

OTTERHEAD ESTATE TRUST

Wildlife observations

Narcissi and Bluebells followed on from the Snowdrops with Campion and Ground Elder flowers now giving colour to the slope along the Main drive. There is plenty of Willow on site and the pollen-laden catkins brought colour on a cold day.



Willow

Pignut is in flower at the far end of the House site. It is the tubers of this plant that are reputed to be the “nuts in May” gathered in the nursery/dance rhymes of old. Not to be gathered any more!



Pignut

We had reports that a Nightingale had been heard & seen at Otterhead as well as Nightjar so those 2 birds can be added to the list. Spotted Flycatcher and Little Grebe were seen 5th June.

The swans haven't produced any cygnets this year. A Mallard duck has been showing her 7 ducklings around the House Lake in the area frequented by Moorhens, not far from the main drive. Jim has sent us these photos of Firecrest & Blackcap seen at Otterhead.

We welcome reports on species seen at Otterhead or points of interest from your visits.

Be aware of hazards on site & at this time of year especially Hogweed & Hemlock Waterdropwort.

Re ticks, “Protect Yourself from Lyme Disease” lymediseaseuk.com



**OTTERHEAD
ESTATE TRUST**

Message from the editor...

“ Thanks to everyone who has become a “Friend of Otterhead” , continued membership and especially to those who have volunteered to help &/or made a donation during the year. All interest in our work is much appreciated. ”



Blackcap



Firecrest

Micro-Hydro Update

Nigel, the project manager ran 2 hydro tours Saturdays 16th March and 13th April. Attended by small groups of interested “Friends of Otterhead” and others, these provided the opportunity to walk the length of the system and see areas not accessible to the public, including the turbine itself.

On the afternoon of Sunday 28th April a Special Event was held at the Coach House to celebrate the commissioning of the Otterhead Micro Hydro Project.

About 40 invited guests represented several of the stakeholders and facilitators of the project including local Parish representatives and South Somerset Hydro who sponsored the event. Commencing at 3.00pm refreshments and a celebratory glass of “bubbly” were provided together with locally-sourced organic hot dogs (+ veg version), cakes and a camp fire.

Nigel Griffiths (OET Director & Project manager) gave a short address at 3.30pm, supported by a display of photographs illustrating the vast amount of work that

had been undertaken to provide a now permanent, free, quiet and zero-carbon electricity supply at the Coach House. There was the opportunity for a guided tour of the installation.

The project was funded by Somerset Council’s Climate Emergency Fund, plus South Somerset Hydro, the Garfield Weston Foundation, Blackdown Hills Rural Partnership, Devon Community Foundation and Forest School themselves. Both Churchstanton and Otterford Parish Councils have been very supportive.

The event has given us a great impetus towards future work, and done us much good in the eyes of the local councils which were represented. Thanks to all who helped on the day, showed interest in the project and enabled the project to reach fruition: some of it was very challenging!

Chris Mogford has made some much-improved sluices in Frog Meadow - they are making the hydro system much easier to control and maintain. Further work may be done “sometime” to insert a double filter. “This valuable support is much appreciated”.



Friends of Otterhead Work Parties...

...took place mornings of :-

Saturday 2nd March, had an amazing turn out of 15 participants of which 6 were students. We worked to clear a large area of bramble and scrub at the House site particularly from around the steps. Another lot of bramble was cut at the other side of the fence by the sluice so that it doesn't damage the fence. Access is made easier. Bramble and some Willow were cut at the LH side, some deadwood being cut and placed where it doesn't pose a hazard.



It is hoped ground flora will benefit & House site "footprint" will be recognised again.

Saturday 6th April. 9 participants continued work at the House site cutting and clearing bramble, moving some cut Ash lengths. Some overhanging Willow was cut at RH side & stacked at the side of the banking.

We took a break in May partly to check coloured Rhododendrons v ponticum and spend time re grant applications.

Saturday 1st June. 6 participants. Tim unblocked the drain pipe at the base of steps from the car park and with some help, the one further down the main drive was located and unblocked. Richard strimmed over the areas where Bramble had been cut before and the arisings were raked off. A fallen Willow branch was cut & cleared. Some Hogweed, nettles and docks were cleared.



Fund raising

As a small charity, Otterhead Estate Trust (Co Ltd) welcomes all donations and contributions from our supporters. The annual core costs of managing Otterhead Lakes as a Local Nature Reserve amount to almost £2,500. That's just to cover Costs of Insurance, Accountants, Bank charges, Website and emptying the Dog-bin.

We need to raise funds. Donations always welcome either via Paypal at Donate on website or direct to Bank Account (details & Gift-Aid forms can be provided). We're pleased to report that following our appeal collecting any old money, foreign coins & bank notes we have now raised £845. Some donations were quite substantial. **THANK YOU.** We think there may still be some contributions to be made and hope our target of £1,000 is achievable. Keep looking & ask your friends to do the same. Be in touch by reply to this email or info@otterheadestate.org

We welcome ideas for raising funds & for projects on site within our Management Plan. Some Grant applications have been made & the outcomes are awaited. The next Management meeting is scheduled for Weds 17th July

Some of the Rhododendron ponticum near the sluice was cut back to benefit the red/orange one, only to find that is partially collapsed across the leaf!

The efforts of all our volunteers at work parties and at other times on site are very much appreciated.

Future work parties = mornings of Saturday 6th July, Saturday 3rd August, Saturday 7th September

Make a note in your diary. Do let us know if you intend to come or if you want to suggest another day or time.



Rhododendron

Ash Dieback

Update: It is unfortunate that some Ash trees on site are showing signs of Ash Dieback. They are regularly checked particularly on the Public Right of Way, Permissive paths and access drive. This is on-going. Help from Forest School staff is much appreciated. Where any trees are thought to pose a hazard, they will be marked to have limbs removed or to be felled. Recent work took place near the Coach House and it is hoped the remaining part of the tree will have improved vigour and resilience. Please avoid the areas if work is being done. The nature of the disease is that branches can become brittle and fall. Do take extra care when visiting the site especially in windy weather.



Facebook

Jim Scott has been wondering about setting up a Facebook group for Otterhead. Discussions are taking place re setting the parameters. If you are interested in this manner of communication, please get in touch.



Neroche Conservation Volunteers

Friends Of Otterhead

The Otterhead Estate Trust is a not-for-profit organisation run entirely by volunteers. Whether you use the reserve regularly or appreciate it from afar (!) we would love to have more "Friends of" members.

It costs £10 a year. The money helps with the upkeep of the site and also means you have a say in how the site is run and can attend members only events. Corporate membership is available at £25. You can join up directly via our website www.otterheadestate.org. If you'd like to know more about the Friends group, please contact info@otterheadestate.org

Can you or someone you know help us out by Volunteering? Can you spare a few hours per month to help run the "Friends of Otterhead"?

Activities would include:

- attending the annual Advisory Group meeting usually held in September.
- communicating with the members
- liaison with the communications officer/trustees
- helping to organise work parties

Have you an interest & some experience in Fund-raising? Please get in touch.

The trustees would support you in these roles and provide any necessary guidance.

Volunteering News

Neroche Conservation Volunteers spent Wednesday 5th June helping Nigel and David with a lot of essential, routine maintenance at the sluice and Broadwater section of the leat. They also constructed an area of fencing opposite the sluice fence, above the steps to the Wheelhouse. This was recommended in Wessex Water's safety audit. **Tough work, Well done!**

Taunton Mid-week Volunteers: Team of 8 spent Thursday 6th June, cutting and clearing some vegetation and Beaver dam debris from next to the leat path as well as rank vegetation at the end of the entrance drive. **Thank you.** They intend to return on Thursday 18th July when their task is to clear bramble and scrub from round the young trees and cut bracken from the lower slope. This area is to the Right of the main drive.

Blackdown Hills National Landscapes

The Blackdown Hills National Landscapes team met with Quantocks & Mendip Hills National Landscapes staff at Otterhead Thursday morning 9th May. They saw evidence of Beavers on site and discussed impacts; enjoyed the benefits of the new Hydro power source at the Coach House, talked about nature & wellbeing and other topics of interest. It was hosted by the Otterhead Estate Trust with Elizabeth Stonex as guide.

Beavers

Beaver activity has continued along the leat and discussion has taken place on how to address their impact in that area. Their main area of activity now appears to be at the far side of the House Lake, well away from public access routes.