



ENGLEFIELD
ESTATE

✂ Hackney New Primary School
by Jim Stephenson

2022

The Echo is made possible with the kind help of all staff, family, tenants and friends of the Englefield Estate.
We would like to thank everyone for their contributions.



Compiled and edited by:
KOR Communications
www.korcommunications.co.uk

Contributors:
Edward Benyon, Richard Benyon, Freddie Benyon, Peter Carson, Edward Crookes,
Catherine Haig, Duncan Rands, Sarah Lindsell, Dr Liz Mattison, Chris Webber and family,
Murray Wilson, Richard Edwards, Rev. Julia Myles, George Dunn, Robbie Kerr, Joe Letts,
Hugh Raven, Dr Joan Webber, Charles Rangeley-Wilson

Design:
The Escape
www.the-escape.co.uk

THE ENGLEFIELD ESTATE ANNUAL REVIEW

ENGLEFIELD ECHO

WE LIVE AND LEARN

Celebrating a community
in perfect harmony



ENGLEFIELD
ESTATE

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✂ Cover photo Hackney New Primary School by Simon Henley



ENGLEFIELD ESTATE



What a difference a year makes

The annual Englefield Echo always reminds me of how much happens in a year.

It’s hard to believe that 12 months ago Covid restrictions were still in place. The pandemic has undoubtedly taken a great toll, but it’s also brought out the best of our local communities and made us appreciate the freedoms we’d previously taken for granted.

This July primary school children from 34 schools across Berkshire and Hampshire were able to get together in a giant outdoor classroom in and around Englefield to learn more about the wonders of the countryside and how it’s managed. Across the two days of unbroken sunshine over 1,500 children joined us to mark the 25th anniversary of this annual event which continues to go from strength to strength. It’s also encouraging to see that the physical and mental health benefits of Green Social Prescribing, which includes outdoor exercise and the simple enjoyment of being in the natural environment, is being more widely understood with many other estates actively supporting the wellbeing of the communities around them.

Schoolchildren in London’s Hackney Borough have also been enjoying their new school and the outdoor spaces that have been so cleverly designed into the building. The success of this outstanding partnership project has not only been recognised with a prestigious national award, but also by the staff, pupils and parents.

In both London and Berkshire, the Englefield Charitable Trust has been able to support the dedicated work of some incredible charities who are making a transformational difference to many lives.

Finally, we pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who did so much for our nation and our communities during her 70 year reign, and we also look forward to the coronation next spring of King Charles III, who shares our great passion for the environment.

Wishing you a happy Christmas and a peaceful new year.

Richard Benyon.



Chris Webber pictured with his children

Sowing the seeds for a resilient future

Fourteen tenant farmers on the Englefield Estate are among the first in Britain to receive business advice, fully funded by their landlord, to help them assess the future of their farms as they transition to changes under the Environmental and Land Management Scheme (ELM).

Englefield became the first private estate in the UK to organise a series of workshops for its farm tenants through the Prince’s Countryside Fund’s Farm Resilience Programme.

Chris Webber, who runs a 324 hectares farm at Amners Farm near Reading, praised the Estate for giving him access to the programme, which he has found particularly helpful for succession planning and for assessing the current position of his business.

“It’s been a very useful reminder of what elements of your business you should be looking at. The group discussion led me to discover that I’m actually doing most things right, which is good to know.” said Chris.

Fellow tenant farmers Tony White of Malthouse Farm, Bradfield and James Hewison of Hartley Court Farm, Grazeley agreed.

Tony, whose 40-acre farm is home to a riding school and 15 to 20 liveries, has lived on the Englefield Estate for more than 70 years, his father Alfred a tenant farmer there before him.

Now aged 75, succession planning was also an important part of the programme for Tony.

“It made us think about ensuring our wills are properly in place as well as the necessary arrangements needed to enable my son to take over the tenancy,” said Tony.

James Hewison, of Hartley Court Farm, Grazeley, who farms 204 hectare on the Estate, said: “With a number of different enterprises, it has enabled us to analyse our business costs more closely.”

“Everybody I spoke to really appreciated the opportunity to attend the programme,” added James.

Independent evaluation of the Farm Resilience Programme by ADAS, a leading UK agricultural and environmental consultancy, found that it delivers significant economic, social and environmental benefits for farmers.

Since 2016, the programme has supported almost 1,000 farming families looking to improve business performance, and in its 2021 study, ADAS researchers found it had delivered tangible results.

This included 56 per cent of those taking part reporting increased profitability, 73 per cent reporting improved business skills and 46 per cent improving their succession planning.

With such strong statistical evidence to draw on, the Estate saw the programme as critical to giving farmers the best possible chance to

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CASE STUDY

Keeping it in the family: Chris gets a succession planning surprise

Tenant farmer Chris Webber was so inspired by the Farm Resilience Programme session on succession planning, he immediately resolved to raise the issue with his four children.

It was a ‘carpe diem’ moment for the 55-year-old, who knew the future of the family business was a discussion he needed to have with his two sons, Michael, 23 and Stephen, 19 and daughters 20-year-old Hannah and Zoë, 17.

With Michael having already embarked on a teaching career and the remaining children either studying or about to, Chris freely admits it was a discussion he had put off – to the point where it was becoming ‘a bit of an elephant in the room’.

But after sitting the family down and outlining his vision for Amners Farm, near Reading – hay, straw and wheat with associated liveries and business rental units – Chris is the first to admit he was ‘slightly shocked’ at their response.

As a third-generation farmer, following in the footsteps of his father Ralph and grandfather Norman before him, he could be forgiven for thinking that it would be the boys who might be interested in stepping into his welly boots.

“To be honest, that’s what they had expected me to say, that I would assume they would take it over and that in turn I wouldn’t even think the girls would be interested,” said Chris, who has farmed on the Englefield Estate since 2005.

“But the reality was, the two boys wanted to do other things and it was the two girls who were keen, particularly Hannah, while Zoë said she couldn’t imagine living anywhere else.”

While Chris admits succession planning had always been on his mind, it was equally important to him that all of his children didn’t feel pressured into taking on the farm for years to come and always wishing they were doing something else.

“I would have loved my sons or daughters to have followed me everywhere around the farm from the age of four, like I did my father,” said Chris.

“All I wanted to do every day was drive a tractor, but my children aren’t obsessed with farming like I was – and that’s fine too.”

With a 15-year business tenancy at Englefield Estate, Chris has a 10-year plan to scale back on the haylage business and focus on the business units income and the liveries, an aspect of the farm that particularly interests both Hannah and Zoë.

The Farm Resilience Programme workshops also gave Chris the opportunity to carry out a detailed analysis of where his business is now and he also found the session titled ‘Managing Your Farmed Environment’ beneficial.

But it was the succession planning that really hit home.

“The speaker was just so inspirational and told us to go and speak to our families, not to wait. So I thought, right I will,” said Chris.

“None of us have made any firm decisions, because like everything in life, things could change, but what is important is that we have had the discussion now. They know what my plans are and they’ve had a chance to tell me how they feel – it’s no longer that elephant in the room.”

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evaluate their own business operations, ensuring they can continue to thrive, while meeting the challenges of the ELM’s sustainability agenda.

“
We hope this programme of workshops has helped to give them the knowledge they need to look to the future with renewed confidence
”

ELM is central to Defra’s Future Farming and Countryside Programme, which the Government has hailed as a ‘once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity to reform agriculture’ through a series of schemes focused on enhancing the environment, protecting the countryside, and improving both farming productivity and animal health and welfare.

Set to be fully in place by 2024, funding previously distributed under the Common Agricultural Policy, or so-called CAP payments, will be refocused through ELM, to pay farmers for taking positive action to improve the environment under three distinct components.

Farmers who manage land in an environmentally sustainable way will be eligible for payments under the ‘Sustainable Farming Incentive’ (SFI) while ‘Local Nature Recovery’ will pay for what are more complex schemes and encourage farmers to take a more collaborative approach.

Finally, ‘Landscape Recovery’ is designed to fund major land use change projects, delivering landscape and ecosystem recovery, such as large-scale tree planting and peatland restoration, which is currently underway at Englefield’s Glenmazeran Estate in Scotland.

Edward Crookes, Estates Director, said: “With so many changes coming into force it was important for us as an Estate that our tenant farmers didn’t feel isolated and overwhelmed, but empowered and ready to meet the challenges the changeover to ELM will present.

“We hope this programme of workshops has helped to give them the knowledge they need to look to the future with renewed confidence, to embrace the sustainability agenda and forge a successful future for both them and their families, knowing we are always there to do what we can to support them.” ✖

The Farm Tenancy Workshop

Alongside the Farm Resilience Programme, the Estate also facilitated The Farm Tenancy Workshop delivered by the Tenant Farmers Association (TFA) and its Chief Executive, George Dunn. The TFA is the only organisation dedicated to supporting all non-land-owning farmers, through expert advice and Government lobbying.

A number of Englefield’s tenant farmers are already members of the Association and had specifically requested a session and so the Estate worked with George to make it happen.

The event focused on the tenant/landlord relationship in the context of forthcoming policy changes, with a workshop on how farm landlords and tenants could collaborate more effectively to maximise opportunities around ELM schemes and other environmental services, including carbon credits and biodiversity net gain.

This was followed by a technical workshop covering a variety of topics, such as tenancy succession, and repairs and compliance.



Mr Dunn said “Some tenants had issues around diversification, while some were looking at succession or possibly exit schemes, so it was good to have the opportunity to address those questions on an individual basis at the end of the session.

“I felt there was a mutual sharing of concerns that hopefully both the Estate and tenants can benefit from into the future .” ✖



Mapping out the journey to net zero

Englefield Estate has been working with a specialist independent consultancy to calculate its carbon footprint, as it sets its sights on a net zero target for greenhouse gas emissions.

Experts from Eunomia, which helps businesses and organisations make a tangible reduction in their impact on the environment, have conducted the first phase of the Estate’s net zero project.

It has included assessing emissions from both the Estate’s building infrastructure, vehicles and power/heat supply and carrying out a screening exercise to ensure the Estate’s measurements are compliant with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, the global standard to measure and manage greenhouse gas emissions.

The phase one work not only covers the Englefield Estate, but also the 300 let properties on the Benyon Estate in the London borough of Hackney, and the Glenmazeran Estate’s 7,700 acres in the Scottish Highlands, where there is a particular emphasis on sustainable environmental management via peatland restoration and tree planting.

In common with public and private sector businesses across the UK, Englefield Estate is committed to meeting the Government’s current target of net zero emissions by 2050. Net zero is defined as achieving a balance, so that the amount of carbon we emit into the atmosphere is no more than the amount removed.

With new standards for emissions and carbon capture (known as sequestration) being developed for land-based sectors, such as forestry and agriculture, Englefield Estate’s ambitions have taken on even greater significance.

Edward Crookes, Estates Director, said that the work with Eunomia is the first step in a very important journey as the Estate looks to do everything it can to ensure a sustainable future for its land and the people who rely on it.

“We know where we would like to get to on this journey, but in order to do that, we need to properly understand where we are starting from and that’s what makes this assessment so important,” said Edward.

“In recent years we have placed more focus on sustainability and a key element of that process is to carry out a detailed measurement of our greenhouse gas emissions, then develop a proper plan to reduce those emissions for the benefit of both people and the planet.”

With the increasing prevalence of extreme weather events, such as flooding and extreme temperatures, the evidence continues to grow stronger every day that the changes in climate are being caused by the activities of humans and the release of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere.

In 2022 Englefield experienced Storm Eunice in February, followed by a summer of record-breaking heat, with drought conditions lasting well into the autumn. Climate impacts on many aspects of an estate like Englefield, such as affecting crops, livestock and the survival of trees.

Any of the Estate’s activities can contribute to greenhouse gas emissions though, not just through the burning of fuels like gas and heating oil, but via crop fertilisers releasing nitrous oxide and methane from cattle, sheep and deer as they digest their food.

But as Liz Mattison Education and Environment Officer pointed out, the Estate can also have a positive impact. Trees, hedges, soils and some crops can also ‘sequester’ carbon – the term for taking carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and locking the carbon up in their structure.

With more than 3,000 acres of forest and over 30 miles of hedgerow at Englefield for example, the potential benefits are clear.

“That’s why we have been taking stock of not only how the climate affects the Estate, but how the Estate affects the climate,” said Liz.

“Clearly, it’s vital we identify the sources and amounts of greenhouse gas emissions so we can prioritise our actions to reduce them, but equally estimating how much carbon is sequestered by woodlands, hedges and wetlands is also very important.

“That’s the balancing act of net zero, but before the Estate can get there, we need to not only know how far along the path to net zero we are, but importantly, how we can continue along that path in the quickest and most effective way.” ✖

Chalking up a healthier future for a uniquely English stream



Beneath the surface of the crystal-clear waters that characterise the quintessentially English chalk streams, all is not good.

The most botanically biodiverse of all English rivers, they are havens of rich flora, such as water crowfoot and starwort, and offer habitats to a wide range of invertebrates, fish, birds, and mammals. Otters, kingfishers, salmon – the list goes on.

Nowadays though, these wonderfully unique stretches of water are under increasing pressure.

Flowing through urbanised and farmed environments means that many are impacted by the activities of people – through water run-off from farms and over-abstraction, taking more water than is replaced by rain. There are also the issues around modification of streams, through centuries of milling, transport or dredging, and of course, their use as a water supply.

But help is at hand in the shape of a major, national initiative aimed at restoring them to their former glory – and Englefield Estate will be playing its part.

The iconic status and global rarity of the English chalk streams network means it is vital that they are protected and restored. That’s the view of the Catchment Based Approach’s (CaBA), Chalk Stream Restoration Working Group (CSRG). The CSRG is a multi-agency partnership, including Defra, The Environment Agency, Natural England and several water companies.

It has produced its Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy calling for all chalk streams in England to be given enhanced environmental status, as well as new investment to prevent pollution and also restoring habitats to boost biodiversity.

Put simply, it’s about making our chalk stream network healthier now – and into the future.

That’s where Englefield Estate comes in.

The River Pang, which runs through Englefield Estate, has been selected as one of 12 flagship catchment restoration projects, that will enable members of the CaBA CSRG to assess how they can achieve the key strategy objectives and restore all the country’s chalk streams.

Dr Liz Mattison, Education & Environment Officer at Englefield, said that the Estate is excited to be involved in such a high-profile project and would be working closely with Action for River Kennet (ARK), a collaboration that would hopefully result in dramatic ecological improvements for all the chalk streams, and the surrounding landscapes that support them.

“At 2.14km, our stretch of the Pang equates to approximately six per cent of the total length of the river, 36.5km, and as we own and manage land on both sides, it gives us the ability to affect both in-stream and land-use changes,” said Liz.

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“Working with ARK our contribution to this project will be done in two distinct phases, beginning with detailed information gathering about the Pang, compiling historical information, as well as current data, particularly around previous restoration work we have carried out. Phase two will be the actual river restoration, central to which will be the Estate’s long-term objectives to improve the condition of the river channel and the habitats in the river and along its banks.”

While boosting biodiversity, as well as improving water quality and quantity, are central elements of the chalk stream restoration strategy, it’s the fourth aim, the call

for better Government recognition for chalk streams that’s arguably the most important.

It’s what the strategy report’s author Charles Rangeley-Wilson, Chair CaBa Chalk Stream Restoration Group, calls – ‘One big wish – enhanced status for all chalk streams.’

All chalk streams are classified as a Priority Habitat, meaning they have been identified as requiring conservation. Seven chalk stream catchments are currently designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and four as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – the Rivers Itchen, Avon, Lambourn and Wensum.

But in his strategy summary, Charles points out that chalk streams were once THE river Priority Habitat, with their own investment driver, whereas now they are a merely a subset criteria of Priority Habitat, a designation that historically hasn’t always been that powerful.

“People who are passionate about chalk streams have asked for one big thing over and over again over the last 20 years, for the Government to give chalks streams a status which reflects the fact these rivers are not just locally precious, but globally unique,” wrote Charles.

“Rivers are found all over the world, but chalk streams are very largely English. They should be our pride and joy. Enhanced status which drives investment – whatever form that needs to take – will allow them to become so.” ✕



✕ Charles Rangeley-Wilson



What are chalk streams?

Hailed as a truly special natural heritage, akin to Australia’s Great Barrier Reef or the vast inland Okavango Delta in Botswana, chalk streams are a type of spring-fed river. They derive most of their flow from underground aquifers, a body of rock and/or sediment holding groundwater, where rain has penetrated the soil.

According to the current figures in the CaBa Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy document, there are 283 distinct chalk streams that have been identified in England, alongside many more nameless rills and becks.

These streams are not unique to England, as they also found in France and Denmark, but nowhere else in the world has the same mass of chalk that occurs in this country.

That chalk is what remains of an entire seafloor, which rose to the Earth’s surface to become rolling chalk hills that surrounded the clear water rivers we now know as chalk streams.

Rain falling on chalk hills soaks into rocks and emerges from springs as crystal clear water, rich in minerals and alkaline content that enable a diverse eco-system to thrive. In fact, botanically speaking, chalk streams are the most biodiverse of all English rivers and it’s this biodiversity that’s now under pressure.

What is the strategy to restore them?

CaBa describe it as ‘The Trinity of Ecological Health’ – the three vital elements upon which a healthy chalk stream depends: water quantity, water quality and the quality of the natural habitat.

That’s why these elements form the main aims of the CaBa strategy for chalk stream restoration, as addressing them together will mean the best chances of success.

Under those main aims, there are 33 individual objectives the strategy is seeking to address that will contribute to that successful restoration.

They include improving river flow and tackling over-abstraction (where more water is taken from the river than can be replaced by springs and rainfall) and working with farmers to reduce nutrient pollution and address run off in chalk catchments. In terms of physical habitat, it aims to restore ecological processes that improve habitats for a wide range of flora and fauna.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the strategy’s fourth aim is to persuade Government to create a robust overarching protection status to give chalk streams a distinct identity and help to drive future investment in them.

Team work... to make the stream work

A key element of Englefield Estate’s contribution to the Chalk Stream Restoration Project on the River Pang is the collaboration with Action for River Kennet (ARK) an organisation dedicated to the protection of chalk streams on the Rivers Kennet and Pang, as well as their tributaries.

The 10-year restoration project on the Pang is due to get officially underway in 2025, with phase one, detailed information gathering followed by phase two, restoration of the river.

But a lot of preparatory work has already been carried out at Englefield, with the help of ARK.

During 2021 and 2022, ARK made surveys of obstacles to eel migration, such as weirs, and to count the places where trout are spawning. ARK has also recruited a network of volunteers to assist in further information gathering as the project progresses.

Anna Forbes, Senior Project Officer & Volunteer Co-ordinator with ARK, is looking forward to the ongoing community involvement in the project, particularly monitoring for evidence of pollution.

‘We are excited to be delivering the ARK Pang Project and improving the habitats of the Pang over the next 10 years. Part of involving the community will be the roll out of river fly monitoring, a proven citizen science method for picking up pollution incidents,’ said Anna.

But there is a wealth of other information about the River Pang that has to be collated too.

This includes a combination of historic and current data, while mapping land use within the whole catchment will also be done, to help identify places that are likely to cause problems. There will be regular testing of the sediment, as well as nitrate and phosphate levels, indicators of water quality.

The project will then move into its second phase – restoration of the river, aiming to increase biodiversity, improve water quality and contribute to flood risk reduction.

To help draw up the river restoration plan, the Estate also called in experts from Cain Bio-engineering, river restoration specialists, based in Hampshire. ✕



Hackney New Primary School wins People's Vote

Photo by Nick Kane

It is perhaps fitting that the Hackney New Primary School and 333 Kingsland Road development won the People's Vote in the 2022 Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stirling Prize, one of the UK's most coveted architectural accolades.

People matter in this hybrid scheme, combining a primary school and affordable housing on the site of a former fire station.

It continues to go from strength to strength thanks to the children, staff, parents and residents who have helped it to become a major focal point of the local community – an educational and residential hub existing in perfect harmony.

Fitting too then that the project also won the Neave Brown Award for Housing, named in honour of the late social housing pioneer and which recognises the UK's best new affordable housing. The 68 apartments in the neighbouring housing block have been sold to London-based Dolphin Living, who provide affordable housing for working Londoners.

It's something Brown – who was lauded as 'the pioneer of quality public housing' – would no doubt be highly impressed with.

The celebrations didn't end there either.

The RIBA Client of the Year award for the Benyon Estate and developers Thornsett Group, completed a hat trick of prizes on the night. Alongside locally based architects Henley Halebrown, they had worked with Hackney New Primary School Trust and the Education Funding Council emphasising the collaborative extent of this community project.

Hailed as 'a piece of social infrastructure making a significant contribution to the East London community', the school first welcomed pupils in November 2019.

While the residential block was deliberately compact, the architects designed the school without inner corridors and with a central courtyard to increase visibility and create that all important sense of space. The courtyard is that central hub where children can play in an open, safe environment.

One of the key features of the school is the long, precast concrete bench where waiting parents can gather – a focal point for creating that sense of community, according to Simon Henley, Principal at Henley Halebrown.

"The interesting thing about a school is that it has the potential to create and support a community.

"We created the bench so that parents waiting for their kids at the end of the day could have a chat and make friends. That way, your kids

make friends too and it becomes a virtuous circle. In doing this, the school becomes a form of social infrastructure."

Headteacher Marya Afreedi said that the school is an important safe space too, for both the children and staff, who come from a range of communities.

"Every single person feels they have a space where they can run around, a space where they can learn that's just for them, a space where they can be with friends and create memories," said Marya.

"It's also a space that takes them away from whatever they are facing outside and helps them to create their own little mini world within our school."

In its shortlisting for the Stirling Prize, judges described the Hackney School Kingsland Road scheme as 'an immense sculptural pink brute of a building, punctuating a busy junction on Kingsland Road with a certain civic pride.'

But amid the hyperbole, they too recognised the successful contribution it is making to the local community.

"This is a notable architectural response, demonstrating how to effectively combine multiple functions without diminishing the strength of either the educational or residential aspect," said Kaye Stout, Chair of the Neave Brown jury.

While RIBA Client of the Year Jury Chair, Denise Bennetts thanked and congratulated the Benyon Estate and Thornsett for 'their commitment to addressing the local community's needs for affordable housing and a primary school.'

Edward Benyon, Manager of Benyon Estate, said the Stirling Awards success was something everyone in the Hackney area could share in – and be rightly proud of.

"The recognition that comes with this most coveted of architectural competitions isn't just for those involved in its planning and construction, but for all people in the heart of the local community, the school and the residents who make this wonderful development such a vibrant place to be," said Edward.

"Congratulations should go to each and every one of you for your continued contribution to such a key community location." ✂



Photo by Jim Stephenson

A place in history and a place to do business

Work is underway on the first phase of improvements to the Englefield Estate Yard, which is focused on converting the old historic sawmill to a new office.

Designed to bring the management of the Estate into the heart of the village, contractors began initial site preparation work in August this year, exactly three years since the Estate held a public consultation on the original plan.

The timescale reflects the importance that’s been placed on getting the scheme right.

It is all about sensitive regeneration, a steadfast aim to realise the potential of converting underused buildings on the site for a new generation of businesses, but not at the expense of losing the sense of history and heritage assets that make it special.

“It’s been a careful and considered balancing act,” said Estates Director Edward Crookes.

“Ever since these proposals were first discussed, we have been mindful of the need to chart a long term, viable economic future for this area of the Estate, while celebrating a rich heritage that has been established over many generations.”

Once the hub of the administrative and maintenance functions of the Estate, employing 200 people, times have changed and the Yard infrastructure needs to change with it. Architectural heritage specialists ADAM Architecture have helped to draw up a new vision for the future – while honouring the past.

Nowhere is this better celebrated than in the phase one redevelopment of the old saw mill into the new Estate office. Here the steam boiler, engines and flywheel will be preserved as a focal point, as the new office space evolves around it, combining modern practicalities with design cues that evoke the building’s industrial past.

Robbie Kerr, Director of ADAM Architecture, said his team has worked closely with West Berkshire Council’s Conservation Officers and other interested groups with a key principle in mind.

“The principle has always been that the Estate recognises and values the heritage that it has in this building, particularly in the rarity of the



✂ The Estate Yard today and below as it was, from the air in the 1960s



steam boiler, the fly wheel and its connectedness with the Estate,” said Robbie.

“This was an opportunity to embrace that in the design of the building. Not only has the steam boiler been retained, it has been enhanced and celebrated in a way that it wouldn’t have been possible to do historically.

“Once completed, this office will be an exemplar of how to improve the carbon

footprint of an historical building that meets the demands of a modern office setting, while maintaining the integrity of its industrial heritage.”

The boiler and steam engine will be restored and refurbished to be preserved as a museum piece. An historic wheelwright’s furnace is also being conserved, with new metal and brickwork.

The architects saw it as important in design terms to be able to maintain an open feel to the new office, by avoiding solid dividing walls running the length of the building.

Katie Pottrill, Associate Architect with ADAM Architecture, explained that the use of Crittall windows and partitions, while giving an industrial feel, also contributes to this sense of openness.

There’s a clear line of sight down the length of the building, as would have been possible when the sawmill was originally operational. In the same way, glazing used in the board room creates a ‘viewing area’ of the historic steam engine room.

“It’s a working office so clearly, we have had to create new partitions, but it has been done in a way that complements the industrial feel of the building. We also wanted to ensure we didn’t lose the flywheels or the gantries, so they have

been seamlessly integrated into the plan too,” said Katie.

“Wherever possible, as many historical elements have been not only retained, but enhanced and incorporated, as part of the new theme.”

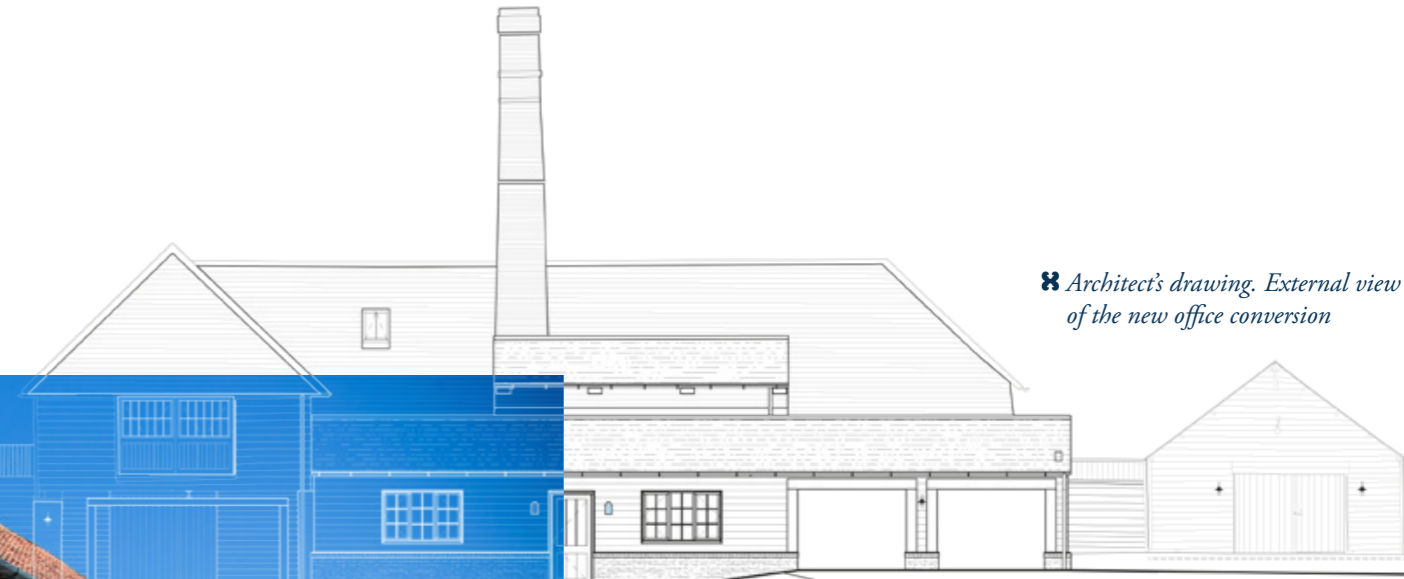
Alongside the conversion of the sawmill, outside, there will be provision for staff parking spaces, incorporating electric vehicle charging points and extensive landscaping work.

Photovoltaic cells are also being installed to generate electricity, while an air source heat pump will provide heating, cooling and hot water. Robbie sees this focus on renewable energy as another key element of the scheme, highlighting the Estate’s steadfast commitment to sustainable technologies of the future, as well as preserving the past.

“They are very focused on where materials are sourced from too, such as using Welsh slate tiles, when slate from China would be a much cheaper option and putting an emphasis on natural, not man made products, sheep wool for insulation and timber in place of steel, for example,” said Robbie.

“All that has a cost implication, but it’s about the Estate’s long-term commitment to the stewardship of its land and the wider environmental focus.”

Further proposals to convert other redundant buildings in the yard to provide flexible new office space, are currently under discussion. ✂



✂ Architect’s drawing. External view of the new office conversion

✂ The interior of the old sawmill



A chance to sing, dance and remember, summer concerts are back



Pop, proms and a poignant tribute to a late TV personality – the crowds came in their thousands to celebrate the return of summer concerts at Englefield Estate.

Staged in partnership with Heritage Live, around 20,000 concertgoers attended three days of live music shows that had to be postponed from last year, due to the Covid pandemic.

80s pop legends Boy George and Culture Club and the acclaimed tenor Russell Watson were the headline acts in two concerts on July 23rd and 24th respectively, both part of Heritage Live's series of exclusive UK outdoor shows for 2022.

Then on Monday 25th, it was the turn of celebrities from all corners of the showbiz world to remember their late TV presenter friend Caroline Flack, at the Flackstock festival extravaganza, staged in her honour.

The event was a celebration of Caroline's life and her passion for festivals and marked an emotional, but uplifting end to three days of amazing musical entertainment and much more.

"After the disappointment of the postponements in 2021, it was just amazing to bring people together again for what proved to be an incredible three days of diverse entertainment," said Events Manager Peter Carson.

"There was something to suit all musical tastes, an opportunity to sing and dance, but also to remember and reflect on a life cut tragically short. They were events that will live long in the memory for all those who attended."

At Saturday's curtain raiser, original superstar DJ Fat Tony, who has performed at birthday

parties for stars like Madonna, Prince and Michael Jackson, set the tone with a powerful set.

Boy George and Culture Club, arguably the most iconic 80s band, were the headliners and belted out old favourites, including 'Do You Really Want to Hurt Me' and 'Karma Chameleon'. The band was supported by a trio of equally famous singing stars – Lulu, Kim Wilde and Gabrielle – whose careers have spanned several decades.

In a change of musical style, Russell Watson took centre stage on Sunday in a show billed as "The Last Night of the Heritage Proms, featuring the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, conducted by David Arnold.

Beginning with a Spitfire flypast and ending with a stunning fireworks display, concertgoers were able to enjoy picnics in the grounds in true outdoor proms fashion, as Russell performed songs from across his 25-year career.



The concert also featured composer, arranger and producer Mike Moran, coloratura soprano Christina Johnston, and very special guests The NHS Choir. £1 from every ticket sold for the event was donated to the NHS Charities Together, the collective representing, supporting and championing the work of the NHS' official charities.

At the Flackstock event, crowds enjoyed performances from Masked Singer winner Natalie Imbruglia, as well as fellow pop stars Louise Redknapp and Fleur East. There were also appearances from Olly Murs, Dermot O'Leary and Keith Lemon, alongside BBC Strictly Dancers Janette Manrara and Aljaz Skorjanec.

The event was also about raising awareness of mental health issues and raising funds for charities supporting those in need of help. All money raised will be divided equally between the Samaritans, Mind, Choose Love and the Charlie Waller Trust, all charities close to Caroline's heart.

Mum Christine was full of gratitude for those who had come together to stage the event, as well as all those who took part. She said it was the perfect way to remember her daughter singing, dancing and most of all laughing.'

"My Caroline was never more herself or happier than at a music festival with her sister and her friends," said Christine. "Not only is Flackstock the most positive way to honour Carrie, but charities that she loved will benefit from the proceeds." ✕

“
It was just amazing
to bring people
together again
”



Perfect launchpad for aviation tech high flyers

Englefield House was the perfect venue for aviation technology company Altitude Angel to stage a live demonstration of more than 140 drone flights, just prior to the Government's go ahead for Project Skyway, marking the next transport revolution.

The Reading based specialist company is at the forefront of safely integrating fully automated drones into airspace across the world and is leading a business consortium developing the exciting project, a 165-mile UK-based drone superhighway that will revolutionise travel and transport of goods, much like railways did in the 18th century.

It chose Englefield House and its grounds for a high-profile corporate event, designed to showcase advancements in its ARROW platform – the technology on which Project Skyway will be ultimately built – to an invited audience. Guests included airspace regulators and aviation industry representatives.

The 'Automated Skies' event preceded the Government's green light for Project Skyway in July this year, which will unlock the huge potential for unmanned vehicles to fly longer distances.

At the heart of Project Skyway is the world's longest and largest network of drone superhighways – initially linking locations in the Midlands and South East of England, with an option to expand across the country.

Cosima Wagner, Marketing Manager at Altitude Angel, said the Estate was the ideal location for the Automated Skies programme of drone flights on an extended section of the planned superhighway, to the south of Reading. "The location of Englefield House

enabled our technology to allow the safe flight of multiple drones alongside general aviation activity, as there is a number of local airfields near the Estate," said Cosima.

"We also liked the juxtaposition of an historical, traditional backdrop for a demonstration of innovation and technology, showing how far we've come. It was also a location befitting of the high-level VIP audience we had invited."

Altitude Angel offers a range of aviation technology solutions across drone piloting and navigation data, as well as airspace management capabilities. Its software platform is currently enabling hundreds of thousands of safe drone flights in 152 countries around the world.

Meanwhile, another business to utilise the potential of Englefield House as a corporate events venue was 2B UK DMC, destination and event management specialists working across the United Kingdom.

The grounds provided both a versatile and stunning backdrop for a corporate activity day for more than 70 corporate guests from the United States.

The event featured a number of food, drink and music marquees, including a re-creation of the Channel 4 'Great British Bake-Off' tent. Guests also got the opportunity to try their hands at country pursuits in the grounds with falconry, gun dog handling and clay pigeon shooting among the activities on offer.

As in previous years, Englefield House played host to a number of marriages, including its first ever Indian wedding ceremony for Jack Nathan and Urvashi Agarwal.

The hugely vibrant event included the traditional Baraat, the groom's procession into the ceremony. ✕



Englefield House hosts two high profile Newbury Spring Festival events

Englefield Estate supported the 2022 Newbury Spring Festival, as it made a welcome return to its traditional two weeks in May.

The House played host to two high profile events beginning with a rare public interview by one of the UK's most distinguished and much-loved singers, Dame Janet Baker.

The mezzo soprano discussed her life in music and what inspired her stellar career with Edward Seckerson, the writer, broadcaster and self-confessed musical theatre obsessive, who has interviewed some of the biggest names in the business during an equally distinguished career.

Audience members were treated to a fascinating and illuminating conversation, as well as excerpts from some of her finest performances. The talk was then followed by an opportunity to meet Dame Janet during afternoon tea.

The following evening, the House was the venue for a performance of the critically acclaimed chamber opera Mansfield Park by the Waterperry Opera Company. With music by Jonathan Dove and libretto by Alasdair Middleton, the production has been hailed as 'an immersive operatic experience like no other'.

Englefield House provided the perfect backdrop for this wonderful period production, that has enjoyed multiple sell-out performances at Waterperry in Oxford.

For more information on the Newbury Spring Festival, visit www.newburyfestival.org.uk



✂ *Fin Lace, Trainee Forest Worker, tending to one of the newly planted trees*

Jubilee tree planting also marks new dawn for disease resistant elm

Seventy new parkland trees were planted in the grounds of Englefield House this year to mark the late Queen’s Platinum Jubilee – and to help reintroduce a species, once decimated by disease.

The tree planting programme by Forestry Manager Rich Edwards and his team is the Estate’s contribution to the Queen’s Green Canopy (QGC) initiative, which invited groups and individuals across the UK to “Plant a Tree for the Jubilee.”

With a focus on sustainability, the QGC encouraged the planting of trees to honour Her Majesty’s seven decades on the throne, while creating a legacy that will benefit future generations and protect the planet.

But in planting 50 elms, the Estate is also playing its part in bringing back a tougher, more resilient species of a tree that has been killed in its millions over the past 40 years, by the now infamous Dutch Elm Disease.

“Dutch Elm Disease particularly decimated the species in the 1970s and 80s, meaning it is now extremely rare in the UK, particularly here in Berkshire, so it is about doing our bit to bring

a really majestic tree species back to our landscape in greater numbers,” said Rich.

“The elm we have been planting has been developed to be more resilient to disease. It’s about reintroducing a tree to this country that has suffered so much in the past, but now is tough enough to survive and thrive long into the future.”

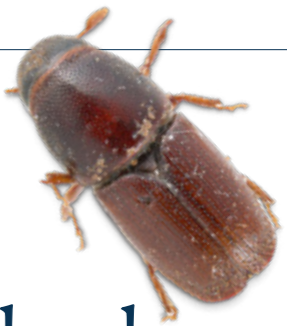
Although Dutch Elm Disease has not been eradicated, university experts across the globe have been working to develop hybrid species, testing their resistance to Dutch Elm. This work has been done in tandem with sanitary felling of dead and dying trees to prevent the spread of the disease.

The hybrid Elms planted in the first phase of the programme at the Estate in March, were a mix of different species, the majority of which was the Ademuz, a particularly well-established variety that should ensure strong growth.

A total of 40 Ademuz were planted along with three Dehesa de Amanieli, two Dehesa de la Ville, four Lutece and a single Wingham. All the trees were planted in clusters across the Estate, in old hedgerows, in Deer Park and on an avenue leading to one of the let farms.

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Two pathogens, one beetle... and billions of dead trees



A number of myths exist about Dutch Elm Disease, not least that it first originated in the Netherlands. The name is in fact derived from the Dutch pathologists, who made the first significant discoveries of the disease in the early 1920s.

But what is definitely anchored in cold hard fact is the devastation it has caused, says Dr Joan Webber, Principal Pathologist at the internationally renowned Forest Research, Britain’s principal organisation for forestry and tree related research.

“Dutch Elm Disease remains one of the best-known examples of what can happen when a potentially highly invasive and aggressive pathogen is accidentally introduced into a susceptible host population,” said Dr Webber.

In the early research carried out by the Dutch pathologists, it was established that the pathogen was spread by the feeding and breeding behaviour of the Elm Bark Beetle, causing what is known as a ‘vascular wilt disease’ in the effected elms.

The beetle caused the disease by boring through the bark and it was accidentally imported into Britain in the late 1960s, quickly spreading through the transport of logs with bark attached, as well as via mulching bark and saplings.

But this wasn’t the first pandemic – and what research has also since established is that the two pandemics were caused by two entirely separate pathogens, carried by the same Elm Bark Beetle.

Dutch Elm Disease first broke out in the decade between 1920 and 1930, killing trees across Europe, as well as Britain. Although it went into decline in the following decade, its accidental introduction into the USA’s east coast from Europe initiated what Dr Webber calls ‘a new explosion in tree deaths’, spreading from New England to eastern Canada.

“By 1989, three quarters of the estimated 77 million elms in North America had been lost to Dutch Elm Disease and it transpired that native American elm were more susceptible than many European species,” said Dr Webber.

This marked the start of the second pandemic first recognised in Britain in the early 70s, which again decimated the elm population in greater numbers than the first.

Half a century on, Dr Webber says the future of elms in our countryside remains uncertain, with waves of disease continuing to attack young trees at 15-to-20-year intervals. It is the continued work to identify tougher, hybrid species that will hold the key to the long-term success of the elm tree. ✂



✂ *Dr Joan Webber*



✂ *Above and below: Examples of public information leaflets published at the height of Dutch Elm Disease*



Continued from page 21

Ademuz is a Spanish field elm, which breeding programmes found had a significant resistance to elm disease.

“We wanted to try a different range of species to see which did well, but we were also mindful of ensuring the majority of trees would become well established, which is why we planted the Ademuz species in the numbers we did,” said Richard.

“It will be interesting to see how the different species fare in our ground.”

In the second phase of planting over the winter, 20 mixed native broadleaf trees will be planted with the help of local school children.

Each tree is planted with a stake and surrounded with a mulch of wood and bark, which decomposes, keeping weeds at bay and ensuring vital nutrients get to the tree’s roots as it grows.

“I guess you could say that this is the ultimate definition of a long-term project,” said Richard.

“It may have taken us only a few months to get to this point, but the trees that we have planted this year will hopefully still be around in 400 years, long after our lifetimes, so it really is a multi-generational legacy that we are leaving behind.

“Hopefully it’s a legacy that will ensure the planet is in great shape then too.” ✂



✂ Rich Edwards, Forestry Manager

✂ Far left: English Elm before disease in 1980.
Left: Elm severely attacked by Dutch Elm Disease in late summer.
UK Forestry Commission



Estates like Englefield are increasingly looking at opportunities to support the health and well-being of their local communities, amid the growth in Green Social Prescribing (GSP).

Research by masters student Joe Letts discovered that a number of estates are exploring a variety of ways in which they can integrate the health and well-being agenda into their overall land management strategies.

Joe, 26, who is studying Rural Land and Business Management at the University of Reading spoke to seven landed estates, including Englefield, as part of the research for his course dissertation. He was interested in how the use of green and blue space increased, as gyms and health clubs shut down during the Covid pandemic.

It is a subject that is personal to Joe too. He has experienced his own difficulties with anxiety and found running was a huge benefit, which culminated in him taking part in the London Marathon, in aid of MIND.

The Covid pandemic highlighted the importance of access to open space to people’s mental and physical health, which has led the NHS to expand GSP – supporting people in considering connecting with nature, as a possible alternative to traditional drug therapies.

“It is clear that Estates are recognising that there are opportunities to support their local communities, as part of Green Social Prescribing, and there is a broad spectrum in terms of how they are doing this,” said Joe, who originally comes from Oxfordshire.

“Englefield identified themselves at the more active end, hosting runs and family bike rides, as well as within their educational offering. Rather than organising these events they facilitate them, which is a key mechanism for estates to be able to support the health and well-being agenda.

“I think the important thing to remember is that, however they are supporting this agenda, they are all doing something to help them connect with their local communities in a beneficial way.”

Joe carried out the research between March and September this year. As well as speaking to Estate management staff, he talked to health professionals and other organisations to see how they have traditionally supported the health and well-being agenda for visitors at an exemplar level.

Joe did identify some obstacles that need to be overcome if GSP is to be more widespread, such as changing the current notion that using open space at landed Estates is still perceived as very much a middle-class activity and that those providing GSP services will need to be properly licensed by the NHS.



✂ Masters Student, Joe Letts

“It was clear from talking to GPs that Green Social Prescribing is only going to grow, but what’s also obvious is that there is a number of administrative hoops that providers would need to go through to be recognised by the NHS,” said Joe.

“This is perhaps where the approach of estates like Englefield, in facilitating local groups rather than commercially organising their own events, is the key. Like its educational programmes, Englefield is doing a great job in supporting local community access and showing how health and well-being can be compatible with other land management priorities.” ✂

At the heart of a burning issue



It’s a practice that dates back centuries, but in a modern world where climate change and the future of the planet dominates the environmental debate, it also increasingly divides opinion.

Muirburn, the Scottish term for the managed burning of small areas of vegetation to promote new growth on moorland, came under the spotlight as the Glenmazeran Estate played host to a high-profile discussion, staged by Scotland’s Moorland Forum.

Representatives from some of the 27 diverse environmental organisations who make up the Forum spent the day touring the Estate with Head Keeper Murray Wilson, viewing areas of recently burned and regenerating heather, before listening to a number of invited expert speakers and finally, holding a lively discussion around all aspects of Muirburn.

Forum members aren’t alone in this either. Muirburn is currently the subject of many a heated debate across Scotland, amid calls for formal licensing of the practice against a backdrop of growing environmental concerns.

In a report released in October last year, RSPB Scotland warned current Muirburn practices were incompatible with the country’s net zero ambitions by 2045 and the voluntary Muirburn Code simply wasn’t working.

Now it has called on the Government to replace the code with a compulsory licensing system, administered by NatureScot, to ensure that it properly addresses ongoing issues around sustainability. However, research shows that the occasional burning of small sections of heather increases, rather than decreases, both moorland plant and bird communities. The removal of excessive heather also reduces the risk of wildfires. These can ignite large areas of the underlying peat, which results in both the loss of carbon and devastates the local ecosystem.

Moorland Forum chairman Hugh Raven said that in light of the current ongoing consultation period, it was important to expose their members to both sides of the debate. What’s more, it was equally important to choose a venue where, he knows, the whole practice and its impacts are taken very seriously.

✂ Photo by Marlies Nicolai, GWCT



“Glenmazeran and Englefield Estate are very open to this discussion and want to get this aspect of land management absolutely right. That means their opinions matter too. We wanted to hear the experiences of people on the ground, the head keepers, who are actually doing this work in a careful and considered manner,” said Hugh.

“The knowledge of head keepers must be respected. It’s not just a case of chucking a match on it and hoping for the best. The skill and care with which the Muirburn is practiced ensures it’s a very controlled and rigorous process and the field trip helped illuminate that aspect of the subject to our members.”

“Equally, it’s important that we also hear from the scientists doing practical work in the field. We must recognise that the science around Muirburn and carbon emission is contested. It’s not cut and dried and we have to respect that too.”

Key findings and recommendations from the Forum meeting will now feed into the ongoing licensing discussion process. Hugh said that in

general, members feel there is strong evidence on both sides of the argument, a viewpoint he personally shares, saying there are some key issues where ‘the jury is still out’.

But what is it that makes the Muirburn debate so divisive?

Historically, Muirburn is mainly associated with grouse production on moorland and upland areas. It is as prevalent today as it was in Victorian times when it was used to improve the habitat for grouse ahead of annual shooting seasons.

These days, the practice is largely carried out by grouse keepers, farmers and crofters, who use it as a tool for both creating fresh heather growth or for the maintenance of open habitat, which if left, would eventually be taken over by scrub and trees.

That new growth is seen as beneficial for a variety of other nesting birds, not just grouse, while fire and rescue services in Scotland have also employed Muirburn in the past to prevent wildfire spread.



✂ *Hugh Raven*

About the Moorland Forum

The Moorland Forum was established in 2002 and is a unique partnership of 27 member organisations that facilitates cross cutting debate on the future of the Scottish uplands and its communities. Its aim is to have a sustainable future for moorland through collaborative work and actively promotes improvements in policy, practice and management.

“
We must recognise that the science around Muirburn and carbon emission is contested. It’s not cut and dried and we have to respect that too
”

But amidst the claims and counter claims, something that is not in question is Glenmazeran’s commitment to sustainable initiatives, and why the Moorland Forum officials were so keen to stage the debate there.

Peatland accounts for around a third of the Estate and since his arrival in February 2021 as Head Keeper, Murray Wilson has put sustainability at the top of his to do list. One of the major projects he has been involved with is the ongoing work to restore peatland, which began three years ago. Glenmazeran has been a key player in a larger collaboration co-ordinated by the Monadhliath Deer Management Group. To date, the Estate has restored just over 700 hectares, with a further 187 hectares planned for late 2023 and 2024.

As well as reducing flood risk and creating new insect habitats, the primary objective of the peatland restoration scheme at Glenmazeran

is to capture and retain high levels of carbon with one single objective in mind – being carbon neutral.

Hugh Raven is full of praise for the work at Glenmazeran and the part the Estate is playing with other land owners in the Monadhliath Mountains in the Peatland ACTION Project, which has the wider aim of restoring peatland across Scotland.

“What is particularly new to me is the collaborative management, where Peatland ACTION is being co-ordinated across multiple land-holdings, rather than each doing their own,” added Hugh.

“This level of collaboration over contracts and other important aspects is extremely impressive and very effective.” ✂

But there is increasing concern that it damages the environment, an ancient practice which has no place in a modern world facing a climate emergency.

Most critics say nothing has changed since Victorian times and that there is little benefit from the Muirburn beyond creating perfect territory for red grouse on rural estates. Not only that, burning merely increases carbon emissions into the atmosphere, damaging biodiversity and water storage in the soil.

But there is a counter argument that the practice is in fact beneficial, for carbon storage, biodiversity beyond grouse and for animal grazing. Indeed, recent scientific studies may actually support that notion.

Among a number of research projects, a recent Cambridge University study suggested that, rather than increasing atmospheric emissions, the practice of controlled burning can actually ‘lock in’ or increase carbon in the soil.



Connecting young hearts and minds

There’s no escaping Sarah Lindsell’s passion as she talks excitedly about the challenges ahead in her new job as CEO at Ufton Court Educational Tust.

“I’m only interested in social impact and reducing social inequality. Social injustice is what flows through my veins every day and I will do everything I can to reduce that inequality and enable others to do better in life.”

That’s exactly what’s she is determined to do for every one of the 15,000 children and young people who walk through the doors of this historic building every year, for its inspirational programme of indoor and outdoor educational activities, whatever their socio-economic background.

Speaking in September, just two months into the role, Sarah is clearly ready for those challenges, but they have taken on even greater significance in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.


“Of all the time Ufton Court has been needed, now is when it is most critical and that’s what attracted me to the role,” said Sarah.

“The experiences of children and young people shrank in the pandemic, particularly those who don’t come from a wealthy background, perhaps stuck in flats, others in inner city areas.

“Ufton Court can allow them to expand their world view again, connect with the outdoors, learn more about themselves and grow their self-esteem and confidence in the most awesome place.”

It all sounds very easy, but Sarah is perceptive enough to know that initially, it was anything but. The isolation felt by many during lockdown arguably impacted most on children and young people; then an energy crisis and a war in Ukraine followed, to further compound anxieties.



 Sarah Lindsell

Sarah knows it is possible to reconnect the young with the wonders of the outside world that surrounds them. It’s just going to take a bit more time.

“There has been a nervousness, children are wary, and their parents and carers have been too,” said Sarah.

“We, as parents, quite rightly wanted to keep our young ones close. Largely children have been nowhere in the past two years and that’s a long time in the life of a ten-year-old, so we as staff are here to help them feel safe enough to do some of those outside, adventurous things they would have taken for granted three for four years ago.”

Using the therapeutic skills of her staff, who understand the requirement to see each child and young person as an individual, Sarah says she has already seen that the activities on offer

at Ufton Court are helping ease those anxieties. Just three days after one child arrived for a residential, nervous and clinging to the leg of a parent, they were transformed, full of joy, desperate to climb a tree again and return home to see what was happening in their own garden.

“All that child probably wanted to do before was be inside on a PlayStation. It just goes to show that all we have to do is open children’s minds,” added Sarah.

Something Sarah wasn’t prepared to do so early in her tenure, was make any bold changes. She does want to listen more to the children who use the house, hear their views and how she and her staff can support them more, to help them better thrive. Eventually, a five-year strategy will be in place, which could include exploring other places offering further activities and looking at ways to reduce

the environmental impact of the Ufton Court site, as well as teaching children the importance of sustainability.


But that’s for 2023 – for now, Sarah is just focused on helping young residential and day visitors raise their aspirations and thrive, by learning how to cook outdoors, use first aid skills, go back in time with historical re-enactments...and much, much more.

“One problem we don’t have here is boredom,” joked Sarah.

“I see kids coming down the driveway and half an hour later they’re all dressed up and involved in a Viking raid. They will remember that forever. We help them be more self-confident and grow their self-esteem and the wonderful thing about that is, you can do it in just a few days. We have evidenced that in research with University of Reading – and now

we need to do more of it with more children.” But all these life changing experiences cost money; £2 million a year to be precise. With no funding available, Ufton Court is a charity that relies on money from wedding hire at the house, some trust and foundation support – and the kindness of individuals, who believe in what it does.

“The Englefield relationship is vital to us. They enable all this to happen through gifting Ufton Court and what an incredible gift it is,” said Sarah.

“We are so proud of the difference we are making for children and young people. Thanks to the support of Englefield and many others, we hope to do that for many years to come.” 

Celebrating 25 years of Schools Days

It was a silver celebration to remember at this year’s Schools Days extravaganza as hundreds of children helped Englefield Estate mark the 25th anniversary of this hugely popular annual event.

The two-day event has come a long way since 315 children from five Berkshire schools attended the inaugural Countryside Days for Schools in 1997.

And this birthday year was no exception, as more than 1,500 pupils from 34 primary schools swapped the classroom for the countryside to learn more about the rural world around them.

Sustainability was, once again, at the heart of the ever-popular event, with lessons in farming, forestry and conservation on offer – part of the Estate’s commitment to community engagement and encouraging greater connectivity with nature and the environment.

From gamekeeping to beekeeping, to bushcraft and renewable energy – the Englefield Estate was transformed into a countryside classroom for youngsters hungry to learn about the rural world around them.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary, the annual Schools Days event was, once again, a great success.

Dr Liz Mattison, Education and Environment Officer at Englefield Estate was delighted to hear those organisations who attended hailed it the best ever year and commented on just how enjoyable it was for all the youngsters present.



“It is wonderful how, each year, we are able to call on such a wealth of knowledge and expertise to give the children a truly engaging experience. I cannot thank them all enough for their support,”

“It was wonderful to celebrate 25 years of Schools Days and I hope there will be many more years ahead,” said Liz.

“All the children were really attentive, engaged and polite. You can see in their faces that there is a real passion to learn about the countryside.

“We have always been committed to giving young people the chance to share in our passion for the countryside and discover why it is such a great place to live, work and enjoy.

“It’s important for us to help children learn about the Estate, its history and activities, as well as the rural skills required to make it tick. It is also about stressing how important it is for everyone to play their part in protecting the future of our planet.”

When the Schools Days first began a quarter of a century ago, the Estate wanted to give young children a positive experience of the countryside and a chance to see the wide range of rural activities that take place there. Now it is firmly focused on the theme of sustainability and has strong links to the national curriculum.

Across the two days, pupils had the chance to get involved in a host of activities that took place in the grounds of Englefield House, as well as the deer park and the village.

Many key rural topics are covered, including farming, habitats and wildlife, community, health and wellbeing, renewable energy, water quality and history.

Estate staff worked alongside a range of organisations and willing volunteers to deliver the two-day programme of activities. Organisations included Thames Water, Action for the River Kennet, Butterfly Conservation and the National Gamekeepers Organisation Educational Trust.

“It is wonderful how, each year, we are able to call on such a wealth of knowledge and expertise to give the children a truly engaging experience. I cannot thank them all enough for their support,” added Liz.

“In the way mighty oaks from little acorns grow, the Schools Days event has continued to flourish over the past quarter of a century, and long may that continue.”



“The best school trip ever!”

That was the verdict of pupils from Alexander First School in Windsor, one of the 34 Berkshire schools who attended this year’s Schools Days.

Teacher Rosie Hayward said all the children were buzzing when they got back to school, particularly appropriate given the beekeeping session was a real favourite.

“We had an amazing day and cannot wait to come next year,” said Rosie.

“It was so well organised and stress-free for me as a teacher. It is brilliant that you can apply in the autumn term, which reduces stress in

the busy summer term when you know the trip is booked and sorted.

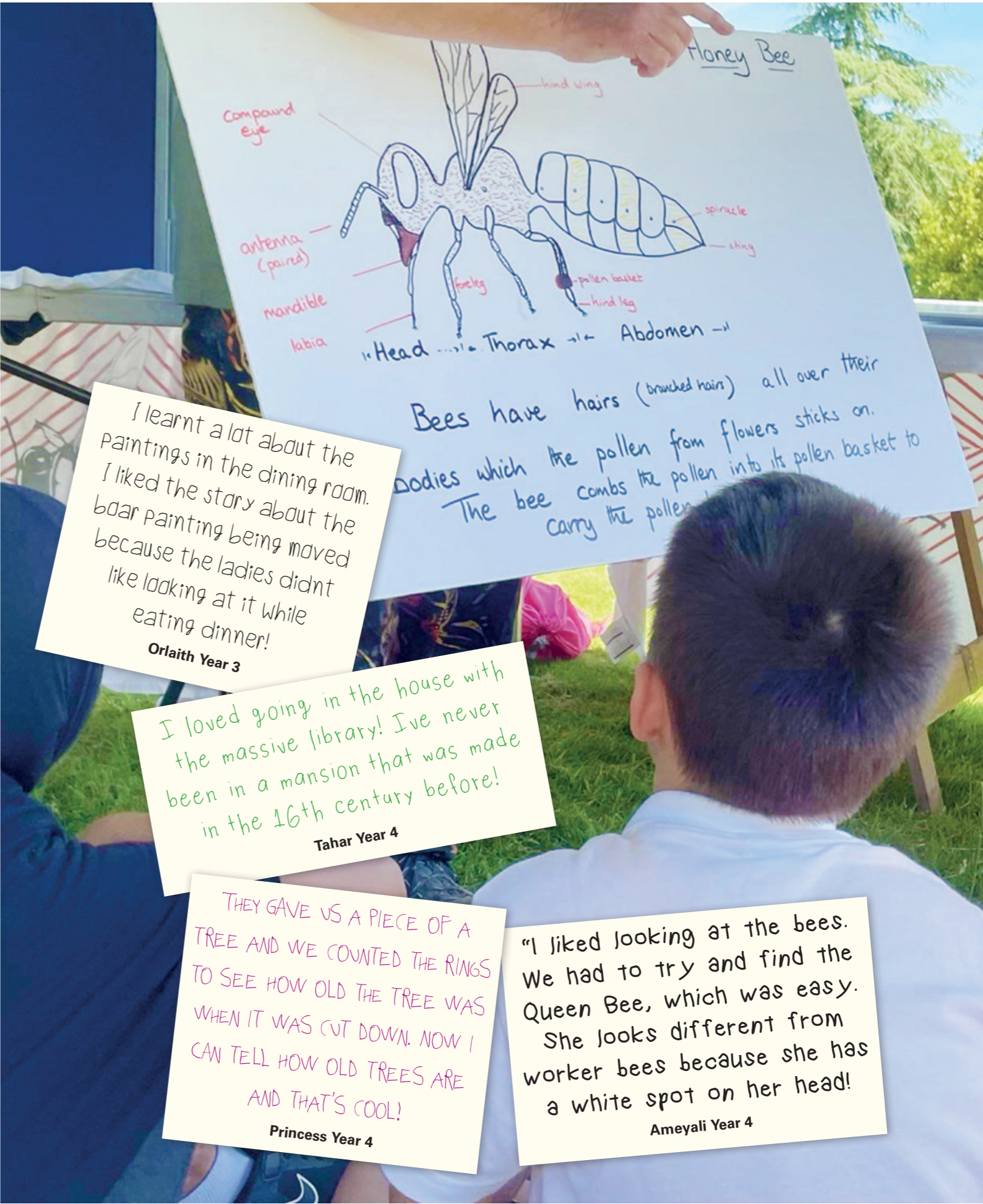
“The teacher’s handbook they supplied was just amazing too. It had everything I could possibly think of needing.”

Rosie said that the activities at Schools Days gave her children a wonderful opportunity to recap on many topics that they had already covered in lessons.

“The children just loved the bees and as we are growing sunflowers at school, we were able to talk about the crucial role bees play in the pollination process,” said Rosie.

“We also have a school garden where we are growing radishes, tomatoes, strawberries, peas and such, so the children loved seeing the walled garden and the five-a-day market garden, which was all much bigger and grander than our small plot!

“The flooding prevention information was great too as that enabled class to recap on our work on the water cycle. The children even started singing our water cycle song for the people who ran the stand, which was brilliant.” ✖



I learnt a lot about the paintings in the dining room. I liked the story about the bear painting being moved because the ladies didn't like looking at it while eating dinner!
Orlaith Year 3

I loved going in the house with the massive library! I've never been in a mansion that was made in the 16th century before!
Tahar Year 4

THEY GAVE US A PIECE OF A TREE AND WE COUNTED THE RINGS TO SEE HOW OLD THE TREE WAS WHEN IT WAS CUT DOWN. NOW I CAN TELL HOW OLD TREES ARE AND THAT'S COOL!
Princess Year 4

"I liked looking at the bees. We had to try and find the Queen Bee, which was easy. She looks different from worker bees because she has a white spot on her head!
Ameyali Year 4

Funding the post pandemic campaign to support mental health and well-being



The Covid-19 pandemic has taken its toll on all facets of society around the world, not least in terms of the impact on mental health and well-being.

That is why the Englefield Charitable Trust had a particular focus on those charities and other support groups at the forefront of mental health services in Berkshire during 2022, supporting those struggling with mental health conditions, or the effects of isolation and loneliness.

The Trust knows that many health professionals and volunteers are working tirelessly to help people deal with the mental struggles that they have not only suffered during the pandemic, but which continue to afflict many, as society attempts to return to normality.

Recent research has shown that mental well-being was a significant issue for young people during the past two years.

That's why Time to Talk – West Berkshire, an independent charity originally established in 1986, which promotes the mental health and well-being of 11–25-year-olds across the west of the county, has had a crucial role to play.

Tammy Willsher, Charity Service Manager, said the Trust's donations has helped the charity double its counselling sessions from a year ago, as demand outstrips supply, which in turn puts pressure on waiting lists.

The Trust also supported Greenham Trust's post Covid-19 fund, Surviving to Thriving. This is a collaborative fund to support health and well-being in West Berkshire and has received wide support from local grant givers and the general public.

Chris Boulton, CEO of Greenham Trust, said that the Surviving to Thriving Fund was set up in the spring of 2021 to target applications for mental health related projects, as the country recovers from the pandemic.

"We were very grateful for the support of Englefield Trust and many other local supporters," said Chris.

Last year, the Englefield Charitable Trust also built on the financial support it gave in 2020 to those charities helping people in social isolation or experiencing loneliness.

One such charity is Home Start Wokingham District, which offers a family support service to disadvantaged and vulnerable families in the area with at least one child under the age of five.

The Trust specifically helped fund Home Start Wokingham's Mum's the Word group, which aims to provide a safe place for mums and children experiencing isolation to meet others.

Senior Scheme Co-ordinator Mandy Ozfici said: "We now have three Mum's the Word groups operating, an indication of just how many mums are feeling a sense of isolation and looking for a place they can go to get the right support," said Mandy.

Reducing loneliness in the borough of Wokingham is also the focus of The Link Visiting Scheme, which benefited from a Trust grant in 2021 for its programme of Christmas events for isolated local people.

Marjie Walker, CEO of the scheme, said that thanks to the support of the Trust and other donations, Christmas Day was less lonely for

those struggling with loneliness at what could be a particularly painful time of year for them.

A range of free, inspiring and empowering courses lie at the heart of Recovery in Mind, a charity which supports adults in West Berkshire, who are facing mental health challenges.

The charity offers a three-step approach to mental health recovery, which begins with an introductory film or session, followed by a five-week course entitled 'Welcome to Recovery'.

From there, people can choose from a range of other courses or workshops that particularly interest them and support them through their recovery journey.

The charity was founded in 2016, by Angela Ryan who said: "We are extremely grateful for the donation from Englefield Charitable Trust, which will be used for running our step three courses, which will enable our students to continue to improve and maintain mental health and wellbeing."

Another recipient was Sport in Mind, a nationally acclaimed charity whose mission is "To improve the lives of people experiencing mental health problems through sport and physical activity."

Winner of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the charity was formed in Berkshire in 2010 by Neil Harris, who designed a recovery focused physical activity programme to help a childhood friend struggling with his mental health.

Neil said "Sport in Mind are very grateful for the support of Englefield Charitable Trust. The donation will be used to expand and sustain our nationally acclaimed service in Newbury." ✕

“We are extremely grateful for the donation, which will enable our students to improve and maintain mental health and wellbeing”

Thank you, ma'am for 70 glorious and extraordinary years

In common with the rest of the nation, it was with great sadness that Englefield Estate learnt of the passing of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth in September.

Our longest reigning monarch will be fondly remembered with affection and gratitude for the lifetime of service she gave to the country.

During her 70 years on the throne, the Queen visited Englefield Estate on several occasions and presented long service awards to a number of Estate staff at the Royal Agricultural Show at Stoneleigh.

As the sad news reached us, the flag over Englefield House was flown at half mast and everyone connected with the Estate offered deepest condolences to the Royal Family. We all mourned the loss of an extraordinary person, who had contributed so much to our nation.

When His Majesty King Charles succeeded to the throne, the newly arrived Rector at St Mark's Church, Englefield, Rev. Julia Myles had already been among the very first clergy in the country to swear allegiance to him.

Julia was just 20 minutes away from beginning her service of installation on September 8th by the Bishop of Reading, The Rt Revd Olivia Graham, when news came through that Her Majesty had died peacefully at Balmoral, aged 96.



✂ Rev. Julia Myles

Part of the service involves the newly installed rector swearing allegiance to the reigning monarch, but when she initially made the oath to Queen Elizabeth, she suddenly stopped proceedings, realising the words would have to change.

"After we first received the sad news, I had re-written my prayers and Bishop Olivia had hastily received a statement from the Bishop



✂ Freddie Benyon, a Captain in the Coldstream Guards, pictured at Westminster Hall, where he stood guard at the coffin of Her Majesty, The Queen.

of Oxford to read out only moments before the service began, but we had both missed the need to change the oath, which was still written down as Queen Elizabeth II," said Julia.

"When I said her name aloud, I stopped and looked at the bishop and we both knew it needed to change. The only part I wasn't quite sure about was what number Charles would be as monarch."

Julia then re-started the service with the new oath: 'I, Julia Myles, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles, his heirs and successors according to law, so help me God.'

She and Bishop Olivia were also given permission by the diocese to annotate Charles' name on a written copy of the oath that they both have to sign, as part of the induction service.



✂ Sir William Benyon, pictured with Her Majesty during a visit to the urban housing charity the Peabody Trust in London, of which he was Chairman during the 1990s.

Julia, who arrived at Englefield at the end of August from the Isle of Wight, where she had worked as a hospice chaplain, said everyone at the service on September 8th was shocked when they received the news of Her Majesty's passing.

As a mark of respect, she instructed that the bells should stop ringing and the organ music be changed from its usual processional style to something more sombre and reflective.

"I was in the vestry when I got the news and stood there momentarily in stunned silence before saying prayers for the Queen and the Royal Family. From being a constant in all our lives for so long, suddenly she was gone and it didn't seem real," said Julia. ✂



✂ Edwin 'Brisher' Cox, Estate plumber from 1923 to 1981, receiving his long service award from Her Majesty at the Royal Agricultural Show, Stoneleigh Park.

New Starters

Englefield Estate

In March, we were pleased to welcome **James Meade** as Head of Rural Property and Land. James manages operations across the Estates’ property and rural land holdings with the focus on our environmental strategy too. He joined us from Savills’ Newmarket office.

On behalf of the Parish of Englefield, we’d like to extend a warm welcome to **Rev. Julia Myles** who became Rector of St Mark’s in September. Julia and her husband Paul, a semi-retired BBC journalist trainer, arrived in Englefield from the Isle of Wight, where she had worked as Chaplain of Mountbatten Hospice since 2021. Ordained in 2013, Julia served her Curacy in St Michael’s Church, Alnwick in Northumberland. She and Paul have three daughters and three grandchildren.

Farewells

We bid a fond farewell in December to **Andrew Rowland**, Rural Surveyor, who is heading to the North of England to join Savills, after six very successful years at Englefield. Andrew joined the Estate as a graduate before qualifying as a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and Fellow of the Association of Agricultural Valuers. Everyone at Englefield would like to wish both Andrew and Kathrin the very best with their move – and the impending arrival of their new baby.

Joe Western, Forestry Roots Trainee, completed his training programme with Englefield in June and moved on to a new role as Assistant Manager (Graduate) with Tillhill Forestry in Newmarket. Wishing Joe good luck in the next stage of his career.

Joe Western

Ufton Court said goodbye to CEO **Fiona Craig** in June. Fiona joined Ufton in 2008, originally in an accountancy role. As CEO, Fiona helped to shape and drive both the fabric and values of Ufton Court to a whole new level and has been a tireless advocate for the conservation of its natural and heritage landscape. Englefield Estate wishes her every success in the future.



Fiona Craig

Vanessa Coccozza, Office Manager at the Benyon Estate, left in May for a role in HR with a technology firm and we wish her every success.

Benyon Estate also said farewell to **Kate Faulkner**, receptionist at De Beauvoir Block, who left in February and Residential Lettings Manager, **Laila Baxter**, who departed in September, following 13 months maternity cover for Bianca Christie. Good to welcome Bianca back on the same day.

Finally, on behalf of everyone at the Englefield Estate, we’d like to thank **Rev. Nick Wynne-Jones** and his wife Harriet for their huge contribution to village life at Englefield, during their time at St Mark’s, and we wish them all the very best in their next adventures.

Welcome also to **Leanne Taylor** who joined the housekeeping team and to caretaker **Chris Visser** who both arrived at Englefield House in July.

The forestry team has a new apprentice on board, **Finlay Lace**, who joined Englefield Estate in July, while there are two new members of staff at De Beauvoir Block, Hackney, on the Benyon Estate, receptionist **Becky McLoughlin** and trainee carpenter **Jamie Brickwood Jr.**

Steve Forster joined the Building Department in September as a Graduate Building Surveyor, having worked at the College of Estate Management.

Congratulations



Richard and grandson Archie

Congratulations to **Harry** and **Sarah Benyon** on the birth of their baby, Archie in April, and to proud new grandparents Richard and Zoe.

Lady Benyon celebrated her 90th birthday on 26th October. A tea party was held in her honour at Englefield House, attended by family and friends.

Also, wishing many congratulations to **Thomas Benyon** and **Rose Eden** on their marriage in September.

Caroline Jones successfully completed her gardens apprenticeship in April and is now a full-time gardener with the Englefield team. Well done, Caroline!

There was also a new arrival for Maintenance Manager **Luke Wade** and his wife Chloe in October, baby daughter Freya – a sister for Harper, aged three.

Well done to head keeper **David Wiggins** and his daughter Robyn who did a skydive to fundraise for dementia and Alzheimers research and care on 30 April and raised more than £1,700.



In memory

It is with much fondness that we remember retired gamekeeper, **Doug Dore**, who died in April, aged 93, and his wife Primrose, who also sadly passed away in October at the age of 91.

Doug was part of life at Englefield for more than half a century, beginning in the Estate Yard in 1942, at the tender age of 14.

He then took up the role of warden in the Estate’s woodlands around Ufton and Mortimer, before becoming gamekeeper to the Ufton shoot in later years.

He made his final journey on a tractor and trailer, driven by his former colleague, Mick Davies.

“It was a very fitting tribute and the perfect way to say goodbye to a true countryman,” said Estates Director, Edward Crookes.

Also, in our thoughts this year were **Wavell Wilson** and **Mike Aldersley**. Former Head Keeper Wavell, who spent 35 years at the Estate before his retirement in 2008, passed away in December of 2021, aged 80, while retired Estate Office Gardener Mike died in August of this year, at the age of 77.

Doug Dore