



College Valley Estate Newsletter No 2

April 2003

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College Valley Estate was bought with funds provided by the Trustees of the late Sir James Knott. Sir James was a North East Industrialist, MP and philanthropist. He died in 1934

The management of the estate is designed to provide amenity, conservation and recreation. Visitors are welcome. There is a car park just beyond Hethpool Farm. Access by car on the private road is restricted to 12 cars per day. A licence to use the estate roads by car can be obtained at no cost from Sale & Partners. Unfortunately, it has been necessary to close access to the roads from Southern Knowe to Goldsleuch because of damage from timber lorries. Renovation will start shortly, but it is not known when the road will open again.

When driving in the valley, please take care. The roads are narrow and livestock roam freely across the road. Also, you may encounter other traffic, including tractors, quads and timber lorries. Please observe the Country Code, which includes: take your litter home, leave no trace. Your co-operation will be especially appreciated during the lambing season April/May. It is a stressful time for shepherds.

General information

Following the creation of the Long Term Sustainable Development Plan, much time and effort have gone into consultation with all interested stakeholders and two meetings have been held. These included the management of the farming, to protect the most sensitive sites, especially on Cheviot. A further one will be held in May of this year.

There are already large areas under the Defra Stewardship scheme, which has meant a reduction in stocking and this has already had a marked effect on the vegetation. Further Stewardship applications are planned.

During the year, College Valley Estate hosted a number of events and visits including:

- Cheviot 2000 Team Fell Race
- Eighth Phoenix Long Orienteering Event
- Karrimor International Mountain Marathon
- Search & Rescue exercises
- Visits by farmers clubs, naturalists, geologists, archaeologists, schools, universities and of course Duke of Edinburgh Award participants
- Many camping groups
- Border Horse Driving Club

When public views were canvassed at the beginning of 2001, one of the "dislikes" was bracken management. Over the years various methods of bracken control have been tested and we now have a bracken management plan in place which is beginning to prove most

effective. About 150 to 200 acres of bracken have been treated over the last two years together with “follow up” treatment from earlier years using *Roundup Biactive*, a chemical which is degraded and neutralised in the soil applied by means of a “weed wiper” pulled by various tracked vehicles. Much of the bracken is on very steep terrain, but the results have been impressive with minimal damage to other vegetation, leading to a quick return of species rich grassland cover, bilberry and other species.

Property maintenance and other expenditure on the Estate has to be found from Estate resources and, last year, maintaining the Estate cost in excess of £200,000.

Chairman’s message 2003 *Charles Baker-Cresswell*

Welcome to our second annual newsheet. We are producing this in order to keep our residents, our visitors, our friends and our neighbours, more closely in touch with what we are trying to achieve in the College Valley.

You will read in this issue of how our main work has been in felling some of our blocks of softwood trees, and re-planting them with a variety of hardwoods, in order to provide a greater diversity of habitat for birds and animals (including human beings!) to enjoy in the future. In doing this, we have severely damaged some of our roads. We apologise to our residents and our visitors for this, and we will set about repairs which will take some time.

We are offering more way-marked walks, some (through Northumberland National Park) to display our remarkable Hill Forts, Terraces and other archaeological features - and others to show beautiful views, and a chance to see more of our wildlife and plants.

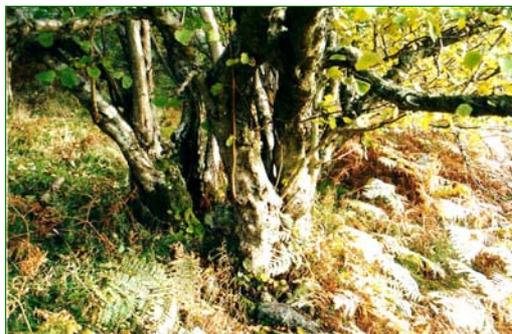
We are building what is virtually a new house for our main farmer, Ted and Anne Fox and their family. We are digging more ponds, opening up more forest tracks and continuing to encourage our Black Game!

So please read on, and enjoy the Valley - and at all times - go safely and thoughtfully, those hills are high and wild!

**There will be a public meeting on 16th July from 6 pm to 8 pm.
After a short presentation in the community hall, a visit will be
made to a particular site of interest. All welcome!**

Conservation issues

Black grouse project *Elaine Rigg, Northumberland National Park, Team Leader*



Very old coppiced hazel at Harrowbog

College Valley is a partner in the Black Grouse Project. There are few black grouse left in the area and the local estates, as well as various conservation bodies have several schemes to increase their numbers, both by putting down young birds and managing the habitat. In the College Valley, a series of small woodlands have been planted as well as the Wilderness, a 70 hectare new native broadleaved woodland. This year up to three black grouse have been seen in the Wilderness.

The Wilderness was planted in 1995. To allow the trees to be established without deer damage, the area had a deer fence erected around it. However, deer fences are difficult to



Wilderness, with markers on deer fence on the left

see for low flying birds and they are thought to cause a significant amount of deaths, especially to black grouse. Thus, to avoid this, we have hung plastic markers on the fence to alert the birds.

The College Valley has the largest area of semi-natural woodland in the Northumberland National Park at Harrowbog. Much of this area was inhabited in mediaeval times and much of the woodland is coppiced hazel. However, there is also an area of woodland on boggy ground which is much richer in species. The College Valley has successfully applied for Challenge Funding to fence the area against sheep.

Forestry

There are two major forestry developments in the valley.



View from Preston hill looking south towards Cheviot

Two years ago, a long term plan was agreed with the Forestry Commission to convert the majority of the existing conifer woodlands to native broadleaves over a period of 20 years. Areas of Scots pine will be left, because, although generally not considered native to Northumberland, they contribute considerably to wildlife habitat, especially black grouse and red squirrels.

Felling and replanting has started at Goldsclench, much improving the landscape. Not all the felled area will be replanted. Some areas have been mulched. This means the stumps and branches have been ground up to allow the heather to re-establish more quickly.

The other major decision has been to implement a deer management policy which will allow natural regeneration and broadleaf planting of native trees to succeed without 6' high fences or plastic tubes.

The planting and regeneration is on such a scale that deer fences would have to be erected for tens of thousands of metres. This would cause a great risk to bird-life and be very unattractive. Also, it would only protect the trees for a limited period. Once the fences are removed, after 15 years or so, the deer would move back in and prevent any future regeneration.

Roe deer are prevalent throughout the UK. Its population used to be controlled by wolves and other predators, but without them, their numbers are such that no trees or shrubs can establish without protection. We will therefore control the numbers to the level that they would have been in a natural environment, so that trees can be planted or regenerate themselves without fences or tubes. Nature is then a little bit more in balance.



1 of 3 ponds created on site of recently felled spruce.

It is with regret that we have had to take the decision to close the bunk-house at Mount Hooley. Renovation is intended to start this autumn and it is very much hoped that a renovated bunk house will be available from next spring (2004).

Guided visits and talks

You may come across Les Hardy (left) or Steven Crees. They are the wardens and responsible for the day to day management of conservation monitoring, vermin control as well as road repairs and visitor management.

They have a wealth of information on the rich wildlife in the valley and are available to give talks, or take parties round. They can be contacted through Sale & Partners.

The Northumberland National Park has created a series of walks which are signposted. A map is situated in the car park. A booklet is available from the National Park for £2.



On your walks in the valley you may see a host of birds, including black grouse, buzzard, curlew, merlin, peregrine, raven, snipe, snow bunting, wheatear, cuckoo, dipper, goosander, kestrel, linnet, crossbill, golden plover, goshawk to name but a few.

Also, you may see early purple orchid, burnett rose, butterwort, sundew, adder, slow worm, red squirrel, wild goat, badger and roedeer.

There are opportunities for guided tours and from Easter 2004 bunkhouse and holiday accommodation. For further information, please contact:
Sale & Partners, Glendale Road, Wooler, Northumberland. NE71 6DW.
Tel: 01668 281611, or use their webside www.saleandpartners.co.uk