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Contents

President`s Address

Once again we have arrived at that point of our year when Wight Studies, the Proceedings of the Society, is published. As usual we have a fascinating selection of Papers to read and ponder upon. It has been a busy year for the Society and I welcome all new members and hope they enjoy reading the Proceedings.

We have been very fortunate to have the Web page updated and much improved by Alan Blenkinsop and I am sure you will agree that it is now a very useful service. Many thanks to Al.

The Archaeology group continues to flourish, with some new members, and we have been busy with geophysical surveying and field walking. We also went to Oxford to the Ashmolean Museum in June and had a highly enjoyable time. On the way back Don Bryan, from the Hampshire Field Club, took us to visit the Rollright Stones near Chipping Norton, quite an experience. For future trips, make sure you look on the website. Next summer we begin our excavations at Quarr Abbey with Southampton University, so keep an eye out for information on this.

The Botany group, despite the appalling summer weather this year, are continuing their work in the conservation and monitoring of two very special Island plants, Field Cow Wheat and Wood Calamint.

Carol Flux from Natural Enterprise is looking for volunteers to carry out surveys on swifts and elms. For details see the article in this Bulletin.

A well known Society member, Dr Anthony Roberts of Haseley Manor, has been awarded an OBE and we all offer him many congratulations.

Hopefully in next year’s Bulletin, I may be able to report a sudden and dazzling change in the summer weather 2012, for the Olympic Games and the good folk of the Isle of Wight.

With warm wishes to you all,

Delian Backhouse Fry. BA Hons, MSc, Arch.

NOTICE BOARD

Photo Library Manager

The Society is looking for someone to be the Photo Library Manager and run the Photo Library.
If anyone is interested and would be prepared to take this on, please contact HQ or one of the Officers.

Isle of Wight Shutes

A very big thank you to all the Bulletin readers who provided me with shute place-names via e-mail, telephone calls and letters. I now have a list of 44 shute names from the Island ! This does not include Hardingshute, which has a completely different derivation, from Old English *sciete* 'corner, nook or angle of land', rather than Old English *scyte* 'steep slope'. I have searched the English Place-Name Society county volumes looking for mainland parallels for our Island shute names. I have found only three examples of shute names used in the sense on the Island, *i.e.* 'road negotiating a hill': Shute Shelve Hill in Axbridge, Somerset, White Shoot in Blewbury, Berkshire, and White Shoot in Lambourn, Berkshire. Our shute names are not quite unique, although it is quite possible that instances cited as *sciete* names in the wider place-name literature are derived from *scyte*. White Sheet Hill in Wiltshire is a likely candidate, especially as it is crossed by what appears to be an ancient highway as shown on the OS map. So far, I have been unable to look for Hampshire examples. The English Place-Name Society volume for Hampshire is yet to be published despite being written in 1961! There is a typescript in the Hampshire County Records Office, which I intend to consult soon.

In addition to the 44 Island names, I have a reference to a Shute Cottage in Whitwell from the 1891 census. Can anyone tell me where this is or was? Also, I am interested in a possible relationship between 'shute' and 'way' names. I have the following 'way' names from the Island: Hillway (Bembridge), Holloway (Ventnor- probably Old Shute), Redway, Sandway (near Blackwater) and Sandy Way (Shorwell). I would be very grateful to hear of other examples.

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Help with Surveys

Natural Enterprise is based on the Isle of Wight and passes profits to its charity, the Island 2000 Trust, in order to support community wildlife projects and environmental research.

We are hoping that members of the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society can help us with a couple of surveys that we are currently conducting:

Save Our Swifts

Since 1994 over half of the entire Swift population in South East England has been lost. This is likely to be the result of complex and interlinking factors both here and in their wintering grounds. We would now like to track down the real hotspots of swift activity, the places where these birds congregate in Island towns and villages; the places where they are most likely to stay and breed. Given this information it will be possible to not only conserve nest sites for the future, but also to create complementary new sites through the use of special nest boxes on existing buildings and swift-friendly designs in new buildings and redevelopments.

Please contribute to our swift survey at:
http://www.gifttonature.org.uk/pages/projects/37-save-our-swifts

Elm Project 2012

There are many young elms present in our hedgerows but these often succumb to disease when they are about 20 years old. We are interested in any which are older than this and still healthy.

As a general guide these trees would have a trunk with a diameter over 15cm (ones that you can't quite get both hands around at about chest height) that look healthy: no dead bits, no dying leaves in the summer.

If you know of any elms fulfilling this criteria, please complete our survey at http://www.gifttonature.org.uk/pages/projects/9-elm-project

Carol Flux

Peloria in the Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)

Scrub clearance by the National Trust at Haddon's Pits, Luccombe has not only improved access on the site but has also disturbed the ground. This may have helped to promote the profusion of Foxgloves flowering amongst the Bracken just beyond the fence line on the northern edge of the site, in early June. The large amount of variation in flower colour, with some specimens being almost white, suggests that the origin of at least some of the plants may not be completely wild.

During a visit to the site on 2nd June 2012 in search of late migrant birds, I was surprised to see that one of the Foxgloves had an unusual flower at the top of the flower spike. The colouration was the same as for a normal Foxglove flower but, unlike the standard tube shape, the structure was a large disc, not measured, but estimated to be greater than 5cm in diameter. This is shown in the photograph which was taken a few days later, on 4th June 2012. (**Photo, page 16**)

As I had never before seen anything like this aberration, I searched the Internet for relevant information and found that it is a genetic abnormality known as 'peloria', which can be found in both wild and cultivated Foxgloves, and in other plant species.

Mark Buckley

The Juniper Shieldbug

Dave Dana photographed this insect on 26th February 2012 in his garden in Wroxall **(Photo, page 16)**.
It was not recorded in Morey, 1909 and the first Island record was made by Oliver Frazer's father at Freshwater in 1948 when he took three specimens from Lawson's cypress. This is interesting.

What is still the main textbook on Shieldbugs, published in 1959, states: "Ripe juniper berries are the principal food and there is no evidence to indicate that this bug ever feeds upon any other plant" and that "it is found in juniper woods where these are of a lowland or downland form".

In 1962 one was found on a Nootka cypress in Berkshire and bleeding was confirmed in 1973 on Lawson's cypress in Surrey. Other conifers have since hosted this bug. Dave Dana's specimen was found on a cultivated dwarf cypress. There is evidence that this bug even lives on "Leylandii".

Juniper as a native plant has declined nationally, but it has never been anything but very rare on the Island and only two small bushes remain, on Compton Down. Cultivated junipers however are probably present in gardens.

The first record of the shieldbug after 1948 was from Borthwood in 1990 and since then there have only been eleven records. Wilson Frazer's record from 1948 seems to have pre-dated by 14 years the bug's habitat change as noted nationally.

One other interesting point about Dave's record is that his date of 26th February is an early one. The 1959 textbook (Southwood and Leston) gives late March as the earliest emergence date. A book of 2003 (Hawkins) gives 1st April. I found an active individual on 21st February 2009 at Osborne and a torpid one on 9th February 2005 at the Botanic Gardens. Are theses early dates due to our southerly situation or to global warming?

David Biggs
Hemiptera Recorder

Are Green-winged Orchids in decline?

The Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) is currently running a Threatened Plants Project. Each year, they request detailed surveys of selected sites for a suite of nationally threatened species. This year, one of the species is the Green-winged Orchid (*Anacamptis morio*, formerly *Orchis morio*).
We are fortunate on the Island to have many sites for Green-winged Orchids. The Rifle Ranges meadow at Porchfield is a classic site with numbers of flowering plants annually in the high thousands. At Thorley churchyard, with careful management, the small patch of orchids has gradually increased in number from single figures in the 1990s to some 90 plants this spring. In 1987, when the Society carried out a botanical survey of the Wydcombe Estate near Whitwell , a tiny handful of plants were discovered. This year, Dave Dana counted over 50 in one field. **(Photo, page 16)**

However, not all sites are doing so well. East Ashey Cemetery was a flagship site for this orchid, with thousands of flowering plants colouring the grass. This year, it was a struggle to find 50 and these were thinly scattered and subject to being mown off. At one time, the flower-rich grassland borders of the cemetery were left uncut during the season. These areas now support very few Green-winged Orchids and the cemetery has become so intensively used that there is little room for wild flowers.

In the course of my work, I have had cause this spring to visit two large houses set in extensive gardens, where plans have been submitted to build in the gardens. Both of these properties had former owners who were immensely proud of their Green-winged Orchid lawns. At one of the gardens, in Ryde, I discovered that the orchid lawn has been left unmown for years and has become scrubbed over. At the second garden, in Bembridge, the lawns have been intensively and regularly mown. In both sites there were no orchids to be seen. I'm guessing that they have been lost from one site through neglect and the second site from too rigorous mowing. Orchids can tolerate this for a short time but perhaps not for many years in succession. However, this may not be the case. Military cemeteries are always kept very

neat and tidy and the grass is mown very frequently. Parkhurst Military Cemetery still manages to produce a few Green-winged Orchids each year. They flower for a brief period between mowings. This year, the wet spring meant that conditions were not conducive for mowing and they fared rather better here.

Wild flowers in gardens are particularly vulnerable to the whims of their owners. One of my neighbours had a front lawn full of Autumn Ladies-tresses orchids but last year their lawns were converted to hard paving and the orchids have gone.

It is very easy to assume that because we are used to seeing plants in particular locations that they will always be there. Sadly, that is not always the case and a sudden change in management can easily result in their loss. That is why it is so important to continue to record, even in sites which are considered to be well surveyed. It is also, sadly, why the national list of threatened plants is so long.

Colin Pope

Book Review **Reissue of 'A Land' – first in three decades**

If you have read any of the articles or reports or attended either of the meetings on Jacquetta Hawkes over the last couple of years – or even if you haven't – you may be interested to know that her seminal work *'A Land'* has recently been reissued for the first time in over thirty years. The edition, in hardback, is very attractively produced with a new introduction. As we go to press a few copies are available in Waterstone's, Newport, in the 'local' section (to the right as one enters the shop), but these will obviously vary according to demand and new copies can easily be reordered. An excellent review of the new edition follows by Dr Margaret Jackson, whose interest and research into Jacquetta has spearheaded the Society's recent talks and papers.

Alan Phillips

'A Land' by Jacquetta Hawkes

It is good to see that a new edition of Jacquetta's book 'A Land' has recently been published by Harper Collins in the Collins Nature Library. This is a series of classic British nature writing consisting of re-issues of seminal works chosen by Robert Macfarlane, the well-known nature writer. Originally published in 1951, 'A Land' grew out of Jacquetta's work as historical adviser to the Festival of Britain, for which she was awarded the OBE. It was completely different from the conventional books on archaeology which she had produced earlier, and was widely acclaimed by critics and became an immediate best-seller. Although it is probably unlikely to become a best-seller today the critical response to the new edition has so far been very favourable. The archaeologist Michael Shanks has described it as a prose poem, a superb example of the archaeological imagination, of creative engagement with the past. The writer Adam Nicolson has chosen it as one of his five favourite books about England, describing it as "a sweep through the whole of time, as seen in the rocks, landscapes, art and imagination of the English people". In his view, "no-one has ever written more beautifully about the spirit of England". Robert Macfarlane, in his introduction to the new edition, describes it as "a flamboyant history of Planet England and a sensorily supercharged call to get back to the land". He sees it as a missing link in the literature of nature and landscape, in which past and present are pushed into vibrant contact.

I have read this book several times now, and dipped into it many times more, but I still find it difficult to define precisely what it is about. At first reading I was puzzled by the fact that it did not seem to fit into any particular category, but as time went on I began to realise that this is in fact one of its strengths, and with each successive reading I find it more and more fascinating and intriguing. The two main themes of the book are the creation of the land (starting from a geological base) and the growth of consciousness, which Jacquetta developed by interweaving scientific facts with archaeology, myth, social and cultural history, art, imagination and personal memory. It was the resulting creative

synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity, the scientific and the personal, beautifully expressed in lyrical prose, which I believe gave her such a distinctive voice as a writer. She also possessed the storyteller's ability to draw the reader in: "I must begin with a white-hot young earth dropping into its place like a fly into an unseen four-dimensional cobweb, caught up in a delicate tissue of forces where it assumed its own inevitable place, following the only path, the only orbit open to it". Some of the science may well be out of date now, but that is really not important. The enduring value of the book lies in the imaginative connections Jacquetta made between all areas of human knowledge and experience. If, like me, you are the product of a conventional academic education with rigid subject boundaries, her holistic perspective will certainly challenge your thinking!

Everyone will find something different to like in the book, but my favourite chapter, the one I keep coming back to again and again, is chapter four, 'An Aside on Consciousness'. Although she called it 'an aside' this chapter seems to me to be in many respects the philosophical heart of the book. It is where she explored her deep sense of the unity of all life, the oneness of everything. She wrote in the preface: "I see modern men enjoying a unity with trilobites of a nature more deeply significant than anything at present understood in the processes of biological evolution..... The nature of this unity cannot be stated, for it remains always just beyond the threshold of intellectual comprehension". Nevertheless, in chapter four she did attempt to express this sense of unity in words: "Even now I imagine that I can feel all the particles of the universe nourishing my consciousness just as my consciousness informs all the particles of the universe..... 'Me' is a fiction, though a convenient fiction and one of significance to the consciousness of which I am the temporary home..... Consciousness is melting us all down together again - earth, air, fire and water, past and future, lobsters, butterflies, meteors, and men..... As for me, what other force has driven me to attempt this book?"

So congratulations to Robert Macfarlane for choosing to include 'A Land' in his series of long-lost seminal works. Let's hope that it will also rekindle interest in Jacquetta Hawkes as archaeologist and writer. (I know that already Christine Finn, her biographer, is working on a programme about her which is planned to go out on BBC Radio4 in the autumn, so that is something to look out for.) The book is available at Waterstone's at £20 (hardback only). I should point out that, sadly, it does not include the two coloured drawings which Henry Moore did specially for the book, much to Jacquetta's delight. Anyone who wants a book which includes these drawings will have to look for second-hand copies, but only the more expensive ones include them, so you need to check carefully before you buy.

Margaret Jackson

Reports of General Meetings

14th January **From Poole to Newtown**

In the first half of the 20th century Hubert Poole wrote many papers on the Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Ages for the Society's *Proceedings*, as well as presenting to the Society his collection of plate glass slides of archaeological and geological interest. The collection has recently been returned from the IW Council store, and these formed the first, and most substantial, part of **Dr David Tomalin's** presentation, which he subtitled: **The Man Who Loved Flint**. They may have reflected one man's enthusiasm but they also present a record of the early years of archaeological study since the inclusion of this subject in the Society's title in 1927. And it is a long time after Poole's superb illustrations of stone tools graced the early volumes of the *Proceedings* before we see any similar illustrations again.

Hubert Poole himself remains something of an enigma, with the most likely surviving photo of him at Werrar, in 1933. He was often accompanied out in the field by Gerald Sherwin – and there is no definitive picture of the latter either! Two almost identical obituaries of Poole, which appear in 1945, reveal him to have been "a tailor by trade" and "in business on his own account" at Lake, but with interests in antiques, archaeology, geology, and natural history – he had in fact already been in the Society as a lepidopterist before he introduced archaeology to members.

David proceeded to show a large selection of Poole's slides which had been transferred to PowerPoint by the ever-capable hands of Mike Cahill. A stunning picture of the Longstone in 1936 showed it with the land actually cultivated behind, quite different to how we see it now or remember it before deforestation. And Poole was transfixed by the now-famous 'tribrach', which had been found on the Undercliff Beach in 1859. There is nothing quite like it in European prehistory, and he likened it to the symbol on a staff carried by the Ancient Order of Buffaloes; whatever the case, it certainly seems to relate to the strong bull and horn symbolism we find in prehistoric imagery.

But Poole's principal sites for collecting palaeoliths – Old Stone Age implements dating in some cases to 600,000 years BP – were Priory Bay, Bleakdown and Great Pan Farm. Bleakdown was being dug for gravel during the 1930s when pits were individually owned by the Vectis Stone Company and the firm called 'Cheeks'. As the gravel was laboriously extracted by hand, many implements were found, and Poole obviously investigated the site well, writing up details of all the objects found. Many of them he transported to the British Museum for identification by Reginald Smith. Are the implements of different periods, or did they just stay in situ for much longer? Several pictures of the Bleakdown gravels have also survived, showing how the beds were laid down in a meandering river valley. Nowadays the site is covered over with household waste.

A slide of Priory Bay in 1936 **(Photos, page-15)** showed how different it once looked. 250 known implements have come from the Bay, and can be compared to the tools left by Homo Heidelbergensis at Boxgrove in Sussex. Poole's finds have become even more interesting since these new discoveries have been made. It has been pointed out that the flint scatters may mean that the hunter-gatherers at Boxgrove were sitting round in conversational groups.

The probable picture of Poole at Werrar, taken at high tide, gives one a great regard for the tenacity of the man, standing in unappealing mud seemingly in the back of beyond. Tools from this area – tranchet axes, burins, scrapers and cores – date to the Mesolithic, c.6000 BC. David drew comparisons with the finds at Wootton-Quarr and, further afield, the Mesolithic campsite of Star Carr in North Yorkshire, which was discovered shortly after Hubert's death. Many of the Island's tranchet axes have been found in little drowned inlets such as Newtown Creek, the Medina, Wootton Creek, where Mesolithic groups appear to have been exploiting particular habitats and employing specialised tools.

The review concluded with the one other surviving photo of Mr Poole, a side-portrait of him carrying a walking-stick and looking quite elderly, though in fact he was only 65 years old when he died.

The second part of the talk centred round the work recently carried out at **Newtown** by Delian, David and the archaeology team. Planning permission had finally been given for the demolition of Key [Quay] Cottage, a brick structure on the south side of the old High Street. The team were called in to rescue any

archaeology on site. It turned out that there was a much earlier house beneath the one to be demolished.

Trenches dug by a digger in a medieval burgage plot called Key Close were found to be sterile on the slope to the shore of the creek. Near the building line of High Street were spreads of oyster shells and pottery of late Norman and Tudor date. A fragment of Bembridge Limestone mortar came out of the upper midden, as well as a whetstone which was bored through at the top with a rather unusual pattern. David tantalised us with a reminder that Newtown was once within the manor of Swainston (a Viking name), that the Vikings overwintered on the Island in the 10th and 11th centuries, and that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* speaks of base camp as well as a bloody confrontation up one of the Island's creeks…

Sorting out the large range of pottery finds turned into quite a job. There were many samples of rims and handles, dating from Early Medieval to modern times. Some cooking pots could be identified as Saxo-Norman, i.e. before and after 1066. There was a good deal of Verwood ware, the problem here being dating as this variety was made continuously by Dorset potters between 1250 and 1950, and this ware was still being taken to local markets in the early post-War years just as in medieval times! A lot of buff wares were uncovered: these and some pottery with a brick-like texture could well be local. A Tudor midden turned up some pottery from the Low Countries dating to c.1500. One handle turned out to belong not to a pot but to a very large lid, dating to c.1250/1350.

A large piece of stone extracted by the digger-driver was identified as a spur stone, once placed on the corner of a building to prevent scraping and damage by carts. This led David to muse on the interesting geology of kerbstones round Newport, pertinent at the present time in the wake of the IW Council's announcement that they intend re-concreting or tarmacing the whole of the borough – the history of the medieval town is written into its streets and we must be vigilant!

There was an amusing photo of some of the workforce taking a well-earned break under an umbrella. **(Photo, page-17)** And the digger-driver had quite recently re-cut the trenches, which raised the interesting question: should all the work begin again…?

It was Hubert Poole's view that the Society would become the driving force for archaeology on the Island in the future. David concluded his talk with the observation that the Archaeology Section has really come to life in recent times and Mr Poole would be proud of where we are now!

Alan Phillips

25th February "Over the heads and in the shadows of the Isle of Wight Dinosaurs"

An illustrated talk by Dr Stephen Sweetman
(of the University of Southampton School of Earth and Environmental Sciences)

When Steven was four years old his mother gave him a pebble from the beach at Cowes – not an ordinary pebble, but a fossilised sea urchin – and after that he was hooked on collecting fossils. His dad found a shark's tooth in Bracklesham Bay and Steve made the connection between the teeth and bones of the living and the fossilised remains of the long since dead. And that is how he became an avid palaeontologist.

In the early nineteenth century the Isle of Wight was at the forefront of palaeontological research in vertebrates. William Buckland and Gideon Mantell collected fossils from the Island, and Charles Darwin's second cousin, William Fox, found *Eocene* mammal bones.

In recent years Jerry Hooke has done most of the research on the Island. In the nineteen fifties and sixties dinosaurs were not found here. In 'Dinosaurs of the Isle of Wight', published in 2001, Martill and Naish considered only twenty-one species of dinosaur to be valid. This proved to be an underestimate. An artist's impression of the floodplain of the *Wessex Formation* depicted a sparse population of fauna and flora, with only a few large dinosaurs and plants. Steven, who was using a flour sieve to examine mud from Compton Bay, found a *theropod* (dinosaur)'s tooth and believed that adopting this method he could discover other Cretaceous species that lived there.

On the Island exposed Cretaceous rocks where dinosaur remains are to be found are restricted to two areas: Yaverland, in Sandown Bay, and Compton and Brook Bay, in the West Wight. They are the *Wealden Group* of rocks: the *Wessex Formation* overlaid by the *Vectis Formation*, once a shallow lagoon. Steven showed us a slide of a typical Wessex Formation with colour mottled over a bank of

mudstones and fluvial flint stones.

Sandstones are not a good place to find fossils, but huge *Iguanadon* footcasts can be found, and depressions in the sandstone at Chilton Chine indicate that something once trod here. A *sauropod* footprint was found in the topmost layer of the Wessex Formation. There are remarkable dinosaur footprints near Hanover Point: three dinosaur footprints in one, an *iguanadon* and two smaller species. West of the *Barnes High Formation* the fossilised remains of a number of different species of dinosaur have been found: *iguanadon*, *brachiosaurid, hypsilophodon, polacanthus, baryonychid*, as well as crocodiles.

In a bucket of mud from Yaverland Steve found two humerus bones of an amphibian in perfect condition and bone from a juvenile *hypsilophodon*. The *hypsilophodon* bed of the Wessex Formation here extends to about three metres.

In the early *Cretaceous period*, the Isle of Wight was about where Gibraltar is today. Greenhouse conditions prevailed and average temperatures were about ten degrees Celsius higher than they are today. There were considerable rain storms for most of the year, but in summer there was drought and the land here was vulnerable to wildfire. Denuded of vegetation, the land was at risk of flooding. Sediments were eroded from plant debris beds and flowed through ponds, where there was an unusual mix of terrestrial and aquatic animals. Most of the dinosaur bones come from these beds. Richard Ford found two mammal teeth here and described a new crocodile species. There were also lizard remains.

Steve applied to Southampton University for support with his sample collection, an arduous and time-consuming process of sifting intended to find the remains of smaller creatures that lived among the dinosaurs and were thus far unknown to science. The University agreed and Steve used machines to pump water up through sprinklers that washed off mud and removed fine material. The machinery was bulky and non-portable and so Steve designed his own, simpler machine. The finer particles of the residue have to be examined under a microscope.

Steven's sampling method proved very fruitful. He found teeth from dinosaurs we don't yet have a name for: *basal ornithiscians*. There was a small, very rare *sauropod* tooth and small *theropod* teeth (carnivorous). He found teeth from a very scary carnivorous dinosaur, a species of *velociraptor.* Despite their small stature, by hunting in packs they could be very dangerous to much larger creatures. From Yaverland Steven found the tooth of a flightless bird, the *troodontid* and hen's teeth from *Mesozoic* birds, the first bird remains from the Island and from *Wealden* Britain.

Among the aquatic animal remains that Steven found were fossilised fish, the earliest record of the fresh water *neosalachian* shark, salamander skull bones, bones from an amphibian that was extinct at the end of the *Pleiocene*, a number of lizard species identified by their teeth, turtle remains that are very rare in the Wessex Formation, and crocodilian teeth that were abundant on the floodplain where the dinosaurs were living.

A new pterosaur from Yaverland, very fragile and very rare, given the name of *caulkicephalus* (caulkhead) *trimicrodon,* had huge crocodile-like jaws and very long sharp teeth. Evidence of mammals living among the dinosaurs, unearthed by sieving, has considerably enlarged our understanding of these smaller creatures and increased their diversity by a factor of two. It includes the premolar teeth of a little rodent whose descendents live in the Gobi Desert, Spain, and on the Island. This is the first evidence for the *gobiconodontid* to be recorded in Britain.

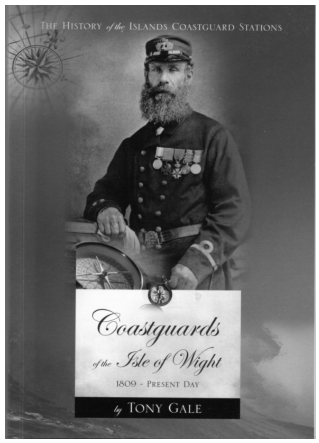
The Wessex Formation has revealed other life forms: freshwater molluscs, bivalves and gastropods, insects and a spider preserved in amber, as well as fruiting bodies useful for dating freshwater algae. These may help to establish the date of the Wessex Formation. Seeds and spores indicate the far greater diversity of plant life. Termite coprolites (dung) are very common and indicate the importance of termites in the ecosystem.

Through all this painstaking research using sieving machine and microscope, Steven has discovered a far greater variety of animal and plant life living on the floodplain of the Wessex Formation about a hundred and fifty million years ago. He showed us a new artist's impression of the densely populated scene. This was an inspirational talk, demonstrating how one man's vision and determination can advance scientific knowledge in one giant leap. I felt privileged that he had come to tell us his story.

Maggie Nelmes

10th March **Coastguards of the Isle of Wight**

Our speaker **Tony Gale** was born on the Island in the 1920s, but it was only when his work as a lawyer involved him in a smuggling case in the 1970s – cocaine being brought to the Island in cars rather than boats – that his curiosity about the subject was sparked, and after much research led on to the publication in 2005 of what is now the key text on the history of Isle of Wight Coastguards.



It might come a surprise that St Cecilia's Abbey was originally erected on the proceeds of smuggling, with extensive cellars to store the liquor. David Boyce acquired land at Appley in the 1720s and organised a smuggling routine, doing so well that he eventually employed twenty men. He was prosecuted on a number of occasions but was always acquitted through bribery of the jury. Such cases resulted in the Balloting Act of 1733, whereby a list of jurors was put into a box, then all were summoned and names of those to serve were picked out of the box at random. Boyce was eventually convicted and died in prison but Customs were unable to retrieve any moneys from the property as it was found to be mortgaged up to the hilt.

Prior to this period there had been one customs officer and four 'Riding Officers' for the Island, who could summon assistance from the troops. This was known as the 'pre-trade era', when the smuggling of leather goods, silks and tea (heavily taxed) was already rife – but not primarily liquor at this stage. This situation applied until the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, which marked the beginning of the 'scientific period' and the amalgamation of various disparate bodies to form the Coast Guard Service in 1822.

Coastguards served all round the country but generally no more than three years in a particular location so as not to get too involved with any locality. Their main role was to patrol the coastline looking out not only for smuggling activities but also vessels in distress, and they also took on other responsibilities such as noting wild birds and dealing with rare fish washed ashore! Lawlessness continued to be rife, however, and even magistrates were reluctant to convict smugglers – who would want to upset too many of the locals without even a police force in operation?

Tony then took us on a fascinating illustrated tour of the Island's Coastguard stations, which were more numerous than one might ever have imagined. Although many were built in the mid-19th century, a surprising number continued to be built as late as the 1890s, just when smuggling activities, at least in their traditional form, were coming to an end and the Coastguard service was running down. Some of the names are familiar – Brook, Brighstone, Atherfield; what follows is a few lesser-known facts about some of the others.

One of the earlier stations to be built was at Ryde, around 1836, complete with Coastguard houses; and an accompanying photo showed Ryde Pier Regatta Coastguard Race in 1906, with one of four boathouses on the pier depicted in the background. Chief Coastguard Officer at Ryde in the 1870s, William Rickard, was awarded the VC for his bravery in the Crimean War, but then imbibed too freely one night following the award and as a result was stripped of his good conduct medal! Despite this he was nevertheless buried at Ryde Cemetery with full naval honours. The Coastguard station was eventually closed down in 1921.

Springvale Coastguard station was built in 1860. A modern photo of the former Coastguard houses offers a reminder that these properties were generally constructed with no front doors but entrances to the rear, so that local smugglers would not be able to see the officers emerging! According to the 1851 Census there were four Coastguards living in ordinary cottages at Seaview: whilst there would have been a station in place, possibly at Seagrove Bay, local tradition indicates that the corresponding houses were not built until the early 1900s.

There were three locations for Coastguards in the Bembridge area. At Bembridge Point the original station was already in situ by 1823, then new houses were put up following the building of the embankment in 1880. The station at Forelands had been built by the 1860s and is still manned by Auxiliary Coastguards to this day; but it has been difficult to establish whether the two groups of Coastguards at the Point and Forelands were always under one command. Culver Down station is of

much more modern vintage, having been built around 1904; the houses remain but Culver Haven public house now occupies the site of the former signal station.

The first record of Coastguards in Sandown is regarding the baptism of a child at the Coastguard station in 1832: it was still being manned in 1908, and the station and houses still stand in Culver Road. Shanklin Coastguard station was even earlier, being built at the southern end of the Esplanade as a preventive station for one officer in 1820; it was likewise still in use in 1908. Shanklin Chine was of course notorious for smuggling.

Ventnor Coastguard houses in West Street were probably built in the early 1840s. A small station was also being manned at Orchard Bay by 1841, and a remarkable photo taken in 1912 shows an early aircraft flying above it. Woody Bay (aka Whitwell) Coastguard station was built only in 1874, whilst another at Niton – also known as St Catherine's – was in place before 1862.

Another early Coastguard station was known as Freshwater Bay or Freshwater Gate, in situ by 1827, though the construction of the terrace of houses (in what is now Coastguard Lane) did not get underway till 1859. Astonishingly, the Needles Coastguard station was not built until 1907, the predominant aim here no doubt being the observation of and signalling to shipping, rather than chasing smugglers. Records indicate that Coastguards operated from Yarmouth several decades before the building of a station and houses in 1862. A breakwater which had been constructed across the harbour by 1838 proved a bone of contention with local fishermen, not only in that it impeded fishing but also meant a closer watch being kept on activities such as rafting in brandy tubs!

Tony Gale's engrossing talk covered most of the 26 Coastguard stations on the Island which he has researched in detail and which form the basis of his excellent book *Coastguards of the Isle of Wight: 1809 – Present Day*. It is a mine of information on a unique aspect of Island history to be found nowhere else: go out and buy a copy if you don't already own one.

Alan Phillips

14th April **An Oyibo`s view of Nigeria**

You may be forgiven for imagining, as I did, an Oyibo to be a mythical bird, forever circling overhead and observing all human activity far below. But no, the Oyibo in question, clad in traditional fez and robe, is a former president of our Society, Allan Insole, by definition a 'white man' or 'foreigner', who has lived and worked in Nigeria. In his illustrated talk he did, however, give us a sweeping bird's eye view of life in this turbulent but fascinating country.

The oil industry in Nigeria, known as 'Shell', set up its own training programme for its workers, under the auspices of the University of Aberdeen, and persuaded Allan to go and teach Geology there. He was based at a town in the Niger Delta where a hundred graduate trainees underwent a six-month intensive course in Maths, Chemistry and Information Technology. They were then separated into their specialist subject areas, such as Engineering, to continue their studies.

Nigeria has a population of about 160 million, making it the most populous country in Africa, and most people live in cities in the south. There are about 250 different ethnic groups and some 500 languages are spoken, more than in any other country in Africa. 51% of Nigerians are Muslim. With this great diversity of human life, is it so surprising that there is ethnic and religious conflict? For an Oyibo to travel anywhere in this country is extremely dangerous. There is a huge network of organised crime, especially drug trafficking, political violence and corruption. In the Niger Delta there is civil war, and street robberies are part of daily life.

Other sources of danger are wildlife. Mosquitoes in the Delta carry the deadly cerebral malaria, whereas the tsetse fly carries sleeping sickness and a host of other diseases. Most snakes are constrictors, but Nigerians do not discriminate between dangerous and harmless snakes: they kill them all. There are scorpions, too, and waterborne bacteria cause stomach complaints.

There are huge variations in climate, giving rise to a great variety of landscapes. In the Delta the climate is monsoonal with a wet and dry season. Torrential rain causes flooding and parts of the towns are cut off. In the dry season Saharan dust is a problem. Just inland from the Delta there is tropical rainforest that gives way to Guinea forest and then to savannah, and this becomes increasingly drier as

you travel northwards into the interior. On the coast there is mangrove swamp up all the creeks and salt marsh. These areas are rich in wildlife. There is also freshwater swamp that is non-seasonal. Felling and not replacing trees adds to the pressure on the environment. Women need to collect firewood for cooking and sometimes they chop down trees. Between 1986 and 2000 most of the mangrove was destroyed by oil pollution and the Delta silted up.

Nigeria is dominated by Pre-Cambrian rocks, the oldest being 2.5 billion years old. The Delta rocks are only 120 million years old. The reason is plate tectonics. South America and Africa were once joined together until the plates drifted apart and there was major rifting down the Atlantic.

There is twelve kilometres depth of sediment in the Delta and the temperatures are just right to break it down into oil and gas. The oilfields extend up to 250 kilometres offshore. The climate is humid, and soluble minerals in the rocks are washed away leaving iron oxides. Deposits of bitumen, degraded oil, were found here before the First World War, but the first real exploration was carried out by Shell in the 1950s. In 1956 the first commercial well was dug 12,000 feet below the surface. Shell and other companies dug wells right across the Delta, which is criss-crossed with pipelines. Then they began to explore offshore.

Nigeria is the world's second largest producer of oil, yet oil wrecks the economy. Other industries have been abandoned and oil companies have taken over with no regard for the health of the local population or for the environment. The result of this carelessness and lack of government regulation is that the Niger Delta is becoming increasingly uninhabitable. Gas flares illuminate the night sky, representing a colossal waste of energy and money. An estimated 70% of Nigeria's natural gas is wasted by flaring. It releases toxins into the atmosphere, some carcinogenic, together with large amounts of methane and carbon dioxide, both greenhouse gases. Although flaring has been illegal in Nigeria since 1984, Shell, the biggest culprit, has made little effort to reduce it and it has grown proportionally with oil production. Mud that is drilled up in exploration should be cleaned, but it isn't and it pollutes. People use pipes as walkways and playgrounds, but they are badly maintained and leak, killing fish and destroying mangrove ecosystems. Corrosion of pipelines and tankers accounts for 50% of oil spills. Sparks can cause explosions. In 2006 over two hundred people were killed in the Lagos area in an oil line explosion. Sabotage accounts for some 28% of oil spills. People tap into a pipeline to extract oil, sometimes damaging or destroying it. They can sell the oil on the black market and oil siphoning is big business. Few Nigerians living in the Niger Delta benefit from oil wealth, yet many are directly affected by breathing problems and skin lesions, loss of basic human rights and access to food when the land is polluted, as well as to clean water and to the ability to work.

The loss of much mangrove swamp to pollution means habitat loss for wildlife. Most affected are rare and endangered species, such as the manatee and the pygmy hippopotamus. No guidebooks have been published in Nigeria about its very rich and diverse flora and fauna, but Allan gave us an outline. There are palm trees: raffia palms from which palm wine can be extracted from the top of the stem. Other plants are acacia trees, bamboo, horsetails, and succulents growing on dense rock that soak up rainwater and store it to use sparingly until the next rain comes. Insect life includes the Emperor scorpion, that isn't very dangerous, the giant centipede and the giant African land snail, that is edible. There are the equivalent of the South American soldier ants, termites, dragonflies and damselflies. Amphibians and reptiles include bullfrogs and various lizards. As for birds, there are some European lookalikes, such as the pied wagtail, the West African thrush and the cattle egret, as well as many varieties of weaver bird that build their nests to keep out snakes, and sunbirds, nectar feeders that are the African equivalent of hummingbirds. There are various species of kingfisher, the pied kingfisher being twice the size of our own, hornbills and vultures. The hooded vulture is not as big as the East African equivalent and the palm nut vulture is the only vegetarian of its kind. Some small rodents, such as the greater cane rat, are sold at the roadside for food and monkeys are kept as pets. Animal skulls are used for juju. Allan described the plants grown to produce the indigenous people's staple diet, not all originating from West Africa, and the animals they keep for food.

Prehistoric rock paintings of cattle show animals with no hump, unlike the cattle kept nowadays. Terracotta figures dating from the Iron Age (500BC to 200AD) and wax and bronze castings found in Nigeria featured in an exhibition in the British Museum recently. Human habitation of this region dates

back to at least 9000BC.

In the nineteenth century the Islamic Jihad in Northern Nigeria lasted until the British and French took control of the country, towards the end of the century. Since 2002 there has been a spate of clashes between government forces and Islamists belonging to 'Boko Haram'. These activists want to establish Sharia law in the northern states where the vast majority of the population are Muslim.

Allan told us about the poor provision of education in Nigeria and the dire state of the roads. He showed us slides of a variety of means of transport, including customised lorries proclaiming 'Only Jesus Christ Can Save' or 'God is Great' and illustrated in bright colours in the Christian South and in a more subdued fashion in the Muslim North. Roadside cafes with franchises are springing up everywhere; outside they look individual, but inside they are uniformly like McDonalds.

Thank you, Allan, for sharing with us your memories and opinions of an extraordinary country facing enormous problems. Will there be a strong leader willing to rein in the oil industry before the Niger Delta is completely destroyed? Will corruption in high places be curtailed? Will there be a fairer distribution of wealth to ease ethnic tensions? And will Christians and Muslims ever live in harmony in this land?

Maggie Nelmes

26th May Visit to the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens near Romsey

It was a hot but windy day and we were greatly relieved to abandon the close confines of our coach. At the visitor centre we each received a plan of the gardens and a brief explanation and then we were released into 180 acres of parkland and woodland for the next six hours.

Sir Harold Hillier had a mission: to bring together a comprehensive collection of trees that could thrive in his Hampshire Garden, so as to study, conserve and enjoy them. His grandfather had founded the successful Hillier Nurseries and his father was a world authority on conifers. He began to create the Garden and arboretum in 1953 and included in it many plants collected by his father and grandfather. He himself was a tireless collector of plants, corresponding with garden owners, curators and nurserymen all over the world to ask for cuttings, seeds and plants. He visited many of the large gardens, searching for rare plants to propagate, and received material from some of the early plant collectors. Towards the end of his life Sir Harold travelled widely, visiting people with whom he had corresponded for many years and returning from visits to the Far East, Australasia and North America laden with plants.

In 1951 Sir Harold bought Jermyns House with its forty-one acres of land for his plant collection because of its chalk-free soil. He purchased more land in the Sixties to extend both his nurseries and the Gardens. In 1977, aged 72, he transferred ownership of the 110 acre Gardens to a charitable trust whose sole trustee was Hampshire County Council and it has since extended the Gardens to 180 acres.

I began my tour of the Gardens by strolling through the Acer Valley, where I enjoyed the natural setting of English oaks, ferns and wild flowers: cow parsley, garlic mustard, forget-me-nots and the remains of bluebells. It was peaceful here and I could listen to the birdsong.

In the Pinetum I discovered an amazing weeping pine, *Picea Abies 'Virgata'*, with huge cones, from whose horizontal branches hang rows of twigs, like washing on a line, reaching right down to the ground. Another conifer that attracted my attention was the elegant *Picea Asperata 'var Heterolepis'* from Western China, Christmas tree-like, its soft new foliage iced-green.

Conifers soon gave way to deciduous trees: various oaks, limes, maples, cherries, and spread before me to the north were hay meadows dotted with pink and white flowering trees. Bordering the meadows rose tall, skinny poplars and other trees, including a magnificent spreading English oak. Certain trees are labelled 'champion tree' because they are a particularly fine specimen or rarity. A greater spotted woodpecker flew onto a branch close by me and a jackdaw dive-bombed a crow, over and over again, to knock it off a signpost. When the crow eventually flew off, still protesting raucously, the jackdaw gave chase.

I crossed the oak field and sat on a bench in the shade of a mature poplar, watching orange-tip butterflies flitting about the meadow, as I ate my sandwiches. Then I approached the pond. On a hot day this area was at its most enticing. There were shady and sunny areas with seating that overlooked the

water, iris and ferns lining the banks, small fish with orange fins and tails squabbling over a freshly fallen leaf and damselflies mating on the wing. Among the reeds I spied the statue of a naked woman bathing and, poised in flight above the water, a magnificent metallic dragonfly.

In the Bog Garden above the pond I ventured across the stream on a freely suspended bridge that swayed. Here the foliage was lush with giant *Gunnera Manicata* leaves concealing huge flower spikes and thickets of bamboo. I watched a blackbird sunbathing on a bank, beak agape, and admired a young Ginkgo Biloba tree with its fan-shaped leaves.

An All-Ability Path leads from the pond up the steep slope to Jermyns House Restaurant. A solid slate bridge of recent construction crosses the upper pond and the path makes a sharp turn towards a viewing platform overlooking the bog garden. Beyond this I discovered the Gurkha Memorial Garden. On the very top of the bank stands a traditional Nepalese resting place, the Chautara, a stepped stone platform where travellers could unburden themselves of their heavy baskets with ease. Chautaras were built along main routes in the foothills of the Himalayas, often as a memorial to a loved one. This Chautara is a memorial to twelve Gurkha regiments whose badges are displayed around its edge.

From here I dropped down into the Himalayan Valley: a dell of rhododendrons and azaleas in vibrant colours. This was one of the first areas of the Gardens to be planted because it was too steep for the nurseries. The heavy clay soil was replaced with free-draining, more acidic soil and the bank terraced. The majority of the plants here are native to Himalayan countries.

A wedding reception was taking place in Jermyns House Restaurant on the afternoon of our visit and I watched the guests arrive from Magnolia Avenue and the Scree Gardens to either side, planted with dwarf shrubs, especially conifers, herbs and alpines. This is one of the oldest parts of the Gardens, begun in 1953. On the eastern side of this area I found heathers sheltered by a variety of trees. A temporary exhibition called ‘Art in the Garden’ involved displaying sculptures, by many artists and made of a variety of materials, throughout the Gardens, and this area of dwarf shrubs was an ideal setting. Many were representations of flower-heads in glass and steel.

From here I found a path leading across the road and into Brentry Wood, a mixture of conifers, especially Scots Pine, acers, rhododendrons and azaleas. The air was laden with perfume and each rhododendron vying for attention with the next, so vivid were the colours. I was well aware that in this heat we were only just in time to enjoy the wonderful display. Flowers on the edge of the wood beside the road were being scorched by the sunshine.

I crossed back over the road and turned westwards into Spring Walk, admiring the beautiful white lace corollaries of hydrangeas. The twisting paths revealed splendid new blossoms at every turn: hydrangeas, camellias and viburnums, planted with a variety of trees in the 1980s, and brought me to the Centenary Border. This was created to celebrate the centenary of the founding of the Hilliers Nursery in 1964. It consists of a 220 meter long double border. In 2010 it was restructured and is now a work in progress. It dissects Ten Acres, a field originally used for nursery production, but after ten years Sir Harold added it to his arboretum to give him more space for his collection. I was delighted to find magnolias in flower in Ten Acres West: a variety of delicate shades of pink, white, cream and yellow, as well as petals of different sizes and shapes. Another attraction in this area is the peony border with both tree and herbaceous peonies coming into flower. Some of the latter have huge gaudy flowers with big centres. They originate from China, where they have been cultivated for over two thousand years. They arrived in Europe in the late eighteenth century and are renowned for their ease of cultivation and sensational blooms. Some of the first European cultivars were planted here.

These Gardens hold thirteen National Plant Collections, under the auspices of Plant Heritage, an organisation established to save the UK’s rare garden plants. These are hornbeams, katsura trees from East Asia, dogwoods, hazels, cotoneaster, witch hazels, Hillier plants raised or named by the Nurseries or Gardens, privets, stone or tanbark oak, dawn redwood, Christmas berry, pines and oaks. As natural habitats all over the world are being destroyed, these Gardens have an increasingly important role to play in conservation and biodiversity. They currently grow many plants that are rare to cultivation and over two hundred threatened plant species. They take part in various conservation programmes, including biodiversity projects at local, national and international level. As well as wild plants, many garden plants are becoming rare, replaced by more recent selections, or neglected for various reasons. Sir Harold Hillier set about conserving these plants, too.

Priory Bay Sea Wall in 1936`s.
Poole to Newtown - Page 7, Priory Bay Site - Page 26

Priory Bay Sea Wall in 2012.

Green-winged Orchid. Page 4

Juniper Shieldbug. Page 4

Peloria in Foxglove. Page 3

Adder`s Tongue Fern. Page

Westover Manor. Page 20

"The Three Wise Ladies"
Poole to Newtown. Page– 8

Ashmolean Visit Page - 26

Rollright Stones - Page 26

Tomalin Jug ?? Page 26

Sir Harold entrusted his Gardens to Hampshire County Council and it is not only maintaining his huge collections, but also running education programmes for adults and children throughout the year and inviting schools to come for study days. It pays for the upkeep of the Gardens by charging entrance fees, providing cafes and a restaurant, catering for weddings and other special occasions, and providing conference facilities. I was impressed with the Council's shouldering of such a huge responsibility, with its vision of a future for conservation through education, and with how, at the same time, it has managed to turn the Gardens into a commercially viable concern.

I returned to the coach greatly enriched by my day spent in this paradise and we are all very grateful to Dave Trevan for organising the trip so well.

Maggie Nelmes

16th June Visit to Westover Manor, Calbourne

From the village green in front of the church there is a fine view of Westover House, perched on the hillside above the lake. It is an elegant Georgian house, designed in 1813 by the celebrated architect, John Nash, who also designed Newport's Guildhall. Nash was then living in his romantic East Cowes Castle, a huge turreted mansion set high up on the hillside overlooking Cowes. Nash was by this time renowned for his use of cement stucco laid over brick and painted white to lighten the facades of houses and terraces. Johanna Jones, local historian and former President of our Society, describes how at Westover House "he used this technique to achieve a masterpiece of classical themes executed with delicacy and panache. The entrance front has beautifully placed windows, a porch supported on classical pillars, a deep plain frieze hiding the roof line and a triangular pediment as the central feature of the frontage... The effect is softened by a single storey curved bay on each side of the entrance, simple and graceful features. The garden front repeats the classical style but here a pillared veranda shades the rooms and creates an informal link between the house and garden." Johanna was to have led us on a tour of the exterior of the Georgian house and the eighteenth century lodge that preceded it, but she was unable to do so, due to ill health. Instead she kindly prepared some information for us, taken from one of her books.

John Weeks welcomed some thirty members of our Society to his estate, in the courtyard behind the older house, where the stables and probably the service rooms and servants' quarters were situated. Johanna describes the house as "a Hunting Box... a typical large rectangular building with a central entrance, long windows on each side, a deep roof with dormer windows and tall chimneys." We entered the courtyard through an archway and facing us at the far end was a clock tower. A mounting block below it indicated stables and sure enough, tucked away behind the right-hand side of the courtyard, I found an archway leading to stables where several fine-looking horses were kept.

Mr Weeks introduced us to one of his gardeners, Neil Clayton, who was assigned to lead us on a tour of the estate. We followed him out of the courtyard and around to the front of the house where I saw some beautiful conifers dotted about the hillside. We rounded the garden front and crossed the lawn into the woods. Here we found two wood carvings of maidens with long hair and one of a man, all made by Island sculptor Paul Sivell from a fallen tree. The ice house stands on a hillock beneath a huge beech tree. It is contemporary with the Georgian house. Behind the farm buildings we discovered a grain house, raised on staddlestones and partly rebuilt. We crossed a walled yard where a small flock of sheep and some handsome poultry were wandering and identified what Johanna describes as "a fine example of an eighteenth century wall", explaining that "the large stones laid in lines are interspersed with fine lines of smaller flints or chopped stone". She adds that there are examples of this kind of wall construction in many barns and farm buildings in the West Wight. We passed through a gate into the beautiful walled gardens. Tall hedges provide extra shelter and shade. I admired the cottage garden plants in the borders and the exotic looking cut-leafed elder with dark purple leaves offsetting deep pink flowers and a subtle elderflower scent. We also found an unusually constructed sweet pea arbour with delicate tracery. In the fruit and vegetable garden there were peaches growing on espaliers on the high

walls.

Here our quick tour ended. Neil is one of only two gardeners on the estate and this is a busy time of year for him with so many plants to tend. Now we were free to explore on our own. Colin Pope took us to the front of the house to admire a fine tulip tree and a monkey puzzle, the Chilean pine, displaying huge female cones, unusual for such a young tree. He pointed out a large plane tree and said that it was probably one of the original plantings on the estate. He also singled out a Southern beech, the deciduous species. The lake at the bottom of the drive is fed by a chalk stream, the Caul Bourne, which rises in the hills above the village and flows down to the sea through Shalfleet, after passing through three watermills. In its very clear water there used to be trout. The lake is flanked by a row of very large willows beside the driveway leading to a low-arched bridge and a two-storey flint lodge, described by Johanna as "Nash at his best: a rustic use of material with Gothic details in the windows and doors, making it an elegant introduction to the house." It reminds me of a tollhouse, due to its many facades, each with a window on each floor facing the approach roads and entrance to the estate. On the lake we saw coots and a family of mallards that climbed out of the water onto a floating platform. Yellow flag irises were flowering on the margins. Near the romantic looking bridge with its dressed stone parapets we found a Judas tree from the Mediterranean, with soft leaves.

Colin told me that the mimulus was flowering in the clear running water of the stream that flows out of the lake and down Winkle Street. Known locally as "monkey musk", it has bright yellow, trumpet-shaped flowers dotted with red. Watercress, with its clusters of tiny white flowers, also grows here, and the stream attracts a variety of birds, especially wagtails, and sometimes when it's quiet, kingfishers.

Thanks to Mr and Mrs Weeks, Neil Clayton, Johanna Jones and Colin Pope, we spent a very enjoyable and instructive afternoon at Westover.

(Photo – page 17)

Maggie Nelmes

Reports of Section Meetings

Access

12th February. Winter waders walk

14 members met on the Green at St Helens on a cold, grey morning for a walk along Duver Road, down by St Helen's Common and the woods to the Duver and the sea. Then by the harbour, along the causeway with the old mill ponds either side, up Mill Lane returning to our cars. The temperature did lift a little during the course of the morning. A pair of Buzzards were spotted at St Helen's Common with one co-operatively sitting in a tree, were we could study it through the telescope. The tide was perfect to see waders although fishermen were down by the edge of the sea displacing the waders further round in the harbour. Brading Marshes were still frozen, so many of the ducks had been forced into the harbour. We had an excellent variety of waders with Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Knot, Greenshank, Redshank, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit and Oystercatcher. No Lapwing were seen. On the millpond sea wall we had a good view of a Mediterranean Gull in winter plumage and some Rock Pipit amongst a number of Grey Plover. Other Gulls seen were Black-headed, Common, Herring and Great Black-backed Gull. Seven Little Grebe were in the harbour together, and another one in the sea. Five distant Red-breasted Merganser were swimming in the sea. A large number of Teal, Mallard and Gadwall were in the harbour as were Shoveller, Shelduck, Brent Geese and Coot. A lone Canada Goose was with its three farmyard Geese friends near the Mill House. One Little Egret was in the pool near the Mill House and a Kingfisher flew away from there. It was an excellent morning for bird watching with 48 species noted.

Jackie Hart

Galls found by Dr David Biggs.

A leafspot fungus (*Ramularia purpurascens*) on Winter Heliotrope GR SZ633 892.
A micro wasp gall (*Torymus hyalipennis*) on Marram grass at Bembridge Harbour SZ 638 887, the only other site where it is found is Thorness Bay.
Green Oak micro moth (*Ecroedemia heringella*). SZ634 893. First found in 1997 now common everywhere.

Colin Black

4th March Kite Hill

Disappointingly only four of us assembled at the start: footpath R1, part of the Coastal Path, GR SZ 551921. The weather was warm and dry, somewhat different to the forecast, with very little wind. We started the walk going north on R1, which is a good path and well made up.

Daffodils were abundant in the hedges and Wood Anemones (Windflowers) were just starting to flower. Horse Chestnuts were just showing their candle flowers. We spotted Rook Nests high in the trees, a good omen for the summer.

Passing the end of R2 we continued along the footpath past many high quality houses in this much sought-after area, with many gardens having moorings on Wootton Creek. The footpath then turned off to meet the main road past the Fishbourne ferry terminal and on to R3, a bridleway towards Quarr Abbey. A Blackcap was heard and seen singing above our heads and Blackthorn was in full bloom, but there were no Little Egrets feeding in a favourite spot on a field as the tide was at low water.

Walkers passed us with big rucksacks doing the 72-mile Round the Island Walk.

We then arrived at Quarr Abbey and headed for the tea shop, passing the farm pigs – the breed was Old Spot, with many young ones, and children were feeding them with grass pulled from the path. Pignuts were also sold at the farm shop!

After our coffee and cakes we headed over to the Abbey Church. We looked at the intricate brickwork completed between 1902 and 1911 with several million Belgian bricks; time has taken its toll and there is quite a large crack in one arch which is closely monitored by strain gauges. The Abbey was finished in 1912. Walking back to the footpath Violets were seen on the side of the path and Ground Ivy

was also in flower.

We walked past the old Cistercian Abbey ruins where the hedge has been cut back to give a viewing spot, and we looked at the Oak straddling a stone wall, part of the original abbey. Very often the path here is flooded at this time of the year, but no sign of water this year. Then on to the poets' gate, with new poems on the board fixed to the gate. We turned off the bridleway onto a footpath and through a bird sanctuary. This was also the start of the old quarry first worked in Roman and Saxon times and where limestone for Salisbury and Winchester Cathedrals was later quarried; Portsmouth and Southampton ports were also reinforced with the stone. The area was cleared of the trees and scrub a couple of years ago, and it is now possible to see the extent of the workings.

Binstead Holy Cross Church was next on the walk, possibly built originally for the quarrymen in Saxon times, but since rebuilt several times over. It is reported that the Abbot of Quarr found the villagers tiresome and distracting at the Abbey Church. The oldest part of the church is the chancel: 13th century or earlier. The last rebuild was in 1969 when fire almost destroyed the whole church.

Now on to Ladies Walk, through the golf course which lies on both sides of the walk, and into Spencers Road, an upmarket part of Ryde in the 1800s with its large houses. This is where Ryde developed after the building of Ryde Pier in 1812. Then just a few yards to the bus station and the new pier after its major repair in 2011.

Colin Black

14th March **Sandown Railway Station to Alverstone**

Seven members assembled on a cold, misty morning – but when Margaret and I walked the route a week before it had been hot and sunny.

From Sandown Station we walked through the tunnel to join the footpath, which took us past the High School onto the old railway line to Newport, closed in 1968. This part of the walk was on the cycleway, which was not busy as only two cyclists passed us.

The first bird – spotted by Steve Luckett – was a Snipe flying low on the marsh, Robins and Tits were in full song, and a Chaffinch was heard. The first Daffodils, planted rather than wild, were in bloom at the base of Willows on the riverbank. On one of the Willows with its feet in the water a large bracket fungus was seen and photographed, possibly Blushing Bracket (*Daedoleopsis confragosa*), since confirmed by Jackie Hart.

Lesser Celandines were appearing and Dandelions, White Deadnettles and Cow Parsley were all just starting to show.

There were no Highland Cattle on the marsh, a little too early for them and very wet underfoot. A line of fence posts separated the marsh from the grazing area, each with a Black-headed Gull perched on them, making some twenty in all, but as there were more gulls than posts a game of musical chairs was on going which was quite amusing. Steve checked whether a Mediterranean Gull was among them but none was found. Crossing over the Yar by footbridge no water birds were seen, neither did we catch sight of a Water Vole as we had hoped.

We approached the end of the cycleway and crossed the road to the riverbank walk in Alverstone, then through a latch gate where we saw our first primroses. This was next to the old boating lake and tea gardens, which were open in the 1930s and where customers once arrived by train before the nearby station eventually closed in 1966 – now just a lake with a male and female Mallard. Then across the weir bridge to the river bank, which last year was overgrown and the river choked with reeds, with a very slow water flow. I was pleased to see all this is now clear. Quite a lot of bird life was heard, but there were no migrants according to Steve.

We reached the cycleway again in just 25 minutes and turned onto a new footpath with bridge and boardwalk to Youngwoods Copse, owned by Wight Nature Fund – the realisation of a long effort to join Bretts Meadow and Youngwoods Copse to the cycleway, thereby allowing more people to enjoy this bit of ancient woodland.

We walked through the newer part of Alverstone Garden Village where a flock of Long-tailed Tits were in the trees above our heads, and onto a bridleway through a deep woodland. The area causes a few problems for drivers as the satnavs direct cars onto an impossible route, with many a car having had to

be dragged out by farm tractor. The notice saying "unsuitable for motor vehicles" is ignored.

We then walked towards Alverstone Bridge past the new fishing lake, where a Roman river crossing was uncovered when the lake was first being dug. We crossed the road to enter the reserve, then through a very muddy patch to the boardwalk. The walking became easier as we mounted steps to a new gate, and on through woodland where two Squirrels were seen at their dray. A short walk to the hide where more Squirrels entertained us, jumping from the hide roof to the fence where we were standing. Chaffinches, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Dunnocks and Robins were all feeding on the bird feeders. Canada Geese were calling very noisily on the marsh, while below us a large Rat was spotted mopping up under the feeders.

It was now an easy walk back to the starting point, past the golf course where the mowing machines were at work. The Hawthorn hedge by the roadside was just showing green shoots – 'bread and cheese' as it was called in our younger days. Then finally through the tunnel and back to the train station.

Colin Black

6th June **Seaview to Priory Bay**

Unfortunately we had had days of heavy rain and on this day we had heavy shows with more forecast. Although 6pm was pleasantly sunny and the tide way out, only one person turned up so we had a short walk to Priory Bay, but as he had to get back to the car for 7pm, we were unable to go far.

Jackie Hart

Archaeology

17th & 18th March **"Newtown Noggin"**

Saturday 17th

A well-attended morning seminar jointly presented by Delian Fry and David Tomalin ranged over several topics – Jutes, Saxons, Pagans, Christians and Vikings on the Isle of Wight – but using the rise and fall of Newtown as its focal point. The standard account is that the Danes, i.e. Vikings, burnt down Newtown in 1001, then supposedly the French did the same in the 14th century, but is any of this true? There is some evidence for Jutish place-names – Wolverton, Swainston, *Dane* at Whitwell – and if they were already living here this might well have attracted Vikings to the area later on. But one might have expected to find a burnt layer in the recent Newtown excavation if it had really burnt down, whereas nothing at all was uncovered.

David reflected on the fact that the Jutes may have acted as the sailors bringing over the Angles and Saxons to Britain, and were rewarded with the two islands of Thanet and Wight. Could the incomparable 'Jutish' jewellery finds from the Island's pagan cemeteries, including the rock crystal balls and perforated spoons from Chessell, have been made in Kent, possibly at Faversham – literally 'the hamlet of the craftsmen'?

And were Islanders really still Pagans before Caedwalla's "Christian" invasion in 686, or by this point did they belong to the *old* Christian church?

As to the key question why the Normans built Newtown in the first place, perhaps Portchester may provide a parallel example, one of the best Saxon shore forts, it was virtually abandoned by the late Saxon period, mainly owing to the changing navigation channels through natural silting and shifting, and new settlements began to grow instead round the 'Port's Mouth'. Did these changes apply to Newtown also? We now know that there had been a Pagan/Christian settlement in and around Shalfleet, and it looks like its creek had been in great use up to Norman times, but over time it may well have become harder to penetrate Shalfleet Creek and so the settlement pattern would have switched to Newtown, or Francheville as it was then called. It was not the only new town or port being laid out, with similar developments taking place at Yarmouth, Newport and Brading. But perhaps Newtown had failed even *before* the French arrived in the 14th century. A thought-provoking session all round.

Alan Phillips

Sunday 18th

A bright, sunny Sunday morning and a good turnout of members at Newtown.

At the intersection of Gold Street and Silver Street sits what was once the old pub, with the coat of arms over the door, displaying the old name Francheville. Despite the names there were no coins found on the dig site in Key Street to suggest that the town was once prosperous. The names are mentioned in the 1240 charter and one supposes that at one time the town must have warranted them. Key Street is no doubt an alternative spelling for Quay Street as this road led down to the old quay.

Delian pointed out the burgage plots which lie off either side of Gold Street, some of which don't appear to have ever been built on. The houses fronting the street would have been wattle and daub with thatched roofs, and some would have had open shop fronts with the living accommodation behind. There would have been vegetable plots behind these and then an area for keeping a few livestock, say a pig and some chickens, so that the villagers would have been pretty much self sufficient. Behind the church there was evidence of ridge and furrows in the field.

The church on Gold Street was built in Victorian times after the old Tudor one fell down. Presumably the town had by then a few more affluent residents than previously.

Past the church, the area to the north of the main street would probably have been for the workers and fishermen (boggy, uninviting land for living on) and the open field there would have been used to keep animals in.

In Domesday the only entry to do with the sea, in the whole area, mentions two salt pans on land at Newtown belonging to the Bishop of Winchester. These salt pans are still visible in the enclosures by the hut on the edge of the water. The area became very poor before it was eventually abandoned, with just the salt pans and some brick making as employment.

On the west side of the creek Delian pointed out the possibility of there being Bronze Age sites as there is a barrow on the high ground there. Also David Tomalin thinks it would be a great site to look for a log boat.

There were possibly Roman oyster beds in the creek and lots of oyster shells were found on the dig site in Key Street, dating from Tudor times. One member told us that he once used to work at the oyster beds when they were still in operation, and the creek was known as one of the best places in the area for fattening up the oysters. Asked why there was no longer any oyster business there, he explained that all it takes is a cold snap to coincide with a low spring tide and the whole crop of oysters would be lost, making it a risky venture in the tidal creek.

On the way back Delian told us an Island folk tale of a Pied Piper character, dressed in colourful clothing, who came and stole all the children as revenge for non payment of his bill for ridding the town of rats as in the Hamelin tale. This is a recurring tale from all over the south coast, from Devon, Cornwall, Sussex as well as Southern Ireland. One possible explanation she posited was that Barbary pirates would raid along the coast and take all the children and some of the more attractive women back to North Africa as captives. This is confirmed by a letter written by one woman captive which she managed to get back to her family in Devon. The colourful clothing would certainly tally with the North African style of dress.

…and "Newtown Noggin"? A special drink concocted by Delian from hedgerow Bullace berries – very much like sloes – found at Newtown when the team was excavating there!

Pauline Charlton

28th April **Castle Walls**

David Tomalin began by talking about Bembridge limestone, the high quality building material that was exported across Southern Britain from the late Iron Age onwards. Examples from the Roman period have been found at Fishbourne Palace, Portchester Castle, Andover, the New Forest and the River Thames to name just a few places It was used for building, for altars and quern stones and for carving images.

One Island site in Roman times was Rock Roman villa where the split roof tiles have been identified as Bembridge limestone by the ostracod fossil content.

Examples from Saxon times include Bosham, Winchester and Canterbury Cathedral whilst the Normans used it at Winchester Cathedral, Romsey Abbey and the White Tower of London.

So why is there so little Bembridge Limestone used in Carisbrooke Castle? The prevailing view is that it was more valuable as an export and other local materials, though inferior, were good enough for this task. The lower enclosure wall, likely to be of Roman date, is built of Greensand, as is the later curtain wall. It has been suggested that the castle was then used as a Saxon fortified burgh, but David thinks the area is too small.

The curtain wall that we see today was built by Baldwin de Redvers in the 12th century and when he backed the wrong side in the power struggle between Stephen and Matilda he had to complete the circuit in a hurry. This can be surmised as one area has a mixture of building materials, possibly using some earlier supplies already on site.

Dark Lane, south of the castle near Froglands lane, was originally a cart track when the Greensand stone was being quarried nearby.

David talked about Princess Beatrice, an unsung hero of Island archaeology, who employed Percy Stone to clear the undergrowth and study the site.

Investigations have continued at intervals since then with not all conclusions being universally accepted. Carisbrooke Castle is a complex and intriguing site and David's talk will add insight to future visits.

Many thanks to Jackie Hart and Mike Cahill whose notes have been used for this account of the talk by David Tomalin

Helen Jackson

2nd May **Site Visit to the Aldi development at BAE Cowes**

Owen Cambridge (County Planning Archaeologist) and John Powell (Wessex Archaeology) made us very welcome and gave us an enthusiastic tour of a muddy site behind BAE in Cowes.

The site had been the subject of an evaluation by Oxford Archaeology who had identified evidence of Iron Age occupation. The current dig is on the footprint of a new supermarket, but it is known that the archaeology covers a wider area. Part of this site was used during WW2 as an emergency airfield, producing more archaeology. Pipe bombs are a hazard although we were assured they were not on this part of the site.

Owen is particularly keen on constructing a story for the site and clearly wants to find evidence for an Iron Age / Roman crossover; this would be a hugely significant opportunity. He is conscious of the proximity of the Chawton Roman site and the strategic position near the river and coastal inlet.

The archaeologists have spent most of the two weeks in pouring rain and trenches, postholes and other features were waterlogged. They had, however, been able to spray paint and map features as soon as the digger removed the topsoil.

John showed us the previously identified ring ditch plus post holes for at least one rectangular structure and a possible round house and fence line. Pottery is mainly flint-tempered and some grog-tempered; Iron Age date yet to be confirmed.

Test results for environmental samples were not yet available, but John thought the soil quality was poor and farming would be at a subsistence level with the trading potential of the river offering the main reason for settling there.

This was a great opportunity to visit a rare site on the island and I can understand Owens's frustration not to be able to dig further. Maybe future development will provide further opportunities.

Helen Jackson

19th May **Priory Bay Palaeolithic**

As preparation for the walk at Priory Bay, Delian talked to us about some of the earliest occupants of Britain and set the scene for a talk by Paul Bingham, based on his MA studies at Southampton University. Delia explained how the changing climate led to the abandonment of the region for long periods of time.

The exciting site at Boxgrove, West Sussex, was excavated in the 1990. Homo Heidelbergensis made and used stone tools to butcher such animals as horse and deer, although it is not known whether they hunted or scavenged them. These early hominids seem to have formed working groups, which implies some form of communication.
Paul Bingham then expanded on some of the previous information. For example, it is now known that the changes between Ice Ages and Interglacials are not as clear-cut and simple as printed diagrams may imply. Work studying oxygen isotopes in ice core samples may be answering some questions, but is raising further queries.

Paul's current research into how hand axes are currently examined and graded was intriguing. He brought a range of samples, including a very early chopping tool from Africa, which we were able to examine.

The earliest stone tools in Britain have been found at Pakenham in Norfolk

Helen Jackson

27th May **Priory Bay Site**

The Priory Bay Palaeolithic site of stone axes is situated in woodland on the coastal strip between St Helen's and Seagrove Bay. As the footpath through the woods is treacherous most of the year, we elected to walk along the beach from St Helen's. The axes were first brought to people's attention in an excavation in the 1930's undertaken by Hubert Poole. Photographs were taken at that time and were shown with others by David Tomalin at a General Meeting in January. Much land has slipped into the sea since then and there is little left of the Sea Wall that was there in the 1930`s **(Photos, page 15)**. The site is at the same elevation as the Boxgrove site on the other side of the Solent in West Sussex. This is where stone tools and a few human teeth were found and dated to 500,000 BC. We looked on the beach and amongst the pebbles for possible Palaeolithic worked flint. We believe we actually found a few and these have been given to Paul Bingham to show his Professor at Southampton University.

Jackie Hart

27th June. **Visit to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford**

The lucky thirteen were collected at Southampton by Don Bryan and taken by minibus almost to the entrance of the .

The recent refurbishment has created a bright but labyrinthine series of galleries which are a test of navigation skills. We wandered as individuals or small groups to select the areas we wanted to visit, although most of us were particularly interested in the prehistoric and medieval Britain sections.

Some of us wanted to study the medieval pottery for similarities to the pieces we found at Newtown. We looked at a range of Delftware but could not identify our sample. Also at Newtown we had discovered Bellarmine ware, named after Cardinal Bellarmine whose face is used to decorate the jugs.
On display at the Ashmolean we found pottery similar, yet different, that we think might be Tomalin ware !!!

After a break for lunch and a brief look at part of the city, Don took us towards Chipping Norton to look at the Rollright Stones near Little Rollright. The name "Rollright" is believed to derive from "Hrolla-landriht", the land of Hrolla. There are 3 features. The 'King's Men' is a stunning Neolithic stone circle, where flowers and candle wax were suggestive of activity during the recent solstice. The 'Whispering Knights' are the remains of a long barrow. The 'King's Stone' is set atop a huge barrow with stunning views across the landscape. The setting of the whole complex amidst poppy-strewn countryside on a beautiful midsummer's day was magical. **(Photos, page 18).**
Information on the Monuments can be found at:- http://www.ancient-wisdom.co.uk/englandrollrightss.htm

As Don whisked us back to Southampton we all agreed this had been a fascinating and enjoyable day out.

Helen Jackson
Mike Cahill

Botany

21st January **Indoor meeting**

Our very-well attended winter indoor meeting was held at Medina Valley Centre and gave us the opportunity to review last year's meetings and finds of particular botanical interest, as well as looking forward to the plans for the new recording season. Various members of the Section are actively involved in the conservation and monitoring of two of the Island's specialities Field Cow-wheat and Wood Calamint and reports of both projects were made. Colin Pope presented an illustrated report on the botanical finds of particular interest during the previous season.

After tea, Dave Trevan gave us a talk about the indigenous and exotic plants of La Palma in the Canary Islands. The Islands have a variety of habitats including sub tropical rainforest and volcanic landscapes. Many of the species were familiar to us as they are grown by the horticultural trade for British gardens. In addition, photographs of a few other striking specimens made it into his talk, including a crab and a lizard!

19th February **Wood Calamint site clearance**

The principal objective of the working party is to remove the remains of brambles and other coarse vegetation from the two lay-bys which comprise the core population of the plant. Both lay-bys were cleared this year.

For several years, following the collection of seed, under licence, in September, Ann Campbell has been very successful in germinating the seeds and producing very healthy looking plants, which have been planted out adjacent to the lay-bys. This year, after discussion with the estate manager and the gamekeeper, they were planted out into two specially cut rides, in the middle of May following a very wet spell. The rides should benefit both the pheasant shoot and the plant and we intend to monitor how well they have taken in September.

4th February **Snowdrops in All Saints Churchyard, Freshwater**

15 very hardy members gathered at All Saints Churchyard Freshwater on Saturday 4th February, on a very bright, sunny but bitterly cold morning! The objective was to look for Snowdrops (*Galanthus*) and other early bulbous plants that thrive in the churchyard. Dave Trevan quickly went through a B.S.B.I. Plant Crib on identification of *Galanthus* species, varieties and cultivars, the main points being:

- Leaf width (narrow or broad)
- Leaf colour (blue grey or bright grass green)
- Leaf base (wrap around or flat –facing)
- Petal marks (mouth, base or both)

We were then joined by the very erudite Paul Stanley, who guided us round the site and pointed out the main species that were in flower, or in some cases showing foliage characters. The main species observed were: *Galanthus elwesii* "Greater Snowdrop", *Galanthus plicatus,* "Pleated Snowdrop," *Galanthus plicatus ssp byzantinus, Galanthus nivalis* "Snowdrop," *Galanthus woronowii* "Green Snowdrop".

Apart from the Snowdrops a number of other species were observed including:

Allium neapoltanum "Neapolitan Garlic", *Allium roseum* "Rosy Garlic"
Crocus vernus "Spring Crocus" *Crocus sieberi* "Sieber's Crocus"

Not surprisingly the *Alliums* were identified by foliage only!

By the time we had finished our tour of the churchyard, the cold got to us and several members retired to the End of the Line Cafe for hot refreshments!

Dave Trevan

15th April **Norris Wood**

A bright but very cold day for our first spring meeting, but there was a very good turn out of members to see the ancient woodland on the Norris Castle estate. In the first part of the wood, the Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Wood Anemones (*Anemone nemorosa*) were making a good display on the woodland floor beneath with canopy of Oak (*Quercus robur*) whose buds were yet to break. As we progressed through the wood, we found the range of species which would be expected in a site such as this, but generally in low amounts. In total 81 species were recorded. The area would benefit from management in the form of coppicing the shrub layer and thinning of maiden trees to open up the ground flora to light.

5th May **Luton Farm**

The meadows of this farm in Northwood have been grazed and/or mown for hay with only natural fertilisers applied for many years. The first meadow we surveyed lies alongside Ridge Copse, an ancient woodland which had a good show of Bluebells. The meadow was rather wet underfoot and had patches of marshy vegetation including Sharp-flowered Rush *(Juncus acutiflorus),* Ragged Robin *(Lychnis flos-cuculi),* Bog Stitchwort *(Stellaria uliginosa)* and Cuckoo Flower *(Cardamine pratensis).* The second meadow was immediately adjacent to the first meadow and separated from it by an old hedgerow. It had a similar range of plants to the first, but we were delighted to find several clumps of Adders-tongue Fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) and a Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*) near the western end. Unfortunately the season was slightly delayed so we did not see the meadows flowering at their best.

As we made our way back, we watched Swallows swooping acrobatically low over the meadow, catching insects and gracefully outwitting the landowner's dog, who tried to give chase!

20th May **Borthwood Farm**

A return visit to this interesting site. Nine members met for this recording session in the willow carr at Borthwood Farm. More than forty species were recorded including many typical plants of the habitat such as Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluvatile*), Tussock Sedge (*Carex paniculata*), Marsh Bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) and Bog Stitchwort (*Stellaria uliginosa*).

Another plant which caused quite a lot of interest was Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocapnos claviculata*), which was plentiful and widespread throughout the area. A most enjoyable and interesting outing.

Recorded by Sue Blackwell.

9th June **Compton Bay Cliff top**

A bright and very windy afternoon saw 16 members of the group survey a variety of habitats on the cliff top at Compton Bay. Firstly we walked over the cattle grazed field to a marshy area well known for its variety of plants and found Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), Slender Club Rush (*Isolepis cernua*) and Plicate Sweet-grass (*Glyceria notata*) among others. The Marsh Marigold had largely gone to seed but would have formed an impressive display a few weeks earlier.

We continued to the chalky bank by the road in search of Early Gentian (*Gentianella anglica*) and Hairy-fruited Cornsalad (*Valerianella eriocarpa*), unfortunately without success. Thrift (*Armeria maritima*) was still flowering well in places but the majority of it was over. Pyramidal Orchids (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) were coming up near the cliff edge but a recent strong salty south-westerly blow had damaged the stems and flowering heads of those just tall enough to catch its full force, and they hung down.

On the cliff face Yellow Horned Poppies (*Glaucium flavum*) were flowering, and there were some small patches of Sea Stock (*Matthiola incana*). We finished on the sandy soils at the top of the steps to

the beach where we added several more species to our list, including English Stonecrop (*Sedum anglicum*), Eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*), Rough Clover (*Trifolium scabrum*) and Sea Fern Grass (*Catapodium marinum*).

Anne Marston

Entomology

29th May **Knighton Down**

The day had started hot and bright, but as soon as the Society's Entomological Section was spotted, the cloud cover came over and the conditions became fresher, breezier and cooler. Six members of the Society attended and spent just under two and a half hours on the Down.

This was a day without any major discoveries but there were a variety of insects to see. There were few butterflies. The most numerous species was the Common Blue Butterfly, but even these were present in small numbers. Among the day-flying moths a Silver-y was seen along with a Yellow Shell and the Pyralid, *Scoparia pyralella*.

A number of crickets and grasshoppers were seen but most of these were nymphs and were not identified. However there were good numbers of the distinctive Dark Bush-cricket. Among the beetles seen were the Lesser Bloody-nosed Beetle, the Common Weevil *Phyllobius virideaeris*, and the Leaf Beetle *Chrysolina banksi*. The Sloe Bug *Dolycoris baccarum* was seen on a couple of occasions.

Among the other species heard were Green Woodpecker and Whitethroat, and we enjoyed good views of a Buzzard, and a pair of Mistle Thrushes. There was a fine display of Common Rock-rose on the central portion of Downland.

21st June **Haseley Manor**

This was a memorable day for all the wrong reasons. There was gridlock in the north-east of the Island, due to disarray over the Isle of Wight Festival parking, and many ferries were bobbing about in the Solent, waiting to dock at Fishbourne. In the evening the rain returned with renewed vigour and the wind approached gale force. Other than the wind, the only sound was of the bass notes from the festival site. The perfect evening for a moth trap. Showing characteristic wisdom, members of the Society stayed indoors, as there was no prospect of any moth surviving in these conditions. The meeting will be re-arranged for September.

Richard Smout

Ornithology

22nd January. **Seaview**

16 members met at Seaview on a blustery, cool morning. We started off with a sea watch but the conditions were not ideal – the sea was very choppy and the wind kept buffeting the telescope. We were fortunate to see a pair of Red Breasted Merganser, several Great Crested Grebe and several auks, one of which we were able to pick up in the telescope and identify as a Razorbill. There were also Great Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Mediterranean Gull, and Herring Gull, as well as Cormorant and Shag. We next visited the Hersey Reserve which produced Mallard, 20 Coot, three or four Little Grebe, a Grey Heron, three Common Snipe, two Lapwing, a Shelduck and a Greenshank as well as a Kestrel, Blue Tit and Blackbird.

Our walk then took us along the promenade, up Oakhill Road, then taking the footpath adjacent to Pondwell Holiday Camp to Pondwell Hill and Nettlestone Hill and to the footpath down to Salterns Holiday homes. A large mixed flock of Rook and Jackdaw were on the Pondwell camping field and the free-flying Barnacle Geese from the Seaview Wildlife Park were feeding and resting in the field adjacent to the main road. We had very good views of the Geese – there was one Snow Goose amongst them.

In all 41 species were recorded during the course of the morning.

5th February. **Appley Park**

Eleven members met at the car park in Appley Park on a very cold, grey morning for a walk in the area. Unfortunately, it was very windy which meant that a sea watch was unproductive because of the choppy sea. We did, however, have good views of Sanderling, Oystercatcher and Curlew through the telescope. We also had Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull and Common Gull. The park produced Woodpigeon, Starling, Pied Wagtail, Redwing, Mistle Thrush and Song Thrush, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Wren, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Goldcrest, House Sparrow, Great Spotted Woodpecker and a number of Blackbird. We walked down to the Canoe Lake, which was not completely frozen, and saw Tufted Duck, a large number of Mute Swan and a lone Black Swan, a large number of Mallard and some Canada Geese and amongst them was a White-fronted type Goose.
In all during the morning we saw 33 species.

13th May. **Hamstead**

Seven members met at the parking area in Hamstead Drive on a lovely morning. We took two cars to the National Trust car park at Lower Hamstead, with the kind permission of the NT, and did a circular walk passing Hamstead Farm and Hamstead foreshore. After weeks of heavy rain the ground was still very wet in places. There were a few migrants about including Chiffchaff, Common Whitethroat, Barn Swallow, Blackcap and Sandwich Tern. At the start of the walk we heard Goldcrest and saw Red-legged Partridge. A pair of Meadow Pipit sat on the telegraph wires near Lower Hamstead Farm and Barn Swallow were busy collecting nest material. Little Egret, Curlew, Shelduck, Oystercatcher and Mallard were seen in the estuary.
In all 38 species were recorded.

16th June. **Newchurch**

Nine members met at the car park at Newchurch on a very windy but sunny morning. In view of the strong wind we were not expecting to see or hear many birds, but I am pleased to say that we did indeed hear many bird songs and calls. The House Sparrows that are normally to be found around the car park and the village main road were still present and so were a number of Jackdaw. Our walk took us along the cycle track from Langbridge towards Alverstone. We turned off left towards Hill Farm and then took the lower path through the woods to the Field of Hope. Blackcaps were singing in all suitable habitats, as were Chiffchaff and Common Whitethroat. We heard a Cetti's explosive call in the reed bed and heard Sedge Warblers singing. A Reed Bunting was calling but did not show itself. Barn Swallows were busy flying overhead and we saw Swift. In the woods we heard Goldcrest and in the Field of Hope planted woodland, we heard a Willow Warbler.

We were all delighted to see a juvenile Red Squirrel sitting on a low branch of a tree, it remained there for some time and everyone had good views.
In all 28 species were mainly heard but some seen.

Jackie Hart

Membership Secretary`s Report

New Members

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Next Bulletin
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for 1st July 2012 to 31st December 2012 should be sent to:-

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The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be **12th January 2013**

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