



## **Holnicote Guardianship**

### **Location:**

Holnicote Estate, Near Minehead, Somerset

### **Background:**

The Holnicote Estate covers an area of approximately 20 square miles within Exmoor National Park and encompasses a wide range of landscapes and habitat types including high moorland, ancient woodland and around 42 miles of coastline and cliffs.

Groups of students from The Priory School, Taunton have visited the estate every week during term time since 1993 and in 2006 they formally become part of the Guardianship Scheme. This has allowed allocation of time and funding to provide personal protective equipment, tools and materials. The Priory School is a special school for young boys with emotional and behavioural problems. Undertaking hands-on conservation projects is a great way to develop not only their own practical skills but also very importantly teaches them to work together as a team and to care and understand for the natural environment in which we live.

### **A Typical visit:**

Up to a maximum of 8/9 students, supported by teacher Pete Giles and two regular assistants arrive and change into their protective gear ready for the task in hand.

Tasks are varied throughout the year and are usually a mixture of construction and habitat management. Core tasks in 2008 have been the construction of a new orchard with traditional species of apple trees and their protective cages, hedge planting, cutting and tidying up overgrown vegetation around the villages and in front of viewpoints and path repair and improvement work. There is also the regular task of estate presentation and making sure that the beach and moorland areas in particular are free from litter and kept clean and tidy for the visitors.

“The partnership between the Holnicote Estate and Priory School staff has been forged over many years. Whether its new students making their first visit or older students supporting the younger ones, they are always very enthusiastic about their time at Holnicote and seem to really enjoy feeling part of a team, helping to look after the countryside.” Paul Camp, Warden

Pete Giles, Teacher at the Priory school, said: “The tasks we are given are extremely well thought out for our boys. It is a great benefit to them as it gives them the opportunity to learn to work together. It also enables them to understand a little more about their local environment.”

“I like the National Trust, doing different jobs, getting out of school and having a barbeque lunch..... but I don't like the rain and getting wet!” Jordan Yr8

“We would like to record that the youngsters were not only very pleasant to meet but worked very hard and their efforts are now very rewarding – all 44 trees are showing new growth. Please ensure that our thanks are conveyed to each person.” Local resident.