

JULY – DECEMBER 2023 • ISSUE 49

COTSWOLD LION

THE MAGAZINE OF THE COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

FREE
ONLINE ISSUE

Learning from Nature
Nature's Mindful Moments
Natural Secrets of the Stones
Treading the Boards
Widening the Welcome



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Welcome to the July – December 2023 issue of the Cotswold Lion.

This issue celebrates people... our young people in the Cotswolds, who we are working with in various ways; the people who have helped us develop more routes to encourage communities to explore Bath and its wonderful surroundings; and people who have tapped into recently available funding to complete projects which help benefit others. The Cotswolds has always been a place where people, nature, and the landscape co-exist, and our team is constantly working to try and make sure this relationship is well balanced in every way.

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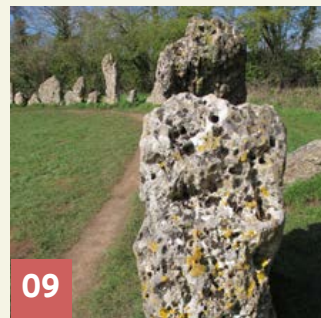
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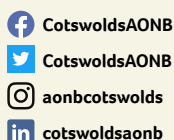


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Every donation helps us look after the Cotswolds today, and tomorrow! Cotswoldsaonb.org.uk



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

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

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Front cover image:
Jemma Bartholomew and her dog Boris exploring Bath as part of the Bathscape project.
Russell Sach

NEWS BULLETIN

Top stories from the Cotswolds National Landscape

FiPL extended until 2025

Read more on page 19 about the exciting extension to the very successful Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. Two key things to note: the programme has been extended to 2025, and the available funding has been topped up so there's more to apply for.

Our team remain committed to helping support applicants and their projects as much as possible – see page 19 for more details.



Guided walks

Summer is here! It feels like we've waited a long time for some sunshine this year, so let's make the most of it by getting out and about with the Voluntary Wardens on their guided walks. Remember – there are guided walks nearly every day through the year, right across the Cotswolds, at varying levels, and they're all free! Donations are always welcome though! Look out for evening and weekend walks too.

Glorious Cotswold Grasslands

Our Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team has had a brilliant year – with over two tonnes of wildflower seeds harvested last summer. The programme team has grown, with Lorna Baggett joining us, and there are plans to acquire more equipment to help us expand our work area. So, if you have land which might be suitable as a donor site or a recipient site for seeds, please do get in touch – the team would love to hear from you. See page 22



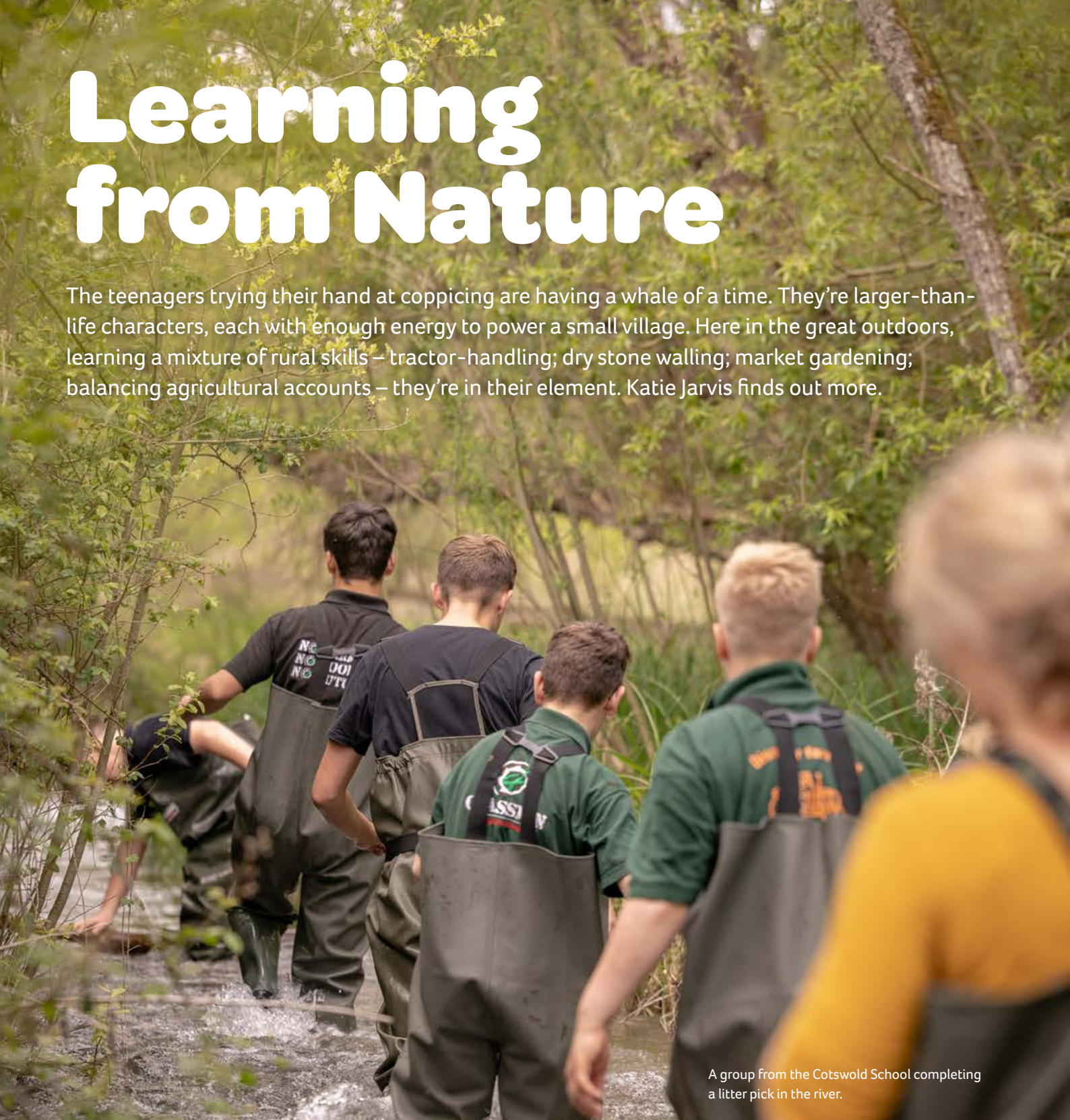
We've moved!

We've busted out from the Old Prison in Northleach! Our team now works across three office locations. As we are now much more dynamic in our working practices, the best way to reach us is via our individual email addresses or mobile numbers.

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

Learning from Nature

The teenagers trying their hand at coppicing are having a whale of a time. They're larger-than-life characters, each with enough energy to power a small village. Here in the great outdoors, learning a mixture of rural skills – tractor-handling; dry stone walling; market gardening; balancing agricultural accounts – they're in their element. Katie Jarvis finds out more.



A group from the Cotswold School completing a litter pick in the river.

Handpicked by their Cotswold schools, these pupils are being offered something a little different from the academic know how they also need to thrive: 'They're bright, but they can struggle in the classroom because there's not enough of an outlet for all that energy,' says James Webb of Cotswolds National Landscape.

He's behind a rural skills outreach programme that sees boys and girls such

as these taken to the most fantastic – and philanthropic – working rural hubs keen to pass on skills that keep the countryside vibrant and viable. Working hubs such as Guiting Manor Farms at Guiting Power; FarmEd at Shipton-under-Wychwood; and Conygree Farm at Aldsworth.

Something James heard on a recent site visit has really stuck with him: 'It was pointed out to me that 300 years ago,

the strong children in the village would be seen as useful – able to help out on farms from an early age. Now, in a post-industrial era, children whose talents aren't necessarily grounded in academia can sometimes struggle at school. They're good with their hands; play for the local sports team; but the classroom isn't always the ideal environment.'

There's a good chance some of the teenagers benefiting from these rural



Left: Outdoor sessions are tailored to the young people in attendance

Below: campfire cooking often features, and is a great way of teaching a variety of skills



I really don't know how young people cope in the modern world,' he says. 'It's terrifically fast and high pressured; way too much to worry about.

skills courses will be from a farming background. Even so, another arm of the outreach programme involves introducing them to new ways of thinking.

'They're often from big arable backgrounds – massive farms, huge machinery,' James says. 'They know how much a ton of fertiliser costs; how much a ton of wheat is.

'But then we show them five acres of market garden in the middle of the Cotswolds, turning over just short of £80k in veg boxes. I'll ask them to consider if five acres on their farms can do the same – and they're blown away by that. Encouraging them to think differently is very rewarding – for them and us'.

Excellent though that is, there's even more to the rural skills programme than

valuable work with schoolchildren.

For another cohort is at hard work in the Woodyard at organic Duchy Home Farm on King Charles's Highgrove Estate. All young adults – aged from 18-28 – they're facing challenges that make them particularly vulnerable: addiction; loss and grief; a background of childhood difficulties. What they're all seeking is mental wellbeing and a better future.

Adrian Leaman, who runs Wholewoods – teaching woodsmanship in all its forms – is not only a highly skilled craftsman; he also understands the healing powers of nature. 'I really don't know how young people cope in the modern world,' he says. 'It's terrifically fast and high pressured; way too much to worry about. An opportunity to slow down and use one's hands and hand-tools, and to work on a project and collaborate together, is a wonderful thing.'

Adrian studied 3-D design and furniture making at university, as well as creating his own 'apprenticeship', learning his craft from other skilled practitioners. He specialises in bringing the outdoors inside, incorporating astonishing forms of nature into the built environment: round-wood timber-framed buildings are a specialism: 'So that people can still enjoy nature when indoors and not feel separated.'

The sense of peace that can bring is an echo of the woods in which he works, full of towering beech and oak, sycamore, maple and hazel; Lawson cypress that evoke the aroma of Swedish saunas when cut.

It's a peacefulness he enjoys sharing. 'It's awesome to see a woodpecker going in and out of a hole, or drumming for a mate. A lot of the time, people don't have a moment to stop and look. But when you're working with hand-tools, you can pause and enjoy these enthralling and endlessly fascinating creatures. It feeds into mental health and a sense of wellbeing that lasts well after people leave here.'

Amanda Griffiths is part of the Engagement Team at The Churn Project in Cirencester, working with a range of different residents facing challenges within the town, as well as nearby villages. The charity has partnered with Cotswolds National Landscape on rural skills projects in the past: 'The Churn participants often face a range of barriers which can mean accessing opportunities is impossible without support. Many people are struggling to pay for food and household bills so paying for training is impossible. The AONB has a commitment to keep rural skills and crafts alive. So it's good teamwork!' she says. 'And the Cotswolds just wouldn't be the Cotswolds without



Participating students often experience improved confidence and self belief

dry stone walls, without hurdles, without beautiful coppicing and traditional hedging.'

When James Webb offered Amanda places on the rural skills outreach programme, she jumped at the chance. 'We took a small group of six or seven – so they wouldn't feel overwhelmed – for a taster session to Adrian's Woodyard, and it was fantastic. They learned how to make wood shingles, hurdles, wind-breaks. The team also made benches, where they turned a leg each. Their faces; the buzz of that achievement. It was great to see everyone so proud of what they'd done.'

Above and beyond those new-found skills – as James and Adrian have

iterated – there's a well-being aspect: 'Space to think; to be free; space in nature where you're not hemmed in,' Amanda says. 'We had one person who'd suffered with agoraphobia; for them, this was somewhere they could feel comfortable because it was such a safe space.'

Another participant, who had suffered a serious mental-health crisis, loved art but felt unable to practice. After a rural skills course, 'where he had an opportunity to explore drawing in nature, he felt able to sit on his village green with a sketchpad. It can be so freeing, in so many ways.'

The team also cooked their own lunches round a campfire – spicy

one-pot Thai vegetable curries and even flatbreads. 'Food is a big part, which is always nice to share. The thing I loved about this project was that it wasn't hard-core skills; it was also about sharing and talking: a restorative experience,' Amanda says.

'We had feedback from family members, too, who'd seen real changes [in the participants]. One person in particular made a special effort to come in and say of their relation, 'She hadn't smiled or been excited about anything since before the lockdown. This is the first time we've seen joy.'

For more, visit: cotswoldsaonb.org.uk; wholewoods.co.uk; churnproject.org.uk

NATURE'S MINDFUL MOMENTS

Hunt out a traditional Cotswolds grassland in summer. These vestiges of English meadow thrum with stridulating grasshoppers. Rare butterflies flaunt their local abundance, bouncing on the hint of breeze. Nodding wildflowers urge you to take the weight off and let timelessness wash over you. And yet timeless is the one thing the Cotswolds aren't. Nothing stays the same, the ebb and flow of the seasons making the Cotswolds truly enchanting. Nature never sits still. But, in an increasingly frenetic world, nor do we. The year scuds by as quickly as rolling clouds. Matt Brierley explores the moments when nature reminds us to take pause and appreciate the little things.

JULY

The gentle chatter of summer picnics, barbecues and garden parties... Unmissable black scythes scream through sun-drenched skies at breakneck speeds. Swifts pierce through our revelry, the fastest British bird in level flight, clocking some 70 mph. Swifts can sleep on the wing – fly to altitude, switch off half their brain and set their flight to a turning circle. But we've been sleeping too, allowing them to spiral towards UK extinction. Their time dashing round our towns is super short, four months tops, and they need your roof cavity more than ever.



AUGUST

A tornado, it seems, has plucked up a beachfront and transported chip-stealing scoundrels to the Cotswolds, trapping a vast swirling of seagulls in ever decreasing circles. What's impossible to see from the ground, however, is the driving force behind this show. For today is Flying Ant Day. There's no one day as such; humidity followed by blue skies is what black garden ants need. Mature ant colonies seasonally produce winged virgin queens and males. Riding thermals on their nuptial flight disperses the ants, shaking up the gene pool, before queens descend to release perfume and attract suitors to start new nests. So bountiful are the ants it's a free lunch for hungry gulls.



SEPTEMBER

Kissed by an Indian summer, tiny giants emerge from Cotswold ponds. Migrant hawker dragonflies are 6.3 cm long. The chocolate-eyed female is brown with yellow or blue spots along her abdomen. The blue-eyed boy has dark blue spots and yellow flecks. Migrant hawkers are exceptional insect-hunters. Their four wings can move independently, allowing for hairpin turns, hovering, and even backwards flight. It's a special moment indeed when a dragonfly bursts through our crowded thoughts, a frenetic jewel, hawking for dinner at 10-15 metres/sec.





OCTOBER

Viking marauders announce their intentions on cloudless nights under a carpet of stars. Get your ear in and evenings are punctuated by sporadic high-pitched “seep, seeps”. These are migrant redwings – thrushes with a creamy strip above their eye and orange-red flank patches – going about their business, roaming for juicy berries.

NOVEMBER

Jackdaws are named after their call. There’s nothing quite as mindful as watching a clattering swoop and rove above a village churchyard against a sky painted with a pastel sunset. Research has found these sociable crows use group vocalisation to work out when to leave their roost each morning. To us it sounds like a cacophony but this is a “democratic process” determining precisely when mass departure happens.



DECEMBER

Christmas shopping. Of course you’ve been organised this year and aren’t part of the fretful frenzied gift-grabbing posse. But on the off-chance you are in town... look for fabled car park birds. Pied wagtails are sprightly black and white asphalt-dashers. On winter evenings hundreds roost in sheltered areas. Listen for high-pitched “chissick” sounds. Peering into urban trees, hot chocolate in hand, is time well spent. It’s not unheard of for them to roost in Christmas trees, hundreds of delicate real-life decorations amongst the twinkling fairy lights.

Whatever the season, nature’s mindful moments are never far away.

Natural Secrets OF THE STONES



As a visitor to the prehistoric Rollright Stones on the Oxfordshire/Warwickshire border, I've always been fascinated by their legends, not least the story that what we are really looking at is a king and his army petrified (literally!) by a witch. Words by Siân Ellis.

While they take their names from the witch's legend, the Stones comprise three distinct monuments: the Neolithic burial chamber called the Whispering Knights (c. 3,800–3,500BC); the late Neolithic ceremonial stone circle of the King's Men (c. 3,000–2,250BC); and the King Stone (c. 1,800–1,500BC) probably erected as a permanent marker for surrounding burials. Together the megaliths have layered the landscape

with potent historical significance and supernatural mystery.

There's also an astonishing natural micro-world that is an important part of the Rollrights' story. Natural surface boulders of Jurassic oolitic limestone, weathered over millions of years, the stones were dragged into place from the close vicinity – the 18th-century antiquarian William Stukeley memorably described them as “corroded like worm-eaten wood by the harsh jaws of time”. The pitted and fissured surfaces of the stones offer a superb habitat for lichens, which cover them from head-to-toe in colours ranging from black, grey and white to bright yellow and tawny red.

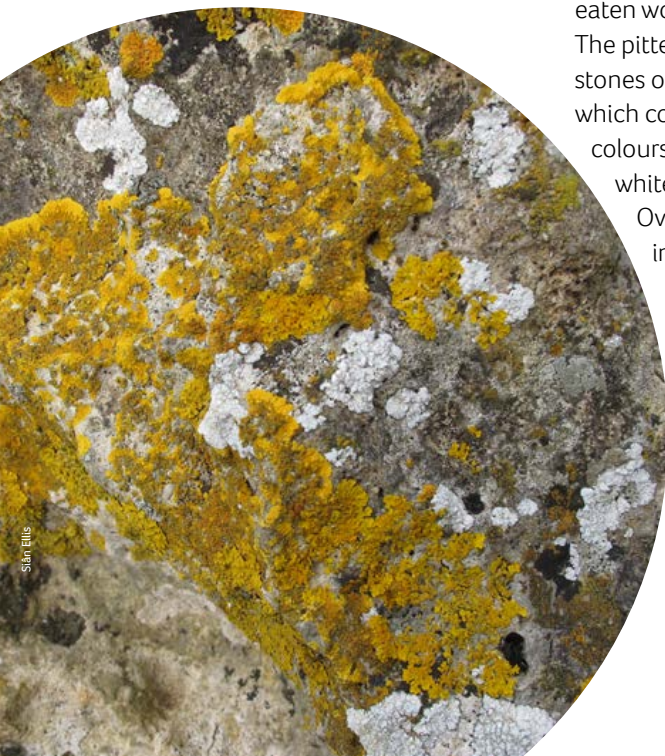
Over 70 kinds have been recorded including regional rarities, and all this cryptic crustiness has plenty to tell us.

The age of some lichens can be estimated by comparing their size with other specimens growing on datable stones (such as gravestones), and a survey in the 1980s suggested that

one large lichen, on a stone at the entrance to the King's Men circle, may be c. 800 years old. Investigations have also highlighted how the size and distribution of lichens can give clues to understanding the history of the monuments.

The studies (available to read on the website of the Rollright Trust, which owns the Stones) “reinforce other evidence – mainly successive accurate drawings from the 1670s onwards – about the positions of many of the King's Men stones,” says George Lambrick, Chair of the Trust and author of *An Illustrated Guide to the Rollright Stones* (all proceeds from which go to the Trust).

Investigations have also highlighted how the size and distribution of lichens can give clues to understanding the history of the monuments.



It is known that over time, numerous stones were moved or fell and were re-erected. A 'tidying up' of the King's Men in the 1880s, for example, was far from exact; it's thought they originally formed an accurate circle of shoulder-to-shoulder stones (many of which have gone missing, probably taken for building materials), with one narrow entrance.

Studies of lichens at the Rollrights have also underlined their significance for the visual character of the stones, with "implications for conservation and aesthetic value/artistic interest," George says. This enabled the Trust to insist that chemicals should not be used when a vandal's yellow paint was removed from the King's Men stones some years ago, and this helped to conserve the lichens.

More generally, the Rollright Stones are home to all manner of algae, liverworts and mosses growing in cracks and pockets, while snails, insects and



of the Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands initiative, pastureland around the King Stone has been sown with wildflower seed (including from Jeremy Clarkson's nearby Diddly Squat Farm) in order to create a species-rich flowery meadow: another chapter in the ongoing tale of the Rollright Stones and their wonderful natural history.

For more info on the Rollright Stones, go to www.rollrightstones.co.uk

small mammals make the most of eroded tunnels and holes for shelter. You might even spot "pantries" filled with seeds. Wildflowers, from Goldilocks Buttercup to Herb Robert, can be found growing on and by stones, while butterflies including Chalkhill Blues and sweetly singing skylarks also find the site alluring.

As part of the Trust's aims to conserve and enhance the wildlife value of the Stones and their surroundings, and with the help





TREADING THE BOARDS

Deep in Gloucestershire countryside, a village hall is starting to fill. As people take their seats, excitement is palpable. They're all familiar with the hall as an invaluable community hub: society lunches; fitness classes; talks. Words by Katie Jarvis.

But tonight is rather different: an award-winning band is playing music that delves into a rich Yiddish past, melding it with a 21st century future. Its like has not been heard in the village before: Polish wedding dances, Slovakian lullabies from centuries of old, East European folk stories of lost traditions: a whirl of exuberance to bring listeners to their feet. As the first notes spin through the air – double bass, accordion, violin, clarinet and soulful voice – the magic begins.

But it's not the only magic in the air tonight.

For many of the audience, getting here has been a walk in the park – almost literally: they've strolled along from nearby homes. Others, for the first time, have met people from just down the road; struck up a conversation over a glass of wine; got their diaries out and planned to meet again.

'There's something visceral about a live performance. That kind of shared experience with your neighbours really does help strengthen the social bonds that, sadly, these days seem weaker and weaker,' says Ed O'Driscoll.

Ed founded and runs Arts in Rural Gloucestershire (or AIR in G, as it's more succinctly known): a charity doing some extraordinary things. Its USP involves putting together



Son Yambu – a UK based band who play authentic son Cubano, which later gave rise to modern salsa

All images provided courtesy of Arts in Rural Gloucestershire

**FOR PERFORMERS,
RURAL TOURING IS A
VALUABLE PART OF THEIR
CAREER – EVEN WHEN THEIR
OTHER ‘LIFE’ IS PERFORMING
TO THOUSANDS ON AN
INTERNATIONAL STAGE.**



Apphia Campbell's acclaimed production *Black Is The Color Of My Voice*

a programme of world-class acts – opera, comedy, dance, music, theatre, family events, and more; adventurous acts; acts by performers with disabilities; diverse multi-cultural acts – something for each and every taste.

He and his life-partner, Lynn, founded AIR in G back in 2001. Ed, a performer and musician, had worked on rural touring schemes himself, playing to community venues throughout the UK. When he and Lynn moved to Gloucestershire, they were surprised to find the county had nothing similar. So they remedied that.

‘So many places are isolated because transport isn’t as good as it could be, especially at night. Yet the nearest theatre or arts centre could be an hour and a half away. We thought it important that rural communities should have just as much access to high quality performances as their more urban neighbours.’

The charity organises menus for villages to choose from; draws up contracts with artists; books them; and promotes with a website and a season guide distributed throughout Gloucestershire.

‘We also offer a financial safety-net – a guarantee against

loss – by underwriting approximately 50 percent of the true cost of the act. In the event of a smaller-than-anticipated audience, we take away a large part of the risk.’

In other words, the promoters who sign up – generally volunteers who run community venues – have little left to worry about other than making the artists a friendly cup of tea.

One of those promoters – for a village near Fairford – is Dudley Russell, also an AIR in G board member. Considering his professional role (promoter of stars such as Shirley Bassey, Richard Stilgoe and Peter Skellern, Alan Titchmarsh and Kenny Rogers), that’s a pretty solid recommendation for the charity.



Louder Is Not Always Clearer
performed by deaf artist Jonny
Cotsen



Tim Lole and Neil Allen: The Opera Dudes

He and his wife – the poet Pam Ayres – see it as their contribution to the community. ‘The main audience I’m looking at are people who perhaps don’t normally get out – they don’t go to Oxford Playhouse or the Everyman or the Wyvern; they are much more comfortable walking to the village hall, meeting friends, having a drink; enjoying hopefully a very good show; and then walking home again afterwards.

‘That’s the key for me.

‘I get lovely emails after each show, saying, ‘Thank you very much for bringing this to the village’. When Pam takes the dog for a walk, people come up to her and say, ‘Oh, we did enjoy the show last night!’



Arts in Rural Gloucestershire brings a huge variety of acts to villages across the area

The Zoo That Comes to You by Scarlet Oak Theatre Company



They’ve scheduled all sorts – from a popular football-themed play to classical music, which always goes down well. Nor does the fun always stop with curtain down.

‘We put up a Russian musician and his partner one time, who drank and drank! We didn’t get to bed until 1 o’clock, and he was at a hospital in London the following morning at 7am for a knee operation. I’m sure they didn’t have to give him anaesthetic. But he was very nice – it was a memorable night!’

For performers, rural touring is a valuable part of their career – even when their other ‘life’ is performing to thousands on an international stage. Neil Allen is one half of the Opera Dudes, along with fellow professional Tim Lole.

‘People sometimes ask, ‘Why are you in a village hall?’ I always reply, ‘Why not?’ If you’re performing, you’re performing. We’ve done intimate parties for 10; and I’ve toured America in shows where I’ve been in front of 20,000. I have to say I really enjoy the intimacy of the village hall.’

Both men are classically trained. But the Opera Dudes brings out their comic sides, too: ‘We call it Il Divo meets Morecambe and Wise, the perfect description.

‘And it definitely makes us better performers, being in village halls. The front row can be as little as a metre away, so you have to really engage with an audience. You can see faces; people will talk to you.’

The best bit?

That they’re not singing to the converted. They’re actually widening their fan base, and promoting opera as an art form.

‘One of the phrases we hear from people after the show is, ‘If it wasn’t for my friend, I wouldn’t have come: the word ‘opera’ put me off. Yet when you sang the opera, it sent tingles down my spine. I wasn’t expecting to feel like that.’

If you would like to consider becoming a promoter for your village, call Ed or Lynn on 01989 566644, and visit airing.co.uk AIR in G would welcome enquiries from people interested in becoming board members. Thanks to an Arts Council England grant, the charity is restarting its youth theatre programme in the Forest of Dean this summer. See the website for continuing updates.



Widening the Welcome

Russell Sach

Nicole Daw, Trails and Access Officer at CNL, has been working with volunteers to devise more accessible routes around Bath, as part of the Bathscape project

“It’s really important to keep improving and broadening access so that people from all walks of life can benefit from the Cotswold countryside,” says Rebecca Jones MBE, Volunteer and Access Lead at Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). She talks to Sian Ellis about people, projects, and funding.

We are chatting about how a recent uplift in Defra funding worth £234,992, administered by CNL, has helped an exciting range of physical and digital projects to open up the beautiful Cotswolds landscape to wider audiences: surfacing work at Leckhampton to extend accessible areas to people using mobility scooters and families with pushchairs; a filter tool on the CNL website to help users check for more accessible self-guided routes; equipment for the Friendship Café in Gloucester to encourage groups to explore; research into calm corners at several Cotswold railway stations for those with neurodiversity challenges.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust put a grant towards car-park levelling and three new accessible picnic benches at Coaley Peak Nature Reserve near Stroud, making the site friendlier to people with impaired mobility (gloucestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk). “Coaley

Peak is a really unique combination of a great view, wildlife and the ancient burial site of Nymphsfield Long Barrow,”

enthuses Lenka Cmelakova, the Trust’s Facilities Manager. “So there is something for everyone.”



Michele Holden



Lenka Cmelakova

Top: Improvements to car parking facilities can make a huge difference for visitors

Bottom: Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust used funding to provide accessible picnic benches at Coaley Peak viewpoint

Down on the farm

Another imaginative project has seen the extension of facilities at Jamie's Farm near Bath with the creation of a new activity hub including a treehouse and firepit (jamiesfarm.org.uk). Taking the idea that farming experiences can provide the catalyst for vulnerable young people to thrive, the charity, founded in 2009, offers residential stays during which participants get stuck into feeding animals, picking veg and other tasks essential to running the farm. Each five-day residential stay is built around three core elements of farming, family and therapy. Jess Callen, Head of Farm, says,

'we say to the young people: "we are not an activity centre; all the jobs need doing in order to make the farm function." It gives a sense of value and purpose to what they do, and it's hard physical work. They are often used to being measured as a person by how well they are doing at school and here they have an opportunity to see themselves in a different light, to realise that, actually, they are people who can achieve things.'

Sharing meals together, with a chance to reflect on experiences, is a crucial part of living and working together as a family – feedback from participants highlights

what a huge thing it is for them to 'feel they have been listened to and heard.' A therapeutic coordinator also spends time with each young person, and after they leave there is follow-up 'legacy' support – ensuring the positive changes made at the farm continue back in school and at home, creating a lasting impact on children's mental wellbeing, behaviour, and engagement with education. →



When young people stay at Jamie's Farm, they're involved in everything - from feeding the animals, to digging the vegetable garden, and making meals

Funding at Jamie's Farm contributed to the completion of a new outdoor learning space



“People that come on our walks can be experiencing a wide range of mental health problems; a walk like this can be a positive distraction, as they’re using all their senses to connect to nature,”

Nicole Daw has been working with different community groups in Bath to create a number of new routes in and around the city

Bathscape for all

Meanwhile the Bathscape Scheme, launched in 2018, has been encouraging us all to explore the breathtaking landscapes that frame the World Heritage City. As part of this Nicole Daw, CNL’s Trails and Access Officer, has created 18 self-guided walks – urban, rural, challenging, wheelchair-friendly – from around one to eight miles in length.

Volunteers helped Nicole to test routes for different needs. Jemma Bartholomew, who suffers from Chronic Fatigue, recce’d the St James’ Cemetery Little Loop: a 0.75-mile flat route in central Bath which enabled her to discover “an unexpected, green and peaceful oasis”. She explains: “There are lots of people like me, who have a

burning desire to get out and do a short walk, but need to know they can park nearby, that the walk is level, that there is a resting spot somewhere.” Gentle walks in the fresh air with Boris, her Basset-Labrador cross, are a highlight of Jemma’s day.

Nicole also leads guided walks, including privately organised ones reaching out especially to people who, through disability or other circumstances, “maybe think it’s not possible for them to go on walks”. A recent short foraging-themed walk with Bath Mind, the local, independent charity that provides mental health and wellbeing support to individuals across Bath and North East Somerset, is one example.

“People that come on our walks can be experiencing a wide range of mental

health problems; a walk like this can be a positive distraction, as they’re using all their senses to connect to nature,” says Angela Farr, Wellbeing Services Deputy Manager for Bath Mind (bathmind.org.uk). “Being outside walking helps people to be mindful and learn more about the natural environment.”

Turn to page 21 to find Nicole’s top Five Bathscape self-guided walks. Download walks at cotswoldsaonb.org.uk or bathscape.co.uk

To discuss booking a guided walk with your group, contact Nicole Daw, email: Nicole.Daw@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Look out for details of further funding from Defra to support more projects like these – coming in 2024.

In conversation with...

Nina Stubbington

Nina Stubbington joined the CNL team in April 2023, on a year long paid placement funded by Ground Work UK. She tells us what drew her to the Cotswolds, and what she hopes to get from, and give to, the role.

The Cotswolds were my birthday destination of choice. I would come here with my family and a close friend (who is now very jealous of my new Cotswolds life!), and enjoy the amazing walks and countryside views, and the pretty towns and villages the area it is so famous for.

I've arrived in my role from a completely different job in retail customer service and administration.

But, when I saw this placement advertised, I thought that it might be an opportunity that could really change my life, so I went for it. Although retail doesn't sound related, there are plenty of skills I've learned through the job which are transferable. As I'll be helping to look after the Caring for the Cotswolds programme, I'm really looking forward to meeting and supporting project funding applicants, and to getting to know the business members of the scheme.

The New to Nature scheme has provided an amazing opportunity.

I have Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, and when I was younger, it prevented me from being able to progress to higher education. My previous job was one which had hours that were manageable for me. I gradually increased my working hours, and now in this new job, I'm doing five hours a day, five days a week. The New to Nature scheme has encouraged people to apply for



I'm really looking forward to meeting and supporting project funding applicants, and to getting to know the business members of the Caring for the Cotswolds scheme.

placements even when they don't have what are traditionally seen as the 'right' qualifications or experience, so now I feel like I have a real chance to shape my future how I want. I've always loved the outdoors and nature, and now I'll be working to help look after one of the biggest protected landscapes in the UK.

I've had to hit the ground running.

The placement is only a year, so I've moved up from Bournemouth and thrown myself into the role. We plan to open the next round of Caring for the Cotswolds project applications in July, which I am really excited for: I can't wait to find out about all the potential projects, and see how the successful ones turn out.

I'll definitely not be short of things to do!

As well as supporting the Caring for the Cotswolds scheme, I'll be getting involved in outreach work with the everyone's Evenlode team, and hopefully working with the Cotswold Way Association and the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team to learn more about access and practical conservation.



Nina has already started meeting successfully funded project applicants, and members of the Caring for the Cotswolds scheme

By the end of my year here I want to be able to say I've done a good job.

I want to keep gaining confidence in the sector and gaining work skills for future roles. We can all do small things every day to help look after the environment, and I'm really enjoying the feeling that my every day job now has a positive impact.



Nina Stubbington



Nina Stubbington

Caring for the Cotswolds opens for new grant applications in July. For further information see www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk. To discuss a project idea or how to become involved as a business/individual supporter in the scheme, email Nina Stubbington, Grants and Outreach Officer, nina.stubbington@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Farming for the future

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has gone from strength to strength in the Cotswolds - largely due to the fantastic applicants and their projects. Here, we highlight a handful of those projects. If they inspire you to consider applying to the programme, please contact the FiPL team at farming@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk for more information.

Homegrown at Hampen

Lower Hampen believes in providing for the local community from their mixed farm using nature friendly, regenerative approaches. At the heart of their farming system are healthy soils, high animal welfare, and abundant wildlife. Their Homegrown at Hampen project has established a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) scheme on the farm, sustainably growing and supplying a wide range of seasonal vegetables, fruit, and other produce at real cost within a 10-mile radius. The FiPL grant helped to launch the scheme and develop the site.

Whittington Lodge Farm

Whittington Lodge Farm is a well-established, and award-winning, mixed farm using organic and regenerative farming systems. Wildlife is thriving on the farm. The FiPL grant has helped upgrade a large meeting space and improve farm tracks, enabling the site to act as a demonstration farm: the Sainfoin Centre. The centre is designed to host events, workshops, farm tours – for both farmers and the general public to explore the transition to sustainable farming systems.



Bruern Farms

Things are changing at Bruern Farms. They're moving away from conventional arable farming, and towards more diverse and sustainable systems, working in harmony with the natural environment. To support their transition from being a conventional arable producer to a regenerative one, with nature friendly farming systems and a reduced carbon footprint, FiPL has supported the purchase of grain processing equipment, a grain mill, and a game larder. Selling directly to local customers is a key part of their new business model. The grant enables the farm to directly supply people with local, sustainably produced heritage grain flour, wild venison and rare breed meat products – all of which are produced, processed and sold on the farm.



Gawcombe Farm

Gawcombe Farm is a truly distinctive site with extensive areas of good quality grassland, scrub and woodland habitats established over forty years of careful management for wildlife. FiPL funding is helping clear large sections of overgrown scrub to restore areas of species-rich grassland that were in danger of being lost, and which will complement an area of wetland on the farm recently restored by the Environment Agency. New fencing has also been installed on pastures as part of plans to implement a more manageable and beneficial grazing regime that will enhance soil health and wildlife habitats, as well as

improving livestock health and welfare – whilst also mitigating against climate change and enhancing human enjoyment of this stunning farm, which has lots of footpath access.





Nicole Daw's Walking Highlights

Our Trails and Access Officer, Nicole Daw, chooses a handful of her favourite routes around Bath, created as part of the Bathscape project. Many of the new routes have been designed to be more accessible, so could be shorter, flatter, or with rest stops along the way. And remember, Bathscape Walking Festival runs every September – check for details (and other self-guided routes) at www.bathscape.co.uk

1 Sensory Smallcombe

2.1 miles

Gently guiding individuals with sensory impairments or learning difficulties to experience nature. Also great for general wellbeing and slowing down!

2 Wildlife & Waterways (on Wheels)

3 miles

The first walk I designed and suitable for pushchairs and motorised wheelchairs, exploring the green and blue spaces of West Bath.

3 One tunnel from Springfield Park

2.1 miles

Starting in a lesser known Bath park, through one of the famous 'two tunnels' and rewarding walkers with incredible views over Bath.

4 Monkton Farleigh, a folly and a feat of engineering

8 miles

The longest walk, very varied, with farmland, river, canal, the Dundas Aqueduct, Browne's Folly – starting and finishing at a pub!

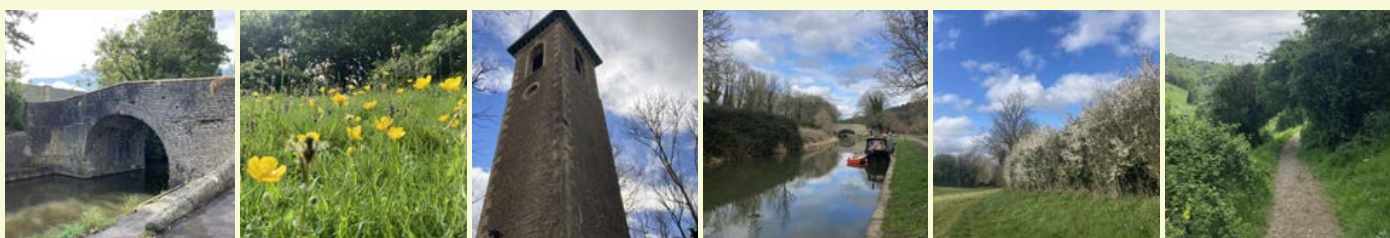
5 South Stoke Circular

3.4 miles

A pub-to-pub walk in beautiful countryside around Bath, up to South Stoke and down along the route of the Somersetshire Coal Canal.

More Cotswold routes!

If the routes in and around Bath aren't your thing, do remember other accessible routes in the Cotswolds, including the new(ish) route at Greystones Nature Reserve in Bourton-on-the-Water. Visit www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk to explore self-guided routes all over the Cotswolds – simply use the filter tool to suit your requirements!





Glorious Cotswold Grasslands

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

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

If you are a landowner, land manager, parish or town council, school, farm, or conservation project, and you're interested to know how the GCG team could work with you, take a look online to find out more, or email Harvey Sherwood, GCG Operations Coordinator at harvey.sherwood@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

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.

2023 funding applications open from 3 July

For more information click [here](#) 