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# Bulletin

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## President's Address

This edition of The Bulletin is dedicated to Chris Lipscombe, one of our best loved and valued members of the Society who sadly died at the end of 2015, aged 97 years. You can read some tributes to her on the following page.

We have a bumper edition of The Bulletin this time and I am grateful to everyone who has contributed. Remember, the deadline for submissions for the next Bulletin is 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2017.

Please come along and visit us at the Wolverton Manor Garden Fair on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> September or, better still, come and help if you can spare a few hours. It is a most enjoyable event and is our opportunity to let people know what we are about. If you can help in any way, please contact Daphne Watson, [tarnside@aol.com](mailto:tarnside@aol.com).

This autumn we will be starting to get ready for our project 'Habitat Health Watch'. This is one of the East Wight Landscape (Down to the Coast) funded projects. The aim is to help recorders, and to get more people recording wildlife both within the Society and the wider public. You should be hearing much more about this over the coming months.

Colin Pope

## **Remembering Chris (1918 -2015)**

Chris Lipscombe was a much loved member of the Society for over forty years who died just after Christmas. Here are a few reminiscences and tributes to her.

I first met Chris in the Pyrenees where I was leading a Ramblers Holiday in the spring of 1982. She already impressed me talking about other parts of the world she had visited. Not many will know, but in the 1940s she completed some high peaks in the Alps. I have seen photographs of her on the summit of Mount Bluet -respect! On that holiday in the Pyrenees we were mainly looking at flowers and although I was leading the tour, her knowledge of alpine flora was far in excess of mine. Towards the end of the holiday I mentioned to Chris that I was about to start a new job as Countryside Officer with the Isle Wight Council. Chris said very generously come round for tea when you start. So that is what I did and stayed for 6 months until we were able to buy a house and my family could settle.

I could not have wished for a better introduction to the Island and its wildlife. Every evening when I returned to St Helens, Chris would ask me who I had met and what parts of the Island I had visited. As the reader will know, Chris was a great defender of rights of way and after a few months I played a prank on her by suggesting that we would be re-routing a footpath in the area of Kern farm. Well, the normally mild mannered Chris was in full flow exposing the reasons why we should not alter the route. As it was a wind up, I offered to cook the evening meal next day but it is just one example of the warm fun relationship we had.

In recognition of all her various involvements in many organisations, we tried to have Chris rewarded in the honours list and to this end we collected various statements of support but unfortunately it was not to be. However, Chris was invited to one of the Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace and was joined by my wife Sue.

We all have our fond memories of Chris and she will be sadly missed.

**Ian Rowat**

I first met Chris at St Helen's car park when, out of curiosity, I asked about the IWNHAS countryside walking group. I had been a rambler since retiring in 1998, but found that we just walked and very rarely stopped to look at views, or the flora.

It was an early February walk called 'Winter Waders' which I found very interesting, having been watching birds from Ryde Rescue look-out for a number of years when on duty. However, the first stop was at a big green plant in flower all down one side of the footpath. It was Winter Heliotrope. I have never forgotten the plant's name and I look out for it on many of our winter walks. Marram Grass was another which Chris pointed out. The number of bird species was about 40, and Chris recorded them in her notebook. At the end of the walk, I filled in the membership form and Margaret and I joined the Society on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002.

Chris took us on many walks on the Island, and also to the New Forest for autumn colour. We were by then good friends. She asked me if I would help at the annual Glow-worm count at St Helen's Church. I helped from 2002 to 2010 when Mary, vicar of St Helen's, left the parish. The new vicar was not happy with request to count Glow-worms in the dark churchyard. Health and Safety issues were raised and she was concerned that someone would fall and sue for damages! At this point, Chris decided to call it a day. In 2002, 15 female and 1 male Glow-worm were recorded; in 2010, 38 female (and no males) were recorded.

**Colin Black**

(Footnote: Beth Dollery has co-ordinated Glow-worm counts in St Helen's churchyard once again this summer)

In 1995, the National Trust wanted to organise a week's walking festival on the Island in celebration of their centenary. Who did they ask to arrange it? Chris Lipscombe of course! She and Gwen Bunce were organisers of the Great Link Walk. We walked for the whole week from one National Trust area of land to another and I was asked to lead the day from Alum Bay to Newtown. During this week, I seemed to always be with Laurie Tiller and we never stopped talking. Both of us were widowed and neither of us was looking for another relationship.

I was already planning a trip around the world going to Nepal, India, Australia, New Zealand, Tonga and Canada. I managed to persuade Laurie that he should go back to India as he was stationed there during the War. After a backpacking trip of 7 months, staying in everything from a mud hut to a palace, I moved in with Laurie and we never looked back.

Chris was always very thrilled that, because of the walk, we had 14 years of happiness before Laurie's death in 2011. She felt that she was the matchmaker!

**Toni Goodley**

### **APPEAL FOR WOOL & SMALL BUTTONS FOR BATS!**

Chris Lipscombe, amongst many other things, used to knit bats in aid of the Bat Hospital, run by Graham Street and his wife Donna. I decided it would be a nice thing to continue with in memory of Chris and so far have knitted about 24 bats. However, I am running out of material and need any spare wool you might have and/or small buttons suitable for eyes. They can be any colour. If you do have anything could you please contact me on 564594 or by Email [tonigoodley@onwight.net](mailto:tonigoodley@onwight.net)

Many thanks

Toni

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### **Launch of Isle of Wight County Pages for Portable Antiquities Scheme**

Since June 2003, Frank Basford has been the Isle of Wight Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). This is a government funded project to encourage the voluntary recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales, particularly finds made by metal-detector users. Finds are recorded online on the PAS database <https://finds.org.uk/database> and can be viewed by anyone although there are various levels of access to accommodate the needs of the public, students and researchers. A total of 21,630 finds have been recorded for the Isle of Wight.

Last year a new initiative called PAST Explorers was launched to encourage volunteers to become involved with the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The PAST Explorers team has developed new 'County Pages' on the PAS website to provide local information on PAS finds, archaeology and volunteering. The County Pages are being rolled out gradually and the Isle of Wight is the fourth County to go online, launching on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016 with Vicky Basford as Volunteer Editor. The pages include 'blogs' featuring some of the most exciting local finds recorded recently. There is also a 'Get Involved' Page which sets out ways for people to engage with the Island's history and archaeology. This includes web links to local museums and societies including the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society. An Events Page features recent and forthcoming local PAS events. Why not explore

the new Isle of Wight County Page at <https://finds.org.uk/counties/isleofwight/> for news of finds and events, links to finds recording guides and other helpful resources?

As Finds Liaison Officer for the Isle of Wight, Frank is currently hosted by the Isle of Wight Council at the Archaeological Centre in Carisbrooke. The Archaeological Centre will be moving to Westridge near Ryde in July 2016 but Frank hopes to work from a new office hosted by the Museum Service in Newport. In the meantime he can be contacted at [frank.basford@iow.gov.uk](mailto:frank.basford@iow.gov.uk)

**Frank and Vicky Basford**

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### **Beatrix Potter – an Isle of Wight connection**

2016 is being celebrated as the 150<sup>th</sup> year of Beatrix Potter's birth. Whilst visiting an exhibition at the Armitage museum in Ambleside, I was surprised to find an exhibit with an Isle of Wight connection. There was an undated letter on display which had been sent to 'Aunt Helen' (Beatrix Potter) from John Henry Leech who was living at St Paul's Vicarage, Shanklin. The letter reads as follows:

*Dear Aunt Helen,*

*I send you some caterpillars of the 3 spot burnet 'Lonicera Trifolii' the real food plant is trefoil but I think you will find that they eat clover and vetch.*

*Hoping they will turn out well.*

*Believe me your affec nephew*

*J.H.Leech*

John Leech was an entomologist who specialised in Lepidoptera and Coleoptera. He was a fellow of Linnean Society and member of the Entomological Society of London. He published a number of articles in *The Entomologist* in the 1880s when he was living in Shanklin. One of these refers to the Red-necked Footman, 'From June 12<sup>th</sup> up to the present date (22<sup>nd</sup> June), they have simply swarmed in a wood near here.' Another refers to a specimen of Silver-striped Hawkmoth, 'A specimen was taken here on October 8<sup>th</sup> by a small boy, who picked it up in the street. Unfortunately, when it came to me it was in a very battered condition.'

Beatrix Potter was an enthusiastic and diligent naturalist and the letter shows that her uncle sent her Five-spot Burnet moth larvae through the post to breed up. Perhaps this was an example of a number of entomological specimens sent to her in the Lake District from the Island.

**Colin Pope**

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### **Nature Notes from the Medina Valley Centre**

A Carrion Crow was seen breaking into and eating the clam, *Mercenaria mercenaria* on the concrete drive leading to the Medina Valley Centre on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2016. The crow had collected specimens from the Medina Estuary at low water and brought them to this hard surface to break the shell before feeding.

"Commonly known as the Quahog and used to make clam juice. This is a non-native species unsuccessfully introduced into British waters several times since the middle of the

nineteenth century. The first live specimen was found in 1864 in the Humber. *Mercenaria mercenaria* was successfully introduced from the USA into Southampton Water in 1925. Due to the colouration of the shell, the native American Indians utilised the shell as 'wampun' for use as currency, hence its scientific name." [www.marlin.ac.uk](http://www.marlin.ac.uk)

Two Peregrine nestlings, with white downy feathers, were observed in one of the 'Kestrel' boxes placed high on the east-facing side of the Vestas building adjacent to Dodnor Creek LNR, in the Medina Valley, on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2016. Three nestlings were observed in the box on 4<sup>th</sup> June (see photo). The adult bird returned with avian food at approximately 90 minute intervals, approaching noisily from the direction of Newport. The immature birds were seen, with an adult, on the Dodnor and Fairlee pylons on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, having successfully flown the nest.

This may be the first ever breeding record for the Peregrine in the Medina Valley.

**Keith Marston**

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### **Sighting of a Sea Mouse**

Dave Agombar contacted us to inform us that his wife, Vivien, had found a dead sea mouse on the strand line at Appley beach while out walking on 11<sup>th</sup> April. She was fortunate; Sea Mice are very distinctive creatures, denizens of deeper water, but are rarely found washed up on our beaches.

The sea mouse is a type of segmented worm with a large flattened body which lives on or just below the surface of muddy sands below low tide. The oval bodied worm, measuring some 10 to 15cm in length, is covered with bristles or setae on its upper surface and sides, a bit like fur. They trap the sediment in which the sea mouse lies. Longer hairs, especially on the sides of the body, are iridescent reflecting blue, green, yellow and bronze tints. This effect is caused by many hexagonal cylinders within the spines refracting the light. Norwegian researchers have been studying the setae of sea mice, placing a charged gold electrode at one end and firing copper or nickel ions into the hollow channels at the other end. These were attracted to the charge plate, filling up the tube and growing into nanowires. These nanowires were 100 times longer than existing methods allow and for a fraction of the price.

The Latin name is *Aphrodite aculeata*, named after Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, and *aculeata* or spiny.

**Colin Pope**

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### **1954, the year the seawall at Newtown was breached**

This year, the National Trust is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Newtown Local Nature Reserve and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Nature Reserve. Most people will be familiar with the view from the public hide at Newtown. It takes in the scrape and looks across an expanse of wetland which was at one time grazing land, reclaimed from the sea and protected by a Marsh Bank forming an arc around the Marsh. The grazing land was referred to the 'The Marsh', mostly dry, rough grassland but with some permanently flooded areas called meres. At one time, it was possible to complete a circuit around the

Marsh, walking on the Marsh Bank. In late 1954, the sea wall was breached and 'The Marsh' grazing fields were flooded, changing the landscape forever.

Mercia Seabroke moved to Marsh Farm House, Newtown, to live with her husband, George in the late 1930s and became very interested in the bird life of the area. She campaigned vigorously for the protection of the area as a nature reserve and, when that finally happened in 1966, she became honorary warden for the reserve. Mercia kept meticulous diaries in which her love and enthusiasm for wildlife comes across clearly. Here are some excerpts from her diary entries for 1954, the year the seawall was breached. They evoke a time, not that long ago, when some birds, particularly summer visitors, were far more common and widespread than they are today and when elm trees dominated the landscape in Newtown village. It was also around this time that myxomatosis appeared in this country for the first time, devastating the rabbit population.

I am very grateful to Richard Seabroke, Mercia's son, who still lives at Marsh Farm House, for lending me some of Mercia's diaries from which these extracts are reproduced.

**4<sup>th</sup> January** Ted Strickland reported that the Bartons had heard geese during the week-end. By their calling they assumed they must be in large numbers. A cold, bright morning, with strong NE wind, Rich and I walked round Marsh Bank looking for geese or signs of them. No luck.

**30<sup>th</sup> Jan.** Ted Strickland brought 2 Pintail which he had shot. They were two drakes, and birds of the first year.

**Note on the weather.** On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January, the weather turned very cold with strong easterly gales. I had an uncomfortable journey to Portsmouth in the car ferry. Bitterly cold there, and at Fareham. Sunday was colder still but with bright sunshine. Monday was cold and dull. Tuesday snow for over 12 hours – I was glad to be home, in spite of having to go Lymington as the Portsmouth car ferries did not run. Deep snow 9in to 1 ft on Wednesday. Bitter winds from NE for over a week, with temperatures below freezing. Friday 5<sup>th</sup> Calm, grey and cold – and so was Saturday 6<sup>th</sup>.

**7<sup>th</sup> February** Rain and wind from SW, veering to W and then NW, freshening in the afternoon. Fine, some sun. Thaw of greater part of the snow. Some flood water and snow in The Marsh. Duck count with M.C.Adams. A wonderful view of 550+ widgeon in Clamerkin and 48 besides in small parties. 33 Teal, 37 Mallard, 30 Shelduck and a wonderful sight of 3 Goosanders, one of which was a drake. An unusual number of Great Black-backed Gulls. There were 34 on Wheatear Point. They all rose together with an unusual croaking call, and flew off over Hamstead to the sea.

**9<sup>th</sup> Feb.** Richard's birthday – a grey, foggy day. Did not, as I usually do, hear the Blackbird. In the afternoon, went to the river and saw a Greenshank in the marsh as on Sunday. A great whistling of Widgeon tempted me to go round the Marsh Bank. The visibility was very poor as the fog was increasing. There were 12 Mallard in the reeds, and just off the black hut in the river, a Great Crested Grebe. I had a splendid view of it, not more than 5 yds away. Its crest was raised and it did not seem frightened. Gradually swam out to the middle of the river where it dived. The Widgeon, a very great number, with Teal, Mallard and Shelduck were on the mere where there was a great deal of water, due to the melted snow. A wonderful experience to hear them whistling and calling and then rising in the mist. Saw a pair of Goldeneye fly just over my head.

**11<sup>th</sup> Feb.** Went to Osborne, looking in at Cowes reservoir on the way. There were 3 Goldeneye there. Osborne was remarkable for the absence of birds but saw 4 Bullfinches and two Partridge.

**12<sup>th</sup> Feb.** After a call from Mrs Hopkinson, went to Freshwater Bay in pouring rain, where I saw 10 Scaup, six very near to land. Then to the Hopkinson's house where I saw the dead Velvet Scoter. Mrs H. had found it washed ashore the day before in a poor condition of health, although its plumage was in good order, except one wing which may have been oiled. She was going to skin it. It was a duck.

**21<sup>st</sup> Feb.** A misty day. I walked to the waterside after church. My attention was attracted by a hoarse quacking near-by. There was a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers just seaward of the public landing. The tide was half low. They were swimming in the shallow water and the duck was jerking its head in a moorhen-like manner. The drake was a fine fellow with a well extended crest. I crept along under the bank and had a view about 10 yds away. The drake bowed with its head and went round and round in the water. Then both birds walked ashore and started preening. When I disturbed them eventually, they flew off and I heard the whistling of their wings, the white patches on which were very prominent.

**16<sup>th</sup> April** Went to woods with Pete to collect hazel boughs for decoration. The woods were full of Willow Warbler's song. I saw a Great-spotted Woodpecker and heard it drumming twice, the first time on a large dead ash and secondly on a small dead branch of a smaller oak. The difference in tone of drumming was noticeable.

**20<sup>th</sup> April** In a field near Barton's Corner, noticed a bird flying towards a group of small trees in the corner. It had a fluttering flight and the wings were barred black and white. It was a Hoopoe. It settled on the tree where I was able to get a very good view of it preening for over quarter of an hour. I was sitting about 50 yd away. Then it flew down into the field twenty yards from where I sat. It stayed for 10 min feeding by rapidly putting its long black beak into the ground. A wonderful view of its flight in full sunlight into an oak tree at the edge of the wood.

**22<sup>nd</sup> April** 5.25 a.m. heard a Cuckoo. It called intermittently till 7.30. There were several, one very hoarse, and one in an elm tree in the meadow very clean – answered by the rippling call of a female.

**24<sup>th</sup> April** At Osborne, I watched a Cuckoo at close quarters, feeding on the rough ground by the shore. I was able to see very clearly the beautiful blue-grey plumage, the delicate barring of the breast, the orange gape when feeding and the yellow legs. Had a wonderful view of a cock Redstart on the Golf Course, and heard the Blackcap and Chiff-chaff, with a good view of each.

**25<sup>th</sup> April** A Red-letter Day because I saw the Avocet. While walking with Lord Hurcomb round the Marsh Bank, saw the bird feeding in shallow water in the NW mere. It had beautiful plumage. Unfortunately, we did not have a clear view of it for long as it flew off to the other side of Clamerkin where we later saw it resting.

**28<sup>th</sup> April** Mr Jack Barton brought a dead Spotted Crake. It had been picked up at Whiteley Bank. It was a beautiful bird, with most attractive plumage. The apricot colouring under the tail and green feet were distinctive. The spotting of the olive-brown plumage was remarkable.

**1<sup>st</sup> May** I heard the Nightingale in full song in Walter's Copse and in ground opposite the church.

**5<sup>th</sup> June** By the low path, Edward saw and heard three Cirl Buntings (2male, 1 female). They were in tall flowering hawthorns.

**30<sup>th</sup> June** Day of the partial eclipse of the sun. Seen clearly at mid-day from the river, it became very cold and a very queer light.

**22<sup>nd</sup> August** A wet evening with thundery clouds around. East Point saw a migration of Little Terns eating fish offshore. I counted 150.

**14<sup>th</sup> September** A passage of Yellow Wagtails in the Marsh. I counted 30.

**3<sup>rd</sup> October** A Yellow Wagtail at Osborne. Cirl Buntings heard and for 15 consecutive days by Clare Adams.

**11<sup>th</sup> October** Several Swallows seen. I picked a lovely bunch of Marguerites in the meadow. Skylarks singing in number. 2 Greenshank and Peewits flocking.

**27<sup>th</sup> October** 3 Partridge, 2 Rabbits (rare after myxomatosis), 6 Little Grebe.

**1<sup>st</sup> November** A bright, warm day. Greenfinch singing sweetly in elm tree for over 10 mins.

**7<sup>th</sup> November** After a very rough night and much rain, the ground absolutely saturated. Overcast, cold, NE wind but fine afternoon. 150 Teal and about 100 Widgeon in Spur Lake. 2 Short-eared Owls. 6 Fieldfares in elms in water meadows.

**9<sup>th</sup> November** A bright, sunny afternoon with a drying NW wind. This after a very rough night and much rain. Went round the Marsh Bank from west to east, the light simply splendid. A hawk-like bird flew in from Clamerkin and over the marsh, where it settled on a post. Its plumage was dove-grey and it had a white patch on the base of the tail. It seemed larger than a Sparrowhawk and much lighter in colour. It was a male Hen Harrier. I had a wonderful view from behind the bank at Black Hut of Widgeon- beautiful drakes, their colours brilliant in the sunshine. There were about 50. They flew into Clamerkin and when I went there, about 200 Teal got up and quite 100+ Widgeon. A wonderful sight. The Teal wheeled and dived and rose from the saltings. Turning from this grand sight and my head filled with the wonderful whistling of the Widgeon, I was confronted by 4 Short-eared Owls, gliding around near to the ground. I was able to watch them very clearly and admired as always their wonderful, patterned plumage. I saw the yellow eyes too.

**26<sup>th</sup> -27<sup>th</sup> November** During this night, the Marsh was flooded by a breach being made in Clamerkin Bank during a raging NW gale. The black hut is gone and it is the end of The Marsh.

**18<sup>th</sup> December** Duck Count. A quiet grey afternoon with light NW wind, not cold. The water surface roughened a little. Low tide, rising. Much water flowing out from The Marsh through sluices and breaks in the bank. The Marsh, which had only minimum of flood water at the time of the count, has turned from green to brown owing to the continual flooding of sea water. Very few birds about.

Richard remembered that following the breach, the Army attempted to repair the damage with sand bags but to little affect. Prior to the flooding, the farmer who owned The Marsh was considering the possibility of developing a holiday camp on the site, so maybe the breach contributed towards the long term protection of the site for wildlife.

*Taken from the diaries of Mercia Seabroke, courtesy of Richard Seabroke.*

**Colin Pope**

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### **Some thoughts on conservation from Bill Shepard**

The title 'Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeological' falls short of the full range of its activities, failing to include geology, of which there is an active section. No doubt, many would think of such a Society as conservationists but the majority of our members take no part in such activity, the emphasis being upon observing and recording nature.

Conservation is obstructing the progress of nature and best known amongst such activity is management of woodland based on the centuries old system when woodland was an important component of farming. Only what was useful was retained. Ash for tools, oak for the structure of farm buildings and hazel, the most labour intensive to produce material pliable enough to be manipulated. To obtain the desired material, a compartment of the wood



was felled, leaving only the standards. The hazel would regrow and, at the correct pliable stage, would be made into hurdles for the close penning of sheep, or thatching spars to secure to secure the thatch on buildings and ricks. Yet another use for hazel at the pliable stage was in wattle and daub, used in dividing dwellings into rooms. What remained was made into faggots, bundles of wood with which to heat the bread ovens.

There was another important natural material that was not a woodland species, namely elm. It was planted around farm buildings and rickyards to filter the wind and prevent it from removing the thatch.

The removal of an area of hazel on an annual basis, thus assuring a constant supply of pliable material, exposed the floor of the copse to sunlight, thus causing the ground flora to flourish. The vegetation having rested for a number of years, springs into life and produces a spectacular display which the conservationists try to achieve.

What if conservation was to cease? It would not render the demise of the ground flora which would appear anywhere in the wood where the sunlight has penetrated the canopy, but perhaps not in such a concentrated spectacular display. With some three hundred and fifty named woodlands on the Island, there is an opportunity for both conservation and wold wood. Without doubt, the latter would be more species-rich.

Of course, we have to stand in nature's way to grow the food required to feed today's population. The days of hunter gatherer are long gone and it is difficult to find an area where humans have not interfered, apart from the coast. I know of an area of woodland so spectacular that I refuse to name it for fear of interference.

If nature is left to itself, it is far from harmony. An excellent Island example of warring nature is Tennyson Down where storm force winds prevent nature from reaching its ultimate goal, climax vegetation.

**Bill Shepard**

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### **Dinosaur Tracking in the Wild West by Martin Lockley A Talk at Dinosaur Isle, 24<sup>th</sup> May**

To some he is known as the most famous ichnologist in the world. To his daughter and her friends, he has the envious job title of dinosaur tracker; the Indiana Jones of the Palaeontological world. While Martin Lockley may not have had any young lady admirers in the front row, distracting him with 'Love you' written in black ink on their eye lids, as Indian Jones did in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, he very successfully kept an audience of varying ages and mixed geological abilities captivated with tales of his discoveries of dinosaur track ways and courting rituals in the Dinosaur Diamond of Utah.

The Dinosaur Diamond stretches clockwise from the Dinosaur National Monument in the north to Fruita, Moab and Price, straddling the Utah-Colorado border and contains an incredible number of dinosaur trackways, a bit like a "Dinosaur Freeway" which was perhaps a migration route. Martin took us on a walk through the sandstones of the Wild West in Colorado and Utah, to look for dinosaur tracks, millions of years after the dinosaurs roamed these plains. The area known as the Dakota Sandstones has so far revealed 120 fossilised track sites with each site containing up to 100 different species from tiny crocodile tracks to proto mammal track ways but this isn't unique to the Colorado region. They can be found worldwide and even on the Isle of Wight, several dinosaur footprints and tracks have been discovered and had the Isle of Wight been more of a desert environment, then it too would likely have had as many trackways as the Dakota Sandstones.

## **Beautiful Rock formations**

Martin showed us an interesting array of slides from incredibly beautiful rock formations to clearly defined dinosaur trackways and stated that visiting these sites was actively encouraged in Colorado as he flicked to his next slide, a road sign which had an image of a 3-toed dinosaur footprint and the wording 'Dinosaur Tracks' above an arrow pointing across an enormous rocky prairie.

We next visited Navajo Mountain and Rainbow Bridge, another stunning natural rock formation spanning 234 feet (71m) and the immense Lake Powell which is 2000 miles long and half a mile wide. At this site in the Navajo area, Martin and his team have even found spider tracks, albeit a very large spider, and small blackbird sized dinosaur tracks. Martin and his team started working on this site in the 1990s and new trackway discoveries still being made today.

From Lake Powell we moved onto the Moab, a region Martin was most proud to announce was visited by David Attenborough in the 1980s. This is a megatrack site running across the Colorado/Utah border containing hundreds of dinosaur footprints, "possibly the same dinosaur," Martin said, "going to and from the pub perhaps."

## **Walking with Dinosaurs**

Then came the Late Jurassic, the "hay day" for dinosaurs. At this point Martin showed us some images of maps, maps which he had hand drawn of the footprints and trackways they discovered. He also enlisted the talents of Isle of Wight Dinosaur Artist, John Sibbick, to illustrate Dinosaur Ridge trackways. The limited edition prints are sold at Dinosaur Ridge to raise funds for the continued exploration and research of trackways. John Sibbick's illustrations are incredibly detailed and you may remember he created the artwork for the dinosaur stamps released in the UK in October 2013.

Martin then took us to the Purgatory site in Colorado showing a group of dinosaurs walking together. The tracks were parallel although not particularly straight a bit like "5 tipsy people coming back from the pub," Martin offered.

As we moved into the Cretaceous, we learned of the palaeontological hero and British clergyman, Arthur Lakes, who made a fantastic discovery when he excavated stegosaurus bones and tracks in Dinosaur Ridge in 1877. Lakes wrote to Othniel Charles Marsh, a wealthy professor at Yale University with details of his find. He did this on at least two occasions but when Marsh didn't respond, Lakes sent details of his next find to both Marsh and Edward Cope, Marsh's main competitor. This act finally got the attention of Marsh who quickly wrote an article about the discovery for the *American Journal of Science* entitled "Notice of a New and Gigantic Dinosaur" and sent one of his leading collectors, Benjamin Franklin Mudge to work with Lakes on the site.

Martin then informed us about a recent discovery that had been made about the courting rituals of dinosaurs. He remembered, while growing up in Pembrokeshire, seeing the male puffins performing for the females in which they would gather in a group and scrape the ground with their feet to attract females and "the ones that showed off the most got the girl," said Martin, adding that there is large scale physical evidence of display arenas like those of the puffins in theropod courtship. This has also been seen in the tiny dinosaur scrapes from Korea. Until the discovery of these scrapes and leks, there had been no physical evidence of dinosaur mating. We carried on through the ages and terminated our journey in Southern Mexico, 10 000 years ago when we came across footprints from our human ancestors preserved in the volcanic ash.

Martin finished his presentation with a question and answer session in which he was asked "So why do you search for dinosaur tracks and not dinosaur bones?" A dinosaur hunter can spend 3 years excavating just one dinosaur and all its bones." Martin said, "My

team and I can go out to the field and in one afternoon find 4 or 5 trackways and have them all written up while the dinosaur hunter is still excavating his find.”

**Fiona Trowbridge**

### Recording Matters

For a record of a species to be entered into a database, there are several pieces of information which need to be present – what was seen (an accepted scientific or English name), where was it seen (the location described with a name and grid reference), when it was seen (ideally day, month and year) and who saw it (and who would be able to give more information about the sighting).

Being on a list for a site enables a species to be described as 'present'. If it was looked for and not found, this can also be a helpful observation particularly when a species is rare and may be in danger of being lost. However a further piece of information which adds considerably to the value of the sighting is some indication of abundance.

If abundance is to be recorded it needs to be done in a systematic way, so that it can be repeated easily and used to compare between sites or year-on-year. There are numerous methods which have been developed, related to the size of the species, how it grows, whether individuals are clearly distinguishable and the nature of the habitat.

If individuals can be distinguished in a relatively limited space e. g. dunlin feeding at the water's edge on an estuary, an accurate count of individuals can be obtained. However, if there is a high tide roost of dunlin where many individuals are packed together over a larger area, then techniques for estimation of numbers need to be employed. Counting a group in one tenth of area for example, then multiplying by 10 can give a reasonable estimate of the flock.

For plants, sometimes individuals can be distinguished - for example daisy plants in a lawn could be counted as each plant grows as a separate individual; however if creeping buttercup is present this cannot be done readily, as the plant spreads by underground stems which link the plants together – so is it one plant or many? A different strategy is required in this case, which involves estimating the amount of ground covered by the plant. The DAFOR scale is one method of estimating where

Dominant	> 75% cover
Abundant	51-75% cover
Frequent	26-50% cover
Occasional	11-25% cover
Rare	1-10% cover

In the marine environment, a similar scale can be applied, which takes into account the size of the species being observed, where S superabundant > 80% A Abundant 40-79% C Common 20-39% F Frequent 10-19% O Occasional 5-9% R Rare 1-5%. Animals can usually be counted, and depending on their size, an approximate cover value assigned as shown in the table. Using a marked area e.g. 10cm x 10cm for very small animals or a 50cm x 50cm grid quadrat divided into 5cm x 5cm squares can be very helpful in estimating the numbers more easily. Seaweeds are usually assessed by estimating the percentage of an area they cover.

<i>Abundance code</i>	<i>Barnacles and other animals &lt;1 cm</i>	<i>Periwinkles and other animals 1-3 cm</i>	<i>Animals 3-5 cm e.g. Crabs</i>
<i>S</i>	<i>&gt;10,000 per m<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>1000-9999 per m<sup>2</sup></i>	
<i>A</i>	<i>1000-9999 per m<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>100-999 per m<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>10-99 per m<sup>2</sup></i>
<i>C</i>	<i>100-999 per m<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>10 99 per m<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>1-9 per m<sup>2</sup></i>

<i>F</i>	10-99 per m <sup>2</sup>	1-9 per m <sup>2</sup>	1-9 per 10 m <sup>2</sup>
<i>O</i>	1-9 per m <sup>2</sup>	1-9 per 10 m <sup>2</sup>	1-9 per 100 m <sup>2</sup>
<i>R</i>	1-9 per 10 m <sup>2</sup>	1-9 per 100 m <sup>2</sup>	1-9 per 1000 m <sup>2</sup>

An assessment of abundance can be used in various ways. Describing plant communities and documenting change in these communities can be helpful in deciding how land is managed to produce more diverse habitats.

If the size of a population is estimated, and over subsequent years monitored using the same technique, it is possible to gauge how well a species is faring. Such surveys provide the scientific basis for tracking trends of farmland or woodland birds, for example, which are reported in national news items. It is also possible to demonstrate when breeding times come to a peak or when seasonal migrations occur, and whether, over time, changes are occurring.

Long-term studies such as the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) and butterfly monitoring transects are now yielding very helpful information to aid our understanding of environmental change. However, looking for links to causative factors and trying to explain and predict change is a much more complex process!

**Anne Marston**

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### **What's in a name? *Juglans regia*: Walnut**

The generic name *Juglans* is a corruption of Jovis glans which translates into English as Jove's acorn. Jovis is an alternative name for Jupiter, highest of the Roman gods; glans is Latin for acorn or nut.

Walnut trees were highly thought of by ancient Romans for the health-giving properties of the nuts which were considered to be food fit for the Gods, hence *Juglans regia*/Royal Nut of Jupiter.

It is generally believed that walnut trees were introduced into Britain by Romans at the time of the invasion.

The name walnut is from the Old English word walhnutu, a combination of two elements: w(e)alh meaning foreigner and hnutu meaning nut; literally a foreign nut.

According to the old Doctrine of Signatures, the crinkled appearance of a walnut kernel was said to resemble a brain, the likeness being an indication that to regularly eat the nuts would keep the brain in good working order.

Another interpretation from the Doctrine of Signatures is that walnuts represented certain parts of male anatomy and that to eat plenty of walnuts would keep the reproductive organs in good working order.

Modern research shows that polyunsaturated oil in walnuts may be beneficial to the heart.

**Sue Blackwell**

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### **Kingston: coronation site or administrative centre?**

I am in the process of researching the *tūn* place-names of the Isle of Wight (Hulverstone, Nettlestone, Weston etc). This has involved thinking about the place-name Kingston and its meaning. Kingston was of sufficient importance to be enumerated in Domesday Book and later obtained a parish church. It was therefore a place of local

significance. The first element of the place-name is Old English *cyning* 'king'. The second element *tūn* had a range of meanings. The generally accepted interpretations are considered to be, 'enclosure', 'village', 'farmstead', 'estate', 'manor', 'township' although the precise meaning in individual cases can be hard to determine.

There is a misconception that Kingston had something to do with the crowning of kings in the Anglo-Saxon period. It is true that the Island had its own royal dynasty which was extinguished with the take-over of the Island by Cædwalla king of the Gewissæ (i.e. Wessex) in the 680s. This is recorded by Bede in his Ecclesiastical History. Although Bede was a monk of Jarrow/Wearmouth in northern England and did not travel widely, he was informed about matters in the south by bishop Daniel of Winchester, so the identification of Arwald as king of Wight is reasonably secure. Kingston however had nothing to do with Arwald's local dynasty. The only documented example of a settlement named Kingston where coronations happened is Kingston upon Thames in Surrey, which saw the coronation of Æthelstan, grandson of King Alfred, in 925. This instance of Kingston would appear to be exceptional. Most Kingstons in England were places of local significance only.

I have had correspondence with Jilly Bourne, a Leicestershire based historian who has been researching the significance of Kingston place-names and is preparing a British Archaeological Report on her findings. Jilly has noted that in mainland England, particularly within Wessex, many Kingstons are closely associated with major long-distance Roman roads. This has led her to suggest that these Kingstons, with their regular distribution pattern of lying 9-10 miles apart along these roads, were purposefully sited to serve a specific, royal, strategic purpose. This however is not applicable to Kingston, Isle of Wight, which is on a relatively small island where long distance Roman roads did not exist. Another explanation for its name needs to be found.

Kingston was formerly part of the extensive *parochia* (mother parish) of Carisbrooke which extended from the Solent in the north to the English Channel in the south. A secular 'multiple estate' which was coterminous with the Carisbrooke *parochia* can be envisaged for the mid Saxon period before the fragmentation into the individual manors recorded in Domesday Book. Domesday Bowcombe, rated at 4 hides in 1066, was a vestige of this estate. In 1086 Bowcombe contributed to the payment of the 'farm of one night', which was rendered through the large Wiltshire manor of Amesbury. 'Although the farm of one night was sometimes expressed in financial terms, it appears to have originally been intended as a render in kind, which may have provided for a king while travelling on circuit' (Lavelle 2007,13). Some idea of the payment in kind involved in the 'farm of one night' can be gleaned from the laws of King Ine of Wessex, dating from the later seventh century. The food render that was expected from an estate of ten hides consisted of: '10 vats of honey, 300 loaves, 12 "ambers" of Welsh ale, 30 of clear ale, 2 full-grown cows, or 10 wethers, 10 geese, 20 hens, 10 cheeses, an "amber" full of butter, 5 salmon, 20 pounds in weight of fodder, and 100 eels' (Whitelock 1968, Ine 70.1). The 'farm' would have been collected within the manor of Bowcombe, probably at Carisbrooke, in the later eleventh century. By this time Kingston was a manor in its own right, but was a former component of the mid-Saxon, or quite probably earlier, estate of Bowcombe. It can be suggested that Kingston was the collection point for the portion of this estate that lay to the south of the chalk downland. Kingston was situated centrally in this area to perform this function, serving as a collection point for the areas which would become the later medieval parishes of Chale and Shorwell, as well as Kingston itself.

This in itself would not totally explain the place-name Kingston. It is quite possible that Kingston had a royal connection other than being a collecting centre. The nature of this connection is now lost to us. The place-name *cyningestune* was first recorded in the laws of Æthelbert of Kent (602-3?: Whitelock 1968). Kingston on the Isle of Wight may have had

some royal function at the time of Cædwalla and Ine, in the later seventh and earlier eighth century (Jilly Bourne, personal communication).

In conclusion, Kingston existed at the time of Domesday Book and seems to have had a connection with the 'farm of one night'. In addition there would appear to have been some other association with royalty which is now unknowable.

#### Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Jilly Bourne for her comments on the first draft of this article.

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**John Margham**

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### **Andy's Nature Notes January to June 2016**

#### **January**

1<sup>st</sup> -5<sup>th</sup>. A period of strong South to South-westerly gales with plenty of rain but very mild. Nothing much about.

6<sup>th</sup>. Unexpectedly, a Painted Lady appeared in the garden and settled on a palm leaf. An odd sight at this time of year, but it was probably from the influx before Christmas when the weather was very benign and many migrant moths and other insects were recorded.

7<sup>th</sup>. The male Black Redstart that was seen in a street nearby is still there.

9<sup>th</sup>. 5 Black Redstarts up in the street now.

18<sup>th</sup>. A female Blackcap in the garden feeding on apples.

21<sup>st</sup>. Went to Foreland ledges to look for Purple Sandpipers. No luck so moved on to St Helens and saw two Marsh Harriers and 5 Snipe from the road bridge.

27<sup>th</sup>. Horrendous day. Poured with rain all day.

30<sup>th</sup>. The Wallflowers growing on the cliffs along the revetment are flowering.

#### **February**

7<sup>th</sup>. Saw a Short-eared Owl up in Rew Copse.

15<sup>th</sup>. 2 Black Redstarts along the revetment. Went over to Newtown with Dave Nordell and Pete Cambell later in the day. Not much about but we did see a leucistic Reed Bunting identified by Pete and probably the bird wrongly thought to be a Snow Bunting.

16<sup>th</sup>. Although the weather has been coldish lately there was a Small Tortoiseshell and a Peacock along the front today.

18<sup>th</sup>. Pete, Dave and I went back to Forelands to look for Purple Sandpipers and again drew a blank. We then had a search along the revetment at Wheeler's Bay for Glanville webs and found 28 some with large numbers of caterpillars in them. There were also 4 Black Redstarts.  
19<sup>th</sup>. 5 Black Redstarts today.  
23<sup>rd</sup>. Dave had a Brimstone and a Red Admiral at the back of the bay.  
24<sup>th</sup>. Found a Rusty-dot Pearl [migrant moth] in a pool of water in a boat cover in Wheeler's Bay.  
25<sup>th</sup>. 40 Glanville webs around the bay now. 3 Black Redstarts still along the cliffs plus a single Red Admiral.

### March

1<sup>st</sup>. A Double-striped Pug moth on the window this evening.  
4<sup>th</sup>. 4 Black Redstarts and a single Oystercatcher along the revetment.  
9<sup>th</sup>. Awful day! North-easterly gale, heavy rain and cold.  
12<sup>th</sup>. My son saw and photographed one of the first bee-flies to be seen this year, *Bombylius major*.  
15<sup>th</sup>. Peacock butterfly in the garden. We are in a long period of easterly biased weather at the moment.  
17<sup>th</sup>. Dave and Peter Hunt had a Large White and a Small Tortoiseshell in my garden this morning. I was at Atherfield counting Glanville webs with Pete.  
19<sup>th</sup>. Went to Binnel looking for webs and found 3[with Robin Curtis]. We moved on to St.Catherine's but failed to find any but did see a Wheatear, my first of the year.  
21<sup>st</sup>. Saw a Snipe on Luccombe Down.  
22<sup>nd</sup>. A Small White and 2 Small Tortoiseshell in the garden.  
26<sup>th</sup>. A Manx Shearwater off the bay heading west into a southerly gale. Quite close in.  
28<sup>th</sup>. The first Humming-bird Hawkmoth [HBHM] of the year in the garden. There was a severe storm last night [Katie]. Bonchurch beach at Monk's Bay was washed out.  
30<sup>th</sup>. A large Adder at Monk's Bay. A fully grown Glanville caterpillar on the path at the back of my house this morning.  
31<sup>st</sup>. 5 Small Tortoiseshell along the bay and the first Spotted Bee-fly, *Bombylius discolor* in the garden.

### April

1<sup>st</sup>. A Comma in the garden this morning.  
5<sup>th</sup>. A single HBHM in the garden.  
9<sup>th</sup>. Plenty of Large and Small Whites about. Another HBHM in the garden (these will all be emerged overwintering hibernating individuals). A Willow Warbler along the revetment.  
10<sup>th</sup>. Seawatching at St Catherine's this morning, just a few Common Scoters and Skuas.  
12<sup>th</sup>. The first Holly Blues (2) in the garden today plus Green-veined Whites, Large and Small Whites and a Peacock.  
17<sup>th</sup>. A Common Sandpiper along at Monk's Bay.  
19<sup>th</sup>. A male Orange Tip in the garden and a Wheatear on the rocks in front of the house.  
20<sup>th</sup>. A first generation female Holly Blue in the garden.  
21<sup>st</sup>. Heard a Cuckoo calling early this morning.  
24<sup>th</sup>. Saw a Great Black-backed Gull catch a Garfish out to sea then bring it back inshore to kill and eat it. The local Herring Gulls watched with interest but did not attempt to steal it! 2 Whitethroats along the revetment.  
27<sup>th</sup>. Pete, Dave and I went up to West High Down and saw 2 Ring Ouzels, a female Common Redstart and 2 Dartford Warblers.

28<sup>th</sup>. Pete and I had a look along Luccombe Down early this morning. Saw a very well-marked Whinchat, 5 Wheatears, a male and female Common Redstart, Whitethroats, Skylarks and lastly an Osprey coming in over our heads. A good morning! 2 Holly Blues in the garden later.

29<sup>th</sup>. Down to St.Catherine's Point this morning with Pete. 3 Common Sandpipers, a Lesser Whitethroat, a single Whimbrel and, best of all, 5 Bottle-nosed Dolphins off the lighthouse heading up Channel.

## May

1<sup>st</sup>. Dave and I saw the first Glanville Fritillary on the wing this morning.

5<sup>th</sup>. 6 Swifts over the house early this morning. Dave and I went out to Shepherd's Chine, Atherfield, mid-morning. We had 3 Wall Brown, 4 Small Coppers, 1 Green Hairstreak, 1 Grizzled Skipper, 1 male Orange Tip and 1 male Brimstone. Also a single Silver Y along the revetment later.

7<sup>th</sup>. Having spent my life beachcombing along the beaches at the Back of the Wight I was delighted to find today something I'd heard about but never seen. I was down at Watershoot Bay when I saw a large object washed up in the rubbish that I knew instantly was a bale of rubber from the wreck of the War Knight, sunk by a mine off Freshwater in 1918. It had taken 98 years to get there! As it was very heavy I cut a piece off to take home.

8<sup>th</sup>. Dave and I went along to Whiteways car park near Freshwater and recorded 6 Green Hairstreaks, 4 Small Blue, 2 Brown Argus, 1 Small Heath and 1 Dinky Skipper.

9<sup>th</sup>. A dull miserable day.

11<sup>th</sup>. Walked along the revetment early this morning and saw 4 Whimbrel just offshore moving from rock to rock as the tide rose. Also 2 Common Sandpipers and 15 Dunlin on the rocks in Monk's Bay. Back along the revetment later there were 6 Glanvilles, 1 Green Hairstreak, 1 Dinky Skipper and 4 Common Blues.

12<sup>th</sup>. More Glanvilles emerging now with a count of 26 today along the bay.

13<sup>th</sup>. Pete, Dave and I went to Shepherd's Chine this morning and logged 10 Wall Brown (a good count as this butterfly is becoming quite scarce), 1 Small Copper, 5 Common Blue and a Brimstone. Later along the revetment Dave spotted a Red-veined Darter dragonfly that I managed to photograph. This is a migrant and the third I've seen in this spot since the 1990's. We also saw a Small Blue there and 8 Common Blue.

14<sup>th</sup>. Went to Binnel Bay with Pete to see if there were any Glanvilles on the wing. We saw 5 which was good after a few years of not seeing any at all.

16<sup>th</sup>. Did a proper count of Glanvilles along the revetment and came up with a total of 63. This is about average for this site and is consistent year after year. There were 2 Small Blues as well. In the afternoon went up to Bonchurch Down with Dave where I spotted another Red-veined Darter plus 5 Small Heath, 5 Common Blue, 1 Small Copper, 8 Brown Argus and a single Wall Brown.

17<sup>th</sup>. As I very rarely visit the Mainland it was quite pleasant to go over with Dave and Peter Hunt to the New Forest to look for Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. We went to New Copse near Brockenhurst and although the weather was not brilliant we found about 20 odd; it is rather sad that we have to do this as this butterfly was an Island species until a few years ago and became extinct here through a lack of management in its stronghold in Parkhurst Forest. Interestingly, we met a couple of Butterfly Conservation members who told us that an irresponsible fellow was going round releasing Pearl-bordered at sites in Hampshire and that he had come over to the Island and let some go at Parkhurst, which accounts for the report of the butterfly being seen there a week or so ago.

18<sup>th</sup>. Another miserable day.



19<sup>th</sup>. Went along the revetment first thing and saw a small wader down on the apron dodging the waves. I did not recognize it straight away but on checking my photos it turned out to be a near summer plumaged Sanderling. I usually see them in the autumn when they are just grey so it is quite a good sighting and a first for me. Back home I saw a freshly emerged Glanville settle on a planter in my garden only to be taken in a trice by a Wall Lizard, which is a bit off!

23<sup>rd</sup>. Dave and I went over to Redcliff to see if by any chance there were any Glanvilles there. There weren't but we did count 5 Wall Brown and 10 Small Heath.

24<sup>th</sup>. A nice hot, sunny day so we went up to Bonchurch Down to see what was about. 3 Adonis Blue, 9 Small Heath, 42 Common Blue, 12 Small Copper, 2 Green Hairstreak and 21 Dingy Skipper. Not bad at all.

27<sup>th</sup>. Acting on a tip off, Pete, Dave and I went to a site near Ventnor and counted a minimum of at least 250 Small Blue, a wonderful sight. Possibly the most I've ever seen in one place.

29<sup>th</sup>. Visited Alverstone Marshes and saw one male teneral Scarce Chaser and 2 Hairy Dragonflies. Also went to Brook Down where there were 40+ Small Heath, 30/40 Grizzled Skipper, 30/40 Dingy Skipper, 10+ Small Blue, 6 Burnet Companion moths and at least 40 Green Hairstreaks.

30<sup>th</sup>. Pete and I had a look along Limerstone Down and recorded 50+ Small Heath, 2 Red Admiral, 2 Wall and a female Black-tailed Skimmer dragonfly far from home. Also a large Grass Snake.

## June

1<sup>st</sup>. 7 freshly emerged Small Tortoiseshells along the revetment this morning.

2<sup>nd</sup>. A Painted Lady and 100's of Diamond-back Moths just about everywhere. The moths are a micro and very small and have come in from the Continent in, as it transpired, many millions. The national press had a field day reporting this.

3<sup>rd</sup>. Went to Bembridge with Pete to look for a reported Spoonbill. We found it okay but only had distant views.

5<sup>th</sup>. Large numbers of Painted Lady coming in the last few days. I've seen at least 70 today.

7<sup>th</sup>. After a report of a Whiskered Tern at Bembridge marshes I went looking for it but it had gone. Did see 2 Little-ringed Plovers though.

8<sup>th</sup>. Went back to Alverstone Marshes and had 1 male Scarce Chaser, 1 male Hairy Dragonfly and about 50 Banded Demoiselles.

18<sup>th</sup>. A long period of unsettled weather with plenty of rain. Saw 2 Sandwich terns along the revetment.

19<sup>th</sup>. Pete and I did a cliff walk to the west and saw a male Peregrine with its kill and one young down on the rocks. Also a Grey Seal bobbing about just off shore. Loads of Bee Orchids along the cliffs this year. Saw 5 Birds-nest Orchids at Flower's Brook as well.

22<sup>nd</sup>.-23<sup>rd</sup>. Heavy rain and thunderstorms.

24<sup>th</sup>. Dave and I went along to Southford, near Whitwell, to look for dragonflies. Failed to find the Golden-ringed Dragonfly, the target species, but we did count at least 50 Banded Demoiselles.

27<sup>th</sup>. We drove over to Walter's Copse, Newtown, to have a look round. There were 2 Silver-washed Fritillaries, 3 Marbled Whites, 12+ Ringlets, 1 White Admiral and a female Beautiful Demoiselle.

28<sup>th</sup>. A single HBHM along the revetment plus 3 Painted Lady and a Glanville.

29<sup>th</sup>. A west-south west near gale with heavy rain today.

30<sup>th</sup>. During a brief sunny spell in the afternoon I recorded 1 Glanville, 4 Marbled Whites, 2 Small Whites, 1 Large White, 1 Large Skipper, 2 Small Tortoiseshell and 4 Common Blue along the revetment. This month has been pretty poor weather-wise but this shows that even a

small break can be helpful to our butterflies and other insects by giving them a breathing space during the prolonged bad spells.

Andy Butler

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## Reports of General Meetings

### **23<sup>rd</sup> January Should We Help Wild Animals? - An illustrated talk by Kerstin Voigt of Wild Bird Aid**

As I walked along Ventnor High Street early one evening in mid January, a feral pigeon fell out of the air in front of me and lay in a heap of feathers on the kerb. I picked it up and cradled it, speaking softly to reassure it, whilst I tried to think what to do. The bird showed no outer signs of injury, but I reckoned it had been hit by a vehicle I'd just seen speeding along the narrow winding street flanked by tall buildings. I had a mile-long walk home, but once there, I knew I could call on Wild Bird Aid.

If I had not decided to go for a walk that evening and ended up in town, I dread to think what would have happened to that injured bird. It was a feral pigeon, after all – what people tend to call ‘vermin’. Kerstin and her partners in Wild Bird Aid think differently, as I do. They believe that every animal on Earth has as much right to be here as we humans do. They therefore treat all creatures with respect and empathy, knowing that they, like us, can feel pain and suffer, and that they are also highly susceptible to shock and high levels of stress caused by traumatic experiences.

Wild Bird Aid is a recently established team of four people who shelter and administer first aid to sick and injured wild birds and prepare them for release into the wild. They are all experienced at caring for birds, but now they are collaborating to share the workload and specialise in different types of bird. Kerstin and her husband Stephan take care of corvids, passerines and birds of prey, Nikkie specialises in waterfowl and game birds, and Claire in seabirds, pigeons and doves.

Their work may start with rescuing and transporting birds, although with only four people, they cannot be administering to their patients and travelling about the Island, catching and collecting injured birds. They usually have to ask people to bring the birds to them. When the patient arrives at their home, they start to administer first aid. This is a very gradual process. Sea birds may be entangled in fishing line and tackle and must be released from it as soon as possible. A wing injury has to be treated. A severely injured bird needs terminal care: warmth, shelter and comforting. That is what I tried to give my feral pigeon on the long walk home. I cradled it, walked slowly and carefully, speaking softly to reassure it. Halfway there, I felt two jolts as its heart stopped, but I still cradled it all the way home, just in case. I felt a strong emotional bond to my patient, and I know that Kerstin and Stephan feel that too.

Feeding is a specialised affair so Kerstin has to prepare a variety of meals when she has a number of different species to care for. She showed us photos of some of the birds she and Stephan have rehabilitated and told us their stories. They give each patient a name. Hermann the gannet was found in a driveway in Cowes. He should have been out at sea, where gannets live, but he was starving. Gradually he built up his strength on a diet of fish, and could be released back into the sea.

In spring and summer Kerstin and Stephan may have nestlings to care for. This is hard work, feeding from dawn to dusk. It is highly specialised, as you can do a lot of harm if you give them the wrong food in the wrong way. Baby birds may have to be put in an incubator on cold nights because they do not have their mother to keep them warm. That is why you have

to act quickly if a mother bird is killed by a vehicle or a predator. The nest must be located and the young rescued before nightfall.

Cleaning out cages must be done every day, as hygiene is crucial in a hospital. And sometimes patients need bathing. A sprained wing may need physiotherapy. Stephan manipulated the wing of a female raven called Zarathustra and she was eventually fit for release at Robin Hill.

Social interaction is very important for corvid species. Crows, rooks jackdaws, magpies, ravens - all are highly intelligent birds. Some, like rooks and jackdaws, live in large social groups, and others, like crows and magpies in small family units. When they are sick and injured, they need social interaction for reassurance. Otherwise they can become very depressed. Some hate to be handled, however.

Eventually it is time for release. Swift releases are especially uplifting. Kerstin and Stephan love to photograph these events. A tern runs onto the beach, stops and turns around and around to check out the area, get his bearings, and decide where to go. It reminds me of young prisoners being released from jail without a plan.

Sometimes Kerstin and Stephan need specialist help with a patient from a mainland rescue society. Once they had to transport a swan to a sanctuary in Shepperton. It is important to have links with other wildlife rehabilitation centres for their expertise. Wild Bird Aid is a voluntary organisation that relies on donations. Kirsten also raises funds by baking cakes and pastries. They are applying to become a registered charity.

#### **What can we do to help wild birds?**

Prevent causing injury, suffering and death to wild birds by restricting the free roaming of cats. In 2006 in the UK, over ten million pet cats killed about fifty-five million birds. Kerstin suggests constructing an enriched outdoor or indoor enclosure where your cat can play with a variety of toys to keep him/her mentally stimulated and physically active without hunting wildlife. Rather than buy a cat from a breeder, why not adopt one from a rescue centre?

Drive carefully to avoid hitting birds. In the nesting season, parents fly low across roads to save time and energy when feeding their young. Remember that a dead or injured parent can mean young left to starve in the nest.

Clean windows can injure birds because they don't see them. Use window stickers and curtains to prevent birds flying into windows.

#### **What to do in an emergency:**

Remove an injured bird from danger from traffic or predators, including humans. Be careful when handling a wild bird, as they can see humans as a threat and resist capture. Wear gloves if possible.

Keep the bird in a safe, warm and quiet place. Don't give food or water, especially when it is very young.

Find professional help as soon as possible. See Wild Bird Aid's website and Facebook page for their phone numbers.

#### **Volunteering with Wild Bird Aid:**

If you'd like to help Wild Bird Aid, they would welcome volunteers to transport rescued birds, help with cleaning cages, animal care or fundraising.

Several weeks after hearing Kerstin's talk, I walked into Ventnor High Street one afternoon and immediately spotted a heap of black feathers in the road. As I approached, a jackdaw sprang up onto the pavement, looking strangely lopsided but very alert. A drama then unfolded, as a young man tried to catch the bird and put it in my shopping bag. Amazingly it could fly, but when it reached the rooftops, it plummeted back down to the ground. He caught it as it lay stunned, but wrapped it in the bag. As he handed it to me, it thrust out of my hands and dived into the road in front of a car. The driver braked, and stopped just inches from the

bird. It flew up again to the rooftops, only to crash back down. This time the catcher bagged the bird. I heard later that he sustained minor injuries to his hands as the desperate bird resisted capture.

Someone kindly offered to drive the jackdaw to Kerstin and Stephan's house. I phoned Stephan later that evening to ask after the bird. He told me it had a head injury on one side and was suffering from concussion. That would have caused confusion and disorientation, which explains why it could fly up to the rooftops but couldn't land. Stephan had to calm it down and reassure it. Then it passed peacefully away. I was amazed at how well Stephan understood how the bird felt and why it acted as it did at every stage, even though he wasn't there. It is a combination of medical knowledge and empathy that both he and Kerstin possess.

I am concerned that I have found two injured birds in Ventnor High Street in the space of just one month, even though I only go there two or three times a week. I wonder how many more are injured there and WHY. I think it is a combination of traffic lights, sharp bends and narrow streets with tall buildings. Traffic lights cause driver impatience that translates into speed. Narrow pavements force birds into the road, and when they take off, there is nowhere to go but up. Could this delay their escape from traffic for too long? And finally, there are humans who scare birds into the road. The day before I rescued the jackdaw, I saw and heard a youth deliberately stamp his feet down hard on the pavement right beside a pigeon, making it launch into the road. How sad that someone bullies a vulnerable little bird just to make him feel big and impress a mate who was passing by!

We thanked Kerstin for an inspiring talk and in recognition of the dedication that she, Stephan, Nikkie and Claire have for wild birds.

**Maggie Nelmes**

### **13<sup>th</sup> February The Isle of Wight in the English Landscape Part 2: Historic Settlement and Cultural Zones, an illustrated talk by Dr Vicky Basford**

The first part of this talk was given in March 2015 and reported on by Maggie Nelmes in the August 2015 Bulletin. Both talks were based on my PhD thesis completed in 2013 and available at <http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/20803/>. I have also published an article on my thesis in *Wight Studies* (2014).

My talk last year focussed on medieval and post-medieval enclosure patterns but this year I concentrated on settlement patterns, examining the historic settlement provinces proposed by Brian Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell in *An Atlas of Rural Settlement* (2000) and *Region and Place* (2002). Roberts and Wrathmell have placed the Isle of Wight in their *South Eastern Province*, characterised by scattered nucleations, hamlets, villages and market towns. It contrasts with their *Central Province* which is defined as an area dominated by large concentrations of nucleated settlements, villages and hamlets. The authors have also identified a third *Northern & Western Province*. Their analysis of provincial variations in settlement patterns focuses on the varying density of 'nucleations' (villages or large hamlets) and 'dispersed settlements' (small hamlets and individual farmsteads) within the three settlement provinces.

Roberts & Wrathmell's analysis is based on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition national series of one inch scale Ordnance Survey maps published between 1805 and 1874. In my research I was able to use the wonderful resource of the unpublished Ordnance Survey of the Isle of Wight at six inch scale, prepared in 1793-4 and now available on the British Library website. My talk featured extracts from the survey drawings, showing how it is possible to count individual dwellings within settlements and thus to achieve a high standard of accuracy in estimating settlement sizes. Analysis of the 1793-4 Ordnance Survey drawings showed that whilst the Isle of Wight possessed some settlements of village size these were scattered rather than

concentrated in the landscape, with most settlement clusters being essentially hamlets. Individual farmsteads formed a significant part of the overall settlement pattern. Moreover, if hamlets are counted as dispersed settlements then the Isle of Wight had a medium density of dispersion. The Isle of Wight therefore fits well within the South-East Province although it is also distinctive.

The size and density of rural settlements are not the only factors that help determine settlement character. Settlement origins and form must also be considered. The medieval landscape of the *Central Province* has typically been seen as one of nucleated villages, often planned, surrounded by extensive open-fields – a pattern that may have developed over a relatively short period of time from the 8<sup>th</sup> century to the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. The growth of rural settlements in the *South Eastern* and *Northern & Western* Provinces may have been more organic and less strictly planned. The classification of settlement forms pioneered by Brian Roberts in *The Making of the English Village* (1987) is an important tool for understanding the origins and development of villages and hamlets although forms can change considerably over time. In my talk I discussed various settlement forms on the Isle of Wight as shown on the 1793-4 Ordnance Survey drawings. The great majority of settlements which are not single farmsteads have irregular plans. Regular row plans (e.g. Carisbrooke) and regular grids account for only about 15% of settlement forms. Irregular or interrupted rows (e.g. Thorley and Wellow) are far more common and together account for nearly half of all settlement forms. Irregular clusters such as Mottistone account for about 15% of settlement forms. Church/manor complexes generally occur as one component in settlement plans, for instance as at Thorley, Gatcombe and Arreton where they are combined with interrupted rows. Church/Manor complexes in association with irregular or interrupted rows account for just over 5% of settlement forms. Green-edge settlements such as Brook Green account for about 19% of settlement forms. Roberts & Wrathmell distinguish between ‘green villages’ (characterised by planned layouts and formalised central spaces) and ‘green-edge settlements’ which developed from areas of open common waste around which farmsteads and cottages accreted. They consider ‘green-edge settlements’ to be on the boundary between nucleation and dispersion and suggest that they may have developed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century or 14<sup>th</sup> century although in East Anglia they could be earlier. ‘Street’ settlements are also thought by Roberts & Wrathmell to be on the boundary between nucleation and dispersion and there are eight Island settlements with the name-element ‘street’ on the 1793-4 Ordnance Survey drawings including ‘Chale Street’, ‘Thorley Street’, ‘Arreton Street’ and ‘Chillerton Street’.

In my thesis I discussed the origins of the Island’s settlements. Some of the earliest settlements may have been ‘parish foci’. These contain parish churches of early date such as Freshwater and Arreton. They may have been at the centre of secular multiple estates of Middle Saxon date. Surrounding the early estate centres there would have been subsidiary dispersed settlements consisting of one or more farmsteads.

Individual farmsteads and farmstead clusters are important element in the Island’s settlement pattern, comprising 545 of the 628 settlements identified from the 1793-4 Ordnance Survey drawings. These dispersed settlements are distributed fairly evenly throughout the Island whereas villages are absent from the heavier clays in north. Over 100 dispersed settlements are farmsteads bearing the same name as one or more adjacent farmsteads but with the suffix ‘Great’, ‘Little’, ‘Upper’, ‘Lower’, ‘East’, ‘West’ etc. In Devon WG Hoskins thought that these ‘linked farmsteads’ sometimes represented constituent parts of single manors recorded in Domesday Book but later divided into several farms. It has been suggested by Christopher Taylor that in many parts of England dispersed settlements could form the oldest layer in the settlement pattern, perhaps dating from the early Anglo-Saxon period or even before this time. In my talk I speculated that combe-edge settlements close to the Island’s chalk downs such as Compton and Shalcombe may be of very early origin.

However, three of these combe edge settlements (Compton, Chiverton and Knighton) have 'tun' place-name endings which John Margham dates to the Middle Saxon period. In many cases, dispersed settlements may have originated as subsidiary holdings on the edges of large Middle Saxon estates, subservient to estate centres. Other dispersed settlements may be associated with the assarting (enclosure) of land in the late Saxon and medieval periods or with the establishment of farms beside greens and commons in the medieval period. I concluded my talk by discussing Isle of Wight 'Cultural Zones'. My thesis used the 1793-4 Ordnance Survey drawings to look at 'cultural variation' between different parts of the Island. I identified seventeen discrete areas based on different zones of medieval land use and enclosure. However, these cultural zones also contain very distinct differences in settlement patterns which could be of some antiquity. The overlaying of additional data onto the map of cultural zones raises a number of research questions. Of particular interest is the distribution of Old English place-names. These names generally indicate pre-Conquest settlement and there are some very interesting gaps in their generally uniform distribution. Areas devoid of pre-Conquest settlement can be overlaid onto a map of archaeological sites and finds plotted from the Historic Environment Record. There are many problems associated with archaeological distribution maps and it has not so far been possible to include finds recorded under the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Nevertheless, the composite maps raise a number of interesting questions. In my talk I discussed the cultural zones defined as 'Shalcombe, Wellow & Thorley', 'Parkhurst and Northwood' and 'Whippingham, Fairlee & Staplers'. I also discussed the curious differences in settlement and enclosure patterns evident in 'Freshwater Isle' and 'Bembridge Isle'. I hope to focus my future research on the differences between the Island's various cultural zones.

**Vicky Basford**

**5<sup>th</sup> March 2016      Newtown Estuary: Fifty years of protecting nature, an illustrated talk by Colin Pope**

On a sketch map of the Newtown Estuary from about 1840, Colin showed us where a wall was built around Clamerkin Creek to protect grazing land from flooding. This was very productive land once the salt was removed. There had been salt workings here since Norman times, but by 1840 these had dwindled to three. On the eastern point of the estuary there was the Salterns Brickworks, a convenient location where sand and clay were accessible at low tide and the bricks could be shipped out. The wall no longer protects grazing land, and spits keep reforming where the tide deposits new shingle.

The Newtown Estuary was first designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1951, after the Nature Conservancy Council had asked local natural history societies across the country to make recommendations. However, in 1957 the government was keen to promote nuclear power and began to search for six suitable coastal sites in the south of England. Using seawater obviated the need for huge cooling towers. Hamstead, on the western side of the Newtown Estuary, was chosen for investigation into its suitability.

Mark Woodnutt, the Isle of Wight's Member of Parliament, asked his constituents for their views and meetings were held. An opinion poll showed that more than four times the number of Island residents opposed the scheme than were in favour. This sent a clear message to the County Council. It could see economic benefits from the power station to the Island, but nonetheless decided to remain neutral until the planning application was submitted. A number of non-governmental organisations voiced their objections to the scheme, notably the National Trust, who owned the Old Town Hall at Newtown, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, whose chairman, Francis Bright, owned Town Copse, the Solent Protection Society, and the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society (IWNHAS), led by teacher George Lawrence. The Nature Conservancy Council, on the other hand, felt there was

little point in opposing the scheme, citing Dungeness as an example of how public pressure had failed.

Yet, despite the conforming social climate of the nineteen-fifties, the campaign against a nuclear plant at Newtown Estuary quickly gained momentum, helped by articles in the County Press. Colin showed us a photograph taken in 1959 of the Newtown Sub-Committee at Marsh Farm. The members were Mercia Seabrook who lived at the farm and whose husband was Newtown's Harbourmaster, George and Molly Lawrence, Oliver and Dorothy Frazer, John Stafford, Ron Machin, Arthur Henry and Mr Cooper. Several of these were teachers and they decided to hold wildlife surveys at Newtown to demonstrate the importance of the Newtown Estuary to science. At this time, wildlife programmes were starting to be shown on television and proving popular. Sir Peter Scott was one of the presenters. The Lawrence's were very keen on photography and took cine films at the summer camps. Some of the pupils took black and white photos. Considering they had such simple box cameras, the quality of the photos they produced was remarkable, says Colin. One of the photos is of a well camouflaged nightjar sitting on her nest.

When the marshes were flooded by high tides, the survey teams came to the rescue of birds and their eggs. The number of nesting birds and the diversity of species was far greater than today. Blackheaded gulls were very common here and among other species, there were redshank, oystercatchers, ringed plover, and even little terns that no longer breed at Newtown. In 1960 Sir Peter Scott accepted an invitation as guest speaker at Cowes Secondary School's Prize-giving. To have a wildlife expert and television celebrity's public endorsement was a significant boost to the campaign. Finally, in late 1960, proposals for a nuclear power station here were abandoned. By then the County Council had been persuaded of the importance of the estuary for wildlife and proposed creating a nature reserve.

IWNHAS began holding an annual exhibition in 1966, named 'Local Look' after Peter Scott's wildlife television series. It was promoted by Oliver Frazer, a teacher at Priory Girls' School and one of those who organised the summer camps with George Lawrence. Oliver lived at Mottistone Mill and set up a photography laboratory there. Colin showed us some footage from a cine film entitled 'Memories: an Experiment in Field Work', of canvas bird hides dotted about the marshes to overlook birds' nests, and of a group of pupils approaching one of these hides and leaving one person inside with a camera, before retreating, so as to fool the birds into thinking they had all gone away. Then he showed us footage from the Kingfisher Survey of 1961, of parent birds entering a nesting hole in a mud bank with food for their young.

In August 1966 the Island's first nature reserve was opened at Newtown. In the County Press an article paid tribute to IWNHAS for its role in achieving this. Mercia Seabrook was appointed chairman and voluntary warden. The school camps continued their surveys for many years. The bird hide bears a plaque dated 1970, being European Conservation Year, to celebrate an award made to the reserve for important work in nature conservation. In 1974 Pat Ewbank was appointed warden and in 1980 the 'scrape' was created to raise the ground level to protect nesting birds from flooding. When Pat retired in 1988, Richard Grogan succeeded him until 1992. Finally, after thirty years, in 1989 the last Whitsun camp was held at Newtown.

The National Trust began to take over more land at Newtown and appointed Frank Heap as warden. He lived at Noah's Ark, an old cottage in Newtown, and organised voluntary working parties and an annual festival called The Randy. In 1995 English Nature declared Newtown Estuary a National Nature Reserve, following the transfer of land from the County Council to the National Trust.

The estuary today is mainly saltmarsh, with some areas of much older saltmarsh that forms an integrated community. This includes some rare plants, such as small cordgrass, the

original species. An introduced cordgrass produced a hybrid with the original cordgrass. It grew quickly and stabilised the mudflats, but it caused the decline of the original species. Golden samphire, though nationally rare, is quite common at Newtown. The estuary is especially important for overwintering birds of passage. It is unusual nowadays to find an estuary that is unspoilt, and Newtown is one of the least developed in the country. But it is changing.

The western shingle bank at Hamstead has moved inland as sea levels have risen. Here yellow-horned poppies and sea kale grow. The eastern spit is quite different. Very little shingle is deposited there and the land is being eroded. This is where the brickworks were and Brickfield camp was held. Brickfield Cottage is still there. The bricks have ornate patterns. A long boardwalk has had to be built to the other bird hide out on the marshes because the bank has eroded. As the sea encroaches, estuary birds are moving onto fields inland to feed and shelter. An increase in algae growth on exposed mud, caused by nitrates and phosphates, nutrient enrichment run-off from intensive farming, is smothering many invertebrates in the estuary.

Newtown's meadows have been traditionally managed over the years. They are unimproved flower rich meadows with woodland flowers growing on the margins. Dyer's greenweed is still present here, although it is declining nationally. Insect species that are highly dependent on it have also present. The tall elm trees that obstructed the views have gone, due to Dutch elm disease, but there are still elms in the hedgerows. A whole suite of lichens were almost wholly dependent on the elms.

The estuary is important for fossils. Pupils at the camps found mammoth tusks and the bones of other mammals and reptiles. Andy Yule has been collecting and studying fossils along this coast for many years and has donated his collection to Dinosaur Isle. Crocodile scutes, the jaw of a snake related to the boa constrictor, and lizards were found here.

The National Trust continues to buy land at Newtown and the reserve is heavily designated. All these protections cannot, however, save it from sea level rise caused by global warming and the consequent encroachment of the sea into the marshes. Someone in the audience asked whether any studies had been done to allow estuaries to move inland as the sea advances. Colin replied that European protection in the form of the Habitat Directive is guaranteed forever. At Newtown there is space for this to happen naturally, but in some other places, where there is not enough space, due to development, measures may have to be taken to compensate for the loss of important habitat by designating another site as close as possible to the original. We ask what the European Union has done for us: its Nature Directives afford our wildlife and its habitats unparalleled protection that we cannot afford to lose.

2016 is a year of celebrations for Newtown, being the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the local nature reserve. There will be an exhibition, guided walks and events for schools. The Council's Bioblitz is to be held there on 2 June and IWNHAS will be taking part, as usual, in recording species. Everyone is welcome to join in. Our society will also be holding some section meetings at Newtown this year.

This afternoon Arreton Community Hall was packed, and buzzing with reminiscences about the camps and wildlife surveys from those who had been lucky enough to take part. There is no doubt that this experience has been a life changer for some and a lifetime's enthusiasm for others. The rest of us had come to hear about the history of the nature reserve we love to visit or work at. Colin received an enthusiastic round of applause for a well-researched, comprehensive and fascinating talk.

**Maggie Nelmes**



**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

**Visit to Dunsbury Farm, Brook**

When we heard that the National Trust had recently purchased Dunsbury Farm, we were naturally keen to take a look. Our guide was Tony Tutton, the Trust's Head of Land Management on the Island, who took us on a tour of the farm. We asked him to tell us about the Trust's rationale for purchasing this land and the surveys that need to be carried out before they can draw up a suitable management plan. This is an opportunity for us to monitor the progress of this project over the years.

Dunsbury Farm is situated on the slopes of the Downs at Brook, on the south-west coast of the Island. It specialises in sheep rearing and our visit coincided with a Lambing Open Day held in the barns. There is an interesting section about the farm in the fairly recent publication 'Brook: a Village History' by Daphne Denaro Brooke-Snall and Susan Mears, in which a farmer's wife describes the harvest suppers held there in the 1950s.

A decade later, mechanisation of farming led to the destruction of hedgerows on many farms to enlarge the fields, but farming in this area was little affected by 'progress' Tony explained how traditionally farmers had an emotional attachment to the land, but this is changing, as farms are bought by investors who pay contractors to manage them. That is a major reason why the National Trust has bought Dunsbury. It has had a close relationship with the neighbouring farm at Compton for many years and has managed the downs very sustainably.

Farming will continue at Dunsbury until the tenancy runs out in 2018. What happens after that is yet to be decided. It's a blank canvas', says Tony. 'I think the potential is huge.' The Trust knows little of the biodiversity of the wildlife here, nor the archaeology. The hedges are the best on the Island for harvest mice. First they plan to bring in a team of experts to carry out a biological survey. The farm is currently divided into two halves: grassland on the slopes of the downs to the north and arable to the south. The whole of the farm is in the higher stewardship scheme, signifying that efforts are being made to improve the land. Yet Tony says it is questionable whether this is good for wildlife.

From the farmhouse, our group of some thirty members headed down to the arable land, where maize and cauliflowers are grown, but the former is not very good for the soil and requires a lot of nutrients. Staples grow crops here, but their contract will expire in 2018. The principal species of bird living here are reed buntings and reed warblers, but for birds that like arable weeds, this is not good. Tony says they'd like to see cereal crop rotations, and not plough the land every year. As we passed a farm cottage, we saw sparrow boxes on the walls and birds flying in and out.

We walked through the fields to the coast that is popular with windsurfers and kitesurfers. The National Trust thinks long-term, Tony says. Erosion is gradually narrowing this coastal strip and the Military Road won't last much longer. When the road is finally closed, this area will change. The road stops the chimes from developing naturally so buying Dunsbury Farm will give them the chance to develop without artificial interference. This coastal strip attracts mining bees and wasps, as well as the nationally rare Glanville Fritillary butterfly. Bronze Age hearths and late Bronze Age pots for burials have been found in the cliffs

From here you can look northwards and see the greensand ridge and the cutting made in the early 1930s when the council opened the Military Road. As the coast eroded, they had to keep on moving it back.

We followed a different pathway through the fields towards the farmhouse. When we started our tour, the sun was shining, but while we were on the coast the sky had begun to darken, heralding the arrival of a storm. Some of our group opted to head straight for the field where we had parked our cars. The rest of our group plodded up a steep slope onto the downs for a fine view over the surrounding landscape and the Trust's Compton Farm. Then the storm

hit, pelting us, on the top of that exposed ridge, with hailstones. Even the sheep were seeking shelter below.

We thanked Tony for his most interesting tour and look forward to returning for updates in the future.

**Maggie Nelmes**

## **22<sup>nd</sup> May      Tour of Eaglehead Copse and Knighton Down Nature Reserves**

These adjacent nature reserves, both managed by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, are situated just below Ashe Down, in the eastern part of the Island's chalk spine. Steve Egerton-Read guided some twenty IWNHAS members through both reserves to tell us about their management plans and progress, and to point out interesting and unusual plants.

### **Eaglehead Copse Nature Reserve**

This is a long narrow strip of mixed deciduous woodland of about fourteen acres, on chalk. The Wildlife Trust has a very long lease on this land from the Forestry Commission. The woodland is managed on an eighteen-year hazel coppice rotation that benefits dormice and red squirrels. Small sections at a time are coppiced, creating a mosaic of ages. We also identified ash, spindle, elder, whitebeam, pendunculate oak, beech and field maple, including some attractive old trees. Opinions differ among conservationists on whether to retain veteran trees or open up clearings in the woodland for wild flowers. The Trust does not hire contractors in the reserve except for dangerous trees. It depends on help from volunteers. The oldest tree in this wood is an ash. Trees on chalk grow slowly because of the thin soil. Old trees are an excellent habitat for bats, birds and insects.

It is surprising how quickly flowering plants establish themselves once there is enough light. Their seeds can lie dormant in the soil for many years. We found various species of flowering plant near the path, including dog's mercury, wood spurge, wood speedwell, wood avens, wild garlic, bugle and moschatel. We were especially lucky to find some locally rare toothwort still in flower. It usually flowers in March and April, but was late this year. It's a parasitic plant that grows on hazel stools and roots, and colonises old coppice. There were some exceptionally good clumps of toothwort this year, varying in colour from white to light pink and purple. It does no harm to the hazel, which flourishes here because there are no browsing deer. The Isle of Wight helleborine, a green orchid that likes dappled shade and crops up unexpectedly, also occurs here.

We climbed up out of the wood onto chalk grassland. As this is north facing, it doesn't get as much light as the south-facing slope of Knighton Down. Strange mosses thrive here. Steve introduced us to a flock of Hebridean sheep that are grazing the ash scrub, and five curious and very engaging youngsters approached us. This was the last site on the Island where the Duke of Burgundy fritillary was recorded, but sadly it has now gone. The scrub invasion has been halted and the chalk grassland is returning. We identified cowslip, salad burnet, mouse-ear, horse-shoe vetch, early gentian, chalk milkwort and sweet woodruff flowering here. In a clearing on the edge of the wood we found the leaves of the common twayblade, not yet in flower.

The Wildlife Trust plans to create more grassland here, with Heritage Lottery funding. It also plans to start a woodland apprentice scheme, building stiles, fences and hedges.

### **Knighton Down Nature Reserve**

This is a very steep south-facing hillside, one of the last areas of unimproved chalk grassland along the Island's spine. To the west, the grassland is less herb-rich, as farming has improved the soil. Once a year, the soil is topped out with a flail to remove thistles that would otherwise spread rapidly. The flowering plants here are tiny. We identified many species

including early gentian, bastard toadflax, quinancywort, rock rose, eyebright, early dog violet, mouse-ear, bird's foot trefoil, germander speedwell with its gall, yellow rattle and fairy flax.

Steve told us about the management of the reserve. The down has been used for grazing for a very long time. This year cows have already grazed the grass and now the Trust needs to bring in sheep to eat the ragwort. To qualify for a grant under the government's Partner Countryside Stewardship Scheme, you must have dual grazing. Although rabbits are grazers, there are too many of them digging scrapes and warrens on this fragile down. Any equipment the Trust uses in this reserve has to be moved by wheelbarrow because the down is so steep that you can't drive a vehicle across it.

On the edge of the reserve, at the foot of the down, there are trees. Ash die-back is probably here. It's an airborne fungal disease. No-one has seen it yet, but it takes about twelve years for the symptoms to show. Reaction won't be the panic button approach used for Dutch elm disease. As resistance to the disease is already in the veteran trees, the policy is to wait and see, and only cut down trees if they are dangerous.

We thanked Steve for a fascinating tour of the reserves.

**Maggie Nelmes**

#### **4<sup>th</sup> June Day Trip to Wareham and Studland**

Seats filled up very quickly on this trip and there was a long waiting list, but in the end everyone who booked got a place. This year we decided to go to three different places: to Wareham in the morning, followed by a choice in the afternoon between a guided tour of Studland Bay National Nature Reserve and a walk to Old Harry Rocks with a visit to Studland Church.

Leading the tour of Wareham's ramparts and historic churches was our own Anglo-Saxon landscape historian, John Margham, who devoted a lot of time on researching the Saxon history and archaeology, and on visiting the area in advance to plan his routes. Our tour began at the bustling historic Quay on the river Frome at the southern end of the town, and passed through an alleyway into a square flanked by Lady St Mary Church and The Priory. Only St Edward's Chapel (1100), said to be the resting place of King Edward the Martyr, before his body was transferred to Shaftesbury, the chancel with its broad windows, the tiny vaulted Beckett chapel (early 14<sup>th</sup> century) and the tower (1500) remain of the original church, as the fine Saxon nave was replaced in early Victorian times. John pointed out the very rare hexagonal font decorated with figures of the apostles (early 12<sup>th</sup> century) and a collection of medieval memorial stones (600-800), written in a Celtic (proto-Welsh) language, rather than Anglo-Saxon.

From here we walked along Church Lane to the start of the ramparts or 'Walls' walk. On the way we passed a cottage whose facade was almost covered in nest boxes and saw house sparrows flying in and out. The ramparts are not very high, but they afford lovely views over the surrounding countryside, and their banks are dotted with wild flowers. These ramparts were just the foundations: a wall or palisade would have been built on top of them. From the eastern ramparts you can look out over heathland to Poole Harbour, and from the North Walls, there's a view of the flood plain of the River Piddle and the attractive Mill House (c.1700). The North Walls are up to fifty feet high and are likely to date from much earlier than Saxon times, when King Alfred may well have had them strengthened to repel Viking raiders. In the far north-western corner of the Walls, known as 'The Cockpits', cockfighting once took place. The final stretch is known as Bloody Bank, probably because it was a place of execution, by hanging from a gibbet, drawing and quartering. Dorset was once the domain of the notorious Judge Jeffreys and his Court of the Star Chamber.

On our way around the ramparts, we made a detour to see the remarkable late Saxon church of St Martin-on-the-Walls. It dates from the early eleventh century. You can tell it's a

Saxon Church because it is so disproportionately high for such a small floor space, and from the outside it's an impressive building. Inside it is high, long and narrow, and divided into two parts with a huge chancel arch between. There is still a small Saxon window in the chancel. Although the architecture inside the church is very plain, the walls are covered in paintings, dating from the twelfth to the early eighteenth century. When restoration work took place in the nineteen-thirties, layer upon layer of paintings were uncovered. John had arranged for a local historian to give us a short talk about the church. She pointed out a pair of paintings in the chancel that tell the story of St Martin, who met a naked beggar on the road, cut his cloak in half and gave one piece to the destitute man. Later, in a vision, he saw Jesus wearing the other half of his cloak. Although these pictures have faded and are partly fragmented, I could make out a group of men on horseback and the beggar's bent leg below. It is also a miracle how this church survived modernisation over the centuries, and especially in Victorian times. From the early eighteenth century it was only used for weddings and funerals, and it soon fell into disuse, until the fire that swept Wareham in 1762, when it became a shelter for the homeless. For two hundred years thereafter it remained disused, until its restoration. Nowadays a regular service is held, as well as marriages and christenings.

St Martin's Church's other attraction is a beautiful effigy of Lawrence of Arabia, an archaeologist and British army officer in the First World War, who masterminded an Arab revolt against the Turks. Lawrence lived near Wareham for many years after the war, until his untimely death in a motorbike accident. His effigy was destined for Westminster Abbey, but they turned it down, as did several other prestigious churches, because Lawrence was still a controversial political figure at the time of his death in 1935. Their loss is St Martin's gain.

After lunch, our coach travelled on to Studland village and Studland Bay. Some thirty people followed John on a cliff walk to Old Harry Rocks where he talked about the geology of this, the western starting point of the Jurassic Coast. On their return they had time for a quick visit to St Nicholas's Church in Studland village, a fine example of an early Norman church.

I accompanied the group of natural history enthusiasts who chose to go to Studland Bay National Nature Reserve, managed by the National Trust. This reserve consists of a wide variety of wildlife habitats, including the shallow sea, sand dunes, marshes, heathland and a large freshwater lake. This was a saltwater lagoon until the 1880s, when shifting sand finally sealed it from the sea. Our guide, Kevin Rideout, led us through the dunes, pointing out interesting plants, such as sand sedge that can push right up through the sand and has long runners. It helps stabilise the dunes. Scots pine is spreading and needs to be controlled, as it shades out the heather. Dunes are typical sand lizard territory and our guide explained how they burrow into the banks beside the paths to lay their eggs. Members of our group saw two sand lizards, but however many metallic sheets we lifted up, no snakes were uncovered. The weather was not warm and sunny enough. We were hoping to see a rare smooth snake; Kevin told us they are very calm and may not slither away when disturbed.

No-one found a striped heath tiger beetle either, though we spread out and searched for it in bare patches in the heather. We did find sundews in a marsh and royal fern, but the highlight of the afternoon for me was listening to young Dartford warblers calling to their parents. We stood still, trying to locate the 'buzz-chip' sounds, seeing one flit past, followed by another, and disappear again.

Four hundred years ago none of this heath existed. Vast quantities of sand were gradually washed ashore by currents and tides and blown inland by winds. The landscape here is constantly changing, due to the fine white shifting sands. From wooden platforms the National Trust has built on top of the highest dunes, accessed by wooden ladders, you can survey the surrounding areas for wildlife. We also admired the views to the east, over Poole Harbour, and across the bay to Old Harry Rocks when it finally emerged from the fog.

John and I were very pleased to be able to offer a coach trip that attracted archaeology, natural history and geology enthusiasts and was also excellent value for money. All the tours were included in the ticket price of £23, largely thanks to John's hard work. Even though a number of people had to drop out through ill health or frailty, I managed to find replacements for them, which meant that our money went further. As a result, we were delighted to be able to make a donation to each of the churches we visited and admired, which Jackie, our Treasurer, sent by cheque.

**Maggie Nelmes**

**N.B.** Additional notes, prepared by John Margham, on Wareham- the Anglo-Saxon town; St Nicholas church; and Old Harry Rocks can be found on the Society website.

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## **Reports of Section Meetings**

### **Archaeology Section Meetings**

#### **January 30<sup>th</sup>                      Roman-Saxon Transition: Are the Jutes a Myth?**

Pat Barber's fascinating talk looked at the evidence for the view that it was the Jutes who migrated to the Isle of Wight following the collapse of Roman control. She started by reminding us that the term Anglo-Saxon is generally used to denote a range of Germanic peoples who moved into parts of Britain after the collapse of the Roman Empire around 410 AD. On the Isle of Wight the latest Roman coin hoard and the end of villa occupation coincide with this period. It is suggested that there was squatter occupation at Rock villa near Brighthstone after this date and some of the pottery found there was Germanic. Then little is known until Caedwalla took aggressive control of the island in 686 and took it into Wessex.

The sole historical source available to us for the Jutes settling the Isle of Wight and Kent is Bede's 'History of the English Church and People'. But he was writing much later, in the eighth century, and in the north east of England. His source is thought to be Bishop Daniel of Winchester. The only other reference, in the second (but not the first) edition of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, is actually taken from Bede. There is even debate as to where the Jutes' homeland was, with the general assumption being that it was Jutland in Denmark. Place name evidence, whereby 'YTE' indicates Jutes, suggests that an area covering the New Forest and the Meon valley was occupied by them; it seems logical that the coastal stretch of Hampshire facing the Solent would have links with our island.

There is some archaeological evidence but this is by no means conclusive. There are some 200 graves of this period on the island with a plentiful range of grave goods. Pat discussed examples from the cemeteries at Chessell and Bowcombe plus individual items reported to the Portable Antiquities scheme; examples of distinctive Jutish jewellery and pottery have been found but not enough to imply a widespread cultural dominance. Many other finds shows Jutish influence in design but incorporating other Scandinavian, Frankish and Friesian influences. Were they made locally or in Kent or bought/brought in from the continent? Pat encouraged discussion and some of the ideas we considered were: Are we wrong to assume large numbers or tribes of incomers? Maybe the focus should be on individuals who bring their own fashions to absorb into the local culture. Art and manufacturing styles probably undergo change as a cultural group spreads. Did the Jutes reach the Isle of Wight via Friesland or Frankia where they had first absorbed regional styles?

There is the potential for much more investigation of the evidence from the graves on the Island but we may never have a clear answer to the opening question.

We were left with a tantalising thought – if it were not for Bede would historians have linked the Jutes with the Isle of Wight?

## **27<sup>th</sup> February      The Anglo-Saxon Beasts of Binstead**

David Tomalin shared with over twenty-five members his recent research into the Anglo-Norman building of Holy Cross church at Binstead. This was a well-constructed and wide-ranging talk, which pulled together several threads but could not yet offer definitive answers.

The old church had been re-built in the 1840s but some evidence for the earlier building remains and had been noted on a previous visit by the archaeology section. It also seems that some of the original stone was used in the re-build, for example above the lancet windows. There are also areas of Saxon-style herringbone masonry remaining. Quarr stone, confusingly quarried at Binstead, was used in the Roman and middle-late Saxon periods and there was only a limited supply

Evidence for the pre Victorian church exists in Tompkins, 1796 ‘Tour of the Isle of Wight’ and in a plan drawn before the re-build. Percy Stone left us a drawing from 1891, which clearly shows the herringbone masonry typical of late Saxon work. But curiously there are rectangular ashlar blocks beneath this. Stone suggests that the best stone was exported to the mainland and that herringbone was a way of using inferior and irregular pieces. Some herringbone is also evident in the nave, but this time above random blocks. On some blocks axe marks can be seen, evidence of Saxon work rather than the saw or hammer and chisel work from other periods. David thinks he has identified the marks of seven different axes. One stone re-used by the Victorians shows the curve typical of a Saxon window lintel.

David then showed us examples of Saxon church-building on the mainland, including at Castle Ashby, Sompting, Kilpeck and sites in Herefordshire. The latter are significant as the lands were owned by William FitzOsbern, lord of the Isle of Wight. And this is where we moved on to ‘the beasts’, even looking at the borders of the Bayeux tapestry where there are gruesome images. Drawings from Tompkins and Stone show dragon like carvings. Today one of the re-used stones appears to show a griffin like creature and a lion’s head swallowing a sinner,

David showed us images from several sites of creatures eating themselves, usually swallowing their tail. They appear in both pagan and Christian contexts and are probably examples where Christianity has adopted the pagan symbol for its own ends. (After the lecture Alan Phillips reminded us of the Norse serpent, which encircles the earth and, biting its own tale, represents the cycle of life, death and re-birth. The relevance to Christianity is clear).

A further stone at Binstead seems to show a bird with a halo but this is not local stone. David was reminded of the picture of St John in the Lindisfarne gospels, which includes an eagle with a halo; it is a messenger of God. Was this stone imported for a particular reason; maybe it was recycled from a carved preaching cross – David gave us examples where such imagery appeared. The female figure, known as a ‘Sheena-na-Gig’ was saved from destruction in Victorian times by the congregation and is now above the gate, where it is suffering from the weather.

So we have building work and carved imagery that suggests an Anglo-Saxon date but in a context that suggests it might be later. One would expect the earliest part of the church to be the chancel yet at Binstead the Saxon work seems to be more in the nave. One possibility is that Norman landowner had the chancel built by Norman builders and the locals added the nave later using their local Saxon methods. Binstead was a busy area in late Saxon and early

Norman times. The extensive fish weir recorded during the Wootton-Quarr project indicates either a substantial local population or lucrative trading.

The Archaeology section followed this talk up with two visits to Holy Trinity church to clean up and record many of the features discussed.

### **14<sup>th</sup> May Walk round medieval Southampton**

After working for Southampton City Archaeology for over 30 years Matt Garner has a thorough knowledge of the city, having excavated several sites himself and talked to the archaeologists who have worked on others. We met Matt across the road from the Red Funnel terminal by the remains of the Watergate at the bottom of the High Street. The gate was demolished about 200 years ago to widen the road but part of the 14/15th century wall and drum tower remains. We then crossed High Street and walked along Winkle Street, A possible derivation of the name is 'bent' and the wall had angled out towards the shore at this corner.

Part of Southampton's value as a port is due to its double tide and the access to two rivers, the Test and the Itchen. Evidence for an Iron Age settlement has been found, but the Romans preferred the east bank of the Itchen near Bitterne, where evidence for a 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century wall has been found.

There is little evidence for the early Saxon period, but in the 7<sup>th</sup> century a town was laid out on the west bank in the St. Mary's area, know as Hamwic or Hamton and with significant trade activity. Decline in the 9<sup>th</sup> century may have been due to flooding or Viking attack and the centre moved west to ground that was slightly higher and better drained. Evidence for the late Saxon town has been obliterated by the Norman occupation.

Most of our walk was within the southeast corner of the Norman town. This was largely a religious quarter with God's House Hospital and a Franciscan Friary both having a range of buildings. God's House Tower and gate and the adjoining 15<sup>th</sup> century Gunners' lodging faced the salt marsh. The Eastgate, by the Friary, led to St Mary's as the mother church was still outside the new town. Half a round tower still stands here, probably unique as it was originally a freestanding dovecote, later adapted and incorporated into the walls.

We then crossed the High Street to go down to one of the medieval vaults. About 20 of these are known, probably used to store wine, which was the most significant import. The vault was large, dry and well-constructed with a vaulted ceiling and a shaft to admit some natural light. Between the High Street, also known as English Street, and the parallel French Street, excavations found evidence for the late Saxon boundary ditch and a flint-cobbled wall. On French Street opposite the car ferry terminal is a rare and well-maintained warehouse dated about 1400. This was probably used to store wool prior to export but may also have stored alum.

We then walked up French Street to the medieval merchant's house, a fine example of an early town house with an entrance from the street. We could imagine the streets lined with these in the heyday of the wool/wine trade. The house is open to the public at weekends.

St Michael's church dates from about 1070 and the adjoining market square was excavated in the mid 1980s to reveal evidence of a late Saxon street. We glanced down towards the Tudor house before heading to the Red Lion for lunch. This is a stunning late medieval building with a wood-panelled and vaulted main hall and a host of quirky features.

The general view was surprise that there is so much history and archaeology so close to the ferry. I suspect there is much more to see and a return visit is eagerly anticipated. Many thanks to Matt Garner (and Ron) for giving up their free time on a Saturday.

**Helen Jackson**

## Looking at the Countryside

### Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016      Walk at Seaview

14 people met at the west end of Bluett Avenue for a circular walk taking in the Old Toll Road, Hersey Nature Reserve, Oakhill Road, the footpath alongside Westbrook House, passed the Wishing Well, up Farm Shute (Nettlestone Hill) and down the bridle way at Fairy Hill to return to our cars.

The first point of interest was at the junction of Bluett Avenue and Salterns Road. James Kirkpatrick, a banker, saw an opportunity to make some money by starting a saltworks on the site of the silted up Barnsley Creek. So in 1790 he purchased the row of cottages opposite called Saltern Cottages for the workers to live in. He then had an embankment built across the old creek (now Duver Road). Sea water was collected during the summer months and placed in evaporation ponds and collecting pans where the water could evaporate until a strong brine resulted. The residue was then collected up and boiled in large iron pans until salt crystals were produced. The salt works were in operation from about 1800 until 1819 when Kirkpatrick sold his estate. The government imposed a high salt tax and at the same time there was increased competition from the cheaper mineral salt mines in Cheshire which resulted in the works eventually being abandoned. We visited Hersey Nature Reserve which is the site of the salt pans and Barnsley Creek. Barnsley Creek was used as a harbour for medieval ships until it silted up in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Corn was shipped up to the water mill at the top end of the creek.

We looked at the beach and out on the Solent using the telescope and had good views of a Cormorant resting with its wings outstretched. Their wings are not water proof and have to hold them out to dry after fishing. Three Great Crested Grebes were on the Solent and on the shore eight Sanderling were busy on the water's edge catching food also there were three Oystercatchers resting. About ten Turnstones were disturbed by dog walkers and they took refuge on the water outflow pipe from the reserve.

On the reserve we had lovely views of Little Egret and a smart Greenshank as well as Mallard, Little Grebe and Tufted Duck. Some lucky people saw the Kingfisher flying by. During the rest of the walk we were able to add to our bird species list including Redwing, Buzzard, Kestrel, Green Woodpecker and heard the drumming of a Great Spotted Woodpecker. In all 35 bird species were noted.

Except for about the last week, the winter has been exceptionally mild and we have seen some unseasonal wild flowers in bloom so we noted those too. Besides the normal Winter Heliotrope, Gorse and Butchers Broom we saw Daisy, Ragwort, Red Valerian, Evening Primrose, Primrose, Dandelion, Meadow Buttercup, Lesser Celandine, Cow Parsley, Smooth Sow-thistle, Wavy Bittercress, Speedwell sp. Spring Snowflake, Greater Periwinkle, Herb Robert, Red Campion and Feverfew (18 species).

**Jackie Hart**

### Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016      Cheverton Down, Shorwell

Twelve members met on a beautifully sunny morning at Cheverton Farm for a circular walk up to Cheverton Down. The name is first recorded in Domesday Book (1086) as *Cevredone*, meaning 'the hill or down infested with chafers or beetles'. Cheverton Farm near Shanklin indicates lands once owned by a family called *Cheverton* who took their name from Cheverton at Shorwell; so does this mean that all instances of the name Cheverton or Chiverton derive from here?

We wound our way up the track above the chalk quarry, looking across to Rowborough Down – from *Rougheberg* 1282, 'the rough hill' – and to the small Slocum



Copse (pronounced 'Sluccum'), 'the valley where sloes grow'. In the field to the south-east it is sometimes possible to identify two barrows, but not today.

Descending again we arrived at the lowest point of Gallibury Fields, where we encountered the famous 'Shorwell Bottoms': Rowborough Bottom, Bunkers Bottom and Fern (or Fernie) Bottom. Many of the fields in this area have earthworks of the so-called 'Celtic' type, making them Iron Age, and probably constructed as stock pens, protected areas for crop growing, and sometimes even as temporary accommodation for stock, farmers or herdsman. The top of Gallibury Fields is the northern boundary of Shorwell parish, and just beyond it at Gallibury Hump a further three parish boundaries come together: Brighstone, Calbourne, and the old Carisbrooke parish.

Proceeding a short way along Fernie Bottom to the lower extremity of Brighstone Forest, we turned sharp left up a steep climb back onto Cheverton Down. Here we bore left by the gravel quarry to arrive at the Bronze Age twin barrow, which itself is on a bank-and-ditch field boundary – does this respect a much older boundary going back to the Bronze or Iron Ages? We discussed the question of local settlement, and why these barrows were on downland remote from the settlement of Shorwell itself while closer downs appeared to have none. We also considered David Tomalin's suggestion in his 1991 paper that the water table extended much further up the Bowcombe Valley in the Bronze Age.

Time was moving on to lunchtime and a few of the group began the return descent while a few of the more experienced 'barrow seekers' lingered to identify the four remaining barrows in this field, not immediately obvious to the eye.

On the walk at various points we observed a Peacock Butterfly and the following birds: Red-legged Partridge, Pheasant, Yellowhammer, Song Thrush, Wood Pigeon, Raven, Buzzard, and Skylark. No fewer than four Brown Hares were seen scampering across the fields, one heading straight for us until it thought better of it. And with David Biggs' help we identified both Jew's Ear and King Alfred's Cakes fungi. The sun was still shining as we all finally reached our cars.

We were very grateful to landowner Mr Andrew Hodgson for allowing us to park at the farm and to both him and his P.A. Claire Parsons for making us feel so welcome to a landscape that is otherwise not so easily accessible.

**Alan Phillips**

### **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June      Newtown National Nature Reserve**

12 Members attended the above meeting with Helen Parry (National Trust Warden) and Hilary Higgins (National Trust Volunteer). This was in celebration of the 21<sup>st</sup> year of the Reserve being formed into a National Nature Reserve.

Helen took us on a short walk through some of the fields, showing an example of a typical burgage plot of land which the tenant was allowed to rent from the Bishop of Winchester. We then went through Town Copse to part of Clamerkin Lake where the new Boardwalk to the Eastern Hide was shown. It then started to rain quite heavily and the group beat a hasty retreat back to the road and the Visitors Centre where tea and coffee were made available.

A Small Heath and Meadow Brown butterfly were seen and Greenfinch, Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Robin, Wren, Blue Tit, Jay, Jackdaw and Woodpigeon were heard.

**Toni Goodley**

## Ornithology

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> January**

**Yarmouth marshes**

15 members met at the beginning of the cycle track in Thorley Road, Yarmouth on a calm, very cold but lovely sunny morning for a slow walk to Barnfields pond and return. At the beginning of the path we spotted a Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Wren and Great Tit. The recent wet weather meant that the field at Rofford Marsh was flooded which attracted a good number of Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler and Mallard. There were also five Canada Geese and a flock of about 30 Black-headed Gulls. On the far side we picked out, with the aid of the telescope, four Common Snipe. Unfortunately they were all resting and were not showing their very long straight bill, the Shoveler too were all resting so did not show their distinctive shaped bill. We also saw eight Moorhen, Little Grebe, a Lapwing and Herring Gull. Near to the old Railway station we saw six Wood Pigeon, some Blue Tit, five Starling on the roof of a house and eight House Sparrows. One Chaffinch was recorded in the trees behind the building. Two Mute Swan were being fed by some children. In the expanse of water in front of the station we noted two Tufted Duck. In front of the old Mill the bird of the day was fishing – a Great Northern Diver. Some other birds on the Western Yar were Brent Geese, Black Tailed Godwit, Grey Plover, Golden Plover, Redshank, Curlew, Dunlin and Shelduck. A Little Egret flew up from the marsh and a Grey Heron was seen in a field the other side of the river as was a Cormorant and Carrion Crow. A Cetti's was heard calling. At Barnfields we had a good view of a Greenshank, Kingfisher and a male Pheasant.

On our return we noted Great Black Backed Gulls and a Common Gull. In all 51 species were seen during the course of the morning.

**Jackie Hart**

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> February**

**Shide to Blackwater**

The pleasant two mile walk from Shide to Blackwater along the old rail track was attended by fourteen members who enjoyed a dry, sunny, cool morning. Nobody brought any red roses or heart-shaped chocolates to celebrate St Valentine's Day but love was in the air for at least six Goldcrests that appeared to be pairing off at 'Shide Trees.' We had excellent views of them.

During January a flock of about fifty Siskins had been seen nearer the Blackwater end of the path but these have obviously moved on, for we saw just two feeding in the Alder trees at Shide.

Of particular note were ten Magpies lined up together at the top of a hedgerow and we had a good view of a Great Spotted Woodpecker which was heard drumming and calling. Most birds that were seen could be heard either calling or singing; these were Blackbirds, Buzzards, Carrion Crows, several Chaffinches, one Collared Dove, Dunnocks, Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Black-headed Gulls, Herring Gulls, House Sparrows, Jackdaws, one Jay, Moorhens, Robins, Rooks, Blue Tits, six Great Tits, Long-tailed Tits and Wood Pigeons. Heard but not seen were Coot, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush and Wren. Canada Geese could be heard from the nearby Marvel Farm ponds and two, honking loudly, flew over us. Total number of species counted during the morning was 29.

**Sue Blackwell**

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March**

**Gatcombe**

15 Members turned up on a cloudy coldish day and walked around churchyard before walking into Gatcombe, up Snowdrop Lane to Garstons and along paths and down Doctors Lane. At the very start of the walk a female Kestrel was seen at a nest box in the garden next to the church. As expected we saw a variety of farmland birds including two obliging Red

Legged Partridge towards the edge of one of the fields and we also saw four Pheasants. We were pleased to hear and then see a male Yellowhammer on the overhead cable. Five to six Redwing were spotted and a Mistle Thrush heard. Although not seen, Mediterranean Gulls were heard calling in a field which we could not see into. Other birds noted included Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Buzzard, Grey Heron, Goldfinch, Chaffinch and House Sparrow. 29 species of birds were seen.

**Toni Goodley**

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April                      Dawn Chorus at Shalfleet.**

A storm the week before brought down some trees in Val Gwynn's garden so we were unable to visit. However, we went ahead with the meeting with a walk along the path running at the bottom of her property. Only four members braved the early morning start although the weather was calm and mild. The first bird we heard was the Pheasant calling followed by Wood Pigeon. Other resident birds were then heard: Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Wren, Dunnock. Much later we heard the Blue Tit and Great Tit followed sometime later by Chiffchaff. We concluded our visit with a walk along to Shalfleet Quay. Flying overhead were heard the distinctive call of the Mediterranean Gull and also saw Black-head Gull. On the exposed mud were Shelduck, Mallard, Canada Goose, Oystercatcher and a Pied Wagtail. In all we heard or saw 20 species.

**Jackie Hart**

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May                      West High Down.**

Eleven members meet at the National Trust Chalkpit car park at Totland for a walk up to West High Down. It was a lovely morning and we hoped to see some migrants, birds of prey and Dartford Warbler. The walk up the track to the downs produced a pair of Blackcaps and well as other singing birds, Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Tit, Wood pigeon, Wren, Blackbird, Robin, Jackdaw, Rook, Great Tit, Pheasant, and Blue Tit. We also heard and saw many Common Whitethroat during the course of the morning. On the downs were Greenfinch, Magpie, Dunnock, Jay, Linnet, Swallow and Skylark. We found a pair of Stonechat in amongst the gorse and as I have a theory that where there are Stonechat we should find Dartford Warblers. However, none were obliging at the first patches of gorse. We walked on and had Meadow Pipit, Peregrine Falcon, Raven, Crow, Kestrel and at long last two Dartford Warblers made an appearance. In all 28 species were noted during the morning.

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June                      Parkhurst Forest evening walk.**

Ten people turned out on a lovely evening. As we had about three quarters of an hour before dusk we had a circular walk round the area near the main car park making our way to the clearing near Tuckers Gate. We heard Wren, Blackbird, Wood Pigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Nightingale, and saw Jay. Throughout the walk and right up until nightfall we heard many Song Thrushes singing. Churring of a Nightjar was heard on our approach to the clearing and after a little wait we saw first one Nightjar flying and a little while later two flew around in front of us. We were pleased to see them but rather disappointed that there was not more activity. Maybe flying moths and insects were in short supply after the high winds we had earlier in the week. No Woodcock put in an appearance this year.

**Jackie Hart**

## Botany Section

### Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January      New Year Plant Hunt

Despite dreadful weather, the rain stopped and the cloud lifted at 2pm in time for our Plant Hunt. The weather had put some people off, so a band of 5 of us set off from Wheeler's Bay car park, examining the waste ground around the car park and the cliff slope at Wheeler's Bay. We found one flower of the Winter Flowering Iris, *Iris unguicularis*, which has become established here.

Walking along the revetment to Bonchurch, we found Hoary Stock, *Matthiola incana*, Red Valerian, *Centranthus ruber* and Wild Carrot, *Daucus carota*. At Bonchurch, we walked up through the village, finding Snowdrop, Lesser Celandine and Alexanders in the churchyards. We walked back into Ventnor, examining the weeds on the walls and in front garden, much to the bemusement of some onlookers! We admired a rough bank covered in Winter-flowering Clematis, *Clematis cirrhosa ssp. balearica*. Finally we went back down the cliff at Salisbury Gardens, where Rock Samphire, *Crithmum maritimum*, had a few flowers.

We retired to The Met as light faded for a drink and a count up. Altogether, we had recorded **56 plants** in flower, excluding planted garden plants, a good total. The unseasonably mild weather no doubt helped. New Year Plant Hunts took place across the country, co-ordinated by the Botanical Society of the British Isles <http://bsbipublicity.blogspot.co.uk/>

### Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> January      Indoor meeting

Our indoor meeting was, as usual, well-attended. The first part of the meeting looked forward to this year's proposed programme before reviewing last year's activities. Updates were given on the two species monitored by members of the group; both species had flowered well last year and further work is planned for the coming year.

Colin Pope gave an overview of species recording. The Island is well on course to complete the requirements for the BSBI's Atlas 2020 project. Ten new species were added to the Island list last year and modern records were added for a further four species. Early spider orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*) turned up on Tennyson Down again in the vicinity of the monument. The management regime of the RSPB reserve at Brading Marshes is benefitting the flora as well as the birds, and a group meeting has been arranged for the coming season. Finally several members of the group took part in the New Year Plant Hunt overseen by the BSBI and produced a total of 54 species in the Ventnor area. The intention is to repeat this survey in another area at the beginning of 2017.

After tea, Dave Trevan gave us an illustrated talk on the visits he and Hazel have made to the Czech Republic in recent years. Staying with family has enabled them to see not only the well-known sights but also to get off the beaten track. In Prague, they visited the Old Town square with the Tyn Church and astronomical clock, Wenceslas Square, the Charles Bridge which spans the Vlatava and the Troja Palace with its formal gardens and statues.

To the south east of the city is the Pruhonice Park which is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a Czech National Historic Landmark. Within its 250 ha are the Institute of Botany and Botanical gardens at Chotobuz. The collection of native and introduced woody plants here is one of the most important in the Czech Republic from both the quantity and the quality point of view with 1,264 taxa of deciduous trees and 342 taxa of evergreen trees, as well as collections of irises, roses and rhododendrons.

Expeditions further afield took them to Cesky Raj a UNESCO Geopark, where there are dramatic rock formations caves and other geological features as well as a diverse flora and fauna. The Castle at Karlstein about 30km south-west of Prague was founded 1348 by Charles IV, Holy Royal Emperor elect & King of Bohemia. It was once the place for safe keeping of the Imperial Regalia, Bohemian crown jewels and other royal treasures. The chateau at

Lednice in Lichtenstein no longer has all the treasures it once had but still there are magnificent gardens and a large greenhouse with collections of tropical and subtropical plants.

This was a fascinating talk with elements of history, culture, gardens, geology and wildlife.

### **February / April                      Wood calamint conservation project**

After the previous raw, rain-swept day we were pleased to see a fine start to Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> February with patches of blue sky showing. Six of the botany group gathered along the track where wood calamint grows on the verge to carry out clearance of the remains of last year's rank vegetation, new growth of bramble and woody growth of the shading hazel, elder and spindle.

This year we had the benefit of new tools, long-handled loppers and billhooks, bought from the Peter Brough award we received in 2014 and these certainly made the task easier. We cleared the main site by 11.30 am and then after a coffee-and-cake break set about the smaller lay by which by 1pm was looking considerably tidier. We were pleased to have had a calm sunny day, sheltered from the wind to complete the job.

On 2nd April 11 members of the botany group met to carry out this year's translocation. Our first job, however, was to assist one of the group whose car was precariously balanced over a large ravine in the farm track at the turning place. With the aid of a large branch wedged in the gully and much muscle power, we managed to get the vehicle back on the track.

This year's planting was on the other side of the valley, on sites agreed with the landowner, tenant and statutory bodies. Thirty plants were set out in groups in a woodland glade and a further thirty on a slope cleared of scrub in recent years. The soil was moist, quite rocky in places and required the removal of some vegetation before the plugs could be set out. To assist re-finding the plants, a numbered stake was placed in the middle of each group. Photographs and GPS readings were also taken.

At the end of the morning, we finished with coffee and appropriately, 'rocky road' fridge cake, with an arrangement to reconvene in the second half of August to monitor the establishment and flowering of the plants.

### **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April                      Briddlesford Copses**

After several weeks of heavy rain, the main rides of the copses north of the railway were very water-logged so we split into two teams and concentrated our recording effort on two small copses nearer to Knight's Cross, Sandpit Copse and Dunnage Copse. Both are semi-natural ancient woodland. Sandpit Copse still had abundant wild daffodils (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) and the bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) formed a magnificent carpet in Dunnage Copse.

One target was to look for and map particular species; we were too early to find some of the sedges in flower but did manage to find a clump of narrow-leaved lungwort (*Pulmonaria longifolia*) in a new location in Sandpit Copse. Sandpit Copse had 21 plants which are considered strong indicators of ancient woodland including hairy wood-rush (*Luzula pilosa*) red currant (*Ribes rubrum*) and stinking iris (*Iris foetidissima*). Dunnage Copse had 18 ancient woodland indicators 14 of which were the same as Sandpit Copse, the other four being smooth-stalked sedge (*Carex laevigata*) remote sedge (*Carex remota*), yellow pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*) and guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*).

### **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May**

### **St James's Churchyard, East Cowes**

This churchyard was last surveyed botanically about 16 years ago by Margaret Burnhill and she recorded 94 species over the season. This time there were 24 of us joining Margaret for a detailed search for the churchyard plants. The grass had been left unmown which was a considerable help to us. In total we found 100 species, of which only 57 had been recorded before.

The previously unrecorded species included common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinalis*) and a number of rosettes of common spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). The total species of recorded here by IWNHAS stands at 137.

Some of the species missing from the 2016 list will be looked for later in the season. We ended the afternoon with very welcome refreshments which were provided by the church.

### **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> May**

### **Northwood Cemetery**

Northwood Cemetery is a large site just off Newport Road Cowes, adjacent to Shamblers Copse. To achieve maximum recording coverage the group split into twos and threes to record in specific areas, identified from a map supplied by the Friends of Northwood Cemetery. The cemetery is on Bembridge marls and the soils range from slightly acidic through to neutral.

The cemetery has a number of fine specimen trees at the northern end but as these have been documented previously, our efforts were directed principally at recording the ground flora. There is an area (marked on the map as 14/15 19/20) which is recorded on the Ancient Woodland Inventory as a 'Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site' - an area which is recorded as wooded on the oldest known maps although at some time in its history the trees have been cleared and replanted. Such sites retain their woodland soil characteristics and tend to have plants associated with ancient woodland sites. 12 ancient woodland indicator plants were recorded on the including wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), barren strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*) and pignut (*Conopodium majus*).

The grassland areas to the south of this are generally strimmed during the growing season which meant that a lot of the identification had to be done from leaves. However several interesting species were found including one plant of lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) which had not been recorded here since 1994. Other plants, looked for but not found included Green-winged orchid (*Anacamptis morio*) last recorded 2015; Betony (*Betonica officinalis*) last recorded 1994; Spring sedge (*Carex caryophylla*) last recorded 2001 but these species may still be present.

At the south west end of the site, we were delighted to find an unmown area of lowland meadow, a habitat which is nationally important and increasingly rare. Characteristic species are red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), crested dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). There was a magnificent display of ox-eye daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) interspersed with meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and corky-fruited water-dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*).

### **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June**

### **Newtown Hay Meadows**

Our visit to Newtown was shortly after the Bioblitz and on our way to the hay meadows we investigated some of the tree species in the hedgerows whose identify needed confirmation. The hay meadows lie immediately south of the salt pans. The field further to the west is interesting as some of our group remembered it as being floristically poor in the 1980s as a result of agricultural practice at the time. However following a regime which has

involved taking hay crops and grazing, the sward has become much more diverse. One of our objectives was to practice identification of grasses and there was a good range in flower including Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), crested dog's-tail, (*Cynosurus cristatus*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and meadow barley (*Hordeum secalinum*).

Grass vetchling (*Lathyrus nissiola*) which has narrow grass-like leaves and solitary magenta pea-flowers, bird's foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and the rayed form of black knapweed (*Centurea nigra*) added splashes of colour.

At the bottom of the field, where the ground lies wetter, brown bent (*Agrostis canina*) is more prevalent, and adjacent to the saltmarsh there is regular saline incursion during the highest tides. Saltmarsh rush (*Juncus gerardii*) is abundant in this area and was in full flower at the time of our visit.

We then moved into the field next to the bird hide and quickly added more species to our list including pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*) not yet in flower. However the find of the afternoon was judged to be adder's tongue fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*). We found a number of spikes, including the one in the photograph (Plate 3) which was much taller and more robust than usual with three fertile spikes!

#### **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June                      RSPB Brading Marshes reserve**

Unfortunately the weather was rather mixed during this meeting: just as we made our way on to the reserve we were caught in a shower. Undeterred we pressed on to look for specialised plants and in the damper areas which hold water on a temporary basis in wetter weather, there were swards of oak-leaved goosefoot (*Chenopodium glaucum*), and marsh cudweed (*Gnaphalium uliginosum*). At the edge of the river channel, reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) was visible and there were also clumps of nodding bur-marigold (*Bidens cernua*), trifid bur-marigold (*Bidens tripartita*) water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*) and water speedwell (*Veronica anagallis-aquatica*). In the channel itself, we saw yellow water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*) at its only Island location. As thunder continued to rumble, we turned back and reached the cars before the worst of the rain came.

**Anne Marston**

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### **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S NOTES**

#### **New Members**

## Deaths

**Toni Goodley**

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### Society Officers

**President** Dr Colin Pope, 14 High Park Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight PO33 1BP  
**General Secretary** Ms J. Tolley, 31 Glynn Close, Seaview, IOW. PO34 5JZ  
**Treasurer** Miss J. Hart, 18 Cherrytree Road, Nettlestone, Seaview, IOW. PO34 5JF  
**Membership Secretary** Mrs T. Goodley, 18 Pell Lane, Ryde, IOW. PO33 3LW

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### NEXT BULLETIN

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings for 1st July 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 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](mailto:iwnhas@btconnect.com)

**The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2017**