

July - December 2026/Issue 55

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# COTSWOLD LION

The magazine of the Cotswolds National Landscape



**People with Purpose  
Dukes and Ruggeds  
Soil Solutions  
Off the Beaten Track**

**Restoring a Rare Beauty and more....**



**Cotswolds  
National  
Landscape**

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## Welcome

Welcome to the July – December 2026 issue of the Cotswold Lion magazine. As we head into the second half of our 60th year as a designated landscape, we have much to look forward to – not least the celebration event we're planning for 15th August (everyone is welcome – the more the merrier!), and the summer tour of the *Cotswolds: Field & Folk* film.

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens have planned a fantastic range of celebratory 'CNL60' walking routes – these are a fun way to explore the Cotswolds in a more personalised, hands-on way. And remember – there are regular walks, long distance walks, and accessible routes – all in the calendar between now and December. Walks are being added to the website all the time, so do keep checking back to stay up to date!



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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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# Bulletin

Top stories from the Cotswolds National Landscape team



## New projects!

The Great Big Climate Circus is coming to town! This new partnership project aims to engage communities with a wide range of climate related sessions, activities, and workshops. The first event was held in Stroud in June, and this summer the circus will be coming to Dursley (11 July) and Gloucester (18 July).

And, another new project called Common Connections started this spring. In partnership with National Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, we will be looking at how we can make the Cotswold escarpment better for nature and for people.

## Regen Generation

The second Regenerative Agricultural Accelerator Programme (RAAP) conference was held in March, and welcomed 160 guests and 20 speakers. This year's event explored the fresh thinking, people, ideas, and collaborations needed to advance regenerative farming, and how we nurture the *Regen Generation*. Key to the event were members of Emergent Generation: a network of young people (18-35) building a food system that nourishes people and planet. RAAP has now accepted its third intake of participants to the programme, Regen Deep has launched at [www.regendeep.co.uk](http://www.regendeep.co.uk) and the Emergent Generation group is planning a summer (and beyond) of events and activities. It's true to say the Cotswolds is a hot bed for regen ag!



Bec Foster.



Lyna Zhang.

## Team news

Our Planning Lead, John Mills, moved to a new role working for Natural England in April 2026. John has been a highly valued and popular member of our team, and whilst we will miss his expertise and knowledge, we're happy to see him move into a role that seems so right for him. Meanwhile, we have welcomed Bec Foster to the team – who is now looking after our Caring for the Cotswolds grants scheme, and Lyna Zhang – who joins our finance team.

## Cotswolds: Field & Folk is here!

*Cotswolds: Field & Folk* will be released and screening around the Cotswolds from July. Featuring real voices from those most closely connected to the landscape around us, the film offers insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the Cotswolds in its 60th year. Check page 22 to find out more, look out for a screening near you, or join the party on 15th August in Cheltenham to celebrate with us!



Leaping Fox Films

# People with purpose

Throughout 2026, momentum has been building around the new *Cotswolds: Field & Folk* film. But who are the folk? Alana Hopkins and Tea Smart present some of the key players in the documentary, ahead of its release in July.

## Jonty Brunyee

Jonty is a leading voice in the UK's regenerative farming movement. Alongside his wife Mel, Jonty manages a diverse, pasture-fed system rooted in organic principles, working with traditional breeds such as Cotswold sheep and Hereford cattle. He is helping to shape a new narrative for farming – one that values connection, stewardship, and longterm thinking. Alongside the farm, Jonty also runs the Cotswolds Regenerative Agriculture Accelerator programme, Regen Deep, and is involved in the Emergent Generation. For Jonty, improving systems now is only part of the story – purpose lies in inspiring future generations to build hope.

In *Cotswolds: Field & Folk*, Jonty exudes a positivity that's hard to resist – putting into practice solutions which go beyond farming and into education and community, and landscape recovery.



## Abby Cook

Abby is a shepherdess and farming consultant. She keeps a small flock of Herdwick sheep, who live outdoors all year round. Abby aims to run a system that offers ewes and lambs the most natural life possible, whilst also working with nature to promote biodiversity and improvements to the soil. Abby's story is one of shared values – she was brought up on a farm managed in a regenerative way by her parents, and the legacy of their influence is clear in the work she does today.



## Andrew Bullock

With decades of experience in conventional farming, Andrew has in recent years embraced a transition towards organic and regenerative methods – driven by a growing concern for soil health, food quality, and the longterm sustainability of the land.

In the film, Andrew speaks about the challenges of transitioning towards organic farming, and explains how values can shift from being based purely in yield, to being measured by the health of the soil itself. Andrew characterises a cheerful but steely determination shared by many of the people we hear from in *Cotswolds: Field & Folk*.

*"We're farmers – and we're eternal optimists."*



## CNL, Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team

Anna, Tom, and Cerian form CNL's Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team. The GCG team's aim is to secure the long-term management of precious wildflower grasslands through farming and community engagement, alongside practical restoration work. So far, they have initiated restoration work on nearly 500 hectares of land throughout the Cotswold National Landscape – and with the help of their volunteer group, work shows no sign of slowing. The GCG team's story is one of collaboration: landscape scale nature recovery cannot happen in a vacuum – and it's only by working with others that this impressive programme of work can thrive.



## Jamie Feilden

Jamie is the founder of Jamie's Farm, a charity transforming the lives of young people through farming, food, and connection to nature. Young people facing challenges in education and wellbeing spend time at the farm to experience the rhythm and responsibility of farm life. At the heart of Jamie's approach is the belief that time spent in nature, combined with meaningful work and shared meals, can spark lasting change.



## Lydia Handy

Lydia Handy and husband Clive offer a compelling example of how tradition and innovation can coexist, with their regenerative enterprise Homegrown at Hampen. They have carved out a place for themselves in the heart of the local community – through their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) scheme. By offering their local community fresh, local, homegrown, and seasonal food, Lydia and Clive are connecting people to nature and landscape in a tangible way. Lydia's voice in the film is a rallying call for creating spaces where nature and people can thrive together.



## Silas Hedley-Lawrence

Silas is a regenerative farmer, coach, and systems thinker working at the forefront of a new approach to agriculture – one that places soil, people, and profitability on equal footing. Silas's work is grounded in science and lived experience, with a strong emphasis on mindset and behaviour change. In *Cotswolds: Field & Folk*, Silas's voice lends weight to the concept that farming more regeneratively doesn't have to come at a cost to the bottom line – a vital consideration for farmers everywhere.



*"Farming doesn't work without people. And in the Cotswolds, the people [...] are full of energy, full of ideas."*

## Lucy Robbins

Lucy Robbins is part of a new generation of farmers helping to shape the future of British agriculture. She is balancing tradition with a forward-looking approach. Her experiences beyond the farm have shaped a broader perspective; one that embraces openness, collaboration, and the need for positive change. In the documentary, Lucy demonstrates the value of a dynamic approach – where collaboration and resilience can build a solid foundation for the future.



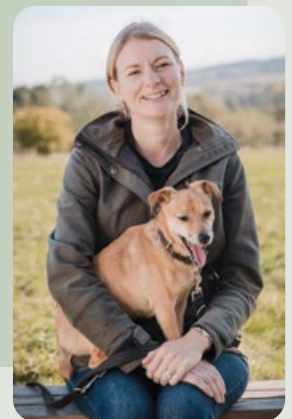
*"There's going to be a lot of opportunity."*

## Ian Wilkinson and Kate Henderson

Ian Wilkinson is co-founder of FarmED, a demonstration farm in rural Oxfordshire. FarmED's mission is to inspire debate and discussion with everyone, from farmers, growers, advisers, foodies, policy makers, students and researchers who are passionate about regenerative agriculture, farming with nature, sustainable food and addressing the climate crisis. Kate runs all the agricultural courses, with a particular passion for educating about food and how it's produced.

*"How can we farm alongside the natural world? That's our biggest challenge..."*

During the filming of *Cotswolds: Field & Folk*, Ian dug into the soil and reminded us that healthy soil is alive – feeding crops and livestock, holding water, supporting biodiversity, and quietly locking away carbon. The story of farming doesn't start in the field above ground...it starts in the soil beneath.



# Dukes and Ruggeds: saving secretive species

The Duke of Burgundy is a threatened butterfly with a name so enigmatic it feels like there must be a story to go with it. Yet how it received its quirky moniker is no longer known, any reasoning lost in the mists of entomological antiquity. It's not the only secret shrouding the Duke. Matt Brierley looks at what other mysteries remain.

It's a crucial time for the Duke, whose UK population has crashed by 84% since the 1970s. Living in discreet colonies across the Cotswolds' calcareous habitats, conservation of critical concentrations is an all-or-nothing business.

But how to find – and ultimately protect – these clusters? Butterflies are mobile and that's a problem for surveyors. Males make life slightly easier. They're territorial morning-sun worshippers loyal to certain spots. Females,

however, hold all the cards when it comes to setting up home. Mark-release-recapture experiments have shown they routinely travel 250 metres, and have been known to set up new colonies 5 km away. So spotting a Duke doesn't necessarily mean that's optimum habitat.

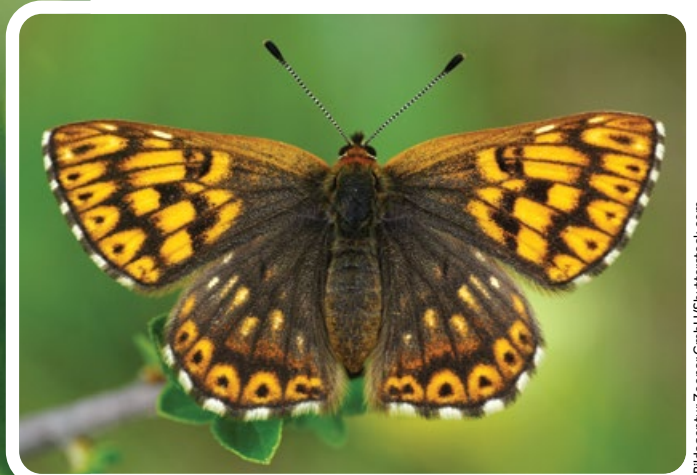
With females laying eggs on the underside of primrose and cowslip leaves, finding those would be practically impossible. From mid-July to May, Dukes are tucked up in a cryptic chrysalis, carefully concealed in tussocky grass. The only real chance to monitor Dukes is by finding larvae between mid-May and mid-July.

Caterpillars are cryptic and sedentary, and Dukes present an even greater problem: they're nocturnal. Whereas some limestone butterfly caterpillars – like green hairstreak – have recently demonstrated photoluminescence under UV light, enabling groundbreaking nocturnal surveys, Dukes haven't. Instead their presence is betrayed only by nibbles known as peppering and panelling.

Unsurprisingly, even to the trained eye, mapping this is painstaking. For the Back from the Brink team – tasked with aiding the Duke's recovery between 2017 and 2021 – their feeding damage report was inconclusive.



Simon Smith



Bildagentur Zoonar GmbH/Shutterstock.com

Rugged oil beetles, another priority species, also guard their secrets well. The adults can only be found from September through April, and they're nocturnal. The life of a rugged oil beetle surveyor is one of cold, lonely, windswept nights. Nevertheless, this time the Back from the Brink team had better luck. Between 2017 and 2021, 28 sites were surveyed. Previously, eight sites were known within the Cotswolds National Landscape. This increased to 20, with an additional three found outside the National Landscape. However, even this intel isn't enough to save a species that has a bafflingly complex life history.

Once mated, females lay hundreds of eggs in burrows. These hatch – between mid-April and July – into long-legged larvae known as triungulins, which immediately scurry up flower stems. When a solitary bee visits, the triungulin seizes its moment, leaping onto its back using specialised hooks. It hitches a ride to the bee's nest, morphs into a maggot-like critter, and develops into a rugged oil beetle by raiding the pollen and nectar pantry.

So, to protect rugged oil beetles, you need to provide for solitary bees, and here's the rub. No one knows which. Thirty-four solitary bee species have been recorded at five beetle sites in the Cotswolds. Of these, nine species have been identified as potential hosts.

So, without knowing the minutiae of their private lives, how do you safeguard Dukes and Ruggeds? That's where the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan comes in. Ambitious landscape-scale projects mean precise details become a nice-to-know, not a need-to-know. Gutsy targets aim to restore 17,500 ha of grassland, including 11,600 ha of species-rich limestone grassland. Furthermore, the plan advocates for 'Big Chalk' creating three bridging areas, connecting the Cotswolds to the Mendips, North Wessex Downs and West Wiltshire Downs.

In the end, saving secretive species may depend less on uncovering every detail of their hidden lives, and more on restoring landscapes vast enough to hold their mysteries.

*The life of a rugged oil beetle surveyor is one of cold, lonely, windswept nights.*



# SOIL

## solutions

**A new project is measuring soil carbon sequestration levels in the Cotswolds as part of aims to tackle climate change. Siân Ellis finds out more.**

The role of soils in building a resilient landscape for the future can often be overlooked, but it underpins our ability to combat climate change, not least because of the CO<sub>2</sub> they can absorb from the atmosphere, says Fred Constantine Smith, CNL's Climate Action Lead.

"As well as storing carbon, healthy soils hold water in heavy rainfall, and they support the diverse communities of plants and wildlife which make this landscape so special," he explains.

A new Cotswold Soils project aims to increase our understanding of this by testing soil samples

from farms across the protected landscape, and so create a detailed picture of how carbon is stored by different soil groups and habitat groups common to the area.

"By building this evidence baseline, we can demonstrate the ability of key habitats like calcareous grassland to reduce the impacts of climate change, and we can also use it as a tool to look forward and model how changing land use and different approaches to management might improve soil health and store more carbon in the future," Fred says.

The targeted sampling programme is being carried out by environmental monitoring company Carbon Quester ([carbonquester.com](http://carbonquester.com)), which specialises in looking at soil carbon across entire landscapes and already had a data set from work with the North East Cotswold Farmer Cluster ([cotswoldfarmers.org](http://cotswoldfarmers.org)).

A team of surveyors visited 108 Cotswold sites to pull out soil samples, which have been taken for scientific testing in laboratories at Rothamsted Research ([rothamsted.ac.uk](http://rothamsted.ac.uk)), says Chris Sworder, co-founder and CEO of Carbon Quester.

"We will have a pretty broad but high-accuracy data set," Chris says. "CNL is a great client for us because they bring scale; they are trying to solve problems and create improvements at landscape scale, which is what Carbon Quester tries to help do." He continues:

*Going forward we can look at how we might want to move our landscape in the future, to improve carbon sequestration, through things like regenerative agriculture and increasing the area of some of our key habitats*



Leaping Fox Films

Healthy soil captures carbon and helps with flood management.



*Fred Constantine Smith and Chris Sworder discuss the potential of landscape-scale carbon capture through soil in the Cotswolds.*

“Sequestering carbon in soil is good because the more you have in soil, generally, the healthier the soil is and from a farm business perspective that is good for long-term financial security; from a climate perspective it is a natural solution to an anthropogenic problem – a natural solution to something man has created in post-Industrial Revolution emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>.”

Carbon sequestration can also be monetised, with increases enabling clients to add revenue streams to undertakings like nature recovery and re-wilding projects, Chris adds.

Early results from the Cotswolds soil sampling are already being analysed and Fred will be preparing a full report, drawing out a better

understanding of how different combinations of key common soils and key common habitats across CNL store carbon.

“Going forward we can look at how we might want to move our landscape in the future, to improve carbon sequestration, through things like regenerative agriculture and increasing the area of some of our key habitats. We can look at mapping-on further objectives to our Nature Recovery Strategy and adding value to nature restoration projects,” Fred says. “The Cotswold Soils project takes a landscape-focused, soil-first approach because that is where we will get the real value out of results.”

# Off the beaten track

**Alana Hopkins wanders off the beaten track to find quieter corners of the Cotswolds.**

Observing the silent passage of light through a church interior might not be the classic image of a Cotswolds experience that springs to mind, but these cool, calm, contemplative spaces are one of the many ways to connect with a different side to the Cotswolds.

They offer a glimpse into the history of the Cotswolds, with a handful being referred to as 'wool churches' – imposing, grand churches

boosted during Medieval times by wealthy wool merchants. These merchants are said to have been trying to buy their way to heaven, but whatever their intention, they have left behind a lasting legacy of architecture and craftsmanship. The town of Winchcombe has a wonderful example of this, in St. Peter's Church. With sunlight pooling on the smooth limestone walls,

and a magnificent stained glass window, as well as the famous gargoyles on the exterior, this church offers a place of quiet reflection away from the hustle and bustle of the high street.

Winchcombe is one of nine Cotswold locations featuring 'Cotswold Gateway' walking and cycling routes. These routes, launched in 2021, highlight 37 walking and cycling routes which allow people to explore the countryside around each slightly lesser-known location.

The routes celebrate local culture, heritage, and wildlife and invite people to get off the well-trodden paths in the Cotswolds and really get to know towns and villages – and their individual charms. In addition to Winchcombe, there are Cotswold Gateways route panels in Charlbury, Cirencester, Dursley, Hawkesbury, Marshfield, Painswick, Tetbury, and Wotton-under-Edge. The towns and villages can be reached by public transport, with an emphasis on lower carbon footprints and slower travel.

In Charlbury, nestled in the beautiful Evenlode Valley, explorers are spoilt for choice: whether to enjoy a relaxing afternoon in a cosy pub, wander out into the countryside to explore the ancient

*Below and top: Routes around Winchcombe offer beautiful countryside to explore as well as the vibrant town.*





*Charlbury is accessible by train and is a great base from which to explore the Evenlode Valley.*

*These routes, launched in 2021, highlight 37 walking and cycling routes which allow people to explore the countryside around each slightly lesser-known location.*

Wychwood Forest or nearby Wigwell Nature Reserve, or just potter around the town taking in the history – from the small museum to the town’s historic architecture.

If quirks are your thing, then Hawkesbury Upton is a must-visit – it’s home to the Somerset Monument, a striking memorial tower built in 1846 as a tribute to Lord Edward Somerset – who led the British cavalry at the Battle of Waterloo. Not only that, the Cotswold Way National Trail skirts right past the doorstep of the village.

For a wonderful example of the honey-coloured limestone the Cotswolds is known for, head to Painswick. Often referred to as the ‘Queen of the Cotswolds’, this charming village has great character: a church with an elegant pointed spire and a churchyard with 99 immaculately coiffed yew trees, a rich history related to the wool trade – and magnificent old merchants’ mansions as a result. A stroll out of the village leads to the Cotswold Way and to Painswick Rococo Garden with its year-round

*The Somerset Monument – one of several striking towers or monuments in the Cotswolds.*

display of gardening delights: snowdrops in springtime, roses in early summer, and orchard fruit in autumn.

Whilst the well-known hotspots for visitors offer icecream and souvenirs a-plenty, the Cotswold Gateway towns and villages offer something a little more – a sense of community, of real-life, and of the tranquillity to be found in the Cotswolds National Landscape – which after all, is one of the special qualities in relation to its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



*St. Mary's Church in Painswick with its memorable yew trees.*

**More information:**

*Look out for Cotswold Gateway boards on display in villages and towns – or search ‘Cotswold Gateway’ in the self-guided routes section online at [www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk](http://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk)*



All images Trevor Ray Hart

# Festival Season

**Katie Jarvis finds out about the joys and surprises behind arranging a walking festival.**

In Winchcombe, a group of walkers – fresh from a trek over panoramic Gretton Hill – are donning protective suits, ready for a tour of beehives by a local keeper (with three types of honey-cake for afters). Elsewhere, a GP is leading a *Diseases and cures walk*: a leper window, St Kenelm's Well, and a physic garden are stops on the way.

Dursley sees two guides with long memories taking hikers three miles along the old 'Dursley Donkey' branch line, recalling days when engines were still chugging goods from the industrial hub of Lister's.

While in Corsham, children are walking to school – through pretty streets shared by free-roaming peacocks – with not a screen in sight. Instead, each clutches a sheet of paper, keenly noting all they see: the bright orange of a railway worker; the prickles of a late-to-bed hedgehog; a friend on a scooter.

*'During the festival, it's not uncommon to see, for example, somebody from Leicestershire and somebody from Surrey embrace each other and say, 'How are you!'*

Welcome to the world of Cotswold walking festivals. Barry Cox, chair of the Corsham team of volunteers, draws a mind-map each year: not an iota is forgotten in planning the town's extravaganza. 'We cram in so many ideas for walks,' he says. 'We've done unusual ones, such as *Lights, Camera, Walk!* to Neston Park, which isn't normally open to the public; the owner gave us a talk and showed photos of television and plays [featuring the estate]. We've done other walks via several of the town's pubs; and evening walks for people who work.'

Everyone is welcome, from able amblers to rookie ramblers: 'I've only had flip-flops twice on one of my walks!' Barry grins.

But it's not just a matter of coming up with ideas for outings: his mind-map has to factor in very practical issues: 'Publicity is

an important part – printing and distributing leaflets. The next big thing is insurance. It takes about £2,500 to run a festival of this size.'

Over in Winchcombe, Robert Talbot and wife, Sheila, are big walkers. (A professional cartographer, Robert has even created two sizeable trails – the Winchcombe Way and the Coln Trail – himself.) In 2009, the couple initiated their town's walking festival: 'We didn't expect still to be doing it 17 years later,' Robert laughs.

They've woven in visits to town businesses (such as a tour of the celebrated Winchcombe Pottery marking its centenary this year); health walks in partnership with local practitioners; even meanderings through new housing estates. Sometimes they set out at the crack of dawn: 'It's a magical time. You'll hear birdsong, and see deer – roe, muntjac – and we finish with a cooked breakfast!' Others take place in the evening.

Nor is there difficulty finding 50-odd volunteers needed to run the event.

'I just appreciate the fact that I live in a town where people want to visit and walk,' Robert says. 'During the festival, it's not uncommon to see, for example, somebody from Leicestershire and somebody from Surrey embrace each other and say, 'How are you!' They'll have met a previous year.'

A particular joy is the way festivals celebrate so many different aspects of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: views, heritage, history, architecture; towns, villages, people. As Nicole Daw, access and volunteers officer for Cotswolds National Landscape, points out: 'As well as giving traditional ramblers more access to things they would probably do anyway, there's a focus on encouraging other, more diverse participants: maybe shorter walks families would enjoy; or walks in cities on pavements.'

'Some organisers have walk-leaders trained to support people with poor eyesight; or they include interpreters.'

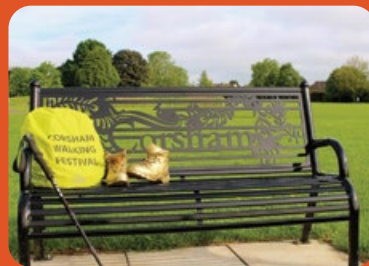
Festivals are not only a fantastic complement to Cotswold Voluntary Wardens' guided walks throughout the year: 'They also allow places to become walking-destinations in their own right, which is exciting. Often people come from further afield, and may even base their holidays around a festival.'

As one woman – who came especially from London – wrote, 'I felt that each day was so full and rich... I met people that may become future friends, another unexpected gift.'





Trevor Ray Hart



All images by Barry Cox, unless stated otherwise.



Courtesy of Lucy Robbins

# Restoring a Rare Beauty

Efforts are under way to re-establish the endangered native black poplar tree, farmer Lucy Robbins tells Siân Ellis.

According to a Greek myth, Phaeton's sisters mourned so much after his fatal attempt to drive the sun chariot that they were transformed into black poplars. It sounds a somewhat arbitrary way for *Populus nigra* subsp. *betulifolia* to come into being, but real-world Nature can be altogether precarious too, and a tree that was once a familiar sight across floodplains and boggy wet ditches is now one of Britain's rarest timber trees.

Within the Cotswolds, a project collaborating with a network of landowners and supported by Farming in Protected Landscapes funding aims to establish native black poplars along the Carrant Brook. Among those involved is fourth-generation farmer Lucy Robbins, at Bredon Hill,

who explains that the black poplar is dioecious – meaning male and female flowers (catkins) are found on separate trees, with pollination enabled by the wind.

Therein lies Nature's challenge because, for reasons ranging from agricultural drainage to changing timber requirements, there are now so few wild black poplars left in Britain – Woodland Trust estimates around 7,000, of which just 600 are female trees – that they are unlikely to pollinate each other. Hybrid/cultivated trees may pollinate them, but this does not produce true, wild black poplars. The new project aims



Sandra Standbridge/Shutterstock.com

*I am interested to see if there is use for the wood in the future, as people did use it in different crafts and carpentry.*

to conserve the few remaining unique genetic clones and facilitate the potential for sexual reproduction.

Black poplar trees can be propagated from long cuttings known as truncheons, sourced for the project by Lucy's cousin Ryan, and the pair were joined by their younger cousin Toby to plant them.

"It was a proper family affair," Lucy laughs. "We got together in February and put in six – three males of the same genetic type and three females of their own clone – in a bottom corner of our farm where it's soft, muddy ground and the brook runs nice and deep, because the trees like it wet. They are on the water-side of a fence so they won't have sheep or cattle rubbing against them and we've protected them from deer with biodegradable tree guards.

"We've started small with six to see how well they grow and then perhaps we will introduce them further into the farm," Lucy adds. "I think it's really important to keep native species, to not close off options in terms of biodiversity and materials; to bring back nature and keep the possibility of working with these trees in the future."

Black poplar is a food plant for caterpillars of many moths, and its catkins provide early sources of pollen and nectar for bees and other insects, while birds eat its seeds. In the past its timber, being naturally springy and resistant to shock, was valued for its versatility, with uses ranging from cart wheels to floorboards. When coppiced or pollarded, it was a popular source for thatching spars, bean sticks and woven fruit baskets.

"We've left enough space so that our black poplar can mature to full trees, or we could coppice one or two," Lucy says. "I am interested to see if there is use for the wood in the future,



*Lucy, Ryan and Toby planted the trees in February.*

as people did use it in different crafts and carpentry. If it has a value, it would encourage other people to plant the trees too. Black poplar is very palatable to sheep, so we could in future give it to them as supplementary feed.

"I want there to be more sites growing native black poplar, like a copy library, so that it is less vulnerable to loss; hopefully being part of a bigger project like this will help. When our next black poplars are planted in the winter, I would also love to get local schoolchildren to come along, to show how they can get involved in conservation, and how simple it can be to do big things by working together."



*Conditions by the Carrant Brook are perfect for black poplar – soft, muddy ground with deep water.*

# Tales through Time



Victoria Tappin Photography

## Siân Ellis talks to an archaeologist and crime-writer about her Cotswolds inspirations.

"I'm beginning to think ye olde English Cotswolds aren't quite so idyllic after all," comments a character in Nicola Ford's novel, *The Lost Shrine* (Allison & Busby). Readers might well agree as the plot unfolds around an archaeological dig: pursuing parallel mysteries of the strange death of a previous site director, and pre-historic finds that include 2,000-year-old infant burials exhibiting disturbing injuries.

Nicola Ford is the pen name of archaeologist Dr Nick Snashall, National Trust Archaeologist for the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site. Passionate about sharing stories of our precious landscapes, she enjoys writing both scholarly papers and archaeological murder mystery fiction, the latter giving her scope "in a light-touch sort of way to help people love discovering about the past, to pull them in." Her archaeologist-sleuths make cracking detectives too.

Kent-born Nick's interest in archaeology began when, aged five or six, she used a book token from her grandmother to buy Noel Streatfeild's *The Boy Pharaoh: Tutankhamen*. As a teenager she went on excavations, including

in the Cotswolds, whose influence on her was "absolutely enormous," she says. "I probably wouldn't have continued and been a professional archaeologist today without the Cotswolds."

Nick came to Crickley Hill for 13 or 14 years, joining summer excavations that took place from 1969 to 1993 to investigate its Neolithic, Iron Age and post-Roman past. "That sparked my interest in pre-history in particular," she says. "Perched on the edge of the Cotswold scarp [Crickley Hill] possesses, in my opinion, both some of the finest views in England and some of the most extraordinary archaeology."

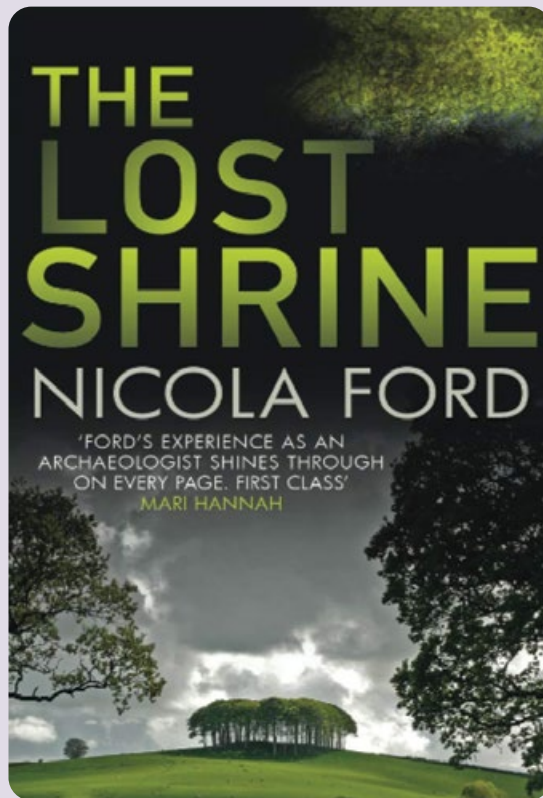
Nick has dug on sites across Britain and Europe, but when she studied archaeology as a mature student, it was Crickley Hill on which she focused her MA research. Her PhD was also based in the Cotswolds. "I was looking at the landscape of the early farmers and the first metal-workers, and Neolithic and early Bronze Age peoples, and how they used stone tools and how these stone tools could tell us about where they were living and what they were doing in the Cotswolds."

Characters and events in *The Lost Shrine*

are fictional, while locations are an amalgam of the real and imaginary: aside from Crickley Hill (scene of a meeting with a dodgy dealer in antiquities), the backdrop is coloured by talk of Barrow Wake, the high-status Birdlip Lady burial, and the Rollright Stones where “Crabby” the local druid enacts solstice celebrations.

The Bailsgrove shrine site of the book’s title, while fictional, was loosely inspired by the Iron Age and Roman ritual complex at Uley in Gloucestershire. “Shrine sites in the Iron Age are relatively rare and Uley is one of the ones that we know a little more about than others,” Nick says.

Alongside solving the novel’s mystery of the first site director’s death, many themes weave in and out: how the team works together on the dig; friction with an unpleasant housing developer keen to get in and build at Bailsgrove; reflections on how places shape people and people shape places, and the liminal potency of the Cotswold scarp edge. Challenged to justify disturbing the last resting-place of the three, 2,000-year-old infants, archaeologist Clare explains: “By studying their bones we can help reveal the details of their short lives [...] we can give these children a voice.”



For Nick, too, archaeology is about being able to tell the stories of the people who have gone before us. “Every time there is a new discovery or we find something else out about a site or time period, we are re-crafting the narrative [...] fitting more segments into the puzzle.” Crime fiction fans will be pleased to hear she is also working on her next novel, combining the worlds of archaeology and murder mystery.



Nick has spent time at Crickley Hill on archaeological digs.

**More information:**  
Visit: [nicolaford.com](http://nicolaford.com)

Neil Morgan

# Miles of Exploring

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens are busy planning a summer of routes covering all areas of the Cotswolds National Landscape. At the time of going to press, they're offering 38 routes and counting! Lots of CNL60 routes – celebrating 60 years of designation by exploring what makes the Cotswolds special, as well as some more accessible routes, and regular outings.

Full information on all routes can be found in the Guided Routes section of our website at [cotswolds-nl.org.uk](http://cotswolds-nl.org.uk), including all practical details, meeting and parking points, and any booking information.

## Long distance walks

Remember long distance guided walks too! Full info at [www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk](http://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk)

## Regular guided routes

**Every month:** Box Tramp, Colerne Tuesday Tramp, Sodbury Stroll (second Tuesday).

**Every quarter:** Shorter and Steadier.

## JULY

**Tuesday 7 July • 9:30am**

### **CNL60 – Kemerton, Beckford and Ashton on Carrant Circular**

Difficulty: Basic fitness  
Duration: 3.5 hours  
Distance: 7 miles

From Kemerton to Beckford, and back to Aston on Carrant, past a couple of churches and a very pretty view. Meet at the war memorial in Kemerton near the Crown Pub. Onwards to visit Beckford, the home of an historical silk trade. From there, we return via the strangely named Aston on Carrant, which possibly means 'the east town on the Carrant Brook'. Please park considerately on the roadside.

All guided walks are free, but we welcome small donations to cover costs.



4 season backpacking/Shutterstock.com

**Thursday 9 July • 10:00am**

### **CNL60 – Heritage**

Difficulty: Moderate fitness  
Duration: 5.5 hours  
Distance: 10 miles

A moderate walk with two lengthy climbs affording great views around this lesser-known part of the Cotswolds, called the Vale of the Red Horse as the hillside was once adorned with figures carved in the red clay. Interesting features passed on the walk include Shenington airfield, Tysoe windmill, Compton Wynyates and The Cathedral of the Feldon. This circular route starts and ends at the café in Tysoe. Please bring a packed lunch.



Neil Morgan

**Tuesday 14 July • 10:00am**

## Leckhampton Common to Barber Wood and Coberley

Difficulty: Moderate fitness  
Duration: 3.5 hours  
Distance: 6 miles

From Brownstones Quarry on Hartley Lane we follow part of the Cotswold Way and explore woods and fields and amazing views along the way. We will start out on the excellent new pathway from Hartley Lane down to the National Star Centre, before entering Barber Wood and heading to Coberley. We will have to cross a major road twice and caution is advised. Then we follow the Cotswold Way around Leckhampton Hill and back to the car park.

**Friday 17 July • 10:00am**

## From Cranham to Paradise

Difficulty: Moderate fitness  
Duration: 3 hours  
Distance: 5.5 miles

A walk along part of the Cotswold Way escarpment, returning through some classic Cotswold countryside. We'll explore some iconic Cotswold habitats, walking through beechwoods and grasslands to the scarp and the lofty heights of Painswick Beacon. We'll return via the hamlet of Paradise through classic Cotswold countryside to the Black Horse pub at Cranham. Car park is a couple of hundred yards beyond the pub (best to pre-book if intending to stop at pub for lunch).



Chrispo/Shutterstock.com

**Thursday 30 July • 9:30am**

## CNL60 – Forest and Frescos

Difficulty: Good fitness  
Duration: 5 hours  
Distance: 10.5 miles

A beautiful summer walk through The Wychwood Forest before heading towards Chilson and Shorthampton to see the frescos in the Shorthampton Church before lunch in Charlbury. After lunch we walk through the Cornbury Estate returning to Finstock.

**Remember to check walk details online before travelling to attend!**



Bob Jenkin

**Friday 31 July • 10:30am**

## Riders and Striders Towpath trail – Kennet and Avon Canal

**\*Booking required**  
Difficulty: Easy access  
Duration: 4 hours  
Distance: 6.5 miles

An easy and scenic Riders and Striders 6.5 mile walk or scooter ride from the Brassknocker Basin in Limpley Stoke to the quiet hamlet of Avoncliff and back, along a historic canal taking in two aqueducts where the canal runs above the river Avon and the railway. Plenty to see along the way and shady trees if the weather is hot. No road-crossings and accessible toilet at start and finish. We'll take our lunch stop in Avoncliff at the No 10 Tearooms or you can use picnic tables by the canal. Return by the same route but Striders have the option of leaving the walk and continuing into Bradford on Avon after lunch and returning to the start by bus or train. (Car park closes 6pm).



Richard Bell

Cleeve Hill.

## AUGUST

**Tuesday 18 August • 9:30am**  
**CNL60 – Painswick  
to Edge along the  
Cotswold Way**

Difficulty: Moderate fitness  
Duration: 3 hours  
Distance: 5.5 miles

This walk will feature a brief visit to the historic town and churchyard of Painswick, the self-declared “Queen of the Cotswolds”, learning of its historic prosperity from the wool trade and the fast flowing Painswick stream powering mills in the olden days. We will join the Cotswold Way as we walk down and then climb up to Edge, which seems appropriate as we celebrate the 60th year of the Cotswolds as a designated AONB. We soon pass a memorial to one of the proponents of the Cotswold Way and, soon after, a stone marking its mid-point. We make our way up to Edge Common whose unimproved grassland wildflowers and entice butterflies, and from where we should enjoy great views over the Painswick valley.



Neil Morgan

**Thursday 27 August • 10:00am**

### **Riders and Striders – A Cleeve Hill Circuit**

Difficulty: Easy access  
Duration: 3.5 hours  
Distance: 6 miles

Walk or scoot to enjoy extensive views over the countryside. Riders and Striders are events for walkers and mobility scooter riders alike. An easy start on an accessible trail created by the Rangers and CNL leads to a meandering and undulating excursion over the Common. Great views over the countryside to west, north and east. The Common hosts an active golf course and boasts the highest point in the Cotswolds. Trammer bookable 01242 672025 or [golf@cleevehillgc.co.uk](mailto:golf@cleevehillgc.co.uk)

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## SEPTEMBER

Friday 11 September • 10:00am

### Shorter and Steadier – Crickley Hill (2026, No.9)

Difficulty: Easy access  
Duration: 1.5 hours  
Distance: 3 miles

One of our quarterly walks around Crickley Hill Country Park, taking in the magnificent views and searching out the wildlife. This is one of our Shorter and Steadier walks to introduce new walkers to the splendour of our glorious countryside and the sheer joy of walking. These shorter walks are at a gentler pace and may be ideal for anyone wanting to regain fitness after a health setback.

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## OCTOBER

Tuesday 6th October • 10:00am

### Colerne Tuesday Tramp

Difficulty: Moderate fitness  
Duration: 3 – 3.5 hours  
Distance: 5 miles

This is a regular, monthly, walk around the various footpaths of Colerne Parish. Bring a mid-morning snack.

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## NOVEMBER

Tuesday 17 November • 10:00am

### Box Tramp

Difficulty: Moderate fitness  
Duration: 3 – 3.5 hours  
Distance: 5 miles

A regular, monthly, walk around the footpaths of Box parish. Bring a drink and mid-morning snack.

Keep checking the guided routes page online at [www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk](http://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk) to check on walks throughout the rest of 2026 – including festive winter walks! New routes are added all the time as the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens research and devise them on a rolling basis.

All guided walks are free, but we welcome small donations to cover costs.



Crickley Hill Country Park.

Neil Morgan



COTSWOLDS:  
FIELD & FOLK



# WAYS TO SEE FIELD & FOLK

## Summer celebration

15 August, Midday – 4pm  
Parabola Arts Centre, Cheltenham

- Film screening
- Hosted Q&A session with film panel
- Photographic exhibition
- Bar and delicious locally produced food
- Live music
- Tickets £7.50, available online at:  
[www.boxoffice.cheltladiescollege.org](http://www.boxoffice.cheltladiescollege.org)

## Summer venues tour

- Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, 9 July
- FarmED, Shipston-under-Wychwood, 10 July
- Tetbury Goods Shed, 16 July
- Isbourne Arts, Winchcombe, 17 July
- Stroud Brewery, 23 July, 20 August & 24 September
- Pound Arts Centre, Corsham, 24 July
- Farm screening, Ashton under Hill, 29 July
- Sherston Village Hall, 7 August
- Farm screening, Lower Hampen, 19 September

## Watch at home or host a screening!

*Cotswolds: Field & Folk* will be available to rent from [www.kinema.com](http://www.kinema.com) – giving people the opportunity to view at home or host their own community screenings.

Details and ticket information:  
[www.cotswoldsfilm.co.uk](http://www.cotswoldsfilm.co.uk)

*Cotswolds: Field & Folk* has been produced in collaboration between:





**Cotswolds**  
National  
Landscape

## **Glorious Cotswold Grasslands**

**Our Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team is on a mission to restore as much wildflower grassland as possible, right across the Cotswolds!**

This vital work is improving biodiversity, and helping wildlife – from beetles and butterflies, to birds and bats. It's great for livestock too!

If you are a landowner, land manager, parish or town council, school, farm, or conservation project, and you're interested to know how the GCG team could work with you, take a look online to find out more, or email: [grasslands@cotswolds-nl.org.uk](mailto:grasslands@cotswolds-nl.org.uk)





**Cotswolds  
National  
Landscape**

# 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.

For the 2025-28 scheme, we are being supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, as well as by our generous business members and their customers. Grants of up to £5,000 are available to grassroots projects which seek to benefit climate, nature, and communities.

The more contributions we receive, the more we can do. Want to get involved? Being a business 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.

**Final call for 2026 applications!**  
**Submission deadline: 4 October 2026.**

For more information, please see  
the Grants & Funding pages online at  
[cotswolds-nl.org.uk](https://cotswolds-nl.org.uk)