

# Nyika-Vwaza News

The newsletter of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust and Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust  
*"working for the environment and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi"*



Welcome to the Spring 2011 issue of Nyika-Vwaza News.

We hope you find lots to entice you – from guest author Peter Overton's experiences of the Nyika and Vwaza on various expeditions, to the arrival in Malawi of our new volunteer Trust managers, to UK supporters running great distances to raise money for our work.

Our world is a fragile one. Recent events in New Zealand and Japan demonstrate that all too clearly. Earthquakes and tsunamis are natural disasters over which we have no control. But there are elements of the natural world that we can influence and where we can make choices. The conservation of our wildernesses is one of them.

Currently, it costs more than £40,000 per annum to fund our vital conservation work in Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. We maintain roads, build and maintain bridges and road signs, run fire control programmes and assist the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in whatever ways we can. We want, and we need, to do so much more! The Malawi Trust has more than a dozen project proposals that require funding, from a wattled crane research project, to upgrading forest walks, to constructing a permanent barrage in the Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve where Lake Kazuni discharges into the South Rukuru river.

Edmund Burke once said "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do little". Our natural world is shrinking fast but we should never doubt that as individuals we can, and do, make a difference.

If you can spare some cash to support conservation in the Nyika and Vwaza – no matter how little, and whether a one-off donation or a regular contribution or even a legacy – please do get in touch. If you have fund raising ideas, again, let us know. Paul and Isobel Langton have recently run the Silverstone half marathon raising £3,500 so far. This is a HUGE boost to our funds. And another supporter, Jeanette Robinson, is currently in training to run the London Marathon for us.

These individuals really are going the extra mile to support our cause. We hope their example inspires you to follow in their footsteps doing whatever comes easiest to you. As always, thank you for your support.

Thank you.

**Jane Gallacher (Editor)**

## The evolving role of forestry – our 2011 RGS Annual Lecture

In 2011 our annual lecture will take place – again at The Royal Geographical Society in London – on Tuesday, 8 November.



Prof Jeff Burley

Continuing our tradition of distinguished speakers, this year Professor Jeffrey Burley CBE has kindly agreed to deliver the lecture. Jeff is an eminent forester of world repute. With an honours degree in forestry from Oxford and a PhD from Yale, in the late 1960's, Jeff headed the Forest Genetics Research Laboratory of the Agricultural Research Council of Central Africa, living in Zambia and working also in Malawi and Zimbabwe. A distinguished research career followed culminating in Jeff becoming Director of the Oxford Forestry Institute. Jeff is currently Senior Partner in C-Questor LLP, which specialises in carbon sequestration, and Chairman of Forestreet plc.

Jeff's lecture will consider the evolving role of forestry in conservation; in particular, how forestry policy and management has changed over the last 50 years. Where once the emphasis was on plantation forestry, in more recent times there has been increased recognition of the importance of natural forests and their role at both national and community level. The Nyika National Park provides a prime example of how these policies and management strategies have evolved. It was identified as a potential pulpwood scheme by Sir Laurens van Der Post in the 1950s but is now a massive conservation/protection area.

Forests are close to all of our hearts – the recent response in the UK to Government plans to privatise Forestry Commission land shows just how close. And rightly so. Anyone who has visited the Nyika's Juniper Forest or has looked for birds, amphibians or insects in any of the relict forest patches knows how important these forests are for the maintenance of biodiversity in Northern Malawi.

Please therefore make your contribution to the survival of the Nyika's forests, and those of Vwaza Marsh too, by noting the date and supporting our 2011 lecture. An application form for tickets at £18 per person is attached to this newsletter. Forms can also be downloaded from [www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org](http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org) (click on the "Events/RGS Evening 2011" button) or from Harry Foot at Stowford Farm, Harford, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JD. Email [stowfoots@southdevon.org](mailto:stowfoots@southdevon.org). Tel: 01752-892632.

## New Nyika volunteer managers

We are very lucky to have two new volunteer Trust managers recently arrive on the Nyika. They are Patsy and Geoff Woolee who succeed Andrew Jackson for whose services during 2010 we are grateful. At the moment, they are going through the process of settling in and getting to know their new surroundings.

The Woolees' initial tasks over the next few months include:

- Getting to know our eight permanent members of staff on the Nyika, as well as the rest of the guys, and building a team spirit;
- Preparing the maintenance programme for 2011 – fire control, roads, bridges, invasive species and the like;
- Re-establishing walks and signs in Chowo Forest and maintaining those in Zovo Chipolo;
- Arranging the erection of the last few road signs in the Park and maintaining those that have been there for a while; and
- Getting to grips with the Malawi Trust's various project proposals.



Geoff and Patsy Woolee

There is a lot for Patsy and Geoff to do and we wish them every success! Chris Walker, chairman of the Malawi trust, has commented of our new couple: "The Nyika is a paradise for Geoff's botanical background and Patsy has already joined in with life at the school whilst reorganising the homestead! They deserve our full support in any and every way we can give it." We fully endorse that final statement!

## Keep on Running!

*In the last few years, three supporters have committed themselves to full or half marathons on our behalf - Paul Langton (London), Drew Williams (London) and Rupert Brown (Berlin). In 2011, the Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust is raising funds through two running events - Paul Langton and his wife Isobel have recently run the Silverstone Half Marathon, which took place on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2011. Jeanette Robinson is running the London Marathon on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2011. Paul, who is a trustee of the UK trust, explains more:*

Over the last few years running to raise money and awareness for the Trust has become something of a trend. So it continues in 2011, with not just one but three of us taking up the challenge. I am pleased to be able to say that, having previously run the London Marathon on behalf of the UK Trust, this year I am joined by my wife Isobel, and Jeanette, our very good friend.

Isobel and I took the easier option of splitting the marathon distance between us, by both running in the Silverstone Half Marathon on 6<sup>th</sup> March whilst Jeanette is tackling the whole thing when running in the world famous London Marathon on 17<sup>th</sup> April.

We were all together recently and had the pleasure(?) of running along the magnificent Northumberland coastline, from the beach at Bamburgh to Seahouses and back (and then Jeanette ran back again to Seahouses!). We were joined by Jeanette's fantastically fit and enthusiastic running companion, Tara, her Irish Setter (sadly ineligible for the race itself!).

Isobel and I have just completed the Silverstone race in 2 hours and 18 minutes. Whilst it was somewhat chilly at the start the sun came out and made it a pleasant afternoon, although the chequered flag at the finish was a welcome sight! To date we have raised over £3,500.

Jeanette is well into her training plan now which is very demanding but should ensure that she can **enjoy** the day rather than just **endure** it...! We will, of course, be going up to London to join Scott, her husband, their four children (Jess, Ollie, Tatum and Scarlett), and maybe Tara, to support her and join her in a few well-earned scoops after the event.



Paul and Isobel

If you would like to sponsor Paul and Isobel, even though they have now completed their run, please go to: [www.justgiving.com/Paul-Langton](http://www.justgiving.com/Paul-Langton) (NB the last figure is numeral 0).

If you would like to sponsor Jeanette, please go to: [www.justgiving.com/Jeanette-Robinson](http://www.justgiving.com/Jeanette-Robinson)

If anyone would like to gather to support Jeanette on 17<sup>th</sup> April, please do let Paul Langton know by contacting him either on 07825 892499 or at [paul.langton06@btinternet.com](mailto:paul.langton06@btinternet.com)

## Exploring a Wilderness

Peter Overton who with his wife, Marianne, runs Biosearch Expeditions offers us some of his insights into and experiences of the Nyika National Park.

"After 25 years, it's really high time I returned to Nyika," I said to a colleague in 1995. "Then do it now," he said. Thus started fifteen years of exploring the remotest regions of the Nyika National Park.

In 1972, I was part of a three month scientific expedition with Wye College to explore and record the area which is now the rugged northern extension of the Park. We enjoyed the support of the Park Manager, Major Ian Gordon and coincidentally, witnessed the building of the road down the western escarpment, which has been of great benefit to the people of Nthalire and beyond. In 1995 Matthew Matemba, the Director of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in Malawi, gave us permission to take a team out to the northern hills to investigate changes over the intervening years. We subsequently worked with his successor, John Mphamba and over the past ten years with Leonard Sefu. Biosearch Expeditions have run one or sometimes two expeditions most years, mainly during the dry season period of July and August but also at Christmas and Easter, when we are planning our 2011 and 2012 expeditions.

We have cooperated with such organisations as the Museums of Malawi, the National Herbarium of Malawi, The Millennium Seed Bank and the South African Botanical Network, with their thorough record of the plants of the Nyika, which includes our collections.

The escarpments and northern hills were brought into the National Park in 1978, extending its size to the current 3,134 km<sup>2</sup>. Rugged terrain and magnificent vistas as far as the Lake Malawi shoreline and across to the mountains of Tanzania to the east and Zambia to the west make this park scenically quite breath-taking. We regularly come across ghost villages, identified by the signs of cultivated areas near the remnants of village huts, occupied until 1978. In 1972, I was able to trade with these villagers and supplement meagre bush rations with fresh chickens and eggs. We witnessed their beautifully painted mud and thatch huts in tiny hamlets. Now all is reverting to the extensive wilderness but we still find signs of stone-age artefacts and pieces of pottery which were in use until very recently.



View to the North West of Chisanga Falls—Biosearch 2007



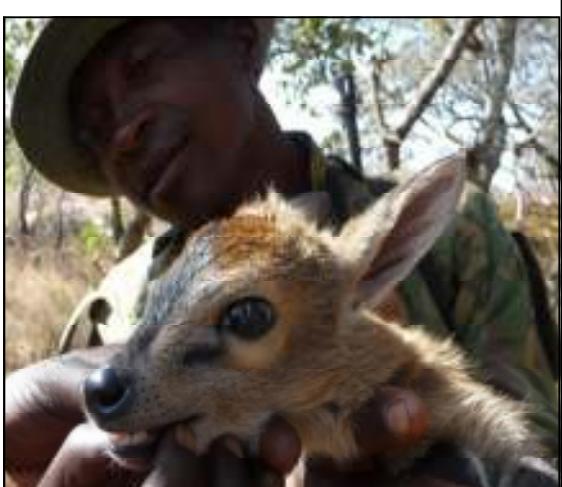
Entomologist and botanist at work with volunteers  
Biosearch 2003/7

By working closely with the Parks Department and their staff in the field, the team builds good international relations that form the basis for further work in this area. During the period of the expeditions we facilitate the ongoing work of the scouts in law enforcement and introduce them to scientific methods, which they find both interesting and useful.

Supporting the scouts with the back-up of food, manpower and scientific expertise, we are able to go to the remoter areas to assess the game populations and the pressure created by

illegal intrusions into the park. We are monitoring not just the bigger game, which can be shy and difficult to see in the bush, but also unique species of smaller animals and all the great biodiversity of the Nyika.

In co-operation with the National Herbarium of Malawi and Kew Herbarium in England we have created a definitive list of around 1,500 plant species, mostly from our dry season work. There are undoubtedly many more yet to be discovered, which are more in evidence during the rainy season. In December 2010 we took our fourteenth expedition team to explore the Nyika, and experienced very little rainfall.



Newborn Common Duiker Biosearch 2009

The central plateau, with Chelinda camp as its focus, is virtually the only part of the park known  
(Continued on page 4)

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to most visitors and represents only around one third of the whole area. Amongst the rolling grassland and in the folds of the landscape small streams arise and work their way to the escarpments along relatively flat marsh areas known as dambos. Many of these areas feature evergreen forest patches, which appear as fragments all over the plateau. They are often nearly impenetrable through the bracken briar on the fringes and create quite a challenge to an explorer but are a distinctive habitat with their own distinctive flora and fauna.



Ghostly brick remains high on the Kawoza – Mpanda ridge  
Biosearch 2004

Descending below 6500ft, you travel through the Protea scrub zone and into the sheltered woodlands, dominated by six species of Brachystegia tree. These woodlands are generally open and easy to walk through, especially if you can pick up one of the many animal paths that run off the plateau and down to the lowlands. There are good camping places along the streams, which flow vigorously throughout the year. Far away on the ridge between the two iconic hills of Kawoza and Mpanda and hardly discernable in bushes that have grown through it (photo), are the remnants of a brick house, built in the nineteenth century; visited by us in 2004 and still presumably used by poachers as a look-out point .



Pigmy Kingfisher netted near Runyina River  
Biosearch 2010

Whilst the Nyika light is a special experience, the Nyika darkness is even more so. The southern sky is clear and unambiguous at altitude. Stars, comets and planets are seen with unbelievable clarity. Unlike the ever-busy lowland tropics, silence is all pervasive at night. This is a huge landscape; visitors feel the vastness as they lie sandwiched between the mass of granite beneath them and the endless universe above. Stirrings in the grass are few, yet in the morning we see the evidence of massive movements of animal life, busily engaged in its nightly activity and challenging us to identify the signs at dawn.



Trekking in Vwaza Marsh—Biosearch 2008

Our expeditions enable reasonably fit people of all ages to work alongside specialists in the remoter parts of the park and gather data to assist in the understanding of the Nyika wildlife and its status. The results, which include the discovery of new species of small mammals, plants and insects and an extension of the state of knowledge about the game and birds, are forming the basis for advice for continuing to conserve this unique ecosystem.



Kasaramba, eastern viewpoint - Biosearch

Those who have undertaken the challenge of hiking off the plateau and into the remoter areas of the Nyika National Park have experienced raw Africa at its best and are

continually reminded of the immense value of wilderness in refreshing the body and spirit and understanding the importance of the connection between man and nature. Virtually every member of our teams believes that they have had a very special and enjoyable experience; befriended and supported very well by the Malawian scouts, with their invaluable experience of the bush. We feel that we have made a valuable contribution to something really worthwhile – the conservation of a very special part of Central Africa.

*My wife Marianne and I are pleased to have been invited to assist the Nyika Trusts as Patroni Naturae and to share with them and their supporters the scientific knowledge that we have accumulated over the years; in particular, through the link [www.biosearch.org.uk](http://www.biosearch.org.uk) on the Trusts' website, where our annual expedition reports can be accessed.*

## Land Resource Survey in Malawi - our 2010 Annual Lecture

The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust had another stellar evening at The Royal Geographical Society in November last year. As always, we had a great turnout for our annual social event and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.



Professor Young's daughter with Mary-Anne Bartlett's painting

Our deepest thanks to Professor Anthony Young for his fascinating talk on the Land Resource Survey in Malawi and also for making available expanded, printed versions of it. If you would like a copy, these are available, for £5 plus £1 postage and packing, from Harry Foot at Stowford Farm, Harford, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JD. Email [stow-foots@southdevon.org](mailto:stow-foots@southdevon.org). Tel : 01752-892632.

We must also thank Chris Badger of Wilderness Safaris for his splendid presentation on the tourist attractions of the Nyika and on the Wilderness Safaris operation there. As the Nyika's current tourism concessionaire, Wilderness is one of our most important partners.

There are a number of others to thank for contributing to the success of the evening. To Mary-Anne Bartlett for the gift of a striking watercolour, sold by silent auction and won by Professor Young's daughter. To Angela Kilner for arranging the purchase of the WESM calendars and to Chris Badger (again!), for bringing them to London. Thanks also to the team of volunteers who helped us on the evening – without you, it wouldn't have been possible. And to Denise Prior, the RGS House Manager and her RGS staff, for their assistance.

The biggest thanks of all, though, must go to those of you who were able to join us. Your support really is invaluable if we are to continue our work supporting the conservation of Northern Malawi's wildernesses.

## Memorandum of Understanding between the Nyika Vwaza Trust and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife

We are thrilled to be able to tell our readers that the Nyika Vwaza Trust in Malawi and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife have signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding, which sets out how the two organizations are working together. Since inception the Malawi Trust has worked closely with DNPW to supplement and augment its work in protecting Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve – indeed, supporting its activities has always been our whole *raison d'être*. It is, though, really good to see our relationship formally documented. The MoU was signed on 14 January 2011 and runs, at least initially, for 10 years from that date.



Joe Kapira (second left) and other permanent NVT staff with Jerry Kent. All key to NVT's successful conservation management work.

## A Golden Wedding Treat for the UK Trust!



Harry Foot receiving the cheque from Bill & Mavis

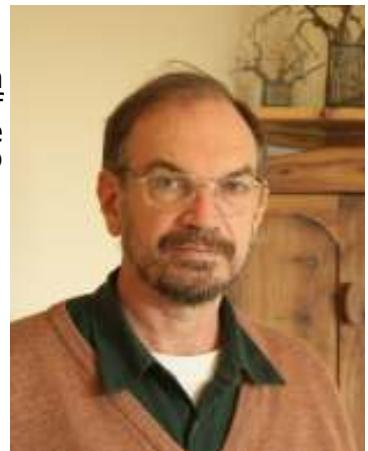
Our very grateful thanks to Bill and Mavis Reed for a cheque for £255 which they collected from friends who were invited to their Golden Wedding celebrations. The donations were in lieu of Golden Wedding Anniversary presents! Harry Foot was presented with the cheque at the January meeting of the South West Branch of the Tropical Agricultural Association. He was surprised and delighted that, on their special day, the Reeds had the kindness and generosity to want to support our work conserving the Nyika and Vwaza Marsh. So are we! Thank you very much indeed, Bill and Mavis.

The Tropical Agriculture Association (TAA) is a professional association of individuals and corporate bodies concerned with the role of agriculture for development throughout the world. TAA brings together individuals and organisations from both developed and less developed countries to enable them to contribute to international policies and actions aimed at reducing poverty and improving livelihoods. If you want to find out more about their work please go to [www.taa.org.uk](http://www.taa.org.uk).

## New UK trustee appointed – Jonathan Timberlake

The trustees of the UK Trust are delighted to announce that Jonathan Timberlake has agreed to become a trustee and also to be the Editor of our website Bibliography and our Databases of the Flora and Fauna of the Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve. Jonathan is also one of our Patroni Naturae.

Jonathan works in the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, London, where he edits *Flora Zambesiaca*, the regional flora for south-central Africa (including Malawi), and acts as the main focal point at Kew for that region. He also led Kew's recent Mozambique–Malawi montane biodiversity project, in which the Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust was one of the main partners, and is involved in assisting conservation initiatives in the region, particularly in Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi.



Jonathan Timberlake

## Maps for Lorna

We have had a request from one of our recent contributors to Nyika Vwaza News. You may recall that Lorna Hobson wrote a piece in the last newsletter – “Living in Chilumba forty years ago – ‘down on the plain’”. Lorna has written to us asking: “Do you know where one can obtain large-scale maps of specific areas of Malawi at a reasonable price? I have a 1962 map of part of the Nyika going east to the lakeshore, scale 1:250,000. It was produced in what I suppose was a government dept in Salisbury, Rhodesia(!) and is, of course, hopelessly out-of-date now. Ideally we would like even larger scale maps of, say, the Nyika and Mlanje, but our internet searches only come up with very costly ones from the U.S. pre-1972, or Russian sets of the entire country.” If anyone has any suggestions for Lorna, please do get in touch with her directly at [lornahobson@yahoo.com](mailto:lornahobson@yahoo.com) or telephone her on 01876 510318.

## Reader's corner

We offer Readers' Corner as an opportunity for free publicity about new publications relating to the Northern Region of Malawi. Publications may be books, one-off articles or scientific or other academic papers. We would welcome especially contributions from the Universities of Malawi. Please send your contributions with a brief description of its subject matter, name of author, price and where it can be obtained, to Harry Foot, [stowfoots@southdevon.org](mailto:stowfoots@southdevon.org).

## The NV(UK)T Book Collection

The UK Trust has been fortunate to have been given a number of books for sale, mostly second hand and in good condition, to raise funds for the work of the Trust. Do spend a moment casting your eye over the list, which is priced, and is on our website [www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org](http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org) under the "Merchandise" button. You may find a gem - and at a bargain price!

## Legacies

Leaving a legacy is one of the easiest ways to make a gift to charity and is a good way to make a significant donation and help secure the charity's long-term future. Please consult your solicitor on making a will or to make an adjustment to include The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust, or alternatively visit the "Remember a Charity" website for a step-by-step guide at [www.rememberacharity.org.uk](http://www.rememberacharity.org.uk).

If you decide to include The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust in your will for a legacy, we would be grateful if you could inform us of your decision.

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*Working for environmental and wildlife conservation in northern Malawi.*

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Website: [www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org](http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org)

The Nyika-Vwaza Trust can only continue with the vital task of helping to conserve the Nyika and Vwaza Marsh with the continuing support of generous donations. We welcome further donations from current Friends of the Trust but we also endeavour to widen our scope for funding so please pass on copies of the newsletter to your friends and relations.



## BANKER'S ORDER (for UK residents only)

To:- ..... Bank plc.

.....  
.....  
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(Please insert the name and address of your Bank in the space above)

Please pay to Lloyds TSB Bank plc, 40 High Street, Alton, Hants, GU34 1BQ (Sort Code 30-90-15), for the credit of The Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust's Account No. 01205669, the sum of :-

£ ..... on .....

(Please insert date above)

and thereafter every month/quarter/six months/year (*delete as appropriate*) until cancelled by me in writing.

Name of Account to be debited .....

.....

Account Number .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please return this completed form to:-

Hon. Treasurer,  
Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust,  
Stowford Farm,  
Harford,  
Ivybridge, Devon.  
PL21 0JD  
for registration and onward transmission to your Bank.

## Friends of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust Donation Form

PLEASE PRINT YOUR DETAILS IN CAPITALS

Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Forenames: \_\_\_\_\_

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a donation of: \_\_\_\_\_

Or: I have completed the Banker's Order Form.

I am a UK taxpayer and want the Charity to treat this donation and all subsequent donations I make as Gift Aid donations until I notify the Charity otherwise.

I am aware:-

1. that I must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount of Basic Rate tax that the Trust will reclaim on my donations; and
2. that if I pay tax at the Higher Rate I may claim further tax relief through my Self Assessment tax return; and
3. that I can cancel this declaration at any time by notifying the Hon. Treasurer in writing.

Signature:

Date:

UK taxpayers are asked to send donations to the UK Hon. Treasurer, other donors either to the UK Hon. Treasurer or to The Trust Manager, Box 577, Mzuzu, Malawi.



# Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust

Promotional Evening with Lecture by Professor Jeffrey Burley  
at the Royal Geographical Society,  
Exhibition Road entrance, London SW7 2AR on Tuesday 08 November 2011

“Evolving Role of Forestry ”.

## Application Form for Tickets

Admission tickets are £18 per person.

I would like to apply for        tickets to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust fundraising party on 8th November 2011 for the people named below.

I enclose my cheque for £ \_\_\_\_\_ made payable to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust.

(Please complete in block letters)

Name of Applicant:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		
Address:		Date Issued:
Contact Tel. No:		
Email Address:		

Names of other people for whom tickets are requested ( see also Continuation Sheet ):

Name:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		Date Issued:
Address:		
Contact Tel. No.		
Email Address:		

Please return this form, with your remittance, a.s.a.p. to Harry Foot, Stowford Farm, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JD.

**((Please complete in block letters))**

Name of Applicant:		Ticket No:
Organisation Name: (if applicable)		
Address:		Date Issued:
Contact Tel. No:		
Email Address:		

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Contact Tel. No.		
Email Address:		