

July - December 2024/Issue 51

**FREE**

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# COTSWOLD LION

The magazine of the Cotswolds National Landscape



**Carrots, Connections and Community**

**Digging Discoveries**

**Ourboretum!**

**Under a Harvest Moon**

**Walking Highlights**

**...and more!**



**Cotswolds  
National  
Landscape**

# Contents

## Welcome

Welcome to Cotswold Lion issue 51. The theme of this issue is change: the most obvious change to the magazine is that we've moved back to a printed format. The magazine is still available for free, and will now be distributed within the community by our Cotswold Voluntary Wardens. Look out for it near you in community hubs, libraries, village shops and cafes, and more locations besides. The online PDF version of the magazine isn't going anywhere either – that will still be available on our website, so whichever format is your preference, the choice is yours. Other changes we explore in the issue are: improvements to Cotswolds paths and access facilitated with more funding from Defra, changes in the landscape promised by National Grid's project to underground cables, the changing seasons and how they influence wildlife, and the changes to our future treescapes thanks to the Ourboretum project.



## In this issue

**03/News Bulletin**

**04/Carrots, Connections and Community**

**06/Dig Discoveries**

**08/Ourboretum!**

**10/Liberating the Landscape**

**12/Access for All**

**14/Under a Harvest Moon**

**16/Free Wheelin'**

**18/Walking Highlights**

**20/Spot the Species**

**22/Guest Feature Recipe**

### Produced by

Cotswolds National Landscape  
Cotswold Business Centre  
2 A P Ellis Road, Upper Rissington  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire GL54 2QB  
07841 663607  
info@cotswolds-nl.org.uk  
cotswolds-nl.org.uk



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

### Words and visuals

**Editor**  
Alana Hopkins  
alana.hopkins@cotswolds-nl.org.uk

**Writers**  
Matt Brierley, Siân Ellis,  
Alana Hopkins, Katie Jarvis.

**Photography**  
As credited.

**Design**  
Neil Morgan Design.

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

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Jacob Sabourin, from Gannicox Camphill Community, photographed by Nina Stubbington.

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# Bulletin

Top stories from the Cotswolds National Landscape team



Russell Sach

## 30 years and counting!

We celebrated Becky Jones, our Access and Volunteers Lead earlier this year. Becky has been a member of the CNL team for 30 years, and to mark this outstanding milestone, we gathered together the team, Board members, and our volunteers (of course) to officially thank her for her decades of enthusiasm, care, and generosity of spirit.

## Nina set to stay

Our colleague Nina joined us in a year-long role funded by New to Nature, and we're delighted to announce that she'll be staying for another year, thanks to further funding from the British Mountaineering Council. Nina will continue to lend valuable support to the Caring for the Cotswolds programme, and will now also lead the allocation of funding through Defra's Access for All: Removing Barriers programme.



Billy Heaney

## Dark Skies Above

We are delighted to announce that thanks to funding from National Highways Designated Funds, we are now embarking on a two-strand dark skies project. We will soon be working with Darkscape Consulting to produce a Dark Skies Guidance pack, to help local authorities, parish councils, homeowners, landowners, and business owners reduce light pollution. We will also be working to measurably reduce light pollution by delivering a programme of retrofitting with the premises, businesses, and sections of road identified in the Feasibility Phase 2 report we completed in 2023-24.



Abby Mould

## Farewell

After five fantastic years with us as Chief Executive, Andy Parsons will be moving on to a new challenge in late 2024. Andy has been a hugely popular member of the CNL team and under his leadership, the team and organisation have gone from strength to strength. We all extend our heartfelt thanks to Andy for everything he has achieved while with us, and wish him the very best for his exciting new role at the Heart of England Forest.



## New team members

Since our last issue, we have been joined by Fred Constantine Smith, who joins as our Climate Action Lead (Technical); Ellie Robinson, providing admin support to the Farming in Protected Landscapes team; Tom Harcourt, our new Glorious Cotswold Grasslands Programme Assistant; and Maria Carter, who will work on a programme of legacy content from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. We're delighted to welcome all three.



# CARROTS, CONNECTIONS AND COMMUNITY



**A working farm with the intention to grow community spirit, as well as produce, at its heart. Katie Jarvis finds out more about Common Soil.**

Take a walk from the centre of Stroud, up to Summer Street, onto Woodside, and you'll find yourself in a different universe. One second you're in a residential road; the next, the world opens up before you. A wildflower meadow; cows grazing; then a sizeable growing-patch providing vegetables for 50 local households. Carrots, potatoes, beetroot; a summer abundance of beans, rosy tomatoes and cucumbers; a winter sustenance of Jerusalem artichokes to roast and pickle, yellow flowers like little suns on top of tall stems.

This is Common Soil, a community farm overlooking the Laurie-Lee beauty of the Slad Valley. Yet it's not only plants that are flourishing among its fertile soils.

This farm is about helping people develop, too: connecting the community with the land.

And that has never been more apparent than in its latest project, as founder member Georgina Anstey explains.

'The idea behind the farm is that all different parts of the community can get involved and have access to nourishing, secure food: some work on the land; others contribute by buying veg.

'But we're aware that some people might need more support to access the farm than others.'

So when Gannicox Camphill Community – based on the Cainscross Road in Stroud – got in touch, this was an exciting new development.



*Members of Gannicox will work at Common Soil until late autumn.*

Nina Strubington



Courtesy of Common Soil

*'I've noticed that it's very sociable,' Georgina says. 'Lots of humour; breaks for tea and biscuits in the middle. One of the group has even started writing a weekly quiz for everyone.'*

working independently, wheel-barrowing compost himself and getting stuck into a task with gusto.

And he's far from alone in loving the activities.

'I've noticed that it's very sociable,' Georgina says. 'Lots of humour; breaks for tea and biscuits in the middle. One of the group has even started writing a weekly quiz for everyone. The growers who run the session will have a set task – a little bit of teaching around a particular plant or the job they're doing; but there's also a huge amount of flexibility for people to work on what brings them joy.'

The group will be with Common Soil until the end of October. 'We'd like them to be involved in the whole growing cycle, to give a sense of satisfaction, as well as an understanding of their own skills and interests.'

They've also joined in some of the farm's celebrations, such as the great-fun Spring Equinox event, with fire-pit, snacks, games and a visit from the Green Man.

For Georgina, the dream is that, one day, every neighbourhood will have a community farm like this to connect with.

'We all know the benefits of being outside in green spaces; but here we prioritise wider connection: people with each other; with food-growing; working with the land and not against it.

'It's so important for members of Gannicox to feel they're contributing to a wider project. That creates a sense of belonging to the farm, but also – just as importantly – to the land that the farm is on.'

**For more information**

Common Soil at [commonsoil.co.uk](http://commonsoil.co.uk)

Gannicox Community at [gannicox.org](http://gannicox.org)

The individuals who share life together in Gannicox House all have their own gifts and abilities, supported by trusted co-workers. 'What their support staff noticed was the huge benefits those individuals got from working outdoors in green spaces. And how satisfying it was for them to include that kind of meaningful activity within their week,' Georgina says.

The question was: Could they come and work up at the farm?

The team at Common Soil – which barely breaks even – was keen to facilitate this; yet well aware it would need additional funding to support the Gannicox community involvement – from staff time to more tools. Which is where the Cotswolds National Landscape team stepped in with a grant.

The result is that, every Friday since February, a dozen or so people from Gannicox have been up on site, joining in with everything from sowing seeds to harvesting.

And the success has been evident right from early days. When one of the participants first arrived, his co-worker would take his hand and lead him to tasks they would work on together. There was enormous satisfaction when he started



The Common Soil team.

Courtesy of Common Soil



# Dig Discoveries

**An enigmatic Iron Age burial, Roman brooches and hundreds of coins from different eras are among exciting archaeological finds unearthed as part of the A417 Missing Link scheme. Siân Ellis talks to Alex Thomson to find out more.**



*Cupid at excavation and (above) after conservation.*

The £460m A417 Missing Link scheme in Gloucestershire includes the building of four miles of new dual carriageway connecting the existing A417 Brockworth bypass with the A417 dual carriageway south of Cowley. Prior to construction getting underway joint venture team Oxford Cotswold Archaeology (OCA) has had a rare opportunity over the past four years to excavate 40ha of land around the works.

"It is very unusual to be able to investigate archaeological sites on this scale," says OCA Project Manager Alex Thomson. "It allows us to look at the landscape story of all the archaeology, and how our sites relate to each other and to previously known sites and finds."

A huge amount of material, from the Neolithic period right through to the Second World War, has been unearthed, helping to reveal human stories held by the landscape through thousands

of years. It is still very early in post-excavation analysis work, but Alex highlights two "unusual sites that we don't get to see very often": an Iron Age 'banjo enclosure' and a Roman roadside settlement with a sort of "Roman Travelodge."

The banjo enclosure (so called because its shape resembles a banjo) was found beside the A417 near the Air Balloon Roundabout and in the shadow of Crickley Hill. Surrounded by ditches dug more than one metre deep, it covered 0.2ha and while no-one knows for sure the purpose of such a site, Alex says: "One idea is that people would go to the enclosure for celebrations or events and then go back to their places of residence." A nearby contemporary Iron Age settlement identified by OCA, and the Iron Age hill fort at Crickley Hill could offer possible connections.

More than 1,000 sherds of Iron Age pottery,



*Roman spoon.*

Courtesy of Oxford Cotswold Archaeology

Courtesy of Oxford Cotswold Archaeology

animal skulls and butchered animal bones found within the enclosure point to feasting, while pieces of a specific type of pot used to transport salt from brine springs in Droitwich indicate local trade links. The crouched burial of a young man aged between 17 and 20 years old raises many questions, "but given that he was in a pit at the very centre of the enclosure, it is easy to suggest that he was somebody of importance to the community," Alex says. Investigations continue!

It is well known that there were rural Roman settlements throughout the Cotswolds and so discoveries of roadside building (the A417 follows the route of Roman Ermin Street) have been another, less-explored point of interest. Excavations in the area of Cowley Roundabout and Birdlip Quarry, where Roman settlement was already known to exist, unearthed foundations from a building that Alex describes as perhaps a sort of "Roman Travelodge".

"It's likely that the building fronted Ermin Street, and given its location between Cirencester (Roman Corinium) and Gloucester (Glevum), and just beyond the crest of the Birdlip climb from the Severn Valley, it's very likely that the passing road trade would have been a key part of the economy of our building and adjacent settlement. There is another Roman building known to lie beneath the Royal George Hotel in Birdlip itself, and this may have been



Kier

Excavations were carried out over 40 hectares.

a similar roadside stopping point for rest and refreshment."

Roman artefacts cast further light on life along Ermin Street, from the day-to-day in the form of a copper-alloy nail-cleaner, to the special: a Cupid figurine, intricate brooches, and a knife and finger-ring deposited in a quarry pit.

As the digs have drawn to a close, the challenge now will be piecing together the diverse evidence from this extraordinary landscape-scale dig, and building a story of life across thousands of years around this corridor through the Cotswolds.

Find latest news at [cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk](https://cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk)

*It is still very early in post-excavation analysis work, but Alex highlights two "unusual sites that we don't get to see very often": an Iron Age 'banjo enclosure' and a Roman roadside settlement with a sort of "Roman Travelodge."*



Courtesy of Oxford Cotswold Archaeology

Roman penannular brooch.



Courtesy of Oxford Cotswold Archaeology

Roman trumpet brooch.



Courtesy of Oxford Cotswold Archaeology

Roman nail cleaner.

# Ourboretum!

A four year-long Gloucestershire-wide community tree planting project has just concluded – or has it just begun? Katie Jarvis finds out more.



Muddy children are laughing and calling to each other, digging holes as they get to work planting saplings on a grassy sward just outside Gloucester. Tired but elated, they stand back to admire their efforts: a neat line of young trees that will grow and thrive in this Gloucestershire soil.

Chris Sandys smiles at the memory. 'Now that was thrilling,' he says. 'Hearing all these primary-school children, full of joy, not fully realising the impact of what they were doing, but loving being in the moment.'

They'll probably always remember planting those trees last year. Yet even these youngsters – as they grow, leave school, get jobs; perhaps even have children of their own – will never witness the full benefit of the saplings they once bedded in on the slopes of Hempsted. It will be generations to come who

admire the gnarled branches huge against the skyline. Mosses and lichens of the future will coat the hollows, as birds nest in spreading canopies above.

Which is exactly what Chris envisaged, four years ago, when he dreamed up the idea for Ourboretum: a tree-planting project unlike any other.

A community producer with BBC Radio Gloucestershire,

Chris was well aware of the looming problem of ash dieback: a fungal disease predicted to rob the Cotswolds of 95 percent of its ash trees. His flash of inspiration was to encourage local individuals, groups and schools – anyone and everyone – to collect handfuls of acorns, hazelnuts and beechmast. Then, with expert guidance, to bring those seeds on to produce saplings that could be planted in small groups to replace and add to stricken ash.

As calls to action went out on the local radio station, people began to respond in numbers. During Ourboretum's first autumn – back in 2020 – 180 participants started scouring Gloucestershire's woods and fields for nuts they lovingly potted and tended.

Some saplings thrived in countryside gardens; others started life on balconies or small window ledges: 'So whether you were rural or urban, young or old, with garden or without: this was something anybody could get involved with,' Chris says.

By the time the project ended earlier this year:

- 🌱 1,096 saplings had been handed over, ready for planting (963 oak, 18 beech and 115 hazel);
- 🌱 84 different participants had taken part, including some 17 primary schools;
- 🌱 Planting locations had been found in every corner of the county: Elmore Court near Gloucester, Woodchester Mansion near Stroud, Cox's Meadow in Cheltenham, Tewkesbury Nature Reserve, Lydney Park Estate,







*During Ourboretum's first autumn – back in 2020 – 180 participants started scouring Gloucestershire's woods and fields for nuts they lovingly potted and tended.*

St Catherine's School in Chipping Campden – and many more.

None of the trees were planted in woodlands (which are being supported separately): instead, they have found homes as replacement hedgerow and parkland trees; or simply dotted about as shade for cattle and walkers.

Vital expertise for Ourboretum came from Mark Connelly – land management lead with Cotswolds National Landscape – who worked closely alongside Chris.

'It's been really interesting,' he says. 'We've learned a lot about community tree-planting: people growing half a dozen trees in their gardens in pots. We've learned about loss-rates: where we started with around 4,000 nuts and seeds, we've ended up planting 1096 trees. We've also had to tackle challenges of finding homes for them.'

'If someone asked us: 'How would we do this in future?', we could certainly offer advice and guidance.'

Sherborne Brook Support Group, caring for nature and heritage around their village, aimed to plant one sapling for every child in the village school. 'Our tagline is, 'What else can you do today that will positively affect the local environment in 400 years' time?'' says founder member Roger Davies. 'We are proud to have been major providers of saplings to

the Ourboretum project.'

As for Chris, he's grateful to everyone who got stuck in.

'As I drive around and see dying ash trees, there's that positive thought alongside sadness: yes, but look at what we've done to try and lessen the impact.'



# Liberating the Landscape

**An exciting project aims to transform the views, skyline and landscape on the Cotswold Plateau between Winchcombe and Cheltenham. Siân Ellis finds out more.**

Called the Cotswolds Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project, the scheme aims to remove 16 National Grid pylons and around 7km of overhead electricity lines, replacing them with cables buried underground. It is one of five such projects in English and Welsh protected landscapes to date and among the first in the world to be explicitly driven by an aesthetic purpose to enhance the natural beauty of landscapes.

“The Cotswolds has more pylons than any other landscape in England and Wales,” says Andy Parsons, Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Chief Executive. “That’s why we are really pleased to be partnering with National Grid on this VIP project. The high wold is known for its open character and far-reaching views, so the project could benefit not just people living and playing locally, but also those for miles around.”

Robbie Griggs, Lead Project Manager for National Grid, shares the enthusiasm, highlighting the transformative effect of removing pylons from countryside vistas seen from historic landmarks like Belas Knap long barrow, the Cotswold Way and Cleeve Common.

Robbie has been involved in numerous public engagement events and he underlines the collaborative nature of the project “from day one”. It was environmental and heritage

organisations who, ten years ago, lobbied for a VIP; energy regulator Ofgem listened and set aside funds, he explains, adding that these days new infrastructure would typically go underground anyway in protected landscapes.

Since 2020 when the Cotswolds scheme was selected by the VIP project’s national Stakeholder Advisory Group, National Grid has consulted widely with local stakeholders, landowners, farmers and experts (including CNL) to determine the route for pylon removal and discuss related logistics and issues. Running from Postlip Mill in the north to near Dowdeswell Wood in the south, the route goes through largely agricultural land and parallel in places to the Cotswold Way National Trail.



*Belas Knap.*



*Running from Postlip Mill in the north to near Dowdeswell Wood in the south, the route goes through largely agricultural land and parallel in places to the Cotswold Way National Trail*

*The current overground pylons (left page), and visualisation (above) demonstrating the improvement to views without.*

One, among many, engineering and topographical challenges has been to negotiate Breakheart Plantation in a way that avoids mature trees and bat habitat, Robbie says. On-the-ground investigations identified an area of ash dieback and the route design was altered to go through this.

As part of preparatory work, lots of archaeological, geological and ecological surveys have been carried out, and monitoring will continue. "Stakeholders we've engaged with have been impressed with the depth and detail we have gone to," Robbie says, noting that Cotswold Archaeology, for one, is excited by the opportunity the project will provide for their investigations.

"There is always something new," Robbie adds, admitting that he had never before come across Roman snails (*Helix pomatia*) in ecological surveys; fortunately said snails are clear of intended route works.

Subject to receiving the go-ahead after submitting planning and funding applications this summer, work is scheduled to commence in early 2026 and be completed in 2029. A site compound adjacent to the A40 has been identified and a large temporary haul road will be constructed with trenches either side for cables to be laid.

Removed soil will be carefully managed ready for reinstatement – within a year or so, the landscape will have rejuvenated, Robbie assures. National Grid's website has an immersive tour of the Cotswolds VIP project, showing scenes with/without pylons – a super evocation of the

benefits to our breathtaking landscape and views.

The Cotswold Way will stay open during works, and an information centre and further engagement events are planned to ensure people are kept well informed about what is happening. National Grid is in talks with CNL about Biodiversity Net Gain to be achieved and there will be a Community Grant Programme offering local organisations up to £20,000 on each eligible project. In short: there is plenty more good news to come – watch this space!



**For more information**

**[nationalgrid.com/cotswoldsvip](https://nationalgrid.com/cotswoldsvip)** Any questions?

Email: [visualimpact@nationalgrid.com](mailto:visualimpact@nationalgrid.com). Tel: 0330 134 0051.

# ACCESS FOR ALL

**Weaving together interconnected stories of archaeology, agriculture, and wildlife, Greystones Farm Nature Reserve is a working organic dairy farm, as well as a site boasting a wealth of nationally important built and natural heritage – and, Alana Hopkins finds out – new features have recently arrived.**

“The new wildlife pond is a game-changer for education at Greystones” says Ros Marsden, Education Officer at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT), “pond dipping is always a favourite with children, who love exploring the hidden wonders below the water’s surface with a net and bucket”.

Ros explains that the pond is one of a range of new practical and landscape features installed at GWT’s Greystones Farm in Bourton-on-the-Water. And it’s all been done as part of a national programme of work, helping more people to access and enjoy the countryside.

The education team from GWT run sessions for schools which encourage children to learn about how people have lived and farmed at Greystones

for over 6,000 years. The Salmonsbury Camp Scheduled Ancient Monument is the only example in England of a lowland fortified settlement, indicating the great value people have always attributed to the land there. A replica iron age roundhouse, created some years ago by the GWT team and volunteers, offers school groups an immersive experience of historical life on site. Sitting in the quiet shade of the interior, pupils are inspired to think about what it took to build (originally and as a replica), and its cultural and community value – as vital shelter, and as a meeting point.

Meanwhile, the rare flower-rich river meadows at Greystones are a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In summer, the fields are alive with birdsong and the buzz of pollinators. GWT has been developing the infrastructure on site for many years, including creating an award-winning heritage education and discovery centre in 2017 – designed to help people engage in a meaningful and informative way with all the special features on the farm.

Developing such a complex and important site comes with challenges though, as Lenka Cmelokova, Facilities Manager for GWT explains, “as the site has become more popular, we’ve realised there are barriers to access in places, particularly for people with limited mobility. We’ve worked to improve access to our SSSI meadows, but we knew we could do more”.

She describes how pedestrian gates in the farmyard could be difficult to open, and bad weather could make access to both the roundhouse and wildlife walk challenging. The team also realised that some of the features of the nature reserve were too far away for some school groups and those with limited mobility.

Now though, thanks to a £30,000 funding grant from Defra’s Access for All: Removing Barriers programme (administered by the CNL team), further improvements have been made. New, easier-to-open wheelchair-accessible gates have been installed in the farmyard, opening up the path to the roundhouse. Once at the roundhouse, pupils will find the new pond with an accessible dipping platform, a large-scale bug hotel (built by volunteers from Moreton Men in Sheds), and a new picnic area with accessible seating.



*The new pond will allow children to pond dip and study aquatic wildlife.*

Courtesy of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust



Courtesy of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Moreton Men in Sheds with their big bug hotel.

As Ros enthuses, "We're thrilled that Greystones now provides so much more for school children on Habitat Discovery days here. Just sitting by the water's edge and watching the dragonflies, pond-skaters, water boatmen, newts and frogs in their aquatic world will offer a restorative contrast to the bustling village centre or the classroom!"

Access for All: Removing Barriers has also recently helped to fund access work at Lansdown near Bath to create an accessible, wheelchair friendly route, and similar work at Leckhampton Hill in Cheltenham.

New gates will allow easier access.



Courtesy of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

*New, easier-to-open wheelchair-accessible gates have been installed in the farmyard, opening up the path to the roundhouse.*



Courtesy of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Volunteers building bench seating for the picnic area.

**For more information**  
 Greystones Farm Nature Reserve  
[gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk](http://gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk)

# UNDER A HARVEST

# M O O N

**This September the moon will put on an incredible show. Matt Brierley investigates.**

Early autumn. A season's bounty is ripe for the picking. In 2024 the Autumnal equinox falls on September 22nd. The sun rises due east and sets due west with pinpoint accuracy. Day and night length will be almost equal (not exactly, despite equinox meaning "equal night", but very close). From here on in, darkness triumphs over light until solstice, the scales tipped in favour of nocturnal foragers.

For our ancestors who harvested crops by hand, shortening days presented a huge problem, a race against time before October's touch of frost. Every scrap of light mattered. Thankfully, September's moon has a trick up its sleeve. Any full moon rises around sunset, spilling precious moonlight that could extend the working day. However, the very next night, moonrise might be over an hour later, little use for farmhands. In September the angle at which the moon's orbit intersects the Earth's horizon means the rise



Ryszard Szczygiel

*Large yellow underwings are on the wing in autumn, using lunar orientation.*

time for days both before and after the full moon hardly differs from one evening to the next, some ten minutes difference between consecutive nights in 2024. September's moonlight is very reliable shortly after sunset. In times of old, crop gatherers turned this to their advantage. They named September's moon the Harvest Moon.

When it rises, the Harvest Moon glows orange – a chubby celestial pumpkin. That's because, when on the horizon, we see the moon through the atmosphere's maximum thickness which absorbs blue light.

In 2024 the Harvest Moon is especially noteworthy. Our moon orbits Earth not as a perfect circle, but elliptically. During any lunar cycle the moon can be approximately 27,000 miles closer to Earth at "perigee". 2024's Harvest Moon is September 18th, just one day before perigee. That means we get a "supermoon". Supermoons can be 25% brighter than other full moons. And, if that wasn't enough, beginning at 3.12am, there's a partial solar eclipse.

And what does all this moon-talk mean for our wildlife? Nightjars are migratory nocturnal birds. Cryptic masters of disguise by day, by night they



*Nightjars migrate in autumn all the way to Africa.*

David Tipling, Courtesy of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

*Our moon orbits Earth not as a perfect circle, but elliptically. During any lunar cycle the moon can be approximately 27,000 miles closer to Earth at "perigee".*

fatten up on moths. Certain nocturnal moths use full moons to navigate, and all are easier to spot. Some 10 days after the Harvest Moon, satiated nightjars leave their last Gloucestershire stronghold in the Forest of Dean, spilling out across the Cotswolds. Their journey to African wintering grounds has begun.

They aren't the only ones enjoying an insect bounty. Bats build up fat stores for hibernation. In autumn romance is in the air for them too – males of most UK species make purrs, clicks and buzzing calls to attract females. But loved up bats need to be careful, especially around Bath and Cirencester. Urban peregrines have mastered nocturnal hunting thanks to streetlights. Bats are supplementing what is normally an exclusively birdy diet.

Nocturnal hunting peregrines are hazardous for warblers too. Our otherwise daytime warblers like chiffchaff, garden warbler and whitethroat migrate at night. This seasonal disappearance of birds puzzled early scientists. In the 17th century Charles Morton penned a well-reasoned



Tom Marshall, Courtesy of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Many bats are wooing one another during autumn.



Courtesy of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Chiff chaffs (above), garden warblers (below left), and whitethroats (below right) all migrate at night.

but totally inaccurate treatise claiming birds migrated to the moon. "Now, whither should these creatures go, unless it were to the moon?" he wrote.

Perhaps Morton was fooled by the "moon illusion". When the moon first rises, our brains process it as being bigger and closer than it actually is. Photographs prove it to be the same width near the horizon as high in the sky, but that's not what our eyes perceive. Even NASA scientists don't understand why this happens. Whatever the reason, make sure you've got eyes on the horizon at 7.28pm for the rising of the Harvest Moon this September 18th. It's a spectacle you won't want to miss.



Chris Gomersall, Courtesy of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust



Andrew Parkinson, Courtesy of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust



Tim Porter, Cotswold Mountain Biking

# FREE WHEELIN'

**Off-road cycling and e-bikes open up the Cotswolds to fresh adventures and get endorphins flowing, two riders tell Siân Ellis.**

For Simon Smith, it is all about a sense of freedom. He rediscovered childhood pleasures of pedal power as an adult after his partner gave him a mountain bike, and following recreational forays into the Cotswolds, he even came across his job as Nature Recovery Lead for the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). "My bike was life-changing in a number of ways!" he laughs.

"The Cotswolds is probably one of the best areas in the country to explore by off-road riding," Simon continues. "It has a great network of tracks and the ground is limestone so water tends to disappear through it and it gets less mud than many other places, although mud

can be part of the fun. There are hills along the scarp, but it is mainly undulating terrain, while the eastern side of the Cotswolds is flatter.

"Riding over the high wold, the views are fantastic: across the vale to the Forest of Dean, into the middle of the Cotswolds, or to the North Wessex Downs.

"Over a certain gradient, I do get off and walk!" he admits, adding, "I see terrific amounts of wildlife, which seems unconcerned by a passing bike."

Simon enjoys plotting routes by using Ordnance Survey maps and an app, checking out bridleways, byways and other legally rideable routes (footpaths aren't open to cyclists). You can download six of his routes from the CNL website, ranging from a challenging ride around Brailes Hill, to Hawkesbury, Westonbirt and rolling hills and valleys around Lower Kilcott.

*"Over a certain gradient, I do get off and walk!" he admits, adding, "I see terrific amounts of wildlife, which seems unconcerned by a passing bike."*



"When you are cycling you become genuinely part of a landscape," Simon says. "All you need is a bike and a helmet, and once you are cruising along a Cotswold track with the fresh air on your face, the sound of birdsong, and rays of sunshine on the landscape, you will be off riding around the Cotswolds for the rest of your life."

## Off-Road For Everybody

Tim Porter has been riding in the Cotswolds for more than 20 years. Based between Stroud and Dursley, he runs Cotswold Mountain Biking, offering day and half-day guided off-road cycling adventures. Off-road cycling can be enjoyed by everyone according to their abilities, he says, and he loves to introduce people to it. "First-timers, in my experience, get hooked."

Visitors, locals, seasoned mountain bikers, or solo riders wanting to sharpen up their off-road skills – all come to Tim. Whatever their level, he covers safety and trail etiquette before setting out: from managing speed to the importance of being friendly and sharing space with other trail users such as walkers and horse-riders.

People bring their own bikes or they can hire one from Tim, including electric mountain bikes which, he says, "are a real game-changer. I've had 14-year-olds and 70-year-olds who have found a little added assistance helps them to do so much more."



Tim says all ages can enjoy mountain biking.

Tim Porter, Cotswold Mountain Biking



Cycling offers an exhilarating way to connect with nature and the landscape.

*"When you are cycling you become genuinely part of a landscape," Simon says. "All you need is a bike and a helmet..."*

Outstanding panoramic views from the escarpment and commons, and ancient history like Uley Bury Iron-Age hillfort are among popular route highlights. "If you have an interest in the outdoors, adventure, scenery, traffic-free countryside and exercise, then mountain biking brings it all together," Tim says.

Tim, Simon and the CNL team also have some exciting news. After much work on their parts, there is now a brand-new c. 300km circular Cotswold Riders' Way right around the Cotswolds, taking in top scenic landscapes, villages and towns. You can download the route as a GPX file from the CNL website.

## Get Cycling

- Visit the cycling pages on the CNL website to find routes to suit diverse abilities and interests, Simon's curated off-road explorations, and the new Cotswold Riders' Way, [Cotswolds-nl.org.uk](https://Cotswolds-nl.org.uk)
- Brush up on the Countryside Code for cyclists, including trail etiquette and where you can legally cycle off-road, [cyclinguk.org/article/countryside-code-cyclists](https://cyclinguk.org/article/countryside-code-cyclists)
- More info on Cotswold Mountain Biking: [Cotswoldmountainbiking.co.uk](https://Cotswoldmountainbiking.co.uk)

Tim Porter, Cotswold Mountain Biking

# Walking Highlights

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens have been busy (as always)! They clocked up over 51,000 hours of volunteer work in 2023-24, and have made some impressive path upgrades – including continuing to improve accessibility on self-guided walking routes (notably at Leckhampton and Lansdown).

Meanwhile, our Walk Leaders have been planning guided routes for summer into autumn, see a handful of highlights below – including the return of evening and weekend walks, and the introduction of Shorter and Steadier walks – for those who like a more relaxing pace.

Please find full details of all walks at [cotswolds-nl.org.uk](http://cotswolds-nl.org.uk) – visit the Guided Walks and Self-Guided Walks pages in the Walking and Exploring section.

## Regular walks:

'Tuesday Tramps' at Box and Colerne.

## JULY

Saturday 20 July • Start: 10:00am

### Circuit of Bath – stage three

*No booking required*

Difficulty: Moderate  
Duration: 4 hours  
Distance: 8 miles

**Start point:** Lansdown Park and Ride, near the toilets.

Suitable for visually impaired walkers\*. This lovely and varied Bathscape walk takes in the ridge below Beckford's Tower, Primrose Hill community woodland, the River Avon and Norton Brook, and the pretty village of Englishcombe. Bring snacks, water, and a packed lunch.

\*If you are visually impaired, please let walk leaders know in advance that you're joining, so a guide can be arranged.

Use the online filter to search for easy/moderate/strenuous



Nicole Daw



Tuesday 23 July • Start: 10:00am

### Minchinhampton Meander

*No booking required*

Difficulty: Moderate  
Duration: 3 hours  
Distance: 6 miles

**Start point:** Minchinhampton Bell Lane car park.

A super and very scenic walk around Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons with great views! A few short descents and ascents, which could be slippery if wet. Bring a drink and snack.

Wednesday 31 July • Start: 6:30pm

### Evening Summer Stroll #1

*No booking required*

Difficulty: Moderate  
Duration: 2 hours  
Distance: 4 miles

**Start point:** Seven Springs layby (opposite the closed Hungry Horse pub).

A lovely stroll for a summer's evening, incorporating a mile of the Cotswold Way with super views over Cheltenham. Initial incline to reach Wistley Hill escarpment, past Chatcombe Wood and onwards to glimpse the site of abandoned medieval village.



**Remember:**  
summer  
means the  
return of  
evening  
walks!

**And, don't forget 2024 walking festivals!**

**Bradford-on-Avon Walking Festival**  
6 – 8 September  
[walkbradfordonavon.org](http://walkbradfordonavon.org)

**Bathscape Walking Festival**  
7 – 22 September (with plenty of walks led by our Voluntary Wardens)  
[bathscape.co.uk/walking-festival](http://bathscape.co.uk/walking-festival)

**Dursley Walking Festival**  
2 – 6 October  
[dursleywelcomeswalkers.org.uk](http://dursleywelcomeswalkers.org.uk)

## AUGUST

**Friday 16 August • Start: 6:30pm**

### An Evening in Ancient Woodland

*No booking required*

Difficulty: Moderate

Duration: 2 hours

Distance: 4 miles

**Start point:** The Woodland Trust car park, just off the A40 at Dowdeswell.

Close the day with an evening walk in ancient woodland at Dowdeswell. The ascent through the wood takes in part of the Cotswold Way, then along the bottom of Wistley Hill before a short steep climb to the impressive local viewpoint on Ravensgate Common. Rejoin the Cotswold Way along the top of Lineover Wood, passing a long barrow and an ancient hill fort before embarking on the descent to the start point.

## DECEMBER

**Tuesday 3 December • Start: 10:00am**

### Adlestrop, Chastleton and Cornwell

*No booking required*

Difficulty: Moderate

Duration: 3 hours

Distance: 6 miles

**Start point:** Adlestrop village hall.

A lovely circular walk from Adlestrop, around to Chastleton (with its picturesque Jacobean manor house), then on to the pretty little village of Cornwell and back via Daylesford – with its renowned farm shop. Bring a drink and a snack.



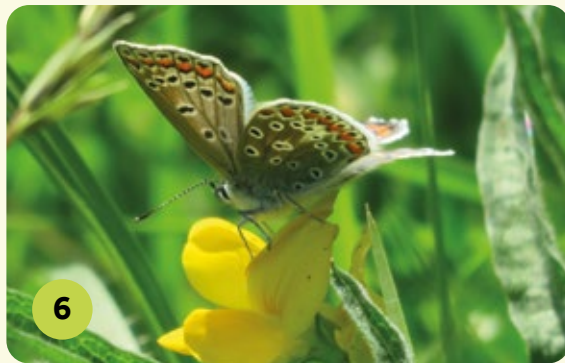
**Please:** always remember to wear appropriate footwear as some walks may be steep and muddy in places. Dogs are not allowed on walks, except assistance dogs. It is advisable to check the website beforehand for details of any changes, particularly during bad weather. And remember: sadly, ticks are a more common pest than ever before – please be tick aware!



**Look out for family walks too!**

# Spot the Species

The Cotswolds is famous for its limestone grasslands – as well as many other vital habitats, home to lots of varied wildlife. See how many of these species you can name! (Answers below)





**Answers**  
1. Adder, 2. Adonis blue, 3. Bee orchid, 4. Burnt orchid, 5. Chalkhill blue, 6. Common blue, 7. Cowslip, 8. Devil's bit scabious, 9. Duke of Burgundy, 10. Greater butterfly orchid, 11. Fragrant orchid, 12. Frog orchid, 13. Greater burnet, 14. Fly orchid, 15. Green winged orchid, 16. Large blue, 17. Pasque flower, 18. Marsh fritillary, 19. Orange tip, 20. Ox eye daisy, 21. Lesser butterfly orchid.



Locally grown produce boxes continue to grow in popularity – and there are plenty to choose from in the Cotswolds. Often with contents grown right on the farm you're buying from, many also offer pick up as well as delivery. If you're looking for recipes to cook with your tasty fresh ingredients, Common Soil have kindly offered up one of theirs, written by Justine Evans ND, a naturopath and nutritional therapist from Stroud.

## Greens and Protein:

This quick but very tasty recipe is filled with nutrients and protein. Enjoy as lunch or supper, or even brunch! Experiment with different vegetables too.

**1 egg**

**1 tablespoon oil**

**A sprinkle of chilli flakes (optional)**

**A dribble of water**

**Dessertspoon mixed nuts  
(walnuts, almonds, Brazils and cashews)**

**1 teaspoon Ras El hanout**

**1 teaspoon ground paprika**

**Grating of nutmeg – about a teaspoon**

**1-2 handfuls of fresh greens – I used chard and cavolo nero, and washed and chopped Kohlrabi and although you can skin the kohlrabi, I didn't. I prepared it by using my mandolin, using the mandolin's thickest setting – but if you don't own one then use a potato peeler to do ribbons of kohlrabi instead. I used about a quarter of it.**

**Dessertspoon of bacon (or vegan bacon) lardons**

**Balsamic glaze (optional) and a squeeze of lemon juice**

Use a wok or a frying pan with a lid. Add oil and gently warm over a hob. Once warmed, add the teaspoon of paprika, the lardons and the kohlrabi. Gently sauté for a few minutes until the kohlrabi becomes transparent and the lardons begin to brown.

Add the greens, mixed nuts and the ras el hanout, plus salt and pepper. Gently stir. The greens should begin to wilt, adding a little water will stop them from sticking or burning and the nuts turning colour.

Add a sprinkle of chilli flakes and the nutmeg. Stir again. Now break the egg into the centre of the wok/frying pan. Watch as the egg white begins to change colour. Once this starts, place the lid over the frying pan, turn the heat down to a low, and wait until the egg is ready.

I actually used an egg timer at this point and it seemed to work perfectly. Your dinner should be ready when the egg timer ends – unless you like your eggs hard or are using a large or goose egg! I serve this dish with a twist of balsamic glaze over my egg and a squeeze of lemon juice over the veg. Delicious.



**Cotswolds  
National  
Landscape**

## **Glorious Cotswold Grasslands**

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

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

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





**Cotswolds  
National  
Landscape**

# HELP SHAPE

## THE FUTURE OF THE COTSWOLDS

The **Caring for the Cotswolds** grants scheme is a way for businesses and their customers to give something back to the environment in the Cotswolds. 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. 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.

**Funding applications  
open January 2025**

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