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Contents

President`s Address

Three years have passed since you read my first President's Address and it is now time to conclude the series before I pass on the torch to Delian Backhouse Fry who will take over from March. The prospect of leading such a large society with such wide interests was somewhat daunting but it has proved to be a period never lacking in interest or surprise, perhaps more so than might have been expected. The major decisions we have made in this time have been dictated by the changed economic situation. At the last Annual General Meeting we approved raising the subscription by a modest amount. This came into effect on 1 January this year and I urge any of you who, like me, forgot to amend your bank Standing Order to do so as soon as possible! I do hope that members will feel able to continue to support the Society for the future despite the financial pressure we all feel.

The most far-reaching effect of national policy came unexpectedly in the late autumn of 2009 when we received six months notice to leave our Headquarters in the Coastal Centre, Ventnor. What seemed at the time a major problem was solved when, through the help of a member, we were directed to a vacant space in Prospect Business Centre, Cowes. We now have accommodation for the immediate future but the search for a permanent home must continue.

Colin Pope in his concluding address spoke warmly of our general meetings which are directed to all our members. I should like to follow his example. We are fortunate to have excellent speakers during the winter months who introduce us to diverse and interesting topics. The summer outdoor meetings are memorable in taking us to parts of the Island we may not have visited, to see experts at work in the field. You can read excellent reports on these in the Bulletin but why not come yourselves and join in these stimulating occasions? You could then go on as I have done to join in that part of the programme arranged by section leaders and explore in more depth the specialized interests of the Society.

During the last three years I have learned more about the wide variety of work undertaken by the

Society, not least being the generous support we have given to other bodies involved in conservation, wild life and archaeology as well as being able to provide financial support to individuals undertaking scientific studies. These are probably not known to members and they are completely unknown to the general public. I wish more people could know what we do and how much we have to offer and it is clear that when we do have a presence, as at the Wolverton Garden Fair, there is a warm response. Many visitors there in 2010 remembered with affection Local Look and while such an undertaking would not now be possible, I hope that regular exhibitions on a more modest scale will become part of our regular programme.

Johanna Jones

NOTICE BOARD

Northwood Park – help with recording

Do you live in the Cowes area and regularly use Northwood Park? The Friends of Northwood House wish to collate a record of the fauna and flora in the park and although the Society is not planning any meetings at Northwood Park next year, we have offered to provide them with any records logged by members. If you wish to help, please send the records of flora and fauna you may see throughout the year to Geoff Toone by email to *Geoff@toone10.fsnet.co.uk* or telephone 403508 (evenings) or post to c/o 46 Downsview, Sandown, IW, PO36 9NY. Geoff will then add them to the Society's records and also forward them to the Friends of Northwood Park.

Lynda Snaith

Sparrow News.

Further to "Return of the Sparrows ?" (Aug 2010).

We are lucky in Newport not to be following the trend in the decline in the House Sparrow population.

The flats where I live are bounded on three sides by tall, dense hedgerows, consisting mainly of Hawthorn. These hedgerows have been a "Des Res" to a thriving colony of House Sparrows for many years. At any time of every day, throughout the four seasons, anything between 15 and 30 Sparrows can be seen together as they sing heartily and socialise among the branches.

In August, a colony of about 70 House Sparrows was observed having a communal dustbath on the path near Dodnor mill-pond.

Here`s hoping that Toni and Laurie`s Sparrow Colony Nest-box is well used in 2011 – whether by sparrows or by tits, remains to be seen !

Sue Blackwell

The late Sonja Harrald

In early October 2010 Christopher Harrald phoned to tell us that his mother Sonja had died, at the age of 93.

Many of us had visited her and phoned often, after the death of her husband Cedric, who was a former President of the Society, For many years Sonja had acted as Press Officer for the Society and her reports of meetings appeared regularly in the "County Press". Her diligence in this work once prompted Cedric to say he thought she was aiming for a Nobel Prize!

In latter years she greatly enjoyed the "Mince Pie Thursday" Christmas celebration, for which she was safely chauffeured to and from Ventnor HQ.

Several of the Thursday Team attended her funeral at Springwood Woodland Cemetery, where we placed a red rose on her coffin, as it was lowered into the ground, in memory of a very dear lady.

Anne Cahill

Country Notes

Longhalves, Freshwater,

This highway that once connected the scattered settlements in the West Wight and today is extensively used to avoid the busy main roads.

"Longhalves" suggest two sections and it is my belief that it once connected Totland, before a church was built there, to the parish church at Freshwater. Today the footpath commences at the Broadway, Totland and continues to Clayton Road, Freshwater,

There is a small modern development on the footpath, Culver Way, otherwise it remains virtually unchanged. Despite numerous inquiries by local people using the path, no name has been forthcoming. It is my belief that this is the western half of Longhalves.

To connect with what is known as Longhalves today. we have to traverse Clayton Road with its continuous housing, on the northern side only, built circa 1900. The southern side retains the original hedge dominated by Elm, in which the ancient West Wight was encased.

The suggestion being that the present Clayton Road was once a continuation of the footpath, placing the pedestrians within a hundred yards of the path known today as Longhalves that I prefer to think of as the eastern half of the pathway.

I put these thoughts forward hoping for acceptable alternatives.

Disappearing nest of Wood Pigeon.

A substantial wood pigeon's nest in a birch tree close to my window has been used for a number of years, apparently without interference. This Spring (2010) a pair of jackdaws have been raiding the nest, taking away twigs and dropping them down a nearby chimney. The pair of wood pigeons, ever present earlier have apparently abandoned the nest.

Diving Mallard young

A female Mallard with six young was to be seen on the Lukely Brook, I judged the age of the young to be between 14 and 21 days. Perhaps I had failed to observe the behaviour of Mallard young, but these were diving and under water for five or six seconds. Why are adults surface feeding if the young are capable of diving ?

Maturing Elms.

Whilst walking around Freshwater I discovered two Elms, *Ulmus procera* with a trunk diameter in excess of twelve inches. These trees usually fall victim to D.E.D., long before they reach this size.

Cleaning of Nest Boxes.
On October 7, 2010, I witnessed the cleaning of the forty-two boxes in Locks Copse on the Newtown Range. Ten had been occupied by blue tits and five by great tits. Dormice nests were found in five boxes. A squirrel had taken over a lidless box and. a wood mouse had made a nest in another. The high-light. was a box containing an adult and four well grown young dormice. They dropped to the floor and one obligingly climbed on to the shoulder of a member present and posed for photographs.

A special Horse Chestnut.
On Hooke Hill, Freshwater stands a solitary Horse Chestnut, *Aeculus Mppocastamim*, with double flowers and does not produce seeds (conkers). This is a sport Baumannii, that arose in about 1820.

Pied Wagtail
On 26th September we were to witness a behaviour pattern previously unknown to us. On St. George's Down, a Pied Wagtail was feeding at the feet of cattle. This is a common method of feeding by the Yellow Wagtail. The bird was extremely light in colour, an observation we all agreed upon. It agreed with the migration of the White Wagtail, but is this a known feeding practice of birds on the Continent ?

An Unusual Hogweed
On the roadside of Blackwater Hollow appeared a very large plant which, I assume, was *Heracleum mautegazeanum* (photo). The uncertainty is because it was growing in an area dominated by *Heracleum sphoudylium*. (**Photo** page 16)

The Charlie Heal Egg Collection. (An extract from the diary of March 31st. 1984)
Charlie Heal was a character known to every countryman in the Isle of Wight, a gunsmith by trade and a naturalist by inclination. With business premises in Newport it was a focal point for all interested in the countryside. The majority of people entering the shop purchased nothing, they went specifically to exchange news of the countryside in any of its many aspects. It was an honorary position that Charlie himself inherited from Mr. Jefferys, the taxidermist with premises situated in Pyle Street. A shop window I shall never forget, full of recently preserved animals, particularly birds with the appropriate clutch of eggs by their side. A case of butterflies or moths and usually a recently gathered specimen of a plant of particular interest, A window where you never failed to pause. It was from Mr. Jefferys that Charlie learned much of his country lore, and upon the death of the former, Charlie inherited many now rare and expensive books.

Through the good offices of Charlie Heal's son, John, I was invited to the family home, “Serenis”, at Sandford, to inspect Charlie Heal's egg collection. It was started by John's grandfather almost 100 years ago, subsequently passing into the possession of Charlie and upon his death into the care of John and his brother. It is with regret that the collection had not been better preserved. Poorly housed and ravaged by mice, who used the cotton wool bedding for nesting material and the paper upon which the wholly important legends were written had suffered a similar fate. Still, there remains some useful specimens, especially a range of guillemot and razorbill eggs showing variation in colouring. Should the Island ever boast its own Natural History museum the remnants of this once splendid collection must be incorporated. The eggs are blown by two methods, the boyish style of pricking both ends and the scientific drilling of a single hole in the side. I suspect that many eggs were purchased from a dealer or came from the Jefferys` collection.

In conclusion I must make mention of the drawing room at “Serenia”, Sanford. where Charlie Heal's widow still resides and where her son John and I discussed the egg collection and a hundred other related subjects. That room was exactly what I expected to find, cases of books exclusively on country activities, pictures relating to similar interests, even a stuffed fox. It was a memorial to the life of Charlie Heal and I half expected him to come through the door at any moment. For me he had lived again.

Bill Shepard.

Below the Ground Project.
Hummet Hill, Newbarn Farm

It was a glorious Spring morning, the 11th May 2010, when first we trod the grassy Hummet Hill. The cowslips were out, the birds were singing and we had the privilege of being on one of the most lovely farms in the West Wight. We were able to see views across the north Wight and the Solent region. Historically, we were on the hills above Calbourne Church, and Winkle Street, where the records show Bronze Age Barrows, boundaries and a chalk landscape leading up to Gallibury Hump. The Brighstone Forest hung on the hills to the south and to the south-west we could make out the Bronze Age Five Barrows at Brook Down peeping through the gap at Strawberry Hill, above Rock Villa.

By the kind permission of Mr Chris Spence, of Newbarn Farm, we were there to locate and plot some Barrows that had been delineated on the OS Map by the County Archaeological Service as being worthy of investigating.

When we arrived at the Site, we discovered that Hummet Hill itself is divided into two big fields. The fields are both down to pasture, with one small strip of ploughed land at the bottom left of the top field, immediately through the gate. It was on this ploughed strip that we picked up several worked flint pieces, before the ground cover took over.

We then had to decide how we were going to grid up this rather large area. Looking upon the Map supplied by the Archaeology Unit, we realised that most of the Barrows depicted, seemed to be clustered on and around the OS SZ 4300 line. We then set about marking this line across the 2 fields. We did this by using GPS. We then delineated the 2 field zones into Hummet North and Hummet South, divided by the fence. Hummet South in fact, represents the higher slopes of the hill.

The weather conditions were almost perfect, warm and dry, following recent rain. Not a problem on a chalk Downland field.

When we reached the higher part of Hummet Hill we realised that the panorama below us, contained many significant archaeological sites. In fact from our lofty perch, we could see far to the western Solent and beyond. Hengistbury Head, an important Neolithic and Bronze Age Site, in Dorset could be seen beyond Yarmouth. To the southwest, Headen Barrow, another Bronze Age site at Alum Bay, and the tapering sweep of Tennyson Down, forming another frame to the south. Below us was the entrance to Newtown Harbour and beyond to the north, the New Forest and Southampton Water. Behind Southampton, the Iron Age fort at Chandlers Ford, appeared on the horizon and to the north-east, we could see Portsmouth and Chichester and the Cissbury Rings, another Bronze/Iron Age area. To the south east and highly visible, Gallibury Hump, a large and imposing Bronze Age Barrow. So whoever built Barrows on the site, was part of a regional population within the Bronze Age.

We decided to run parallel flag lines that would probably catch any Barrows in the area indicated on the map. So we would basically work up and down the lines at places that Barrows were marked.

We did not find any Barrows but we did come across a mysterious feature straddling the eastern side of the field. Whatever it was, it was well defined, so whenever it was built it was constructed with a ditch and bank. It was rather too large for a Roundhouse, and it was not round, but the shape really puzzled us. We knew that we were in an area of Medieval boundary systems, but it did not look very Medieval, maybe it was an enclosure, but why the straight sides?

However, when we looked at the 18th Century Mudge Map, we realised it was running along the outlines of two fields, and was probably a Medieval Field Boundary. It was rather brilliant when we managed to match them up on the Mudge Map, but still no Barrows were appearing on Hummet South.

Then I had a conversation with a Mr Martin Goodyear, our local gardener, and it turned out that he had worked at Newbarn as a gamekeeper and he said that some Barrows had been grubbed out in the 1960's on the hill that we were working on. We then did a final cast up the hill to where the Barrows were marked. There was a soil change in the area, and on the Geo Plot there were some curious markings, where the Barrows were supposed to be, possibly digger marks

At this point we had a meeting with Dr Ruth Waller, to ask her if we could have the aerial photos of the Site, which had not been given to us before. This time we were able to see the whole landscape that we were working on. The big Feature that we found on the Mudge Map was there, but no Barrows on

Hummet South except one lying under the fence line. Further north on Hummet North field there were three Barrows.

We closed down the Hummet South Site and hurried down to the fence line and in no time at all we found the first Barrow. Of course I am making this all sound so easy and swift. This was not the case at all. There had been a lot of work involved and it had been a steep learning curve.

We finally crossed the fence line, and started the whole Process again on Hummet North. Success! Within a day we had found 2 beautiful Barrows.

It was late September when we finished at Hummet. The birds were migrating, the harvest was under way, and the trees were beginning colour along the ridge of Brighstone Forest. We had finally found our Barrows, evidence of Bronze Age Culture, linked to the Bronze Age landscape of the Solent Region. We can only speculate about the people who were buried in these Barrows. Unlike the Neolithic, where Barrows were family affairs, the Bronze Age Barrows usually contained only one person, important in their world. **(Photo** page 17)

Delian Backhouse-Fry

A Fungal Bonanza on the Isle of Wight

Across the country, the autumn of 2010 will be remembered amongst mycologists as one of the best for fungi for many years, after a long succession of poor, dry autumns. Therefore, hopes were high for the Annual Autumn Foray of the British Mycological Society (BMS), held on the Isle of Wight for the first time in the long history of that august body. True, the BMS did spend a day on the Island on 13th September 1982, during the week when their foray was based in Southampton, but on this occasion they were to spend a whole week here, scouring the countryside for fungal specimens.

Around 25 members booked for the week, which was based at Northcourt Manor, Shorwell from 13th to 21st October. Jacquey Newton from the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group made the arrangements. Many of those attending were national experts, each specialising in different aspects of the Fungi kingdom. Northcourt Manor proved to be an ideal venue. The music room was converted into a laboratory with benches groaning under the weight of microscopes, driers, reference books, laptops and specimens. The grounds surrounding the house were ideal for gentle exercise and foraying, and collections of edible fungi gathered during foraying sessions were served up for breakfast. The Crown Inn provided evening meals. (**Photos** page 15)

Warm, wet conditions are ideal for fungi but the previous two weeks had been dry, temporarily curbing the flow of fresh specimens. This meant searching harder but nevertheless, well in excess of five hundred and fifty species were recorded during the week, with more determinations due to come in over the coming months from material taken away.

Members of our Society joined the group on the Saturday in Parkhurst Forest. Numbers were also boosted by additions from the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group although some of their numbers, including the BMS Vice President, Stuart Skeates, stayed the whole week. Those of us who were present at lunchtime will have seen a large display of collected material spread out over the picnic tables by the car park.

During the week, members of the BMS were able to see two of our fungal specialities. At Ventnor Botanic Gardens, they were able to admire magnificent fruiting specimens of the Red Cage Fungus, *Clathrus ruber*, in all stages of development. On St Boniface Down, they found the large white, Bearded Amanita, *Amanita ovoidea*, in its only reliable native site in the U.K. However, there were many other highlights during the week.

Brian Spooner and Mariko Parslow from Kew collected large numbers of micro fungi growing on host plants for curation and further examination back in the laboratory. Some of these are likely to be new records for the country.

Caroline Hobart spent her time looking for hypogeous fungi, a large and disparate group of fungi that are associated with tree roots and occur beneath the soil surface. Perhaps understandably, given their

secretive habits, they are poorly recorded. Searching for them takes many hours on your knees, gently scraping the leaf litter looking for often tiny specimens whilst avoiding damage to the mycorrhizal tree roots just beneath the soil surface. On the first day, she found a Summer Truffle, *Tuber aestivum*, beneath beech trees close to Northcourt Manor. During the week, she found a total of eight species of hypogeous fungi, all but one new to the Island.

Alick Henrici and Penny Cullington were particularly interested in recording the fungi which have a mycorrhizal association with the roots of Rock Rose, *Helianthemum nummularia*. This poorly studied association includes many species, which have been long recognised to be woodland associates but are also sometimes found growing in open chalk grassland. Mottistone Down and Tennyson Down were considered to be particularly good sites for this group of fungi. Twelve different species were recorded, some new to the Island, but particularly exciting was *Marasmiellus carneopallidus*, a species new to Britain, found growing on dead Rock Rose stems on St Boniface down. This fungus, a known Rock Rose associate, was originally described from the Czech Republic.

By far the richest site for fungi visited proved to be Firestone Copse. We had always known it to be a good place for fungi but had assumed that Parkhurst Forest was better. The BMS found that Firestone Copse was much richer, both in numbers of species and in rarities. It was therefore particularly fitting that on the day of their visit they were joined by Prof. Lynne Boddy, a leading fungal researcher from Cardiff University and the current BMS President. One particularly exciting group of rarities was discovered by Alan Lucas. He found three species of tooth fungi associated with oak trees growing in one small area. These fungi are nationally rare and the two 'hot spots' for them are the New Forest and the Caledonian pinewoods of the Cairngorms. Previously, we did not know that they were present on the Island. Conservation of the habitat where they are growing now becomes a priority.

Altogether, the foray was judged to be a great success by all, and those who attended went away with fond memories of the Island as a delightful place to visit and to foray for fungi.

Colin Pope

A New Fungus find for the Island

In recent years, our fungus foray events have profitably extended well into the early winter period and 2010 was no exception. However, we had not reckoned for the early onset of bitter winter weather. At our meeting on Brook Down on 28th November we had to chip frozen specimens out of the ground. Our final meeting at Northwood Cemetery on 11th December followed heavy snows and ice. Nevertheless, we were surprised at the good finds we made. However, we were pretty sure that the fungal season had been brought to an abrupt close.

At our last meeting, Howard and Lesley Atkins told me that they had found some fungi in the sandy grassland at Thorness Bay, which they had identified as Winter Stalkballs (*Tulostoma brumale*). I had never seen this species before, but knew that it had never previously been recorded from the Island. On separate occasions, David Biggs and Jillie & myself set out to find it. Sure enough, a very localised patch of moss covered sandy grassland was studded with miniature puffballs (less than 1cm across) on stalks. (**Photos** page 16)

This distinctive fungus occurs very locally on sand dunes. It is recorded from Sussex but there are no records from Dorset or Hampshire. Formerly, it was also found growing in the mortar of old walls. The puffballs develop at or just below ground level and are then lifted up as their stalks elongate in the late autumn. As their common name suggests, they are usually noticed during the winter months. I have since looked for it at other sand dune sites on the Island without success, which suggests that it is genuinely rare. An excellent find to round off the season.

Colin Pope

A Place to Be: Jacquetta Hawkes and the Isle of Wight

"Jacquetta Hawkes, archaeologist, writer and peace campaigner, has suffered from a miscarriage of justice, has never properly been regarded by the archaeological community and was never forgiven for leaving Christopher Hawkes for J B Priestley" – this was the key theme of a fascinating talk arranged at short notice by Dr Margaret Jackson at the Seely Hall, Brook, in late September and given by Dr Christine Finn, Jacquetta's biographer, currently doing a lecture tour round the country to mark the centenary of Jacquetta's birth. After their marriage in 1953, Jack and Jacquetta lived at Brook Hill House, where they spent a quiet few years entertaining friends and family, as well as continuing their prodigious output of books, essays, talks and scripts.

In 1996, whilst researching for a PhD in archaeology and poetry, Christine Finn came across Jacquetta Hawkes' volume *A Land*, a homage to the British landscape and better received by the literary than the archaeological community. She then became involved in finding a home for Jacquetta's collection of books and manuscripts: Priestley's papers were already at Bradford University and the library agreed to house the Jacquetta Hawkes archive there also. Christine has since made it her mission to research and publicise Jacquetta and for her to be recognised in her own right, not least for her prescient and passionate communication of the past.

Jacquetta (Hopkins) Hawkes was born in Cambridge in 1910 to an academic household, studied archaeology and anthropology at Newnham College Cambridge, and excavated at Mount Carmel in Palestine. Excavation moved her: she regarded skeletons not as though they were artefacts but as human ancestors that she was making contact with. Soon after, she married fellow archaeologist Christopher Hawkes and they had one son Nicolas, but she was obviously going through great emotional dilemmas and the marriage was not destined to last.

After the War Jacquetta became very much a part of the rebuilding of the British spirit, attending an early Unesco meeting in London, where she met J B Priestley: it was a meeting of souls and Jack described her as "ice without and fire within". They came within Robert Graves' circle, who emphasised how drama in one's own life provided the inspiration for poetry. It was at this point that they arrived on the Isle of Wight where, interestingly, Graves' views seem to have been borne out in that Jacquetta, now more at ease with life, no longer felt the need to write the poetry which had hitherto been so important to her.

Jacquetta took a second trip to Mexico whilst Priestley headed for Texas, both ostensibly on a quest to research what was it that made women women, and men men. She always insisted that she was not a feminist but was more interested in the borderland areas, the *animus* and *anima* – this certainly influenced *Dragon's Mouth*, one of the plays they wrote together and inspired by the theories of the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung.

Jacquetta would have been aware on the Island of the relationship between sea and land. She wrote the script for a film about Barbara Hepworth, *Figures in a Landscape*, just 18 minutes long. She was keen on the role of intuition and believed that all the arts ought to be used in the service of archaeology; but for the more scientifically-minded archaeologists this was too much about the self and it had begun to cause great irritation. This was not helped by the fact that by now she had built up a popular (but not academic) following. On one occasion Colin Renfrew spoke at a Cambridge debate against her work.

Jacquetta eventually died in 1996, twelve years after Priestley. Christine is encouraged that interest in her is at last growing, especially in her centenary year, despite the fact that all of Jacquetta's books remain out of print. One that made a particular splash was her autobiography *A Quest of Love*, produced in her later years and including the intimate physical details of her relationships with Priestley (good) and Hawkes (bad); unsurprisingly, this did little to heal any rifts with her fellow archaeologists!

During questions, Margaret Jackson pointed out that Jacquetta's one excavation on the Island, at the Longstone in 1956 accompanied by the late Jack Jones, proved conclusively something we all take for granted today, that the site was a Neolithic Long Barrow. She also tried to get the Forestry Commission to remove the encroaching trees in the area, with only limited success: they were eventually taken down in the early 1990s!

Johanna Jones added, from having attended soirées at Brook Hill during the Priestley and Jacquetta years, that Jacquetta was a very distinctive person and extremely kind, but was somewhat removed and obviously did not find social occasions very easy – but Christine's talk had shown how she was obviously a deep and inspiring personality.

Christine is hoping for her biography of Jacquetta Hawkes to be published in book form at some point, but meanwhile it is available online at:-

http://traumwerk.stanford.edu:3455/christinefinn/Home

What this beautifully delivered talk illustrated for me was not that Jacquetta was opposed to the scientific method in archaeology – that would be absurd: without the detailed scientific recording and all the skills that go with it there would *be* no archaeology – but that there is also a humanistic approach which complements it, where archaeology interlinks with the rest of the humanities, all of which can be brought to bear to enrich it. In seeking to establish a personal link with the ancient past she was in fact ahead of her time, and only now do we see these links between archaeology and a broad array of humanistic disciplines come to fruition.

Alan Phillips

A Day in a tent!!

Having put my name down to help if required at the BRV dig, I was delighted to be asked if I would help with washing the finds as they were excavated.

Jessie Booth had been there on several days this year and on previous BRV digs and so was able to explain what was required, but having been involved in washing finds with IWARCH (the logo for the Archaeology Group of the Society), I was not too worried.

So I 'clocked' in and after a quick chat about the procedure and a resume on Health and Safety, I was taken down to the tent, which was very obvious from the pile of trays stacked outside it! Jessie had already made her way there and several other ladies were there hard at work. After the 'Spanish Inquisition' about what I knew of washing finds, I was given my first tray of objects from the pile stacked inside and outside. We were obviously going to be busy.

The range of finds was very varied. Animal bones, bones of chickens and geese as well as the occasional oyster shell were fairly frequent objects, showing the Villa owners were eating healthily. Pottery was the most numerous find, ranging from Samian ware to low quality items used in the kitchen. As the dig had progressed to its conclusion, more Iron Age pottery began to appear. However worked flint was not too evident. I had several flakes, the odd scraper and a couple of microliths.

Towards the end of the day Helen Jackson kindly offered to take me round the site, I managed to have a quick chat with Colin Piper, one of our members who has been involved in digging on all of the digs that have been done over the last 3 years. The highlight of the walkabout was to watch the recovering of the first of the cremation urns, altogether 5 burials were found in the SE corner of the site.

So ended the day, it was extremely interesting and enjoyable. I learned a lot about the 'lifestyle' of the inhabitants who had lived and developed the Villa.

Chris Ratsey

My 2010 Brading Roman Villa Big Dig Experience

It's the 1st August 2010 and year three of the archaeological excavations are about to begin at Brading Roman Villa under the direction of Professor of Archaeology Sir Barry Cunliffe.

Having been extremely fortunate to be selected for the third year running as a volunteer digger, I along with other volunteers and members of the dig team gather at the site office at 0815hrs. It is great to meet up with many of the team that have worked here on the previous digs and it is also nice to see some new faces. Sir Barry greets everyone and briefly sets out the plan for the next three weeks. His main objective being to - further understand the overall development and phases of occupation of the site. The main part of the work will be concentrated on the meadow at the back of the car park where a recent geophysical survey showed some very good linear features which were possibly enclosures. Because of the limited time the team have to excavate the site and the very dry soil conditions Sir Barry had already decided to have the first 35-40cm of top soil over the whole site removed by machine – and this had been completed a few days prior to the start of the official dig. Sir Barry further explained that there will also be some more cleaning work carried out on the walls within the Villa complex and maybe small excavations. A small trench may also be reopened on a section of the south range.

After a briefing on health and safety by Rosemary the site co-ordinator we all collect barrows and tools and head for the site. Once on site, we are split into teams with a supervisor leading each team. This year's supervisors are Graham, Lisa, Wendy and Jamie - who are trained archaeologists and core members of Sir Barry's team, and are responsible for the recording of all work carried out by their respective teams.

I am working in Jamie's team, although like previous years fully expect to be moved around when needs must. All the teams are instructed to start at the north end and begin to strip off a layer of soil using mattocks and shovels - wheeling away the soil to the spoil heap. After only a few minutes we all realise we are in for a very difficult time as the earth is like concrete. An arbitrary line across the centre of the site is where we have to work to – an area of about 500 square metres. This took a little over 3 days of back breaking work removing about 7cm in thin layers. The area has also been marked into grids and any finds we placed in trays and marked according to the grid reference. As this work progressed, it achieved the objective of exposing features hidden by the upper levels of soil. We could now see more clearly the outline of the ditches as shown on the geophysics. There were also other features indicated by darkened patches of soil which were possibly post holes. These were recorded and marked for future exploration.

Now half way through the first week we began to excavate the ditches. Working in Jamie's team I began to excavate a 2 metre section of the south ditch alignment with Jamie barrowing and Emma shovelling. Starting in the centre of the section and going down about 7cm each layer working outwards to find the edges. Each layer is recorded separately with a new finds tray for each layer. Plenty of small shards of very well made black pottery were coming out with each layer. Right at the end of the day when trowelling away the loose soil I uncovered a large piece of stone which Jamie said we will leave in place for recording the next morning.

The next morning the stone was recorded before I excavated and removed it. When turning the stone over I discovered that it was in fact a section of broken quern stone (a concave shaped piece of very hard stone used for grinding corn into flour by hand). Once I removed the stone, I noticed it had been resting on some very large pieces of black pottery. After very gently cleaning away the soil around the pieces they were recorded before I could lift them. I believe these were the biggest pieces found on the site and would have made a vessel of at least 30cm across and maybe as deep. As I reached the bottom of the ditch the final piece to come out was a very nice broken green stone hand axe - probably Neolithic – a really nice find.

The next 10 days or so saw me excavating other ditch sections and post holes with a few other interesting finds. The best being a very small copper alloy wire ring about 5mm across. I also found an animal jaw bone with teeth, an almost complete animal skull we believe possibly pig, a small piece of Samian pottery and also many shards of black pottery.

Now in the last few days of the dig and with many of the diggers having left, Sir Barry wanted to concentrate as much work on the area just outside of the south end of the main enclosure as Wendy had just found and removed a fine cremation urn and he felt that there may be others to be investigated. I now joined Wendy's team to remove layers of soil adjacent to her find and sure enough found a further 3 all in a fairly straight line and about a metre apart – 2 were open burials and one more in an urn. These would be lifted after being recorded. Before this was done Sir Barry decided that an area in the south east corner of the site which had some broken chalk covering an area of about 8 square metres would need to be investigated as this was very close to the burial urn excavated by Wendy and may well have been contemporary. Mark and I therefore began to excavate this area which turned out to be a huge ditch about 2 metres wide and 1.8 metres deep. We could now see that this ditch aligned with the ditch that Lisa's team had discovered and were finishing at the east west corner and in this alignment sat the cremations. This indicated the ditch we excavated would have been a much earlier phase and been back filled as the cremations were in the upper level of the back fill.

Now afternoon of the last day it was decided that the cremations must be lifted and much to my surprise and great delight Wendy asked me to excavate and lift the urn. (**Photos** page 15) I began by marking a line across the centre of the object then very gently began removing the soil starting about 30cm away from the urn and digging down and picking gently towards it. As I began this excavation I found many small rusty nodules around the top of the urn. These were carefully put into bags and placed in the finds trays. After creating a hole approx 30cm square by about 45cm deep it now exposed half of the urn and unfortunately found it to be in a very decayed condition. It was now recorded and photographed in situ. After this was done and with the help of Wendy supporting the urn I began to gently remove the remaining soil. This area not unlike the rest of the site is rock hard so only very small bits were picked away at a time. The suggested method of excavation was to remove soil from around the top going down about 5cm at a time then wrapping the object with bandage whilst in situ. Then down another 5cm and wrapping, and so on until the object can be released and lifted. However, when I started to remove the very first layer of the soil, apart from more rusty nodules appearing, I discovered another small pot lying against the upper part of the urn. This meant that the bandaging procedure could not be carried out and the urn had to be removed as is.

A further 20 minutes or so of careful picking away now from the bottom and working up and around the back both Wendy and I eased it gently from its position and lifted it clear from the hole. It was then quickly bandaged by Viv and taken off site.

This just left me to lift the other small pot that was still in position and with Wendy holding it in place, I again gently picked away at the hard soil until it came away almost complete. It appeared to be a small drinking goblet possibly placed in the grave to enable the deceased to partake in his or her favourite libation on their journey into the hereafter. As mentioned earlier the nodules of rust that were found near the top of the urn, because of the order in which they were found Wendy suggested that they may have been boot studs which seems a logical suggestion. If this is so, it would appear the grave also contained the person's footwear as well, the significance of this I am sure we will never know.

It is now 1715hrs on the last day of the dig and Sir Barry has asked everyone to clean the site of any loose soil and to ensure all areas are left perfectly clean as the site will be left open for visitors to view for the next few weeks. Sir Barry's expectations were no different to any other day as he operated a disciplined regime with regards to site management. There was a strict code with the use of tools and equipment, cleanliness on site and good time keeping – all of which made the whole operation highly organised.

At 1730hrs everyone returned to the Villa for a farewell drink with thankyous and goodbyes, and it just leaves me to conclude my experience on the 2010 dig by saying that it was a great privilege to be a part of Sir Barry's wonderful team and I can never thank the Villa staff and friends enough for allowing me to be a part of it.

Colin Piper

Reports of General Meetings

17th July **Visit to the Bradleys' Smallholding near Newtown**

At the invitation of James Bradley, twenty-four members gathered at his 7½-acre smallholding between Newtown and Porchfield, though in the event it was his parents Colin and Rachel who showed us round. The land, resting on a very heavy clay soil, was bought off London Farm as surplus to requirements some eighteen years ago. One area has since been cultivated as a wild flower meadow, a pond has been created and a hedge planted, as well as 3500 trees to create a substantial woodland on the bulk of the reserve. (**Photo** page 17)

We were guided round the 1½-acre, wildflower-rich meadows, which are cut only in September or October to encourage the flowers: birds-foot trefoil and ox-eye daisies have been particularly good this year. Next came the orchard, where many old varieties have been planted; and in addition to apple trees, there are plums, blackcurrants, damsons and greengages, as well as two teepees!

A hessian carpet was laid next to the wildlife hedge to suppress the weeds, and a pheasant laid her eggs on it – she obviously knew what was to her own advantage!

Moving on to the wetland area, Colin explained how the willows are distributed to schools and garden centres. The pond is eight feet deep in the centre: moorhens nest here but also go over to the farm to use the two clear ponds there. All this land was once part of the Swainston estate and is therefore entitled to a free water supply, despite Southern Water's best efforts to counter it.

Following a beekeeping course which James attended, there are now five hives on-site, and with different trees and flowers coming into blossom all year the reserve has proved wonderful for the bees, with a lot of honey produced. Fleabane in particular provides a good source of nectar. One colony is more aggressive than the others, the variation depending on the character of the queen.

We then took to the paths between the wooded areas. Colin had warned us at the start about the numerous cracks in the ground where the clay had dried out, and how true it turned out to be, with many potential opportunities for getting feet caught, but thankfully everyone was very careful. Considering that there were no trees to speak of when the Bradley family arrived, this woodland area was impressive and, at 5½ acres, formed the greater part of the landholding. Blocks of oak and hazel formed a key constituent. The aim is to keep the woodland coppiced but a block at a time. Passing a barn owl box, Colin related how the one year that a pair had young inside, the babies died; sometimes adults don't feed the young if times are hard. Occasionally red squirrels have been observed in the wood but are not frequent visitors.

At the end of the walk Colin and Rachel allowed us to peruse the photo albums in which an excellent record of all stages of the reserve management had been kept. Immediately prior to the Bradleys taking over, the area had been used mainly for grazing animals, with some crop growing. But before 1940 it had in fact been woodland, so to some extent it has now been returned to what it had originally once been.

Colin and Rachel were warmly thanked for a fascinating tour of their smallholding. It is very encouraging to know that, in these days when almost everything is subjected to a balance sheet, there are some people prepared to own and manage land solely for the intrinsic merits of nature conservation.

Alan Phillips

13th November **Alien Spotting in Britain & Beyond: A Talk by Dr Helen Roy**

It all began in the hot summer of 1976 when Helen was a young child. An explosion in ladybird numbers in her garden attracted her attention and she watched, fascinated, as the pupae she found one day burst open the next to reveal tiny beetles with yellow spots. Birds and bats were her other passions. Later Helen found herself at Newtown Camp with fellow students at Cowes High School. This was the camp run by Mr Cox and other teachers to demonstrate the importance of the wildlife of the Newtown area for

educational and scientific study. It was a concerted effort in response to the threatened development of a nuclear power station there. The pupils conducted surveys, studied birds and bats, and had to be up at 6 am to empty animal traps. Helen went to this camp every year while she was at the school. They had a big open fire, she recalls, and slept in a ramshackle house. During her teenage years, Helen was also an active member of our Society. At Southampton University she studied Biology, followed by a Masters degree at Nottingham and a PHD in Community Ecology. She researched how pathogenic fungi infect insects and how ladybirds help to move fungi around to infect different aphids. Now, as a research scientist working for the government, Helen is doing a lot of work on alien insects. She is an ecological entomologist at the Biological Records Centre (BRC), part of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. As a ladybird expert, she leads the UK Ladybird Survey and the Harlequin Survey. The BRC is doing a lot of work on alien insects.

Invasive species are second only to habitat destruction as a threat to biodiversity. These include the harlequin ladybird, deemed an environmental disaster, and the grey squirrel, a social problem. When the grey squirrel first arrived in Italy, animal rights protests thwarted plans to eradicate it and it spread across Europe. The ruddy duck is an expensive problem, as it hybridises with other species. Now it is almost eradicated. The best solution is to prevent alien species from arriving in this country. An alien species is one that is introduced by humans to somewhere outside its natural past or present distribution. A native species, on the other hand, is descended from individuals that were present in Britain when humans were still hunter-gatherers, or they colonised Britain without human transport. Not all alien species are invasive: only some fifty species, a tiny minority, cause problems. After all, we fill our botanical gardens and our own private gardens with non-native species.

Some alien species control others as part of the food chain. On the Australian island of Macquarie, alien feline predators kept alien herbivores under control, until the cats were eradicated. This led to an explosion in the rabbit population. Humans could use alien ladybirds to suppress alien pest insects, such as those that damage crops. Scientists are compiling an inventory of alien invasive species for Europe, known as DAISY.

The increase in human movement around the world is responsible for the rapid rate of increase in new arrivals of alien species. One particularly invasive species is the horse chestnut leaf miner that causes the trees hideous disfigurement. Studies have revealed that the moth pupae overwinter in leaf litter under the trees, and if the leaves are swept up and burnt, the pupae can be destroyed. In order to understand the scale of the problem, national records need to be kept in one central location. The most invasive ladybird species is the harlequin. It originated in Asia and was introduced into Europe as a biological control. It should never have been released. Its spread was dramatic, due to its wide dietary range, its high reproductive capacity and its ability to thrive in a variety of habitats. The harlequin will eat anything that tries to feed on aphids: moth eggs, other ladybird larvae and even its own species at the larval stage. The big larva has a voracious appetite. Especially vulnerable to predation is the native two-spot ladybird whose numbers are in decline. The harlequin is also more successful at protecting itself from predation. The larva is spiky and black with bright orange markings. The adult comes in a variety of bright colours that act as a warning to predators. It also tastes and smells foul. Our native seven-spot ladybird has only one opportunity a year to breed, but the harlequin keeps on mating throughout the year and can build up huge numbers. One harlequin can lay a thousand or more eggs in its lifetime. In its native range in Asia, the harlequin does have natural enemies, highly specialised parasites: a wasp, a fly and a bacterium, carried by female harlequins, which kills all male embryos. Surprisingly, female harlequins benefit from the dead males, by feeding on them. Some natural enemies of European ladybirds are beginning to attack harlequins.

These alien ladybirds have been spread in flowers, suitcases and celery as far afield as Northern Ireland and Orkney. The most northerly record is for Norway, where they arrived in timber imported from Pennsylvania in the USA, in 2008. The European harlequin is, however, very different from the original harlequin in Asia, due to its genetic adaptation for use as a biological agent. In its native range, the harlequin emerges late, giving other ladybirds a head start. The Ural Mountains prevent it from spreading west. Where there are agricultural crops, harlequins may cause problems by invading houses in villages. They mistake pale walls for mountain sides to which they migrate. In Europe something is

preventing the harlequin from spreading to the south.

So far Helen has done a lot of radio work, which she has enjoyed, and conducted the UK Ladybird Parasite Survey for the BBC series 'Breathing Places'. In 2010 her team was selected to participate in the Moscow Science Festival. She plans to work closely with groups abroad to record ladybird population trends, their natural enemies and diseases.

This was a fascinating talk and slide show, attended by some thirty members. We were only celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the school camps at Newtown a year ago and here was someone who had been inspired by them to devote her working life to wildlife research. What is more, Helen was an active member of our Society. We are very grateful to her for taking the time and effort to come and tell us about her work.

Margaret Nelmes

Reports of Section Meetings

Access

9th July **Parkhurst Forest**.

With the permission of the Forestry Commission, 7 members assembled in the car park in Parkhurst Forest, on a hot summer morning.

The walk was about 2 miles, on the rides through the forest, led by Tad Dubicki. A lot of clearance has been carried out on the rides to open up the habitat for butterflies and other insects.

Leaving the car park, we walked west to the main drive, heading north. It was immediately apparent that opening up the drive had made a difference, as we saw a mass of butterflies over the tall grasses and shrubs beside the path, all fast flying, small and battling for nectar on the many flowers, never landing so we could not identify them. Of those that did land, most were Gatekeepers. A sweep net would have been handy for us to identify more. On the path edges wood ants nests were alive, a walking pole tip on the top of the mound would arouse a seething mass of ants.

Walking on we came to a boggy area with standing water. Dragonflies, Broad-Bodied Chaser, male and female, were seen, also many Damselflies. A Comma butterfly resting on a stone in the boggy area was seen.

I had my chart out to identify some of the Damselflies, but then I found I was on my own, no other walkers to be seen, my wife came back to see if I was OK. By then we were well adrift from the main group and the heat was getting to us. All we wanted was shade and the water bottle. We did catch up with the main group who were in the shade waiting for us.

We then walked back towards the squirrel hide. We sat waiting for the squirrels to appear, even they thought it was too hot, so none were seen.

From the hide a short walk back to the cars. They were in the shade, and more water to drink before returning home.

St Helens Churchyard. Glow-worms surveys

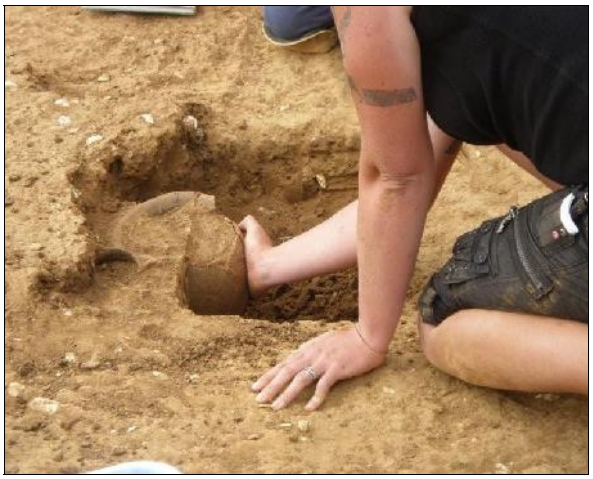
16th July.

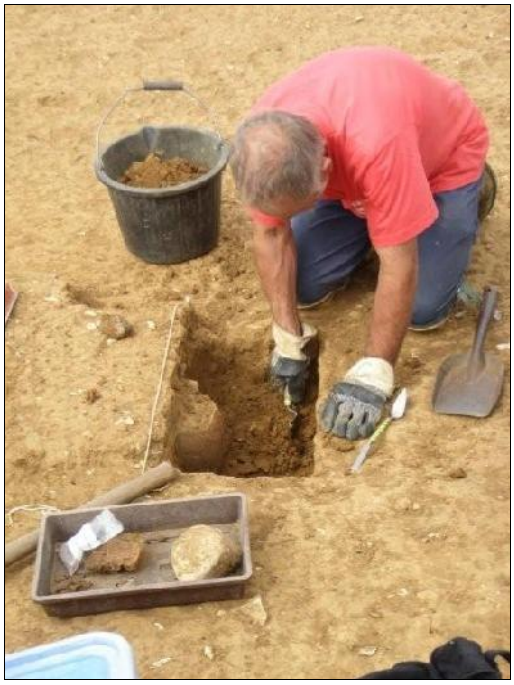
10 people gathered for the annual Glow-worm count.

The weather was fine and dry, almost drought conditions as no measurable rain had fallen for weeks.

Chris Lipscombe was on hand to inform the uninformed visitors on the glow-worm life cycle, with her information books. There were only two parishioners, the others were NHAS members, they were issued with recording slips which were returned to Chris at the end of their search.

There were four recorders with maps who walked the churchyard to map all sightings. At the end of the evening 38 had been recorded.



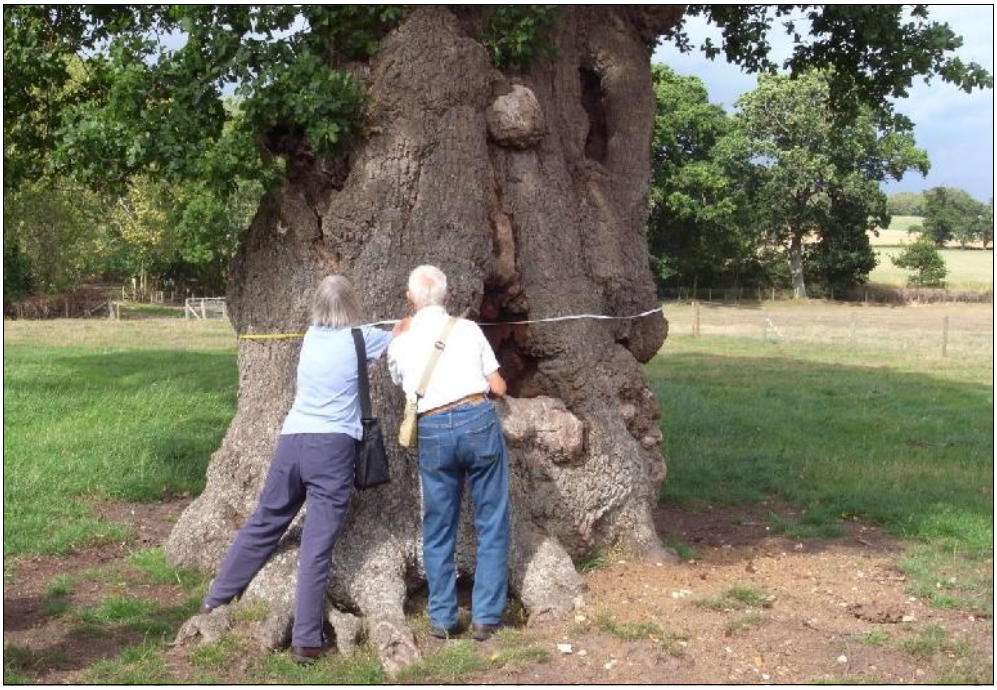


Big Dig Experience
Excavation of Cremation Ur n .
Page 11

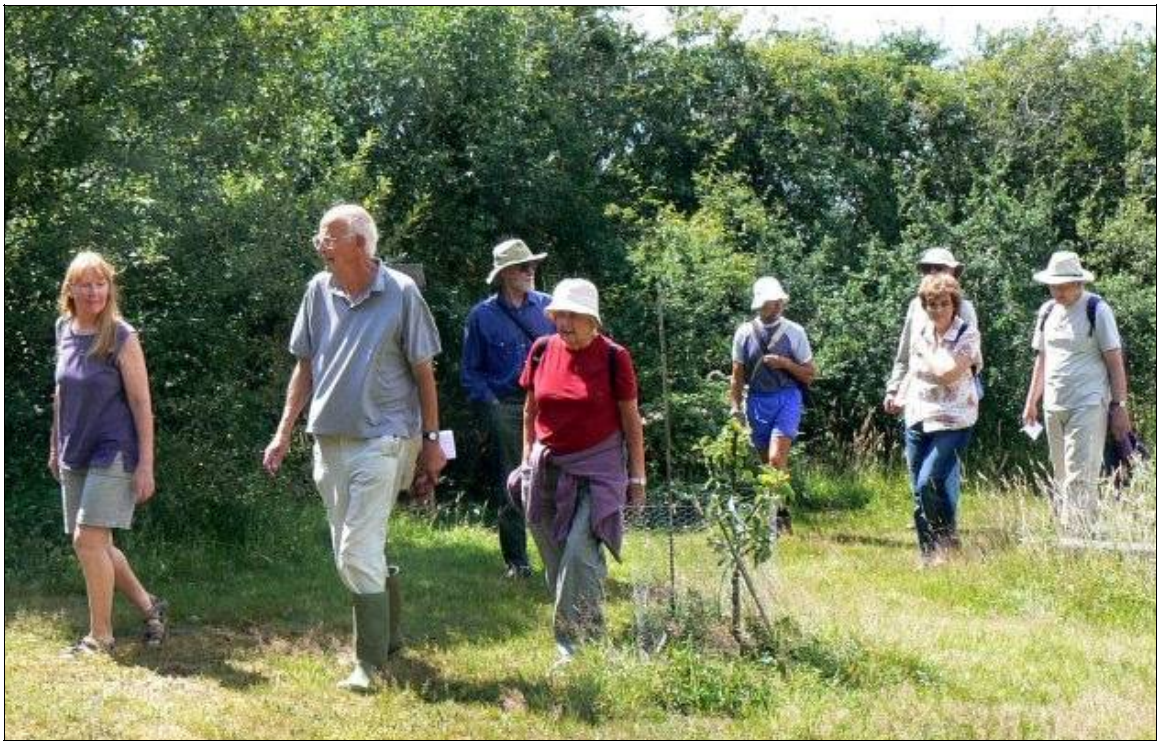
Fungal Bonanza
Page 6

Unusual Hogweed ,
Country Notes. Page 4

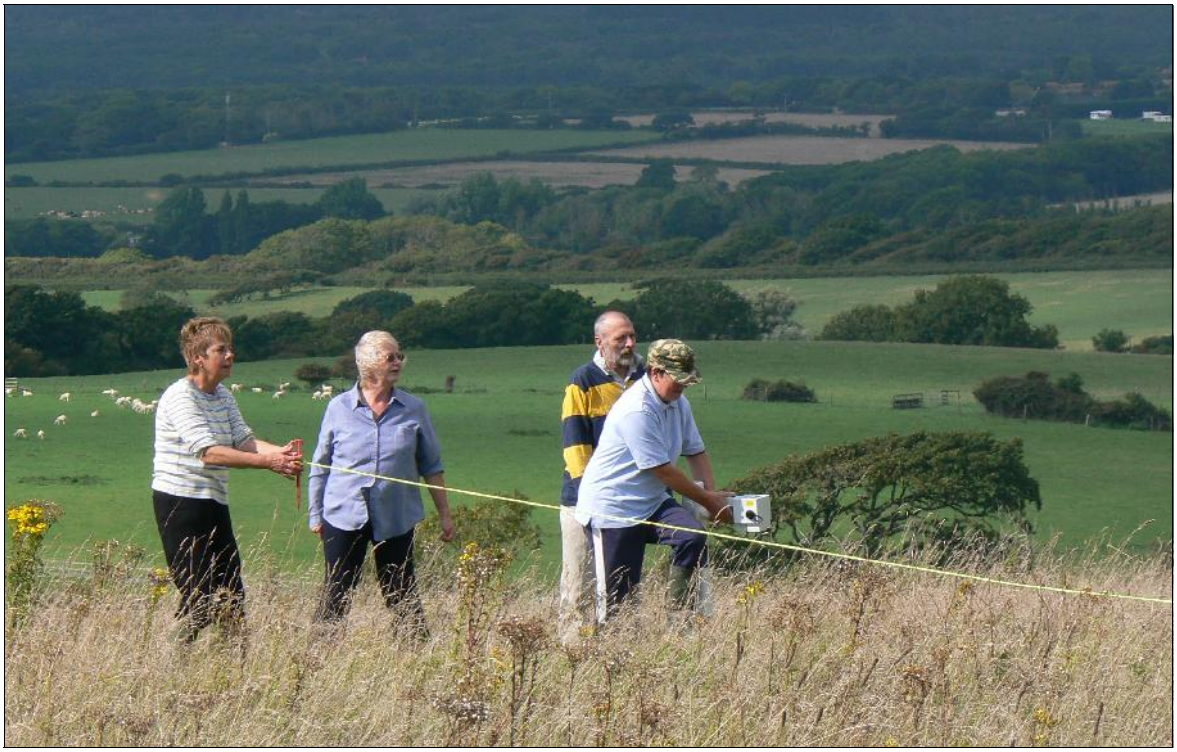
New Fungus. Page 7



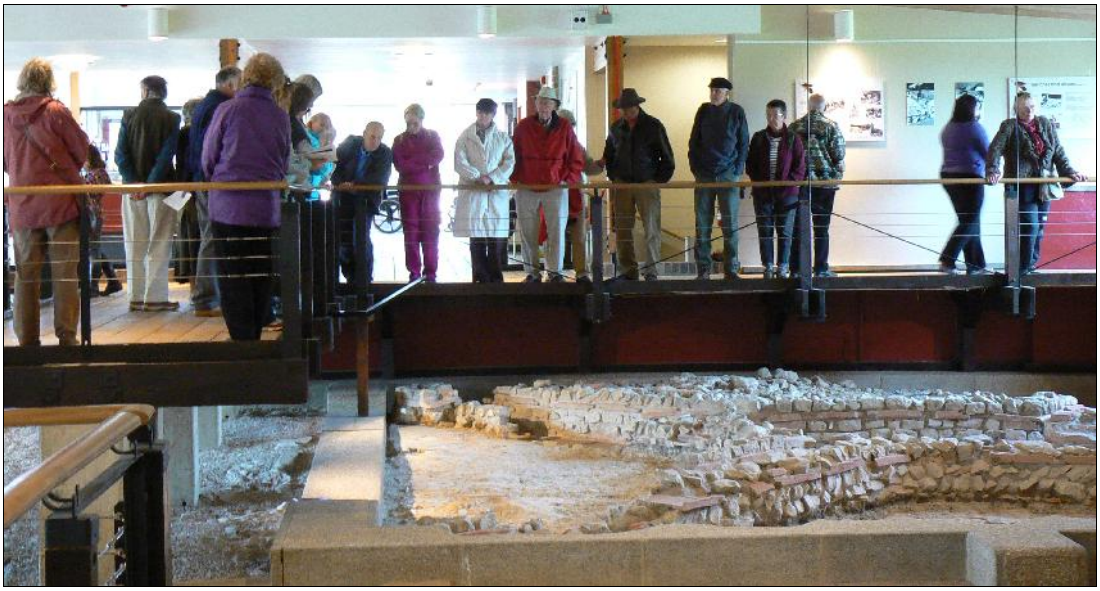
Trees at Nunwell. Page 21



Bradleys' Smallholding Page 12

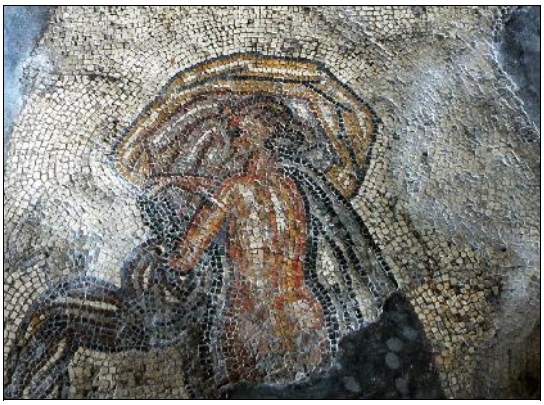


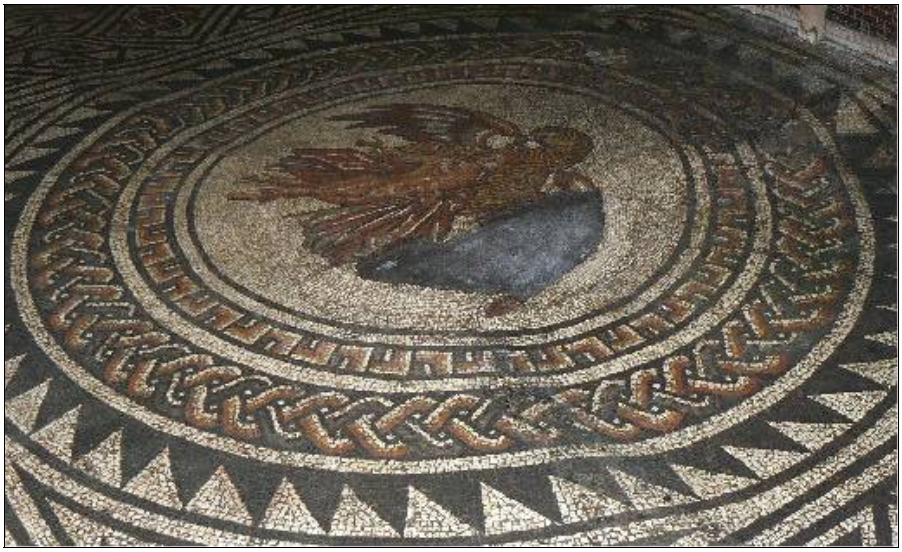
Below the Ground Project Pages 5



Fishbourne Roman Palace Page 20

Bignor Roman Villa
(Dancers Mosaic)
Page 20





Bignor Roman Villa (Ganymede & Eagle Mosaic) Page 20

17th July.

There were no members of the public or NHAS members.

The four recorders again walked the route, and 36 Glow-worms were mapped.

The count was successful but we were disappointed at the level of interest, after the publicity in the press, and the Island Council Summer Walks programme. The difference in numbers on the two nights was only two.

Thank you to Anne and Keith Marston, Peter and Sheila Burgess, Tad and Chris for the support again this year.

Looking back over a number of years, the count on two nights only varies by one and four, which made me decide that one night`s count will give a good idea of the state of the colony in future. If for any reason there is a huge decline on one night a second count could be arranged.

The report of the numbers has been sent to the IW recorder also to Anne Marston for the IW site maps to be updated.

Colin Black

5th November **Gatcombe and Sheat**

This circular walk of two and a half miles, beginning and ending at Gatcombe church, was billed as a chance to see some autumn colours. In a year with some of the most spectacular autumn leaves for a long time, everything appeared set for a magnificent display in the woods and hedges on this walk. Unfortunately the day began with torrential rain and, although this had virtually stopped by the time that the walk began, the colours that we did see were subdued in a surfeit of "mists and mellow fruitfulness."

At various stages of the walk there was the chance to look at the cottages in the village and to learn about field names based on nineteenth century surveys of the Gatcombe estate. We looked down over Chillerton and learnt how it had once been divided between detached portions of Wootton and Carisbrooke parishes. In Sheat we had a brief detour down to the ford, before returning to the main path for a view over Sheat Manor and then moving along the path along the back of Gatcombe Manor.

Among the natural history sightings of note there were twenty Red-legged Partridges in four coveys in the fields between Newbarn and Sheat, while the Pheasants near Tolt Copse were running for cover at breakneck speed. Eight Meadow Pipits were seen in the fields below the Old Rectory, a couple of Goldfinch were seen on Teasel, and this autumn's influx of Jays continued with an individual being sited near the entrance to Chillerton village. The sight of a number of bushes of Wayfaring tree in flower was unexpected and the Harts-tongue ferns were seen in good numbers, one individual distorted with a double leaf tip.

The meeting ended with a visit to St Olave's Church where we admired the medieval and nineteenth century stained glass, the monument to a crusader with his dog, and discussed the legend of Lucy Lightfoot. From the corner of the churchyard we could see Gatcombe House, lent by the Seelys as a Red Cross hospital in the First World War, which made the monument in the church to their son Charles Grant Seely, who died at Gaza, all the more poignant. Among the graves in the churchyard was one to the Brannons who lived at Newbarn, a family which included the famous 19th century engravers and the founders of the Isle of Wight County Press.

Richard Smout

Archaeology

26th September Visit to Fishbourne and Bignor Roman sites

Don Bryant was again our guide for this mainland excursion so we were rightly confident that this would be a successful day.

Part of our journey from Portsmouth followed the route of the old Roman road between Chichester and London, reminding us of the importance of this area. As we passed Emsworth pond we learnt that the remains of a fountain and a large building were found there.

Bosham, Don told us, was the 7th most important port in England at that time. He took us to Dell Quay, thought by many to be a site where the Romans landed during the Claudian invasion. This inlet, now silted up but very atmospheric, would have been navigable up to the Fishbourne site and would certainly have been a useful trading route. Evidence has been found of tile and brick manufacture and of 1st century buildings with black and white mosaics.

Fishbourne

At Fishbourne Roman palace we were particularly envious of the Discovery centre, with its education room, conservation labs, research room, sensitive store and large storage area. Some of the previously excavated material is now being re-examined using modern technology. This huge and important site is owned and managed by the Sussex Archaeological Society. (**Photo** page 18)

A guide gave a talk of the events leading up to the building of the palace. Even with so much of the site beneath the road and local housing, the scale is impressive. Mosaics are mostly black and white geometric designs, typical of the early period, but the later multi-coloured pictorial designs are also beautiful.

An added bonus in the museum area was a display celebrating the 50th anniversary of the discovery and excavation of the site. An amateur cine film of the event was a delightful period piece, not least for the shots of a youthful Barry Cunliffe with a mop of dark hair.

Bignor

Bignor Roman villa, now tucked away along winding country lanes and surrounded by a vineyard, was in Roman times in a favoured position near to Stane Street.

Although only some remains of the villa can be seen, and these are spread across several small buildings, plans of the site show that this was a large high-status courtyard villa The site was discovered in 1811 so the records of the excavations are, not surprisingly, patchy. The delightful thatched-roof buildings were erected soon after and give the modern site its distinctive character. The mosaics are deservedly famous; the rich colouring has survived well and the 70m long passage mosaic is the longest in the country. (**Photos** page 18)

Tea and delicious home-made cake fortified us for the trip back to Portsmouth.

Thanks to Delian Backhouse-Fry and Don Bryant for organising and transporting us on such an enjoyable outing.

Helen Jackson

Botany

10th July Peacock's Tail Seaweed survey

The Botany group joined up with a number of seaweed enthusiasts from the mainland to look for the very distinctive Peacock's Tail Seaweed on Bembridge Ledges under the guidance of Dr Roger Herbert. This seaweed is a national rarity and the Island is one of its strongholds in the British Isles. We walked from the lifeboat station eastwards towards Whitecliff Bay trying to find the seaweed and to describe its

habitat. Unfortunately out attempt to map the species thoroughly was unsuccessful as a GPS failed to function correctly, but a smaller handset was able to give us a series of point locations, which were later transferred to a map. Peacock's Tail was generally not found growing in the deeper pools underneath the large floating fronds of Japanese seaweed but was in shallower water and muddy and sandy substrates. Further research on the distribution and abundance of this species is under way.

7th August **The Trees of Nunwell**

Mrs Fanny Oglander together with Bill Shepard was our guide around the historic trees of the Nunwell estate, which has been in her family for centuries. In the garden of the Coach House we saw the restoration of the ice-house which is taking place, before looking at the recent planting of Walnut trees. This species is one that is predicted to thrive if our climate becomes warmer. We went along Ladies' Walk to view a Stag's Head Oak, which is approximately 400 years old and still has leaves at the tips of the branches. To the north of the path the remains of an avenue of Lime trees, planted some time before 1749 (as it appears on a map of this date) was seen. It was a landscape feature known as The Prospect and it was designed to draw the eye from the house to the Downs. However was largely removed in favour of the more informal parkland when the fashion in garden design changed towards the end of the 18th century.

We walked across the fields to examine and measure some of the huge oaks that are a feature of the estate, and even stood inside the trunk of one of them. In Brick kiln field we saw a dead oak, still standing but stripped of its bark. Such trees are valuable habitat for birds, bats, invertebrates and a range of lichens. (**Photo** page 16)

Rain began to set in as we approached the house, but we were still able to appreciate the unusual form of an umbrella-shaped oak. It is in the later stages of its life, as the top of the trunk is rotting above the low dome-shaped foliage.

18th September **Brading Marshes**

In recent years the RSPB has been able to purchase large areas of the floodplain grazing marshes surrounding the Eastern Yar between Brading and Bembridge Harbour. The management of the river and surrounding land has been designed to make the area wetter to improve it for wetland birds. This process has benefited the aquatic plants also and we found a number of specialities during the afternoon. The Yellow Water-lilies *(Nuphar lutea)* were past their flowering season, but many others were still identifiable, including two species of Bur-marigold, Nodding Bur-marigold *Bidens cernua* and Trifid Bur-marigold *Bidens tripartita.*

In a pool to the side of the track there was a good stand of Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapathum,* together with Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides.* Lesser Bulrush *Typha angustifolia*, a plant with a more localised distribution on the Island*,* and Bulrush *Typha latifolia,* which is more widespread, were both seen. They are distinguishable by comparing their leaves; those of Lesser Bulrush are much narrower. The flower spike is also different, as Lesser Bulrush has a gap between the male and female flowers, whereas Bulrush does not.

We also recorded two species bearing the name 'water plantain', they are in the same botanical family (*Alismataceae*) but in different genera. Lesser Water-plantain (*Baldellia ranunculoides)* is much less common than Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica).* Bristle Club-rush *Isolepis setacea* was another interesting find, and a new record for this site.

The grassland is largely managed by grazing, in an area poached by cattle hooves, Oak-leaved Goosefoot *Chenopodium glaucum* was growing. It is a relatively uncommon plant associated with enriched soils. It has greyish green wavy edged leaves that do have some resemblance to the shape of oak leaves.

2nd October **Jersey Camp**

This meeting proved productive with 28 gall causers, 22 leaf miners and 17 species of micro-fungi being found by the group. Of these 15 were new species for this site. We started by looking in the orchard area before moving on to the pond and saltmarsh via the hedgerows; we returned through Locks Copse.

Fifteen species of plant were found to have galled parts, with Oak *(Quercus robur)* having ten kinds of gall. The Sea Anemone Gall *(Andricus grossulariae)*, which causes the acorn to produce a mass of twisted growths, not unlike a Sea Anemone, was one of the new records for the site.

Fifteen species of plant also showed damage from leaf miner activity. Again Oak had the largest number of species associated with it with three species of moth caterpillar and one species of sawfly caterpillar identified.

A variety of micro-fungi were found, causing symptoms such as powdery mildew, rust and leaf spot. Creeping Thistle *(Cirsium arvense)* was probably the most dramatically affected, as it showed a spindly white growth above its green leaves. This is called chlorosis and it is produced by a fungus *Puccinia punctiformis* which grows through the plant's vascular tissue and disrupts the transport of food and water round the plant. This infection is sometimes mistaken for the plant having been sprayed with weed-killer.

23rd October **Trees of Pan**

Before setting of to explore the trees planted along the streets of Pan, Bill Shepard who was leading the walk, took us on a brief detour along the bank of the Medina noting a Pear Tree (*Pyrus* sp) with striking red foliage across the river, and a gnarled Apple Tree (*Malus domestica*) with hollow bole. Under the bridge at St George's Approach there was a Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) on the riverbank, which has one branch growing into another, a phenomenon called inosculation.

The main part of our meeting was to prove a world tour of sorts, judging by the names of the species we saw. Firstly we looked at the large London Plane Tree *(Planus x hispanica*) outside Leigh Thomas Mill. It is visible as a large tree on pictures taken in 1900. Walking up to the main road we passed Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia)* and Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria)* planted as street trees, and stopped to debate the scent of Spanish Broom (*Spartinum junceum*) still just in flower.

Bill told us that the trees planted on Pan had come from a nationwide planting scheme paid for by the National Coal Board in the 1960s. At Pan Close we saw Field Maple *(Acer campestre*) Swedish Whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia),* Pittisporum *(Pittosporum tenuifolium)* which has sticky black seeds visible when the fruits split open, Italian Alder *(Alnus cordata)* and Norway Maple *(Acer platinoides)*. On the corner of Ash Road there was, appropriately an Ash Tree *(Fraxinus excelsior)*. In Home Meade, Keaki *(Zelkova serrata)* was developing magnificent colour where the branches were in the strongest sunlight. Other trees in the group included Beech *(Fagus sylvatica)*, Turkey Oak *(Quercus cerris)* which has acorn cups with a whiskery growth, Himalayan Birch *(Betula jacquamontii)* with its silvery white peeling bark, Alder *(Alnus glutinosa)* alongside a ditch, Large-leaved Lime *(Tilia platyphyllos)* rarely suckers at the base (unlike Lime *Tilia x europaea*), Balsam Poplar *Populus balsamifera,* Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) English Oak *(Quercus robur)* and a large *Prunus* cultivar which will need examination in spring to determine it more precisely.

A corner was filled by shrub planting including Japanese Rose *(Rosa rugosa),* Berberis *(Thunbergia atropurpuraea)* Dogwood *(Cornus sanguinea)* and Forsythia. A Monterey Pine *(Pinus radiata)* distinguishable by its needles in groups of threes was found near the large open space. We descended on the Isobel Centre for a refreshment break before making our way back. Trees of note here included Manna Ash *(Fraxinus ornus)* Small-leaved Lime *(Tilia cordata)* Red Oak *(Quercus rubra)* Scots Pine *(Pinus sylvestris)* and finally as we entered the upper car park at Coppins Bridge, a Tree of Heaven *(Ailanthus altissima)*. This is a tree worth examining in July when it bears clusters of blossom which are red in bud and cream when fully out.

Anne Marston

Entomology

6th July **Long Lane Farm, near Staplers**

This was a fine afternoon for a visit by kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Laking. The main area of grassland was rather short of species, but the hedgerow corridor on the north side of the main field and the pond area were productive. This was a particularly good meeting for hemiptera (bugs). The leafhopper *Macropsis pragina* was the first record for the Island in the century since Morey's Guide was published. The Mirid Bug *Amblytylus nasutus* had only seen on one other occasion in the Isle of Wight since the publication of the Victoria County History in 1896. A second Mirid Bug *Orthotylus marginalis* was being seen for only the third time on the Island since Morey. None of the other finds were unusual but a Longhorn Beetle *Leptura livida* was seen, as was Speckled Bush-cricket. Among the butterflies we found Marbled White and Small Skipper. There were a large number of grass moths and those identified were a common species *Chrysoteuchia culmella*. Cinnabar Moth caterpillars were also found. Green Woodpecker and Buzzard were seen: Whitethroat and Linnet heard. We were very grateful for the refreshments provided after the meeting by Mrs Laking.

15th July **Swanpond Copse**

Three members visited this Wight Wildlife reserve. The weather had been very threatening earlier, but this proved to be a productive meeting, and the sun emerged briefly at one point. Those areas where there were glades within the woodland were very good for a range of species. A total of thirty mines and galls were observed and a dozen different rusts and mildews. Eleven species of butterfly were recorded, including White Admiral, and a couple of Commas. In one of the more northerly glades fallen timber added to the variety of habitats. It was in this area that no fewer than ten Common Darters were seen, together with Common Groundhoppers and the fourth Island record of the Ant Beetle, the last individual being recorded in East Cowes in 1994. This is a very distinctive species, but like so many beetles it has been under-recorded. It has an attractive combination of orange with a black and white pattern on the wing case.

Among other species recorded were Southern Darter, and two hoverflies *Volucella pellucens* and *Scaeva pyrastri*.

18th August **Jersey Camp**

This was the second of three visits to Jersey Camp planned for 2010, and the only meeting to be held in the day-time. A wide range of species were seen on this visit. We concentrated on visiting the main meadow and the pond behind. This was a breezy day which meant that the number of species varied enormously depending on how exposed the vegetation was.

In the meadow one striking feature was how much Common Dodder was visible. It is a long time since this parasitic plant has had such a good year. There were a number of butterflies observed, including Common Blue and Small Heath. As we approached the pond more Odonata were observed. Common Blue Damselflies were the commonest species, but there were also at least four Ruddy Darters. The micro-moth *Coleophora alticolella* had been feeding on one of the rushes, and among the moths seen in Lock's Copse was a Mocha, with its intricate patterning. Orthoptera were also well represented with Oak and Speckled Bush-crickets being seen with a Long-winged Cone-head. Among the hoverflies identified was a good example of the distinctive species *Chrysotoxum bicinctum.*

27th August **Moon's Hill – moth-trapping**

This meeting was hosted by Sam Knill-Jones at his home in Totland. The weather conditions were not ideal and moths were not seen in large numbers. Among those species that were recorded were Vine's Rustic and Six-striped Rustic. There were a few migrants: Rush Veneer and White-point. There was most interest in the Jersey Tigers that were caught, for which we found both of the colour forms, and in a fine example of a Dusky Thorn.

17th September **Jersey Camp – moth-trapping**

The final moth-trap of the year saw us returning to the excellent facilities at Jersey Camp. There were not as many moths to be found as on our earlier visit. The commonest species was the Oak Lutestring. A couple of Lunar Underwings and Large Yellow Underwings were seen. All the other identifications were of single examples. These included Angle Shades, Willow Beauty, Feathered Gothic and both the Dusky Thorn and the September Thorn. We were grateful to the staff at Jersey Camp for allowing us to use their training room.

4th October **Brading Marshes**

This was the final section visit of the season, and we set out from Brading Station, walking along public footpaths as far as Centurion's Copse. This meeting offered a range of species, and on a dullish day with moments of brightness the range of insects seen was quite modest. However there was some good bird-watching. A Mediterranean Gull flew over the reserve, a couple of Grey Wagtails were recorded and a party of thirty Meadow Pipits flew off from one of the fields. One hedgerow was full of migrants including at least five Chiff-chaffs and a Spotted Flycatcher.

The unattractive larva of a sawfly which produces the Pear and Cherry Slugworm was observed, a single Common Lizard was seen along with Red Admiral, Small White and Speckled Wood. Near Centurion's Copse four Common Darters and a Migrant Hawker were spotted in one of the brief interludes of sunshine. The Dark Bush-cricket and Meadow Grasshopper were also found during the visit.

Richard Smout

Fungi

Fungi meetings 2010

In recent years the autumn weather has been relatively mild up until Christmas with dry conditions in September so we altered our meetings to reflect this, meeting fortnightly from October until early/mid December. This year was different; we had wet, mild weather in September and it turned very cold in the last week of November and continued into December.

Five field meetings were held during the main fungi season, not counting the British Mycological Society meeting. We began with a meeting at Firestone Copse on a very wet but mild 3rd October. Firestone produced 46 identified species during the course of the morning, and as David Biggs was away on holiday, all were macro-fungi. These included four Amanita species: Snakeskin Grisette *Amanita cecilae,* False Death Cap, *Amanita citrina,* Panthercap, *Amanita pantherina,* Grisette, *Amanita vaginata,* four Boletes: Bay Bolete, *Boletus badius, Leccinum aurantiacum,* Brown Birch Bolete, *Leccinum scabrum,* Suede Bolete, *Xercomus subtomentosus* and three Tricholoma: Soapy Knight, *Tricholoma saponaceum,* Deceiving Knight *Tricholoma sejunctum,* and Sulphur Knight, *Tricholoma sulphureum.*

On the 16th October we joined the British Mycological Society for a day in Parkhurst Forest instead of having our usual annual Fungus Foray, which for the past few years has been lead by Alan Outen. They spent a week on the Island visiting various places and have produced a very impressive list, which has not yet been finalized. The website www.rshotbolt.f2s.com/iow2010/ gives the list; On 17th November, I logged on and there were 557 species with a number of new records for the Island. A large number of these are for species which we, as a group, are unable to identify.

On 31st October we held a meeting at Westover Plantation which produced 56 identified species, an improvement on the 29 records we recorded on a very wet 1st November 2008. Species included two Earthstars: Collared Earthstar, *Geastrum triplex* and Sessile Earthstar *Geastrum fimbriatum,* two Puffballs: Common Puffball*, Lycoperdon perlatum* and Stump Puffball, *Lycoperdon pyriforme,* and a Common Earthball, *Scleroderma citrinum.* Fort Victoria Country Park was our next venue on a calm, mild morning of the 13th November. The previous few days we had heavy rain and high winds that meant that the ground was saturated and covered in fallen leaves but we still managed to find 62 species.

Four Tricholomas: Aromatic Knight, *Tricholoma lascivum,* Deceiving Knight, *Tricholoma sejunctum,* Sulphur Knight, *Tricholoma sulphureum* and *Tricholoma stiparophyllum.* Birch Polypore/Razorstrop Fungus, *Piptoporus betulinus* was well represented and Grey Coral, *Clavulina cinerea* hid amongst the undergrowth at the side of the path. With a rapid decline in the weather a hardy few members met at Brook Down on 28th November on a very frosty morning. The few fungi we managed to find were in poor condition and very dry. This meant that any specimens taken home to identify did not produce any spores. 14 species were identified including *Sowebyella radiculata*. This was a fungus Colin found last year and sent for identification – status Rare. Dung Roundhead, *Stropharia semiglobata* was found frequently on cow dung as was *Cheilymenia stercorea*, a small orange cup fungus with hairs. A smaller version of King Alfred's Cakes, *Daldinia concentrica* called *Daldinia fissa* was found on a burnt gorse twig.

The last meeting of the year was at Northwood Cemetery on 11th December. Despite the fact that we recently had snow and the weather was still very cold, 39 species were identified, many of them being grassland specialities. *Geoglossum fallax* and *Microglossum olivaceum* particularly like the conditions at Northwood Cemetery. There were also seven species of waxcaps and False Chanterelle, *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* clustered on wood chip. Four Beaked Earthstar, *Geastrum pectinatum* were found under a row of Macrocarpa trees. To end the season the meeting was adjourned to the Old Stag Pub to review the finds of the autumn.

Jackie Hart

Geology

18th July **A Geological walk to Luccombe Chine**

Six of us set out from Shanklin Chine where, at low tide, golden sands sweep around the bay to end at Horse Ledge. Knock Cliff towered above us. It consists of rocks in the Lower Greensand Group, comprising, from bottom to top, layers of ferruginous sands, sandrock and carstone.

As we reached the narrow gap between sea and cliff and clambered up onto Horse Ledge, we found nests of brachiopods in a huge slab of Greensand. Our guide, Cathy Adamou of The Geological Society IW, pointed out that Greensand is the name of the rock formation and not necessarily sand. At its base we admired a ripple effect caused by waves and found fossilised worm tubes or burrows: tracks in the mud known collectively as trace fossils.

On the ledge there were fossilised oysters and wood containing boring bivalves. This wood is mainly cycad and comes from sandrock. Sometimes it contains crystals of iron pyrite, commonly known as "fool's gold", which will crumble eventually. Patches of green glaze on rocks are glauconite, a mineral that weathers brown, and patches of pale blue are silica. Ammonite fragments are commonly found here, usually hoplites, originating from gault clay. We found many cats' paws, individual chambers of ammonites, and what Mike Cotterill identified as coprolite, commonly known as poo. Here there are also sea urchin beds.

Cathy said to look out for some birds of prey she had seen every time she'd come here. I heard their raucous cries before I spotted them, high above us on a ledge: a pair of Peregrine Falcons, built like fighter aircraft to dive upon their prey.

I remembered seeing an unusual seaweed on the ledges here several years ago and recognised it from a photographic slide shown at one of our Society's meetings earlier this year, to advertise a Botany meeting at Bembridge. Sure enough, to our delight, we found some of these rare and delicate Peacock's Tails.

A little further on the beach was covered in a mulch of fine seaweed some six inches deep, through which we had to wade for fifty yards. Mike Cotterill and I continued our search all the way to Luccombe Chine and Mike was rewarded with a beautiful piece of flowstone, creamy coloured crystals which, he explained, are what stalactites and stalagmites are made of. I spotted a rock covered in a thin crust of these crystals and later found another piece on the beach. On the sands several lone rocks are surrounded by deep pools, stained red by streams of iron ore that flow from the cliffs. Many of the stones strewn about here are dyed red, yellow and orange.

Mike ventured up the Chine, whilst I returned to Shanklin the way we'd come, still combing the beach for fossils. The sun had broken through and it was getting hot. By the time I reached Horse Ledge, I had been walking for over four hours and that long reef that juts way out into the sea had all but disappeared beneath the waves. I clambered down through the narrow gap onto the beach and had to scale a series of high wooden breakwaters, carrying my heavy rucksack full of fossils, before trudging up the long, steep staircase on Appley Cliff. But I'm not complaining. Our walk was surprisingly productive and well worth the effort. We are grateful to Cathy for guiding us.

Margaret Nelmes

29th November **Visit to Dinosaur Isle**

For a bitterly cold day in late November, the turnout was surprisingly good. Thirteen members braved icy roads to turn up at Dinosaur Isle by 10 am, and Steve Hutt, the museum's curator, was there to greet us.

Our tour began in the long, winding entrance corridor, starting with displays of the fossilised remains of plant and animal life from ten thousand years ago, and each section took us further back in time until we reached invertebrates of the Cretaceous period, some sixty-five to one hundred and twenty million years ago. The museum is only interested in displaying finds from the Isle of Wight, unless it acquires something of outstanding importance. A member of our Society, Andy Yule, who collected fossilised insects in limestone from the Island's north coast for over forty years, has donated twelve cratefuls to Dinosaur Isle, and some of his finds are in the Natural History Museum in London.

As well as the display cases, there is a microscope for the close examination of various exhibits and an interactive kiosk, designed and built by Dinosaur Isle's Trevor Price, where you can press an area on a map of the Island and discover the age of the rocks exposed there and the sort of fossils to be found. The Ichthyosaur display is a beach scene strewn with huge ammonites of various species. Steve recalls how he has hauled huge ammonites like these, several feet across, up Whale Chine. There are various children's activities, including a 'Jigsaurus' and a sandpit with hidden fossils.

The Cretaceous display includes eleven sharks' teeth and a complete skeleton of a shark's head. The Island was then part of a vast continental sea where ammonites flourished. Vertebrate finds are rare, maybe because for some reason the skeletons disintegrated. A new display, 'The Vectis Lagoon', features fossils from the oldest Wealden beds on the Island, the subject of Dr Steve Sweetman's recent research, mostly teeth and pterosaur fragments. Sifting through huge quantities of rock and earth to find these tiny remains was painstaking work. The 'Vectis' is the youngest of the Wealden rocks, dating back a hundred and twenty million years. Pterosaurs flew over the land and were buried in clay. Their bones are very fine, yet surprisingly well preserved, so they can't have been washed very far.

The final display in the entrance corridor is arguably the most enchanting: a collection of flint sponges from chalk, into which various colourful minerals have washed to fill the spaces left by soft body parts when they had disintegrated. The exhibits have been lovingly preserved and polished, to stunning effect. This display is known as 'The Alternative T-Rex Case', for it contrasts greatly with the displays of dinosaur bones and whole skeletons in the Main Exhibition next-door, and dinosaur appeal tends to overshadow other exhibits, especially when life-sized models move and roar, as some do at Dinosaur Isle.

Dinosaur bones found on the Isle of Wight date from the Cretaceous period, from the oldest exposed rocks here. The bones started out white, but the sulphur in swamps turned everything black. Minerals creep into cracks in bones, among them sulphur and iron, which together form crystals of iron pyrite, calcite and red haematite. Dinosaur bones have been laboriously cut from the rock and polished before being fitted together with many others, a veritable jigsaw puzzle, to form a whole or partial skeleton. Sometimes the bones are fixed to a frame to make the skeleton freestanding. The display entitled 'Life and Death in the Waterhole' depicts the Wealden floodplain where crocodiles and turtles lived in freshwater marshes and mussels and other shellfish thrived, predated by large shell-crushing fish. Fossilised plants from the Cretaceous Park include the cycad and the Monkey Puzzle tree, both of which survive to this day. The most interesting find in this display is probably a cycad leaf caught in a conglomerate of sandstone. The temperature controlled display cases that house the exhibits cost thousands of pounds

each, and black bones have to have humidity.

Exhibits that caught my eye include a Monkey Puzzle tree trunk, a collection of the teeth and jaws of plant-eating and meat-eating dinosaurs, a baby crocodile skull and huge Iguanadon footprint casts. Andy Yule found one in the garden of a house he moved to recently, but delivering something so heavy to the museum created a major problem. Among the dinosaurs whose skeletons are displayed here are the Neovenator, whose bones are very fine and so a complete skeleton is very rarely found, and the Hypsilophodon, a small dinosaur found in Chilton Chine sandstone. The Neovenator skeleton discovery is a long story. A family found some black bones on a beach, then another family fetched shovels from a farm and some bones they found were taken to the Natural History Museum. Years later these bones were returned to the Island and more bones were excavated from the cliffs until eventually, about twelve years ago, Steve and Penny found the femur and the tibia.

Finally Steve led us through the laboratory where new finds are cut, preserved, polished and catalogued ready to be put on display. A cast may be made of a particularly good fossil, to be given to the finder in exchange for the real thing. Then we went up the back stairs to the Education Room where we admired a small sample of the insect fossils that Andy Yule has donated to the museum. He has been a very successful collector and has even had three species of fossil insects named after him. Other local collectors' finds are also displayed here, too, and there is a 'New Finds' case. The dilemma for museums of this kind is the high cost of display cases, which means that some collections must remain in store and are never seen. The case makers have a monopoly and can charge high prices, as modern cases must be temperature controlled and have shatter-proof glass.

We are grateful to Steve for devoting so much time to guiding us around the museum and for making our tour so interesting. He was also kind enough to make us coffee and tea before we departed.

Margaret Nelmes

Ornithology

11th July

14 members met in the road outside Walter's Copse, Newtown on a beautiful, sunny morning. July is usually a quiet month for seeing birds as most of them have bred by this time and are concealing themselves whilst they undergo a moult. So we were on the lookout for butterflies and dragonflies as well. The conditions were perfect and we saw a fair number of Silver-washed Fritillaries and Purple Hairstreaks. White Admirals were also patrolling the rides. Large and Small Skipper, Ringlet and Brimstone were present as well as the usual butterflies. 14 species of butterfly were seen. However, 21 species of birds were mainly heard, but a few were seen. There was a flock of Long-tailed Tit whilst we were gathering to start the walk and there was a family of Blue Tit in the woods. At least three Chiffchaff were heard singing, at least four Blackcap were heard as well as some Goldfinch. Jays were seen flying about and a Buzzard circled above. Swift were seen whilst we were trying to pick out the Purple Hairstreak. Down on the estuary we saw Canada Goose, Black-headed Gull, two Great Black Backed Gull, four Little Egret, three Cormorant, Lapwing, Curlew, Oystercatcher and Crow.

19th September

Ten members met on a dull, cold and windy morning for walk on Mottistone Down toward Pay Down before taking an acute left turn to go to the Longstone, then ascending Castle Hill and return to the cars via Strawberry Lane. Unfortunately, the meeting coincided with an organised Downs cycle race from Freshwater and we meet a huge number of racing cyclists bombing over both the trackway and the grass. By keeping very close to the fence line we did manage to see some birds! Of the migrants we had an abundant number of Swallows, two Common Redstart, one Blackcap, two Willow Warbler, three Chiffchaff and many Willowchiff (we were unable to decide which they were). Six Spotted Flycatcher. There was a flock of some 40 Long-tailed Tit and six Blue Tit. Goldfinch were common and it was good to see a Yellowhammer and two Bullfinch. We had three Mistle Thrush – these have been seen on the Downs

since I have been monitoring for Dartford Warblers in 2010. Raptors were represented with two Buzzard, four Kestrel and one Peregrine. In all 29 species were seen.

9th October

Eight members met on a misty, mild but overcast morning on Culver Down for a walk in the area. During the course of the morning we saw flocks of Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipits, Swallows and House Martins. The Swallows and House Martins mainly flew west to east along the edge of the cliff, which enabled us to have a good look at the differences in both plumage and flight. Two Peregrine Falcons hung in the wind above the cliff edge presumably on the look out for some unwary little bird, but gave us ample opportunity to admire them. In front of the coastguard cottages we saw two Wheatear. On some bramble we spotted a male Stonechat, soon after a female appeared and then another two. In amongst the trees were Willow Warbler, Willow/Chiffs, Goldfinches and Chaffinches. A Buzzard was seen and towards the end of the walk a Raven was heard. In all 21 species were seen during the morning.

6th November

17 members met in Thorley Road for a walk along the old railway track to Binfield and return. At the start of the walk Cetti's Warbler was heard calling. We spent a long time looking over Rofford Marsh which was flooded. Whilst there we saw several flocks of Common Snipe flying around, in excess of 13 birds with some landing on the marsh but they immediately disappeared from view. A Water Rail was seen skulking in amongst the sedge and remained there for a considerable length of time to enable everyone to get good views through the telescope. Mallard, Wigeon, Teal and Shoveler were about as were Coot. Periodically we heard shooting and saw Pheasant being shot down. When the guns had left the scene, we spotted a hare in the far field. 99 Black-tailed Godwit were counted during the course of the morning, most on the flooded area opposite the old railway station platform but some on the estuary; also in the flooded area were 46 Lapwing. On a field the other side of the Western Yar was a flock of approximately 150 Golden Plover and eleven Canada Geese. The Golden Plover were disturbed and we saw them flying over the river before returning to the field. A Grey Plover and Curlew were on the mud in the estuary and some Redshank in the pool by the Mill Copse hide. During the course of the morning we saw six Little Egret and two Grey Heron. 47 species were seen.

5th December

As we had snow during the previous week with it still lying thickly on the ground on Friday and the forecast for freezing conditions to continue over the weekend, it was decided to call off the meeting at The Folly, Whippingham. Email messages were sent to various people and a note placed on the website. However, by Sunday the temperature had risen and freezing overnight temperatures did not materialize. David Biggs and I went down to the Folly in case some people turned up. In fact there were six of us so we held the meeting. The tide was very high, and although we expected it to fall, it remained high throughout our meeting and prevented us from going very far as the footpath beyond the footbridge was flooded. However, we saw approximately 20 Turnstone and at least 50 Dunlin and some Oystercatchers standing on pontoons. At least 86 Oystercatchers were counted in various places. A flock of about 100 Sky Lark were seen flying over and landing in a field. There were eight Canada Geese in view and a number of Brent. Lapwing were standing in a field on the far bank and were later seen flying – about 20. Thirty Black-tailed Godwit were disturbed by us and flew by giving us a good view of their plumage. A Redshank was startled, as was a Little Egret. We saw Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Gull and Great Black-backed Gull. A Kestrel took advantage of an electricity pylon and a heavily streaked Song Thrush sat in a Poplar tree. Some four or five Little Grebe were on the river as were Mallard, Wigeon and Teal. David saw a Kingfisher flying amongst the boats but unfortunately the rest of us did not pick it out. We finished in The Folly for a warming coffee or tea. In all 38 species were counted.

Jackie Hart

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES' NOTES

New Members

Deaths

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President Mrs. J. Jones, Woodlands Cottage, Marvel Lane, Carisbrooke, PO30 3DT

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Next Bulletin

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings for 1st January2011 to 30th June 2011 should be sent to:-

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The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be **12th July 2011**