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President's Address

I first joined the Society in 1970 which was European Conservation Year. Conservation was a particular theme for the Society and other organisations in that year. The Isle of Wight County Council won an award for Newtown Local Nature Reserve. They also set up new Long Distance Trails and proposed a Medina Water and Countryside Park (!). At the time, Jim Cheverton was one of the Society's leading lights. He ran the Ornithology Section and was heavily involved in the annual Local Look exhibition which ran throughout August in the Seely Hall at Brook. 1970 was the tenth year that it had run and the report of the exhibition says, 'The wonderful weather during the month did not deter our 8,200 visitors, but it felt that we suffered somewhat from the proximity of the Pop Festival at East Afton, as the traffic had to be diverted.' Jim continued to play a key role in the running and organisation of the Society up until fairly recent years and his gentle wisdom, common sense and good humour were always valued highly. Other tributes to him appear elsewhere in this Bulletin.

Local Look was an attraction for holiday makers to the Island during August for very many years and it opened their eyes to the wildlife around them. We are fortunate that, despite the inexorable march of progress, much of the Island still remains a wonderful place for wildlife and attracts visitors from far and wide. The Glanville Fritillary is a great attraction for many naturalists and the Island is the place to visit if you wish to see them in this country. Andy Butler, whose house overlooks Wheeler's Bay, where most people come to see Glanvilles these days, has met very many people from all over the country who have come across for the day or the weekend to enjoy seeing these butterflies. Red Squirrels also attract lots of visitors to the Island. Our wild flowers are also a draw and during June we were visited by a group

from the Wild Flower Society for a weekend, and a large group from the Bradford Botany Group for four days. It was a great joy to go out with these groups and show them many of our special flowers growing in spectacular Island landscapes. Both Anne Marston and Dave & Hazel Trevan also helped out with the Bradford group on their visit. What has struck us all, in meeting up with fellow naturalists travelling from far and wide, is how appreciative they are and how much pleasure they derive from coming here and looking at our wildlife. To date, the Society's mainland visits have been restricted to single day visits. This tradition continues and next year Dave is looking to arrange a visit to the RSPB reserve at Arne in Poole Harbour. Do make an effort to come along if you can. Arne is a great place for ornithologists, botanists, entomologists and reptile hunters with plenty to see that we would rarely, if ever, get to see on the Island.

Finally, we send our best wishes to Howard and Leslie Atkins who have left the Island to start a new life in Newent, Glos. We are sorry to see them go. They have contributed much to the Society and the reinvigorated 'Looking at the Countryside' section has flourished under Lesley.

Colin Pope

Lt.-Cd. James Milton (Jim) Cheverton, R.N. (rtd.)

15.05.1921 – 03.06.2015

Born in Shanklin, educated at Sandown Grammar School, Jim entered the Royal Navy as a Naval Artificer apprentice in 1937. Passing out in 1940, he served in HMS Intrepid which was sunk off Leros on 26th September 1943. After the War, he served in many stations as a Senior Commissioned Electrical Officer, retiring from the Navy in 1976 as Lt.-Commander and subsequently working at the underwater weapons department at Bath as an Equipment Officer and as a technical author for the MOD.

It was whilst in Rosyth in 1950 that he bought a complete set of Witherby for £7. He had already begun his life-long interest in birds and their nests. He joined the BTO in 1954. Later enlisting the aid of his three sons, he notched up a remarkable number of nest records for the BTO. In 1974, for instance, he recorded the details of 503 nests.

He joined our Society in 1960, undertaking Beached Bird Surveys, Rook Censuses, Wild Fowl Counts and later Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS). In 1967, he became leader of the Ornithological Section, leading monthly field meetings for many years. He served as President from 1978 to 1981, reactivating the role of recorders for various species groups. He served as Dragonfly Recorder from 1981 to 2007. He was heavily involved in the organisation of 'Local Look', together with Oliver Frazer.

His publications demonstrate the wide variety of his natural history interests:

- 1970 Nesting of Kittiwakes at Main Bench
- 1986 Early sightings of Painted Lady
- 1987 Odonata of the Isle of Wight
- 1987 Watching Birds in the Isle of Wight (with Bill Shepard)
- 1988 Current status of Isle of Wight moths (with Connie Pelham)
- 1989 Breeding Birds of the Isle of Wight
- 1992-2008 Odonata records; Annual Reports
- 1997 Provisional Atlas of the Odonata of the Isle of Wight

He was a wise member of Council for many years, a mentor to generations of bird watchers and a good friend to many of us.

David Biggs



Jim Cheverton (left with telescope) from his book '*Watching Birds in the Isle of Wight*' (1987) written with Bill Shepard.

British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Isle of Wight News

Although there is an obituary of Jim Cheverton elsewhere in this Bulletin, I would like to pay tribute to Jim's immense contribution to the BTO which spanned 61 years. At the time of his death he was the longest-serving Island member, having joined in February 1954, and was still contributing to the Nest Record Scheme (NRS) and Garden BirdWatch.

Jim's nest-finding skills were attributed to his childhood pursuit as an egg collector, like most young boys of his era, although with adolescence this was outgrown. The interest in breeding birds remained and Jim began submitting records to the NRS in 1955. In total, he collected over 4,400 nest records for the scheme covering 97 species with over 700 Blackbird records.

He also covered the Brading Harbour site (Brading Marshes and Bembridge Harbour) from 1965 to October 2001. Initially this was covering both the National Wildfowl Counts and the Birds of Estuaries Enquiry (launched in September 1969) until they were merged into the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) in 1995. Crucially he always followed the same route which ensured consistency of data and clocked up over 1,300 hours covering this site, recording 95 species.

In addition Jim contributed to the three BTO Atlas projects and submitted 2462 records for the 2007-11 Atlas, which was all the more impressive when you consider that he was 90 when the last record was submitted.

There was also twenty years of Garden BirdWatch coverage amassing over 13,000 records from his Shanklin garden in addition to his involvement in the many 'one-off' surveys for the BTO, all fulfilled with his usual enthusiasm. He will be sorely missed by all at the BTO.

House Martin Survey

At the time of writing there is mixed news regarding House Martin breeding records on the Island. Although a lot of the allocated squares in the BTO Survey have drawn a blank, several colonies previously unknown have been reported through the local survey which is being run by myself. Properties with artificial nests appear to have had early success probably due to the colder spring which made building natural nests difficult due to the mud not drying.

There is an interesting note in the July 2015 issue of *British Birds* magazine regarding a pair of House Martins which had used an artificial Swallow nestbox in 2014 in Herefordshire, building up the entrance with mud to resemble a martin nest. It will be interesting to observe during the coming years whether artificial nestboxes become increasingly important to this species.

I hope that many of you have participated in the Island survey this year and I would be grateful if you could return the forms to myself (either electronically or in paper format) at the end of September or the last date you see a House Martin occupying a nest site. If you would like a form please contact me (details at the end of the article).

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

Thanks to all of the volunteers for reporting their counts so promptly after the June survey which concluded the reporting year. The highlight of the year was the February count of 2,144 Dark-bellied Brent Goose at Newtown NNR. This is an Island WeBS record beating the previous best of 2,115 at the same site in January 2008. It is also the third time that Newtown has recorded international importance year maxima with the site identified as nationally important for this species since the qualifying level was first published for the 1980/81 count.

The 2015/16 reporting year commenced in July but there is still time for anyone who is interested to join the survey. There are plenty of potential new sites for the survey on the Island considering the number of ponds and reservoirs available.

Non-Estuarine Waterbirds Survey (NEWS)

The BTO have received funding to run the Non-Estuarine Waterbirds Survey over the 2015/16 winter. This survey was last carried out in 2006/07 and involves volunteers covering randomly selected stretches of non-estuarine coast, as well as SPAs and SSSI. The counts from these sites are then used to contribute towards a revision of waterbird population estimate and to explore any increases and declines. Further details will be available in due course but if you would like to register your interest in participating in this survey, please contact me.

Heronries Census

Initial records indicate that it has been a successful breeding season for the Grey Heron on the Island. The number of occupied nests at Bembridge was similar to 2014 while there was a modest increase at Gatcombe. Unfortunately for the third successive year no records were reported from Wootton.

If you have encountered a Grey Heron either nesting in the Wootton area or you have recorded them in another part of the Island, please can you contact me as soon as possible so we can include this in the survey.

Garden BirdWatch (GBW)

We urgently need Island volunteers for the Garden BirdWatch Survey so if you can spare a few minutes each week counting the birds in your garden, please consider joining.

It is a self-financing scheme with a £17 annual subscription although this includes a free copy of “Garden Birds and Wildlife” by Mike Toms and Paul Sterry upon joining plus you get a quarterly Bird Table magazine. Further details are available at the following link; <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw>

Ringling

The Isle of Wight Ringling Group have been participating in the Constant Effort Sites (CES) scheme with three sites in operation during the breeding season; Jersey Camp at Newtown and two sites at Haseley Manor; Haseley Marsh and a new site Haseley West (Reeds). The CES is the first national standardised ringling programme within the BTO Ringling Scheme and has been running since 1983. Ringlingers operate the same nets in the same locations over the same time period at regular intervals through the breeding season at over 130 sites throughout Britain and Ireland.

The Scheme provides valuable trend information on abundance of adults and juveniles, productivity and also adult survival rates for 24 species of common songbird.

Jersey Camp produced a noteworthy re-trap of a Lesser Whitethroat on 4th June. It was originally ringling at Jersey Camp on 6th August 2009 and was re-trapped the following week. There were no further reports until 2013 when it was controlled by a ringlinger at the Jerusalem Bird Observatory, Israel on 1st March. According to the BTO website, the longevity record for this species is 9 years 2 days set in 2008. This would make the Newtown bird the second oldest Lesser Whitethroat reported at 5 years 9 months and 29 days.

The Ringling Group now have a fourth “A” permit ringlinger (the highest qualification in ringling terms) after Eleanor Ness’s application was approved by the BTO Ringling Committee.

If you have photographed a ringlinged bird, or seen one and you have noted either the ring number or the colour combination of the rings on the birds legs, please report the bird as soon as possible using the following process;

For ALL species excluding Sanderling

- If you have access to the internet please report your sighting via the ring.ac website. The website will then send your details to the appropriate ringlinger and you should receive a reply from the ringlinger in due course.

For Sanderling

Sanderling have been colour-ringed at Hayling Island by the Farlington Ringling Group as part of an international Sanderling project since 2011. To date over 360 sightings on the Island, predominantly at Ryde and Seaview, have been reported and the organisers are requesting your help once more as the birds begin to arrive for the winter.

- Please send your photo, or details, of the colour-ringed Sanderling to Jeroen Reneerkens at j.w.h.reneerkens@rug.nl and ensure you include the location and the date of the sighting.

If you see a ringlinged bird and do not have access to the internet, please contact myself with the details and I will pass on the information accordingly and advise you of any replies.

If you require further information or wish to discuss any BTO-related topics please contact myself, Jim Baldwin either by phone (01983 721137(home)/ 07528 586683 (mobile)), email (wightbto@hotmail.com) or write to me at 21 Hillcrest Road, Rookley, I.W PO38 3PB.

Jim Baldwin

Bird nests aren't just for birds

The great value of nests as invertebrate habitats and in fact as staging posts for invertebrate dispersal has been little studied but remains a fascinating area of investigation. Old nests at the end of the season can be safely collected and unpicked for their many and varied micro-inhabitants.

Fleas and mites are common parasites, sometimes also blood-sucking hemipteran bugs such as *Oeciacus hirundinis*, frequent in house martin nests. If you take a look at the lining of House Martin nests you might be surprised by a terrifyingly alien louse fly *Crataerina hirundinis* leaping out at you.

But there are more benign creatures also at large amongst the organic debris of nests. Case-bearing clothes moths for example, their caterpillars sticking together overcoats made from assorted debris and browsing their way through the hair, wool and feathers. Many beetles too; grubs and adults can be shaken from old nests. Staphylinids are very common but also a group of very beautiful small Histerids called *Gnathoncus* which specialise in nest-living. I had the opportunity this year to inspect the nest which Ravens had built on the Hammerhead Crane at Cowes, once the birds had left the nest, and was able to find some Histerid beetles (see colour plate 3).

Ian Boyd

The IWNHAS visit to the Orkneys, May 18-26, 2015

Introduction

The intrepid participants were David Tomalin, Delian Backhouse-Fry, Helen and Peter Jackson, Erica Manley, Alan and Renella Phillips, and Alan and Jane Martin.

We didn't go for the weather, which is just as well since it was cold and wet, with a bitter, strong wind from Iceland attacking our extremities for almost all of the 8 days. It did nothing, however, to dent our enthusiasm, since we were privileged to investigate arguably the best Neolithic sites in Europe with one of the foremost experts Caroline Wickham-Jones.

Helen made an impeccable job of organising our travel and accommodation, by Red Jet Cowes to Southampton, then Flybe from Southampton to Edinburgh, then LoganAir to Kirkwall, capital of the Orkneys. After booking in to the excellent Royal Oak Guest House it was straight out for an introductory meal with Caroline at the Kirkwall Hotel. Start as you mean to carry on!

Neolithic Orkney

An early start next day took us to the **Ness of Brodgar**, a remarkable site, discovered 12 years ago, where a massive settlement was built around 3,200BC, and used for at least 1,000 years. We were met, in the pouring rain, by Nick Card, from the University of the Highlands and Islands, Director of the excavation. He was unable to show us round the site as it is covered until this year's dig begins in July, but he did show us some amazing finds, including stone balls with knobs on and with intricate, sophisticated designs, found at many sites (see Photo 1). They are very tactile and fit in the hand, but their purpose is unknown. He also showed us some large stones excavated from the site. These were skilfully cut and shaped, with remarkable carvings on them; Nick explained that some of the building stone had even been painted. Inside the perimeter walls one building is a huge, ceremonial Hall, 25m long by 20m wide and at least one of the buildings has evidence of a tiled roof.

The **Ness of Brodgar** is in the middle of a World Heritage Site. This includes the Neolithic village of **Skara Brae**, the Neolithic tomb of **Maes Howe**, and the ceremonial Stone Circles of the **Stones of Stenness** and **The Ring of Brodgar**; so all aspects of Neolithic

life, from birth to death, can be found in this one amazing place. The problem Nick explained will be what to do with the trenches and finds when the excavation is completed. How can they be preserved and displayed, or will it be necessary to fill them in again?

During the week we visited all the above sites and many others, as Orkney has more Neolithic sites than you can shake a stick at, if you could find one since it is almost treeless.

Stone Circles

Although several of the **Stones of Stenness** were blown up by a 19th century vandal landowner who objected to their pagan connotations (plus ca change), those that remain are impressively shaped at the top to mirror the hills on the island of Hoy in the background.

The **Ring of Brodgar** is a huge henge 104m in diameter, where 27 of the possible 60 original stones remain standing. As we walked around the circumference in the early evening the atmosphere was enhanced by curlews calling, while skylarks and reed buntings sang their hearts out. Both stone circles predate Stonehenge by several centuries.

Villages

Skara Brae was discovered by the local laird in 1850 when the sand covering it was blown away in a storm. There is a reconstruction of one of the houses in the Visitors' Centre, and although the shape of the roof is conjecture, it gives a good impression of what the homes were like, with a stone sideboard facing the entrance across the central hearth, and stone-lined beds at the sides (colour plate 4). The site itself was reminiscent of Hobbiton, with many of the circular stone houses covered in turf for preservation. It is not known why the village was abandoned around 2,500BC but it may have been due to erosion bringing the sea much closer.

The **Links of Noltland** are on the island of Westray, behind a stunning bay which would be lined with hotels if the weather were much warmer. Here Caroline discovered another Neolithic village, which is currently being excavated (colour plate 4).

Caroline did not expect anyone to be there but we were extremely lucky that the Director of the Excavation was at the site and agreed to show us round. Looking at a dig in progress made it easier to see the problems involved and the need for meticulous attention to detail, since there is so much material to catalogue and remove and to make matters worse this site is among sand dunes, which means everything is constantly being covered by fine sand blown by the strong winds.

Neolithic tombs

In addition to the ceremonial sites and villages, we visited many Neolithic tombs, the most famous of which is **Maes Howe**, on Mainland and probably in use around 2,700BC. The passage to the great chamber in the centre of the mound is built of 4 huge stone slabs, 1m high by 7m long and at the mid-winter solstice the sun setting over Hoy shines through the passage on to the rear wall of the chamber. What clever people! Thousands of years later some Vikings entered through the roof for shelter and carved Runic inscriptions on the walls, boasting of their exploits (plus ca change!).

We visited three further tombs on Rousay. The first was the spectacular **Midhowe Cairn**, a huge mound with a long central corridor, lined with stalls and shelves. Of the two smaller ones **Taversoe Tuick** dates back to 3,500BC and is unusual in having two storeys; and **Blackhammer Cairn** which is entered down a ladder is similar to but much smaller than Midhowe.

The most poignant of all the tombs is **Isbister Cairn, the Tomb of the Eagles**, so named as eagle talons were found here alongside the human remains. The tomb was discovered and excavated by the local farmer on S. Ronaldsay, Ronald Simison. His daughters, Katherine and Freda, lovingly look after the artefacts and maintain the excellent museum, demonstrating a strong connection across the millennia with the people who lived there.

Iron Age to Vikings

For most of us the prehistoric sites were the main reason for the trip, but Caroline showed us plenty of the rest of Orkney's history and landscape.

In the Iron Age a number of the villages in the Orkneys were built around brochs, huge circular towers with accommodation inside. We visited three, firstly the **Broch of Gurness**, on Mainland, the largest island of Orkney. It is situated beside an important sea channel with strong and dangerous tides. There is a wide street approaching the imposing entrance to the Gurness broch (colour plate 4).

On the island of Rousay is **Midhowe Broch**, which, like Gurness, has a huge lintel over the entrance and a small stone structure outside, which Caroline suggested was probably a guard dog kennel.

The third broch we visited, at the **Links of Noltland** on the Island of Westray was excavated by Caroline many years ago, and is now sadly slowly collapsing into the sea.

Little evidence remains of the Picts, although on the **Brough of Birsay**, reached by a causeway at low tide from Mainland, we saw remains of a Pictish community, including a carved gravestone.

Since the Vikings ruled here for centuries it's not surprising that they left more behind than graffiti in Maes Howe. On the Brough of Birsay they built extensively over the Pictish settlement and on Westray we saw the ruins of a Viking homestead at **Quoygrew** beside a beautiful beach. The house was well built and lived in for centuries and the people made a good living catching cod. Remains of the stone boat shelters can still be seen.

By far the most impressive legacy of the Vikings is **St. Magnus' Cathedral** in the capital Kirkwall, attractively built of red sandstone from Mainland and yellow sandstone from Eday (colour plate 4). Magnus was murdered by his fellow Earl, Haakon, and when Haakon died his heir, Rognvald, built the cathedral in his honour. Magnus' bones were found recently, having been hidden behind a loose stone in a column near the altar, where they were probably placed for safety during the Reformation. The cathedral also contains a poignant memorial to HMS Royal Oak, sunk in Scapa Flow by a Uboat during the Second World War.

16th-19th Centuries

Some ruins remain from this period, notably the **Earl's Palace at Birsay**, built by Earl Robert Stewart, son of Patrick, the illegitimate half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots. Patrick built the **Earl's Palace in Kirkwall**, across the road from the cathedral. This was an impressive building, rather resembling a French chateau. Using forced labour for these buildings, it is not surprising that the Stewarts managed to alienate the local peasants, but they got on the wrong side of the gentry too, so were finally sent to Edinburgh to be executed for treason.

Noltland Castle on Westray was built by Earl Balfour, another shady character. He was implicated in Darnley's murder and various other nefarious deeds before being exiled to Sweden, where he was executed after being involved in a plot to kill the King (plus ca change). Impressive as they are, these ruins were not a patch on the Neolithic remains.

Skaill House was worth a visit. Home of the laird who discovered Skara Brae, it is full of interesting memorabilia of the family and the history of the Orkneys.

20th Century

During the two world wars the huge natural harbour of **Scapa Flow** was the main base for the British Fleet and the place where the Germans scuttled their Grand Fleet in 1920.

Old ships (blockships) were sunk across entrances to the harbour for protection but after the sinking of HMS Royal Oak by a Uboat, with huge loss of life, **Churchill Barriers** were built across 4 possible entrances between the eastern islands. These remain as causeways connecting the islands to Mainland and the lives of the islanders have become much easier as a result.

Most of the construction was carried out by Italian prisoners of war, who built themselves the beautiful **Italian Chapel** from 2 Nissen Huts. The lovely painting above the altar was taken from a Renaissance postcard given to a prisoner, Domenico Chiocchetti, by his mother as he set off to war. This peaceful place is a testament to what faith can achieve in times of adversity.

The Western entrance to Scapa Flow is protected by the **Ness Battery**, an ugly if functional fortification. Inside one of the Nissen huts is another wartime artwork of a picture postcard English village, complete with thatched cottages, pub, church, windmill and gypsy encampment. The work was signed by A.R.Woods, who, after exhaustive research, has been traced to Gravesend.

From the Battery it was a lovely walk around the coast, passing basking seals on the way to the pretty town of Stromness. Here we were lucky to find the Orkney Folk Festival in full flow. In the Hudson Lounge of the Royal Hotel we enjoyed lunch to the music of a group from Prince Edward Island in Canada. Stromness had been the base of the Hudson Bay Company. Outside in the square we listened to a Pipe Band before visiting the excellent Stromness Museum, which held many Neolithic artefacts as well as fascinating displays about Arctic expeditions.

Acknowledgements

It is impossible to thank Caroline Wickham-Jones enough for organising our holiday. We were taken around by minibus, enjoying the beautiful, if stark, countryside, and on two ferry trips, to Rousay and Westray. Caroline organised an excellent lunch each day, most memorably at the Pier Restaurant on Rousay, where we were treated to the most amazing buffet including great piles of crab and salmon and much else besides.

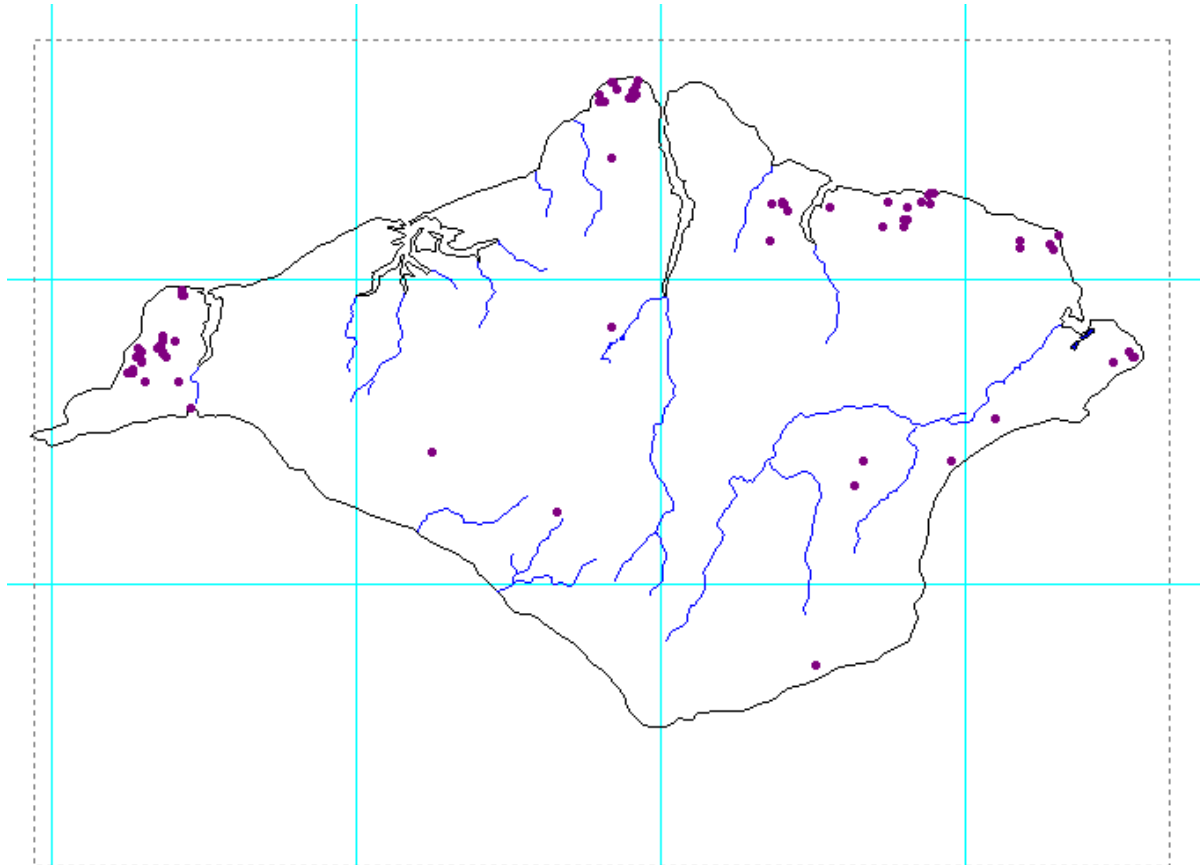
It was a real and much-appreciated privilege to be shown the Orkneys by such an interesting, expert guide, a University Lecturer who has written books on the History and Monuments of The Orkneys. She enabled us to visit some sites not open to the public as well as so many that are. Finally thanks to Delian, who conceived the idea and made the trip possible through her family links to Caroline.

Janie Martin

One man's hunt for Autumn Lady's Tresses Orchid

An exciting botanical discovery was made by a visiting botanist holidaying on the Island. On 12th May, Stephen Oakes-Monger came across a plant of Early Spider Orchid flowering on Tennyson Down, close to monument. I met up with him to see and admire his find and he told me that he had a particular interest in orchids and regularly holidayed on the Island although generally during August. Last August (2015) he made a determined effort to find how many gardens had Autumn Lady's Tresses flowering on their front lawn. Remarkably, he presented me with a list of 173 addresses in towns and villages across the Island where he found orchids growing on lawns. He told me that he knocked on everyone's doors to ask them if they were aware of their orchids and that the majority had no idea! The map shows the locations of all the sites where Stephen recorded Autumn Lady's Tresses in August

2015.



We have frequently wondered about carrying out a public survey to find out where Lady's Tresses orchids are growing in gardens; Stephen Oakes-Monger appears to have done this single handedly! I would still be pleased to hear if you know of any garden locations which are not marked on the map.

Paul Bingham has recently brought to my attention that Dr Martin, author of 'The Undercliff of the Isle of Wight' (1848) contended that the Undercliff is relatively dry because it has 'absorbent soil and good drainage'. He suggested that the dry climate of the Undercliff was indicated not only by his hygrometer recordings, but also by the orchid 'ladies tresses'. I'm struggling to find an explanation for these observations. However, one thing that is clear is that the number of Lady's Tresses flower spikes fluctuate very widely from year to year. Although the proportion of plants producing flower spikes is probably related to weather conditions, the optimum set of conditions required is not known. However, in a dry summer, lawns may be left uncut allowing previously unseen plants to flower. The dry weather during August last year probably helped Stephen to record more lawns with orchids than might otherwise have been the case.

Colin Pope

Chawton and Functional *Tūn* Place-Names

Alan Phillips has drawn attention to David Briggs' concern over the interpretation of the place-name Chawton (Phillips 2010). Kökeritz (1940, 186) gives the origin of the first part of the name as Old English *cealc* 'chalk'. I agree with David's reservation about this as Chawton is situated some three miles from the nearest occurrence of chalk so could not have been notable as a source of this stone for whatever purpose. Alan's contribution goes on to say that

David's research on Chawton in Hampshire has revealed that the form of [the] name was *Chalvedone* in 1230 and *Chaveton* by 1272: these derive from *cealfa-tūn*, 'calf-farm', and he suspects a similar derivation for the Island Chawton. This view is further substantiated by two references I have come across: the likely origin of Chawston in Bedfordshire as 'Cealf's thorn-tree', as well as that of the field-name *Chaw Parke* (1608) in Portland, Dorset, as 'the calves' paddock.

The earliest recording of the Island place-name cited by Kökeritz was *Caulketone* in 1248. There are no subsequent references until *Charton* in 1785. The Ordnance Survey 6 inch survey of 1793 records the name *Charlton*. Whilst I am not a linguist I would agree with the interpretation 'calf-farm' despite the similarity between Old English *cealc* and *Caulk-* in 1248. The pronunciation of Old English *cealfa* (c before e as in child; Cameron 1998, xviii) would appear to support this argument.

Chawton is one of four *tūn** place-names located on or just beyond the margins of the Plateau Gravel within Northwood parish. The other three, along with their earliest reference and meaning, are as follows:

Cockleton, *Cocheltone* 1255, probably Old English *coccel* 'corncockle or cornfield weed' (Mills 1996, 40)

Somerton, *Somertone* 1316, Old English *sumor* 'summer' (Mills 1996, 96)

Luton, *Levintun* and *Levintune* 1086, probably a personal name *Lēofa* (Mills 1996, 69).

One of these is of particular interest in providing a context for Chawton being associated with calves. Somerton 'the summer *tūn*' implies seasonal use of this area for pasturing stock. This would have reflected land-use, or former land-use, when the name was first coined, probably long before the early fourteenth century. With Chawton and Somerton we have two examples of 'functional tuns'. There has been a growing awareness of this phenomenon in place-name research in recent years. 'Functional tun' names can be seen as representing a specialised function within a large estate, in the case of Chawton the raising of calves, and with Somerton summer grazing. Other examples from the Island can be cited from the other side of the Medina estuary: Wootton (Old English *wudu* 'wood') and Barton (Old English *burh* 'defensible enclosure').

Chawton and the other *tūns* in the vicinity formed the core of the later medieval parish of Northwood. This, along with the parishes of Chale, Kingston, Shorwell, Gatcombe, Shalfleet detached (Watchingwell), Carisbrooke itself and various other detached portions of parishes and extra-parochial Parkhurst Forest, made up the mother parish centred on the former minster at Carisbrooke. This was a huge area which stretched from the Solent in the north to the English Channel in the south. This ecclesiastical area probably had a counterpart of a coterminous estate. Its centre would have been in the Bowcombe/Carisbrooke area and was exploiting a wide range of contrasting landscape regions. We can see Chawton and Somerton as components of this 'multiple estate'. The Plateau Gravel area would have provided dry heathland, with wet heathland and wood-pasture on the surrounding clay soils. A *tūn* specialising in the production of calves would have been an important component of such an estate in the mid-Saxon period.

John Margham

*A total of 65 *tūn* place-names can be identified from the Island. Old English *tūn* had a variety of meanings: 'enclosure, enclosed building(s), farmstead, hamlet, village, estate'.

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2010, pp. 12-13

What's in a Name? (continued)

Celandine: Greater and Lesser Celandine, although both yellow-flowered and similarly named, are not actually related. Greater Celandine is a member of the Papaveraceae, the poppy family, whilst Lesser Celandine belongs to the Ranunculaceae, or buttercup family.

Confusion arose between the two species when poet William Wordsworth died in 1850. It was intended that Wordsworth's favourite plant, Lesser Celandine, be carved on his gravestone. The outcome was that a misinformed stone mason mistakenly inscribed a Greater Celandine.

***Chelidonium majus* (Greater Celandine)** Chelidon = the Greek word for Swallow; majus = Latin for larger or greater. An archaic belief was that parent Swallows applied juice from Greater Celandine plants to the closed eyes of their blind hatchlings to induce sight. This fable and the plant's flowering period from May to September, when Swallows are in Britain, explains the old unofficial name of swallow-wort.

The plant's poisonous acrid yellow juice was used for riddance of warts. The stem would be broken to reveal the juice which was applied generously. When dry this may appear unsightly but, if applied daily, it can work even though the treatment may take several weeks.

***Ficaria verna*, formerly *Ranunculus ficaria*, (Lesser Celandine)** Ranos (hence Ranunculus) = Latin for frog; ficus = Latin for fig. The genus was named from the damp habitats where many Ranunculus species thrive, as do frogs. The specific name derived from the tiny bulbils amongst the roots which were fancifully likened to figs. Figs was an obsolete colloquialism for haemorrhoids. In common parlance, Lesser Celandine was referred to as pilewort. Herbalists and physicians practiced the Doctrine of Signatures, by which parts of plants which even vaguely resembled body parts or physical ailments were signed as being medicinally useful. Bulbils of Lesser Celandine were believed to signify haemorrhoids and so were an indication of remedial treatment for piles. An ointment made with the roots and leaves was applied to the affected area. I can vouch for the efficaciousness of the Greater Celandine treatment but not for that of Lesser Celandine! In the first instance, professional medical advice should be taken for any maladies, ailments and afflictions.

When compared with the Latin name *Chelidonium majus*, the Latin name *Ficaria verna* appears to be a misnomer. The usual explanation is that Lesser Celandine's early spring flowering period coincides with the arrival of the first Swallows. The Latin word verna means happening or appearing in spring.

Sue Blackwell

Recording Matters

It was good to see many of you at the St Helens Bioblitz at the end of May. We tried to record as many species as possible within the designated Bioblitz area (this year in grid squares SZ6387 and SZ6388) in a 24 hour time period. The species total was 400 by the end of the afternoon and after all the species had been identified and checked it rose to 647, the highest

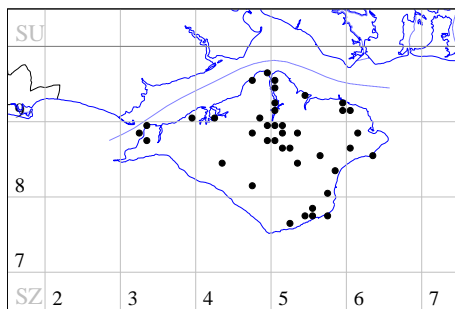
total we have had in any Bioblitz to date. You can read an account of the day on the Wild on Wight website (go to News section). See also colour plate 3 to see some insect finds.

The making and publishing of records is one of the most important activities of the Society. *The Natural History of the Isle of Wight*, with contributions from local people and mainland experts and edited by Frank Morey, was published in 1909. It was a landmark in recording the Island's flora and fauna and ten years later Morey called the inaugural meeting of the Society.

The recording efforts of individuals and groups over the years have led to the publication of species information in nature notes in the Bulletin, annual reports and specialist articles in *Wight Studies* (formerly called the Proceedings) and the Bird Reports. *The Flora of the Isle of Wight* (1975) by Bevis, Kettell and Shepard and *The Isle of Wight Flora* (2003) by Pope, Snow and Allen, are examples of major publications by the Society. Individuals have also contributed to other works of reference such as *Moths of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (2001) by Goater and Norris.

We can all contribute to building up our knowledge of the Island's flora and fauna. We are all observing, all the time, and these observations are the basis of recording. However, it is important that we pass on these records, rather than just keeping them in our heads or notebooks.

Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*)



Above is a map produced from records held in the Society's database. It shows the records of slow worms that we hold – but there must be many more locations where they are found.

Can you help us fill the gaps for this species and many others?

A record needs to have several parts:

What have you seen? *A common name is acceptable, although if you have consulted a reference book the scientific name will be available to you as well*

How many have you seen? *Count individuals if possible or make a comment like 'abundant'*

When did you see them? *giving the date as day/month/year*

Where did you see them? *a location from an Ordnance survey map and a grid reference.*

You could also make a comment to include anything unusual you have observed.

Help with identification, and describing locations can be found on the website, or ask the leaders at section meetings.

Recording forms are available from the Society's website. They can be sent back by post to the recorder (local specialist) of the particular group you are interested in, to the Society's office in Cowes or via e mail to records@iwnhas.org You can send records at the end of the year, or straight away if you think what you have seen is unusual and it should be checked by an expert.

More details of how to make and submit records are available on the Society's website.

Anne Marston

Andy Butler's Nature notes January to June 2015

January

- 1st SW gale to start the year with a large movement of Gannets up the Channel.
- 2nd Went to Forelands with Pete Cambell but not much to see. Stopped off at Sandown Dino Lake where there were at least 70 Mediterranean Gulls. Gannets now heading back down Channel with the wind NW.
- 4th A number of Blackcaps in the garden enjoying the apples, they ignore everything else.
- 16th A Black Redstart along the revetment at the Bonchurch end.
- 25th Went to Shepherd's Chine, Atherfield, for a look round with Pete and he spotted a wagtail that on closer inspection turned out to be a Yellow Wagtail. At this time of year it shouldn't be here but is supposed to be in Africa, so this is an interesting record. After much research the probability is that it was of the eastern race but this could be open to doubt. They breed in temperate Asia and migrate to S.Asia and Australia. Whatever, it is it is definitely lost!
- 31st A Humming-bird Hawkmoth was seen nectaring in Ventnor today by Peter Cramp.

February

- 2nd Went along to Forelands to see if there were any Purple Sandpipers on the ledges. I was in luck and saw a total of 7. Wind North and sunny and warm.
- 3rd A light covering of snow last night but it was all gone by 10.00. Found a dead Common Gull at Bonchurch with no sign of any injury.
- 6th Bitterly cold NE/E wind these last few days with light snow showers.
- 7th Went to the Recorder's Conference at Arreton, very enjoyable and interesting.
- 8th Walked out to Blackgang Terrace today from Whale Chine with Pete and Dave Nordell. Haven't been along there for years; it was a bright sunny day and the erosion along the cliff line was quite severe and easy to see. Many years ago I used to climb down at the end of the Terrace road to go all night fishing (I was 15 years old) but an impossibility now and not just because of age. We saw a Peacock butterfly and 5 Yellowhammers.
- 17th 2 Small Tortoiseshell in the garden today, sunny and warm. A Mottled Umber moth came to the lighted dining room window this evening.
- 20th Cold wet and miserable today.
- 23rd Rain, sleet and hail today, NW wind and a horrible day.
- 24th What a difference a day makes! Almost Spring-like today with light W of N winds, warmer and sunny spells and I also found the first Glanville web of the year along the revetment towards Bonchurch. That Black Redstart keeps showing up in the same place at Bonchurch so is presumably spending the Winter here
- 26th Cold wet and miserable.
- 27th Went to Compton looking for Glanville webs but drew a blank.

March

- 4th Dave saw a Small Tortoiseshell on the bank at the back of Wheeler's Bay.
- 6th A sunny day with a SW wind. First migrant Chiffchaff flew in off the sea along the revetment. Glanville web count up to 11 and a large Adder on the bank at Monk's Bay. Went to Shepherd's Chine in the afternoon and saw 5 Snipe.
- 12th Had a walk round Culver Down with Pete. A Black Redstart, 3 Stonechats and a large Adder. Sandwich Tern in the bay off home.
- 15th 2 Chiffchaffs in the garden.
- 18th The first Bee-fly (*Bombylius major*) of the year in Walter's Copse. Also 5 Brimstone and 5 Comma as well. Wind E and light.

20th 21 Glanville webs along the revetment now.
25th 4 Dartford Warblers on Ventnor Down.
27th A female Blackcap in the garden.
31st A male and female Brimstone in the garden.

April

2nd 5 Wheatears on the rocks at Bonchurch. A Sparrowhawk attempted to take one but missed.
6 Swallows flying round the house.
5th First Small White in the garden today. Wind NE but sunny.
6th A Clouded Yellow along the revetment and the first Holly Blue in the garden. NE/W fine and sunny.
7th Went over to Brading for a walk along Laundry Lane. Not much about but did see three Ospreys very high up heading North. They touched down in Hampshire a bit later on. A Ruby Tiger moth in the garden.
8th A Clouded Yellow along the revetment.
10th The first Dotted Bee-fly (*Bombylius discolor*) in the garden.
14th The first Orange Tip in the garden. 2 Clouded Yellow along the revetment.
15th Went to Atherfield to look for Glanville webs and whilst searching a low bank a Stoat popped his head out and glowered at us. Managed to get some pics of him as he wasn't bothered by us.
19th First Common Blue of the year along the front and there are now 3 Clouded Yellows all in the same place and just flying up and down continuously, hardly ever settling. All three are males.
21st Dave and another friend, Alan Clark and I went to Shepherd's Chine at Atherfield for a look round and saw a cracking male Common Redstart down near the bottom of the chine. Obviously just flown in and a real treat to see. Went on to Mottistone Down where we had 8 Green Hairstreaks plus Dingy and Grizzled Skippers.
26th A Common Sandpiper at the far end of Bonchurch beach. 3 Painted Lady in the garden.
28th Dave, Alan and I went back to Atherfield this morning and had the remarkable sight of a male Cuckoo busy eating Glanville caterpillars as fast as he could go. I've never seen this before and although Cuckoos are now very scarce I would prefer it if he left our rare butterfly alone. I subsequently found out it had been there for at least three days feeding up.
30th Clouded Yellows still in the same bay along the revetment.

May

4th The first Glanville Fritillary emerged today at Wheeler's Bay.
5th I found a number of Glanville chrysalids in the Bay this morning, the first for many years. There was a Grey Seal close in off the Bay as well, a bit surprising as it is blowing a force 8-9 westerly gale.
12th Went up onto Bonchurch Down looking for butterflies. Had 13 Common Blue, 21 Brown Argus, 2 Small Copper, 1 Dingy Skipper, 1 Small Heath and 2 Broad-bodied Chaser dragonflies.
13th Dave and I went over to Clammerkin near Newtown but not much doing although we did see one Hairy Dragonfly, once a great rarity in the Island.
15th Geoff Blake, Ventnor fisherman, told me that he had 4 Storm Petrels round his boat when working about 20 miles due south of Ventnor.
16th Saw and photographed a female Red-veined Darter dragonfly this morning along the revetment. This turned out to be the first one seen in the UK this year.
17th Plenty of Glanvilles on the wing now, with a few in my garden most days.
25th A Grey Seal off Wheeler's Bay most of the day.

27th Went to Redcliff looking for Glanvilles but with no success. I think they have gone from there now which is a shame as this is where they were first discovered in the Island by Edward Newman in 1824.

June

2nd A severe SW gale last night with heavy rain.

3rd Saw a Bordered Straw moth along the revetment. A migrant and as it turned out the first of many.

6th Many emerging Glanvilles are being taken by a small flock of House Sparrows that live just above the bay, a new food source for them.

8th Had a small micro moth in the trap last night, *Aethes beatricella*, that has not been recorded in the Island before. Went over to Compton and met up with Mathew Oates from the National Trust and with Dave and a visitor (Jackie from Scarborough) we set out to count Glanvilles along the undercliff. Not too bad as the numbers had declined in the last few years but are slowly recovering. Also saw a pair of Red-veined Darters on a small pool down there.

11th One female Red-veined Darter in Shepherd's Chine.

14th 8 Bordered Straw in the moth trap last night.

17th Had the first Ni Moth I've ever caught last night.

22nd 3 Marbled White butterflies in the Bay area today.

23rd Dave and I walked from Whale Chine to Atherfield Coastguard Cottages along the cliff top and about halfway along there were 3 Glanvilles nectaring on Bird's foot Trefoil. Never seen any in that area before.

25th The Grey Seal back off the bay and quite close in.

28th A freshly emerged Glanville in the garden this afternoon. It was unusually small in size and it is also quite late in the season to see them still emerging.

29th Dave and I went over to Walter's Copse and saw the first Purple Hairstreak of the year and even managed to get a few photos of it. There were also 3 Silver-washed Fritillaries and 2 White Admirals.

30th There hasn't been much in my moth trap so far this year but I have caught a lot of Privet Hawkmoths, for instance there were 6 in the trap this morning. A bit of very good news this evening when Rob Wilson 'phoned to say he'd found a colony of White-letter Hairstreaks in an Elm in Newport of all places! This butterfly hasn't been seen in the Island for some while so this is excellent. Hope to get up there to see them shortly and perhaps get some photos.

Andy Butler

Footnote: Rob Wilson's discovery of White-letter Hairstreaks in Newport caused great excitement. It was particularly gratifying to find that they were attracted to recently planted disease resistant 'Lutece' elms. Lutece has become the most widely planted of the modern elm hybrids in Britain, largely through the efforts of Butterfly Conservation and Island 2000 Trust. It had been thought that its prolonged dormancy in spring would prevent it from becoming the resource for White-letter Hairstreaks that it was once hoped to be. However, this discovery suggests that those fears may be unfounded. (Plate 2) Editor

Reports of General Meetings

24th January Bird Ringing, an illustrated talk by Dr Daphne Watson

Daphne began her talk by telling us about the history of bird ringing. During the Punic Wars, the Romans attached messages to crows with thread; falconers in the Middle Ages used personal seals; from about 1560, swans were marked with a nick in the bill; and in 1803, in the United States, Audubon, tied threads around the legs of young Eastern Phoebes. In the 1880s, marking birds with ink, known in the US as ‘bird banding’, was popular.

The first attempts at ringing, in 1990 in Denmark, failed because the zinc rings were too heavy, but they were replaced nine years later with aluminium. In 1909, two ringing schemes were set up in the UK: one, at Aberdeen, was unsustainable during the First World War, and the other was taken over by the British Trust for Ornithology in 1933. Kaliningrad, a port on the Baltic coast of East Prussia, was a particularly good place for bird ringing, as there is a very long spit of land beside a huge lagoon, but the bird ringing society founded there was severely restricted when Russia invaded Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War.

On the Isle of Wight, Jack Miner invented the duck trap in 1909, and he made and attached his own rings. In more recent years, John Stafford, the Island’s Bird Recorder from 1953 to 2009, Lorna Snow, Daphne herself and James Gloyn are among the longest and most dedicated ringers. The St Catherine’s area is a particularly good place to catch and record migratory birds, using nets. At this point, a member of the audience expressed concern that netting wild birds might cause them stress, but Daphne replied that they soon settle down. Among the landmark and memorable sessions and recoveries, James Gloyn’s study of Barn Owls shows that they stay on the Isle of Wight, maybe because they prefer not to fly over the sea to reach the mainland. And a Chiffchaff, ringed on the Island in September 2011, was caught in Pas de Calais in North- Eastern France nine days later.

Haseley Manor at Arreton has become an important bird-ringing site since Anthony and Vivien Roberts bought it in 2002 and created a wildlife sanctuary, excavating some lakes and planting large areas of trees. Daphne showed us a Google Earth aerial photograph of Haseley in 1999, followed by a series of photographs documenting the huge transformation of the manor grounds over a three-year period. Twenty-five acres of the thirty-seven acre estate is now nature reserve, and Anthony is a dedicated member of the bird-ringing team. Here they recorded the House Sparrow crash. In 2001, ten per cent of the catch was House Sparrows, with no feeding, but ten years later there were no House Sparrows at all, even with the attraction of food. Fortunately, there are signs that there may be a revival of House Sparrows along the Back o’ the Wight, where eco-farming is leaving weedy, seedy fields over winter. At Kingston, near Shorwell, thirty-six birds have been netted, representing some five per cent of the catch.

The Island ringing group has a number of different sites, including the Newtown Rifle Range, Kings Quay, Harbour Farm and Kingston Farm. At Haseley they run a June ringing course. At Jersey Camp Rifle Range there are Lesser Whitethroats and Nightingales. A Lesser Whitethroat, ringed there in August 2009 as a first year bird, was caught again at the Jerusalem Observatory in April 2013, nearly four thousand miles away! It was probably on its way to Ethiopia, where most of our Lesser Whitethroats migrate, to overwinter in the moist uplands. What a long journey for a small bird! It breeds in good numbers at Jersey Camp and elsewhere on the Island.

As for the future of ringing, Daphne said there is still so much to learn, and many birds must be ringed to produce recoveries. Currently, the recovery rate is only one per cent or less for most passerines, but up to twenty per cent for larger birds. A better rate is achieved when an email address is given, rather than the BTO contact details. More sophisticated technologies are now available, such as satellite transmitters and geo-locators, although you need to recapture the birds, and you must be careful that by using such gadgets, you do not alter the bird’s behaviour.

Daphne ended her talk by welcoming anyone in the audience to go along to a bird-ringing meeting. We are grateful to her for an informative and very interesting talk.

Maggie Nelmes

14th February Penguin Paradise, my travels in the Falkland Islands, an illustrated talk by Rosemary Stewart

In January 2008 I joined a group from Island Holidays for an 18 day visit to the Falklands. We flew out from RAF Brize Norton and with a short stop at Ascension Island it took 18 hours. Our leader was Will Wagstaff, who runs the Wildlife Tours on the Isles of Scilly and had written the Bradt Guide to the islands, so we were lucky! There are 700 islands, 3,000 inhabitants and 500,000 sheep! We flew in a Britten Norman Islander from Stanley in East Falkland to West and on to 3 others islands. I can only give you a taster of the wonderful wildlife and flowers that we saw.

Anywhere outside Stanley is called 'camp', meaning countryside. It is wild and windy with a mountainous area in the north, names made famous by the battles in the Falklands War. The terrain is peaty soil covered in white grass, tussock grass and low shrubs. The only trees are those planted as shelter around settlements. We saw waterlogged peat and pools, colourful grasses, rushes, dunes and rocky outcrops. We marvelled at the Stone Runs, the dramatic boulder fields formed predominantly of quartzite blocks which cover wide areas of the mountains.

Our first full day was a 2 hour ride from Stanley in a 4 x4 to the famous King Penguin colony at Volunteer Point. We stood outside a big ring of white stones which protect their nesting site and watched their antics. Standing at 1m tall, they strut up and down in their smart black suits showing off their dramatic yellow head markings and white bellies or lift and swing their heads to trumpet to their mates. Some were nursing their eggs on their black leathery feet and the big fat gawky juveniles covered or half covered in brown fluff were just hilarious. Down on the beach they plunged into the waves or marched out in groups to trek their way through the sea cabbage back up the hill. All around were grazing sheep and handsome upland geese.

On Pebble Island our great delight was sitting amongst the inquisitive little pink footed Rockhopper Penguins with their jaunty yellow crests who seemed pleased to see us, peck at our bootlaces and just stare. They have to throw themselves from the sea on to the foot of the cliff then hop, hop, hop up to the communal nest site, perhaps stopping to have a chat with a little gang making their way seawards. At another place they mixed in with the handsome King Shags which gave them some protection against the marauding Falklands Skua who were always on the look-out for defenceless babies. Here was the HMS Coventry memorial and the site of the SAS raid which sabotaged 11 Argentinian planes on the airstrip. Hilly Carcass Island was home to many different birds clustered round the sheltered farm house - from the destructive Striated Caracara, the Blackish Oystercatcher, ducks and the cheeky Meadowlark to the delicate little Cobb's Wren. The patchy black and white Magellanic Penguins were plentiful. They nest in burrows in the fields or cliff tops and bray like donkeys. We saw them everywhere. From here we sailed to West Point Island to see, right up close, the magnificent Black-browed Albatross nesting in the rocks and tussock grass at the top of a cliff. They build bowl shaped peaty nests to keep safe their large babies which sit hopefully with open mouths. Rockhoppers were mixed in too! From the boat we watched flocks of the graceful albatross mixed in with prions, petrels and gulls feeding in some shallow waters.

On Sealion Island in the south thousands of Gentoos spread out over the flat terrain and sandy beaches. This haughty penguin has a white patch on its black head and orange feet.

They build rough stony nests. I had fun watching groups of them trying to get to land after a fishing trip. A huge Sealion lay in wait knowing when there was an easy meal making for the beach! Sadly he caught one but most waddled in to safety on the sand. (I just missed seeing an Orca catch a young Sealion - very frustrating!) If we sat down at their level young Gentoos came up to us, inspecting our boots and cameras. One leant right over me to try and get my dangling lens cover. Magic!

The other fascinating sight here were the groups of Elephant Seals - huge shapeless bodies weighing up to 4 tons with a unique proboscis on the males resembling an elephant's trunk. Some were in the process of moulting so lay around flicking sand over their backs to keep off the sun and ease the itching! In August the males arrive to set up a harem of about 50 ladies who give birth then mate ready for next year. Most have gone by the end of the year.

Amongst the rough vegetation we often found clumps of Diddle-dee, the red crowberry. Locals make memorable pies and jam with these little berries. Tough little flowers hide amongst the grass such as the endemic Vanilla Daisy (*Leucheria suaveolens*), and Falklands Lavender (*Perezia recurvata*). The delicate Pale Maiden (*Olsynium filifolium*) is their national flower. We were lucky to see the rare Queen of the Falklands Fritillary butterfly too.

Falklanders are descended from various settlers but mainly from Britain since the late 1830's with recent additions from St Helena and Chile. The pubs are just like ours and the friendly locals never miss an opportunity to invite you for 'smoko' - a big cup of tea with delicious cake and scones!

Rosemary Stewart

14 March The Isle of Wight in the English Landscape: Medieval and Post Medieval Land Use and Settlement, an illustrated talk by Dr Vicky Basford

This talk is based on research that Vicky carried out in recent years for her Doctorate and we congratulate her on her successful completion. Some members of our Society took part in surveys that Vicky conducted as part of this research.

The origins of her research are:

- an interest in patterns of historic land use and settlement on a national scale;
- an interest in local models of historic landscape character; and
- a desire to explore the diversity of the Isle of Wight historic landscape.

Vicky was inspired by Oliver Rackman's book, 'The History of the Countryside', published in 1986. It identified three distinct zones of countryside:

- Ancient countryside, as in the Southeast and Northwest of England, including the Isle of Wight. This is generally well wooded, with trees in hedgerows and small irregular fields that are enclosed. There are many winding lanes and tracks, some sunken;
- Planned countryside is in the central belt of England, where there was much parliamentary enclosure from open fields in the nineteenth century.

Three provinces correspond fairly closely to Rackham's divisions. They are the South-east and North-east provinces with hamlets and dispersed settlements, and the Central province with its larger nucleated settlements.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) technique was developed by English Heritage, mainly for planning purposes. It is a device for modelling historic landscape character at county and local level. Vicky ran the HLC project on the Isle of Wight between 2002 and 2006, examining the historical and archaeological processes that have influenced the present-day landscape. For this she used maps and aerial photographs. Various HLC types were digitally mapped. Most of the Isle of Wight consists of field patterns, horticulture,

industry, military and defence, mineral extraction, etc. A map of HLC areas shows particular landscape types clustered in different areas.

One of the key techniques Vicky used in her thesis was historic landscape analysis of an Ordnance Survey map of the 1790s. By overlaying an old map on a modern map, she defined different kinds of field patterns and other land uses. She was able to identify all different land uses, including downland, marsh, rough ground, woodland and saltmarsh. Evidence sources for field patterns and enclosure processes include the shapes and sizes of fields, manorial surveys and royal surveys. In medieval times fields were divided into strips by their owners to give equal shares of different types of land to their sons when they died. Later this type of farming became impracticable and the strips had to be parcelled together to allow the mechanisation of farming. Johanna Jones has done a lot of work at Brighstone Manor on strip enclosures and enclosures based on strip fields. Well underway by 1630, this practice continued well into the eighteenth century.

Is the Isle of Wight landscape ancient or planned? It is diverse, some parts fitting better into one or other of these categories than others. Now most landscape historians are more flexible in their approach, realising that more depends on when the land was enclosed. The earlier enclosure indicates ancient landscape.

Defining Isle of Wight settlement size and density in the national context, Vicky studied *A Map of England, Rural Settlement in the Mid Nineteenth Century*. To determine the numbers of dwellings in Island settlements from 1790, Vicky counted all the houses in each settlement. In 1793 a hamlet had up to five houses; a village had twenty or more. There was a thin scatter of villages and a medium density of small settlements.

Questions from the audience revealed that the population of the Island recorded in the Domesday Book was only a thousand, and in Sir Richard Worsley's eighteenth century survey, only about ten thousand. So why, with such a small population, were there land enclosures here? In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there was land hunger and at Chillerton there is evidence of ploughing right up the steep hillsides, in lychets.

As time was limited and Vicky had more findings to reveal, we agreed to invite her back to continue her talk in the next programme. Meanwhile we thank her for sharing her research with us in this very interesting talk.

Maggie Nelmes

26th April Coach Trip to Gilbert White's House and the Oates Collections at Selborne in Hampshire.

We received a warm welcome when we arrived at the museum after our one hour's journey from the ferry at Southampton. Dave Trevan, who organised the annual outing again this year, had arranged and paid for our visit in advance. The curator gave us a brief introduction to the house and gardens, handed us each a sticker to display, and allowed us to come and go as we pleased during the day.

The Reverend Gilbert White, known as the 'Father of Ecology' and the man who started bird watching, lived in this, his grandfather's house in the eighteenth century. He wrote a book, published in 1789, entitled 'The Natural History of Selborne', based on his observations of wildlife, which has been translated into many languages and become a natural history classic, never out of print. In the gift shop, I saw several different editions on sale. They also stock 'The Garden Kalendar' and 'The Naturalist's Journal', comprising White's diaries that he kept from 1751 until his death in 1793. He recorded the weather daily, using a variety of instruments, which were not always reliable. Nevertheless, his comments provide a historical reference point from which to examine changes over the years and understand

man's impact on nature. Some of the birds he studied, such as the Corncrake, Wryneck and Red-backed Shrike, are now very rare.

Downstairs in Bell's Library, added to the house in 1850, you can learn about White's life and work. There are a number of interactive displays, some designed for children. I enjoyed trying to identify recorded birdsong. One of White's important discoveries was to classify the Chiffchaff and the Wood and Willow Warblers as separate species, and he was first to describe the Lesser Whitethroat. He also discovered the Harvest Mouse and Noctule bat, and helped to solve the question of whether birds migrate. Swallows, Swifts and House Martins were his favourite birds, and they still nest in the village.

Next to the library is the Great Parlour with its marble fireplace, which White built to entertain his family and friends. He was the eldest of eleven children, and although he did not marry, he was a great family man. At one point he had 63 nephews and nieces, and they came to stay and be educated. They also helped him to edit his book.

The Little Parlour is the oldest room in the house; it was the main living room of the original fifteenth century hall house, but the oak beams date from the early seventeenth century. With its low ceiling, it has an intimate feel.

The tea parlour was originally a dining room, built by White's brother soon after he inherited the house on Gilbert's death. It is an attractive room, popular with visitors to the museum and passers-by. The Old Kitchen behind it was probably the original dining room. Upstairs White's bedchamber was dark and atmospheric, to preserve the bed-hangings embroidered by his aunts. The tiny study is furnished in eighteenth century style and designed to demonstrate White's wide-ranging interests. It looks as if he has just stood up from his desk to take a break.

The rest of the upper floor is dedicated to the Oates collections that celebrate the lives of two prominent late nineteenth and early twentieth century explorers from the same family. In 1955, when Gilbert White enthusiasts wanted to purchase the estate, a member of the Oates family answered their appeal for finance with a large contribution, on condition that part of the buildings housed exhibitions dedicated to their pioneering relatives.

Frank Oates was fascinated by birds from an early age, and on his travels in Central America, he collected some beautiful specimens. The Frank Oates Gallery documents his fateful journey to Africa, where, as an early explorer, he trekked from Durban all the way north to the Victoria Falls, collecting an assortment of African weapons and other traditional artefacts on the way, before succumbing to illness from which he died.

The next gallery is dedicated to Frank's nephew, Captain Lawrence Oates, soldier and explorer, best known for his participation in Captain Scott's ill-fated expedition across Antarctica, which turned into a race with a Norwegian party to be the first to reach the South Pole. In the Oates Conference Room I watched part of a film, originally taken by Herbert Ponting, a renowned photographer, telling the story of that Antarctic Expedition of 1910 to 1912. Vast, icy landscapes greeted me, impressive but austere. They set the scene for what was to follow.

As I entered the Lawrence Oates Galleries, I heard the roar of a relentless wind. Before me were a model and photographs of the 'Terra Nova', the ship in which the expedition party sailed to the Antarctic and was stranded in the ice; a long wooden sledge the men had to haul themselves because they were not used to working with huskies; and a mannequin dressed in the heavy woollen clothing they wore. I read excerpts from the diaries of some of the men, including Captain Oates, as the expedition progressed, saw photographs they took. Captain Oates, put in charge of the ponies, was concerned at their poor condition. It was heart-breaking to read how ill-equipped the team was to face the harshest conditions on Earth, how bitterly disappointed the men were that they had risked so much, only to find, on reaching the Pole, that a Norwegian flag had been raised, robbing them of their glory. And

then they had the long trek back across the ice: defeated, exhausted, dogged by appalling weather and low on food supplies.

For me, the Captain Oates Galleries were the highlight of the exhibitions because the story they told was so moving and the evidence of their overwhelming struggle was there to see: the inadequate clothing and tents, the heavy sledge, the condition of the ponies. If only they had had the technology we have today!

It was a relief to go out into the gardens, designed by White himself, who developed the land in sections over the years: flowers, shrubs, vegetables, orchards and a landscaped park. I was delighted to find a variety of wild spring flowers growing there, especially the Snakeshead Fritillaries in the orchard. No weed killers, pesticides or artificial fertilizers are used in the park, to encourage wild flowers to spread across the meadows. I sat in White's 'Wind Pipe', a seat and shelter made from an old port barrel, to eat my packed lunch and admire the view of the garden and house. A distant statue turned out, on closer inspection, to be White's clever deception, or poor man's substitute.

On leaving Gilbert White's House, I walked the short distance to the Plestor, meaning 'play place', which has been the village green since medieval times. The stump of an ancient yew, covered in honeysuckle, stands in front of the twelfth century St Mary's Church, where White's grandfather was vicar. The church contains memorial plaques to the White family and two magnificent stained glass windows dedicated to Gilbert White, who is buried in the churchyard.

White was a pioneer of field studies, as opposed to the traditional practice of dissecting dead animals. He identified birds by their songs and observed insects and earthworms in his garden as part of ecology and soil fertility. His writings inspired many other naturalists, and Darwin himself based some of his work on White's observations. I walked across Church Meadow and down into the valley, where I followed the path through the land known as the Short Lythe, followed by the Long Lythe. This is a lovely walk through a narrow valley, flanked by hanging woods. In the meadows and woods, owned by the National Trust, I identified a wide variety of spring flowers. Eventually I reached some ponds, where I watched Coots, Canada geese and Mallards. Returning to Selborne, I climbed a steep path to rediscover the house, situated in a row right above the Short Lythe, where I lived for a while, some twenty-five years ago.

Selborne is a picturesque village with many interesting and attractive old buildings. Above it, to the west, rises 'The Hanger': an impressive, beech-clad escarpment, bordering the parkland attached to Gilbert White's House. White and his brother laboriously cut a long zigzag path up this escarpment, which is still used today to access the Common. I found it surprisingly quick and easy to climb this path, carrying a rucksack, without pausing for breath, though tedious, especially coming down! Selborne Common is one of the few surviving ancient commons in East Hampshire, used for hundreds of years by local commoners to graze their livestock and collect wood. The National Trust, which owns it, describes it as 'a patchwork of grassland, glades, scrub, ancient trees and woodland'. I found it beautiful and peaceful, as I had left all the other tourists behind, climbing up and down the zigzag path. My only regret was that I only had time for a short walk there before I had to hurtle back down to the coach in time for our departure.

Despite the cool, dull weather, I had a wonderful day at Selborne, and I hope that everyone else who came on the trip enjoyed it, too. There was so much to see and do for natural history and gardening enthusiasts. My thanks go to Dave Trevan for all his hard work in organising the trip and especially in trying to fill a fifty-two seater coach. In the end we managed to get some forty-five bookings, so we had a small deficit to make up from Society funds.

Maggie Nelmes

6th June

Yarmouth, a local history walk led by Richard Smout

French raids, in the mid fourteenth century and again later, were largely responsible for the decline of the once flourishing late twelfth century town and port of Yarmouth. Fortunately, unlike Newtown, it remained a small port, with a Henry VIII castle to defend it, bounded by the sea on its northern side, a wide estuary to the west and marshes to the south and east. For a couple of years in the mid seventeenth century, Yarmouth became an island when a cutting was made to the east, from the Solent to Thorley, for defence purposes. Eventually a drawbridge reconnected the town with the rest of the Island.

Richard Smout, County Archivist and former President of our Society, took some twenty people on a stroll around this delightful town, stopping outside a number of significant buildings to describe their architectural features, origins and history. The George Hotel, an imposing building which backs onto the castle in Quay Street, was the home of a Governor of the Island, Sir Robert Holmes, who lived in the castle until he built this substantial residence in a fashionable classical style in 1668. It has since been much altered.

Just around the corner, in The Square, stands the little redbrick town hall, with three arches, originally open, built by Thomas, first Lord Holmes, Sir Robert's grandson, in 1763. From 1584 to 1832 Yarmouth had two Members of Parliament, even though there were only six MPs for the whole of the Island. It was known as a 'pocket borough', in the pocket of the Holmes family, as everyone appointed to parliament had a connection with them. Incredibly, the maximum number of voters at any one time during this period was nine!

Admiral Sir Robert Holmes was, like Sir Francis Drake before him, a fearless merchant adventurer, and also a great naval tactician, who constantly raided the Dutch and nearly started a war. On one expedition he returned home with a cargo of gold for a grateful monarch. In a chapel in St James Church we found a statue of him. The story goes that he captured a ship carrying the headless statue of King Louis of France, or that the vessel was wrecked, and he had his head sculpted and attached to the statue of the king.

The castle was built in the mid sixteenth century, after the first group of Solent fortresses, such as Hurst and Southsea. It is square-shaped, with the sea on one side, the harbour on the other, and originally a moat on the landward sides. A bastion juts out to the south-east. From the outside, the castle has changed little from its original appearance, apart from the loss of the moat and the buildings that crowd it in on the south side.

Close by, on the eastern side of the Square, is The Bugle Hotel, with its five-bay stone frontage and thick-framed sashes, one of the oldest inns in Yarmouth. Richard also pointed out several old cottages in the town centre, including Jireh House, with a typical rough stone front.

We turned into High Street, a narrow road with little traffic, lined with a mixture of businesses and residences at the western end. Further to the east, we came upon two remarkable villas: The Towers, whose plain and modest frontage belies its true Gothic character of turrets and battlements, as viewed from the side alley leading to the sea. The architect Daniel A Alexander, who designed Dartmoor and Maidstone prisons, lighthouses and the London docks, lived here in the 1820s. There is a memorial to him in St James Church.

North House is an imposing villa, of three storeys and a basement. The windows have thick architraves and the porch has Doric columns, with small stucco lions above the corners. To one side is a beautifully tended garden, facing the sea.

These are some of the highlights of the walk. Yarmouth is a beautiful and fascinating town that has thankfully managed to escape substantial ugly and inappropriate modern development, and it appears to be coping with its very close proximity to the ferry dock.

We are grateful to Richard for giving up his time to lead this very informative and fascinating walk around the town.

Maggie Nelmes

Reports of Section Meetings

Looking at the Countryside

Wednesday 17th December

Quarr Abbey

It was a grey drizzly morning when 11 people met in the visitor car park for a short walk in the Abbey grounds. David Biggs had brought a large plan of the old abbey that had been worked out in the 19th century. We had to look at it under the tail gate of my car to keep the old book dry. Fortunately, Jackie had brought a laminated copy with her which was useful later. We admired the Monterey Pines that grow by the approach to the new abbey, these trees are 100 years old. We followed the route of a woodland walk that has been put through the woods between the abbey and the main road. It is a pleasant stroll and we found some fungi of interest, in particular a black jelly fungus that was identified by Colin as *Exidia glandulosa*, although it was almost black, it had white spores. David found a gall on Spindle that causes the leaf edge to roll, and on the same leaf a scale insect that was new to the site.

We joined the public footpath that runs from the road to the old abbey. This connected the abbey to the extensive system of fishponds that can still be seen in part at Newnham Farm. Along the lane were some trees with many balls of Mistletoe. We passed a large ancient wall that was once the perimeter wall of the old Cistercian Abbey. The modern track between Quarr and Binstead crosses the site of the original church. We crossed the track and went down to the ruins. In a corner of the field is a magnificent oak tree that must have grown on top of a wall. The wall has fallen down leaving the tree standing on three legs forming arches. Close by is the arch of the old infirmary chapel. The walls of the abbey have been recently renovated because ivy had caused a lot of damage. Growing in walls we found Wallflowers, Pelitory of the wall, Polypody fern (*Polypodium interjectum*), and after quite a bit of searching Colin found Rue leaved Saxifrage. David Biggs pointed out the marks left by a leaf mining moth on the Polypody.

We returned to the new Abbey by completing the woodland walk where we saw a beautiful patch of Candle snuff fungi. There is a hide just off the path for watching birds and squirrels but so many people together meant that we didn't see anything. By now we were ready for a cuppa so we made our way to the café for refreshments and a quiz. Despite the inauspicious weather at the start we didn't get wet and there was even a glimpse of blue sky so we had a pleasant walk in interesting surroundings.

Lesley Atkins

Sunday 11th January

Yarmouth

14 members took part in the winter visitor walk along the cycle track at Yarmouth. After several days of wet stormy weather we were blessed with a sunny morning and the wind had much reduced in strength. We did not get any further than the Barnfields pond by Mill Copse as there were many ducks and some waders to see along the route. Our first stop was to see what had congregated on the flooded area on Rofford Marsh – Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler, Mallard, Moorhen, Coot and Black Tailed Godwit as well as Black Headed Gulls and a couple of Common Gull. Further along this stretch we saw a pair of Stonechat which soon disappeared from view. We heard a Water Rail from the marsh behind us as well as a Cetti's Warbler. A very friendly Robin visited us amongst our feet whilst walking along the track

here both on our outward and inward journey. It was nice to see House Sparrows in the garden of the house alongside the stream – the numbers of these seem to have increased here recently after many years of decline. A few Tufted Duck were in the pond overlooked by the old railway station. The reeds have gradually increased since grazing has ceased and seems to deter the ducks and waders from visiting. On the estuary overlooking the mill house we saw a flock of lovely Golden Plover, Oystercatcher and Redshank. No Geese were noted during the course of the morning. Further along we saw a Mediterranean Gull, Curlew, Lapwing, Grey Heron, Shelduck and a Cormorant. Two Buzzard were flying overhead. Tits were represented by Blue, Great and Long Tailed Tits. In all 42 species were noted.

Jackie Hart

Thursday 19th February Ventnor downs

A small group of people braved a grey windy morning with rain promised, for a short walk in the area of the Radar Station. We set off from the viewpoint car park towards the top of the steep path up from Ventnor. Down in the valley to our right we saw where there used to be a Rifle range in the 19th century, some of the remains of buildings are still visible. The cold, buffeting wind meant that we were not inclined to linger and enjoy the view. It was a more pleasant walk along the coastal side of the radar station with the wind on our backs. There was no sign of the goats that are used to control invasive trees and shrubs; apparently they like Holm Oak, Ash and Blackthorn, but not Hawthorn. For a few years there were New Forest ponies grazing on the down but they have now been removed and the growth of bilberries and heather has noticeably improved. We saw that there had been quite a lot of burning and mowing in order to keep the gorse low and bushy. This is to encourage Dartford Warblers who like the dense shelter of young gorse. We went to the top of Nansen Hill to admire some of the large old hawthorn trees. It is rare to see such large individual specimens.

We crossed over the ridge of the down to return on the other side. There are the remains of many Bronze Age barrows on the top of the down, and there is also evidence of a Bronze Age stock enclosure. At the Radar Station we looked at pictures of the original installation in the 30s when it was part of the Chain Home system and talked about how the site has been used since. It is now a part of National Air Traffic Services used for civil aircraft communications. Until the 1990s there was an emergency bunker deep below the site, its entrance hidden under a bungalow, the bungalow has gone and the entrance now sealed up. The southern end of the site is derelict and we had a look into one or two of the old wartime bunkers.

Just beyond the radar station is a memorial to an air crash in 1962 when a passenger flight from the Channel Islands to Portsmouth hit the down in poor visibility, killing all but 6 of the people on board. It was as a result of this accident that air communications were improved.

The walk would be best described as bracing, but with some interesting things to see and in good company it was still enjoyable – and the rain held off until we were driving away.

Lesley Atkins

Wednesday 18th March Shorwell Landscape Walk Part 2

A large group of 27 and 2 dogs set off from Farriers Way on a beautiful sunny morning for the second part of Alan Phillips' walks around Shorwell. We plodded up a field to the low ridge that runs parallel to the South of the main ridge of Downs. From this ridge there were lovely panoramic views. The ridge is not chalk but is made up of Chert beds in the Upper Greensand. Whilst the ridge does not have a name on the OS map it is known locally as Gore, a word meaning a point or promontory. From the ridge we looked down on New Barn Farm,

in its sheltered combe; it is one of several “New Barn” farms around the Island. Above it is Northcourt Down. To the south of the ridge is Haslett Farm which was first recorded in 1295. The name means ‘a valley frequented by hares’, and a little later in the walk a hare was spotted near Sheards Copse not far away. Skylarks were singing above us, so high we had difficulty spotting them. Looking south were more ancient farms, Bucks Farm and Presford Farm. (Presford meaning ‘priest’s ford’). In the distance was Atherfield and we learned about the many finds in that area, Neolithic worked flint, evidence of Iron Age post holes and signs of Romano-British pottery. Atherfield is mentioned in the Domesday Book and was also a site of a medieval beacon, recorded in 1324, one of three in the Shorwell area. There is also evidence of medieval field systems in the area. We learned about St Simon of Atherfield who was murdered by his wife in 1211, and miracles are believed to have happened at the site of his tomb, the site of which is no longer known. Why there is a place called Kingston is something of an enigma, as it does not fit into the usual pattern for areas called Kingston, it does not seem to have had any royal connections. We paused just below the ridge out of the brisk cold wind and enjoyed the sunshine whilst looking down on Sheards Copse. Sheard means ‘a gap, path or cleft’. In that area is a Bronze age barrow, not easily distinguishable nowadays, one of two just off the ridge (the other being closer to Shorwell but now totally invisible). Sheards Barrow contained the skeleton of a 30-40 year old woman, but there were also Saxon remains in the barrow. There were signs of a large badger sett, also Jackie spotted a male Stonechat on the Gorse nearby. Whilst we paused here, David Marshall showed us LIDAR images of the Iron Age fort on Chillerton Down, with signs of ramparts and possibly round houses – the only definite such fort on the Island, though there are one or two other possible sites. The area of the fort has become known locally as Five Barrows and is marked as such on the OS map but there are in fact no barrows present. David also had an image of ridge and furrow in the field we first walked up from Shorwell, even though there is no obvious sign of it on the ground.

Our walk continued along the ridge and then crossed the valley and up the chalk down to the mast at the top. Here we turned down the concrete road back towards Shorwell. Alongside the road were trees covered in several different lichens. Colin Pope found the extremely rare Golden eye lichen, *Teloschistes chrysophthalmus*. This tiny, bright orange disc-like lichen was believed to be extinct in the UK until quite recently, it has only been found in three other sites on the Island, and this was a new site. Buzzards were circling, larks singing and some Red Legged Partridge were spotted. We looked across the valley to Gallibury fields and Rowborough Down. This area is the site of an extensive ancient field system which incorporated the “Bottoms” around Rowborough and Cheverton Down, such as Fern Bottom and Bunkers Bottom. Cheverton is recorded in the Domesday Book. The name means ‘the hill infested with chafers (beetles)’. Near Lorden Copse was the site of another of the beacons, the hill where it was situated is known locally as Weathercock. Nearby is an area called Mount Ararat, this name is believed to be fairly recent, Victorian perhaps, and may refer to when Northcourt had an ornamental area there connected to the manor by the foot bridge over the shute. It wasn’t far back to Shorwell and the end of a lovely walk.

Thanks to Alan’s extensive research of the area, we found out lots of interesting things, far more than there is room for in this report!

Lesley Atkins

Tuesday 12th May Wootton & Briddlesford

A large group met in Wootton car park for a walk around the Briddlesford Estate in bright, sunny weather. Bill told us about some of the special trees as we walked down the main road and on to Lakeside. We followed the footpath until we reached Hurst Copse where we walked through the ancient woodland to the Creek through land owned by the People’s Trust for

Endangered Species. The spring flowers were looking at their best and we spent much time admiring the plants before emerging back on the track alongside of the Fernhill Ice house. We proceeded along the track to the railway crossing. Having had lots to see, at this point, some of our party made their way back to Wootton. The rest of us negotiated a herd of noisy cattle and made our way into Briddlesford Copse, courtesy of the PTES. We spent some time here admiring the trees, woodland flowers, views of the creek and butterflies in the woodland clearings before making our way back. I think the walk was greatly enjoyed by everyone, helped no doubt by pleasant spring sunshine.

Colin Pope

Archaeology

The year began with a review of our current activities and plans for future work including tasks that are not weather-dependent. We also want to train and use the existing skills of the members who have joined us recently.

We now have a list of sites for geophysical survey that will keep us busy for some years, but we have started surveys on 4 sites as well as continuing research on others. Training sessions with the equipment, particularly the magnetometer and the Geoplot computer programme have enabled more members to work with a little more understanding of the technical processes and to improve the quality of the results and interpretation. We also spent a session preparing new equipment so we can work more efficiently.

One focus area is archaeology in the landscape. A study of several LIDAR images has shown features below the surface that may not be apparent on aerial photos and have prompted us to walk in the countryside looking for evidence of, for example, boundaries and medieval strip farming. We have also started to walk sections of the coast carrying relevant HER reports to familiarise ourselves with recorded discoveries.

Six members attended training on Archaeology in the Landscape run by the Maritime Archaeology Trust, which will help us to recognise and record features.

A visit to the County Records Office in Newport introduced several of the group to the wealth of resources available. We looked at some of the tithe maps and apportionment books; these can provide valuable evidence for past activities, for example by the names of fields. One long term plan is to compare details such as boundaries on these maps with modern maps and look for evidence on the ground, building on the invaluable survey work carried out previously by Vicky Basford and members of this society.

And nine of us went on a fantastic trip to Orkney in May – see separate report. Most work has been undertaken on Wednesdays so we aim in future to have more weekend activities to include those still constrained by a 5-day working week.

Helen Jackson

Botany

Saturday 17th January

Indoor meeting

The first part of the indoor meeting included reports of previous year's activities, plant monitoring projects and highlights of botanical recording.

After tea, there were two short presentations on botanical recording. The first of these dealt with updating of records for the Atlas 2020 project being promoted by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland. Volunteers were sought to take on specific areas in the coming season.

The second presentation looked at how records can be made in digital format and some of the resources which are available via the internet to help this process. With the volume of data which is likely to be generated for the Atlas 2020 project, recorders digitising

their own data will help the county recorder considerably and will assist with mapping and analysis.

Sunday 1st February & Thursday 16th April Wood calamint

The February meeting concentrated on the clearance of brambles and other coarse vegetation for the two lay-bys where the population has been concentrated for many years.

In April a small group met to plant out plugs of Wood Calamint grown in 2014 from seed collected in the autumn of 2013. Approximately 50 plants were put out into a newly coppiced area and we plan to monitor them in August 2015 to see how they have progressed.

Saturday 11th April Puckers Copse, Newnham Farm

Pucker's Copse is an area of ancient woodland on Newnham Farm. Some of the area has retained the deciduous tree canopy and undershrubs and has a diverse spring flora. Part of the wood was clear-felled and planted up with fast growing conifers in the 1940s. This caused deep shade to be cast and had the effect of suppressing the ground flora. Subsequently some of this planting has been removed opening up the woodland floor to light the ground flora has shown a measure of recovery.

Although this is a well-recorded wood there were several new finds: Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*), Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*) and Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*); perhaps the latter has come in more recently.

Saturday 25th April Norton Spit

We met at Fort Victoria and walked along the shore to reach Norton Spit, taking the opportunity to update records for the grid square SZ3489 before we reached the sand dunes and saltmarsh which have a range of specialised plants. The Kidney Vetch was well in flower and particularly abundant but we had to look very hard with limited success to find any of the small clovers which we expected to be present. Several patches of Subterranean Clover (*Trifolium subterraneum*) were found. This plant is named from the downward growth of the ripe globular fruits. Leaves of Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*) and Sea Bindweed (*Calystegia soldanella*) were seen and both plants seem to be doing well at this site. The saltmarsh plants included Sea Purslane (*Atriplex portulacoides*), Sea Lavender (*Limonium vulgare*) and both Danish and English Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia danica* and *C. anglica*).

Saturday 9th May Wydcombe

Our primary intention at this National Trust site was to look at some of the wetter areas of the meadows. We set out along the footpath leading from the buildings and were able to record a variety of spring woodland flowers and ferns. Stepping off the footpath and into a wet area immediately caused the fragrance of Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) to be noticeable. There are a variety of sedges here including Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*), Smooth-stalked Sedge (*C. laevigata*), Common Sedge (*C. nigra*) and Carnation Sedge (*C. panicea*.) A large patch of Adder's Tongue Fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) was also discovered and its distinctive reproductive fronds were just beginning to form. Both Southern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) and Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) were present, identified from their leaves as they were not quite in flower.

We made our return via a bluebell wood, where we also added Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*) and Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*) to our list.

Saturday 23rd May Ryde Cemetery

Ryde Social History Group have carried out a lot of work in Ryde Cemetery in recent years, assisted by Heritage Lottery Fund grants. This includes the interpretation of biological interest as well as the memorials, and family and civic history. The group divided into two thus enabling us to make species lists for both the conservation area (cut once a year in the autumn) to the south of the main path and a similar area to the north of the path which is cut much more frequently throughout the year.

Although we found a greater number of species in the conservation area (106 recorded as opposed to 96 in the area on the other side of the path), the two areas had about two-thirds of their species in common.

There was an 'open afternoon' in the cemetery so we were able to join in with the tea and cake on offer in the restored buildings.

Saturday 20th June

Golden Hill Country Park

The meeting was held jointly with the Bradford Botany Group who were visiting the Island for a few days. After a brief introduction to the site by Bob Edney the site manager, the group split into two in order to obtain maximum coverage of the area. The site has woodland fringes and blocks of scrub as well as open areas which contain a wide range of plants. The underlying geology is the tertiary rocks of the Solent series and there is a mixture of soil types derived from calcareous silty clay and silty sand. Plants typical of calcareous soils included Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*) and Quaking Grass (*Briza media*), and there were also areas where the plants such as Tormentil (*Potentilla recta*) suggested a more acid soil. Early Gentians (*Gentianella anglica*) were just still flowering in one area in the vicinity of a pipeline which was constructed through the site, and it is thought that seeds of this plant were brought in with chalk rubble used to backfill the area.

The site has two relatively uncommon violets, Heath Violet (*Viola canina*), and Pale Dog Violet (*Viola lactea*). Unfortunately, a heavy shower passed through when we were in the area where we should have been able to locate the leaves of the Heath Violet; after the rain stopped, we continued to a glade which has been cleared in recent years and Pale Dog Violet leaves were found. Also in the vicinity we found Flea Sedge (*Carex pulicaris*) which had been known from this site previously. Our total species count for the afternoon was 166.

Ornithology

Saturday 10th January

Shide to Blackwater

Despite a force seven wind strength and threat of heavy showers, seven members enjoyed an interesting couple of hours walking along the former rail track from Shide to Blackwater. Although in essence listed as a bird meeting, the walk nevertheless utilises individual members expertise relating to other subjects. Along the way, references were made to the plaque dedicated to the seismologist Professor John Milne and the former Milne Estate adjacent to the Shide end of the track. Secondly, a gall found on a Hazel tree was examined and identified; similarly, a fungus affecting the cones on Alder trees was given an explanation.

Members were hoping to spot a Tree-creeper, but the nearest approach to tree-creeping agility was when a fungus was spotted out of human reach on a tree branch thus making the fungus un-identifiable unless brought down to ground level. Fortunately a rotting lengthy branch was found by the side of the track whereby a member managed after several attempts in gale force wind to dislodge a sample of the fungus for further investigation at homehuman tree-creepers may be comical too observe, but certainly do not fulfil the delicate skilled charisma of the *Certhia familiaris*!

At the end of the bird walk, members unanimously decided that the 'Bird of the Day' was to be the over-wintering Chiffchaff. The 28 species of bird logged were: Blackbird, Bullfinch (1 Male), Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch (heard), Chiff Chaff (1), Collared Dove, Cormorand, Dunnock, Goldcrest (at least 3), Goldfinch, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Jay, Magpie, Mallard, Mistlethrush, Moorhen, 1 male Pheasant, Pied Wagtail (2), Redwing (at least 4), Robin, Rook, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Wood Pigeon.

Roger Blackwell

Sunday 8th February Bembridge Harbour

18 people were enticed to attend a walk from St Helen's Duver on a beautiful sunny morning. Low tide was at about 8 am so was perfect for seeing waders in the estuary. Whilst we were waiting for people to arrive we heard and saw Greenfinch in the NT car park and a flock of about 100 Brent Geese flew overhead. We also had Woodpigeon, Crow, Blackbird, Chaffinch and Robin. We then walked over the old golf links to the mill pond causeway and heard Great Spotted Woodpecker. There was a group of Gadwall in the water with some Teal. More Gadwall were seen on the Marsh and on the Lagoons. Shoveler was seen as well as Shelduck. A good variety of waders were represented although not in vast numbers; Black Tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Greenshank, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Oystercatcher. A pair of Grey Heron were nesting in the reeds by the pond near the Eastern Yar. Someone was doing a bird count on the RSPB reserve which disturbed the birds and we saw a flock of Lapwing a number of times flying. There was quite a number of Cormorant roosting on the dead trees along the E Yar. On the lagoon near Harbour Farm was a group of 25 Tufted Duck and one Pochard. There was so much to see that we ran out of time so we then turned and made our way back to the cars. On the walk back we eventually saw a Mediterranean Gull, Kingfisher and Buzzard bringing the total of species seen during the morning to 56.

Jackie Hart

Sunday 22nd March Shepherd's Chine

13 members and two guests met at Shepherd's Chine for a walk inland with the hope that we might see some farmland birds and perhaps an early migrant. We followed the Shepherds Trail for a while before taking the footpath near Dungewood Farm and return to our cars. As it was a sunny morning the Sky Larks were soaring and singing, at least eleven were noted singing. The largest flock of the morning was at least 150 Woodpigeons having a feeding in a crop field. The new reservoir only had Canada Geese swimming – eight in all but a mature little reservoir on our return journey held two Little Grebe, five Tufted Duck, a Coot and Moorhen. A Chiffchaff was very active in the bramble nearby. Three Red-Legged Partridge put in a brief appearance and we saw two cock Pheasants having a fight. Rather surprisingly a Siskin was seen briefly by one of our number in a hedge near Dungewood Farm. Three Buzzards were noted flying as well as a Kestrel. In all 30 species were noted during the course of the morning.

Jackie Hart

Saturday 25th April Calbourne

Nine members met at Gotten Leaze, Calbourne on a quiet, misty morning. Under the guidance of David Harding the group walked up through the beech wood on Newbarn Down to Brighstone Forest, eventually to the trig point and back across the fields to Gotten Leaze. Because of the mist this was an exercise in identification by sound rather than by sight. It was however a very rewarding meeting with 17 Blackcaps identified, two Common Whitethroats

and nine Chiffchaffs amongst the expected migrants. Other woodland birds heard or seen were three Great Spotted Woodpeckers, two Goldcrests, seven Great Tits, 16 Blue Tits, two Long-tailed Tits, six Wren, four Blackbirds, six Song Thrush, three Robins and seven Chaffinch. Of raptors one each of Buzzard, Kestrel and Sparrowhawk were sighted. The fields yielded one Sky Lark, five Linnets and five Dunnock. One Red Squirrel was seen in the Beech Wood. Altogether 26 species were found.

David Biggs

Sunday 17 May Brading Marshes

Twelve members enjoyed an exciting warm sunny morning with occasional clouds that caused fluctuating temperatures. A total of forty six species were sighted during the circular walk starting at the southern end of Laundry Lane. These included Hobbies over Bembridge windmill, two Marsh Harriers across the marshes towards Centurion's Copse, a Lesser Whitethroat and three families of Canada Geese with goslings at various stages of development.

Our route took us back towards Carpenters Road, turning left along the footpath parallel to the road to Carpenters Farm and left again to what has been affectionately nicknamed "Monet's Bridge". During this section of the walk we sighted Redshank, Jackdaws, Wood Pigeon, Swallow, Whitethroat, together with our first two Canada Geese families, juvenile Lapwing (paddling alone in a stream minding its own business) and Skylark.

We continued along the footpath in a north westerly direction, turning to the right just before the stile onto the old railway track. We now had views across towards Hill Farm on our right, together with those over the RSPB site to Culver Down and Bembridge on the left. This section of the walk provided us with a goodly selection of both flora and fauna to include a variety of little beetles and damsel flies, rusts, Crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*). Of the birds here we saw or heard: Swans, Heron, Chiffchaff, Black Cap, Great Tit, Pheasant, Magpie and Chaffinch.

The footpath joined the old railway track near Wall Lane, Brading. At this point we returned to Laundry Lane via the track having many more sightings eg. a third family of Canada Geese and goslings, Herring and Black Headed gull, Green and Spotted Woodpecker (seen or heard) Little Grebe together with Reed, Cetti's, Willow, Warblers, several Cormorants perched on a dead tree to our right, Moorhen and Collar Dove. In all it was a very productive morning which we all enjoyed.

Anthea Blackwell

Friday 29th May Parkhurst Forest

Eleven members met at Tucker's Gate, Parkhurst Forest for a dusk meeting. We did not have to walk far up the track before we heard the distinctive churring of the Nightjar. At the clearing about 200 yards from the gate we stopped, looking and listening. Soon we had sightings of Nightjar and Woodcock. As the light faded completely a Nightjar flew over our heads several times. Three of us who waited in the main car park to redirect people to Tucker's Gate heard a very loud churring coming from the clearing behind the car park so we went to investigate. We were lucky enough to have a very good view of a Nightjar sitting on a branch of one of the conifers. There were probably three Nightjars seen and two Woodcock in the small area we investigated.

Jackie Hart

A Message From The Library Administrator

The Society has a number of surplus copies of past editions of IWNHAS Proceedings up to 2010. If any members would like free copies of any of these please Email me at iwnhas@btconnect.com.

Please contact me before October 31st.

If you wish to check in which volume an article appeared there is a list on the society website in the 'Resource' section under 'Articles and Publications'.

Helen Jackson

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NEXT BULLETIN

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings for 1st July 2015 to 31st December 2015 should be sent to:-

Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeology Society, Unit 16, Prospect Business Centre, Prospect Road, Cowes PO31 7AD Email - iwnhas@btconnect.com

The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be 2nd January 2016