

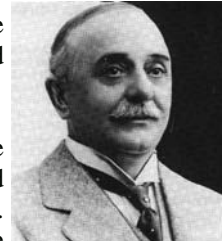


College Valley Estate Newsletter No 3

January 2005

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www.college-valley.co.uk

College Valley Estate was bought with funds originally 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 estate must live within its means, and any surplus goes to improvements. The management of the estate is designed to provide amenity, conservation, recreation and economic viability. 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 from Sale & Partners.

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. www.countryside.gov.uk/WiderWelcome. Your co-operation will be especially appreciated during the lambing season April/May. It is a stressful time for shepherds.

Harrowbog project

With assistance from the Forestry Commission, we have started the ambitious project to safeguard and expand the ancient semi-natural Harrowbog woodlands, which are the largest remnant native woodlands in the Northumberland National Park. At only some 30 hectares, it illustrates how poor the Park is in native woodland cover.

The scheme consists of fencing 74 hectares in 3 separate blocks around the core woodlands (1,2,3 in picture). Natural regeneration from the existing crop, assisted by planting and seeding will provide a new generation of trees and thus ensure these woodlands are perpetuated.

In addition, stock will be excluded from a fourth area of 12 hectares along the College Burn (4). A fifth area (5), the core of Harrowbog has already been fenced for many years. Natural regeneration has not appeared here, probably because of the dense grass and bracken cover. It is hoped that our efforts on the new areas are more successful.

News in brief

Defra RES application successful! This has allowed us to renovate the bunkhouse for affordable accommodation and renovate Dunsdale farmhouse as high quality holiday accommodation. It has also allowed us to reinstate part of the Goldsleuch road, which had been damaged by timber lorries to the extent that it was no longer fit for use by visitors.

New project manager. Jane Mallen has been appointed part-time project manager, to promote the use of the facilities in the valley and create guided walks and educational events for visitors.

Black grouse return to the valley. In 2004 the population of black grouse in the valley was strengthened. Up to 8 birds have been noted and further planting will be carried out to further improve the habitat.

Grey squirrels threat. However, grey squirrels are now also very close to Hethpool. It will be our aim to control any greys and keep College Valley as a haven for red squirrels. Please report any grey squirrel sightings to estate staff or phone 01668 281611.



The first stages, fencing and controlling bracken have been carried out this summer. In the autumn and winter, cattle are being used to trample the vegetation and improve the soil for planting and seeding. Birch seed will be broadcast following the grazing and, from February, trees will be planted in small tubes. As well as rejuvenating the tree cover, the planting will also add different species which would have been part of the woodlands, but have long since disappeared.

A web of mycorrhiza (underground fungi) is a natural part of any woodland and extends the effectiveness of the tree roots a hundred fold. To improve the chances of young trees succeeding, plants will be dipped in appropriate mycorrhizal gel prior to planting.

A baseline ecological survey has been carried out by Dr Jane Young. A copy of the survey is available on our website.

Feral goats

Goats are not “native” to the UK, but were introduced by stone-age man 6000 years ago. There is a herd of about 150 free-roaming animals close the College Valley at the “Tors”. These goats are reputed to have been released in mediaeval times by the monks from Holy Island and they are regarded as part of the biodiversity of the area. However, goats have no respect for fences or other boundaries and threaten projects like Harrowbog. In conjunction with the Northumberland National Park, local estates are developing a management plan to decide how the population can be managed to ensure its well-being as well as allow habitat improvement schemes to be carried out. We are looking for a “goat-herd” at least on a temporary basis.



Chairman’s message 2005 *Charles Baker-Cresswell*

2004 has been a very busy year. The highlight came in June, when we got the news that we had been successful in our bid for Rural Enterprise Scheme funding. This is to help the countryside to turn away from food production and to look more towards other sources of income, such as tourism, leisure activities, educational schemes, access for the public and wildlife enhancement. This is the Government’s objective. All our plans and costs and estimates were ready, so as soon as the go-ahead came - we started. The result is that Dunsdale is now ready and will take 8 people and has an additional cot. It is furnished and equipped from top to toe - from egg spoons to dog kennels.



Mount Hooley will be open again in February/March, ready to take groups of up to 20. This is bunkhouse accommodation – bunks, mattresses, cooker, showers, lavatories, drying room, briefing room, wood burning stove. And don't forget Coldburn which opened in 2004 and takes 4 people.

In addition, we have been repairing the roads, broken by timber lorries as we re-structure the 50-year old inappropriate conifer blocks. We are gradually felling these woods, reducing their size where possible, introducing ponds, glades, rides and open spaces - and re-planting with deciduous trees. This is expensive work but will lead to a more beautiful area, with a better mix of plants, birds, animals and insects. It will be more interesting for people to walk in, to ride in, and to enjoy. We had a well attended open day in 2004, and we will of course be repeating this in 2005.

We look forward to you continuing to visit College Valley - always remember to respect those hills. There are not many people about in them - that is part of their attraction. A sprained ankle (or worse) can put you in real trouble. Even in summer, cloud can quickly come down and it can get very cold. Remember that in many areas there is no signal on mobile phones. Please dress for the hills and not for the beach! Bear in mind that this is a working area - look out for timber lorries, farm vehicles and animals on the roads - and enjoy the highlands of Northumberland!

Bunkhouse accommodation

The bunkhouse was always widely used and it was with great regret that it was closed in 2002 because of health and safety issues. However, we are delighted to be able to announce that, following a successful application for funds from Defra, the bunkhouse will re-open officially on 1 March 2005, although it will be available for bookings from February. Previous visitors will be astonished by the improvements.



The bunkhouse offers 20 bunks as well as cooking, drying and washing facilities. Booking is advised through Pauline Baker 01668 216358 (after 6pm). A booking form is available on our website.

Holiday cottages

The reduction of income from farming and forestry has forced the estate to look at other sources of income. College Valley used to consist of 7 farms and 21 shepherds. Now there are 2 farm tenants and one full-time shepherd. Many of the houses are let for permanent residence, creating a core community, but self-catering holiday accommodation is being developed from remote, empty cottages to act as a source of income.



Coldburn cottage

Last winter Coldburn Cottage was renovated and made available as a comfortable, 2 bedroomed holiday let. The success has been overwhelming, with over 70% occupancy and excellent reports from visitors. Many have re-booked and some even came back in the first year for another week. To most, the main attraction is the feeling of remoteness and the lack of television reception is considered a plus point.

With help from DEFRA, it has now also been possible to renovate Dunsdale farm house and make it available as high quality, self-catering accommodation with 4 bedrooms. We expect it will be equally popular with visitors.



Dunsdale



Cuddystone Hall

The Cuddystone Hall has been renovated and is available for hire. It is ideal for large parties, lectures and events. It is licensed for weddings. It has catering facilities and can accommodate a large number of people.

All facilities can be booked through Sale and Partners 01668 281611.

The Battle of Trafalgar and Admiral Lord Collingwood

The 21st of October 2005 will mark the 200th anniversary of the victory of the British fleet over the combined fleets of France and Spain, off Cape Trafalgar. We hope that you will help us to celebrate this in the College Valley in an appropriate way.

Admiral Collingwood took the title of Lord Collingwood of Hethpool and Coldburn – both are farms in the valley, which he and his wife Sarah owned.

Admiral Collingwood was Nelson's second-in-command at Trafalgar, and the two were great friends. Collingwood had ordered the planting of an oak wood in College Valley, which still stands.

The Directors have given instructions for a second wood of 2½ acres to be planted for the 21 October 2005 celebration. It is hoped that an existing member of the Admiral's family and of his wife's family (she was Sarah Blackett, daughter of the Mayor of Newcastle) will plant the last two trees. A vicar will say prayers for the brave of all three nations. A suitable libation will be drunk by all those present, to keep out the chill of an October mid-day. This drink is likely to have a naval rum base. Everyone will then go to the Cuddystone Hall in the Valley, where a delicious buffet lunch will be served, having a Trafalgar theme. At a suitable time, a speaker will give an account of the battle, and toasts will be drunk. We will try to keep the weevils out of the biscuits.



Admission by ticket only will be £15 to include the drink before and wine with lunch. A cash bar will be available. Please apply to Mrs Jane Mallen for tickets. Fifty only will be sold on a first-come-first-served basis. 0777 4606123 or jane@college-valley.co.uk

Wildlife update by Les Hardy, Wildlife Manager

As regular visitors to College Valley will know, large areas of conifers have been felled which has had a dramatic affect on the landscape. One walker I spoke to couldn't believe the change, coming over from Langleeford into the Goldsclough valley. This change has had as big an impact on the flora and fauna as it has on the eye. As a result some species are winners, some losers. Red squirrels, crossbills, siskin and long-eared owls for instance have had to move on to other conifer blocks after felling, but barn owls are benefiting from the newly planted broadleaved areas as more food becomes available with voles etc colonising the increased ground vegetation. Butterflies and moths along with a wide variety of insects are much more numerous as plant life becomes established, which in turn provides food for a greater number of birds including warblers. Pipit and Stonechat numbers have increased. Reed buntings have turned up in the Wilderness planting and Kestrels have done exceptionally well over the last few years.



A happy family of barn-owls

With forestry, change is inevitable as mature timber is harvested. College Valley manages its forestry operations as sympathetically as possible towards its wildlife, for instance, expert advice was taken regarding our red squirrels and their future.

The extension of Harrowbog is also an exciting project which will help secure our green woodpeckers in future years but the wild goats will have to be managed to prevent losses once planting begins.

The Goldsclough pools are maturing and developing all the time: frog spawn turned up for the first time, as well as some duck and the odd dragonfly. Another pond has been created in a recently felled area which will be planted with broadleaves as an ongoing part of our Black Grouse project. Numbers are increasing steadily, with eight birds seen flying together last spring.

You may come across traps to catch animals in the College Valley. Conservation, especially of birds, requires the control of predator species. Stoats, weasels, foxes and crows especially, can do tremendous damage to ground-nesting birds by raiding their nest for eggs and young birds. We therefore shoot and trap the predator animals in legal and humane ways to keep their populations at an acceptable balance. Please, therefore, do not damage the traps. If you would like to learn more about this, we would be happy to tell you about it.



Ring Ouzels, one of our rarer visitors, had a reasonable year with 3 pairs definitely breeding with the possibility of another 2 breeding pairs.

The Wildflower Society enjoyed a visit to the Bizzle, with one or two uncommon or unusual species being located. These very knowledgeable amateur botanists consider the College Valley well worth a visit. All in all things are looking good with College Valley, creating greater biodiversity than at any time for many, many years.

Events in 2005	
18 June	Cheviot Team Race
6 September	Moorland Management Day
21 October	Trafalgar Day in the College Valley - the home of Admiral Lord Collingwood
5 August	Open day



Jane Mallen - Project Manager

Jane Mallen has been appointed project manager on the basis of one day per week. Her task is to co-ordinate and promote the various facilities in the Valley as well as arrange educational tours and lectures.

Jane can be contacted on 0777 4606123 or jane@college-valley.co.uk

There are opportunities for guided tours from Easter 2005 as well as bunkhouse and holiday accommodation. For further information, please contact:
Sale & Partners, 18-20 Glendale Road, Wooler, Northumberland. NE71 6DW
Tel: 01668 281611 Information is also available on www.college-valley.co.uk