

Countryside Matters



In this Spring 2019 edition:

Space for Nature

Beavers highly commended in national photography awards

Pages 4&5

Bicton Arena news

Olympians expected at horse trials, and more

Pages 10&11

Planting “bat corridors”

The importance of hedges in the crusade to help Britain’s bats

Page 13

4&5

Space for Nature

How an image captured for our wildlife prospectus *Space for Nature* received national acclaim



6&7

Our apprentices

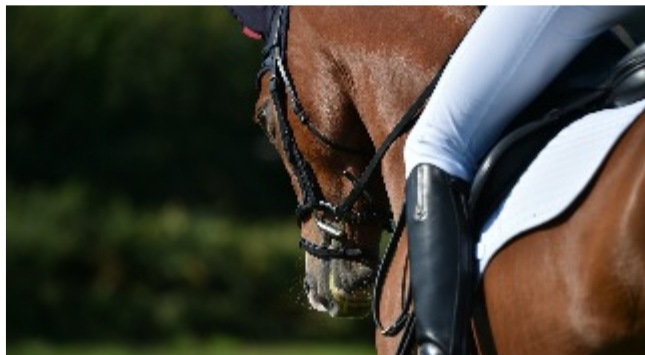
We now have trainees or apprentices across almost all our departments



10&11

Bicton Arena news

Olympic riders expected at our spring International Horse Trials



12

Grenades return

Historic military live grenade firing is returning to the heaths this autumn



13

Hedges for bats

How creating hedgerows and "bat corridors" are helping boost Britain's rare bats





CLINTON DEVON ESTATES

Welcome to the Spring 2019 edition of Clinton Devon Estates' quarterly magazine, Countryside Matters.

It's the time of year when nature is at its busiest - and so are our staff and volunteers.

The Friends of the Commons volunteers have been planting hedges on farmland in Beer to provide bat "corridors" to help boost populations of Britain's rarest horseshoe bats, while on the River Otter the beavers are thriving.

Across the Estate, our apprentices and trainees are getting hands-on experience in a wide range of land and property management activities; from farming, forestry and game keeping to accountancy and office administration.

Here at Bicton Arena the team are preparing for the first major international horse trials of the season this Easter weekend along with a summer spectacular show jumping event. Both equestrian events are open to the public and there are plenty of family friendly activities with food and drink available too. It's a great spectator sport and makes a great day out, so if you've never visited us before we look forward to welcoming you. Details can be found on the Bicton Arena website www.bicton-arena.co.uk.

We hope you enjoy reading about our work and invite you to share our newsletter with friends, family and colleagues.

Beavers in the limelight



In the fading light of evening along a quiet stretch of a Devon river, a mother beaver and her kits pause to enjoy their willow bark supper just long enough for the intimate moment to be caught on camera.

Wildlife photographer Matthew (Matt) Maran had been lying patiently on the grassy banks of the River Otter near Budleigh Salterton, waiting for the perfect picture, which happened on 7pm on July 28, 2016.

The magic moment came 45-minutes into his tenth visit to the riverbank. "I'd walked up and down the river to photograph other aspects of the habitat a lot, and I'd always stop to try and see the beavers," recalls Matt.

"That evening, right up until that moment, they were moving

around quite a bit. The mum was quite active gathering food – she had five kits in total to feed, but I never saw all five together. They were busy, doing their beaver thing, snacking on willow and diving down.

"Whenever mum came back with a willow branch she would either dive down to her other kits or bring it back to the bank where these two were waiting. When she wasn't there, the kits would disappear off. So when they were all lined up like this, it was a wonderful, peaceful moment to capture.

"To watch animals behaving naturally is a real privilege," says Matt. "As a nature photographer you want to capture animal behaviour and show intimate moments, and from a conservation perspective, if you want people to engage with



Award-winning image, by Matthew Maran

your images, there has to be that connection. The mother beaver feeding her babies made it easy to relate to."

Matt's picture was taken as part of a year-long project for Clinton Devon Estates to document the habitats and wildlife under its stewardship in a wildlife prospectus entitled *"Space for Nature"*.

In November 2018 the photograph received national acclaim in the Habitats category of the 2018 British Wildlife Photography Awards, winning a highly commended.

Beavers were discovered on the river near Ottery St Mary in 2008, the first breeding wild beavers to be found in England for 400 years. How they got there remains a mystery.

In 2014 Natural England approved a five-year monitoring trial

of the beavers led by the Devon Wildlife Trust and supported by Clinton Devon Estates, Exeter University the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and Derek Gow Consultancy Limited. There are now eight family groups living along the river.

The beavers occupy only a small section of the prospectus which has been written by Dr Sam Bridgewater, Head of Wildlife and Conservation for Clinton Devon Estates.

The book catalogues conservation areas of greatest significance, including saltmarshes, species-rich grassland and hedgerows, and also outlines key priorities for species such as the cirl bunting and how the broader landscape can be enhanced for wildlife.

And, we're off...!



Land and property management businesses can play an important role in equipping the next generation and plugging Britain's skills gap. Supporting young people through apprenticeships has long been part of Clinton Devon Estates' ethos and the business now offers traineeships across almost all of its departments

For more than a decade, Clinton Devon Estates has worked hard to increase opportunities for young people and currently has apprentices or trainees working across almost all of our departments including agriculture, forestry, game keeping, land management, finance, and business.

Large rural estates are very well placed to provide training opportunities across a range of business operations, providing opportunities for those who have been to university and those who haven't - a key government objective.

"When apprenticeship starts fell a number of years ago, we were glad to be bucking that trend and increasing apprenticeships," explains head of human resources Graham Vanstone.

"Apprentices bring a fresh, young perspective and new ideas into the workplace, while also bringing a willingness to learn

and an enthusiasm which rubs off on longstanding members of staff," adds Graham.

Recent research by the British Chamber of Commerce as well as the Open University has revealed that the UK is in the midst of a growing skills shortage with a large number of firms struggling to find the right staff. Senior managers at Clinton Devon Estates agree that businesses have a duty to do something about this and apprentices bring "immeasurable" value to the workplace often increasing productivity and reinvigorating a business.

For 20-year-old former farm hand Dom Dorling, from Exmouth, his 18-month forestry apprenticeship with the estate ignited a passion for a career he now considers his calling. "I'd always been interested in forestry and when I started it felt like a natural fit for me," recalls Dom whose



apprenticeship led to a permanent position.

"I was treated like I was one of the staff straight away which made settling in to a new role easier. I gained all the practical skills I needed to be able to fulfil the role independently and felt totally prepared when the full-time position became available. The opportunity the apprenticeship gave me has been absolutely amazing."

Katie Turner, 20, who lives near Sidmouth, was offered a permanent position with the business after completing a one-year business administration apprenticeship in 2017. Joining the estate team represented a complete change of direction for Katie who was working in the kitchen of a nearby pub following a catering course at Exeter College. She admits she'd probably still be there had it not been for the opportunity to side-step.

"While I was working at the pub, I started weighing up my options and thought, I have good organisational skills, I wonder how I could put them to use," she explains.

"I didn't have any experience to be able to do the job, but learning on the job was invaluable. I was never treated like an apprentice; there was never a job too big. This meant I felt completely equipped to step into the permanent role."

Full of promise: Pictured on the left are Lee Wilcox, Katie Turner, Dom Dorling, Lorna Hayes, Jonathan Wood and Will Shepherd

Meet Plumb Park's apprentices



Seven apprentices are kick-starting their careers at Plumb Park in Exmouth.

The development is a joint venture between Littleham 2010, a Clinton Devon Estates company, and leading homebuilder Taylor Wimpey Exeter. Like the Estate, Taylor Wimpey is committed to helping train the workforce of tomorrow and now has 14 apprentices across various departments.

Ian Perkins, Tom Wright, Joshua Parsons-Daring, Max Turner, Kade Haymen, Matthew Priddle and Conor Moore, aged between 18 and 27, (left) are based at the Exmouth site full-time and are undertaking paid apprenticeships in carpentry and electrical installation. Richard Harrison, Land and Planning Director at Taylor Wimpey Exeter, said: "Talented apprentices are the future of our production business. Skilled labourers and technicians are key to building quality homes and we are committed to ensuring that trained individuals are brought into the industry."

For more information about careers and apprenticeships with Taylor Wimpey, visit www.taylorwimpey.co.uk/careers.

Turn to page 12 for an update on how Plumb Park is progressing.



A Budleigh Salterton cliffhanger

Essential cliff safety work has been completed at Budleigh Salterton to remove an unstable 15 metre high sandstone pinnacle which had formed following many decades of weather erosion.

Contractors from Abcas (UK) Ltd, working for the landowner Clinton Devon Estates, used ropes to abseil from the clifftop near Steamer Steps, and with specialist equipment they were able to carefully fragment the pinnacle from its peak.

Estate Surveyor Clare James from Clinton Devon Estates explained: "The pinnacle is the equivalent height of a four storey building and around 8 meters wide and due to ongoing erosion over many years it had become unsafe. Recent cliff survey work recommended that the pinnacle was removed under controlled conditions. Due to the SSSI designation in the area, we were granted special consent from Natural England."



Blast off: military live grenade training returns to the heaths



A core component of the Royal Marines' close combat training is returning to the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths. Since the 1950s live grenade throwing has taken place at a purpose-built range on Colaton Raleigh Common by Royal Marines based at the nearby Commando Training Centre (CTC) in Lymstone.

Weather damage and erosion at the site prompted Ministry of Defence (MoD) officials to close the range in 2015.

Earlier this year the MoD announced plans to reinstate the training activity following a £250,000 restoration of the range involving the replenishment of specialist layers of stone and repairs to a number of small buildings and the perimeter fencing.

Work commenced in February and lasted several weeks, with the aim of grenade throwing returning to the recruits' training programme in September.

The MoD works closely with Clinton Devon Estates, which owns the land, and the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, which manages the area.

The range is situated within the 1,100-hectare network of linked heaths which are home to more than 3,000 species of flora and fauna and protected by national and European designations, so the work is being closely monitored by Natural England.

Andy Cross, Defence Infrastructure Organisation Training Safety Officer for the Woodbury Common training area, explained that due to the high-risk nature of light weapon training and the range's environmentally sensitive setting, only a particular type of stone is suitable at the range site. "Different layers of stone make up the impact area of the range," he explained. "But it has to be a particular type of stone which not only minimises the impact of the explosions, but, if a grenade fails and must be manually detonated by someone going right up to the device, it must absorb the impact of the person's approach and not cause a ripple of movement and disturb the grenade, which could set it off.

"Not only this, but the stone must be ecologically compatible with the heathland, and this particular stone

doesn't come cheap, so it's only now that funding has become available for its replenishment."

Grenade training is an operational requirement for the Royal Marines and as close combat warfare has increased, so has the use of grenades on the frontline. Mr Cross added: "To be able to have the option of using a grenade in a real-life scenario, military personnel must have experienced throwing a grenade on a purpose built range so they understand the principles of what they're doing before they go into a tactical scenario, so training facilities like Colaton Raleigh Common are crucial to progressive military training."

During the closure of the range recruits travelled to ranges in Wiltshire and South Wales to train, so its restoration will reduce transport time and cost. Devon based Territorial Army units are also due to use the range for the first time. Kim Strawbridge, Pebblebed Heaths Site Manager, added: "Military training on the heaths dates back to the Second World War when Dalditch Camp was a major military encampment. The Royal Marines operating out of CTC follow strict orders regarding how they operate on site and the MoD is respectful of the environmental sensitivities of the heaths and their obligation to operate appropriately." Updates on the progress of the refurbishment works will be issued periodically by both the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust and Clinton Devon Estates.

Once reinstated, live throwing will take place over a maximum of two days a fortnight and no more than eight times per calendar month, with all detonations occurring in daylight hours between 9am and 4pm.

Formal notification of firing dates and times will be published on www.gov.uk/government/collections/firing-notice a minimum of one month before activity is scheduled to take place.

The legal conditions for this type of military training activity are set out in the Ranges Licenses and The Woodbury Common Range Byelaws, copies of which are published on noticeboards positioned on all approach routes to the Range Danger Area.

Managing risk in one of the world's most risky sports

Eventing has been an Olympic sport since 1912 and it remains the only sport that involves animals, and also men and women competing on equal terms. Widely regarded as the triathlon of equestrian sport - comprising dressage, show jumping and cross country - it is considered to be high risk.

Already the competition level has been lowered for the Tokyo Olympics in 2020, partly for the protection of riders and horses.

To help ensure eventing retains its place in future Olympic Games, an exclusive group of top-level course designers, including Bicton Arena manager Helen West, met in Switzerland earlier this year to discuss how to make one of the world's riskiest sports less dangerous.

Helen was the only woman to attend the International Federation for Equestrian Sports' (FEI) risk management seminar in Switzerland alongside 37 other course designers from around the globe, including Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and Uruguay.

"Because the competition level has been reduced for the Tokyo Games, now the four-star events at Badminton and Burghley remain the highest level of competition in the world," Helen says.

"As cross-country course designers, it's down to us to reduce horse falls, but ensure that courses still present challenging competition for the riders. If everyone goes around clear, that's no competition. No rider wants a walk in the park."

Last year, Helen became the second woman in Britain to achieve the highest accreditation as a three and four-star cross-country course designer, held by only a handful of people in the UK including Olympian Captain Mark Phillips and London 2012 course designer Sue Benson.

Since joining Clinton Devon Estates as Arena Manager, Helen's ambition has been to raise the profile of Bicton Arena and establish a three-star international cross-country event, elevating its status from a two-star venue to one of only five, three-star venues in the UK.

Having now successfully designed a number of courses at one and two-star level and assisted with the design of several three-star courses, Helen is set to design her first three-star course at Ballindenisk in Ireland this September. Led by American Olympic gold medallist David O'Connor, the design seminar saw the multi-national group of equestrians discussing various approaches to reduce the likelihood of rotational falls, the most common cause of injuries and fatalities for riders.

"There's no denying that cross-country is a high-risk sport and we'll never make it safe," stresses Helen. "It's about



managing the inevitable risks and reducing the number of horse falls. Normally I work with a handful of designers from around the UK, but the seminar was a chance to find out more about what's going on in the world of eventing elsewhere in the world.

"The UK is leading the way when it comes to riding and health and safety standards, with many overseas riders moving here to ride at the highest level. On any weekend there can be several events going on around the country. It's not like this anywhere else, so it was fascinating to sit in a room with so many other nationalities and learn about the differences in approaches to safety."

One way to reduce horse falls is to construct fences with frangible pins so they collapse if they're hit in a certain way, at a certain speed.

In Britain, event organisers submit an order form for the devices required by their course designer to British Eventing which covers the cost of all frangible devices, while in America it is standard for all fences to be fitted with these devices. Helen remains unconvinced that mandatory enforcement of frangible pins is the answer.



"If the FEI was to impose the requirement for all fences to be fitted with frangible devices it would be prohibitively expensive to countries that don't have the budget of the North Americans," she said. "The knock-on effect would be the demise of eventing worldwide."

"So, as course designers we have to look at ways to raise health and safety standards in a cost-effective way such as sending the most experienced designers around the world to assist with course design."

In the UK, course designers are being educated to take into account horses' dichromatic vision; horses are red/green colour blind and can't see directly in front of them.

Ground lines are used to help a horse take-off at the optimum point, crucial for it to successfully clear a jump, and the front edge of the fences are often painted in the colours they see best, blue, cream and yellow. "These are things we do in the UK, but are not happening around the world," said Helen. "So the seminar was an opportunity to share best practice with the ultimate aim of raising standards globally."

Come and join us at Bicton for...

British Eventing International Horse Trials (April 19 – 21)

Olympic riders from across the globe are expected to compete at the Bicton Arena International Horse Trials over the Easter weekend.

Around 800 riders are expected for the spring event – the venue's first major international event of the eventing season – which was oversubscribed in 2018 by some 200 entrants, and will include dressage, show jumping and cross-country action on all three days of competition.

Around 10 Olympic riders are expected including Team GB rider William Fox-Pitt (pictured below), New Zealand Olympian Andrew Nicholson and Australian Olympian Sam Griffiths.

Members of the public are encouraged to come along to the event which, for the first time, will include family-friendly activities including a bouncy castle and an Easter egg hunt on Easter Sunday. Helen, said: "This is one of our most prestigious events and a really thrilling opportunity to see some of the world's top riders in action. It's not very often you get to see so many top-level sportspeople compete on your doorstep."

The event is free to attend, with parking £10 a car.



Bicton Arena May Spectacular British Show Jumping and Stabling (May 23 – 26)

More than a thousand riders are expected to take part in the Bicton Arena Summer Spectacular show jumping event which serves as a qualifier for the prestigious, annual Horse of the Year Show.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the competition which is expected to attract several international riders jumping heights of up to 1.50 metres.

Trade stands, food and a bar will be available with live music in the evening.

"Watching riders on these heights is exciting stuff," said Helen. "We hope people of all ages will come along and enjoy the event."

Taking shape: Exmouth's hillside c



Community



The first residents of Plumb Park are settling into their new homes as the construction of Exmouth's newest neighbourhood continues apace. Twenty nine plots have been sold with 14 open market homes now occupied. A further 15 plots have either been reserved or exchanged. Plumb Park is a joint venture between Littleham 2010, a Clinton Devon Estates company, and leading homebuilder Taylor Wimpey Exeter and will feature 264 two, three and four-bedroom homes, 66 of which will be affordable. The neighbourhood will also comprise 14 acres of parkland with Donkey Hill rising up at the development's midpoint. The path up to the top of the hill, which features a striking granite topograph and boasts far-reaching views over the River Exe Estuary and Lyme Bay, is proving popular with residents and visitors alike.



Hedging our bets for Britain's rare bats



Volunteers from across East Devon joined forces this spring to plant a hedge to create a natural “bat corridor” to help boost populations of rare bats near Beer.

As part of community initiative, Bat Friendly Beer, a group of volunteers from Clinton Devon Estates’ Friends of the Commons group and the Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project planted 360 native species including hawthorn, blackthorn, oak, elder, field maple and holly to create a Devon hedge on farmland at Beer Head.

The seaside village of Beer, and particularly the Beer Quarry Caves which are owned by Clinton Devon Estates, are well-known for their Greater Horseshoe bat population. The new hedge was planted between two important bat maternity roosts, the only known sites in East Devon and two out of just 11 in the whole county.

Bat Friendly Beer, which has participants from 16 local community groups including the village primary school, was established two years ago to support the project and build on the excellent work undertaken previously by East Devon AONB, local landowners, businesses and bat enthusiasts.

Helen Parr of the Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project explained: “Britain’s greater horseshoe bats have declined by 90 per cent over the last century and are now only found in the South West of England and South Wales.

“Hedgerows play an incredibly important role in increasing

the life chances of bats, doubling up as bat corridors and providing food whilst enabling bats to navigate the countryside more easily in the dark using echolocation, using sound waves and echoes to determine where objects are.”

The Bat Friendly Beer working group spent several hours creating the hedge at Southdown Farm, where farmer Richard Dormer is working hard to increase biodiversity for the benefit of local wildlife and the wider environment. Kate Ponting, Countryside Learning Officer for Clinton Devon Estates, who facilitates the working group, added: “All the Bat Friendly Beer partners are keen to deliver practical measures to support bats in this part of Devon.

“This is about creating something for the long-term but while this hedge was planted for bats there will be other benefits too.

“A central part of Bat Friendly Beer is to raise awareness in the local community that what is good for bats is good for other wildlife and for people too.”

Bat Friendly Beer group member Karen Mynard, who also works for Beer Quarry Caves, was among the volunteers planting the new hedgerow. She said: “I spend most of the year being the keeper for the bats in their hibernation roosts underground, so it was nice to be able to do something for them for the part of the year when they’re not with us.”



Bat friendly: Above and below, volunteers lay the foundations for a “bat corridor” at Beer Head. Left, greater horseshoe bat, by Michael Symes/Devon Wildlife Trust



For more information visit, www.devonbatproject.org



CLINTON DEVON ESTATES

Rolle Estate Office,
Bicton Arena,
East Budleigh,
Budleigh Salterton,
Devon EX9 7BL

mail@clintondevon.com

Words and images by KOR Communications