



National Trust

The Lakes

About our conservation work and projects



Winter 2013/14

A time to reflect

In 1902, Brandelhow Park on the western shore of Derwentwater could have been sold into private hands. Instead, Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley rallied the troops in the fledgling National Trust and started the first ever National Trust appeal, managing to buy the land on behalf of the nation so we can all enjoy access to one of the most beautiful shorelines in the Lakes.

This story of passionate support and a desire to protect and care for all our special places continues today.

The generosity of donors and volunteers at Allan Bank in Grasmere, the former home of Canon Rawnsley, is inspiring. Pictured here are hand made Christmas puddings painstakingly knitted by a volunteer to help raise funds to care for the house, garden and grounds.

The National Trust and you, our supporters, looking after what we love forever, for everyone. Thank you all.



That's the spirit

The River Irt is famous for deep pools which hold brown trout and salmon in season. It flows from Wastwater through Nether Wasdale, ultimately joining the River Esk then out into the Irish Sea. The Trust owns a five mile stretch of land on both sides of the river, and at various points throughout the Nether Wasdale Estate.

This year a big chunk of bank washed out, a real problem for our tenant farmer with the river water quality badly affected too. In August the National Trust, Environment Agency, West Cumbria Rivers Trust and local Gosforth Anglers met for the first time to look at how the erosion problems could be tackled.

What followed was a great example of partnership working, everyone contributing both expertise and funding to come up with a solution which could be rapidly implemented. A 30m 'soft' bank repair has now been created using larch logs (spiels) driven in as posts, the space filled with river cobbles and more spiels wired to the posts and backfilled with soil.

The River Irt project is being led by NT Ranger Andrew Porter. He's looking forward to working with volunteers from all the groups in the new year, to plant willow and shrubs to help stabilise the bank. Further downstream the group would like to create a 300m long fenced off path to enable fishermen and the public to access this lovely stretch of quiet riverside.

Helped by working holiday volunteers (pictured) Andrew's colleagues in the west have been busy planting trees at Troutal Farm in the Duddon Valley. Our farmers claim Higher Level Stewardship payments from Natural England and we help them with match funding and to deliver the capital works. This is positive land management which the National Trust works hard to support.



Beginning with what's there

In order to look seriously at ways to protect and enhance wildlife habitat, you do need to know what is there at the start. Local West Lakes Ranger Jon Metcalfe has begun this process by installing a wildlife camera in a secret location in the Duddon valley. Just after nightfall in November an image of an otter was captured, great evidence of something that up to now we'd only just speculated about.

Jon has also put a camera on Scafell, where he hopes to catch a glimpse of the ever elusive pine marten which are believed to be present. Fingers crossed, more photographs in the next newsletter!



Lyth Valley Wetlands

The wetland restoration project at Sizergh, on 38 hectares of land in the Lyth Valley, is an exciting and ambitious project to restore wildlife-rich, natural habitats on degraded agricultural land.

By landscaping fields with diggers to create scrapes and pools, and deepening and widening ditches, we intend to create great habitat to attract some of Britain's most rapidly declining bird species like bittern, bearded tit and redshank, pictured below.



© NTPL/Andy Sands

We'll also be putting in sluices and a surrounding water-retaining bund to help us to control water levels where there are natural springs bubbling up on the land. This work does require planning permission and other consents, which we hope to have granted

by the end of 2013. We could get started by February next year.

Some elements that don't need any consents we are already beginning to plan for. In the summer we'll be restoring over seven hectares of species-rich fen, which is an even rarer habitat in Cumbria than reed beds are. The work will involve stopping up ditches, turf stripping and introducing seeds harvested from a nearby fen. It is experimental and quite expensive work, so we are especially grateful to a local donor whose generous gift is helping to make this possible.

There are also several hectares of drier grasslands around the edges of the site that we are restoring. Here we'll be planting 'plug plants' that have been grown on, again from local seed. We'll be harvesting seed from elsewhere on the Sizergh Estate especially for this purpose as well as sowing it directly into some of the flatter areas of the restoration site.

There is a small apple and damson orchard which is rather neglected at present.

We hope with the help of the local community we can start to manage this again and make it productive to benefit people and wildlife. We'll plant a small number of native, local variety fruit trees to fill the gaps.

Native breed cattle will be used as part of the management of the area. We are working with one of our tenants (winner of the 2013 Conservation Farm of the Year Award at the Westmorland County Show) on this aspect.

Eventually, once the changes have settled and the wildlife have discovered new homes, we'd like to build a bird hide or viewing station in the reed beds with a raised causeway leading to it so visitors can get quietly close to nature. As ever, we rely on your support and donations to enable us to achieve this ambition.



NEWS, thank yous and project updates

The Aira Force project is well underway and although the changes look quite raw at present, we're confident all those who supported the appeal will be delighted with the improvements. We'd like to give particular thanks to Cumbria Waste Management Environment Trust whose generous grants through the Landfill Tax Fund have largely funded a brand new upper footbridge to extend the circular route. We look forward to working with them again.

At the time of writing we are awaiting listed building consent for changes to Bridge House, an iconic building that has featured in many a painting of Ambleside. But don't worry, we aren't going for a conservatory! We want to open up access to the top floor, put back the fireplace and bring warmth and life to this unique gem of a house. The project has been budgeted at £8,000, but donations are very much needed to enable this all to happen.

We'd like to say a special thank you to Mr Harry Collier who earlier this year, as a tribute to his late wife Emily, made a generous gift to the National Trust to help us look after two places with special memories for him. We've put in a new footbridge at Stubbins Estate in Lancashire and his gift will also fund a garden project at Hill Top later this year.

Legacies and memorial gifts to the National Trust have enabled us to acquire much of the land and property in our care here in the Lakes today. We continue to be inspired and grateful to all those who've chosen to include a bequest in their will to the National Trust Lake District Appeal. You are helping to look after what you love, for future generations to enjoy.



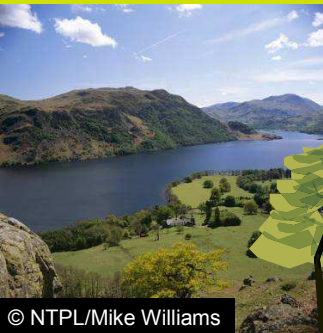
Outstanding conservation in action

National Trust Lead Ranger for Central and East Lakes John Pring reports.

“With a working title of ‘Cows and Trees’, this project is one of the largest wood pasture restoration schemes in the country today. Wood pasture is basically a half-way house between woodland and open grassland and is characterised by fantastic open grown trees, ancient veterans (with associated lichens and bugs) as well as herb rich grassland. It is a very rare habitat these days and a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been produced to ensure its continued survival.

We are lucky to have large areas of wood pasture in both Ullswater and Troutbeck which has given us the opportunity to do landscape planning on a large scale. Working with our tenant farmers and the new HLS environmental support system, we'll be creating or enhancing over 500h of wood pasture at Glencoyne farm, Troutbeck Park farm and Glenamara Park. The preferred management of these areas is relatively easy, a limited number of hardy cattle will replace a large number of sheep. The idea being that the cows plodge up the ground a bit, allowing seeds to set and natural tree generation to occur, but not enough to make an enclosed woodland – a bit of a juggling act!

But some of this work is very challenging. We're planning a large 55h wood pasture site at the far end of Gowbarrow which requires the felling of 12h of non-native conifers and a helicopter lift to bring in materials to make a 400m timber access track with a mile long fence to enclose the site. This will then be home to eight cows all year round. At Troutbeck Park we're planting 500 junipers at the head of the valley, a long walk in with materials on slopes reaching 45% where both hands are needed to stay upright. It's hard work for a ranger my age!



© NTPL/Mike Williams

Much of this is funded through a HLS Conservation plan but inevitably, due to the difficult and time consuming nature of the work, there is a shortfall in funding. We've been kindly supported by a local donor and we hope to attract more support.

Bizarrely you can't see a big difference now, rather natural processes will subtly change the landscape for the better over many years.”

Wray Castle conservation

This mock-gothic castle on the west side of Windermere has gone from strength to strength this year and is attracting lots of interest.



With connections to Beatrix Potter and Canon Rawnsley and intriguing rooms with plenty of space for families to relax it has widespread appeal.

Now they have an (almost) watertight roof work has continued to bring ground floor rooms back to life.

In autumn 2013 we started our work to restore the Morning Room to how it looked when Beatrix Potter and her family visited, beginning with the fireplace tiles. Our Tile Conservator Lynne painstakingly removed old paint to reveal original tiles. Watch the short film clip on the NT website - Wray Castle, Our Work pages to see their beauty revealed.



We've also been working on an old sideboard that was lurking dusty and unloved, doing all the conservation work in front of the public. Thanks to the visitors who helped, it is looking much better!

Fairies at Acorn Bank?

Over the last few months several little doors and houses have been appearing in the woods at Acorn Bank near Penrith, to the delight of visitors young and old! There's a boat house, tree stump and tree houses (with some furnished), a tiny wheelbarrow full of sacks in the mill, and even a mini garden shed complete with tools to discover.

Don't tell the children, but the man behind the fairy houses is Acorn Bank Ranger Robert Bennion. So far he's been using his personal tools and equipment to make them in his own time.

We're now looking for some small donations, about £300, to help us to buy tools for him so that he can make us more.

They are so charming, we'd like him to start carving little dustings of his subtle magic on tree stumps, gateposts and bird hides throughout the Estate.





The Lakes Appeal

Look after what you love



Why do we need to fundraise?

Our commitment to look after the Lake District countryside, farms and historic homes 'for ever, for everyone' comes with a huge price tag.

The National Trust is a registered charity with no government funding for our core work. Membership fees cover only a third of our costs so the support of people like you, our members and our volunteers is vital to enable conservation work to continue in this unique place, free for all to visit and enjoy.

The Lakes Appeal doesn't have a simple fundraising target. It is an ongoing fund and this newsletter mentions just a few projects which need your support right now. We need to grow our Lakes Appeal fund, to ensure we can always be here working to care for this precious landscape and unique farming heritage.

Please help to look after what you love. Every gift really does make a difference.

How to donate

Post a cheque or CAF cheque payable to the National Trust to Liz, details below. (Or pop in to the office.) All donors are personally thanked.

Tell us what you'd like to support—the Lakes Appeal fund or your favourite valley in the Lakes, or one of the projects featured. If you'd like to help repair the upland paths specifically, we can direct it there too.

And you can make your donation worth 25% more. To qualify for Gift Aid what you pay in income tax or capital gains tax must be at least equal to the amount we will claim in the tax year. Just note this in a signed letter when you send your donation.



Get in touch

If you have any questions about the projects in this newsletter, about how to donate or how you can leave a legacy to the National Trust in the Lakes, please do get in touch. All enquiries will be treated confidentially.



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Extra bits

We have an outstanding range of places in our care in the North West region, from Paul McCartney's council house to stately homes, beaches and mountain tops, valleys and now a pub in the Lakes too. Talk to Liz or find out more on the main website www.nationaltrust.org.uk. Look out for us on Twitter and Facebook too.

To minimise costs, Liz produces this newsletter in our Grasmere office. All photos ©NT.

If you would like this newsletter in a different format call Liz on 015394 63806