



# ‘Uncovering Ham Hill's Past for its Future’

## Ham Hill Heritage Fund Project Newsletter December 2025



### The Ham Hill Visitor Centre is now open!

We're excited to announce that the brand-new Visitor Centre at Ham Hill is officially open! Located at the Lime Kiln Car Park, this milestone is part of the *Uncovering Ham Hill's past for its future* project, made possible thanks to the generous support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Wolfson Foundation.

#### What's Inside?

- Lime Kiln Café – Dog-friendly, serving delicious refreshments.
- Retail space with local products
- Exhibitions showcasing Ham Hill's past and future
- Accessible facilities, including Changing Places toilets

This is more than a building—it's a space for learning, discovery, and community.

And over the next two years, we look forward to:

- New activities, events and exhibitions
- Waymarked footpaths and interpretation panels
- Biodiversity enhancements and tree planting
- Archaeological and dry stone wall restoration
- New volunteer opportunities

Christmas Opening times  
17 – 22 Dec: 8am – 4pm,  
23 – 25 Dec: Closed  
26 Dec: 10am – 2pm  
27 – Wed 31 Dec: 8am – 4pm  
1 Jan: 10am – 2pm  
2 Jan onwards: 8am – 4pm,

Plus, coming soon: Hillfort Hideout natural play space, outdoor seating, and wildflower planting. We look forward to welcoming you.

# Welcome to our new team members



We are thrilled to welcome a new colleague to the Ham Hill Ranger team. Tessa Eveleigh joins us as a Green Estates Ranger, bringing experience in practical habitat management for conservation purposes and species surveying. With a background in Biology, Tessa is passionate about delivering activities which celebrate Ham Hill's wonderful wildlife and history and assisting with the work of the Ranger team.

## Meet Our New Baristas

We're excited to introduce some of the talented new baristas joining our team at the Ham Hill Lime Kiln Café! We've welcomed three head baristas and six casual baristas to bring you the very best coffee and treats. Meet Mandy, Lea, Jozef, and Debbie, who can't wait to serve you. Due to varying shift patterns, we haven't been able to photograph everyone just yet, but we'll be sure to introduce the rest of the team in the new year.



Mandy and Lea



Debbie and Jozef

## New Visitor Centre Volunteers

And finally, we've had a brilliant response to our call out for Visitor Centre volunteers and have recruited 20 of the 30 needed so far.

Starting in the new year, these incredible individuals will be true champions for Ham Hill, greeting visitors and helping them make the most of their time here. From offering tips on the best walks to sharing fascinating stories about the site's rich history and diverse wildlife, they'll ensure every visit is memorable. We can't wait to introduce them all to you soon.

Interested in becoming a volunteer visit the [Somerset Council website](#).



or scan this QR code

# Volunteer Autumn Highlights

## National Tree Week at Ham Hill



### Volunteers dig in to plant 3000 trees

To celebrate [National Tree Week](#) (22 - 30 November), we hosted a week of tree planting and set a challenge to plant 3000 new native trees to join up four fragmented woodland areas near lower Witcombe Valley.

A huge thank you goes out to our rangers, regular volunteers, teams from RNAS Yeovilton and Somerset Council, the Friends of Ham Hill, and members of the public (approximately 150 people!) who over the course of the week got stuck in and planted almost all 3000 trees with just a few left to do the following week. An all round tree-mendouse effort!

The trees and fencing were kindly funded by [Carbon Aware Productions](#) and [Ham and Doulting Stone](#).

### Dry stone walling update

This autumn and winter, our volunteer walling team restored two historic dry stone walls. Our main focus was the field-boundary wall between Strouds and the Warren, dating back to the 1700s. We rebuilt slumped sections and reinstated cope stones to stabilise the wall and keep it stock-proof.

In October, volunteers from Leonardo, Yeovil, helped sow wildflower-rich margins along sections of the Ham Hill plateau. Our Wednesday volunteers cleared scrub, brambles, and bracken to prepare for future repairs and seed sowing.



They also restored part of the Montacute-Norton parish boundary wall, dating to around 1600, originally built under Sir Edward Phelips. They also got stuck in to help with the planting 3,000 trees to link woodland fragments in Witcombe Valley.

In November, members of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society visited to explore Ham Hill's unique Jurassic geology, archaeology, and quarrying history.

## Practical Volunteers



Photo credit: John Day

Autumn has brought plenty of activity! Our team has begun clearing scrub and trees along the Eastern flank of the upper rampart. This work protects the hillfort's archaeology, enhances the landscape, and encourages wildflowers and grasses to thrive. They've also improved the area around the new visitor centre by widening paths and creating dead hedges, great for invertebrates and small mammals. Other tasks include removing old fencing, caring for last year's planted trees, and preparing fields for a wildflower margin project.

## Construction Volunteers

The construction team has been busy repairing steps, building pads for a new storage container, restoring and upcycling chairs for the visitor centre, and clearing fire-sites to maintain low nutrient levels.

## Leonardo volunteers creating a Buzz at Ham Hill!



Last month, we were thrilled to welcome a fantastic team of volunteers from Leonardo in Yeovil – the Home of British Helicopters – who joined our Green Estate Rangers to plant wildflowers for one of the UK's rarest bumblebees: the shrill carder bee.

With only five known populations left in the UK, including one in the Somerset Levels, Ham Hill's unique limestone grasslands offer a perfect opportunity to support this critically endangered species. Together, we planted a specially selected mix of wildflowers – including knapweed, vetchling, marjoram and yellow rattle – to create a rich, late-season feeding habitat to attract these buzzing beauties and other vital pollinators.

This project was made possible thanks to Leonardo's support and their commitment to local biodiversity. Claire Ellis, Head of Social Value at Leonardo, shared: "Creating a new lifeline for a bumblebee as threatened as the shrill carder on a site as historically significant as Ham Hill is incredibly rewarding for our team."