

Quantock Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Winter Newsletter – Issue 18

January 2023



Photo credit - Diana B Photographie

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The Quantock Hills Partnership mourns the loss of Chairman, Anthony Trollope-Bellew



It is with great sadness that we report on the death of Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Chairman of the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), in a tragic accident last October. With a long history on the Quantock Hills Anthony's family are intrinsically part of the local community. Anthony, as well as having been a farmer himself, was heavily involved in many aspects of community life, whether that was with the Commoners Association, the parishes, the farm facilitation groups or for a significant number of years the Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) – the committee overseeing the partnership of the AONB.

In July 2001 Anthony joined the JAC representing Somerset County Council and stepped up to become Chairman straight away. In his twenty-one years as Chairman Anthony's commitment to the Quantock Hills was unwavering even when he held other time-consuming roles such as cabinet member at Somerset County Council and later as leader of West Somerset Council. Having such a deep and rich history and understanding of the Quantock Hills, he brought together people from all sectors, whether political, farming or local communities and was respected by farmers, user groups and politician colleagues alike. Within the work of the AONB Service Anthony provided advice, guidance and support, becoming to many of us a mentor.

With the move to a single Unitary Council this coming April Anthony was looking to step down from local politics and the JAC. However he had indicated his keenness to remain engaged with the AONB Partnership and his death is a loss to us and the wider community.

Iain Porter
Quantock Hills AONB Manager

Farming in Protected Landscapes: Stream Farm

Katie Read

Quantock Hills Landscape Project Officer

The Landscape Projects team have supported 24 applications to deliver FiPL projects since the programme began last summer. One of our applicants is Stream Farm, an Organic share farming operation near Broomfield, run with sustainable and regenerative principles. Stream farm is a 100ha holding with multiple farm businesses, including beef, lamb, chicken, eggs, apple juice, trout, and raw honey.

One of the farmers manages 550 Hampshire Down sheep and 140 Dexter cattle and, expanding on the regenerative ambitions of Stream Farm, had undertaken a mob grazing trial, targeting soil health and climate change resilience, as well as livestock welfare.

Mob grazing involves grazing small parcels at high stocking densities for short periods of time (24–48 hours) followed by long rest periods of 60–90 days. It has been shown to boost pasture productivity, increase soil carbon and organic matter, and improve resilience to both drought and heavy rainfall through reduction in poaching and compaction. Additionally, wildflowers are better able to compete with vigorous grasses as livestock are prevented from selectively grazing and eating regrowth, in turn attracting a range of pollinators, while trampled vegetation makes the pasture more attractive to small mammals. Livestock should also benefit from reduced incidence of some common diseases such as foot rot and parasitic worm infections, both of which are spread between animals through the pasture.

Frequently moving the livestock to ‘clean’ pasture reduces the opportunity for transmission, and long rest periods interrupt the life cycles of worms. Furthermore, the improved resilience of the vegetation allows for more abundant, protein-rich growth.



The trial found that the biggest obstacle to extending the benefits of mob grazing with sheep and cattle over the whole holding was the labour involved in moving the electric fencing as well as the difficulty of supplying water to the grazing parcels.

In many places across the holding, livestock access to water is directly from the stream, which can cause water pollution and damage to riparian habitats. The FiPL Programme funded more efficient electric fencing equipment and an upgrade to the water infrastructure on the farm, as well as a pasture plate meter and soil monitoring.

Stream Farm hosts an annual open day which receives around 1,000 visitors and is well-placed to share knowledge through connections with the local farming community as well as previous farmers who have since moved on. They will be sharing the successes and challenges of their mob grazing project widely, and also reporting the results of their soil testing to the AONB.

Stream Farm
naturally good food



Why organic?



Small is beautiful



Grass-fed



Farm Diversity



No to GM crops



For more details on the next open day keep an eye on their website: www.streamfarm.co.uk



There is still time to apply for the FiPL programme, which runs until March 2024.

If you are a farmer within the Quantock Hills AONB and have a project which meets one or more of the themes of Climate, Nature, People and Place you could be eligible to apply.

Contact our Landscape Project Officer Katie Read on katie.read@somerset.gov.uk or 07977 412249 for an initial informal chat about your ideas. You can see more case studies and information about FiPL online at www.quantockhills.com/farming-in-protected-landscapes

Archaeology in Crowcombe

Dan Broadbent

Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme, Historic Heritage Officer

Following the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme's successful archaeological investigations on Cothelstone Hill and Bicknoller in 2021, the focus of our work this year has been fixed squarely on the village of Crowcombe, with two separate investigations into the history of the village.

Firstly, during the summer, together with archaeologists from Context One Heritage & Archaeology, we spent almost 4 weeks in search of the site of the village's medieval manor, the first written record of which dates to 1295 but which may well have been of even earlier original construction. The manor, however, was demolished in the early 18th century and its exact location has never been positively identified. Various theories abound, with plausible arguments for the manor being most likely located to the East of the Church, or on the West side of the modern drive leading to Crowcombe Court, the 18th century Mansion which ultimately superseded the medieval construction. The first edition Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1886, places the manor to the due north of the churchyard, and it is in this area that the QLPS was granted access to investigate.



It is known that a later walled garden was laid out in this area by John Carew in 1676, the remains of which are still evident as slight earthworks. These remains make identifying potential locations of the manor site rather difficult, as the later walls mask any potential earlier remains. Prior to the excavations, a geophysical survey was undertaken for us by GeoFlo. This too, revealed the walled garden remains, along with a number of other anomalies, some of which suggested rubble spreads, potentially indicative of building demolition. These were chosen as the sites with the best potential for identifying evidence of the medieval manor.

Two large trenches were opened, exposing an area of 100 square metres. In addition, a number of 1m test pits were sunk to investigate some of the other anomalies identified by the geophysics. Immediately, the trenches began to show promising results, revealing a substantial spread of rubble to the west of the walled garden, and large amounts of demolition debris to the north.

This debris included huge amounts of glass and 18th century post-medieval roof tile. Much of this seemed to be associated with the demolition of the walled garden and a substantial Victorian greenhouse, but excitingly, amongst this debris were earlier remains, including fragments of medieval glass; medieval pottery sherds; and a number of medieval roofing slates.

As this debris was cleared, a building began to reveal itself and we began to believe that we had succeeded in locating part of the manor. However, as the dig progressed, it became clear that the building was, in fact, a pavilion or garden room associated with the walled garden. Amongst the finds recovered from the area of this structure were large amounts of clay pipe fragments and a number of 18th century wine and champagne bottles, helping to create a picture of the gardens and pavilion as a place of recreation and entertaining.



The manor itself remained elusive but we consoled ourselves that we had learnt a huge amount about the development of Crowcombe Court and the extent of the landscaping which had taken place there to create the 'natural' landscape that exists today. And then, with literally hours to go until the mechanical diggers arrived to start backfilling the site, one of the small test pits, originally sunk to confirm the corner of the garden wall, revealed a potentially older structure. Sitting directly beneath the garden wall, at well over a metre in depth, was another construction, comprised of much larger stone than we saw anywhere else on site.

Could this be evidence of the manor, or just a foundation, and possibly a buttress, for the corner of the walled garden? Unfortunately, it was simply too late to do anything to confirm this. Instead, like the rest of the excavations, the feature was recorded and mapped. It does, however, hold out the tantalising possibility for further investigation of this area in the future.



Volunteers with some of the many fragments of pottery they recovered during the investigations into the origins of Crowcombe Manor

We returned to the village in October, supported this time by community archaeologists Past Participate, to continue our programme of Village-Test Pitting, exploring the origins and development of Quantock villages. Test-Pitting involves assisting local residents and volunteers to dig small test pits in their own gardens in search of evidence for the village origin. It is a well-used technique for both engaging communities in archaeological research and for providing information in occupied areas which other methods cannot access. Specific research aims for the weekend included identifying evidence of any expansion or contraction of the village, or migration of foci during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

In total, nine pits were opened across the village, including in public areas close to Church House and in the beer garden of the Carew Arms. At the time of writing we are awaiting expert analysis but amongst a large number of finds were several sherds of medieval pottery and a number which may date from the Anglo-Saxon period. Interestingly, these earlier finds were recovered from the northern extremity of the village, away from what is generally recognised as the historic core.

Over 70 individual volunteers took part across the two projects, contributing almost 1,700 hours of work. In addition, nearly 100 pupils from Crowcombe and Stogumber Primary Schools took part in the Crowcombe Manor dig and around 150 local people visited our excavation open day to view the excavations; handle some of the vast number of finds recovered.

We would like to express our huge thanks to the residents of Crowcombe for their support of our work in the village this year. We will be back to share our final detailed results once the post-excavation process is complete.

New Defra Funding To Open Up Access

Iain Porter
Quantock Hills AONB Manager



The Quantock Hills AONB has been awarded Capital Access Funding totalling over £68,000, to enhance access provision across the AONB. The funding was confirmed in December with the first tranche to be spent by the end of March 2023 and the second tranche to be completed by March 2025.

In this first year the funding will be used to enhance tracks, repair car parks and to improve the information provision via the AONBs website. The AONB Service will be prioritising projects for the second tranche of funding during 2023 looking at both physical and digital enhancements and are wanting to hear from local communities over potential projects.



Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Update – Crowcombe Park Gate Car Park

Bill Jenman

Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager

Following the tragic death of Anthony Trollope-Bellew on his estate just before Christmas, the Crowcombe Estate will be in probate for a couple of years or so, and legally unable to grant us formal permission to proceed with the replacement of the Crowcombe Park Gate car park and the associated lease of the new parking area to The Friends of the Quantocks.

The extended Planning process has, to put it mildly, been extremely frustrating to navigate, with multiple consents from different bodies needed each of which looked at their own procedures and processes in isolation without considering the environmental, access, or flood management benefits of the overall package of improvements. It should simply never have taken so long to resolve – the car park should have been signed off, built, and opened a couple of years ago. As it is, by the time probate has been completed, the consents will have timed out again but more significantly so will the QLPS and its funding.

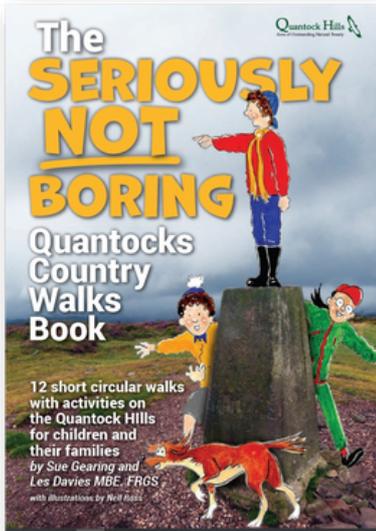
This project has taken a huge amount of staff time (not only from QLPS staff) over the last five years, and over £10k of public money, to get to this point and was a centrepiece of the QLPS capital works programme. Not being able to get this work done is a bitter disappointment, especially as we were so close to finally being able to go ahead. We were about to seek quotes for the work to start next spring when the news broke.

We will miss Anthony for his many contributions to the LPS – he had a knack of being on good terms with both “sides” when different parties had opposing views – and as such was a hugely valuable mediator and source of advice. It is therefore particularly sad that this project, on his land and of which he was always so supportive, is one bit of his legacy that we will not be able to realise.

Hopefully one way or another the AONB, The Friends of the Quantocks, or another body will be able to find fresh funding and pick up where we left off in due course.



Book Sales



What's special about this book?

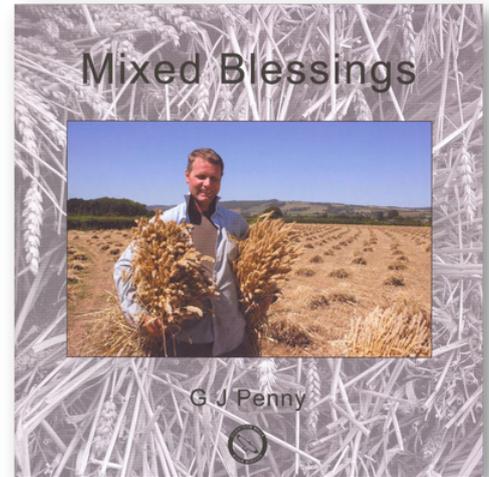
This, the Seriously NOT Boring Quantock Country, is the third in a series of 'Seriously NOT Boring' walk's book that Sue Gearing and Les Davies have written together, aimed particularly at children and their families. Still drawing upon their knowledge of the countryside, its history, landscape and natural beauty, their aim is to show that walking can be anything but boring. Together they have written many other walking books.

Here are 12 short circles in and around Quantock Country, between 3.7k (2.5 miles) and 8.4k (5.2 miles) They include fun things to do - such as making a compass in a puddle, sticky stones , building a small shelter and finding the age and height of a tree.

So come with us now and join Tom, Mia, Kate, Sam, Harry and the Scamp the inseparable dog on these circles of discovery and adventure.

Mixed blessings is a look at the lives of the agricultural community of the Quantock Hills of West Somerset, through the pictures and extracts from the many hours of interviews the author recorded with farmers and other rural workers from the surrounding area. This book contains a selection of the many hundreds of pictures which Gary has made for the Quantock Hills AONB rural archive.

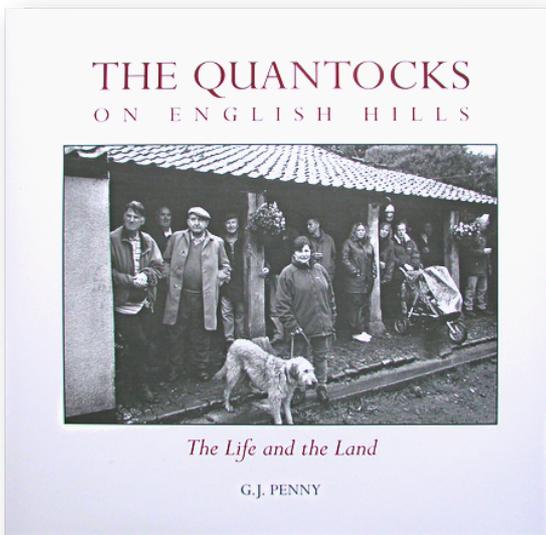
Gary has been a documentary photographer for over 20 years. During that time his work has sought through his images to define the nature of English people. His work is mainly influenced by the social documentary work of the mass observation movement during the middle and later half of the 20th century, which sets out to record the lives of the ordinary men and women of this country who are so often overlooked.



The Quantocks On English Hills is a unique social document that records in photographs of frankness but matchless beauty, one of the last truly distinctive corners of the country.

To many it will still seem a remote place. Yet the pace of change in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has led to huge pressures, not only on the scenery of the Quantocks but on the culture of the people who live and work there and so largely determine its character. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty status granted in 1957 (making the Quantocks the first AONB in England) has helped significantly to protect and preserve the hills, but the way of life here is still a fragile one.

Acclaimed photographer Gary Penny, who lives in the heart of the Quantock Hills, has spent years recording the people of the area and how they interact with the landscape, latterly as Photographer in Residence with the Quantock Hills AONB. His lens ranges widely from church to hunt, village fete to village pub, the hard life of the farmer to the whole range of country pursuits that define for so many the true spirit of the hills. His camera lingers not only on the face of the land but on the faces of the people.



Quantock Word Search

Woodland Management



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



AXE BERRIES BILLHOOK BOWSAW CHAINSAW CHARCOAL
COPPICE FELL GLADE HAZELNUT POLLARD RIDE STANDARD



PLEASE
KEEP YOUR
DOG ON A
LEAD OR
UNDER CLOSE
CONTROL AT
ALL TIMES



PLEASE
REMEMBER
TO STICK TO
DESIGNATED
PARKING
AREAS ON
THE
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**Quantock Landscape
Partnership Scheme**



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