

Sherborne and Bibury



Looking forward to winter

I hope everyone is looking forward to the cooler, crisper, days of winter, and the Christmas break. I know I am.

This time, the newsletter is largely focussed on work the Ranger team of staff and volunteers carried out across the estate at Sherborne during the unusually soggy summer season. My thanks to them for the volume of work they have managed to get through. It has included, among many other things, improvements to

visitor structures; monitoring species and creating habitats; and caring for newly planted trees. Autumn is a time for proactive tree management and then into the winter we'll be looking at some further planting.

Although not in this particular newsletter, we do also continue to invest significantly in the rented properties and buildings and you will see much repair work taking place

across the estate. Our deep research continues too with consultants working on the varied and layered history of the estate as well as in certain areas thinking about future climate and how that will affect our work for many years to come - we will need to adapt.

Sherborne is such a place of opportunity to support the future. As ever, do come and say hello when you see us out on the estate!



Left : James Bradford, Ranger, and the Bridge replacement at Sabrina Way. Photo Credit. Georgina Lindsay

Below : 5 chicks from one Owl Box on Stone Farm. Photo Credit. Anna Field



Summer Work Update

The rangers at Sherborne have been very busy this summer and what a wet summer we have had.

With so much rain, the last few months have been particularly difficult in term of work programming and carrying out our surveying, maintenance and mowing tasks and we have

had to be flexible and change our plans constantly depending on what the weather is doing.

However, the vegetation has thrived this year and keeping our newly planted trees alive has been less stressful and time consuming than last year during the drought.

Unfortunately, it has meant that some of our more rain adverse wildlife such as butterflies, bats and barn owls have had to struggle through the sustained wet period.

In spite all of this, these species are quite resilient, and we have still recorded good species numbers across the Estate.

Storage unit and allotment to rent

A storage unit is available to rent at the West end of the village; rent will be £900 per year.

An allotment is also available for rent in Sherborne, at £15 per year.

Please contact

Kathryn.alsbury@nationaltrust.org.uk

if you are interested in either of the above and to arrange a viewing.

Ewe Pens car park

We have at Sherborne recently received confirmation from Cotswold District Council that we have been successful with a funding bid submitted back in May this year.

The CDC Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Fund is available to projects which encourage new and existing residents and visitors to visit other greenspace sites, rather than the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC. The scheme is designed to ensure that recreational pressures and ecological damage are minimised at the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC.

We have successfully applied for £26,000 from the fund and will provide £10,000 from Sherborne Big Nature Better Access funds. This work will

build on efforts that were carried out in 2018 and 2019 to mitigate the impact of the upturn in visitors following the broadcast of the BBC series of Springwatch and Autumnwatch.

The project will deliver improvements to existing tracks, provide cycle storage at Ewe pens, provide accessibility improvements in line with recommendations from access audits carried out by Inclusion Gloucestershire, provision of benches, improvements to public signage and wayfinding and visitor interpretation at Ewe Pens.

Planning for the work will take place over the next few weeks with delivery commencing in the new year.

Dead-hedges

A focus for the Ranger team this year has been installing several dead-hedges around the estate.

For anyone not familiar with dead-hedges, they are constructed natural boundaries that are made of arisings and brash that we would otherwise dump somewhere.

They offer multiple benefits in terms of conservation, providing deadwood habitats for saproxylic species, shelter areas/ wildlife corridors for small mammals, birds, and can provide a buffer to other important and sensitive habitats.

We have even utilised several as a fence to keep deer out of a planted area, as seen in the Pleasure Grounds and East Belt.

Welcome to Laura Nicholls

I am excited to have joined the Cotswold Portfolio as Volunteering and Community Manager.

I join the National Trust , having worked previously as a Community Engagement Officer for the Roman Baths and Bath World Heritage

Centre, and prior to that as a teacher. My role involves me working across the Cotswolds portfolio, including at Sherborne, and I feel very lucky to be working in such a beautiful setting.

I hope to be able to meet some of you at future parish council meetings, as well as at future community events.



Estate Management



Recreating the 18th-century Charles Bridgeman landscape at Lodge Park

Between the showers of Spring & Summer we have been trying to get stuck into maintenance around the wider Estate.

Starting with visitor infrastructure (which includes things such as way marker posts, gates, fences, walls and many more) , we have a dedicated volunteer who goes around the estate and maps it all out.

As you can appreciate, on a 4000 acre estate this is a

mammoth task, and so as a small ranger team we look to prioritising certain structures and/or inviting in a volunteer group to assist with any repairs or replacements required.

This year alone, alongside general housekeeping, we have replaced 2 vehicles gates, rebuilt and repaired fence lines, started repairing the dry stone wall along Eastington Road, re-barked the permissive path between Ewe Pen Car park and Ragged Copse and

installed a new bridge near the Watermeadows, which was personal highlight.

A huge thank you to the Sherborne Volunteers and the Cotswold Wardens for all their help and hard work.

Habitat management

One of our big objectives over the coming years is to improve habitats across Sherborne.

Sherborne has a mosaic of habitats which can sustain a multitude of species already, however, we would like to see even more biodiversity and improve the health and resilience of our existing habitats. We aim to do this in a variety of ways and have already started to begin some of these changes.

We participated in 'No Mow May', a Plant Life initiative aimed at increasing flower forage for pollinators and have relaxed some of our mowing to help insect species thrive.

We are working with some of our tenant farmers to farm more sustainably and improve habitats on their farmland. This can include hedgerow planting, tree planting and wildflower margins on arable land.

We have made an effort to try to increase deadwood across the Estate, especially in our woodlands where deadwood specialist species are incredibly beneficial.



Common Blue Butterfly. Photo Credit Georgina Lindsay

We have seed harvested from some of our more floristically rich grasslands with the aim of re-seeding other less diverse areas this Autumn.

In the areas we plan to improve habitats, we have also spent time surveying for a baseline data set. These areas will then be monitored long term so we

can compare data sets in the future and have a scientific, evidence-based approach to see whether our effort to enhance habitats have been successful.

Wildlife Highlights

We have had some exciting wildlife sightings this year.

Our raptor populations are doing well with breeding barn owls, tawny owls and little owls, Hobbies, Kites, Buzzards, Sparrowhawks and Kestrels, a lovely sighting of a Peregrine Falcon sitting by the Broadwaters and an Osprey just North of the Estate's boundary.

Many of the owl chicks have also been recorded and ringed as part of the British Trust of

Ornithology ringing and monitoring scheme. We have seen Leverets (baby Hares), deer fawns, fox cubs and badger cubs.

We have recorded good numbers of farmland birds and despite the rain, even the butterfly numbers have been quite impressive.

The ranger team has also carried out moth trapping with our highlight being a giant Poplar hawkmoth. Orchids could be seen all over the

Estate this summer and we had some lovely days surveying the flora in some of our woodlands as well as some grassland surveys for some of our farmers.

Our wildlife monitoring volunteers have also been very active this year at Lodge Park, Conygree Farm and Sandy Hill Farm and we have successfully mapped species over approximately half the Estate in the last 2 years.



Little Owl at North Field Barn. Photo Credit: Richard Tyler – Wildlife Photographer

Trees and Woodlands

We will be commencing our first year of our Woodland Management Plan this Winter, that was approved this summer by the Forestry Commission, with the last few months spent planning the logistics of a phased approach over the next 10 years. We will be thinning some of our woodland by up to 30% to allow more sunlight into the woodlands and reduce overcrowding and competition.

Although removing trees seems counter intuitive to what we are trying to achieve as a Conservation organisation, thinning can have many ecological benefits. It involves the removal of some trees or parts of trees within woodlands.

As the trees reach 10-15 years old, they begin to compete for space, light and nutrients and growth starts to slow. Thinning makes sure that the best trees grow at the fastest rate, allowing a more diverse woodland structure and helping to futureproof the landscape.

It also allows more sunlight into our woodlands which will improve ground flora in these areas and hopefully attract

more varied species of birds, insects and mammals. This year we will target West Belt and East Belt for our first forestry thinning.

Typically, our chainsaws tend to only come out during the Autumn/Winter period but due to heavy rains and winds this summer, we have had a couple of trees or tree limbs come down which we have had to deal with on road and paths.

We have also had some trees start to blow over in peoples garden and with permission from the Council, we have dealt with these quickly so that the trees caused no damage to houses and gardens. Although we like to try to plan our weeks, this summer has been very reactive with the varied weather and kept the Ranger

team on our toes!

Alongside all of this, we have been looking at areas where we can plant trees as part of our climate action initiative and have carried out feasibility surveys for improving our landscape connectivity.

We aim to improve our Parklands and Wood Pasture areas as well as increasing scrub, hedgerows and increase our woodland cover. We are working with the AONB, Natural England and the Forestry Commission to see what the Sherborne Park Estate can do to help fight climate change. So, there could be even more trees at Sherborne in the future!



Ash Dieback

As a charity, the National Trust cares for around 850 hectares (2,100 acres) of woodland in Gloucestershire. Ash trees are a common feature in these woods as well as in the wider landscape.

Like many other organisations, we're concerned about ash dieback. Ash dieback is a fungal disease that's sadly now present in all the woodlands we manage in Gloucestershire. It's a disease that is having a devastating impact on the countryside up and down the country. As ash trees succumb, they can drop limbs and branches, collapse or fall. Once a tree is infected the disease is usually fatal.

The thin limestone soils of the Cotswolds have contributed to the rapid deterioration of infected trees in the county – making it one of the most severely affected areas in Britain in recent years.

Over the summer period, the ranger team has been assessing and monitoring the health of the ash trees on land that we manage. As a result of these surveys, we have identified a large number of trees across the portfolio that pose a risk to public safety and unfortunately are in urgent

need of felling.

Not all affected ash trees will be felled. Wherever it's safe to do so, we'll be leaving both standing and fallen deadwood so that wildlife can benefit. The felling will only take place in high risk zones where infected trees pose a risk to public safety. This includes those that are along public highways, rights of way, well used paths, permissive routes and near residential areas and car parks.

There may be temporary road closures and restricted access along some routes and pathways at the places we care for during these essential works. Where this is the case, we'll ensure that temporary diversions are in place to keep residents, contractors and visitors safe. We hope to keep the disruption to a minimum.

Despite the tragic loss of trees, we'll be seizing the opportunity to increase the biodiversity in areas hardest hit. Where we've removed dying ash trees, we will leave some areas to naturally regenerate, in others we will replant with native broadleaves like beech, whitebeam, cherry and oak while in other areas you will see us adopt a mixture of both

types of woodland management.

Our long-term aim is to improve the resilience of the woodlands against threats such as climate change and disease. By increasing species diversity alongside improving the natural age structure of the woodlands we can help their long-term survival.

If you have any questions, the ranger team can be contacted via email at sherborneestate@nationaltrust.org.uk

Goodbye to George

This week we have said goodbye to George, our Area Ranger for the past 2 years. George leaves us for an exciting new job in the Cairngorms, where she will be working with rare and endangered native wildlife. We will miss her energy, her vision,

and passion for nature.

We are recruiting for a new Area Ranger now, and we will introduce them in this newsletter once they are settled in.

Thank you for everything George!



Lodge Park trees

In part thanks to a wet Summer, out of 129 standard trees planted at Lodge Park last Winter, all 129 trees have survived, which is an Incredible success, and relief.

This has meant that we were able to carry out other tasks within the Bridgeman landscape to ensure all the trees are happy. Recently I had the Sherborne volunteer group crown raising on the slightly more mature Limes that are now in the enclosures.

This method requires cutting the branches off to give the tree a more umbrella looking effect. This replicates a browse line that normally deer or cattle would create, and this management technique allows more light to penetrate the canopies, allows more height to walk down the avenues and also creates a better sightline/view through or down the avenue.

Lodge Park open days



It's been a great season for Lodge Park.

We've had more open days, removed the booking system and joined in with the Festival of Archaeology. It's been lovely to see visitors enjoying their visit, relaxing on the front lawn, playing with the games, and exploring at their leisure. It's been especially lovely to chat

with visitors from the local villages and surrounding area. I hope we'll be able to welcome you back again soon!

Having Off Road Bean serving great coffee and cakes has also been a very welcome addition for visitors, volunteers and staff. A big thank you to everyone who has made this year a success – volunteers, rangers, and of course, visitors.

Lodge Park refurbishment



Lodge Park, for those not familiar, is located on the road to Aldsworth from Sherborne. It was built by John “Crump” Dutton in 1634, as a Deer Coursing Grandstand – a place to entertain, gamble and banquet. Over the years since “Crump” built it, the building has been changed numerous times to adapt to the desires of the Lord Sherborne. Indeed, Charles Dutton, 7th Baron Sherborne lived out his final days in Lodge Park. Lodge Park has outstanding national importance in architecture, as an icon of provincial Jonesian classicism – in 1990 work

began on restoring the building to represent how it would originally have appeared internally – reinstating its grand architecture and celebrating this impressive part of the Sherborne Estate in a way that shows how it may originally have been used.

That said, these beautiful buildings take work to maintain, and they were not designed with our modern audiences in mind. The building has a seasonal opening (see below for 2023 opening dates), which presented the opportunity for us to embark on some more

involved works over the winter months. In this time we’ve:

Refurbished the toilets, with the aim of making them tidier, easier to clean, more accessible and to reduce water waste. We’ve installed a ramp into the block for wheelchair users, new handrails in all toilets, new baby changing facilities, accessible basins, motions sensor taps and lighting, access-friendly locks, cladded walls to enclose pipework and cables, a hot water boiler for on-demand heat and given the interior of the building a fresh lick of paint.

Installed a fall prevention system to enable access to the roof for maintenance, as well as replaced the Oak balustrades like-for-like to ensure our visitors too can have access to the roof (weather permitting)

Repainted the Entrance Hall and Grand Staircase – a lengthy process which involved investigating paints suitable for historic houses, colours and techniques fitting of the era

Updated back of house spaces,

introducing work spaces that will allow our staff to work in the building frequently to support our delivery of work across the Estate

Installed Wi-Fi which will allow public to access the internet, including the resources on the National Trust website for Lodge Park

Worked with a local charity to complete an Access Audit of Lodge Park and the Sherborne Estate to identify more

opportunities for us to improve our buildings, car parks and experiences so that we can be more inclusive to wider audiences, offering them opportunities to get involved with our stunning landscapes and buildings.

These works are just examples of the continuing work we do at Lodge Park and our other places in the way of caring for our places, but also as part of ensuring our visitors get high quality experiences with us.

