



A family walk on the Holnicote Estate. NTPL/Jennie Woodcock

## Wessex country sites attract 10 million visits a year

Research carried out for the Trust has revealed that our countryside sites in Dorset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset attract more than 10 million visits every year – twice as many as we thought.

The research, by Bournemouth University, involved collecting data at 28 of the Trust's 90 countryside sites in Wessex, which span 25,000 hectares of heath, downland, seaside, woodland and wetland. It showed that coastal properties drew from a wider area than inland sites, and that

beaches drew their audience from the widest area of all. Among the most popular countryside sites are the Golden Cap estate, with 530,000 estimated visitors, Glastonbury Tor, with 310,000 and Avebury, with 292,000. However the Holnicote Estate in Somerset has by far the highest number, estimated at 1,187,000.

Looking after all this recreational space does not come cheap – for example, maintenance at Crook Peak, our 300 hectares of common land in the Mendips, costs £38,000 a year.



## Recording local memories for posterity

Oral history is a valuable – and often overlooked – part of studying the past. To help put that right, volunteers have been working in the village of Lacock for the past year to record the memories of present and past residents of Lacock and neighbouring Bowden Hill, as well as those with a particular connection to the area, such as wartime evacuees.

A substantial archive has now been established, with contributions from many local villagers, along with children from Lacock Primary School who have contributed their views on village life. Everyone involved in the project is a volunteer, including project co-ordinator Fiona Miller.

"The interviews paint a picture of a village full of happy memories – a very lively and down-to-earth place" said Fiona. "They conjure up images of children learning to swim in the river and riding the farm horses through the village to the blacksmith's, and at harvest time – once a great social occasion."

Hard times are also reflected in the archive, including primitive housing conditions and the big floods of 1935. Local people remember their fear of the geese which once paraded up and down the High Street.

Wartime stories uncovered include the Commanding Officer who challenged the local Home Guard to break into the US Army base at neighbouring Lackham. Using local knowledge of the tracks and ways across the river, a small group successfully answered the challenge – and were found the next morning smoking cigarettes in the CO's office.

After the project finishes this May, the information will be made available for researchers and educational purposes via the National Trust archive as well as Lacock's own archive, the National Archive held by the British Library and the BBC's 'People's War' archive (online).

# News in Brief

### Seed library brings lost vegetables back to life

A scheme to bring back disappearing vegetable varieties is taking root at Tintinhull Garden as a result of collaboration with the Henry Doubleday Organic Research Association. The Association's Heritage Seed Library enables gardeners to explore the diversity of colour, shape, taste and history available from the many varieties which are threatened with extinction. Examples now being cultivated at Tintinhull include achocha, a relative of the cucumber and one of the lost crops of the Incas; 'Delaway' cabbage, saved from extinction by an Irish farmer, and 'Rat's Tail' radish, grown not for its roots but for its edible seed pods and recently 'adopted' by the Prince of Wales, HDRA's patron.

### Living history at Dunster

School groups at Dunster can now see the castle's Victorian servants brought back to life in front of their eyes. In authentic period costume the Butler, Head Housemaid and First Footman, in the setting of the largely unrestored domestic quarters and kitchens, explain their duties, ring for servants and speak of the life and times of a bygone age. The Head Housemaid prepares a maid's room and recalls the austere life of the castle servants, while the Butler greets guests.

### Study room for all at Avebury

Avebury now has a new study room where anyone with an interest in archaeology can examine finds and consult an extensive library with many titles on the archaeology of Wiltshire. Jointly funded by the Trust and English Heritage, it is being hailed as the best archaeological store in Wiltshire and is expected to be much in demand. "The facility will be particularly useful to people returning to education later in life who have an interest in archaeology" says Ros Cleal. Use of the study is by appointment – please call 01672 539203.

### Don't throw away your old phone

Discarded mobile phones and ink cartridges can now contribute to National Trust funds, thanks to a tie-up with Office Green Technologies, the UK's leading recycler of unwanted phones and printer cartridges. For every phone or cartridge received, Office Green will give the item's recycling value to the Trust. To donate phones or empty inkjet cartridges (the sort that fit in your hand) put them in a plastic bag and send them to The National Trust, FREEPOST LON11452, Barking, Essex IG11 0TW. If you have larger cartridges, or larger quantities, and want them collected free, please call Office Green on 08700 50 20 50.

### 'Batcams' at Dunster

This year visitors will be able to get even closer to the wild 'residents' of the castle – the endangered bats that live in the basement – because they are to be captured on camera and the footage replayed on monitors. The 'Batcams' have been in place since early April, when the colony of Lesser Horseshoe bats returned from hibernation to breed.

### Trust acquires precious Purbeck site

Funding from the Neptune Campaign has enabled us to acquire East Man on the Isle of Purbeck, part of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. This 63 hectares of farmland at Worth Matravers, between Seacombe and Winspit, is a landscape of outstanding natural beauty with areas of important medieval archaeology and great potential for improving wildlife habitats. The site, with spectacular sea cliffs, is of very high landscape value. A five-year restoration programme to repair and maintain the stone walls will provide employment to local dry-stone wallers and quarrymen.

### Japanese garden blooms again

Restoration of the seven-acre Edwardian Japanese garden at Kingston Lacy, the largest Japanese garden in the UK, will be complete this summer. The five separate areas – a formal Tea Garden, a Quarry Garden, a Flowering Cherry Garden, an Evergreen Glade and an Acer Glade – are due to be completed by the opening date of 7 June. The garden, created by Henrietta Bankes in the early 20th century, had severely declined when we took it over. Full of symbolic representations, it uniquely combines classical design with elements of the Bankes family's very Edwardian interpretation of a Japanese garden. Recreating it has involved a great deal of complex detective work.

### IN BRIEF

- Thanks to funding from two National Trust Centres, we've installed a children's play area for our youngest visitors next to the restaurant at Snowhill, to add to the family appeal of the gardens from this summer.
- At Tintinhull Garden the local history society have created a new exhibition that looks at the architecture of this South Somerset village, a free self-guided trail is provided.
- At Lytes Cary a riverside family trail is a new addition to the series of estate walks.
- Work is being done this summer to improve the surface of the car park at Stourhead.

## Holiday like a lord at Lytes Cary

A new seven-bedroom holiday cottage at Lytes Cary, available this summer for the first time, will make an ideal holiday home for a large family gathering.

Lytes Cary holiday cottage is available from June 16. Its seven bedrooms and three bathrooms, over three floors, will sleep up to 14 people, while the beautiful panelled dining room and drawing room give views over the gardens and out to the Bristol Channel. Outside there is a private garden and lawn tennis area.

The cottage is handy for several Trust properties, including Stourhead,

Montacute and Barrington Court, as well as many countryside properties and the market towns of Somerton, Sherborne and Glastonbury. It's also great base to explore some fine walks around the nearby Somerset Levels.

Downstairs there is a dining room, twin bed with ensuite, gallery, sitting room and separate toilet, while the first floor has a long gallery, four bedrooms and the main bathroom. The second floor has two twin bedrooms and a bathroom.

Price band 22. More info from [www.nationaltrustcottages.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrustcottages.co.uk)

Published by the National Trust Regional Office, Eastleigh Court, Bishopstrow, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9HW Tel: 01985 843600.

Regional Director: Brendan McCarthy. Edited by Alex Brannan.

Photography: NT Wessex Library & NTPL.

© 2006 The National Trust, Registered Charity No. 205846.

Design by Four Square Design, Clevedon BS21 7QH. Printed by Garden House Press.

# WESSEX NEWS

DORSET, SOMERSET, WILTSHIRE, BATH, BRISTOL & GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Local news & events for National Trust members

SUMMER 2006

## Take the family on a new adventure this summer

Picnic on the grass and watch open-air family theatre, or dress as a film star and party under the stars. Become an archaeologist for a day, learn to make a Bronze Age axe or go hunting for bats, badgers, barn owls or butterflies. Hunt for dinosaur footprints, learn how to be a jester, or dress up as a pirate...

These days, the National Trust offers boundless opportunities to understand history and the people who made it, even to experience what it must have been like to have been there.

We are also finding new ways of helping people to have fun in the historic settings we manage around Wessex – from fun and games to classical music.

This summer we have an unprecedented wealth of diversions to offer, including:

- The Fête Champêtre at Stourhead – dress as your favourite star of stage or screen, and spend a night with the stars, under the stars.
- The history of Stourhead goes back much further than the famous landscape garden. To celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Trust's acquisition of Stourhead, an exhibition covering 6000 years of history on the site, 'Stourhead through the Ages', takes pride of place at Stourhead House.
- The Proms are back at Lacock Abbey this July. A weekend of music offers a choice – classical music on the Saturday evening in the form of a concert modelled on the Last Night of the Proms with the London Gala Orchestra, followed by a show with Jools Holland and his rhythm and blues orchestra on the Sunday.



Stourhead. NTPL/David Levenson



A campaign to raise the profile of history and heritage – 'History Matters – pass it on' – is unveiled this summer. The National Trust and English Heritage, backed by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Historic Houses Association, the Civic Trust and other conservation organisations, have got together to promote the importance of history.

The aim is to encourage people to speak up for history and why it matters to them. We hope that by asking people to stand back from the maelstrom of modern high-tech society we can help the world to realise just how wonderful, and how important, our history is.

Wessex offers an unrivalled range of opportunities to appreciate our history. Think of Chedworth Roman Villa, buried and forgotten for a thousand years before it was unearthed to become the oldest 'country house' in Trust ownership; or Dunster Castle, where one family ruled through 600 years of unbroken history; or the 1300-year documented history of the Kingston Lacy Estate. Then there are Avebury and Stonehenge, two of the greatest archaeological treasures in the world, and – vastly further back in time – the dinosaurs whose remains can still be found today along the Jurassic Coast of Dorset.

"History matters – pass it on" will be about getting our heritage talked about more widely in communities, in schools and by young and old alike. If evidence is needed that many people in Wessex already understand why 'history matters', you only have to look at some examples of what's been achieved lately:

- Tyntesfield – £8.5 million raised by the public to help buy it for the nation
- Volunteering – almost 4000 people are giving their time to be Trust volunteers in Wessex
- Kingston Lacy – 1200 people in a single weekend came to see the Guido Reni fresco when it first went on show in March
- The Trust's Cheltenham and Gloucester Centre has helped



Chedworth Roman Villa. NTPL/David Levenson

with the cost of cleaning and conserving the William Morris paper in the 18th century dining room at Newark Park.

Look out for more information on the campaign this summer at properties in Wessex. Collect a History Matters badge from a Trust property to show you care or take your children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces to a property and share our history with the next generation. Visit [www.historymatters.org.uk](http://www.historymatters.org.uk) to learn more about the campaign and how you can get involved.

ble deeds – if you're not too squeamish!

- As part of National Archaeology Week, we're giving visitors the chance to learn about the fascinating history of Brownsea Island. Become a 'seashore time detective' and you can explore the history of the island's pottery and brick industry. Brownsea also offers the chance to play at pirates, follow seashore and woodland trails and see the famous red squirrels.

- There's more family archaeology and history at Corfe Castle, where you can work in a mock excavation pit and watch living history events, including a display by the English Civil War Society. You can also explore some of the tricks and techniques of conservation in this fascinating castle.

- At Dunster Castle too, we have found new ways of bringing history to life. You're invited to stay in the village for two nights and enjoy private tours, talks and walks around the castle, including parts not normally open to the public. There are also family fun days devoted to pirates and 'medieval mayhem'.

- At Snowhill Manor in the Cotswolds, you can explore an extraordinary collection of artefacts, from clocks and bicycles to suits of Japanese armour, swords, looms and musical instruments.

- At Dyrham Park, near Bath, tracker packs introduced at the end of last season will keep families with children absorbed for hours. The tracker packs are also available at other Wessex properties including Brownsea and Chedworth Roman Villa. Children's trails are also available at Barrington Court and Prior Park.

- At Stourhead, there's an exhibition all summer which will take visitors back through 6000 years of fascinating history.

- You've seen the film of *The Railway Children* – this summer at Corfe and also at Tyntesfield you can see it brought to life as an open-air stage production. Bring the children, bring a friend, bring a picnic!

For details of events at Wessex properties this summer, see the Events Guide inside this issue or visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk).

## Pope is about to get his wilderness back

Visitors this summer to Prior Park Landscape Garden will for the first time be able to see work to restore the wilderness area designed by Alexander Pope more than two centuries ago. Following our successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid last year, work has begun to restore the 18th-century Serpentine Lake and Cascade.

The lake will be restored to its original 150-metre length, while associated water channels and culverts will be repaired or reinstated and a 'gravel cabinet' – an outside room, typical of 18th century garden design – will be created. New trees will be planted to reflect the original planting scheme.

Property staff and volunteers have begun work on shaping new paths through what had become a heavily overgrown area of the gardens. In June, the lake will be excavated to reveal the original stonework before reconstruction begins. Design options can then be evaluated for the repair of the Cascade and the water channels which will link the Serpentine Lake to the already-restored lakes at the bottom of the garden.



Volunteers at work on the Wilderness Area

## Fine, fresh, local food – all part of the visitor experience

Long gone are the days when Trust cafeterias offered little more than cream teas and sausage rolls. As more people discover the pleasure and health benefits to be derived from fresh, locally-produced fare, Trust properties around Wessex are increasingly taking a lead with their own contributions to good eating – with such success that many people are now seeking out our restaurants for their own sake.

At many of our properties you'll find much of the food on the menu was grown or raised a few yards from the door – a nice antidote to all the supermarket 'food miles' we hear about. Some, such as those of **Stourhead** and **Snowhill**, have their own long-established traditional kitchen gardens.

**Barrington Court's** traditional kitchen garden is one of the best. Established more than 80 years ago, it produces a host of vegetables, including beans, peas, potatoes, courgettes, squashes, marrows and salad crops, while the fruit cage has redcurrants, whitecurrants, gooseberries and blackberries and the walls give shelter to apricots, peaches, nectarines, apples, pears, damsons and plums. There are also figs and cherries. With a herb garden to complete the picture, it is not surprising that the restaurant has a superb range of seasonal fresh food on offer through the season.

### A summer recipe from Barrington Court

#### SWISS CHARD RELISH

Makes approx 6lb – excellent with cold chicken or mature Cheddar cheese.

#### Ingredients:

5lb Swiss chard stems, finely chopped (no leafy parts)  
2lb onions, finely chopped 2 pints white wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon celery seed 1 tablespoon mustard seed  
4 cups caster sugar  
**Sauce:**  
1/2 cup cornflour 1/2 cup cold water  
1 teaspoon turmeric 1 teaspoon curry powder  
2 teaspoons dry mustard  
1–2 teaspoons flaked chillies (according to courage)

#### Method:

1. Sprinkle salt on the chopped swiss chard and let stand for at least 2 hours.
2. Add onions, mix well and let stand for a further half hour.
3. Drain well and cover with vinegar, sugar, flaked chillies, celery and mustard seed.
4. Cook until tender (about 30 minutes – medium/high heat).
5. Prepare sauce by mixing ingredients together and then adding to swiss chard mixture. Bring to a full boil and cook for five more minutes.
6. Seal in sterilised jars.

## What we do in the Trust grazing

### Matt proves he's a rare breed



Matt Stanway with Welsh Blacks

Working for the National Trust can mean looking after living, breathing charges as well as paintings and parklands. With 60 cattle to look after on 350 acres of precious Gloucestershire downland spread across several sites, stockman Matt Stanway doesn't get much rest.

Matt's dedication to his job as Area Warden (Stockman) for the Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons has earned him a City & Guilds Medal for Excellence for outstanding performance in the Landbased Industries sector of the NVQ scheme.

Matt, who is based at the Trust's Eborth Centre near Birdlip, looks after a 35-strong herd of Belted Galloways and 25 Welsh Blacks, rare breeds chosen specifically for their suitability for conservation grazing. The animals are hardy enough to be kept outdoors through the winter but are docile around people and dogs, calve easily and are straightforward to manage.

The animals are making a vital contribution to the

management of these sensitive areas of species-rich limestone grassland, listed as SSSIs.

"I need to keep tabs on the animals all year round, monitoring any illness and looking after their breeding needs" explained Matt. "We allow them to run with bulls for a short time each summer, then we monitor pregnancies by scanning the cows on the hoof so we can predict when they will calve."

Although Matt has a degree in geography and experience in farming, he decided that a qualification in agriculture would help him with this project. He decided to study for an NVQ Level 3 Agriculture (Livestock), specialising in beef, part-time at Hartpury College. The external verifier on Matt's course was so impressed with his work that he suggested Matt be put forward for a City and Guilds Medal for Excellence – which he duly won, one of only eight in the country in this category.



Appetising fresh produce on sale at Stourhead

### Farm shops and farmers' markets

The Stourhead farm shop is now in its second season. Run by two local National Trust farm tenants who are passionate about 'real food', it offers visitors a wide range of fresh food including meat butchered on the estate, freshly-picked seasonal vegetables, local cheeses, eggs, fresh herbs, locally-bottled mineral water and vegetables grown in the walled garden.

The **Sherborne Estate** in Gloucestershire now offers Benson's apple juice produced on the estate, while at **Kingston Lacy**, our tenant farmer at Barford Farm will be manufacturing ice cream from this summer.

This summer you can visit farmers' markets at **Lacock** (third Saturday of every month), **Montacute** (24 June/22 July/23 September), **Corfe Castle** (4th Sunday of every month), **Kingston Lacy** (to be held for the first time on 24 October) **Hidcote** (26 July) and **Stourhead** (14 Oct).



## Youngsters go behind the scenes at Tyntesfield

The start of Tyntesfield's first season of full public opening was marked by more than the usual excitement, thanks to the presence of a crew shooting a major feature film.

The film – 'Angels', starring Sam Neill, Romola Garai and Charlotte Rampling – provided the perfect opportunity for five young people to get a taste of working on a film set. We're very pleased to have arranged for two youngsters from Knowle West Media Centre and two from a Bath agency, Suited & Booted, along with a young woman on a film-making course, to gain work experience.

There was great interest from the year's first visitors to Tyntesfield, who were often been able to watch the filming from a discreet distance.

Tyntesfield is a key location for the drama, set in England at the turn of the 19th century. It tells the story of a poor but determined young woman who climbs the social ladder by becoming a celebrated romantic novelist.

Heather Worth commented: "Tyntesfield was chosen for its gothic grandeur. We had to clear many of the downstairs rooms of furniture to allow the filming to take place. Volunteers were on hand constantly to make sure there was no risk to the property or contents. It was fascinating for all of us."

The Trust generates substantial income, as well as valuable publicity, from allowing filming on historic properties.

Tyntesfield is now fully open for the first time since the Trust acquired the property in 2002. The gardens are open 10.00am–5.30pm Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. The magnificent walled kitchen garden, the formal terraces and Paradise (the arboretum) are among the many attractions on view. More practically, there is now a car park on site.

A shop and catering kiosk, offering a range of light refreshments and sandwiches, are also open.

If you're interested in natural history, Wessex is exceptionally rich in wildlife sites – and many of the most important are owned and managed by the National Trust.

To help you plan your visits this summer, we've compiled a list of 10 of the finest.

### 1 Purbeck

Wetland, dry heathland, chalk grassland and maritime habitats combine on the Isle of Purbeck to create extraordinary riches. Rare reptiles and amphibians rub shoulders with an extraordinary range of birds, insects and mammals. Purbeck is also a botanist's paradise, and there are even dinosaur footprints.

### 2 Golden Cap

Undercliffs are among the few truly unspoiled wildlife habitats, and Golden Cap has some of the best. It is also one of the most important sites in Britain for unimproved hay meadows and rare wild flowers. There is ancient woodland, grassland, heathland and acid fen, and much for the fossil hunter.

### 3 Studland

The sand dunes, heathland and freshwater lagoons are home to the very rare smooth snake and sand lizard as well as many rare plants and insects including the heath grasshopper, the grayling butterfly and the small red damselfly. The intertidal zone has sea horses and zostera beds.

### 4 Minchinhampton Common

This limestone grassland common, grazed with rare breeds to maintain the turf, has a scrub and woodland edge community backed by fine beechwoods. Butterflies include the Duke of Burgundy and the chalkhill blue and there are also greater horseshoe bats, pasque flowers, juniper bushes and orchids.

### Do not disturb – otters at work

The discovery two years ago of a dead female otter and two cubs came as both bad and good news to countryside staff at Kingston Lacy. Though the deaths of the animals in an illegal net was unfortunate, the three sad corpses were clear evidence that the Trust's conservation work along the River Stour had begun to bear fruit.

When the wardens realised that the busy permissive path along the river ran through the territory of a new otter family, they knew it was time to act to protect them. They put up notices explaining the situation to dog-walkers using the path and asking for their co-operation in keeping away from the critical area.

The dog-walkers were glad to comply. This year, monitoring has revealed both spraint and tracks further downriver, indicating that the area is being used regularly by the otters. An environmental assessment has established the existence of a number of other important wetland flora and fauna, including snipe, kingfishers and white egrets. The entire area has been taken back into management to protect this rare habitat and its inhabitants.

### Tradition triumphs when it comes to managing trees

Elevated pollarding is an ancient method of tree management designed to grow straight poles while keeping new growth above the height grazing animals can reach. It has been practised for centuries at Dover's Hill, near Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire – and this year our staff will be hard at work continuing the tradition with a number of ash trees.

Steps are also being taken to protect a valuable 17th century oak which is threatened by competition from younger trees around it. Mature oaks only reach their full splendour if they are reasonably free of surrounding trees



## My Wessex

Richard Wilkin, new Chairman, National Trust Wessex Region

Richard Wilkin has just been appointed Chairman of the National Trust in Wessex in succession to Joe Studholme. He brings to his new role a wealth of experience in every aspect of managing heritage buildings, historic landscapes and gardens, from marketing and tourism to conservation regulations. Richard, who until last autumn was Director General of the Historic Houses Association, has spent the past 20 years working with his wife on the restoration of period buildings in London and Dorset. South Dorset has been his home for most of his life and he now lives at Coombe Keynes, within sight of the county's Jurassic Coast.

## Our top 10 Wessex wildlife sites

### 5 Brownsea Island

Apart from the famous red squirrels, there is precious lowland heath with fresh water and brackish lagoons, willow carr, and an intertidal zone frequented by interesting wading and water birds. Avocets breed and there are nightjars, Dartford warblers and rare moths.

### 6 Dunster Castle

The parkland, oak woodland and heathland features much rare wildlife including several internationally-important bat species, such as the grey long-eared and both the greater and lesser horseshoe.

### 7 Tyntesfield

Though most of the attention has been focused on the famous house, the wood and parkland around Tyntesfield has also revealed wildlife riches, including six bat species, great crested newts and a large colony of the autumn ladies' tresses orchid.

### 8 Woodchester Park

Woodchester's chain of wooded lakes have interesting aquatic flora and fauna, while the beech and ash woodland



Rocky foreshore at Purbeck. NTPL/JoeCornish

is home to nationally important colonies of greater and lesser horseshoe bat, one of the longest studied in the UK.

### 9 Wiltshire downland

Wiltshire has a quarter of the unimproved chalk downland in Britain. Rare birds include the stone curlew and corn bunting, while the grassland flora includes most British orchid species and many butterflies, such as the adonis, chalkhill and small blue and the marsh fritillary.

### 10 Fontmell Down and Melbury Hill

A spectacular expanse of unimproved chalk downland with scrub communities and an exceptionally rich chalk downland flora and fauna, including rare orchids and endangered butterflies such as the Duke of Burgundy, adonis blue and silver-spotted skipper.

## At work in the countryside



which compete for sunlight and soil nutrients. Yet removing all the encroaching trees at once can cause the oak to go into shock, so they have to be removed carefully in stages.

"Pollarded trees live longer and create better habitats for wildlife such as bats, birds and insects" explained Martin Jones. "Management is all about continuity and avoiding sudden changes."

### Avebury to benefit from sports field management techniques

High-tech methods for managing sports fields and athletics tracks have been used this spring to help regenerate the heavily-used footpaths at Avebury.

Every year the paths across the renowned World Heritage Site have to endure the feet of around 300,000

visitors. Combatting the consequent erosion is becoming increasingly important to the management of the famous stone circle.

The Trust has employed a tractor-mounted Vertidrain machine to aerate the soil along the paths. These machines, used on bowling greens and football pitches, punch 15-centimetre holes into the soil, allowing air to reach the roots of the grass. Combined with reseeded, the process allows the grass to grow back stronger.

The depth of the holes has been carefully regulated to ensure no archaeological damage is done.

Other management techniques at Avebury include careful grazing using Texel cross sheep. This year a crop of hay will be taken from the northern quadrants, which will allow wild flowers to set seed and provide a better display in the future. The banks have great ecological value besides their archaeological importance – their chalk soil has been granted the status of a County Wildlife Site.

### A rare chance to see a rare butterfly

For a couple of weeks this summer, visitors to Collard Hill in Somerset will have the chance to see one of the rarest and most fascinating butterflies in the UK – the Large Blue, freshly returned from extinction. The species has declined dramatically across Europe, mainly because of changes in agricultural practice, and the species became extinct in the UK in 1979 through habitat decline. Its successful reintroduction – a huge triumph for conservationists – has given people in this country an unexpected chance to see not only a very rare butterfly but one that has one of the most extraordinary life cycles found in nature, being totally dependant on a single species of ant. Collard Hill is unusual in providing open access to a colony of this still highly vulnerable butterfly. A Large Blue hotline (01793 817732) has been set up to provide up-to-date information on the flight season during June.

Find this a very difficult choice – Wessex has such an outstandingly rich and diverse range of properties, from Lodge Park – one of the finest small buildings in Britain – to Avebury. Each of the properties I've selected is beautiful and personally very familiar to me, and each lifts my spirits.

First is the downland of Melbury Hill and Fontmell Down, familiar from childhood and nowadays on my route from home to Wessex Trust HQ. I always stop there, look, breathe or walk. This is an ancient, prehistoric spot and one which also reminds us of the sheep and wool on which the South West's wealth was based for centuries – and which paid for all those wonderful buildings. The dramatic, rolling, dipping beauty of this place and its vistas lifts my heart every time.

Secondly, Creech Arch. This is said to be

the most remote, most secret and smallest of all the Trust's Wessex properties, but it has long been one of my favourites. It's an eye-catching folly which epitomises the elegant simplicity of 18th century architecture, and it forms a high point of my favourite walk along the downs, until you glimpse Corfe Castle and the Isle of Wight in the distance beyond.

Finally I've chosen the cliffs of the World Heritage Site. I love coastal seascapes – their drama and beauty are constantly changing and are wonderful at any time of year. I have been able to see the cliffs beyond St Aldhelm's Head from my home for most of my life and I walk there whenever I can. I believe the preservation of our coastal property – South West, Wales and those northern stretches – is among the Trust's most important contributions to Britain's island heritage.