

JULY – DECEMBER 2022 • ISSUE 47

COTSWOLD LION

THE MAGAZINE OF THE COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

FREE
ONLINE ISSUE



Wild Trainees gaining skills and experience
Best foot forward – walking in the Cotswolds
Nature recovery in action across the Cotswolds
The English oak – uncovering the secrets of an icon
Fresh Air Sculpture a return to form
And more...



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Welcome to issue 47 of the Cotswold Lion. This issue will see us through from July to December 2022. What a couple of years it's been. The last few of these welcome notes have been dominated by issues related to coronavirus, but, as I write this one, restrictions have been lifted across the UK, most people have been vaccinated, and things are feeling more normal once again. With all that in mind, we hope this summer in the Cotswolds is one filled with fun and sunshine. UK holidays boomed last year, and many local businesses will continue to be pleased with the support from residents and visitors alike. Whether you're exploring the Cotswolds through walking, cycling, sightseeing, or discovering hidden gems on the doorstep, we wish you a happy, healthy, and restorative summer!

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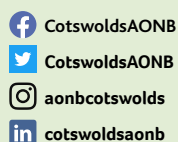


Support the Cotswolds National Landscape!

Every donation helps us look after the Cotswolds today, and tomorrow! Cotswoldsaonb.org.uk



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The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), managed and looked after by the Cotswolds Conservation Board. The two key purposes of the Board are to:

- conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB
- increase understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB

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If you are interested in sponsoring the Cotswold Lion, please contact alana.hopkins@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Front cover image:
Floral sculpture by Ruth Moillet
Image courtesy of Fresh Air Sculpture Show.

NEWS BULLETIN

Top stories from the Cotswolds National Landscape

Rebecca Jones awarded

We are delighted to announce that Rebecca Jones, our Volunteer and Access Lead, has been awarded a Member of Order of the British Empire (MBE). Rebecca (Becky) has been recognised for her services to volunteering and the environment.

For over 20 years, Becky has been working with the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens to oversee conservation and access matters rights across the Cotswolds. Becky, with no blueprint for how to harness the energy of these 400+ men and women, has shaped this group of volunteers into award winners. Today, the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens are known locally, nationally and internationally for their commitment, independent work, and for the scale of their activities. Their achievements were officially recognised by the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2018.



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Climate change update

We're delighted to welcome Mike Elliott to the team as our new Climate Action Lead. Mike will be working to set us on the right path to achieving our Climate Crisis Commitment: blending in-house collaboration, partnership working, and on-the-ground action to help us understand the current baseline for greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and potential pathways to achieving net zero in the Cotswolds National Landscape.



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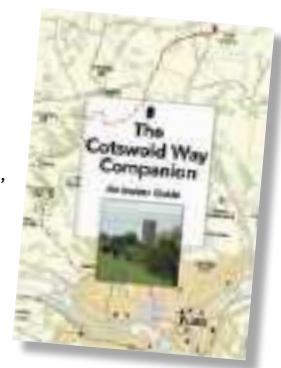
FiPL update

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has now funded £957,000 across 39 wide ranging and creative projects. From accessible paths across farmland showcasing organic arable and livestock farming; to owl and kestrel boxes, and farmland bird conservation helping support wildlife; to hedgerow creation and restoration to increase biodiversity and help capture carbon; a woodland skills education centre to increase accessibility and education, to an on-farm education centre demonstrating regenerative farming and conservation grazing. There is funding still available, so applicants are still encouraged to apply. Visit the farming section at www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk for more information.

New book out now

Our friends at The Cotswold Way Association have produced a wonderful new book about this fabulous walking route! 'The Cotswold Way Companion: an insider guide' offers first hand insight into what makes the Cotswold Way such a special route: exploring the main points of interest, where to get the best views, great photogenic or 'Instagrammable' spots and more. If you're looking for inspiration to explore the route, want to reminisce about previous walks along it, or want to re-walk sections, this book will help build anticipation and excitement.

Available in both eBook and paperback formats [here](#)



For more news from the Cotswolds National Landscape visit cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Wild Trainees



Siân Ellis finds out how Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is helping Wild Trainees to gain practical skills they will need for careers around land management.

“It’s very challenging to get into paid work in the conservation sector,” Emma Settle, the Trust’s Wilder Landscapes Advisor says. “But we really need to involve young people because they are the ones who are going to be making decisions in the future about how we support nature and wildlife.”

While many young people might study conservation-related subjects at school and university, they often lack on-the-ground experience, and not everyone can support themselves while doing voluntary work to build up their CV. The Wild Trainees programme, which Emma has been coordinating, offers eight placements a year focused on work-based practical activities and giving participants “a strong set of skills

that will stand them in better stead with job interviews.”

Launched in September 2021, the programme runs for three years, each trainee working three days a week for the Trust for up to a year. Individuals are not paid but get reimbursed for travel costs and, thanks to a generous donor there is also a bursary available to those who need it.

Trainees are currently divided into two teams, covering the east (more calcareous grassland habitats) and west (more heathland areas) in Gloucestershire.

Izzy Clarke (east team) completed degrees in geography and environmental science “but I didn’t get much practical experience and I

wasn’t getting accepted for any jobs, so I wanted to build myself up.” She has been working with Trust staff in nature reserves, with volunteer groups, and with Emma and the Wilder Landscapes team on private land.

Izzy loves the variety of seasonal work, including coppicing and dead hedging the perimeter of the adder habitat at Crickley Hill, fencing, and working on natural flood management techniques such as building and installing faggots to improve river speed and create habitats for fish. She has gained a certificate in First Aid and over the summer she will be involved in habitat survey work.

“It’s really rewarding to see you are making a positive impact on the environment and I have become ❖❖❖



“Land is managed for different purposes. For me it is about finding that balance between being good for nature and also making sure what you are doing is financially sustainable.”

confident with using a wide range of tools as well as conservation techniques,” she says.

Jess Thorne (west team) studied environmental science at university but had never had the chance to put theory into practice until becoming a Wild Trainee. Her activities have included heathland restoration in the Forest of Dean over the winter and guided walks training with the Cotswolds National Landscape team. “I live literally right next to the Cotswold Way and I would like to host my own young person’s walk at some point.”

Conquering her fears to gain her chainsaw licence and learning how to fell trees and process them has been a highlight of training, Jess says. “Taking it step-by-step and safely was really empowering.” She has also enjoyed working with Highland cattle and Exmoor ponies used in conservation grazing on Trust reserves.

In addition to being a Wild Trainee, Jess is chair of the Trust’s Youth Advisory Group and the youngest member of its Board of Trustees. A great advocate for getting young people involved in conservation, she says, “Land is

managed for different purposes. For me it is about finding that balance between being good for nature and also making sure what you are doing is financially sustainable.”

Taking stock of feedback from the first eight Wild Trainees, the Trust plans to broaden the scope of traineeships to include placements working, for example, in the communications and engagement teams, “to involve young voices within all areas of the organisation,” Emma says.

Interested? Izzy and Jess have no hesitation in encouraging young people to apply!

Find out more about Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust’s Wild Traineeships (including trainees’ blogs) at gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk



Best foot forward

A summer of walking and outdoor opportunities is here.

Our Cotswold Voluntary Wardens have been working hard to programme guided walks across the Cotswolds now that the pandemic restrictions have lifted. This summer, they have reintroduced weekend walks – so if you're normally unable to join them in the week, please look out for those.

And of course, Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

will only happen once, and the wardens are keen to join in the celebrations this year! There are royal connections to be made (current and historical) throughout the Cotswolds. From early summer, the wardens' guided walks programme will feature a sprinkling of walks with a royal theme. Here are some highlights:

Multi-stage guided walks

If you've ever thought about completing a long distance route, but would like to break it up into stages, we have two multi-stage guided long distance routes:

Delights of the East Cotswolds

A linear walk through the Cotswolds in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, completed in 5 - 8 mile sections. Contact ros.wilson@hotmail.co.uk for more information.

Heart of the Cotswolds

Explore a route from Chipping Campden to Bath, completed in 9 stages of ten miles. Contact ej.walker@talktalk.net for more information.



Weekend guided walks

This summer, the wardens are running more weekend walks – ideal if you work, or have other commitments in the week! With walks on Saturdays and Sundays, these walks are a great way to get out and about at the weekend, and brilliant for putting the week behind you as you set up for the new one ahead! **Visit the Guided Walks page at cotswoldsaoNB.org.uk for walk listings.**



Monday 11th July • 10:00

Jubilee Walk Through Longtree/Ledgemore

4.5 miles • 2.5 hours • Moderate

Along the wooded path to Longtree Bottom, and King Edward's near-battle with Godwin. Continuing through sheep pasture, using the pre-turnpike route to Tetbury via Chavenage Green. Rounding off with refreshments at The Wild Carrot. An easy going undulating shorter walk, with woods, pasture, and a bit of history. (Please note: 1 stile).

Start Point: Parking at The Wild Carrot, Chavenage Lane, Tetbury. Follow signs for Chavenage House from A46. Approx 2.5 miles south of Nailsworth, or the B4014 Avening Road/Tetbury Road.

Wednesday 27th July • 10:00

Royal Sudeley Valley

5.5 miles • 3 hours • Moderate

Inspired by Kings and Queens of old – a lovely walk crossing the home parks at Sudeley with views to St Mary's Church, which contains the marble tomb of Queen Katherine Parr. We climb up out of the Sudeley valley, looking across beautiful countryside, formerly an ancient royal deer park, to the Welsh borders in the west. Moderate ascent and one steep descent. Please bring coffee/snacks. Refreshments are available at Sudeley Castle (no entrance fee to café) as well as in Winchcombe. No need to book.

Start point: Winchcombe Back Lane car park (£1 all day pay & display/Ringo App).



Saturday 20th August • 10:00

Jubilee Walk: Across Painswick valley to Sheepscombe

5.5 miles • 3 hours • Moderate

A walk across the beautiful Painswick valley, which was visited by Henry VIII and Charles I, to Sheepscombe, and returning via Paradise.

Start Point: Walkers' car park (on the road between the A46 and the B4073, not far from the entrance to the Painswick Rococo Garden).



Neil Morgan

Don't forget! Walking festivals are back too:

2 - 4 September

Bradford on Avon Walking Festival

The 10th festival, with 17 varied walks, including a route led by one of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, and routes featuring canals, castles, a spot of photography, and even bat hunting! For more information click [here](#)

10 - 25 September

Bathscape Walking Festival

The ever-popular Bathscape Walking Festival – taking in routes and views in the countryside around the beautiful city of Bath. For more information click [here](#)

5 - 9 October

Dursley Walking Festival

For more information click [here](#)



THE ENGLISH
OAK
Nature's Great Survivor

Icon of the British countryside: the English oak.
Matt Brierley uncovers the secrets that make this tree so special.



*It is a foresters' proverb that oaks
"take 300 years to grow, 300 years
to stay and 300 years to die".*



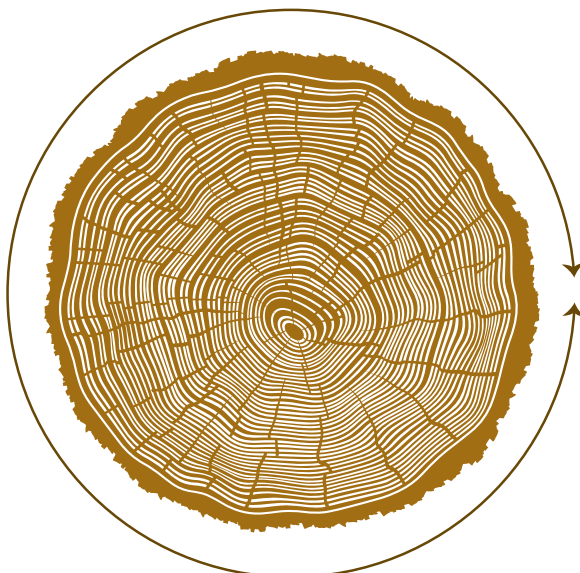
Icon of the British countryside. The English oak. So long-lived are oaks that to be considered ancient they need to reach the big 400 years old (a beech, by comparison, hits ancient at 225). It is easy then to take oaks for granted: a tree forever there. We see them simply as homes for others, gnarled bows and eerie cavities perfect nest holes for migratory redstarts, roosting owls and hibernating bats. We can easily forget oaks themselves are complex, dynamic beings battling the seasons. Yet scratch the surface and the oak's secret life is mind-boggling.

It is a foresters' proverb that oaks "take 300 years to grow, 300 years to stay and 300 years to die". You can figure out where on its 900 year odyssey an oak is with a simple piece of string. Wrap it around the trunk 1.5 metres above ground. A 2 metre girth suggests

~80 years; 5m ~300; 8m ~700. The Woodland Trust's handy *Ready Reckoner* equates 9m 28cm to 924(!) and urges reporting all oaks with a 4.5 metre girth or greater.

Let's say you measure a tree 6 metres round. It's probably 400. It harvests energy from sunlight using 700,000 leaves that would cover three tennis courts. This year it'll lay down ~230 kgs of wood plucked from thin air and churn out ~234,000 litres of oxygen, enough to sustain you for six months.

Juicy leaves spell an insect smörgåsbord. But the oak is far from defenceless. Extraordinarily, it detects pests chemically, differentiating between attackers and even estimating caterpillar size! Wound hormones course through the sap-system and forewarning airborne signals chatter through the canopy. Leaves flood with distasteful tannins. If that fails, the tree calls for help, using chemicals to signal to the predators of the pests. Sometimes it backfires. Scientists studying green tortrix moths found they too are attracted to the very scent that calls in their adversaries. If the tree is ❖❖❖



**Let's say you measure
a tree 6 metres round.
It's probably**

**400
years old**

Autumn is acorn time. If leaves were a buffet, acorns are a potential feast.

resorting to Plan B the leaves are still edible and, after all, predators can't quaff all your kids. It's a dog-eat-dog world 20 metres up!

Oaks also tell the time. It's called photoperiodism, achieved by phytochrome receptors changing in response to higher amounts of red light in summer and far red light in autumn. An oak knows when to start ingesting its chlorophyll, the green pigment it uses to convert sunlight to sugars. That reveals three other pigments reflecting red, orange and yellow, giving us the wow of autumn.

Autumn is acorn time. If leaves were a buffet, acorns are a potential feast. Cue another oak trick. Masting. Trees – often miles apart – produce hardly any acorns

one year and hundreds the next. So many, in fact, predators could never eat them all. How they coordinate masting across a landscape remains one of nature's greatest mysteries. All we know is they subtly monitor weather.

We used to think acorns rooting close to the parent tree were doomed; they'd never get enough light. Now we understand the 'wood-wide web' exists, a fungal network allowing trees to share their resources.

During winter an oak's cells could freeze, so the tree dehydrates itself, producing a sugar concentrate that functions as anti-freeze. The oak also allows its xylem cells – those carrying water and minerals upwards – to die in areas sensitive to cold. The mechanism



of transport still works; the oak has effectively built itself an incredible permanent network of non-perishable pipes.

Next time you're out in the countryside and notice the emblematic spread of an oak, pause for a moment. Here is a tree nothing less than miraculous.

Juicy leaves spell an insect smörgåsbord.

NATURE RECOVERY.. IN ACTION

Nature recovery is a hot topic at the moment – with organisations, community groups, and individuals all working on habitat restoration and encouraging wildlife to thrive. We recently published our Nature Recovery Plan for the Cotswolds. The plan outlines a number of approaches to build a network of habitats at a landscape scale. Here, Alana Hopkins discovers five great examples of nature recovery in action...

BUTTERFLIES BACK IN BATHURST WOODS

The beautiful pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly was once widespread, but has declined by 95% since the 1970s, and is now highly threatened in England and Wales. The aim of this project was to enhance and support the work being carried out in the Bathurst Estate Woodlands to protect the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. In Gloucestershire, the butterfly can only be found in the Bathurst Estate woodlands and thanks to nature recovery work by the local branch members of Butterfly Conservation and funding from a Caring for the Cotswolds grant, together they have undertaken targeted habitat management work, including the planting of 700 common dog violets, the caterpillar's sole foodplant. Butterfly numbers are now very good, with butterflies spreading into new areas.

As tree planting schemes are encouraged and praised nationally, it will remain important that some areas are kept cleared and maintained as open areas for butterflies, bees, and other insects. Once these are lost, there is a break in the biodiversity network which is very difficult to replicate. Creating or maintaining 'mosaic' habitats is one of the central themes to the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan.

More information: butterfly-conservation.org



© Chris Tracy

GLORIOUS COTSWOLD GRASSLANDS

Between 2019–2022 the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team initiated restoration work on over 200 hectares of land throughout the Cotswold National Landscape, more than double their original target of 100 hectares! Now the team is working with Severn Trent Water as part of their Great Big Nature Boost and this funding, combined with several other potential funding sources, has enabled the project onto a permanent footing, meaning we will be working to restore Cotswolds grassland for many years to come. Wildflower-rich grasslands support a vast diversity of wildlife; including rare species like the pasqueflower and a huge variety of invertebrates – and all the birds and mammals that depend on them. Wildflower grasslands are particularly important for pollinators such as bees and butterflies, including many rare species such as the Chalkhill Blue and Duke of Burgundy.

The geography of the Cotswolds grasslands represents an outstanding opportunity to help this grassland wildlife adapt to climate change by moving northwards to a new climate space.

More information: cotswoldsaonb.org.uk



Anna Field



Anna Field

CREATING A 'SUPER RESERVE' FOR NATURE

In Stroud's Golden Valley, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers have been teaming up with local landowners to enhance pockets of land in between nature reserves, to create a vast, connected haven for wildlife – particularly insects.

Grazing sheep and ponies are a key part of GWT's land management strategy, and essential to keeping the valley's species-rich grasslands free of scrub and encouraging wildflowers to thrive. The animals are perfectly adapted to access the steep slopes of the valley – where human or mechanical intervention would be extremely difficult. They help to clear unwanted vegetation that may prevent sunlight from reaching the soil, and their hooves help push wildflower seeds into the ground.

Funding from Cotswold National Landscape's Cotswolds Champions scheme, Biffa Award, and Royal Entomological



Nathan Miller

Society (RES) has enabled GWT to expand its conservation grazing programme in the Golden Valley – installing almost 4km of livestock fencing and four new water troughs. It's also covered staff time to check livestock and ensure animal welfare is the highest priority.

More information: gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk

A HOME START

We can all take part in nature recovery – by supporting nature charities, volunteering, getting involved in community projects, and even by creating space for nature ourselves! This pond was created by Simon, our Nature Recovery Lead, as a pandemic lockdown project in his nature-friendly garden during 2020. Simon had already created areas of woodland, deadwood and grassland habitats in the garden, and the pond was also designed for wildlife – with a variety of slopes and levels, and enough depth not to freeze completely in winter. It's filled with rain water captured from the house roof.

Now in its third summer, the habitat is thriving and wildlife has arrived in abundance. Specific native plants were chosen including floating oxygenators and water soldiers for the deeper water. Water soldiers pull themselves down to the pond's bottom over winter, then rise up again in the spring. Marginal and wet grassland plants went around the edge: yellow flag, king-cup, and greater trefoil have all brought lots of colour – but Simon's favourite is the spectacular purple loosestrife.

The pond has become the star of the garden. Two years on it has matured well, and is full of invertebrates including dragonflies and damselflies. Best of all, newts and frogs have taken up residence, and local birds, bats, and animals all come to visit. It just goes to show that nature recovery is valuable at any scale!

For more information click [here](#)



Keyna Doran

PRESERVING TRADITIONAL ORCHARDS

Traditional orchards, once commonplace, are now increasingly rare. They are excellent for wildlife; trees of different ages and unimproved grassland provides habitat for a range of species. Wolds End Orchard's proximity to the town of Chipping Campden also makes it unusual. Whilst there is no public right of way, the orchard is open to the local community through regular volunteer work parties, and four main events throughout the year: Blossom Time, Summer Picnic, Apple Day and Harvesting, and Wassailing.

Through this conservation project, the Campden Society hope to preserve this special three-acre traditional orchard. The work involves pruning the oldest trees to protect them from being damaged in high winds, prolong their life, and improve their health; as well as a survey of the trees, and buying tools to enable ongoing management by the volunteers. By maintaining the orchard, habitats will also be provided for pollinators and birds. The survey of the trees and grassland will improve understanding of the site and inform future management.

The Campden Society successfully bid to Caring for the Cotswolds for funds to support this exciting nature recovery and heritage work.

More information: thecampdensociety.org

Creating **Slow Ways**



Sian Ellis talks to Dan Raven-Ellison about his mission to create Slow Ways: a new and exciting national network of walking and wheeling routes.

Ben Darlington

Guerrilla geographer and creative explorer Dan Raven-Ellison's work is about "making new connections and challenging people to look at the world a little bit differently," he says. Slow Ways, the project he started in 2020, is one such example, aiming "to inspire and support more people to walk and wheel, more often, further, and for more purposes." (Wheel in this instance means wheelchairs and scooters rather than cycling.)

The ambition of Slow Ways is to create a comprehensive network of walking/wheeling routes that connect all of Great Britain's towns and cities as well as thousands of villages: encouraging people to walk not only for leisure and fitness, but also for multiple other purposes, like visiting friends or to go to work.

Utilising existing paths, trails and roads, Slow Ways link neighbouring places and can be combined to make longer journeys. Each Slow Way is reviewed by volunteers and by people who actually use them, providing trustworthy practical insights.

The idea blossomed during the spring 2020 lockdown after a call-out resulted in 700 volunteers drafting 7,000 routes online that collectively stretched for 100,000km. "They basically invested about a year's worth of time in a single month to create that initial network," Dan says.

"Since then, thousands of people have been checking that routes work on the ground. The response has been absolutely magical. Some people walk the routes as groups or families, others are solo walkers, and there is such [a sense of]

community through the shared aim."

There are now over 8,000 Slow Ways (121,617km) and nearly 5,000 route reviews featured on the Slow Ways website. The project has become a not-for-profit Community Interest Company, with funding that includes £3 million over seven years from the National Lottery Community Fund's 'Growing Great Ideas' programme. The aim is to have every route reviewed on the ground by the end of 2022.



Ben Darlington

Dan Raven-Ellison wants people to explore more of the UK on foot or by wheel

Right: Checking routes first-hand involves evaluating everything along the way: from signage, to stiles, to accessibility

Below: Volunteer hack days have resulted in thousands of Slow Ways route suggestions



Ben Darlington

“to inspire and support more people to walk and wheel, more often, further, and for more purposes.”

Cotswolds call-out

Slow Ways captures imaginations for many reasons, Dan says, including more awareness of the physical and mental benefits of being outside in fresh air and connecting with nature. Concerns over reducing our impacts on the environment also feed into greater interest in walking.

Such themes are a perfect fit with the Landscapes Review (2019) that encouraged National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to work collaboratively and increase their accessibility to people from all backgrounds. So it's no surprise that Dan is reaching out in particular to people in Protected Landscapes in the South West, including the Cotswolds, to lead the way in progressing the Slow Ways network.

You are invited to walk/wheel and review routes: that connect a village, town or city to the Cotswolds National Landscape; that lie within the National Landscape; or connect two or more National Landscapes in the South West.

“There are 105 Slow Ways either inside or connecting directly to the Cotswolds,” Dan says. “That’s currently 127 routes – each Slow Way can have more than one route option – and 1,721km. The average route is 14km.”

Like to get involved? You will find all the info you need on walking and reviewing routes on the Slow Ways website. How about 12km Chawoo (Charlbury–Woodstock: routes are named from the first three letters of the place at each end); or 10km Mintet (Minchinhampton–Tetbury); or 22km Cirnor (Cirencester–Northleach).

Look out, too, for dates of National Swarms when volunteers see how many routes they can walk, check and review between them in a single weekend – the last event totalled 2,000km. Have fun!

For more information click [here](#)



Ben Darlington



© Russell Sach

L- R: Ros Marsden, Ruth Rudwick, and Rowan Wynne-Jones make up the Everyone's Evenlode team

Getting our feet wet...

Katie Jarvis discovers how the Everyone's Evenlode team at CNL are working to encourage communities to engage with their local river environments.

The birds at Honeydale Farm in the Evenlode Valley are an ornithologist's dream. Skylark, song thrush, cuckoo, yellowhammer (bright yellow heads bobbing as they sing their distinctive 'a-little-bit-of-bread-with-no-cheese' refrain)...

For children who visit as part of Everyone's Evenlode project, these are rare and beautiful sights.

But for many Cotswold youngsters, even common rural experiences are a source of wonder.

'I was with some Year 8s [12- and 13-year-olds] when they saw deer,' says Ruth Rudwick. 'One of the girls I was walking with was amazed – she'd never seen deer before.'

Ros Marsden nods. 'When I was young, we all collected frogspawn – jam-jars with string attached. A lot of




Young people are volunteering with the Everyone's Evenlode team as part of their own Duke of Edinburgh Award practice

children today have never done that.' At Combe Mill on the Blenheim Estate (another Everyone's Evenlode site), toads and frogs abound. 'One pupil said, 'I've caught a 'line'! What is it?'

'I explained it was toadspawn – frogspawn never forms a line. So they were able to compare the two ways these amphibians lay eggs.'

The excitement of the children – pond-dipping, learning about different types of woodland, seeing the Evenlode River and Valley in all their glory – is palpable. 'They literally come running back from sessions to tell friends about it: 'We did this! We saw that!', Ruth says.

Ruth, Ros, and Rowan Wynne-Jones run the community outreach and education programmes that form Everyone's Evenlode, a project delivered by Cotswolds National Landscape as 



part of the Evenlode Catchment Partnership and funded by Thames Water's Smarter Water Catchments initiative. Started in November 2021, the first phase runs for a three-year period.

For schools and colleges all around the Evenlode, it's about science, geography, nature. It's also about the sheer joy of being beside a playful, babbling river. One mindfulness session – put together by Rowan – sees children become clouds and raindrops, exploring the water-cycle through tai chi: 'Though, it's always nicer to do it in sunshine!'

Behind it all is a serious aim. The quality of rivers has declined dramatically over the years. Everyone's Evenlode is about taking back community ownership; putting pressure on water companies and government to recognise things need to improve: the next generation and nature itself



Flood management techniques can include retention ponds like this one at Bruern

For schools and colleges all around the Evenlode, it's about science, geography, nature. It's also about the sheer joy of being beside a playful, babbling river.

deserve better. To exchange knowledge and experiences of the river.

'I was speaking with someone from Stonesfield, who'd seen a kingfisher on the Evenlode for the first time in years,' Ruth says. 'She was thrilled. The deterioration in river habitat and the quality of the water is what local people will mostly tell you about.'

Flooding is another issue. Good management schemes – of which there are many – make a difference. But initial

earthworks can look horrifying to local residents.

'When JCBs move in, it can seem as barren as the moon,' Ros says. 'Within a couple of years, you'd never guess the result wasn't natural. You see from animal prints how quickly it regenerates.'

Ask the team what they'd most like to result from Everyone's Evenlode, and they're agreed. Improved water-quality; the empowerment of teachers to continue education work; perhaps, one day, an Evenlode footpath similar to the Thames Path National Trail.

Most of all, it's about reconnection. 'It would be great if people were able to confidently swim in the river,' Rowan says. 'We'd love to capture a generation that has potentially lost touch with the Evenlode, reengage them, and get a momentum of children playing in the river once again.'

Everyone's Evenlode currently uses three sites, all offering signed footpaths along the Evenlode for the public to explore: Honeydale Farm OX7 6BJ (where the team works with FarmEd, a not-for-profit organisation); Combe Mill OX29 8ET; and Daylesford Organic GL56 0YG. For more information click [here](#)



School children learn about water-related topics, including this visit to Didcot sewage works

Planting for the Future

Deep in the Avon Valley district of the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, a band of dedicated wardens have been keeping busy with a flurry of tree planting throughout 2021 and 2022, many of which will now be officially counted as part of the Queen's Green Canopy. Alana Hopkins finds out more.



Courtesy of Cotswold Voluntary Wardens

Planting at Grove Farm came with some lovely views

In the autumn and winter months of 2021, on behalf of the Cotswold National Landscape team, wardens Dave Wright and Richard Wilson liaised with landowners to identify parcels of land where they can develop hedgerows and woodland.

The outcome has been a programme of tree planting sessions that has seen some of the largest gatherings of Avon Valley work party wardens in recent years. Some 28 wardens pitched in on one planting day – offering a fantastic opportunity for partnership working with organisations such as Sodbury Woodland and Nature (SWaN), Sodbury Town Council, and volunteers from Wessex

Water Force (WWF) to continue the planting of the Community Woodland and Community Orchard Planting.

Their completed planting projects included:

Sodbury Town Council

The river Frome was re-routed to go over a new aqueduct which was higher above the railway, to allow clearance for the overhead electric wires.

The banks of the diverted river are now ablaze with colour and well-established with flowers and grasses.

To achieve this work Network Rail bought the fields. After completion of the works, Network Rail sold the fields to

Sodbury Town Council for a peppercorn amount – on the condition that they were planted up as a community woodland and orchard. SWaN was asked to manage the site for the town council.



Courtesy of Cotswold Voluntary Wardens

The Voluntary Wardens even roped in help from Stephanie Millward MBE, Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire with their tree planting

The community orchard will feature a varied mix of apple, pear, plum, cherry, medlar and quince trees, alongside soft fruit like gooseberries and blackcurrants.



© Russell Sach

Grants to complete this work were successfully obtained: the orchard is funded by a Cotswold Champion grant from Cotswolds National Landscape, and the Woodland Trust provided 4,000 trees (and protection) for the woodland.

The community orchard will feature a varied mix of apple, pear, plum, cherry, medlar and quince trees, alongside soft fruit like gooseberries and blackcurrants. Alongside the footpath through the orchard, some of the apples will be trained as espaliers on frames. The idea is that walkers on the Frome Valley Walkway can pick an apple for eating as they pass by.

Meanwhile, the community woodland will have a range of native species from oak, hornbeam, and lime to alder and field maple, the edges of rides and glades being planted with shrub species.

Jamie's Farm

Just before Christmas, local councillors Brian Mathews and Nigel Ingledew, along with Stephanie Millward MBE, one of the new Deputy Lord Lieutenants of Wiltshire joined the wardens at Jamie's Farm in Box. The work there was to finish off the restoration of a hedge line by laying mixture of hazel, hawthorn, and blackthorn and then infilling any gaps with new hedge transplants. In all, the group planted 100 hedging plants.

Fosse Way Hedge Laying

A 12-strong team of wardens successfully planted 800 assorted hedge transplants to form a new 500m hedge line alongside the road that forms the boundary between Marshfield and Colerne.

On other farmland, they have planted 300 trees and installed a new fence line and gate to protect the transplants from cattle and deer. The project was jointly funded by the farm's owners and the wardens' Countryside Fund, and supported by Protect Earth.

Woodland tree planting

As well as planting alongside roads and railway lines, and on farmland,

the wardens have also been planting in woodland. In a small wood on a farm near Box, the wardens have been working closely with the landowner, Box Parish Council, and residents to plant 500 broadleaf trees provided by Protect Earth to restore the woodland to its former glory.



Courtesy of Cotswold Voluntary Wardens

Planting at Colerne Oaks Farm

A RETURN TO

FORM



The biennial Fresh Air Sculpture Show, in the garden at the Old Rectory in Quenington, has just held its 2022 exhibition led by new curator Stephanie Cushing, who caught up with Katie Jarvis to talk about the show.

Sculpture of man and dog by Simon Connolley

Image courtesy of Fresh Air Sculpture Show



A glimpse of *The Colour of Mourning* by Sally de Courcy



Work in metal, by Ian Turnock

THE INTERESTING THING IS, MUCH OF THIS ART – IN MOSAIC, METAL, RUBBER, TEXTILE, CERAMIC, GLASS – WAS CREATED FOR THE CANCELLED 2021 SHOW.

Stephanie Cushing, curator of the Fresh Air Sculpture Show, fell into art almost by accident. That's kind of hard to believe as you gaze on her own sculptures, made at her Cotswold studio. Often from marble, these are abstract wonders, twisting into sensuous shapes seemingly designed by the same hand (divine or otherwise, according to your thoughts) that moulds seeds, fruits and leaves.

But it's true: she was a latecomer to art.

Stephanie trained as a biologist before working for the civil service in data management. When her children were still young, she started a ceramics course as an almost guilty pleasure. Even then, she says, art felt like adult playtime. 'I had all these other things to do: housework, children, a job. It was only after I gave myself permission to do something just for me that I was able to let my life as an artist begin.'

It's a strange thought. Because Fresh Air – the outdoor sculpture show Stephanie now curates – couldn't be a



One of the kinetic sculptures by David Watkinson, the movement of which is determined by the breeze

clearer example of how vital art can be: teaching onlookers to see the world differently; provoking new thoughts; highlighting connections – between Earth and humanity – that otherwise mightn't be obvious.

Take Sally de Courcy's *The Colour*

of Mourning. Nestling amongst the Old Rectory's wildflowers and grasses, this white wheel – hypnotic in its repetition of symmetry and shapes – looked deeply alluring. Yet when those shapes crystallised in the eyes of beholders, another story began to take appear: lifebuoys, children's shoes, bones and driftwood; 21st century flotsam and jetsam. Symbols of war; detritus of desperate refugees.

'And then we had pieces relating to our overuse of the Earth's materials,' Stephanie says. 'Pernicious, by Sally Barker, is one that seems to grow out of the ground.' Its 40 glazed ceramic pieces both complement and contrast with the natural world around it. 'It makes the viewer think: Is this piece organic itself? Is it harmful or is it not?'

These were just two of more than 130 pieces featured in this year's exhibition.

The interesting thing is, much of this art – in mosaic, metal, rubber, textile, ceramic, glass – was created for the cancelled 2021 show. In other words, ❖❖❖



Image courtesy of Fresh Air Sculpture Show.

A work in metal by Henry Collins, suspended from the branches of a tree

'I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE MORE WORK THAT COMMENTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT. I'D ALSO LIKE MORE WORK FROM ETHNIC AND DISABLED BACKGROUNDS.'

when Sally de Courcy conceived her mandala – a eulogy for people fleeing across the sea – Ukraine was a rumbling concern, not yet a humanitarian disaster. (Not that the world is ever short of tragic refugee crises.)

In 2022, there have been no lockdowns – but another set of hurdles. Brexit added paperwork, costs and uncertainty to transporting pieces often logistically challenging in any circumstances. It took months, for example, to bring over the colourful installations by French artist Edith Meusnier: 'They were oversized but not heavy: two-metre-diameter circles displayed in sycamore trees in the garden. Stunning,' Stephanie says.

Under her curatorship, the 2024

show will be the most accessible yet. 'I'd like to introduce more work that comments on the environment. I'd also like more work from ethnic and disabled backgrounds.' Just as Stephanie needed 'permission' to become an artist, so different others can give inspiration to those longing to find their creative selves.

Mostly, she wants to carry on the tradition of making visitors stop, pause, and think.

'And whatever they think is allowed. There are no rules; they can't be wrong.

'The most important thing is to get pleasure out of seeing things in the garden; to see a variety of art in a different environment. But, above all, to generate a response.'



Image courtesy of Fresh Air Sculpture Show.

Latticework metal sculpture by Pete Moorhouse

To find out about Fresh Air Sculpture, visit freshairsculpture.com Fresh Air Sculpture is a selling exhibition, which helps generate funds for an education programme for schools and community groups.

HELP SHAPE

THE FUTURE OF THE COTSWOLDS



The **Caring for the Cotswolds** grants scheme is a way for businesses and their customers to give something back to the environment in the Cotswolds. We use donations to support projects that conserve vital habitats, preserve our heritage, and improve access to the countryside for everyone.

The more contributions we receive, the more we can do to. Want to get involved? Being a member boosts green credentials with customers, and shows that your organisation cares for the environment. Donating as a customer is a great way of helping us look after the Cotswolds National Landscape now – and into the future.

For more information click [here](#) 