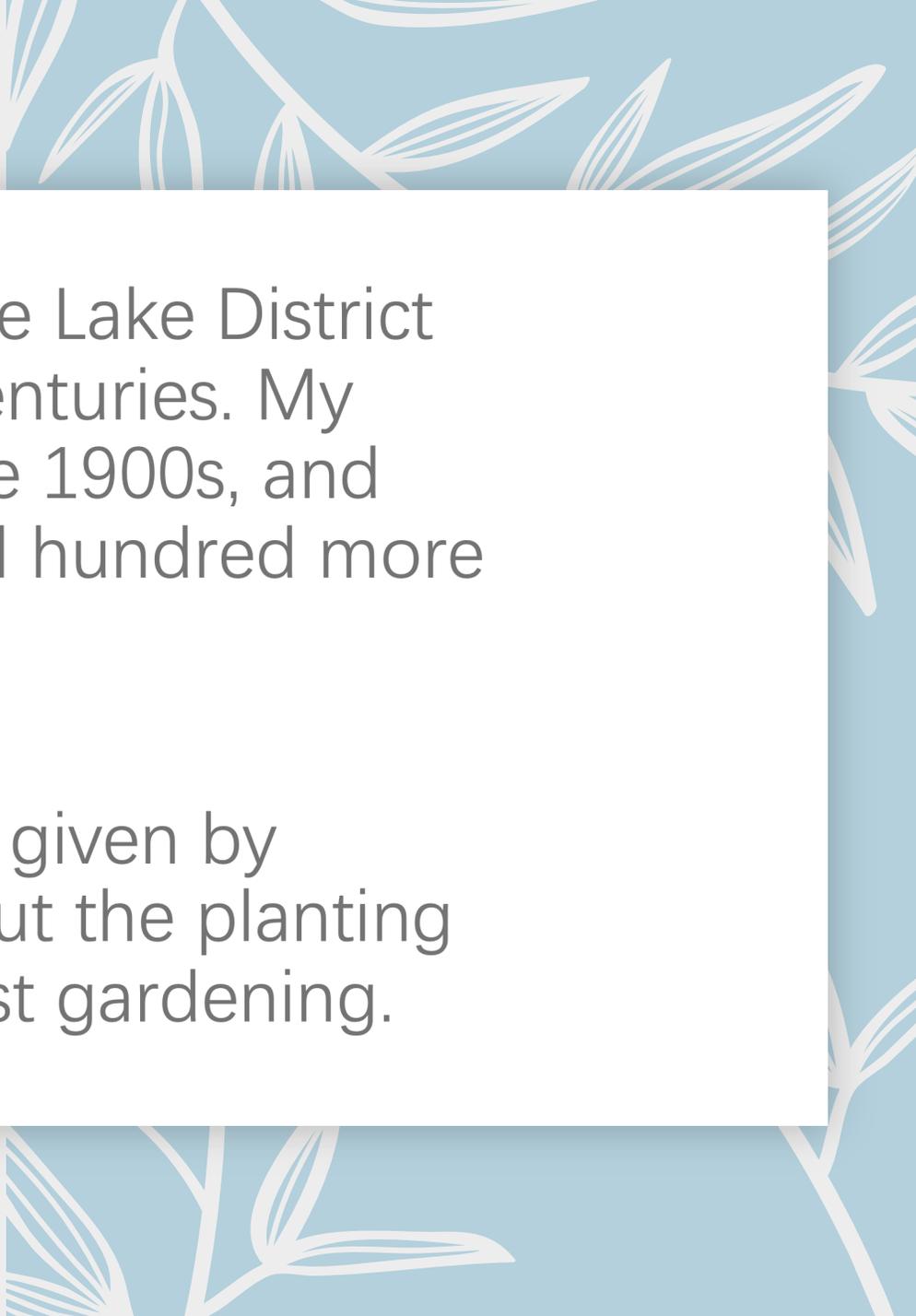




Steep sheep pasture
to forest garden

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The 4.5 hectares around our house in the Lake District have been used for sheep grazing for centuries. My grandmother began planting trees in the 1900s, and since the 2000s, we have planted several hundred more trees.

After I had taken a forest garden course given by Ricarbol in Chile, we began to think about the planting (or part of the planting) in terms of forest gardening.



This photo, taken in March 2021, shows the main forest garden project (the field above the house); the tree tubes are just visible. Although few of the trees are visible in this photo, a large number of them are around five years old and are coming out of the tops of tubes. Above and to the right of this field is the thick bracken that covers most of the land in this area.

Trees planted over the last ten years or so include:

- Native fruit & nut trees: hazels, filberts, cherries, service trees, a variety of crab apples, elders, cornus mas
- Long-standing fruit & nut tree introductions: Persian walnut, sweet chestnut, fig, almond
- Recent introductions to Britain: black walnut, Manchurian walnut, Virginian persimmon, ugni molinae, Chinese hawthorn, celtis occidentalis, idesia polycarpa
- Nitrogen-fixing trees: common alder, grey alder, Italian alder
- Trees not for fruit/nut production: oak, birch, rowan, beech, holly, larch, yew, hawthorn, willow, aspen, blackthorn

A photograph of a stone house on a hillside. A large, leafless tree stands in the foreground on the left. A path of yellow daffodils runs along the slope of the hill. The sky is blue. A semi-transparent circular overlay is on the right side of the image, containing text.

There has been a garden and orchard next to the house since long before my discovery of forest gardening. The orchard now has a selection of apple trees, pear trees, bullace trees, elaeagnus, pineapple guavas, and a very old chestnut tree; the garden has a walnut tree and damson/plum trees.



The much smaller field (to the right of the tree line in the photo) contains slightly older sweet chestnut trees, now interplanted with alders as nitrogen-fixers. We have discovered that sweet chestnuts seem to be unusual in being able to grow despite exposure to red deer (perhaps because deer do not like the foliage?) We would like to know of more trees like this!!!

Characteristics of the land:

- The land is made up of three south-facing fields (plus orchard and garden)
- The land is 170m-250m above sea level, with an average gradient of 1 in 3
- The soil is quite uniform rich loam, with a neutral pH
- Several streams come down through the land, and parts of it are becomingly increasing boggy and overgrown with reeds
- The rainfall pattern is typical of the west coast (we are 45km from the coast)
- Temperatures range from an average of around 3C in winter to 20C in July
- The prevailing wind comes from downhill; because of the steep slope, windbreaks need to be close to trees in order to be effective, yet this means that windbreaks are likely to shade productive trees (we haven't yet worked out how to deal with this)
- The large herd of red deer in the valley are the main problem in growing trees; deer fences of over 2m are needed, especially on the upper boundary to the land



Other factors influencing our work:

- The total area of land, in combination with the fact that we are not working on it full-time, has made detailed planning unfeasible so far
- We do not depend on the land for subsistence (yet!), so immediate productivity is less of a priority than experimentation
- A free and almost unlimited supply of small walnut trees from my dad's garden in Buckinghamshire has given walnuts quite a significant role; I have also bought North American and East Asian species of Juglans
- There is an ancient woodland that is almost contiguous with our land; we would like to make this contiguous with ours
- The water for the house all comes from the hillside above; with increasingly dry summers, water has sometimes run short; we hope that woodland above the house will help with this
- We aim to produce enough firewood for the house



Please come
visit!!!

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