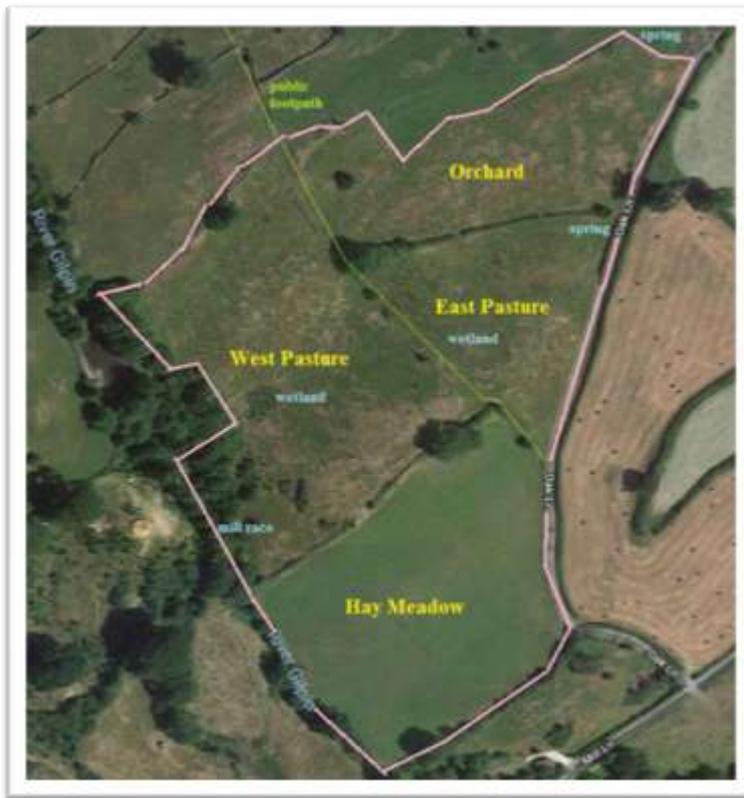


Children of Crosthwaite School to Benefit from Their Own Wildlife Reserve

Mill Fields Wildlife Project and Conservation Orchard

The land, known to some, as the Mill Fields, east adjacent to Oak Lane (also locally known as Nurses' Lane) was purchased by us, **Andy and Sheila Brown** of Crook, in April last year. The purchase was for the purposes of returning some local land to species-rich pasture and natural hay meadow, as well as wetland habitat for the benefit of indigenous wildlife proliferation, research and education. There is also section allocated for the start of an orchard for Westmorland, North Lancashire and Cumberland types of fruit, supported by local associations and groups.

The strategy for this land, is to develop a species rich natural environment, to promote native fauna and flora. This is for preservation and study by **local schools and wildlife groups**. The orchard will develop locally originated, or old breed, cultivars, varieties, and strains of fruit for the local region, under the guidance and breed management of the **South Lakes Orchard Group** and the **Westmorland Damson Association**.



A small area of both the wild pastures, between the easterly spring and the mill, is to be developed, by **South Cumbria Rivers Trust**, into wetland areas for the promotion of cleaner river waters and creating wildlife rich habitat. This project will commence in mid to late 2019. Part of this development will improve the public footpath condition, reducing muddy areas.

The hay meadow shall be left to develop whatever species of flora chooses to develop there and shall be cut at least twice a year in mid-Summer and late Autumn to avoid over growth of invasive and over-prolific shrubs and bushes. The two pastures have been, and will continue to be, kept short by the grazing of Shetland cattle, maintained by the **Rare Breed Species Trust**. Their placement is strictly controlled to avoid over-grazing and over growth as per the hay meadow. The orchard shall have enough space between trees to allow for grazing or cutting (scything) annually to encourage wildflower activity and naturally occurring pollinators, such as bumble bees, wild native solitary bees and hoverflies.

It is well known that, due to forty years of absentee landlords, the good people of Crosthwaite have enjoyed a bit of a wander about this land in the past, however, for these valuable projects to come to fruition, we ask for those not concerned with the projects to keep strictly to the public footpath to prevent the further degradation of these delicate habitats as they improve. Unfortunately, **dogs, their waste and roving owners** are not conducive to wildlife development. Also, when the cattle are in the fields, as per the countryside laws, dogs are to be kept on leads. The large amount of dog-poo bags and litter already collected from the land is disappointing and very environmentally damaging.

Groups with a vested interest in these projects, that currently have permission to access the land, **beyond the strict adherence to the public foot path**, are: Crosthwaite C of E Primary School students on specific project work with teachers, South Cumbria Rivers Trust, South Lakes Orchard Group, Westmorland Damson Association, Butterfly Conservation Trust, and South Lakes Woodlanders Group and specific members of the Cumbria Wildlife Trust. Also, allowed onto the land are The farmer concerned with the Rare Breed Species Trust cattle and local Crook farmer George Taylor. The Doves Nest Group have specific route access to the Mill Pond area. We are most grateful for your cooperation in order to help the wider community of Crosthwaite in the future.

This exciting project is designed to be a legacy, to benefit all future children of Crosthwaite, and possibly the wider area, to improve the children's education and appreciation of nature into the future.