

Countryside Matters



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CLINTON DEVON ESTATES

Welcome to the Winter 2019 edition of Clinton Devon Estates' seasonal newsletter, Countryside Matters.

This year, as we remember all those who have lost their lives in service to our country, the men from the village of Otterton who fell during the First World War have been honoured through a commemorative waymarker project. The signs, each inscribed with a soldier's name, can be found dotted around the countryside lanes and paths surrounding the village.

The recent installation of our Clinton Dairy milk vending machine at Otterton Mill is reducing food miles while providing the local community with delicious creamy milk. It is filled daily with fresh organic whole milk produced by Clinton Devon Estates cows, which graze in the nearby fields, just hours before.

Bicton Arena enjoys frequent visits from the world's top eventers and this autumn the International Horse Trials once again attracted Olympians as well as riders hoping to compete at next year's Olympics. Meanwhile, Bicton Arena manager Helen West has predicted Team GB's shortlist.

One hundred years ago Lord Clinton's grandfather planted the first trees for the newly formed Forestry Commission in Eggesford Forest near Crediton. Those trees are standing strong today and represent the start of the Commission's inspiring and important preservation work, as well as the Estates' commitment to countryside stewardship.

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

Powered by milk



We're used to buying fizzy drinks, sweets and crisps from vending machines, but what about fresh milk?

This autumn, Clinton Devon Farms Partnership established a 24/7 milk vending machine at the popular Otterton Mill visitor centre, less than 2km away from Otter Farm, Colaton Raleigh, where the milking and pasteurising takes place. The objective was to reduce food miles, waste, and connect the farm with the local community.

Customers using the Clinton Dairy vending machine, which is refilled with fresh milk daily, are able to see the cows which produce their milk grazing in the surrounding fields along the River Otter.

Children from Otterton Primary School joined Estate staff, including Countryside Learning Officer Kate Ponting, for the official unveiling of the facility in September, and enjoyed learning all about the cows that produced their glasses of milk.

The vending machine's location at the mill, which is understood to be among the 20 oldest businesses in the world, represents a synergy between history and modern innovation. Farmers usually sell their milk to dairy companies which is then transported, often many miles away, for processing at regional pasteurising depots. Whereas the majority of milk

from Otter Farm is processed 50 miles up the M5 in Bridgwater, the milk supplying the vending machines is pasteurised at a purpose-built facility at Otter Farm so

boasts little over one food mile – the distance food has to travel between source and destination.

Barney Tremaine, Farms Manager at the Estate, said: "We wanted to give local people the opportunity to buy our fresh organic milk produced only hours before by cows grazing on their doorstep.

"By cutting out the middle man and reducing food miles, the milk is as environmentally friendly as it gets.

"We are also keen to raise the profile of organic farming, which prioritises animal welfare."

The refrigerated vending machine holds 100 litres of whole milk and is fitted with a cash and card payment facility. Each litre of milk costs £1.50 and customers can purchase a re-useable, recyclable glass bottle for £2.50, or bring their own bottles, so customers will also be helping fight the

war against single-use plastic.

The working water mill at Otterton Mill dates back to the 11th century, with the attraction best known for its artisan bakery using flour milled on site.



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Eco-friendly: Children from Otterton Primary School try the milk produced and pasteurised just hours before



“Organic milk production involves a far more holistic approach to animal welfare, which revolves around reducing stress on the cows”

Barney Tremaine, Farms Manager

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With a business ethos focusing on local producers, the mill was considered the ideal location for the vending machine, which has its own purpose-built shelter accessed from the road.

To be certified as organic, milk must come from cows which have not received antibiotics or synthetic hormones and have been fed grass which is pesticide-free. The herd of 570 cows are entirely grass fed and outdoor reared.

“Organic milk is creamier than ordinary milk, but the main difference is from an animal welfare perspective,” explained Barney.

“Rather than being yield driven, organic milk production involves a far more holistic approach to animal welfare which revolves around reducing stress on the cows. Because of the extra costs involved with organic, profit margins are still tight, hence trying to cut out the middle man. The main result is much

happier cows and a more environmentally friendly farming method.”

Demand is determining how often the vending machine is refilled and whether more will be installed at other locations. Upholding a zero-waste policy, any leftover milk is fed to the calves.

While the majority of milk destined for supermarket shelves is homogenised, which means that fat molecules are artificially broken down to stop the milk separating, Clinton Dairy milk is non-homogenised and uses a gentle pasteurising process allowing a tasty layer of cream to form on top, maintaining flavour.

“There may even be a nostalgic appeal to buying fresh milk using a re-useable glass bottle,” added Barney.

Chris Wright, co-owner of Otterton Mill, said: “These machines provide a sustainable way to buy locally produced milk, so it dovetails with our own ethos. Our visitors are able to go for a walk past the cows which have produced their pints of milk, so in a world where we all need to do our bit, selling milk in this way is a really positive contribution.”

Waymarkers honour village's fallen heroes



Respect: Otterton Parish Council chairman, Councillor John Hiles, Steven Harper-Smith from Ladram Bay Holiday Park and Clinton Devon Estates Ranger Ed Lagdon

A century ago, on 11th November 1919, the people of Otterton, like millions of others across the country, fell silent for two minutes to honour their husbands, sons, fathers and brothers who gave their lives for their country in the Great War.

By the following summer, the villagers had raised enough money to erect a permanent tribute to their war dead, and on 1st August 1920, the Otterton Memorial Cross was unveiled at a ceremony attended by the then Lord Clinton.

Today, the men whose names are inscribed on that memorial cross are again being honoured as each has his name on one of 16 new timber memorial waymarkers being put in place across the parish. Funded by Otterton Parish Council through the Parishes Together Fund, and supported by Clinton Devon Estates and Ladram Bay Holiday Park, the new waymarkers will replace old ones which were weather-worn and beyond repair.

Otterton Parish Council chairman, Councillor John Hiles, said: "We realised that there were 16 old waymarkers which needed to be replaced, which coincidentally was the same number of names on the World War One faces of the memorial cross.

"So we thought it would be appropriate, and fitting, to give each of those men their own waymarker, so their names would perhaps be seen more often, and their sacrifices not forgotten."

Among those honoured is Cecil Till, who was born in Otterton on 28 December 1890 and before enlisting

worked as a groom and gardener. He joined the Royal Engineers in Otterton on 18 September 1914, with the rank of Driver.

In 1917 Cecil married Alma Payne, the sister of Hubert Payne who is also named on the Otterton memorial. They had no children, and Alma never remarried. She is buried in the same grave as her husband.

Cecil was wounded in France in March 1918, and while recovering at a military hospital in Brighton died of influenza and pneumonia just eight days before the 11th November Armistice.

He was the last of the servicemen from Otterton to die in the Great War.

Otterton born and bred Petty Officer Wallace Harding, is another of the men whose names are inscribed on the new waymarkers. He died when the vessel he was serving on, HMS Bergamot, was sunk after being struck by a German torpedo to the north of Ireland in August 1917, aged 39.

Clare James from Clinton Devon Estates said: "Hundreds of men and women from across the Estate communities gave their lives in the First World War and we are determined that they will be remembered. Tragically, although that conflict was thought of at the time as the war to end all wars, seven more names were added to Otterton's memorial cross at the end of the Second World War.

"Supporting the parish council's remembrance waymarker initiative is another way to keep the memories of Otterton's Great War heroes alive."

New plaque unveiled to mark centenary of Forestry Commission



Above: Lord and Lady Clinton with Sir Harry Studholme, Chairman of the Forestry Commission.
Top right: The first Forestry Commission trees being planted in 1919 at Eggesford Forest.
Pictures courtesy of The Forestry Commission

Lord Clinton has unveiled a plaque to mark 100 years since the formation of the Forestry Commission, in the same North Devon woodland his great grandfather planted the first Forestry Commission tree in 1919.

Two hundred guests including Sir Harry Studholme, the Chairman of the Forestry Commission, and Sir William Worsley, the Government's Tree Champion, joined Lord and Lady Clinton of Clinton Devon Estates at Flashdown Wood in Eggesford Forest near Crediton for the ceremony and the planting of three new trees to complete an avenue of 100 trees, known as the National Centenary Avenue.

In 1919, Charles Trefusis, the 21st Baron Clinton was appointed one of the founding members of the Forestry Commission, formed as part of the Forestry Act to replant Britain's woodlands which had been depleted during the First World War. Immediately after the first meeting in London, Lord Clinton and fellow member Lord Lovat from Scotland challenged one another to a race home to plant the



Commission's first trees. Records show that Lord Clinton had assembled a small team of foresters, ready to plant trees as soon as he disembarked his train at Eggesford Station. Meanwhile as Lord Lovat arrived at Elgin Station he was handed a telegram from Lord Clinton announcing that the first trees had already been planted in Flashdown Wood in Devon. Today, some of the same Douglas firs, larch and beech trees stand at around 40 meters tall.

The 21st Baron Clinton went on to become the second Chairman of the Forestry Commission, leading a programme of work to replenish Britain's timber resource. Over the years, the focus of the Forestry Commission has shifted much more multi-purpose woodland for habitat protection and recreational space.

The centenary planting at the Forestry Commission's Eggesford Forest is the third tree planting ceremony conducted by the current Lord Clinton; the first being in 1969 for the 50th anniversary and the second in 1994 to mark the 75th

anniversary. Clinton Devon Estates owns and manages around 1900 hectares of woodland in Devon.

John Wilding MBE, Head of Forestry and Energy is also Chairman of the Forestry Commission's South West England Forest and Woodland Advisory Committee.

Commenting on the Estate's long-standing links with the Forestry Commission, John Wilding explained: "In the last 100 years the Forestry Commission has been largely responsible for doubling woodland in the UK. Here at Clinton Devon Estates, the legacy of our tree planting and forestry management has resulted in multi-purpose woodland of 25% native broadleaves within a mosaic of commercial conifers, much of which occupies steep slopes an ancient woodland sites."

John Wilding added: "Our long-term vision is to hand-on a more diverse forest of in terms of species and irregular structure which will help to protect soil and store carbon dioxide as well as helping to meet the challenges from new pests and disease."

'I'm really looking forward to retiring in my beautiful modern bungalow'



Home Sweet Home: Lord Clinton and his son Charles Fane-Trefusis (centre) celebrate with two of the Estates' longstanding tenants who are relocating into their new bungalows in Merton, North Devon

The first tenants to move into new bungalows which have been purpose built for older members of the rural North Devon community of Merton near Okehampton have been welcomed to their new homes by Lord Clinton and his son Charles Fane-Trefusis. The four semi-detached, energy efficient homes, have been built by Clinton Devon Estates to provide comfortable, village homes for long-standing tenants who were keen to downsize from larger and older properties in the area. Each home has two bedrooms with a modern fitted kitchen and bathroom or walk-in shower room, a front and rear garden, and ample car parking space. Solar photovoltaic (PV) has been fitted to the roofs to provide low-cost heating and hot water. The Merton homes are the latest addition to Clinton Devon Estates' residential portfolio of over 300 tenanted properties in Devon, many of which were built in the 1800's by Lord Clinton's predecessor Mark Rolle. One of the new residents is Sandra Bunn who has moved from a three-bedroom, thatched cob cottage in Merton. She said: "I've lived in Merton for around 20 years and when Adrian at Clinton Devon Estates told me about the new cottages I said yes right away. I'm pleased to be staying in the village and to be staying near all my old neighbours too. "It's lovely to be in a modern bungalow and it's much warmer, which is great for me. I've been here for a couple of weeks and I'm enjoying being in the new space already."

Mrs Bunn's neighbours include a local farmer who had

worked on Estate land for more than 40 years. Downsizing his home has meant that his six-bedroom farmhouse has become vacant for a family. Adrian Pitts of Clinton Devon Estates explained the organisation's commitment to supporting rural communities: "Many of Clinton Devon Estates' properties are older houses that define the character of many rural towns and villages, especially in North and East Devon. "We believe that it's really important to ensure that these rural communities are sustainable and, by providing the right kind of housing in the right place, there are comfortable homes for older people and larger homes for growing families who keep the primary schools full and allow local shops and pubs to survive."

"We wish all of our new tenants in Merton a very happy and comfortable retirement in this wonderful village," added Adrian. The properties were built by Martyn Bowman Ltd., a family firm from just a few miles down the road in Hatherleigh, comprising Martyn, his son, daughter and son-in-law. Adrian added: "We are really pleased with the work that Martyn and his team carried out. They were brilliant throughout, ensured everything ran smoothly and delivered exactly what they said they would. They employed the help of sub-contractors from the area too, and we're pleased that we could support a number of local firms with this project."



Fighting back: Chalara ash dieback (left) Image courtesy of The Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), Crown Copyright, and crown dieback in a mature ash tree (right)

Facing the fungus: tackling tree disease in East Devon

By John Wilding
Head of Forestry and Environment

The only challenge facing the future of our trees which is greater than the tree fungus ash dieback, is the havoc grey squirrels wreak.

Ash trees have long defined the landscape across East Devon. Following the loss of elm from the Otter Valley in the 1970s the Estate encouraged the growth of ash, particularly in the hedgerows. And while elm re-growth succumbed to the cycle of Dutch elm disease, and oak, beech, sycamore and maple trees were ravaged by the aforementioned squirrels, ash trees prevailed. This is particularly noticeable at Home Farm near Otterton where the hedgerow treescape is defined by 200-year-old oaks, planted as part of the wider Bicton parkland, and 30 to 40-year-old ash coppices.

Ash dieback, *hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, is a fungal pathogen believed to originate in South East Asia. Since the early 1990s it has been devastating trees across Northern Europe, first identified in Poland in 1992 when the fungus spread west. Its presence in the South West of England became known to foresters in 2012 and the first sighting in our woodland, near Woodbury, was only three years ago. It is now widespread across the Estate, especially on roadside trees where the transport of fungal spores was hastened through the air movement from vehicles.

An infected tree's speed of decline depends on how repeatedly it is exposed to fungal spores and to other stresses such as drought or water logging. Our

experience in the Lower Otter Valley is that it is pretty swift, where there are many trees in severe decline, requiring removal on safety grounds within two years of first infection.

Taking action now is a priority as a significant complication is the speed infected ash timber degrades. Trees with advanced infection are highly dangerous to fell with a chainsaw because they can collapse without warning. There have already been tragedies because of this and new mechanised approaches of dealing with the challenge of felling infected trees are being developed.

Learning from the experiences of those in the eastern counties of England, Devon County Council convened an Ash Resilience Working Group to plan how to deal with the challenge. The Estate has been playing an active part in the group as well as the work of the council's Landscape and Environment Resilience Group in order to plan and advise on what we should replace ash with, and the best way to go about doing this.

The landscape throughout the Estate will look very different when the ash is removed and we have started a long-term planting programme for replacing hedgerow trees.

The Estate is using a range of native species particularly climate change resilient species from southern Europe, such as sweet chestnut and Turkey oak. Whether this wider range of species survive to help create a more resilient landscape will greatly depend on how well we can effectively control the grey squirrels.

For more information visit,
www.devonashdieback.org.uk

Training for Toyko



Class combination: Olympic hopeful Tom McEwen on Toledo, riding at Bicton Arena's International Horse Trials in April 2019
Image: William Carey Photography



Image: Jayphotos Equestrian Photography

Standing proud: Lady Clinton (far right) at the prize giving ceremony for Bicton Arena's International Horse Trials in October which attracted hundreds of riders from 18 nations including Olympians and Tokyo 2020 hopefuls

Bicton Arena hosts several prestigious competitions a year which traditionally attract the cream of the equestrian competition circuit, including Olympians and Olympic hopefuls.

This autumn, the International Horse Trials attracted riders from 18 countries including British riders vying for a place on Team GB for Tokyo 2020 and top-level athletes from various nations including The Netherlands, Japan and Ireland.

Bicton's next major competition, the Bicton Horse Trials in the spring (April 17 – 19) is also set to be treated by elite equestrians as a warm-up event for next summer's Olympic Games.

Earlier this year, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) introduced a new format for the sport of eventing in time for next year's Olympic Games with the sole aim of making the sport simpler to understand for spectators and therefore more accessible to the general public. Changes include lowering the competition level to 4* (Badminton is rated 5*) and reducing the number of team members from four to three competitors.

Bicton Arena manager Helen West, who rode professionally for 14 years and is one of only two women in the UK qualified to design top-level 5* cross-country courses, has welcomed the simplification of the rules, but remains "concerned" for the future of eventing as an Olympic sport. "To keep eventing in the Olympics, the sport had to be made simpler for the watching public," said the 39-year-old. "The new changes are a step in the right direction, but they need fine-tuning further.

"The IOC also wants to make equestrianism less elitist. One way they're attempting to do this is by lowering the level at which riders compete. There are only a handful of riders in the world who can ride at the top level and there are only a handful of horses which can. Qualifying at 4* level is still hard and will mean more nations will be able to enter

teams; if you're wanting more flags on the post, going down a level was the right choice. It was a necessary move in order to keep eventing in the Olympics."

She added: "I am concerned that if eventing is dropped, because the Olympics are regarded as the pinnacle of sport, it would lose its kudos, which may have an adverse impact on commercial investment and sponsorship, which will impact on the level riders are able to train and compete at."

Having ridden with many of next year's Olympic hopefuls and watching them compete over the years at Bicton, Helen has predicted that the Team GB selection process will be "cut throat" and confirmed her favourites as Tom McEwen, Piggy French, Ros Canter and Oliver Townsend, all of whom have ridden, or ride regularly at, Bicton.

"Tom rides at Bicton a lot," said Helen. "Tom and his horse Toledo, who won the CCI5-L at Pau France this autumn, are a class combination and a dead cert for Tokyo.

"Piggy won Badminton 2019," continued Helen, who won team gold alongside her in 2001 in the Young Riders European Championships. "She's been progressing ever since and just had the most phenomenal 2019 season. "Ros is the current world champion and had a winning return after having a baby, winning at Ballindenisk this autumn on the 5* course I designed. She's gone straight back to where she was before having time out to have her baby.

"Oliver is a fierce competitor; he embodies power, talent and determination. He'd be a hard one to leave behind." Helen added: "We'll be spoilt for Olympic hopefuls at the next Bicton Horse Trials in April, so this will be an amazing opportunity for the community and members of the public to come and witness top-level riding on their doorstep."

For more information about events at Bicton Arena visit, www.bicton-arena.co.uk/events-calendar-all-competitions



Beer Men's Shed: 'Our group brings people together'

An East Devon Men's Shed group, which was founded earlier this year in a member's garage using borrowed tools, has celebrated the opening of a new, purpose-built workshop.

Every Tuesday and Thursday, the Beer Men's Shed project provides sociable woodwork sessions for men in Beer, Axminster, Kilmington and Seaton. Over the summer, members launched a crowdfunding appeal via Crowdfund Devon to raise money for a permanent base and in just eight weeks they had generated £13,000, including £4,500 from East Devon District Council, to build their 22sqm workshop, which doubles up as a club house.

The official opening of the Beer Men's Shed in the grounds of the Mariner's Hall, on Saturday, October 26, was attended by a number of dignitaries, benefactors, residents and prospective members.

Despite limited resources, members have already completed a number of commissions including a largescale village noticeboard and 50 dormouse nesting boxes for the district council, and a large wooden children's activity box. Local landowner Clinton Devon Estates, who funded the clearing of the site for the workshop, has invited the group to collaborate with their Plan for Pollinators project. This will involve making large flower boxes to attract insects, birds and bats, in support of Bat Friendly Beer, a partnership project to boost Beer's bat population. Chris Pickles, group chair, said: "Our main priority is attracting more men to our group and inspire them to lead happier, healthier lives, which is our main consideration when deciding what project to take on.

"We put the call out on social media and the money just came in overnight; it really is a measure of the goodwill in

the community." Chris continued: "In Beer 30 per cent of the population is over the age of 65, and half of them are men, therefore there's a sizeable population of men who may find themselves in need of social interaction or a practical interest, including male carers who may feel they don't get out of the house enough."

To this end, Action East Devon has offered to supply a professional carer to give those members with caring responsibilities time to attend the group.

"One of our members enjoys it so much he takes a 45-minute bus ride to the club twice a week," continued Chris. "He used to spend the majority of time at home and was in and out of hospital.

"He's led on some of our projects, and enjoys the laughs and jokes we share; we've seen how the group has cheered him up.

"The group brings people together," Chris added. "Some people like to get stuck into the work, while others like the social aspect more. We keep an eye out for each other and we enjoy each other's company."

The group has also received funding from Devon County Council's Community Chest, Devon and Cornwall Police's Community Resilience Fund, Defra's Sustainable Development Fund and the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Funding has also enabled the purchase of more tools, such as a lathe for woodturning, allowing members to take on more ambitious projects.

Sessions with Beer Men's Shed take place on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. For more information visit www.beermensshed.uk or email chris@picklesnet.com



Team work: Lord Clinton's daughter Caroline Fowle attends the opening of the Beer Men's Shed workshop



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