



Newsletter

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www.yacwag.org.uk

Celebrating the Cobthorn Reserve Handover



Photo by Joe Aucott

The sun shone brightly on the second attempt to celebrate the transfer of land off Cobthorn Way in Congresbury from Strongvox to YACWAG. Storm Eunice prevented the first attempt in February, but on 18th March YACWAG representatives were joined by Cllr Richard Westwood, Chair of North Somerset Council; Bill Richardson, Planning Manager from Strongvox and Alison Howell from Natural England as well as local residents and staff and members of North Somerset Council.

Members and local residents will have a chance to see the reserve on Saturday 14th May when there will be opportunities to take part in practical conservation activities, family craft and games, a nature trail and guided walks. See page 7. This will be YACWAG's only big public event this year and volunteers are urgently needed so if you can help please get in touch via yacwag@gmail.com and enjoy meeting new people, having fun and making a difference for wildlife.

YOUR PHOTOS, ARTICLES AND FEEDBACK ARE ALWAYS APPRECIATED. Contact yacwag@gmail.com

The Grazing Team at Cobthorn

The living tools for land management at Cobthorn are proving to be a huge hit with local residents.

YACWAG is pleased to be working with Andy and Jo Millward, conservation graziers, to provide the animals and their all-important dung that is needed on the fields to support a nice population of dung beetles as food for the Greater Horseshoe bats.

Cobthorn Reserve is to be managed especially for the rare bats that forage there, especially the juvenile bats in the summer months. The livestock kept in the field will be young animals and this year there are seven beautiful Dorset Horn lambs to join the young Dexters, Buddy and Ruby.

Dorset Horn sheep have been developed from stocky, white-faced short-wooled sheep that thrived on the hill pastures of Dorset. They have long bodies and both ewes and rams have horns, with the rams' being longer. Dorset Horn wool has a fine, tight quality that suggests some historic cross-over with a Merino-type breed from Italy. As well as having excellent fleeces they also make good meat. Dorset Horns were already firmly established as a breed by 1892.

The little Dexter cattle are also a heritage breed, originally coming from Ireland. They are very hardy and are prized by conservation graziers for their small size which makes them easy to handle. Dexters are also much lighter so they are ideal in wet fields in the South West of England, where they can remain on pasture all year round.

Buddy, the bull, has been hand-reared by Jo, and so has Ruby, the heifer, whose coat has a rich red tinge in the sunshine. All seven of the lambs have also been hand-reared so the stock is all friendly and will come up to see people at the fence.



Dorset Horn lamb: Photo Meriel Harrison



Ruby, one of the Dexter cattle

Although the animals are very cute, they do not belong to YACWAG and it is a privilege to have them on our land. It is important not to put them or yourselves at risk by allowing dogs close to them or going into the fields alone with them.

Access to the reserve, like all YACWAG's others, is limited for the benefit of wildlife, by arrangement.

Insane with the Love of Insects

The second in an occasional series about female naturalists and campaigners

Lady Eleanor Glanville 1654-1709

Eleanor Goodrick was born on 1st January 1654 in Tickenham and became the first female entomologist that we know of. Her first husband died and her second marriage was to a Lincolnshire landowner, Sir Richard Glanville.

The intellectual changes which occurred during the second half of the seventeenth century are sometimes called the 'Scientific Revolution'. When Eleanor was eight years old the Royal Society was founded, an expression of a new interest in science and what was called 'natural philosophy'. Country mansions at the time began to be filled with fashionable collections as those who were interested began to collect, categorise, catalogue and display their natural finds. Eleanor, growing up in this environment, was a bright learner who herself, in spite of superstition and ridicule, followed the 'masculine' pursuit of natural history. In fact, she had a passion for insects and accrued a large collection of butterflies, some of which are in the Natural History Museum collection.

Eleanor's interest in butterflies and other insects was so intense that she separated from Sir Richard. At a time when insects were just becoming noticed, she discovered in the Lincolnshire Wolds the butterfly she named the Lincolnshire Fritillary and it was later renamed in her honour: we know it today as the Glanville Fritillary. She was also estranged to some extent from her children, as after her death her children overturned her will which had excluded them, arguing successfully that she was insane and citing as evidence her hobby of entomology. In fact that hobby was her life's work and if she had been born 300 years later her contribution to science would hopefully have been more readily acknowledged by society.

The Glanville Fritillary, *Melitaea cinxia*, is a butterfly of the family Nymphalidae. It occurs over most of Europe but in the UK the Glanville Fritillary's distribution is restricted to the south coast of the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands, specifically from soft undercliff and chine grassland where ribwort plantain is abundant. There are a few sites where the butterfly has been introduced, including a historic one at Sand Point near Weston-super-Mare in the 1980s. It was sadly lost from Lincolnshire as early as 1850 and was extinct in its stronghold in Kent by the mid 1860s.

As global temperatures increase many butterfly species are shifting northwards to keep in their preferred climate. Only migratory species like the Clouded Yellow are able to adapt in this way. If the environment of a sedentary butterfly like the Glanville Fritillary becomes suddenly unsuitable for its survival, it is unable to travel to a new site, so it is highly susceptible to climate change.

Research has shown that the female Glanville Fritillaries mate only once in June or July and lay their eggs on spiked speedwell (in parts of Europe where it is common) and ribwort plantain, these being the plants that provide food for their caterpillars. The Glanville Fritillary is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Species but it is not considered threatened in Europe where there is more suitable habitat.



Glanville Fritillary, Sweden.
Photo: Tony Moulin

Faith Moulin

Yatton and Congresbury's Wildlife Window Wanderland!

Thanks to funding from Yatton and Congresbury Parish Councils, YACWAG's first Window Wanderland 'Love Your Local Wildlife' was a big success and we hope to do it again next year, bigger and better! You can see a video of all the entries in the YACWAG website library, thanks to Nigel Watts, but here is a tiny sample, showing the different styles, ingenuity and creativeness of those taking part.



YACWAG Work on the Strawberry Line



YACWAG has carried out maintenance work on the 'pondlings' along the Strawberry Line between Yatton and Congresbury.

The pondlings provide more water on the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to protect rare water plants and invertebrates. Making more water features is a good way of providing habitat for the most needy of the special aquatic wildlife. The pondlings are made by drawing out the banks of the ditches to make 'berms' - shallower shelving or small ponds.

The pondlings have now been indexed and recorded and there are 17 of them which have been made in the last 10 years. We know they create areas that are very popular with Lesser Horseshoe bats when they emerge from hibernation and in March a pair of ducks was dabbling happily in one of them. Below the surface are the rare invertebrates rarely seen.

Mosaic Seat Needs Repair - Can You Help?

The mosaic seat near the entrance to the Strawberry Line at the top of Chescombe Road, Yatton needs a little repair and refurbishment. The seat in this place was originally made by Bristol artist Barbara Disney to help us celebrate the finding of Roman remains nearby. *(For more about that see Faith's blog on the YACWAG website).* Barbara worked with Yatton Junior School pupils to create a mosaic unveiled at the Strawberry Line Millennium Festival event in 2000. This original seat was rebuilt by Barbara Disney in 2013, using hard-wearing porcelain tiles each handprinted with designs of local wildlife by Junior School pupils.

If anyone has the time and DIY skill with cement and grout to make some repairs to the seat, please get in touch. YACWAG will meet all out-of-pocket expenses and has some spare tiles to put in place.



Queen's Jubilee Planting in Yatton

YACWAG volunteers shared their enthusiasm for more urban trees when they joined forces with Yatton Library to plant 14 trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy scheme.

Rowan, crab apple and hazel whips were planted in the border alongside the library entrance. It will be many years before these trees make much impact but the need is definitely there for more trees to be planted wherever they can be fitted in.

When you go to the library look out for what we have done. It was exciting to be invited to return to the library to plant trees for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee because ten years ago for her Diamond Jubilee YACWAG planted 60 trees in public sites Yatton, including the flagship hornbeam tree which is doing very well at the front of the library.

THE QUEEN'S GREEN CANOPY

YATTON LIBRARY

PLANTING A TREE FOR THE JUBILEE



TOGETHER WITH YATTON & CONGRESBURY WILDLIFE ACTION GROUP



Viv, Tony and Andrew were joined by Christina Batt from Yatton Library to plant the trees

Nature Is Your Neighbour

The open day at Cobthorn Reserve will be YACWAG's only big public event this year so we hope you will be free to join us and take a look round our latest reserve.

Volunteers are needed for all aspects of the day, from putting up the YACWAG gazebo to helping children to make bouncing bat hats. Helping out at YACWAG events is a great way to learn about nature and to meet like-minded people. The more volunteers we have the easier the day will be on everyone.

If you can't help on the day, don't worry, there is still a chance to be involved in the preparation for the event. For example, we will be making slow worm hibernacula (winter habitat for reptiles and amphibians to hibernate in) and need to accumulate piles of the necessary stone, wood and soil before the day.

If you can help in any way, please email contact@yacwag.org.uk.



NATURE IS YOUR NEIGHBOUR
Cobthorn Reserve
off Cobthorn Way, Congresbury, BS49 5DS

Saturday 14th May 2-5pm

ALL WELCOME TO THIS FREE EVENT

FAMILY ACTIVITIES, GUIDED WALKS, NATURE TRAIL,
VISIT THE 'BAT CAVE', BUILD A BUG HOUSE,
HELP WITH PRACTICAL CONSERVATION
plus *EVENING BAT WALK*

Bring your own refreshments
Arrive on foot or bike

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Libby's Litter Picks

Thanks to Libby Watts, YACWAG was able to provide some opportunities for people to get out and clear litter. Litter is not only unsightly but can be harmful to wildlife, as well as to the wider environment. From hedgehogs getting their heads stuck in dog-food tins to wood mice trapped in discarded bottles, the danger to wildlife is obvious.

The UK has one of the worst statistics in the world for litter, with over 60% of adults admitting to sometimes littering. The RSPCA answers an average of 14 calls a day to animals injured by litter - cut on glass or sharp metal, caught up in fishing lines, etc.

If you would like to organise a social litter walk where you live, YACWAG has litter pickers you can borrow and a supply of sacks.

Raising Money for YACWAG at No Cost to You

YACWAG is always grateful for your donations. You can make a donation at any time through our website. You don't have to have a Paypal account - simply opt to checkout as a guest and make a donation. If you can GiftAid it we will benefit by a further 25 percent from HMRC.

However, if you do online shopping there are ways of making donations to YACWAG that don't even cost you a penny.

Amazon Smile

Amazon Smile is a way of making your Amazon purchases support YACWAG. The only difference is that instead of going to www.amazon.co.uk you enter smile.amazon.co.uk and the site comes up via a different route. It's the same products, the same prices. First of all you will have to go to the site and set your chosen beneficiary to 'Yatton and Congresbury Wildlife Action Group' - you can change it at any time but we hope you won't! Amazon will then give YACWAG 0.5% of the purchase price of every item you buy via Amazon Smile. You just shop in the usual way to generate automatic donations. You won't lose any of your order or invoice information. On a phone or tablet you can get a simple-to-use Amazon Smile app and with a desktop computer you can put the icon in your Favourites.

Give As You Live

Like Amazon Smile, GiveAsYouLive (GAYL) is completely free to join and use but there are 5500 leading stores and services in the scheme. Whether you are planning a holiday, a rail trip or a flight, or when you need a new fridge or computer, if you buy the item online through popular stores like John Lewis, Curry's, Marks and Spencer, Next etc an automatic donation will eventually find its way to YACWAG. You will have to choose 'Yatton and Congresbury Wildlife Action Group' as your named charity, then shop as normal. GAYL send an email soon after your purchase to tell you how much you have raised for YACWAG. I was very excited to book a self-catering cottage last week and received an email thanking me for making a donation of £22 to YACWAG. Imagine if all our 300 members were raising donations that way! It is worth doing - in the years we have been using GAYL we have received donations totalling over £600. You can start off by using the link below to get a bonus £5 for YACWAG when you sign up:

<https://www.giveasyoulive.com/refer/R9UuagswjnFKIO7GZYbwqw7aiEK5L9I-3D>

Legacies

Gifts in wills, whether large or small, are a wonderful way to support a cause you care about. Your donation through your will could help safeguard the maintenance of our nature reserves in Yatton and Congresbury and ensure the continuity of management that will be so vital to keep barn owls and kestrels in our parishes. Larger bequests may make it possible for YACWAG to buy more land to create nature reserves and make more space for nature.

Thanks to the foresight of the late Harry Hailes, YACWAG was the beneficiary of a small piece of land off Claverham Close. This land has a large oak tree on it which is a beautiful and perfect symbol of nature and, with the agreement of the other six owners, a second oak tree was planted last year in the same field. Harry knew that his little bit of land would not be sold to developers, and the tree now known as Harry's Oak would be in safe hands for ever.



YACWAG Events for your Diary

In case you missed the email, or forgot to make a note of the dates, here are some of the events coming up. Booking is essential for walks to ensure a place. In spells of good weather events may be arranged at short notice. If you are interested in seeing our reserves at other times, please let us know.

Easter Monday 18th April 10.30am Guided visit to Stowey Reserve with Tony and Faith. Booking essential - yacwag@gmail.com or 0744 384 3556.

Bank Holiday Monday 2nd May 7-9am Bird Song walk with Trevor along the Strawberry Line. Booking essential - birds@yacwag.org.uk or 01934 835208.

Saturday 14th May 2-5pm 'Nature As Your Neighbour' Cobthorn Open Day. Sorry no dogs. The reserve is rough and unsuitable for pushchairs or wheelchairs although can be seen from a good footpath. No refreshments or toilets provided. If you want to come from further afield please consider the environment (and our human neighbours) by walking or cycling if you can.

Tuesday 24th May 10am Wemberham (Yatton) wheelchair-friendly bird walk with Trevor. Also suitable for prams, walkers with mobility problems, etc. Booking essential. birds@yacwag.org.uk

Saturday 4th June 11am. Round the Reserves with Richard. Bring snack/lunch for a walk of 6 miles which will take you to all of YACWAG's grassland reserves. The walk will cross the railway and the A370 and at least 2 high stiles will be encountered. Children must be closely supervised. No dogs. Booking essential yacwag@gmail.com

Saturday 18th June afternoon. Yatton VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to help with a stall at Yatton School Carnival and Fair.

Saturday 25th June afternoon. Congresbury VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to help with a stall at Congresbury Village Fete.

Saturday 2nd July 10.30am Emily's Little River walk. Booking essential for this general nature walk in the North End of Yatton. yacwag@gmail.com. If wet, the walk will take place the following day.