

Upfront



Photo by Guy Newman

Learning from old woods

An intricate study of tree growth in ancient Devon woodland is expected to provide a template for volunteer scientists around the UK to help monitor the effects of climate change.

Scientist Alison Smith has begun a four year research programme at Clinton Devon Estates' Hunshaw Woods near Torrington.

When complete the work will be packaged into a simple measurement toolkit that can be used by an army of "citizen scientists" in their local woodlands to predict the impacts of climate change on forests, and ultimately protect species that might be endangered by it.

Alison's research involves measuring leaves, buds, ground flora, saplings and canopy cover and mapping her findings

against changes in the weather which are recorded by weather stations tracking the effects of hot temperatures, wet weather, severe cold and droughts.

She hopes with the right research, techniques can be developed that enable this work to be carried out by volunteer groups from local communities and schools across the UK.

Alison explained: "At the moment it is difficult to say what impacts climate change will have on our forests. We know that it will have an impact, but different forests will respond in different ways.

"The methods we currently use to detect subtle changes in the growth and health of forest species are too costly, too time consuming and too labour intensive to do all the research that is needed."



Spade work

A recycling initiative sees old garden tools restored by prisoners and given new life for use at various schools and community projects.

Richard Leatherby, the Plymouth-based coordinator of The Conservation Foundation's Tools Shed project, arranges collection of the broken tools which are repaired at HMP Dartmoor's prison workshops.

The restored tools are given to schools and community groups at giveaway days at participating garden centres and horticultural organisations. conservationfoundation.co.uk



Bird's eye view

Scientists from The University of Exeter and the RSPB have captured incredible footage of what it's like to fly with the UK's largest seabird.

Researchers attached miniature cameras to gannets with fascinating results showing a bird flying high above the coast while ships pass below. Find it on YouTube by searching Gannet Cam



Loyalty reward

A new loyalty card for rural folk has been launched by John Hardman, chief executive of Countrywide Farmers, which has two Devon stores, in association with NFU Countryside.



Happy horses

A new barn has been opened at The Mare and Foal Sanctuary near Totnes where ponies like Florence (left) are looked after. The charity's supporters funded the new building.



Gorilla thriller

An auction by Paignton Zoo of 27 decorated lifesize gorilla sculptures has raised £100,000 for gorilla conservation and Children's Hospice South West, marking the zoo's 90th year.



Thank you very mulch

Children from Wynstream Primary School, Exeter, received a delivery of compost from Coastal Recycling to help their school garden. The children had attended a Farm Wise event run by Devon County Council at Westpoint and were so impressed with the demonstration by Coastal Recycling of how the garden waste of Devon is turned into compost for farms that they asked if they could have a delivery to fertilise their own school allotments.

Coastal was happy to oblige and delivered about 14 tonnes of compost for the children to spread on their allotment and newly planted orchard.

Lyn Chadwick from Coastal said: "The children were fantastic; they rolled up their sleeves, put on their wellies and got involved as soon as we arrived."



Breaking taboo

Saying Goodbye founder Zoe Clark-Coates has been shortlisted for a Tesco Mum of the Year award.

Through Lymptstone-based Saying Goodbye Zoe works to break the taboo of miscarriage and stillbirth and give everyone who has experienced baby loss the opportunity to say goodbye to their child at one of the national remembrance services run by Saying Goodbye throughout the UK.

Zoe Coates, said: "I am overwhelmed to be nominated for this award."

Beefy role for ex Chief

Ex-Chiefs rugby star Richard Baxter and Broadclyst-based farmers Neil and Sally Grigg have joined forces in a unique partnership to provide Devonians with the popular Red Ruby Devon beef.

Richard Baxter, who retired from professional rugby earlier this year, has returned to the family farm in Exwick and is now concentrating on increasing his herd of this traditional native breed.

He was introduced to the Griggs who have recently taken over Courtneys Butchers in Exeter, by a mutual friend.



Exeter Chiefs' Brett Sturgess, butcher Ray Clemonts, Exeter Chiefs' Hoani Tui, butcher Bob Thornton, former Exeter Chiefs' Richard Baxter and Exeter Chiefs' Haydn Thomas

"Farming was always what I'd wanted to do after playing professional rugby, and when I was introduced to Neil and Sally, I knew that Burrow Farm would provide me with the perfect outlet for my beef" says

Richard. "My family had shopped at Courtneys of Cowick Street for years, so I'm really pleased to know that some of the beef sold there will be my own." burrowfarm.com



Care for coast

A popular section of the South West Coast Path, between Soar Mill Cove and Fir Wood near Salcombe, is receiving some TLC thanks to the Great South West Walk and sponsorship from Toad Hall Cottages. The firm raised money for the improvement project and sponsored a stretch of The Great South West Walk as well as entering a team in the event.



Canine friend

Comet is the new recruit at St Luke's Hospice in Plymouth where he cheers up patients. The black labrador was bred to be a Hearing Dog for The Deaf but didn't quite make the grade.



Picture perfect

Leanne Ward, Miss Devon 2013, has turned her passion for photography into a business - opening a photographic studio in a former fishmongers shop on the outskirts of Plymouth.



Firewalker

Brave Linden Homes' commercial director, Jason Knight, who lives in Barnstaple, has raised £1,000 for Children's Hospice South West by walking five metres over smoking hot embers.



Wintry scene takes prize

Steep valleys blanketed in mist; an avenue of snowy beech trees; a sunlit slope covered in buttercups; children running over hills that roll and stretch to the horizon: these are just some of the images entered in the recent Blackdown Hills landscape photography competition.

The competition was organised by the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding

Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership team to showcase one of Devon's most beautiful but least well-known landscapes. The winning entry, by Gary Spencer, shows a snow-covered scene on the AONB's plateau: one the area's distinctive features.

Now the team hopes that these stunning images will encourage more people to discover what makes the Blackdown Hills so special and worth a visit.



Telling stories

Devon author Sarah Pearse has created a new business turning people's special memories into personalised short stories.

A Tale to Tell is a bespoke story making service from the Torquay writer.

She'll take a cherished memory - perhaps a special holiday or comedy first dinner cooked for a partner - and craft it into a unique piece of short fiction.

Starting at £200, the tales are available in three lengths depending on what kind of tale the storyteller wants to tell.

The married mum of two said: "I have an exceptionally close family and know how important stories are to the fabric of a family. I passionately believe that everyone has a tale to tell." taletotell.co.uk

Military music

The Military Wives Choir and the band of the Royal Marines' commando training centre at Lympstone will perform at a Last Night of the Rotary Proms in Exeter Cathedral.

The event marks 20 years since the Rotary Club of Exmouth and District staged a proms concert to raise funds for flagpole and flags at Exmouth.

The 1 March cathedral concert will support the Devon Air Ambulance, Childrens Hospice South West and the Rotaries International charity End Polio Now.

exeter-cathedral.org.uk

Challenging perceptions

Sidmouth's Ben Callon will join 15 local playwrights in the From Devon With Love festival, which runs from 24-27 January at the Bike Shed Theatre, Exeter. He will be performing his own, original one-act play *A Little Bit OCD*.

A graduate from the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Ben says: "I wrote *A Little Bit OCD* as a combatant to the

exploitative fashion in which mental health is currently documented on television. Shows such as *OCD Cleaning Squad* and *Supersize vs Superskinny* take stories of all too real and all too debilitating conditions, then squeeze them into a format to entertain. We are a million miles away from the Victorian era, yet still seem to indulge in bedlam and I for one believe this has to stop."

Find out more about the show at bikeshedtheatre.co.uk



Chief support

A new business has 'touched down' in Exmouth with a little help from Exeter Chiefs' Chris Bentley, who cut the tape to officially declare open Ian Crook Wealth Management.



Busy business

South Molton interiors shop KK Design, fitted out entirely from recycled products, is moving to new premises because business is so good.



Swimming star

Liz Johnson, a paralympian breaststroke winner, visited Pathfield School in Barnstaple to highlight the special school's hydrotherapy pool refurbishment project.



Flights of fantasy

Devon aerial filming and photography experts Flyonix say they specialise in making the weird, wonderful and almost impossible a reality.

The company made lawnmowers, washing machines and a barbecue take flight for a 2012 Avios TV commercial.

Now they have marked the 50th anniversary of *Doctor Who* by constructing a flying replica of the time lord's TARDIS.

The creation, powered by a dozen propellers, is the work of Ben Whiting, Rupert Brandon-King and Ben Bailey who are all from Hatherleigh.

But while the three men have overcome the challenge of making the TARDIS fly they have yet to achieve the next step of making it travel through time.

For videos go to flyonix.com

MONTHLY ROUND-UP



IN DISARRAY

Developers RWE have abandoned controversial plans for an offshore wind farm 10 miles off the North Devon coast, saying technical challenges would make it too costly.

INFLUENTIAL TEEN

Exeter University student and romantic fiction writer Beth Reeks, 18, has been named by Time magazine as one of the 16 most influential teenagers in the world, alongside Justin Bieber and Lorde. Writing as Beth Reekles her book *The Kissing Booth* was an internet hit.

FROZEN WATER BILLS

South West Water cheered up customers by announcing it was freezing standard tariffs and standing charges for all household and business customers until April 2015.

STAR'S ROMANCE

Plymouth's Olympic medallist diving star Tom Daley stole a march on the media by using his own YouTube channel to announce that he was in a relationship with a man.

FINDING GOLD

A rare golden eye lichen which was once thought to be extinct in the UK has been spotted growing on a willow tree at Devon Wildlife Trust's Andrew's Wood, near Kingsbridge - the first Devon sighting since 1966.

See Devon by Freetrike

A local cycling service is celebrating travelling 1500 miles since June 2012.

Tom Pales from Silverton set up Freetrike following his father's stroke in 2001.

He had previously been living in London with a career in property management, but relocated to Devon, completed a degree in health and social work and began working for charities and cycling services. Freetrike uses traffic-free cycle paths and is a cycle coaching service for people with disabilities living in and around Devon.



Tom Pales who runs Freetrike disability cycling service on a cycling trike at Instow

The service uses recumbent trikes - a three-wheeled cycle with a reclined seat - to help build confidence and allow people to enjoy the local

countryside. The one-on-one sessions last two hours and are suitable for all ages.

For more information see freetrike.co.uk



Warspite centenary

The 100th anniversary of the launch of what many consider to be the greatest British warship ever built was honoured at a tribute event in Plymouth. More than 200 guests attended a celebration of battleship Warspite and the sailors that served in her.

Devon Life welcomes your views

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