

# GOAT WALK LAND TRUST

## AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2019

This summer the fields have shown the results of all the work that our volunteers have undertaken in the past three years. The ragwort which was so evident in our first year has not been a problem and last year's crop of thistles was noticeably absent. The grass has grown well and with the paths that we cut through the meadows, much more use has been made of the whole of the fields, rather than just the well-worn paths around the edges.



The problem weeds this year have been the docks. Last year our hay crop contained too many perennial weeds to be of any use so it was important that this year the seed heads of the docks were removed before the hay was cut and again later in the year to reduce the spread of docks across the land. Once again our volunteers stepped up to the mark and organised

working parties to remove the docks. This resulted in a hay crop of excellent quality and the two fields produced 26 large bales which amounted to about 9 tons. Not only could it be put to productive use as fodder, but this meant that it was removed from the land thereby reducing the fertility of the soil, which is so important to our long-term objective of encouraging wild flowers.

The trees that we planted as one year old whips in the Lower Field and the larger oak trees planted in the Upper Field are growing well so we are now able to move on to our next project which is to add some apple trees in the lower field. After much research into local apple varieties and finding a source for these historic apples, we



have now placed an order for six trees of different varieties to arrive this winter, including "Tom Putt", "Star of Devon" and Upton Pyne". The last two varieties

were developed in Topsham's orchards and so are truly local. The apples are a mixture of cider or juice, eating and cooking apples, but they will not be producing fruit for five to six years so we will need to be patient.

The scrape in the lower field has been largely dry during the summer but the conditions appear to have been ideal for growing willows. However, most of these will need to be removed in order to maintain the scrape for drainage and for wild flowers. In the Upper Field much of the existing vegetation was removed from the sides of the scrape when it was reshaped. The Management Committee has therefore decided to encourage the growth of more wild flowers at the margins of the scrape by introducing seeds from plants which would naturally grow in wet areas. We have found a company which can supply native varieties from sustainable sources which we hope will colonise the edges of the scrapes.

After the last session of dock removal, the Trustees and volunteers made proper use of the fields by having a picnic in the Lower Field. We thoroughly enjoyed our lunch on what was an extremely hot day but were agreed on the need for some larger trees to provide more shade ....which is, of course, what we will have in due course. My thanks again to all our volunteers who do not always have such lovely weather when working on the land

On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 the Trust will be having its Annual General Meeting. It will be held in the Matthews Hall at 7.30pm and members will shortly be receiving formal notice. Under the terms of our constitution one of our existing Trustees, Peter Gray, is due to retire this year at the AGM but he is willing to stand for re-election. Peter has been a Trustee and a Management Committee member from the start. His hard work for the Trust is much appreciated by the other 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 1<sup>st</sup> January, 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](mailto:info@goatwalklandtrust.org)) or at our postal address, Mathews, 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 1<sup>st</sup> January 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 come along. The Trustees and the Management Committee will also be happy to answer any questions at the AGM and notice of these is not required.

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/> ] or on Facebook, or Twitter.

Chris Buckingham