

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

Welcome to our November Newsletter

We are pleased to be able to bring you news of all the work that has been happening in Scilly over the past few months, as always it's been a busy time. Thank you to all the contributors who have provided updates in this edition, which include:

- Rosemary Parslow shares the importance of the 'Least Adder's-tongue' fern;
- Charlie Johns, Senior Archaeologist looks at how 'Heritage Surveys are helping to shape the future';
- Jacob Blackett from the Isles of Scilly National Landscape updates on the Yellow-legged Asian Hornet;
- Reports are available from TerraFarmer and Pasture for Life; plus
- More news and updates, including on the abattoir, from Jaclyn Pearson.

Farmers and Partners Gathering

In September, over 20 farmers and project partners gathered on Tresco for a morning dedicated to sharing the progress of the Small is Beautiful Landscape Recovery project, looking at survey results and next steps.

After an early boat ride and a welcome over tea and coffee at the Flying Boat Café, we were delighted to welcome Judith Batchelar OBE, Honorary President of the British Nutrition Foundation and Deputy Chair of the

Environment Agency, who set the tone for the day with thoughtful opening words about the future of farming, food, and nature recovery.

The TerraFarmer team led a session on narcissi and soil health, followed by an in-field site visit focused on soil sampling and the role of soil management in building resilience and supporting productivity. It was a hands-on and insightful session, with plenty of discussion among participants.

Norman Carreck and Meg Loach led an engaging talk on bee health and pollinators, followed by updates from Emma Gardner on Farming and Landscape Recovery and Dave Mawer on opportunities for farmers to book their Whole Farm Plan sessions.

The event wrapped up with a lively Q&A before lunch, with many staying to chat and continue conversations over sandwiches and coffee.

It proved to be a timely gathering, coming just a week before the yellow legged hornet incursion, which has since sharpened the focus on biosecurity and pollinator protection across the islands.

A big thank you to everyone who joined us, shared their expertise, and helped make the day such a success.



Spotlight on Least Adder's-tongue

Botanist, Rosemary Parslow shines a light on the Adder's-tongue fern and shares her work on plant species on the islands.

The Least Adder's-tongue fern is a tiny (barely as big as a rabbit dropping) rare plant that is only found on Wingletang Down, St Agnes and the Channel Islands. There are three Adder's-tongue ferns, the Least, Common and Small (larger than a rabbit dropping!). Once they were all to be found on St Agnes, but sadly Common Adder's-tongue has not been found there for many years. The Least and Small Adder's-tongue ferns can both be found on Wingletang, sometimes at the same sites, although their seasons differ slightly.

Interest in the fern began in the 1970s, but it wasn't until the 1980s that attempts to map the population were made. This culminated in an illustrated gazetteer, helping sites to be found and monitored. As the fern appears in autumn and is at its best mid-winter, visits between November and January are ideal. However, locating sites can be challenging and in some places the fern may not appear at all for several seasons, one being that they can live underground depending on the mycorrhiza in the soil.

In September, I visited St Agnes to check the ferns, concentrating on the northern part of Wingletang. No ferns were found at several known sites but at three, fronds were emerging, not only the sterile fronds (the one or two leaf-like fronds) but a number of emerging fertile fronds (the 'Adder's-tongue' - growing up between the sterile fronds that produce the spores). This was an encouraging result and with the continued management of Wingletang through the Wildlife Trust and contracted farmers, the project hopes to enable these tiny ferns to thrive.



Least Adder's-tongue fern
Photo: Rosemary Parslow

Invasive non-native plant species

We continue to collect a lot of information on invasive plants in Scilly, with the aim of producing an interim document in the next two months or so. Although only ten of the most problematic species were selected for distribution mapping, the other invasive non-native species are still being recorded where possible.



Sour Fig

Isles of Scilly Grassland & Species

The Isles of Scilly are unique, having a very different flora to the rest of Britain and even Cornwall. So, although the islands share many species and habitats with the mainland, there are usually subtle differences; it is this aspect of the island flora that makes them special.

One habitat that seems to be rare or missing these days are hay meadows. There are pastures and some grasslands, but no traditional hay meadows.

I was delighted to find, some St Agnes locals who could tell me which grasslands were once hay-cut. I had recalled Lewis Hicks and Gordon George hay-making and using a horse and cart to take the load from Browarth fields to the farm.

So based on recent and past surveys, and research on both grasslands and arable fields we are now able to come up with comprehensive lists of the species of plants that would be found in these habitats and could form the basis of Isles of Scilly themed seed mixes. Please take a [look at the list](#) and we will embed this into the project moving forward, assisting land managers to use seed mixes containing these species wherever possible.

Isles of Scilly Grassland & Species List

Please visit our [website](#) to view the list of species that have been identified in Scilly.

List of species to inform seed mixes on Scilly					
Annual Meadow-grass	<i>Poa annua</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Annual Pearlwort	<i>Sagina apetala</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for arable mix		
Bell Heather	<i>Erica cinerea</i>	Native on Scilly	Heathland		
Bird's-foot	<i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Bird's-foot Trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Biting Stonecrop	<i>Sedum acre</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Buck's-horn Plantain	<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Bulbous Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Camomile	<i>Chamemelum nobile</i>	Native on Scilly	Unlikely to be in a seed mix	Donor sites on Scilly	
Cat's-ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for arable mix		
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Common Bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Common Centaury	<i>Centaureum erythraea</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Common Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Common Mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Common Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Native on Scilly	Very important to insects		
Common Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Native on Scilly	Very important to insects		
Common Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Common Stork's-bill	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Native on Scilly	Arable or Grassland mix	Mainly coastal	
Common Vetch	<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Native on Scilly	Arable or Grassland mix		
Creeping Bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Creeping Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Creeping Thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Crested Dog's-tail	<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Cuckoo Flower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix	On Scilly prefers wet	
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Dove's-foot Cranesbill	<i>Geranium molle</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Early Forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis ramosissima</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Early Hair-grass	<i>Aira praecox</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
English Stonecrop	<i>Sedum anglicum</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
False Oat-grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Fiddle dock	<i>Rumex pulcher</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Field Wood-rush	<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil	<i>Lotus subbiflorus</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix	Grows in drier places on Scilly	
Green Field-speedwell	<i>Veronica agrestis</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for arable mix		
Ground-ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Groundsel	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for arable mix		
Heath Bedstraw	<i>Galium saxatile</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Heather (Ling)	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Native on Scilly	Heathland		
Heath-grass	<i>Danthonia decumbens</i>	Native on Scilly	Heathland		
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Native on Scilly	Very important to insects		
Hop Trefoil	<i>Trifolium campestre</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Lady's Bedstraw	<i>Galium verum</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Lesser Trefoil	<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Navelwort	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Native on Scilly	On Scilly, on walls		
Oxeye Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Parsley-piert	<i>Aphanes arvensis</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for arable mix		
Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Pignut	<i>Conopodium majus</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		Mainly St Martin's
Procumbent Pearlwort	<i>Sagina procumbens</i>	Native on Scilly	Very tiny, unlikely to plant		
Red Clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Rough Meadow-grass	<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Sand Sedge	<i>Carex arenaria</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Sand Spurrey	<i>Spergularia rubra</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for arable mix	A sedge, yet common in Scilly grassland	
Selfheal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Sheep's Fescue	<i>Festuca ovina</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Sheep's Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		Rare in Scilly
Smooth Hawk's-beard	<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Smooth Meadow-grass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Squirreltail grass	<i>Vulpia Bromoides</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Soft-brome	<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Sweet Vernal-grass	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Thale Cress	<i>Arabis thaliana</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for arable mix		
Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Tufted Vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Velvet Bent	<i>Agrostis canina</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Wall Speedwell	<i>Veronica arvensis</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for arable mix		
Western Gorse	<i>Ulex galii</i>	Native on Scilly	Heathland		Not common in Scilly
Wild carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		Sea Carrot sub species in Scilly
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Wood Sage	<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Yellow Bartsia	<i>Parentucella viscosa</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Yorkshire-fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Native on Scilly	Suitable for grassland mix		
Not recommended to be planted on Scilly due to rarity					
Meadow Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Common species in Scilly are Bulbous and Creeping buttercup			
Thyme-leaved Sandwort	<i>Arenaria serpyllifolia</i>	Only found on Bryher, Rushy Bay			
Rosebay Willowherb	<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>	Two casual records			
Batony	<i>Stachys Betonica officinalis</i>	Used to be on Great Ganilly			
Not recommended for restoration as probably extinct					
Meadow Vetchling	<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Always rare			
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	One record St Mary's			
Adder's-tongue	<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i>	Formerly on St Agnes			
Field Pansy	<i>Viola tricolor</i>	Possibly misrecorded			
Wild Mignonette	<i>Reseda lutea</i>	Formerly on Gugh, probably introduced with shoddy			
Yellow Oat-grass	<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>	Introduced for straw plaiting on a Team farm (1840-1880).			
Not recommended, as not occurring as natives in Scilly					
Yellow rattle	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>				
Kidney vetch	<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>				
Native, but needs reduction, not planting					
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Native on Scilly			
Barren Brome	<i>Bromus sterilis</i>	Native on Scilly			
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Native on Scilly	At least 23 types on Scilly		
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Native on Scilly			
Rushes, unlikely to plant					
Hard Rush	<i>Juncus inflexus</i>	Native on Scilly			
Jointed Rush	<i>Juncus articulatus</i>	Native on Scilly	On Scilly, damp grassland		
Soft-rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Native on Scilly	Common in Scilly grassland		

Featured Partner: Tresco Island

From the waved heath of Castle Downs to the Great Pool, the diversity of Tresco's landscape is one of the most compelling qualities of the island. As well as three Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Tresco has both the largest single farm and the most significant area of planted woodland in the Isles of Scilly. Combining the stewardship of these precious areas of habitat with the need for agricultural productivity is one of the key elements of Tresco's partnership with Small is Beautiful.

In considering the aims of Small is Beautiful, they demonstrate values that sit at the core of Tresco's land management practices. If an example was needed of the importance of the islands working together on these aims, we have no need to look further than the management of emerging biosecurity risks. As mentioned on p.5, only a few months ago, Scilly's first population of the Yellow-legged or Asian hornet was discovered in the Abbey Gardens. The nest was eradicated with ruthless efficiency by the National Bee Unit and the Tresco team but incident highlighted the vital requirement for joined-up thinking and inter-island partnership in dealing with the threats of climate change, biodiversity loss, fragile food security and poor biosecurity.

Alasdair Moore

Head of Estate and Gardens

Forst Adder's tongue

Caring for Scilly's Past: How Heritage Surveys are helping to shape the future

Many of you already know how extraordinary Scilly's archaeology is, but returning to the islands to repeat surveys I first carried out in the early 1990s, truly reminded me just how special these places are. Scilly holds an incredible 238 Scheduled Monuments, and any one of them would be considered highly significant on the mainland.

Our recent surveys found that many sites are becoming heavily overgrown with bracken, coprosma, gorse and bramble. Although this vegetation may appear harmless, dense cover can damage the monuments' settings, restrict access and most importantly, the roots and bracken rhizomes can cause real physical harm to the buried archaeological layers beneath the surface.

A key part of the Small is Beautiful project is developing a grazing plan that brings farming, biodiversity, and heritage together.

Mechanical work, clearance with hand tools and well managed grazing can help keep scrub under control, protect monuments from root damage, and reduce future fire risk across the landscape. This approach blends traditional land management with modern conservation thinking, helping ensure Scilly's unique archaeology remains visible and protected for generations to come.

It has been a pleasure to return to the islands and support the project team in shaping decisions that benefit heritage, wildlife and farming alike. Careful planning, selecting the right tools or animals for the right locations, will all form part of the future strategy, and it is exciting to be part of it. **Charlie Johns, Senior Archaeologist**



Charlie Johns on St Martin's

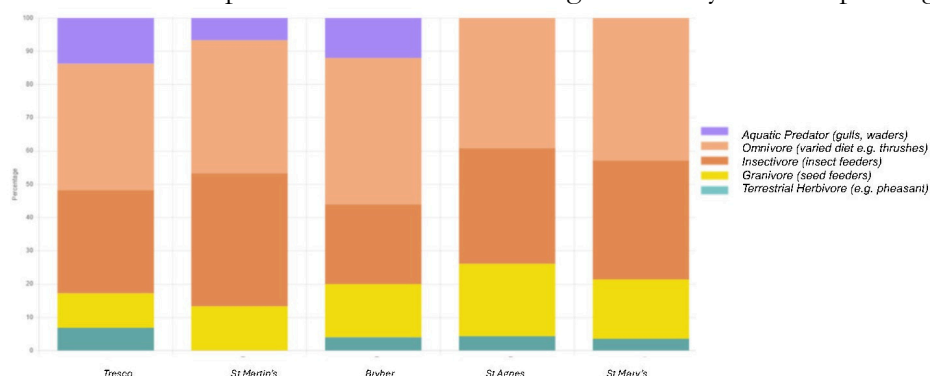
Chirruping across the Islands

This year five farms across the islands have installed Chirrup devices, a bird listening tool that records and identifies species from their calls.

The two most common groups were omnivores such as robins, thrushes and blackbirds, and insectivores such as swallows, warblers and wrens. These appeared in very similar proportions across most sites, showing that Scilly farmland provides a good mix of food and shelter for a broad range of species.

Granivores (feeding on seeds) including linnets and goldfinches were recorded on every island, with St Agnes showing the highest proportion. This group is a reliable indicator of healthy farmland, heathland and grassland, so an increase in numbers would suggest that wildlife friendly management is having a positive effect. We will use the data to identify trends as we continue shaping landscapes that work for both farming and nature.

If you would like to learn more about Chirrup or are interested in hosting a unit on your farm please get in touch.



Yellow-Legged Hornet Update

Back in September, during the event on Tresco, Jilly Halliday, Norman Carreck and Meg Loach (pictured), spoke to us about the increasing spread of the invasive Yellow-legged Asian Hornet (YLAH).

Meg had recently returned from specialist training in Jersey. That training focused on how to recognise early signs of hornet activity, how to respond safely, and how to support community-wide monitoring. At the time, YLAH were spreading steadily across the South West of the UK, so the message was clear: we needed to prepare in case they reached Scilly. YLAH are highly predatory and one single nest can consume over 11kg of insects – affecting honeybees and native pollinators, with likely knock-on effects to birds and bats.

Thanks to the SiB project, we were able to support Meg's training trip, and this proved timely as just one week later a YLAH was confirmed on Scilly. A nest was later found and destroyed on Tresco. This early detection highlighted exactly why the training and preparation were so important.

We are now moving into the next stage of our response. The nest on Tresco may have released future queens, which hibernate through the winter and then establish new nests in the spring. Jacob Blackett from the Isles of Scilly National Landscape and Jilly Halliday will be coordinating a spring trapping and monitoring effort across the islands to hopefully detect any queens early on. Several monitoring traps will need to be placed on each island, and so help will be needed from farmers and growers, as well as other community members.

If you would like to help with hosting a monitoring station on your farm, please get in touch for more details.



Farmers and Growers Initiative Farm Walk and Upcoming Soil Testing

It was great to see so many farmers and land managers at the Farmers and Growers Initiative farm walk at Pelistry Farm earlier in November.

We learned about cattle biosecurity, ongoing artificial insemination opportunities for Scilly, narcissi production, and even met the newest arrivals on the farm with some very early lambs. It was brilliant to catch up with so many of you over a pasty.



Upcoming Soil Testing

We are working with TerraFarmer to help collect a baseline soil survey across most farms. This means we will have a clear starting point for soil condition, organic matter and wider soil health, which we can track across the lifetime of the project.

We'll be in touch soon to arrange soil sampling before Christmas. Please choose which fields you'd like sampled, confirm when our team can visit, and show them the sampling spots. The process is quick, and results will follow in January.

Who will be visiting you:

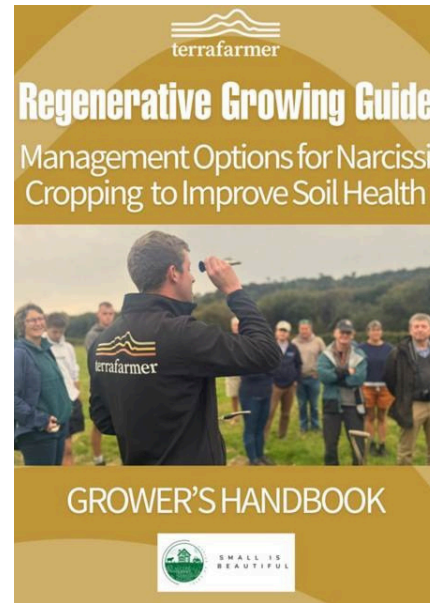
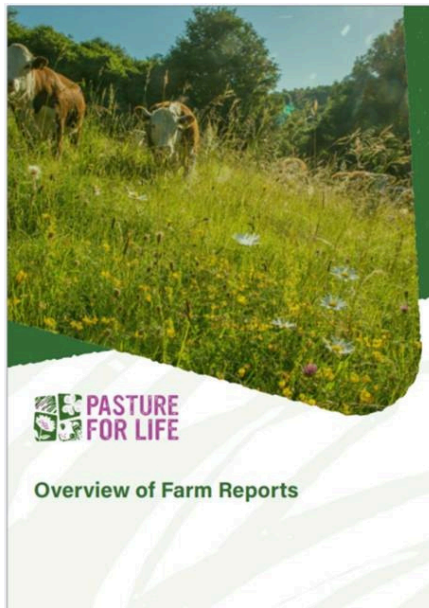
- **Jaclyn** for St Marys & St Martin's (coordinating helpers)
- **Aiden Hicks** for St Agnes
- **Jack Armstrong** for Bryher
- **Graham Eggins** for Tresco

Pasture for Life & Terrafarmer Reports

Over the past few months Pasture for Life and Terrafarmer have been working with farmers and land managers to identify ways to improve grazing management and soil health. The following reports have been produced to inform project planning: You can view the following reports on our [website](http://smallisbeautiful.org.uk): smallisbeautiful.org.uk.

Pasture for Life: Overview of Farm Reports Holistic Considerations;

TerraFarmer: Management options for Narcissi Cropping to improve soil health - Industry Report
Regenerative Growing Guide: Narcissi Cropping to improve soil health - Growers' Handbook



Abattoir Planning Update

Our consultant, Andy Gray, visited the islands last month and thank you to those of you representing farmers and land managers on the Abattoir Steering Group - your input is invaluable.

It was a productive visit, and we'll share a fuller update in the next issue. The abattoir will strengthen food resilience on Scilly by reducing food miles, supporting farmers, and enabling conservation grazing that enhances biodiversity.



Abattoir Development Steering Group meeting

Stay in touch

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the topics in this newsletter, please get in touch:

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