



We did it! Woodland purchased for Squirrels

The Isle of Wight Red Squirrel Trust has now purchased 12 acres of ancient woodland on the outskirts of Ryde. It has taken many years of searching for the right woodland and of course to find the money.

The majority of the purchase price came thanks to Simon Howes rowing the Atlantic Ocean single-handed and unsupported in his 68th year. He broke the record by 43 days! What a feat for a non-sailor!

The woodland is named 'Howes Wood' in recognition of Simon's efforts. If you want to read about this amazing venture, you can buy his book via the website: www.iowredsquirreltrust.co.uk.

Local resident, Val Gwynn added money to the pot so we could buy extra acres. Val has been a staunch supporter and great help to Helen from the start of her work with red squirrels in 1991. There isn't much Val doesn't know about the natural world!

We bought half of the woodland block and would very much like to buy the other half – so another challenge for us or another brave person to do something amazing! Could that be you? It is our 20th anniversary this year, so what a way it would be to celebrate!

The woodland is ancient woodland which was planted with conifers as a commercial crop by the Forestry Commission about 50 years ago. The majority is Lawson cypress which is not good habitat for wildlife, so

the Trust's aim is to restore it to ancient woodland. This will take some years and we are working closely with the Forestry Commission and obtaining a felling licence, in order to fell trees. Many of the trees are dead and the wood badly needs thinning, so we have our work cut out!

The long term plan is to turn the habitat back to predominantly broadleaf with a few of the conifers species that squirrels and birds prefer. Self-seeded hazel and oak saplings are struggling among the Lawson cypress, so by thinning the conifers and giving the saplings light, they should thrive and little new planting should be required. A woodland pond and a hide are also on the wish list.

When it's safe to do so, we will invite small groups to visit. The aim of the Trust is 'to educate the public about red squirrels, their habitat and the flora and fauna they share it with.' Meanwhile we will document species of flora and fauna we find. We would also like to have a web page dedicated to giving updates on the work, so watch out for it in the coming months.

Last October, Simon Howes officially opened the woodland on behalf of the Trust. It was well attended by supporters and the press. Lucky for us the weather behaved that day!



Cassie wins 'name the red squirrel mascot' competition

The competition was popular with the children, all 12 years old and under, with over 40 picking a name.

Goldie is the name chosen by randomised selection for the new red squirrel mascot, made by Bernie. The name was chosen by four-year-old Cassie Nunn from Shanklin. Cassie said she chose Goldie because squirrels have golden hair like hers!

She likes exploring the woods and finding wildflowers, her favourite is wild garlic. Cassie goes to Nettlestone Primary School where she has been busy learning about bees. She loves playing outside and jumping in puddles. Cassie also likes reading, swimming, gymnastics and Irish dancing.

The pictures of Cassie were taken at The IOW Red Squirrel Trust Bluebell Day at the end of April. It was very muddy and Cassie really enjoyed herself in the puddles!

The prize included a red squirrel soft toy, a book, a cushion, a red squirrel necklace, pencil and notebook.

Photograph of Cassie courtesy of Francesca Croft.



Bluebell Day

The annual Bluebell Day managed to raise over £500 for the Trust.

The money raised was from the gate and cake sales. Debbie once again kindly provided the wonderful cakes.

It was rather muddy but it certainly didn't deter people and, as usual, the bluebells were stunning. Once again we have to thank the owner of Knighton Wood, Nicky Eaton, for allowing us to hold the event again.



Online auctions a great success

The two online auctions held in the last 12 months, which Debbie and Beth organised, did really well and raised over £10,000.

Thank you to all the businesses who donated items and all of you who bought them. Beth and Debbie worked very hard and are having a well deserved rest from online auctions for a while.

Debbie will be at some of the local shows with all sorts of goodies to sell, including her famous cupcakes.





Kitemark takes the Biscuit!



The Isle of Wight Red Squirrel Trust rewards businesses who support us by giving them publicity on the website and Facebook as well as the right to use our kitemark.

The Isle of Wight Biscuit Company has been a supporter for many years by giving us commission on their red squirrel shaped ginger biscuits.

Recent recruits taking advantage of this scheme are Isle of Wight Bird Foods isleofwightbirdfoods.co.uk and Squirrels Den Collectables, Arreton Barns, Arreton. Squirrel Den Collectables do not have their own website.

2025 Calendars

There are still a few half price Red Squirrel 2025 calendars for sale.

If you would like one they are now only £5 with P+P at £2.50 (full price £10). Please send a cheque made out to The IW Red Squirrel Trust to 37 Quay Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5BQ. Or if you are on the Island, visit AAA records in Newport, Biscoes in Newport or 66 Union Street, Ryde to get your copy while stocks last.



Red squirrel book offer

Do you know of a university or college who would benefit from having a free copy of Red Squirrels on the Isle of Wight?

It is 30 years of red squirrel work, so a huge volume. There is a lot of science and graphic photos of post mortem findings, so not everyones cup of tea. Free copies will only be sent to a university or college.

For a private person who would like a copy, the heavily subsidised cost is £35. Email Helen: wightsquirrels@hotmail.com

Quarr hide

The hide at Quarr is now closed for repairs.

The hide most probably won't re-open to adoptees as we are planning to build a brand new hide at Howes Wood which we will open instead.



Change of address

Due the huge cost of a PO Box, the PO Box 33 address will cease as from February 2025. Thanks to Nick we can use the address: 37 Quay Street, Newport, IOW, PO30 5BQ.



Meet the Trustees...

Helen Butler MBE BSc

I am founder and chair of the The IOW Red Squirrel Trust. I started working with red squirrels in 1991 quite by accident and got hooked on these charismatic animals.

I have also founded the Wight Squirrel Project which is the science and welfare branch of red squirrel conservation on the Isle of Wight. Naturally the two charities work closely together.



Chair

Dr Catherine Hollyhead ACA

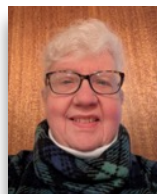
I have had a varied career which has included (in no particular order) being a secondary school teacher of mathematics, a Group Financial Controller for a multi-million Euro jewellery business, Deputy Finance Director for a Housing Association, Engineering Doctorate researching for the RNLI, Quality Manager for an IOW Sailing charity and as a Civil Servant. But at my heart I am an animal lover which is why I was honoured to become a Trustee and do what I can to help protect our Island's beautiful red squirrels and help raise awareness in my role as Talk Co-ordinator.



Education Officer

Dorothy Hughes

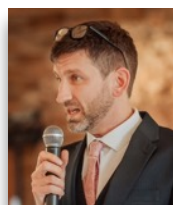
I have been a Trustee and Treasurer since the inception of the Trust and worked alongside Helen Butler to increase awareness of our fabulous red squirrels on the Island and protect them and their habitat for generations to come. I am now retired but after accountancy training in London have run a book-keeping business initially in London and then from 1983 on the Island. Alongside this I have taught art and many crafts over the years and sold my work both in London and on the Island.



Treasurer

Simon Craddock MSc, MA, BSc (HONS)

I have lived on the Island all my life and was raised on a market garden nursery just outside of Freshwater. As a child, I used to attend the wildlife club, WATCH (I forget what it stood for) and have always felt that there is balance being human interaction and wildlife, with people able to get so much more from their surroundings than a nice view. I am keen to get children involved with the activities of the Trust, and will be looking into ways to encourage participation in activities such as bird box making, pond dipping or perhaps even some planting of trees.



Youth Engagement Officer

Nick Gurney-Champion, LL.B (Hons), Solicitor

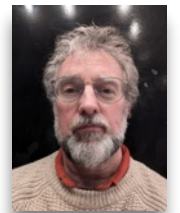
I was born and brought up on the Island and have always had an interest in and fondness for Red Squirrels, which have been frequent visitors to our family home. I am a solicitor by profession and have been a Trustee for three years and am currently the Secretary and Legal Adviser to the Trust. I am former President of the Isle of Wight Law Society and I am Chairman of the Arreton Parish Council.



Secretary & Legal Adviser

Jonathan Bacon, LLB, BCL

I am currently an elected councillor on the Isle of Wight Council as well as being a Parish Councillor in St Helens and a Town Councillor in Brading. I originally practised as a Barrister and also taught Law at postgraduate level. From 2017 to 2021 I was Chair of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. I hold trustee roles on a number of bodies and have been a Trustee of the Red Squirrel Trust since 2019. I am currently the Trust's Publicity Officer.



Publicity Officer

Nikki Kownacki

I became a Trustee in March 2024. Previously I studied for four years at Art College and gained an HND in Visual Communication and had a career as a Graphic Designer. I also volunteer for the Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and do a weekly Butterfly Transect and help lead Butterfly walks on the Island for Butterfly Conservation. I am also a member of the Steering Group for the West Wight Villages Residents' Association (WVRA). The group aims to help prevent inappropriate greenfield development on the Island.



Publications Officer

And finally, a sad farewell

Long time trustee John Gurney-Champion sadly died last year at the age of 100. John supported Helen's work from the time she started in 1991, became a trustee when the Trust was founded in 2005 and attended and hosted meetings to the end. We are very grateful to John for all his support over the years.

