

Issue Number 55 - Spring 2016



# FEEDBACK



WATERLEAT, ASHBURTON, DEVON TQ13 7HU - (01364) 653026 - [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) Reg Charity No: 299 835



- **One Lucky Barn Owl**
- **New Barn Owl Directory**
- **Barn Owl Mini-Film Awards**
- **State of the UK Barn Owl Population**

*Conserving the Barn Owl and its Environment*

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philmclean-photography.co.uk

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by staff and volunteers.

Many thanks to everyone who provided  
words and pictures for this issue.

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Website: [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk)

## The Acoustic Café

*A great night out*

**Saturday April 30th - 7.15pm**  
**- Bovey Tracey -**

**in aid of the Barn Owl Trust**

A two-course, multi-choice meal with a  
vegetarian option interspersed with a variety of  
talented local musicians.

Admission by ticket only - tickets £12 (includes  
meal) available from the Trust.

Call 01364-653026 or email us at:  
[info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk) for tickets ★

*See page 4 for more details*

Welcome to Feedback 55. As you'll see from this issue we've been really busy since the autumn. Not only have we been dealing with our general enquiries and conservation work, we've run two sets of training courses, four days of 'Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs' courses and one day of 'Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation'.

We launched a new 'Barn Owl Directory' on our website giving people the chance to find local Barn Owl Groups and Projects, Owl Carers and Rehabilitators, and Professional Surveyors in their area. This is a first for UK Barn Owl conservation and was a really big project to get up and running.

For the third year running the 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' has been collated and published. Covering 2015 this report contains data from 32 groups and includes Northern Ireland for the first time.

After several years of being 'put on-hold', we have finally completed and published the results from the 2013 Devon Barn Owl Survey. Our first survey back in 1993 was unique in that it was the first county survey in the UK; we followed it up with a Cornwall county survey in 1994. Both surveys were repeated after ten years in 2003 and 2004 and Devon again in 2013. Unfortunately we didn't have the resources to 'do' Cornwall again in 2014. The full survey report is available on our website but there's a summary here on page 5.

We've also advertised, interviewed and recruited a new member of the conservation team. We had over 80 applications for the vacancy and lots of very good candidates. You may remember in our last issue that we said goodbye to Stuart, our conservation officer, who left after six and a half years to go and work with snakes, spiders and bugs (rather him than us!). After inviting five of the candidates here for interview in January we can now announce that Rick Lockwood has joined us to fill the post.

Judith Read joined the team in August and is here one day a week leading our legacy leaflet project (see Team Talk on page 13 for an introduction to both Judith & Rick and page 12 for our smart new-look legacy leaflets - thanks Aaron for your great design work).

It's wonderful to have Marianne back after her Maternity Leave; she has gone from being full-time to working three days a week. Aaron is now the only full-time member of the Admin team.

We are currently advertising a staff vacancy again and will be going through the interview and recruitment process once more. This is because we will soon be saying goodbye to Jo who, for almost 2 years, has been P.A. to Head of Conservation and doing our education work. She's off to work in the education department at Paignton Zoo. Best of luck Jo, for your new job, for your wedding in April and for your starring role in the TOADS (Torbay Operatic and Dramatic Society) production of Grease in June.

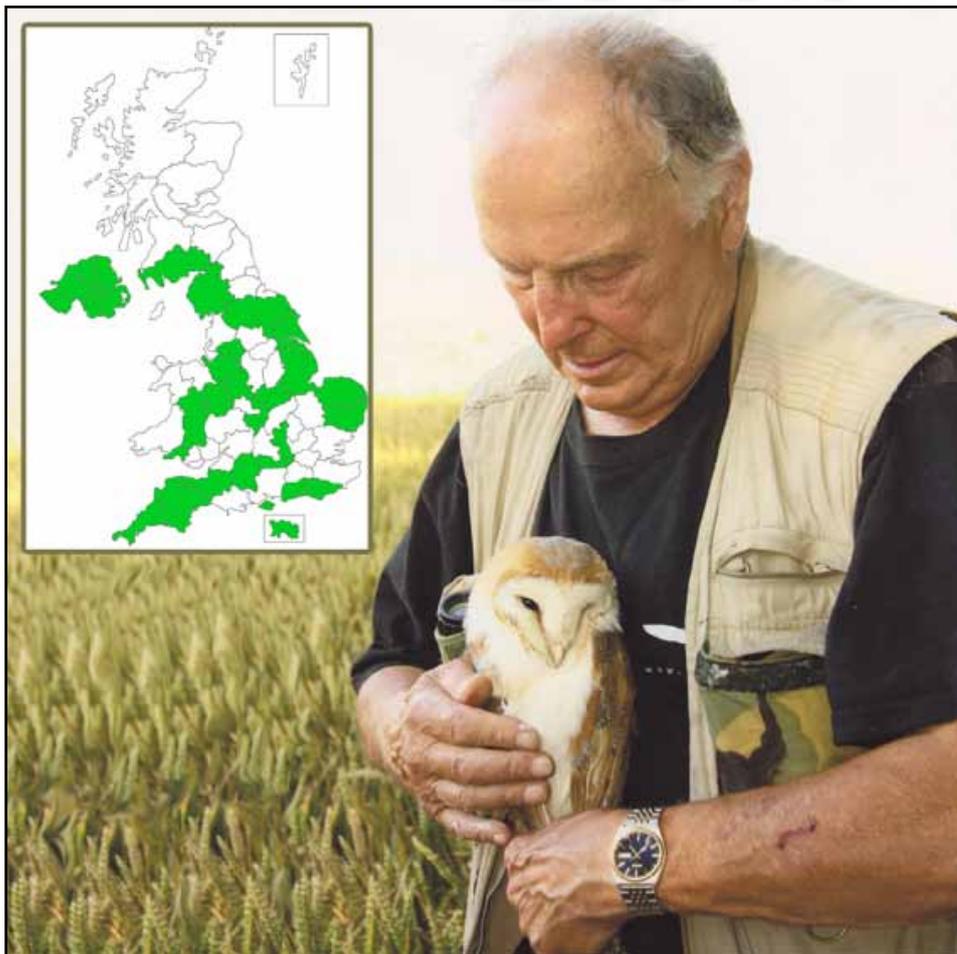
After such a wet winter we are all really looking forward to some sunshine and a really good Barn Owl breeding season, fingers crossed. We've got a series of events planned here on the 'Lennon Legacy Project' land, details on page 7, which include cakes and even a cream tea or two! There is also a practical conservation day every month throughout the year for anyone who fancies getting involved in 'hands-on' management tasks ranging from scrub clearance to hedge laying depending on the season.

For those of you who can make it 'The Acoustic Café' at the end of April (left) promises to be a great night out, whilst raising funds for the Trust. Those of you too far away to come along might like to consider holding your own event to support the Trust? Invite a few friends round and have a draw, run a Coffee Morning or a cake sale.... We'd be really glad of your support and can provide some leaflets and posters to promote your event.

If you'd like to be kept up to date between issues of Feedback with all the very latest BOT news check the 'News Pages' on our website or follow us on facebook and twitter. We regularly post pictures and news from the Trust and of the birds here at the sanctuary. You can also sign-up for 'Owl E-news' on our website - a free monthly email listing forthcoming events and news.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and feel inspired to continue to care for the natural world. Thank you for supporting our work, after all we couldn't do it without you.

**Frances Ramsden, Aaron Kitts & Marianne Bryan ★**



Major Nigel Lewis has been monitoring Barn Owls in Wiltshire for over 30 years  
Photo: Provided

## State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2015

Following on from 2013 being the worst-ever year and 2014 being one of the best-ever years for Barn Owls, we just had to produce a report for 2015! This time around 32 Barn Owl Groups and Projects kindly provided their monitoring results – the highest number so far – to whom we are obviously very grateful.

Overall, 2015 was a poor year for Barn Owls in the UK but with marked geographical variation. Our initial impression, that Barn Owls in the west had a good year and those in the east had a poor year, turned out to be false. In reality the results showed marked variation within regions and even within counties.

Numbers of nesting pairs were slightly above average in parts of western England particularly Shropshire, Staffordshire up into Cheshire and Manchester but in the north-west (Cumbria and SW Scotland) the number of nests was again below average. Other below-average areas included Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire, Mid-Sussex, Jersey, Leicestershire, Norfolk, Powys, Somerset, Mid-Sussex, Warwickshire and Wiltshire. Food seemed to be in short supply in Lincolnshire and parts of East Yorkshire where numbers of nests were <95% below average (even worse than 2013 in some parts). On the plus side, the numbers of young found in nests in West Cornwall was 17% above average and the number of nesting pairs we recorded in East Cornwall and Devon was 16% higher than usual.

Thanks to Ulster Wildlife, for the first time we were able to include information from Northern Ireland where Barn Owls are scarce and probably under-recorded. This is abundantly clear from looking at the results of our on-line UK Barn Owl survey which has been running now for nearly three years (see [www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk](http://www.barnowlsurvey.org.uk)). *State of the UK Barn Owl Population 2015* is freely available on our website at [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) ★

## News Bites

### Barn Owl Directory

A major project for the last year has been launched - the first-ever Barn Owl Directory (or BOD for short) can now be found on our website.

It contains three types of contacts. There are 87 Barn Owl Groups and Projects listed plus 209 Owl Carers and Rehabilitators, and 222 Professional Surveyors trained by us.

So if you want to contact your county Barn Owl group, find a surveyor for your development site, or if you need to take an injured owl to someone local, just go to the BOD and click on your county. Easy! [www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-contact-directory/](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-contact-directory/)

### BO Mini Film Awards

This year the Barn Owl Trust is pleased to announce the BOMFA's - Barn Owl Mini Film Awards! Running from 1st May - 16th December 2016.

Our panel of judges include TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham and Robbie Hill, creative director of Hilltribe Media. See page 5 for more details.

### Radio Tracking Analysis

Over the years, in collaboration with Ambios and Biotrack, we have radio tagged a total of nineteen nesting Barn Owls and tracked their autumn dispersal. Finding out where they go, and ultimately what happens to them is important because as young Barn Owls they face many dangers. Indeed, more Barn Owl deaths occur during dispersal than in any other stage of their life-cycle. Our student Mark Ellison is writing up the results as his Placement Project and hopes to finish it this Spring.

### At Long Last!

Our report on the 2013 Devon Barn Owl Survey has been published at long last! 2013 was certainly an 'interesting' year for Barn Owls. Find the full report on our website and a brief summary on page 5.

### Rat poison – Important EU News

A recent bulletin has been issued by the UK Health and Safety Executive – Chemicals Regulation Directorate; 'The European Union looks set to ban the sale of all anti-coagulant rat poisons to amateur users with effect from 30th June 2018. From 1st April 2017, professional users will have to meet the requirements of the new Stewardship Regime'. More on page 15.

### World Owl Conference

Venaus, Italy - 2nd to 26th of March 2017- see page 11 for more details. ★

# More BOT News



*The first ever BOT nest inspection on the Isle of Wight!  
David checks out the box on the edge of Jo's garden  
Photo: Frances Ramsden*

## On the Isle of Wight

In October we visited the Isle of Wight for the first time to meet up with some folk who are passionate about their local Barn Owls. Garden designer Joanna Cowan kindly paid for our ferry crossing and provided somewhere for us to stay for a few nights in order to make the visit possible. Thank you Jo! Regular readers might recall that Jo wrote about the Barn Owls in her garden in an item we featured back in Spring 2015 (Feedback issue 53). During our visit, as well as showing us some of the Barn Owl sites in her area, she took us to meet members of her local Gardening Club for a very enjoyable evening which included a gardening quiz and lots of chat about Barn Owls.

We also took the opportunity to meet up with Gill Gaylor who featured in an 'Around and About' article we printed way back in Spring 2000 in Feedback 23. Gill started erecting Barn Owl boxes on the island in 1996, currently monitors 56 sites, and submits his findings for our 'State of the UK Barn Owl Population' publication, now in its third year. Although Gill's been in touch with the Trust since 1997 this was the first time we'd ever met up.

It is clear from Gill's monitoring, and that of another long-standing Barn Owl enthusiast James Gloyn, that Barn Owls are generally more common on the Isle than they are on the mainland. We've often wondered why and, having now looked at land use on the Isle we don't think the habitat is much better. So, what's the reason? Perhaps Wight Barn Owls do better because there are no major roads?? We wish Joanna every success with her own Barn Owl nestbox project. ★



## European Campaign

As you've probably heard by now, most owls (including 87% of Barn Owls), raptors, and even hedgehogs contain rat poison. Under EU regulations, member states are permitted to authorise the sale and use of rodenticides (rat poisons) for five years at a time. As part of the current review, the EU's European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) is investigating alternatives to the use of poison through a 60-day round of Public Consultation.

Given our success in the UK review and our 126,000-strong petition in 2014, our Trustees were keen for us to respond – so we did!

The alternative we've recommended is principally improved Environmental Management (stopping or reducing rat access to food and harbourage) and, where strictly necessary, the use of multi-catch automatic electrocution devices which are the most humane way of killing.

You can read our full response on our website: <http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/BOT-response-to-EU-consultation-February-2016.pdf> ★

## A Cracking Escape



*Somewhere under this tangle of branches (above) is the upper boardwalk. The remaining part of the tree (bottom left) reaches 100' into the air. Sorting out access will need to wait until the ground conditions improve as the land is saturated at the moment. Photos: Frances Ramsden*

Storm Imogen on the 10th February brought down part of a big Beech tree on the Apprentice Path along Riverbank Walk.

Five minutes earlier we'd walked up the path which was fairly sheltered in the bottom of the valley. As we walked out into the top field two sharp cracks echoed, like gunfire. Realising a tree must have come down we looked back down the hill to check the bridge was still intact - it was. It wasn't until the following day when we walked the Apprentice Path again, we realised what had happened when we found the route was blocked.

A very tall Beech tree near the top bridge had split some 20' up and one half had come crashing down. It smashed branches off neighbouring trees as it fell, eventually landing over the Apprentice Path and the upper boardwalk. ★

# Get Involved



## Acoustic Café



Musicians give their time to support the Acoustic Café  
Photo: PandRPhotography

Good food and good music - what could be a better way to support the Barn Owl Trust?

The Acoustic Café has been run bi-annually in Bovey Tracey at the Parish Church Rooms since 2010 by Mark and Jane Bailey. They have raised just under £5,000 for local good causes - amazing. Now it's the turn of the BOT.

Join us on Saturday 30th April 2016 at the Bovey Tracey Acoustic Cafe for a great value evening.

A two-course, multi-choice meal with a vegetarian option will be interspersed with a variety of talented local musicians - line-up to be confirmed. Bring your own drinks/glasses. All proceeds, including raffle, will support the Barn Owl Trust.

Admission by ticket only - tickets £12 (includes meal) available from the Trust. We'd love to see you there. Call 01364-653026 or email us at [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk) ★

## B.O.M.F.A's



Most people have heard of the BAFTA's - the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards, well this year the Barn Owl Trust is pleased to announce the **BOMFA's - Barn Owl Mini Film Awards!**

This competition, new for 2016, offers everyone the chance to create their own short film inspired by this iconic bird.

There are three award categories - Open, Amateur and Young film-maker (entrants of less than 18 years). We are delighted to announce that our panel of judges includes TV presenter and naturalist Chris Packham and Robbie Hill, creative director of Hilltribe Media.



Chris Packham has kindly agreed to be one of our judges

The competition theme is the Barn Owl and we are looking for entries that will raise awareness of the species. The best entries will be posted on our website.

Production techniques can include any medium - animation, documentary, drama, experimental, artist and hybrid work; there are just a few things to remember: the welfare of the subject is more important than the filming. The Barn Owl is a Schedule One protected species and a licence is needed for any work at or near the nest site during the breeding season. Films featuring captive Barn Owls must be identified as such.

Prizes details will be listed in the autumn issue of Feedback and the competition will run from 1st May 2016 and will close on 16th December 2016. Visit [www.barnowltrust.org.uk/bomfa](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/bomfa) for more details and an on-line entry form. ★

## D.B.O.S. 2013

Our report on the 2013 Devon Barn Owl Survey was finally published last winter - two years later than planned. Unfortunately it had to be put on the back burner repeatedly as other more urgent work kept coming up. If only we had more time! Being a small under-resourced charity does mean that some things just have to wait!

2013 was certainly an 'interesting' year for Barn Owls. As well as quantifying what a terrible year they had, the report also highlights ongoing failings in the planning system.

The 2013 survey replicated the methodology of previous surveys in 2003 and 1993. This involved the checking of all Barn Owl sites reported to BOT during and since the 2003 survey. A total of 1,070 results were obtained, and additional surveys conducted in semi-randomly selected areas suggest that overall coverage was reasonable. Only 8.3% of sites had nesting, 34.6% had roosting whilst 57.1% showed no evidence of Barn Owl occupation. Based on these results the Devon Barn Owl population in 2013 is estimated at 110-150 pairs. This represents a 65% drop in nesting when compared to 2003. There was a 16.9% increase in roost sites.

There can be little doubt that the decrease in records of breeding Barn Owls is largely attributable to extremely cold weather in the spring of 2013. Although disappointing, such fluctuations in the population are to some extent an entirely natural phenomenon.



Photo: David Ramsden

However, the frequency of extreme weather events has increased dramatically in recent years due to climate change (IPCC, 2012) and it remains to be seen whether, on balance, this will work for or against Barn Owls in the UK in future.

Perhaps more worrying is the ongoing loss of traditional Barn Owl sites through conversion. Sadly, and despite policy being in place to ensure protected species' interests are given full consideration, a significant proportion of Barn Owl sites that were converted in the period 2003-2013 did not include built-in owl provision, and are now lost to Barn Owls forever. This represents a significant failure in the planning system. More in a future issue of Feedback. ★

# Bird News

It has been a very quiet half year in our bird hospital with only a few cases coming in. As Stuart left us in October, Jo has now taken over responsibility for our rehabilitation and sanctuary birds and is pleased she can continue with the personal naming approach that we introduced last edition.

## Releases

In the last edition of Feedback we reported on nine owls – four Barn Owls, three Tawny Owls and two Little Owls - that were waiting for release. We are pleased to say that they have now all been released back into the wild and, following the adage of no news is good news, hopefully thriving.

The two Little Owls were first to go. Little Owls like a mixed landscape with hedgerows, copses and orchards so we decided to use one of our mobile aviaries in the orchard we maintain on the LLP. Despite setting up our trail camera we didn't manage to get any photos of the birds returning to the aviary. Thankfully David was on hand with his camera when we lifted the lid to get a few shots of them leaving.

We released the three Tawny Owls from our static release aviary. One of these was Ewok, our May the 4th owlet who came to us with badly inflamed eyes. He was only four weeks old when he arrived at the Trust so it was great to see him fully grown and heading out into the world. We continued to put food into the release aviary for a couple of weeks after we had lifted the lid but the highly territorial nature of Tawny Owls means they never hang around for long.

The four Barn Owls were split into two pairs for release. We usually try to release Barn Owls in male-female pairings but as these four were all from the same brood, it was better to release the two girls together and then the two boys. We found two great sites to host our mobile aviaries with good habitat within sight of each other. Whilst the girls disappeared a couple of days after release, the boys hung around at their site for three weeks before finally venturing off on their own. Thank you to both of the site owners for providing the sites and giving up their time to release these birds.

## Audrey

You may remember reading about the Barn Owl with the broken wing that we received from Seymour Vets in Totnes in the last edition of Feedback. Unfortunately, as the results of her last X-ray suggested, her wing had not healed well and therefore she could not fly very strongly.

Despite our hopes that she would improve with time, it soon became clear that this would not be the case. The good news for Audrey is that there will always be room in our sanctuary for any birds that cannot be released so she is one of the first residents in our newly rebuilt aviary along with our other female Barn Owls.

## A Parliament of Tawny Owls

Whilst it may have been quiet with respect to Barn Owls, we have received four Tawny Owls in recent months. Not quite a parliament perhaps but enough to keep us busy. Thankfully all four birds were not injured and just needed a few days feeding up before being sent back on their way. Three out of the four were found at the side of the road so were very lucky not to have come to any more harm! The quick recovery of all of these birds meant we did not give them names but all were fitted with BTO rings so we will hear if anyone finds them.

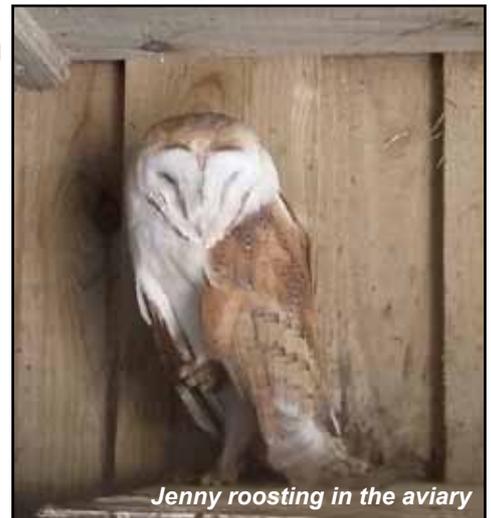


*One of the Little Owls leaving the aviary on release night  
Photo: David Ramsden*

## Jenny

Jenny was our most recent Barn Owl. When she arrived at the Trust she weighed just 215g! She was so emaciated that we did not think she would make it through the night. However, she turned out to be a model patient and not only survived the night but began eating three chicks a day immediately! She very quickly began to regain her strength and moved into an aviary within a week. We decided to name her Jenny after Jenny Ford (see article on page15). Coincidentally, the lady we collected her from was also called Jenny!

Due to starvation she had a lot of muscle wastage and needed to spend another week in an aviary to rebuild her strength. She very quickly began to fly strongly again. No surprise really when she was still polishing off three chicks a day! At the end of January, she was taken back to the site where she was found along with one of our mobile aviaries. By the time you read this she will have been released back into the wild, hopefully kick-started for the year ahead.



*Jenny roosting in the aviary*

If you would like to read about our casualty birds as they come in, along with photographs and regular updates, you can follow us on Twitter (@BarnOwlTrust) or on Facebook (www.facebook.com/BarnOwlTrust).

We would like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers, site owners and vets who have assisted with our rehabilitation and release work especially the Veterinary Hospitals Group. ★

**Jo Plant**  
Conservation Assistant

# LLP Update

At the beginning of July a Kingfisher was seen flying upriver by one lucky observer from the Taw and Torridge branch of Devon Birds, whose group had just enjoyed an LLP walk and talk. Further Kingfisher observations were made in September and again in January. Another equally fortunate lone observer watched a Golden-ringed Dragonfly take a Marbled White butterfly on the wing just above the weather station a few days later. A demoiselle species, thought to be a male Banded Demoiselle was watched briefly by the lower pond the same day, which would have constituted the LLP's first record, if only it had been confirmed. In August the more familiar Beautiful Demoiselle, a male, was on an Oak by the Trust offices on the morning of the 18th, with a female by the ponds later on. A small unidentified Fritillary, smaller than the usual Silver-washed we regularly enjoy here was another species that frustratingly evaded identification.

The mid-July Butterfly Walk was conducted in less than ideal weather conditions. Nevertheless, and despite it being dull, heavily overcast and rather muggy, a surprising number of species and individuals were recorded. Perhaps it was the lack of sun that seemed to slow everything down but excellent views were obtained of hundreds of Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites and Small Skippers, with Gatekeepers and Ringlets common.



*Purple Hairstreak*  
Photo: Stuart Baker

In addition, Large Skipper and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies were seen, as well as Silver-Y, Clouded Buff and Six-spot Burnet moths. The LLP's first record of Purple Hairstreak, a very showy female in bracken and bramble by Corner Wood, was unfortunate in its timing, coming only a day after the Butterfly Walk.

A group of ecological consultants participating in the Advanced Barn Owl Surveying and Mitigation training course in late July were delighted to note a Brown Long-eared Bat at roost in one of the bat boxes in the lower section of the Wildlife Tower. This new species adds to the growing list of bats that appear to be using the tower; Pipstrelle, Noctule, Lesser Horseshoe, a Myotis species and Brown Long-eared.

One, possibly two, Barn Owls were heard screeching around the field at dusk one August evening, a few days later to be seen sitting on the cut-off telegraph pole and in flight along Pennsland Lane. Further Barn Owl observations were made in September, and again in January, when one was watched flying from the roof of the North Park polebox towards the wildlife tower at lunchtime in broad daylight.

The second record of Skylark for the LLP concerned an individual accidentally flushed from grass by the old dung heap site in August. A Kestrel started putting in regular performances over the field in the autumn. By September it had been noticed sitting atop the Wildlife Tower and by December it had obviously found its way in since several pellets were found on the boulders underneath the dedicated Kestrel provision. By January, another half a dozen Kestrel pellets and a quantity of fresh white faeces was clearly visible in this same area, with a Kestrel putting in regular performances hovering over various parts of the field. A Woodcock was seen at dusk along the path by Pennsland Lane hedgerow in January.

The Dormouse boxes in Riverbank and Corner Wood were checked by a licensed Dormouse worker in September but no evidence of occupation was found, although that does not apparently mean there aren't any about. Roe Deer on the other hand were far more obvious with a hind and one calf by the roadside polebox in mid-August, and possibly another hind with up to two calves in Forde Orchard a week later.



*The driveway hedge laying in November*  
Photo: Jo Plant

Practical conservation work started in July with invasive species control. The Creeping Thistles were spot-sprayed in a test area of the site for the second consecutive year, and although no accurate count was made, the general feeling was that there were far fewer plants than in 2014. Himalayan Balsam was also pulled and disposed of, from areas in Kiln Close and adjacent to the Holly hedge along Pennsland. Ragwort plants were dug up in Kiln Close and near the Wildlife Tower. The orchard was cut with brushcutter and brushmower at the end of July once the flowers had set seed.

The first, and by far the earliest, group of Plymouth University students visited a month earlier than normal in September and set to work cutting back scrub in the usual places. Further groups cleared North Park hedgerow of bramble ready for hedge-laying, though when this major job will get done is currently unknown. The trackside hedge in Kiln Close received a day's worth of laying in November leaving only about 20 metres more to go. The apple trees received their annual pruning in December with almost all in leaf to some extent, no doubt a sign of the continuing mild winter. The annual grazing regime started with 10 heifers in mid-September. These were joined by four cows and four calves in early October, and all were removed at the beginning of November.

The abstraction system in the Ashburn which feeds the ponds caused problems from November onwards when the annual avalanche of autumn leaves blocked the pipes. Due to the mild weather many of the trees were obviously still shedding leaves into the New Year, as blockages persisted well into January, though by then the merest wiggle of the pipes was enough to restore flow to full bore. The leak in the lower pond that had previously been mended suddenly reappeared so more significant repair works are planned for this year. ★

**Matthew Twiggs**  
Senior Conservation Officer

## Diary Dates 2016

*Come along:*

- April** - Friday 29th - 5:00am - Dawn Chorus Walk  
Saturday 30th - 7:15pm Acoustic Café, Bovey Tracey
- May** - Thursday 12th - 2.30pm - Wildflower Walk & Cream Tea
- June** - Thursday 16th - 7:30pm - Mid-Summer Walk
- July** - Thursday 14th - 2:30pm - Butterfly Walk & Cream Tea
- August** - Thursday 18th - 7:00pm - Bat Walk
- September** - Thursday 8th - 3.00pm - Walk, Cake & Cream Tea
- October** - Thursday 6th - 4.00pm - Autumn Air Walk

Contact the office for more details or to book a place at an event - booking is essential as places are strictly limited. There may be a charge for some of the events. Check out our 'Events Diary' on our website for more details & dates of other LLP events.

[www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk) ★

# Main Aviary Rebuild . . .

The demolition of the main aviary, reported in the last edition was in fact not the original one! The first aviary on this spot was built single-handedly by yours truly in 1986 to house breeding pairs of Barn Owls that produced young birds released by the 'Devon Barn Owl Release Scheme' – the forerunner of the Barn Owl Trust.

Isn't it strange how one's perception of time changes as you get older. In my twenties I was really happy to build things that would last at least five years. Five years seemed like a really long time! Of course, those five years flew by and the aviary, made of untreated slab-wood, only lasted seven years. By 1993 the Barn Owl Trust had been running for five years, could afford proper timber, and had some wonderful volunteers including a carpenter!

So our second 'Main Aviary' was built to last at least twelve years which, back in my mid-thirties did seem like a really long time! In the event it lasted twenty-two years and housed many of the 'sanctuary' birds that were in our Adoption Scheme. Indeed, owl names like Paula, Buffy, Kirk, Willow, Pippin, Pickle, or Joy may ring a bell with some of our older supporters! And then of course there was Woodstock, an unforgettable nearly-blind Tawny Owl who survived against all odds, was such a great character, and lived in the old Main Aviary for seventeen years.

Now I'm in my late fifties, time is whizzing by at a tremendous speed and even twenty two years doesn't seem long at all! We've found that even good quality treated timber will start to rot well within ten years where it is in contact with the ground. So we decided to bite the bullet and build the third 'Main Aviary' on shallow concrete foundations and a low block wall (see photos).



*Shallow concrete foundations were made*



*And then low block walls  
Photos: Mark Ellison*



*The framework for the walls going up*

After the foundations and blockwork had been finished it was time to start assembling the timber jigsaw that Jasmin and 'volunteer student placement' Mark had already prepared in the barn. Very soon the site started looking like an aviary once more.

The roof trusses, again pre-made, were erected then the apex timbers. Every piece fitted perfectly! Then began the slightly laborious task of covering the roof then the sides in weldmesh. Within a few weeks all the mesh had been attached and half the roof was covered in corrugated sheeting so the owls would have plenty of shelter.



*The corrugated sheet went on after the mesh*

Large swinging perches were hung from the roof at either end. Another was hung behind a plywood screen to make the birds feel safe and tucked away. The plan was to be able to house owls that could fly and owls that couldn't in the same aviary. So, two roost boxes were placed low down with natural branches leading up to the entrance for easy access.

Finally the groundwork was done: woodchip under the shelter and gravel where rain will help to keep it clean, then water taps for the owl baths.

A big thank you to all our volunteers as well as our Nestbox Builder Jasmin whose standard of woodwork is second to none and her helper Mark Ellison. Special thanks also to the Cecil Pilkington Charitable Trust for funding this project. ★

**David Ramsden**  
Head of Conservation

# How Time Flies



Ready for the owls



'Rose' in the new Main Aviary



Stuart releases Rose

## BREAKING NEWS!

Funding received from the Norman Family Charitable Trust and the Marjorie Coote Animal Charitable Trust means we are now planning to replace more of our old aviaries! ★

## One Lucky Barn Owl

One morning in August the phone rang. A landowner in Hampshire had found a Barn Owl in his water trough and wanted some advice. Not too unusual an enquiry until, that is, he said that the bird was still alive! In over 25 years of Barn Owl conservation this was the first time that we had had a report of a Barn Owl being found alive in a water trough so we were keen to get all the details. The landowner reports:

"The owl was holding onto the water connection pipe within the tank which was keeping most of it above the water. It was very tired and almost floating on its back when we first found it with only one foot holding on. That end also had a cover so it could stay out of the sun seeing as it was a very hot day". The photo (right) was taken at the time immediately prior to rescue. "We force fed the owl a few hours before letting it go and it flew off very nicely, so hopefully is back to normal and doing well. Let's hope it has learnt from the experience and won't be visiting another trough any time soon. Having phoned the Trust for advice on release methods and water trough floats the bird went off none the worse for its ordeal".

It's not clear why Barn Owls visit water troughs, as they don't need to drink water. Rather they get all the moisture they need from their food. However, it is thought that adult females may visit to bathe after weeks of incubation and brooding young during the breeding season, although there's no evidence for this.



Photo: Samantha Eagger

Inexperienced juvenile birds may simply fall in or be drawn to their own reflections, most likely they just go in to bathe. Steep-sided bodies of water are relatively rare in nature; the smooth vertical sides of the trough afford no grip and the soft feathers of a Barn Owl easily become water-logged so there's no mystery as to why most can't get out and ultimately drown.

Further information on the dangers of water troughs and how to solve the problem can be found at; <http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/hazards-solutions/water-troughs-barn-owls/> ★

# Barn Owls in our Chimney

*The following paragraphs are extracts from a blog by Sue Russell. She contacted the Trust last year for some advice on building a nestbox.*

**Sunday, 19 July 2015**

We have known for three years that there's a resident owl in the unused section of the chimney in our French house - sometimes we hear it in the night, and it sounds uncannily like human snoring!

A few weeks ago friends came to visit, and occupied the second bedroom which is rarely used. One night the noise kept one of our friends awake, and she decided to investigate. She moved a board in front of the old fireplace and to our astonishment found two baby Barn Owls!



*Two owlets inside the fireplace*

We need to cap the chimney but now we have a worry - can they get out once they fledge, assuming they survive? Will the noise of the roofers climbing about over their heads frighten the parents? Will we be able to choose a moment when the mother and father are absent and cap the chimney at last?

**Friday, 7 August 2015**

The bigger one may be beginning trial flights; we have found downy white feathers on the lawn, and our fine new roof is already bearing the inevitable signs of owl-fouling! Meanwhile my intrepid husband is rising to the challenge of constructing a nestbox, which we hope to put in place in one of our decrepit outbuildings. First we have to move a great quantity of ancient bundles of kindling; then fix in place a heavy beam across the highest point, to which the box will be attached. And we have to avoid falling off the ladder!



*The owl nest-box takes shape  
All photos provided*

**Saturday, 8 August 2015**

The owl nestbox takes shape. Now for the tough part: getting it secure on a beam at least 10 feet from the ground in our falling apart and cluttered outbuilding!

Some great excitement late last night, though: I went out on the off-chance of seeing an early meteorite (no show) and took a torch with me. It was very dark, I flicked the torch along the roof-line, and caught a movement. At the far western end of the building, was the adult owl. It saw me, gulped, and took off across the stubble fields. Ten minutes later I trained the torch on the roof again, and saw an owl on the chimney. It disappeared very quickly so I don't know if it was the adult returning or a baby about to embark on a test-flight; but there were more downy white feathers on the lawn this morning.



*These boxes are heavy!*

**Wednesday, 12 August 2015**

For the past nine days we've spent a great deal of time, one way or another, battling with the owl-house. The laborer lugged the box across the garden. Minus the lid, it weighed about 11kg. You will just have to imagine two old-timers, each on a ladder, manhandling a heavy, awkward box into position: no mean feat, and done with a minimum of altercation. On goes the lid, and the final image is from the window, a low-flying owl's-eye view.

As to the owls themselves, there have been developments. When we lifted the cover off the fireplace there was nobody home! That night I saw at least three owls flying around our roof by the light of my torch, and last night there were two - I suspect the youngsters. After a moment they flew off back to the chimney. It seems that's where they are roosting during the day; with the aid of a mirror I can see the chimney top from the fireplace and I think I can see a bird's tail feathers up there.



Now we just have to hope they find their palatial new home. After all the efforts we've made the blighters had better use it!

**Thursday, 5 November 2015**

The roof is done on our house in France, and all that remained was to cap the chimney but there remained the problem of the adult owl. The open chimney let rain water in, and we wanted to avoid another year of hosting nestlings, when there are so many other places to live and breed undisturbed in our ramshackle outbuildings.

**Continued →**

# Other Owly News

Dear BOT

I just wanted to say thank you for the assistance and advice you gave when I phoned from France, mid June:

I was imminently about to take our 3 owlets to a rescue centre as they kept falling out of their nest and their parents seemed to have disappeared. Following our conversation, we were able to assist with their feeding for a few days before the parents did reappear; and again in the heatwave, when they didn't show for a full week.

I feel so privileged to say we now have 3 fully fledged barn owls; at the moment still roosting on different beams around the barn.

My husband has been busy making bird boxes ~ which we plan to put up when the "guys" leave.

Once again I am so grateful for your advice; these beautiful birds could have ended up in captivity without it. I can't begin to express what an honour it has been to have watched them grow. Many thanks,

Julie XXX



After a bumpy start Julie's 3 French owlets eventually fledged successfully with a little help from their friends!

Photo: provided

## Fancy a trip to Italy?

The World Owl Conference 22nd to 26th of March 2017



Paul Adams

In the words of its Italian organisers; "After eight years of waiting, the World Owl Conference, an important event for all researchers, naturalists and ornithologists concerned with studying owls, returns. This convention will offer a chance to meet and collaborate with the most important associative realities: universities, museums and naturalists who work and study nocturnal birds of prey in the field".

Based in the town of Venaus, at the base of the Alps, this 5-day event will attract owl workers from around the Globe and, luckily for us, the international language of science is English!

The last one in Groningen, Netherlands, in 2007 was certainly a major event for the Barn Owl Trust as our two presentations were very well received. Initially planned for October, the Conference will now take place from 22nd to 26th of March 2017 – plenty of time to plan your trip! ★

.....Continued from page 10.

One young builder arrived with new chimney-pots and buckets of cement, and up two ladders he went, scaling our steeply-pitched roof and leaning precariously across our very high chimney, many feet from the ground. He flashed our torch down into the darkness, and reported that the owl was in residence. What to do? The last thing I wanted was to incarcerate the owl. But I also had no wish to lose this precious opportunity (our builder's a busy chap.) So we formulated a plan, took a deep breath, and told the young man to go ahead - having established that there was a big enough space at the top of the chimney's inner dividing wall for the owl to escape.

The young man had the job done in a couple of hours while the light lasted. Where was the owl meanwhile? Had he flown away while we weren't looking? Or was he lurking inside the now-dark chimney, wondering what the heck was going on?

## The Owl & the Ball



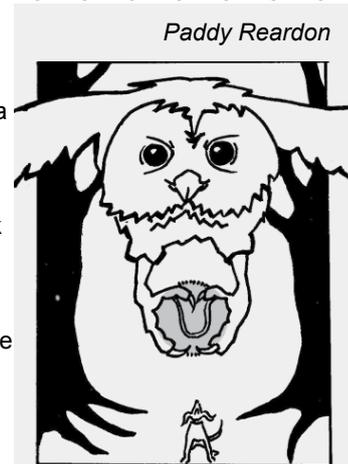
I was walking next-door's collie dog just around dusk in the Autumn. He loves his ball and just as we walked down a sloping path through a small wood, he dropped it.

The ball rolled down the track and, out of the trees a Tawny owl swooped down, grabbed the ball and disappeared up into the trees on the other side of the track.

Result: one very miffed dog and one amazed dogwalker. 'Well! We've lost that!' I said to Bramble, But, no, out of a tall tree at the end of the track bounced the ball – the owl obviously wasn't impressed.

The dog had had enough by this time and just left me to chase and rescue it. ★

Ben Wilkins  
Brixham, Devon



Paddy Reardon

As it started to get dark that evening, about six o'clock, I took the cover off the bedroom fireplace and opened the window. Then I planted myself on a rather uncomfortable tree-stump a short distance up the garden, and as the light faded fixed my eyes on the dimming rectangle of the open bedroom window. Would the owl take his chance?

I didn't see him emerge, but suddenly, there he was - flying over my head, silhouetted against the darkening sky, unmistakable on those great silent wings, up over the garden and away towards the maize fields; homeless, but free.

Even though we have evicted him from the house, I hope he comes back - perhaps to roost somewhere in our outbuildings, or even to raise young in the nestbox under the eaves of the old bread-oven. But that's probably a story for another year. ★

Edited from an original blog by Sue Russell.

# Bits and Bobs

## Owly Champions!

A massive thank you to Shelton Infant School in Derby who, in February this year, held a sale of some fantastic handmade 'owly' crafts and treats to raise money for the Barn Owl Trust.



Miss Gardner's Nursery Class, Miss Derbyshire's Class 2 and Mrs Cornforth's Class 3 raised an amazing £177.50. They chose to adopt three Barn Owls: Doreen, Barney & Valentine. We hope you enjoy adopting these wonderful birds! Thank you so much for your support. ★

## Can you help?

As stocks of some of our older leaflets are now running low we've decided to give a few of them a bit of a revamp. We've started with our 'Leaving a Legacy' leaflet. This leaflet explains how individuals are able to make donations or leave legacies to the Trust and some of the things we have been able to do with ones we have already received.



A big thank you to Russell Savoury, Paul Smith, Melanie Lindenthal and Mark Fullerton who have kindly allowed us to use their beautiful photographs.

## WANTED

Volunteer cartoonist/illustrators



If you have these skills and are prepared to produce drawings occasionally for us to use in Feedback and other BOT publications please contact: [feedback@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:feedback@barnowltrust.org.uk)

Thank you. ★

We also have four new *free* promotional postcards featuring stunning images of Barn Owls in the wild. We'd like to thank Lucy Flatman, Nigel Morley, Craig Jones and David Pearson for allowing us to use their fabulous images. We are now looking for businesses and organisations that would be kind enough to display them for us. Please get in touch by calling the office on **01364 653026** or by emailing [info@barnowltrust.org.uk](mailto:info@barnowltrust.org.uk) if you are able to help. ★

## Rat Poison News

According to a recent bulletin issued by the UK Health and Safety Executive – Chemicals Regulation Directorate: the European Union looks set to ban the sale of all anti-coagulant rat poisons to amateur users with effect from 30th June 2018. This is good news for owls, other predatory birds and even for hedgehogs, most of which contain rat poison.

From 1st April 2017, professional users of rat poison (farmers, gamekeepers, pest controllers etc.) will need to meet the requirements of the new Stewardship Regime. This includes a requirement for all purchasers of baits to be able to prove that the end user has attended an approved training course. Central to that training is compliance with the new UK Code of Best Practice issued by the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (a body set up by the rodenticide industry). Following our 126,000-strong petition (which many of you signed), we have had a lot of input into this new Code over the past three years.

It remains to be seen whether 'training' and a new 'Code' are enough to get rat poison users to change their ways. One way or the other, it will be the levels of rat poison in dead Barn Owls that proves its success or failure. ★

## Shows & Events

Lookout for us at the following events throughout 2016:

- Thurs 19th - Sat 21st May - **Devon County Show**
- Thurs 9th - Sat 11th June - **Royal Cornwall Show**
- Weds 27th June - **Yealmpton Show**
- Sun 31st July - **Totnes Show**
- Thurs 4th August - **Honiton Show**
- Sat 3rd September - **Kingsbridge Show**
- Tues 13th September - **Widdecombe Fair**

Be sure to pop by our stand and say hello to the team.

# Team Talk

Judith joined the Trust part-time in August 2015. Her role is to contact solicitors and other organisations to ask them to display our legacy leaflets and promote this important aspect of the Trust's income. Having spent many years and still continuing to do so, as a barristers' clerk she is used to the legal world and its quirks!



Judith - Photo: Provided

A bonus for Judith is seeing and learning about the owls as she has a passion for birds. She is a keen birder and holds a BTO 'A' permit for bird ringing. This can cause confusion with her other interest of church bell ringing. She is also a keen spinner and knitter working from raw fleece to a finished garment. Judith also enjoys walking with her constant companion – a chocolate Labrador pointer called Midge who likes to come to work with her. ★

Hello everyone, I'm Rick. I'm still pinching myself having been appointed as the new Assistant Conservation Officer. Having been passionate about birds my whole life I feel I have finally landed my dream job. It's only taken me 47 years to get here!

Having worked previously in nature conservation jobs for the National Trust, and been a VSO volunteer working in the Philippines I had then moved away from conservation into gardening, working outdoors with young people, and most recently, teaching English in Austrian schools.

Originally from Yorkshire I have lived on Dartmoor with my family for the past 11 years. Aside from birding I love being out in nature, running or doing a bit of photography. I'm overjoyed to have been offered this opportunity and I'm looking forward to using my talents in working for the Trust and making a positive contribution to conserving Barn Owls. ★



Rick - Photo: David Ramsden

Hi everyone, Jo here! After 21 months with the Trust I am moving on to pastures new...or rather pastures old! I moved to the Trust from Paignton Zoo in June 2014 and from mid-March will be returning to the Zoo again although this time in the Education Department rather than as a keeper. My new role will involve delivering all of the informal education around the zoo including supervising the presenters, writing signage and running event days so lots to keep me busy!

My time at the Trust has flown by and I've learnt a huge amount. I am definitely leaving a more-rounded individual. The parts of my job I have enjoyed the most are organising the training courses, getting stuck in on the LLP and delivering the educational sessions with my Barn Owl sidekick, Baley.

I will not be disappearing completely just yet as I am staying on a day a week until a new PA starts. By the time you read this we will hopefully have interviewed for my replacement and you will meet them in the next issue. ★



Jo - Photo: Emma Moxham

I'm Danielle and I have recently spent a week at the trust working with the conservation team. During this time I have helped with many tasks including moving owls to mobile release aviaries, hand feeding a starving owl and conducting research on the LLP.



Danielle - Photo: Jo Plant

Being able to be a part of these things and being treated like part of the team has really made my placement here memorable and if I could I would have stayed longer. Learning about the owl species has encouraged me to do further study on them and I will be basing my dissertation on Tawny Owl and Little Owl populations. I am incredibly grateful for experience this week has given me and I hope to come back and do a longer placement in the future. ★

# Fundraising

## Poetry Competition

We are pleased to announce that our Poetry competition, which ran between September 2015 and January 2016, had an amazing 61 entries. Thank you to everyone who submitted their work. What a talented bunch! This year's theme was "Wildlife/ Conservation"

Our judge, Hilary Jupp (winner of our 2014 Poetry Competition), enjoyed reading all the entries. She crowned Mary Woodward our winner with her poem **Red kite over Gorhambury**. Well done Mary and thank you for entering. Your prize is on its way.

### Red kite over Gorhambury

*Where have you come from, beautiful bird,  
wheeling and dipping and calling your cries  
of wildness and greenness and a life on the wing?*

*From the Northern forest, the elk's berried groves,  
the cold air of the wasteland, the light of the night,  
the grey ice of winter, the sweet thaws of spring.*

*Where have you come from, beautiful bird,  
wheeling and dipping and calling your cries  
of wildness and greenness and a life on the wing?*

*From the dark oaks and ashes, the shadowy trees  
of Ceredigion's meadows and valleys and hills,  
from above the slate pools and hazelnut hedges.*

*Where have you come from, beautiful bird,  
wheeling and dipping and calling your cries  
of wildness and greenness and a life on the wing?*

*From the past I have come, from your past,  
the dead years, the lost ages, come back, back  
here now to be with you, my rival and friend.*

Mary Woodward ★

The prize winners are:-

1st Prize - **Red Kite over Gorhambury** - Mary Woodward  
2nd Prize - **Hob White** - Peter Branson  
3rd Prize - **Watching the slow wing beat** - Jason Gillingham

Highly commended:

**Frog, Waving** - Juliet Wilson  
**Following the Plough** - Virginia Griem  
**Seed** - Christine Woolf  
**Natural Beauty** - Marjorie Brown  
**Woodlark Cuscus** - Virginia Griem  
**All Creatures Great and Small** - Ruth Westall

**Wildlife Words Volume 4**, an anthology with nineteen of this year's entries is available from the Trust for £5 plus P&P.

It contains all of the winning and commended poems plus entries by Eleni Cay, Diana Payne, Lisa Bignell, Natalie Boyd Williams, Mark Totterdell, Rebecca Johnston, Julie Stamp, Clare Crossman, Kathleen Kummer and Sandra Brackstone. ★

## Annual Draw 2016

Each year in December, the Trust holds a Charity Prize Draw Raffle. All proceeds support the vital conservation work of the Barn Owl Trust.



Tickets for 2016 are now available at £5 for a book of five tickets.

The first Prize will be an 'Owl Experience' with the Barn Owl Trust's Conservation Team. This is a unique chance to see Barn Owls in the wild. This fantastic day out will take place in the summer of 2017 and includes a delicious lunch.

We are always on the look out for draw prizes and we'd love to hear from anyone that has good quality, easily postable items. Please contact us if you feel you could help. Thank you. ★

# Give a Gift

Do you have an unwanted gift card lying around?

You can now donate it to the Barn Owl Trust.

You can then swap up to 50% of the value for a new gift card you will use.



1. Go to [giveagifthq.com](http://giveagifthq.com)

2. Upload your gift card

3. Search for and select the Barn Owl Trust

4. Make your donation

5. Swap the remaining balance for a new gift card

# giveagifthq.com

# Remembering Friends

## Tony Beard

We were very sad to hear that local farmer, celebrity and BBC Radio Devon presenter Tony Beard had died aged 79 after a long fight with cancer. Tony was affectionately known as "The Wag from Widecombe".

He first contacted the Barn Owl Trust in 1997 for a radio interview and the following year started to send us Barn Owl observations from around the county. In October 1999 he 'did' our Annual Draw for us at Ashburton Information Centre.



Tony at the BOT Draw in 1997

In 2006 we erected a Barn Owl nestbox at his farm and by 2008 it was being used. Tony used to occasionally ring us up with sightings as he could see comings and goings from his kitchen window. By the summer of 2010 he was seeing two Barn Owls and the following year saw three together.

He would often pop in and say hello to us at our stand at the Devon County Show and tell us about his owls. Tony also publicised our various events such as the sponsored walk and Nestbox Workshops on his Sunday Radio Devon show whenever we asked.

I last saw Tony at our stand at Widecombe Show in September 2015. Unfortunately he had not seen any Barn Owls for a couple of years at the farm. On a personal note I always found him to be friendly and very accommodating when we asked for some publicity.

His presence on the radio and at local events with his strong Devon accent and dialect will be missed by us all. Our thoughts go to his widow Wendy and the rest of his family and friends. ★

**Pete Webb**  
Admin

## Pat Ford



Pat & Jenny helping with our mailing

Pat sadly passed away after a long illness in December 2015. Pat and his wife Jenny became long time supporters and volunteers after seeing an article in Exeter's Express and Echo back in 1997. They volunteered here regularly, often bringing their dog Moss, until 2009 when Pat's health deteriorated. Pat would often tell us of his wild Barn Owl sightings from his daily early morning walks with their dogs.

Pat worked as a van driver for the buildings department of the railways until his retirement when we started to benefit from his spare time. He was always willing to lend a hand with any jobs around the place and was a 'dab-hand' with the guillotine. He was a keen gardener and many of us still have plants and trees he nurtured into life.

We see his handiwork every day from our office with his round barrel single and multi-use sparrow nest-boxes on the front of our barn which is in use every spring.

Pat will be sorely missed and fondly remembered by all at the Barn Owl Trust. ★

## Our Memory Tree

Designed and built here in Devon, by the Barn Owl Trust team, this nine foot wooden tree provides a constant reminder of all of those who have made a lasting difference to wild Barn Owl conservation..

Each wooden leaf bears the name of someone who either chose to support our work by leaving a legacy to the Trust or, of someone whose family and friends have made donations in their memory.

Until 2011 our Memory Tree was just an idea. We had recorded the names of all those who had remembered the Trust with a legacy, or for whom we had received donations in memoriam but we had nowhere to put a Memory Tree. It was a legacy that made it possible to build our wonderful *Norman Alderson Meeting Room* and allow us to provide a home for our Memory Tree.

If you would like to find out more please contact us. ★

## In Memoriam

The Trust has received legacies from the estates of  
Juanita Zeelander  
&  
Eileen J Fradgley

and

donations in memory of  
Jocelyn Underwood,  
Emma Cave, Agnes Youngman,  
Mrs Mathias,  
Una Gaston & Pat Ford

Our grateful thanks and sincere sympathies go to their families and friends

*They all now have a leaf on our Memory Tree*

# Thanks and Things

As always we are overwhelmed by your generosity and would like to take this opportunity to thank all our supporters who are either Friends of the Trust, Barn Owl adopters or those who donate much needed funds and materials. We also owe a huge thanks to everyone who gives up their time or expertise. And of course there are all the supporters who send us items to use, recycle or sell. So a massive thank you to:

Heather Buswell, Richard & Leigh Anne Boucher, Ceri Norman, Gwyneth Parish, Nina Fenner, Roy Nash, Mr & Mrs Alway, Hannah Nutbeem, Fred Towers, Vanessa Farbrother, Melanie White, Marsh Christian Trust, Mr & Mrs Catlow, Myfanwy Ford, Ashburton PO, Roy Nash, Fred Towers, Nigel Reid, Nicky Pearce, Tracey Morris & Shelley Wright, Tools for Self Reliance, John Smith, Pat Le Herissier, David Moor, Joan Masters, Alison Lawrence, Patricia Wright, Janet Rutter, Sandra Stewart, UKC Hogwarts Society, Barry & Carole Bowden, Axe Valley Runners, Margaret Crocker, Kev Brett, Vincent Nurseries, Vivid Arts Ltd, Rachel & Diana, Lowe Aston, Pink & Greene, Kingsbridge Tourist Info, Steve Thomas, Orchard Volunteers, Teign Trees & UPSU Volunteers.

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers: Kim Baker, Tony Hulatt, Bill MacDonald, Alan Sloman, Margaret Rhodes, Mark Ellison, Nic Butler and Michael Jennings.

Finally we would like to thank Westmoor & Estover Vets and all the Annual Monitoring Site owners, tenants and guardians for their help caring for the owls.

## Can you help with:

- ⊗ Postcards and pre1970 envelopes with stamps on (they are worth much more to us intact)
- ⊗ Any used stamps, including any foreign stamps & currency
- ⊗ Wild Barn Owl pellets (we can never have too many)
- ⊗ Wild bird food - mainly sacks of black sunflower seeds, also peanuts & plain canary seed
- ⊗ Wood for making outdoor nestboxes - sheets of 9 / 12mm tanalised soft ply and lengths of 25x 50mm tanalised batten
- ⊗ A4 and A3 recycled paper and card both coloured and white
- ⊗ Anabat detector
- ⊗ Hand held hetrodyne bat detector
- ⊗ Carpet suitable for the office
- ⊗ Metal detector
- ⊗ Pliers, spirit levels
- ⊗ Drill-driver bits (for screwing)
- ⊗ Quick grip clamps
- ⊗ Small plate compactor
- ⊗ Emulsion paint (pale colour) sufficient to paint an office
- ⊗ Brown packaging/parcel tape 50mm x 66mm
- ⊗ A3 rotary trimmer for paper and card
- ⊗ OS Explorer maps of Devon, particularly Bideford, Ilfracombe, Barnstaple and Dartmoor

Thank you for your help ★

## Tail piece ...



We live in troubling times but I guess that's true to some extent for every generation. I recently saw a time-lapse map of the changes to European borders over the last 1,000 years. I can't help but wonder what the world would be like if human beings had put the energy that was used to change these borders and to fight and kill each other, into sharing and caring for each other and the planet. War seems to me, to be created by and benefit the few, because of intolerance or lust for power and glory or greed, and somehow, time after time, generation after generation of ordinary folk are sacrificed and suffer for these 'gods of war'.

There is a saying that 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. There will always be people who want that *power* and are prepared to go to any lengths to get it; unfortunately that seems to be part of human nature. But looking at this map and imaging the millions of people that have suffered and died to make these boundary changes, I can't help but think that as a species we should have learned by now that there must be a better way to solve our differences! Imagine the diseases that could have been cured if just a small proportion of the resources that go into developing weapons went into health research.

Of course there are many things worth 'standing up for' and racists, bullies and bigots whatever their nationality should not be tolerated. However wouldn't it be wonderful if the majority of the people in the world worked together to solve the environmental, social and economic problems facing the planet today. As John Lennon sang; "Imagine all the people, Living life in peace".

In addition to the appalling suffering of the ordinary Syrian people, prepared to risk their lives and those of their children to escape the terror of war, there are other huge disasters affecting lives around the world today. There are currently 15 million Ethiopians in critical need of food aid, This is caused by a severe drought now gripping the Horn of Africa. A disastrous

spate of oil spills in the Peruvian Amazon have left Indigenous tribes frantically trying to clean up the mess left by the nation's state-owned oil company. The Health Ministry there has declared a water emergency in five districts. In Tasmania on 13 January a huge, dry electrical storm set more than 70 fires rampaging across the island. For more than a month, fire has rolled back and forth across the northern edge of Tasmania's vast world heritage area. And closer to home, in the UK over the winter, the country has been battered by a series of bad weather events with nine storms severe enough to be named. December was the wettest month in records dating back to 1910; almost 30,000 tonnes of damaged household goods have had to be dumped in landfill following the winter floods.

Currently our media is flooded with whether or not Britain should remain part of the European Union. The news is full of 'how our politicians should dress', alongside the 'latest celebrity' gossip. Whatever our individual views on this topic we need to be aware that burying our heads in the sand or throwing up barriers and creating more borders will not prevent the destruction of our eco-system caused by 'economic growth' and the exploitation of natural resources. Even here in the UK we are feeling the effects of climate change and we can only improve the situation if we, as a species, work together, help each other whatever our colour or creed and remember the lessons that history has taught us - borders and beliefs come and go.

Life and the natural world are our greatest treasures; we need to care for the planet that sustains us. We need to share with and care for our fellow human beings, because if we all work together we can achieve what is really important. The air that we breathe, the water we drink, the food that sustains us are all gifts from the Earth and we can appreciate and honour those gifts in the best possible way by living in harmony with each other and the planet.

*Together we really can make a world of difference.* ★

**Frances Ramsden**