

Brent Island Trust

Newsletter, February 2023



A Message from Graham

Dear Members,

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2023, and it has certainly been an eventful one for The Island so far!

Many of you will already be aware that, as we reported in the last Newsletter, the work funded by an accessibility fund from Dartmoor National Park (DNPA) has now been completed and what a change this will make for all of us to get down to The Island much more safely and easily!

- The roadway has been nicely tarmacked
- The gate access has been opened up and widened with a new gate
- A land drain has been installed beneath the path to improve drainage, hopefully this will stop the flooding and muddy path
- The pathway inside the gate has been resurfaced all the way over the bridge and in front of the display board on The Island
- And finally, a small ramp has been installed to make for easier access into the Linhay from the meadow.

We are very grateful to DNPA for funding this work and to their contractors who have completed their work professionally and to a good standard.



Tarmac on the roadway



New wider access gate



New surface on the path



Access ramp to the Linhay

Our thanks also to Tim Ferry who has supplied and planted a new Spindle sapling in place of the Walnut sapling, which was planted last year, but sadly did not survive. The Spindle is a native deciduous tree species which flowers in May and June. The flowers develop into very distinctive bright pink fruits with bright orange seeds. The waxy green leaves turn an orange-red before falling in Autumn. The leaves are a food source for several species of butterflies and moths. We hope that the tree develops and grows to provide colour and natural habitat for many years to come!

I was excited to have my first recent sighting of a Dipper at The Island. It was heading slowly downstream behind the Linhay, stopping to dip and dive into the water then flutter a few yards before repeating its delightful display in search of food.

I hope that you may all continue to enjoy visiting The Island, and please do let us know of your sightings as we edge slowly towards Spring!

Graham Royle (Chair)

Island Otter Spotted

Exciting wildlife news! In late January an Otter was seen on the river bank near the Elephant Beech. In recent times they have been recorded by Lydia Bridge and also in Avonwick so perhaps their territory is expanding. It's many years since one has been recorded on The Island and we'd welcome feedback from anybody else who has seen it. You can use the contact details at the end of this newsletter or via our website

Easter Egg Trail

Our now traditional Easter Egg Trail will be on Saturday April 8th between 10am and 4pm. It costs £2 per child to enter and follow the clues around The Meadow, leading to the reward of a chocolate egg. It's a fun way of encouraging youngsters to get closer to nature and explore The Island, so please do come along. Youngsters need to be accompanied by an adult.



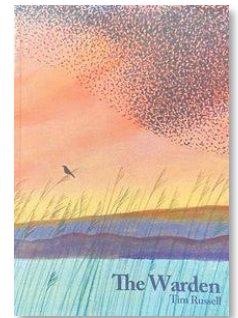
January Storms

The torrential rain in January brought the expected exuberant flow of water along the river. However, where it passes the fallen Elephant Beech tree it's started to erode the river bank. You may recall that in 2019 Westcountry Rivers Trust repaired the bank near the linhay which has withstood the test of time and inundation very well. We'll keep an eye on the current (pun intended) situation but, if necessary, we'll contact the Rivers Trust again to see whether we should take action.



Annual General Meeting

The 2023 AGM will be on 11th July at 7.30pm. As usual it will be in the Village Hall and refreshment will be provided in the form of cheese & biscuits and wine/soft drinks. Our guest speaker this year will be Tim Russell who is the Recreation & Access Projects officer for Dartmoor National Park and who has written a book entitled *The Warden: A Lifetime in Nature*. Tim grew up in the hills of rural Shropshire and his first job was at Slapton Ley. His career has taken him to the Quantock Hills, Australia and back to Devon as Plymouth's first Urban Ranger and finally to Dartmoor National Park as Access Officer, helping to improve access for all.



Working Party

Thanks to all who took part in the working party on The Island on 21st January (Terry Jordan, Tony Rose, Andrew Farrow, Mavis Hewitt, John Reilly, Geraldine Coleman and Chris Royle). The aim was to scallop the bramble encroaching into the meadow to provide a varied habitat for wildlife and, importantly, to get this done before insects, mammals and birds start to emerge in quantity when spring bursts upon us. The fruits of the party's efforts can be seen in this photograph.

On a beautiful frosty morning we also managed to dredge a lot of sludge from the leat, clear a lot of ivy and bramble from around the Linhay and remove two Laurel bushes. Not stopping there, we then cleared a number of driftwood branches from the weir onto the bank as well as a general tidy of the pathways.

The Demise of Amazon Smile

Have many of you been using Smile to raise funds for The Island? Over the months since the scheme started it's contributed over £54 to our funds but, unfortunately Amazon withdrew the facility on 20th February. Another option to continue donating is to use Give As You Live (<https://www.giveasyoulive.com/>) or easyfundraising.org.uk which, so far, we haven't tried.

Contacts:

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