

JANUARY – JUNE 2022 • ISSUE 46

COTSWOLD LION

THE MAGAZINE OF THE COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

FREE
ONLINE ISSUE

Community spirit
Wildflowers in Bloom
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Helping hedgehogs
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Cotswolds inspiration



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Welcome to issue 46 of the Cotswold Lion. This issue is all about people... creative young people who have been inspired by our Glorious Cotswold Grasslands project; Nicole and the wardens (and other partners) helping share walking and exploring routes around Bath; Ben and Jane who are helping young people through the Cotswold Youth Network; motivated communities who wouldn't let the pandemic hold them back; Jo, who likes to get away from people every now and again to seek out nature... and more besides!

This welcome note is being written in December 2021, against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic entering its second winter. We hope that as restrictions lifted in 2021,

those of you who longed to be around people once again have been able to cautiously start to do that. Whilst it's clear that we aren't out of the woods yet, since businesses were allowed to reopen, our little patch of the world does feel a bit more 'normal'. We hope that all our readers stay happy and well through the winter months towards summer 2022.

Coronavirus forced us to move the Cotswold Lion online. Until then, it had always been a free printed publication, distributed across the Cotswolds for everyone to enjoy. We are currently seeking generous sponsors to help with the costs of returning the Cotswold Lion to a printed format. If that's you – please do get in touch!

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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:

Ilmington Community Farm Shop
Image © Debbie Sarjant

NEWS BULLETIN

Top stories from the Cotswolds National Landscape

Kingfisher Trail

A big thank you to everyone who explored the Kingfisher Trail in summer 2021, and to anyone who joined us at the auction. The project raised surplus funds, and these are being put directly towards our work engaging young people with rural skills and the great outdoors. Keep a look out for our next arts activity!



New team members

We're delighted to introduce our new team members, who joined us throughout 2021, to help us deliver a variety of work across the Cotswolds:

Farming in Protected Landscapes team

Joining Mark Connelly and Scott Brown to deliver Farming in Protected Landscapes are: Heidi Gibbs and Iris McCormick (both Farming Engagement Officers) and Caroline Regan (Programme Administrator). Mark, Scott, Heidi, and Iris are all going out



Heidi Gibbs



Iris McCormick



Caroline Regan

to meet farmers and land managers to support and advise them in applying to the Farming in Protected Landscapes funding programme. Their focus is on helping farmers and land managers find ways to transition from conventional farming and land management to work which includes projects that support

nature, increase soil health, address climate change, and enable better and more meaningful access to the Cotswolds National Landscape. Caroline is tasked with providing the essential behind-the-scenes administrative support – for the team and funding applicants. ❖❖❖

New team members



Rosalind Marsden

Russell Sach

Education and Outreach team

We are delighted to announce that thanks to funding from Thames Water's Smarter Catchment initiative for the River Evenlode (in partnership with the Evenlode Catchment Partnership), we now have three new team members dedicated to education and outreach across the Evenlode catchment area. Rosalind Marsden joins us as our new Education Officer, Ruth Rudwick is our new Community Outreach Officer, and Rowan Wynne-Jones will be our Community Outreach and Education Officer.



Simon Joyce

Planning team

Simon Joyce is our new Planning Officer. Simon's principal role will be to provide responses on behalf of the organisation to planning applications which are likely to have significant impacts on the Cotswolds and its setting. He will be responding to local authority consultations on planning applications and providing advice and guidance to a wide range of stakeholders. He will also support John Mills on strategic-level issues, including responding to development plan consultations and developing and advocating our position on relevant issues.



Ruth Rudwick

Russell Sach

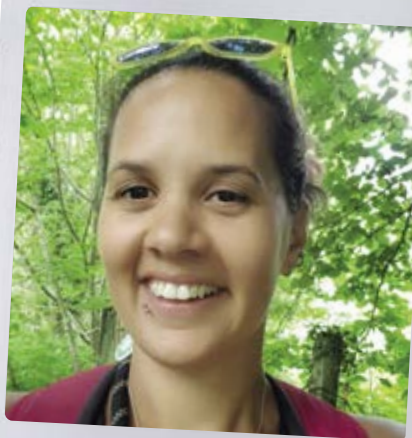


Rowan Wynne-Jones

Russell Sach

Access and Trails team

Early in 2021, we welcomed Nicole Daw as our Trails and Access Officer, working with Becky Jones. Nicole will focus on delivering walking routes and engagement activity relating the Bathscape project. In time, her role will expand out further across the Cotswolds National Landscape area.



Nicole Daw

Future team members

During COP26 in November 2021, protected and conserved areas around the world came together and made a commitment to take a leading role in addressing the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. At the same time, we finalised our Climate Crisis Commitment – working towards a Net Zero Carbon Landscape. The first step in this journey is to have a really clear understanding of where we are now – what is our carbon baseline and, through working with partners, what measures can be implemented to ensure the Cotswolds becomes a Carbon Positive Landscape? We're delighted to announce that we have been awarded funding to recruit our first ever Net Zero Landscape Officer, who we look forward to appointing soon.

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

Wildflowers in bloom

Young artists celebrate our Glorious Cotswold Grasslands project with creative responses.

Earlier this year, our Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team launched an art competition for young people, encouraging them to get out into the landscape, explore wildflower meadows, and create artistic work in response. Schools across the Cotswolds encouraged students to enter work, which was judged by Jim Parkyn, Hatty Staniforth, and Anna Field. We're delighted to announce the winners here!

An online exhibition of all the competition entries can be viewed at www.gloriouscotswoldgrasslandsart.com. A real life exhibition along with a range of exciting meadow-inspired activities, will be held at Nature in Art near Gloucester over the 2022 Easter break. Keep a look out for more details!



The overall winning artwork was created by **Ruby Pritchett (aged 15)**. The judges found her work uplifting and loved the inclusion of wildflowers such as wild carrot and oxeye daisies. The inclusion of seed pods and seed dispersal is also a great

nod to the seed collecting work carried out by judge Anna and her colleagues from the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands project. Judge Jim Parkyn said,

'Ruby has captured grasslands in a rather 1950's print style that I like very much. Her use of blank space and shape is very appealing.'

Close runner up was **Ellie Rowlands (aged 15)** – the judges loved her colour use, composition and the mix of wildflowers included in her painting.

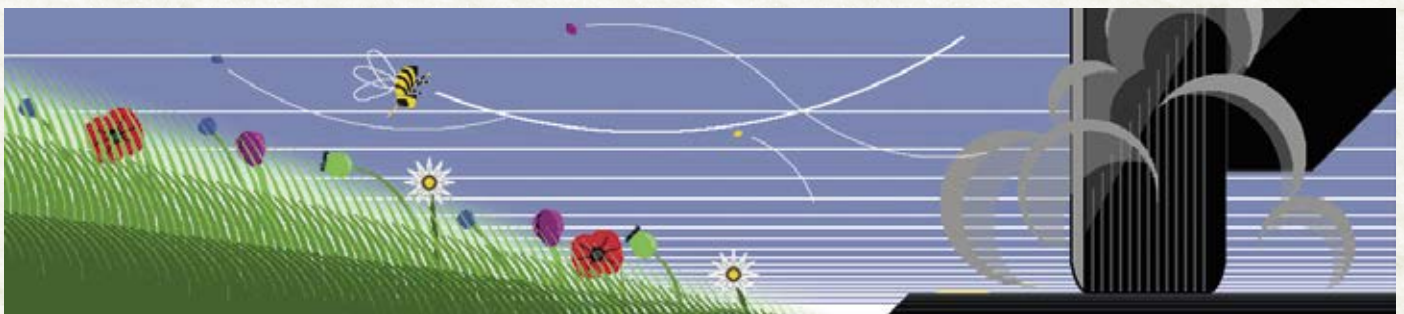
The winning work from the 16-19 age category was **Daniel Vollborth (aged 17)** and the winning work from the 11-15 age category was **Daisy Davis (aged 13)**.



Ellie Rowlands



Daisy Davis



Daniel Vollborth

Judging panel



Jim Parkyn

Jim is a character designer, model maker, sculptor and stop motion animator. He has worked in animation for over 20 years, and has worked on films such as Chicken Run and Wallace & Gromit.



Hatty Staniforth

Hatty is an artist and illustrator whose work explores themes including nature, food, laughter and folklore. Hatty's clients include FT Weekend, Women's Aid and Loose Joints.



Anna Field

Anna is the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands Assistant Project Officer. She is a trained ecologist with a wide variety of experience of botanical, invertebrate, and ornithological surveys and practical habitat conservation in the Cotswolds.

Sharing a beautiful secret

Siân Ellis speaks to Nicole Daw about revealing a splendid way to explore the countryside around Bath.

“I think I’ve got the best job in the world,” says Nicole Daw, and listening to the Trails and Access Officer for the Cotswolds National Landscape as she describes doing a ‘walkover’ to check on the newly waymarked Circuit of Bath it is hard not to be envious. Better still: get out and explore the thrilling 21.5-mile route yourself!

As the name suggests, the Circuit of Bath takes walkers on a circular route,

“There will be at least 19 different walks... Some will be steep, some flat, some accessible for wheels, some that are good for really young children...”

providing magnificent views of the World Heritage City, local towns, villages and spectacular countryside along the way.

“The view from the top of Woolley, across the city and right over to Little Solsbury Hill is beautiful,” Nicole says

when pressed to name a favourite stretch of the circuit. “Englishcombe is really stunning too, like walking through a chocolate-box village.”

Adding waymarkers to the Circuit of Bath to make access easier and encourage more walkers to explore it is one of many interconnected projects in the Bathscape Scheme. Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and others to the tune of £2.2m, the six year partnership scheme, launched in 2018, is restoring and enhancing the natural landscape surrounding Bath so that more residents and visitors will actively enjoy it. The Cotswolds National Landscape, working with partners, is creating a range of walking routes.

“There will be at least 19 different walks,” Nicole says. “Some will be steep, some flat, some accessible for wheels, some that are good for really young children – we are talking with lots of people, particularly those who might not normally think about going out for a walk, to find out what will encourage them.”

So what behind-the-scenes work has gone into making the Circuit of Bath more accessible? A route via permissive paths and public rights of way already existed but it felt “like a beautiful secret” without clear waymarking, Nicole says. To enable it to be shared more widely, she and



Jess Gay of Julian House, with Nicole Daw from Cotswolds National Landscape



Nicole Daw

Looking out from Little Solsbury Hill trig point



Volunteers have worked to improve access and signage along the route



Nicole Daw



Nicole Daw

New signage was installed along the route in summer 2021

“The Circuit of Bath goes past all three of the city’s park-and-rides...”

several Cotswold Voluntary Wardens (the volunteer arm of the Cotswolds National Landscape) explored and spoke with landowners about installing waymarkers, making small diversions where the going was unsuitable.

“One landowner pointed out that he would have cows in a field where we wanted to put a waymarker and they would use it as a scratching post!” Nicole laughs. “So we took a slightly different line.”

Another consideration was to ensure that the route can be walked in sections by people wanting a shorter ramble, with

access by public transport, car parking points, and facilities like cafés and toilets within reach along the way. “The Circuit of Bath goes past all three of the city’s park-and-rides, at Lansdown, Odd Down and Newbridge,” Nicole says.

Access improvements have included putting in handrails, steps and kissing gates, as well as some 400 waymarkers: “a real partnership effort,” involving Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, Bath Ramblers, Avon Wildlife Trust, Bathscape’s Community Action for Nature volunteers, Bath & NE Somerset Council, and the National Trust.

After all the hard work the route was ready by September 2021, in time for local charity Julian House (which supports vulnerable and at-risk individuals across South West England) to do its fundraising walk along the whole length during the annual Bathscape Walking Festival. Since then Nicole has led some short wellbeing walks with local schools too.

As we wind up our chat, Nicole is itching to get out: there are, after all, another 18 or so routes to get set up in addition to the Circuit of Bath. “We’re lucky to have so many willing volunteers to help us, who know the area really well

and will help maintain the routes,” she says. “We couldn’t do it without them.”

Step out

For more information on Bathscape visit www.bathscape.co.uk

For details on the Circuit of Bath including downloadable section guides and links to walks on Outdoor Active and Go Jauntly apps, visit www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Like to get involved or got any questions?

Email Nicole Daw on

Nicole.daw@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk



Nicole Daw

View to Little Solsbury Hill from Woolley in early summer



Nicole Daw

View to Little Solsbury Hill from Woolley in midsummer

Stinchcombe Hill

a local treasure

The name Stinchcombe might now conjure images of Harry Potter, but locals know that Stinchcombe Hill goes back much further than a blockbuster book and film franchise! Lying just to the west of Dursley, and part of the dramatic Jurassic limestone scarp of the Cotswolds, Stinchcombe Hill is loved for its views – to the River Severn, the Forest of Dean, the Malvern Hills, and to the nearby Tyndale Monument at North Nibley; for its wildlife; and of course, for its fantastic walking routes. Local resident, and trustee of the Stinchcombe Hill Trust, John Hammill, tells us what makes this place so special to him.

“It’s the variety of terrain, really. From the woods on the way up the hill, to the more open areas near the top, I never tire of being on Stinchcombe Hill. Seeing the seasons change across the hill all year round always makes each visit different and enjoyable.

Being on the Cotswold Way, Stinchcombe Hill regularly features in the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens guided walks programme. Recently I designed a walk using a section of the Cotswold Way around Stinchcombe as part of the celebrations of the Cotswold Way at 50. Routes around here can be invigorating – Drakestone Point is 219 metres (719 ft), and on a breezy day, you are certainly aware of being at height. The view makes it worth any blustery weather – the expanse you can take in from up there is always impressive no matter the weather. One of the other things I personally enjoy about



John out and about on his trampler

Nature is ever present on Stinchcombe Hill... there are three sizeable Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) here, and we enjoy a huge variety of wildlife.



A skylark – always a delight to see and hear

Stinchcombe is the accessibility – as someone who uses a Trampler mobility scooter to get around, it’s encouraging to know that there are plans to improve access to allow more disabled people to enjoy the hill.

Nature is ever present on Stinchcombe Hill... there are three sizeable Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) here, and we enjoy a huge variety of wildlife. The wildflower-rich grasslands provide habitat for all sorts of wildlife, including some very beautiful butterflies and moths, beetles and lots of other insects, plants (of

course), and a range of other animals. There are also plenty of birds who call Stinchcombe home, of which my favourite is probably the skylark. Their light and cheerful song, always while in flight, never fails to delight.”

John is keen to share the history of Stinchcombe too, describing how Sir Stanley Tubbs purchased the land of Stinchcombe Hill in 1928 to protect the natural landscape, granting a 99 year lease to the Stinchcombe Hill Golf Club in 1929. In 1930 he conveyed the whole of the hill to the Stinchcombe Hill Recreation Ground



Looking towards the Tyndale Monument



John Hamill

Stinchcombe Hill blanketed in winter snowfall

Trust. The current trustees are still responsible for conserving the hill and work in partnership with the Golf Club to maintain it, in accordance with the spirit

of Sir Stanley's bequest that: 'golfers, horse riders and the public generally, should gain mutual benefit from his benefaction with neighbourly and

sportsmanlike behaviour being exhibited by all parties'. John says, "I think this summarises so well what the Trust is all about, supported by Warden activities on guided walks and local interpretation." As well as being a Stinchcombe Hill Trust trustee, John is also a Voluntary Cotswold Warden, and plays an integral role pulling together their rolling annual guided walks programme.

Heading outside

There are almost 100 self-guided walking route downloads found on www.cotswoldsaoib.org.uk. In addition, guided walks are added and updated all year round. Guided walks are a fantastic way to explore the Cotswolds National Landscape – they vary in distance, duration, and difficulty, and are a wonderful way to get out and about. Browse online for the full walks programme, and full details including booking when necessary. Here are our five guided walk highlights for early 2022:

SOUTH

Monday 3rd January • 10:00

'Around Minchinhampton Commons'

5 miles • 3 hours • Easy

A bracing morning walk on upland commons to celebrate the new year. Fairly flat terrain and no stiles. Glorious views of surrounding valleys and beyond (weather permitting!). Refreshments available locally after the walk, if required. Suitable for families, but not buggies or pushchairs.

Start point: Opposite the Amberley Inn, Amberley. (Please do not use Inn car park).

AVON VALLEY

Friday 14th January • 10:00

Castle Combe Circular

9 miles • 5 hours • Moderate

This walk takes in some fantastic views of the southern Cotswolds. The route heads south along the Bybrook to Ford and Slaughterford passing the ruined paper mill, then east towards Biddestone – before turning North back to Castle Combe.

Start point: Castle Combe free car park

NORTH

Tuesday 1st February • 9:30

Stanton village to Stanway House and back

6.5 miles • 3.5 hours • Moderate

A walk from the lovely village of Stanton, with pretty outlooks along the way. A visit to the wonderful Jacobean Stanway House. Bring coffee and a snack. Lunch available after the walk at The Mount in Stanton.

Start point: Stanton village car park

CENTRAL

Friday 4th March • 10:00

Kilkenny, Shill Hill and Foxcote

6 miles • 3 hours • Moderate

Starting from the Kilkenny Viewpoint with wonderful views along the ridge, virtually all the way to Shill Hill. Through mixed woodland past Upcote Plantation, with parkland and a gallop track to the tiny hamlet of Foxcote and then up across meadowland for the return journey.

Start point: Kilkenny Viewpoint car park. Just south of A436 and 0.5km west/uphill from the Kilkenny Inn, Car park is just off the Hilcot road.

EAST COTSWOLDS

Wednesday 27th April • 10:00

Spooks and booze

5.5 miles • Approx 3.5 hours

An intriguing walk over open undulating farmland with stunning views. These views would have been shared by the most important female Russian agent of the 20th century. Add in the wafting aromas of fermenting hops to make a fascinating morning.

Start point: Great Rollright Village Hall

COMING SOON: Delights of the Eastern Cotswolds

Following the success of the 2021 linear "Delights of the Eastern Cotswolds" walk we are planning a continuation. We plan to develop a roughly 5 - 8 mile route through Burford, Minster Lovell, Wychwood, Charlbury, Blenheim, Woodstock, Great Tew, and Chipping Norton. The walks will be on the last Thursday of the month, starting in March and running until October or November. To register interest in this walk please email cvw.east.guidedwalks@gmail.com for more info.



HOGGING THE HEDGE



Matt Brierley sorts fact from fiction when it comes to our prickly little garden friends...



Attracting urchins to your street may not sound like the most desirable idea until you discover that's another name for a baby hedgehog! In fact, once upon a time, all British hedgehogs were called urchins and it was their half-spiked appearance that created that nickname for poorly clothed children. European hedgehogs usually give birth to four or five urchins – or hoglets – in June or July. Hedgehog courtship peaks in May and June when males attempt to impress females by snorting, puffing and running

round them in circles. The commotion soon attracts other males and so begins the hedgehog rut, with the boys chasing each other, before squaring up and head-butting. On account of their 7,000 sharp keratin spines, hedgehogs mate carefully.

It was their spiky backs that earned hedgehogs the strangest of reputations. Writing in the 1st Century, Pliny the Elder claimed hedgehogs collected rotting apples on their backs and stored them in hollow tree trunks as a tasty winter ❖❖❖

THEIR SPIKY BACKS EARNED HEDGEHOGS THE STRANGEST OF REPUTATIONS.

treat. By the 7th Century Isidore of Seville detailed them climbing up vines and harvesting grapes. By 1566 Elizabeth I had introduced a hedgehog bounty to stop them damaging crops. In 1867 Charles Darwin penned a letter to Hardwicke's Science Gossip to reliably report that one Mr. Gisbert had seen a Spanish hedgehog trotting along with a back covered in the fruits of a strawberry tree. In 1988 a British wildlife documentary impaled an apple on a hedgehog's back. Predictably, it fell off. This seemed to finally draw the matter to a close which is perhaps as well, since hedgehogs actually eat bugs.

Fruit theft isn't the only urchin fable. Victorian ecologists published fanciful accounts of farm lads beating suckling hedgehogs off the udders of cows with sticks. This supposed love of milk haunts hedgehogs to the present day. Despite them being intolerant of cow's lactose, many people still leave hedgehogs a night-time snack of bread and milk. Miss Tiggywinkle's hedgehog hospital suggest leaving out some dog or meaty cat food instead.

Providing the right supper isn't the only way you can help your hogs. Why not build a hedgehog nest box with dry leaves and straw inside? This might be used as a nursery by a mother hedgehog or become a cosy winter hibernaculum. Hedgehog hibernation is so incredible the European Space Agency have looked into it as a possible way to help humans travel to new planets. A normal hoggy heartbeat of 280 beats per minute slows down to just 5 beats per minute.



There are lots of other ways to assist your hedgehogs too...

- Create a hedgehog highway by cutting a 13cm hole in your fence. One garden isn't enough for foraging, hungry hogs need whole neighbourhoods.
- For a prickly critter, garden netting is seriously bad news. Let them in to snaffle your strawberry-stealing slugs instead.
- Never use any toxins in your garden. They bioaccumulate in top predators like hedgehogs.
- A neat and tidy garden isn't one hedgehogs will thrive in. Leave a patch to rewild and be careful with that strimmer!
- Visit www.projectsplatter.co.uk to report squished hogs. These rather sad records are, nevertheless, vital for understanding hedgehog populations.
- Report live sightings at www.hedgehogstreet.org and find loads more out about hedgehogs there too.

With hedgehogs currently listed as vulnerable to extinction on the UK Red List there's never been a more important time to step up for our urban urchins.

They then snuggle into a nest that itself regulates a temperature of 1–5°C when outside drops to a frosty -8°C. Wild piles are fantastic hedgehog homes as well; be sure to check them before any garden bonfires, even in spring and summer.

A NORMAL HOGGY HEARTBEAT OF 280 BEATS PER MINUTE SLOWS DOWN TO JUST 5 BEATS PER MINUTE.



IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE

Katie Jarvis talks to Ben Ward and Jane Manning about the work they do to inspire young people across the Cotswolds.

The Cotswolds: affluent, beautiful; independent shops, chocolate-box cottages... Well, yes. And no.

Just ask Ben Ward and Jane Manning. They run World Jungle, a social enterprise promoting happier, healthier communities. Over the summer, they took a children's activity programme to some of the area's most thriving towns.

'You think of these as places that have it all,' Ben says. 'In fact, there's a lot of poverty, though it's often hidden away. There are estates that many more affluent residents probably



Ben Ward and Jane Manning of World Jungle

have never even seen.' But you often also see within these estates incredibly strong communities, with people really looking after each other.'

Ben, Jane and team set up in local parks, bringing activities for youngsters to enjoy for free. Football, circus skills – juggling, unicycling – hula hoops, arts and crafts, drums; even cooking pancakes one week.

Despite initial shyness among the children: 'By the end, they were loving it. Especially the music. We brought speakers so they could DJ and MC – grime, hip-hop. They had a great time.'

There's a serious side, too. One volunteer – a professional play therapist – helped youngsters express emotion through drawing; even picking up on issues during fun activities such as sand-play.

'What was clear to all of us is that Covid has resulted in a lack of social interaction. There was a loss of confidence around playing with others,' Ben says. 'Lockdown has made these schemes more vital than ever.'

Ben and Jane – a husband-and-wife team from Dursley – founded World Jungle in 2006. They'd been working with disenfranchised young people in Bristol – students excluded from school, or involved with drugs – trying to expand narrow world-views they encountered amongst them. 'Low expectations, low ambitions. Many lived in pretty rough areas, yet they wanted to stay put because they felt comfortable. We just thought, 'Come on, guys! You're young – get out there!'

'So we had a desire to broaden horizons. Our idea behind World Jungle was all about diversity. A jungle is full of different experiences – as far from a



Image courtesy of World Jungle



Image courtesy of WorldJungle

World Jungle invite young people to participate in a range of creative outdoor activities

'Come on, guys! You're young – get out there!'

mono-culture as you can get. That's what we wanted for them.'

As a social enterprise – reinvesting profit back into the communities it serves – World Jungle works all over the South West and with all ages: one three-year project focused on elderly mental health and loneliness, visiting care homes in Dursley, Berkeley and Wotton-under-Edge.

In the Cotswolds, however, much of their work involves children aged six to 18. They chair the Cotswold Youth Network, coordinating youth services in the region. And, thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund, they've teamed up with Inspire to Aspire, a new youth social enterprise, setting up and supporting youth clubs in towns including Tetbury, Stow-on-the-Wold, Bourton-on-the-Water and Moreton-in-Marsh.

'What we'd like to see at the end of this three-year programme is for each town across the Cotswolds to have some kind of regular youth provision,' Ben says.

There's no doubting that the area covered by the AONB is full of different challenges. Many families struggle with poverty: 'But those are the children you'll often find out in the park. In some respects, because they're outdoors, they're getting a freer, more traditional childhood. While in more affluent areas, children have probably got their own PlayStation and don't need to go out,' Ben says.

Whatever their needs, youngsters and their attitudes often surprise him. Such as when the team took to the road, last summer, asking for news and views.

'It's easy to think everything's doom and gloom, but the young people we spoke to often felt really lucky to be growing up in the Cotswolds. Of course, there are issues such as mental health, lack of transport, and not much to do.

'Yet there was also a recognition that they do live in a beautiful part of the world. That they have amazing places where they can simply enjoy hanging out with their mates – and for free.'

More information about World Jungle and their projects:
www.worldjungle.org.uk



Image courtesy of WorldJungle



Adam Henson with Victoria the horse, one of his many favourites at the Farm Park

In conversation with...

ADAM HENSON

Adam chats to Alana Hopkins about what's been happening at Cotswold Farm Park (a lot!), and just as excitingly, what's planned for this year.

"I'm a farmer, first and foremost, but some people are surprised when I say I start my day on the farm at 8am.

They expect me to be up at dawn, as a dairy farmer would be! Most work days begin with meeting our team – the farm park has over 90 team members, and we have our farm team too. The farm park is open from 14th February until Christmas time every year, but the team work all year and in all weathers.

Closing in 2020 because of the pandemic was heart-breaking for me.

My dad, Joe Henson, opened the farm park in 1971 based on an ambition to save rare breed native animals, and I promised him I would look after them all when I took the farm park over. When we initially closed because of covid-19, there was such uncertainty and fear about all our futures – as farmers, and also for the farm park. I feared for our team of employees, and also for the animals' futures. ❖



Adam with one of the many lambs born each year on the farm



New lodges allow people to stay at the Farm Park for short breaks

It was a scary time. But, through the furlough scheme, and the other government initiatives to support businesses, we hung in there. We're now back up to visitor numbers at the same levels as 2019, and we're grateful for the support people have continued to show us.

Lambing is a brilliant time of year at the farm park.

We wear radio mics as we look after the ewes, and talk people through the whole process, as it's happening. We don't candy-coat what's going on – it's better that people see the reality of farming and food production so they are well informed. Sometimes it's upsetting, and some people step outside if it gets a bit much for them, but most stay. We've had people cheer, cry, and clap as they witness lambs coming into the world. People have also watched foals and calves being born here. It's warming to see how people react to the animals arriving.

We carry on my dad's legacy of looking after rare native breeds – he saved many breeds from extinction. They're a part of our national heritage, almost like living antiques-on-legs, but they're so much more. Retaining their genetic diversity will always be an important part of what we do. Building a national Gene Bank for native breeds has economic, social, and environmental relevance. As farming changes in

the future, and as we consider the complexities of climate changes and sustainable food production and farming, it'll be vital to have native breeds as a part of that equation.

My favourites change all the time – I have a lifelong fondness for Exmoor ponies, but I also love our three regional breeds, Cotswold sheep, Gloucester Old Spot pigs, and Gloucester cattle. Having said that, I've added Dartmoor sheep to my list of favourites at the moment. They have a wonderful fleece, charming faces, and I also like their temperament – the ewes are very attentive, and keep their lambs very close. ❖❖❖



Exmoor ponies and Dartmoor sheep are more of Adam's favourite farm park residents



The Wildlife Walk takes people on a route across farmland

It's been heartening to see the accommodation full and visitor numbers continue to rise. It's great to know that people's enthusiasm for farming and the countryside is there.

About 50% of our visitors have been to us before.

The other half are new to the farm park, and of those visitors, for some it's all brand new. Education is an important part of our work, and so is experience. In 2020 we opened up even more glamping and accommodation options over on the campsite, for people who want to extend their time with us. We also used the lockdown time to revamp our wildlife walk and adventure play areas. It's been heartening to see the accommodation full and visitor numbers continue to rise. It's great to know that people's enthusiasm for farming and the countryside is there. In 2022, we're hoping to develop the experience element with overnight stays for children, guided walks across farmland and woodland, more evening activities for families, and improved play equipment.

I love sharing what we have here, and that's what makes my job(s) so rewarding. We already had plans to implement things here which would improve our carbon footprint, but on the back of COP26, it's more important than ever to share our knowledge too. Helping our children and young people



Revamped play areas allow little ones even more opportunities for adventure

understand the countryside, farming, and food production – to experience it all first hand – is the best way we'll help encourage them to care about these things in the future. And the more fun it all is, the more people connect with it – that's what we're all about!"

*Find out more
Opening times, events, and more:
www.cotswoldfarmpark.co.uk*

All images courtesy of Cotswold Farm Park

Solitary striding

Cheltenham artist Jo Biggadike talks to Katie Jarvis about the Cotswold walks which inspire her printmaking.



A Memory of Swifts by Jo Biggadike, collagraph print

The scene is shades of blue: a base of deep Prussian that refracts and morphs into myriad tints of inky sky and metallic wisps of silvery cloud. And then there's the movement. Black darts of birds – dusky swifts – swirling over the tip of a towering weathervane, before heading off on a journey, destination known only to them.

Printmaker Jo Biggadike was walking – as is her wont – on Leckhampton Hill, at the time. One of those lazy summer days, with no one else in sight: 'It was very peaceful. Then, suddenly, all these birds came swooping overhead. A magical moment – me and these birds – a moment it felt as if they'd gifted to me.'

Swifts are the fastest of skilled aviators, pretty much impossible to catch in a photograph. 'Or to draw,' Jo says. 'So the print I made of that moment is called A Memory of Swifts. I had to remember the sight and the feeling. The beauty and the elation.'

Jo started her pattern of walking and drawing during a master's course in illustration at the University of Gloucestershire. A textile-designer by trade (she studied at Chelsea School of Art, working for many years as an in-house fabric designer at John Lewis), the degree course reflected her desire to return to art after time off with her children.

Tutors encouraged Jo to get out into the landscape in which she lives. To look; to draw; to really 'see'. 'I used to rely on photographs before my master's. And I do still use photos as reference. But I've discovered that your eye sees something different from the camera. I'd find that I'd look at a photo and think, 'That's really not what I was seeing''

And so Jo began her walks through Cotswold countryside, drinking in everything she saw: above, below, ❖❖❖

Swifts are the fastest of skilled aviators, pretty much impossible to catch in a photograph. 'Or to draw,'



Jo often sketches outside during her walks

'I use a collagraph process – a non-toxic version of etching – with card on which I can create textures.'

in front of her. Being on her own was important, too.

'It's being still and quiet that gives you these things. One day, I was drawing under a tree. I looked up – and there was a woodpecker sitting looking at me.'

She found that known landscapes became unfamiliar as seasons changed. The blue of flax, the yellow of rape, ceding to burnt rusts of autumn.

Jo's defining moment came when she realised she could turn those

drawings into signed, limited prints, and greetings cards, which she sells through her business, TheAmblingPress. 'I'm a printmaker at heart,' she says. 'I use a collagraph process – a non-toxic version of etching – with card on which I can create textures. There are all sorts of different ways of achieving texture and quality: perhaps using glue; or by cutting to create darker areas.'

'The fascinating part is that there are so many influences you haven't got



control of – a texture, or the way colours blend: a fusion between you and the collagraph process. When you first peel back, you're not sure what you're going to get. There's always that excitement of: Wow! I didn't expect that!

Originally from Lancashire, Jo came to Gloucestershire – via London – 18 years ago. 'And as I've explored, I've come to love the landscape. Maybe I look at it in a different way. When you're born somewhere, it can sometimes be hard to see the very thing that's in front of you.'

'Even now, I can be in the same place two days running and see a completely different scene: the colour, the light, the weather.'

And there are still elements to discover, even after 18 years.

'Recently, I saw my first hare. They're a real symbol of Gloucestershire. We never had them in London; never had them in Lancashire, either. But there it was, very much in the distance, right over the other side of a field. It was such an exciting moment. Now I'm just waiting to see one close to.'

For more information about Jo and her work, visit www.amblingpress.co.uk



Winter Woods, collagraph print



Jo in her Cheltenham studio



Amongst the Wild Garlic, collagraph print

Community Spirit



New research has revealed an upsurge of interest in community-owned pubs and shops. The government has also launched a £150 million Community Ownership Fund to help people to keep their local facilities. But what is it really like to set up and run community ventures? Two Cotswold businesses share their experiences with Siân Ellis.

National charity Plunkett Foundation, based at Woodstock, says that despite Covid-19 restrictions during 2020, 13 new community shops and 13 new community pubs opened across the UK, bringing the respective totals for each to 392 and 139. Through its support of diverse businesses owned and democratically run by and on behalf of local communities, the Foundation helps rural people to tackle issues ranging from social isolation to wellbeing, work and training.

“The resilience of community-owned shops and pubs is truly remarkable,” say Plunkett’s Chief Executive James Alcock, highlighting their innovative, flexible approach in “seeking to reflect the needs of the people they serve.” The Foundation’s Rural Vision campaign also underlines that, building on the community spirit that flowered during the pandemic, now is the ideal time to promote community businesses as part of a broader renaissance of rural towns and villages.

The White House community pub in the heart of Bladon, bordering the Blenheim Estate, is where Winston Churchill said he “learnt to drink”. But by 2019 it had become rundown and was up for sale. With no other pub in the Oxfordshire village, a group of



Volunteers worked to renovate The White House community pub

locals rallied to save it. After lots of hard work mail-dropping residents, holding meetings and receiving mentoring from Plunkett about setting up a community business, around £0.5million was raised through shares bought by more than 450 shareholders, as well as commercial mortgages, and help from Plunkett and Blenheim Palace.

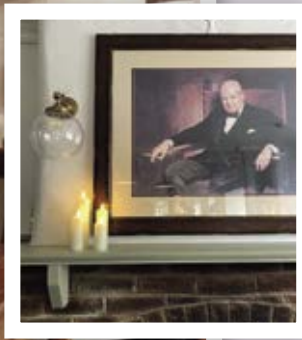
By summer 2020, the community had bought the pub and volunteers set about tidying and painting, also



Volunteers got stuck into a range of jobs during the renovations



The new pub interior



A portrait of Winston Churchill provides a nod to The White House's intriguing past



The inviting new beer garden

“It was fantastic. Everybody was meeting people they had never spoken to before. We had already brought the community together before we even opened the pub. It was very, very heart-warming.”

creating a “brilliant beer garden”, before opening in October 2020, says Committee Chair Mike Edwards. “It was fantastic. Everybody was meeting people they had never spoken to before. We had already brought the community together before we even opened the pub. It was very, very heart-warming.”

With Johnny Roberts appointed as tenant landlord and Ben Bullen (a quarter-finalist in *Masterchef The Professionals*) as head chef, you can expect local beers and local ingredients on menus, and the pub looks forward to welcoming tourists, as well as serving the village. It hosts activities like quiz nights and a crib club, and Mike says, “It was saved by the community and it’s got to be the centre of the community. We’ve really had to work hard and there is always something to do, but it is massively rewarding.”

It took two-and-a-half years of “determined and tireless hard work” to raise money and organise the opening of **Ilmington Community Shop** in May 2015, filling a void left by the closure of a previous village shop. An adjoining café was opened the following year and together they are run as a community-owned cooperative with over 400 members who bought shares. Apart from the shop manager and assistant manager, there’s a rota of around 40 local volunteers each week and a volunteer management committee.



Ilmington Community Farm Shop and Cafe and inset, homemade cakes are very popular alongside everyday groceries



Volunteers pitch in with the day to day running of the shop and cafe



“Volunteering is a fantastic way to meet people, we have a lot of fun.”

got 13-year-olds doing their Duke of Edinburgh Awards.”

Michele adds: “Since we have opened the café, where we serve homemade cakes, we have created quite a few community groups, like knit & natter, book and games clubs, and a parent and baby club. It’s about combatting loneliness and being a hub.”

Always happy to share tips with other community businesses, Michele says: “Keep it simple, and make sure you bring people along on the journey with you.”

More information:

Plunkett Foundation www.plunkett.co.uk

The White House, Bladon

www.bladonwhitehouse.co.uk

Ilmington Community Shop & Café

www.ilmingtonshop.co.uk

for many during the pandemic, sells both essential groceries and luxury items, and supports local suppliers.

“One of the biggest challenges is keeping the rotas full with volunteers,” says shop manager Michele Hall.

But volunteering brings plenty of rewards, says Deborah Sarjant who, as well as taking her turn in the shop spearheads PR and communications.

“Volunteering is a fantastic way to meet people, we have a lot of fun, and it gives a sense of fulfilment to be part of something so important.

We’ve got 85-year-olds, and we’ve also

Folly Wood

Community-owned ventures vary widely. Folly Wood, bought in 2010, is owned and managed by Stroud Woodland Co-operative; there are 70 allocations of shares and a waiting list of people interested in becoming members. Overlooking the Slad Valley, the three-acre site had been heavily planted with larch and the Co-op is gradually bringing it back to a more natural state through a management plan of felling and new planting: including hazel, field maple and oak. The saplings were contributed by Stroud Valleys Project.

“We’ve a work party WhatsApp group,” says Ruth Illingworth, current Chair of the Co-op, describing how recently they rolled chopped larch logs down a steep hill and a sawmill from Avening then planked them up. “We previously built a composting loo in the woodland using planked wood. People also collect planks for making raised beds and cladding.

“Members use Folly Wood in quite varied ways, like birthday parties, enjoying the darkness overnight, naming ceremonies for their children, woodcraft and singing sessions. One member is an art psychotherapist and has worked with colleagues there, while others have done walking and drawing visits as part of Walking the Land [connecting art, landscape and community]. It’s a beautiful space where you can look up at the trees and see them changing within the seasons and the year.” www.stroudwoods.org.uk/



Courtesy of Stroud Woodland Co-op



Courtesy of Stroud Woodland Co-op

RURAL SKILLS

courses are back!



Book a place online at www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

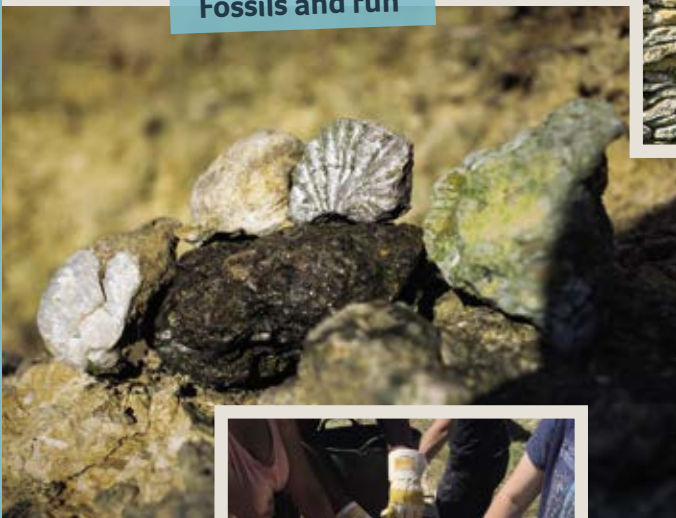
We took a little break from running courses during the pandemic, in line with government advice. Now we're back – courses have been made covid-safe, and trainers are raring to go and can't wait to welcome people!

Dry stone walling



Russell Sach

Fossils and fun



James Webb



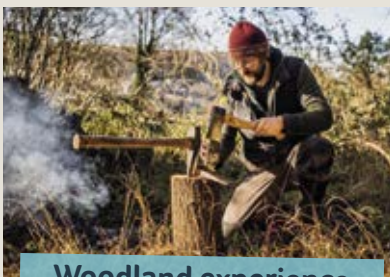
Alana Hopkins

Dry stone walling



Russell Sach

Scything



James Webb

Woodland experience



Hedgelaying

Images depict a selection of rural skills courses which have run previously. Please note courses are seasonal, and not all courses are available all year round.