 400 trees failed, gives us every expectation for a new woodland area in the higher field in years to come.

The final working party this spring has seen the turf removed and an aggregate base laid at the sites of the two new benches that we will be installing shortly. The existing benches have been much used by visitors during the Covid lockdowns and the Trustees felt that two further benches could be accommodated without spoiling the rural nature of the site.



The two scrapes which have been working successfully in managing the drainage of the lower parts of the fields still have small pools of water even after such a dry April and there is still plenty of mud. We have yet to see the scrapes colonised by frogs but having water in the scrapes at this time of year makes them suitable sites for frogs to lay their eggs, even if the scrapes dry up in mid-summer. The willows and oak trees on the margins of the lower scrape now need to be controlled and this is one of the several tasks which the Management Committee has on its list for the summer.

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

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