

GRIDLINE

The magazine for landowners

Spring 2021

WIN

A lockdown-easing
British inn break
or a £100
shopping spree

Inside

Walking away: The brothers
who turned their backs on farming

Simply spectacular: One of
the winged wonders of the world

Blade runners: The helicopter
crew saving lives from the sky

Locking horns with

history

10,000 years old and rarer than the Giant Panda,
meet the cattle on the comeback trail



nationalgrid

Some useful contact numbers

The Land & Acquisition Services team is responsible for acquiring all rights and permissions from statutory authorities and landowners needed to install, operate and maintain National Grid's electricity and gas transmission networks. The group acts as the main interface for landowners with gas and electricity equipment installed on their land. Your local contacts are listed below.

ELECTRICITY AND GAS

» Land teams – all regions **0800 389 5113**

WAYLEAVE PAYMENTS

» For information on electricity wayleave payments, telephone the payments helpline on **0800 389 5113**

EASEMENT ENQUIRIES

» Email box.electricityeasements@nationalgrid.com

CHANGE OF DETAILS

» To inform National Grid of changes in ownership or contact details, telephone 0800 389 5113 for electric and 01926 654 844 for gas, or email grantorservices@nationalgrid.com

ELECTRICITY EMERGENCY

» Emergency calls to report pylon damage to National Grid can be made on **0800 404 090**. Note the tower's number – found just below the property plate – to help crews locate it.

ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS

» For information on electric and magnetic fields, call the EMF information line on **08457 023 270** (local call rate). Website: emf.info

GAS EMERGENCY

» **0800 111 999**

DIAL BEFORE YOU DIG

» Before carrying out work in the vicinity of a gas pipeline or digging more than 0.5m in depth, contact Plant Protection on **0800 688 588** or email plantprotection@cadentgas.com – please provide five days' notice so searches can be carried out to determine the exact position of our assets and provide the required permission to safely carry out the works.

QUESTIONS

» If you have any questions about our Electricity high voltage or Gas Assets, call our service provider Cadent on **0800 688 588** or email plantprotection@cadentgas.com – they will provide the exact location of all our assets.

Gridline is produced by
SONDER

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Put a face to the name...

CENTRAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM

- 1 Paul Steger
 - 2 Sophie Phillips
 - 3 Becky Kearsley
 - 4 Jackie Wilkie
 - 5 George Barnes
 - 6 Thippapha Montorano
 - 7 Palvinder Kalsi
 - 8 Nicky Boucher
 - 9 Deena Wood
- Lynne Todd (not pictured)
Pam Ridley (not pictured)



Here's how to get in touch...



Land officers provide a daily point of contact for National Grid grantors and can be contacted with any questions about compensation, reinstatement, maintenance or refurbishment plans in your area – the team above will put you in touch or help you direct.

If you have any queries, please telephone **0800 389 5113** and select from the four options below.

OPTION 1

To find out how to obtain your electricity MPAN number. For business or residential consumers it's Energy Networks Association at www.energynetworksassociation.com and type in your postcode.

OPTION 2

For National Grid grantors needing assistance with a wayleave, easement or payment query.

OPTION 3

For all other enquiries.

LUMP SUM PAYMENT FOR CONVERTING WAYLEAVES TO EASEMENTS

Many of National Grid's grantors currently receive annual payments in line with their wayleave agreement and the rates set by the NFU and CLA. But did you know you can convert the wayleave into an easement and receive a one-off capital payment instead?

National Grid encourages you to seek professional advice from a qualified chartered surveyor or agricultural valuer. National Grid will pay reasonable agent's fees in accordance with its published Surveyor's Fee scale, together with solicitor's fees, upon completion of the easement. So there should be no need to pay an agent any of the payment rightly due to you.

If this is of interest to you or you wish to find out more about easements and the payment which you could receive, then please contact us directly or through a qualified agent at box.electricityeasements@nationalgrid.com

CONTENTS

NEWS AND FEATURES

- 04 Using virtual tour technology to showcase a visual improvement project
- 05 Five ways National Grid is tackling the burning issue of climate change head-on
- 06 The bird sanctuary that's home to two of the avian wonders of the world
- 10 Goodbye to the farm: Two brothers, one difficult decision
- 13 Getting back to normality: A snapshot of how grantors have stayed strong

- 14 Trust in nature: How lockdown gave a Welsh estate with a difference the chance to take stock
- 17 Keeping you safe and saving lives: The 'copter crew looking out for your land
- 19 Five things you might not have known about National Grid
- 20 WIN: A post-lockdown two-night British inn getaway break or a shopping spree



10



06

14

Welcome...

... to the Spring edition of Gridline and hopefully the end of what has been a very challenging year for us all.

As many of you will know, or see elsewhere in this magazine, the natural world around us has continued to thrive during the pandemic and its beauty knows no bounds.

The slowdown has given wildlife an unexpected opportunity to reboot and allowed us to think again about our lives. Both positive aspects of the pandemic feature in this edition.

We visit the twins turning their backs on farming to try something new and celebrate the work of grantors ensuring the UK's bird population and one of its rarest breeds of cattle flourish long into the future.

It's been business as usual for National Grid as we've recently submitted business plans for new infrastructure projects that will connect clean, affordable energy and maintain our existing assets for the next five years.

None of that would be possible without the support of you, our grantors, who work with our engineers to allow them access to carry out essential work to keep the electricity and gas network reliable and safe.

You may have seen National Grid are selling a stake in Gas Transmission and our US business to buy Western Power Distribution, the UK's largest electricity distribution business, but rest assured we remain totally committed to working in partnership with our grantor communities and will continue to focus on effective delivery.

We wanted this edition to be as positive as possible at the end of a difficult time for individuals and businesses, and looking ahead we'd love to hear your success stories, so get in touch at gridline@madebysonder.com

Thanks for your support and enjoy the read.

Amanda May
Head of Land Rights and Acquisitions,
Land and Property

NEWSLINE

The latest news from National Grid and its landowner partners

Broad vistas... at the click of a mouse

Plans to remove pylons and overhead electricity lines near one of the nation's most beautiful areas are being brought to life in a virtual tour.

Families living in an area where National Grid is working with local stakeholders to remove above ground assets are being shown a 360° virtual tour of what it will look like.

The proposed removal of up to 12 pylons and 4.5km of line near Roundway Hill and the Millennium White Horse in Devizes is part of National Grid's Visual Impact Provision project in areas across England and Wales.

Over the past 18 months, National Grid engineers have been exploring a range of potential routes for the new underground cables in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The plans have been refined with the advice of local experts and community representatives.



Place your camera phone over the QR code and click the link for a 360° tour of the area



Local shoemakers cut the original white horse in 1845



Record breaker

A replacement gas pipeline project under the River Humber has been awarded a Guinness World Record.

At 4.96km, National Grid's tunnel beneath the Humber Estuary is officially the world's longest hydraulically inserted pipeline.

Work on the installation continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to secure supply of up to 25% of Britain's gas in time for last winter.

The award for the world's longest hydraulically inserted pipeline was officially made to National Grid and joint venture project partners Skanska, A.Hak and Porr.

Emma Ford, Head of Gas Construction for National Grid, said: "This is a super achievement, especially when the project has such a good safety record of no lost time injuries in more than 500 days. To achieve a world record is the icing on the cake".

Gas makes up 40% of the power consumed in the UK, heating more than eight out of ten homes and providing more than half of UK industry's energy needs. The 6,500 tonne pipeline, which connected to the network in December and is guaranteed for 40 years, sits in a tunnel designed to last 120 years.



Around 60km of tunnels will house high-voltage cables beneath London, reducing the need for roadworks above ground

Power to the people

Families living near a £1 billion project to rewire London's ageing electricity network are set to benefit from a National Grid grant.

The £16,000 grant will go to Community Southwark, which supports more than 1,000 local not-for-profit organisations in the south London area to help give minority groups a voice.

London Power Tunnels is a National Grid project to renew the capital's electricity network by constructing more than 60km of new deep-level tunnels carrying high-voltage cables.

The tunnels replace a series of power transmission cables buried just beneath the road surface which were difficult to maintain without disrupting traffic.

The grant is one of 39 totalling nearly £500,000 given out by National Grid's Community Grant Programme this year to community organisations and charities where vital work impacts local people. It will enable a newly appointed Support Officer to support the borough's BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) Network, helping the local community to tackle inequality, lobby for change across the borough and ensure their voice can be heard.

New dog, new tricks

A dog has been declared fit for paw-pose at a National Grid substation in the States.

But this intelligent retriever has a shiny yellow coat, bandy legs, a zoom camera for a head – and is also fitted with thermal imaging equipment. There's no collar or lead either... he's kept under control by an engineer who uses a tablet like a video game to control some of his faithful friend's tricks.

Spot can send images back to his human master from hard to access equipment in electrified areas to see if and where maintenance and repair work is needed.

The four-legged mutt is kennelled at the Sandy Pond substation terminus of a 930-mile high-voltage overhead transmission line that brings hydro-electric power from Canada into the north eastern United States.



Coming soon? The K9 engineer



Changing the climate

Around 30,000 people are due to attend the UK's largest ever summit later this year to discuss the burning issue of climate change.

The COP26 (Conference of the Parties), the annual UN climate change conference, is scheduled for November in Glasgow.

Principal Partner National Grid will call for more ambitious action towards a clean energy future. It's an ideal forum to show that achieving net zero is possible using new technologies.

Here are five ways it is keeping temperatures below 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels and limiting temperature increase to 1.5°C degrees.



For more ways National Grid is tackling climate change visit www.nationalgrid.com/responsibility/environment/cop26

1. RENEWABLE ENERGY

A network of interconnectors or undersea cables allow us to exchange electricity with neighbouring countries, so we can draw on more renewable clean energy from solar or wind turbines. By 2030, they'll provide enough electricity for eight million homes to use 90% zero carbon energy.

2. ULTRA-FAST ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS

Ultra-fast chargers at key locations would cut charge time to as little as five to ten minutes.

3. GREENING UP GAS

Gas fuels more than 80% of UK home heating and more than half of industrial energy needs.

We're pressing for a switch to hydrogen, which is cleaner and lower in carbon than the currently used methane.

4. USING ROBOTS TO REDUCE GAS LEAKAGE

Sending robots down high-pressure gas pipelines to carry out checks and repairs reduces maintenance costs and generates savings of more than 2,000 tonnes of carbon a year.

5. CUTTING OUR BUILDINGS' CARBON FOOTPRINTS.

We're looking at lower carbon construction methods and have set a target of increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings by 10%.



CAN YOU SOLVE THE GREAT GAS HOLDER MYSTERY?

Three giant structures once used to store gas in the heart of Birmingham are at the centre of a nationwide riddle.

The iconic 1885-built gasholders close to National Grid's Windsor Street site are currently being dismantled because gas is now stored beneath ground.

But the mystery of how the structures came to be painted in Aston Villa's claret and blue remains.

Sarah Rea, Land Regeneration Manager at National Grid, said: "We believe they were painted in the 1980s and there are lots of theories about how, but it would be great to solve the mystery once and for all."

A National Grid heritage team is keeping a pictorial record of the work, due to end next spring.

TYING the knot WITH NATURE

For some, the thought of being surrounded by the whooshing, swooping and flapping of 30,000 birds is the stuff of Hitchcockian nightmares.

For Jim Scott it was his idea of heaven and the breathtaking pinnacle of 25 years working for the RSPB... the moment he was completely at one with nature.

It happened one afternoon as the knot – stocky wading birds – took off in a swirling cloud from the food-laden mudflats of the Norfolk coast to roost on an inland lagoon as the racing tide rushed in to end their tea-time.

The wading birds' Snettisham Spectacular is one of the wildlife wonders of the world and something the RSPB Site Manager never tires of. But this time it was different.

Jim said: "It's never the same twice. Tens of thousands of knot take off in a cloud and fly no lower than 20 feet over your head, calling to each other. The noise and a sky black with birds are simply incredible.

"But that August day I was here alone, there was no wind and they were flying at chest height so I laid down on the ground. They were so close I could have reached up and touched them."





For more information about the work of the RSPB visit: www.rspb.org.uk/



The mudflats of The Wash stretch for 100 square miles on the north west of East Anglia, from Skegness to Hunstanton

THE LAGOON:

Black-headed gulls: Around 1,000 pairs nest here from April and breed through to July.
Common terns: Around 150 pairs arrive at the end of April from wintering grounds off the West African coast.
Avocets: Between 20 and 100 pairs make the lagoon their home, taking their chicks to the mudflats to feed.

SHINGLE BEACH:

Ringed plovers: Between 10 and 18 pairs use the beach for nesting. Well camouflaged, they are fiercely protected by the volunteers.
Oystercatchers: Around 25 pairs nest here. One local bird was known to be more than 40 years old.



SURPRISE

Just as nature puts on a separate show when up to 50,000 pink footed geese who winter on the reserve head inland to feed for the day – “another wonder of the world” insists Jim – she can also be brutal too.

A hide close to the man-made saline lagoon and bank where the birds shelter from predators was destroyed by flooding in 2013 and has now been replaced by an 80-person capacity, storm-proof version.

“We monitor breeding and wintering patterns and safeguard habitats, so where the ringed plovers nest on the shingle beaches in breeding season, our volunteers put up signs, urging people to stay away. They also remove vegetation on the lagoon banks to encourage waders to roost,” he said.

The rise and fall of population numbers painstakingly collected and collated by Jim helps to create a five-year plan for the two reserves, as well as feeding into the broader national picture.

He said: “We analyse the statistics with the Society’s ecologists and Natural England to assess what may have caused the drop or rise in numbers.

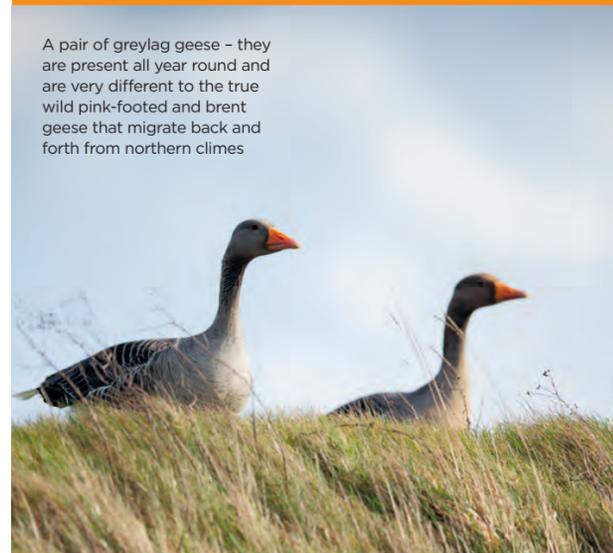
“That helps us decide what we can do to help in the local and national plan and might even mean some species go on the red endangered list.”

He added: “Sometimes there are anomalies that simply can’t be accounted for, like the incident I experienced. Birds still surprise me and sometimes make me think ‘wow, I didn’t realise they did that’. That is the wonderful thing about nature.”

MUDFLATS:

The fine silt and clay sediments create a fertile feeding ground of invertebrates thanks to the high content of organic material. **Waders** head here for the shellfish and worms, dunlin come for tiny snails, while oystercatchers go further out to find mussels. **The knot** return from breeding grounds in Arctic Canada while bar-tailed godwits make the trip from Siberia. **Best time** to see the show is when the tide is at its highest, generally on a few days each month from July through to April.

A pair of greylag geese – they are present all year round and are very different to the true wild pink-footed and brent geese that migrate back and forth from northern climes



That exhilarating moment – the proud Scotsman insisted no whisky was involved – cemented his love affair with nature and The Wash, where he recorded a record 140,000 knot last autumn.

REASSESSING WHAT MATTERS

The RSPB, Europe’s largest wildlife conservation charity and a major gas and electricity grantor, looks after 200 reserves around the UK – from the estuaries, mudflats and salt marshes of Snettisham and nearby Titchwell to forests and urban habitats.

“The Wash is the UK’s most important estuary in terms of numbers and can hold up to 450,000 wading birds and wildfowl at peak times in winter, with around two million passing through on migration. Our reserve can hold up to a third of those,” added Jim.

As the tide rolls in, knot, oystercatchers, grey plover and bar-tailed godwit gorging on the mudflats’ “all you can eat buffet” of snails, worms, cockles and shellfish leapfrog each other to extend their feeding frenzy, creating nature’s showcase.

The mudflats, a wing-beat from the Royal Estate in Sandringham, pretty much look after themselves, but there is always work to be done for Jim, his two wardening colleagues and the “crucial” 25-strong team of volunteers.

“We leave nature to do her thing as much as possible,” he said: “But we have a 4,500 acre site with lagoons, lakes and trails, so we have to maintain the infrastructure, clear footpaths, mend benches and look after the hides, as well as constantly monitoring the populations.”

More than 20,000 people visited Snettisham last year, many to marvel at the showpiece and others to simply rediscover what really matters.

“The pandemic has certainly made people reassess things and people have become a lot more aware of the world around them and the natural wonders on their own doorstep. That’s a good outcome,” smiled Jim.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Growing numbers of farmers are becoming experts in biodiversity, managing their land to encourage birds which destroy crop-feasting insects and rodents. But others know little about the benefits of attracting the barn owl, grey partridge and corn bunting, which all play a vital role in establishing a thriving countryside.

1. Arable field margins

A metre-wide grass strip between the hedge and the crop edge provides a home for ground-nesting birds such as partridges, buntings and yellowhammers.

The same strip is also a perfect habitat for insects and spiders which feed on crop pests in the spring, while wild flower strips attract bumblebees and hoverflies.

Cultivated margins can also help conserve rare arable plant species on the edge of fields, as well as providing seeds for farmland birds in areas with light soils and low fertility.



2. Extensively grazed grassland

These areas are rich in wildlife, plants, butterflies, bumblebees and other insects. Birds such as lapwings, skylarks and yellowhammers feed on earthworms and insects found here in the breeding season.

Pastures with flowering dandelions provide seed for linnets and goldfinches and the abundance of seeds is vital in winter for hungry starlings and thrushes.

Reducing livestock on grassland can mean the loss of nests through trampling for birds such as lapwings, curlews, yellow wagtails and skylarks, whereas heavy grazing in fields with a high water table helps redshanks and snipe.



3. Drainage channels

Well-maintained drainage channels with good quality water are crucial to allow species to move through the countryside.

Dykes and ditches cleaned little and often with a year-round water supply are most popular with the plants and invertebrates that provide food for birds such as lapwings, redshanks, curlews and snipe.



Walking away: It was a heart-wrenching decision, but Paul and Michael (right and left, opposite) are now looking forward to their next adventure



SEEKING PASTURES NEW

THE TWINS WHO TURNED THEIR BACK ON FOUR GENERATIONS OF FARMING TO INVEST IN BRICKS AND MORTAR

For nearly 15,000 consecutive days siblings Paul and Michael Southall thought of little else but their farm, the result of generations of graft and passion.

Since great grandfather Matthew started the farm to supply his greengrocer business in 1907, destiny decreed they would always take the helm when the time came.

Until, that was, the possibilities offered by retirement loomed – and it became clear the brothers' children didn't want to continue with the tradition anyway.

"We'd been farming this land for 40 years. That's a lot of days thinking about producing the best quality vegetables at the right quantities from the moment you wake up to the moment your head hits the pillow," said Paul.

They did a pretty decent job of it too, expanding from the original 150 acres surrounding the farmhouse where they grew up to the 1,150 of today, building a packhouse and employing 12 full-time employees and an average of 250 seasonal workers.



Shutting up shop: An old Massey Ferguson tractor dating back more than half a century still has pride of place in an outbuilding

PART OF THE COMMUNITY

The farm, in rolling countryside 10 miles north of Worcester, sent much of its 12 core lines, including purple-sprouting broccoli and asparagus, direct to the big three supermarkets' depots.

'Southalls of Norchard' signs still point the way to the packhouse built in 2004 and extended 10 years later to cope with their own and third-party packaging – but they are an anachronism now.

Although the brothers still own the land, they have passed on the logistical burden to a large third-party grower to focus instead on the less demanding world of property development.

Michael, younger by 10 minutes, said: "We've grown steadily since 1995 when we started renting more land and began establishing strong links with cooperatives such as the Worcester Bean Growers Association.

"We're proud to have been a big part of the community, but equally we have looked after our Eastern European pickers, some of whom have kept returning for 20 years."

Mr Paul and Mr Michael, as the seasonal regulars emerging from their hostel site call them, are proud of the team they built... but admit it made it even harder to take the next step.

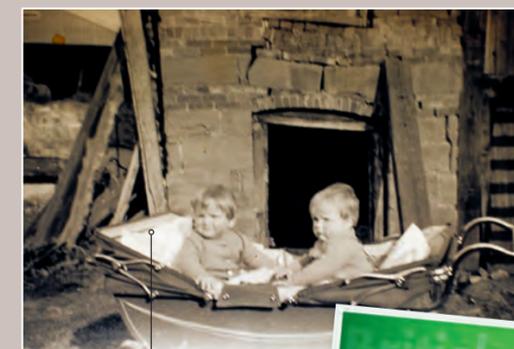
"It was tough, especially given all the history and the work we'd put in. But there were factors like Brexit, workforce availability and supermarkets squeezing margins that made it less difficult," said Paul.

FAMILY TIES



Matthew Southall bought the farm in 1907 to supply his Dudley greengrocery business, making use of the local railway station.

After grandad Arthur steered the farm through the 1930s, the twins' dad Don (front centre) took the reins in 1947.



Paul and Michael in their pram outside an old stable that did not survive to be converted.

The farm supplied many of the major supermarkets as well as maintaining its strong links with local retailers and the community.





Inside the hay barn, one of the open plan renovated buildings with sweeping views of the Lickey Hills

The pair already have permission to turn this old barn into a three-bed house, but the piggery at the front must remain

“We’d built up a great team, so we made sure that whoever we sold to looked after them. There was continuity and they were transferred over.”

And because the first phase of their new venture of four farm building conversions sits in the shadow of their childhood home, they are still – physically at least – connected with the farming which still flourishes around them.

Paul and Michael, 62, each have two children and will shortly have a total of five grandchildren, so they felt the time was right to regain more of a work-life balance, especially after lockdown.

Paul said: “Our children could see it was a business where you don’t get much time off and they didn’t want to take it on. At the same time, we realised we wanted to see more of our families.

“So we looked at our assets and got permission for a residential development around a courtyard by renovating existing farm buildings. We want to make a margin but would also love to leave a legacy here, just like our family and ourselves did with the farm.”

He added: “The day we finally sold the business I sat in my office and watched the last two workers go back to their chalets and felt very emotional. I told my wife. She reminded me to look to the future.”

REWARDING... AND LESS DEMANDING

Before making any decision, the brothers “stripped out the emotion” and planned strategically in three-month blocks to see if the property idea had legs... to investigate the art of the possible.

Wanting to leave the industry at the top with the business still moving forward, they also offered their expertise to the farm’s buyers.

“Perhaps it was wanting to make sure that all our work wasn’t in vain, but we’ve been pleased with the job the new people are doing, so we’re taking satisfaction in that,” said Paul.

The project management of the three open plan eco-build properties is keeping the pair busy, and they are now planning to convert a fourth barn into a three-bedroom home.

Michael, now finding more time for his butterfly and moth conservation and habitat creation around their land’s ponds, said: “Landscape gardening is very rewarding and far less demanding than farming.

“We wanted to get out at the top but also keep moving forward and although it was a tough decision, we think we’ve done that.”

“We want to make a margin but would also love to leave a legacy here, just like our family and ourselves did with the farm”



Going, going, gone: Once the farmyard properties have gone, the brothers plan to look elsewhere in the area for potential investments

THE WAY THEY WERE



12

core lines of veg sold to Tesco, Waitrose and Sainsbury’s



2M

pre-packs per year



4,500

tonnes of vegetables per year

SNAP HAPPY

Our incredible community of landowner grantors kept the country running during lockdown, so in the last edition we asked you to send us your ‘business as usual’ pictures for Gridline’s regular photo competition.

We picked a winner (on the back page), but were so impressed with the other shots that we had to share a handful to lift the spirits.

Don’t forget to get your entries in for the next chance to win a much-needed shopping spree.



CAP DOGS!

Grantor Victoria Organ sent us this shot of her peak capped helpers in full farmer’s regalia - from the checked shirts right down to the tweed flat caps.



GULL ATTACK

Graham Kitto captured these up close and personal birds as he ploughed his land in Liskeard, Cornwall.



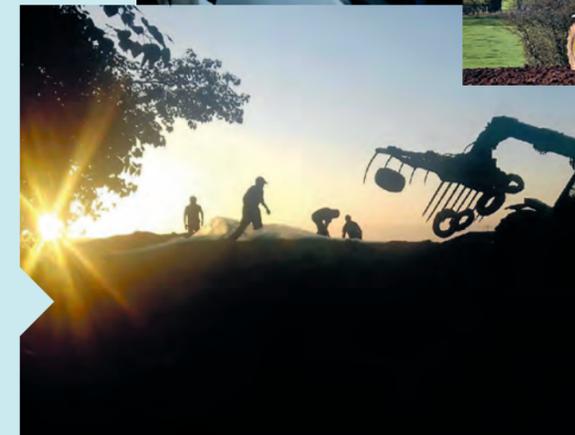
GIVE US A LIFT

This starling hitchhiker dropped in on Exeter grantor Laura Smith as she parked up on the seafront in Poole. “I think he wanted my packed lunch,” she said.



HERE COMES...

...the sun. David Spratt took advantage of the mini March heatwave to snatch this shot of a basking friend. Or was it him with a timer?

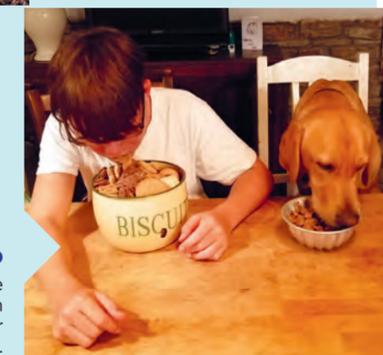


SILAGE SUNSET

Not even COVID can stop the silage process! Submitted by Ceri Roberts.

GOOD JOB SON

Heather Ross grabbed this shot of son Sam drilling winter wheat on a crisp winter’s day in December at the family farm near Coleshill in Warwickshire.



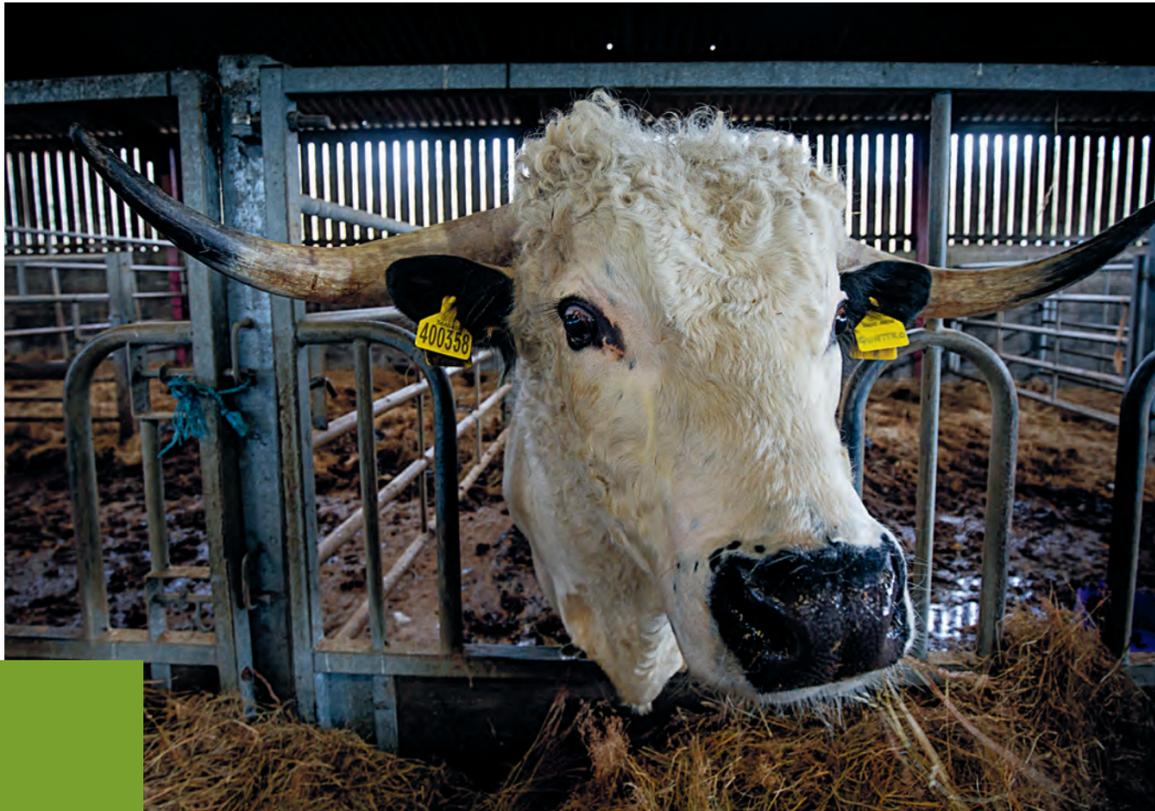
GRUB’S UP

Grantor Karen Haste reveals how lockdown has changed her family’s eating habits.



Channel your David Bailey and win £100. Join our great grantor photographers above and give it a go. Turn to page 20 to see last edition’s winner and find out how to enter >>

Rare Breed Cattle



Rhodri (far left) is proud to look after one of the planet's oldest breeds. Dai (below) by the mill pond end of the Boardwalk



THE WELSH 'PANDA'

WILD AND EXCITABLE, ONE OF THE RAREST HERDS OF CATTLE IS FIGHTING BACK FROM THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



“They have horns and they know how to use them,” warns Lead Ranger Dai Hart to anyone considering getting up close and personal with one of the planet’s oldest recorded herds of cattle.

His farm worker colleague Rhodri Thomas knows the foibles of every one of the 57 White Park Cattle in his charge, inside out... and even he won't enter their field without a stick.

Because there's something romantically wild about this ancient rare breed, as mystical as the rolling Welsh countryside it has called home for nearly 2,000 years.

The 800 acres of land around Dinefwr Castle in Carmarthenshire are steeped in legend, and the White Park herd is mentioned in the writings of Hywel Dda, who once ruled the country.

UNPREDICTABLE

These days they are cared for by the National Trust, whose area team of three rangers and two stockmen have been instrumental in reviving the estate's fortunes since taking over in 1990.

The cattle are a noble and distinguished attraction for the estate's 90,000 visitors each year, and from a low of 60 in 1973 their ranks have grown to 950 adult breeders... but that's still fewer than the rare Giant Panda.

Curious, excitable and unpredictable, these beautiful white beasts with their contrasting black points on their muzzle, ears, eye-rims and socks are mesmerising. The elegant wide horns with black tips provide the coup de grace.

“They are the oldest recorded domestic herd in

the UK and their genes have been traced back to Iraq 10,000 years ago before they were used as a form of currency here,” said Rhodri.

“At one point there were two herds. Now they're at several sites in the UK, plus Germany, Canada and America, but this is their ancestral home.”

Early progeny were named after Shakespearean characters Miranda and Olivia, but pride in their heritage means Welsh monikers Liliwen, Ancira and Rhiannon have come to the fore.

As well as the conservation aspect, the cattle also play a key role in the successful management of the estate's parkland through conservation grazing.

Dai, a former carpenter and environmental charity manager who has been with the Trust for 12 years, explained: “The way they graze means they leave tussocks of grass at different heights to provide habitats for bees and pollinating insects.

“Increased hay meadow planting and the way we leave field borders and wider hedges mean we can create biodiversity across the entire estate.”

NATURE OR NURTURE?

“To achieve that means striking a balance between nature and nurture, because sometimes scruffy is good,” admitted Dai. It's something that lockdown and the estate's closure to the public has assisted as nature has seized the quieter time to re-energise.

Essential work pollarding ash trees affected by dieback and creating nearby biodiverse corridors has continued, but elsewhere the lack of human presence has allowed things to flourish.

GREEN SHOOTS

With 200 trees dating back to the 14th century and 100 wild fallow deer roaming the Capability Brown-inspired landscape, land management work is “full speed ahead” now restrictions have eased.

But, as Dai admitted, the balance between a picture postcard scene manicured for the public and a genuinely natural one is critical to this Site of Special Scientific Interest's success. >>



The 17th-century Newton House (right) is a magnificent focal point for the estate's visitors, and (below) one of the hundreds of yellow meadow anthills near the Boardwalk



“We’re indebted to Natural Resources Wales, whose green recovery grant has been critical to keep us ticking over. We also liaise very closely with our tenant farmers and have kept a small staff on during the pandemic to look after tree safety management,” he said.

But without income from the estate’s focal point, the 1660-built Newton House with its mid-19th century updated Gothic design, it has been a case of prioritising for the electricity grantor.

Most of the 100 volunteers who work at Dinefwr, the only Welsh parkland designated as a National Nature Reserve, have had to stay away... but the green shoots of recovery are emerging.

The symmetrical gardens to the rear of the main property are trimmed and tidied, plans for a socially distanced outdoor café are in place and the deer remain as inquisitive as ever.

There’s an air of renaissance, with day trippers not just stopping at Dinefwr Castle but also keen to explore the estate’s many aspects, from wetland to pond and deer park to forest trail.

Dai said: “This past year has helped people reflect on the things that matter, such as nature, which will always be here. We’re absolutely thrilled to see our visitors returning in their droves – the looks on their faces has made it all worthwhile.”



Carol (left) and former IT Manager volunteer Rob Evers hard at work on the new visitor attraction which opened in April

Walking back to happiness

When they do they’ll be met by one of the newest attractions in Wales, created during lockdown by a core of dedicated National Trust volunteers.

Sixteen of Dinefwr’s volunteers have transformed a decaying 580-metre wooden walkway, dissecting a boggy wood teeming with wildlife, into a solid all-access walkway.

Part-funding for the £30,000 Bog Wood Boardwalk project has come from Natural Resources Wales, with a team of volunteers completing it inside three months.

Around 34 tonnes of wood, 75,000 nails and 1,500 bolts have revitalised the once rotting, handrail-free trail to allow all visitors a truly immersive experience.



They will pass the Castle Oak, a sapling when the imposing fortification above it was built at the end of the 12th century by Rhys Gryg, son of the Lord Rhys, as one of the main residences of the Princes of South Wales.

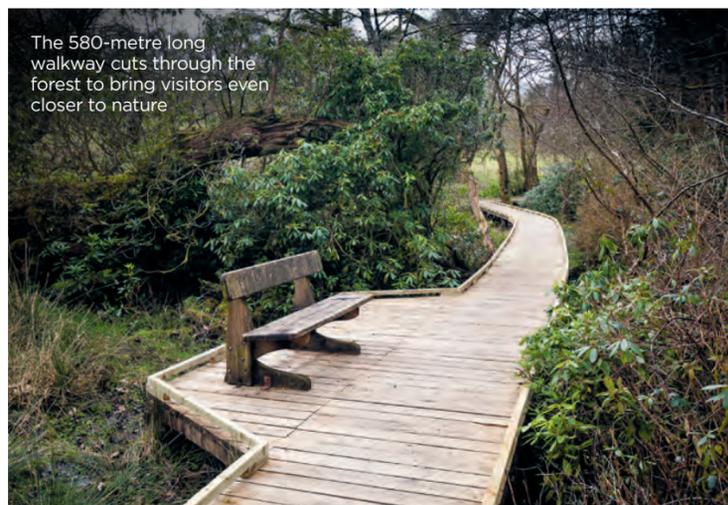
TIME TO REFLECT

Visitors can touch centuries-old trees, mosses and lichen and observe robins, blackbirds, coot and moorhen from the platform which runs alongside a sloping field of small mounds – home to an estimated 100,000 yellow meadow ants in the largest collection of nests in the country.

Volunteer leader and Dinefwr Ranger, Carol Bailey, said: “I’ve been here 17 years and I’m so proud of the work the team and volunteers do. This last year has given us time to reflect, so when the first people back walked along here, it was absolutely wonderful to be with them, to watch their faces and listen to their comments.”



For more information: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dinefwr



The 580-metre long walkway cuts through the forest to bring visitors even closer to nature

“It’s a Magical Mystery Tour”

NO DAY IS EVER THE SAME FOR THE NATIONAL GRID HELICOPTER CREW SAVING LIVES AND “KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON”



High-flying heroes: (left to right) Observer Doug Foster, Grantor Assistant Becky Kearsley and Pilot Liam Hughes



When Simon Gudgeon began his day on a routine aerial patrol of the rolling countryside near the beautiful north west coast, he had no idea he’d end it a lifesaver.

He and his pilot were flying at 50mph around 500 feet above one of National Grid’s 23,000 pylons when he picked up an unusual heat reading from the corner of a field slightly obscured by one of the pylons.

A sweep back to hover over the ‘warm’ area and, using a powerful daylight camera, he zoomed in on a motionless trapped sheep, its eyes shut and apparently close to death.

Within seconds he had alerted Becky Kearsley, a Grantor Assistant in National Grid’s Land and Property team, with a picture and coordinates. She then checked the database, found the grantor’s mobile number and contacted him immediately.

The incident, which ended happily after the relieved farmer raced to free the animal, happened in Heysham on the Lancashire-Cumbria border – but it could play out in any landowner’s field.

Simon (inset) said: “We can be anywhere in the country on any day. We don’t plan where we’re going until the last minute because to a degree the work is weather dependent. It’s like a Magical Mystery Tour.”



TIME FLIES

Simon, a Line Observer for National Grid for 20 years, jokes that “time flies, if you’ll pardon the pun” and insists he wouldn’t swap his public service job for the world: “Our highest priority is to make sure our overhead lines and the pylons that connect them are in the best possible condition to ensure the network remains safe and reliable.”

To do that, the rear of one of two helicopters that scours the UK’s 4,300 miles of lines each year is

TRUST TITBITS

45K

Hectares of land and 160 miles of coast cared for by the Trust in Wales

1895

The National Trust conservation charity is founded

27M

People visit National Trust properties and estates every year

6M

Members and 65,000 volunteers ensure the UK countryside is cherished

packed with technology linked to a records database at National Grid's Warwick headquarters.

Simon said: "Our work is essential in spotting defective equipment before it goes wrong, so ensuring the power to thousands of homes and businesses isn't lost. I suppose you could call us trouble-shooters."

"This stage of the operation where we need to hover beside the pylon and span can take 10 or 15 minutes, and it's the thing that can annoy livestock grantors."

It's a gruelling but rewarding job for the crews, who work in shifts to cover the UK and can be in the air for a total of five hours a day.

"Once we strap ourselves in and the blades start turning it can be quite a long day without a natural break. These days we can't touch down like we used to for safety reasons," he said.

JUMPED FOR JOY

Despite their attention to detail – the team keep a comprehensive record of the terrain and livestock that lies below – the work can attract "a handful" of complaints every year.

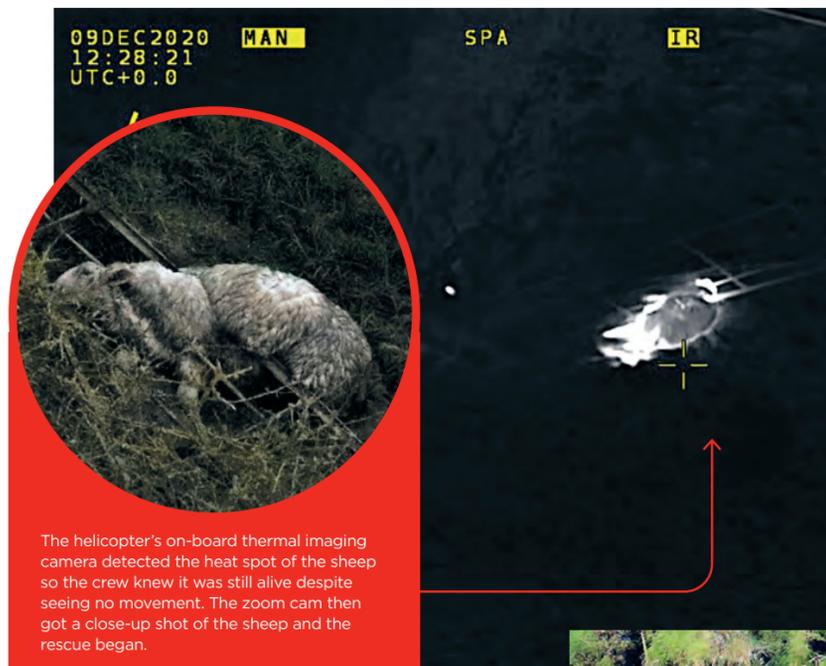
Simon said: "If a grantor isn't happy, we log it so we know what the issue is so we can do better next time. We love to have telephone numbers, addresses and emails so we can let people know if there's an issue."

High-flying heroes Simon and his fellow tech specialist, Doug Foster, have been responsible for spotting some genuine life-or-death situations in the fields down the years.

"We've had cows that have fallen down railway embankments, horses in bogs and ditches, and plenty of sheep stuck on their backs unable to right themselves," he said.

"If the grantor's contact details are up to date we can contact Becky. When the farmer arrives we've seen righted sheep literally jump for joy before running off."

Becky said: "Simon and the crew do a great job and through us alert grantors or relevant authorities to any issues – that's why it's important for us to have a record of mobile and landline numbers, emails and other details about the land and its usage."



The helicopter's on-board thermal imaging camera detected the heat spot of the sheep so the crew knew it was still alive despite seeing no movement. The zoom cam then got a close-up shot of the sheep and the rescue began.



Simon and the crew often grab a snap of the animals (right and below left) they've helped landowners rescue from some of nature's hazards

DIARY OF A RESCUE



► An infra-red thermal camera detects heat, a telltale sign of a defective or failing nut, bolt, fitting or conductor.



► Once found, pilot Liam Hughes hovers near the suspect part as Simon grabs a clear picture thanks to the camera's anti-shake gimbal.



► He sends the picture of the part and its serial number to the database of previously fitted parts to verify its age and when it was fitted.



► The system then automatically reorders the part needed and assigns its fitting to a maintenance team as a matter of priority.

The crew are due to add a brand new helicopter to the fleet in May, with one of the older models due to be mothballed by the end of the year.

Simon said: "Technology is always changing, so we have to stay ahead to fulfil our commitment to doing the very best for our grantors, because without their assistance and cooperation, maintaining and repairing the network would be a lot more challenging."

HAPPY ENDING

Landowner Robert Fenton hailed the vigilance of the helicopter crew and admitted: "Without them the sheep was probably only hours from dying."

Brothers Robert and Philip rent the land in Heysham, near Morecambe, to a local farmer and always check on the flock's welfare every other day. But they had just finished their round when they got a call from National Grid to alert them to the trapped sheep.

Robert said: "We make a point of ensuring our details are up to date with National Grid. It's a good job we do, or this little fellow wouldn't have survived."

"He had got underneath the pylon and was trapped beneath the iron security gates. He had probably been there a while and we wouldn't have found him until the next day when it would have been too late."

After pulling the seriously ill sheep free, Robert's brother brought him back to the farm where they revived him and tended to his cuts.

Robert said: "His owner came to collect him and treated him, and the next week we got a message saying he was back on his feet and out and about again, so it was a happy ending."

5 THINGS YOU (POSSIBLY) DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT NATIONAL GRID

From finding buried treasure to being ahead of the game in tackling climate change, here are a few facts about us you may not know



1

WE'RE ALL AROUND YOU

National Grid plays a critical role in taking high-pressure gas and high-voltage electricity from the producers to the operators, who then deliver it to homes and businesses across the UK. We operate 4,481 miles of overhead electricity lines, 1,417 miles of underground electricity cables and 4,760 miles of high-pressure gas pipes... that's 10,000 miles or the distance from London to Sydney.



3

WE'VE FOUND BURIED TREASURE

Engineers at National Grid are always digging deep to improve the energy infrastructure, and make fascinating discoveries along the way. They've unearthed 6th-century skeletons in Dorset, a Neolithic wooden roadway from around 2300BC in East Anglia and Roman remains in Hertfordshire. They even found a rare and complete Fairey Barracuda Second World War bomber (right) during a survey of the seabed off Hampshire for an undersea cable between the UK and France.



2



4

WE'RE CHANGING LIVES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Our £150million Warm Homes Fund has been tackling fuel poverty in the UK by providing grants to vulnerable 'fuel poor' households to make them warmer and more energy efficient. The fund provides grants for new gas connections, new heating systems and insulation.

WE'RE DIVING DEEP TO SHARE GREEN ENERGY

A network of undersea cables allows National Grid to exchange electricity with neighbouring countries so the UK can access more clean power when needed and sell surplus when supply outstrips demand. Collaborating with other countries means our energy system is greener, more reliable and affordable.

WE'RE PUSHING HARD FOR NET ZERO

We're committed to net zero by 2050 and are already close to achieving the target we set for 2030.

We're working with partners towards establishing a carbon-free industrial area in the Humber region with potential to help both the environment and the local economy to prove that it can be done.



Visit www.nationalgrid.com/uk/stories for more about the people keeping our gas and electricity flowing and how our future energy needs are safe in National Grid's hands

5

LASTWORD

Two ways to spring into summer with Gridline

WIN



BANISH THE LOCKDOWN BLUES WITH A BREAK

With lockdown easing, we thought you'd want a chance to explore pastures new or go to the pub... or better still, both.

So what finer way than with a two-night British inn break for two with a full English thrown in?

Stay close to home or make a long weekend of it somewhere different in the comfort of a twin or double room.

Simply answer the question below, which features on page 8 of this edition.

Q How many wildfowl and waders make Snettisham their home in winter?

Email your answer, name and contact details to gridline@madebysonder.com – or send your entry to **Sonder Experience Day competition, Victoria Court, 8 Dormer Place, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 5AE to arrive no later than 19 August 2021.**



WIN

Enter our photo competition to win a £100 gift voucher

Grantor Lucy Scott's 'footprints on a quiet beach' at Anderby Creek in Lincs wins this time.

But it was difficult picking Sleaford-based Lucy ahead of so many fantastic entries, so we've shown off some of the others on page 13.

Meanwhile, to try again, send your picture with the theme 'Out of lockdown' to gridline@madebysonder.com – the closing date is 19 August 2021.



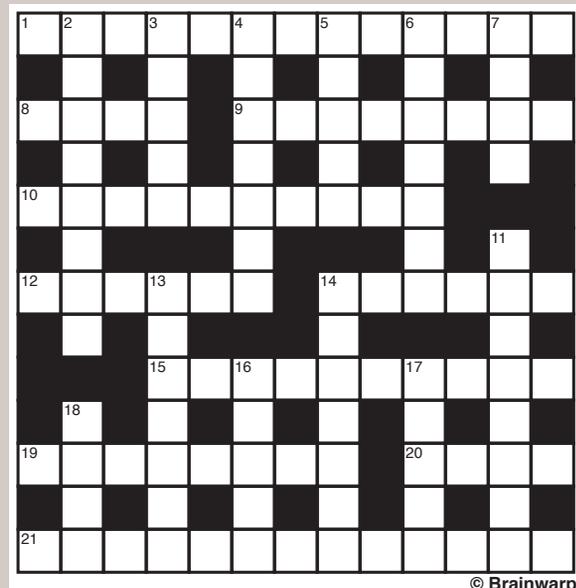
JUST FOR FUN CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Early novel by D H Lawrence, which brought him to the public's attention (4,3,6)
- 8 African plant of the Lily family, whose fleshy leaves are used in the preparation of a cathartic drug (4)
- 9 Painter, born in America in 1834 but who settled in Chelsea and produced many views of London (8)
- 10 Town in Gloucestershire, home of GCHQ (10)
- 12 Outside the domain of morality (6)
- 14 Stage dance which originated in 19th century Paris and which came to symbolise Parisian naughtiness (6)
- 15 A community of men and women devoted to higher learning (10)
- 19 Aquatic mammals found in the warm parts of the Atlantic (8)
- 20 A card game similar to poker (4)
- 21 Soprano, born in Scotland in 1895, who became famous for her work in oratorio (6,7)

DOWN

- 2 South central state of the USA, deriving its name from an Indian word meaning 'red people' (8)
- 3 Form of iron containing carbon, formerly made by the Bessemer process (5)
- 4 F D Roosevelt's policies for prosperity and social improvements in the US between 1933 & 1940 (3,4)
- 5 Scottish port, incorporated into Edinburgh in 1920 (5)
- 6 Any of thiamin, riboflavin, folic acid etc (7)
- 7 Perennial, water-loving grass which can grow to 12 feet in height (4)
- 11 Highly-seasoned smoked beef (8)
- 13 Plant with edible stalks and poisonous leaves (7)
- 14 London district, famous for its flower show (7)
- 16 Standard of perfection (5)
- 17 In classical mythology, a priestess of Apollo who was supposed to prophesy under his inspiration (5)
- 18 The lowest male singing voice (4)



© Brainwarp

SOLUTION: ACROSS: 1 Sons and Lovers, 8 Aloe, 9 Whistler, 10 Cheltenham, 12 Amoral, 14 Cancan, 15 University, 19 Manatees, 20 Bragg, 21 Isobel Baillie
DOWN: 2 Oklahoma, 3 Steel, 4 New deal, 5 Leith, 6 Vitamin, 7 Reed, 11 Pastram, 13 Rhubarb, 14 Chelsea, 16 Ideal, 17 Shyl, 18 Bass

COMPETITION TERMS AND CONDITIONS: INN BREAK: The winner will be the first entrant selected at random who correctly identifies the answer and is a National Grid grantor at time of draw. Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into. Gridline reserves the right to change the prize without notice. It is not transferable and can't be exchanged for cash. National Grid always seeks feedback and opinions from stakeholders they interact with to better understand stakeholder requirements. By entering the competition you permit BMG Research to contact you on behalf of National Grid Gas/Electricity Transmission. Closing date: 19 August 2021. PHOTO: Winning image will be the most visually appealing and relevant to the theme and will feature in the next edition. The winner must be a National Grid grantor. Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into. Gridline reserves the right to change the prize without notice. It is not transferable and can't be exchanged for cash. Closing date: 19 August 2021. The winners' names will be published.

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