

Please do contact Caroline with your ideas and contributions for future editions.  
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### A day in the life...



I learnt a lot about the National Trust's activities at Ebworth from a talk Head Ranger, Matt Stanway, gave at Sheepscombe village hall. I was planning to retire and keen to take up a volunteering job that would combine putting something back into the community with outdoor, physical activities.

Fast forward to January this year – I contacted Matt and said I would be interested in volunteering at Ebworth and he put me in touch with Laura Riley, the ranger responsible for the woods around the Sheepscombe and Crickley Hill.

On a cold day in February I walked up the hill to Ebworth to meet Laura. She was very friendly, talked me through the role, showed me around the site and outlined the philosophy and objectives of the NT. Laura explained she was aiming to build up a volunteer ranger team.

On my first day, I met the rest of the team (all of whom were very welcoming). After a coffee, we loaded the kit into the truck and headed into the woods to clear fallen branches from the bridleways.

That first day exceeded all my expectations and has set the pattern for my volunteering days since. I thoroughly enjoy the friendliness and enthusiasm of the rangers and volunteers, the variety of jobs we tackle and the warm glow I get from strenuous physical work coupled with a real pride in helping the NT manage the land in ways that benefit the environment and visitors equally.

Based on my experience, I would recommend volunteering as a NT ranger to anyone looking for a worthwhile and rewarding physically active role.

**John Petrie, Ranger volunteer**

### Secret Bat Caves

Secret caves around our Commons are where rare bats, will this autumn be hanging about to hibernate. Protected roosts deep within hillsides at Minchinhampton, and further afield, are where endangered Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats choose to spend the winter. Dis-used stone mines are among their favourites, with more common Pipistrelles and other bat species lodging alongside them too. The nocturnal bats are of course hard to spot. Often all people see is when they suddenly catch a flit out of the corner of their eye at dusk. But the places that the National Trust looks after in fact offer homes to every species of bat that lives in the UK. Across the valley from the Commons, you can observe bats in the attic of Woodchester Mansion via a bat-cam. The parklands that surround the mansion are owned by the National Trust and have been the summer home and feeding ground of

the Greater Horseshoes since the early 20th century. Over the winter we will be working on the "W" area of Minchinhampton Common and Iron Mills Common (satellite area of

Minchinhampton) to help keep the environment the bats rely on for food and shelter in top form. Cattle grazing to provide dung for beetles on which they feed are already busy on the "W", and have been at Iron Mills through the summer. Scrub work is planned throughout the winter with the W scrubbers, with the long awaited return of the remote control scrub flail machine.

**Rich Evans, Ranger**



## So... What's going on at Boundary Court Farm

Boundary Court is nestled in a small valley between Stroud and Woodchester Park and covers approximately 55 hectares and consists of a coombe on the Cotswold escarpment. The upper slopes are wooded, with cattle-grazed pasture on the lower slopes and a wooded stream in the valley bottom. There is little historical information available on Boundary Court but we do know that in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century it was part of the Spring Park Estate, now Woodchester Park where it belonged to the Earl of Ducie until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century.



A view from Boundary Court

The site was donated to the National Trust by Neil Curwen in the early 2000s, who at the time was a member of the National Trust regional committee and therefore had a strong relationship with us. The site locally is known as a special place to walk but it is also a special place for nature conservation. It is not only recognised as a Key Wildlife Site by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust but the woodland is classed as Ancient Woodland, so has been there since 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Nationally scarce plants and invertebrates have been found within the woodland and grassland. Our aim is to conserve the species-rich habitats that we have and also to improve habitats elsewhere on the farm.

Since taking the farm back in-hand in 2016 we have carried out extensive works to improve and protect the habitat. We have carried out fencing of three fields which will be maintained as wildflower hay meadows and installed 3 spring-fed water troughs. The three hay fields have also been enriched by a wild flower seed to increase species rich habitats.

Over the next 18 months we will be carrying out further fencing and we will also be enhancing a field next to Selsley Common with a yellow rattle wildflower seed. This will break up thick areas of grass and create more areas of bare ground which will enable us to over-seed with a broader wild flower seed mix over the next 3 years.

**Max Dancer, Area Ranger**

## Sward enhancement at Boundary Court Farm

This autumn important habitat restoration work will be taking place at Boundary Court Farm.

Approximately 5 hectares of grassland will be enhanced by adding 25 kilograms of yellow rattle seed supplemented by another 2 kilograms of mixed seed collected earlier this year from a wildflower rich meadow located on the farm.

The 5 hectares of grassland has recently returned to the National Trust following a long standing tenancy. The area of grassland which was surveyed in the summer months currently displays signs of agricultural improvement and is dominated by a few coarse grasses and undesirable herbs and presents a perfect opportunity to restore diversity back to the sward and connect it to the herb rich Selsley common.

The ground will be prepared first by grazing with our herd of belted Galloway cattle to reduce the sward height, the grassland will then be chain harrowed to expose at least 30% bare earth before broadcasting the seed and reintroducing the cattle to trample in the seeds, giving them the best chance to germinate.

Yellow rattle has been chosen to form majority of the seed mix as it is semi parasitic on grasses and given the dominance of grasses in this sward will help to subdue these grasses and provide the opportunity for wildflowers to establish over time.

This important work is being carried out to fit in with the National Trust's Land, Outdoors and Nature (LON) programme which aims to restore a healthy, beautiful, natural environment.

We will be watching with keen eyes next spring to see if the yellow rattle is able to establish and the many years thereafter as the sward becomes more diverse over time.

**James Gomery, Ranger**



Wild flower rich meadow at Boundary Court Farm

## End of Year get-together and Whole Team Portfolio meeting

- The date of our End of Year Get-together hasn't been decided quite yet, we'll let you know as soon as we can. Last year our Rangers were delighted to provide home-made goodies as a token of their appreciation. How would you like the event to run this year? Please drop Caroline an email with your thoughts.
- Please look out for information on our next Whole Team Portfolio meeting date to be confirmed, as last year there will be a small number of spaces open to volunteers on a first come first served basis.

## A Summer Day Out ?

We've held the annual summer BBQ for a few years now. It's great to be able to get together and spend some time with each other. With all of our various roles, we don't often get to see one another so it's a good chance to catch up with old friends and new.

It crossed my mind that we might like to do something a bit different next year so I need your thoughts. Would you like another summer BBQ next year or would you prefer to have a day out somewhere? Possibly another NT place where we could make use of our volunteer cards? In the past, the host property has even thrown in a guided tour. We could arrange for a bus to take us there and bring us back to Ebworth. However, it's very much your day, so please do let Caroline know by 31 October whether you'd prefer a BBQ or a day out.



The choice is yours!

Lisa Edinborough

## Volunteer Survey 2018 - have your say

Just a quick reminder that the volunteer survey closes at midnight on Monday 24 September.

We'd really like to encourage you to find 15 minutes between now and Monday to complete it. Your responses help us to continue to gauge how well we're involving volunteers in our work and help us to focus on areas where we still need to make improvements. Each year the key question in the survey is **'Would you recommend volunteering for the National Trust'**. This is the question, that as a property we're rated on. As it's one of our key performance indicators, we're rated only on the **'Strongly Agree'** responses. If you enjoy volunteering with us, please do consider ticking the 'strongly agree' box.

You can find the survey by following this link: [www.lateralthinkers.com/NTVolunteering2018](http://www.lateralthinkers.com/NTVolunteering2018)

**If you have already completed the survey, thank you!**

## News ... from the Cheltenham & Gloucestershire NT Centre

We've had some most enjoyable outings and a five day holiday, organised by the long-standing team of David and Adris Cooke. The annual holiday was to the Peak District, where we visited Calke Abbey (one of my favourites), the village of Eyam, Haddon Hall and Chatsworth, among other properties. Ann Nye and I organised a car outing apiece, hers being to the Walled Garden at Croome. The highlight of the Cookes' coach outing was to Dudmaston which a lot of us admitted to being unaware of, so it was an especial delight when we got there.

David Cooke first came onto the Committee in 1994, as Minute Secretary, and there have been very few years since then when he has not taken an active part in our activities. He was Chairman during our half century celebrations in 2014. I think he would be the first to admit he could not have achieved so much without Adris, who is also a long-standing member of the Committee.

**Julph Miers, Vice Chairman**

### Our Lecture series begins in October

Talk by Stefanie van Stokkom on Newark Park

Date: 4 October

Venue: Bethesda Church Hall, GL50 2AP

Time: 2.30pm

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Talk by Frank Austin on Tasmania

Date: 18 October

Venue: Woodmancote School, GL52 9HN

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NT volunteers very welcome at our lectures. Cost £3 for a Centre member, £4 otherwise. No need to book, but the afternoons at Bethesda are quite popular so it's advisable to get there by 2.15. Bethesda is very close to the Bath Terrace Car Park which can also get quite full!

For more information go to <http://www.cheltglosntc.org.uk> and click on Lectures info in the Outings and Lectures link