



Newsletter  
Spring 2017

# Moor Trees

creating native woodland

## Moor Trees Director Graham Burton brings us up to date



My garden has been a riot of daffodils this year, always a wonderful sight after a gloomy winter. The wild versions have been much in evidence at the main woodland creation site this winter, Weir Mill, near Drewsteignton, where the volunteers have planted over 3500 trees – a bit of a marathon! It is only through the commitment of our volunteers and supporters that our mission to create natural woodland can be achieved, so a huge thank you to everyone who has wielded a spade this winter.



See page 2 for a full account of this season's planting .

Plans have been laid for next winter's planting sites. Trying to meet the *Defra* (Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs) deadlines and ever more complex paperwork, I haven't been out much! We will find out this summer whether the two schemes near Lifton and Longdown have been successful – if so, I will provide more detail in the autumn newsletter.

Re-wilding has continued to be on the agenda over the winter and it is gratifying that it has become a key part of the debate following the Brexit thing – what will we, as a nation, do about farming subsidies after 2020? Especially in the marginal uplands where I saw a figure quoted that 85% of farm incomes are via state aid.

On an organisational note, I am finding it increasingly complex to manage the modest IT needs we have. If there is a member or supporter who might be able to help and advise, that would be incredibly valuable. So, if you know your POP3 from your IMAP, and your widgets from your plug-ins, please get in touch!

Best wishes  
**Graham Burton**  
Director

### Great news!

Moor Trees was one of three charities chosen by Tesco in Exeter for customers to vote their most deserving. And Moor Trees won! £4000!!!!

Registered Office

Old School Centre  
Totnes Road  
South Brent  
TQ10 9BP





## Planting officer **John Brock** reflects on this season's tree planting

### Cath's field near Loddiswell

Beginning in late November, the first trees of the season were planted at Cath Sturdy's field, situated near South Devon Chilly farm near Loddiswell. Over the course of three Sundays Moor Trees volunteers planted 1000 saplings - including oak, hazel, birch, hawthorn, blackthorn, alder, crab apple, wild cherry, spindle, sallow (goat willow) and small numbers of rowan, holly and field maple - creating a new woodland nestling in the river Avon Valley. We also planted 100 hornbeam for the first time in place of ash as ash is still prohibited by the Forestry Commission. Our usual substitute, native small leaved lime was not available. Each Sunday lunchtime volunteers were refreshed with Cath's excellent variety of veggie soups which left stomachs yearning for a return!



*...volunteers were refreshed with Cath's excellent soups*

### Ali's Field near Hennock



Situated near Hennock, Ali's field was to be planted with 1000 trees - much the same mix of trees as in the previous plantation at Loddiswell. This was a local community project and not an 'official' Moor Trees project. We spent just one Sunday here at the beginning of January, helping landowner Ali McClure and his friends to get the project off the ground. With Moor Trees volunteers and Ali's friends together, over 30 people planted just over 500 trees in one day! The baked potatoes, soup and other food provided by Ali, definitely helped!

### Weir Mill near Drewsteignton

For the remainder of the season to the end of March, Sundays were occupied by our major planting of the season on a 3.2 hectare site at Weir Mill near Fingle Bridge, on the river Teign. A hardy band of volunteers - usually about a dozen each Sunday - planted a total 3800 trees including 1400 oaks, 100 hazel, 250 birch, 80 hawthorn, 300 blackthorn, 20 rowan, 120 alder, 300 crab apple, 60 holly, 40 wild cherry, 100 spindle, 30 guelder rose, 40 alder buckthorn, 300 sallow, 60 field maple and 600 hornbeam. With primrose and wild daffodils creeping on to site (quick result for sheep removal!) It was truly a magical sight to see all the newly planted trees surrounded by a yellow haze of spring - wonderful!

**Massive thanks to all our volunteers for all their hard work and of course to Brian Daniel and Jon Covey, always busy behind the scenes. Can't wait for next year!**



*...Weir Mill volunteers enjoying a well earned break!*



*...trees as far as the eye can see!*

### Student planting

For five Wednesday afternoons from January to March, students from Plymouth University came to plant another 1000 trees, this time at Scorrilton on the edge of 'proper' Dartmoor. Sadly they also experienced 'proper' Dartmoor weather, being greeted with high winds and horizontal rain! However, even through such adversity, they managed to plant 400 oaks, 40 hawthorn, 150 blackthorn, 140 crab apple, 60 spindle, 80 alder buckthorn, 100 hornbeam; and smaller numbers of alder and sallow, usually ending the day a bit bedraggled. In recognition of such dedication, we will all enjoy a BBQ, if spring arrives! **Well done everybody!**

## Wild Boar on Dartmoor: a case of 'accidental re-wilding' by Naomi Wisbey



**Wild boar is a native British species, but they have been absent for the past 700 years. Their recent reintroduction to the wild has been both accidental and controversial.**

Boars can weigh up to 200kg, looking pretty alarming, although you are unlikely to see one as they are shy and nocturnal, hiding in the undergrowth during the day. They have been known to attack domestic dogs which get too close, but generally only become aggressive when defending young. Boars can be destructive when 'rooting' - digging up tracts of ground searching for food. This makes them unpopular with bluebell lovers, golf enthusiasts and farmers. Boars are doubly unpopular with farmers because they also carry Bovine tuberculosis.

During the 1980s British farmers began to import wild boar as an 'exotic' meat. This was the first time boars had been seen in Britain outside zoos since the seventeenth century. It is believed the original British population became extinct in the thirteenth century but there were sporadic attempts to reintroduce them for hunting until the end of the middle ages. Dartmoor has been a Royal Hunting Forest since the Norman Invasion and therefore would have had one of the last wild boar populations. The last wild boar on Dartmoor was probably killed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In the twenty first century they have started to escape from farms and return to the wild. In January 2006 a herd of around 60 wild boars were released by animal rights activists from a farm in North Devon. Some of those are believed to have made their way 30 miles south, crossing the busy A30.

Soon after, wild boars were spotted close to Horrabridge and Buckland Monachorum in South Dartmoor. An additional 50 boar later escaped in November 2006 from a farm near Holsworthy.

Boar is essentially a woodland animal although it is happy to live in a



*Wild Boar – photo from treesforlife.org.uk*

'patchwork of habitats' including open moor, marsh and riversides. It is estimated that 52% of Dartmoor would be suitable boar territory, with the capacity to support around 1000 individuals. Boars are normally not seen in the daytime, unless food is short, when they will forage throughout the day. Females and piglets live in groups called 'sounders' normally led by two or three matriarchs. The male boars live alone except for in the breeding season (late winter). Wild boar communicate vocally, squealing when distressed and rumbling when content.

A wild boar's diet is quite varied comprising of acorns, roots, bulbs, fungi, insects and carrion. In the UK they compete for food with animals such as rodents, squirrels and jays and their only predator is man. In Eastern Europe they are also sometimes hunted by lynx and wolves if deer is scarce, but they also benefit from living near carnivores such as lynx, whose leftovers they will finish off.

Their effect on their woodland habitat is debateable. Some sources claim they are beneficial to woodland because their 'rooting' mixes up the seed bed and increases fertility. In Sweden, where boar were accidentally reintroduced, biodiversity has increased. But

a study on wild boars' behaviour in Northern Italy has suggested that they have a negative effect on young trees, digging up seedlings and knocking saplings over. Our woodland ecology evolved with wild boar, but after an absence of 700 years the ecology may have evolved further or stabilised without them.

In December 2007 a 'sounder' of wild boars walked into the centre of Tavistock in the middle of the day, joining Christmas shoppers window shopping. Sightings of boars in the local area were common for a couple of years after this, recorded on websites such as [legendarydartmoor.co.uk](http://legendarydartmoor.co.uk) and [Britishwildboar.org](http://Britishwildboar.org).

Recently, recorded sightings around Dartmoor have decreased, but it is hard to tell if this is because of a declining interest or a declining population. It could even be that, after a couple of generations, the boars have become more secretive and better at hiding. The official DEFRA policy on wild boars is that the responsibility for 'management' of wild boars lies with the local community and landowners. It is possible that the Dartmoor wild boar have been hunted to extinction again by private landowners. But some interesting ground disturbances spotted on a recent walk in the Horrabridge area suggests that wild boar are still at large!



*Ground disturbances consistent with 'rooting' observed at Horrabridge 22/03/17*

Native  
trees

## Graham Burton continues his series on native trees with a look at two 'flowery' trees

### Wild cherry (*Prunus avium*)



One of the first signs of life in spring in the woods is the white blossom of the wild cherry. The blossom hangs in heavy clusters, turning into the fruit known as cherries - round and initially yellow-orange in colour before turning to crimson in July. They are edible but are often bitter to taste and not as fleshy or sweet as orchard varieties.

They are not small - mature trees can grow to 30m and live for up to 60 years. It is native throughout the UK and Europe, except the far north, growing best in full sunlight and fertile soil.

The shiny bark is a deep reddish-brown with prominent cream-coloured horizontal lines. The tree exudes a gum from wounds in the bark, by which it seals the wounds to exclude insects and fungal infection.

#### Value to wildlife

The spring flowers provide an early source of nectar and pollen for bees, while the cherries are eaten by numerous kinds of birds and mammals, which digest the fruit flesh and disperse the seeds in their droppings.

The foliage is the main food plant for caterpillars of many species of moth, including the cherry fruit and cherry

bark moths, the orchard ermine, brimstone and short cloaked moth.

#### Mythology and symbolism

In Highland folklore, wild cherry had mysterious qualities, and to encounter one was considered auspicious and fateful.

In folklore, it has unusual associations with the cuckoo, whereby the bird must eat three good meals of cherries before it may stop singing.

#### How we use the cherry

As well as being eaten straight from the tree, cherries are used to flavour alcoholic drinks such as whisky or gin. Cherry brandy can easily be made by filling a bottle with wild cherries, adding sugar, topping up with brandy and leaving for a few months.

Cherry wood is hard, fine-grained and used for turning, especially the large burls with unusual grains which can appear on the trunk. It is also used for making furniture, and its red-brown wood polishes up well to a deep, shiny brown colour.

### Crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*)



One of the ancestors of the cultivated apple, it can live up to 100 years. Mature trees grow to around 10m in height and can become quite gnarled and twisted, especially when exposed, and the twigs often develop spines. This 'crabbed' appearance may have influenced its common name, 'crab apple'.

In spring, the sweetly scented blossom is pollinated by bees and other insects, which develops into small, yellow-green apple-like fruits, sometimes flushed with red or white spots when ripe, and around 2-3cm across.

#### Value to wildlife

The crab apple is one of the few host trees to the parasitic mistletoe, *Viscum album*, and trees are often covered in lichens.

The leaves are food for the caterpillars of many moths, including the eyed hawk-moth, Chinese character and pale tussock.

#### Mythology and symbolism

Crab apples have long been associated with love and marriage. It was said that if you throw the pips into the fire while saying the name of your love, the love is true if the pips explode.

The Celts believed the apple to be associated with rebirth and were said to bury apples in graves as food for the dead, a practice that is shown to date back over 7,000 years in Europe and West Asia.

#### How we use crab apples

The fruit is not an important crop in most areas, due to the sour malic acid. However, they are an excellent source of pectin, and their juice can be made into a ruby-coloured preserve with a full, spicy flavour.

The crab apple is one of the nine plants invoked in the pagan Anglo-Saxon Nine Herbs Charm, recorded in the 10th century, intended for the treatment of poisoning and infection.

Apple wood gives off a pleasant scent when burned, and smoke from an apple wood fire gives an excellent flavour to smoked foods. It is easier to cut when green and exceedingly difficult to carve.

## News from an old friend– former volunteer Tobi Rottwinkel



**Tobi, a former Plymouth University environmental Science student and Moor Trees Sunday volunteer updates us on his current studies for an MSc in Environmental Forestry at Bangor University. He tells us how his experiences at Moor Trees influenced his choice.**

In late 2013 I had my first volunteering experience with **Moor Trees** which got me hooked; not only because of the free cake and cookies but also because we were planting trees and took part in bringing back native woodlands to the UK. What was even more rewarding was the knowledge that those trees were not part of a plantation, to be felled in a few decades, but are intended to establish into a healthy forest ecosystem with no expiry date.

It seemed like the only sensible thing, to spend my free time doing! For about three years I returned frequently with **Moor Trees** to different planting sites, nurseries and for seed collection.

Spending time in nature and places where humans have not had much of an impact has been important for me to continue being mentally healthy. This made my decision to volunteer with **Moor Trees** easy as it gives you time away from everyday crazes, especially computers! Those days out were some kind of meditation: when you start digging the hole and carefully bury the tree roots under soil for it to establish to a mighty oak or a fast growing birch. It also put things into perspective as you left everything behind for an entire day and can look at it in a refreshed way.

While I was exploring Cornwall and Devon with my friends (all **Moor Trees** volunteers, of course), there was a big difference in forests compared to my home country, Germany. Most of the areas, as beautiful as they are, have been grassland and heathland and in the eyes of an environmental scientist are heavily degraded; stripped of most of its wildlife and biodiversity. By the end of WWI, the UK only had 5% forest cover which almost tripled to 13% by 2010. Through **Moor Trees'** regular events, this regrowth was being continued and it has been a great feeling to know that you are taking part in bringing British native forests back into the landscape. Although most of the British land is owned by private owners, **Moor Trees** is doing a great job in seeking permission to plant on those lands on and around Dartmoor National Park.

Different jobs attract different people and this is very apparent when it comes to volunteering, where you offer

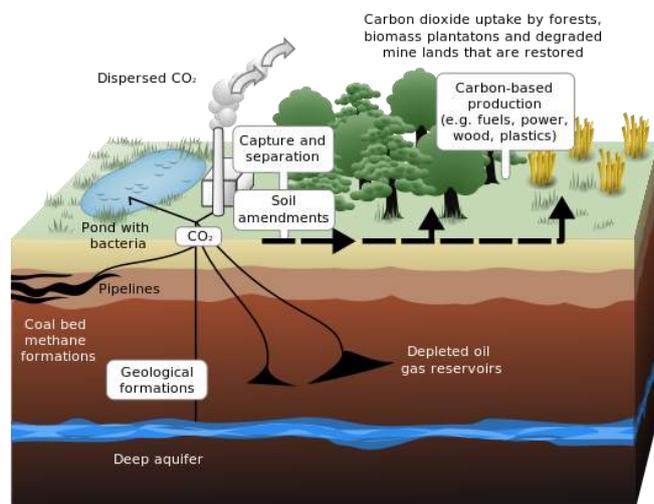


your own free time. This is why at **Moor Trees** I have met so many beautiful, sincere, and open-minded people that made those days very enjoyable.

Ultimately, these volunteering experiences had an impact on my decision to start my MSc Environmental Forestry at Bangor University back in September 2016. This degree is enabling me to see forests in a different light and emphasises the importance of woodland to human survival globally as they provide a range of services such as the reduction in water and nutrient run-off, atmospheric carbon sequestration (see below) , and clean water supplies.

### What is Carbon Sequestration?

Carbon Sequestration can be defined as the storage of Carbon which would otherwise be Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This can be in many forms: lots is absorbed into the water in the seas; some is in bogs, and coal/ oil/ gas deposits; and it is also stored in living organisms like trees, animals and even people.



biodiversity

## Rare species discovered at 'lost world' estate near Loch Ness

**Surveys at Trees for Life's Dundreggan Conservation Estate near Loch Ness have revealed a range of rare species, including a midge never recorded in the United Kingdom before – underlining the site's growing reputation as a 'lost world' for biodiversity.**

The discovery of the non-biting midge (*Chironomus vallenduuki*) by entomologist Peter Chandler last August brings the total of UK biodiversity firsts found at the estate in Glenmoriston in Inverness-shire to 11.



non-biting Chironomid midge

Other key findings during the charity's 2016 survey season included two rare gnats whose larvae feed on fungi. One of these (*Sciophila varia*) is only known from four other UK sites. The other (*Mycomya nigricornis*) is only known in the UK from a handful of Scottish sites and had not been seen since 1990.

"Dundreggan is a special part of the Caledonian Forest that keeps on revealing beautiful, interesting and rare

species. The surprisingly rich wealth of life in this corner of the Highlands highlights the importance of concerted conservation action to protect and restore Scotland's wild places," said Alan Watson Featherstone, Trees for Life's founder.

The charity also found two parasitic wasps (*Homotropus pallipes* and



knotty shining claw

*Diphyus salicatorius*), for which there are very few Scottish records, and – for the first time in Scotland north of the River Tay – a pseudoscorpion called the knotty shining claw. (*Lamprochernes nodosus*).



parasitic wasp, *Diphyus salicatorius*

A micro-moth, the small barred long-horn (*Adela croesella*) – only documented at three other locations in Scotland, and never before this far

north – was found by volunteer Richard Davidson. Richard had been taking part in one of Trees for Life's popular volunteer Conservation Weeks at Dundreggan when he found the moth.

"Our latest discoveries add to an already remarkable range of rare and endangered species found at Dundreggan – some of which were previously unknown in the UK or Scotland, or which were feared to be extinct," added Alan Watson Featherstone.

New species for the UK discovered on the estate in recent years were three sawflies (*Nematus pravus*, *Nematus pseudodispar* and *Amauronematus tristis*), an aphid (*Cinara smolandiae*), two aphid parasitoids (*Ephedrus heleni*, *Praon cavariellae*), three fungus gnats (*Brevicornu parafenicum*, *Mycomya disa*, *Sceptonia longisetosa*), and a mite (*Ceratozetella thienemanni*).

Dundreggan has also revealed the second ever British record of a waxfly species (*Helicoconis hirtinervis*); a golden horsefly (*Atylotus fulvus*) only seen once before in Scotland since 1923; and the juniper shieldbug (*Cyphostethus tristriatus*), thought to be the first Highlands record.

**In total, more than 3,300 species have now been recorded at the forest restoration site. At least 68 of these are priority species for conservation.**

This article has been reproduced from the Trees For Life newsletter, February 2017 with the kind permission of **Trees for Life**

**Besides knowing that they are helping the environment, many volunteers find that volunteering helps them personally in some way. Here we talk to three volunteers**



#### **A fresh start for Colin Shazell**

74 year-old Colin Shazell has been volunteering regularly with **Moor Trees** for the last 8 months. After his wife suddenly passed away, Colin was looking for a fresh start to his life and some voluntary work to occupy his time. He saw an advert for **Moor Trees** in a local paper. 'Being a joiner by trade and having a passion for working with wood it seemed an obvious choice' says Colin.



#### **Robin Lee likes doing things at a pace that suits him**

36 year old Robin Lee, who suffers from Aspergers syndrome, has been volunteering with **Moor Trees** for 9 years. 'I first heard about **Moor Trees** through the website,' says Robin. 'I started volunteering because I wanted to do something practical, hands on and in the countryside. I like the fact that I can get on and do things in my own way at a pace that suits me. I love doing it!' Robin says he gains great satisfaction from the variety of tasks involved in the growing and planting of trees—from collecting and processing seed, tending the tree nursery beds, to digging up the trees for our planting. 'We've planted over 70000 trees and we are still going!' says Robin, 'I volunteer for a couple of days each week. My Aspergers condition is more about learning difficulties rather than the physical stuff which I like to get on and do'.



#### **John Burden keeping active**

75 year old volunteer John Burden has volunteered on Tuesdays and Sundays with **Moor Trees** for nearly 12 years. Just over 12 years ago he lost his job and felt too fit to retire. So he volunteered with BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) - now TCV. One of the BTCV volunteering days involved working with **Moor Trees** volunteers at one of the **Moor Trees** nurseries. So John decided he would like to volunteer with Moor Trees as well. John - who lives alone and suffers from anxiety and Parkinsons Disease says: 'working with **Moor Trees** keeps me active and fit. Otherwise I would just be at home staring at four walls'.

Interviews by Paul Harrison and Jon Covey

## **Fancy volunteering?**

**This season's tree planting has now finished but work (and cake and socialising and fun) continues every Tuesday and Sunday at our nurseries and in the maintenance of previous plantations.**



**For volunteering opportunities check out our website at [www.moortrees.org](http://www.moortrees.org)**

# Loveliest of Trees

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,  
Twenty will not come again,  
And take from seventy springs a score,  
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.

A. E. Housman



## Moor Trees

Old School Centre  
Totnes Road  
South Brent  
Devon  
TQ10 9BP

PHONE:  
0845 456 9803

E-MAIL:  
[info@moortrees.org](mailto:info@moortrees.org)

Visit our website  
at  
[www.moortrees.org](http://www.moortrees.org)

Registered charity number  
1081142

## About Moor Trees

### Our staff:

Graham Burton	Director
Brian Daniel	Project Officer
Jon Brock	Tree & Volunteer Officer
Jon Covey	Broadley Nursery Officer
Chris Curry	Membership Officer
Paul Harrison	Newsletter Editor & Tree Dedications

### Our trustees:

Janet Cotter (Chair)	Adam Griffin
Guy Gilmore (Secretary & Treasurer)	Jon Covey
Jon Brock	Naomi Wisbey
Jill Broom	Tom Murphy
Paul Harrison	

### Our patrons:

Sir Jonathon Porritt  
Stephan Harding (Schumacher College)  
Satish Kumar (*Resurgence* magazine and Schumacher College)  
Pen Hadow (Polar explorer)  
Alan Watson Featherstone (Trees for Life)

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