



10th December 2020

Winter Newsletter – Issue 9



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## Looking back on 2020...

By Amanda Sampson

Quantock Hills AONB Communications & Support Officer

Well what a year! Since the arrival of the Coronavirus early in the year and the national lockdown that followed in March, all of us have had to adapt to a new way of life in one way or another. Whether this has meant starting to work from home for the first time, home schooling our children and trying to maintain some kind of routine or just trying to cope with the new restrictions in our lives that we have faced in different ways, we have all had a very tough 2020...

The Quantock Hills have seen a significant increase in visitors to the hills this year, either in an attempt to escape the confinement of being at home, to clear our heads or to just simply have some exercise, fresh air and some time to reflect on things in life and enjoy the beautiful tranquillity that the hills have to offer us.

We are incredibly lucky to have such a beautiful countryside right on the doorstep for us all to appreciate and enjoy as families and individuals for years to come, whatever the future may hold.

# From Little Acorns

By Vickie Sellick

Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Support Officer

One of the key aims of the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme is to plant lots of trees at specific sites. At sites such as Cothelstone Hill we will be planting new trees to help diversify the woodland and to repair the damage done by ash dieback disease. To do this we will need to source young trees to plant. You can help us by growing new trees from seed. Not only will you get to watch the magical transformation of a seed into a tree, you will also be helping to make the woodlands of the Quantock Hills AONB a better place. We are looking for Oak, Beech, Holly, Hazel, Hawthorn and Blackthorn.

## Grow your own tree for the Quantocks!

1.

*What you need to do:*

Head outside into your local area and search for seeds from one of the following trees...



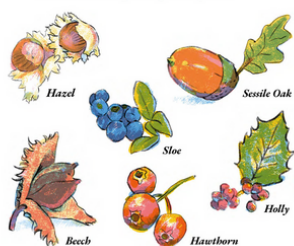
Take care  
Please take note:



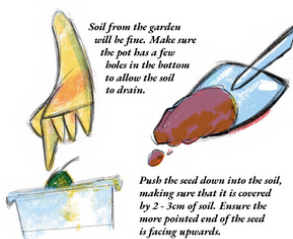
Before you head outside to find your seeds, please take note of the following things

- Make sure you only take 10 seeds from a single species to grow yourself. Seeds are food for a range of animals, and you must leave some to germinate naturally.
- To ensure you have the best chance of success, avoid seeds that have holes in. These may have been parasitised or eaten. Also make sure your seed is brown as this means it is more likely to be ripe and ready to grow.
- Make sure that you comply with the UK government coronavirus guidance. You can find the latest guidance here: [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://gov.uk/coronavirus)

2. Search for seeds on the ground beneath the living trees of these species:



3. Fill a pot with soil (a 500ml sized yoghurt pot will do).



4. If the soil is dry give it a bit of water to ensure it is damp.



5. Once the seedling is about 25cm high carefully move it to a larger pot.

If all has gone well your seed should germinate in spring. Water the seedling once or twice a week and move it to a sunlit location.



Take care to move all of the roots. The larger pot will allow it more room to grow.

What happens next?  
Get in touch:

Please email us\* to let us know what trees you have planted.

- We will then be able to get in touch with you next year to find out how your trees are doing and to organise the planting of them out into the wild.
- Send your email to: [qlps@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:qlps@somerset.gov.uk) adding the subject title From Little Acorns.
- Share on social with #FromLittleAcorns

\* By emailing us you are opting-in to receive updates from the QLPS. Your information will not be shared with anyone outside our organisation. For full privacy policy see: [quantockhills.com/cookie-policy](https://quantockhills.com/cookie-policy)

Quantock Landscape  
Partnership Scheme  
Reimagining the Manor



This year has been a great mast year so there are lots of acorns, hazelnuts, beech nuts and berries all around the base of these trees. Pick a small selection, (no more than 10) take them home and plant in a pot with some soil from the garden.

Water a little to make the soil moist, then leave in a cool place out of direct sunlight. If your seed germinates in spring take it to a sunnier spot and water a couple of times a week. Move it into a bigger pot to give it the space it needs to grow.

Let us know what you have grown and we will be in touch to arrange to plant them out into the Quantocks.

You can email us on:

**[qlps@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:qlps@somerset.gov.uk)**

By emailing us you are opting-in to receive updates from the QLPS. Your information will not be shared with anyone outside our organisation.

For full privacy policy see: [quantockhills.com/cookie-policy](https://quantockhills.com/cookie-policy)



# Waxing lyrical about Waxcaps

By Iain Porter

Quantock Hills AONB Development Officer

Recently I had a wonderful opportunity to spend a morning with Andy Mclay and Pete Baker looking at the fungi – mushrooms and toadstools – at Durborough Farm. In particular we were looking for waxcap fungi. The fruiting bodies of waxcap fungi are often brightly coloured, ranging from yellows, oranges and reds to purples and even black. Under the caps the gill are thick and mostly waxy and on some species the caps are slimy because of a glutinous surface layer. While it can be easy to identify a fungi as a waxcap, with over 40 species in the UK it can be harder to identify the species of waxcap.

My fascination with waxcaps started about 15 years ago when walking across Bicknoller Hill I came across a lovely pink fungi – the Ballerina or Pink Waxcap. It was so apparent in the short closely grazed grass sward and yet there was only one fruiting body. I soon learnt that waxcaps are associated with grassland habitats, especially nutrient poor ones such as hay meadows, unimproved pastures, old lawns and churchyards. If fertilizer is applied to grassland it increases the soil nutrient level and the fungi will disappear.



Ballerina waxcap

As well as being a key indicator of unimproved pasture waxcaps play a vital role in ensuring the functioning of grassland ecosystems. This is because most of the fungus is hidden away underground in the form of huge networks of fine, root-like mycelia. These mycelia break down organic matter in the soil by secreting enzymes which dissolve the plant debris which release nutrients that are absorbed by the fungus. Waxcap grasslands are rare. Agricultural intensification, either grasslands being ploughed – which breaks the mycelia – or improved through the application of fertilisers, will kill off the fungi. Even minor improvements, such as putting in a land drain, will reduce waxcaps as they are sensitive to changes in the soil such as moisture or temperature levels.



montage of the different waxcaps

Back at Durborough Farm and Andy, a leading mycologist at Natural England, was whizzing across the fields pointing out the vast numbers of waxcaps poking out of the grasslands. On the day we counted 14 species, including the glorious Ballerina waxcap but Andy and Pete have found 24 species of waxcap at Durborough Farm. The amount of species and abundance place Durborough Farm in the top ten best English waxcap grassland sites, as well as being of international importance for this group of fungi. The quality of the species rich biodiversity of the farm is a tribute to the environmentally sensitive manner in which Janet White and her family have farmed this valley over the last 55 years.

Other sites such as Fyne Court and Cothelstone Hill are also good places to go searching for grassland fungi, and while the best time to see them is usually October you can still find a few of the later ones poking their brightly coloured caps above the grass.

# Quantock Quiz – Hidden



1. Which famous literary local once brandished this instrument, and what is it? (and in which Somerset museum can it be found?)
2. Which location on the Quantocks is shown here dusted with snow?



(a)



(b)



(c)

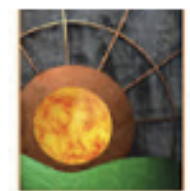


(d)

3. Can you tell these Quantock pubs from their pub signs? (we've removed some important details!)



(e)



(f)

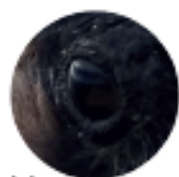


(g)



(h)

4. These ritual protection symbols found in some historic places supposedly had the power to avert which evil influence?



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

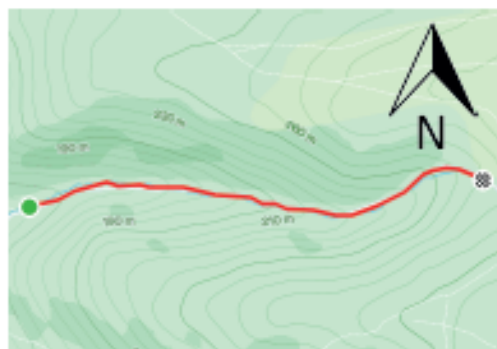


(g)



(h)

5. Can you tell each corvid pictured from just their eyes?
6. At over 1km long, with an average gradient of 12% which combe to Weacombe Hill is pictured?





# Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Update

**Bill Jenman, Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager**



A return to lockdown has made planning for the next few months and next year more difficult than usual – you can do business over platforms like Teams and Zoom but it's harder to be creative, and reaching new people face to face is impossible without events or activities. However social media is another way to reach out to new audiences, and we've been able to get our accounts up and running; Instagram and Twitter are by their nature slower to build a following but our Facebook page has 255 "likes", and our most popular post so far, the "From Little Acorns" tree planting project, has reached over 44,000 people with over 1300 reactions, comments and shares which is a brilliant result after only one month. Check them out at;

<https://www.facebook.com/quantock.lps>

<https://twitter.com/QuantockLPS>

<https://www.instagram.com/quantocklps>



We have also been working on adding content to our new website at [qlps.org](http://qlps.org) (NB no "dot uk" at the end) which will go live any day now. Available now, and every day until Christmas, is our advent calendar of stories and activities... Check it out!

In other news we've been putting quite a bit of thought into what we can deliver under Covid conditions over the coming months – the Lottery are very supportive of altering plans as much as necessary under the circumstances. We're confident we can get going on both hedgerow survey and archaeological field walking projects in the New Year. Meanwhile we have discovered that Jon Barrett, our Community Engagement and Volunteering Officer, missed his vocation as a Blue Peter presenter. Watch out for his fun "makes" – Spaxton the Sheep is coming your way 😊.

On a more serious note we have been supporting an initiative by the PCSOs (Police Community Support Officers) working in north Taunton, giving young people at risk of offending there an outlet for their energies at Kilve Court Outdoor Centre. For this sort of audience, group activities like climbing and mountain biking have been permitted even under lockdown. We aim to offer this to more groups (and not just young people at risk of offending) from January but for now I'll end with some feedback from the autumn trial run "One young man told me he wouldn't be where he was today if it wasn't for projects like this and another parent spoke to the group explaining how important a project like this can change your life and open up opportunities like it did for her son." Sometimes getting things done in the face of the pandemic feels like very hard work, but feedback like this makes the effort worthwhile.

# Thinking Of The Hills...

**Verity Jones, Quantock Hills AONB Volunteer Coordinator**

November has been a quiet month for volunteering due to the national restrictions, with group work not running, only individual volunteers like the Volunteer Rangers going out and a couple of our 'support groups' being able to meet. We are optimistic that soon we will be back to running small group activities and will let you know soon as it's definite.



There has been plenty going on behind the scenes whilst we all work away in our respective 'home offices' and managing to escape out onto the hills whenever we can. We have set up a series of online talks over the coming months to keep you entertained with various members of the team, and external partners like Somerset and Devon Wildlife Trust and have run several successful ones so far with PlantLife and the Landscape Partnership team.

Have a look at the programme below and sign up to any events here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4CAFA929AAFEC34-online>

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>30.11.2020, 14.00-15.00</b>                  | Introduction to the Brown Hairstreak butterfly with Simon Phelps, Natural Heritage Project Officer, QLPS.              |
| <b>04.12.2020, 11.00-12.00</b>                  | Combining Nature and Art for Engagement, with Jon Barrett, the Community Engagement and Volunteering Officer for QLPS. |
| <b>08.12.2020, 18.30-19.30</b>                  | Intro to bat ecology by Iain Porter, Quantock Hills, AONB Development Officer  |
| <b>10.12.2020, 16.30-17.30</b>                  | The history of the River Culm, with Dr Antony Firth of Fjord Ltd and the Connecting the Culm Project.                  |
| <b>15.12.2020, 14.00-15.00</b>                  | Somerset's Brilliant Coast talk by Somerset Wildlife Trust's Dr Mark Ward.   |
| <b>18.12.2020, 10.30-11.30</b>                  | An Introduction and how to get involved with 'Saving Devon's Trees' with Project Lead, Rosie Cotgreave.                |
| <b>21.12.2020, 19.00-20.00</b>                  | Scheduled Monuments on the Quantock Hills, with Charlotte Russell from Historic England.                               |
| <b>11.01.2021, 18.30</b>                        | The Making of the Mendip Hills, with Somerset Wildlife Trust   |
| <b>19.01.2021, 16.00-17.00</b>                  | Bumblebee Talk with Bumblebee Conservation and Somerset Wildlife Trust   |
| <b>21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2021</b> | Beaver spotting training with Devon Wildlife Trust TBC   |
| <b>01.02.2021, 10.30</b>                        | Lyme's Disease Awareness with Somerset Wildlife Trust  |

# Merry Christmas

S O H O H O H D Y Y M I S T L E T O E M P G T  
 L D M N W H E A B C O M E T S G K T R E E C R  
 C I I E P G L N I J O S U A L C N T D U K Y E  
 K P T N X I G C A V V F Y X S E V L E D P R H  
 Z U F A D E N E T D A E R B R E G N I G R R S  
 U C I C O L I R N O I N G N I K C O T S A E A  
 G J G Y N S J R A P Z U D J B E L L S Y N M D  
 X E H D N A R B S A U S L O R A C W O F C T S  
 N Z P N E S E L Y E N M I H C T Z K X W E N T  
 E A L A R H E O K R G N O R T H P O L E R E H  
 Z I O C A N D O N S E I K O O C Y W V J O M G  
 T I D M U Z N D Y L L O J N Y L I M A F L A I  
 I Z U P S B I K E N S N O I T A R O C E D N L  
 L J R D K K E J Z B P X L V P H O L L Y N R K  
 B V P H I B R W O R K S H O P N V T W S K O V  
 B M H J I C U Y N E X I V N N R V B Q V X W K

Find the following words in the puzzle.  
 Words are hidden ↑ ↓ → ← and ↘ .

|            |             |             |            |          |
|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|----------|
| BELLS      | CUPID       | GINGERBREAD | NORTH POLE | TREE     |
| BLITZEN    | DANCER      | HO HO HO    | ORNAMENT   | VIXEN    |
| CANDY CANE | DASHER      | HOLLY       | PRANCER    | WORKSHOP |
| CAROLS     | DECORATIONS | JINGLE      | REINDEER   |          |
| CHIMNEY    | DONNER      | JOLLY       | RUDOLPH    |          |
| CLAUS      | ELVES       | LIGHTS      | SANTA      |          |
| COMET      | FAMILY      | MERRY       | SLEIGH     |          |
| COOKIES    | GIFT        | MISTLETOE   | STOCKING   |          |

## Quiz Answers from page 4

1. Evelyn Waugh's ear trumpet (can be seen at Somerset Rural Life Museum).

2. Staple Plain (The Great Road)

3. (a) Hood Arms

(b) Farmers Arms

(c) Blue Ball Inn

(d) Lamb Inn, Spaxton

(e) Carew Arms

(f) Rising Sun, West Bagborough

(g) Swan, Kingston St Mary

(h) Tynite Arms

4. Witches

5. (a) hooded crow

(b) rook

(c) raven

(d) jay

(e) magpie

(f) chough

(g) jackdaw

(h) crow

6. Bicknoller Combe





[quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk)



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