

GRIDLINE

The magazine for landowners

Autumn 2021



The *reindeer* whisperer

When an expert told grantor Jennie 'you'll never breed them' she was determined to prove him wrong

**SIGN UP
& WIN**

A £100 email
draw windfall

Inside

Niche market: The nature lovers buying an ancient plot for eternity

Journey's end: We reveal exactly what it takes to get engineers onto your land

Donkey diversity: Two grantors working together to protect the planet

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: emfs.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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Your Gridline magazine has brought the very best of grantors into your home for more than a decade.

From The Queen's own strawberry growers to trained Lifeboat rescuers and a brilliant one-handed potter to a former nuclear physicist turned vineyard owner, we've showcased some of the very best of the diverse grantor community of which you're a part.

We've captured some incredible stories through words and beautiful pictures, but if truth be told we've always yearned for a little more space to really show them off.

So in the new year the print edition of Gridline will move over to digital to offer you, the UK's 24,000-strong electricity grantor community, an altogether richer experience.

All the usual grantor features you love will still be there – but now they'll be updated every other month to build into an archive of the most inspirational stories of diversification.

The switch will also give readers enhanced and quicker access to FAQs and contact links to National Grid to find out any other information you need.

There'll be a permanent finance feature with hints on how to manage your wayleave payment as well as a simple guide on how to change to an easement.

Because we won't be bound by pages, we'll be running a gallery of the incredible pictures you send us as well as the usual Gridline competition, now every other month.

And because Gridline digital won't be restricted by print deadlines, it will be 'always on' – meaning we can bring you more topical, real-time news as well as communications on projects or outages tailored specifically to your postcode.

We'd hate to lose touch with you, so to **Power Up**, simply share your email address with us – follow the QR code below to access the email capture form, fill in your details, and we'll be in touch to let you know when the first issue is out!

Meanwhile, enjoy your last print copy of Gridline... and then make the change to a more sustainable read.

Nicola Brownbridge,
Head of Land Rights
and Acquisitions



STAY IN TOUCH TO HELP US HELP YOU

We know it's a pain, a nuisance or worse when engineers have to come onto your land to carry out essential repairs to keep the electricity flowing.

But it's never been more important for National Grid's Overhead Lines Teams (OHL) to be able to maintain the network that homes, schools, businesses and hospitals in your area depend on.

Take a look at the feature on **page 9** which explains why the work we do isn't always as straightforward as you might think. By the time you see an engineer scaling a pylon near you, the team may have gone through plenty of hoops, experienced delays and hitches and been as frustrated as you by unexpected last-minute postponements.

Sometimes those problems can be easily resolved by something as simple as having your up-to-date telephone number or email address so they can

keep you in the loop in real time. That means that if we do hit a last-minute hitch or even a possible issue before your scheduled visit, we can let you know so you can get on with any work you'd planned to pause.

OHL Team Leader Tony Holmes said: "The worst thing we can do as a team and a business is keep grantors in the dark, which is why we have knowledgeable, friendly and helpful Lands Officers as a point of contact.

"That link breaks down if we don't have contact details for you, so it's really important to know who owns what. Lives and livelihoods depend on it."

There are other benefits too. In the extremely unlikely event we visit and cause damage to the land, we need to know where to send any compensation.

Maybe in the past we haven't made it easy enough for you to safely and securely share this kind of information,

so we've come up with a quick and easy way of helping you. It will take seconds to complete, will safeguard you from inconvenience and will mean our engineers can get the job done quicker.

Turn to 20 to see how to share your details AND sign up for Gridline digital at the same time.



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T - ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA

The first new-look pylons in Great Britain for nearly 100 years are on their way. Around 116 new T-pylons will be built in Somerset along a 57km route, connecting six million homes and businesses to low-carbon energy.

The T-design is a third shorter than the traditional high-voltage pylon design, with a smaller footprint, and adds to National Grid's suite of approaches and technologies to mitigate the impact of electricity infrastructure on the landscape and environment.

The first of the 35-metre tall towers has gone up in Somerset as part of National Grid's £900m Hinkley Connection project to connect low-carbon electricity from Hinkley Point C Nuclear power station.



For more information visit: <http://brws.it/hinkley>

LIGHT-BULB MOMENT

Four in 10 UK adults feel hopeless about climate change. The same number thinks Britain gets up to 10% of its electricity from zero and low-carbon energy sources. The actual figure is 55%. Carbon jargon is confusing, with many never having heard of terms like carbon neutral (42%) or net zero (61%).

Just over 40% said they would feel more positive if they knew the cleanest time of day to use electricity, so National Grid has launched the Green Light Signal - a new low-energy smart bulb that shows people the cleanest times to use electricity by glowing green.



For more information visit: <http://brws.it/greenlightsignal>

NEWSLINE

The latest news from National Grid and its landowner partners



Three little birds

A trio of baby barn owls have made a National Grid Substation their home thanks to a ground-breaking collaboration.

The protected birds of prey have moved into nesting boxes at the Capenhurst Substation near Chester following a partnership with the Wirral Barn Owl Trust.

They are the latest in a very long line of hatchlings and kestrels to be born at the site, a safe location away from predators and bad weather, since 1999.

Next year, the site will begin providing the connection for the largest transmission battery in Europe to absorb reactive power from the transmission network and remove more than a million tonnes of CO₂ over the next 15 years.

However the site will remain home for the next wave of owlets whose numbers are down because of May's wet weather.

Ciara Taberner, Head of Operations - Substations and Circuits for National Grid Electricity Transmission, said: "Our teams are working in communities 24 hours a day to keep the lights on for homes and businesses, and it's important that we work in a sustainable and socially conscious way. We're making spaces for nature where we can and improving biodiversity on our sites. It's a fantastic project and we're proud of our continued involvement in it."



National Grid substations make perfect sheltered habitats for nesting birds like these fellows

Christine fulfils boring pledge

A £1 billion project to create 32.5km of tunnels below south London to allow National Grid to rewire the capital is now under way. A tunnel-boring machine called Christine is connecting a network of new electricity cables to match the London Power Tunnels project north of the Thames.

The 140-tonne machine was named after launch guest of honour, Christine Townley, for her commitment to championing diversity and bridging the gap between disadvantaged communities and careers in construction.

That's a pledge shared by National Grid, whose schools outreach programme with social enterprise, MyKindaFuture, will work with 100,000 pupils from deprived secondary schools in south London over the next five years. Since its launch, National Grid has delivered Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) outreach programmes to 19,000 secondary school students near the main site at Bexley.



The tunnel boring machine was named after local community champion Christine Townley



Back to the swinging 60s

A large swathe of one of England's most picturesque landscapes is set to be free of pylons for the first time in almost 60 years.

Nearly 70% of the cables have already been laid in trenches in the Mendip Hills Area of Natural Beauty south of Bristol and Bath.

This is part of the Hinkley Connection Project which will see National Grid install 8.5km of 400,000-volt underground cables

and will carry low-carbon energy to six million homes and businesses in the UK.

Work started in February and most of the cables are expected to be in place by the beginning of next year - the same time as the planned removal of the existing pylons between Bridgwater and Sandford.

The entire Hinkley Connection Project is due to be completed by 2025.



A £100 gift voucher in our photo competition

Winning grantor Philip Robinson's granddaughter, Willow, celebrates being 'out of lockdown' in this joyous shot at Mundesley Beach in Norfolk.

Sign up to the new Gridline digital magazine on P20 to see some of the stunning entries when we launch in March.

For a chance to win £100, send your 'new start' shots to gridline@madebysonder.com before 12 February and we'll announce the winner online.



A handful of moist lichen and Chewy is anyone's



"THEY GET SHIRTIER AND SHIRTIER... AND THEN ON CHRISTMAS DAY THEY DON'T WANT TO KNOW YOU. IT'S ALMOST AS IF THEY'VE FLOWN AROUND THE WORLD"

THE REINDEER WHISPERER WHOSE WHIM TURNED INTO A CHRISTMAS PASSION

When one of the first people to bring reindeer to the UK sold Jennie Woodcock two pairs and warned her she'd never get them to breed, it was like a red rag to a bull.

That was just over a decade ago, since when the mother of three teenage children has proved the seemingly reluctant salesman spectacularly wrong.

The single-minded wife of third-generation farmer John now has a herd of around 20, including two bulls, females and a nursery of calves born on the 830-acre site.

But the former school learning mentor still recalls the moment she broached the subject of complementing his dairy, beef and mixed arable farm in Nottinghamshire with the festive flyers.

"We were in the car, and I had been looking for a hobby or something that could give me the best of both worlds, working with children but also here on the farm," she laughed.

"I suddenly said, 'what about reindeer?' and after John's expletives stopped, the more we thought about it the more it seemed like a good idea. Well, I did anyway."

RICHER EXPERIENCE

First, though, she had to check that her allergy to horses didn't extend to the first quartet of Winston, Stella, Gilbert and Frayer, all imported from Finland.

With the all-clear, she brought them home to her Haughton Park House Farm near Worksop with a scant

knowledge of what the Scandinavian and Russian natives needed to help them flourish as individuals and a herd.

"It was a steep learning curve because they have the husbandry of a sheep, the mechanics of a cow, they eat everything like a goat and have a collie's brain," she said. "Also there are also no registered drugs available for reindeer in this country."

Spurred on by memories of tacky Christmas events that she took her eldest, Katie, to as a child, she was determined to offer a richer experience that combined fun with education.

ENTHUSIASTIC

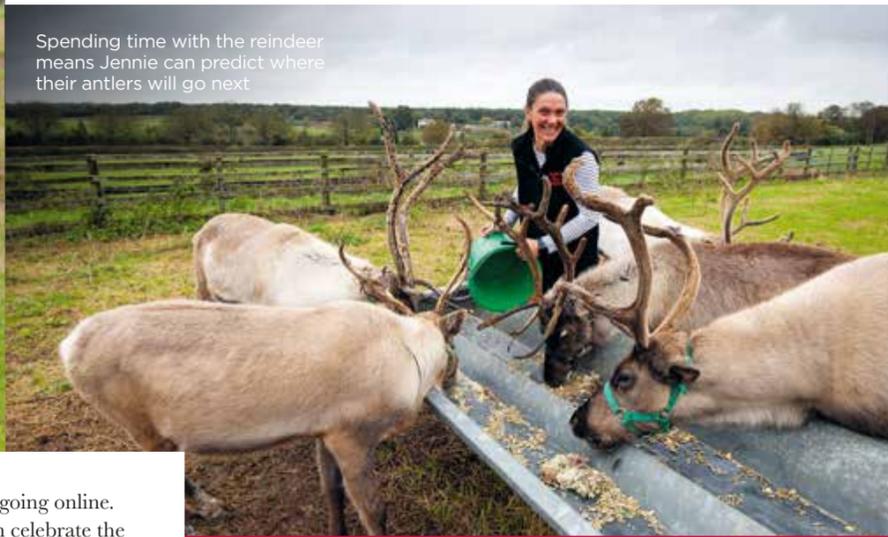
Her Haughton Park Reindeer venture is now regarded as one of the most holistic reindeer experiences in the country, taking the seasonal magic to schools, care homes and even weddings in a 40-mile radius of the farm.

FARM FACT
Jennie and John farm Holstein Friesian cattle for 6,000 litres of milk a day, as well as beef animals, British Blue, Hereford, and Angus.

In the build-up to the big day Father Christmas also pays a visit to the farm with Mrs Claus and the elves, who host teddy bear and biscuit-making classes as part of the popular Elf School.

"We run hands-on visits throughout December which reach around 500 children a day and then in the final week we open the farm for Elf School, which is different every year," she said.

The first year was a shock for the positive and enthusiastic Jennie when just four people turned up for the on-farm attraction. But since then, the quality of the event – no plastic presents and tat here – has seen word



Spending time with the reindeer means Jennie can predict where their antlers will go next

of mouth sell out all the slots within hours of going online. Wide-eyed nursery and reception-age children celebrate the magic of Christmas while Jennie goes into more detail about how the species has adapted and reindeer science with the older pupils.

And she added: "Although children love it, the look on the faces of adults when they see the reindeer for the first time is wonderful and so full of joy. It's the only animal that can transport people back to their childhood."

"We've had adults ringing and asking sheepishly if they can come on their own. We always say 'of course' – the magic of Christmas is for everyone."

The visits and open days also help dispel some of the myths – and confirm others – that surround these hardy creatures responsible for taking Santa around the world.

"Some people ask if the antlers are real, so we let them touch and feel the velvet fur," she said: "... but the strangest thing is the way they act after December 24."

"They get shirtier and shirtier the closer we get to that date and then on Christmas Day they don't want to know you. It's almost as if they've flown around the world."

NAUGHTY OR NICE?

But our mythical connection with these vegetarian sprinters – some have been recorded charging at 48mph as Jennie has almost found to her cost – doesn't end there.

Jennie is amazed by the reindeer's reaction to noisy or disruptive children and, in contrast, elderly and disabled people: "They will stay well away if a child is demanding their attention but if they sense a disability, they are always so affectionate."

"It sounds crazy but it's like they can tell who is naughty and nice. They're very tactile and often go to the other end of the field when John appears, but I'm saying nothing."

Christmas over, the herd – separated by cows, castrates and calves – are allowed to take it easy for the next 10 months on a diet of formulated pellets, lichen, mushrooms, grass, straw, willow and birch.

Jennie added: "The busy run-up to Christmas makes them self-sufficient in terms of paying for their food, and the extra events mean there's a small income that supports the main farming activity."

"It was never going to be a main income, but I married into farming and the reindeer have meant I've had the best of both worlds and allowed me to feel like I'm putting something into the farm."



THE RUDOLPH RUN-DOWN

Reindeers are mostly found in northern Scandinavia, Russia and Iceland where they were introduced by humans in the 18th century.

They have the largest and heaviest antlers of all deer.

In the wild they live in herds of between 50,000 and 500,000.

They rarely stay in one place for very long and have been known to cover up to 3,000 miles in a year.

Reindeer have double-layered coats that keep them warm when they're flying.

Male and female reindeer grow antlers annually, all covered with a lustrous velvet fur that is said to have restorative medicinal properties.

Jennie's reindeer include Chewy (born on 4 May and named after Star Wars character Chewbacca), his brother Blue and the possessive bull, Bodo.



In a few years these calves will be ready to join Santa on Christmas Eve



For more information visit: www.haughtonparkhousefarm.co.uk

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD (TO YOUR DOOR)

SEEING OUR OVERHEAD LINES TEAMS ON YOUR LAND IS ONLY THE VERY END OF THE STORY

Engineers climbing a pylon to carry out maintenance and replacement of tired, corroded and worn-out parts are a common sight in the fields, back gardens and retail parks of the UK.

Most grantors see National Grid's Overhead Lines Teams (OHL) as an infrequent but necessary part of keeping the nation's infrastructure, such as schools, businesses and hospitals, running.



A small minority see them as an intrusion on their rural deadlines and strict schedules... that's why we do our best to make sure we cause the minimum of disruption.

But have you ever stopped to think about the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes before our OHL Teams can actually set foot on your land?

Preparation has become more complex. Dealing with external agencies and regulations, combined with environmental considerations, mean these works can take more than a year to plan.

Then throw in the emergency works and changes-in-system outages managed by the System Operator (SO) and you can see the challenges the teams face.



Pylons

Risk assessments, method statements, environmental management plans, land access, heavy plant availability and keeping our community of grantors informed and happy are just a few of the hoops we jump through.

But, even then, nothing is guaranteed. Tony Holmes, OHL Team Leader for the North East, said: "We can have everything ready and be all set to start work when the job is called off at the last minute. It's incredibly frustrating for the grantor and for us, but the very nature of the Transmission system means that flexibility is everything."

"The System Operator can change outage requirements at short notice to ensure consistency of load flows around the country, meaning supply and demand is managed for our customers. This can also mean localised disruption for us in our work plan."

He added: "The planning takes longer than the actual job. Rebooking can get frustrating for landowners, especially as changing work dates mean 'we're coming' one day and then 'no, we're not' the next. Unfortunately the demands on the system sometimes means we need to be flexible in our work."

Work planning and access requirements to OHL pylons or towers also mean that sequential work planning becomes difficult on a project. OHL Tower access is governed by the wishes of the grantors and landowners in terms of dates and hours' notice that may need to be given to access particular sites.

Tony added: "We might end up doing numbers seven, 15 and 62, and then we have to go back when we can gain access to do another seven. It's like a jigsaw... it adds further complexity to the day-to-day planning and delivery of work."

Here's a glimpse of the planning peaks and troughs that we face before we get to your land to carry out the work that keeps the network running safely.



1 Planned maintenance, defects and scheme works are planned a year out using information identified by foot patrols or helicopter observers. The Planning Teams prioritise work and produce a year-ahead plan, liaising with the System Operator to secure and agree OHL Circuit outages.

2 Work is allocated to the Project Lead. Senior Authorised Persons (SAP) are appointed to establish safety from the system and a Lands Officer is appointed to arrange Tower Access.

3 The Project Lead (PL), Lands Officer and SAP visit the grantor's land to look at the work requirements and assess whether special equipment such as winches are needed to carry out the work on the OHL Tower.

4 The Lands Officer talks the grantor through what will happen and when, and keeps National Grid's Lands Department in the loop so they can send official notice to the grantor, who can advise on a mutually acceptable route we need to take to the OHL Tower.

8 Motorways, railways, and third-party properties all have their own unique requirements for access that need to be resolved a year ahead.

7 Ecology and environmental hazards also need to be managed, such as nesting birds, dormice, badgers, bats and newts. The management of vegetation, such as Japanese knotweed clearance and avoidance, has to be included. We produce environmental reports for each job and work closely with ecologists and Natural England.

6 Because OHL work can take place in public areas such as retail parks and near housing estates, hazards need to be identified and managed. The PL puts a plan together that includes risk assessments, method statements covering equipment to be used, ground tests, surveys, clearance issues and the planned activity of the landowner - all crucial factors in deciding when we visit.

5 The Lands Officer will produce a set of access papers, agreed with the grantor, for the OHL teams to use to access the work sites.

OHL TEAMS
There are 12 Teams around the UK across four areas - SW, SE, NW and NE - covering 22,000 pylons.

EACH TEAM HAS

- 1 Team Engineer
- 2 Project Leads
- 2 SAPS
- 8 Linesmen
- 5 Lands Officers

13 Planning meetings continue routinely throughout the year to manage changes such as outage dates changing and outage cancellations which affect work delivery and cause work postponement and re-planning.

12 Our OHL team can get to the site and find the gates locked, concrete blocks in the way or cattle roaming the field. That's why it's important to get agreed access with grantors or landowners. Lengthy delays or even postponement of works can occur, meaning the works have to be planned out again from the beginning.

11 Because OHL Towers can be in quarries, industrial estates, retail parks and supermarkets, back gardens, car parks, nurseries and even car boot sale fields, it's vital that National Grid has up-to-date contact details to ensure the work doesn't impinge on daily activities.

10 Agreement is reached with the grantor, who is notified around a month before work is due to start. The OHL team does its best, but changes to access and notice periods can mean plans alter. Liaison with the grantor through the Lands Officer is a key part of ongoing works.

9 Weather conditions play an important part in safely managing work in terms of OHL Teams' safety and Land Access, which can lead to jobs being postponed.

MEET THE TEAM

14



When the OHL team reaches the site, they carry out a Tool Box Talk, a meeting on site to discuss the work, access requirements, who is doing what and, importantly, carry out onsite risk assessments before any work starts to ensure all hazards are managed.

15



Before any work is carried out on the OHL tower, inherent dangers such as Induced Voltage and Induced Currents need to be managed to allow the OHL Team to carry out the work safely. This will mean applying Drain Earths as prescribed by the Senior Authorised Person (SAP).

16



And then finally... the work can be done

Tony said: "A lot of effort is put in by many people to plan work for overhead lines and at times can be a very frustrating both for us and grantors. The good news is that once our work is completed, we shouldn't be back for while."



TONY HOLMES, OHL TEAM LEADER, NORTH EAST

"I started as a Linesman's Mate with National Grid 39 years ago and have done everything from an engineer's role to team leader. I have the overall view of all the area works that are scheduled."



NICK HENDERSON-NEWTON, SENIOR LANDS OFFICER

"I'm the Project Lead liaison between the project and the grantor. I organise access and am the go-to contact or buffer between the grantor and the engineers. It can be frustrating at times because I understand how the grantor feels when work is cancelled. Communication both ways is always the key to the smoothest job."



ADAM HENFREY, OHL ENGINEER (YELLOW)

"I manage the system safety and provide safety for the High Voltage system for the line teams carrying out the work. I can put in weeks of work on a single job and then it gets knocked on the head and you're back to square one. That's why I'd always say to grantors: 'Please be patient with us'."

BUMPY RIDE AHEAD

THREE DECADES AND STILL GOING THROUGH THE GEARS: A LIFE-CHANGING GRANTOR'S STORY >>





Bikers



Former British Trials Champion Dan Thorpe shows first time rider, nine-year-old Finlay Halliday, the ropes

140
DAN'S TOTAL OF NATIONAL TRIALS WINS (HIS DAD WAS A TRIALS LEGEND AND HIS WIFE RIDES TOO!)



Carolyne Kenzitt isn't prone to exaggeration, so when she insists the small but unique charity she runs has helped hundreds of thousands of children, it's hard to question her. She'll readily admit the success of Birstall Urban Motorcycle Project for Youth, or BUMPY, isn't solely her doing though. Far more the result of a flame first lit by her police officer sister that still burns bright in the community.

Her sister, local beat bobby Julia Morris, was the visionary behind the training, testing and skills centre that has given troubled youngsters and wasteland teenage riders a place to flourish safely and legally.

Launch year was 1989 when Julia brought councillors on board and secured grants from the government and Children in Need to create the purpose-built off-road circuit, workshops and storage sheds.

Two years later, aged 30, the young mum died of ovarian cancer and her sister, a peripheral figure until then, stepped in to take the reins.

"I couldn't just sit there and watch what she'd started fall by the wayside, so I became more involved and every day since she left us, Julia has been here with me," she said.

Carolyne's convinced that the small robin that flits into her office when things get tough is a sign from her sis' that she's "doing okay". But long days taking bookings for everything from motorcycle training to visits from schools and special needs sessions, make it a gruelling labour of love for the dedicated and stoic mum and gran.

WRONG DIRECTION

She has helped grow the site, nestled beneath electricity pylons eight miles south of Leeds, into one of the country's leading motorcycle activity centres. That, despite a gradual slowdown in central government and grant funding in recent years which has left Carolyne and partner Roger Smith frustrated and infuriated.

BUMPY's most telling work is with the area's schools that each week send around 30 disaffected or troubled pupils taking the wrong paths in life to the brownfield site and its maintenance sheds. Carolyne said: "We must have had hundreds of thousands of children riding or learning bike mechanics through here, many of whom might otherwise have ended up in prison and all the cost that entails.

"It's not that they're bad, just bored, disinterested in school and take the wrong direction. When they're here they have to be disciplined to be safe and most love it."

Carolyne's face lights up as she recalls a 30-something dad who recently turned up with his youngster. His first words were "You

"I've always been into bikes because they teach you discipline and how things work. It will make Finlay an even better young man" Jason Halliday



don't remember me, do you?" She takes up the story: "We remembered him alright. He was a right little herbert, but he was fascinated by bikes, came here one day a week and got his maintenance qualifications."

Ten years, two army tours of Iraq as an engineer and a boy of his own later, he was back to instil the same character building into his young protégé. "We even dug out his old certificate and he was so chuffed. He just needed a purpose," said Carolyne: "... and I guess mine is keeping Julia's legacy alive and keeping kids away from the courts, police stations and young offender teams."

The three full-time staff include former British Trials Riding Champion Dan Thorpe, who is equally happy riding, practising his skills on the man-made obstacle course or giving seven-year-old riders their first glimpse of a life on two wheels.

DWINDLING SUPPORT

The centre, an authorised training centre for Kawasaki and Honda dealerships, augments its income through road training and instruction as well as the annual membership, which allows riders anytime use of the 10-acre circuit.

But it's not easy, as Carolyne's deep sigh when asked how she manages to balance everything testifies. Sustaining a charity that's run for 32 years with dwindling financial support means BUMPY relies on donations and business sponsorship.

"We charge the schools and the annual membership fees so we can keep the projects going for the children of families that really can't afford it, but that's an area where we'd really like to explore business sponsorship," added the former teacher.

A £50,000 grant from the People's Project National Lottery has supported free sessions for children with educational needs and disabled riders, but that money has now run out.

"We're victims of our own success. We have people who come from London and Newcastle to trial ride and our places on the Ready, Steady, Go project for young people with disabilities and additional needs get filled in no time," she said.

"It's so popular that hundreds of thousands of young people helped is not over-egging it. The sadness is that with investment we could do more and save the country money that otherwise gets spent on correctional facilities." The robin, perched on a feeder nearby, tweets her agreement.



Left: PC Julia Morris, the trailblazer for the project, and the derelict workshop area transformed by the grants she fought for back in 1989

TWO GRANTORS JOIN UP TO COLOUR IN THE MARGINS

A collaborative biodiversity project is protecting rare wildflowers from extinction and creating a rich feeding habitat for endangered species – by walking the donkeys

Treading in: The donkeys restoring nature by doing what comes naturally



An innovative partnership between two grantors is saving one of the UK's rarest wildflowers from extinction... and boosting biodiversity at the same time.

Charities The Donkey Sanctuary and Plantlife have joined forces in a conservation scheme to encourage the growth of catchfly and other wildflowers to attract insects and the wildlife that feeds on them.

Rescue donkeys Paddy and Kelley are being regularly walked through a wildflower meadow at the site in Sidmouth, Devon, as part of their routine training and exercise.

Their disturbance spreads seeds from wildflowers by 'treading in' to the soil, helping create a vibrant meadow home to wildflowers such as common knapweed, bee orchid, oxeye daisy and yellow rattle.

In full bloom, the meadow will attract pollinating insects such as common carder bee and hoverflies as well as butterflies such as the small skipper and common blue.

Insects are an important food for threatened farmland birds including skylarks and linnets as well as bats such as the brown long-eared, common pipistrelle and serotine.

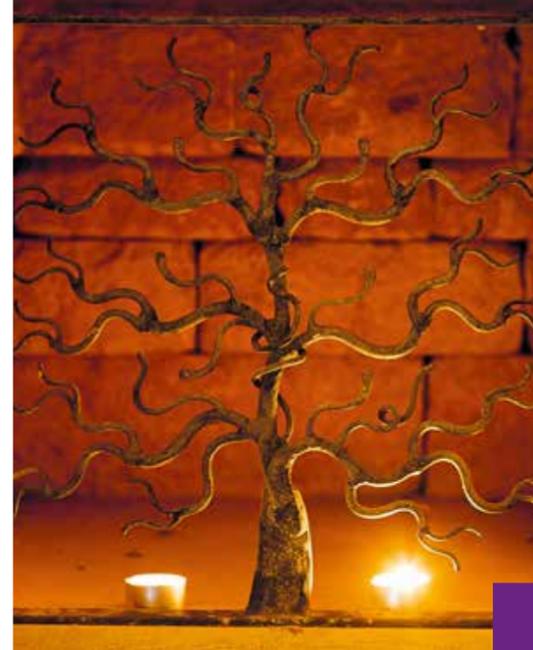
One flower thriving thanks to the project is the catchfly, which has almost vanished from around 70% of its former habitat due to agricultural intensification and increased herbicide use.

Ecology and Conservation manager Ruth Angell said: "Biodiversity is essential for supporting life and natural processes which

make our environment more resilient." The Sanctuary, which runs 10 sanctuaries around the UK and Europe caring for 7,000 donkeys and mules, has also been using donkeys from its herd to graze species-rich grassland in the nearby Weston valley.

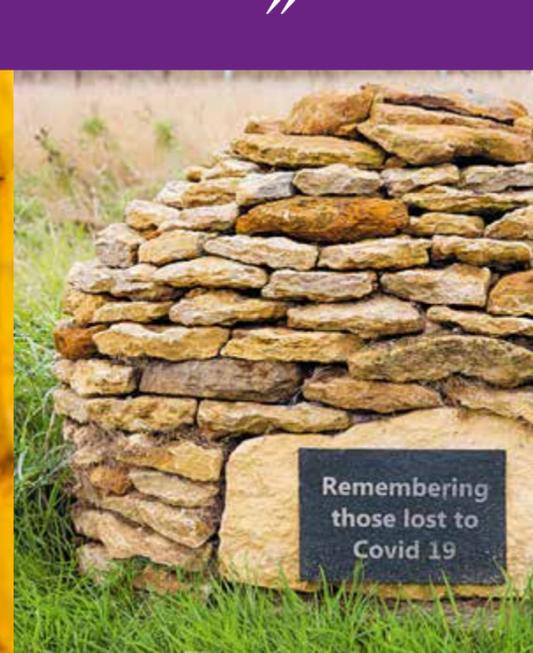
Conservation officers and volunteers work on a range of projects, including woodland, hedge and grassland management to improve habitat for wildlife and donkeys.

Cath Shellswell, manager for Wiltshire-based Plantlife's Colour in the Margins project, added: "We're so grateful to the Sanctuary for helping these fantastically rare wildflowers back from the brink of extinction."



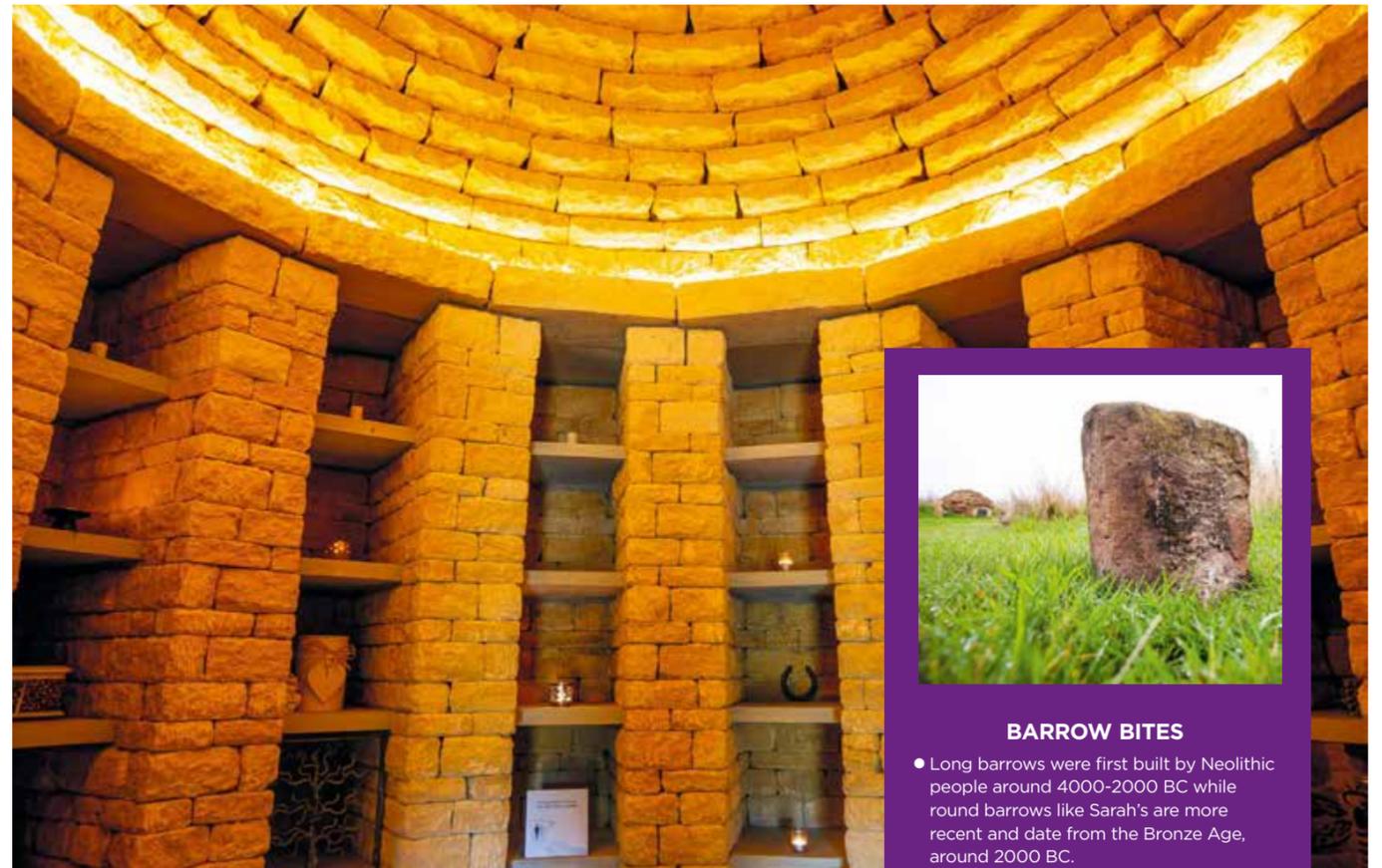
THE ANCIENT GALLERY OF LIFE

THE GRANTOR BRINGING A PREHISTORIC TRADITION BACK TO LIFE



FACT

The oldest long and round barrows are prehistoric sites, but burial mounds similar to round barrows were built by the Anglo-Saxons between the 7th and 11th centuries.



BARROW BITES

- Long barrows were first built by Neolithic people around 4000-2000 BC while round barrows like Sarah's are more recent and date from the Bronze Age, around 2000 BC.
- The Royal Burial Ground at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk contains several burial mounds for Anglo-Saxon Kings, including the Great Ship Burial portrayed in the film, The Dig.
- There are three more barrows in England in Shropshire, Wiltshire and Cambridgeshire.
- All have shared stones with each other to create a link.

The ashes are securely stored behind personalised glass or metal screens in each niche

A few years ago if you'd told healthcare management expert Sarah Smart she'd one day be a key figure in reviving one of the oldest funeral traditions in Britain, she'd have laughed.

At the time, the effervescent former nurse had been looking for a way of diversifying with her farming business partner. Truffles, goji berries and tea were all on the 'possibles' list of new projects to explore.

It was safe to say that becoming one of only five people in the country to build a barrow – a mound of earth over natural stone where loved ones' ashes are stored – was pretty low on the list of options.

But a chance meeting with mutual friends changed all that, and the mother-of-two with her arable and livestock farmer partner, Richard Beeby, turned their attention to one of the oldest markets...

Their friends had walked them around a barrow they'd built on their own land and both were completely overwhelmed by its peacefulness, calm and uplifting tranquillity.

The total silence and primal nature of the space and its individual niches – cubby-holes in the candle-lit limestone walls where ashes are stored behind bespoke, beautifully designed glass or metal doors – was the perfect antidote to the chaos of life outside.

SPIRITUAL

So Mid-England Barrow near Banbury, on the borders of Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire, became the latest natural stone burial mound in a renaissance of a tradition dating back to between 3800 and 1400 BC.

Since then, the more structured, religious view of "how death should be done" has seen a move towards more formalised ways of celebrating lives well lived.

But Sarah believes that will change, with a shift to the spiritual increasingly gaining momentum: "Marriage used to be possible only in church, register offices and more recently hotels, but now people can get married on the beach or even under the sea!"

"In 20 years' time the stance on funerals will have changed as people realise you don't need black cars, services given by clergy dressed in black followed by a wake at a village hall or pub. You can be free in the countryside close to nature, spending time remembering those you loved in surroundings they'd have revelled in."

Sarah's empathy, honed by a career in nursing and losses of her own, is the catalyst for moving away from the "conveyor belt"

crematorium experience towards a warmer, celebratory approach. A self-professed baker and cook, she concedes that while the business model of buying a niche that can hold up to five family urns for a 10 to 99-year spell offers only limited revenue possibilities, the events side will provide a steady income.

Afternoon teas and charity fundraisers have a symbiotic relationship with the farming side of the business on the 70 acres that's home to Longhorn Cattle, pigs and lambs. The events have also piqued the curiosity of some people in what Sarah admits is a "very slow burn" marketing approach.

"It's a difficult sell because you can talk about the barrow as much as you like, but until you've actually been inside and experienced the feeling of silence and calm, you can never truly appreciate it."

CELEBRATION

More than half the 168 niches have now been booked, one by a woman in Utah who wants to return to her native Oxfordshire when her American adventure has run its course and another by a woman who wants her dogs to rest there with her. Most, though, are secured by people who visit first.

"Everyone who has pre-booked is fortunately still with us, but as the barrow fills, family and friends can visit and have a religious blessing from the local vicar or no religious element at all," she said. "It can be a small gathering or a large celebration, with food on the first day or anniversaries, so we can cater for anything."

She added: "We'd heard so many stories about people who'd been to a service and wake that was quite impersonal and in and out in 20 minutes. That shouldn't be how it ends, so we offer half day or even full-day events to families as well as giving them access codes to visit when they want."



Even Richard, a self confessed "miserable so and so", was converted when he set foot inside the barrow

For more information visit: www.mid-englandbarrow.co.uk/

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