

Kemerton Conservation Trust

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**GOVERNORS**

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John Clarke Memorial Walk Project – Final Report 31st July 2022

Project Background

Following the sad loss of the Trust's longstanding Conservation Advisor John Clarke in 2019, Trust Governors wanted to create a meaningful memorial for him, in honour of his outstanding work for nature conservation in the local area.

Various ideas were considered and rejected, and ultimately it was agreed that a memorial walk was the best option.

In January 2022 fundraising for the project began, with a target of raising 50% of costs from grants or specific project donations. A generous donation of £1000 from Highfields Trust CIO was received in February 2022. In May a grant of £500 was received from Magic Little Grants through the partnership between Localgiving and Postcode Local Trust. In addition, long-time corporate sponsor Cotswold Agricultural Merchants also supported the project with a donation of £200, in memory of their long association with John, and Overbury Enterprises, as a project partner, also generously contributed to the project. With our target exceeded, the project could begin.

Project Aims

The aim of this project was to create a lasting memorial to Conservation Advisor John Clarke which reflected his incredible contribution to Kemerton Conservation Trust (KCT) by creating a circular walk which focusses on wildflower margins and arable margins, two habitats he championed.

The walk will use existing public footpaths to highlight some of the best pollinator corridors on Kemerton Estate, which have been managed in partnership with KCT for over 30 years, as well as including a short section crossing Overbury Enterprises land that will showcase some of the best limestone flora on Bredon Hill, which KCT helped manage for several years and which John continued to advise on up to his untimely death. Walkers will be able to see a variety of native wildflowers and the bees and butterflies that depend on them. Whilst the walk will be at its finest in spring and summer, the route chosen will have interest at other times of the year; during autumn, winter and early spring the birds will move to centre stage.

As part of the new circular walk, the project included an interpretation board at the start of the walk (near Oat Hill Cottage), a bench by the interpretation board, and a new downloadable leaflet showing the walk route and including information about the flora and fauna visitors might see and how the habitats are managed.

Overview of Works

Work on the project began in February 2022 with the design of the interpretation board. In consultation with John's widow Pamela, now KCT's Conservation Advisor, and in partnership with Overbury Enterprises, the board's text and images were chosen and sent to the project designer Top Floor Creative. As part of the board design, a downloadable map was created for KCT's website as well (see Appendix A – Walk Map).

The beautiful oak bench was chosen and ordered in March, with delivery in April. A deliberately rustic design was chosen to fit with the rural site (see Appendix B – Photo Montage).

In late March the final board design was sent to the printers and work began on the walk leaflet. The leaflet was designed and printed by end of April.

In early April contractors CRC Ecology roboflailed sections of Oat Hill Track (part of the new walk) that had begun to scrub up too much with bramble and plum suckers. Occasional scrub management is part of the regular habitat management needed to keep the wildflower verges in good condition. Following the flailing, on 30th April our work party volunteers raked off the resultant brash to remove nutrients and maintain the verge.

In May the interpretation board was delivered.

In early June contractors CRC Ecology installed the new bench and interpretation board at Oat Hill Track, with the board left covered until the official unveiling. KCT's website was updated to include the downloadable map ready for the walk's grand opening.

On 10th July 2022 the new John Clarke Walk was officially opened, with Chairman Adrian Darby marking the occasion with a speech and Pamela Clarke unveiling the new interpretation board. A group of 30 attendees, including some of John's family and Penelope Bossom of Overbury Enterprises, then walked the route together to celebrate John's legacy.

After the grand opening, a link to the new downloadable map was sent by email to Friends of KCT, and the details were also posted on the Trust's Facebook page.

The project was also publicised in the Trust's bi-annual newsletter in edition 30, July 2022.

Project Results

Thanks to the generosity of the project funders, and hard work from KCT's team including our work party volunteers, the project was completed on time and on budget. The fundraising target of 50% of costs was met and exceeded.

The Future

The John Clarke Memorial Walk Project has officially ended but management of the key areas on the walk that are the responsibility of KCT will continue into the future. The map leaflet will be available at all future events for interested parties to take away, the downloadable map will be available from our website, and the bench and interpretation board will be maintained for visitors as part of our annual management.

We have already received positive feedback from members and locals who have followed the new walk and made use of the bench.

Acknowledgements

Kemerton Conservation Trust would like to thank our funders Highfields Trust CIO, Magic Little Grants through the partnership between Localgiving and Postcode Local Trust, Cotswold Agricultural Merchants and Overbury Enterprises; without whom this work could not have been carried out.



Special thanks go to Penelope Bossom of Overbury Enterprises for her support partnering with us on this project in memory of John.

We would also like to thank all those who assisted in the delivery of the project, particularly our hardworking volunteers, and Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke, whose input was vital in ensuring the walk was a fitting memorial to John.

Appendix A – Downloadable Map



The memorial walk follows various public rights of way across land which is owned by the Kemerton Estate and Overbury Enterprises. Much of this land is particularly important for wildlife and has been managed in partnership with Kemerton Conservation Trust for many years.



Arable Plant Areas – Oat Hill, Pad Piece & Tueswell Hill

Since the early 1980s, Kemerton Estate has experimented with untreated arable field margins where no farm chemicals are used. In these areas, rare 'arable weeds' have survived, including Venus's looking glass and rough poppy. John and Pamela's work with arable margins was instrumental in persuading governments to pay subsidies to farmers for leaving parts of fields untreated. Since 2021 the estate has left these 3 fields entirely untreated and unplanted to expand on this work. The best time to see these plants is from June to August.



Calcareous Grassland – Barn Piece, Round Hill SSSI, Quarry Field & Clay Furlong

The thin, limestone or 'calcareous' soils underlying this part of Bredon Hill give rise to pastures that are particularly rich in wildflowers, including pyramidal orchid, quaking grass, salad burnet and woolly thistle. The path runs alongside several such fields including Round Hill, which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its flora. The best time to see flowers is May to June.



Wildflower Rich Verges – Oat Hill Track, Pad Barn Track & Westmancote Track

Some of the tracks along the route are ancient in origin and their verges contain a profusion of wildflowers, including field scabious, greater knapweed, common calamint, restharrow and meadow cranesbill. These verges attract a wide range of insects including butterflies, moths, bees, flies, beetles and glow-worms. The best time to see flowers and insects is from June to August.



Wood Pasture and Woodland – Westmancote Hill, Oat Hill Meadow, Quarry Field & Quarry Wood

Recently created Wood-pasture can be seen in Westmancote Hill and Oathill Meadow. This mosaic habitat of grassland and open-grown trees grazed by livestock provides excellent habitat for wildflowers, invertebrates, birds and bats. The new wood pasture connects via existing wood pasture in Quarry Field to Quarry Wood, which was planted with John's assistance in 1984. This woodland consists largely of beech trees, underplanted with yew, box and holly. It provides habitat for birds such as chiffchaff, blackcap and goldcrest. The best time to hear birdsong is from March to June.



Access

The route of this walk follows public rights of way. Please keep to the paths and prevent dogs from running in to the fields to avoid disturbing wildlife. Please take nothing but photographs and leave nothing but footprints.

Please park with consideration for villagers and be aware that large farm vehicles or emergency vehicles may need access. The walk starts on the public footpath by Oat Hill Cottage, Westmancote, GL20 7ES, [what3words //silly.exacts.subsystem](https://www.what3words.com/silly.exacts.subsystem)

Appendix B—Photo Montage

All photos copyright Support Coordinator Kate Aubury



KCT work party volunteers raking off Oat Hill Track,
April 2022



Oak bench after delivery, April 2022



Oak bench being installed, June 2022



Pamela Clarke unveiling the new
interpretation board, July 2022



Pamela Clarke, Penelope Bossom and Adrian Darby with
the new interpretation board, July 2022



Six-spot Burnet on Greater Knapweed, Oat Hill Track,
July 2022



Poppies and White Campion in Westmancote Hill, July 2022



A profusion of wildflowers on Oat Hill Track Hill, July 2022



Grand Opening Attendees walking the new route, July 2022



Marbled White on Greater Knapweed, Westmancote Track, July 2022



Grand Opening Attendees walking the new route, July 2022



View of arable weeds in Oat Hill with Kemerton village in the distance, July 2022



Small Skipper on Greater Knapweed, Oat Hill Track, July 2022