



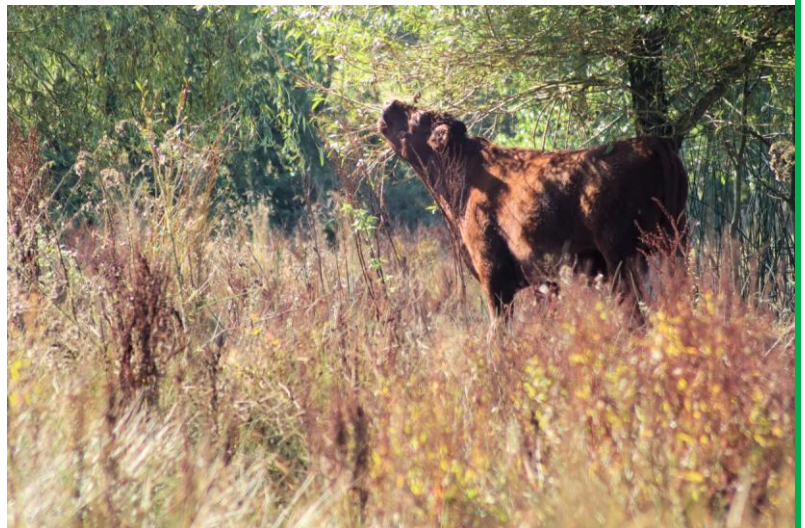
Rewilding Roborough Fields Newsletter

Much has happened since our last newsletter in July.



The fields

In terms of the fields themselves, we were lucky enough to have 9 yearling Devon Ruby cattle in the fields in August/September. These were very kindly brought in, looked after and taken out again by one of our neighbours, Neil Huggons. The cattle took to their temporary home as born to it and did a fantastic job of eating back the soft rush, the willows and the grass in the front field. The idea with using large, domestic herbivores, like cattle, is to stop succession to closed canopy woodland. These traditional breed cattle mimic the impact that their wild ancestors would have had - poaching the ground, breaking down vegetation and generally messing things up. The varied habitat that this creates then supports many more plants and animals. The cattle showed every sign of loving this varied environment and the range of fodder it offered.



The ponds

The water levels in our ponds dropped over the very hot summer, one or two even drying up, but this is not a bad thing. It means that each pond will be slightly different every year, its vegetation altered by the water level at the end of the year before. In addition, the empty ponds fill up in the autumn and therefore store water that would otherwise contribute to flooding.



Species

Our total species number (plants and animals) is now up to 486 from 250 in the baseline survey of August 2020. The overall roughness and complexity of the vegetation is much increased and the number of animals using the fields has increased as a result.



Charitable Trust

Currently the fields are owned by us (Nick and Annie) but we have applied to set up a charitable trust that will be called Roborough Rewilders. Once set up, we will transfer ownership of the land to the trust. The three trustees are Nick Benge, Annie Benge and Andrew Mounstephen. In October 2022 some friends tried to buy a field in an auction in Roborough with a view to adding it to the rewilding project but just missed out. We are still on the look-out for more opportunities to extend our rewilding project and as a charitable trust, we will be able to fund-raise in order to acquire more land, not necessarily in Roborough - (hence the change of name to Roborough Rewilders.)



Talks and Walks

Nick has been giving talks on the project with a PowerPoint presentation of beautiful photos taken by Paul Hopkinson. To date he has presented it 16 times including in Roborough, Winkleigh and various places in Scotland. Paul recorded the Roborough presentation so if you want to see it you will find it here: (control -click)

<https://www.roboroughrewilders.org/>

Nick will also be doing a walk-round of the fields on Friday 23rd June for the Devon Rewilding Network starting at 10:30 a.m. and another for the Devon Wildlife Trust on Friday 21st July meeting at 2:30 p.m. Anyone is very welcome to come along to either of these on the day.

The fields are 300 metres north of the village of Roborough on the Ebberley Road. What3words location is: Glassware-Bookmark-Squad and the OS Grid Ref: SS576175

The project has been a huge success to date, both on the ground and in terms of spreading the rewilding message. We now have 120 or so people signed up for the newsletter, and the talks have been very well received. Next steps are to develop the trust and extend the project both in terms of the land we can manage and the contribution we can make to the ever more obvious need to reverse ecosystem collapse and mitigate climate change.



Here is a drone shot of our back field. See the contrast with the surrounding fields.

Best regards,

Nick and Annie



All photos courtesy of Jo Everitt and Paul Hopkinson aka The Devon Artist

<https://devonartist.co.uk>