

JANUARY – JUNE 2023 • ISSUE 48

# COTSWOLD LION

THE MAGAZINE OF THE COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

**FREE**  
ONLINE ISSUE

**Farming into the future**  
**The River Wild**  
**Fresh air for everyone**  
**The Power of Art**  
**and more...**





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Welcome to the January – June 2023 issue of the **Cotswold Lion**.



We are delighted to welcome you to the new issue of the Cotswold Lion by celebrating a dear colleague and her achievements. In the late Queen's Birthday Honours list 2022, Becky Jones, our Access and Volunteer Lead, was awarded an MBE for her services to volunteering and the environment.

Becky has been working with the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens to oversee conservation and access matters rights across the Cotswolds for over 20 years. During this time, she has worked tirelessly to support the wardens, provide opportunities for young people, and improve access for everyone. She was officially given her MBE by the King at Windsor Castle in November 2022. We couldn't be happier for Becky, or more proud of her – and, we'd also like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her work so far, which really does make a positive difference for people.

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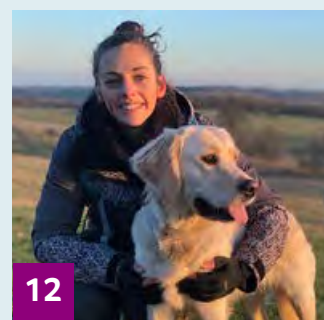


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### Support the Cotswolds National Landscape!

Every donation helps us look after the Cotswolds today, and tomorrow! [Cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://Cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)



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

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

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Front cover image:  
The Power of Art, an experimental installation organised by Squid Soup and Cotswolds National Landscape.

Image by Russell Sach

# NEWS BULLETIN

## Top stories from the Cotswolds National Landscape

### They see us rollin'

Thanks to 'Removing Barriers' funding from Defra, we're delighted to have purchased two vehicles for use by our voluntary wardens. The new trucks will help wardens go further and do more – by getting to difficult locations and increasing access



opportunities for more people, and by ensuring that people who don't have access to transport can still take part in our volunteering activities. They will be used in the wardens' East District, and Avon Valley and South District. Our logo features loud and proud on the vehicles, so if you see us around, be sure to give us a friendly wave!

### A417 gets the go ahead

In November 2022, the decision was made to move ahead with the A417 'Missing Link' road scheme, addressing long standing traffic and safety concerns.

Cotswolds National Landscape, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the National Trust have worked collaboratively to help National Highways move towards a genuinely landscape-led road scheme that can deliver a lasting, beneficial legacy for the Cotswolds landscape, its wildlife, people and history.

Our engagement has resulted in positive changes and, whilst we recognise efforts from National Highways to improve protections for wildlife, we remain disappointed that the scheme will not deliver overall biodiversity net gain.

We are passionate about our role in protecting the natural beauty, diverse wildlife and unique heritage of this important landscape. We will continue to engage with National Highways to ensure the protections set out in the planning application are delivered, and to identify additional opportunities to improve the outcomes for nature and people.



*Visualisation of Gloucestershire Way crossing, courtesy of National Highways*



### Welcome to Jennifer

A big welcome to Jennifer Lanham. Jennifer joined us in October 2022, to pick up the reins from Ruth as Community Outreach Officer for the Everyone's Evenlode project. She will be continuing to develop relationships with local youth and community groups, and delivering practical experiences to connect people with their local stretch of the Evenlode river. Jennifer is really looking forward to developing opportunities along the Evenlode for under represented groups.

### Seeds of success

Our Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team members, Harvey and Anna, have had a brilliant summer 2022. Supported by their volunteers, they harvested a total of two tonnes of seed from donor sites across the Cotswolds. Seed has been redistributed across 70+ hectares of recipient sites.



### Rev. Canon Jeffrey James West OBE

We were saddened to learn that our former Chairman, Jeff West, died in December 2022. Jeff served as our Chairman between 2009 and 2014, and was a greatly valued and respected member of the community and our organisation. We send our condolences to his family.

For more news from the Cotswolds National Landscape visit [cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](https://cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)





Wood is harvested and used on site



Harry and Diana Acland



Activities offered at Notgrove include dry stone walling courses

# Notgrove Estate

“When I was a young lad I was told farming is a disaster, it’s boring, don’t go back to the farm. But that attitude has changed. Farming is exciting now, and farmers and environmentalists are on the same page,” Harry Acland tells Siân Ellis.

Notgrove Estate has been in the family since 1969, and Harry and his wife Diana “came back” (after Harry’s various land-related jobs elsewhere) some 13 years ago. They manage the c.1500-acre farm, including a holiday business, with a passion for conservation, the environment and supporting local entrepreneurs.

“What I find fascinating is that in the 1800s records show the estate had only about 100 acres of permanent pasture; everything was cropped in one way or another. Now permanent pasture and woodland are around 500 acres,” Harry reflects. “Farming has changed; it’s a very diversified business and we farm much less of the land. But what we do farm, we farm better.”

By way of example he explains, “When I first farmed we used to go over each field seven or eight times, ploughing, harrowing, before we drilled a crop. We recently direct drilled our crop straight into a green cover: we didn’t plough anything and didn’t disturb the soil.

So we’ve retained the moisture and soil structure. Not only that, we have used 25% less fertilisers and 25% less sprays, and much less diesel in machinery.

“We get around a third less yield in wheat,” Harry acknowledges. “But it’s not about maximising yield, it’s about getting the best return we can do with the most sensible inputs.” This last year, with fertiliser costs tripled and much

higher prices paid for wheat (due to war in Ukraine), the economics of old and new approaches to crop growing balanced out about the same, Harry says.

Climate change is huge, but it is wrong to vilify farming stock, Harry continues: the picture is nuanced. “Farmers were told, ‘don’t have stock, stock is bad, cattle are terrible: they



Wildlife thrives at Notgrove Estate



fart out methane all the time', yet you cannot have organic or regenerative farming unless you have stock. In the old days when we had [lots of] cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens we used no fertiliser, because we had all their lovely natural muck." Today he has "a muck-for-straw agreement" with Notgrove's grazier. "He can take our straw for free for his cows and sheep, and we get the muck back after they've lain on the straw. It's win-win."

The estate's green credentials extend to tree planting too, creating wildlife corridors, while wood harvested from thinning is used in heating the manor house and providing fire packs to estate holiday accommodation. It is planned to add 90-plus acres of trees to the existing

100 acres of woodland, with 17 acres of native broadleaves already planted in 2021 and a new Elizabeth Wood of more than 3,500 native trees planted in 2022 in support of the late Queen's Green Canopy initiative.

Less intensive farming and woodland initiatives have benefited estate wildlife, with hares, owls, kites, buzzards, lapwings, hobbies and hedgehogs among creatures that have increased. "I do safari tours around the farm for people that come to stay. We look at the sheep and cattle, and we see the buzzards, kites and hares, and I say: "this is what mixed farming and what stock farming is about.' People love it."

We chat about Notgrove Holidays, which supplements farming income,

and the estate's safari tents, glamping pods and holiday cottages: use of solar energy, water saving and recycling; working with local businesses to offer visitors activities like guided foraging walks and dry stone walling courses; how tourism can revitalise village amenities and "is a really valuable part of the countryside."

"I love the holiday business because we can share Notgrove with so many people," Harry says. They will learn a lot about environmentally-friendly farming too.

*For more information on Notgrove Estate, visit [www.notgroveholidays.com](http://www.notgroveholidays.com)*



**"Farming has changed; it's a very diversified business and we farm much less of the land. But what we do farm, we farm better."**

New trees planted at Notgrove, with plans to continue future planting



# THE RIVER

# WILD

The River Thames, England's longest river, is thronged by English icons on its meandering commute through London. But it's not just the historic structures it passes that have stories. The river itself has a tale to tell to Matt Brierley.

The Thames has – in its murky past – been very murky indeed. In 1857 authorities poisoned the Thames to clean it. “Impure matter” lay in drifts two metres deep. Carbolic acid was poured in as a remedy. It didn't work. What little aquatic did exist was killed stone dead. By July 1858 such was the volume of sewage, Londoners endured the Great Stink. Enough was enough. New sewers were built and things improved... for a while.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Toads hibernate in some pretty strange places. Recently dormouse surveyors found toads hibernating in trees.

100 years later – in 1957 – and the Thames was in trouble again, choked by chemicals and algal blooms sparked by agricultural run-off. Dissolved oxygen levels were so low, that for 42 miles there were no fish. The Natural History Museum



Chris Dresh, ARC

COMMON TOAD

## GREAT CRESTED NEWT



Chris Dresh, ARC

described the river as “biologically dead”.

But what does this have to do with the Cotswolds? Well, bubbling to life through prehistoric limestone, the Thames springs to life here. Follow its course and it grows mightier thanks to five Cotswold tributaries – the Coln, Churn, Leach, Windrush and Evenlode. In these aquatic hinterlands water sculpts habitats that drip with wildlife.

Every Spring, one of the UK's most extraordinary wildlife dramas plays out in ponds alongside these rivers. Surprisingly, great crested newts spend most of their life on land – but when they awaken from hibernation in February, water calls. The males resemble tiny dragons, fiery orange dappled bellies and a frilled crest that grows throughout the breeding season. Females are chubby, full of eggs. The first newt meal of the year is their own skin. As newts shed into their finery, their semi-transparent moulted skin floats through the water, ponds full of ghostly newt hands and feet.

After getting changed, the males dance for the ladies – not to show off ❖❖❖

## DID YOU KNOW?

There's a moth whose caterpillar lives underwater. The China mark moth larva is completely aquatic.





## WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH

their moves, but to waft their perfume in their general direction.

After mating, females lay their eggs, each one gracefully parcelled in a leaf gently pressed together using her hindfeet. For those few moments she stands statue-still. It's a risky time – grass snakes hunt underwater and like nothing more than a tasty newt for lunch.

Sagas unfold in the rivers themselves too. White-clawed crayfish – think of a bronze lobster just 11 cm long – build their exoskeletons from the calcium carbonate that abound in these chalky waters. Living to the ripe old age of 15, they

mate in autumn. Berried mothers carry 80 eggs under their tail. After they hatch, they carry their babies until the following summer. These devoted mothers aren't shy about squaring up to rivals and four non-native species are now on the march north, looking for trouble. Sadly, our native crayfish is losing out. Signal crayfish are particularly dirty fighters, carrying a killer crayfish plague. But it's the

### DID YOU KNOW?

Before becoming adults, dragonflies exist as predatory nymphs underwater. Golden-ringed dragonflies are nymphs for 5 years. It's typical for them to be grabbed and eaten by a hobby hawk just after they emerge!

### Why don't you... go pond dipping?

You'll need a grown up to supervise, a net, a white tray, a spoon and a way to identify your catch.

- Scoop some pond water into your container. Look closely, you'll already have some tiny creatures. These are likely daphnia, a type of freshwater plankton.
- Lie on your front or kneel by the pond – don't lean over or there's a chance you'll fall in.
- Sweep your net through the water. Swooshing by plants can help you catch some really interesting top predators, like dragonfly nymphs.
- If you sweep along the bottom you might catch a tiny crustacean called Gammarus.
- Carefully turn your net inside out into your container.
- Use your spoon to scoop up any creatures for a closer look.
- When you're done, carefully return your creatures.

old enemies of discharged sewage, chemicals and agricultural waste that are the biggest threat to the Thames tributaries and their wildlife today.

However, all is not lost. Dedicated individuals are striving to save these precious habitats. One such venture is the Everyone's Evenlode project (part of the Evenlode Catchment Partnership) presently working with local schools and community groups to inspire people to connect with, and take positive action for, their local stretch of river.

Given the chance, wildlife can thrive. Further down the Thames – in the once "biologically dead" river – seals abound and otters play. The time to save our precious river catchments is now. Let's rise to the challenge and avoid a big stink.

### More information

Email [evenlode@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](mailto:evenlode@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk) for more information about what the team is working on.

Check out [www.arc-trust.org](http://www.arc-trust.org) to find out more about encouraging amphibians and reptiles into your garden.

Pete Hill ARC



## GRASS SNAKE





# Fresh air for everyone!

With 3,000 miles of public footpath to look after across the Cotswolds National Landscape, the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens are always busy. But as Alana Hopkins finds out, maintaining and improving the existing footpaths is only one element of their important access work across the Cotswolds.

## Exploring accessibility

As well as clearing paths, waymarking, and repairing and upgrading hardware like gates and stiles, the wardens have for many years also been working on developing new routes suitable for a wider range of people.

A quick filter of the self-guided routes on the [cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://cotswoldsaonb.org.uk) website reveals 16 routes in the Cotswolds described as 'stile free', 'wheelchair friendly', or 'pushchair friendly' – features that make them all more accessible than many traditional walking routes. Explorers are always advised to check route descriptions before setting off, just in case – because, as Voluntary Warden John Hammill explains, “among other considerations, a stile free route may include a steep section, and all paths are subjected to the weather,

including those suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs”. That said, as a mobility scooter user himself, John is keen to point out that the accessible routes offer the same interest, beauty, views, wildlife, and fresh air of the Cotswolds as any other routes.

## Route highlights

John is currently supporting proposals, initiated by fellow South District warden Mick Thorpe, for a route suitable for 'Tramper' style off-road mobility scooters and wheelchairs at

Stinchcombe Hill, Dursley. The addition of this path to existing accessible routes would complement those already available across the Cotswolds. The most recent path created with accessibility in mind is at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Greystones Farm site in Bourton-on-the-Water. At just under 2 miles, and all on the flat, this route has been designed for those wishing to explore the wildlife, birds, and history at Greystones. With a replica Iron Age roundhouse on site, and the remains of an Iron Age fortified enclosure ❖

*“potential users of accessible routes vary greatly – it could be someone using walking poles or a rollator, to someone with an all-terrain Tramper, power chair users, or those with visual, hearing or other impairments”.*



(Salmonsbury Camp), there are 6,000 years of history to explore on this route. Not to mention the wildflowers in summer, the bird life, and the occasional bat!

In Cirencester, a 2.5 mile route on hard surfaces takes in plenty of architectural features in the pretty market town (often referred to as the capital of the Cotswolds), as well as attractive parkland, and plenty of views.

As part of the wardens' 50th anniversary celebrations, a route was created around Leckhampton near Cheltenham, with help and support from the Cheltenham Borough Council's Leckhampton Hill ranger, Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common, and the Disabled Ramblers. This route offers access to splendid views over the Severn Vale. Along the way, you may meet docile grazing cattle, and you'll pass sites of ancient settlements. The map diagram for this route shows the different sections as hard surface, mown, or unmown grass – so people can judge for themselves how suitable it might be at different times of the year.

### What makes for a more accessible path?

- Flat terrain
- Hard surfaces, or mown grass (where grazing and nature recovery work permits)
- Larger kissing gates, approved by RADAR (Royal Association of Disability and Rehabilitation) – these provide more space for access through gates with mobility aids such as wheelchairs or mobility scooters.
- Stile free
- Ramps
- Shorter routes, or options to shorten
- Rest stops along the route
- Listening posts and audio guides (downloadable from QR codes along routes)
- Full route descriptions, with plenty of detail to help people assess suitability
- Routes designed with support from end users



*An 8 mile route near Winchcombe is a welcome addition to the accessible paths in the Cotswolds*

### Making a difference

The mental, physical, and emotional benefits of being outside are well documented, but when there are more barriers for some people than others to enjoying these benefits, they can sometimes feel a long way off. As John says, “potential users of accessible routes vary greatly – it could be someone using walking poles or a rollator, to someone with an all-terrain Trampler, power chair users, or those with visual, hearing or other impairments”. What the wardens focus on is working in partnership with end users, so that constantly working to improve access is done in a collaborative way, with listening at its heart.

### What more can we do?

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and the CNL team are committed to developing accessibility across the Cotswolds. We want to explore as many ideas as we can for ways to make the great outdoors accessible for as many people as possible. What would you like to see? What improvements would make your experience of exploring the countryside more enjoyable? Please send us your ideas and comments to [rebecca.jones@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](mailto:rebecca.jones@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)

*For self-guided routes, as well as guided walks led by our Voluntary Wardens across the Cotswolds, visit the [Walking and Exploring](http://cotswoldsaonb.org.uk) pages online at [cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://cotswoldsaonb.org.uk) to filter for routes by your requirements.*





# THE POWER OF ART

Deep, deep into Cotswold woodland, something strange happened in the autumn of 2022. Hanging amongst beech trees were white orbs. Puffballs, you might think? Not a bad guess. Words by Katie Jarvis.

But, no. The 50 orbs were human-made. Sometimes they swayed, colourless, in a breeze. At other times, when the sun warmed the earth, they radiated like glow-worms: softly luminous blues, pinks, greens, oranges, purples.

They were hidden; secret at the time. But a livestream showed them sometimes dancing; sometimes still; sometimes with natural light dappling the trees – in harmony with the weather. They were strangely mesmerising. But however the images made you feel, they should provoke one emotion above all. Curiosity.

How on Earth can this artwork (for that is what it is),

far away from civilisation, light up at all?

Squidsoup is a digital arts collective based in Cheltenham. But the art installations they've been creating for the past 25 years – installations that blur the lines between digital and reality – have been exhibited the world over. At festivals, in art galleries, shopping centres, town squares: art installations you can walk through; viscerally experience.

Sometimes these installations feature both light and sound: often they're abstract. Some are small – barely half a metre square; others huge: big enough to fill the whole of Alexandra Palace's Great Hall with dazzle.

Yet they all have one thing in common. 'They're a spectacle; something to make you feel inspired,' explains Squidsoup's creative producer, Hannah Brady. 'Each installation will be immersive; a transformation of that space you're in.'

The small Squidsoup team is unique. A mix of artists and creative technology specialists, they not only design the installations; they create the hardware and write the programmes that operate them. ❖❖❖



'So it's a purely bespoke process,' Hannah says. 'No off-the-shelf technology. We like to say that we make our own 'paint!'

There's one thing Squidsoup doesn't do, though. And that's stand still.

For a while now, they've been having conversations around sustainability and carbon footprint. The problem didn't lie intrinsically within their installations – all are LED, with low power-consumption.

'But we often create the light and sound in outdoor spaces – and you cannot get away from the fact that they have to be powered by electricity. If we are showing in rural areas, organisers might have to bring in a huge diesel generator – which is overkill.'

What's more – as 2022 has thrown into sharp relief – power is expensive; power is a precious commodity.

Research as they might, Squidsoup couldn't find a ready-made solution to eco-powering mobile installations.

So (being Squidsoup) they came up with their own.

Using batteries from disused electric cars, they've designed a fully portable system. Solar-power charges the batteries; the batteries feed the artwork.

'Ah, but!' detractors might demur. 'Solar is unreliable...'  
To which Squidsoup has a simple response: climate is part of their art.

'If we have a grey day with not a huge amount of power gathered through the solar panels, the work may well run

differently from on a bright summer's day. Maybe it will only run for a little bit, or not be so bright. We're building that into the installation.'

Ingenious.

So back to that Cotswold wood where the orbs glowed among the trees. This experimental installation was the first of its kind. Cleverly entitled *The Power of Art* – a name that, like Squidsoup itself, explores emotion and practicality; an electric source with an electric audience response.

As it cycled through its 12-minute performance of pulses and glows, set to a woodland soundtrack, this was a project with huge potential. A potential that excites the Cotswolds National Landscape team working with Squidsoup on the trial: 'We're really keen to see how we can use the results of this research to roll out something bigger, brighter, and even more exciting – which would allow more people to see this kind of artwork in unexpected locations,' says Alana Hopkins, who is coordinating CNL's Art in the Landscape work, part of a national programme of arts delivery in AONBs.

*The Power of Art's* mystery location remained a secret. But the mystery of its power-source is one Squidsoup is proud to share.

Watch a recording of the livestream here:

<https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/the-power-of-art/>

*This experimental installation was the first of its kind. Cleverly entitled **The Power of Art** – a name that, like Squidsoup itself, explores emotion and practicality; an electric source with an electric audience response.*



# Women *in farming*

According to government statistics, women comprise just over half the farming workforce in England and Wales – if you include unpaid and family labour.

Katie Jarvis finds out more.

That figure is growing, and in a very real way. As smaller farms turn to sustainable practices, so more women are being attracted in. And that, in turn, is feeding the regenerative farming movement.

Lydia Handy, a trained land agent with experience of running her own businesses – is a prime example. When she married Clive 13 years ago, he was father to three young children, with little time to think beyond daily needs of Lower Hampen Farm. High in the hills above Cheltenham, this 330-acre mixed

farm has been in his family for over 200 years.

Since Lydia's arrival, Clive is the first to admit there has been transformation. The patchwork of small fields is now a haven for wildlife. 'It's not only that we

get skylarks, lapwings, yellowhammers, kestrels, and so many different owls – it's the numbers, too.'

Thanks to Lydia's networking, the farm today liaises closely with FWAG, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. ('We're doing a big-agro-forestry project with them this winter'). She's also diversified Lower Hampen's product-line: hand-weaving wool from their Devon Closewool flock into one-off items; selling candles, tea-lights and ❖



Liberty Nimmo works with Lydia and Clive Handy on their market garden and in the farm shop





Lydia Handy at Lower Hampen Farm

Squashed Robot

*According to government statistics, women comprise just over half the farming workforce in England and Wales – if you include unpaid and family labour.*

it comes to dealing with bulls weighing a sizeable ton.

‘Sometimes, I can tell that people are challenging me in a way they probably wouldn’t if I was male. But much more important to me is the attitude of people I directly work with.’

Foremost amongst those is Rob Havard, ecologist and sixth generation farmer, who took Sarah on in March 2020. He recognised her skillset as the perfect complement to his holistic farming practices – farming that places equal import on economics, environment and social impact.

And he’s been proved right.

A graduate in bioveterinary science, Sarah has been key to promoting the business internationally. The farm’s highly selected cattle are perfect for low-impact, grass-based systems; and while Phepson has long sold breeding cattle within the UK, Sarah has helped develop a market supplying bull straws to Europe, America and Canada.

But it’s far from just business acumen that Sarah has brought.

‘I think it’s fair to say that women

often bring empathy. Mental health has been a big issue in the agricultural industry – so having more women adding diversity to a team is not just good for business but for morale as a whole.’

She also – including in her own day-to-day work – is keen to challenge the notion that women aren’t suited to physical farm-work. ‘There is a false idea that they aren’t strong enough or tall enough.’

In fact, a recent mountain-bike accident in which Sarah broke her collarbone brought physical issues into focus. The team found a workaround: ‘So it can be done. It did make me think that any farmer could have a similar accident and not be able to work. In other words, the industry itself needs to change to make work more accessible to all sorts of different people.’

Changes won’t happen overnight, but with recent coverage on BBC’s Countryfile programme, and greater consideration being given to accessibility and diversity in work and leisure, the farming industry is opening up more than ever before.

soap made from the honey of bees pollinating their meadows, herb leys and sainfoin crop.

‘The whole idea of regenerative farming feeds into the female psyche,’ Lydia says. ‘I was talking about this with Clive over breakfast, and he’s absolutely sure it’s because women engage more easily; they’re better with animals; with the whole interconnection with nature and how that affects farming.’

The Handys have recently been joined by Liberty Nimmo. She’s employed by a travel company part-time, and spends the rest of her working-week on the vegetable garden and in the shop – a job she loves.

‘So much of what we do in financial terms doesn’t make any sense,’ Lydia says. ‘What motivates us is the way we’re contributing to the well-being of the land – and the community, too. Since we’ve had the little market garden, with the shop, it’s transformed this little area. People walk here; they drive here; it’s almost like the local pub.’

Meanwhile over on the Worcestershire/Gloucestershire border, Sarah Dugate relishes every moment of her work at Phepson Angus: 1,000 acres of diverse grassland where native type Aberdeen Angus breeding-cattle graze, outdoors, 365 days a year.

Now and then, as she goes about the farm, she’ll come across a passer-by leaning over a gate, interested in what’s going on. At 5ft 4, Sarah’s not your stereotypical farmer, especially when



Squashed Robot

Visit [homegrownathampen.co.uk](http://homegrownathampen.co.uk) and [phepsonangus.com](http://phepsonangus.com) for more information



Sarah Dugate with some of the cattle she looks after (inset: the market garden at Lower Hampen Farm)





Nicole Daw

# Fresh Legs

Siân Ellis takes inspiration from a new book to explore the Cotswold Way.

Striding along the Cotswold Way from Cleeve Hill late last October, I watched sunlight and cloud-shadows dance a slow-motion waltz over fields as they rose and fell on the horizon. Dipping down, between snug hedges, and tree and grassland, I breathed in the fresh, just-rained leaf and earth aromas. Perfect for perking up my senses and sharpening my curiosity.

Before setting out I had read a recently published book, *The Cotswold Way Companion: An Insider Guide* (more of

which anon), and browsing its themed chapters featuring ten stages along the 102-mile national trail I rather fancied the sound of 'a history lesson': walking from Cleeve Common to Hayles Fruit Farm. I like rambles that stretch my imagination as well as my legs. And so it did.

Interspersed with field-paths, woodland, stitches of dry stone walls and wide-open views (plus some road tramping), an eclectic mix of scenes stepped me back in time: ❖❖❖





The mysterious swell of Belas Knap Neolithic long barrow, where two other walkers sat gazing silently into the distance from its top; centuries-spanning Sudeley Castle and Winchcombe, where I was primed to search St Peter's Church for the squat-hatted grotesque – one of 40 such carved stone faces – said to be the model for the Mad Hatter in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*; Hailes Abbey, founded by a grateful survivor of a shipwreck, and the not-to-be-overlooked church next door with its wall paintings and unusual tale of uprooted villagers.

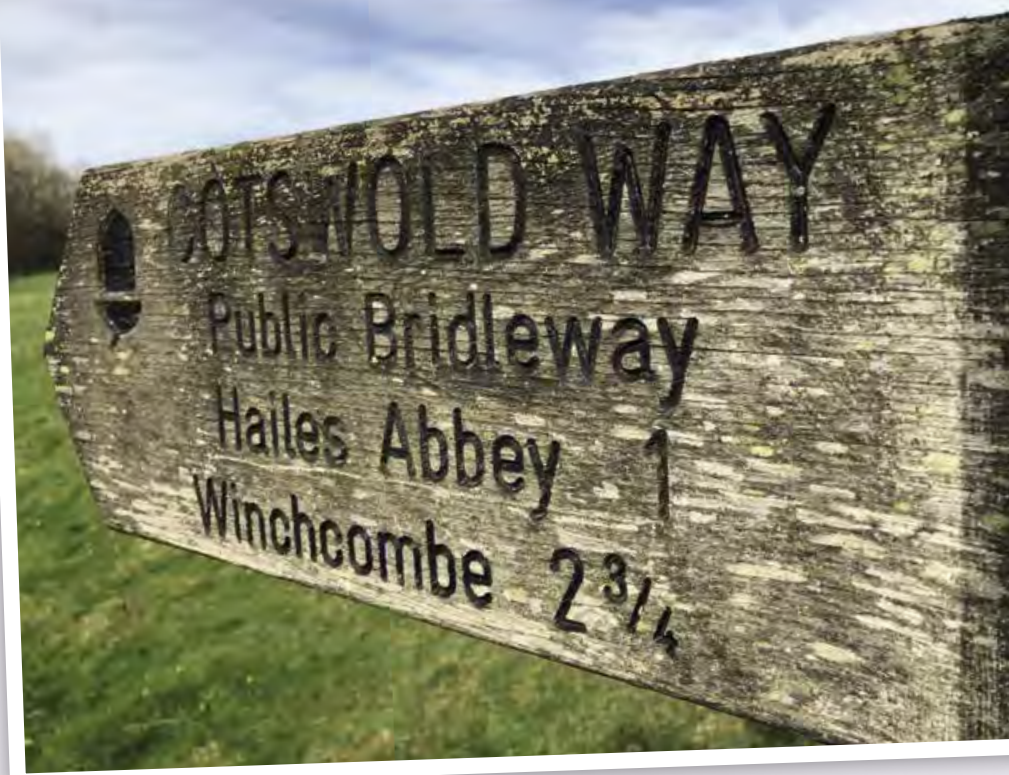
All in all (and there's plenty more to tell) it was a refreshing ramble that I span out to nearly a day, including a sandwich stop in Winchcombe where 'Walkers are Welcome'.

*The Cotswold Way Companion* is published by The Cotswold Way Association (CWA), in paperback and as an eBook. A series of audio guides based on the ten stage chapters are also available.

Aside from helping people to get the most out of walks – highlighting key points of interest and beauty, best views and photo opps – it aims to raise money towards the upkeep and improvement of the trail. Introductory chapters outline the special landscape qualities of the Cotswolds that attract so many visitors; the ongoing need for fundraising to keep the Cotswold Way in good condition; and some of the projects already supported by the CWA.

Keith Sisson, editor of the book,

Neil Morgan



explains it was created from notes and insider knowledge of Cotswold Voluntary Wardens; each of the typically ten-mile-or-so stages is drawn from their walks. Further investigations filled in details (sources are meticulously noted) and the question "what does this stage really do for people" gave themed chapters: whether 'Into wool country', 'The best of nature trails', or my 'Time for a history lesson'.

While there are maps for perspective, photos and drawings, *the Companion* is not a step-by-step guide; you are advised to follow trail waymarks and take an OS map for backup. There is helpful information on parking, links to circular walks and a plethora of other



Nicole Daw

useful detail.

I liked the quirky anecdotes; even Keith, a recently retired Warden and active volunteer with the CWA says he discovered "oodles" through editing the book: why J K Rowling so named the Dursley family in her Harry Potter books; why there is a Cromwell's Stone in the middle of nowhere above Painswick; what links the Stanway Estate to characters as different as Thomas Becket and Peter Pan.

Pushed to name his favourite stage, Keith plumps for 'A finish to relish: Hayles Fruit Farm to Chipping Campden' – no spoilers here; read the book and pull on your boots.

**The Cotswold Way Companion: An Insider Guide is available in paperback (£15.90), eBook (£7.90) and is serialised in ten audio guides (£2.95 each). More information at [www.cotswoldwayassociation.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldwayassociation.org.uk)**



Nicole Daw



In conversation with...

# Candia McKormack

Candia McKormack has worked at *Cotswold Life* magazine for 20 years and has been editor since December 2020. She is co-founder of Gloucestershire's annual Tales of Witchcraft & Wonder events, and has recently written a book of that title with her husband Tony, exploring the lyrics of the pagan gothic rock band (Inkubus Sukkubus) they co-founded in 1989.

**I've always had an interest in folklore and witchcraft.**

When I was very young I used to tell my mum and dad that I was a witch! I grew up Severnside and would disappear off into the woods for the day, losing myself in the countryside. It was such a magical childhood.

**Folklore is very much rooted in the landscape and that shapes the stories.**

Some of them have a grain of truth in them, but in the telling they change organically, much like the landscape does. I think [folklore] is a way of us trying to make sense of the natural world, the changing seasons and why certain things happen.

**There have been lots of local stories linked to the River Severn,**

how she gave with fish, elvers, salmon and lampreys; but she could also take, both lives and the land, carving out a horseshoe bend. It is a reminder to treat her with respect.

**I see singing as almost like a magical act, like spellcraft [...] that brings things to life.**

'Sabrina' is a song I wrote about the Severn – she will always be special to me: her power, how she changes, and the feeling you get just before a bore [large surge wave] when everything goes so quiet.

**There is a lot of fairy lore linked with our woodlands.**

Certain trees would be considered gateways into the fairy realm. There also seems to be something [special] about 99 trees, for example in Painswick churchyard, and why there can't be a hundredth.

**Manmade structures like the Rollright Stones are linked to fairy lore as well as witches**

– you can imagine them coming to life! The Cotswolds is also filled with burial mounds, like Belas Knap, which would be considered gateways to another world.

**A lot of people associate witchcraft with curses and warty noses.**

But the essence of it is very much linked to reverence for nature and honouring the seasons. There is always dark associated with light. If you embrace that it makes more sense.

**The Tales of Witchcraft & Wonder events we hold are always very joyous.**

It's a celebration around folklore [with music, theatre and storytelling]; the positive powers of magic, how we all have magic within us, about working with the seasons and nature.

As told to Siân Ellis.

Find more info about *Tales of Witchcraft and Wonder* events at [talesofwitchcraftandwonder.com](http://talesofwitchcraftandwonder.com)  
Catch up with *Cotswold Life* magazine at [cotswoldlife.co.uk](http://cotswoldlife.co.uk)



Candia McKormack

The River Severn



Candia McKormack

Belas Knap is just outside the Cotswold town of Winchcombe



Candia McKormack

The entrance to Belas Knap long barrow



**I see singing as almost like a magical act, like spellcraft [...] that brings things to life.**



Candia McCormack is editor of Cotswold Life magazine, an author, singer, and an artist

Anna Isabell



# Driving Community Connections



Local charity Cotswold Friends is recruiting for volunteer drivers in the North Cotswolds and Cirencester areas, as demand for its Community Transport Service continues to increase.

Over 1,600 people living in the Cotswolds use Cotswold Friends' Community Transport Service, with more than 12,000 journeys undertaken by the charity's volunteer drivers in 2021 for medical, social and practical reasons – that's over 230 drives on average, every week of the year.

Jo Hammond, CEO of Cotswold Friends said, "With many hospitals still catching up with appointments after the

pandemic, plus the roll-out of COVID and flu vaccinations, many of our older, vulnerable clients continue to need transport to medical appointments.

"This puts pressure on our existing volunteer drivers and our Community Transport service as a whole, which remains vital to so many older and vulnerable people who do not have access to public transport or find it difficult to use. ❖❖❖"







***“Volunteering as a driver is enjoyable and rewarding. Our drivers tell us that they feel more connected to their community and enjoy meeting new people, often making friends for life.”***

“Volunteering as a driver is enjoyable and rewarding. Our drivers tell us that they feel more connected to their community and enjoy meeting new people, often making friends for life.”

“Drivers are at the heart of delivering our mission to reduce isolation and support older and vulnerable people to live independently in their local communities in the North Cotswolds and Cirencester areas. And, drivers are paid up to 50p per mile which significantly helps with the running costs of their vehicle.”

Keith Rogers is a Cotswold Friends volunteer driver in the village of Willersey. He says: “Once you retire and the pressures around you drop, you look for something you want to do, not need to. Being a volunteer driver gives me an opportunity to not only benefit my community but also myself.”

**12,000**

journeys undertaken by the charity’s volunteer drivers in 2021



“Social interaction with people, who often don’t socialise much, brings pleasure to both parties. I’m sure the drivers get as much out of it as the passengers! What better way to bring a bit of sunshine into both their and my life.”

Carolyn Roberts is a Cotswold Friends volunteer driver in the village of Hazleton.

Carolyn says: “I was interested in becoming a volunteer because my mother lived alone in a tiny hamlet with no public transport, and when she stopped driving, she was very isolated.”

“What I enjoy about volunteering for the charity is the chance to meet other people in the locality and discovering local communities that are new to me.”

Keith Baalham is a Cotswold Friends volunteer driver in Cirencester.

Keith says: “I was interested in becoming a volunteer for Cotswold Friends because I wanted something to do in my spare time and to help the community.”

“In terms of how volunteering has been helpful to me, at my age, it’s not about the practical benefits but the pleasure of helping others and, in so doing, meeting new people.”

A driving role at Cotswold Friends provides complete volunteering flexibility. Drivers can let the charity’s Booking Office know when they want to drive and what types of journey they are happy to do; some drivers like local drives, others prefer longer journeys.

If you can give the time, if you enjoy driving, and you like meeting new people – it’s a win-win for you and your passengers.

*For details about becoming a volunteer driver, contact Cotswold Friends’ Volunteer Manager, Sheryl Murray: 01608 697007 email: [volunteering@cotswoldfriends.org](mailto:volunteering@cotswoldfriends.org)*





# Future nature writers

Last summer, we ran a creative writing competition for children inspired by the Evenlode river. As part of the Evenlode Catchment Partnership work to restore the Evenlode river and its catchment, we've been working with lots of local school children to help them learn about river wildlife and habitats, water quality, and pro-environmental behaviours. We were delighted, and very impressed, by the creativity and imagination of the entries from all the children.

One of our competition judges, Simon Diggins, from funder Thames Water, said,

"It was a joy and a pleasure to read and enjoy so many wonderful entries. We know water is the essence of life and

yet sometimes we talk of a 'creative fire'; I think, after reading these wonderful entries, that the 'sprite of water' has as much claim to being the source of inspiration, joy and creation. May all your daemons be of the water – mine's

an otter!"

The following pages are dedicated to sharing the fantastic winning and highly commended entries from the competition. Thank you to all those children who entered the competition.

*"Reading all the competition entries was one of the nicest jobs I've done all year, but having to pick a winner was one of the hardest! They were all brilliantly evocative of our local watery places and the creatures that live there."*

**Neil Clennell, conservationist and competition judge**

## Age 4-7 category:

- 1st – Sophia Corbiere (age 7). In the Water
- 2nd – Tilly Glasspool (age 5). River River
- 3rd – Daisy Guy (age 6). The Wichwood Gardens
- Highly commended – Willow Daniels (age 6). Boating
- Highly commended – Ebony (age 5). Charlotte's Waters

## Age 8-11 category:

- 1st – Imogen Edwards (age 11). Free!
- 2nd – William Nial Drummond (age 11). The River Sees
- 3rd – Connie Ghosh (age 8). Recipe to make a River
- Highly commended – Eva May Pascoe (age 8). Farmoor Reservoir
- Highly commended – Maddie Doyle (age 8). The Crazy Cool Combe Beach
- Highly commended – Jolyon Uglow (age 9). A Lonely Boy



*"The entries were such a joy to read. Such a talented bunch of young nature enthusiasts and writers."*

**Octavia Karavla, bookshop owner and competition judge**



Age 4-7 category:

1st - Sophia Corbiere (age 7). In the Water

## In The Water

In a glistening lake

I watch and wait,

some beautiful ducks that pass by

I see a buzzing little fly,

I saw two fish one long one short,

I wonder if it has ever seen

a human I thought.

I touched the rushing water but

I feel a bit cold,

I'd love to see a otter

so good and bold, all spins

and twists make me feel

dizzy, come to the water and  
/8/ you'll see nature's surprises.





Age 4-7 category:

2nd - Tilly Glasspool (age 5). River River

river river  
by tilly Glasspool  
RIVER RIVER light  
and free  
River river splash with glee  
River river light and free  
River river reflecting  
a tree  
Dogs dogs swimming around  
Dogs dogs splashing about  
the river tripling so fast and  
wild  
RIVER rushing racking  
running along!





Age 4-7 category:

3rd - Daisy Guy (age 6). The Wichwood Gardens



## The wichwood gardens

this is my favourite place  
to go.

It is pretty like a Rainbow.

It is relaxing in the sun.

It sun.

the moorhen is seeding its baby  
with a nut.

the ducklings wants a turn.

the ducklings are so fluffy and cute.  
oh I just saw a newt.

I can hear the wind blowing  
through the trees.

soon the trees will lose their  
leaves.

the wichwood gardens is my  
favourite place to go.



by Daisy Guy  
Age 6.





Age 4-7 category:

Highly commended - Willow Daniels (age 6). Boating

## Boating

Boats coming through locks  
water rising

People waving

People going

People feeding ducks

Beautiful skies

Children watching boats go past  
waters shiny and cold

by Willow Daniels  
age 6



Age 4-7 category:

Highly commended - Ebony (age 5). Charlotte's Waters

Charlotte's Waters

Playing in the shallows, Charlotte kept getting deeper until she reached rushing waves of water up to her neck. She doesn't know she is being taken out to sea.

Her neck feels cold, she shivers.

A worried question: "Am I going to drown?" Strokes Charlotte's mind.

Then a flash thought hits her: "SWIM! SWIM TO SAFETY!"

Charlotte began to kick her legs, not using her arms, she powered her body along through the under water. Back to the shallows of the riverbank Charlotte went.

Ebony Brady - Elridge 5



Age 8-11 category:

1st - Imogen Edwards (age 11). Free!

On a mountain my journey began,  
Started as a puddle and slowly went down,  
I passed slugs and bugs,  
And boxes in broken boxes,  
But my journey didn't end there there's much more.

I weaved around trees,  
Sticks and stones hit me and so did falling leaves,  
I left the forest to enter a field,  
The grass was so tall it could be a shield.

As I saw the beach in sight,  
I realised I wasn't as light,  
Children were playing  
Some even laying in me,

But I kept on pushing I could see the sea!

I meandered around homes,  
And pushed over some cones,  
I felt the sand,  
I'm finally off land,  
I touched the sea and realised I'm finally

**F R E E !**



Age 8-11 category:

2nd - William Nial Drummond (age 11). The River Sees

## The River Sees

Grasshoppers Hum as the birds tweet above,  
People in boats their paddles splash splashing,  
The river sees it all.

People run by their feet pat padding,  
People bike by their bike's pedals whirring,  
The river sees it all.

The river feels the breeze,  
And the sun,  
And the moon on cloudy nights,  
The river feels it all.

The river sees the days go by,  
People go by,  
Ducks float by,  
The river sees it all.



Age 8-11 category:

3rd - Connie Ghosh (age 8). Recipe to make a River

# Recipe to make a river

Take the Ripples of the Ocean, the hair of  
a horse and the colour of the sky.  
Take the Dew of Spring, The Ice of a mountain  
and The Spring of life.





Age 8-11 category:

Highly commended - Eva May Pascoe (age 8). Farmoor Reservoir

## Farmoor Reservoir

As you enter the calm and windy reservoir, birds are chattering and families are laughing. The sound of surfboards make you feel like you are on a paradise island. The smell of freshwater and seaweed drifts underneath your nose. All of the geese with their baby ducklings make your day even happier. The white fluffy clouds above you make it feel like home. The little footpaths built into the reservoir lead to calm rushing streams and little wooden hides. If you just and watch everything around you, you realize how lucky we are to have such a beautiful environment.

Listen out for some of the birds you can hear: Little ringed plover, common kingfisher, Eurasian hobby, Northern wheatear and a blackcap. The birds songs are so relaxing to listen to. Chatter, chatter, chatter listen and learn. Birds are very silly but at the same time very beautiful and elegant.



Age 8-11 category:

Highly commended – Maddie Doyle (age 8).  
The Crazily Cool Combe Beach

Combe beach is a wonderful place

You can pretend you're a skateboard going d

o

w

n the cliff into the shallow water

The water tickles your toes.

Sinking into a silky cloud of sand.

One step ankle,

three steps knee,

five steps hip.

Turn right and it's the perfect height for swimming.

Instead of staying with the grass I would join the fish in the River Evenlode.

If you feel like it, we could meet there

for a picnic on the grass.

But we might need to share our food with the sheep.



Age 8-11 category:

Highly commended – Jolyon Uglow (age 9). *A Lonely Boy*

## A Lonely Boy

It was August of 1940 when Robert first heard the roaring of German planes overhead. He had been warned on the radio that the Battle of Britain was about to begin but he hadn't expected that it would come so quickly, but now all he could see was planes peppering each-other with lead and filling the sky with flames as he took Billy the dog on his morning walks. When doing these walks Robert would go to the same glorious brook, this place he loved because of the swaying green grass the beautiful crooked oak and the wonderfully still stream. Every day he would come on the water's edge fiddling with a piece of grass taking in the delightful scenery and the chirping of the larks as distant planes raged in the sky.

Before the war Robert had always gone up to the brook and shared a sandwich with his Father as they sat on the water's edge like Robert was now, and they would be chatting about the day ahead. But now Robert was sat there alone, as his father had been recruited to do his duty and had perished at Dunkirk, his lifeless body never to rise again.

Father had always loved the way the water rippled and how the breeze was slight. But now Robert was the only one who thought that.

Living in the Cotswolds with his mother, Robert thought the war could never reach them but now they realised war had found them again.



# HELP SHAPE

## THE FUTURE OF THE COTSWOLDS



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

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

For more information click [here](#) 