

Countryside Matters



In this Summer 2019 edition:

Bird Wardens

The octogenarians acting as our eyes and ears for 30 years

Pages 8-10

Bicton Arena news

Hundreds expected for summer events programme

Pages 6&7

Local energy plant

How the Estate is joining the fight against global warming

Page 12

4&5

Kingfisher Award

More than 200 children took part in this year's scheme celebrating the link between nature, farming and food



6&7

Bicton Arena

Summertime at Bicton is when hundreds of Pony Club riders become happy campers



8-10

Bird Wardens

For 30 years Doug and Joan Cullen have volunteered for us as "bird wardens"



12

Future of energy

Plans are being made for a reserve power plant to generate electricity for 4,200 homes



13

Plumb Park

Exmouth's newest neighbourhood is marking its first year since homes went on sale





CLINTON DEVON ESTATES

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

Summer has got off to a promising start, and not just the weather; this year's Kingfisher Award Scheme was, once again, a great success. The scheme provides a wonderful opportunity for local primary school children to learn about the link between farming and nature, and this summer received coverage on Radio 4's *Farming Today* programme.

Bicton Arena has enjoyed a busy start to the eventing season and the team is hosting many young, promising Pony Club riders throughout the summer holidays, along with events including the British Dressage Regional Championships.

"Bird wardens" Doug and Joan Cullen have been our eyes and ears along the River Otter for almost 30 years. Lord Clinton has thanked them for their commitment as volunteers and the role they played in reviving a rare bird species.

The Estate has been committed to providing sustainable energy for some time and we hope the establishment of a local reserve power plant at Liverton Business Park in Exmouth could make an important contribution.

This summer marks a year since homes went on sale at Plumb Park in Exmouth, a joint venture between Clinton Devon Estates and Taylor Wimpey Exeter who are already supporting the wider community through various charitable initiatives.

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

Muck, milk and minibeasts



The link between earthworms and milk production, what makes farms organic, and the role moths play in pollination were among the many insights gained by 240 East Devon primary school children who took part in this year's Kingfisher Award Scheme.

Now in its 26th year, the educational farming initiative offers young people across Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Wiltshire the opportunity to find out about the vital relationship between food production, farming and wildlife through hands-on experiential learning. More than 12,000 children have taken part since its inception.

Over four days this May, children from Budleigh Salterton, Exmouth, Feniton and Broadclyst primary schools donned their wellies and took part in a series of workshops to learn about milk, soil and pollinators, exploring the theme "Milk, Muck and Minibeasts".

East Devon's event once again took place at Dalditch Farm, an organic dairy farm on the outskirts of Budleigh Salterton owned by Clinton Devon Estates. Each year the workshops are run by staff from the Estate, the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust and an enthusiastic group of volunteers. Following the workshops, the children returned to their classrooms to produce a creative project which, this year, included poetry, games, a song, science investigations, cookery books artwork and 3D models, and were judged at an awards event at Bicton Arena this July.

An earthworm made from a Hoover and a radio station for cows were among this year's creative displays, with children from St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in

Exmouth crowned the winners for their project involving a game showing how bees use a 'waggle dance' to find food, and an interactive farm.

The class five pupils, aged 10, were presented with the prestigious carved wooden kingfisher trophy, books and prize money.

The judges commended the enthusiasm of the children, their depth of knowledge and their creativity.

Jason Edmunds, class five teacher at St Joseph's School, said: "The Kingfisher Awards brought a fantastic buzz to our classroom. The children were all actively engaged with their personal contributions and our collective project and have been enthralled with all the learning."

"The children have become true experts in the areas they chose to investigate and present: everything from how Sandstone is formed and becomes the rich soil we see beneath our feet, to what life is like for a dairy cow on Dalditch farm."

"We had models of bees and other soil living mini-beasts, identification guides, animations, artwork, diagrams, and some amazing poetry. We also had some living animals to show-off and explain the important role they play."

The farm was one of several around the Westcountry hosting field days as part of the project which was founded by the late Poet Laureate Ted Hughes and friends to support the work of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG South West).

Kate Ponting, Countryside Learning Officer at Clinton Devon Estates, added: "The quality of work this year was



extremely high. It's so rewarding to see how much the children have learnt and taken away with them from the field days.

"This is a brilliant scheme encouraging children to go and explore outdoors and learn about our countryside and farming, and something Clinton Devon Estates is proud to support."

Events take place every year thanks to the support of local farmers and volunteers. Farmers who would like to find out more about hosting an event can email

info@kingfisherawardscheme.co.uk



Children from St Peter's School, Budleigh Salterton, enjoying the Kingfisher Award Scheme workshops at Dalditch Farm

Riders of the future



This summer Bicton Arena is welcoming hundreds of young riders from across the Westcountry who are keen to take all aspects of horsemanship to the next level.

Around 300 pony club members aged between six and 14 have signed up to take part in a residential camp at the venue, with a further 70 expected at British Showjumping's annual Regional Junior Academy Camp.

With more than 110,000 members worldwide, The Pony Club is the largest association of young riders in the world. It is one of 16 organisations which make up the British Equestrian Federation with around 345 volunteer-led branches across the UK. The annual summer residentials are hugely popular and focus both on riding technique and animal care.

This year, Silverton, Mid Devon, East Cornwall, Tetcott and South Tetcott pony clubs as well as East Devon Pony Club, for which Bicton Arena manager Helen West and her husband Andrew Fell are district commissioners, are hosting camps at Bicton.

"The camps offer local up-and-coming riders the opportunity to experience riding at a fantastic, world class facility and it's lovely to see the next generation utilising what we have here at Bicton and seeing them progress year-on-year," said Helen, who first joined a Pony Club aged six and was Senior Pony Club Horse Trials National Champion in 1999, aged 18. "Pony Club camps are entirely inclusive and are for riders of all ages and abilities; there's something for everyone," she said. "The young riders benefit from intensive training, receiving tuition from some of the best instructors across the region.

"A unique feature of the camps is the focus on holistic horsemanship, enabling the riders of the future to become well-rounded equestrians with a broad general knowledge and appreciation of equine care, including how to administer first aid and how to bandage properly."

The arena is hosting events every day bar two this summer and is so popular with pony clubs that each year the team finds it has to turn down applications.

Youth residentials dominate Bicton's summer calendar which is also interspersed with prestigious events including the Amateur Festival of British Showjumping and the British Dressage Regional Championships. Hosting so many camps throughout the summer, which don't bring in as much revenue for Bicton as other competitions, tallies with the ethos of Clinton Devon Estates, which owns the arena, to provide for future generations.

One of the final events of the summer camp season is The Pony Club Mini Championships involving low jump heights of 40cm, 50cm and 60cm, attracting boys and girls aged between six and 12 years old from across the South West from Cornwall to Wiltshire. The Pony Club Regional Championships round off the youth programme.

The camps also include evening activities including pilates and bushcraft, sometimes even an inflatable assault course, and talks from experts which have in previous years included Olympian Mary King MBE who regularly competes at the arena.

"Because of the broad scope of the camps, they give less competitive riders the chance to shine in other aspects of horsemanship, including preparing them for the Pony



Happy campers: members of the East Devon Pony Club

Club's annual national pony care competition," continued Helen. "While the camps are great for the young people, socially, they also encourage independence, so they not only stand young riders in good stead for life as equestrians, but for life in general.

Helen added: "I grew up as a Pony Club member and it played a massive part in preparing me for my career. Many of the young riders who take part aspire to represent the country in the future and many of today's ones to watch progressed with Pony Club camps."

Dressage takes centre stage

There were record entries for this summer's British Dressage Regional Championships (August 9 - 11), hosted by Bicton for the third year since the opening of its Western Counties Arena in 2017.

Around 200 riders from across the South West of England took part in various PSG and Inter 1 gold levels. The event served as a qualifier for the nationals at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire in September. Entries were up by 10 per cent on last year and encompassed both high-calibre amateurs and professionals. The establishment of the all-weather arena allowed Bicton to increase its offering of showjumping and dressage events, with its existing competition arena becoming a spacious 90m by 50m warm-up area for the regionals.

Bicton Arena assistant Gemma Cooke, said: "Winning the bid to host the competition was a huge accolade for Bicton. "The expansion of our facilities meant we've been able to host more prestigious events such as the regional championships throughout the year.

"Dressage is a wonderful spectator sport and showcases the close connection between horse and rider.

"The partnership is quite remarkable. It's highly disciplined; you can't wing it on the day! If there are cracks in your training, it will show."

For more information visit, www.bicton-arena.co.uk



Thank you, Doug and Joan



Ever since they moved to East Devon from London in 1990, octogenarians Doug and Joan Cullen have volunteered for the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust, which was set up by Clinton Devon Estates in 2006 to manage the heathland and conserve the surrounding landscape, including the River Otter Estuary. In addition to monitoring bird numbers on the Otter Estuary and advising on additional habitat creation work on the adjacent wetland meadows, the couple's work has included influencing habitat management around Stantyway Farm in Otterton for cirl buntings, a rare farmland bird. The population of the species had declined so much, due to the intensification of farming and loss of habitat, that by 1989 the RSPB estimated that there were just 118 pairs remaining in the whole of Britain, confined only to South Devon.

After the couple spotted a pair near the farm around 10 years ago, they instigated a collaborative effort with the then tenant Martin Williams, Cath Jeffs, Cirl Bunting Project Manager and Deborah Deveney, Cirl Bunting Project Officer for the RSPB and Dr Sam Bridgewater, Head of Wildlife and Conservation for Clinton Devon Estates, owners of the farm, to improve their chances of survival.

At the time, the birds hadn't been seen this side of the River Exe Estuary in at least 20 years, but the couple's most recent count in January put the cirl bunting population in Otterton at 28, with another pair spotted

over near Weston, Sidmouth. Helping the cirl buntings has had a knock-on effect: Doug and Joan have also helped boost Otterton's winter and breeding skylark population.

"When we first discovered them, we went straight to Sam and he was as keen as us to do what we could to help reinstate the area as a habitat for them," recalls Joan, 85, who grew up in Honiton. "The objective was to keep them there, so the initial focus was how best to improve the habitat. One way was substituting their main food source of arable plant seeds, with a millet and canary seed mix. The retention of over-wintering stubble fields, which provide a winter seed food source, the management of broad grassy field margins to ensure summer feeding opportunities and encouraging dense hedgerows for nesting, were important." The collective's efforts have been continued and expanded by farmers Sam and Nell Walker who took over the tenancy of Stantyway Farm, a 264-acre arable farm which was certified organic last year, when Martin retired.

Downstream, along the Lower Ottery Estuary at Budleigh Salterton, the couple has helped improve the habitat for migrational birds including establishing scrapes – water beds of varying depths – and managing large reed beds. A combination between their efforts to improve the habitat and the impact of climate change

Continued on Page 10



Lord Clinton presents a painting of cirl buntings to Doug and Joan who have worked tirelessly to help the species

From Page 9

has resulted in an increase in migrational bird species at the estuary.

"Our whole aim was to encourage birdlife and wildlife to the area," explained Doug, 84, who is originally from Hackney, East London. "So we looked at how the landscape could be improved. The scrapes are good because different species like different depths. You could say that it's been landscaped for birds."

Joan and Doug walk along the River Otter most days watching out for the birds. Their early work served as a precursor for the evolving Lower Otter Restoration Project, a joint partnership between Clinton Devon Estates and the Environment Agency deemed crucial in restoring the ecological health and inter-tidal habitats of the lower Otter valley and adapting to climate change.

"Birdlife and wildlife have increased hugely over the years and we're seeing more rare species," said Doug. "And we're getting more migrants staying the whole year, rather than breeding here and then going."

The couple estimate that they've been volunteering for around 35 years in total, starting with the RSPB and the Kent Wildlife Trust when they worked in London, Doug

as a printer for the London Evening Standard, and Joan as a manager in the fraud department of a bank.

"We took early retirement and haven't stopped since," Joan said. "Sometimes I feel we've been busier than when we were working!"

"We were never going to put our feet up," added Doug. "You get stamp collectors, and you get bird collectors. Bird watching is an enjoyable part of life."

Dr Bridgewater, said: "Doug and Joan have played a significant role in improving the future prospects of the cirl buntings in Devon and the species as a whole. We are most grateful to both of them for being our eyes and ears along the Lower Otter Estuary for almost 30 years; their enthusiasm and dedication has had a direct impact on bird populations there."

Ms Jeffs, added: "People like Doug and Joan really make a difference and are part of why my job is so rewarding. It has been a pleasure working with them and sharing the ups and downs of nature recovery."

"Clinton Devon Estates has been brilliant at supporting their tenants to be wildlife friendly and they should be proud of what they are doing for out threatened farmland species."



All aboard the Pebblebed People Carrier!

Many school and community groups have been welcomed aboard Clinton Devon Estates' new Pebblebed People Carrier this spring and summer.

The trailer has space for 39 passengers and is proving popular with visitors keen to learn more about the historic landscape and its wildlife.

While being able to handle the heaths' tough terrain, the trailer provides shelter from the elements and doubles up as an outdoor classroom.

To find out about how your school or organisation can use the Pebblebed People Carrier please visit, www.pebblebedheaths.org.uk/your-visit



Liverton Reserve Power, keeping the lights on for local people and helping secure a cleaner future

Clinton Devon Estates is supporting moves towards a cleaner future with proposals for a local reserve power plant at Liverton Business Park, Exmouth.

At times of peak electricity usage, power supplied to the National Grid by traditional power stations and renewable energy sites can be insufficient to fully meet demand. Reserve power plants are small, unmanned gas-fired power stations which can operate for varied periods of time to provide backup power to the grid. A typical reserve power plant is designed to fire up within minutes, responding flexibly at times of peak demand to ensure uninterrupted power supply in the local area. Renewable energy sources of solar and wind power are more variable than the traditional large-scale fossil fuel power stations they are replacing, at times this results in intermittent supply. As an increasing proportion of the UK's energy supply is derived from renewable sources, demand for the backup power provided by reserve power plants is increasing.

The burning of coal to produce electricity is seen as one of the country's largest single sources of carbon emissions. The first major coal-fired power station in Britain was built in 1882 and 10 years ago there were 21 operational across Britain. That number has fallen to just seven today and all are due to be phased out by 2025.

In May, Britain was coal-free for two weeks for the first time in more than a century, as a result of a range of new, alternative energy sources.

Clinton Devon Estates has been at the forefront of moves to de-carbonise the local economy for some time, using biomass for heating and investing in a six-megawatt solar electricity farm.

The Estate is committed to environmental sustainability and is now seeking planning permission for Liverton Reserve Power, a small-scale, flexible gas-powered generating plant designed to operate in times of peak demand, to help fill the gap in the area. The proposal is that the plant will not operate between the hours of 11pm and 7am, except in a major emergency.

It will be capable of powering around 4,200 homes in and around the town and is designed to reduce the area's reliance on higher-carbon energy generated a long way away. Instead, when renewable energy sources aren't providing enough energy at peak times,

Liverton Reserve Power will generate electricity closer to where it is used, which is more efficient and much better for the environment than having large-scale "base load" power stations on permanently.

The expectation is that it will be operational for no more than 2,500 hours a year, or an average of six or seven hours a day, covering morning and evening peak demand, with demand varying throughout the seasons. The seven-megawatt plant is being proposed for a site at the Liverton 2 Business Park in Exmouth, next to commercial units. Its location has been carefully chosen to be as unobtrusive as possible, while also providing straightforward underground connections to existing electricity and gas networks.

A number of independent reports into the impact of the plant, covering air quality, ecology and acoustics, have been commissioned by the Estate and have confirmed negligible impact of the plant on people and wildlife. John Wilding, Head of Forestry and Energy at Clinton Devon Estates, explained: "As the remaining coal stations are phased out and older gas powered and nuclear powers stations are retired the country will rely on renewables and new nuclear for our electricity, whether generated in Britain or imported via interconnectors.

"Britain's existing nuclear power stations were all built decades ago and at the moment provide around 20 per cent of the nation's electricity. It's clear they cannot keep operating indefinitely and it's not certain new nuclear capacity will be built in time to replace their output - at a time when demand for electricity will only increase thanks in part to the drive towards electric cars, another key element of the climate change battle. "At the moment wind and solar are the biggest hitters in terms of UK renewables, and together they can produce about a quarter of our electricity needs. That's impressive when you see how far they've come relatively quickly, but they're a long way off replacing coal, natural gas and nuclear.

"For the sake of the planet, our aim must be ultimately to generate or import all the electricity we use from carbon-free sources, but it will be a long journey and we need to make plans to make sure we keep the lights on, literally, in the meantime in the most responsible way."

Plumb Park homebuilder supports wider community



Plumb Park, Exmouth's newest neighbourhood, is marking its first year since homes went on sale last August.

Sixty-one homes are now occupied (23 open market and 38 affordable), a further 32 homes have been exchanged (four open market and 28 affordable), and 12 open market homes have been reserved.

More than 50 per cent of Plumb Park's residents are from the Exmouth area; 70 per cent moving there from within a 12-mile radius. The most popular house type has been the four-bedroom detached Colyford style home, and the three-bedroom Portland and Seaton style homes have been the big sellers.

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. Work is progressing on establishing the allotments and the Taylor Wimpey team continues to work hard on ensuring residents are able to move in on time, reporting that 90 per cent of its Plumb Park customers would recommend the company to friends and family. Taylor Wimpey is committed to supporting local community initiatives and has pledged support for several causes including sponsoring the Best Customer Service Award at this year's Exmouth Chamber's Business Awards, donating £500 to the Exmouth Sea Cadets to help fund a 4x4 support vehicle to facilitate the launch and retrieval of their boats from the water (pictured, above), and supporting Littleham in Bloom (pictured, above right).



Leading by example



Licensed commercial dog walkers are working with the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust to encourage responsible dog walking at the 1,100-hectare conservation site.

There are 18 professional dog walking companies licensed to use the heaths, each of them walking up to six dogs at a time, the maximum number permitted by both law and insurance regulations. They lead by example in actively promoting the Pebblebed Dog Code – a code of conduct which aims to help all dog walkers understand how they can use the heaths responsibly.

“The licensing scheme is so much more than just filling in a form,” explains Kim Strawbridge, Pebblebed Heaths Site Manager. “We’ll sit down together so the commercial dog walkers can find out all about what we do, and vice versa and this has helped foster a strong relationship. They really are our eyes and ears on the heaths and they are setting a good example too.”

The Trust was established in 2006 by Clinton Devon Estates to manage the ancient heathland near Exeter, designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Kim Strawbridge explains the importance of keeping the heaths free of dog poo: “Heathland is special in that it needs soil which is nutrient poor. Adding nutrients changes the soil which eventually changes the plant and animal life. Typical heathland plants include heather and gorse as well as grasses, but not the type found on your lawn; one of the reasons we see green verges, especially near the car parks, is because of nutrient enrichment from dog poo.

“These grasses can outcompete more sensitive heathland plants. Not only is it a legal requirement to remove your dog’s waste from the heaths, it is the easiest way people can help us keep the heath healthy for the wildlife that live

there, the stock that graze there, and the people that work and play there.”

Kim added: “It’s clear that the overwhelming majority of dog walkers are doing a brilliant job and picking up after their pets, but there is still more work to be done, particularly around the car parks and the first few hundred metres of paths.

“One way people can help us improve these areas is by getting themselves ready before letting their dogs out of the car. It is very easy to be distracted at the start of the walk and we think this is why we still have a particular problem in these areas.”

Cassie Bulger runs a dog walking and equine care business, Pets Outdoors, and received her licence from the Trust last year. “I know all the dogs I walk well,” said Cassie, a former teacher. “They trust me and come to me when I call them; we have a responsibility to make sure they’re well behaved.”

The 46-year-old’s consideration for the heathland, and those who use it, even extends to picking up other people’s dogs’ waste. This May, two volunteer poo pick up events, suggested by Cassie, were supported by several commercial dog walkers, all keen to uphold their reputation.

“You come to have a bond with your dogs and know each of their habits, including when and where they like to go to the toilet,” said Cassie. “I know which of my dogs will want to go as soon as they jump out of the car and that Zach goes by a bush and Millie likes to go near a gate! Not seeing your dog go, is no excuse.

“Staff that lead school activities on the heaths told me they go and pick up dog waste before the kids play there – no one should have to do this.”

Team Clinton saddle up for charity cycle challenge



A team of four cyclists from Clinton Devon Estates took part in the 20th Nello Cycle Challenge raising money for local cancer charity, FORCE (Friends of the Oncology and Radiotherapy Centre, Exeter).

Starting and finishing in Topsham, cyclists can choose between a 100-mile route via Exmoor or a 55-mile circuit across Mid Devon.

The Clinton Devon Estates team, some of whom have taken part in the Nello challenge for seven years, included John Wilding MBE, Head of Forestry and Energy, Kevin Brosnan, Head Gamekeeper, who both took on the 100-mile route, with Adrian Pitts, Estates Surveyor, and Gaynor Hayne, Finance executive, both taking on the 55-mile circuit.

The Estate's staff cyclists were joined by Colin Newell, Estates Contractor, Lestyn John, Partner at Bell Cornwell, Neil Eriksen, from Smile Fitness, with Heather Herbert, Nina Wilding and Andy Bush, completing the team of 10. Clinton Devon Estates has supported the annual event since 2016 through generous sponsorship and fundraising, raising more than £7,000.

John Wilding said: "We had near perfect cycling conditions for this year's challenge as the roads were dry and the temperature was cool to start us off. Once again the atmosphere was electric and the food stops for cyclists were great as usual, which was an added bonus after cycling for so many miles!

"It was a fantastic event and it was great to see so many friendly faces throughout the challenge. We're proud to have once again supported the event raised money for FORCE cancer charity."

The challenge began in 2000 in memory of Topsham resident and cycling enthusiast Nello Ghezzi who lost his life to cancer. The chosen routes were favourites of Nello's, offering challenging hills, exciting downhill sections and stunning scenery.

Participants and their donors have raised an incredible £900,000 for FORCE since the race began with organisers hoping to hit £1 million this year.

FORCE strives to improve patient care by assisting in the purchase of advanced equipment and funding for vital research at the University of Exeter Medical School.



CLINTON DEVON ESTATES

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

mail@clintondevon.com

Words and images by KOR Communications