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Bulletin

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Contents

President`s Address

Summer greetings to you all and this time it looks like it won't be a wash out. Although the Spring was a month late, everything seems to be catching up and let's hope our bees make a recovery this summer. I have left a goodly chunk of my garden to the whiles of Nature, and hope the abundance of wild pollen will go some way to restoring one of our most important creatures.

I am pleased to see that we have attracted some interesting new members, whom I welcome to the Society. Please don't be shy about volunteering your ideas and thoughts about what we do and what you may like us to do.

Wolverton Manor Garden Fair is fast approaching (31st Aug & 1st Sept), and as you know it is our Window on the World. I would appreciate volunteers to help on the display stand, and be prepared to spread the Word. Rather like Glastonbury this year, the IWNHAS rocks. Anyone who is prepared to help setting up, talk to the public or has a great idea, please contact me, Delian on 853 292 and I will put you on the list. We will need people to help set up on Friday, run the Stand on Sat and Sun and help take it down on Sunday evening. Looking forward to seeing you all there.

Delian Backhouse Fry.

NOTICE BOARD

HELP NEEDED

The Society has vacancies for the following:-

Minutes Secretary, to cover Council Meetings and the AGM (5 meetings per year).
Publications Committee Secretary, (1 meeting per year).
Vertebrata Section Editor, for the Proceedings.

Any Member who would like take on one of these positions, please contact the Secretary, Jennifer Lehrer tel:718440 email : Jennymari@gmail.com

Many thanks and looking forward to hearing from you.

LICHEN GROUP

Colin Pope and I feel that there might be scope for starting up a lichen field study group on the Island. This would be a new Group in the Society and would have occasional field trips.

If anyone has an interest in lichens and would like to join, would they please contact me Sheila Street: streetecology@btinternet.com

HELEN BUTLER.

Many congratulations to Helen, founder of the Wight Squirrel Project. Helen has been awarded an MBE for her services to Red Squirrel Conservation on the Island. For the past 20 years she and her volunteer helpers have monitored Red Squirrel population and rescued injured animals.

They have also given educational talks to groups and worked with local farmers to make the Island a suitable habitat for Red Squirrels.

Looking at the Countryside Group

This is a non-specialist group, which looks at all aspects of the countryside in an informal way. Monthly meetings take the form of a short walk (usually 2-3 miles) where we look for interesting things. It may be flowers, animals, birds, insects, fungi, historical and archaeological sites, it all depends on what we find on the day.
It is open to all members of the Society and offers an opportunity to share knowledge and to learn from each other, whilst enjoying a pleasant stroll in the country. So please come along, whether you have a specialist interest or just enjoy nature in general.

Any ideas for future meetings would be very welcome, for example if you have a favourite walk or place of interest you would like to share.

This group used to be called Access to the Countryside Lesley Atkins

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The Large Gold Case-bearer

In Bulletin No.50 for August 2008 I reported the finding of a viable colony of the rare case-bearing moth *Coleophora vibicella* in Newtown Meadows. The moth is a U.K. Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and is currently known from only six sites (Dorset 1, Sussex 1, Hampshire 3 & Isle of Wight 1).

In 2008, I counted 34 cases. In 2012, I counted 109 cases in Newtown Meadows and also found cases at three other sites around the Newtown Estuary. Lower Hamstead yielded six cases and Newtown Rifle Range ten cases at one site and one at another.

The Newtown Estuary colony is now the second largest colony in England and clearly increasing in size, in contrast to the counts in Dorset and Hampshire.

Management programmes have been put in place both in the Newtown meadows and on the Rifle Range to preserve the habitat for this moth, which lays its eggs and feeds, as a larva, on Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria.*

With an increasing interest nationally in micro-moths this species has now been given an English name – The Large Gold Case Bearer.

David Biggs

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) Volunteers Urgently Wanted

There are currently vacancies for counters at Sandown Canoe Lake and Foreland for the 2013/2014 WeBS reporting year. Both of these sites are important elements to the Island section of the national survey which is the national monitoring scheme for non-breeding waterbirds in the UK and is the principal data for their populations and wetland habitats. As most of you are probably aware, an annual report of the Island sites covered in the survey is produced for the Isle of Wight Bird Report.

Sandown Canoe Lake, when counted in conjunction with Brading Marsh and Bembridge Harbour, helps to provide a fuller picture of wintering wildfowl and gulls in the East Wight area. In recent years the Canoe Lake has recorded Wigeon, Teal, Gadwall, Pochard and Tufted Duck along with Yellow-legged, Mediterranean and Little gull in addition to Water Rail, Kingfisher and the more common species. There has also been the occasional wader stopping off during migration.

Foreland, being a coastal site, has a more diverse list with Fulmar, Razorbill, Red-breasted Merganser, Brent Goose (Dark and Light-bellied have been seen here), Bar-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Grey Plover and Purple Sandpiper, a key site on the Island for this species although in much smaller numbers nowadays, along with Oystercatcher. Mediterranean Gull is also seen at this site while Sandwich and Common Tern are also recorded during migration and the summer months. Ideally this site should also be counted in conjunction with Brading Harbour (Brading Marsh and Bembridge Harbour) to reduce the amount of double counting due to movement between sites.

The WeBS counting year runs from July to the following June with the "core count" period from September to March although it is greatly appreciated if the counters can continue to send in their records outside of the core period.

Counters are encouraged to carry out their monthly count on, or as close to, the date designated by the WeBS organisers (again to minimize double counting) although these can be altered to reflect local tide times and counter availability. For information the count dates for 2013/2014 are as follows; 21st July, 25th August, 22nd September, 13th October, 10th November, 15th December, 19th January, 16th February,16th March, 20th April,18th May and 15th June.

Currently, in addition to the two sites mentioned above, we have regular coverage of the following sites; Western Yar, Newtown NNR, Thorness Bay, Medina Estuary, Carisbrooke Ponds (incorporating Carisbrooke Pond, Marlborough Road Pond and Priory Farm Pond), Wootton Creek, Ryde East Sands & Ryde Canoe Lake and Brading Harbour (incorporating Bembridge Harbour and Brading Marsh RSPB Reserve).

As the WeBS Local Organiser, I am also always keen to accept new sites for inclusion in the survey. On the Island there are a vast array of available wetland sites to choose from (e.g Hersey Reserve, Bathingbourne Reservoir as well as the numerous ponds of varying sizes); a quick look through previous IW Bird Reports will give further potential sites.

I would be delighted to hear from you if you can spare the time to regularly cover a site (the smaller sites take less than an hour). If you are interested and would like further details please contact me either by phone (01983 721137), email (jimr.baldwin@tiscali.co.uk) or write to me; Jim Baldwin, 21 Hillcrest Road, Rookley, I.W PO38 3PB.

Reports of General Meetings

26th January British Owls and European Raptors

An illustrated talk by Danny Vokins. Danny is a wildlife photographer par excellence whose patience has been rewarded over and over again with some amazing sequences of bird behaviour. His very young, but able assistant took charge of the laptop. The talk was given to an audience of over fifty members and guests at Arreton Community Hall.

British Owls

For each species Danny showed us slides accompanied by their calls. The Little Owl can be found in a variety of habitats, in rocky terrain or in trees, and is widespread on the Isle of Wight, where it breeds. The Long-eared Owl also breeds here and in Britain you can see up to fifteen birds together, a small flock compared to those in Bulgaria, hundreds strong. They can be found in Laundry Lane, Merstone and St Helens Duver and although they are nocturnal, one has been seen hunting on the Duver in daylight. The Barn Owl is also a fairly common breeding

resident on the Island, flying silent and ghost-like on white wings at dusk, skimming field margins. The Tawny Owl is a rare visitor to the Island, though common in other parts of Britain. Its distinctive calls are the best known of all.

Last year there was a big influx of Short-eared Owls from Scandinavia into Britain, but they don't breed here. Male and female have the same call, and yapping is for courting. Danny showed us photographs of four short-eared owls perched on a fence beside the Military Road at Compton, turning their heads to watch the traffic as it passed. These owls have good camouflage and can blend in anywhere. In a courtship display, we saw two birds touching claws in flight. Danny told us how it can take months of patience to get the best shots like these.

To photograph the Eagle Owl in the wild, Danny went to Portugal, where he attached all his camera equipment to a tripod and used a telescope to search for owls on a towering rock face. Wearing camouflage, all he could do was set up his camera equipment and wait, but eventually his patience was rewarded.

European Raptors

It is hard to tell the difference between a Sparrowhawk and a Goshawk, but the Goshawk is rare on the Island. Its wings are S-shaped. The Merlin is the smallest raptor and the male is smaller than the female. It flies low, close to the ground. The Hobby, a summer migrant to Britain, feeds on insects and is very agile. It is like a small version of the peregrine falcon. The Common Kestrel, widespread on the Island, is a fairly common breeding resident and a passage migrant. It is commonly seen hovering on cliff edges and hunting on roadside verges. The Common Buzzard is a widespread resident on the Island, breeding in increasing numbers. It can vary in colour from dark to nearly white. Danny photographed a juvenile Montagu's Harrier, a rare passage migrant, at Rocken End and a juvenile Marsh Harrier in Laundry Lane. An Osprey, ringed in Scotland, has been visiting Newtown for seven years.

Danny has spent a lot of time watching and photographing raptors in Spain and Portugal. He showed us a sequence of a Lesser Kestrel and a Black-shouldered Kite fighting for a post perch. The kite is very attractive with kohl-outlined eyes and white and pale grey plumage. The Black Kite is very common along roadsides in mainland Europe. We saw pictures of a Red Kite in the Pyrenees in the snow, struggling against the wind. A bird fair is held on a headland in Portugal that is on a migration route and ornithologists set up their cameras there. All the birds that fly over the headland are recorded, and if a rare bird arrives, the wind farm can be closed down. Among the birds that Danny photographed there was a Booted Eagle, the smallest European eagle and only slightly bigger than a buzzard. They nest in Spain and Portugal and can be recognised by white marks on the shoulder called 'landing lights'. A Bonelli's Eagle snatched a Booted Eagle and flew off with it. The Short-toed, or Snake Eagle hovers like a Kestrel. The Greater Spotted Eagle is a visitor to Portugal, but the Lesser Spotted Eagle is extremely rare. One bird took a wrong turning while migrating from Spain to North Africa and flew into Portugal, circled round and returned to Gibraltar to make the crossing.

A cliff face in Spain, seventy miles west of Madrid, is home to Eagle Owls, Griffon Vultures, Black Vultures and the Spanish Imperial Eagle, the rarest eagle in the world. There are only about a hundred and fifty pairs and they take four to five years to reach maturity. They are the same size as the golden eagle and just as aggressive. They are very vocal, their call being less harsh than that of a raven. Between October and December they display to each other. Danny showed us a series of pictures of a male eagle trying to knock vultures off their perches on top of a cliff. Then the bigger female eagle took her turn and together they chased off a Ravels Vulture with a wing span of nine feet. Whereas the Griffon Vulture has a long neck for reaching inside a carcass, the Black Vulture has a short neck for feeding later on the bones. The vultures were standing on top of the cliff to dry out after a night of rain. The Egyptian Vulture is the smallest, about the size of an eagle, and black and white with a diamond shaped tail. The

Lammergeyer, or Bearded Vulture, lives in the Pyrenees. It has orange plumage, brown wings and thick fluffy trousers for insulation from the cold. Danny had to trek through the snow carrying all his camera equipment to find these birds.

The star of the show was fittingly the last to make an appearance: a male Peregrine Falcon, seven months old, brought into the hall by Danny's friend, George, who rescues and flies birds of prey. The peregrine has been recorded diving for prey at two hundred miles an hour. It is known to catch a hundred and fifty species of bird and is highly adaptable, able to live in cities, on cliff edges and even in the middle of the Solent. Danny showed us pictures of two juveniles working together to bring back their first catch. An adult may have caught it and dropped it for them. Peregrines are doing well on the Island, breeding in increasingly greater numbers.

Danny's sequences of photographs captured some remarkable bird behaviour and the quality of his pictures was of a professional standard. I was very impressed with his dedication and hard work and grateful to him for sharing with us his passion for owls and raptors.

Maggie Nelmes

23rd February **From Oban to the Arctic Circle**

An illustrated talk by Jill Reilly. The sixteen day expedition began in May 2012, when Jill and eleven other people boarded *The Stockholm* in Oban, on the North-west coast of Scotland. The ship is a hundred and fifty feet long and has a Norwegian skipper-owner. They were bound for the Arctic, via the Hebrides, Cape Wrath, Orkney, Fair Isle, Shetland and the Norwegian coast. From Tromso, in the Arctic Circle, they would cross the Arctic Ocean to the Svalbard Islands. The main purposes of the expedition were to record birds and observe wildlife, visit important archaeological sites and experience the Arctic wilderness.

Handa Island, near the north-west tip of Scotland, is managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust as a bird sanctuary. It has spectacular and very old sandstone cliffs, where many thousands of sea birds nest on ledges, including internationally important numbers of guillemots, razorbills and great skuas. Large numbers of puffins breed there in burrows. Until 1848 and the potato famine, more than sixty people lived on this island, but they all had to leave. Red grouse browse willow buds on the heath and wheatears nest in rock crevices before migrating to Africa. Jill was able to get close-up photographs because the wildlife there has no fear of humans. Lichens cover the rocks, indicators of clean air.

The next port of call was Stromness, on Mainland in Orkney. Jill found the granite buildings very bleak, but they had come here to see the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as 'The Heart of Neolithic Orkney'. At one end of a long isthmus is the Ring of Brodgar, a spectacular stone circle surrounded by a large circular ditch, or 'henge', and at the other end is Skara Brae, an amazingly well preserved Neolithic settlement, uncovered in a storm in 1850. In between there is a temple complex whose walls are covered in colourful pigments. Some archaeologists believe that Skara Brae was the Land of the Living and The Ring of Brodgar, the Land of the Dead. Maes Howe is the largest and most spectacular of the chambered tombs on Orkney. It is probably nearly five thousand years old, predating Stonehenge. The entrance passage, ten metres long, leads to a central chamber. At the winter solstice the sun shines directly down the passage, dramatically illuminating the back wall of the chamber for just a few minutes.

The *Stockholm*'s passengers were fortunate to be able to visit Fair Isle, one of the Shetland Islands, as ships can only land there in calm weather. The island has been inhabited for over five thousand years. There are now seventy residents. In the nineteen-forties the President of the RSPB bought Fair Isle and, together with the RSPB, financed research into bird migration and courses in ornithology. After the Second World War the National Trust for Scotland took over

the island and responsibility for the upkeep of the crofts and the series of mills for grinding corn. Boat building and machine knitting of traditional Fair Isle patterns, using wool from small sturdy sheep, are now the main industries.

Lerwick, a severe looking town, dominated by a Napoleonic castle, is the administrative capital of the Shetland Isles. The Noss wren, a subspecies that lives on one of the most northerly islands, is speckled with a long white eyebrow stripe. Noss is a Scottish Wildlife Bird Sanctuary, whose towering cliffs are crammed full of nesting birds, including one of the largest gannet colonies in the world, attracted by the plentiful supply of fish in the sea. The noise and stench of guano are overpowering. Puffins thrive here, too, now that the rats that ate their eggs have been exterminated.

Upon reaching the coast of Norway, the *Stockholm*'s skipper steered a course northward along sheltered channels between the islands. They berthed at Alesund, a very attractive town close to rich fishing grounds where cod, herring, halibut and other fish are prepared for export. One January night in 1904 a fire started in a fish house and spread rapidly through the wooden buildings of the town, fanned by a strong wind. Only one person was killed, but ten thousand were made homeless. Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, grandson of Queen Victoria, who had often spent holidays in this area, sent four warships with materials to build temporary shelters and barracks. Though often held responsible by historians for igniting the First World War, his response to Alesund's international appeal for help shows him in a very different light, and one of the town's busiest thoroughfares is named after him. Alesund was rebuilt in brick, stone and mortar in the Art Nouveau style of the time, by twenty master builders and thirty Norwegian architects, some trained in Berlin, who drew inspiration from all over Europe. It is now a very smart and expensive resort. From the citadel, perched high above the town, you can see its layout. The town centre is built on two islands, and residential areas on two more. An undersea tunnel, built in 1987, links the second largest island with the town centre. Altogether Alesund consists of seven islands. Behind it rise high mountains, through which the famously beautiful Geiranger Fjord cuts a deep channel.

During the Second World War many young Norwegians escaped from Alesund to Shetland to fight the German occupation of Norway, and many lost their lives. A memorial commemorates the special operations unit nicknamed 'The Shetland Bus' that transferred agents in and out of Norway via Shetland and supplied them with weapons and radios. They also brought out Norwegians in danger of being arrested by the Germans. At first they used a large number of small fishing boats as a disguise, and crossings were made mostly in winter, in heavy seas and under cover of darkness. They were armed with light machine guns, hidden in oil drums placed on deck. The operation was under constant threat from German forces and three fast and well armed submarine chasers were later added to the fleet. A British army officer and his assistant, stationed at two houses on Shetland with very few staff, were in charge of the operation. Alesund was nicknamed 'Little London' for its leading role in the Norwegian Resistance.

Grip archipelago, some nine miles from Kristiansund, on Norway's north fjord coast, consists of more than eighty islands, but only two are inhabited. In the fishing village of Grip the houses are densely packed along the narrow streets. They are well maintained, but there are no permanent residents. They all left in 1964, but they and their descendants return in summer for the fishing. This small island, only one mile long, has two harbours and many boat houses, for these are rich fishing grounds. So why did the inhabitants leave? The owner of the island exploited the fishermen, paying them a pittance for their catch. Now trawlers use nets to catch fish to raise in fish farms. A pod of thirty pilot whales surrounded the ship, hunting shoals in packs. Jill was impressed by their team strategies: one group driving the fish towards another.

As the ship entered the Arctic Circle the weather got colder and cloudier. In a fishing village cod was hung up to dry from bars on the buildings. Dried fish can last for ten years and can therefore be taken on long voyages. Only birch and willow grow here and the willow grouse feeds on the buds. Tromso, the largest city in Northern Norway, is situated over two hundred miles within the Arctic Circle. It boasts Norway's only wooden cathedral, built in 1861, and a modern church, known as 'The Arctic Cathedral', that resembles an iceberg and is a famous landmark. The climate here is surprisingly mild, as this coast is warmed by the Gulf Stream, but when Jill visited it was raining – the only rain on the voyage – and it looked bleak and cold. It may be more attractive in winter, for Tromso is in the middle of the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights, zone and one of the best places to observe this amazing phenomenon. Even in midwinter there are a couple of hours of twilight, often accompanied by a beautiful bluish light, and from late February to late April the snow causes such intense daylight that skiers must wear sunglasses.

A field of floating ice welcomed the *Stockholm*'s exhausted passengers to the Svalbard Islands. The voyage from Tromso had taken two and a half days in storm force eight to ten northwesterly winds. In the sheltered waters off the south coast of the largest island, Spitsbergen, they watched glaucous gulls, guillemots and little auks, many on the cliffs or flying into the wind in formation. Ships have to take great care when navigating through glacial ice that is recognisable by its green tinge. Wonderful white glaciers were constantly crumbling and the sea was very calm. The passengers saw polar bear paw prints in the snow and Jill asked to be woken up that night if a bear was spotted. At midnight she was woken and she hurried out onto the deck without getting dressed. Just off the starboard side of the ship a polar bear was eating a seal. Her photographs show a male with a bloodied nose and forepaw. His fur was wet, so he must have swum to catch the seal.

On the south-west side of the island the captain had to steer carefully through a crowd of rocks to reach a former whaling station. Whale bones and the rusted remains of pots were still strewn across the beach. Ice lay under the snow and moss covered the beach. The passengers saw eight Arctic foxes, some pure white, searching for little auks' eggs on the cliffs, kittiwakes and wild reindeer, no bigger than sheep, with short sturdy legs, well adapted to face the very strong winds. The weather was very cold and clear, so they had fine views. There was a fishing hut on the beach with bunk beds.

Longyearbyen, with over two thousand inhabitants, is the seat of local government and Norway's main administrative centre on Svalbard. The Norwegian Government has poured money into the town to attract families to live there, and it is a tax haven. It is named after the Scotsman who discovered coal there. There are several other settlements on Spitsbergen, the only inhabited island, including a Russian and a Norwegian mining community. Longyearbyen is a tourist resort where big ships can anchor. It has a post office, museum, two new hotels, a university with 250 students which specialises in climatology, schools, an airport with flights to Tromso, and a seed bank containing about eighty per cent of all the seeds in the world.

Jill's vivid account of her adventures, accompanied by some good, clear photographs, reminded some of her audience of their own travels to Orkney, Shetland or the Norwegian fjords. Others said they were inspired to surf the internet for holidays to these destinations, or even a voyage to the Arctic.

Maggie Nelmes

9th March **Excavations at Mons Claudianus**

David Tomalin stepped in at the last minute to deliver a fascinating, illustrated talk on his visit in 1990 to the well-preserved Roman quarry site of *Mons Claudianus* in Egypt's Eastern Desert. This housed a garrison along with civilian and workers' quarters. The area is a rock rather than a sand desert, and the site had been worked for its granite-like stone during and beyond the time of Nero in the first century AD. It lay east of a huge bend in the River Nile and required a five-day trek across some very rugged terrain.

It was a sister site to *Mons Porphyrites,* some 40km to the north. This had come to have a fearsome reputation as halfway between a work camp and a death camp. When four Christians were sent to the latter as punishment for their beliefs, they started to make superb statuary there, so much so that the emperor requested that they fashioned Roman gods; when they refused, they were 'put to death by scorpions'. *Mons Claudianus* was quite different, with very good working and living conditions, and included a fortified settlement, somewhat resembling the appearance of the Roman fort at Portchester.

David pointed out that Romans really had an eye for stone, particularly its exotic varieties, and it came to be one of the things which distinguished them culturally: they became very adept at working stone and stone columns, something which would be very difficult for us to do – one only has to think of the superbly executed Trajan's Column in Rome itself. Here on the Isle of Wight, David cited the column fragment found at Brading Villa, hewn from our local Greensand.

At *Mons Claudianus, v*ast quantities of stone would have been shaped into columns and then dragged with the aid of donkeys to the river and loaded onto platforms, whence they were ferried in specially built boats or barges down the Nile to Alexandria, and then onwards to Rome, Constantinople, and other destinations. The columns of the portico of the Pantheon at Rome and Diocletian's Palace at Split, Croatia, were all quarried at *Mons Claudianus*.

But many stone products were left lying around, including seventeen huge columns that never got delivered. The many individual quarries were numbered by the Romans and some were given simple names. Stone was removed by wedging, and many chippings were left on-site, looking for all the world as though the workmen had just gone home for lunch! At the Pillar Quarry a huge pillar was moved a certain distance before it cracked, and iron straps were then attached to keep it moving, but without success. 21,000 bones were also collected from the site, mainly of the donkeys which were the main beasts of burden: there seem to have been many more of these than there were camels.

Excavations were led between 1976-1982 by Professor David Peacock of Southampton University. The archaeologists worked alongside a number of papyrologists interested in the thousands of 'ostraka' found on-site – sherds of broken pottery used as writing materials on which were recorded the daily details of life in the quarries – "better than *Vindolanda*", as David referred to them. The writings refer to soldiers and officials, skilled and unskilled workers and their respective jobs and earnings, and women and children; they convey personal messages; and they express the fear of 'barbarian' tribes and competition over water sources. Of the many papyri also discovered, one alone lists 960 people in the camp. Most of the messages were originally in Greek rather than Latin, and all are now stored in the Institut Français d'Archeologie Orientale in Cairo. Four volumes of the ostraka have so far been published, covering the first 500 or so and translated into French.

David concluded this absorbing and profusely illustrated talk with the question: "Where else in the Roman world would you find anything as well-preserved and remote as this quarry?" Where else indeed.

(Photos page 15 and 16) Alan Phillips

27th April **The Great Wild West Archaeological Mystery**

An illustrated talk by Allan Insole. 'Buffalo Bill's Wild West', the show that captured the imagination of both North America and Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, gave rise to a highly stereotyped image of Native Americans in films and literature. In fact, only those living on the Great Plains followed this lifestyle. Allan Insole, who had long been interested in Native American culture and had made three field trips to Red Indian lands in the nineteen-eighties, decided to go on an exploration of New Mexico and Indiana last year, to mark his seventieth birthday. With the help of two local guides, he sought to uncover how the Native Americans in the American South-West really lived.

The landscape in this region is not a sprawling desert, as stereotypical images would have us believe, but extremely varied, ranging from the Rocky Mountains to the north-east, through the Colorado Plateau over a mile high, down to the Rio Grande Rift Valley. The whole area is characterised by a dry climate, extreme temperatures and dramatic red rock landscapes. A few rivers flow constantly here, including the Colorado River that flows through the Grand Canyon. In April and May the snow melts in the mountains and in late summer thunderstorms bring rain.

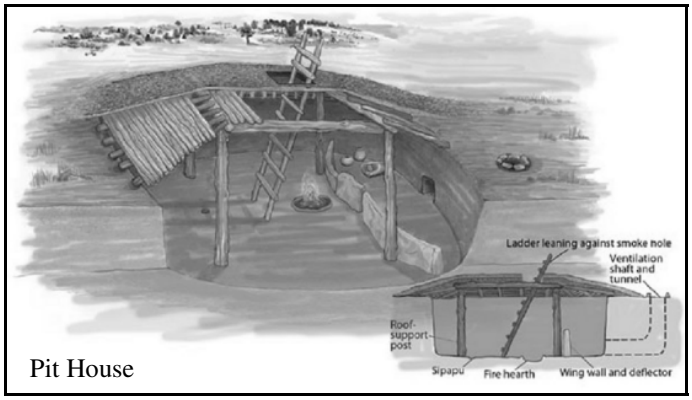
Three major cultures among the settled people of this region are in evidence. The Hohokam lived in shallow pit houses, made from mud bricks, whose layout resembled a ball game court and whose influence was Mexican. The Mogollon, well known for making amazing earthenware pots, lived in deep pit houses, but later built stone structures under the cliff overhang. The Anasazi or Pueblo people inhabited the area for well over a thousand years. Their lands are the most visited archaeological sites in North America. They were basket makers from 0 to 700 AD, but disappeared in the twelfth or thirteenth century AD. The Athabascan people, including Navaho and Apache, began arriving in the area in 1000 AD and by 1800 had taken over most of the Pueblo lands. Theirs is a totally different culture. They preyed on the Pueblo people and may well have fought members of the Spanish Colorado Expedition of 1540-42, who came searching for gold. Today they are still the largest indigenous group in the area.

At La Capas Tucson, in the Rio Grande, archaeologists were amazed to discover that the Mexican influence was strong. The inhabitants had developed a series of techniques to *irrigate* dry land to grow three crops: maize, beans and squash, as well as foraging for wild plants. These techniques included floodplain farming: creating a barrier to hold water and digging irrigation channels, building terraces to retain soil and moisture, and cliff-base planting to catch storm water flowing over the cliff.


Irrigation

Modern Pueblo Indian societies are deeply traditional and good stewards of their environment. The community takes precedence over personal power and wealth. Archaeologists call these peaceful, egalitarian societies. Each has their own culture and traditions, building style and language. Hopis, in the Rio Grande, lead very simple lives, rejecting modern technology, including piped water and electricity. They are very secretive about their culture and photography is forbidden on their lands. In the past they were ill-treated by white men and some were removed from their culture and forced to live a western lifestyle.

The Anasazi settled on what are now the borders of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado. In the Chaco Canyon they built *Pit Houses* to a standard design, with four posts supporting a wooden roof, entered by a ladder . Inside there is a fire pit, a ventilator shaft and deflector, and a hole in the ground from which, legend has it, they originated. Most houses are round, but in one area they are rectangular. The dry climate preserves the remains very well. At Mesa Verde many of the structures are below cliffs. In the Cliff Palace, dating from 1200 to 1300 AD, some seven or eight hundred people would have lived. In Spruce Tree house food was stored above the living quarters to protect it from rats. All the stonework is covered in mortar. The pottery found here is very attractive, and the shell ornaments and pendants are evidence of big trading routes linking the area with Mexico and the Pacific coast. There are also some large buildings in the Chaco Canyon, known as great kivas, evidence of a sub-culture whose purpose is unknown, but may be religious, characterised by beautiful masonry and precise stonework. They are round, with steps leading up from a rectangular antechamber. Inside there are seating pits with benches and wall niches, a fire box and vaults. Kivas do not appear elsewhere, but in the Mesa Verde the longhouses are similar in structure.



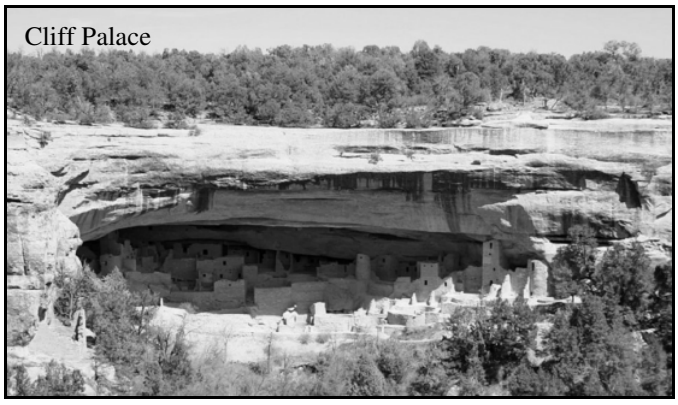
Pit House

Pueblo Bonito is one of the largest structures that you can visit in the Chaco Canyon. The pueblos succeeded the pit houses and often had an astronomical alignment. These were symmetrical, but later structures were square. Pueblo Bonito has D-shaped sides that are almost symmetrical and divided into two slightly different halves. Many of the rooms were never lived in but used for storage or for huge 'middens', or rubbish mounds. The structures were gradually built higher, those at the back, against the cliff, reaching five storeys high. The stonework was covered in mortar and the doorways well crafted. Some doors are T-shaped, but no-one knows why. There are three types of building in the Chacoan settlements: the Great House, the kiva and the small unit houses that surround the Great House. The Great Houses have oversized rooms and geometrical floor plans. In one room thirty thousand burial objects were found, mostly jewellery made of minerals like turquoise, jet and shell. In another room a hundred and one cylindrical jars with black and white patterns had cocoa remains inside, and in separate places macaw and bear bones were discovered – all indicating a kind of ritual. Tower kivas are rare.

The Chacoan people planted their crops in ravines and built dams to divert water. Permanent springs were scattered. Their roads are hard to see from the ground, as they were shallow depressions made by people on foot: they had no wheeled vehicles or pack animals. They carved staircases up the rock face to get out of the canyon. Two spectacular rocky outcrops reveal evidence of the inhabitants' interest in astronomy. On Fajada Butte astronomical spirals were carved. Light falls on a different place at different times of year and it acts as a calendar, with solar and lunar markings. Chimney rock in south-west Colorado, is a high ridge with a number of pueblos perched on top. But why build them three thousand feet above the valley when you have to fetch water from below? The answer must be that they are not dwellings, but astronomical structures.

By the twelfth century, the Chacoan culture seemed to be thriving with ordered and stable communities, sophisticated agricultural systems and astronomical understanding. So what happened to cause the sudden disintegration of this empire? Was the society marked by institu-

tional differences in social, economic and/or political power? And where did the Chacoan people disappear between 1090 and 1115? Two major periods of drought resulted in famine and the people, starving and desperate, turned on each other. So violent and widespread was the feuding that the people withdrew into isolated communities, building towers for their safety, like the *Cliff Palace* whose entrance was hard to reach. And they were so desperate that they resorted to cannibalism. Evidence of this has been found at a large number of sites: human bones with cut marks, thrown carelessly into communal burial pits. Gradually these separate groups scattered, moving to resource richer areas such as the Rio Grande, to start life again.


Cliff Palace

Thank you, Allan, for sharing with us your enthusiasm for these little-known cultures, and for explaining how the Chacoans managed to overcome the challenges of a dry climate for so long until eventually succumbing to extreme conditions. It was a fascinating tale of human ingenuity and endurance.

Maggie Nelmes

25th May Visit to Wakehurst Place – 'Kew in the Country'

It was cold when we set off on the coach at 8 am and still cool several hours later, when we arrived at the gardens near Haywards Heath in East Sussex. During the afternoon, however, the sun shone and temperatures rose steeply in the sheltered valley.

We were each given a plan of the gardens in a free newsletter, which also features garden news, news from the Millennium Seed Bank and the gardens' seasonal highlights. I first made my way to the Elizabethan mansion, whose original architecture I much admired. The stables restaurant is in the yard and to the side are two massive Californian redwoods, a beautiful copper beech and a fascinating swamp cypress from the south-eastern USA. This is a slow-growing and long-lived deciduous tree which produces a similar structure to the air roots of the mangrove. Its timber is soft and its foliage fern-like. The horse chestnuts along the avenue were displaying beautiful bright green foliage and deep pink flowers.

Beyond the mansion's lawn there's a pond flanked by dwarf Japanese maples, whose feathery foliage is a deep maroon, and the delicate flowers of bleeding heart, mixed with wild garlic and bluebells. On and beside the pond I saw geese, mallards and moorhens. A stream flows down a narrow ravine in a series of waterfalls and pools. This area, known as 'the Slips', is imaginatively designed and planted with exotic looking leaves from other parts of the world. These include 'skunk cabbage', named for the unpleasant smell of its dramatic yellow flowers and for the rosette of large fleshy leaves, like those of a cabbage. It comes from the western edge of North America and thrives in moist ground. Whilst it produces its flowers on spikes before the trees come into leaf, its large leaves emerge later, under the shade of the trees. In the stream there are clumps of Royal fern, and from the bridge you can see huge Koi carp in the Black Pond.

Patches of colour in the soil catch my attention and I discover an amazing parasitic plant: the purple toothwort. It is native to Belgium, France, Spain and Italy and was introduced to Britain in the nineteenth century. Its flowers grow on the surface of the soil, under its preferred host

trees: willows, poplars and maples. Colin Pope has discovered some unusual species of orchid growing on turf above the stream: a single loose-flowered orchid in bud, among a large number of tongue orchids. Colin tells me that the tongue orchid was accidentally introduced here in the nineteen-nineties, as part of a programme to grow wild orchids in cultivation. It is a Mediterranean species, not otherwise found in the UK. The loose-flowered orchid, on the other hand, was intentionally introduced by Kew Gardens and has been reported a great success. People come great distances to see it. Above the stream I found the Asian Heath Garden which produces a wonderfully vibrant and sometimes fragrant display of azaleas and rhododendrons from Korea and Taiwan.

It was time to move on and I headed for the Westwood Lake to find some space. After following a less frequented path through natural woodland, I crossed the reed beds on a causeway. I found a bird hide on the Lower Lake and went in. Someone had just seen a kingfisher. I read a poster about the Tunbridge filmy fern which grows on sandrock here and decided to try and find it. As I walked around the Westwood Lake, a Canada goose was parading five huge, but still fluffy, goslings through the mud, picking out tasty morsels. Occasionally they stretched their stunted wings. As I reached the main path on the other side of the lake, someone called hello. David Biggs was sitting on a bench, eating his packed lunch, helped by a charming, but persistent Muscovy duck.

Horsebridge Wood consists of natural deciduous woodland dotted with trees from the New World. Around every turn of the path there's a surprise: giant Wellingtonia redwoods, a huge Douglas fir with its thick, cork-like bark and distinctive cones. I was delighted to find the woods still bright with patches of bluebells, their flowering delayed by an exceptionally cold spring. Beyond, in Coates Wood, there are trees from South America planted in English deciduous woodland. I have since read that swathes of native trees in these woods were felled by the Great Storm of October 1987.

The valley is bounded on one side by a wall of sandstone. I found plenty of mosses, liverworts and ferns growing on the surface of this moisture-retaining rock, but not the rare Tunbridge filmy fern. This fragile plant comes from the west coast of Britain, where it thrives in the mild, wet climate. Yet in the High Weald on the Sussex-Kent border, where the climate is comparatively dry, it can grow on the sandrock because it doesn't dry out. The fronds of this fern are only one cell thick, making it look almost transparent and very fragile.

I followed the Rock Walk around Bloomers Valley, marvelling at the mature trees whose roots hug the bare rock as they snake down it, creating natural sculptures. Although this sandrock wall is not as impressive as the towering cliff in the Landslip at Bonchurch on the Isle of Wight, the sheer number and variety of trees clinging to the rock is impressive. I remember seeing a mature beech balancing on the edge of the wall, as well as many yew trees of varying size.

Finally I arrived at the Millennium Seed Bank. This is cleverly designed so that visitors can view the various laboratory processes, from labelling, through drying and cleaning, to storing, through the windows. Information panels explain each process and describe how they awaken dormant seeds and deal with recalcitrant ones.

I wish I had been able to visit all areas of the gardens, but there wasn't time. However, I am certain that these wonderful gardens will leave a lasting impression on me. I was surprised to find that there is no guidebook on sale. I would have liked to have one to help me choose which areas to visit and, more importantly, as a souvenir to mull over in the dead of winter and to show photographs when describing the gardens to friends and family.

Thanks to Dave Trevan for arranging another very enjoyable trip.

Maggie Nelmes

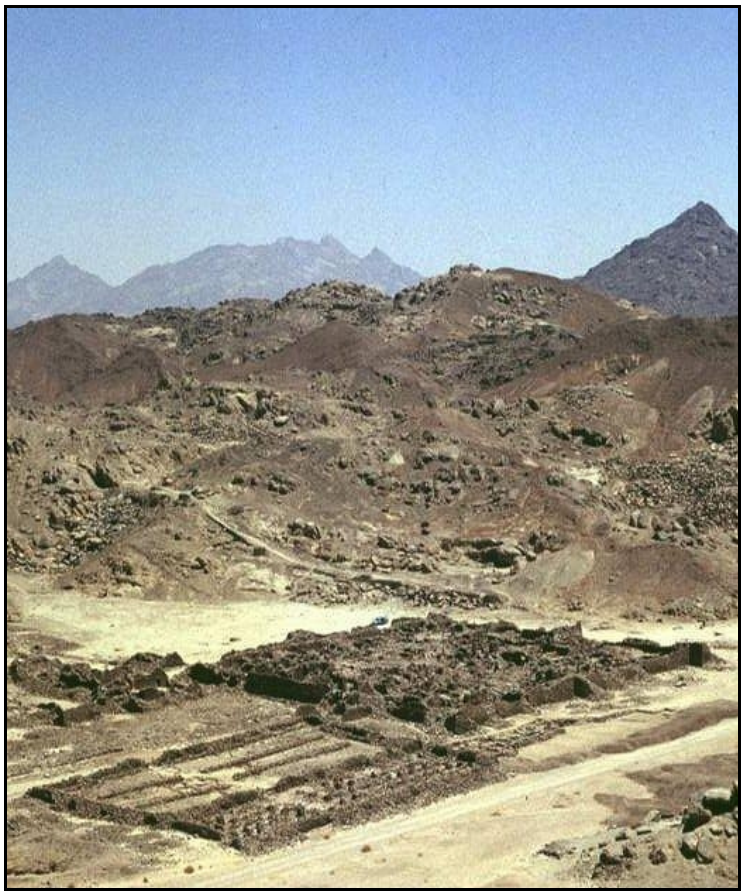
29th June **A History of Newport Quay**

A guided walk by Bill Shepard. Bill's family has lived and worked at Newport Quay for hundreds of years. A document held at Winchester College, dated 1396, mentions the lease granted to Thomas Shepard and family of a plot of land on the west bank of the Medina, in the north of the area now called 'Little London'. The landowners were the Abbot and brethren of St Cross Priory, who had housed the Shepards beside 'La Keye' in 1391 because they were fishermen and owned boats with which they could transport people and goods between The Priory and God's House in Southampton. Fourteen years earlier Newport had been set ablaze by French raiders, which must have caused the surviving inhabitants great hardship.

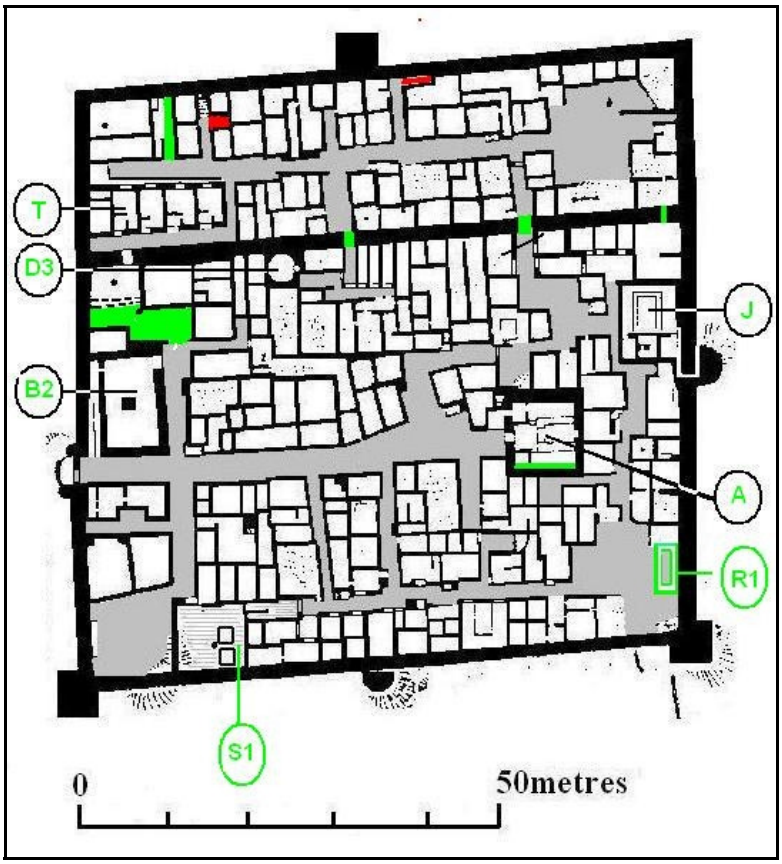
The Shepards were an adaptable and hard-working family who dominated Newport Quay for the next five hundred years. Bill showed us the cottage, named after St Cross Pier, where his father William was born in 1879. His father, Thomas, owned and captained a small cargo vessel, trading in and around the Solent. That is, until he got into serious debt and had to abandon his family and flee the country to avoid being thrown into a debtor's prison. He was a heavy drinker and William's early life was hard. At nine years old William started to work for the Crouchers, a local carrier firm, expected to do any odd job, and he stayed in their employ for the rest of his working life, apart from ten years spent in the army. At age sixteen he qualified as a deliveryman, working first with horses and later with motor vehicles. His day began at 6.30 am at the Quay, unloading the boats and sorting the goods before breakfast. At about 9am deliveries began around the town. Then each carrier set off for his own individual area. William's was Ryde and Bembridge. It was a twenty-four mile round trip. As well as carrying goods, he provided an essential passenger service for working-class people living in villages with no railway connection. On his way home he always dropped in at The Hare and Hounds Pub on Arreton Down and he was lucky to arrive home by 8pm. Sometimes it wasn't until 10. He worked six days a week and on Sundays took his turn to feed the horses.

Bill left school in 1935 to work with his father for Crouchers of Quay Street. By then they owned a fleet of sixteen lorries, ranging in size from one ton to six tons, eleven river boats and extensive storage. By this time, Bill recalls, he knew a lot about the job because from age eight he would spend most Saturdays riding about town on horse-drawn delivery carts, as far afield as Whitecroft Hospital, and as he grew older he travelled further, no longer as a passenger, but helping the lorry driver and his mates to lift heavy sacks onto the tailboard. His reward was a cup of tea and a bun with the men in the cafes en route. The worst job for a carrier was unloading Welsh slates, especially in lashing rain, without the protection of oilskins.

We assembled for the walk at the Propeller on Town Quay, where Bill passed around some old photographs. The Quay Arts Centre directly opposite is housed in stores once owned by a local brewery, Mew Langtons, used for loading and unloading beer onto barges, apart from The Rope Store, on the right. The latter building is hemmed in between the Quay and the railway bridge and has a curiously curved roof. In the mid nineteenth century the first railway to be built on the Island, from Cowes to Newport, needed a railway bridge to cross the Medina, if it was to be extended. This provoked fierce opposition from some shipping companies, as the masts of their vessels would not pass under any of the bridges proposed. Yet Shepard Bros., by far the largest Newport shipping company, saw a commercial advantage, as they owned land downstream from the proposed bridge as well as at the Quay. They emerged from the negotiations with the railway company with a quay wall over the foreshore, two more delivery stores and a railway delivery contract with both Newport and Freshwater stations. The railway bridge was built with a sliding opening facility, but this was subject to the railway timetable and caused delays to shipping movement, which was already subject to the tides. Robert Croucher,



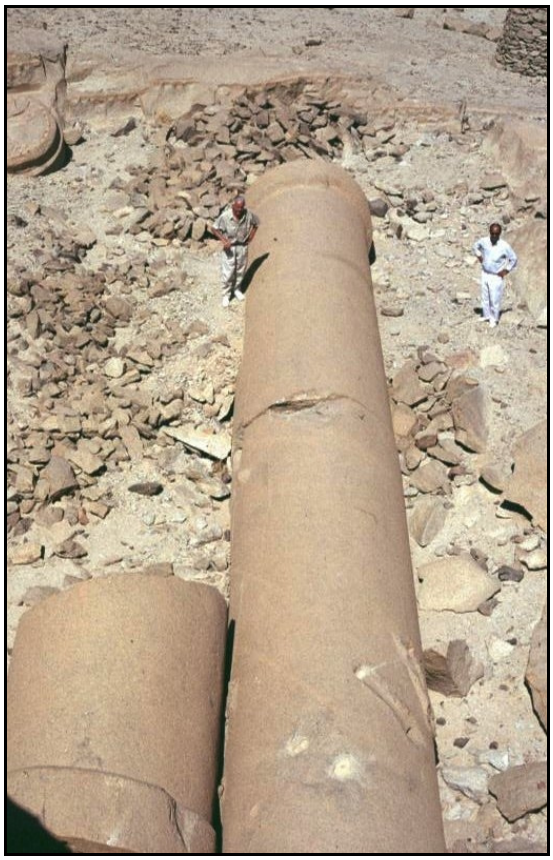
Mons Claudianus.
A fortified work camp for the quarrying of pink diorite in Egypt's Eastern Desert. In the foreground are the 'animal lines' for donkeys and camels.



The walled 'castellum' for workers and soldiers

Mons Claudianus
Page 9.

Roman column manufacture on Vectis.
The Greensand column at Brading villa.



A cracked and undelivered 50ft column in the Pillar Quarry

Botany - Chalk Milkwort. Page 25

Botany Sect - Munsley Bog,
Molecatcher Bill

Page 27

Front Lawn

Cellar

The Great Hall

who had landing facilities at the Quay and some warehousing in Sea Street, was desperate for more storage and office space. So he bought the small piece of surplus land beside the railway bridge and constructed the building known as The Rope Store for its use in the later years of its occupation by Crouchers Ltd. To optimise the limited space available, the north wall of this building is thirteen feet wide and the south wall thirty-three feet.

The Derrick store, on the north side of the bridge, is now the site of The Bargeman's Rest public house. The Derrick was designed to swing goods from the ships to the store over a public right of way. At first it was operated manually, then by steam traction engine, and finally by electric motor. The building of the quay wall created a deep-water berth alongside the store.

When, in 1893, the Shepards applied for permission to build The Model store on the riverbank near Cooper's Ark and fenced off the site, the local council contested their claim to ownership in court. The Shepards claimed that they had been in possession of the land for more than twelve years, had demolished some of the houses on the foreshore that were flooded by high tides and built a wharf there with piles and planks, raising the height of the quay wall, all with the council's permission. The court ruled in the Shepards' favour and they eventually built the Model store on this site, so named because it used the latest technology, which included a bracket crane, no longer in evidence. This building has now been converted into a modern apartment block.

The warehouses that were once sited between Sea Street and the river were designed to store goods in sacks, such as animal feed and flour. Pairs of doors were arranged one above the other on three floors and the sacks were raised by means of a pulley, directly from the hold of a ship berthed alongside. The work of the hoist operator was, writes Bill in his book *A History of Newport Quay and the River Medina*, co-written with Brian Greening, 'one of the most dangerous and skilful techniques ever witnessed in daily use'.

Sometimes an exceptionally large and heavy piece of equipment, like the boilers for Whitecroft Hospital, St Mary's Hospital and later Parkhurst Prison, had to be transported by barge to Newport and then by road. Whereas Southampton had cranes capable of lifting these weights, at Newport Quay in 1895 they had to devise their own methods for unloading from barge to wagon. At Southampton the vessel was loaded to hatch level with sacks of flour and suchlike, then timber was laid across the top and the boiler was positioned on the deck. At Newport more timber was laid from ship to quay, level with the deck and the waiting transport, so that the boiler could be rolled off. Bill showed us some fascinating photographs of the transportation of the first huge boiler from the Quay to Whitecroft Hospital.

On the east bank of the river there were two stores. The first you came to from the town centre was the Green store, situated where the council car park is now. This is where Bill worked from 1935 until he was called up in 1940. Here goods were sorted by district for the carriers to deliver. The second was Jubilee Stores, now used for council offices and artists' studios.

Bill remembers seeing stacks of timber on the quayside. There were two timber merchants in town. Moreys began in 1863 and took their first delivery of Swedish redwood ten years later. At Medham, near Cowes, it was transferred onto lighters, engineless boats that were towed upriver by motorboat and unloaded on Newport Quay. Morey's business gradually expanded and diversified and is still thriving today. In 1923 they opened a joinery department and in 1928 their first drying sheds on the Quay. Supplies of timber arrived from Scandinavia in the autumn and Morey's took delivery of three or four shiploads at this time. The work was done by casual workers who assembled outside The Fountain and later The Dolphin public house each morning, willing to do any work, however dirty and arduous.

The gas works was built at the Quay in 1851, but gas was first supplied to Newport at least thirty years earlier, making this one of the first provincial towns in the country to have a public supply. At first coal supplies were delivered to Medham and brought to the Quay by barge, but

after the railway viaduct was built, deliveries were made by lorry. This had to be done by night, when the trains weren't running, as an ingenious method was devised to unload from the bridge down a chute directly into the coal yard below. The trucks had to be unloaded by men with shovels. In 1937 an imposing art deco building, eighty-five feet high and made from Rookley bricks, was erected on land adjacent to the Quay. This was The Retort, described as the most up-to-date system for making gas. Yet in less than twenty years the Gasworks here was redundant and the derelict eyesore it had become was demolished.

From Bill's large and varied collection of photographs and his descriptions of the many different activities on Newport Quay, we realised what a hub of industry this small area at the heart of Newport was for so many decades. Fortunately some of the buildings remain and have been converted for other purposes without losing their character. For example, Bill is pleased with the conversion of the brewery and Ropestore to the Quay Arts Centre. Working at and from the Quay was often very hard and dangerous and many men sustained serious injury or were killed.

If you would like to know more about the Quay and see a large number of interesting photographs of the buildings and activities that took place there in the nineteenth and twentieth century, you can read Bill's book, co-written with Brian Greening, *A History of Newport Quay and the River Medina*. For more information, first-hand, about Bill's eventful life, I suggest you read *One Island Life Well Lived*, published last year and compiled by Brian Greening.

Some thirty members joined Bill on his tour of the Quay. Thank you, Bill, for your fascinating insights and amusing anecdotes.

Maggie Nelmes

Reports of Section Meetings

Archaeology

2nd & 3rd March The Bronze Age and the Isle of Wight

The Saturday Talk. Delian followed up her previous talk on this subject with some new perspectives, pointing out that during the Bronze Age the fundamentals of the English countryside as we see it today were laid down. There were at that point circa half a million people living in the British Isles. The term 'Chalcolithic' is beginning to be used in the British context for that period between the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age also known as the Copper Age: we now have evidence of copper mines in Britain such as at Great Orme in North Wales. And the best kind of bronze is 90% copper and 10% tin.

On the Continent they would have known about these stores of copper and tin in Britain for making bronze, and groups were no doubt being drawn here for this purpose, but perhaps also to Stonehenge and other sacred Wessex sites for their ceremonial connections. The Amesbury Archer, originally from the Italian Alps, might have been drawn here for either of these reasons: among his accoutrements was a copper dagger, as well as a black basalt cushion – he was undoubtedly a gold- or silversmith. Delian conjectured that there may have been an element of hroic voyaging attached to these long-distance quests, and these would have linked in to the new magic of sword-making.

But the point about these transitions is that they did not all happen everywhere at the same time. In some parts of Britain, such as the Fens, they did not have any materials at all. As Francis Pryor has pointed out, everything that was deposited at Flag Fen was not only incredibly valuable, but would need to have been acquired from elsewhere: it was ritual in the context of

conspicuous consumption on a grand scale.

On the Island a series of Bronze Age boundaries have been found, including at Lynnbottom and Span Farm, Wroxall, which again raises interesting questions: are these tribal boundaries, or religious boundaries associated with the barrows? Newbarn and Ashengrove in the Calbourne vicinity are particularly spectacular, yielding views to many other Island hilltop sites: perhaps there was a relationship between the setting of these barrows in the landscape, though it may have been due to something as simple as the best places for lighting bonfires.

Questions also arise over Beaker pottery finds such as the remains of about thirteen pots recently found by the team at Binnel Bay: are finds such as these the work of incoming peoples, or do they represent a diffusion of ideas amongst the indigenous culture? In Wessex as a whole, the presence of amber might lead one to suppose a source in the Baltic, but not necessarily: Cretaceous amber finds have been made on the Island, and a Polish researcher is currently working on 3,000 pieces of Isle of Wight amber in Maidstone Museum.

In the Late Bronze Age there was a trend towards increasingly fortified – one might call them proto-Iron Age – settlements, and bronze axes would have felled the trees that created this new landscape. An outstanding example of ceremonial use of trees in this period is the famous Seahenge site in Norfolk, with its ring of oak trees, the huge oak in the centre turned upside-down, and the honeysuckle ropes that had lowered it into position.

A great status was attached to horses and this became entwined with the British horse-cult of Epona. Horses such as the White Horse of Uffington were engraved on the Wessex hills. Macedonian coins mounted for Alexander the Great infiltrated into 3rd-century Europe: they contained not only the head of Apollo but on the reverse was a chariot drawn by horses; and both Gaul and Britain copied these.

The Sunday Walk. A hardy group met on a freezing morning at Brook Shute for a walk up to the Brook Down barrow site, where David Tomalin expounded on the subject. Dateable to 1600-1400 BC, this is the best barrow group on the Island, and the most prominent. The standard estimate of Island barrows at 300 has now reached a figure nearer 400, with the benefits of aerial photography showing up many more crop circles. The Brook barrows were dug in 1817/18 on his visits to the Island by the indefatigable John Skinner, rector of Camerton in Somerset, whose 97 leather-bound volumes of antiquarian researches round the country are preserved in the British Library. Brook Down at this time belonged to Sir Leonard Worsley Holmes of Westover.

The appalling results we see repeated everywhere with these early barrow-diggers find no exception here: the permanent damage done to the barrows, the breakage of important finds such as cremation urns, the loss of others. But we have to view these activities in the context of their time, and at least Rev Skinner's motives were of the best, in attempting to piece history together much as we do today. And his drawings of the barrows are quite charming.

We moved down the crest of the down, almost benumbed with the cold, to the moon-shaped disk barrow with its huge circle, surrounding bank, and ditch just inside it, quite different from the bowl barrows we had just visited. And so it might be: it contained one female burial, and there is only one other disk barrow on the Island like it, on Brighstone Down. David referred to her as the 'Bronze Age Lady of Wight': an awful lot of people must have turned out for her at such a special burial. That other early antiquarian Sir Richard Colt Hoare had speculated on the ancients 'dancing in the ditches' at these sites, and we know that American Indians danced in round circles. But David had dismissed Colt Hoare's theory as fanciful – until he was investigating a ploughed-out barrow on Mountjoy, when he came across a polished chalk floor and concluded that they had been dancing in the ditch!

Maybe a spot of dancing would have suited us: such was the cold that we had to curtail any further excursion and hurry back down the hill to our cars to warm up!

Alan Phillips

20th & 21st April Time and Tide in the Landscape

The Saturday Talk The main focus of Delian's talk was about human rather than natural impact on the landscape. Linked with this is our place in the landscape and our awareness of change. Delian recommended a book by Simon Schama, 'Landscape and Memory'.

Much change has happened as an incidental result of human activity, from the Neolithic farming practices, clearances of woodland, Fenland drainage, development of trackways and later roads, through the Industrial Revolution and the Enclosures Act to the present day when legislation controls much of the change that takes place.

Some change is intentional, such as the landed gentry creating their own landscape, sometimes relocating villages to improve the view. An example could be the development of Appuldurcombe from a medieval manor to a Jacobean home, then to a Georgian mansion and the attendant development of the village of Wroxall.

Ritual landscapes have been discussed before, but Delian returned to the theme of water. Islands, causeways etc have been significant since prehistoric times. A notable example is the Ness of Brodgar in Orkney, where the spit of land between a sea loch and fresh water became a site of great importance in Neolithic times.

From the Middle Ages people have altered and used waterways, diverting, creating banks, weirs, millstreams etc.

At the end Delian returned to the theme of 'personal' landscape, the changes we have seen in our own lifetimes and the emotional resonance it can have to our sense of who we are and where we belong.

The Sunday Walk We were fortunate to be greeted by a glorious sunny day and belated signs of spring – skylarks, ravens and fulmars in the air, cowslips and violets on the ground.

As the path from Yaverland had become unsafe, we re-convened on top of Culver Down and walked round the headland.

Delian was able to point out features of the 'economic' landscape and how much activity on this Northern side of the island is focussed towards the Solent. Shipping has anchored in the Solent from at least Roman times and the farmland has produced not only food crops but also useful materials such as hemp for rope-making.

The old waterways of the River Yar and Brading Haven would have been navigable for boats with low draughts. We had a bird's eye view of the coastal changes with the movement of the River Yar and the silting and eventual draining of once navigable waterways.

And of course the human impact is most evident in Sandown Bay with the defensive and tourist developments.

Helen Jackson

18th & 19th May The Georgian Landscape

The Saturday Talk. Delian's talk began with an unexpected comparison between the Georgian and Roman influence upon the British landscape. Both were periods of global expansion and wealthy landowners built their country homes as statements of wealth, status and culture. Roman villas were often built on the site of, and to replace, what were seen as more primitive or

modest farmsteads. Georgian country houses often replaced the medieval or Tudor/Jacobean manor houses. And of course both cultures looked to classical Greek sculpture and architecture as their models.

Perhaps a major difference is that the Georgians paid more attention to the wider landscape and created their own vistas, even removing unsightly villages. The wealthy were influenced by their travels, importing artworks, building materials and plants. The Georgians brought the horse chestnut from America; the Romans had introduced the sweet chestnut.

Many of the earliest Georgian houses on the Isle of Wight were more utilitarian, such as houses built for the Revenue officers. When war in Europe put an end to the Grand Tours, the wealthy travelled nearer to home and local tourism began. Until then, there had been few roads on the Isle of Wight and many areas could only be reached by footpaths and the occasional farm track – another comparison with the Romans, as both cultures were responsible for developing road systems.

Searching for comparable scenery to that seen in Europe, the Georgians began to create their own romantic idylls, as in the St. Lawrence Undercliff. There was a trend to build 'cottage ornées', such as Puckaster Cottage. With decorative woodwork and other design features they have stood the test of time and contribute to the attractions of the island for the modern visitor.

This led on to a consideration of 'heritage tourism' and which modern buildings might survive and be of interest in the future. Did the creators of the Georgian landscape give any consideration to what they were leaving for the future? A thought to take with us to Appuldurcombe House the next day.

The Sunday Walk. We were made very welcome at Appuldurcombe House and told that the site is significant in that it retains the original design by Capability Brown. Research by Delian and Vicky Basford suggests that the house was built upon the foundations of the Jacobean house.

As we walked through the grounds we noted that the beautiful mature trees may have been planted with future generations in mind; in the eighteenth century they would not have been seen at their best. **(Photos page 18)**

It could be argued that the ruinous state of the house helps the visitor to focus on the setting and the details of the landscape. Clear advantages are the tranquillity and the freedom to wander and use one's imagination. Typical features of this Georgian design are the carefully chosen and spaced trees, the attention paid to the natural contours of the land, the folly on top of Wroxall Down opposite (known more recently as 'Cook's Castle' but now sadly demolished), and the Ha-ha. (picture ….) This wall and ditch, designed to keep the grazing animals out, can only be seen from outside and so did not detract from the view as a wall might. Although now almost levelled in front of the house, we were delighted to find the original feature at the back and could see how it encircled the site.

The house itself has been partly re-roofed, giving a sense of faded grandeur to the Great Hall. (picture …) A visit to the cellars is not for the faint-hearted. (picture ….) Most of the building, however, is open to the elements, encouraging the visitors to focus on construction details and their own interpretation. (picture ….)

We had been fortunate with the weather but as the rain set in it was not a good day to walk up to the Freemantle Gate. This is on the original carriage drive from Godshill. As the drive now ends at the car park we were free to surmise that it may have continued across in front of the Ha-ha before sweeping round to the 'porte-cochère', the covered area at the rear. This would have ensured that the guests' first view of the house was of the stunning frontage with its view across the valley and landscaped backdrop.

Helen Jackson

22nd & 23rd June **The Monks of Lyra**

Saturday Talk. Delian began by talking about the legends and oral history associated with Bonchurch, so what follows is not all presented as fact!

The house called 'Pulpit Rock' is named after the rock from which St. Boniface preached. He lived in a large cave, sleeping on a stone ledge. Later this shelf housed a large flint which, being shaped like a skull, was associated with him. Eventually St Boniface went to convert the pagans in Germany where he was killed.

Later the monks from Lyra in Normandy came ashore at Bonchurch, giving rise to the name 'Monks Bay', and built a wooden church.

St. Rhadegund's Abbey in Normandy sent lepers to land at Woody Bay and climb the cliff en route to Whitwell to be healed at the Holy Well.

The Victorians of course relished such tales and made much of some of the holy wells in the area, creating a grotto over the St Lawrence well.

There were stories of ghostly monks, but one wonders if this might be linked to the smugglers who would have made use of the remoteness of the village and the caves in the rocky hillsides.

Now the documented history, but still with some speculation.

The monks of Lyra were favoured by William the Conqueror and granted lands in several places on the island, such as Whippingham and Godshill. The stone church at Bonchurch was built in about 1070, very soon after the conquest. According to the Domesday Book there was an abbey church at Bowcombe; some historians think this was a busy and prosperous settlement before Carisbrooke and Newport rose to prominence.

It is recorded that William, returning to Normandy where he died, spent some months on the island, but there is no record of where he stayed. An abbey owned by his favoured monks is a contender for such a place.

The monks of Lyra had been 'spreading the word' in England for sometime before the conquest. Delian posed the intriguing idea that missionary monks and friars travelling the country could have provided a useful spy network for William as he planned his invasion. Was the gift of so much land a reward for such services?

Domesday Book provides a useful insight into the social and economic structure in Anglo-Saxon times as well as just after the Norman conquest. Delian pointed out that the Anglo-Saxon social system, with a clear hierarchy and accountability and where every individual and their role was known, would have provided a good basis for William to take control of his new kingdom.

Sunday walk. About a dozen people met at Bonchurch pond, pleased to find the weather better than expected. As we walked through the village we discussed how the rocky hillside had been altered by the Victorian 'building frenzy'. A number of these houses were built for the 'nouveau riche', for example merchants returning with their fortunes made with the East India Company. As well as hugging the rock faces, several gardens have caves (probably useful to smugglers), and one mansion (Undermount) has a stunning tunnel cut through the rock for a driveway. We also considered how the area has changed since as the growing vegetation has altered or blocked viewpoints. We noticed that 'Hadfield Rock', from which the admiral of that name could observe the ships sailing from Portsmouth, is now surrounded by sycamores.

We passed Winterbourne where Dickens lived for a time, writing in his diary about the ghostly monks supposedly seen by his servants.

The old church, built soon after the conquest, still maintains much of its original charm, including fragments of medieval frescoes. The churchyard, with its wooded, peaceful setting, is

fascinating and includes the graves of the poet Algernon Swinburne and the writer Henry de Vere Stackpoole.

We then walked down to Monks Bay, following the route down along which blocks of building stone were transported to be loaded on to barges on the beach. Coming up from the beach we looked at the field below East Dene where large amounts of late Saxon / early Norman pottery have been found, indicating the probable site of the settlement around the church. Delian recalled the field beyond, now lost to the sea, where Roman artefacts were found, including coins, a sword and cremation urns.

As always there were nuggets of information too numerous to mention here, including contributions on geology, botany and entomology. For me, this variety and shared input are what make our society outings so special.

Helen Jackson

Botany

12th January **Indoor Meeting**

Our indoor meeting gives the opportunity to review last year's recording, and looking forward to the new season's programme. Reports were given of the two rare plants (Field Cow-wheat and Wood Calamint) that the Botany Group members monitor. Colin Pope showed photographs of some of last years special finds including Broad-leaved Cudweed, *Filago pyramidata,* a species which was thought to be extinct on the Isle of Wight, and Chalk Milkwort *Polygala calcarea* (**Photo page 16)** a species new to the Island. Both of these plants were found by Paul Stanley.

Roger Porley has a particular enthusiasm for finding and photographing orchids and he showed us some photographs of the specimens he found in the last season. Several other people brought pressed specimens of plants and photographs to be examined in the tea interval.

Finally, we looked at some photographs of the flowers of the Ukhalama Drakensberg National Park in South Africa, taken by Keith and Anne Marston on their visit in December 2012. Although the plants initially appear very different from our native flora, it is possible, in some cases, to pick out family characteristics in terms of flower structure and work out which native British plants are related to them. Other plants, such as Lobelia and Nemesia, we are familiar with because they are commonly grown in gardens. Some account of the uses of these plants, whether as food, medicinal or horticultural, was also given.

24th February **Wood Calamint conservation working party**

On the original date scheduled, the day dawned wet and the steady rain by 8.30am caused the meeting to be cancelled. We were able to rearrange a date later in the month, although with fewer members able to be there. Our first task was to set out small Wood Calamint plants grown from seed by Ann Campbell. No new rides had been cut this year, so they were put into areas where there has been some success with extending the population previously. The new plants were marked with sticks bearing a numbered flag, and later in the year we will visit the site to monitor how well the plants are growing.

We then continued with the clearance of rank vegetation on the two original lay-bys, pulling out brambles and other coarse weeds to get the growth back to soil level to assist the growth of the plant in the coming season.

13th April **Whitefield Wood**

Unfortunately this meeting was cancelled due to heavy rain, and we will try to re-arrange it for next year.

18th May **Totland Grasslands**

In the nineteenth century there was an extensive area of grazed grassland at Colwell Common on the road between Colwell and Totland and a number of unusual plants were recorded from this area. Since that time the area has steadily been developed and there are relatively few areas of semi-natural vegetation remaining. We met at Colwell Baptist Church where the minister and congregation are allowing the grassland in the graveyard to grow longer this year to see what species are present. In an area of just over 400m^2, we recorded 75 species on the afternoon. Adding in those seen previously and since, nearly 120 plant species have been recorded in the churchyard so far! In particular there was Field Wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, three species of buttercup - Bulbous, Creeping and Meadow *Ranunculus bulbous, R repens* and *R. acris* and five species of Speedwell – Wall, Germander, Slender, Ivy-leaved, and Thyme-leaved *Veronica arvensis, V chamaedrys, V filiformis, V. hederifolia and V serpyllifolia*, together with several spikes of Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio*,

From here we walked to the area presently called Colwell Common to find Green-winged Orchids again and Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*. A group of people on their hands and knees soon attracted the attention of local residents who were curious to know what we were doing, and they were very interested to discover what was growing next to their gardens.

Finally we moved to Totland recreation ground where a fairly small unmown strip between the football pitch and the adventure play equipment. We had a magnificent display of Green-winged Orchids and several Common Twayblade Orchids *Neottia ovata,* along with Jointed Rush *Juncus articulatus* and Changing Forget-me-not *Myosotis discolor*.

26th May **West High Down**

As noted above, Paul Stanley found Chalk Milkwort on West High Down last year and the major focus of our meeting was to re-find and map the location of this species. As this area is botanically very interesting, we were surprised to find that there were relatively few species recorded for this grid square in the database, so while walking from the West High Down Chalk pit to the Nodes Beacon we set about making as comprehensive a list as possible. A brief detour took us to see some hawthorn bushes which have Golden-eye Lichen *Teloschistes chrysophthalmus*, growing on them. This species was found here last year and has appeared recently at several locations on the south coast. However it may not persist, as it is quite demanding in its climatic requirements.

We located the Chalk Milkwort *Polygala calcarea* to the north-west of the Tennyson Monument and slightly downslope. At least 30 patches were recorded and an average position calculated from GPS readings.

Finally we went to look for the Early Spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes,* recently found by Rob Wilson. Although it was well photographed after its initial discovery, it did not survive the strong winds of mid May and we could only see the leaves and remaining part of the stem.

8th June **St Helens Duver**

St Helens Duver is a well known site which we have not visited for a number of years. We started our recording on the stabilised grey dune system near the National Trust car park and the first find of interest was Smooth Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris glabra*, a rarity of acid sandy soils.

Sand dunes are a difficult habitat for plants to survive in; they are very free draining and water shortage is an ongoing problem. Plants found there in quantity include Marram Grass *Ammophila arenaria*, Sheeps' Sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and Sand Sedge *Carex arenaria.* Bur Chervil *Anthriscus caucalis* was flowering well and examination of the fruits with a hand lens showed their tiny hooked bristles. Close inspection of the sward enabled us to find Slender

Parsley-piert *Aphanes australis*, Common Stork's-bill, *Erodium cicutarium*, Bird's-foot Clover *Trifolium ornithopodioides* and Suffocated Clover *T. suffocatum*.

Further south of the Duver on the western side of the mouth of Bembridge Harbour is an area of yellow dune, in the early stages of colonisation. Hare's-foot Clover *Trifolium arvense* was present is some quantity and there was a good show of Sea-kale *Crambe maritima*. The amount of Sea Holly, *Eryngium maritimum* has increased dramatically here in the last few years. However, there we also found a number of non-native plants beginning to gain a foothold including Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa* and other plants are moving in from nearby gardens.

Anne Marston

22nd June **Munsley Bog**

Fourteen members met at Mr & Mrs Higgs, the landowners, and were taken down to the marshy areas where we started recording. The landowners were very proud of their marshy field, which was full of Southern Marsh Orchids, Common Spotted Orchids and their hybrids. They made a splendid show, although not so special, as in the bog Sphagnum mosses, Sundew and Bog Asphodel used to be there. We also visited a part of Munsley Bog, which is publicly accessible, where there was a splendid show of Ragged Robins in full bloom, in two shades of pink. We were surprised to find one striking fully double flowered plant. The whole area we searched yielded an impressive list of well over one hundred species, but the highlight for many was a Mole on the surface. It was pounced on by Bill Shepard, mole catcher general, who displayed its features to the rest of the group (**Pictures page 17**).

Colin Pope

Entomology

23rd May: **Jersey Camp moth trapping**

The recent pattern of very poor conditions for moth-trapping continued into a second year. We met at Jersey Camp, near Clamerkin Lake with facilities laid on for us by David Maidment. However, the low temperature was the main problem and although the trap was run for 90 minutes, no moths were seen in flight and no insect (not even a midge) was found in the trap. We were treated to the song of a single Nightingale and one of our members shared the bridge over the creek with a Badger. It was a good chance for members to catch up with the latest news.

28th May: **Yarmouth Green for Bioblitz**

This was an extraordinarily wet day, and could not have been worse for entomology. Not surprisingly the entomological walks that had been planned were shelved and members either switched to record bird and plant species, or went on individual forays to see what could be added.

11th June: **Afton Marsh**

If you are planning a day off, or a wedding, check to see when the Entomological Section is meeting and select another date. Of the three meetings in the first half of the summer this was the most successful, but even so the weather was disappointing with intermittent drizzle throughout the visit.

There were a number of interesting sightings during the afternoon. A Nationally Scarce B moth, the Little Thorn *Cepphis adveratia* was found by the path leading north through the south-west part of the reserve. Also found in woodland was the attractive micromoth *Alabonia geoffrella* . This is quite a common species but this was an excellent chance to see the exquisite

markings at close quarters.

Nine galls and three mines were identified. We looked for and found evidence of the stem of the Common Reed being thickened due to the gall of the fly *Lipara lucens.* The most interesting find of the day was probably evidence of a Bay Laurel mite gall *Cecidophyopsis malpighianus* . This species only came to the British Isles in 2005 and this is the second record for the Isle of Wight. Seven and Fourteen Spot Ladybirds were seen, as was a black and white shield-bug known as the Brassica Shield Bug *Eurydema oleracea* , a new record for the site. A grass bug, *Stenodema calcarata* was also new for the marsh.

Finally some work was done on woodlice and two positive identifications were made: Common Rough and Common Pygmy Woodlice were both seen in good numbers.

Richard Smout

Looking at the Countryside

14th February Access winter waders walk to St Helens

Unfortunately only two members turned up for the meeting besides the two leaders, on a lovely mild morning. As we had heavy rain a few hours before the meeting, it was decided not to take the footpath that runs between the woods and St Helens Common, as it would have been very slippery. We walked down the road instead and took a look out to sea before going over the old golf links to look at the end of the mill pond. We then took our usual route through the bushes to the sea wall and round to the harbour. The tide was about half way in and not many waders were seen until we reached the mud flats inside Bembridge Harbour. The waders that we did note were Redshank, three Greenshank, Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Curlew and Black-tailed Godwit. Ducks were represented by Teal, Shelduck, Mallard and 40 paired Gadwall. We also saw a Great Crested Grebe in summer plumage, as well as one still in winter plumage and Little Grebe. At least 26 Brent Geese flew in and one Canada Goose faithfully stayed with his friends, the three farmyard geese that are found near the Old Mill House. The gulls were represented by Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Black-headed Gull and several Mediterranean Gull. Several other birds were noted during the walk including Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker and Pheasant.

In all 37 species were noted.

Jackie Hart

19th June Wootton to Hurst Copse

Ten people met in Wootton on a very warm muggy morning for a walk to Hurst Copse, led by Mary and John Edmunds. Mary told us about Fernhill House, a mansion that was burned down in the 30s. It was a very large ornate house with a tower that once contained a signal station that linked with Ashey and other prominent points around the Island. The house was located roughly where there is now a caravan park. A pleasant walk past Fernhill Farm took us to Hurst Copse, which is owned by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES). It is an attractive small wood where, unusually, the dominant tree species is Hornbeam. We admired the beautiful ridged trunks that have a snaky look about them and the lovely soft leaves. We also saw Herb Bennet Aka or Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*). At one point we crossed a marsh area on a boardwalk, where Hemlock Water Dropwort was shoulder high. There were also some very large Oaks, Field Maple and Spindle.

As we left the Copse we encountered the Ice House of Fernhill House, which appears to be

still in good condition. Fortunately it is barred off so that it cannot be spoiled. Nearby was a fallen log with a good display of the Hairy Bracket Fungus (*Stereum hirsutum*); although it was bit dried out, it was still in quite good condition considering it had probably been there since autumn.

Beyond the copse we made a short detour to admire a Wild Service Tree also known as Chequers (as in the pub) Tree. This is a good sized tree despite being overshadowed by a very large Oak.

We then went to a PTES managed wild flower meadow. At first it didn't look as though there was much to see other than buttercups and daisies, but as we walked round the field we gradually discovered more flowers. There was a good sprinkling of Common Spotted Orchids all over the field and possibly other similar looking but different orchids (no spots). We also identified Common Vetch, Meadow Vetchling, with its attractive bright cerise flowers, Self heal, Meddick (though we weren't sure which one), Marsh Thistle, Yarrow, Red Clover and a Small Cranes-bill which might have been Cut-leafed Cranes-bill. The field also has a wide variety of grasses.

There are two ponds in the meadow one of which provided us with some insect interest. There were several large dragonflies zooming around, one in particular had a short, wide, strongly blue body which was identified as *Libellula depressa*, the Broad-bodied Chaser. There were also Damselflies and Skaters on the pond.

In the field we saw several butterflies and moths and some stayed still long enough for us to identify Meadow Brown and Holly Blue, we also saw Speckled Wood butterflies throughout the walk. Some merriment was caused by the sighting of a 'Hornet Moth', which turned out to be an aeroplane! There are some magnificent Oaks in and around the field.

We didn't see much birdlife, except for a Buzzard lazily circling over the field and a Heron wading belly deep in the lake above the bridge. However we heard Chiffchaff, Black Cap, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Robin.

A shady short-cut took us back to Brannon Way and a welcome cuppa in the tea rooms. Right next to the loos Mary spotted some Broomrapes coming up near the Oak Tree, but most of us missed them!

Thank you Mary and John for a most enjoyable wander through an area that several of us had never been to.

Lesley Atkins

Ornithology

5th January.

21 members in Thorley Road, Yarmouth on a dark, misty and drizzly morning. We walked down to Thorley bridge and then along the old railway line to Barnfield and return. The water meadows held plenty of water which in places attracted ducks and Common Snipe. The telescopes were very useful in picking out these birds and we managed to get good views despite the damp affecting the telescopes. Unfortunately, there was clay pigeon shooting going on in the vicinity and the bangs caused the birds to take flight a number of times. We heard Water Rail and Cetti's Warbler and saw Gadwall, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Pintail, Tufted Duck, Coot and Moorhen as well as Snipe and Curlew before we had got to the estuary. There we added to our total of species with Canada Goose, Brent, Mute Swan, Turnstone, Knot, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Grey Plover, Black-headed Gull and Herring Gull as well as Little Egret and Little Grebe. At the pool at Binfield we had a Greenshank and Grey Heron. In the hedgerows, trees, and bushes we saw Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Great Tit, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Starling, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Blackbird, Robin, Magpie,

Great Spotted Woodpecker, Reed Bunting, Kestrel, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Rook and Buzzard. In all 52 species were seen during the course of the morning.

Jackie Hart

10th February.

Seven intrepid members turned up at the car park at Shalfleet on a very wet morning. It was decided the best thing to do was to adjourn to the bird hide at Newtown National Nature Reserve. The rain continued to fall relentlessly but we were nice and dry in the hide looking out on to the newly re-profiled scrape. The tide was coming in and was extremely high gradually submerging the new island – could be a problem with attracting the return of the breeding Black-headed Gulls this spring. We managed to record 22 species. Greenshank, Redshank, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Curlew Carrion Crow, Shelduck and Cormorant around the scrape area and Teal, Wigeon, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Red Breasted Merganser and Mallard in the estuary beyond. Little Egret and Kingfisher were seen at Cassey Bridge on the trip from Shalfleet.

Jackie Hart

The March meeting was rained off

14th April.

Six members and two guests met at Hurstake for a walk along the muddy west bank of the Medina estuary to Dodnor millpond, along the cyclepath towards Werrar Farm and back via Dodnor Bridge.

Although the morning weather was dry and warm, the previous day's continual heavy rain meant that wellington boots were an essential part of the kit.

In total a pleasing 38 species were counted – a mix of gulls, ducks, waders and passerines. Of the early migrants we saw one male Blackcap, Barn Swallows and several singing Chiffchaffs whilst Willow Warbler song could be heard from the Dickson's Copse area. Other noteworthy species included Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits, House Sparrows, Chaffinches, three Jays, and a Song Thrush in full song, which we all admired through Jackie's telescope. Sky Larks were up and singing at Werrar Farm.

Among a small flock of Black-headed Gulls on the east side of the Medina estuary, we saw several Mediterranean Gulls, identifiable by their intensely black heads, bright scarlet bill and legs.

At Dodnor we had an excellent view of a Whimbrel feeding on the shore whilst on Dodnor millpond there was a Little Egret, Little Grebe and a pair of Canada Geese.

For fun, at the end of the walk, everyone was asked to nominate their 'Bird of the Day'. Votes were equally divided between Blackcap and Whimbrel.

As a bonus, the warmer weather brought to our attention three species of butterfly; Peacock, Comma and a male Brimstone.

Sue Blackwell**.**

4th May.

Sixteen members met on a very blustery morning for a walk in the Ningwood area. The route started by the Horse and Groom and continued across fields and through woodlands to Ningwood Common Nature Reserve. Only one person wore Wellington boots; the rest of us wished that we had done! 29 species of birds were counted, most of which were seen and others only heard.

A Treecreeper was noticed by just a few of us, as it quietly crept its way around the trunk of an Oak tree. Other species seen included Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Chaffinches, Greenfinch, 4 Buzzard, 3 Jays, a pair of Red-legged Partridges and one Great Spotted Woodpecker, though

another could be heard drumming in the distance.

Most of the birds were quite vociferous throughout the walk. The group stopped for a while on Ningwood Common to listen to the sweet warbling of a Blackcap, while the characteristic song of a Nightingale could be heard from deep cover of Gorse bushes and Blackthorn trees.

It was hoped that we might have seen or heard Common and Lesser Whitethroats, but as the morning was cool and overcast none were evident.

As well as the area's pleasing bird life there was colourful botanical interest with many Primroses, Wood Anemones and Dog-violets to admire all the way round.

A very pleasant walk indeed, much enjoyed by all who took part.

Sue Blackwell**.**

2nd June.

We were joined by some of the Arnside & District Natural History Society members for the evening Nighjar walk at Mottistone Common. It was a lovely evening, warm, bright and a slight breeze. We met at the small car park near the bottom of Strawberry Lane and made our way up along the track passed the Long Stone as far as the bench near the Bronze Age round barrow. As the sun went down the Nightjars began to chur. At one stage when Tracie waved a white handkerchief a bird moved to a branch almost overhead. During the evening we did get a few brief glimpses of a bird, one flew low in front of us across the track. It is difficult to estimate the number of birds there were, but we probably heard at least 3. I think everyone enjoyed the evening; it was the first time one of our members had heard and seen Nightjars.

Jackie Hart

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S NOTES

New Members

Deaths

Society Officers
President Mrs Delian Backhouse Fry, Hereward, Old Park Road, St Lawrence, IOW. PO38 1XR
General Secretary Ms J. Lehrer, 31. Glynn Close, Seaview, IOW. PO34 5JZ
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Next Bulletin

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings for 1st July 2013 to 30th December 2013 should be sent to:-

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The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be **12th January 2014**

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