

YONDER OAK NEWSLETTER



Merry Christmas from the Woodland Trust! We are bringing tidings of comfort and joy from Yonder Oak as we look back at the past few months and what the New Year has to bring.

Ben Lee / WTML





One of the 13,000 saplings that have been planted so far.

PLANTING DATES

We are happy to announce we have two public planting days in the diary next year.

- 18th January
- 14th February

We will love to see you again and will be offering a minibus service from Exmouth Train station that will ferry people to and from the site. Planting sessions will be 2hrs starting at 10:00am. Please bring wellies, warm clothes and any hot drinks and snacks you may need to keep you energised!



Join us for some family fun tree-planting in 2025 at Yonder Oak.

Please book your tree planting slot using this link here:

- 18th January - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/yonder-oak-tree-planting-tickets-1080379105989>
- 14th February - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/yonder-oak-tree-planting-tickets-1109156830939>

WHAT'S NEW?

The team has been busy preparing the ground for what might be a wet winter ahead. We had 100 tons of timber delivered to the site recently that have been felled from local sites as part of our woodland restoration work. The beech that has been felled was planted post war on ancient woodland sites and is being managed with the help of Screwfix. This dead wood will be used on site for a variety of things.

Firstly, it will be used to create flood buns. This involves placing the timber perpendicular to the flow of water in the wetter part of the site and topping it with soil and grass. This will help 'slow the flow' and create a wetland habitat as water pools behind the buns when it rains.

Secondly, we will create free standing deadwood to create rustic perch points for birds of prey and it will provide an important habitat for fungi and beetles as the wood decomposes.



One of the kindly funded reusable cactus guards in place around a new sapling.

The volunteers have been great in helping us mark up and protect the young oak saplings that have been cropping up everywhere with tree guards. We are protecting these trees that are growing here naturally (natural regeneration). Natural regeneration is an important method of creating woodland and we are pleased to see so many trees starting to grow here of their own accord. With thanks to a wonderful family, we are now using cactus guards to prevent the cows that will graze here in the future from pushing against them due to the sharp spines on them. They will also protect the saplings from deer in unfenced areas. These guards have a long life and can be re-used.

The volunteers have been busy with other tasks such as the removal of non-native, invasive rhododendron and laurel. These species grow extremely quickly and shade the understory, preventing other plants that need more light to grow.

The orchard is finally finished with the last of the apple trees being planted by volunteers. This will help provide pollination opportunities for insects as well as being gorgeous to look at around springtime.



Our volunteers creating the flood buns by digging a trench for the deadwood to sit in it.



A close up of the cactus guards.

OH DEER!

We have placed some wildlife cameras in certain areas around the fence line to see if we are hosting any furry friends. As you can see, we have noticed a few roe deer.

Roe deer are the most selective of browsers. They go for the sweetest and freshest growth, and our newly planted trees provide the perfect snack. The nibbled tops will make the tree grow all twisted.

Whilst this isn't ideal, we must accept that deer will always be part of the landscape. Our tactic to ensure a high survival rate is to plant on mass. We are monitoring their presence closely to see what impact they are having at Yonder Oak. We might look to get some volunteers to flush out all the deer by walking in a field simultaneously. We can then patch up the gaps in the fence where they are getting in.



Roe deer having a tasty midnight snack!

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS AT YONDER OAK

We recently hosted a group involved in water quality, flood risk, and wildlife projects in Lympstone – including seven Lympstone residents and a land management advisor from the Westcountry Rivers Trust. They are all interested in Yonder Oak Wood because it is at the top of the Wotton Brook which flows through Lympstone to the Exe Estuary.

We spoke to Clem and Sara, who lead the water quality project, about why they are all excited about the work at Yonder Oak. Clem explained: “We couldn't believe our good fortune when the Woodland Trust purchased the land at the top of the Wotton Brook catchment. It's steep land with soils that easily compact, so rainfall runoff can be rapid, which increases the risk of diffuse pollution and flooding. The Woodland Trust's work to plant trees, allow fields to rewild, and build leaky dams in the Brook will help to slow water flow – improving water quality, increasing biodiversity, and reducing flood risk. We also discussed the potential for a wetland, which would bring even more benefits.” Sara added: “We have a lot of information and data on the runoff pathways and soil quality, and we started monitoring the water quality in



The Wotton Brook at the top of the Lympstone Catchment.

Ben Lee/WTNL

the Wotton Brook earlier this year, so it will be very interesting to see the impact of the work. Working together in partnership is so valuable – both for sharing information and ideas, and for raising awareness in the community.”

Catchment-based partnerships are increasingly important in managing precious water environments and reducing flood risk, particularly as pressures from climate change and development grow. They are often community-led – due to local recognition of the urgent need for action – and they bring together organisations, landowners, interest groups, and others in the community with a connection to the water environment. Lympstone residents



The Wooton Brook at the top of the Lympstone Catchment.

began this approach in 2018 to tackle the increasing risk of flooding and are now focused on water quality and biodiversity as well. They work closely with the Westcountry Rivers Trust.

Clem and Sara see Yonder Oak as a great demonstration site for other small catchments – both locally and nationally. “The work being done by the Woodland Trust, your local partner Parklife SW, and the volunteers they coordinate, will make a huge difference”, said Clem, “We all share the same vision, and working together we can achieve so much more, and raise awareness more widely. It’s a real win-win situation.”

CAR PARK

We are still awaiting a decision from the planners about the car park. Whilst we know this is very frustrating for those of you wanting to access the site, rest assured we are doing everything we can to open it as soon as we can. We will update you when we have something positive to share.

The acquisition and development of Yonder Oak Wood has only been possible thanks to our amazing funders which include Biffa Award, as part of the Government’s Landfill Communities Fund, Lloyds Bank, the John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust, SCOPE our members and supporters and a really heart-warming response to our public appeal. Thank you.

If you have any questions about Yonder Oak Wood, or would like to get involved with volunteering, please contact southwestenquiries@woodlandtrust.org.uk



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