August 2007

Issue no. 48

Bulletin

Established 1919

www.iwnhas.org

Contents

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

I felt very proud to see our Society's logo on the front page of the Isle of Wight County Press on the first of June. This must be an all time first and it heralded the appearance of a regular monthly column in the paper. The first article, about Cockchafers and Summer Chafers, resulted in a flurry of letters to the paper, some of which appeared in the subsequent issue. This has to be good news in spreading the name of the Society and in providing regular informative articles about wildlife and archaeology. All credit for this is due to our new publicity officer, Helen Slade, but it will be no easy task to provide regular and topical articles of interest. If you see anything of interest out and about, then please provide the information to Helen so that it can be worked up into an article. Even better, but by no means essential, if you able to provide a suitable photograph to illustrate an article then please include that as well. Helen can be contacted at Seaweed Cottage, 19 Spring Hill, Ventnor, or by e-mail at Helenslade@btinternet.com. Her work, together with that of Geoff Toone, beavering away behind the scenes at the Society website (www.iwnhas.org), is doing a great deal to raise the profile of the Society.

After a long break, the Proceedings is back. It is a double issue and this partly accounts for the size of the latest mailing. A team of editors has taken over from Richard Grogan to bring this to you, but our Bulletin editor Mike Cahill has carried out the bulk of the work to bring it to the stage of publication. We hope you like it. Please take the time to look through it, even if you are not an avid Proceedings reader. Hopefully there will be something to interest you. If not, or if you have any (hopefully constructive) comments to make, then please let us know as it is the Committee's aim to make further changes in future issues to broaden the appeal. The inclusion of an Index to all the Proceedings back to 1920 is something of a milestone. Maureen Whittaker had already been working on a contents list of the earlier Proceedings and when, in passing, I mentioned to her how invaluable it would be to have an Index, she ran with the idea and, with Anne Marston's technical assistance, we now have a complete Index. It is

our intention that this will also be available on the website where it should be possible to update it with each successive volume.

Don't forget to keep recording our six target species for the Wildlife Watch project. Active House Martin nests, Snakelocks Anemones and Wasp Spiders, all come into their own at this time of year. We included the Snakelocks Anemone to get people looking in pools on rocky shores. At the time we thought that they would be easily found but, as it happens, they are remarkably rare this year. Becky Cooksley pointed this out to us on the very enjoyable General Meeting at Bembridge Ledges in June. We found lots of rock pool life but no Snakelocks Anemones. So, this year, negative as well as confirmed sightings would be invaluable. If you do find them, please tell us whether they are the green form or the pinkish-brown colour form. Please remember to send all your Wildlife Watch records to the Society's headquarters by the end of this year. We are hoping that they will reveal all sorts of interesting information when we bring everything together.

Colin Pope

Monthly column in the County Press

Many of you may have noticed that the Society now has a regular column in the County Press. Following the launch of the Wildlife Watch project, the new editor of the paper, Mr Alan Marriott, invited the Society to contribute an article to be published in the first edition of the paper each month. This is a wonderful opportunity to raise the profile of the Society and I have taken up the challenge to write the articles each time, as your new Publicity Officer.

To be relevant, the article needs to cover subjects that are suitable to the time of year; suitable for the readership of the paper; and hopefully produce some sort of feedback. The first month's article, on cockchafers, produced a crop of letters in the following week's paper, and got us off to a flying (!!) start.

However, I do not profess to be an expert in any subject embraced by the Society, and the continued success of the column will depend on the supply of suitable material for which your help is requested. I have already received some suggestions and some background material for possible future articles, and this is a plea to keep them coming.

Each article must be accompanied by a photograph, since it gives it much more impact, so if you are able to provide a suitable picture (preferably in an electronic format) that will be a tremendous help. Also useful is the address of any web-site or other source of further information.

So, if you come across anything that you think might be interesting for the public to know about, please let me know with as many details as possible. I can't guarantee that your material will be used; I am limited to about 300 words or so and it is therefore impossible to include everything. But it is much easier to write something when I have too much material, rather than too little!! Please don't be disappointed if your contribution does not make it immediately. It may find a slot later on, or alternatively, you could always submit it to the Bulletin!

I look forward to hearing from you, either by email (helenslade@btinternet.com) or by post at Seaweed Cottage, 19 Spring Hill, Ventnor, PO38 1PF.

Helen Slade

NOTICE BOARD

PIED WAGTAIL SURVEY

Some of the Pied Wagtail roost on Ryde Pier Head has been ringed during last Winter. Each bird that has been trapped has a metal ring on one leg and a yellow colour ring on the other. We are trying to establish the area that these birds come from to make up the roost of 500 – 600 birds. Are they from part or the whole of the Island, or do Mainland birds also contribute.

If you see a Pied Wagtail with a ring on a leg could you please let us know where and when the bird was seen, and on which leg the yellow colour ring is.

With thanks

Dr Anthony Roberts 865420 and Dr Daphne Watson 731114

SOCIETY LIBRARY

The Library at Ventnor is open to members on Thursdays from 10.00 am to early afternoon, or by arrangement with Anne Cahill – tel; 248054

HARLEQUIN LADYBIRDS

Important

Please report any sightings to :-

Bill Shepard. tel: 526059

VACANCY
for the Office of
Editor of the Proceedings

This is an ongoing appointment, but can be terminated at any time by the holder.

Nominations, signed by a proposer and a seconder, should be sent to the Secretary as soon as possible.

Please make sure that your nominee is willing to stand.

VACANCY
for Marine and Freshwater
Section Leader

Mike Ashdown has now left the Island and has stepped down as Leader of this Section. In order to continue, the Section will need a new leader to be elected. If any member would be prepared to lead this Section, would they please contact the Secretary.

Country Notes

March 27, 2007. A beekeeper had a call from Brading to come and see a swarm of bees. Intrigued, but dubious he went to see the lady. Upon enquiry regarding the location of the swarm, she pointed to a tree estimated at some fifty feet. "They fly into the top of that tree and then out again." The insects appeared, landed in the tree and took flight again. Certainly not the behaviour of bees. The only insects that behave in this manner are beetles, *Amphimallon solstitialis,* the Summer Chafer. All my records of this occurrence are for July, with one exception, June 27th. But March ?.

Japanese Umbrella Pine *Sciadopitys verticilatta* - Planted as a memorial on the green to the left of the main entrance to Quarr Abbey. A species now confined to Southern Japan, but formerly widespread and evidence is found in coal deposits in Europe. A specimen was planted by Hilliers in the Ventnor Botanic Gardens during the initial planting but a heavy snowfall laid on the branches and split the trunk. It never recovered. I know of no other specimen in the Island.

Elms - A bird meeting took us through Yafford in April and to my surprise rooks were nesting in elms. Something I thought I would never witness again.

Leaf Mine - An intriguing record made in 2002 of a leaf mine made by a beetle in a specimen of Bog Myrtle, *Myrica gale* one of our rarest shrubs. It still exists in small quantity in the Wilderness at Cridmore. But David Biggs' record is from Newchurch. There is a record from the area in the 19th.Century and another appears in an annotated copy of Bentham and Hooker, dated 17 - 9 - 1925.
If anyone has knowledge of this plant in the Newchurch area, we would be delighted to hear of it.

The Oil Beetle. *Meloe***. -** A huge family of some 1500 species, mainly tropical, of which only nine has been recorded in Britain and just two in the Island.
The Oil Beetle, so called, varying in size between 10 and 30 mm., has a defense mechanism, not exclusive to this family, of exuding an evil smelling oily liquid, its blood, through its joints.
Its life style leaves one wondering how it has survived, for a female with a swollen belly, makes a hole in the ground and deposits some four thousand eggs. This is followed by a second batch and occasionally a third and fourth, with each successive batch decreasing in number. The larvae hatch after ten to twelve days and are immediately active. They now have to climb a flowering plant and reach the inflorescence, here to await the arrival of a mining bee, hitch a ride back to the nest of the bee, where it devours the food supply and the bee larvae.

Measuring Trees - Yet another method of measuring the height of trees has been brought to my notice, used by African and Native American tribes. Walk away from the object until you can just see the top of the tree when you bend and look back through your legs. The distance from where you are standing to the base of the tree is its height. There are some splendid Robinia's in front of the County Hall, High Street, Newport. Should someone be visiting Newport, I would be grateful if they would measure the height of the trees by this method and communicate the result.

Stag Beetles - Hilary Higgins saw a male Stag Beetle, *Lucanus cervus*, on the former rail track between Yarmouth and Freshwater. The records of this species date back more than a century and extend from Yarmouth to Ryde, yet no record south of Newport. It is always a male reported because they are unmistakable and the only proven breeding on the Island is from Cowes.

Tree Roots, - An interesting picture of exposed roots of a Beech *Fagus sylvatica* on an eroding bank at FP191, off Millers Lane, Carisbrooke**. (Photo**, page 16).

New Beetle - A beetle new to Britain, recorded only from two southern counties, but not yet from the Island is the Hollyhock Weevil, *Rhopalapion longirostre.* It`s lengths is from 4 to 6 mm including the rostrum, the trunk-like appendage extending from the head. The rostrum is about half the length of the body in the male and can be as long as the body in the female. The beetle has a silky-grey appearance and is found exclusively on Hollyhock, *Althaea.* Possibly best to look for damaged leaves.

Continental Visitors - With our waning climate we can expect more continental visitors and one quite widely distributed in Britain, but not yet recorded for the Island, is a very large bee. Violet Carpenter Bee, *Xylocopa violacea*. An insect as large and conspicuous as a Bumble Bee. Nesting in wood, trees and posts, we would like to have reports.

Bill Shepard

The Great Box Bug to High Cranmore Hill Shall Come

Gonocerus acuteangulatus, the Box Bug was described in Southwood and Leston "Land and Water Bugs of the British Isles", still the standard text on **Hemiptera – Heteroptera** although published in 1959 as "In Britain confined to Box Hill, Surrey and its Immediate Neighbourhood".

Older texts read similarly. Butler (1923): "Confined to one spot, the extensive grove of Box Trees which grows on the downs at Box Hill". Saunders (1892): "On Box Trees at Box Hill, Surrey". Douglas and Scott (1865): "Not common. Box Hill, Surrey, on Box Trees in May". Interestingly, Douglas also wrote (1865) that he had found just two specimens over a period of fifteen years before finding eight males and eight females on May 23rd 1865. There are no British records before 1850. On June 12th 2007 I found a male at Ningwood Common, Cranmore. There is no Box at Cranmore.

The Box Bug is a large and handsome bug, 14mm long, slim, golden brown above with black punctuation, and lime-green below. This is the first record for the Island.

It is a somewhat curious fact that this bug has recently begun to expand its geographical range and feed on food-plants other than Box. In 1990 it was found at Bookham Common, 6 km northwest of Box Hill and it subsequently spread rapidly throughout the count of Surrey, reaching adjoining areas of west Kent and Sussex in 2002 and Middlesex in 2003. One specimen was found in Bristol also in 2003 and by 2006 it had been found in Hampshire and Buckinghamshire.

It appears now to be feeding mainly on Hawthorn as well as Box, but also on Rose, Buckthorn and Yew. There is much Hawthorn, Rose and Buckthorn at Cranmore.

(**Illustration of this new Island resident** - page 16).

David Biggs
Hemiptera Recorder

A Thirteenth - or early Fourteenth Century Seal Matrix
A Rare and Important Find

A complete personal silver oval seal matrix containing an oval Roman jasper intaglio, (Treasure case no. 2006 T375) has been found by Mr Peter Jones near Arreton, Isle of Wight and recorded by Frank Basford (Isle of Wight Finds Liaison Officer).

From an impression of the seal, the inscription starts at 12 o'clock where there is a cross potent and reads from right to left:

SIGILL WALTERI DE LONGEDVNE (Seal of Walter of Longdown). The letter N's have reversed bars.

Enclosed by the inscription is a first century AD Roman red jasper intaglio depicting Victory facing right and standing on a globe. She is draped, winged and holding a wreath in the right hand and a palm-branch in the left hand. In front of her there are a crescent moon and three stars representing eternity. A suspension loop at the top of the reverse is integral with a central mid-rib that extends to the bottom. The seal is in good condition. However, one side on the reverse is damaged and slightly distorted.
The intaglio is red jasper. In its Roman context the gem, which is cut in the precise classicising style of the 1st century, most probably alludes to the eternity of Imperial Victory. Although a well educated man in the Middle Ages would no doubt have known about the Classical Victory, it must have been very tempting to re-interpret the figure as an angel, perhaps Gabriel, and the stars as the Heavens glorying in the birth of the Saviour, Christ. This should be seen not as ignorance of the Roman past but as subtle re-interpretation of a fine piece of early Roman art which in fact dates not many years after the birth of Christ.

Dr Martin Henig of the Faculty of Classics, Oxford University, has provided a detailed report on the Roman intaglio.
The Isle of Wight County Museum Service is hoping to acquire the find.
Length 28.5mm, width 23.4mm. Weight 9.71g.
The far right image has been flipped enabling the inscription to be read more easily.
Photo - page 16.

Frank Basford
Finds Liaison Officer & Coroner's Officer

Andy`s Nature Notebook

Early emergence of butterflies in the Isle of Wight 2007
This year has been noteworthy for the unprecedented early emergence time of some of our native butterflies and moths. The most astonishing record has got to be the 3 Glanville Fritillaries seen by Gordon & Kathleen Wheeler in their garden at Bonchurch on the 8th April; this was a full 10 days before the first ones seen along the sea wall between Bonchurch & Wheelers Bay and 21 days before the previous earliest sighting in 2003. The following is a chronological list of first sightings of selected species including location and observer.

23rd February	Humming-bird Hawkmoth	Ventnor	A&EB
11th March	Clouded Yellow	Ventnor	AW
11th March	Small White	Ventnor	A&EB
5th April	Orange Tip	Ventnor	A&EB
6th April	Large White	Ventnor	A&EB
6th April	Grizzled Skipper	AftonDown	SK-J
7th April	Green Hairstreak	AftonDown	SK-J
15th April	Dingy Skipper	Brading	DB
16th April	Wall	Whippingham	JR
17th April	Brown Argus	AftonDown	SK-J
18th April	Common Blue	Ventnor	A&EB
19th April	Small Heath	Sandown	DB
21st April	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Parkhurst	JR
27th April	Green-veined White	Ventnor	A&EB

29th April	Adonis Blue	Bonchurch Down	A&EB
30th April	Large Skipper	Whippingham	JR

Observers: Andy & Enid Butler(A&EB), Adam Wright(AW), Dennis Britton (DB), John Rowell (JR), Sam Knill-Jones (SK-J).

Storm Petrels

Over the last few years there have been occasional sightings of Storm Petrels off the south coast of the Island, usually from observers on fishing boats. The last ones I saw were on June 19th 2005 with a definite sighting of 2 but possibly 4 around our fishing boat about 1.5 miles off Woody Head St Lawrence. This year I asked Geoff Blake, a commercial fisherman working out of Ventnor Haven, to keep an eye out for any that may be attracted to his fishing operations. He has had some surprising results. The birds are usually only seen in rough weather and this year May & June have been particularly windy and consequently he has had some excellent sightings as follows :-

May 30th	6 between	Dunnose and Ventnor
June 15th	1 off	Ventnor
June 28th	1 off	Dunnose
June 29th	2 off	Dunnose and Ventnor
June 30th	5 off	St Catherines Point
July 1st	6 off	Seen together off Dunnose
	2 off	Wheelers Bay (seen by Andy Butler)

The six individuals on the 1st July are probably the most recorded at any one time from the Island.

Large Tortoiseshell

On the 20th June an influx of Large White, Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow butterflies was noted at Ventnor and Bonchurch. There was also a sighting of a Downy Emerald dragonfly at Ventnor which is most unusual. Best of all, though, was the appearance of a number of Large Tortoiseshell butterflies both here on the Island and on the near mainland in Hampshire & Dorset. This is an unprecedented event as sightings of this Butterfly are very rare.
Sightings were as follows :-

June 20th	1 off	Ventnor. (A.Butler)
June 20th	1 off	In the afternoon on the cliff edge near Little Stairs, between Shanklin & Lake (C. Meany)
June 20th	1 off	Tichfield Haven, on the Mainland
June 21st	1 off	Newport (Mr George)
June 21st	2 off	In Hampshire
July 6/7th	1 off	Rope Walk, Seaview (R. Trueman)
July 6/7th	1 off	Steyne Road, Seaview (R. Trueman), possibly the same Butterfly
July 7th	1 off	Ningwood (K. Stevens)

Many of the sightings were photographed and a feature of all the butterflies was that they were all in pristine condition. The life cycle of the butterfly is different to most others in that they emerge in June/ July then hibernate until the following early spring. It will be interesting to see if any are seen early next year.

Stonechats

Throughout last winter and into spring and early summer this year a pair of Stonechats have come into our garden to bathe in one of the bird baths. This has been on a regular basis and they usually stay for about 10 minutes.

In April I saw a Magpie fly onto our lawn with a large Slow-worm in its beak. The Magpie held the Slow-worm down with one foot and then very quickly made an incision in its body and removed its in-

testines in an almost surgical manner. It then cut the unfortunate lizard into three pieces, split these to get into the flesh inside which it then swiftly consumed. The whole incident took less than five minutes and was executed with precision and speed.

There have been some unusual sightings of birds along the esplanade between Bonchurch and Ventnor this spring. On the 28th April a Bar-tailed Godwit spent most of the afternoon feeding on the lower apron of the sea wall at Wheelers Bay, allowing close access and taking no notice of passing people and dogs. Similarly on the 10th June 12 Dunlin were also on the sea wall but nearer to Bonchurch. There was a late Purple Sandpiper on the outer rocks of Ventnor Haven on 22nd May and on the 14th June a Red — breasted Merganser on the sea about 100 yards offshore of Wheelers Bay.

A Grey Seal was present between Ventnor and Bonchurch during mid to late May.

On the 14th June a Basking Shark was seen heading east past a fishing boat about half a mile off Steephill Cove, seen by John Moody.

Andy Butler.

The Solent Thames Regional Research Project

On the 13th May, Alison Broome and I attended a focus session at Northwood House, hosted by Ruth Waller, County Archaeologist. The idea of this Project is to produce for each County in the Region - in our case, Oxfordshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight - a series of archaeological reports ranging from the Paleolithic to the Late Medieval. Various archaeologists in these regions have been asked to contribute each section. It was very interesting to meet up with Francis Wenban Smith from Southampton University who has been doing research into the Paleolithic on the Island at Priory Bay. Professor David Hinton, an expert on Anglo Saxon archaeology, gave the group valuable advice on the structure of our reports. Dr Tim Sly, also from Southampton University and an Islander!!, fresh from his travels around the world, is the IT specialist at the Archaeology Department in Southampton, and had some interesting input to the technical production of data. Frank and Vicky Basford also attended and Vicky was responsible for the Medieval section of the Isle of Wight report. Several people had been unable to attend because of the atrocious weather, and indeed the rain lashed down outside the windows for the entire event. Ruth circulated the various reports that apply to the Island, and the general plan was to review the reports to date in each County and bring any amendments or additions to the notice of the Project as soon as possible. Other meetings will be held in Hampshire and Oxfordshire in the near future to iron out any problems before going to print.

I think that the Island group, including Joy Verrinder from Carisbrooke Castle Museum and Corina Westwood from the IOW Museum Service, concluded it was about time we had Vectis Report number 2 [ie a follow-up to Vicky Basford's original report produced in 1980]. So much has happened and so much has been revealed by the metal detectorists, that a whole new view of the Island is appearing daily. We just need some large amount of money and a large amount of time to do it.

Delian Backhouse Fry. MSc

Trees

Why are trees the Cinderella of flowering plants. They dominate our lives, are so conspicuous and familiar that we ignore them. Unless they fall and cause inconvenience they are rarely mentioned. Furthermore, we can't even name them. "Oh, yes I can," I hear you say, "that's an Oak." But which one, there are at least ten species growing on the Island.

Enquire of what trees are growing in any given area and no one can enlighten yon. No parish body, garden society or community committee has a register of its trees. Even the Botanic Garden, where one would expect the trees to be labelled, many are not.

In ignoring trees we are missing so much. The magnificent avenue of giant redwoods in Firestone Copse, not yet resident long enough to display their full potential, reminds me a living cathedral and incidentally, our only conifer to reproduce by suckering. There is a bewildering diversity of trees in Rylstone Gardens, at least fifty species and pride of place to a Liquidambar, free-standing in the middle of a lawn. An autumn visit is justified to see its farewell display of colour as it prepares for its winter repose. How does one differentiate between the Wellingtonia and the Giant or Coast Redwood. Both grow in Rylstone Gardens and an examination of the leafing will make it obvious.

Have you seen the Indian Bean Tree with its seed pods, some a good fifteen inches in length, decorating the leafless tree throughout the winter. Perhaps in visiting the Crematorium and walking the Garden of Remembrance you have noticed the Caucasian Wingnut, with its foot long green rulers hanging down and the seed pods sown on like the buttons down the front of a dress. We had few Victorian planted Monkey Puzzles, but did you know that the trees are either male or female and our Island specimens are predominantly male. If you find a female the fruits are unmistakable, as large as and could be mistaken for coconuts. Of the three species of Cedar; Lebanon, Atlas and Deodar the latter give the most problems in identification, but pick up a bunch of needles, and the Deodar needles are twice as long as the other two.

Just a brief introduction to our Island trees, but a book could be written of the charm and mystery they have to offer. Who will be the first Island parish to produce a register of their trees and perhaps the first in Britain to do so, but not the first in the world. Many states in Australia and America have such registers.

Bill Shepard

Two New Leaf-mining Moths Colonize the Island

Two new leaf-mining moths have been recently found thriving on the Island. Just before Christmas 2006, on 22nd December, a chance visit to the very foot of Shanklin Chine, outside the (closed) gate prompted me to examine the plants of Pellitory-of-the-wall growing there. Some were growing in very shady recesses in the walls and I knew that this was the favoured habitat for the moth *Cosmopterix pulchrimella.* Until recently only known from France, Switzerland and through southern Europe to Greece and the old Yugoslavia, it had appeared in Dorset in 2001, in Guernsey in 2002 and in Cornwall in 2004. I mentioned this moth in a note in Bulletin no. 44 in August 2005 and expected it to arrive shortly thereafter. The entomologists who first found its mines in the British Isles stressed that only plants growing in shade hosted the moth. I soon found several very obvious bright white puckered blotch mines on the upper sides of the leaves, some containing larvae. I was able to breed out the adult moths and positively identify the causer of the mines. Dr John Langmaid confirmed my identification. Although small, with a wingspan of only 9mm this moth is extremely attractive (**Illustration** -page 16). I subsequently found larvae mining leaves above Steephill Cove on 27th December 2006 and in very large numbers at Bonchurch on 17th January 2007.

On 3rd February 2007 I examined a small plantation of Holm Oak on the Osborne House Estate, a plantation I had never entered before. I was amazed to find that every leaf of every tree was covered with the mines of another new moth (**Illustration** - page 16). This was *Ectoedemia heringella,* the mines

of which were first recorded from the gardens of Buckingham Palace in 2001. A subsequent visit on 17th February enabled me to confirm that the moth evidently was widespread on the estate and its larvae were certainly mining trees that had not been affected in 2006. I have since found the mines of this moth in Appley Park, Seaview, St Helen's, Bembridge, Shanklin, at the foot (only) of St Boniface Down, Niton, the Medina valley and Cowes. It is not yet present at Fort Victoria. My identification was again kindly confirmed by Dr John Langmaid. The mines can be found from November to April and mainly in January and February. The adult moths fly from April to June. Until 2001 it was only known from Mediterranean islands, Corsica, Sicily, Cyprus and from Italy, Istria, Dalmatia and Greece. By 2005 it was only known in Britain from Greater London but by February 2007 there were records from Middlesex, Surrey, N. Kent, Essex and Suffolk. John Langmaid found the first Hampshire mines a few days before my finds at Shanklin. I understand from a newspaper cutting that Dave Dana sent me, that the authorities at Kew Gardens are now concerned about its effect on the Holm Oaks there. Perhaps the National Trust won't need goats for much longer on St Boniface Down.

D.T. Biggs
Leaf-miner Recorder

Archaeological Field Survey – West Wight Community Archaeology Project

A well attended course was held in Feb 07 beginning with a classroom day on the Monday at the very pleasant setting of Sandpipers Hotel, Freshwater, at which we were introduced by Jim Fawcett to the Wessex Archaeology team who are co-ordinating the work due to lack of funding for our own Archaeology department. It was explained that they are trying to fill in the gaps on the maps for archaeology in the West Wight and that this training course hopefully will enable trained volunteers to carry out this work. We were given an interesting presentation of the type of landscape features that we were to look out for and it was explained that the winter months are by far the best time to look for these features, due to the low sunlight casting better shadows and fields having shorter grass and crops growing in them, which can mask the evidence later in the year.

The Wessex Archaeological team who carried out the field training were John and Jennifer, a charming young pair who made the field days fun and easygoing. The morning of day one we met at The Needles Car Park and climbed up to West High Down with John pointing out various features which were already on the map so that we could understand what to look out for. We noted a couple of items that were not on the map and we were given instruction on how to use the GPS hand sets so that we could note down the precise location of the features and how to fill in the Feature Record Sheet correctly. Those of us unused to digital cameras were also shown how to use them so that photographs of the features could also be taken. It was interesting to note that the local knowledge of some of our volunteers was very important in assisting identification of some features. For instance, most of us were unaware that there had been a golf course on the top of High Down in the past and we could have been fooled into thinking that some of the old bunkers etc were possible Neolithic sites! We descended back to the car park for lunch and then were sent off up again on our own to see if we could find other features to log so that we could confirm that we knew what we were doing!

Day two was down to work at Bouldnor Wood which has never been properly mapped. That was a fun day of bramble tramping resulting in lacerated legs and very muddy feet! We did manage to find quite a few old military buildings which did not appear on the maps and several other features of modern origin. Not an easy day, but very informative!

Day three found us back at The Needles area, this time at Warren Farm. We had two fields to survey there and it was a most interesting day. In the first field we located a building platform above the terraced side of a hill (which we assume was the actual rabbit warren when the little beasts were once farmed!) below which we found some worked flints around the current wild rabbit holes. There was also a large piece of ironstone lying prone beneath the platform hill which looked like it could have been a standing stone or a marker of some sort. We were told that it certainly looked Neolithic. The second

field was ploughed and we did a field walk looking for finds unearthed by the plough and there was plenty of Victorian pottery pieces to be found and a few more worked flints. Also one piece of medieval pottery was found by one of the volunteers.

To sum up it was a very interesting, fun, muddy and tiring week but one I would repeat like a shot. We now await contact from Wessex Archaeology to inform us when we can start the actual work. I for one am looking forward to it.

Pauline Charlton

Rail Track Vegetation

There can be no doubt that the proposed line of the first Island railway, between Newport and Cowes was defined by boundary fencing and all vegetation within its confines was cleared. The track was constructed and vegetation planted along the boundary fencing. This consisted of Oaks and possibly, in places, Ash. These were equi-spaced and in those spaces Hawthorn was planted. The object was not to produce a hedge, but to screen the line.

All other vegetation is encroachment and this has increased to narrow the track since the railway ceased. With few exceptions this consists of native material and with the exception of Hazel defining where the track ran through woodland, there is no pattern to the distribution. The commonest alien is the Apple, twenty seven specimens, no doubt originating from cores thrown from the train, but as a number of specimens are in groups it is feasible to suggest that they originated from a parent. Aliens otherwise are few and occur in the vicinity of human activity. Medlars and Plums at Hurstake and Butterfly Bush, *Buddleja* and Virginia Creeper, *Parthenocissus* in the vicinity of the former Cowes refuse tip. One strange absentee is the Pear. In fact they are rare in the countryside and those recorded can usually be traced to former cultivation.

There are breaks in the continuity of the vegetation, areas dominated by Bramble. This I suspect the result of trackside fires.

The foregoing is the observation and interpretation of a single observer. It would be interesting if others carried out an unbiased investigation.

Bill Shepard

Spring Caterpillar Walkabout

Glanville Fritillaries hibernate over the winter communally as small caterpillars. They spin silken tents attached to grass or food plant stems on rough land along the south and west coasts of the Isle of Wight. It's always struck me as a strange strategy for a butterfly on the northern end of its range, although the coastal sites they usually prefer are largely frost free and the silk web presumably protects well from the frequent gales. I have never really thought about what happens when they wake up, but on April 17th my husband and I witnessed the next stage in their life-cycle.

We had walked through Shepherd's Chine to the sea and sat on the cliff top in warm sun to eat our lunch. There were several silk tents nearby, empty and covered with the black and shrivelled remains of cast caterpillar skins. One cast showed clearly the notched appearance of it's now-larger inhabitant's head. We looked further and realised we were surrounded by several hundred caterpillars, many purposefully walking across the rough terrain. Some were settling and feeding on rosettes of Buck's-horn Plantain (*Plantago coronopus*). Previously I have seen tents on Ribwort Plantain (*P. lanceolata*) and assumed this was the main food plant but in today's patch of cliff top there was no Ribwort Plantain and the Buck's-horn Plantain was plentiful if rather dwarfed in the poor soil. As we became interested and searched we found so many caterpillars that it was difficult to avoid treading on them. They were about 2.5 cms long, not much longer than the diameter of the numerous daisy (*Bellis perennis*) flowers in the grass. Predominantly black, warty and very hairy, they had conspicuously shiny-red bi-lobed heads.

Looking closer, we saw orange-red claspers, red true legs and rows of pale spots between the segments. We thought that these caterpillars were probably just beginning their final instar before pupation, and marvelled at the speed with which they must develop to be on the wing as mature insects by May or early June.

Daphne Watson

Reports of General Meetings

3rd March Meeting the Ancestors: The Frazer Memorial Lecture

This year's Frazer Memorial Lecture was an extra special event, held at the Medina Theatre, Newport. Our guest lecturer for the occasion was Julian Richards of *Meet The Ancestors* and *Blood of the Vikings* fame. Over the course of the evening Julian related his journey in the world of History and Archaeology from his school days to the present. In the very first slide we met the ancestors, or at least his. He started his presentation with a photograph of his grand parents, Ethel and Ernest. This at first just seemed like a simple play on the title of his famous TV series, but as the evening went on it proved to be the first hint of his overall theme. History and Archaeology are not about places, events and objects. They are about people, and not just the famous (*kings etc*.), but everyday real people.

Julian was born in Nottingham and went to Nottingham Boys High School. Not an exceptional student, his headmaster said of him: "I hope Richards finds something useful to do with his life, but I doubt it". At the time learning was by rote and Julian found history to be a complete and utter bore. His first paid employment, as a wages clerk, didn't prove to be any more successful, because after all what are a few pennies here and there? This was not an outlook that fared well with the accountancy profession. Needing employment to complete his education he was put onto an excavation by a friend from the Nottingham Castle Museum, and this proved to be the turning point in his life. Julian was taken on as a trainee (5s 6d) at the excavation carried out prior to the construction of a shopping centre. Soon into the excavation he was given the job of digging a pit, which turned out to be a cesspit. At the bottom he found a bronze key and this proved to be his eureka moment. As Julian put it: "…Imagine someone leaving the Jerusalem (Nottingham's oldest pub) and seeing a key fall from his pocket as he stops to relieve himself…." History had come alive and was telling him a story. He now knew what he wanted to do for the rest of his life! After two years of digging Julian went on to Reading University and under the tutorage of Professor Richard Bradley embarked on his career as a professional archaeologist in 1975. For five years till 1980 he worked for the Berkshire Archaeological Unit, helping to build the County Sites and Monuments Record, and carried out an excavation/survey of the Berkshire Downs. Then for the next decade he ran the 'Stonehenge Environs Project', a detailed study of Stonehenge and its surrounding landscape.

It was at this time that Julian had his first contact with television, making several contributions to programmes about Stonehenge. In 1991, having had enough of working for a large organization, he left and with two others formed AC Archaeology. Three years later, realising that commercial archaeology was not his forte, he began to work for English Heritage on their Monuments Protection Programme. This took him back to his fieldwork roots. It was at this time that Julian was asked to make contributions to another TV series *Secrets of Lost Empires* about the construction of Stonehenge - how were the stones moved and then erected? Julian's first slide to illustrate the technique was an injection of humour show-

ing a “Flintstone” style illustration of a dinosaur being used as a mechanical digger. To a captivated audience he went on to show how 170 people could move such a massive stone using a sledge and rollers, with the use of a pivot to move the Trilithon into an upright position. We will never know the names of the people who constructed Stonehenge, but how they worked was brought to life in these illustrations.

Meeting BBC researcher Tania Linden they soon realised that people are fascinated with skeletal remains. This led to the creation of *Meet the Ancestors.* I am sure that most of us are familiar with the series especially the facial reconstructions that made it famous, but Julian pointed out that simple observations of the grave could reveal a wealth of information about the person in the grave. For instance finding a body in a foetal position in a circular pit would indicate a prehistoric burial; a body with the head by the knees would open the possibility of a Roman decapitation burial; burial goods would indicate the status of the person (eg a warrior); an East-West orientation would indicate a Christian burial. If the body was found in a tight position with the jaw closed, burial in a shroud would be suspected, or a coffin indicated if the body was spread with the mouth open and dropped. Developments in science such as Radiocarbon Dating are now making dating more accurate. Tooth wear can age the person. Isotope Analysis can indicate where the person came from or spent time. Some parts of course were best guess, based on other data, like hairstyle, eye colour or clothing. In the end it all contributes to telling a story about a real person and brings the past alive. This is the ethos of all Julian's programmes and books – real archaeology brought alive by a real archaeologist and not presented in a dull lifeless way. After the first series of *Meet the Ancestors* he resigned his position at English Heritage to devote his time to broadcasting and writing.

Julian concluded with a question and answer session. I can only surmise the questions by his answers, because not all the questions were audible. His answers included: Yes - it is good that the Druids are back at Stonehenge and should stay as long as they respect the site. Yes - metal detecting is of value as long as finds are properly reported. No - he has not done any excavation at Stonehenge, but would love to do so. And finally he would like to be buried in the local cemetery, but would like a firework send-off. After the talk Julian concluded this very interesting and enthralling evening by signing books and chatting individually with people as they left the auditorium. We can only hope that future events equal this evening!

Other media projects by Julian Richards are: *Blood of the Vikings*, a Timewatch Special on *Hadrian’s Wall*, *Mapping the Town* on BBC Radio 4, two interactive games “Hunt the Ancestor” and “Viking Quest” on the BBC web. His books include: *Stonehenge – A History in Photographs, The Amazing Pop-Up Stonehenge*, *Blood of the Vikings, Meet the Ancestors*, *Stonehenge*, and his newest, *Stonehenge – The Story So Far.* In addition he has made many contributions to the BBC History Magazine and web pages. The Unit of Art in Medicine, Manchester University, did the facial reconstruction in the *Meet The Ancestors* series. More information about the process can be found on their web page: http://www.medicine.manchester.ac.uk/artinmed/reconstruction/technique/

Richard Pratt

19th May **New Forest: Archaeology & Botany**

Seventeen members - including one who had made it by bicycle rather than minibus - were met at the Filly Inn, Setley, by Clive Chatters, Regional Conservation Manager of the Hampshire & IW Wildlife Trust, and Richard Reeves, field archaeologist and Librarian of the New Forest Museum.

As we set off across the open heathland of Setley Plain, Richard pointed out the Roman road we had just travelled upon, remarking how these Roman roads linked with the Isle of Wight as communication routes following Vespasian's capture of the Island; he was also keen to impress upon us the many links he had uncovered between the IW and the New Forest in the early medieval period. This was the Jutish period of settlement: in fact the old name for the New Forest was ITENI, or "Land of the Jutes". Upon reaching a huge bank, he explained that this was a classic medieval boundary bank associated with a grant made by the Roydon estate to the Cistercians in 1253. In fact, the whole valley was enclosed in the

13th and 14th centuries, but settlements were abandoned following the Black Death and never recolonised.

We next came upon two large Bronze Age disc barrows, a remarkable enough fact in itself (only three of these rare barrows are known on the Island), but the Forest barrows also have interlocking banks, one of only two examples in the country to do so! However, the theory that disc barrows are associated with female burials was impossible to test here, as bones don't survive in the acidic environment of the Forest. Bronze Age barrows were once considered the most numerous archaeological features in the area, but these are now outnumbered by boiling or burnt mounds, usually kidney-shaped and once used for boiling water by heating flints over a fire - though we didn't come across any on our excursion. It also raises the question as to how many of the burnt flint scatters found on the Island may be attributed to this origin. (**Photo**—page 17)

We proceeded along part of a hollow way which runs from Sway to Brockenhurst, and Richard pointed out a track running up from POW camp no. 65 which once housed mainly Italian prisoners-of-war, who were engaged in forestry jobs such as felling timber. In fact, the open land of the Forest was used for battle and tank training of all sorts. The hollow way was very wet and Clive was able to point out several bog plants including both Round-leaved and Intermediate-leaved Sundews.

Circling Setley Pond, we saw further bog plants, many of which are scarce or absent on the Island. However, our search for Pillwort, a relative of the ferns, was unsuccessful. Good views were had of Meadow Pipits and Stonechats and several splendid red leaf beetles, *Chrysomela populi*, were admired on Aspen shoots. The distant sighting of Fallow Deer across the valley led Clive to observe that there was a history of a thousand years of deer management in the Forest.

We walked across Setley Plain towards the railway track, stopping to examine several boggy areas. We enjoyed a fine display of Pale Butterwort, flowering abundantly. One particularly nice find was a population of the nationally scarce Marsh Clubwort which, like much of the specialised flora and fauna here, is rare away from the Forest. Passing under the railway tunnel, we arrived at Milking Pound Bottom, our lunch stop, where Richard elaborated further on the links between this area and the Island in the Saxon period, before rushing off for another appointment. In 755 an early grant of freeholding was made in several places in the New Forest by the West Saxon royal household, confirming an earlier grant of 735 made 50 or so years after Caedwalla had taken the New Forest and the Isle of Wight, thereby creating the West Saxon kingdom and wiping out its Jutish predecessor. The Island appears to have possessed the high-status manorial holdings, with smaller sub-manors in the coastal areas of the Forest and yet smaller ones in the heart of the Forest itself. Transportation between the two was straightforward, and once a sub-manor on the mainland had been sorted out the whole thing was relatively easy to establish.

The party then divided into two groups. The first group accompanying Colin Pope ventured into the boggy area of Widden Bottom to search for plants. It was very wet here so we were obliged to jump from tussock to tussock in order to stay dry. We were searching for three species of Cotton-grass which grow here but succeeded only in finding common Cotton-grass, in quantity. However, Bogbean and Marsh Lousewort in full bloom made for a very active setting. We flushed a Snipe and later saw a young Lapwing. It is good to know that waders still breed in the Forest. We had seen several Lapwings and heard Curlew during our walk.

The second group accompanied Clive along an Iron Age embankment on the ridge which runs from Sway to Brockenhurst, though its exact purpose is unknown: a ridge-top boundary division perhaps, but why would they have chosen a boundary with a huge bog adjoining? Clive drew attention to the 218 ft Sway Tower, observable from most points on the walk and built by Victorian Judge Peterson as a celebration of his Spiritualist beliefs. He was ahead of his time in installing electric lights, but bankrupted himself in the process. Today, being the tallest building in the whole vicinity, it is full of mobile phone equipment!

Clive then explained a little about his other role as New Forest National Park Chairman, the main priority of which is to make sure that the "specialness" of the area survives and is enhanced. There are currently 50 different owners of the Forest, but they own the soil only. There are, however, tens of thousands of Commoners who have rights of herbage for their animals - ponies, cattle, pigs and donkeys - though in practice perhaps 3-500 families who actually practise these rights at any one time. Additional

rights to firewood, clay and turf have now been regulated out of existence. It is the job of the Verderers to act as the guardians of the Commoners and their rights, whilst also acting as the watchdogs of the Forest landscape. They employ five Agisters to ride the forest and supervise the day-to-day welfare of the Commoners' animals.

While some peeled off for tea at Durns Town in Sway, a few of us accompanied Clive along to Marlpit Oak, a wooded area formerly used for clay extraction by the Commoners - and virtually the only piece of "forest" in the modern sense which we encountered on the whole day's walk! As we said our goodbyes before mounting the minibus, it would have been difficult to imagine two more knowledgeable and dedicated guides on what had turned out to be an excellent and informative day's outing.

Alan Phillips
Colin Pope

23rd June **Bembridge Ledges.**

Approximately ten people met at Bembridge Lifeboat car park on the Saturday morning. The Round the Island yacht race was in progress and this provided a wonderful backdrop to our intertidal walk to look at the flora and fauna of the Ledges. The tide was falling and we followed it out across the rocks. Becky Cooksley, Field Studies Tutor from the Medina Valley Centre, who was leading the meeting, identified our finds and we were particularly on the lookout for Snakelocks Anemone, as it is one of our target species this year. Although Colin found one, he did not share it with the rest of us as he thought there would be plenty of them to see. However, this turned out to be the only one found during the morning. Becky told us that due to a very cold spell several winters ago, the number of these Anemones had dramatically declined. The Isle of Wight is the furthest east that this species is found.
Lynda Snaith`s granddaughter, Amy, enjoyed herself investigating the many rock pools and another youngster delighted in collecting the various crabs.

The species found are listed below,:-

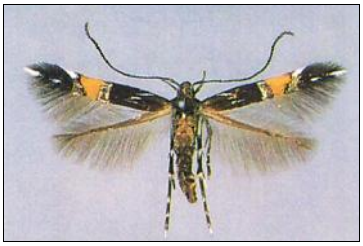
Breadcrumb sponge	Grey topshell	Serrated wrack
Beadlet anemone	Purple/flat topshell	Spiral wrack
Snakelocks anemone (grey/brown)	Netted dogwhelk	Bladder wrack
(only 1)	Chiton	Shaving brush weed
Keelworm	Flat periwinkle	Peacocks tail
Spiral tube worm	Rough periwinkle	Japanese seaweed
Acorn barnacle	Common/edible periwinkle	Red seaweed
White-line shrimp	Dogwhelk	Red seaweed
Edible crab	Common limpet	Irish moss (Caragheen)
Common shore crab	Starry sea squirt	Red seaweed
Isopod	Lightbulb sea squirt	Red seaweed
Squat lobster	Sea squirt	Mermaids hair
Velvet swimming crab	Colonial sea squirt	Red seaweed
Hermit crab	Shanny fish	Encrusting red algae
Prawn	Green seaweed	Red seaweed
Hairy crab	Antlerweed	Pepper dulse
Long-clawed porcelain crab	Sea lettuce	Laver weed
Broad-clawed porcelain crab	Bootlace weed	
Sea slug	Brown seaweed	

(List supplied by Becky Cooksley)

Jackie Hart
Mike Cahill

Great Box Bug - page 5

Medieval Seal - page 6



Leaf-mining Moth
C. pulchrimella -page 9

Leaf-mining Moth (mines)
E.heringella.– page 9

Tree Roots - page 4

New Forest - page 14

Alum Bay - page 25

Alum Bay - page 25
Rare fossil fish

Galibury Hump - page 21

Ancient Skills - page 22

Reports of Section Meetings

Access

18th January

Thursday had been forecast as the worst day of the week and that it certainly turned out to be. Gale force winds and the sea lashing over the revetment where we were going to walk, made us, regretfully, have to abandon the walk. We shall put it on at another time.

9th February

Tad Dubicki led this walk and reports that nine stalwart supporters braved the elements by meeting at the Jubilee car park on Mottistone Down, for a walk which commenced through the Westover Plantation and proceeded as far as the Harboro Barrows before returning by way of part of the Worsley Trail across Mottistone Down.

Chris Lipscombe started proceedings by explaining the origin of the name 'Jubilee'. The plantation was planted in the 1960s for the Silver Jubilee of George VI. She gave some historical details of the inception of Westover Plantation.

Our path through the wood provided plenty of winter interest, wispy Beech being much in evidence. On reaching the Harboro Tumuli, at 203 metres, we were able to investigate the four burial mounds, now quite mutilated by early excavators, rabbit burrows and by general erosion. The views, which would have been rather spectacular from this height, were marred by an extensive sea mist. We were, however, able to sight the Longstone field monument.

By this time a full SE gale was blowing and our return to the car park was quite eye watering, to say the least, as we were facing and completely exposed to the blustery conditions.

12th March

Tad Dubicki reports that a fine Spring morning greeted twelve members who assembled at Fort Victoria Country Park car park, for a walk westwards through woodland following the coastal path, thence turning off Monks Lane in an easterly direction, crossing fields via public rights of way (passing Pratlands Copse) before returning by way of Westhill Lane at Norton.

The viewpoint on the coastal path with strategically placed benches provided fine views towards Hurst Point and westward along the mainland coast almost as far as Anvil Point. Passing the old "Cliff End Battery" we were able to take a closer look at the Fort Albert complex.

Our route over the fields became rather boggy and wet under foot, however just adjacent to the copse we were able to admire a fabulous Goat Willow with catkins in full bloom.

The approach along Westhill Lane, was bordered with Wild Daffodils, Primroses and an abundance of Winter Heliotrope.

18th April

The path through Nodes Point woods was extremely muddy so Tad Dubicki led the group on a different route. He reports that clear blue skies and glorious sunshine was the order of the day when seventeen members convened at St.Helens Duver car park for a walk along the Duver foreshore, before crossing the Mill Pond causeway and proceeding along the Bembridge embankment, at the same time admiring the interesting houseboats neighbouring the footpath. We returned by way of the old Bembridge to Brading rail track, starting from east of Home Farm and retracing our route across the causeway and thence back over the old golf course. The botanists in the group recognised many species some examples being Yellow Flag Iris, White Poplar, Herb Robert, Common Storksbill, Hedgerow Cranesbill, Rock Samphire, Common Valerian and Field Maple, to name a few.

In the ponds adjacent to Home Farm, Mallards and Coot were seen foraging in the reeds as were Tufted Duck and Shelduck. In addition Little Egrets and Grey Heron were sighted as was a nesting Swan close by the path. Finally, while crossing the old golf course prior to arriving back at the car park, numerous Holly Blue Butterflies were observed.

11th May

This walk was in the Walking Festival programme. Jill Nicholls led it and reports that after a week of wet weather, Friday came and the sun shone. Another surprise was that 64 people turned up for the walk, 14 visitors from the mainland including a Dutch couple, 15 children from Barton Primary School and 4 dogs on leads. The children were very well-behaved and enjoyed every minute and the dogs behaved well, too.

The walk went from Godshill car park to Moor Lane via the pig farm and up to the main road, returning through the Bluebell woods of Beech Copse and fields to the "Griffin".

We did think that because of climate change the Bluebells would be over, but, although perhaps not perfect, there were plenty to be seen. This was a relief as we had advertised a "Bluebell walk".

The walk took place in sunny, dry weather but, within half an hour of finishing, rain had started again.

25th May

Jill and John Nicholls led this walk and report that on a lovely sunny morning eleven people arrived at Blackgang Viewpoint car park for a 2.5 mile walk. First they looked at the fine view along the bays and cliffs of the south-west coast of the Island. Then proceeded up to the cliff edge and inland through fields to Niton. There were many flowers to be identified, Thrift, Cow Parsley, Seaside Thistle, Curled Dock, Hawksbeard and Rock Rose. The walk returned along the inland cliff, overlooking the sea. A Raven was seen and Fulmars gave a good flying display. Skylarks were also seen and a Buzzard was soaring above. The views were enjoyed by everyone, especially the sight of St. Catherines Lighthouse looking very white and spruced up, as they walked above it along the cliff.

21st June

Val Gwynn invited us to come for a walk round "Wild Tracts" at Shalfleet to see the woods and the newly-acquired hay meadows. We had to shelter from the rain while she described how "Wild Tracts" is now graded as a farm and classified as "traditional English pasture". It has just been accepted into the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme and the whole area has to be managed for the benefit of all forms of wildlife. The rain stopped and we walked through a little ivy-bordered path with Dogs Mercury and Hartstongue ferns revelling in the recent rain.

Not all the trees were native. Val pointed out a Tree of Heaven, *Ailanthus altissimo*, the only one on the Island. The path now ran beside a stream coming down from the chalk downs. Kingfishers were encouraged here.

Coming out of the woods Val showed us the two meadows which she had recently acquired and which were being returned to traditional wild-flower hay meadows. At least a dozen flower species, excluding grasses, were noted. The hedges were managed to create linking routes for wildlife by cutting every three years. Manpower was used rather than machinery.

Now we were at the end of a most informative tour, thanks to Val's enthusiasm, and she also provided us with tea and biscuits afterwards.

Chris Lipscombe

Archaeology

21st January **Caves and their Contents: Exploration and Interpretation**

A relaxed and chatty presentation of the exploration of caves took place at HQ at Ventnor which left us with a fascinating insight into the world of cavers and potholers, that breed of men and women who find the attractions of burrowing underground too hard to resist. This is a fairly recent occupation in England according to David Tomalin, who opened the talk with a short and entertaining history of caving in England in which we discovered that the English were for a long time far too superstitious to explore underground, it being the 'abode of the devil'. John Winch then took over and showed a film by Sid Perou, which showed a reconstruction of the Frenchman Edouard Alfred Martel's descent into the aptly named Gaping Gill in Yorkshire in 1895, the first such occurrence. Martel must have been an extraordinary character who apparently first had himself lowered into the bowels of the earth in his native

country on the end of a hemp rope by local shepherds. The film depicted him being lowered into the 350 foot Gaping Gill on a flimsy rope ladder to the floor below with freezing water cascading over the rim soaking him to the bone to make things just a little more difficult and uncomfortable! The Bradford Potholing Club each year construct a winch over the mouth of the Gill and the public can pay for the privilege of descending in a cage down to the floor at a much quicker rate than Martel! It was suggested as a possible outing for the association by some intrepid members! David resumed the talk with descriptions of cave descents in the limestone Mendips which is the area he is most familiar with including telling us about the various diving equipment past and present used to travel through flooded passages. We had a slide show of some of the tight, muddy and very claustrophobic places these potholers force themselves through and of the various forms of stalactites which can form in the caves. One of the most interesting slides showed a cross section of a stalactite showing the internal rings, very similar to tree rings, with some of the rings showing very dark indeed, which presumably shows periods of severe pollution of some sort. These could be used as another good indicator of climate change that has taken place over the centuries. The talk concluded with another slide show of various people involved with the Bradford Potholing Club over the years and a few very beautiful, atmospheric photographs of some of the caves themselves.

Pauline Charlton

11th Febuary **Sites and Monuments Record**

25 members were present for Rebecca Loader's powerpoint presentation regarding her work as SMR Officer to record and update the Island's archaeology. She began by describing how the first inventory of ancient monuments was set up in 1908, how O.G.S. Crawford set up a mapping system and encouraged local societies to keep their own records, and how on the Island Hubert Poole and Gerald Sherwin produced some of the first annotated manuscripts, still valuable today. Vicky Basford created the original card index and records were computerised in the 1980s.

Linking the database with geographical information systems (GIS) has more recently enabled all records to be displayed on maps; whilst linking with other data sets such as areas of national archaeological importance (ie a set of monuments in an area scheduled by English Heritage) has also proved crucial in being able to consider wider historic landscapes as a whole. Work which would have previously required the time-consuming skills of professional draughtsmen can now be achieved at the touch of a computer. The concept of "sites and monuments" has evolved since 2000 into the much wider one of "Historic Environment Records", and some benchmarks for good practice have been laid down, including evolving policies for public access and recommendations for funding by local authorities. It is to be hoped that the current review of heritage protection will give SMRs a lot more clout: if at some point in the future archaeological records were to become statutory, this would be a very significant and exciting development. Locally, the aim is to marry the SMR to a new database, thereby bringing the Island's records up to national standards, then eventually to put all records online - providing there are the staff resources to carry it out.

Throughout her talk Becky illustrated the incredibly wide range of records she manages. These include not only the standard archaeological sites one would imagine, but also aerial photos for example of Newtown (there are also commercial sets covering the whole Island such as the RAF set of 1946); military sites such as 19th century batteries and World War II sites; maritime records; industrial sites such as the crane at Newport Quay; the Island's complete range of historic buildings; street furniture such as old telephone boxes, milestones and water pumps; listed gravestones; and even the site of the original pop festival! These have been supplemented in recent times by Vicky Basford's work on the Island's historic landscape character, and will be further added to by the many records likely to be produced by the Society's historic lanes and tracks survey. As Becky concluded, it is the wide variety of the Isle of Wight's archaeological and historic sites in such a relatively small area that makes it so special.

The relaxed style of presentation and invitation to the audience to ask questions and make comments as the session proceeded contributed enormously to a most enjoyable and revealing afternoon.

Alan Phillips

1st April **Gallibury Down Barrows**

Over 30 members met at 1.30 pm on a very pleasant afternoon to be guided by Dr David Tomalin the retired IOW County Archaeologist, to visit and learn some history of the barrows on the downs behind Mottistone and Brighstone.

We started by walking a short distance to the West from the Jubilee car park to look at two barrows which had been 'excavated' by Rev. Skinner in the early 18th century. David gave a very interesting talk, one of many, about the history of the excavation of these and the others on Afton Down. The excavators were only interested in finding items of value, so they tended to dig straight down into the top of the barrow. Very little drawings or notes on what was found were done, so much of what was found, if anything, has been lost. There were a lot of recent rabbit burrows but unfortunately no worked flints were seen, although a few members gave the spoil heaps a thorough examination!

Barrows are not always on the crest of a hill, but are positioned to appear as if they are from the settlements. If you go 1/4 mile out to sea then these 2 are visible, perhaps that was where the settlement was 4-5,000 years ago?

We then walked down Lynch Lane and into Brighstone forest and visited 3 barrows. These were overgrown with trees and shrubbery, but no plough or rabbit damage was evident. David showed us an aerial photo of the site taken in the 1930's which clearly showed another large barrow, but this has been ploughed out and there is no visible evidence of it today.

We then walked on to Gallibury Down, now called Newbarn Down, to the site of Gallibury Hump. It still stands some 5-6 metres proud of the present land surface. However about a metre above the present land surface was clear evidence of the original land surface, which shows how much downwash there has been in the last 4-5000 years since this was built. A huge depression in the middle showed where it had been robbed out, so nothing much was ever found. However from the top a very fine view of the Solent and the Channel was evident, so a superb place to bury and worship the ancestors, as it would have been visible from many places. (**Photo** –page 17)

A little further to the East we came to an adjoining barrow which was excavated by David and colleagues in 1978/9. This indeed was a treasure trove. Several burial sites with skeletal remains were found. Most were inside a round house, some 6-7 metres in diameter, although one was found outside the door. 217 post holes were found and David showed us a stunning photo of the reconstruction which he and his team did with all the 217 posts in place!

Just below the plough level a cremation urn was found. This had a second pot inside, a red handled pot, which is now on show at the Guildhall, one of only 3 found in this country, one of the others came from the Stonehenge area. They came over from Brittany and were made by the Armorican tumulus culture, one of the most exciting finds ever to come from the Island.

This brought our walk to an end, a superb afternoon's learning about some of the Island's 300 plus barrows. Dr Tomalin was thanked and a generous round of applause showed how much we had all enjoyed his passing on to us a small portion of the Island's early history.

Chris Ratsey

13th May **Identifying Prehistoric Flintwork**

19 members and friends attended this informal session led by lithics expert - and flint knapper extraordinary - John Winch, who had very kindly brought part of his extensive collection for us to look at. It was an afternoon of shattered illusions and startling insights into the way of life of the peoples of the Stone Ages. For example, most blades and axes weren't lovingly and painstakingly crafted until they achieved aesthetic perfection; rather they were the Stone Ages' equivalent of plastic cutlery. Produced quickly, perhaps in 5 or 10 minutes, in response to a sudden need or opportunity, they were used once and then discarded. Welcome to the original throw away society. Why did they do this? Because they hadn't invented pockets! And because flint is heavy and if you have just butchered a large animal and want to carry as much of it as possible back to your family, there was no need to burden yourself with tools that could so easily be replaced. Those of us, who, under John's patient guidance, have attempted flint knapping, felt a distinct increase in our respect for these ancient peoples.

We learnt that a flint tool made last week is virtually indistinguishable from one made 100,000 years

ago. And, in a wide-ranging discussion, that the gravels extracted from Boxgrove quarry contain many thousands of hand axes that, along with the gravel that has preserved them for so very many years, are used in the foundations of new roads.

John's passion for his subject and his ability to pass on his enthusiasm meant that we enjoyed a fascinating afternoon.

Sheila Burch

17th June **Ancient Skills**

14 people met at Joy Verrinder's property in Yafford, by her kind invitation, for a practical session on rope making demonstrated by Nigel Tibbutt. The skills he has acquired over a 20 year period covered the making of rope from ancient times until 1801, when a Captain Huddart invented a system that speeded up the whole process. Until this time the making of rope was very labour intensive, with three people being needed for the simplest method. Rope walks were in use until after the 2nd World War. On the Island, Seaview's Rope Walk is 145 yards long, where ropes of 100 yards in length were made. There were Rope Walk fields in Ryde where Nelson Street and Nelson Square are now, and also in Cowes.

Nigel showed us that rope could be made out of various plants; Nettles, Grasses, Honeysuckle bark, Bullrushes, Willow bark, Lime Tree bark and also Horsehair. Although using several strands together makes strong rope, twisting them together makes them more flexible but loses 20 per cent of its strength. Originally the making of rope would have been by twisting with the fingers, but by using a bent wood attachment at the end of a stick, known as a Throw Crook, allowed the bent stick to rotate the strands, taking the pressure off the thumbs. This device was still in use on farms on the Island until the 1950's, for thatching hayricks using straw.


Throw Crook

He then produced some hemp and flax to demonstrate the preparation required in turning the raw plant into fibre ready for rope making. First of all, bundles were taken down to the river or pond, where they were soaked until the fibres were partially rotted and could easily be separated from the pith – a process known as retting. The bundles were then removed and placed on a warm, dry bank to dry out. The fibre is then separated from the pith, the pith used for other purposes e.g. roofing insulation. In about 1200 AD, a device was invented to break the fibre, instead of having to use fingers. This was known as a Breaker. The next processes were scutching, to get rid of bits in the fibre and then hackling, a form of combing. In the Neolithic Age, this would have been done using thorns – maybe Sea Buckthorn or Hawthorns. Nigel used a wood base with cut down bicycle spokes stuck in it. The separate fibres were drawn through the spokes several times making the fibre soft and fine. The long fibre is known as "line" fibre, the shorter fibre, "tow" fibre, was not as good.


Breaker

The fibre was then spun, women used a distaff with a weight, so that they could do other jobs around the home at the same time. The use of a spinning wheel meant that a spinning walk of maybe up to 300 yards was needed to produce long lengths of yarn.

Nigel then demonstrated making various thicknesses of rope; this is where the need for a minimum of three people came in. The thicker the rope the more yarn is used in each strand. The thicker the rope the stronger it is. The last rope Nigel made used 4 yarns per strand, and the twisting resulted in a length of rope, originally of 8 metres, being reduced to 7 metres. (**Photo** –page 17)

We were fortunate in having warm sunshine for the occasion and everyone found it a very interesting and informative demonstration.

Jackie Hart
Anne Cahill

Botany

14th January **Field Cow-wheat site clearance**

The Field Cow-wheat site is in a fairly sheltered position on the top of the Undercliff. Frequently we have a pleasantly warm and sunny morning (for January) when we do our annual clearance, and this year was no exception and we managed to clear the banks thoroughly.

4th February **Wood Calamint site clearance**

A good turnout of volunteers, combined with a warm sunny morning, allowed both lay-bys to be cleared thoroughly this year. We are hoping that this will benefit the flowering of the plant later in the year and its progress will be monitored towards the end of August.

18th March **North Afton Down**

A rather cool and showery afternoon did not deter us walking up the north side of Afton Down in search of Dwarf Sedge (*Carex humilis*). This plant was recorded for the first time on the Island last summer by Paul Stanley. It is an early flowerer and we were hoping to see flowering spikes. We had mapped its position using a GPS receiver last summer, but it was much less conspicuous in March and it took some time to re-locate it. Flowering spikes were found but were inconspicuous. We also looked at the chalk grassland community in which this plant is found, and attempted the identification of plants using their vegetative characteristics, using labelled photocopies of leaves to assist us.

14th April **Corf Camp**

A turnout of over 30 people enjoyed the spring woodland at Corf Camp on a warm and sunny afternoon. We walked through the woodland tracks and glades to the saltmarsh at the edge of the creek and then back via a meadow.

A considerable amount of interest was generated by clump of violets that had deep mauve petals and striking creamy yellow coloured spurs. It was initially thought to be Heath Dog Violet (*Viola canina*) but on further investigation it proved to be the Common Dog Violet (*Viola riviniana*) with unusual colouration.

Twelve galls were recorded together, five of them on oak. Five leaf miners and six microfungi were also found. None were new species for the Island but nineteen of them were new for this site.

29th April **Froglands Lane and Millers Lane**

These two tracks in the vicinity of Carisbrooke Castle formed part of a circular walk to look at the flora associated with them, to provide additional information for the HEAP project.

Froglands Lane proved to have a particularly diverse flora along its northern side including Redcurrant (*Ribes rubrum*) in the hedgerow and at least 12 other woody species. Wood Goldilocks (*Ranunculus auricomus*) was found under a group of trees by footpath N 89.

At the west end of Millers Lane there is a striking clump of Caucasian Comfrey (*Symphytum caucasicum*), a garden escape, by the side of the road.

Millers Lane had the richer flora on the eastern side where the bank is steeper and has a species rich hedgerow on the top. The other side has been incorporated into gardens in a number of places.

12th May **Calbourne Mill**

The owners of Calbourne Mill have recently purchased a field which slopes down to the Caul Bourne to the west of the mill buildings, and the botany section carried out a survey to assist in the future management of the field, which has been cattle-grazed in recent years.

A species list of 112 plants included six species of sedge including Spring Sedge (*Carex caryophylla*) and ten species of grass including French Oat Grass (*Gaudinia fragilis*).

Near the water's edge we found Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) and Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and there were some early damselflies on the wing.

3rd June St Luke's Cemetery and St Helens West Green

St Luke's Cemetery, on Lane End Road, Bembridge, has an attractive meadow flora and is left uncut at this time of year. Off the paths, it is rather uneven underfoot so it was a case of slow and careful searching. Species we noted included Corky-fruited Water Dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*), Rosy Garlic (*Allium roseum*), Salad Burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*) and Squirrel Tail Fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*). An unexpected find was Purple (or yarrow) Broomrape (*Orobanche purpurea*) in several places. This is a new site for this plant.

A part of St Helens Green is also left uncut and it is noted for the presence of Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*). A number of springs run underneath the area, giving rise to damper patches, where plants such as Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Lady's Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*) Oval Sedge (*Carex ovalis*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) grow.

3 0th June Kern Farm

Unfortunately this meeting was abandoned because of heavy rainfall. We hope to carry out a survey here next year.

Anne Marston

Entomology

24th May Nansen Hill

Four members met on a pleasant sunny afternoon, and explored this reserve lying above and to the west of the car park for The Landslip at Bonchurch. The lower slopes have recently been cleared of scrub, and this was a useful opportunity to see what effects this might have had on the wildlife of the area. There was a wide range of species to observe, but some groups were few and far between, in particular the only butterflies to be found were two Common Blues, whereas we managed to find six moths or their larvae, including a very well camouflaged Silver-y; the attractively marked pyralids, Thistle Ermine, and *Pyrausta aurata*, and the beautiful bluish green gold and black caterpillars of the Mullein moth, appropriately enough on the plant of the same name. A number of beetles and hemiptera were identified afterwards with the help of Bill Shepard and David Biggs. The Soldier Beetle, *Cantharis rustica*, with its black wing cases was easily the commonest species of the day. There was a great deal of interest in the large black weevil, *Otiorhynchus clavipes* found drowned in the pools of water at the base of the leaf stems of the teasel on the reserve. The vivid iridescent green of the metallic green leaf beetle *Chryptocephalus aereolus* provided a splash of colour, and there were two new sightings for hemiptera in this 10km square. The first was the attractive Sloe Shield-bug, the individual seen having a pronounced purplish tinge to the wing cases. The other was a lacehopper *Tachycixius pilosus*. The visit was made all the more enjoyable because of the wonderful views north-east over Sandown Bay.

Richard Smout

13th June Haseley Manor

Twelve members met for this meeting which concentrated on the meadows and ponds between the manor and the River Yar, but also looked at higher drier ground between the house and the main road. We were accompanied by Anthony and Vivien Roberts, who also supplied us with some very welcome refreshments at the end of the visit, and many thanks are due to them for their hospitality. We were extremely fortunate with the weather, the rain holding off until shortly after we had departed. As a result we were able to find and identify a pleasing variety of species helped by the wide range of expertise within the group.

We never managed to confirm whether the larvae that were munching their way through the asparagus bed were indeed examples of the Asparagus Beetle, but that will, no doubt, become evident later in the season. There were an unusually large number of Seven-spot Ladybirds with a yellow-orange colour rather than the traditional red. A couple of Harlequin Ladybirds were found, and, among the other beetles the most distinctive was the metallic green *Chrysolina menthastri*, specific to Water Mint, and found on the pond closest to the house.

Seven species of odonata were seen. The Black-tailed Skimmers were the most obvious species

but there were smaller numbers of Emperor Dragonflies, and eggs were being laid by both of these species. We were given good views of a male Banded Demoiselle, and given advice on how to distinguish between Common Blue and Azure Damselflies in the field. Both Great Green and Speckled Bush Crickets were found in the longer grass towards the River Yar. There were few butterflies, (the best being a couple of Large Skippers), but six species of moth were seen, as well as caterpillars of the Common Quaker and one of the Kitten moth. Cinnabar Moths were the commonest species, but a Five Spot Burnet was seen, new for the reserve, as were White Ermine, Thistle Ermine and the Brown China Mark. Thirteen insect galls, and evidence of ten other insect species through leaf mines, were recorded, and the distinctively marked hoverfly *Chrysotoxum bicinctum* was seen by two members of the party.
As ever, there were plenty of species to be seen, other than insects, during the afternoon. These varied from rust fungi to breeding water birds such as Little Grebe and Tufted Duck. The reserve continues to develop and it will be interesting to see what new species arrive in the coming years.

Richard Smout

Geology

22nd April **Alum Bay**

A small group of four gathered for a walk at Alum Bay led by John Winch. We first negotiated the stony beach which curves round south-westerly towards the cliffs leading to the Needles, and John pointed out the Reading Beds as we passed them. From that point on we were mainly clambering over rocks, and hard hats came into play owing to possible falling debris from the chalk cliffs above, a point reinforced by a National Trust safety notice - but though we observed the springs coming out of the cliffs, in the event nothing further transpired. John Walton recalled how as a young man in 1948 he had walked out most of the way to the Needles following this lower cliff route, and had passed two cannons on the way which had tumbled off the fort! This feat would be almost physically impossible today.

As we continued on our route John Winch pointed out the iron sulphide deposits in the chalk, and how the various flint bands, now almost vertical, would originally have been horizontal but the heave in the rocks had pushed them up. There were several Belemnite fossils, at least 65 million years old and related to the modern-day squid, one-and-a-half inches in length and looking for all the world like little bullets. A few of the many sea-urchin fossils were chiselled out for us to take home. But despite a low tide our way was barred by deep water right in to the rocks, and we were unable to venture the original distance John had intended. The keen eyes of John Walton spotted a Peregrine Falcon overhead, and two Rock Pipits as we returned along the cliffs.

The prize find of the trip was, however, an extremely rare fossil fish, possibly 100 million years old, lying on the chalk face. John Winch had certainly never seen anything quite like it on the Island before, and local records are very few and far between. The rare species was duly chiselled out of the rock, and we made our way back. (**Photos** - page 17)

For this non-geologist the whole experience had been a complete revelation!

Alan Phillips

24th June **Prospect Quarry, Shalcombe SZ384866**

Waterproofs, hard hats and sturdy footwear were essential equipment for a rainy afternoon at this quarry, which exposes most the thickness of the Bembridge Limestone Formation. Only the lowest (oldest) few metres of the bed are concealed. Seven geologists led by John Winch were rewarded by a variety of features and fossils. John quickly spotted a giant land snail *Megalocochlea pseudoglolobosa*, in limestone blocks near the entrance gates, and was soon also showing us a large Ramshorn snail look-alike, *Planorbina discus*. We viewed an infilled Pleistocene? palaeovalley cut into the top of the limestone near the entrance ramp, and found good specimens of dark orange calcite crystals infilling cavities and veins. The 'spider-egg cocoons' proved more elusive, though John found some small specimens.

Unlike most British limestones, which are marine, Bembridge Limestone and the slightly older limestones in the underlying Headon Hill Formation are freshwater deposits. Bembridge Limestone formed in an extensive shallow lake on lowlands close to sea-level. It was quite alkaline freshwater,

unlike lakes we are familiar with. The small conical freshwater gastropod *Galba longiscata* (currently changing its name to *Lymnaea longiscata*) is locally common. There were also several specimens of *Viviparus angulosus*, a large freshwater mollusc with a body whorl similar in size to the rather rare *Megalocochlea* but a taller spire. Water levels fluctuated and the lake occasionally dried out, allowing subaerial karst weathering, so many fossils are only represented by casts and moulds where the original shell was dissolved away and later replaced by an infill of fine limestone. A narrow band of grey limestone high in the cliff face probably represents the lake bed during a period of muddy inflow or possibly soil formation. The top of the Limestone is immediately below the modern surface regolith and soil, forming a northward-dipping slope or cuesta from Thorley to Shalcombe. Elsewhere on the Island the Limestone is overlain by Bembridge Marls, a brackish water sediment of the Bouldnor Formation, indicating a marine incursion from the east. John mentioned the rare mammal bones sometimes found in Bembridge Limestone, which correlate with the gypse fauna at Montmartre in Paris.

H.J. Osborne White (1921) described Bembridge Limestone as varying from eight to twenty five feet in thickness, and recorded it as Oligocene in age. It is thus shown as Oligocene on the geological map, never updated, but the Eocene/Oligocene boundary has been much debated. Curry (1992) recorded Bembridge Limestone as the topmost bed of the Late Eocene (34 million years ago), when a broad land isthmus connected England with France. A marine North Sea basin extended west almost to the present east coast of the Isle of Wight, followed by land westwards to Devon/Cornwall, and beyond that was a western marine gulf. The Island was 50 degrees North, and this was a period of declining temperatures although the average temperature was still ten degrees above that of today. The Early Eocene (55 million years ago) probably had over six times the present-day concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide (Beerling 2007), and experienced the hottest climate of the entire Cenozoic (Tertiary). An abrupt decline in greenhouse gases occurred 40 to 30 million years ago, partly due to their chemical reactions with rocks exposed in the newly uplifted Himalayas. This was changing global climate to the modern 'Icehouse-World' by Bembridge Limestone times, as the first ice began accumulating in Antarctica.

Mike Cotterill

Ornithology

20th January

Ten members met at Yarmouth Old Railway Station for a walk along the cycle track. During the course of the morning we saw 43 species. Cetti's Warbler was calling, and we were able to compare the differences between Redshank and Spotted Redshank as they were both together in the wet area by the hide at Mill Copse. We also saw a male Reed Bunting. Rofford Marsh was flooded which the ducks love and we were able to see at least seven Shoveler and three Snipe.

17th February

15 members met on an overcast morning by the Canoe Lake at Ryde. Unfortunately, we got the timing of the tide wrong when we drew up the programme and the tide was coming in – completely wrong for seeing birds on Ryde Sands. So we walked along the Esplanade to Appley Park and walked round the park before returning to our cars. 33 species were seen. Of the various gulls we saw Common Gull, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull and a Great-black Backed Gull. We noted Brent and Canada Geese. 41 Mute Swan were sharing the Canoe Lake with the model boat club. In the park we saw two Treecreeper, Coal Tit, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush and Redwing, as well as Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Woodpigeon and Stock Dove.

17th March

18 members met at the main car park at Firestone Copse on a cloudy but mild morning. Our circular walk took us down to the riverbank and briefly across the main road and then back to the car park. During the morning we saw or heard 30 species. By the estuary we spotted Shelduck, Mallard, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Black-headed Gull and Herring Gull. There appeared to be a movement of Buzzard as we saw seven and we also saw a Sparrowhawk. The Goldcrest were elusive although we did hear five. Of

the tit species present we identified Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Coal Tit and we also saw both Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush. In a stand of conifers two Red Squirrels were running around in the trees.

22nd April

Ten members met at the car park in the village of Brighstone for a walk to Yafford. The walk was billed as a two-mile walk and on the day it was arranged that some cars would be parked in a farmyard at Yafford to return us to the car park at the end of the walk. It was a lovely morning and the route took us down to Marshgreen and Marsh Chine along the cliff path to Cowleaze Chine then inland – a rather long two miles! In all 32 species were seen including two House Martin flying at Brighstone car park whilst we were waiting for the meeting to start. The trees near Brighstone Mill hosted Blackcap and Willow Warbler as well as a warbler that was very flighty and vocal, but we were unable to identify. Along the coast many Skylark were heard and Meadow Pipits were seen in abundance. Down on the beach at Barns High a large mixed flock of Great Black-backed Gulls and Herring Gulls were roosting amongst debris that probably came from the wreck of the Napoli. The occasional Swallow put in an appearance and it was lovely to see Yellowhammer. The rather weary walk along the road to Yafford produced a Whitethroat.

15th June

After a rather wet day the evening was overcast and windy but dry, not ideal conditions for seeing or hearing Nightjars. Ten people met at Firestone Copse at dusk. We walked across the road from the car park and waited. Some heard a very soft call of the Nightjar so we walked up the ride a short distance and heard another Nightjar. We also heard a Little Owl. On the way back down, at our original stop, a Nightjar was churring beautifully. Although it must have moved whilst we stood listening we did not see it fly. We then re-crossed the road and took a ride leading towards the creek and although no Nightjars were heard, chicks of Long-eared Owls could be heard calling to each other. They were very close and numbered at least three but we could not see them. As it had by now become too dark we retraced our steps and returned to the car park.

Jackie Hart

Book Reviews

Silent Fields by Roger Lovegrove. Oxford University Press £25 - Any work which includes a map showing recent damage to churches by woodpeckers deserves its place on the bookshelf. This is a wonderful book, packed with an astonishing range of information about the fate of our nation's wildlife, particularly over the last five hundred years. It focuses on the payments made by churchwardens for the control of "vermin" from the Tudor period to the early nineteenth century, and contrasts this with the efforts of gamekeepers to remove all possible threats to those species in their care.

The book is written by Roger Lovegrove, famous for his work on ensuring the survival of the Red Kite, when he was the Director of the RSPB in Wales, and the Kite is one of the many species to be featured in this book.

Roger Lovegrove has travelled through England examining the levels of killing that took place in those parishes for which records survive. By carrying out such an extensive study, he is able to highlight those species which suffered particularly heavy persecution in a given county. On the Isle of Wight it is the numbers of Sparrows that are killed on an astonishing scale, reflecting the importance of this area for the production of grain. There is also an unusually concentrated attack on the Stoat population here, the reasons for which are less clear. There is a very extensive appendix showing which species are killed in which parish, but the figures here are comparative, and give an order of magnitude rather than the total numbers killed in each community. The reason for this is clear, it enables accurate comparisons to be made between parishes of very differing sizes and populations, but some will miss the actual numbers of casualties. Some of this detail is given in the text: for instance we are told that in the last decade of the eighteenth century 275,000 Sparrows were killed in Island parishes, and for some communities no records survive, so the final tally is probably even greater.

This book is full of detail, some of which is unpalatable, but all of which is very readable. I appreciated the author's passion when he was referring to the attacks on some species by 19th and 20th century gentlemen collectors. He tells us that the word "vermin" was derived from the French word for worm, because it was originally applied as a term for loathsome creatures, and then came to be regarded as applicable to any creature viewed as a pest. We are also told that some communities believed that the Dipper was the female Kingfisher, in the days when both birds were attacked by those keen to preserve fisheries, Choughs were thought to be fire raisers because of their red beaks, and there was a royal Mole catcher until the eighteenth century. The book is very strong on the social background to persecution, as well as in the individual species accounts that account for half of the text. The book has attractive line drawings of many of the species, and some invaluable maps which highlight some of the marked regional variations in the level of persecution … we are left wondering why were Hedgehogs persecuted more heavily in Hampshire than Sussex ? On the other hand the concentration of Woodpecker damage to churches in Essex and Kent is due to local architectural fashion, those are the counties with the greatest concentrations of shingle steeples. We are even given a list of parishes affected so that we can inspect the damage for ourselves …assuming that the buildings have not been repaired already.

The book ends by asking a number of questions about the modern control of wildlife which should help to open up an interesting debate. I hope other members of the Society will be absorbed by this book, and the tale that it tells so well.

Richard Smout

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES' NOTES

New Members

Deaths

Mr F Booth, Brighstone
Mr B Cutter, Ryde

Society Officers

President	Dr C. R. Pope, 14 High Park Road, Ryde, PO33 1BP
General Secretary	Mrs. L. Snow, Ein Shemer, Upper Hyde Farm Road, Shanklin, PO37 7PS
Treasurer	Miss J. Hart, 18 Cherrytree Road, Nettlestone, Seaview, PO34 5JF
Membership Secretaries	Mrs T. Goodley & Mr L. Tiller, 18 Pell Lane, Ryde, PO33 3LW

Society Address :-

Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeological Society, Salisbury Gardens, Dudley Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight. PO38 1EJ
Tel: 01983 855385 **Email: iwnhas@btinternet.com**
Web address: www.iwnhas.org

Next Bulletin

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings for 1st July 2007 to 30th December should be sent to:-

M. Cahill . 4 Nodes Road, Cowes, IOW. PO31 8AB
Telephone 01983 – 248054
Email - cahill@onwight.net

The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be 12th January 2008

The Editor would like to thank Anne Cahill and Jackie Hart for their help with Proof reading.