



College Valley Estate Newsletter No 6

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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, but his spirit lives on through The Sir James Knott Trust. The Trust's website is www.knott-trust.co.uk

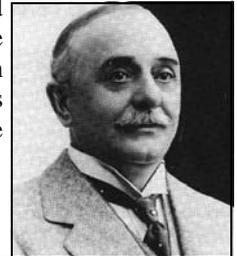
The management aims to excel at conservation and provide educational and quiet rural enjoyment for visitors. However, we must live within our means, and any surplus goes to improvements. Farming,

forestry and, increasingly, tourism are funding the estate activities and we work hard to keep the right balance between all these activities. Visitors are welcome. There is a free car park just beyond Hethpool Farm.

Access by car on the private road beyond this car park is restricted to 12 cars per day. A licence to use the estate roads by car can be obtained for £10 from Sale & Partners (Monday to Friday 9-5). 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: taking your litter home and leaving no trace.

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



Integrated land use plan implemented



In 1996 a land-use plan was commissioned to integrate farming and forestry in the Valley and improve the landscape. As part of the plan, Fawcett Shank (the hill in the foreground) originally entirely covered in trees, was to be partly cleared and not replanted. A year and 12,000 tonnes of timber later, 27

hectares have been cleared. Unfortunately, the wet summer has ensured that much Sitka spruce regeneration has established on the felled site. It is difficult to remove. Overall the tree cover remains the same in the Valley, as new woodlands of native broadleaves and Scots pine are planted.

John Baker-Cresswell finds today's students are up to the challenges College Valley can offer.

Students these days? Do as little work as possible, feckless, smell bad, don't hold their drink, drive like nutters, waste of public money! Well, maybe some of it is true. Having spent a fascinating evening in the Baltic Centre listening to students present their and their fellows' work I am not sure about the first point. The common theme - you may have guessed - is College Valley. All had chosen to carry out the field element of their studies in our midst. In all, last season approximately 16 groups or individuals used the Valley, choosing a wide variety of subjects based on archaeology and the environment. Groups came from the Universities of Durham, Northumbria and Newcastle as guests of the Sir James Knott Trust, who kindly organised the evening and gave two prizes of £250 each for the best presentations. It would have been easy to spend an evening listening to each of the groups instead of the 15 minutes that we had. Memorable moments for me were:

- The farmstead opposite the show field had been only occupied for a short time in the eighteenth century before being abandoned as uneconomic, and was probably home to an extended family looking after as many as 700 sheep from tiled and cobbled buildings (Johnnie Shipley of Newcastle University).



Left to right: Charles Baker-Cresswell, College Valley chairman, Ray Atkinson (2nd prize), Denise Connor (1st prize) both Northumbria University and Professor Oliver James, Sir James Knott Trust.

- Water run-off below different types of wooded areas had revealed that water below the conifer blocks had appeared to REDUCE in acidity rather than the reverse that had been expected, but that fresh water shrimps only could be found adjacent to broadleaf trees (Denise Connor, Northumbria University)
- A summary of post-graduate work on woodland regeneration with reference to the Wilderness area, planted in 1995, which suggests that it would take 100 years before the site becomes semi-natural woodland (Libby Wilcox of Newcastle).

Of the eight groups, all had found fascinating subjects well worth the study in our view. Many were coming

to useful conclusions – information that we may be able to use, to manage the Valley in a more informed manner. Most came and did the bulk of their work in the months of June and July which, as you might remember, were not exactly arid. We recorded about half our average annual rainfall in those eight or nine weeks. To illustrate the hardships of the last season, Mariette Acker and her colleagues from Newcastle monitored the behaviour of four goat herds (collection of smelly animals that is, not the mythical young boy band look-alikes who looked after goats in Ancient Greece) above Harrowbog every 15 minutes between 5 am and 8pm. For three weeks! And apart from the discomfort, the weather did not exactly help with some of the science: Stephen Brown found that the carabids that he was studying, instead of dying of alcohol poisoning in his cunning traps, discovered rather a taste for the rain-diluted version.

All the students that I spoke to were keen to point out how much they had enjoyed and valued their time in the Valley. They appreciate very much the hospitality of Mrs Baker and our tenant farmers. We look to be shaping up for a good crop of studies next year. Their work will become available on www.college-valley.co.uk

Chairman's message: Charles Baker-Cresswell

This has been a year of mixed fortunes in The College Valley. It started off in triumph, with the award of a grant from DEFRA called Higher Level Stewardship. Farmers no longer get any money for producing food – no more grants for sheep, cattle or grain. It was to be awarded to those farms that had features especially popular with the people – and therefore the voters – everything to do with public access and the environment. College Valley directors anticipated this change since the beginning of this century, and so we were off to a flying start when the competitive grant applications were called for. The files got thicker and thicker – heads were scratched for weeks, and the weeks grew into months. But in the end all the efforts were rewarded, and in March the award was made.

But DEFRA gives – and the government

takes away. In August came news of a Foot and Mouth outbreak, caused by lack of maintenance on the government's establishment at Pirbright in far away Surrey. There, vaccines are made for foreign countries. The virus had escaped, which it had done before in the 1960s. Instantly – no exports for cattle or sheep. The price to the farmer was dropped £10 per fat lamb over-night by the supermarket buyers. But it was worse for our College Valley farmers – Ted Fox and Bill Elliott. They sell a lot of their stock for further breeding and fattening – and sales between farms were banned. They also sell rams – and all the ram sales were cancelled. Some hill farmers have lost up to £70,000, which was caused by government inaction—and no compensation.

A wet June and July – enlivened by University students in the Valley,

reported on elsewhere.

Hethpool Mill is our new self-catering house – it opened three months late because of the electricity service provider but it is letting well. Stephen Crees (our deer stalker) married Catherine to everyone's delight. The ceremony was in our Cuddystone Hall (licensed for weddings) and was a truly happy occasion. Stephen then got on with protecting our newly-planted broadleaved woods against roe deer. Goats were counted and photographed by Newcastle university students - and rounded up in the autumn and an appropriate number exported live to new homes. So the old year goes and a new year arrives – and the Valley is still there for you to explore, wet or fine, rain or shine. So come and see us – in the appropriate clothing!



Lord Joicey explains the changes to the Mount Hooley bunkhouse - come and see for yourself!



The remote Mount Hooley bunkhouse

Plans are under way to bring the bunkhouse at Mounthooley into the YHA's Enterprise scheme, in which the bunkhouse will be marketed through the main YHA website and central office in Matlock.

Representatives from the YHA have commented very favourably on the facilities already in place at Mounthooley, and on its tremendous location. Some additional minor work to the interior, will be undertaken in the early spring of 2008. Pauline Baker will continue to manage the bunkhouse and to look after all those who come to enjoy its peace and quiet. You can continue to make bookings direct with Pauline. Her e-mail is: paulineatthetop@hotmail.com

However, to the regular visitor to College Valley, it will be the addition of an external toilet that will be of most interest. Hitherto, the valley has been

noticeably lacking in such a facility, as many of you have been aware. The toilet will be situated at the gable end of the bunkhouse (the southern end), and will be open at all reasonable hours, for walkers, hikers, etc. Access to it should not disturb the residents of the bunkhouse.



Les Hardy with our new fire-fighting equipment. Wildfires are increasingly a threat.

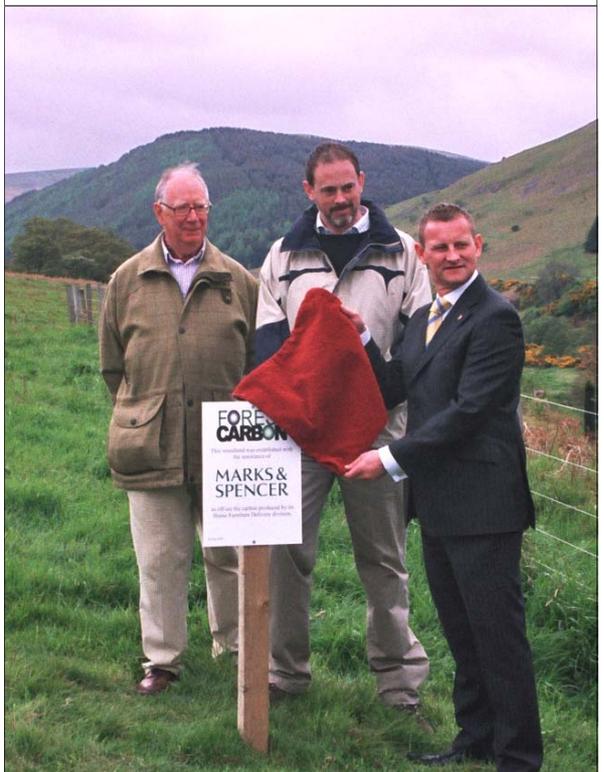
STOP PRESS—FIRST GREY SQUIRREL SHOT IN VALLEY

The grey squirrel, an introduction from North America, is driving the red squirrel to extinction in the UK and much of Europe by competition for food and habitat and passing on a lethal virus. The grey squirrel also causes devastating damage to broadleaf woodlands. Northumberland and College Valley were a safe haven for the red squirrels, but not any longer. If you see any grey squirrels please phone **Red Alert 0845 347 9374.**



About 50 feral goats were rounded up from College Valley and neighbouring estates and relocated to friendly homes to ensure a sustainable balance between the goats and the vegetation. Although not native, feral goats have been an integral part of this part of the Cheviots.

Marks & Spencer sponsored the planting of 35,000 trees in College Valley to off-set the carbon produced by its Furniture Home Delivery division. The carbon sequestration project is monitored by Forest Carbon Ltd. www.forest-carbon.co.uk



From left to right: John Izat, College Valley director, Steve Prior, Forest Carbon and Steve Rowe, director Marks & Spencer Home Furnishing Division.



In a small corner of the world..... Oak trees from College Valley grow on in Collingwood, Canada. Marg Scheben-Edey presents an oak sapling to the Mayor Chris Carrier. Collingwood was an admiral and friend of Nelson and fought with him at Trafalgar in 1805. His home was in the College Valley. Oak trees were planted by his wife at Hethpool in 1815 to provide timber for future warships. In Collingwood, Canada, acorns from Hethpool helped raise funds to preserve the town's heritage.

Hethpool in College Valley with Collingwood oaks in the background



Wildlife notes - Les Hardy, wildlife manager, becomes a TV star

I spent a day with the BBC unit which came to film an episode for the *Spring Watch Trackers* series. This involved two children who were set a daily challenge. The College Valley's challenge was to look for tracks and signs of the Cheviot goats and hopefully film them. After about four hours we managed to get close enough. This involved carrying the cameras and equipment up and down hills through woods, over rivers and streams, across wet, boggy ground, squeezing through gorse bushes and finally stalking near enough to film the goats.



Almost 10 hours' work for less than 10 minutes TV time. It was an enjoyable and amusing day and the children were very enthusiastic and seemed to enjoy the whole experience.

We also had a visit from Granada TV for a series called *The most beautiful places in Britain*.

A kingfisher appeared near the Lynn, which is not that common an occurrence.

Fewer black grouse were seen at the "lek" than the previous year. Many theories have been considered, but I think we should wait and see what the 08 season brings before we make any assessments. The Forestry Commission has very kindly donated a hide, which will be erected shortly.

Nuthatches have become regular visitors for a few years now and seem to be well established in some areas of the Valley.

Paul Harris, who lives at Fleehope in the Valley, had seen two waxwings in the Wilderness. These birds were regularly seen in quite large numbers during hard winters, but are not common now.

Barn owls and ravens were both ringed as part of the British Trust for Ornithology ringing scheme.



Fencing at Dunsdale. Spectacular but difficult working terrain

WHY I THINK THE COLLEGE VALLEY IS SO SPECIAL

This year's contributor is Martyn Howat, Regional Director of Natural England.



I hesitated for a moment, when I was asked to write a piece about why I find College Valley such a wonderful place. For me, a visit to the Valley is simply a joy; it is a remote and secret place hiding away in one of the northern most parts of England below the Cheviot hills. I hesitated because I don't want to see it filled with the problems that can befall a popular beauty spot in our crowded island.

However, as you can see I, have said yes, so please read on, but make sure if you make the effort to visit that you give yourself time to enjoy this very special area of remote English upland quietly. I've known the Valley for the past 20 years and have never been disappointed whenever I visited, whether in spring, summer or winter.

So what is so appealing about this remote upland estate? Firstly it is the journey up the lower part of the Valley, passing the scattered sheep farms with their meadows and pastures. Then as the road becomes narrower and narrower the valley itself closes in with the river close by the deserted road. Then you are struck by the first view of Harrowbog, a large stand of ancient woodland so rare in this part of England and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. As you continue on your journey, the Valley opens up. Look carefully and you will see sheep and occasional roe deer and almost certainly a feral goat or three! In late summer a walk by the river will likely give you sight of a dipper or the fleeting glimpse of a kingfisher and in the river itself, the swirl of a sea trout preparing to spawn. Butterflies, flowers and birds such as the rare and magnificent blackcock are around for those who pause to look.

College Valley is not this way by accident. Its rich landscape and wildlife is a product of centuries of hard work by generations of upland farmers. It will not stay this way without hard work and continuing sustainable management. That is why we in Natural England have, in partnership with College Valley directors, developed a higher level management scheme (HLS) to help support and take forward the vitally important management in the Valley. It will help to make the Valley even more attractive for wildlife, enhancing the landscape and providing opportunities for people to enjoy the area for all it has to offer.

The College Valley is an outstanding example of what can be achieved by bringing together all those with a contribution to ensure its well-being. The directors are to be congratulated on what they have achieved. Natural England will continue to do all it can to support their work in the Valley for today's and future generations to enjoy.

**Holiday cottages: Coldburn (4) - Dunsdale (8) - Hethpool Mill (4) - Mounthooley Bunkhouse (20)
Cuddystone Hall: meetings, parties, weddings - Grouse shooting and fishing - Guided tours on request**

For further information please contact:

Sale & Partners, 18-20 Glendale Road, Wooler, Northumberland NE71 6DW Tel: 01668 281611

Also: www.college-valley.co.uk