

Hopton Castle Enhancement - Wild Flowers and Tree Planting

Grant Reference CF2122/4

FINAL REPORT

This Final Report covers Phase 2 of this project – Tree Planting in the castle grounds, partly to replace those mature trees lost in the mini-tornado that swept the valley in August 2020 but also to increase the number and diversity of indigenous tree variety. See map for locations of the trees planted.

Bare rooted 7-10 foot tree whips were purchased from Bucknell Nurseries. Holes were dug of a size to allow the tree roots to be fanned out. Support posts were driven in and the trees placed in the holes and tied in before back-filling, soil compression and the replacement of the turves. See photographs attached.



Since the castle fields are grazed by sheep we necessarily had to erect tree protection. Posts were driven in around each tree and rails nailed around the top before galvanized rabbit netting was stapled around to form an enclosure. Two strands of barbed wire were added above the netting and below the rails.

During the course of planting and whilst erecting the tree protection shields we were encouraged by the comments of an increasing number of visitors, all of whom thought that the general attractiveness of the site was much improved and that they would definitely be coming again to view the progress of both the wild flower and new tree growth.



The trustees of the Hopton Castle Preservation Trust should like to thank the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Group for firstly making a grant available to complete Phase 2 of this project but also for approving the extra expenditure of additional tree protection posts, rails and netting.

Match funding amounted to £462.00 (Phase 1) plus £476.00 (Phase 2) = Total £938.00, all as a result of Volunteer Labour.

Please note that Phase 1 of this project, the Wild Flowering of the motte around the castle and of the triangle of grass on the right as you cross the bridge into the car park was completed in October 2021. The germination rate of the seeding is encouragingly high and we expect a fine display of wild flowers this year and in the years to come.

Project Summary

In making an application for a grant to enhance the castle site and grounds with wild flower and tree planting we had hoped to generate a sense of local cohesion and interest in the facility. We are delighted that this has been realized both by the extent of the volunteer labour involved and through the comments of the visitors to the site, both local and more distant. We have experienced a significant increase in visitor numbers over the last 12 months, partly because covid restrictions meant that people were taking staycations rather than travelling abroad but also as a result of the frustrations of isolation resulting in the use of an easily found open space offering free parking and a chance for animals and children to run around safely in an area with pleasant surroundings.

We learnt much during the course of realizing the project from other groups who have undertaken wild flowering projects but also from each other as the volunteers shared their own experiences of developing wild flower meadows in their fields and orchards.

The tree planting represents a longer term project but has none-the-less already resulted in positive comments from recent visitors. The fact that we could plant a wider range of indigenous trees will undoubtedly improve the bio-diversity of the total site and make for an increasingly attractive place to visit.

All in all we feel the project to be a resounding success.

Members of the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Group are cordially invited to visit the site at any time to witness and review the completion of this project.

E R Laidlar Treasurer HCPT

14th March 2022