



FOR FRIENDS OF HARDWICK ESTATE

The Hardwick Newsletter

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Issue 1

Transition things

by *Miriam Rose*

As ever, much is happening here at Hardwick! The transition to the Estate becoming a community led charity is now in full swing, boosted enormously by the 7 person Hardwick delegation's trip to the Community Land Scotland conference in Skye in June which we report on here. Last week's Henley Standard featured a full page spread entitled 'Heirs hand over Estate to community stewardship' which is our first piece of public coverage about the transition, and points out that this will be the first community run Estate in England, following the success of the Scottish community owned land model.



Lysaczenko, Miriam, Kanada and myself. All of us went hoping to learn something, and to gather ideas to bring back to Hardwick. Our mission was very much accomplished!

One thing that all we were all struck by was an amazing feeling of camaraderie - so many people with interesting stories and insights from their own experiences of transitioning in their communities, in different ways, from a more traditional model of land ownership to a more equitable community governance model. What differs about Hardwick's situation, of course, was that the change in most of their contexts came from the bottom-up - communities seeking governance of their own homes, often with absentee landlords. Hardwick, of course, is top-down - a gift to the community. Although there is a big difference in what the Scottish communities had to do in the first place to gain that powerful community core, there was much we learned that can be applied in our own context, now and in the future. One of the most powerful things is the possibility this gift has, the potential - if we all participate and really make the most of it. There are so many exciting projects that could be initiated, so many exciting ways we can all get involved and make Hardwick - if this is even possible - even more groundbreakingly brilliant than it already is!

We met some brilliant people and came away brimming with enthusiasm and ideas. I think it would be fair to say that the whole experience had a profound impact on us all and we are hoping that other Hardwickians could benefit from a similar research trip to

Scotland in the future! One comment that was made a number of times signifies a great deal not just about what we can do as a community, but the wider possibilities for the future: they called us the 'English Eigg'. The Isle of Eigg was the pioneer of community land stewardship in Scotland, and still one of the best and most successful examples. (further research about Eigg encouraged by all!)



New logo

Deepest thanks to our former artist in residence Nick Hayes for designing this beautiful new lino cut style logo for the Estate. Hardwick merch. here we come!



'The English Eigg'

by *Tash Robson*

At the beginning of June, a group of Hardwickians went on an adventure to the Community Land Scotland Conference, held at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (The Gaelic College) on the Isle of Skye. The delegation was made up of Romilly Swann, Dave Jackson, Josh Bannerman, Sophia

Top Title for Tolly!

by *Tamara Schipou*

On 17th of June Tolly was awarded M.B.E in His Majesty's The King Birthday Honours list for services to agriculture, and on 5th July the Soil Association presented Tolly with the Lifetime Achievements Award in the Best On Organic Markets BOOM Awards. Receiving these awards brings great pride and joy to us, acknowledging his hard work and dedication throughout the years.

Tolhurst Organic was the first farm to attain the Stockfree Organic standards and Tolly's philosophy of a "systems approach" to working with soil, nature, biodiversity continues to inspire farmers and growers worldwide. He has pioneered many key techniques, including the use of green manures, intercropping and under sowing, functional biodiversity, alternatives to peat growing media and the use of woodchip.

However, Tolly's greatest achievement and impact, and that of the farm itself, is the knowledge and skills shared to over 200 trainees and volunteers across the years. These are people who will perpetuate the values of the farm, and in his speech at the lovely MBE party at Walled Gardens on 1st July, Tolly dedicated his award to them all and handed custom-made medals to those present. Congratulations!



Bottoms up for bottom-up!

by *Miriam Rose*

Over the last year or so a number of brilliant projects have emerged bottom-up - from within the Hardwick community. These interviews with the people behind them sheds some light on how and why they took the initiative. In January 2022 Tash had been thinking about wanting to give a talk about her critical thinking research at Hardwick, and mentioned this to a few other folk who also wanted to give talks. She approached Miriam who was very positive, and agreed to send out an email to advertise the talks to the wider Estate.. and so the Hardwick Lecture Series was born! The original group of would-be speakers (Alastair, Tash, Romilly, Nick Hayes and Miriam) are still coordinating the monthly talks more than a year later, and many Hardwickians and others have given fascinating lectures on a wide variety of topics. Tash says "my hope is that the lectures continue to bring people together from different demographics within and outside the Hardwick community, and engages them in stimulating dialogue with one another."

The series continues with four lectures from Hardwick's farmers and foresters this summer and autumn. See Events.

After the success of the Tolhurst Organic Christmas market, informal chats between Tamara, Sophia, Karen and Sparrow led to the idea of a quarterly Hardwick Market held at Lin's Veg Shed to showcase produce and crafts from across the Estate, and connect the local community with local producers. Karen was 'ultra organised' (according to Sophia) and reached out to craftspeople like Dave Jackson, Romilly and Suz who were all keen to be involved. As it was to be hosted at Tolhurst Organic the group didn't feel any need to ask permission from the Estate..until the eleventh hour

when it occurred to Sophia that they should ask about using the Hardwick name! This was quickly agreed. The two markets so far have generated lots of interest from the local area and stallholders have sold well. Sophia says "we really wanted to keep money in the local community, promote organic food and encourage other small scale producers. I love the conversations with people attending, who didn't know about Hardwick or its produce." The next market is on 23rd September (see Events).

During recent conversations about access to land with Nick Hayes, as well as with local people who interact with her sheep and ask how they can help, Romilly has been pondering the desire for people to connect with land by being involved with it, and the problematic way public debates about land often pit farmers and the public against one another. Having helped James Norman with ragwort pulling for many years she had the idea that she could set up a group for local people to come and help with this task, socialise and learn more about the land where they live. She put out a call out on the WhatsApp and to her contacts locally, and formed an email list called "Hardwick Hands", and in June 2022 a group of local and Hardwick folk joined in this annual task. Later in the year the group watered trees, bramble-bashed and conducted a wassailing in the orchard. Romilly says "I wanted to help local people feel more connected to and welcome at Hardwick, and integrate the Hardwick and wider community. I hope the events give people more of a sense of ownership of the place, and bring together socially isolated people, making and friendships, as well as building a network of folk with knowledge and love for Hardwick who can be called on to help in future."

The next ragwort pulling event will be very soon! Call / WhatsApp Romilly (07958 772240) if you want to be added to the Hardwick Hands WhatsApp group or know anyone else locally who might.



Having worked with apple trees for the last few years Kristen could see the urgent need to take care of the suffering community orchard trees, as well as the potential for the area as a community resource. Despite nervousness about approaching the Estate, especially as she didn't know what was already happening with the orchard, she got in touch with Miriam to see if there was any scope for her to help and was pleasantly surprised by getting a very positive response! Coincidentally the Estate farm advisor John Twyford had just found some funding for looking after traditional orchards and it was quickly arranged that Kristen could use some of this to restore and manage the trees, as well as to take forward her interest in getting the community more involved. When she started talking about this around the Estate she was further buoyed by the interest and positivity from others. As emails and writing are not her strong point Miriam has offered to help with this aspect so she can concentrate on the trees and people. Kristen says "my hope is for more people to feel a connection to and ownership of the orchard as well as to better maintain the trees. I feel passionate about keeping community orchards alive as places to celebrate fruit,

land and community."

Kristen is setting up a tree buddying system so Hardwick people can get to know a particular tree and how to care for them.

Spotlight on..The Real Tennis Court

by Tim Tomalin, Chair of The Friends of Hardwick Tennis Court

The court at Hardwick is a favourite of many real tennis players throughout the world. It is visited often by players from Australia, France and the USA. The charm of Hardwick House and the Estate is admired by all. Prince Edward came and played on his world tour on behalf of the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. During the Ladies World Championships being held at the Oratory recently, Hardwick hosted the parallel amateur doubles tournament as part of the event.

The court was built for Charles Day Rose by Joseph Bickley in 1907. It is the third Rose court: Sir Charles already had a court in his house in Newmarket and the first one at Hardwick, built in 1896, allegedly proved too far from the house for convenience. Mr Bickley developed the formula for the finish of the walls and floor, and the technique for curing it that nobody has managed to reproduce. He took his secret to the grave, and "our" court is one of the few remaining Bickley courts with all its original surfaces intact. In 1989 The Friends of Hardwick Tennis Court was formed and made an agreement with Sir

Julian Rose to have access to the court under licence, to play and maintain the court and its facilities. Over time the roof was fixed and lights installed, changing rooms and kitchen updated. Hardwick is one of very few regularly used privately owned courts in the world.

The game of real, or Royal, tennis developed from games played in the street where there was sufficient space, or we think played by monks in abbey cloisters, as the shape of the playing area suggests. Real tennis thrived until the late nineteenth century when lawn tennis was invented.

The court is laid out with galleries under a sloping roof, the penthouse, which runs round three sides of the court. On the fourth wall there is a short section set at about forty five degrees. This is a useful target as it sends the ball flying sideways across the court; quite alarming for anyone whose duty is to return the shot and isn't ready! If the player at the service end fails to hit the ball before its second bounce, the distance of the second bounce from the end wall is marked and a chase has been laid. The best chases are the ones nearest to the wall. After the players have changed ends, the new server serves and the new receiver has to win the chase, placing the ball closer to the wall. If the ball isn't going to make it then the server doesn't have to hit the ball to win the point. Are you following? It has been said that it is like a cross between lawn tennis, squash and chess. And the Royal bit? Well, Henry VIII enjoyed the game and, it is said, every time he lost a point he invented a new rule to put things right!



Property Matters

by Alastair Dick-Cleland,
Property Manager

Elm Tree Cottage Following the serious fire that happened at the end of February, it has been a painfully slow business trying to make progress on restoring the house so that the tenants can move back in. Our insurers handed the matter over to loss adjusters, who never seem to make anything simple or quick! The house has been cleared and cleaned, including some of the ceilings and floors being removed (unnecessarily in my opinion!). At long last, we have a contractor to carry out all the works that the tenant isn't doing themselves. The house needs a new heating system, and subject to final agreement, the plan is to install a 'green' air to air heat pump system, which will be a first on the Estate, and which we are assured should work well for a traditionally constructed old cottage.

Straw Hall Some cracking in one of the bedroom walls led to further investigation, revealing that the roof structure was in a terrible state including a broken purlin, a rotten wall-plate, and decayed or missing rafters. Norman Millar, who is a structural engineer, inspected and agreed a series of repairs - but all to be done from inside the room. Amazingly, with Dan Dunne's help, we found a willing and experienced carpenter at short notice, and as I write Keith Norfolk is hard at work piecing the structure back together again as well as beefing up the insulation to hopefully make it a somewhat more pleasant residence.



The Old Boathouse, Sheepwash Lane. As many of you will know, the Boathouse and all the other adjacent moorings are being marketed for sale by Strutt & Parker in Pangbourne. Any sale of Estate assets is to be avoided if at all possible, but we need to make provision for an ongoing income for Sir Julian Rose, and this isn't something that will be possible once the Estate has transitioned into a charity, and hence the need for the sale to hopefully raise a significant sum to invest. We are exploring selling it all as one lot or divided into 3 sections. Do let anyone know who might be interested. In the meantime, many of the existing moorers have stayed on for the time being, and any vacant moorings are available to rent on a monthly/weekly basis.

The Dower House After several years, the previous tenants have left the Dower House for new premises near Henley. So the Dower House is currently being marketed to rent by Knight Frank. The Dower House is one of our 'market rent' properties and not subsidised, and so we are hoping to get a useful monthly income from it. Again, if you know of anyone who might be interested, please let me know.

Hardwick Community Energy The energy group continues to meet on a regular basis. Research suggests that a Community Benefit Society is probably the best structure for such a group, with the proposed name of 'Hardwick Community Energy'. Josh and Romilly are reviewing the Estate for the best locations for possible solar panels. Jonny is exploring links with academia to see if anyone might wish to carry out research at Hardwick. We may need help with collating the energy use and demand from everyone on the Estate – not an easy task! And I continue to review measure to improve thermal efficiency on Estate properties. Elm Tree Cottage will be getting some new double-glazed windows as part of the refurbishment works there. We are now members of Oxfordshire's Low Carbon Hub (TBC!)

Willow Weaving in the Woods

by Suz Williams

Willow weaving workshops are in full swing at Greenbroom Farm this spring and summer. I hold a variety of weaving and carving workshops in the coppice behind the farm and people from across the country have been coming along to learn a new skill. On the whole the workshops have been going well and the weather has been kind to me and the participants. The only rainy day so far was on the day of the coronation when it rained non stop for 6 hrs. But the day was saved by a sea of bluebells that look amazing, even in the gloom. More workshops are planned for later in the year - if you'd like to attend then get it touch. Email Suz on thecoppiceco@gmail.com



EVENTS

31st August 7.30pm Hardwick Lecture Series James Norman 'We need to talk about livestock' at Tolhurst Organic Packing Shed *suggested donation £3*

1st - 3rd September Wellbeing gathering at Hempen with Earth Living. A curated intimate event for those wanting to connect with nature, organic nutrition, the hemp plant and our community farm Hempen.co.uk

23rd September 11am - 3pm Hardwick Market at Lin's Veg Shed – farmers market, street food, arts and crafts and live music

28th September 7.30pm Hardwick Lecture Series Iain Tolhurst, 'Stock free organic horticulture..how and why' at Tolhurst Organic Packing Shed *suggested donation £3*

6th – 8th October The Organic Growers Gathering at Tolhurst Organic CIC. Talks, workshops, music, sauna etc. Search Organic Growers Gathering 2023 on Eventbrite to book

26th October 7.30pm Hardwick Lecture Series Ben Manning, 'Near natural woodland management at Hardwick' at Tolhurst Organic Packing Shed *suggested donation £3*

check out our new Events page on the website!

<https://hardwickestate.co.uk/events/>