



Edward Whitley is putting the family brewing fortune to use in t

Finding beer money to save the butterflies

EDWARD Whitley's seems like the easiest job in the world. While everyone else is trying to earn money, he gives it away.

Every year Edward, a 31-year-old former banker, and the rest of the Whitleys unload about half a million pounds from the family's brewing fortune. You may think this involves nothing more onerous than sitting at a desk signing large numbers of cheques. But on Monday in the rain, there was Edward Whitley, nose tormented by hay fever, trousers water-logged, hopelessly inadequate shoes shipping gallons, marching across 23 acres of Hampshire chalk downland in the vain pursuit of the Small Blue butterfly, deciding whether the man who had brought him there should benefit from his bounty. This was the modern philanthropist in action.

"You have to be cautious," he said, as rain-loving snails cracked underfoot. "There is so much to be done, you don't want to waste any money." Mr Whitley spends at least two days a week like this, working for the Whitley Trust. It was established in 1961 by his grandfather, who set aside a wad of shares in the family firm, the North-west brewers Greenall Whitley. The profits were to be used solely for animal protection.

"It's not a very fashionable cause at the moment," Mr Whitley explained. "Smart journalists think conservation's very much last year's news. Mind you, conservationists are their own worst enemy. They are so dedicated they become boring. And they all have beards. Even the men."

George York, a typical conservationist after Mr Whitley's money, had a beard. He also had

stickers supporting the RSPCA, the RSPB and Butterfly Conservation on the back window of his car, and, unlike his potential benefactor, a stout pair of wellies. "It's no use messing around with flag days to support the kind of work we're doing," said Mr York, as he led Mr Whitley around his sodden conservation project in Hampshire. "You have to go straight for the jugular. Go after the chaps with real money."

Mr York, a retired lawyer, has done remarkable things to Magdelene Hill, a mile from Winchester, across the valley from where the M3 extension is cutting a concrete swathe through Twyford Down. Over four years he has turned 23 acres of abandoned hillside back into chalk downland, the sort of place where threatened species of butterfly thrive.

"People don't like to hear it," said Mr York, "but much more chalk downland has been lost to neglect than to bulldozers."

Mr York and his team of enthusiasts spent hundreds of hours of back-breaking toil, clearing the scrub, strimming the brambles, bringing in sheep to keep the grass down, making it more butterfly friendly.

"I used prisoners quite a lot, usually the chaps in the last six months of their sentence," he explained. "They're much better than those awful people on probation who won't do a stroke unless you stand over them. I'm as busy now in my retirement on this as when I was a lawyer. Unfortunately, it's not chargeable time. You a botanist? This is kidney vetch. Small Blues only eat this plant. Terribly conservative things, butterflies."

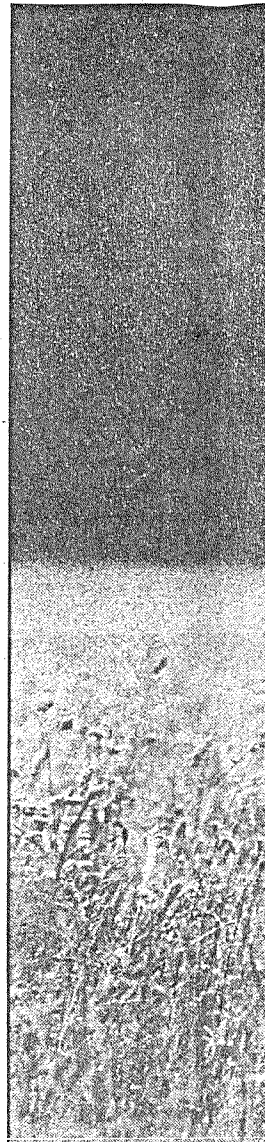
Mr York needs about £5,000 a year to manage his hill and provide a chance for beleaguered species to re-establish themselves. He had raised £50,000 himself in the past, but was now running short of sources of income. He was understandably anxious to impress Mr Whitley. But a cold June morning in Hampshire is the butterfly equivalent of a foggy January night at Heathrow. All the specimens on Mr York's hill were grounded, hidden in the undergrowth, wings closed against the chill. "Aha, what have we here," he said suddenly, bounding enthusiastically into the undergrowth in pursuit of a small, flapping object. "Oh no. It's a moth."

For more than a quarter of a century the Whitley Trust bundled along, supporting donkey sanctuaries and cats homes, not aware that anything as exotic as the Small Blue butterfly in Hampshire might require its assistance. And then, in 1988, Edward Whitley was made a trustee.

At the time he was working in the City. "The golden era of banking," he said. "There was huge money to be made, it was so easy. I worked in corporate takeovers, great fun."

On taking up his position, Mr Whitley backed a proposal that the trust's low-yielding brewery shares be sold and the money reinvested in a wider portfolio which gave enormously better returns. Thereafter the family had some real dosh to dispose of.

About the same time, Mr Whitley was having some success with his hobby: writing. He wrote a book called *Graduates*, a series of interviews with people who had been to his Oxford college. It



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gained him a commission to write an article about eccentric zoo-keepers for the *Spectator*. The first was Gerald Durrell at Jersey Zoo. "He told me this amazingly successful success he has which trains animal reservationists from around the world and sends them back to start up small-scale projects. Nobody appeared to know anything about it."

Mr Whitley, with characteristic dispatch, secured himself a place on the staff of the City and set off around the world to research a book about