

Friends of Juniper Hill Field



Today the fields are rich in grass,
And buttercups in thousands grow;
I'll show the world where I have been –
With gold-dust seen on either shoe.

What Has Been Happening

8 September, 2023

Over the last four months a group of concerned residents have been exploring every aspect of the history of Juniper Hill Field and the plans of [Woodlands.co.uk](https://www.woodlands.co.uk). We have put together a detailed summary of our research on the [savejuniperhillfield.co.uk](https://www.savejuniperhillfield.co.uk) website in the form of an FAQ. We hope it will answer most questions in as much detail as possible.

The biggest setback is that [Woodlands.co.uk](https://www.woodlands.co.uk) rejected Natural England's offer to buy the whole 20 acre site made earlier in the summer. It is understood that [Woodlands.co.uk](https://www.woodlands.co.uk) are prepared to sell the whole site in principle, but having bought it for just under £200,000, they are now pricing the first of the 4.5 acre plots at £85,000. Sold at such a price, it would appear that they want to make a hefty profit on the land. Despite requests direct to Angus Hanton, the owner of [Woodlands.co.uk](https://www.woodlands.co.uk), for a price on which to start negotiations, we have had no reply. We are still hoping that Angus Hanton will recognise that this rare fragment of grassland is a vital link needed in a wider landscape nature recovery strategy stretching from Juniper Hill to Cranham incorporating several SSSIs.

So far [Woodlands.co.uk](https://www.woodlands.co.uk)'s management of the grassland has provoked deep concern that they do not know how to conserve this species rich meadowland. The installation of the fencing entailed heavy machinery and happened during the skylark breeding season on the hill top. Skylarks are endangered and disturbance of breeding birds is banned under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981. The fencing installed will make the regime of light grazing by cattle impossible and that has been key to the growing biodiversity of this field over the last twenty years.

Meanwhile, we have managed to contact all relevant organisations and charities and alerted them to the situation (CPRE, AONB, Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council, amongst others). Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust who own and manage the adjoining woodland have expressed their concern directly to [Woodlands.co.uk](https://www.woodlands.co.uk). All vehicle access to Juniper Hill Field is through 150 metres of the SSSI Frith Wood. The fear is that if five owners are regularly using the Frith Wood track it will impact on the woodland protected by the SSSI designation.

On a brighter note, we are delighted that Patrick Barkham, one of the most prominent nature writers in the country and a reporter on *The Guardian* has written a detailed [article](#) which picks up on the remarkable story of the two wonderful women who have walked the Juniper Hill Field almost every day for forty years. Both are in their eighties, Hanny Fox lives in Slad and Joy Elworthy lives on the other side of the hill at Wick Street; they have regularly met on top of the hill. Both have built a considerable knowledge of the remarkable wildlife. [Woodlands.co.uk](https://www.woodlands.co.uk) have deprived them of the paths they have used by installing gates and padlocks.

The response to the article and a mention in a newsletter leaflet delivered by Gary Luff, the Green councillor for this ward, has been terrific with another 500 people emailing the website. We have now registered 681 supporters.

We are hoping that *Cotswold Life*, *Stroud News and Journal* and local radio stations will now start to take interest. Anyone with contacts in any of these media and can help, please get in touch via the website.

Local film maker Peter Moseley is making a short film about the field and the friendship of these wonderful women. We are hoping the film will be on the website soon.

As part of our aim to widen awareness of this remarkable grassland, local councillor Gary Luff took the chief executive of Stroud District Council on a site visit in June along with other senior directors. We believe there has effectively been a Change of Land Use from agricultural to leisure. Normally this requires planning permission and we have pointed this out to Stroud District Council and are waiting to hear a response. We are also researching whether we could apply for the status of Asset of Community Value; many thanks for all those who agreed to their names being used to support the application.

We are in the process of pulling together several volunteers to better monitor the wonderful range of rare birds, wildlife and flowers on the field. We hope to be able to provide regular updates on [the website](#) and on [our Instagram](#). Please follow us. If you spot something, let us know. Recent discoveries have included a sixth type of orchid and birds such as a spotted flycatcher as well as the presence of bats. We have also just opened a [Discussion Forum](#) where you can share your thoughts.

We strongly believe that the conservation of this grassland is best managed by long term ownership by an organisation or charity dedicated to conservation who can draw on the necessary expertise. We are horrified that it could become a private glamping site for a few very rich owners, depriving the public of access and degrading the wide range of wild flowers, birds and insects which have flourished there in recent years.


This a small part of a bigger national and even global biodiversity crisis. The UK is the third worst in terms of depletion of its bio-diversity in Europe; only Malta and Ireland are worse. That shameful record is the result of thousands of small, local battles like this one.

Please spread the word to friends and neighbours. We have printed leaflets summarising the situation and if you can distribute them, let us know and we will arrange delivery. On the website we have listed five actions you can take to support the Friends of Juniper Hill Field.

Visit our website



Orchids and daisies flourish amidst the grasses on Juniper Hill Field.

[View our instagram profile](#) 

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