

National  
Trust

# MAGAZINE



Autumn 2026 £6.50

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Ironbridge Gorge

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# WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR



A sunny day at  
Killerton, Devon.

**T**here's nothing like nature to  
lift your mood and shift your  
whole day into a better place. It  
doesn't have to be much. Maybe  
it's a garden bird singing its heart out  
somewhere nearby, or a quick, thrilling  
glimpse of an urban fox. That's why I'm so delighted  
to bring you this issue's cover story, which celebrates  
the Trust's Window to the Wild initiative. Rangers  
and film-makers have sensitively placed hidden  
cameras into nestboxes, seal colonies, beaver habitats  
and more, streaming the footage online. Along  
with thousands of other captivated online viewers,  
I've watched, entranced, as eggs hatched, babies  
consumed vast quantities of snacks delivered by  
tireless parents, chicks fledged and beavers ... sneezed?  
Turn to page 28 to see some of the year's highlights for  
yourself and discover whose daily lives will be coming  
online next. Also learn how these nature cams are  
playing their part in contributing to the Trust's work  
to restore nature, helping us all access moments like  
these, while inspiring millions more of us to care –  
and take action to protect it.

*Sally*

Sally Palmer, Editor

# IN YOUR AUTUMN ISSUE



## EVERY ISSUE

- |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Out &amp; about</b> ..... 9                                                                              | <b>Just for you</b> ..... 68                                                                                              |
| Enjoy seasonal days out with art exhibitions, festive cheer and winter walks                                | Top tips, makes and things to win – plus complete the crossword for the chance to win an oak planter and shrub rose       |
| <b>My ... Erddig</b> ..... 14                                                                               | <b>Children's zone</b> ..... 74                                                                                           |
| Apple festivals and natural play: member Megan and her family share their highlights from Erddig in Wrexham | Head out on a scavenger hunt. Find crisp leaves, shiny conkers and other treasures, then make a watercolour leaf painting |
| <b>News</b> ..... 17                                                                                        | <b>From you</b> ..... 76                                                                                                  |
| B&Bs for bats, new gardens to explore and more from around the Trust                                        | Your letters and pictures, and meet volunteer 'BT', who's loved and learnt the dunes at Portstewart Strand for 40 years.  |
| <b>From the Director-General</b> ..... 20                                                                   |                                                                                                                           |
| Hilary McGrady reflects on the power of campaigning for nature                                              |                                                                                                                           |



## FEATURES

- |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Dance at dusk</b> ..... 6                                                                                | <b>Trees of Hope</b> ..... 51                                                                  |
| A mesmerising starling murmuration on the Isle of Purbeck, Dorset                                           | The iconic Sycamore Gap tree lives on through 49 saplings                                      |
| <b>Nature-first town planning</b> ..... 25                                                                  | <b>Step back in time</b> ..... 54                                                              |
| Architect George Clarke considers how to build better towns for people and nature                           | How the Trust's three Historic House Hotels balance an authentic spirit with modern comforts   |
| <b>Windows to the wild</b> ..... 28                                                                         | <b>Becoming visible</b> ..... 56                                                               |
| <b>ON THE COVER</b> The UK's wildest residents, caught on camera                                            | Exploring the lives and work of queer artists, writers and creatives who defied convention     |
| <b>Ironbridge Gorge: the next chapter</b> ..... 38                                                          | <b>Plant life</b> ..... 63                                                                     |
| Explore industrial heritage and living history at the Ironbridge Gorge museums, which are now in Trust care | Plant-based meals can be delicious and good for the planet                                     |
| <b>Open book</b> ..... 44                                                                                   | <b>Meet ... Valentina Risdonne</b> ..... 82                                                    |
| From cosy reading rooms to grand libraries, discover Trust places where you can curl up with a good book    | The conservation scientist who's setting up a world-leading archive of historic paint samples. |



**On the cover**  
Glimpses into the secret lives of UK wildlife, brought to you via the 'Window to the Wild' livestream camera footage.



# Dance at dusk

‘Biologists studying the movement of starlings in the 1930s thought the birds must be using telepathy to choreograph their astonishing murmurations,’ muses Michelle Brown, ecologist for the Isle of Purbeck in Dorset, where these swirling starlings were photographed one perfect autumn evening. ‘They gather at dusk and perform their aerial ballet for around 45 minutes, before dropping down to roost for the night. They are often drawn to bodies of water, like Little Sea on the Studland Peninsula, where sheltered reedbeds and surrounding water help protect them from night-time predators such as foxes and weasels. Their displays peak in late autumn and winter, and their roost sites can vary from year to year.’

Conservation work at Purbeck, ranging from altered grazing practices to wetland restoration and beaver reintroductions, is helping to shape a landscape where native wildlife flourishes. Starlings play an important role in the ecosystem, controlling insect populations and dispersing seeds. ‘When the landscape is healthy, starlings gather and thrive, and we get to enjoy their spectacular displays in return,’ says Michelle.

 [nationaltrust.org.uk/nature-conservation](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/nature-conservation)



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# OUT & ABOUT

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## Tree-mendous

From the apple tree that sparked a scientific discovery to the giant redwood that broke a Guinness World Record, find a special tree near you to visit this season. Just watch out for falling apples ...

### 1. One plus one Crom, County Fermanagh

The Crom yew, potentially the oldest tree in Northern Ireland, is actually two trees that have fused together into one. According to local legend, this is where the Irish Chieftain Hugh O'Neill bid farewell to his mistress in the 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607.

### 2. Giant Beech Plas Newydd, Anglesey

You'll find this colossal tree at Plas Newydd on Anglesey, close to the banks of the Menai Strait. Known as the Giant Beech Tree, it's well over a century old and boasts one of the largest trunks of any beech tree in Britain.

### 3. Ancient oaks Horner Wood, Somerset

Mosses, lichens and ferns cover the ancient oak trees in Somerset's Horner Wood, a temperate rainforest and ancient woodland set on the banks of the cascading River Horner. You can explore the woodland on one of the walking trails.

### 4. Colourful katsura Winkworth Arboretum, Surrey

The katsura trees at Winkworth, the Trust's only arboretum, are known for their heart-shaped leaves, which turn from green to brilliant shades of yellow, red and orange during the autumn. When they fall, the leaves smell sweet, like candy floss or toffee.

### 5. World Record holder Cragside, Northumberland

A 150-year-old redwood at Cragside officially became the world's tallest 'bedded' (decorated where it grows) Christmas tree last year. It's more than twice the height of the Angel of the North and is dressed in 1,300 lights during the festive period.

### 6. Tree of discovery Woolsthorpe Manor, Lincolnshire

Woolsthorpe Manor is the childhood home of Sir Isaac Newton. Here you'll find the famous Flower of Kent apple tree, near which he was sitting when a falling apple led him to develop his theory of gravity in the 17th century.

### 7. Knobbly Bob Blickling Estate, Norfolk

Sweet chestnut trees usually grow tall and straight, but 'Knobbly Bob' on the Blickling Estate is lumpy and twisted. Local folklore suggests that he was once cursed by a wizard. In fact, the bark is susceptible to fungal attack and damage, and the lumps are where the tree has tried to repair itself over the years. »

[nationaltrust.org.uk/woodland-walks](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/woodland-walks)



Do check websites or call the property for the latest information before you visit. Please book events online at [nationaltrust.org.uk/whats-on](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/whats-on) unless otherwise stated.

# OCTOBER

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## Heritage Open Days

11–20 September

Heritage Open Days returns this September, celebrating history and culture across England. This year's theme of 'Everyday Histories' shines a light on the routines, crafts and trades that defined our ancestors' lives. Lots of heritage sites open their doors – free of charge.

Many Trust places are taking part, including **Petworth** in West Sussex (12–13 Sept) where visitors can explore the house's extraordinary art collection and current exhibition *Expressions in Blue: Monumental Porcelain* by Felicity Aylieff. Or be transported back 500 years at the moated manor house of **Baddesley Clinton** in Warwickshire (13 Sept), before exploring the walled gardens and estate, set in the peaceful Forest of Arden.

Heritage Open Days is brought to you by the National Trust with funds raised by Postcode Lottery players. Find events near you at [nationaltrust.org.uk/heritage-open-days](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/heritage-open-days)

## Stranger Folk

Head out on a spooky quest this autumn with Stranger Folk, an app-based interactive game for kids (and their grown-ups!) designed especially for National Trust places. Inspired by the folklore of the British Isles, it features sneaky goblins, scary boggarts and the wise Old Crone. Search 'stranger folk' on your device's app store to download the game for free.

Find your nearest 'crack' to the spirit world at [nationaltrust.org.uk/stranger-folk](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/stranger-folk)



## Apple days

Celebrate the apple harvest and sample some heritage varieties at a Trust orchard near you

**Acorn Bank, Cumbria**  
**Apple Tasting Weekends**  
5 September–27 October

Celebrate the season with a series of apple-themed experiences in Acorn Bank's orchard. At weekends you can sample freshly picked fruit from more than 175 heritage varieties.

**Barrington Court, Somerset**  
**Remarkable Rangers: Apple Harvest Days**  
See website for dates

Drop in during harvest week to learn more about the orchards, meet the Rangers and discover how the fruit is gathered and sent off to make cider.



**Llanerchaeron, Ceredigion**  
**Apple Weekend**  
2–4 October

In the orchard, you'll find a display of more than 50 varieties grown on the estate. Watch apple pressing, enjoy cider tasting, browse stalls and bring apples for identification.

**Shaw's Corner, Hertfordshire**  
**Apple Day**  
18 October

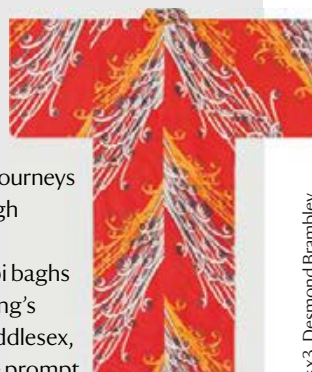
Step into George Bernard Shaw's beloved orchard for a day of tours, tastings and family fun. Sample more than 20 heritage varieties and chat to the Senior Gardener about orchard care.

LAST CHANCE TO SEE...

## JOURNEYS EXHIBITIONS

Until 1 November

Created with collector Karun Thakar, *Journeys* traces the global stories woven through textiles. **Blickling Estate** in Norfolk showcases Japanese kimonos, Punjabi baghs and French toiles that highlight Blickling's global connections. At **Osterley** in Middlesex, textiles exploring migration and trade prompt reflections on the estate's links to empire. And **Dyrham Park** in South Gloucestershire is transformed by West African Asafo flags, celebrating heritage, symbolism and identity. [nationaltrust.org.uk/special-exhibitions](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/special-exhibitions)



National Trust Images x3, Desmond Brambley

# NOVEMBER

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## Diwali

**Corfe Castle, Dorset**  
25 October

Join Corfe Castle's after-dark Diwali celebrations, with a light trail, rangoli artworks, live music and dance, Indian food stalls and craft activities. Co-created with the Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch Indian Community, the night will culminate with a diya-lighting ceremony, with visitors invited to light clay oil lamps, symbolising the triumph of light over darkness. Booking essential.



**Dunstable Downs, Bedfordshire**  
See website for dates

This year's Diwali celebrations will be brighter and more colourful than ever. Everyone is welcome to come and join in making rangoli art, making and lighting diya oil lamps and crafting marigolds, which are traditional decorations for festive occasions in India. There'll also be music, dancing, henna and special Diwali treats available from the café.

**East Riddlesden Hall, West Yorkshire**  
6–11 November

Run in partnership with Bradford Hindu Council, the lower floor of the hall will be decorated with lamps and hand-made paper flowers. Listen to traditional Indian music played on the flute and tabla hand drums. There'll also be puppet shows and storytelling led by the local Hindu community.

LAST CHANCE TO SEE...

## Meet Rembrandt

**Upton House, Warwickshire**  
Until 8 November



Have a seat and take time to absorb Rembrandt van Rijn's masterpiece, *Self Portrait Wearing a Feathered Bonnet* (1635). The audio description encourages viewers to linger over the painting's details in a 'slow looking' experience and hear from the conservators and curators who have taken the artwork on its conservation journey. After Upton House, the painting returns to its usual home of Buckland Abbey in Devon. [nationaltrust.org.uk/upton-house](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/upton-house)

## FUNGI SPOTTING

Look out for some of these weird and wonderful fungi on your next autumn walk

**IMPORTANT**

Never touch, pick or eat any fungi you find. As well as supporting important ecosystems, many fungi are poisonous.

### Amethyst deceiver

Spot the vibrant amethyst deceiver in leaf-litter and wet moss during autumn. It's one of about 400 species of fungi you can find at **Sheringham Park** in Norfolk.



### Chicken of the woods

Look out for the orange or yellow tiers, named for their cooked-chicken-like appearance, if you're walking through the Big Wood at **Erddig** in Wrexham.



### Fairy ring champignon

These mushrooms grow in 'fairy rings' in grassland, and can be hundreds of years old. Look at **Ickworth** in Suffolk or **Golden Cap** in Dorset.



### Fly agaric

Found under birch, pine or spruce trees, the fly agaric looks like it's from a fairy tale. Try the woods at **Brimham Rocks** in North Yorkshire or **Mount Stewart** in County Down.



**i** *The Fungi Spotter's Guide* by Lynne Boddy and Ali Ashby is out on 8 October (National Trust Books, £9.99) [nationaltrust.org.uk/shop-books](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/shop-books) »

# DECEMBER

» Find more to do near you  
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## FESTIVE CHEER

**Hill Top, Cumbria**  
**A Hill Top Christmas Tale**  
7 November–13 December  
(closed Thursdays)

Step inside Beatrix Potter's beloved farmhouse to find Christmas decorations straight from a storybook, with lights, music and playful touches inspired by her characters.



**Polesden Lacey, Surrey**  
**The 12 Days of Christmas**  
21 November–3 January

Lavish immersive displays and sparkling trees decorate the house at Polesden Lacey, themed on the 12 Days of Christmas. Admire the six metre (20ft) Christmas tree, follow the children's trail around the grounds and pick up a festive treat in the café.

**Longshaw, Derbyshire**  
**A Longshaw Christmas**  
See website for dates and booking information

Enjoy a nature-based Christmas at Longshaw, with a children's deer trail around the woods, crafts and wreath-making. Take your little elves to meet Father Christmas, and buy a Christmas tree to take home.

## Winter lights

Light up the dark winter nights at a Christmas illumination event. At **Stourhead** in Wiltshire, light installations including a 'sea of light', 'fire garden' and 'winter cathedral' will be set against the backdrop of the Palladian gardens. Step into a winter wonderland at **Wimpole** in Cambridgeshire, with its illuminated trail and festive food and drink. And at **Belton** in Lincolnshire, expect twinkling lights and immersive seasonal sounds. Find winter lights near you at [nationaltrust.org.uk/winter-lights](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/winter-lights)



## Walks for all

**Bolberry Down, Devon**  
**Amble on the Down: 1 mile (1.6km)**



Explore the Devon coastline on an easy, circular route with great views around the flat plateau of Bolberry Down. Expect some uneven ground and a kissing gate.

[nationaltrust.org.uk/bolberry-down-amble](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/bolberry-down-amble)



**Calke Abbey, Derbyshire**  
**Tramway Trail: 3.7 miles (5.9km) or 6.3 miles (10.1km)**



Explore woodland, farmland and pasture. The accessible figure-of-eight route is suitable for walkers, wheelchairs, pushchairs and cyclists.

[nationaltrust.org.uk/calke-tramway-trail](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/calke-tramway-trail)



**Mount Stewart, County Down**  
**Lake walk: 0.6 miles (0.9km)**



Enjoy a picturesque lakeside route through the gardens of Mount Stewart in County Down. It is accessible to wheelchair users, but there are some gravelly parts.

[nationaltrust.org.uk/mount-stewart-lake-walk](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/mount-stewart-lake-walk)



**Rhosili, Gower Peninsula**  
**Serpents, seascapes and shipwrecks walk: 1 mile (1.6km)**



Soak up views of Rhosili's sandy beach on the path to the Old Coastguard Lookout. It's suitable for trampers and motorised wheelchairs.

[nationaltrust.org.uk/rhosili-seascapes-walk](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/rhosili-seascapes-walk)



**Sizergh, Cumbria**  
**Holeslack Access Trail: 1.2 miles (1.9km)**



Take in Sizergh's ancient woodlands, orchards and historic farm buildings on this path. It's suitable for pushchairs and electric wheelchair users.

[nationaltrust.org.uk/sizergh-holeslack-trail](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/sizergh-holeslack-trail)



National Trust Images x10

# JANUARY

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## Snowdrop spotting

Don't miss our snowdrop displays! They're at their best in January and February and are a reminder that spring is not far away



**Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire**

Baddesley Clinton's gardeners began planting a new snowdrop woodland last winter thanks to a kind donation from the Southeast Staffordshire National Trust Association. Over the next 10 years, hundreds more bulbs will be planted here.

**Kingston Lacy, Dorset**

Find a bench along the twisting paths of the Fernery to enjoy views of the rustic raised beds, which burst with 35 different varieties of snowdrop in January and February. Continue on to the Lime Avenue for more snowdrops.

**Bodnant Garden, Conwy**

Bodnant's display of snowdrops gets more impressive each year thanks to their annual planting of new bulbs. They first appear in early January, and by the end of February thousands blanket the Old Park.

**Wallington, Northumberland**

Towards the end of winter, Wallington's woodlands become a carpet of delicate white snowdrops – one million of them, no less – which dedicated gardeners, volunteers and visitors have planted over the last 10 years.

 Find more snowdrop swathes at [nationaltrust.org.uk/snowdrops](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/snowdrops)

## This month in history



In January 1901, in a little hut on the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall, Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi received a radio transmission from the Isle of Wight over 180 miles (290km) away. The signal proved radio could work over the horizon – something many scientists thought impossible at the time – helping pave the way for today's instant wireless communication. The Lizard Wireless Station at Bass Point has been restored to look how it would have in Marconi's day. It reopens in April 2027, at times dependent on volunteer availability. [nationaltrust.org.uk/marconi-stations](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/marconi-stations)

© Martin Parr / Magnum Photos, Justin Piperger

## Lacock by Martin Parr exhibition

**Fox Talbot Museum, Lacock, Wiltshire**  
Until 27 June 2027

Lacock by Martin Parr wittily captures everyday life in the village of Lacock in a new exhibition by the renowned photographer. Parr completed the portraits shortly before his death last year, making this his last major commission.

The exhibition reflects Parr's deep appreciation for Lacock's history and the work of Henry Fox Talbot. [nationaltrust.org.uk/lacock](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/lacock)



## At the Bend in the River

**Beningbrough, N. Yorkshire**  
10 October–4 April (on open days)



Discover evocative riverscapes and moments of stillness in Beningbrough's Reddihough Galleries with an exhibition of works by British artist Nancy Cadogan, many painted on-site. Her expressive paintings offer new perspectives on the natural world and human connections. 

# MY... ERDDIG



'I'm Megan Wynne. My partner Liam and I have been visiting Erddig, in Wrexham, since we were kids. Now we bring our own children – Emlyn, aged 3, and Will, who's 1.'



## Coming full circle

Liam and I both grew up visiting Erddig – school trips and summer evenings watching outdoor theatre with our families. Now we're bringing our own children and creating a new layer of memories. We became members two years ago and visit regularly.

## House and home

We often explore the house and the outbuildings. The portraits and photographs of past house staff members are fascinating – like stepping into another time. Our boys love the collection of old cars and the stables, and our eldest always lingers in the nursery, tempted by the toys on display.



## Core memories

Erddig's annual Apple Harvest Celebration (26–27 September and 3–4 October 2026) is a highlight of the year. We have a go at apple-themed arts and crafts and try games like 'hook the apple'. You can help with apple picking, and maybe even buy some to take home.

## Wild in the woods

We love visiting the Wolf's Den natural play area, especially in autumn when all the leaves, conkers and acorns are spread across the woodland floor for the children to collect and explore. Emlyn really enjoys climbing, balancing and challenging himself on the rope swings and balance beams, and spotting insects and wildlife as he plays.



## Scoops and sips

Every visit comes with its own ritual: a warming coffee from the Hayloft café for me and Liam, and Emlyn is always keen for an ice cream – whatever the weather or time of year!



## A garden for all seasons

Seasonal changes mean every visit is different. The children love learning the names of all the flowers as they bloom in the borders. In the cooler months, it's so peaceful to pause in front of the house and watch the mist rise over the water of the garden canal.



## AT A GLANCE

**Built:** 1684–c. 94, with the addition of wings to the north and south around 1721–24

**Taken into Trust care:** 1973

**Style:** Restoration/Georgian

**Architect:** Thomas Webb

### Potted history:

**1682:** Joshua Edisbury was appointed High Sheriff of Denbighshire and set out to build a grand mansion on his estate at Erddig. Spiralling costs pushed him into bankruptcy, and in 1709 he left for good.

**1714:** John Meller (1665–1733), a wealthy lawyer, bought the estate and developed the house and gardens. Childless, he left Erddig to his nephew Simon Yorke I (1696–1767).

**1922:** The family's fortunes were fading, yet Simon Yorke IV (1903–66) was determined to keep the estate intact. But coal mining beneath the house in the 1940s caused severe subsidence, leaving roofs leaking and the south wing sinking.

**1966:** Simon's brother Philip Yorke III (1905–78) inherited a crumbling mansion. He worked with the National Trust to negotiate compensation from the Coal Board before transferring Erddig to the Trust in 1973. A four-year restoration followed.

**1977:** On 27 June, Prince Charles opened Erddig to the public. Philip Yorke III persuaded the Prince to have a go on his penny-farthing.

## IF YOU HAVE ...

**An hour:** Explore the servants' quarters to find out what life was like working 'below stairs' in the early 20th century.

**A day:** Take a seasonal walk around the 486-hectare (1,200-acre) estate, or tick off some of our '50 things' activities.

**A weekend:** Head eight miles south of Erddig to explore 13th-century Chirk Castle. The estate has two holiday cottages: Home Farm Cottage and Ty'r Stocmon.

 Plan your visit at [nationaltrust.org.uk/erddig](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/erddig)

Would you like to share your favourite Trust place in the magazine? Write to us using the details on page 76. If we can feature it, we'll be in touch.



Holidays

Emley Farmhouse,  
Surrey

Stay to  
celebrate

Whether you're gathering for a special day, toasting a loved one, or simply reuniting with your favourite people, discover spaces for all your celebrations.

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# NEWS

**Q&A with Tayshan Hayden-Smith**  
'Closing the Green Gap' **p19**

**From the D-G**  
Hilary McGrady on the Nature = Future campaign **p20**

**This year's AGM**  
Get involved in your AGM in person or online **p23**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.**  
Here's what the Trust has been doing this season



National Trust/Jenni Holsey

## Building Arcadia

At Shugborough Estate in Staffordshire, an exciting new project is taking root. Known as Arcadia, part of the estate has been redesigned as a forest garden, where every plant is a vital part of the self-sustaining ecosystem.

Carefully planned pairings of mutually beneficial plants will allow the innovative garden to water and fertilise itself. It's a magic trick that helps build resilience against pests, disease and climate change.

And it's not just clever – it's beautiful. Within the sanctuary of the Grade-II listed walled garden, visitors will be able to weave through interconnected areas and learn about the more than 100,000 plants that make Arcadia's ecosystem possible, and how to apply the idea of forest gardening to your own green spaces.

Arcadia will open to visitors in autumn 2026 as the Trust's first forest garden, and the largest of its kind in the UK. [nationaltrust.org.uk/shugborough](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/shugborough) »



## Living legacy

In the charming Suffolk hamlet of Flatford, riverside cottages, paths and meadows once served as the inspiration for some of John Constable's most famous paintings, including *The Hay Wain* (1821). We're expanding our work to protect and celebrate this part of the country he loved by finalising our plans to take over the running the Flatford Wildlife Garden.

The garden was first opened to the public by the RSPB in 2011, with the aim of inspiring visitors to have their own wildlife-friendly gardening ideas. Growing the legacy of the RSPB's work, the Trust plans to open the garden in 2027, continuing to maintain and develop it for people's enjoyment and wildlife's benefit. In the future we hope to offer sensory experiences and improved access to this tranquil corner of Flatford. [nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford)

## Rievaulx reunited

Rising from the tranquil River Rye valley in North Yorkshire, Rievaulx Abbey has looked out over its landscape for nearly a millennium. English Heritage cares for the historic abbey ruins – and now, as part of a new agreement, National Trust members can visit them for free.

The move reunites the abbey with neighbouring Rievaulx Terrace, one of Yorkshire's finest 18th-century landscape gardens. The gardens, which are owned by the Trust, have been leased to English Heritage as part of the new arrangements.

Rievaulx Terrace is one of the best spots to view the abbey ruins, and the roots connecting the two places run deep.

[english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/rievaulx-abbey](https://english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/rievaulx-abbey)



## HOMES FOR NATURE



### Going to bat

A 19th-century Gothic folly on the Petworth Estate has been kitted out with a 'thermocline hibernaculum', which makes a perfect pad for rare greater horseshoe bats. It creates stable climate conditions for their winter hibernation and summer breeding.



### Watery digs

Over 150 water voles were released in North Devon in June. And 300 more were released into the North Wey River in the South Downs, thanks to a partnership between local people, landowners and organisations including the Trust.



### Pine haven

Den boxes for pine martens have been installed at Stourhead in Wiltshire, and some of the elusive mustelids have already been spotted on the estate. The Trust is working with Wiltshire Mammal Group and The Vincent Wildlife Trust to monitor their presence, with the hope that they'll thrive here.

National Trust Images x2, Alamy, English Heritage, RSPB Images/Sam Turley



## Beneath the paint

Visitors to Nostell in West Yorkshire can take a closer look at one of the greatest treasures in its collection – a painting of *Sir Thomas More and his Family* (c. 1592–1620). The work shows three generations of the family of Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor, who was executed for treason for not supporting the annulment of the King's first marriage. It's a rare copy of the lost original by German painter Hans Holbein the Younger, composed before More's execution in 1535.

In early September visitors to Nostell can see the painting undergoing technical analysis, using infrared reflectography and a newer imaging technique called MA-XRF.

The aim is to solve some of the mysteries around the artwork – such as who painted it, is it a close copy of Holbein's original, and has it been altered over time? While the analysis takes place on site, there'll be pop-up talks by the specialists doing the work. Why not return in spring 2027 to discover the full results?

[nationaltrust.org.uk/nostell](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/nostell)

National Trust Images x2



## Q&A

Gardener, activist and National Trust Ambassador **Tayshan Hayden-Smith** discusses the inaugural 'Closing the Green Gap' community garden in North Kensington

### What inspired you to create this garden with Lancaster Youth Hub?

I founded Grow to Know – a not-for-profit collective – in the wake of 2017's Grenfell Tower tragedy. It was one of the biggest preventable tragedies in recent history. In the aftermath of the fire, a movement grew of guerrilla gardening by local young people, building living spaces in a community that deserved so much more.

That spirit brought us to Lancaster Youth Hub, one of only a few youth clubs left in North Kensington.

Together, we wanted to do something to help counteract the many institutional failures that have seen young people in this area deprioritised and left to fend for themselves. This sparked our 'Closing the Green Gap' campaign to create a series of community gardens shaped by the people who use these spaces every day. The Hub felt like a natural home for our inaugural garden.

### What are your hopes for the garden when it opens?

The community garden will truly belong to the young people who co-designed it, and the hope is for a new wave of young horticulturalists, garden designers and architects to emerge from North Kensington.

### What are the next steps for 'Closing the Green Gap'?

As well as supporting the young people to steward and use the first garden as they see fit, we'll be working on the second Closing the Green Gap space at Meanwhile Gardens in Westbourne, North Kensington. We're aiming to have it co-designed and built in 2027 – so much to do and so little time! But with the Trust's continued support with advocacy and advice from experts, I'm confident we'll get there.

We'll also be raising funds for Closing the Green Gap: In the Wild, which will see young people from North Kensington travel to beautiful places, sometimes overnight.

### What's the value of gardening for young people?

Priceless. As someone who started gardening aged 20 following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, I'd say that gardening and nature came to my rescue. I've seen just how powerful it can be. Now imagine if every young person was able to experience that. »

 [growtoknow.world](https://growtoknow.world)

**Above:** Tayshan with Newton's apple tree at Woolsthorpe Manor, Lincolnshire.



Autumn 2026

## From the Director-General

Nature = Future

As Director-General, I'm not allowed to have favourite National Trust properties. But there is one that holds a particularly special place in my heart, and that's Crom. It's a cluster of islands, woods and ruins on the banks of Upper Lough Erne in Northern Ireland, and it's so beautiful that it feels like you're standing inside a picture book.

No wonder it was chosen as the host location for this year's BBC *Springwatch*. An amazing array of birds, butterflies and insects all call the islands 'home', as do a few very hungry pine martens. You might have even seen videos of its famous swimming cows on social media. And there are stories everywhere you turn. The castle survived two Jacobite invasions (just) before accidentally burning down, and in the 1940s the whole site was requisitioned as a base for US troops. It's one of those places that's awash with nature and with history – and we should have more of those.

People need nature and culture, not just in wonderful oases like Crom, but in everyday life. That's what you tell me and that's what many of you have been telling the Government too, through our campaign Nature = Future. We launched the campaign earlier this year to call on the Government to restore nature faster and tackle unfair access to green space, and your support has meant the message is being heard. Thousands upon thousands of letters have been sent, to almost every local MP in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Thousands more have gone

straight to Whitehall, to the door of the Environment Secretary, and to Stormont too.

We're now speaking to MPs about what they can do for their constituents, and to politicians about strengthening the laws that protect nature and enabling more people to have nature in their lives and enjoy it. People often ask me whether writing to your MP makes a difference, and I can tell you, honestly, it does.

Since the campaign launched, we've seen money promised for threatened wildlife and a project to bring back the golden eagle, 150 years after it disappeared from our skies. We've seen a bill announced that aims to clean up our rivers, and we've heard the issue of access to green space debated in the House of Lords. It's not enough yet – but it's certainly a start.

So thank you to everyone who wrote a letter, and please keep up those actions to support nature and culture – however large or small. It will take all of us to make a difference and it won't always be easy. But the National Trust is in it for the long haul. As the adage goes, Rome, or should that be Crom, wasn't built in a day.

Hilary McGrady

**Above left** Crom, on the banks of Upper Lough Erne, in County Fermanagh, is full of wildlife and history.

**Above** A white wagtail on the Crom Estate.

**Inset** Hilary at Morden Hall Park, London.

National Trust Images x3

## CHANGING CHALK

A four-year partnership to restore globally rare chalk grassland across the eastern South Downs has concluded. It's boosted habitats for nature and local opportunities in the area, and celebrated the long human history locked in the landscape.

**650 ha** of chalk grassland have been transformed into havens for wildlife to support this rare habitat's mosaic of grassland species, which range from orchids to reptiles.

**50,000 people** directly participated in activities celebrating the heritage and natural beauty here, including ecotherapy, workshops and farm experiences for children.

**30,000 hours** have been contributed by volunteers to community activities and nature conservation tasks – thank you!

**32 rare wart-biter bush-crickets** were translocated within the project area to establish a new population in the South Downs.

**13 organisations** worked together on the project, including conservation and community groups, local councils, farmers and research institutions.

**21 interlinked projects** connected communities to the landscape on their doorstep.

**£4.27m invested in nature, people and heritage** by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, partner contributions and generous support from other funders.

[nationaltrust.org.uk/changing-chalk-partnership](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/changing-chalk-partnership)



## Fungi future

A farm at Wallington, Northumberland, will be the first site in the UK to trial an innovative – if unexpected – new carbon capture and food production technique. Known as 'mycoforestry', it could deliver carbon-negative edible mushroom crops.

The project has already involved the creation of a new woodland, thanks to support from Defra's Nature for Climate Fund. University of Stirling researchers inoculated many of the saplings with fungi spores which will grow into mushrooms and work symbiotically with the trees. The fungi's mycelium 'roots' help the trees to absorb more water and nutrients from soil, and the trees provide fungi with carbon-rich sugars.

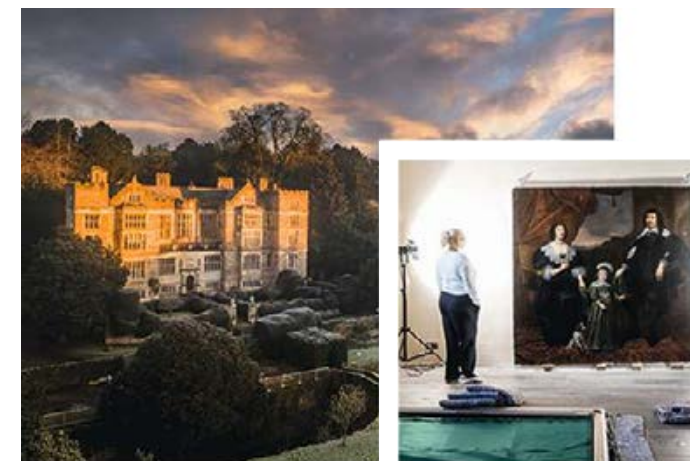
The trees also absorb carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere and transferring carbon into the soil, where mycelia act as natural carbon storage units.

## Opening the doors

Tucked within the Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal Estate in North Yorkshire, Fountains Hall is one of the site's most intriguing yet historically overlooked buildings. Now, reopened rooms welcome visitors for the first time in decades.

The new interpretations show how the 400-year-old building's interiors evolved from manorial court to chapel to family home, with volunteer guides bringing the stories of its layered past to life. The Hall also celebrates the return of a portrait of Sir John Mallory and his family, who owned Studley Royal from the 15th century. Conserved after decades in storage, the painting now hangs in the Hall once more.

[nationaltrust.org.uk/fountains-abbey](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/fountains-abbey) »



National Trust Images x2, National Trust/Mike Heaton, National Trust/Jenni Shepherd

# NEED TO KNOW

## Get involved in your 2026 AGM



Your Annual General Meeting’s a familiar fixture in the Trust’s calendar, and we’d love you to be part of it again this year.

**The AGM will be held online and at the STEAM Museum, Swindon, on 7 November.**

The AGM is your opportunity to catch up on the work we’ve been doing over the past 12 months, hear about priorities for the year ahead and take part in decisions that help shape our shared future. Your voice matters, and the AGM is one of the most direct ways to make it heard.

**You can have your say by:**

- electing members of the Trust’s Council, who in turn appoint the Board of Trustees and monitor and support the Board’s work.
- voting on resolutions proposed by your fellow National Trust members.
- asking questions – which can be done at the meeting itself if you’re attending, or in advance by emailing [agm@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:agm@nationaltrust.org.uk). We aim to respond to as many questions as possible on the day.

### HOW TO VOTE

**You don’t need to attend the AGM in order to vote.** Council election voting closes at **11.59pm on Friday 30 October**, and all election votes must be cast before then. AGM resolutions can be voted on in advance by the same deadline or, if you attend the AGM, during the meeting itself.

The AGM booklet on our website contains information about candidates standing for election to Council and details of this year’s Members Resolutions on banking arrangements and the Council election process.

Visit [nationaltrust.org.uk/agm](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/agm) or phone 0344 800 1895 to get all the information you need, including how to:

- cast your vote.
- register to attend online or in person. This must be done in advance.
- request a paper AGM booklet. Requests must be received by 5pm on 9 October.



### Motor revival

A beloved Wolseley Eight car is finally on the road again after years consigned to a garage. From 1946, the car – lovingly named ‘Bud’ on account of its number plate – was owned by Lady Elizabeth Nuffield of Nuffield Place, Oxfordshire. Her husband William Morris, Lord Nuffield, is widely recognised as the father of the British motor industry.

Recently, Ollie, a mechanic from the specialist conservation garage at the British Motor Museum, embraced the challenge of hunting down the right parts and has painstakingly restored everything from cork gaskets to the rubber parts of the suspension. Bud finally passed his MOT in February 2026 and the only roadworthy car in the Trust’s historic collection is now back on display at Nuffield Place.

### STAY IN THE LOOP



Keep your email address up to date in My Account to receive AGM and election updates direct to your inbox. Use the QR code below or go to [nationaltrust.org.uk/my-account-info](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/my-account-info)



National Trust Imagesx3



National Trust

# We all need nature; it’s a matter of survival

**Nature is our future. It is the air we breathe, the water we drink. Nature helps us feel connected, at peace, and replenished.**

But nature is disappearing at an alarming rate.

**This is a human crisis.**

When nature is thriving, people flourish. Communities are better protected from floods and heat; places become healthier, more beautiful and hopeful.

We **can** restore nature. But we need to do it **together**.

By showing your support, your donation will help restore nature.

It will plant trees. Save species. Connect habitats. Protect wildlife.

The National Trust protects and cares for the nation’s coast, historic sites, countryside and green spaces. Generations of people have stepped up to help people and nature thrive.

**Will you stand with us today and build a brighter tomorrow?**



**Donate today. Scan the QR code or visit**

**[nationaltrust.org.uk/everyone-needs-nature-appeal](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/everyone-needs-nature-appeal)**

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\*Valid between 02/09/26 - 30/11/26. Minimum spend £85. Discount not redeemable in concession stores.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ...?

What happens when

# we build towns that put people and nature first?

George Clarke believes in the power of planning. Revisiting the utopian, nature-led new town of his youth, the architect suggests how we might build better neighbourhoods for everyone

By Vincent Crump

**W**ashington was revolutionary in its day – a utopia for my parents moving in from the cramped terraces of inner-city Sunderland. In less than a

decade, a team of designers and landscape architects created this state-of-the-art town from scratch. They built housing for 50,000 people, with all the transport, parks, shops and doctors' surgeries they would need. It was a lovely place to live.'

George Clarke has risen to become one of Britain's best-known architects. On a string of hit shows for Channel 4, he works wonders transforming everyday homes into attractive, eco-friendly living spaces, driven by his abiding belief that good design can change lives for the better. Much of this stems from his early years growing up in a council house in Washington, a 1960s new town in Tyne and Wear.

'The town inspired me as an architect and shaped me as a person,' says George, who is also a National Trust ambassador. 'The vision behind the place was radical, and the town planning was deeply humane. Our new estates were designed as a series of villages, each with its own primary school, corner shop, pub and village hall.' His walk to school was just over a kilometre and didn't involve a single road crossing. 'I picked up friends along the way – we all walked.'

The homes were spacious, with plenty of green space. 'My mum's house is two storeys, with four bedrooms and a front and back garden. All the houses look out on a courtyard square, with the cars parked round the back, away from where we played. The sense of community was off the scale. Everything was so lush and green too – they did a great job with the landscaping.'

As the Government pledges 1.5 million new homes to address the UK's housing crisis, George's personal perspective on what makes a successful urban neighbourhood couldn't be more relevant. With 21st-century 'new towns' planned for seven sites around the UK, the urgent demand for housing arrives against a backdrop of climate change and nature loss.



**Previous page** Compact terraces in Portsmouth, Hampshire (top), contrasting with Milton Keynes, Bucks. (bottom), built as a green new town in 1967.

**Left** George Clarke (below) grew up in a council house in another new town: Washington, Tyne and Wear, where the homes were spacious with lots of green space.



This is often compounded by political rhetoric that paints the environment as a 'blocker' to development – a narrative that conservation organisations like the Trust are fighting hard to contest. 'We think it's false to say you can have growth or nature but not both,' says Georgina Holmes-Skelton, the Trust's Head of Public Policy. 'Green space isn't a luxury – it's a human need, benefiting physical and mental health.'

Biodiversity has proved to be fundamental to a nation's long-term economic prosperity. Research from the Green Finance Institute suggests that damage to the natural environment could cause a 12 per cent loss to UK GDP – a steeper decline than that caused by the pandemic. While 80 per cent of British people live within 15 minutes of a decent-sized green space, this figure plummets to as low as 1 per cent in the country's most disadvantaged, urban areas. As a recent Trust-backed report warned, many first-time buyers are effectively being forced into 'nature deserts', a symptom of a long-term failure by governments to create greener, healthier new-build developments.

George echoes the Trust's call for nature to be 'planned in' to housing developments before a spade hits the soil, prioritising the preservation of existing habitats wherever possible. 'In Washington, it felt like greenery and wildlife were all around us,' he recalls. 'It was integrated into the original design. Ponds and waterways ran through the town, where we'd find tadpoles, mice and voles. There were plenty of birds too, thanks to the hundreds of thousands of saplings planted there. Those trees have since

matured over the years – if you look at Washington on aerial imagery today, it looks like a forest.'

George sees parallels between today's generation of young adults, shoehorned into pricey private rentals, and that of his parents, rescued by the new towns from the decaying industrial slums of post-war UK. He is unimpressed by the housebuilding policy of recent decades, with its piecemeal approach and legacy of bland edge-of-town estates, designed mainly to maximise profit. 'These places look like a handful of Monopoly houses have been thrown down willy-nilly, devoid of the vibrant social amenities that made Washington a success. Nature is often an afterthought, a token square of grass rather than an integrated part of the landscape.'

George believes house buyers deserve more for their money, and there's a lack of guidance for the big housebuilders. 'They don't invest in suitable architects, and local authorities don't have a coherent plan.'

He points to the Duchy of Cornwall's housing developments at Poundbury in Dorset and Nansledan in Cornwall, as back-to-the-future blueprints for a better solution. Both developments are founded on New Urbanism, an American movement that promotes environmentally friendly habits by creating walkable districts with a range of housing, an onus on bikes and buses over cars, and a commitment to jobs on the doorstep. 'They rediscover some of the principles of good urban planning that

we've lost in this country,' George says. 'Nansledan is a simple village model with pedestrianised avenues, places for people to come together, and beautiful parks. Not every building is to my taste, but who wouldn't love to live in a well-built Georgian home? There's a reason that style of architecture has stood the test of time.'

Of course, the monarch can't bankroll every modern mass housing project – and the green new settlements of the 1960s were pump-primed by major public sector investment. Washington Development Corporation was mandated to buy land at agricultural prices, which made for healthy profits as soon as it was developed. In the past, major projects like Milton Keynes were self-sustaining, funded by endowments that still maintain the city's forests, lakes and parks to this day, with green space occupying about 25 per cent of the city.

In an age of tightening public purse strings, and with the Government demanding an 'ambitious density' of properties built on each plot of ground, Georgina accepts that most new housing will continue to come from smaller-scale private schemes. 'But even modest pockets of nature can be meaningful if they link

together well, creating green corridors for the wellbeing of people and wildlife,' she says.

The Trust is calling for planning authorities to make use of new strategic planning powers to think holistically across towns and cities, finding the areas of public space that already exist and seeking to expand and enhance it. 'We've seen it work in places like the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London, where the River Lea was cleaned up and used as a backbone for a joined-up network of green spaces,' says Georgina. 'They are cherished because they serve different community needs – whether for sport and exercise, children's play, outdoor gatherings or gentler contemplation in nature.'

One Trust project seeking to move the dial is the 8 Hills Regional Park, between Birmingham and Bromsgrove. With the area facing growing pressure from both development and visitor numbers, the Trust is working with partners to join up green spaces, with future housebuilding contributing to their creation and upkeep.

'This patch is pretty typical of lots of urban fringe landscapes, and we hope our plans can be replicated elsewhere,' says Hannah Sargent, the Trust's project lead. 'We're looking to link up public transport,

walking, cycling and horse-riding routes so city folk can get into the outdoors, and we're incentivising farmers to open new footpaths that will make it easier for people to access nature closer to home.' The same thinking lies behind Nature Towns and Cities, a coalition launched by the Trust with Natural England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund, which aims to give 5 million more urban dwellers access to nature over the next decade.

For George, green planning begins on a small scale. 'Nature should be hard-wired into everyday life, with green roofs, roadside rain gardens and vertical planting on the walls,' he says. 'We should have pocket wildflower meadows, beehives and allotments. If planners are worried about the long-term maintenance of green spaces, they should rally the community to help care for it. They'd rise to the challenge.'

He believes we should invest in developments that last, working *with* nature rather than against it. 'That's what I grew up with in Washington, and with the right ambition, it's within our grasp today.' ○

**Vincent Crump** is a journalist, writer, editor and editorial consultant.

## “In Washington, it felt like greenery and wildlife were all around us



National Trust Images, National Trust/Steve Sayers, Alamy, George Clarke



**Below left** Community members have a chat during a tree-planting day at Redhill Park, Bournemouth.

**Below** The River Lea was cleaned up in 2012 when the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park was created in London.

You no longer need hiking boots, a snorkel or a four-wheel drive to get closer than ever to the UK's wildest residents. Reach for the popcorn – nature is putting on a show

**H**earing about the rich and varied wildlife that exists in the far-flung corners of the UK is all well and good – but nothing beats seeing it with your own eyes, right? Too often, though, these remarkable moments are out of sight, unfolding under the cover of night or simply out of reach, requiring a complex itinerary of planes, trains and automobiles just to get close. In other cases, the sites themselves are simply too fragile or highly protected, requiring complete freedom from human footsteps for vulnerable species to thrive.

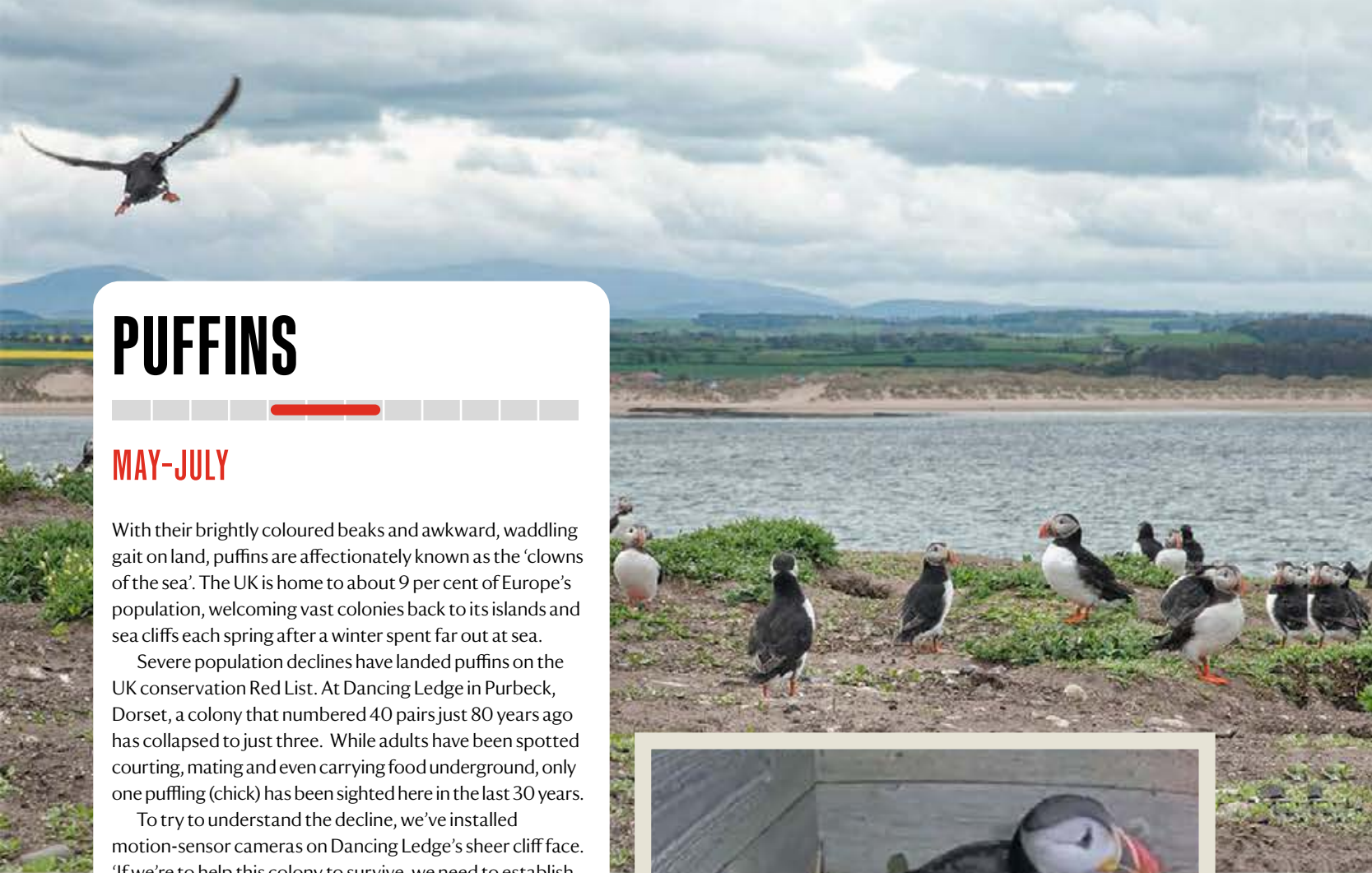
Thanks to livestream technology, it's now possible to access the hidden worlds of some of the UK's most enchanting creatures. Our lenses play different roles. Some operate behind the scenes to help rangers solve challenging conservation questions; some are set up for TV broadcasts; while others simply capture the nocturnal antics of species we rarely see, bringing joy to nature-lovers everywhere.

With 85 per cent of the UK's population living in urban areas, many of us are a long way from seal colonies, remote sea cliffs or secret woodland enclosures, but a new project has provided a portal into those hard-to-reach places. With the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies, this year the Trust launched 'Window to the Wild', a number of top-of-the-range wildlife cams. They've been bringing viewers online ever closer to the births, nesting behaviours and species reintroductions happening year-round in our gardens, estates and woodlands. Mobile vans took the experience a step further, streaming real-time nature feeds directly into bustling city-centre streets around the UK for passers-by to marvel at for themselves.

This autumn, more cameras are due to come online, so do look out for them whenever you've a need to step outside your day and into the world of a bird or beaver. In the meantime, let's look back at an incredible year of footage, and see what amusing moments, crucial scientific findings or unexpected dramas these windows to the wild managed to capture. »

**Clockwise from top right** Some of the characters whose private lives feature on Trust wildlife cams: puffins on the Farne Islands; a nesting barn owl at Arlington Court; blue tits on the Longshaw Estate; a red squirrel on Brownsea Island; beavers on the Holnicote Estate; and a grey seal at Blakeney.





# PUFFINS

MAY-JULY

With their brightly coloured beaks and awkward, waddling gait on land, puffins are affectionately known as the ‘clowns of the sea’. The UK is home to about 9 per cent of Europe’s population, welcoming vast colonies back to its islands and sea cliffs each spring after a winter spent far out at sea.

Severe population declines have landed puffins on the UK conservation Red List. At Dancing Ledge in Purbeck, Dorset, a colony that numbered 40 pairs just 80 years ago has collapsed to just three. While adults have been spotted courting, mating and even carrying food underground, only one puffling (chick) has been sighted here in the last 30 years.

To try to understand the decline, we’ve installed motion-sensor cameras on Dancing Ledge’s sheer cliff face. ‘If we’re to help this colony to survive, we need to establish what’s going wrong,’ says marine ornithologist Richard Caldow. ‘Puffins can live for 30 to 40 years, but with our current pairs likely over 20 years old, time is ticking. If they don’t breed successfully, the colony could vanish completely.’

In 2024, volunteers combed through 70,000 camera images but found no clear culprit. ‘Food shortages seem unlikely, as small fish remain plentiful and seabirds nearby are thriving,’ says Richard. ‘Our main suspicion is predation by rats or crows, which may be taking eggs or chicks.’

This year, the team upgraded to solar-powered cameras angled deep into the cliff’s fissures. Because the remote site lacks a signal to livestream, rangers wait until after the breeding season to retrieve the footage and look for answers.

About 350 miles (563km) north, the outlook is far brighter. The Farne Islands, off Northumberland, host one of the UK’s largest colonies of almost 40,000 pairs. Their success is helped by the islands’ isolation, absence of ground predators, and scrupulous monitoring by Trust rangers.

Here, live cameras give the public a front-row seat. First launched last year, the ‘puffin cams’ streamed daily from May until the birds departed in July. This year, the Trust added a new ‘burrow cam’ to reveal the hidden world of the pufflings, which remain underground until they are fledged.

Because the Farnes are a highly protected scientific and archaeological site, rangers couldn’t disturb existing burrows. Instead, they built an artificial, stone-covered burrow above ground. Though it was mainly used for naps this season, it remains ready for a new pair to nest in next year.



## Highlights reel

A puffin enjoys an aimless – and deeply relatable – potter.



**Top** Puffins thrive on the Farne Islands, Northumberland.

**Inset** A new artificial ‘burrow cam’ box may be used as a nest next year.

**Right** Beavers on the Holnicote Estate, Somerset, will enhance the work of the recent river restoration project.

# BEAVERS

MARCH-OCTOBER

It’s the middle of the night on the Holnicote Estate in Exmoor, Somerset. A squat, muscular beaver clammers out of a pond, unexpectedly loses its balance, and topples backwards with a splash. Normally, its clumsy midnight tumble would pass unseen – but this year the beaver’s antics raised a smile for the thousands of viewers glued to Holnicote’s livestream online.

It took a comprehensive health and safety assessment and a full kilometre of wire cable threaded through the remote Exmoor countryside, from the beavers’ enclosure to the Trust’s estate office, to run the live feed. The footage shows the positive changes the Holnicote beavers are having on their landscape.

‘As well as the beavers themselves, we’ve seen so many species on their camera, including otters, water voles and kingfishers,’ says Beaver Project Officer Jack Siviter. ‘They’re all benefiting from the beavers’ presence. The other day I even heard a cuckoo calling – I hadn’t realised they were living in that part of the estate.’

Because of the way they can reshape their landscape, beavers are often described as ecosystem engineers. In the building and maintenance of their dams, they slow down water, which helps prevent flooding while locking the water in place to resist drought. ‘During last year’s dry summer, the beaver wetlands were the only deep water left on the estate,’ recalls Jack. ‘They acted as oases for other wildlife.’

Once widespread across the UK, beavers were hunted to extinction in the 16th century. But for some years now, conservation organisations including the Trust have been reintroducing them, taking advantage of the positive environmental changes they make. Following several previous enclosure releases at Holnicote, this spring the team released a pair and family of four into the wild, bringing the estate’s total population to 22. »



**Top** A beaver, or ecosystem engineer, at work.

**Inset** A nose-to-nose encounter between a beaver and its kit caught on the cam at Holnicote.

## Highlights reel

A beaver sneezes on camera – the adorable clip that took social media fans by storm this spring.





LIVE ●

If we're to help this Dorset puffin colony to survive, we need to establish what's going wrong

# PIED FLYCATCHERS

APRIL-JULY

A fan favourite on BBC's *Springwatch* in 2025, the charming pied flycatcher takes its name from its magpie-like plumage and acrobatic insect-hunting habits. These tiny birds travel thousands of miles from West Africa to nest in UK woodlands over summer, but breeding populations here have plummeted by over 50 per cent in the last 25 years.

While the UK's main populations are tightly concentrated in the wetter, oak-wooded western valleys of Wales and South West England, Longshaw Estate in Derbyshire has bucked the trend to become a surprisingly vital stronghold for the species.

'We manage the woodland to create more dead wood and potential nesting places,' explains Longshaw Ranger Mark Bull. 'When we noticed their numbers declining in 2010, we began putting up more nestboxes and managing the woodland in a way we hoped would help. We now have 30 boxes spread across six different areas, monitored by a team of volunteers.'

To prepare for the breeding season, the team blocks half the nestboxes to prevent early-nesting competitors like blue tits from claiming them all. Inspired by the public's enthusiasm for flycatchers through the *Springwatch* coverage, this year the Trust decided to install our own cameras into four boxes to keep the livestream action going.

The cameras soon captured some dramatic relationship dynamics. While the female worked tirelessly, the footage showed the male flycatcher was far less attentive, forcing her to leave the nest to hunt for herself. 'The males do sometimes mate with two females,' Mark explains. 'It could be he was too busy with his other female.'

Nevertheless, six chicks successfully fledged from the nest, contributing to the overall total of 200-300 pied flycatchers that fledge at Longshaw each year.

Alongside our entertainment, the cameras are also helping a research project with Liverpool John Moores University. The footage is giving scientists additional insights into nesting behaviour, and their findings will help the Longshaw team discover how to better protect these global travellers for the future.

## Highlights reel

A pied flycatcher breaks free of its egg, before fledging for life beyond the nest.



**Above** One of 30 pied flycatcher nestboxes at Longshaw, Derbyshire.

**Below right** A glimpse of a large clutch of eggs for

a pair of barn owls at Arlington Court, Devon.

**Previous page** Abseilers monitor the puffin cams at Dancing Ledge, Purbeck.

## Highlights reel

A barn owl reveals the arrival of another chick – then settles back down to keep the remaining eggs warm.



# BARN OWLS

MAY-AUGUST

Famed for their heart-shaped faces and ghostly, silent night-time flight, barn owls are rarely seen up close in the wild. This summer's livestream camera gave viewers an intimate window into the hatching and development of fluffy owlets (chicks) at the Arlington Court Estate in Devon.

Our glimpse into the nestbox is the culmination of a major conservation success story. Since 2021, the estate's breeding pairs have risen from two to three, with the average number of young fledglings nearly doubling. This mini-boom is thanks to changes the Trust has driven in land management. Reducing the numbers of grazing livestock has allowed grasslands and hedgerows to recover, boosting the populations of the voles relied on by the owls. Richer habitats have benefited kestrels and weasels, too, and lured swallows, house martins and swifts back to parts of the estate from which they had previously disappeared.



## Highlights reel

An eagle-eyed member of the local team spotted a live seal birth on screen.



**Above** Access is limited at Blakeney, Norfolk, during the breeding season, but the solar-powered live camera can show us the grey seals' daily lives.



# SEALS

NOVEMBER-JANUARY

Each winter, Area Ranger Eddie Stubbings prepares to move out of his home in the Old Lifeboat House at Blakeney Point, where he lives and works as part of a small ranger team. It's not the bitter Norfolk winter that drives him inland, but the colony of grey seals that comes ashore to give birth and breed.

'They arrive in such numbers that the colony spreads right along the ridge, sealing off the point completely,' he says. 'By mid-November, the beach is so densely populated it wouldn't be safe or kind to stay. The seals even pup underneath the house.'

Reducing the disturbance in this area is key to the colony's enduring success. Just five pups were recorded here in 1999; today, around 9,000 are born each year.

The seal breeding season follows a steady natural rhythm. 'Each cow comes ashore to give birth and nurse her pup for around three weeks,' says Eddie. 'Just before she leaves, a bull will mate with her. Then that's it, parental duties are over.' The pups linger a while longer, moulting their white coats before heading out to sea.

At the end of the dunes, the rangers have set up a solar-powered live camera in what will become the heart of the colony, ready to film the action. It's enclosed within a low, seal-proof barrier and built robustly to withstand curious – and very heavy – neighbours as it records mothers arriving, pups feeding and daily coastal life.

'We know how important the livestream became for people who aren't able to get out to these places,' says Eddie. 'At Blakeney, where winter access is limited, it's wonderful for everyone to see exactly what's happening, without disturbance, allowing the seals to thrive.' »

# RED SQUIRRELS

## DECEMBER-MARCH

The red squirrel is an endangered species in most of the UK, due to the loss of its woodland habitats, but it's a different story off the coast of Dorset on Brownsea Island. Free of the invasive and normally dominant grey squirrel, Brownsea is one of the largest strongholds for reds in the south of England. A pine woodland sits at the island's heart, and the red squirrels feed on the seeds in the cones, spreading them as they go and regenerating the area.

This winter, we're installing a livestream camera in a Brownsea red squirrel's drey (nest), high up in the tree canopy, close to the trunk. This is where they rest – and, in late winter, breed. Male squirrels engage in high-speed pursuits of fertile females in a practice known as 'mating chases', with spring litters born around March.



**Above** Brownsea Island, Dorset, is a stronghold for red squirrels.  
**Right** *Springwatch* cams capture nesting buzzards and great crested grebes at Crom, County Fermanagh.

### Highlights reel

*Springwatch*'s Hannah Stitfall captures two frolicking pine martens in action



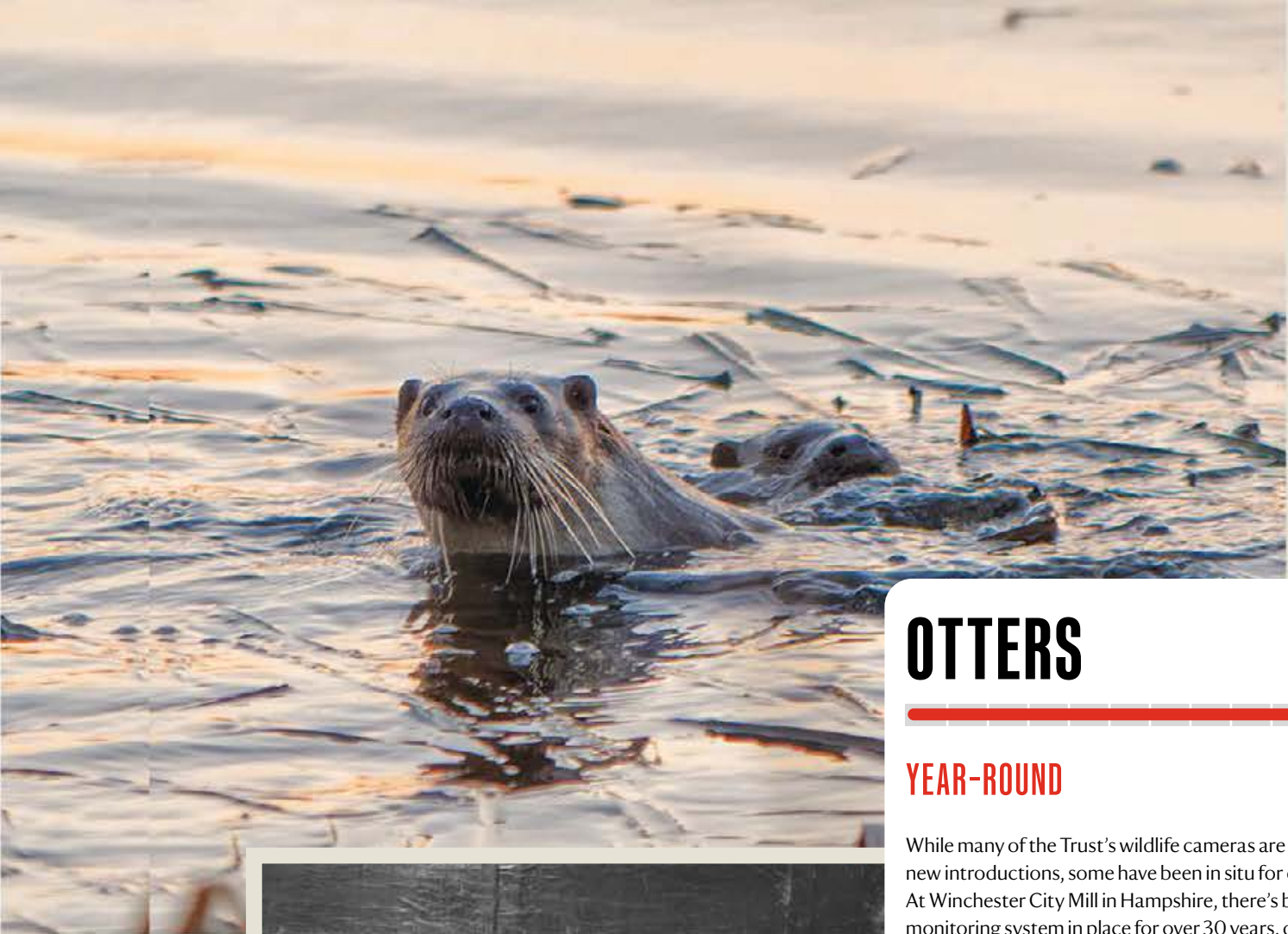
# THE STARS OF SPRINGWATCH

## MAY-JUNE

Throughout its three-week broadcast from Crom in County Fermanagh, the BBC's *Springwatch* team hosted its live cameras online, with nests and woodland habitats beamed into people's homes for 15 hours a day. With around 100 people working on the production, *Springwatch* is one of the BBC's biggest outside broadcasts, with researchers monitoring the cameras morning and night, gathering wildlife highlights from the shores of Upper Lough Erne. On the livestreams, viewers could track a stellar line-up of local residents – house martins, badgers, buzzards, pine martens, little grebes, warblers, robins, starlings, jackdaws, swallows and great tits – enjoying a glimpse into their hidden habitats.



National Trust Images x3, BBC Studios x2



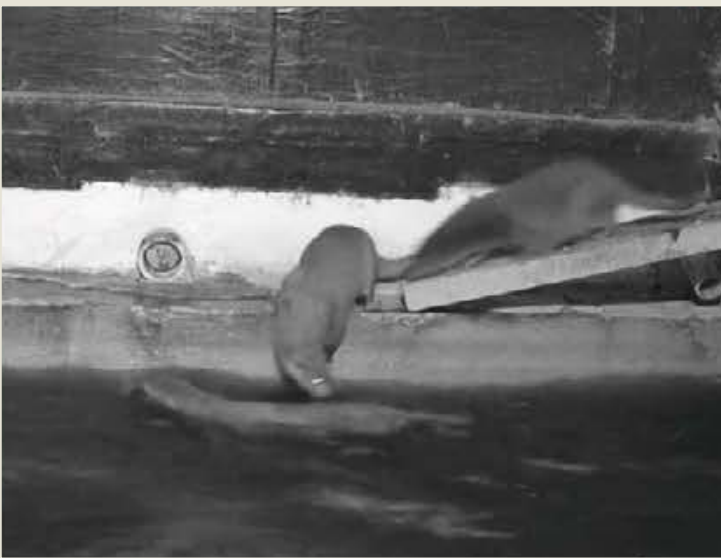
# OTTERS

## YEAR-ROUND

While many of the Trust's wildlife cameras are relatively new introductions, some have been in situ for decades. At Winchester City Mill in Hampshire, there's been a monitoring system in place for over 30 years, dating back to the 90s, when the Environment Agency installed the first cameras. The star of that show? The Eurasian otter – a species that has made a triumphant comeback across UK rivers after facing near-extinction in the mid-20th century.

In 2006, the City Mill team began maintaining and monitoring the otter-cam more formally. There have been many upgrades to the camera set-up since then. Motion-activated cameras now catch the otters in action as they emerge from under the Mill at night, scurrying around to hunt for food in the wildlife-rich River Itchen. There's an underwater camera, too, with eels, brown trout and ducks adding to the line-up.

The Mill's volunteers and visitors regularly enjoy the antics of the entertaining creatures who share their building, and the team shares otter-cam highlights with an international audience on the Mill's social-media channels. As the river is an active otter corridor, there's plenty of action. Whether it's a late-night trout snack, motherly exasperation at a cub's clumsy antics or a midnight cameo from a bat, the after-hours show never really stops. ○



**Top** Otters, once on the brink of extinction, have made a great recovery in UK rivers.  
**Above** Resident otters caught on the Winchester City Mill long-standing otter-cam.

### Highlights reel

A high-speed chase ends in a spectacular tumble, a riverbank pigeon receives a sharp midnight prod from an otter, and the camera lens gets plenty of kisses.



**i** You can watch the current live wildlife cams at [youtube.com/@nationaltrustcharitystreams](https://www.youtube.com/@nationaltrustcharitystreams). If you like, you can donate to the Trust's 'Window to the Wild' campaign at [crowdfunder.co.uk/window-to-the-wild](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/window-to-the-wild)

# IRONBRIDGE GORGE:

the next chapter

In March, the National Trust took over the management of the 10 museums, 550 hectares and 400,000 collection items that make up Shropshire's world-famous Ironbridge Gorge. Curator **Lauren Collier** explains why the immersive World Heritage Site is known as the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution', and sets out what visitors can expect next from this new chapter in its history





Their efforts led to the founding of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT) in 1968, followed by decades of excavation, acquisition and restoration to create the heritage site we know today. In 1986, Ironbridge Gorge was one of the first seven locations in the UK to be designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. English Heritage took over the management of its famous Iron Bridge and still looks after it today.

For nearly 60 years, IGMT cared for the Gorge's museums, archives and collections. But by 2024, financial pressures and falling visitor numbers were threatening the future of the museums, and IGMT turned to the National Trust for help. The Trust receives moving offers from places at risk almost weekly and, much as it might like to, it can't accept them all. But Ironbridge Gorge was different. Teams at the Trust immediately recognised it as a vital part of the UK's industrial heritage that helped shape the world we live in today. Its unique collection of historic sites, with their pioneering 'living history' approach, have captured the

imagination of generations of people, helping locals and visitors alike to see that history isn't something that happened to other people in other places. It happened here, it's still happening here, and it belongs to them.

The National Trust knew it was well placed to make sure Ironbridge Gorge's unique blend of living industrial history could continue. Support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and commitments from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England helped secure the funds to safeguard the site for the future, and the museums and collections passed into the Trust's care in March.

I've transferred across to the Trust after eight years working for IGMT, and I'm now working together with other former IGMT staff and new colleagues from the Trust to revitalise and expand the experience of visiting Ironbridge Gorge. We're reopening the museums in phases, and there are currently four that you can visit, including Blists Hill – a living, breathing re-creation of a Victorian town. Walking through its streets, you might hear snatches of music-hall ballads drifting out of the pub, or meet Constable Jarrett, the friendly policeman on his daily rounds. Inside the printing shop you'll find costumed interpreters at work on the presses. Follow your nose and it will lead you to the fried fish dealer on Canal Street, where you can tuck into fish and chips cooked in beef dripping and wrapped in newspaper.

Ironbridge Gorge also helps to keep heritage craft skills alive. At Blists Hill, for example, you'll find expert craftworkers demonstrating trades such as tinsmithing, blacksmithing and decorative plasterwork. Chandlers make candles using a traditional 'nodding donkey' – a rack which repeatedly dips hanging wicks into molten wax to build up layers.

We have a dedicated costume team who design and make every garment worn by the interpreters from scratch, using historic patterns where possible. They produce a huge variety of outfits, from Quaker dress to Victorian bathing suits, along with the day-to-day work of repairing and laundering dozens of outfits – although we do let them use modern washing machines rather than a Victorian washboard and mangle!

All the experiences at Ironbridge Gorge are underpinned by extensive research. We have a huge collection – about 400,000 objects – spanning industrial life in the 18th and 19th centuries. There's also an enormous archive covering the various industries that were based here and how they operated, as well as local history – with photographs, oral histories and written accounts.

There's a terrific breadth of stories, particularly working-class stories, which is quite unusual for a heritage site, and I think is one of the most exciting things that Ironbridge Gorge brings to the Trust. The records of a stately home often focus on just »

Combined with his newly patented method of using moulds made of sand that could be easily mass produced, Darby's breakthrough didn't just improve ironmaking – it changed the course of history.

Iron products shifted from being scarce and costly to something that could be made cheaply, reliably and in vast quantities. Thanks to Darby's innovations, it was now possible to build the machinery and infrastructure that would soon power the Industrial Revolution.

Building on Darby's initial successes, his descendants branched out further. The Coalbrookdale Company produced iron products on a tremendous scale, beginning with the likes of cooking pots, iron rails and stationary steam engines in the 18th century and expanding to locomotives and decorative furniture in the 19th. In 1779 came the eponymous 'Iron Bridge' spanning the river just 500 metres downstream from Coalbrookdale. Designed by architect Thomas Farnolls Pritchard and built by Darby's grandson, Abraham Darby III, the bridge transformed transport links in the Gorge, connecting industries on both sides of the river and allowing both materials and the factory workers to move around more easily, while the River Severn carried the finished goods by boat down to Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol and on to the rest of the world. With its pioneering design and construction, the graceful arch soon became a global advertisement for British engineering and the possibilities of cast iron.

Industry thrived at Ironbridge Gorge for more than two centuries, but shifting markets and the rise of steel took their toll. By the late 1960s, the factories had largely fallen silent. Yet there was a growing fascination with industrial heritage. With post-war development erasing historic sites, local campaigners recognised the Gorge's importance and fought to preserve it.

**Previous page** Blists Hill Victorian Town, in the Ironbridge Gorge, Shropshire, was once a booming industrial area.

**Above left** A glimpse inside Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron.

**Above** The old brickworks at Blists Hill.

**Below** Chatting to a Blists Hill local from the 19th century.

“  
There's a terrific breadth of stories, particularly working-class stories, which is quite unusual



**W**hen Abraham Darby I arrived in Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, in 1708, he kick-started a chain of events that

transformed the small riverside mining settlement into the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

At the time – 100 years before the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, and 60 years before Richard Arkwright opened his first water-powered cotton mill – the UK's manufacturing industries were generally small-scale and localised, with the economy still largely based on agriculture.

Darby was a skilled metalworker and an innovative businessman who learned his trade working in foundries in Bristol. He was drawn to Coalbrookdale because of the rich natural resources in the surrounding Gorge – particularly coal, iron ore, limestone and clay – and the opportunity to lease a blast furnace. Within a year of arriving and establishing the Coalbrookdale ironworks, Darby had pioneered an innovative new method of smelting iron using coke – a type of processed coal – instead of more expensive charcoal.



A candle-making demonstration at Blists Hill using a traditional 'nodding donkey'.

» one or two families, who were usually wealthy and educated enough to record their own stories and amass collections that tell us about their lives. The Gorge has a much larger cast of characters, from miners and potters to pipe-makers and tile-painters, whose histories are often under-recorded elsewhere.

Ironbridge has the tagline of being the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, but that comes with the undeniable consequences that industry has had on trade and colonialism, nature and climate change. Being part of the National Trust means we've not only safeguarded Ironbridge's places, collections and landscapes for the future – we've also got a wider support network of other curators and experts with experience in researching and telling these broader stories.

We're keeping the 'fan favourites'. At Blists Hill you can still buy humbugs from the Victorian sweet shop and see George the Shire horse in harnessing demonstrations. But we'll also be listening to ideas and feedback from visitors and the local community, as well as new audiences, to find out what they'd like to see.

The Gorge is still a place of making. One of the historic tile companies still leases part of its original factory from us; our teams still make ceramics at Coalport; and we regularly run hands-on creative activities, workshops and demos across the sites. That's the beauty of Ironbridge Gorge. It's immersive, creative and alive. ○

**Lauren Collier** joined Ironbridge Gorge's curatorial team in 2017, and now works as the Property Curator covering all 10 museums.

# EXPLORE THE GORGE

Here's a taster of the 10 museums that bring the history of Ironbridge Gorge to life. Some of the museums are already open to visitors, with a phased reopening of the others over the next year. For the latest, including opening days and times, visit the Ironbridge Gorge website.



### 1. Blists Hill Victorian Town

Originally an ironmaking, mining and brickmaking site, Blists Hill was redeveloped between 1969 and 1973, and over the last 50 years has grown into today's bustling 'Victorian' town. Many of the shops and cottages are historic buildings saved from demolition and moved brick by brick to the site. You can wander the streets, meet costumed characters and experience what life was like in the 19th century.



### 2. Jackfield Tile Museum

Once the world's largest decorative tile works, this restored factory now showcases a vast collection of tiles and ceramics dating back to the 19th century. Many of the tiles on display were manufactured by Craven Dunnill or Maw & Co. Today you can learn how Jackfield tiles came to adorn grand buildings as far afield as Russia and the US, as well as local pubs and homes.



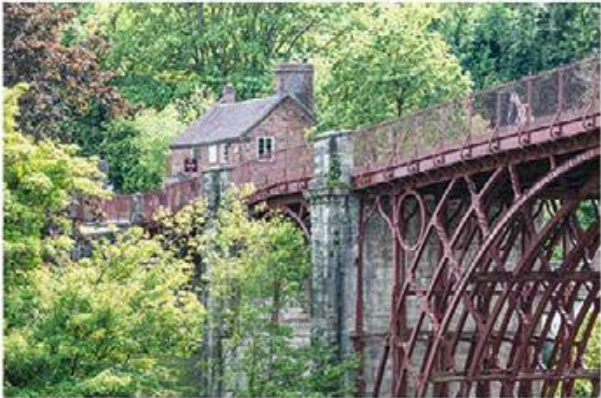
### 3. Museum of Iron and the Old Furnace

Head inside the Coalbrookdale Company's 'Great Warehouse' to discover how Abraham Darby I's iron smelting breakthrough helped spark the Industrial Revolution. Exhibits reveal Coalbrookdale's global influence, from early rail lines and steam locomotives to ornate ironwork. Don't miss the remains of Darby's blast furnace, without which the world would look very different.



### 4. The Tollhouse

Take a stroll over the world's first iron bridge to the Tollhouse, which was still active until the bridge passed into public ownership in 1950. Today it houses an exhibition explaining how and why the bridge was built, and its transformational impact on travel and engineering.



OPENING SEPTEMBER 2026

### 5. Coalport China Museum

Step inside the original Coalport china factory established by John Rose in 1796. For more than a century, its works were among the most successful of their kind anywhere in the world, picking up prizes at international exhibitions. When the museum reopens, visitors will be able to uncover stories of the craftspeople, techniques and designs that made Coalport so successful.

### 6. Broseley Pipeworks

Broseley was once the site of the most prolific clay tobacco pipe-makers in the UK, whose goods were exported around the world. Frozen in time since the Pipeworks ceased trading in the 1950s, this time-capsule factory offers a look into an industry spanning 300 years. It has tools, workbenches and moulds on display, along with different types of pipes such as the Churchwarden and Dutch Long Straw.

SEE WEBSITE FOR UPDATES

### 7. Darby Houses

This pair of elegant houses once belonged to the Darby family, and now offer a glimpse into 18th- and 19th-century Quaker life. Dale House was where Abraham Darby III planned the construction of the famous Iron Bridge, and has been restored to reflect that time period. Rosehill House recreates life in the 1840s, and contains many of the Darby family's personal belongings spanning generations.

### 8. Enginuity

Enginuity is a hands-on engineering playground where families can experiment with machines, power, design and invention. It also houses the UK's first Fab Lab (Fabrication Lab) – a small-scale digital manufacturing workshop available to hire, where people can learn and develop new products.

### 9. The Tar Tunnel

When this eerie, 18th-century underground tunnel was being dug as a canal tunnel, the miners instead struck a spring of natural bitumen – which still oozes from the walls today. At the time, bitumen was used to weatherproof ropes, caulk wooden ships, and was even bottled as 'Betton's British Oil' – an unscientific remedy for scurvy.

### 10. Museum of the Gorge

Once a bustling riverside warehouse built for the Coalbrookdale Company, and situated right in the heart of Gorge – just a short walk from the famous bridge itself. Discover how goods from across the Gorge were shipped worldwide, putting Ironbridge Gorge firmly on the map.

STILL TO COME

# OPEN BOOK

As more Trust libraries encourage visitors to sit back and relax with a book, could they help halt the decline in reading for pleasure?

By Karen Gregory



**T**he armchair is comfy and piano music drifts in from the room next door as I lean back and leaf through a history of Britain. I'm in the Library at Killerton in Devon, and I'm feeling right at home.

Killerton's one of an increasing number of Trust libraries where visitors are being encouraged to pause, relax and use the room as it was originally intended. Where possible, there's a selection of books to browse – I've picked from a wide range of literature and history books here at Killerton. The plan is for more places to follow.

'This library is so cosy,' says Sarah Gooding, who has volunteered at Killerton for nine years. 'People have fallen asleep in here because they feel so comfortable. They often tell me they'd love to have a library like this, so it's great that they can share this one.'

The move towards opening up more Trust libraries is timely, as 2026 has been designated the National Year of Reading. The initiative, led by the Department for Education in partnership with organisations including the National Literacy Trust and The Reading Agency, aims to help tackle a sharp decline in reading for pleasure over the last 20 years. In 2025, only a quarter of boys and 39 per cent of girls aged 8 to 18 said they enjoyed reading for pleasure, while 35 per cent of adults surveyed by The Reading Agency in 2024 classed themselves as 'lapsed readers'. The rise of smartphones, distractions from social media and a lack of time are all likely to be playing a role.

Given reading has so many proven benefits, from reducing stress and increasing empathy and the ability to experience others' perspectives to helping children learn, its continued decline is a concern. Could Trust libraries play a role in helping people to discover or reconnect with the joy of reading?

It seems so at Killerton. 'We see families here introducing their children and grandchildren to books they might have read as a child, like the old *Blue Peter* annuals and selection of pocket-sized Observer's >>



» Books, or sitting in the corner and reading together,' says Sarah. 'Other visitors might look at the shelves and think, "When was the last time I read a book?" We often point them towards the second-hand bookshop on the way out.'

The hope is that such experiences can be repeated in more of the hundreds of other libraries in the Trust's care. Killerton is one of around 200 Trust properties which together hold nearly half a million books and manuscripts. The collections include rare treasures such as the *Sarum Missal*, a prayer book printed by William Caxton in England in 1487 and on display at Lyme in Cheshire; the libraries of literary figures including Agatha Christie at Greenway in Devon; and the 20th-century book collection of poet, novelist and civil servant Khadambi Asalache at 575 Wandsworth Road, London.

'Books are the cornerstone of the Trust's collections,' says Tim Pye, the Trust's National Curator of Libraries. 'They aren't "showy" in the way that perhaps paintings or furniture can be, and I think that makes it easier for people to relate to them. Unlike other libraries, most of the Trust's books are still in situ and often contain things like inscriptions or notes in the margins. That means you haven't lost that very personal connection with the stories of how people used, read and valued them. You can get right up close to the books at a Trust place, and I think that really helps people be inspired by the rich histories they can tell.'

These histories can be found in the grandest country houses and the smallest bookcases and help to tell the story of how reading and literacy developed

## “Most of the Trust's books are still in situ and often contain inscriptions or notes in the margins

**Previous page** Visitors browsing well-thumbed books in the Library at Killerton, Devon.

**Top left** Engrossed in books that have been donated in the second-hand bookshop at Blickling, Norfolk.

**Above** Arthur Ransome was a favourite author for the Acland family at Killerton.

across time. Large collections, like the 12,500 books and manuscripts at Blickling Hall in Norfolk, recall a time when only the wealthy could amass large quantities of books. They have plenty to tell about the lives and interests of this section of society, and how they used their books. At Killerton, for example, a music book owned by Lady Henrietta Mary Erskine was dedicated to her by George Marne, a little-known 18th-century musician in the 1790s, suggesting she was both his student and his patron.

'Occasionally you will find houses where there has been a bibliophile in the family who has gone out to find loads of really impressive books to put on their shelves, but the idea that books were "bought by the yard" simply to look good in the library is largely a myth,' says Tim. 'But I'd say the vast majority of the collections

in Trust libraries are publications that people wanted to read to get information or enjoy for pleasure, just like we do now.'

It wasn't only the wealthy elite who read and used the books in the Trust's collections. At Townend in Cumbria, for example, the Browne family of yeoman (gentleman) farmers built a collection of around 1,500 books including novels, poetry and books on farming, religion, law and medicine. Many show signs of being well read, with turned-down pages, fingerprints and annotations in the margins. The collection also includes several bawdy 'chapbooks' – small, cheap volumes containing risqué stories or crass humour, made to entertain members of the working class. They would have been sold door to door in the 18th century by 'chapmen'.

By the 20th century, with the rise in subscription and public libraries and mass literacy achieved in the UK, books had become a major source of entertainment across the social spectrum. Cragside in Northumberland had a servants' library of over 200 books, likely assembled between 1900 and 1920, provided for the domestic staff who lived there. Traces of servants' libraries have also been found at Mottisfont in Hampshire and Baddesley Clinton in Warwickshire.

In 1900, a Workers' Library was established at Quarry Bank in Cheshire, containing over 400, largely

**Left** The grand, yet cosy, Edwardian Library at Killerton.

**Below** Taking a close look at bibles in different languages on display at Tŷ Mawr Wybrnant, Conwy.

fiction, titles that workers could borrow for a small fee. From the records, it's possible to piece together insights into the lives of the cotton workers, manual labourers, domestic servants, clerks and teachers who used it. Take Phoebe Whittaker, a 16-year-old cotton weaver, who read a wide range of fiction by authors such as Edna Lyall, a bestseller of her day. The records show Phoebe often borrowed the same books as another 16-year-old, Lily Bone. Perhaps they were friends or visited the library together? Another young borrower, a clerk called Ezra Tunnicliffe, seems to have preferred adventure stories and books with heroes like Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. Ezra's lending record stops in 1914 when he became a private in the army, but later records show he survived the war. Today, visitors can see a selection of books from the Workers' Library on display at Quarry Bank, helping to paint a vivid picture of working life in an early 20th-century industrial community.

These hugely varied libraries and collections tell stories of people who, regardless of background or time, had that same need for storytelling and knowledge we can look for in books today. Despite concerns about the decline of reading, the Publishers Association says publishing continued to grow in 2025, with total publishing revenue standing at £7.4bn. The Trust itself publishes around 25 beautifully illustrated non-fiction books each year, »



National Trust Images x2, National Trust/Steve Sayers



**Above** Perusing the shelves just like previous generations of the Killerton Acland family.

» including children’s books, guidebooks and books on nature, heritage, gardening, walking and travel. And, of course, there’s the rise of the BookTok community on the social media platform TikTok, and the growth in audiobooks over recent years. Maybe what we are seeing is simply another evolution in the long history of reading.

‘We’re thinking about how we can responsibly make that leap from people being able to browse and get up close to the books, to actually getting them off the shelves,’ says Tim. ‘Back in 1909, when the very first books were brought into the Trust’s care at Coleridge Cottage in Somerset, the idea was that it would be a place for people to go and enjoy reading. We’re still grappling with the balance between access and conservation, but we’re working towards curators being able to identify books which could withstand more use so that we can bring them off the shelves for people to look at. We’ve also trialled digital solutions where people can “virtually” pick a book up at places like Wimpole in Cambridgeshire.’

Back in Killerton’s Library, I can sense the generations of the Acland family who once lived here. Perhaps Sir Richard Acland, who, in line with his political principles, passed on Killerton to the Trust for everyone to enjoy, is reading over my shoulder? ‘I think he’d have been delighted to see people still reading here,’ Sarah says.

The history of reading and books is long, but I’m excited for the next chapter. ○

**Karen Gregory** is an author, writer and part of the *National Trust Magazine* team.

**i** Discover places in Trust care with literary connections [nationaltrust.org.uk/literary-connections](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/literary-connections)

# STOP, READ, RELAX

Discover more Trust places where you can kick back with a book

## Belton House, Lincolnshire

Relax on comfy sofas and armchairs with cushions and blankets and a selection of books to read in Belton’s Library. Watch out for Book Discovery Days, where books from the collection are laid out for visitors to enjoy up close with conservation volunteers and partners from the University of East Anglia.



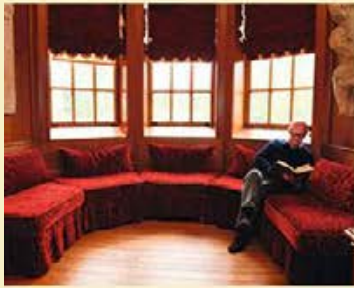
## Blickling Hall, Norfolk

Blickling Hall’s collection of around 12,500 books is one of the largest in the Trust’s care. Today visitors can wander along the book-lined Long Gallery, or stop and relax on cosy sofas where a selection of books is usually available to read in peaceful, distraction-free surroundings.



## Lyme, Cheshire

The *Sarum Missal*, or service book for the Catholic Mass, is the only surviving book of its kind. You can leaf through a facsimile of the missal and see the original, then borrow a book to sit and read in the Library.



## Tŷ Mawr Wybrnant, Conwy

Tŷ Mawr Wybrnant is the birthplace of Bishop William Morgan, the first person to translate the entire Bible into Welsh. Today, you can sit in a beautiful, custom-made walk-in pod called Y Llyfrgell (the Library) and interact with a growing collection of foreign language bibles.



## Wallington, Northumberland

The Library at Wallington includes the collections of the Trevelyan, a family of radical liberal landowners. Many of the books contain their annotations. After you’ve seen the Library, head to the reading room with its dedicated children’s book nook and get lost in a book.



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# Wagging tails welcome

Celebrating five years of the Trust's Dogs Welcome Project, in partnership with Forthglade

**W**hether strolling across parkland, bounding over hills, snuffling through woodland leaves or splashing in the spray at the beach, nothing brings joy to an autumn walk like sharing the experience with your dog.

This September marks five years of our Dogs Welcome Project, created with the support of Devon-based natural pet food company Forthglade. 'Five years ago, we asked dog-owning members how we could make their visits better, and they asked for more access, more information about where they could go with their dog, and more things that felt especially for them,' says Dogs Welcome Programme Manager Ceinwen Paynton. 'We're thrilled to share that, with Forthglade's help, 87 per cent of the places we care for can now welcome canine visitors – including almost all Trust gardens in South West England and many more across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. More places also have special facilities for dogs, including agility courses and "sniffari" trails.'

With Forthglade, we've developed a 'pawprint rating' system, which you'll find on our website or in your *National Trust Handbook*. This easy guide gives you an idea of how dog-friendly a Trust place is –

or how you can find a dog-free place, if that's what you prefer.

To ensure everyone can enjoy their day, whether or not they're visiting with a dog, we've created a Canine Code, which we respectfully ask owners to stick to in order to preserve the landscapes we care for.

September also signals the return of our popular 'Pooch Passport' scheme, which more than 100,000 visitors and their dogs have enjoyed over the last three years. You collect stamps each time you and your dog visit one of 137 participating Trust places. Collect five stamps, and your dog will receive a free packet of natural Forthglade dog treats. Reach 10, and claim a Pooch Passport pin badge.

'For many dog-owners, their pets are a part of the family and they want to be able to enjoy National Trust places together,' says Ceinwen. 'We're so pleased that, with Forthglade's support, we have been able to make a day out with your dog easier and more fun.' ○

**i** Find out more about visiting with your dog and Pooch Passports at [nationaltrust.org.uk/forthglade](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/forthglade)

**Forthglade**  
natural pet food since 1971

## GREAT SPOTS FOR A DOGGY DAY OUT



### Arlington Court, Devon

Arlington Court boasts an array of beautiful dog-friendly walking routes, many of which have been refreshed for autumn with improved trail signs. Don't miss the new 'sniffari' – a smell-based exploratory walk for four-legged visitors.

### Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire

Clumber Park's off-lead paddock, with agility equipment, is the perfect place for energetic dogs to stretch their legs. Pick up a dog-friendly treat at 'Central Bark' café, which we've recently refurbished, with Forthglade's support.

### Ickworth Estate, Suffolk

After roaming the parkland and walled garden, retire to the Porter's Lodge café for a rest. You'll find dog beds and blankets, plus dog snacks for sale. Pooches can also have their photo taken for the chance to become 'dog of the week'.

**Above left** Fun for all the family at Arlington Court, Devon.

**Above** Pooch Passport holders with five stamps will receive free treats.

Text by Sophie Kershaw. National Trust Images x2

**National Trust**

The illegal felling of the iconic Sycamore Gap tree has led to a new beginning – 49 times over

By Helen Beer

# TREES OF HOPE

Last autumn, a group of sycamore saplings set off from a secret location in Devon. Some travelled hundreds of miles, destined for new homes as far afield as a youth project in Newcastle Upon Tyne, an ancient orchard in Cambridgeshire, an urban park in Bath and a horticultural college in Swansea. Each has a unifying theme: hope in – and for – the natural world.

These saplings are the ‘Trees of Hope’ – 49 trees grown from seeds collected from the original Sycamore Gap tree in Northumberland following its illegal felling in September 2023. People from around the world united in person and online to express grief and outrage – but they also shared ideas for how the tree’s legacy might live on.

A year later, the Trust announced that organisations and individuals could apply to offer a home to one of 49 saplings – one for each foot in height of the original tree – to plant in a publicly accessible space as a symbol of hope and renewal.

More than 500 organisations and individuals applied and, after two years of nurturing at the Trust’s Plant Conservation Centre in Devon, in autumn 2025 the saplings were strong enough to plant out. Communities at the 49 chosen sites around the UK planted their Trees of Hope, reflecting on what the tree, and nature, means to them.

As well as the Trees of Hope, each of the UK’s National Parks has been given a sapling from the tree, creating a living legacy network. The Trust also presented a sapling to His Majesty the King, our charity’s patron, to plant in Windsor Great Park, and to the school closest to the site of the original tree, in recognition of its importance to its local community.

Part of protecting the fallen tree’s legacy was deciding what to do with its wood. The largest intact piece is now on permanent display at The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre, which is part of Northumberland National Park. Other smaller pieces of wood have been used in art projects, such as printmaker Shona Branigan’s *Heartwood* prints, created using a 90cm disk from the trunk.

In May, following a public vote and final decision by an expert judging panel, the Trust revealed the winners of the Sycamore Gap wood commission. Arts charity Helix Arts and George King Architects will create a shared, living artwork called *The People’s Tree*. They are inviting people to send in recordings sharing personal connections to trees. They’ll also record a ‘digital soundtrack’ of the Sycamore Gap tree by scanning the tree’s rings, turning its history into sound. Together, the works will form a series of exhibitions, culminating in a sound sculpture near Hadrian’s Wall.

At the site of the original tree, new shoots growing on the stump hint that in time the tree could regenerate. One day a legacy sycamore might stand in the Gap once again. While we wait, the 49 Trees of Hope will continue the story it began.

**i** Find out more about the Sycamore Gap tree and its legacy at [nationaltrust.org.uk/hadrians-wall](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/hadrians-wall)

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## Our tree will anchor a space designed for activity, reflection and recovery

Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust’s **Healing by Nature** project uses nature to support people through mental health challenges.

**We see every day how nature supports wellbeing and helps reduce anxiety, stress and depression.** We planted our sapling at our Trevillis site, in Liskeard, where we’re developing an outdoor wellbeing space. The tree will anchor the space, which is designed for activity, reflection and recovery, helping us embed nature at the heart of how we support mental health.

**Planting the sapling felt incredibly special and symbolic.** We held a small ceremony and a group member sang a song she wrote after attending our group and spending time in nature. It was an emotional and powerful moment that captured the spirit of ‘Healing by Nature’ beautifully.

**The people involved in planting the tree still feel a connection.** During hot weather, members of the team have watered and cared for it, and we’ve been pleased to see new shoots as it settles and grows. It already feels like an important part of the space and the community around it.



**Previous page** The Sycamore Gap sapling destined for Coton Orchard, Cambs.

**Below** The 49 Trees of Hope were raised at the National Trust’s Plant Conservation Centre in Devon.

**Above** A moment with the sapling in The Tree Sanctuary in Coventry.

**Above right** Planting at Tina’s Haven, County Durham, in memory of Tina Robson, who lost her life to trauma-based addiction in 2020.

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## Planting our sapling was a refusal to let destruction have the final word

**Coton Loves Pollinators** is a grassroots village group in Cambridgeshire that brings local people and businesses together to create nature corridors.

**One of our members grew up near Sycamore Gap,** and the tree threaded itself through many of their life’s important moments: childhood walks, trips home, then later taking their own children there. For them, as for many others, it was never simply a tree but a landmark of memory and belonging.

**We planted our sapling at Coton Orchard,** where we have created a ‘Story Orchard’ filled with what we think of as living bookmarks: trees planted to hold memories, histories and acts of hope. The sapling seemed destined to find its place among them. We marked the moment with a community event for local people, and Sir Partha Dasgupta, economist and president of the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants, planted the sapling in its new home.

**Receiving the sapling felt strangely moving.** A small thing, easy enough to carry in your hands, yet heavy with the sense of what had been lost and what might still endure. Planting it became less an act of replacement than of continuity. It’s a refusal to let destruction have the final word.



“

## Nurturing our sapling is a fabulous opportunity to learn

The Landscape and Horticulture department at **Gower College Swansea**, works with teenagers at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

**For us, our sapling symbolises renewal and new opportunities.** We have already begun using it to teach our learners about trees and the vital role they play in ecosystems. We want our learners to be aware of the impact the vandalism of cutting down the original tree had on the nation, and to take responsibility for nurturing one of its saplings.

**The act of gathering to plant our tree created a wonderful sense of unity and shared purpose.** The event brought together managers, students, lecturers, community partners and pupils from local schools. It highlighted our commitment to sustainability and wellbeing, and strengthened connections across our community.

**We planted our sapling in our Heritage Orchard,** a tranquil and naturally beautiful part of the college grounds. The orchard features an ancient apple tree alongside newer fruit trees, a pond and remembrance benches, creating a calm and reflective environment. The sapling is already encouraging more members of our college community to visit the space and enhancing their sense of wellbeing. ○





# Step back in time

Can a Historic House Hotel be both a portal to the past and a modern-day sanctuary?

Down the wide, sweeping driveway, past the spa – a peaceful sanctuary in what was once the coach house – and the dramatic outline of Hartwell House comes into view. The statue of Frederick, Prince of Wales, sits grandly on his horse as a red kite flies past overhead.

At the studded wooden door, Hotel Director Kevin Hughes greets new arrivals, welcoming them into an immediately warm atmosphere. There's a sense of stepping into a friend's home – but with the period designs, opulence and drama of a historic property.

Hartwell House in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, is one of a trio of treasures – alongside Middlethorpe Hall in York and Bodysgallen Hall near Llandudno, Conwy – saved by businessman and philanthropist Richard Broyd when he founded Historic House Hotels in 1979. Though each had flourished for centuries as a country estate, time had taken its toll, and by the late 20th century, their fortunes had diverged: Hartwell had served as a wartime military billet and a girls' college, Middlethorpe had spent a decade operating as a nightclub, and Bodysgallen was a struggling bed and breakfast.

'I wanted to return them to their original state, furnishing them appropriately and restoring them for

**Above left** View from Hartwell House, Buckinghamshire, of the statue of Frederick, Prince of Wales.

**Above** Middlethorpe Hall, York, framed by autumn colour.

**Inset** Treat yourself to an exquisite afternoon tea at Middlethorpe Hall.



the future,' explains Richard. In 2008, he donated the estates to the Trust to ensure their long-term protection.

How did he decide on the vision for their modern renaissance? 'The buildings and their grounds speak to you,' he says. 'As the poet Alexander Pope advised, you must "consult the genius of the place in all". Fortunately, we have an extensive archive of photographs, which has informed our careful restoration.'

Sourcing period items has been key to evoking the atmosphere past residents might have enjoyed. At Hartwell, original pieces sold off in 1938 when the Lee family gave up the property to prevent its demolition have since been repurchased, restored and returned to their rightful setting.

One of the house's most famous residents was Louis XVIII of France, who lived in exile at Hartwell during the Napoleonic Wars. At auction, King Louis's writing desk was reacquired. Today, it sits in the Morning Room, where guests are invited to enjoy afternoon tea or read a newspaper. 'It's very satisfying when a portrait or piece of furniture is returned to a room after nearly 90 years,' says Richard. 'It's wonderful to see history become part of the present.'

At Middlethorpe Hall, the gilt chandelier that hangs over the main staircase has remained in position for decades. 'You can see it in 1950s photographs, and it survived three or four changes of ownership, even during its nightclub years,' he says. 'Imagine the stories it could tell!'

“

As they were in their heyday, these estates are abuzz with guests, grandeur and vibrant hospitality

Balancing an authentic spirit with modern comforts is no small feat. 'These are still country houses with well-maintained gardens, an excellent chef, a well-filled wine cellar, yet with all the modern amenities that guests expect,' says Richard. 'The hotels are presided over by hospitable directors and their staff.'

From each guest room, views sweep over parkland carefully managed to restore the planting schemes of the 16th and 17th centuries. Head Gardener Robert Owen has worked at Bodysgallen for over 45 years and has reinstated the estate's historic gardens, including a formal rose garden, rare 17th-century parterre and kitchen garden. Wildlife thrives: muntjac deer and swans grace the park at Hartwell, while deer are often spotted at dusk at Middlethorpe.

As they were in their heyday, these estates are abuzz with guests, grandeur and vibrant hospitality. Thanks to the hard work of the Historic House Hotels teams, they have been returned to their former splendour, complete with exquisite dining and impeccable service. After a night's stay, people feel thoroughly looked after, says Richard. 'They always remember the warm welcome and excellent service.' ○

**i** For more information or to book a stay, please visit [historichousehotels.com](https://www.historichousehotels.com) or call:

**Bodysgallen Hall**, North Wales: 01492 584466  
**Hartwell House**, Vale of Aylesbury: 01296 747444  
**Middlethorpe Hall**, York: 01904 641241

**Above** Hartwell House, Buckinghamshire, faces a serene lake.

**Above right** The terrace at Bodysgallen Hall, North Wales, overlooks historic gardens with Conwy Castle and the mountains of Eryri (Snowdonia) beyond.

**Inset** Bodysgallen's 17th-century parterre in winter.

## Come and stay

READER OFFER

We look forward to welcoming you to a Historic House Hotel.

**Bodysgallen Hall** near Llandudno, North Wales, and **Middlethorpe Hall** in York both start from £139 per person per night, to include accommodation for two people in a classic double or twin-bedded room, cooked breakfast and use of the health spa, plus a £25 allowance each towards dinner food in the hotel restaurant and a £20 voucher each per stay towards pre-booked spa treatments.

Or stay at **Hartwell House** in the Vale of Aylesbury from £149 per person per night, to include £25 allowance each towards dinner food in the hotel restaurant and a £20 voucher each per stay towards pre-booked spa treatments. You'll also receive a free walking map of the estate.

Please note: a supplement for single occupancy will apply to all hotels. Please quote **NTMAG26** when booking.

Terms and conditions: This offer is valid for stays Sunday to Thursday from 1 October 2026 to 25 March 2027, excluding 23 December–2 January, 14 February.

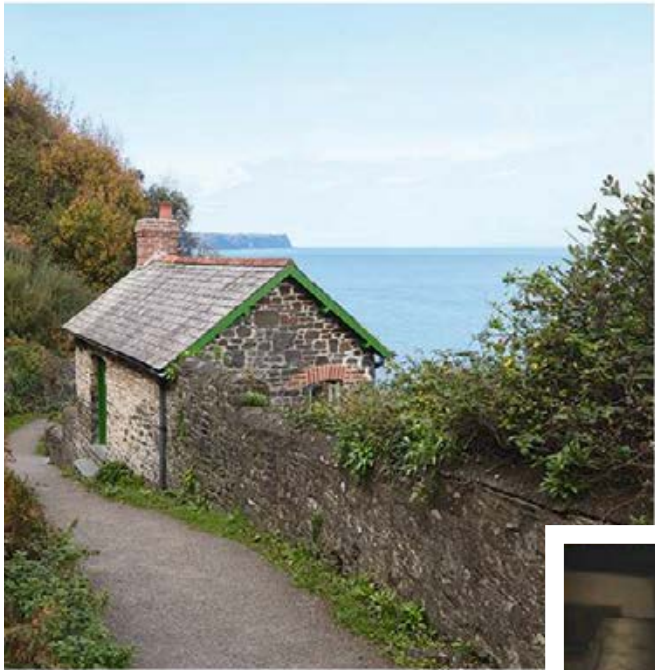


The Trust looks after remarkable cultural heritage shaped by people who challenged expectations around gender and sexuality. To celebrate the publication of a new book, *Queer Creativity: A National Trust History*, co-authors **Dawn Hoskin** and **Richard Ashbourne** reflect upon the lives, experiences and creative contributions of those who lived differently

**P**erched above the sea in a sleepy North Devon fishing hamlet, Bucks Mills Cabin still holds traces of the two artists who sought peace, inspiration and companionship there. The squat stone cabin was the studio and summer residence of painters Judith Ackland and Mary Stella Edwards, who shared their lives and practice for over 50 years from the 1920s until Ackland's death in 1971.

Bucks Mills Cabin was the quintessential secluded artists' retreat, but for Ackland and Edwards it was also a place where they could build a life together on their own terms. Their blend of freedom and togetherness, set against the rugged coastline, became an endless source of artistic inspiration; they often painted each other in their sea-sprayed setting. Ackland focused on painting the local cliffs, tides and village scene around them, while Edwards was particularly drawn to the feel of the place, writing and painting about the movement, sounds and changing light of the sea. Their shared experience of the cabin and its surroundings fed directly into their artistic practice.

Edwards' expressions of love for Ackland were often bound up with the sea and the natural world just beyond the cabin door. The process of making work from their immediate environment also opened space for them to reflect. A sense of place, their relationship and creative expressions were often interwoven. 'I find I've written at the rate of a poem per month since we were at >



**Previous page** Judith Ackland at work in the cabin by Mary Stella Edwards at Bucks Mills, Devon.  
**Above left and above** Exterior and interior of Bucks Mills Cabin.  
**Inset** Christopher St John at her writing desk c. 1910–20.

» Bucks – which is exactly double my output for each year of the three years before that,’ she mused to Ackland in 1925. ‘You said that you had a hope that Bucks would make me write – but it is you and the place together.’

Through their creative work, letters and diaries, Edwards and Ackland reveal an experience shared by many of the people who lived differently at places now in Trust care. Observing, recording and responding to the coastal landscape could be a way of understanding and expressing themselves and their relationship. Reflecting on her life with Ackland in October 1973, Edwards wrote: ‘There is no “label” that could enclose all the kinds of love we felt for each other ... the starry heights, the simple joy of “being” together, and all the deep happy relationships between.’

If we look closely, we can see this kind of inward reflection time and again in the artistic work and personal writings of queer creatives. Many discuss and consider questions of gender, sexuality and identity, showing an outward curiosity towards ever-evolving ideas. For some, creative practice became a way of working through their ideas – a means of understanding both themselves and the world around them. In bringing these stories together we consider their creations alongside where they chose to live, with whom they spent time, and how they navigated their place in society.

Many of the artists, writers and creatives featured here lived before terms such as ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’, ‘bisexual’ or ‘transgender’ came into use. Their experiences do not always map neatly onto modern ideas of identity, and the language we use now would not always have been available, or felt appropriate, to them. To allow

## “ Creative practice became a way of working through ideas

space for this complexity, we use the term ‘queer’ (connected to the LGBTQ+ umbrella since the late 19th century) as a broad and flexible way of thinking. Where possible, we draw on people’s own words and those of their contemporaries to give a sense of how they understood themselves and those around them. We take a similarly expansive view of creativity, embracing not only artists and designers but also creative thinkers whose ideas found expression through writing, performance, collecting, gardening, homemaking and other pursuits – from the Georgian era through to the present day. Their stories can be found in the objects, places and traces they left behind – sometimes expressed openly and sometimes hidden in plain sight.

Christopher St John’s life (1871–1960) offers a vivid example of this kind of self-searching. Born Christabel Gertrude Marshall, she later adopted the names of two male saints and built a wide-ranging career as a journalist, critic, novelist, biographer and playwright. »

National Trust Images x4, Sussie Ahlburg (c) Unravelled Arts, Estate of Cedric Morris/Bridgeman

# THE ART OF THE MATTER

From painting to sculpture, explore artworks from artists who defied convention



**Piccadilly 1830, 2012**  
Matt Smith (b.1975)

Contemporary artist Matt Smith often works in historic houses, using objects and interventions to question how histories are told – and whose stories are left out. Displayed at Nymans, West Sussex, in 2012, *Piccadilly 1830* reimagined a theatrical costume designed by Oliver Messel, whose fantastical sets and costumes helped define British theatre in the mid-20th century. Created for dancer Serge Lifar and later worn by Messel himself, the costume allowed Smith to connect Nymans with themes of memory and loss.

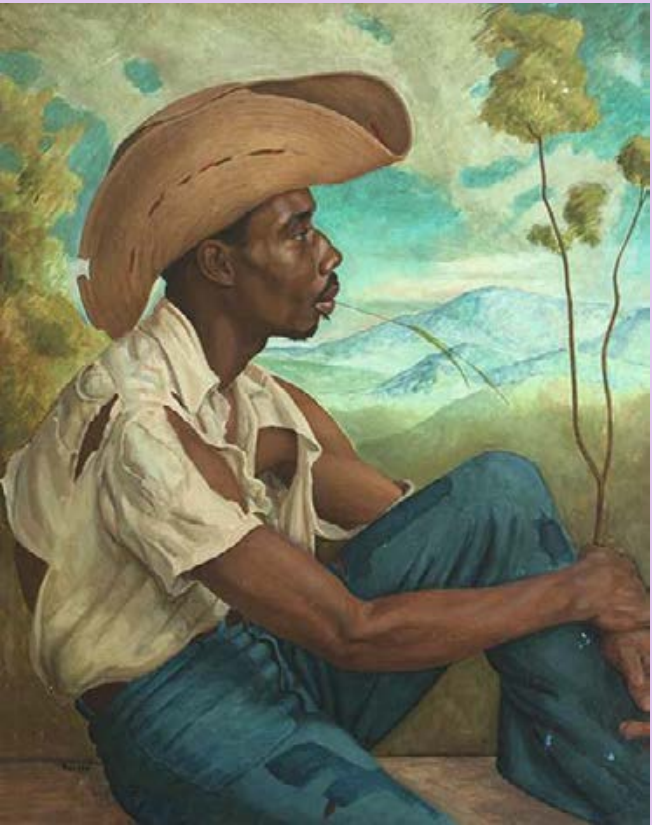


**Italian Wild Flowers, 1922**  
Cedric Morris (1889–1982)

Cedric Morris lived and worked in a creative circle, sharing his life with the artist Arthur Lett-Haines and opening their home, Benton End in Suffolk, to young artists. Morris’s paintings reflect a close attention to the natural world, through his love of gardening and plant breeding. Far from seeing flowers as merely ‘pretty’, Morris admired their ‘grimness, ruthlessness, lust and arrogance’. *Italian Wild Flowers* captures that sensibility.

**Seated Man in a Landscape, c. 1950–58**  
James Richmond Barthé (1901–89)

Richmond Barthé was best known as a sculptor of black male figures, exploring themes of spirituality, beauty and the human form. A key figure of the Harlem Renaissance, he moved within a creative circle that included writers and thinkers, and he found trusted confidants who he could speak to openly about his guarded homosexuality. Painted during a period of relative isolation in Jamaica, *Seated Man in a Landscape* is one of his few surviving oils.



» Passionate about theatre and literature, she recalled actor Dame Ellen Terry as the ‘goddess of my youthful idolatry’, and remembered meeting Terry’s daughter Edith ‘Edy’ Craig as a defining moment. When shaking hands with Edy, who was mending her mother’s costumes in a theatre dressing room, her finger was pricked by Edy’s needle: ‘Cupid’s dart, for I loved Edy from that moment.’ Their partnership, later joined by Clare ‘Tony’ Atwood, formed what Vita Sackville-West described as ‘a triptych’. The trio later moved to the Priest’s House at Ellen’s home, Smallhythe in Kent. Reflecting on their shared life, St John wrote: ‘The fine point of our pleasure in being together was not blunted by excess of it ... we belonged to the same world, the artist’s world. That established a camaraderie which was perfectly easy, unguarded and spontaneous.’

Across this wider world of reading, queer writers and readers drew on publications past and present to express and understand their experiences across

## “Creativity emerges as something shaped through conversation, influence and shared experience

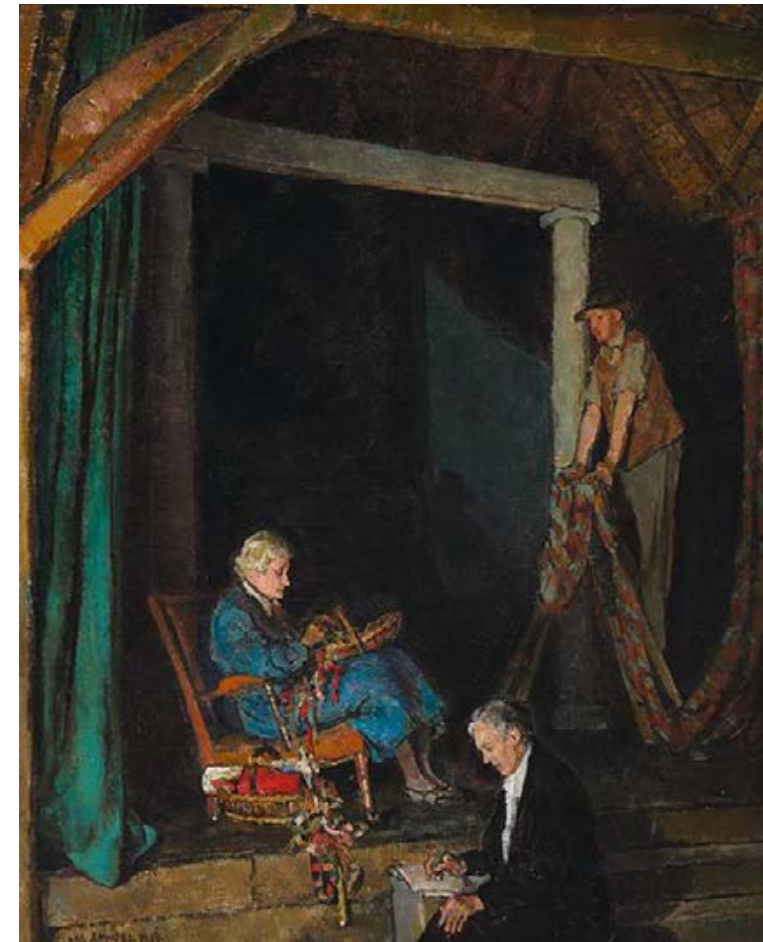
**Below** This fireside nook at Wightwick Manor, West Midlands, reflects the Aesthetic Movement ideals championed by Oscar Wilde.

poetry, philosophy, religion, fiction and science. Like many creatives, St John turned to many sources for insight. In a 1933 letter, she describes reading a book by Havelock Ellis, a writer known for his studies of sexuality, ‘hoping to find something new in it’. It’s a small but telling glimpse of her ongoing search. Books like Ellis’s seven-volume *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, published between 1896 and 1928, introduced new ways of thinking about gender and sexuality. They offered language and frameworks that could potentially help people begin to articulate and understand themselves more fully, even if they could not sufficiently reflect every experience.

All were orientating themselves in shifting legal, social and artistic landscapes. From the late 19th century, the shadow of Oscar Wilde lingered heavily across all three. Through his plays, essays and novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, first published in 1890, Oscar Wilde became one of the defining voices of the Aesthetic Movement, shaping ideas about beauty, art and self-expression that extended far beyond literature. He was convicted of ‘gross indecency’ in 1895 and sentenced to two years of imprisonment and hard labour, which broke his health and spirit.

Celebrated and persecuted, his name became a byword for homosexuality and his downfall a symbolic warning. In E. M. Forster’s *Maurice*, written in 1913–14 but only published posthumously after his death to avoid damage to Forster’s reputation, the protagonist describes himself as ‘an unspeakable, of the Oscar Wilde sort’. For some, even reading Wilde could feel charged. Writer Beverley Nichols recalled being discovered with Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as if he had been ‘caught in an illicit act’.

Many moments of joy and connection can be found in books, letters or marginal notes. When gay rights advocate and socialist Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) first read the work of the foundational American queer poet Walt Whitman, he described it as a moment of sudden, joyful alignment, encountering a way of thinking that seemed to echo his own feelings. It offered a powerful sense that he was not alone; that a language for his experiences might slowly take shape.



**Top left** Interior of the Barn Theatre, Smallhythe Place, with Edith ‘Edy’ Craig, Charles Staite and Vera (Jack) Holme, by Clare ‘Tony’ Atwood (1939)

**Top right** The same 17th-century Barn Theatre today, first used by Edy Craig for performances in 1929.

Christopher St John’s sense of ease and belonging was rooted in her shared life at Smallhythe with Craig and Atwood. Here, work and life intertwined, with writing, painting and theatre-making all happening side by side. As a theatre director and founder of the Pioneer Players, Craig’s productions brought together performers, designers and writers, and often platformed women while exploring progressive ideas such as workers’ rights, class, sex work and abortion.

Across the early 20th century, many queer creatives lived amidst communities like the one at Smallhythe, sometimes in looser urban circles. The Bloomsbury Group, for example, was an informal network of writers, artists and thinkers. It included Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster and Duncan Grant, whose friendships shaped their personal lives and their work. Relationships were often intertwined – romantic, intellectual, collaborative – and fed directly into members of the group’s work. Woolf’s 1928 novel *Orlando*, inspired by Vita Sackville-West, or Grant’s paintings of his lovers and friends, are just two visible traces of how closely these worlds overlapped. Again and again, creativity emerges not as something produced in isolation but as something shaped through conversation, influence and shared experience.



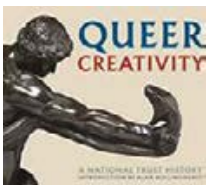
As we trace the circles people moved in, a broader picture comes into view – not fixed or neatly contained, but expanding outwards through a web of overlapping relationships. These connections reveal where people felt most at ease, whom they trusted, and the kinds of lives they were able to imagine together. They also challenge the idea of queer lives as solitary or defined only by struggle. Shared experience helped shape lives that were often rich, productive and creative.

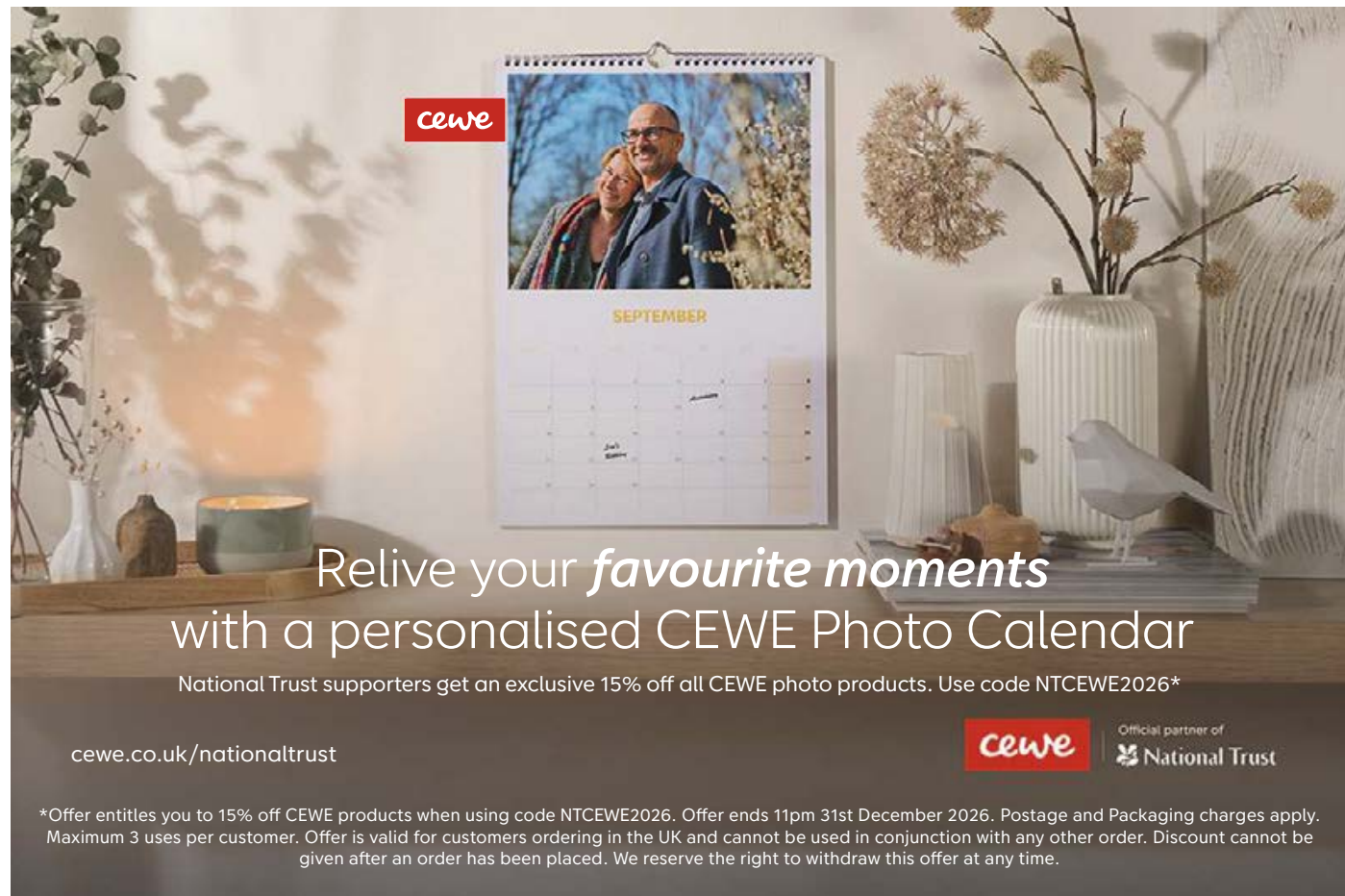
That is why these stories still matter. They are part of a wider shared history. They show how people come to understand themselves over time – through connection, experimentation and creativity. Their legacy lies not only in what they made, but in what they made possible: the confidence to question, to connect, and to imagine different ways of living. ○

**Richard Ashbourne** is an Assistant National Curator with the National Trust, where he has worked in curatorial, collections and interpretation roles since 2017.

**Dawn Hoskin** is a National Trust Cultural Heritage Curator and Curatorial Lead for the Trust’s LGBTQ+ Steering Group. She is also a freelance curator and researcher, and is the author of *The Short Story of Queer Art* (2025).

**i** *Queer Creativity* by Richard Ashbourne and Dawn Hoskin, with an introduction by Alan Hollinghurst, will be available soon from most high-street and online booksellers, most National Trust shops and through [nationaltrust.org.uk/shop](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/shop)





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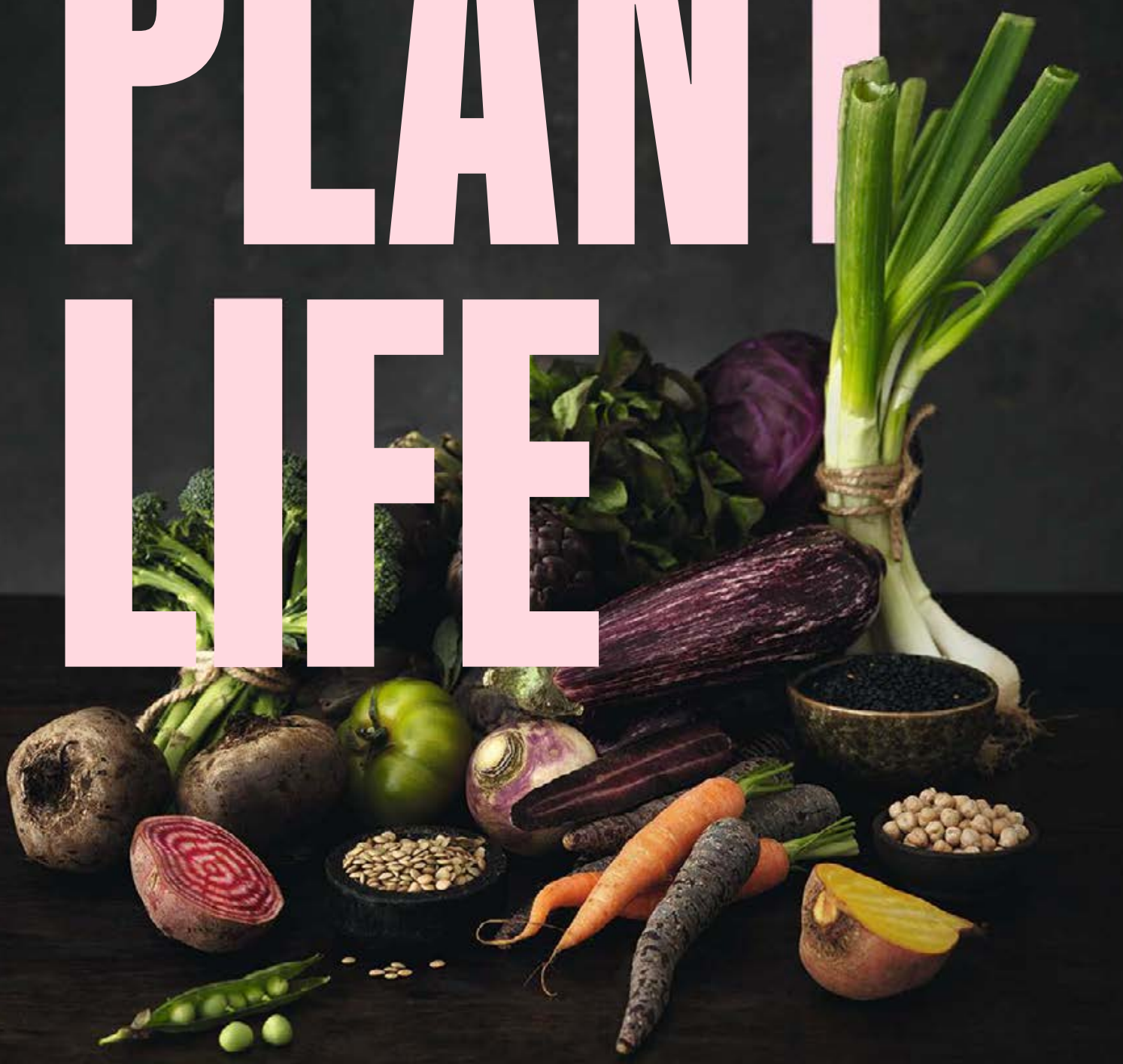
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# PLANT LIFE



Revamp your favourite meals to make them plant-based and you could be in for a surprisingly tasty result that's better for the planet

By Sophie Kershaw

StockFood/Eriksson, Lina

# Y

our fork breaks through the burnished top of a cottage pie to reach the bubbling, savoury centre; you mop up the final drops of a hearty stew with a crusty roll; you brush away the sticky crumbs from a golden slab of flapjack that cling to your fingers. Comforting, delicious

and – perhaps surprisingly – all dishes you can make using plant-based ingredients.

Many people equate plant-based eating with a vegetarian diet – where no meat is included – or a vegan diet, which excludes any animal products. Although some do use the terms interchangeably, according to the World Health Authority plant-based eating is a diet made up primarily of plants or plant-based products. It can include small amounts of meat and animal products, so long as the bulk of the meal is made up of combinations of vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds or meat-replacement products such as tofu or tempeh.



**Above and below** Try a delicious plant-based pasty or cottage pie with a creamy mashed potato topping – good for you and good for the planet.

At 2024's AGM, National Trust members proposed a resolution calling for half of the menu options offered across its cafés to be plant-based, which was passed. The Trust has worked hard to meet the target. This autumn, visitors can expect an array of tasty new plant-based dishes landing on menus, including spiced pumpkin soup, sweet potato and vegetable massaman curry one pot, and new orange and sultana cookies. For Christmas, the sour cherry and mincemeat-filled flapjack brings a festive twist.

'We're excited to be able to offer members and visitors more choice when they eat at our cafés,' says Development Chef Sasha Beviere. 'We'll still have dairy, eggs and meat on our menus, but we hope many people will enjoy the delicious plant-based dishes we've developed too, whatever type of diet they usually follow.'

There's a growing awareness of the negative effects of intensive meat production on the environment, with more people choosing to make plant-based meals part of their weekly routines. Intensive livestock raising contributes to global greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption and loss of biodiversity. Introducing more plants to our plates and cutting down our meat and dairy

# “

## This autumn, visitors can expect an array of new plant-based dishes

consumption is one reliable way to support the global fight against climate change.

With increasing interest in plant-based eating, it's an exciting time to be cooking, too. Most recipe books now include plant-based options, and Instagram and TikTok are full of chefs imaginatively adapting recipes. Pioneers like chef duo Henry Firth and Ian Theasby of BOSH! have taken social media by storm with their quick and flavour-packed vegan recipes. Cookbook author Rachel Ama inspires her followers by infusing her dishes with vibrant Caribbean flavours. And Katarina Cermelj (known as The Loopy Whisk) brings her food science acumen to developing baking recipes to suit a range of diets – including dairy-free and egg-free.

At home, there's a wealth of delicious ingredients ripe for experimentation that are available throughout autumn and winter. You could try making seasonal vegetables the star of your plate, rather than relegating them to a side dish. Try roasting or stuffing squash, pumpkin or celeriac for a hearty vegetable centrepiece (see page 66), or roasting sweet root vegetables such as parsnips or beetroot in the oven and then glazing them with maple syrup or tossing with fresh herbs.

You can get creative with classic dishes, too. Soak cashew nuts and whizz them in a food processor for a velvety smooth white sauce; cook tender green lentils down with tomatoes to create a family-friendly Bolognese (see page 67), or char mushrooms on a griddle to use as a replacement for meat burgers.

It might not suit everyone to eat a plant-based diet all the time, but including a handful of plant-based dishes in your repertoire can be a fun way of getting more creative in the kitchen. And whether you opt to overhaul your diet entirely, embrace a plant-packed meal once or twice a week or simply switch the milk in your cup of tea for a plant-based alternative, the planet will thank you for it. »

**Sophie Kershaw** is a writer, chef and food stylist.

## SIMPLE SWITCHES

Keen to experiment with plant-based cooking?  
Take inspiration from these easy swaps



### Whole eggs → chia seeds

Replace eggs when baking or making pancakes. Swap 1 egg for 1 tbsp of chia seeds mixed with 2.5 tbsp warm water and leave to soak for a few minutes.



### Egg white → aquafaba

The liquid from a can of chickpeas – 'aquafaba' – can be whipped up with sugar to create meringue for pavlova or chocolate mousse.



### Mince → lentils

Hearty and great at soaking up flavour: lentils can easily substitute for mince in staples such as cottage pie. Other pulses such as butter beans or chickpeas also work well.



### Parmesan → nutritional yeast

These tangy yeast flakes are great for topping pasta dishes or soups which need the savoury hit Parmesan cheese usually provides.



### Chicken → tofu

High in protein, tofu comes in a range of guises, such as firm, silken, smoked or marinated, and is great at absorbing flavour and adding texture in curries, stir-fries or stews.



### Chocolate → ... chocolate?

Plant-based eating can include treats like chocolate. Dark chocolate with over 70 per cent cocoa is usually dairy-free (do check the label).

# RECIPES

Celebrate the abundance of autumn with these plant-based recipes from *A Good Appetite* by Jenny Chandler

## ROASTED CELERIAC WITH TOMATO AND LEMON SAUCE

Celeriac can make a dramatic centrepiece for a meal

**Serves 4**

**Ingredients**

- 1 medium celeriac (about 1kg)
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp coarse sea salt
- Leaves from 2 sprigs of thyme
- 1 onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
- Finely grated zest and juice of ½ lemon
- 2 tbsp tahini
- 4 tbsp nutritional yeast
- 100g roasted hazelnuts, roughly chopped
- 1 small bunch of parsley, finely chopped
- 1 small garlic clove, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper

**Method**

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan/gas mark 6).
2. Scrub the celeriac thoroughly, then pat dry with a towel. Place it on a large sheet of foil, rub in 1 tbsp of the olive oil and sprinkle with the salt and thyme leaves. Wrap up into a parcel and roast for 1½ hours.
3. Open up the foil and then roast for a further 45 minutes to caramelise. Meanwhile, heat the remaining olive oil in a small pan over a low heat and fry the onion for 10 minutes, or until soft. Add the crushed garlic and, once you can smell it, tip in the tomatoes. Simmer for about 20 minutes, then add the lemon juice and tahini. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Mix the lemon zest, nutritional yeast, hazelnuts, parsley and chopped garlic together in a bowl. Slice the celeriac into wedges at the table. Serve with the tomato sauce and sprinkle with the nut mixture.



**TOP TIP**

Don't have a celeriac handy? You could use a cauliflower, a large swede or an entire squash instead.

Kirstie Young x2

## RAINBOW SLAW

Crunchy slaws are a good way to use up leftover veg

**Serves 4**

**Ingredients**

- ½ red onion, diced
- 150g red, white or hispi cabbage or Brussels sprouts, finely sliced
- 2 carrots, cut into small chunks, matchsticks or discs
- 100g celeriac, kohlrabi, cauliflower, parsnip or beetroot, cut into small chunks, matchsticks or discs (finely slice any cauliflower cores)
- 1 apple or pear, unpeeled, cored and cut into chunks
- 4 dates, finely chopped, or dried figs, raisins or sultanas
- A handful of nuts, such as walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds or peanuts
- 2 tbsp toasted seeds, such as sunflower, pumpkin, sesame, flax, hemp or poppy
- A handful of fresh mint, parsley or coriander leaves (optional)

**Dressing**

- 2 tbsp vinegar (cider, sherry or wine vinegar)
- 4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp Dijon or grainy mustard
- Salt and pepper

**Method**

1. Place all the chopped vegetables and fruit in a large bowl and add the dried fruit, nuts, seeds and herbs.
2. Shake the dressing ingredients together in a jar, balancing with salt and pepper. Toss everything together immediately before any fruit or vegetables begin to oxidise and turn brown.
3. The slaw can sit happily in the fridge for a couple of days and is best eaten at room temperature.



**TOP TIP**

Transform into cottage pie by placing half the cooked ragu in an ovenproof dish and topping it with mashed potato. Sprinkle over breadcrumbs and finish in the oven or under the grill.

## MUSHROOM AND LENTIL RAGU

A good ragu (or Bolognese) is a must for a home cook

**Serves 6–8**

**Ingredients**

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 1 celery stick, diced
- 300g portobello or chestnut mushrooms, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 250g pumpkin or any squash, peeled and diced
- 100ml red or white wine
- 3 tbsp tomato purée
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 800ml vegetable stock
- 200g dried green lentils
- 2 bay leaves
- 1–2 tbsp vegan Worcestershire sauce
- About 1 tbsp sherry vinegar
- Pinch of caster sugar (optional)
- Salt

**Method**

1. Heat the olive oil in your largest saucepan over a low heat and fry the onion, carrots and celery for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Add the mushrooms and garlic, then increase the heat to medium. The pan will seem too dry but, as you stir, the mushrooms will release moisture.
3. Stir in the pumpkin, a pinch of salt, the wine, the tomato purée, the chopped tomatoes and the stock. Add the lentils and bay leaves, cover with a lid and cook on a gentle simmer for about 45 minutes, adding a dash of water if the pan seems dry.
4. Once the lentils are tender, balance with Worcestershire sauce and vinegar, and even a pinch of sugar. ○

## BUY THE BOOK

*A Good Appetite* by Jenny Chandler (National Trust Books, £20) is available at [nationaltrust.org.uk/shop-books](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/shop-books)





# JUST FOR YOU



Sneak peeks, prizes to win, and ways to make the most of your membership this season

## TOP TIPS

# EVERY TRICK IN THE BOOK

In a bit of a reading rut? You're not alone – with busy lives and all sorts of distractions, many of us have drifted away from reading for pleasure. It's why the Department for Education declared 2026 the National Year of Reading – aiming to reconnect us to books that expand our minds, help us relax and spark creativity. If our feature on National Trust libraries and reading rooms (page 44) has inspired you, here's some tips to help you turn the page again.



### TIP 1

#### Read by feel

If you're not sure what you're in the mood for, try a website such as [whichbook.net](https://www.whichbook.net), which lets you browse by emotion, setting, character type or even how quirky, dark or optimistic you're feeling. You can also filter by what everyone else is reading – ideal when you want a guaranteed page-turner.

### TIP 2

#### Join a book group

Reading is often more fun when it's shared. Local bookshops frequently host friendly, low-pressure book groups, or you can gather a few friends and rotate who chooses the next read. A group gives you a reason to pick up a book again – and the conversations can be just as enjoyable as the reading itself.

### TIP 3

#### Visit your local library

Libraries are perfect for rediscovering what you actually enjoy. You can browse without commitment, dip into a few pages and walk away with a stack – all without spending a penny. And most libraries now let you borrow e-books and audiobooks through apps like BorrowBox or Libby.

### TIP 4

#### Try audiobooks

If sitting down with a book feels daunting, audiobooks can ease you back into enjoying a story. They're ideal for long drives, dog walks or while doing chores – or even to help you drift off to sleep (if you're listening via your phone, you can always set a timer for it to switch off), and a good narrator can make a work feel completely fresh. It's a great way to reconnect with stories.

### TIP 5

#### Make reading routine

A little consistency goes a long way. Try carving out a small pocket of time each day – 10 minutes with your morning coffee, a chapter on your lunch break, or swapping the pre-bed doom-scroll for a few pages. Keeping a book within reach makes it easier to dip in whenever you get a moment.

### TIP 6

#### Switch up the format

Reading doesn't have to mean chunky novels or dense non-fiction. Magazines, comics, blogs and podcasts are all great options. Choose something that engages your brain. If it tells a story, sparks curiosity or teaches you something new, it counts.

 Discover some of the remarkable books in Trust collections at [nationaltrust.org.uk/remarkable-books](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/remarkable-books)

National Trust Images x4, National Trust/Immy Tinklerx3, Alex Bailey/© 2026 Focus Features LLC

## HOW TO ... make your own tile coasters



Taking inspiration from the Jackfield Tile Museum at Ironbridge Gorge (page 38), this guide will help you design and craft your own set of tile coasters. Jackfield was once the beating heart of British tile production, where makers created designs that travelled across the world. If this whets your appetite, why not pay a visit to Jackfield Tile Museum to discover the techniques and artistry that made their tiles so special? [nationaltrust.org.uk/ironbridge-gorge](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/ironbridge-gorge)



### EQUIPMENT

- Air-dry clay (widely available)
- Rolling pin
- A small bowl of water
- Cutter (square or circle) or craft knife and ruler

#### Ideas for decorating:

- Texturising objects, e.g. lace fabric, buttons, leaves, craft stamps
- Acrylic paints or ceramic/porcelain marker pens
- Decoupage: patterned paper napkins, decoupage medium and a small paint brush

#### For sealing/finishing (optional):

- Clear acrylic varnish (or decoupage medium)
- Small varnish brush
- Sticky felt pad dots

### METHOD

1. Prepare your workspace by putting down baking paper or a silicone mat to prevent sticking.
2. Condition the clay by kneading it until it's smooth and pliable. Roll it out to at least 6mm (¼ inch) thick. Rolling it too thin can cause warping or cracking as the clay shrinks during drying. Use a slightly damp finger to smooth any cracks as you roll.
3. For a textured design, press your chosen texturising objects into the clay sheet. You could try lying leaves or lace on top, rolling them in with a rolling pin and then peeling them off carefully, or lightly stamping designs into the clay.
4. Use a shaped cutter or a craft knife and ruler to cut out your coasters. Smooth the edges with a finger dipped in water.
5. Cure by leaving flat on baking paper for 24–48 hours, flipping after 12 hours to prevent warping.
6. Add any other decoration you like. Use acrylics to paint your design, or try decoupage – a technique where patterned paper is glued onto a surface. Brush a thin layer of decoupage medium onto the coaster, separate the layers of a patterned paper napkin and place the patterned layer onto the coated coaster, smoothing out any wrinkles. Finish with another layer of medium to seal it.
7. If you've added paint it's best to seal the coasters with clear acrylic varnish. Otherwise, you can leave them unsealed if preferred. Make sure to follow any safety instructions for your chosen sealant.
8. Once fully dry, you can stick felt pads to the underside of the coaster to protect your furniture.

*If you give this a try, we'd love to see the results. Feel free to send us a photo of your creation – we may feature it in a future 'From you' page.*



## Wild Tales podcast

Catch up with 'Wild Tales', the National Trust's podcast for nature lovers. Join experts Rosie Holdsworth and Ajay Tegala on adventures around the UK's diverse habitats, and experience the natural world in a whole new way.

Coming up this autumn and winter: you can meet the once-extinct butterfly whose survival depends on ants; delve into the secret world of barn owls; and check out the urban otters who have made a home in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Listen at [nationaltrust.org.uk/podcasts](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/podcasts) or wherever you go for your podcasts.



## Sense and Sensibility



This autumn, London's Rainham Hall steps into the spotlight in a major new film adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. The Hall's carefully preserved Georgian interiors made the perfect stand-in for the London town house of Mrs Jennings, played by Fiona Shaw, where Elinor Dashwood (Daisy Edgar-Jones) and her sister Marianne (Esmé Creed-Miles) stay during a key period of the story.

See the film in cinemas from 25 September, and visit Rainham Hall between 26 September and 19 December for an exhibition in two of the rooms used for filming, revealing how they were transformed for the silver screen. Rainham Hall is open Thursday–Saturday by timed entry slots; pre-booking recommended. [nationaltrust.org.uk/rainham-hall](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/rainham-hall)



WIN!

## What's on Nestflix?

If you've been captivated by our 'Window to the Wild' nature livestreams (page 28), why not set up your own cameras to see what your local wildlife gets up to? We're offering one reader the chance to win their own nestbox with an inbuilt camera (worth £219.99) from our partners at CJ Wildlife.



To enter, tell us which bird species is sometimes nicknamed 'clowns of the sea'. Submit your answer online via the QR code or [nationaltrust.org.uk/wildlife-camera-comp](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/wildlife-camera-comp)

Keen to give nature a helping hand in your area? You can explore the full National Trust x CJ Wildlife range of wildlife food, bird feeders, nestboxes, wildlife habitats and much more at [birdfood.co.uk/nt-members](https://birdfood.co.uk/nt-members)

The competition will close at 23:59 on 26 October 2026. Entrants must be 18 or over. National Trust employees may not enter. One entry per person. For full competition T&Cs, see page 81.



WIN!

## A festive hamper

With Christmas on the way, it's the perfect time to treat yourself to some festive goodies. We're offering one lucky reader the chance to win a Christmas food hamper full of tasty treats such as Jingleberry jam, savoury crackers, festive stollen chocolate bar and the all-important Christmas pudding.

The winner will also receive a £150 National Trust gift card to spend on presents for friends and family – or on themselves! Perhaps you'll go for a cosy throw to curl up with on cold winter nights, or a set of needle-felted nativity mice decorations to hang on the Christmas tree? Whether you're shopping for bookworms, foodies or style icons you'll find plenty of gift ideas both in stores and online at [nationaltrust.org.uk/shop](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/shop)

To enter the competition, tell us which coin was traditionally hidden inside a Christmas pudding. Submit your answer online via the QR code or [nationaltrust.org.uk/christmas-2026-comp](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/christmas-2026-comp)

The competition will close at 23:59 on 26 October 2026. Entrants must be 18 or over. National Trust employees may not enter. One entry per person. For full competition T&Cs, see page 81.



National Trust Images x4, Green Feathers x2



## 100 CLASSIC COUNTRY WALKS



This book reveals some of the UK's most memorable walking trails – the kind that stay with you long after your boots are off. Each route blends rich wildlife, layers of history and beautiful scenery – from ruined castles and ancient woodlands to grand houses and landscaped gardens. Expect summits, coastlines, waterfalls and ridgelines, plus those small surprises that make a route feel like an adventure.

From Cornwall to the Lake District and the Midlands to the Highlands, most of these walks come in at a manageable 6 miles or less, with clear directions and overview maps to steer you in the right direction. You'll also find suggestions for the all-important pub or café break along the way – or even the occasional seaside chippy.

Changing with the season and the weather, these are walks you can return to time and time again.

*100 Classic Country Walks* (£14.99) is on sale now at your local Trust shop, or online at [nationaltrust.org.uk/shop](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/shop)

WIN!

We're offering five readers the chance to win a copy of *100 Classic Country Walks*, so they can hit the trails and find their own favourite routes from among this selection by outdoor adventure writers Jen and Sim Benson.

To enter, tell us the name of England's first National Trail, which opened on 24 April 1965 and stretches for 268 miles between Edale in the Peak District and Kirk Yetholm, Scotland. Enter via the QR code or online at [nationaltrust.org.uk/country-walks-comp](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/country-walks-comp)

The competition will close at 23:59 on 26 October 2026. Entrants must be 18 or over. The competition is not open to National Trust employees. One entry per person. For full competition T&Cs, see page 81.



## JUST FOR FUN



This object is part of the collection at Lacock in Wiltshire, but can you guess what it is? Find out next issue – or visit [nationaltrust.org.uk/guess-the-object](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/guess-the-object)



## FROM LAST ISSUE

In the summer 26 issue (page 71), we asked if you could identify this curious item from the collection at Ardross House in County Armagh. It's a turnip pulper or root cutter made by Pierce and Co Ltd, Wexford – which used to be one of the largest foundries in Northern Ireland, manufacturing agricultural and household items out of cast iron.

Pulpers like this one were turned by hand to chop up root crops such as turnips and fodder beet. This made for easier consumption by livestock, as whole root vegetables could pose a choking hazard for valuable farm animals.





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© National Trust Images/James Dobson.

JUST FOR YOU

## CROSSWORD

### WIN! AN OAK PLANTER AND 'OLIVIA' ROSE



Even a small outdoor space – a balcony, patio or sunny doorstep – can become a showcase for seasonal colour with this beautifully crafted oak planter, created in collaboration between the National Trust and outdoor furniture makers Gaze Burvill. Made in Hampshire by skilled craftspeople using characterful 'Grown in Britain' oak offcuts, each planter has its own unique grain and silvery patina that sets off plants beautifully.

The clever 'twist and lift' design means you can swap the liner in seconds, refreshing your display throughout the year without the hassle of repotting.

If that wasn't enough, the winner will also receive a potted 'Olivia' shrub rose bred by David Austin.

Every purchase from the National Trust's Gaze Burvill collection contributes to the careful management of the forests and woodlands in the Trust's care. Find out more at [gazeburvill.com/national-trust-collection](https://gazeburvill.com/national-trust-collection)

#### TO ENTER ONLINE

Decipher the prize word, revealed in the shaded squares, and submit it online via the QR code or [nationaltrust.org.uk/crossword-78](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/crossword-78)



#### TO ENTER BY POST

Write to us, including the prize word and your contact information, to Crossword No. 78, *National Trust Magazine*, Heelis, Kemble Drive, Swindon, SN2 2NA. Entries for this competition will close at 23:59 on 26 October 2026.

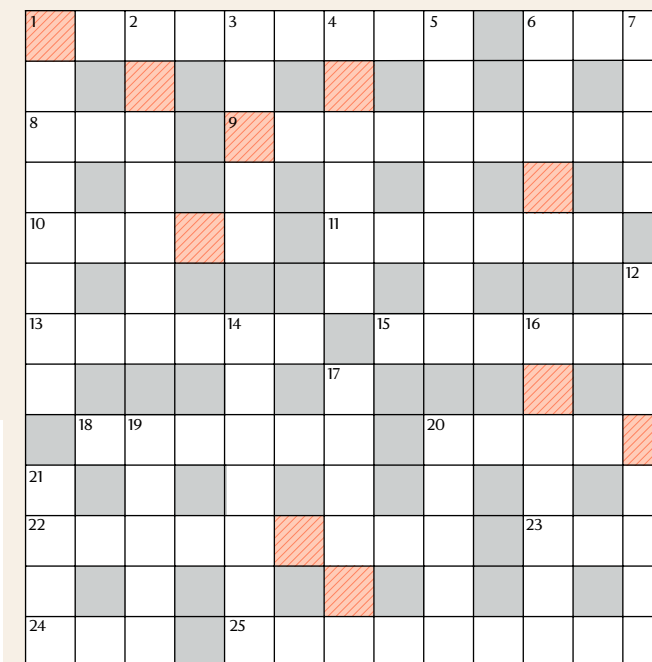
**Terms and conditions** Entries will close at 23:59 on 26 October 2026. The first correct entry drawn at random will win a 46cm Gaze Burvill x National Trust planter with additional liner (RRP £492), and a potted 'Olivia Rose Austin' rose (RRP £35). There is no cash alternative. Entrants must be 18 or over. This competition is only open to UK residents due to shipping restrictions. The competition is not open to employees of the National Trust, Gaze Burvill or David Austin. Each person may only enter once, either by post or online. The winner will be drawn and notified within 30 days of the closing date. Once notified, the winner must claim their prize within 14 days, or a new winner will be drawn. All entries will be securely disposed of once the prizes have been dispatched. Your details will not be used for any other purpose. For full T&Cs, see page 81.

#### Crossword solutions (from last issue)

**Across** 1 Peat bogs 5 Isle 9 Lindsay 10 Royal 11 Sisal 12 Lacock 15 Energy 17 Grease 19 Edward 20 Astor 22 Noble 24 Badgers 25 Henk 26 Reynolds  
**Down** 1 Polesden 2 Agnes Head 3 Basil 4 Ghylls 6 Sky 7 Eels 8 Grocer 13 Chartwell 14 Tea roses 16 Glades 18 Edible 20 Arden 21 Inch 23 Ben

**Prize word** Packwood

**Congratulations to the winners of crossword no. 77 in our summer issue, who each won a National Trust holiday stay worth £500.**



★ PRIZE  
WORD



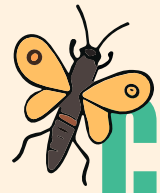
Clue: Small Northumbrian farmhouse, once home to a famous artist and naturalist

#### ACROSS

1 Exmoor estate whose hidden livestream camera allows viewers to watch beavers in real time (9)  
6 Relaxing facility, a highlight of 1 down (3)  
8 Enjoy a trail – – – designed by Trust rangers at many scenic places, such as Rhosili and East Soar (3)  
9 – – – – – Topping is an iconic Yorkshire landmark (9)  
10 Barriers on rivers that control the flow of water (5)  
11 Elgar began composing his – – – – – Variations on a piano now in Hatchlands' Cobbe Collection (6)  
13 These light-emitting devices enable detailed scans of interior details as well as landscapes (6)  
15 – – – – – boats provide fun on many lakes and beaches (6)  
18 The Trust's Dogs Welcome project has created a – – – – – Code (6)  
20 Cambridgeshire village that has planted one of 49 saplings derived from the Sycamore Gap tree (5)  
22 The Devil's – – – – – in Surrey is a popular visitor attraction (5,4)  
23 – – – a picnic outdoors, no. 9 of our '50 things to do' (3)  
24 The first – – – distress call was received by Marconi's Lizard Wireless Station in 1910 (3)  
25 Queen Anne town house in Salisbury's Cathedral Close (9)

#### DOWN

1 Historic House Hotel that acts as a 'portal to the past' (8)  
2 Pulses that are a tasty substitute for mince (7)  
3 Cadair – – – – – in south Eryri offers stunning views (5)  
4 – – – – – mushrooms and other fungi can often be seen on an autumn walk through the woods (6)  
5 The period during which the sea level falls and water flows back out to sea (3,4)  
6 The Library at Lyme holds the – – – – – *Missal*, a unique and historic Catholic manuscript (5)  
7 The seeds of Dunster Castle's celebrated handkerchief tree were reputedly brought over from South Africa by – – – – – Luttrell (4)  
12 Lawrence – – – – – created Hidcote's world-famous Arts and Crafts-inspired garden (8)  
14 London's – – – – – Hall stars in a new film adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (7)  
16 Profession of Ellen Terry, owner of Smallhythe Place (7)  
17 The Trust is calling for a Water – – – – – Bill to clean up our waterways and make polluters pay (6)  
19 St – – – – – Head in Cornwall is an ideal place to stargaze (5)  
20 The deer rut is an autumn highlight at – – – – – Abbey in Derbyshire (5)  
21 – – – – – *mellifera* is better known as the honey bee (4)



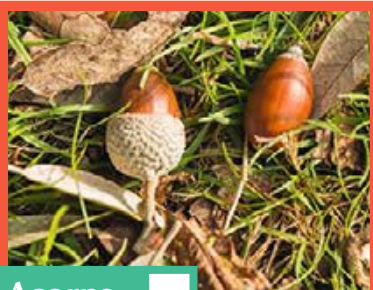
# CHILDREN'S ZONE

As autumn settles in, trees are shedding their leaves and seeds are tumbling to the ground. Head out on a scavenger hunt and see what seasonal signs you can spot

## Autumn scavenger hunt

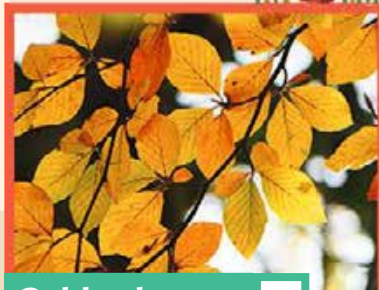
What will you find today?

Under 11¾ only!



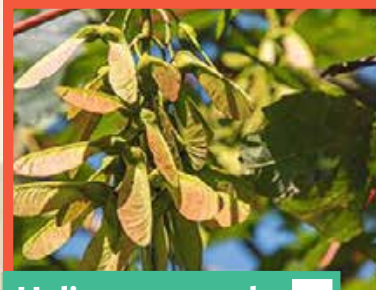
### Acorns

Acorns are small nuts from oak trees, with little caps like hats. They are a favourite food for squirrels and birds. A mighty oak tree can grow from just one tiny acorn!



### Golden leaves

'Deciduous' leaves turn golden, red and orange in autumn as trees stop making green chlorophyll. It's a sign that trees are preparing for winter, before the leaves fall to the ground.



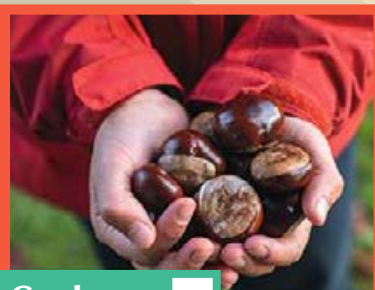
### Helicopter seeds

These spinning seeds, often called 'helicopters', come from maple and sycamore trees. Their winged shape helps them whirl through the air, spreading far from their parent tree to grow somewhere new.



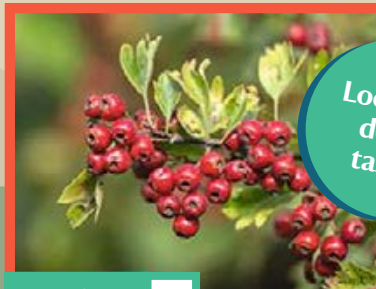
### Pine cones

Pine cones come from evergreen trees and protect seeds inside their tough scales. When it's dry, the cones open to release seeds. When it's wet, they close again to keep seeds safe.



### Conkers

Conkers are the shiny brown seeds from horse chestnut trees. You'll find them hidden inside spiky green cases. It can be fun to collect them and play conkers, a traditional game that dates back to the 1840s.



### Berries

Bright berries add splashes of red, orange and purple to autumn hedgerows. Many are food for birds – and some, like blackberries, for humans – but others can be harmful, so look, don't taste!

Look but don't taste!



## RAINY DAY CORNER

### MAKE A WATERCOLOUR LEAF PRINTING

Gather different shaped fallen leaves on your scavenger hunt and get creative with this watercolour technique, where you make prints from the textures and marks in each leaf.

#### You will need ...

#### A grown-up to help

- A selection of leaves
- Watercolour paper
- Large paintbrushes or sponges
- Watercolour paints
- Jar of water
- A paint mixing pot – an old ice-cream tub would do
- Masking tape (optional)

- 1 Collect a few different leaves while you're on your scavenger hunt (left). Try to find different shapes, and some that are nice and flat, as they make clearer prints.
- 2 Tape around the edges of your paper if you want a neat border.
- 3 Using a large paintbrush, brush water on your paper so it completely covers the sheet of paper, making sure it is soaked. This will help your leaves to stick.

- 4 Choose a leaf and a paint colour. Brush paint onto the paper where you'd like the leaf to go, creating a soft area of colour that's a little bigger than the leaf and roughly echoes its shape. Then place the leaf on top of the paint.

- 5 Add more paint around the edge of your leaf. Use plenty of water to help it stick around the edges and where the leaf touches the paper.

- 6 Do it again with the other leaves to make a pattern. Choose your paint colours – maybe lots of colours to make a rainbow effect?

- 7 Leave your painting to dry somewhere where it won't be disturbed. This part is really important as the prints won't work if you remove the leaves too early!

- 8 Once the paint has dried, you can start peeling away the leaves to reveal the prints underneath. It's magical to see how the leaf details have printed onto the paper!

- 9 If you have masking tape on the edge of your paper, peel it away to reveal a clean border around your beautiful painting.



### We'd love to see pictures of your watercolour leaf prints!

Ask your grown-up to help take a photo and send it to us at the email address at the bottom right of this page. See page 81 for some pictures of last issue's bee hotels and butterflies.

### WRITE IN!

Have you explored somewhere in nature recently, at home or at a Trust place? Please write in and tell us all about it.

Please include your name, age and where you're from, what you did, what was special about it, and a photo of you doing your activity. We'll also need your parent or guardian's name and email address, and their written permission for us to publish your words and picture. The magazine team reads every one and chooses which we'll print. We securely store anything we don't use for 12 months from the date we receive it, so we can consider it for a future issue, then delete it.

Please write to us at [magazine@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:magazine@nationaltrust.org.uk) or to the address on page 76. We promise not to use your contact details for anything else.

### UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS

Can you unscramble the letters to find six autumn nature treasures?

1. LBARGBEIKRES \_\_\_\_\_

2. CORAN \_\_\_\_\_

3. PELMA \_\_\_\_\_

4. EDSE \_\_\_\_\_

5. AELF \_\_\_\_\_

6. ENNEPICO \_\_\_\_\_

1. blackberries 2. acorn 3. maple 4. seed 5. leaf 6. pinecone

# FROM YOU

## We love to hear from you

✉ The Editor, *National Trust Magazine*,  
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## Celebrating 100 years



STAR  
LETTER

My mother, Joan Tait, turned 100 years old last year and has been a loyal National Trust member for longer than I can remember. In

May, the team at Attingham in Shropshire – her favourite place! – invited her there to celebrate with lovely tea and cakes and a tour of their 'Imagining India' exhibition (on until October).

Mum has five daughters and one of the constants throughout our childhood was being 'dragged around' National Trust properties. Thanks to her, we all developed a deep appreciation for the Trust and the importance of preserving these beautiful places and their history for future generations.

Mum loves Christmas and one of our treasured family traditions is visiting Attingham each year to see the Christmas trees. It has become a very special part of our family celebrations over the years.

She still lives independently and remains active, and her National Trust visits are something she truly cherishes. She continues to take great pleasure in visiting and walking around the beautiful properties.

Thank you for everything you do to preserve such special places, which mean so much to members like my mother.

**Debby Lovell, Shropshire**



## A SLOW WALK AT KEDLESTON

We visited Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire on a bright September morning. After visiting the café and pleasure gardens, we intended to go around the site on the Long Walk. We ended up only taking the Short Walk as we stopped every couple of minutes to look at one of the 20 varieties of fungi we found on the felled trees next to the path. We have never seen such a display! Oyster, inkcap (below), honey, porcelain, stinkhorns and puffballs to name a few.

**Tom Brierley, Nottinghamshire**



## Mountain triking

This is my elder brother Neal at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, last year. It was by pure good fortune that we turned up when the *Time Team* production unit was carrying out a dig and filming live. We were so close to Sir Tony Robinson! Our memorable afternoon out was only possible thanks to the generosity of the National Trust in lending Neal an all-terrain Mountain Trike, enabling me to push him wherever he wanted to explore.

So thank you National Trust ... time spent with my big brother is very precious.

**Catherine Daymond-John, Buckinghamshire**

## Won over by change

My husband and I had never considered joining the Trust, but when we moved to Pembrokeshire six years ago, there were many Trust car parks near the coast paths where we love to walk. Reluctantly, we joined so that we could use the car parks – and have been so glad we did. We had no idea what a broad range of support you offer, from peat restoration to crucial advice on gardening and working with climate change.

I shall now be taking a much more active interest in the positive change that you are creating in all that you do.

**Marian Logie, Pembrokeshire**



## Stitches in time

I produced this artwork in my sewing class. I have tried to incorporate as much of Belton Estate's history as possible. The first section is based on the house in the 1680s, including a horse and carriage. The middle section reflects the estate's use during the First and Second World Wars. The final section is based on Belton when it was saved by the Trust in the 1980s. I've included an adventure playground as I believe Belton has the largest one in the Trust, and here the trees are fully grown.

**Vicky Roberts, Bedfordshire**



## Inspired by a preloved book

I was inspired to write to you after reading your latest magazine. I too enjoy a browse in your second-hand bookshops. Earlier this year I visited Corfe Castle in Dorset and in the visitor centre I found a craft book with a great idea that I could use to paint an old box which needed a revamp. I was delighted with the result (above).

**Carol Cox, Dorset**



## Share your coastal highlights?

Following the opening of the King Charles III England Coast Path earlier this year, we'd like to hear your memories of your special times enjoying the UK's coast paths. If you have a story or image you'd like to share, please write to us at [magazine@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:magazine@nationaltrust.org.uk) or the address on page 76. Please include your contact details and we'll be in touch if we can feature your story.

# YOUR PICTURES

Favourite moments from your days out

**1. Starburst over Owler Tor**

A river of purple at Owler Tor in the Peak District.  
**Steven Hewitt, Derbyshire**

**2. Beautiful Brownsea resident**

It was wonderful not only to see but manage to photograph a red squirrel on Brownsea Island!  
**Peter Burrill, Chesterfield**  
**Volunteer Ranger Clumber Park, Notts.**

**3. Penrhyn splashed with red**

The vibrant Virginia creeper growing up Penrhyn Castle, Gwynedd.  
**Chris Jones, Isle of Anglesey**

**4. Getting into character**

We had a great day out at Lyme, Cheshire. You're never too old to dress up and be a bit silly.  
**Andy and Paula Morton, Cheshire**

**5. A beloved old oak**

Our grandchildren love climbing this oak at Cliveden, Buckinghamshire. It's a must-do stop after the story-book play den, and has my favourite view in the distance.  
**Lynda McGuire, Buckinghamshire**



**6. Scooting around**

I broke my ankle in an accident last year, but thankfully I was able to hire a mobility scooter from the very helpful staff at Kingston Lacy, Dorset, to get around the beautiful grounds.  
**Lisa Harvey, Dorset**

**7. A double celebration**

My friend Sarah and I celebrated our birthdays last year by making Christmas wreaths in the greenhouse at Croft Castle, Herefordshire.  
**Anne, London**

**8. Seeing Gibson in a rosy light**

I took this picture of Gibson Mill at Hardcastle Craggs, West Yorkshire, on a gorgeous early-morning September walk.  
**Cheryl Doran, Greater Manchester**



## ‘WHY I VOLUNTEER’

The dune system at Portstewart Strand, County Londonderry, is 6,000 years old. Long-term dune volunteer William – known as BT – has been leading butterfly safaris and sharing his knowledge with visitors for 40 years

**P**ortstewart Strand is a wild space on our doorstep. I’ve lived here most of my life and played on the sand and among the dunes as a youngster.

I began volunteering here in 1986. I’d had a heart attack and I started walking on the beach again, as it was flat. I began to notice things I hadn’t when I used to play here as a child. I’m an engineer by trade and I wanted to find out more, so I got a book to see what plants and other wildlife was there. The National Trust team caught on that I knew a bit about it and asked me to take people on tours to show them the dunes and tell them what was living there.

People tend to look at the dune system as nothing but heaps of sand with spiky grass and prickly buckthorn. They often think it’s not terribly interesting until someone like me comes along and points out there are actually things here that are very fragile and beautiful, like bee orchids. They come up at the end of May and only last a month, but they’re absolutely beautiful. People are always surprised you can have orchids in sand dunes.

I did a butterfly conservation survey here for years in the summer months and I still lead the odd butterfly safari showing people what butterflies they can find. I find butterfly populations come and go. Some years the common blues will be in ones and twos and another year you find them in groups of 20 or 30 at one time. Occasionally we find big flocks of painted ladies, which come all the way over from North Africa. About 35 species of butterfly can be found across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and I’ve seen 18 of those in the dunes here over the years. We also see shelducks, which nest in rabbit holes, badgers, hares, curlews and lapwings on the river which runs past the dunes.

It’s a fragile ecosystem and there’s always something new to find and see. I come back home after a day’s volunteering and feel I’ve put something back, maybe inspired someone to look at the dune system in a different light. It’s very satisfying.

**i** Find a volunteering role that suits your skills, interests and schedule at [nationaltrust.org.uk](https://nationaltrust.org.uk)

**Top left** Visitors exploring Portstewart Strand, County Londonderry.

**Top** A common blue, one of 18 butterfly species that BT has found in the dunes.

**Inset** BT loves showing people the varied wildlife that lives on the dunes.

## BEST MAKES

Thank you for sending in your wonderful bee hotels and butterfly pictures from last issue’s Children’s zone. We loved seeing them. Here are some of our favourites.



Iris, age 7



Theo, age 5 and Isaac, age 3



Ben, age 9



Willow, age 8 and Ivy, age 5



Lily, age 6



Jennifer, age 7



Callum, age 4



Maya, age 3



Miriam, age 4

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## Competitions

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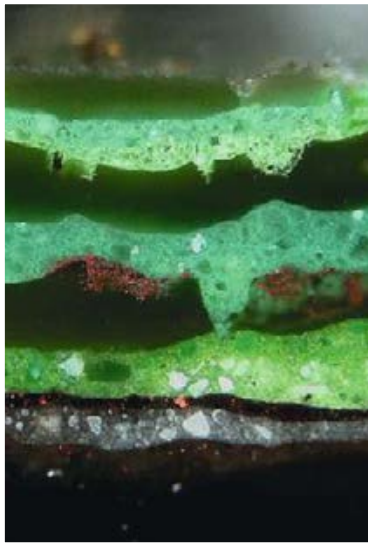
All competitions in this issue of *National Trust Magazine* will close at 23:59 on 26 October 2026. Entrants must be 18 or over. Entries are not open to employees of the National Trust, or employees of any other companies connected to the competitions. There is a limit of one entry per person per competition. Duplicate entries will be disqualified. Responsibility cannot be taken for entries that are incomplete, mislaid or corrupted. Winning entries for each competition will be drawn at random from all eligible entries. The winners will be notified within 30 days of the closing date by phone or email, and must claim their prize within 14 days of notification. If the prizewinner fails to do so, they forfeit their right to the prize and we reserve the right to pick another winner at random from the remaining entries. No cash alternative or refund will be given. Imagery of prizes may be for illustrative purposes only, and colours and other minor details may vary. Events may occur that render the competitions or the awarding of prizes impossible for reasons beyond our control and we may amend the promotions accordingly. We will do what we reasonably can to ensure that participants receive prizes of at least equal value. Any personal data you provide for a competition will be held and used only by National Trust or its agents and suppliers to administer the competition, and will be processed as per our privacy policy [nationaltrust.org.uk/privacy](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/privacy). The surname and county of the winners will be made available on request. If you object to your details being available, or wish to reduce the amount of data shared, please contact [magazine@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:magazine@nationaltrust.org.uk). By entering any competition in this issue, you are agreeing to these T&Cs. These Terms are governed by English law, and the parties submit to the non-exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England and Wales.

MEET...



Valentina Risdonne

National Conservation Scientist **Valentina Risdonne** is setting up a world-leading Paint Sample Archive and Microscopy Centre at the Royal Oak Foundation Conservation Studio in Knole, Kent



**I was the child who would break things up to see how they were made.** Conservation science brings together my interest in how things work and my passion for the arts, and I knew from a young age that it was what I wanted to do. After studying for my degree in Italy, I moved to England for my PhD and then secured a role as a conservation scientist at the Victoria and Albert Museum. From there I became a lab manager at University College London.

**I'm now setting up a state-of-the-art paint archive and science facility** at the Royal Oak Foundation Conservation Studio at Knole in Kent. The archive holds samples of paint from places around the Trust, as well as a Microscopy Centre – a laboratory space with equipment to analyse paint. By archiving paint samples and storing them properly, we can keep them safe for the future, while sharing the knowledge they hold about historic places and collections with others. When the archive opens next year it will be a valuable resource for people working in heritage, in the Trust and beyond.

**We have 14,000 samples in the archive so far.** They come from nearly every property around the Trust, from frescoes at Chedworth Roman Villa in Gloucestershire and the quintessential Arts and Crafts

**Above left** Valentina analyses a paint sample from a sculpture of *St George Slaying the Dragon* at Snowhill Manor, Gloucestershire.

**Above** The stratigraphy, or layers, of paint can reveal clues such as the period and provenance of a work.

**i** Find out more: [nationaltrust.org.uk/paint-archive](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/paint-archive)

interiors of William Morris to priceless artworks by Jacopo Tintoretto and Joshua Reynolds.

**The paint samples are tiny – often just 1mm across.** We take them using a scalpel to cause as little damage as possible to the work. We describe this as being ‘microinvasive’ – it leaves a tiny hole but is not usually visible to the eye. We put the samples in a liquid resin, and once the resin has cured, we polish and expose the stratigraphy – layers – of the sample. It’s a bit like cutting through the layers of a cake. When you look at them under the microscope, the layers can offer clues about the period the work was made, its provenance, the manufacturing processes used to make it, and sometimes even the artist.

**I always say heritage scientists don’t answer the questions, they teach you what questions to ask.** I work with curators, conservators and historians to understand more about a sample and its history. Then that context and combination of expertise and knowledge comes together to build the bigger picture.

**The big ‘painting hiding under the painting’ reveals make for good stories,** but they are quite rare. My work is more like that of a detective – gathering clues and connecting the dots. The stories the paint samples reveal might influence how conservators choose to look after an object or the decisions they make when they’re restoring historic places. For example, curators at the Bath Assembly Rooms, which are currently being restored ready to reopen in 2027, are using analysis of paint samples from the Card Room to help decide what colour it should be painted.

**Once we’ve finished setting up the archive,** we hope to share it with visitors through open days. I’m looking forward to showing people around the lab and sharing some of the stories the paint samples can reveal. **o**

*This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), through the Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science (RICHeS) programme.*

Interview by Helen Beer. National Trust/Anna Vesaluoma, Lincoln Conservation



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