

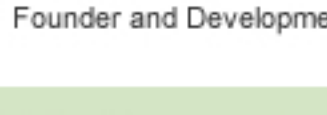
Welcome



Inspite of brisk winds and chilly mornings, Spring is just around the corner and the magnolias and camellias in London are at their magnificent best. It has been a tricky week for our capital city, but the power of Nature never fails to lift the human spirit.

I was honoured to be invited to lunch earlier in the month by the Worshipful Company of Farmers to speak to the Court about work experience opportunities in the land-based sector for our [HighGrounders](#), and a huge thank-you to [Lycetts](#) for featuring HighGround in their [Annual Review](#) which is sent to all their clients – our perfect audience, and both were precious opportunities to raise awareness of HighGround's work.

Our first [Rural Week of 2017](#) and our first at Bicton College is nearly upon us and I'm so grateful to Phil Le Grice the Principal and his team for all the work they have put into the new programme – bring it on!



Anna Baker Cresswell
Founder and Development Director

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HighGround at Headley Court

Now that the 3 year pilot at Headley Court is behind us and Horticultural Therapy has been integrated into the range of rehab interventions which Headley Court can offer its injured patients, we are looking ahead to the next 3 years of delivering the Horticultural Therapy service.

We are extremely grateful to the Soldiers' Charity who led the funding of the pilot, and the Horticultural Therapy Challenge has now been launched to ensure Horticultural Therapy continues to be available at Headley Court, and from next autumn, the new [DNRC](#) at Stanford Hall.

More details about the Horticultural Therapy Challenge are [here](#); if you can contribute to this appeal or you know anyone who could help us please, please get in touch. No money, no Horticultural Therapy.

Carol has had another busy quarter. This is why we need to raise £354,000 to keep this going.



Digging at Headley Court
Photo © Charlie Hopkinson

Carol's Column



It all started so well...

Happy New Year arrived with a few hitches...

The weather has been more than a challenge but lack of heating in the greenhouse has been a greater one. During the coldest spell the heating decided to fail. We delayed sowing and hoped our overwintering chillies would hang on and make it through. Very soon some jolly nice chaps fitted a new shiny heater, this equals a happy team and patients who were able to cast off a layer or two.

It was all too good to last. I walked to the horticulture area a few weeks later, through a howling gale and nasty rain with thoughts of a lovely cosy greenhouse. I opened the door and the blast of icy cold air swept over me. The shiny heater had blown the fuses. I raised the alarm and in true Army fashion, we have temporary facilities with a promise to 'sort it out for good'. The precious seedlings are spending their nights under bubblewrap and it seems to be working. We are putting back on the layers!

A further challenge has been the outbreak of Avian Flu. You will be happy to know that we have been following the guidelines from DEFRA. We had a major brain wave to secure our ladies and called for the Unit Assistance Team. We decided to use our fruit cage to segregate the hens from wild birds. The UAT arrived, all six and with a person at each corner they attempted to 'walk' it up our sloping gravel path. If I tell you their heights ranged from about 6ft 5" to 5ft 2" I will leave it to your imagination to think about the journey of the fruit cage. It reminded me of an old song.. 'Right said Fred' by one B Cribbins...

However, after much shoving and pushing, a mallet and various bits of net and pieces of wood our feathered friends were 'behind bars'. The hens and bantams were not too pleased with their enforced confinement in the fruit cage attached to their henhouse. So we supplied them with old CD's hanging on strings to peck, and punctured plastic cartons filled with seeds to kick around and peck also. Access was also restricted to avoid any contamination. Despite all the new arrangements they have laid well and patients are busy making omelettes and pancakes.'

The latest news from DEFRA allows us to let them out, still we restrict access and all food and water is inaccessible to wild birds. Happy hens and bantams again.



Inspecting the seedlings grown for the Woodland Trust's Trees from Seeds project.

We have been visited by the [Woodland Trust](#) to discuss how we could continue working together in the future. As some of you will remember, we have been involved in growing 'Trees from Seeds' and our fledgling trees have been judged as the best subjects compared to the others grown by various schools and communities. Praise indeed. They have recently planted a heritage orchard at Langley Vale, Epsom which is the site for one of the new woodlands. We took part almost two years ago, in the first swathe of planting at this location. They have kindly donated two fruit trees to us which have been potted up and will be sent to Stanford Hall as the beginning of an orchard in the new horticultural therapy area.

We are also propagating plants, shrubs and grafting fruit trees from our existing orchard at Headley Court to take forward to [Stanford Hall](#). The patients really like the idea that some of Headley Court will be growing when they get there.

'Home Thoughts' garden is still looking quite good. The mini allotment area is providing vegetables for patients to use and hens to peck. We have planted many bulbs but have discovered that badgers love crocus bulbs and happily dig them up and devour them. This is probably the same badger who scoffed our four rows of carrots. Barriers are in place and fingers are crossed. At the moment, the delphiniums, lupins and other herbaceous seem to offer no attraction to Mr Brock and long may it stay that way.

Our Gardening Volunteers continue to support us fair weather or foul. Even in the coldest days pots have been washed in Jeyes Fluid and stacked ready for use.

One patient declared Jeyes was his favourite smell and he just loved using it at home. We teased him and said 'don't dab it behind your ears, your wife might not like it!'

Courtesy of Gardening Volunteer Andy, the compost bays have been re-organised and expanded. Some of the compost has been ready for use and spread on the borders in the 'Home Thoughts' garden, excellent recycling!

Gina has been very patient with me and my insistence with the overwintering chillies not being 'dead sticks' but merely sleeping. They have been moved around, re potted and regularly trimmed (with quite a lot of muttering from my lovely Assistant). However, to quote a politician, we are now seeing the 'green shoots of recovery'. I am feeling rather smug!

Sometimes it seems a bit like the end of term, when it all gets a bit sad but happy too. I have been working with two patients for 2 and 3 years who will be discharged from the military very soon. Horticultural Therapy has played a key part in their rehabilitation. They have had ups and downs, setbacks and hard times, but coming to the greenhouse has given them consistency, a safe place and purpose. We will be saying goodbye in the coming weeks and it will be emotional. However, I am very proud of HighGround and the work we have carried out for these two excellent men and continue to do for all the lads and lassies who need us.

So finally thank you all for supporting us, supporting them!!

Carol



Avian Flu precautions



After Mr Brock's visit



Having a brew in the Home Thoughts garden



Basket weaving at Headley Court

Horseferry Road

We are delighted that Air Commodore (rtd) Ian Elliott has joined the Board of Trustees as Chairman of HighGround. It is a pivotal time for us as we begin our fourth year of operation and to have a man with such energy, experience, and fantastic contacts to lead us is a huge privilege.

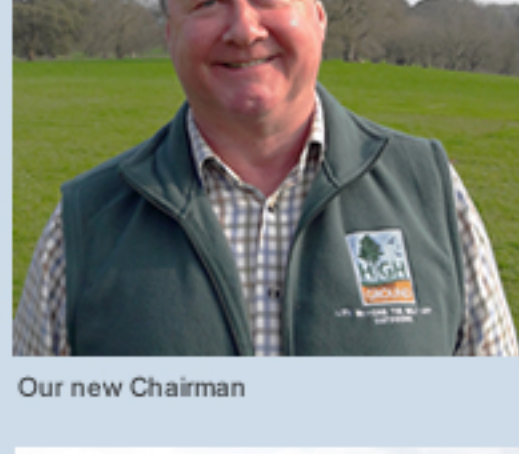
We also welcomed Georgina Brown to the Board of Trustees so a very exciting time for HighGround. Annington have generously funded us to stay at Horseferry Road for another year for which we are profoundly grateful. As a small charity with very limited resources we rely heavily on volunteers, and being so centrally located means that we are able to attract skilled volunteers to help us with IT, marketing, social media and much more.

Thank you so much Annington, and all our wonderful volunteers.

We still haven't recruited another Careers Manager but Tony Potter, who recently stepped down as CEO of Calvert Trust Exmoor following a long career in the Army, has been a huge help as we prepare for our 2017 Rural Weeks programme at Bicton College and he will be joining us there as Course Manager which is terrific news.

I'm delighted that starting after Easter we will be running Insight Days at Horseferry Road for the [Career Transition Partnership](#) to give Service Leavers who are still in their resettlement an overview of the land-based sector; another reason to be grateful for being at Horseferry Road.

I'm also working with the Royal Forestry Society and the Forestry Commission on a 12 month project to employ a Land-Based Integration Officer who will co-ordinate opportunities in the Forestry industry for ex military people – watch this space for more info.



Our new Chairman



RXW10 in front of the lake at Bicton College

Fundraising

We have received funding for the 2017 Rural Weeks programme from the RAF Benevolent Fund and Help4Heroes which is wonderful news.

On the Unrestricted side, the Worshipful Company of Gold & Silver Wyre Drawers and St John's Lodge have made generous donations and at their recent Hunt Ball, the Quorn Hunt raised £2,000 for us. Thank you all.

The [Horticultural Therapy Challenge](#) is relentless, and we will use our involvement with Miracle Gro's garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May to help raise awareness of the appeal.



Quorn Hunt Ball 2017
Photo © Nino Morgan

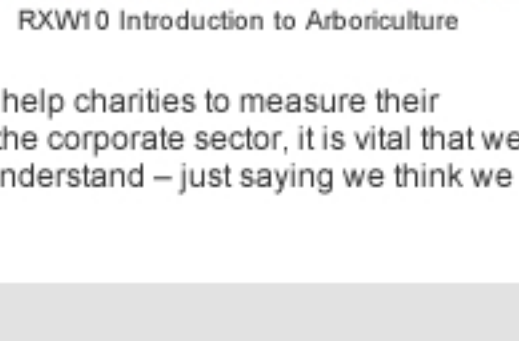
PR and media

To help us communicate better with both new and existing funders we now update our Executive Summary each quarter. You can find the archive [here](#) and if anyone would like a copy of the current document my e-mail address is . It's meant to be an introduction to our work at HighGround and gives information about who we help, how we do it and crucially, what it costs – very un-British I know.

Research

Dr Zoe Morrison and Professor Nicola Fear have now completed their Final Report about the 2015 and 2016 Rural Weeks and you can read it [here](#). They did all this pro bono and we really are Very grateful to them for producing such a precious and important document which we can send to funders and referrers as we continue to develop Rural Weeks to help Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans with Life beyond the military – Outdoors.

I'm very excited to be working with [Pro Bono Economics](#), who help charities to measure their impact. As we seek to engage with new funders, especially in the corporate sector, it is vital that we can explain the value of what we do in language which they understand – just saying we think we are great ain't enough.



RXW10 Introduction to Arboriculture

Clippings

As we enter our fourth year with a new Chairman and new Trustees, a new venue for our Rural Weeks programme and with the Horticultural Therapy pilot behind us, I wanted to thank all those people who have helped us to get this far. It has been some journey, and I am grateful to each and every one of you – Onwards!

