



August 2019

Issue No. 72

Bulletin

www.iwnhas.org

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President's Address

Well, our centenary is almost upon us! Please come to as many of our special meetings as you can and make our anniversary memorable.

This Bulletin includes an article which attempts to document some of the developments locally, nationally and internationally over the 100 years of the Society's existence. Anne Marston has written a short overview to draw together some of the threads but much more could be explored. The themes described in the timeline – land use change, farming practice, water and energy supply, waste disposal, nature conservation, environmental recording and data management, together with many others, could form the subjects of more comprehensive documentation and thorough analysis via papers our journal *Wight Studies*.

Although the Society's focus is on Island species and habitats, geology and archaeology, we must remember that, as John Donne wrote, 'No man is an island, entire of itself'. We live and work in a regional, national and international context. The physical, economic, political, social and cultural environment has changed beyond recognition since the Society was founded and will continue to do so. We need to consider how we will respond to these changes so that we can continue to fulfil our purpose. Items for publication in *Wight Studies*, based on evidence, experience and analysis are always welcome, so contact the editor with your offers to help to debate these issues. Over to you!

I am delighted to be able to report that the Biodiversity Partnership has recommended to provide funding to continue our iWatch Project after Down to the Coast.

I am sorry to have to say that due to lack of capacity it has not been possible to take forward the visit to Jersey that had been proposed for May 2020. An exchange visit with another Island will have to be for another time.

Paul Bingham



Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeological Society

100th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

Environmental Change on the Isle of Wight: past, present and future

Venue: Riverside Centre, Newport, Isle of Wight

Saturday 4th April 2020

Please add this date in to your diaries. A programme is being developed on the broad theme of ‘*Environmental Change on the Isle of Wight*’, which is fitting for our 100th anniversary as we reflect on the Island’s past, present and future landscape, seascape and species distribution.

Confirmed key note speakers include Prof. Helen Roy from the Centre of Ecology & Hydrology, who will discuss species invasions, Prof. Stephen Hawkins, former Director of the Marine Biological Association, who will introduce the conference with reference to his work on the impact of climate change on intertidal organisms in the English Channel and Clive Chatters, whom many of you will know from his work on the Isle of Wight and in the New Forest. Dr. Emilie Hardouin from Bournemouth University and Helen Butler will present recent work on the genetic origins of Red Squirrels on the Isle of Wight in the context of mainland and European populations.

You will hear more about the conference in forthcoming months and we anticipate the box office open from October! We are also hoping to develop an associated schools programme leading up to the conference and there will be a poster exhibition.

Roger Herbert



**A celebration of centenary of the inaugural meeting of our Society.
Friday 8th November 7 to 9pm at Caffé Isola, 85 St James Street, Newport
PO30 1LG**

Join us for this special meeting to celebrate the founding of our Society at Caffé Isola in Newport, the building which was formerly a chapel where Rev. Daniel Tyerman founded an earlier Natural History Society which, had it been continued, would have been one of the oldest such societies in the world.

We will have several short presentations about Rev. Tyerman and some of the early luminaries of our Society and there will be plenty of time to mix and chat.

Come along and have a drink. Light refreshments can be purchased on the night but Caffé Isola are also offering us quiche (vegetarian or non-vegetarian) with cheese and chutney, olives, nuts and local crusty bread and butter for just £6.00 per head. In order for the café to organize this, they need us to order this in advance.

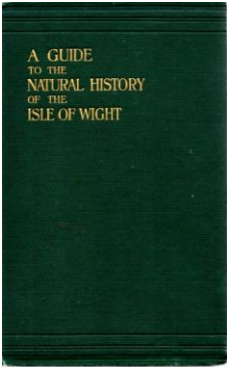
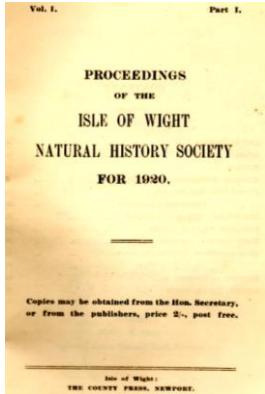
Free tickets can be booked on line (details to follow). If you are unable to book on line, call our HQ (tel. 282596) and leave a message if you would like to come.

If you would like to order quiche, please send a message to iwnhas@btconnect.com letting us know how many and whether or not you would prefer vegetarian. You can pay us at the event.

Caffé Isola is a delightful location and the proprietors are opening specially for us. Do come along and make this a night to remember.



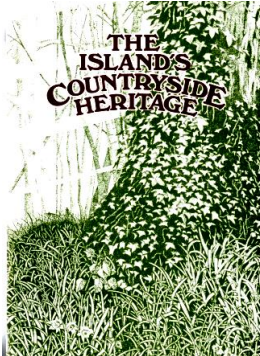
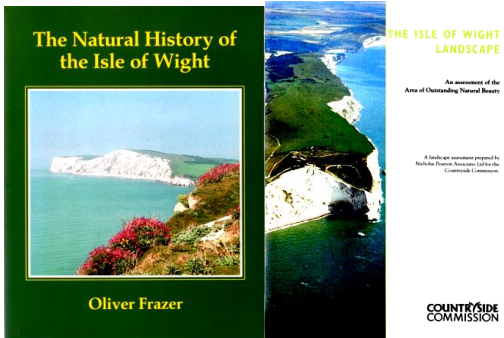
Over the past 100 years, what are some of the most important factors

Decade	(1) 1919 to 1928	(2) 1929 to 1938	(3) 1939 to 1948
(A) International Context	1919- League of Nations formed	1929- Wall Street Crash	1939- WW II begins
(B) National legislation/ Events	1919- Forestry Act: established Forestry Commission 1921- Corn Production Repeal Act: return to free trade, marginal farmland abandoned	1932- Town & Country Planning Act 1935- Restriction of Ribbon Development Act	1947- Town & Country Planning Act (T&CPA) 1947- Agricultural Act increased UK food production
(C) Isle of Wight	1919- IWNHAS formed 1920- Isle of Wight Disease (of bees - term first coined 1904) 1922- St Boniface Down first National Trust acquisition on IW 1928- Newport livestock market moves from St James Square to dedicated new premises	1929- Forestry Commission acquires land at Brighstone and Combley 1931- IW branch of Campaign to Protect Rural England established 1937- IW Joint Planning & Development Committee established	Consequence of wartime agriculture e.g. Colwell Common ploughed up 1943- Under Solent electric supply cable: need for IW based generation diminished 1944- West Medina Cement Mill closed: had been source of pollution
Publications	 <p style="text-align: center;">1909</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">1920</p>	


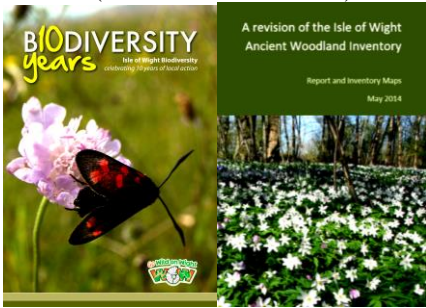
affecting species/habitats on the Isle of Wight?

(4) 1949 to 1958	(5) 1959 to 1968	(6) 1969 to 1978
<p>1949- Treaty of London established Council of Europe.</p>	<p>1959- European Court of Human Rights established</p>	<p>1969- First man on the moon 1973- Britain joined EU</p>
<p>1949- National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act: established National Parks, National Nature Reserves, AONBs & SSSIs.</p> <p>1953- Myxomatosis reached UK. (Since 2018 has affected hares)</p>	<p>1965- National Trust: Enterprise Neptune 1968- Countryside Act</p>	<p>1971- Ramsar Convention 1975- Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act 1976- UK Drought</p>
<p>1951- First IW SSSIs designated 1952- 'IW Survey Report': prepared as requirement of 1947 T&CPA</p> <p>1952- 1966 Most IW railway lines close</p> <p>1956-71- High Down/Needles used to test rocket engines.</p> <p>1963- Newport flood scheme started (river channel concreted)</p>	<p>1961- H&IW Wildlife Trust established 1963- IW AONB designated 1963- Newport flood scheme commenced (river channel concreted) 1966- Newtown LNR designated</p> <p>1966- First under Solent gas supply pipe: IW converted to natural gas 1974.</p>	<p>1970s- All mature IW elms lost due to 'severe' Dutch elm disease. 'Mild' disease had reached IW by 1928.</p> <p>1970s Number of cattle on IOW peaked: one outcome of Common Agricultural Policy?</p> <p>1970- Golden Hill Country Park</p> <p>1975- Wireweed (<i>Sargassum muticum</i>) found on Bembridge Ledges</p>
	<div data-bbox="588 1509 924 1971" data-label="Image"> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">1969</p>	<div data-bbox="1067 1559 1374 1971" data-label="Image"> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">1978</p>

Over the past 100 years, what are some of the most important factors

Decade	(7) 1979 to 1988	(8) 1989 to 1998
(D) International Context	<p>1979- Lord Mountbatten assassinated</p> <p>1979- EU Birds Directive</p>	<p>1989- Berlin Wall came down</p> <p>1992- UK signed Rio Convention</p> <p>1992- Habitats Directive</p> <p>1994- UK Biodiversity Action Plan</p>
(E) National legislation/ Events	<p>1981- Wildlife and Countryside Act: includes first Marine Nature Reserves</p> <p>Oct 1987- Great Storm</p>	<p>1990- Environment Protection Act</p> <p>1991- Countryside Commission launch Stewardship Scheme</p> <p>1992- Badgers Act</p> <p>1992 – MacSharry reform of CAP introduces ‘set-aside’ (abolished 2008)</p> <p>1994- PPG 9 Nature Conservation</p> <p>1995- Environment Agency established</p>
(F) Isle of Wight	<p>1985- Woodland Trust acquires western part America Wood</p> <p>June 1980- Under Solent water supply pipe completed. Large IW reservoir not constructed</p> <p>1981- IW outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD)</p> <p>1983- Newport livestock market closed</p> <p>1986- IWC Countryside Management Service established</p> <p>1986- Pioneering Refuse Derived Fuel plant opened in Forest Rd</p> <p>1987- IW abattoir closed</p> 	<p>1990- Wight Nature Fund established</p> <p>1992- People's Trust for Endangered Species acquires Briddlesford Woods</p> <p>1995 IW becomes a Unitary Authority</p> <p>1995- Newtown NNR designated</p> <p>1997- Island 2000 Trust formed</p> <p>1998- SPAs & Ramsar sites designated</p> 

affecting species/habitats on the Isle of Wight?

(6) 1999 to 2008		(7) 2009 to 2018	(8) 2019
1999- First elections to new Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly 2000- Water Framework Directive		2009- International Swine Flu epidemic	2019- ? Britain leaves EU
2000- CRoW Act 2001- UK outbreak of FMD 2005- Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation 2005- Special areas of Conservation designated 2006- Natural England formed from 3 bodies that variously trace their origins back to 1949		2009- Marine & Coastal Access Act established Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) 2010- Habitat Regulations 2011- Biodiversity 2020: strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services 2012- National Planning Policy Framework (revised 2018)	? UK replacement for EU environmental regulations IOW designated by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve Asian hornet
1999- IW Biodiversity Partnership established 2000- IW problem colonisation by Himalayan Balsam recognised 2000- Standen Heath landfill opened 2001- RSPB Brading Reserve 2001- IW Unitary Development plan 2001- Designation of SINCs 2002- Seaclean Wight completed 2003- Footprint Trust and IW Green Gym launched 2004- Newport processing dairy lost 2005- IW SACs designated		2016- The Needles MCZ designated. 2015/16 - 2 anaerobic digesters commissioned. 201x- Photo-voltaic farms established. Feb 2016- Island 2000 manages most of IWC countryside estate 2016- Ash-die back confirmed on IW (confirmed in UK 2012)	2019- Centenary of IWNHAS Consultation on new Island Plan Population Has been estimated for 2019 to be 140,302 an increase from 1921 (census) of 48%
 <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> 2000 2003 </div>		 <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> 2009 2014 </div>	

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Timeline Overview

In the 100 years of the Society's existence, there have been enormous changes in the world. Population growth is perhaps the most significant, as everything we need comes from our environment and all we produce finds its way back there, in some shape or form. The changes in technology have been huge, and expectations relating to our standard of living have risen far above the aspirations of previous generations.

In Britain, population figures are captured by census surveys every 10 years. In 1921 the population of Britain was 42,769,170; it was 61,371,315 by 2011, an increase of 43.5% over 90 years. The 1921 population of the Island was 94,666 and by 2011 was 138,265: an increase of 46.1%¹ over the same period. Figures for the world population are less reliable for the beginning of the 20th century, but the 1927 estimate was 2,000,000,000 to compared to 7,043,008,586 in 2011: an increase of 252%.²

To cope with population growth, government, international, national and local, has legislated for the way resources are used. Town and Country Planning Acts were passed in 1932 and 1947, and in 1937 the Isle of Wight Joint Planning and Development Committee was formed. Structure Plans, defining areas for development and other land uses, were developed locally. Governments issue planning guidance at intervals, setting out national policies in areas such as housing, transport, and mineral supply as well as nature conservation. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) replaced these documents in 2012 and was revised 2018. With the advent of the Isle of Wight Council as a Unitary Authority in 1995, the planning framework was revised and the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) covering a ten-year period was adopted in May 2001. Local development frameworks (LDF) are the most recent planning tools. They contain policies to reflect local priorities in the context of national policy guidance. The Isle of Wight LDF, referred to as the Island Plan, is under periodic review to meet ever-changing priorities,

War has concentrated minds with respect to our food supplies. Rationing occurred during the 2nd World War and was not fully lifted until 1954. The 'Dig for victory' campaign related not only to gardens and allotments; the wider countryside was put under the plough to increase food production. The post-war driver for agriculture was even greater productivity, to reduce dependency on imports. Farming became more intensive, requiring the use of more fertilisers to increase yields and more pesticides to reduce competition from weeds and insect pests. Afforestation, using quick-growing softwoods to produce home-grown timber, produced swathes of dark green woodland, profoundly affecting our landscape. When Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1973, farming practice come under the influence of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Failure to match supply and demand resulted in 'mountains' and 'lakes' of produce and impacted on farm businesses. CAP was reviewed and reformed in 1992. Countryside Stewardship Schemes were introduced by the Countryside Commission in 1991; these paid farmers and land managers to modify their practices to deliver environmental benefits. These schemes have been analysed in relation to costs and benefits and have been revised. Animal welfare standards have also been subject to review and legislation; the Island's abattoir closed in 1987, the requirement for veterinary supervision having made it financially unviable. Consequently, livestock must be shipped across The Solent for slaughter, which has implications for animal welfare and costs to the farmers. The changes in farming practice and land use as measured by statistics collected by Defra³ show changes which can be related to these national and international policy changes.

A further change in land use results from the drive to develop renewable energy sources. Photovoltaic installations are visible on suburban rooftops, and in the Island landscape as 'solar' farms. Growing crops for the production of biogas by two large anaerobic

digester plants will further change the colour palette of our countryside. The debate over the Island as a site for wind and tidal power has been extensive and there have been periodic attempts to look for viable oil reserves both onshore and offshore.

Both the volume and types of waste have increased; attitudes to, and methods of dealing with it have changed considerably. Separation of waste for recycling, and the incineration of waste to generate electricity have gone some way to reduce the volume sent to landfill. Current emphases include considering sustainability when making purchases. Disposal of sewage and other waste water via long sea outfalls was once acceptable but is now recognised as a hazard to health. The Seaclean Wight scheme has gone some way to reduce pollution, although more needs to be done, for example to deal with combined sewer outfalls.

Voluntary natural history and heritage groups such as RSPB, National Trust, and the Wildlife Trusts have gained momentum over the last hundred years. Land has been specifically managed for nature and people have been encouraged to participate in wildlife conservation. The public's interest, demonstrated via involvement in and membership of these organisations, has had influence on public policy.

Legislation has been passed in an attempt to protect species and habitats. In 1949 the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act began the establishment of Sites of Special Scientific Interest on the best national examples of habitat. However, wildlife does not recognise our boundaries; for example, black-tailed godwits breed in Iceland but spend the winter on the estuaries of Britain. For the species to survive, the habitat needs to be protected in both areas. International networks include wetland sites designated under the Ramsar Convention; and Natura 2000 (European Union) sites which are Special Protection Areas (for birds) and Special Areas of Conservation (for threatened habitats and species). Locally, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) were designated in the UDP. The realisation that protecting pockets of land is only part of the requirement for a thriving natural world has led to the concept of 'living landscapes' where protected sites are linked by corridors and patches of semi-natural environment. If wildlife is to cope with changing circumstances, it needs to be able to move through the landscape to find food and space. The possibilities of 're-wilding' to reverse the over-management of natural systems to make them more resilient to climate events such as extremes of weather, as well as better for wildlife, are actively being discussed⁴.

Observation of species and habitats has always been a priority for the Society. This information, together with expert verification and analysis, has enabled the production of publications, both regular and occasional. In recent years, the development of specialist biological recording programs has enabled larger volumes of data to be stored and analysed. Through this recording, it is possible to track both the arrival and establishment of new species, and to chart declines and local extinctions. This information is incorporated into national datasets to add to the wider picture, and there is considerable emphasis on making this information widely available. An accurate and comprehensive evidence base is essential for sound decision making.

However how we determine our priorities as individuals and as a society is also significant. To quote Lawrence Hamilton, a major figure in the World Conservation Union "It is not the ecologists, engineers, economists or earth scientists who will save spaceship earth, but the poets, priests, artists and philosophers."⁵ In other words, it's not just what we know, but how we value our environment that is the crucial factor. And that's not something that can just be left to someone else.

Anne Marston

¹ <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10168405/theme/POP> Accessed 03/04/2019

² <http://worldpopulationreview.com/> Accessed 03/04/2019

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june> Accessed 02/04/2019

⁴ <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/wilder-hampshire-wight> Accessed 04/06/2019

⁵ Ethics, Religion And, Biodiversity: Relations Between Conservation and Cultural Values Lawrence S. Hamilton, Helen F. Takeuchi: quoted in <http://www.georgewright.org/193hamilton.pdf>

Thank you

It is always nice to receive thanks from members of the Society and an e-mail received at HQ was particularly nice and Janette has given her permission to repeat it here. She writes;

I was born on the Island and have a strong connection to it. After reading the February Bulletin, I felt a renewed deep sense of gratitude for the biodiversity on this magical island and also for all of those of you who monitor and record it. It's exciting that the Island might gain the UNESCO biodiversity status in June. It would be great to know that a significant swathe of the island would be involved.

In the last few months I have attended meetings of the Archaeological group. It has been a fascinating pleasure to begin to learn about early man through attending talks by Delian and Alan. A spin off from this was attending the CBA Wessex annual conference with other members of NHAS. This was a memorable day with lectures on various archaeological sites across the world providing more insight into the lives of our ancestors. DNA testing and other technologies are constantly expanding knowledge. The lectures were given by luminaries in the archaeological field and the day culminated in an entertaining lecture by Dr Alice Roberts!

Thankyou again to all those of you who make this such an excellent society to belong to.

Janette Stroud 15th March 2019

iWatchWildlife update

As soon as the wildlife picked up in the Spring, things became very busy for iWatch Wildlife – the Society's Community Species Recording project.

In the lead-in to the Biosphere Island Mardi Gras earlier in the year, we partnered up with local schools and groups to deliver input sessions on 'Glanville Fritillary', 'Spiny Seahorse' and 'Rare Moths' where we took in relevant specimens and resources to help kick-start the pupil's costume making, in fact, we may have been the organisation with the most topics!

We've been involved in several large events this summer in particular, Hullabaloo in Sandown in May and Appley Day, Ryde in June. We met and engaged with many visitors of all ages where we offered nature-related activities, exploration of the natural history specimens in the pop-up museum and raised awareness of key species such as Emperor Dragonflies, Stag Beetles, Hedgehogs, Swifts and of course the Society in general.

We've continued highlighting local wildlife through our 'Species of the Month' campaign where we ask folks via Social Media to share their observations with us. We then



capture, verify and convert these valuable sightings into records for the IW County Species Database held by The Society. Our species for August is Barn Owl and September the Two-spot Ladybird. Please do let us know if you spot either of these in the coming weeks, although we welcome all species records at any time of year.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the support, time and expertise given so generously by the iWatchWildlife volunteers – you know who you are, thank you very much for all your hard work! We would love to hear from you if you would like to get involved with the project. We welcome help at outreach events and are also looking for ‘Record Champions’ – folks who can help us keep an eye on, assist with ID and capture local wildlife records posted on Social Media. For further information, please do get in touch.

email:iwatchwildlife@gmail.com
#iWatchWildlife

Facebook: @iWatchWildlife

Instagram:

Tina Whitmore

(Picture credits: *iWatchWildlife*; *Arc Consulting*; *Holly Joliffe Photography*; *Nick Edwards – Hares*; *Andy Butler – Orange-tip Butterfly*; *James Gloyn – Emperor Dragonfly*; *Cat James – Stag Beetle*; *Rosie Hume – Hedgehog*; *Danny Vokins – Barn Owl*; *John Caws – Two Spot Ladybird*.)

Golden Hill Heritage Project, an opportunity for volunteers

Golden Hill Fort at Freshwater was built as a “Palmerston” defence and the landscape around it still contains the remains of buildings used when thousands of soldiers were demobbed after WW1, during WW2 and afterwards. Ruth Waller is running a Heritage Lottery funded project to identify and record the military remains associated with Golden Hill Fort within the wider Country Park that surrounds the fort.

Ruth says that, ‘We will be doing research on the people associated with the fort, particularly the soldiers demobbed there at the end of WW1 and those trained at the fort. If any of your members have family involved in the fort or Country Park over the last 150 years, I would love to hear from them.’

The project will teach volunteers how to do the archaeological research, recording, mapping and interpretation of military structures and the historic landscape which surround Golden Hill Fort. Anyone with a particular interest in Military Heritage who would like to take part in the heritage activities, is encouraged to get in touch. No experience necessary and full training given.

For more information and to register your interest to volunteer email:

ruthwaller77@gmail.com or call Natural Enterprise at the Shide Meadows Centre on 296244

What’s in a name? *Humulus lupulus*/ Hop

The generic name *Humulus* could be a derivation of the old Dutch word for hops – hommel. In modern day language, hop is the same in Dutch as it is in English. The Anglo-Saxon word *hopen* means to climb. Hop plants always climb in an anti-clockwise direction. Wild hops are native to Britain though cultivated varieties were introduced into this country from Holland during the sixteenth century.

The specific name *lupulus* seems a curiosity as *lupus* is latin for wolf; so what can be the connection?

Roman philosopher and naturalist Gaius Secundus aka Pliny the Elder (c. 23-79 AD) is thought by some historians to have been the first person to mention hops in writing. In the botanical section of his extensive 'Historia Naturalis' volumes, Pliny makes reference to plants called *Lupus salictarius* which translates into Wolf-of-the-Willows. *Salix* or *Salices* (pl.) is Latin for willow(s). The thinking may have been that the twining, rampageous growth of these plants through willow carr suggested roaming wild throughout the countryside, as did wolves.

Some researchers were of the opinion that Pliny did not always distinguish between fact and supposition so it may only be conjectural that the *Lupus salictarius* of Pliny's writing were actually hop plants. However, eighteenth century naturalists and nomenclator Carl Linnaeus, must have believed that they were and subsequently gave hops their official latin name, *Humulus lupulus*.

Humulus lupulus is a member of Cannabaceae, the cannabis family. Glands among the bracts of female hop flowers contain lupulin, a substance which can be used as a sedative or calming agent for nervous disorders or anxiety. Pillows stuffed with dried hops are said to be an effective aid against insomnia. As well as being used to flavour beer, hops can be steeped in hot, sweetened water to make a relaxing non-alcoholic drink.

Being that hops are in the cannabis family, 'hop-head' has become a slang term for an habitual user of certain substances.

Sue Blackwell

How to give up mowing and gain a meadow

This year I decided to give up mowing the lawn four weeks ago in response to various sources encouraging people to give wildlife a chance. It is now the end of June and I have a lovely mini meadow where my sterile lawn used to be!

I think the original turfs might have come from a meadow. I began to get excited when I started counting the species of flowers and grasses not to mention insects. I don't have enough knowledge to identify everything, so I invited Sue Blackwell to visit and she very kindly came over to help. We both enjoyed making the growing list. Here's what we found:

White clover, red clover, daisy, dandelion, ribwort plantain, scarlet pimpernel, common mallow, black medick, spotted medick, red valerian, common sorrel, common mouse-ear, petty spurge, common cat's-ear, smooth sowthistle, purple and pink toadflax, smooth hawksbeard, common ragwort, field forgetmenot, dovesfoot cranesbill, Canadian fleabane, thyme-leaved speedwell, creeping buttercup, procumbent yellow sorrel. Last but not at all the least, knotted hedge parsley which Sue asked me to report to Colin. A total of twenty-six and no mowing. Doubly rewarding.

Here are the grasses. Timothy, perennial rye grass, cocksfoot, meadow fescue, wall barley, Yorkshire fog, common bent, smooth brome. 34 species of plants in all to date.

In addition I have seen a meadow brown and a painted lady butterfly, two species of hover fly, a ladybird, common woodlice, ant nests, common ground hopper (I think), a common carder bee, many buff tailed bumblebees and a large bumblebee which I haven't identified.



My meadow has brought a new dimension into my life. I will be mowing again sometime in September through to December. This replicates old farming methods of cutting hay and then grazing livestock. It accommodates the life cycles of wildlife. If the neighbours don't understand, don't worry. The wildlife would thank you if it could. I have tried to explain it to one of my neighbours and our relationship is as good as ever. The other neighbour's lawn looks much the same as mine for other reasons. I hope this might persuade some of you to try your own experiment and that you also get some pleasure from the results!

Janette Stroud

Andy's Nature Notes

January

3rd. An Oystercatcher on Monk's Bay beach.

8th. Went to Newtown with Pete Campbell. We saw 3 Spoonbills, 110 Curlew, 170 Grey Plover, 80 knot, c.500 Dunlin, 4 Red-breasted Merganser, one Little Gull, 20 Pintail, c.100 Shelduck and c.100 Oystercatchers. The joy of Newtown in the winter!

9th. A male Blackcap in the garden.

14th. A moth, *Acleris sparsana*, indoors today. Although only common, this is the first moth of the year. A Grey Seal off Bonchurch, could be 'Ron'.

16th. A movement of Gannets down Channel in a westerly gale. They were feeding close inshore in the rough water, probably taking Sprats.

19th. A male and female Blackcap in the garden.

25th. The first Fulmar of the year off Bonchurch.

26th. Two Fulmars off Wheeler's Bay.
31st. 11 Brent Geese east off home.

February

1st. 2 Red-throated Divers flying west close in off home. There was a southerly gale and heavy rain last night.
3rd. A Black Redstart at Ventnor Haven and a Little Egret feeding in the rocks at Monk's Bay.
6th. A Bloxworth Snout moth in my woodshed. Black Redstart still round the Haven.
10th. The Blackcaps still in the garden.
13th. A Red Admiral round at Bonchurch was the first butterfly of the year.
23rd. Dave Nordell and I saw a Vagrant Emperor dragonfly along the revetment toward Bonchurch. It flew round us giving close up views before heading up and over the cliff. There has been a significant influx of this insect into the UK recently.

March

11th. 10 Glanville webs along the revetment.
15th. Went to Ryde Canoe Lake with Pete to see a female Red-crested Pochard. It wasn't ringed but very tame so origin unknown.
18th. The first Bee-fly of the year, *Bombylius major*, in the garden.
22nd. Watched a Great-spotted Cuckoo along the revetment taking the caterpillars of the Brown-tailed moth. It was first seen the previous afternoon but news didn't get out until the late evening.
23rd. Humming-bird Hawkmoth in the garden. The Cuckoo was still there. Eight Wheatears on the rocks in the bay. A Spotted Bee-fly, *B. discolour*, at Binnel.
24th. A Small White butterfly and 3 Peacock along the revetment.
25th. The Cuckoo is now ranging along the upper cliffs between Wheeler's Bay and Bonchurch. It is now eating Glanville Fritillary caterpillars instead of the Brown-tailed Moth caterpillars and is no doubt a serious threat to them. People from all over the UK are coming down to see it.
26th. A Swallow in over the revetment.
27th. A male Holly Blue in the garden plus 3 Small Tortoiseshell along the revetment.
28th. The Cuckoo perched on a tree in my garden. Not a bad garden tick!
29th. A Clouded Yellow along the revetment. 2 male Orange-tips and 2 Small Whites in the garden.
30th. Went to Binnel with Pete. Saw 22 Wheatears in one area and one Clouded Yellow.
31st. Cuckoo still here.

April

1st. Went to Yarmouth to checkout an over-wintering Spotted Redshank to see if it had got its black summer plumage yet but it was still grey.
2nd. A Black Redstart along the revetment.
3rd. Cuckoo still present. 2 Chiffchaffs in the garden.
4th. 23 Brent Geese east in the evening.
6th. The cuckoo is proving to be very elusive now.
8th. First Common Blue along the revetment.
10th. 'Ron' the seal back off home today.
12th. The Cuckoo has moved along to the gardens by Ventnor Cascade where it is feeding on the Brown-tailed moth caterpillars again.
16th. Eight Bottle-nosed Dolphins heading west in the early evening.
17th. Three Orange-tips in the garden and a Wheatear along the revetment.



The Greater Spotted Cuckoo which spent 29 days at Ventnor in March/April and was seen by twitchers from all over the country. The lower picture shows it feeding on Glanville Fritillary larvae. This is the second Island record for this rare vagrant; the first was in 1986.

Photos: Andy Butler

18th. A Clouded Yellow along the revetment as well as the Cuckoo again. This proved to be the last sighting of it as it was not seen again. It has been here for 29 days.

20th. Two Dingy Skippers along the revetment. 3 Holly Blue, one Green-veined White and 4 Orange-tips in the garden.

22nd. The cuckoo didn't get them all, as the first three Glanville Fritillaries emerged today! This is the earliest I've ever seen them. There were also 2 Wall, one Brimstone, 2 Small Coppers and 2 Common Blue all along the revetment. I saw a Cattle Egret on the rocks in the bay which was a first for round here.

23rd. Two Common Sandpipers in the Bay.

25th. One Green Hairstreak in the garden.

26th. A Clouded Yellow, 2 Glanvilles and 2 Dingy Skippers along the revetment.

29th. The first Small Blue along the revetment seen by Dave. I went to Yarmouth and the Spotted Redshank is now black, although distant, I managed to get a few photos.

30th. A Turnstone on the rocks just to the east of the Haven.

May

1st. A Wheatear by the skate board park this morning and a Common Cuckoo along the revetment.

3rd. A Glanville in the garden. Adonis Blue, 2 Glanvilles, Dingy Skippers and Common Blues along the revetment.

5th. Went to Newtown with Pete. 120 Med Gulls in the Scrape.

6th. 8 Glanvilles, 10 Common Blue, one Small Copper and 3 Dingy Skippers, along the revetment. 5 Bottle-nosed Dolphins heading east. Male and female Orange-tips and 3 Holly Blues in the garden.

7th. 2 Glanvilles in Castle Cove, Steephill.

10th. 19 Glanvilles, 6 Common Blue, one Green Hairstreak, one Brimstone and 5 Dingy Skipper all along the revetment.

13th. One Cream-spot Tiger moth and 2 Wall in Monk's Bay.

15th. Went to Shepherd's Chine mid- morning; 58 Glanvilles, 11 Wall, 2 Small Copper, 2 Green Hairstreak, 2 Grizzled Skipper, 13 Dingy Skipper, 6 Common Blue and 28 Small Heath.

17th. Went to Bembridge with Pete. One Bittern in flight, 4 Marsh Harriers and c.400 Swifts.

22nd. Up to Watcombe Bottom this morning with Pete and Dave. 187 Small Blue, 311 Glanvilles, 4 Adonis Blue, 11 Dingy Skippers and 4 Green Hairstreak. Must be one of the best sites in the country for Small Blue and not bad for Glanvilles either!

23rd. Walked along the lower slopes of Bonchurch Down this morning. 21 Adonis Blue, 18 Glanvilles, 15 Small Heath, 2 Small Copper, 12 Dingy Skipper, 20 Common Blue and 8 Brown Argus.

24th. 18 Glanvilles seen along the revetment.

25th. Went to St. Catherine's Point with Pete. A total of 68 Glanvilles, they are starting to recolonise the area after a long absence. On the way back had a look at the Field Cow Wheat at St Lawrence.

26th. A Painted Lady on the bank at the back of my house.

June

1st. Dave and I went to Atherfield and recorded 247 Glanvilles, 4 Painted Lady, one Meadow Brown, 2 Large Skippers, one Wall and a Black-tailed Skimmer dragonfly.

2nd. Found 50/60 Bee Orchids at St. Catherine's with Pete.

3rd. 2 Holly Blue and a Glanville in the garden. There are a few Rose Chafers about at the moment, a spectacular insect.



Top left: Glanville Fritillary at Binnel Bay.
Bottom left: Rose Chafer at Ventnor
Photos: Andy Butler

Top right: Orange Tip at Ventnor.
Bottom right: Adonis Blue, Bonchurch Down

6th. Went to Southford, near Whitwell this morning. One Glanville by the reservoir which was a bit of a surprise plus male and female Emperor Dragonflies and one Banded Demoiselle.

9th. A small seal off Bonchurch.

12th. Saw a Barn Owl fly by in front of my bedroom window at 0315. I have not seen one down here for about 13 years.

14th. A Portland Ribbon Wave moth in the garden, also a Hummingbird Hawkmoth (HBHM). 6 Glanvilles [one fresh] along the revetment.

17th. First two Marbled Whites of the year in the garden. Watched a HBHM attempt to take nectar from an Echium; it gave up. A Dark-green Fritillary seen and photographed by John Caws on the bank at the back of my house.

20th. A faded Painted Lady and 5 Marbled Whites in the garden.

21st. Drove over to Rylstone Gardens early this morning (06.00) and parked up. Down the steps onto the beach and walked round to Luccombe Chine. Climbed the cliff by the waterfall with great difficulty only to find I could go no further owing to the thickness of the scrub. The idea was to see how the Marsh Helleborines were faring but as I couldn't get across to where they grew I had to give up and return to Shanklin. Never mind it was a nice morning anyway. Later on in the day I met up with Dave and we went out to a private reservoir near Atherfield looking for dragonflies. We found 4 Red-veined Darters, 7 Black-tailed Skimmer and one male Emperor.

23rd. 'Ron' the seal back off the revetment.

25th. There has been an influx of Painted Lady into Britain over the last few days. Dave and I counted 57 along the revetment this afternoon with some still coming in off the sea.

26th. 16 Painted Lady together on the bank back of the house.

27th. Most of the Painted Lady have gone now, moved on North. Very strong (40mph) NE wind today.

28th. Dave and I went over to Newtown this morning and searched the hedges in the meadows for White-letter Hairstreak. None found. Looked round Walter's Copse and recorded 17 White Admiral, 8 Silver-washed Fritillary, one Comma and a male Beautiful Demoiselle. A pair of Wrens are nesting in a large Echium in my garden.

29th. Very hot today.

30th. Ten Purple Hairstreak near Thorness.

Andy Butler

British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) News

English Winter Bird Survey

The purpose of this survey is to investigate how wintering birds and Brown Hare benefit from using Agri-environment scheme (AES) options in winter, which remains a major gap in our knowledge. This work will complement existing studies that have successfully evaluated the effects of AES options on farmland birds and will further our understanding of why the majority of breeding farmland birds are still in decline.

The existing Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) 1-km squares and methodology were used with the priority on squares containing farmland. There was also the option to include additional 1-km squares where AES options had been used. Volunteers had to make a minimum of two visits (ideally January and February) and a maximum of four visits to their 1-km square from December 2018 to March 2019.

Fourteen BBS 1-km squares on the Island were classified as priority (containing farmland) by the BTO. Ten received coverage with three non-farmland squares also covered and I would like to thank all of the counters for taking part.

Looking at the results from the 10 1-km farmland squares, 62 species of bird were recorded. The top ten most recorded species are as follows;

Position	Species	% of squares covered
=1	Blackbird	100
=1	Carrion Crow	100
=1	Dunnock	100
=1	Herring Gull	100
=1	Jackdaw	100
=1	Robin	100
=1	Woodpigeon	100
=8	Buzzard	90
=8	Chaffinch	90
=8	Great Tit	90
=8	Rook	90
=8	Wren	90

The non-native gamebirds, Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge, were recorded in 80% and 70% of the squares respectively.

Only three squares recorded Collared Dove which supports the reduction in reported sightings on farmland of this species in recent Isle of Wight Bird Reports.

While Linnet and Yellowhammer were recorded in 70% of the squares, House Sparrow and Starling fared less well with 50% and 60% respectively.

It will be interesting to see the national figures and trends when they are published by the BTO in due course.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)

The 2019 survey was completed at the end of June with 20 1-km squares covered on the Island which is a record coverage for the survey and a 250% increase in comparison to five years ago. Thanks to all counters, both old and new, for their brilliant work in producing a meaningful dataset for the Island which covers a wide range of habitats. I hope to bring you further details in the next issue of the Bulletin.

The 2018 annual BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) report was published in the spring and shows the impact that severe 2018 weather may have had on some of our birds. The Beast from the East hit some of our smaller resident birds whilst strong desert winds hampered spring migration for some of our summer migrants. You can access the report online at the following link; <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/breeding-bird-survey/breeding-bird-survey-2018>

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

The June 2019 count completed the 2018/19 reporting year for this survey. Once again coverage was excellent with all nineteen sites receiving full or partial coverage and preliminary results will be included in the next Bulletin.

We also said farewell and thanks to long-standing WeBS counter David Agombar, who covered the Brading Marshes Eastern section, as he has moved to Scotland. He has been succeeded by IWNHAS member Dave Fairlamb who encountered unseasonal torrential rain and winds for his first count in June before ending the survey in sunshine while recording a returning Green Sandpiper!

Garden BirdWatch (GBW)

Many people in Britain feed birds in their gardens but, until now, the wider effects of this activity have been largely unknown. As a nation we spend an estimated £200–300 million on bird feeding products each year.

In a newly-published BTO study, we show that feeding the birds is significantly shaping garden bird communities in Britain. The results show that in the 1970s, garden bird feeders were dominated by only two species, House Sparrow and Starling. Today, a much broader range of species is commonly seen taking advantage of the growing variety of supplementary foods on offer. This study provides strong evidence that garden bird feeding has supported population growth in some bird species, and has increased the diversity of species visiting our feeders.

You can help provide more data to the BTO about your garden birds by joining Garden BirdWatch. You can obtain further details at this link; <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw>

New BTO President

BBC Security Correspondent Frank Gardner OBE has been appointed as the new BTO President, succeeding Chris Packham CBE. In addition to being an award-winning journalist, Frank is also a very keen birdwatcher and is looking forward to promoting the BTO during his four year spell in the role.

Increases in generalist predator populations are associated with gamebird releases

New BTO research has revealed that the release of Pheasants and Red-legged Partridges for commercial shoots may be boosting numbers of the avian predators and scavengers.

Every year, 41-50 million non-native gamebirds (Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge) are released in the UK. Fewer than half these birds are shot, meaning there is potentially a large food resource available to predators and scavengers, sustaining their populations above the levels they would otherwise reach. If it occurs, this inflation of predator numbers might alter predator-prey dynamics, increasing predation pressure on some vulnerable species, including declining breeding waders like Curlew.

You can read more about this research at; <https://www.bto.org/community/blog/what-effect-might-annual-releases-non-native-gamebirds-be-having-native-biodiversity>

If you require further information or are interested in becoming a member of the BTO please contact myself, **Jim Baldwin** (BTO Regional Representative) either by phone (01983 721137(home), 07528 586683(mobile)), email (wightbto@hotmail.com) or write to me at 21 Hillcrest Road, Rookley, I.W PO38 3PB.

Reports of General Meetings

Saturday 12th January Rats, Abraham Elder and Folklore, a talk by Dr Paul Cowdell

An audience of some forty-five members gathered at Arreton Community Centre to hear this intriguing talk about folklore and its influence on and importance in our heritage. In Abraham Elder's 'Tales and Legends of the Isle of Wight', published in 1839, the tale of The Pied Piper of Newtown describes how the town was overrun with rats, depleting the grain stores, and how a stranger came along and enticed them with his music to follow him to the sea, where they drowned. During the Hundred Years War with France, in the fourteenth century, Newtown's population was depleted, leaving it vulnerable to French attacks from the sea. This population decline was largely due to the Plague, spread by rats.

Is this tale really folklore, told by local people and passed down from generation to generation, questions Paul. Elder writes that this storytelling was 'rife' in his time, but no evidence has been found that supports his claim. Oral tales do not have the high profile that officially published stories do. Most folklorists see Elder's work as a mix of fact and fiction. Brian Hinton, a well-known twentieth century Isle of Wight historian, described Elder as 'a precursor of Alfred Hitchcock'. Elder's book was published seven years before the word 'folklore' became part of our language. "Folklorists tend to concentrate on what storytellers do, and not on whether a tale is genuine or invented", says Paul.

It is generally acknowledged that The Pied Piper story is associated with Hamelin in Germany. A stained glass window in the church there, depicting the story, is a sixteenth century replacement for the original window. In the first version of the German story, there is

no mention of how the Pied Piper lured the children away from the town. The Brothers Grimm, serious researchers into folk tales, first mention, in their book 'Deutsche Sagen' (German Sayings), published in 1816, how this story had changed over the years. The local legend was being expanded in the re telling.

Paul considered how rats are seen in folklore. They are intelligent, destructive, sinister and portentous. Rats are known to destroy up to a fifth of the world's grain stores. In the Biblical story of Noah's Ark, they are seen as such a nuisance that Noah has to introduce a cat to control them. Yet it would take an exceptionally large and bold cat to be able to stand up to rats. Studies show that rats are discriminating: given a choice of bread, they will take only the best. Rats are neophobic, concludes S A Barnett in his publication 'The Rat, a Study in Behaviour'. They are wary of anything new that is introduced into their familiar terrain. In 'The Story of Rats: Their Impact on us and our impact on them', S A Barnett states that it is difficult to poison rats because of their neophobia. You must first familiarise them with the bait you intend to lace with poison.

Rats are no cleverer than any other animal, maintains Paul, but they have had to develop avoidance strategies for their species' survival in a human world. Studies show that rats not living among humans do not have neophobic behaviour. Rats do not appear to be more intelligent than other animals because they have not developed defence mechanisms. In Britain, the earliest differentiation between rats and mice was made in the twelfth century by Gerald of Wales. Black Ship Rats, *Ratus ratus*, arrived here by ship at this time. But in 1979, the discovery of black rat bones in a well places rats here centuries earlier. The Brown, or Norway rat, *Ratus norvegicus*, arrived here in the mid eighteenth century.

Paul described some superstitions about rats over the centuries. In the fourth century BC, rats were seen as omens. In AD 77, Pliny writes that rats can foresee war by chewing holes in shields. And rats that nibble clothes and furniture were seen as an omen in different parts of the country. Mice often appear in myths as the souls of the departed, and rodents are seen as agents of divine retribution. One folk tale describes how rats avenge an act of genocide. A bishop locks villagers in a barn and sets fire to it. Rats swarm around his palace and he has to flee for his life. He takes shelter in a tower in a river or lake, but the rats follow him there, eat through the walls and kill and eat him. Rats leaving a sinking ship are seen as harbingers of ill omen. In some parts of the country, it is considered bad luck to even mention the name 'rat'. They are called 'long tails' instead. Whereas the exodus of rats is seen as a warning, so is the influx of rats an ill omen, a harbinger of death. This is not surprising, as in the Middle Ages, rats spread the Plague, and dead rats served as a dire warning. Yet in nineteenth century Aberdeen, the arrival of rats was seen as foretelling wealth and other good fortune.

Often in folk tales, rats were led by one animal that stood out from the group, being bigger or a different colour – often white, a King Rat. Sometimes rats are knotted together by the tail to form a King Rat. This may be because rats' tails become sticky and freeze together in the nest. Not all exhibits in museums are natural, however. Tales of rats' ingenuity in stealing eggs, wine and oil are depicted in Walter Potter's tableaux 'A Friend in Need'. You can see examples of these in The Dairyman's Daughter pub at Arreton Barns. To steal eggs, one rat rolls over onto its back, holding some eggs, while the other rats drag it off by the tail. To steal wine or oil, a rat dips its tail into the fluid and licks it off.

To rid themselves of a rodent problem, people wrote charms, posting a notice offering rats and mice somewhere else to live, and threatening to cut them to pieces if they did not leave. People believed that if rats had to cross water, boards should be laid out for them. Rats are good swimmers, but they can be drowned in floods. Another way to drive rats out was to make a din, banging and clanging. And to charm them, music was played. This is the basis for the Pied Piper ('Der Rattenfänger') legend. Generally, the music was played on a pipe or

flute, but in the Westphalian tale, a hurdy-gurdy charms the children to follow a stranger. In urban legends, the children enter a cave and emerge in a foreign country.

By 2001, the black rat was one of the most endangered species of animal in the world. The rat populations of islands have had to be killed to conserve nesting birds. In 1994, the population of brown rats in Britain was estimated at forty million, two-thirds of the human population. We have come to recognise rats as part of our lives – a dangerous other. They can carry up to thirty-five diseases. Our relationship with them involves moving them around, rather than killing them. Sewer workers tell traditional tales of a Queen Rat. Nevertheless, ratting became a popular sport after a nineteenth century law forbade cockfighting, bull- and bearbaiting. Rat pits were constructed in taverns and wagers placed on whose dog could kill a hundred rats in the shortest time.

Do stories invented by antiquarians become folklore when handed down in the oral tradition, asked someone in the audience. “Elder sifts many sources”, Paul replied. The relationship between folklore and popular culture is known in America as ‘folkloresque’. And why are there so many folk tales about rats? Their social interaction fascinates us, Paul maintains. “Rats seem mysterious and we identify with them”.

We thanked Paul for a thoroughly researched and well delivered talk, full of remarkable tales.

Saturday 9 March West Medina Mills, an illustrated talk by Dr Ruth Waller

Three years ago, Ruth, archaeology consultant and former Isle of Wight County Archaeologist, was asked by Gift to Nature’s Carol Flux to excavate a corner of the former West Medina Mills Cement Works site. This corner is all that is left to uncover, as the owners demolished the buildings before English Heritage came to inspect the site, and several years ago Vestas built its huge wind turbine factory over the rest of the site. Gift to Nature was concerned to preserve this corner, known locally as the Mummies’ Caves, as an important part of both the Isle of Wight’s and our national heritage. A nature reserve, part of Dickson’s Copse, was also created, adjacent to the archaeological site. Forty local people were involved as volunteers, including members of the Industrial Archaeology Society.

The Industrial Revolution, between 1760 and 1830, changed almost all aspects of people’s lives in the move from hand production to factory production. In 1790 a baker, Mr Porter of Newport, built two corn mills on the banks of the Medina, one on either side. He borrowed the money from a bank, but one of the partners ran off with all the assets. In 1796 James Parker founded a Roman cement works here. Previously, lime cement was used, but it was toxic and not strong enough. Roman cement was made using a stone called septaria, a mud stone with veins of calcite found in the Thames and along the coast. Brunel’s Thames Tunnel was constructed of Roman cement.

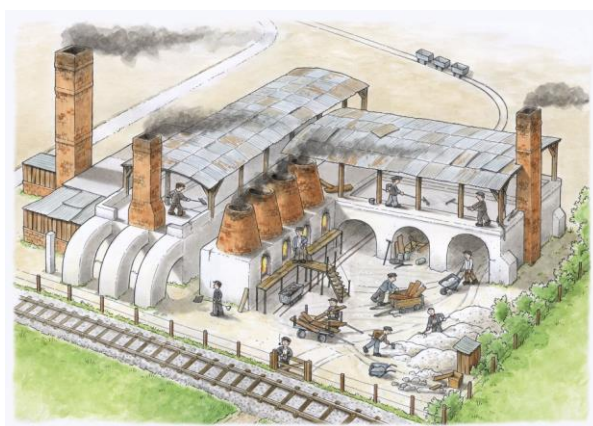
Charles Francis and John White fired their first cement kiln in London. Their partnership lasted for twenty-seven years, from 1810 to 1837. Charles Francis and Sons looked for a new site. They needed access to the site by road and the water power of the mill to crush the stones. The supply of septaria stones was drying up in London and Kent, but a new supply was available in the River Medina.

A lot of the concrete used in the building of the Solent forts was made from Medina cement. This cement won many prizes, including the bronze medal in the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the gold medal in the Havre Exhibition of 1858. West Medina was the only factory in the world producing Medina cement.

Portland cement was even harder and more durable than Medina cement, and West Medina became one of many factories producing it. By the 1860s they were no longer

producing Medina cement. Located at the end of Stag Lane, they had access by road and river. Raw materials came to the Quay. The chalk was crushed in a big rotating mill. The wash mill, a huge round structure, mixed chalky clay and water into a slurry, a sloppy mixture the consistency of paint. The slurry was taken to the drying flats where it was kept for some weeks. The lumps sank in these pools and the water drained out. Drying was essential, as water would explode in the kiln. The lumps were loaded into the kiln.

In the 1860s the kilns were known as bottle kilns because they were shaped like a bottle with a neck. The loading door at the top was accessed via a raised walkway. It took fifteen days to fire. In 1872 Isaac Johnson invented the chamber kiln, which reduced the time taken to fire the slurry to seven or eight days. The chamber was supported by arches. The wet slurry delivery pipe was above. All the hot gases could be channelled above where the slurry was dried on the roof. By 1896 West Medina mills had a railway to transport the chalk from Shide pit, south of Newport. But by 1926 the cement works was no longer used.



Left: Reconstruction of West Medina Mills. Alan Rowe, Potting Shed Cartoons
Right: Aerial view of West Medina Mills Donated by James Heald

Ruth and Carol set up a three-month training course in early 2018 to teach the volunteers excavation techniques and drawing skills. Alan Dinnis, the grandson of James Warsap, who was manager of the mill from 1894 to 1929, wrote a book about the cement works that was published in 2016, entitled *West Medina Cement Mill, Dodnor, Isle of Wight: a History*. It is available to purchase from the publisher, Nigh and Sons.

The excavations revealed three bottle kilns in a row, east to west, one chamber kiln, east to west, and one north to south. The positioning of the kilns was found to be significant, as prevailing winds catch the firing of the kiln pots. After firing for fifteen days, small boys were sent in under the kilns to rake out the impurities. Diggers found wagon tracks at the bottom of the kilns to facilitate the removal of the impurities. A fourth bottle kiln was found by accident, and two more were discovered under a chamber kiln, making a total of six. The best preserved bottle kiln could not be excavated because a family of foxes with young cubs was using the entrance.

Rob Martin, of the Isle of Wight Industrial Archaeology Society, was a great help in researching the kilns. The chamber kilns are very complex. Hot gases were channelled all along the top of the kilns and back again, on two levels. They facilitate drying on the drying flats, formed by concrete slabs laid over brick walls that sit on top of the arches. On a metal plaque affixed to one of the buttresses supporting the later chamber is inscribed GF, Sons 1875. The bottle kilns date from 1867 to 1870. The whole complex went out of use by 1900, when all the chamber kilns were replaced by rotary kilns.

Volunteers found the names of 364 workers at the site. Their very varied jobs included cement burner, cement tester, chemist, engine driver, brick maker and barge worker. A great

number of men were involved in serious accidents. Newspaper reports usually feature wrongdoers, but one man was praised for saving a police officer from soldiers at Parkhurst barracks. One volunteer's father was a lorry driver, humping huge sacks of cement, four times a day for forty years. Now in his eighties, he suffers from chronic back pain.

Among the accidents recorded at the cement works was a Mr James, who sank up to his waist in burning cement. He was taken to the workhouse but died later of his injuries. Another man fell into a wash mill and died instantly. The coroner said he shouldn't have slipped. Blaming the worker rather than the manager for an accident seems to have been common practice. If the worker was held responsible by the coroner, his widow would not receive compensation. A man fell through a hole in the viaduct, another was crushed by a crane, and both were also blamed. Only one widow managed to get a little compensation. The volunteers on the dig were aged from ten to eighty-four years old. Katie Bell, an archaeologist, teaches at Ryde School. Nancy, aged ten, wanted to take part and so her mum and dad came with her. Volunteers braved the hottest summer for decades, covered in cement dust. When the dig was completed, they held an open day for the public to come and see what they had uncovered. The volunteers were on hand to give explanations and answer questions. I attended the open day, in late July 2018, and found it very interesting. After this, as Carol's bid for more lottery funding was turned down, the volunteers had to backfill the trenches for health and safety reasons. Enough of the structures is still visible, however, and most of it can be seen from the cycle track.

Rob Warne, the Isle of Wight Council's Risk and Insurance Manager, whose ancestors on both sides of the family worked at the cement mills and who played there as a child, suggested putting up a fence between the site and Vesta's factory, with a gate.

Ruth's talk was followed by a short question and answer session. Someone pointed out that Queen Victoria herself had complained about the black fumes from the cement mills, blown on the wind towards her home at Osborne House in East Cowes. So when her minister brought her the Factories Act to sign, she refused until the cement works was included in it. After the 1870s, the smoke was white and therefore perceived to be less dangerous to health. Ruth described how workers on the site had to suffer fumes, heat and inhaled dust. Those who raked out the kilns drank oat mixed with water, believed to line their oesophagus. The volunteers noted the huge contrast between health and safety at the Vestas factory, with all their personal protective equipment, and the cement mill's working conditions in the nineteenth century. Yet although the management was very strict about enforcing no alcohol consumption or smoking on site, off-site drinking was a form of relaxation after hard labour. One popular hostelry was the Flower Pot up nearby Chawton Lane.

Ruth kindly offered to take members of our society on a tour of the dig site, and we have fixed a date – Saturday 14 September from 2 pm. See the Autumn/Winter programme for further details.

While being very interested in industrial archaeology and local history, I am shocked to read of the many serious accidents and terrible working conditions commonly suffered by workers in factories, mines, shipyards and other workplaces in the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. In more recent years, I have also been aware of how concrete, though present everywhere, is extremely harmful to our planet, being one of the world's biggest single sources of greenhouse gas emissions, generating vast amounts of carbon dioxide. The sooner we develop non-polluting alternatives to concrete, which are in the pipeline, the better for our planet and the survival of all of its inhabitants, human and wildlife.

Some thirty-five members of our society joined me in thanking Ruth for a fascinating talk, and we are looking forward to visiting the site in September.

Wednesday 17th April Ryde Under the Pier, an exploration of intertidal marine life.

We assembled on the beach beside the pier, two hours after high tide. Ian Boyd, our leader, Emily Stroud from the Wildlife Trust and over twenty members and friends took part. The weather was fine and fairly warm, though a cool breeze sprang up as we ventured further down the shore. The spring tide was retreating rapidly, revealing vast swathes of golden sand. We wore wellington boots to protect our feet and legs from slabs of loose masonry under the pier, from the spines of sea urchins and the stings of sea anemones. Ian provided us with buckets to collect sea water, trays to fill with that water, and shrimping nets for us to catch our finds and bring them to the trays. Ian stood by the trays and, together with Emily, helped us with identification, as well as telling us something about each species.

After a short health and safety briefing and introduction to our methods of working, we began searching the sands on the upper shore for plant and animal life. The water under the pier was still deep. We found various molluscs, such as periwinkles, ropes of slipper limpets clamped firmly together, and pod razor shells, as well as some pieces of sea lettuce, and Japanese wireweed that migrated to the Solent on the hulls of ships.

On the weeds, we discovered the bright green, glutinous eggs of the Green Leaf worm (*Eulalia viridis*), and on an iron pillar I touched a tiny bright green strand that moved and retreated into the thick algae covering. It was a Green Leaf worm, only a few centimetres long, though they can grow to fifteen centimetres. Its body is divided into about two hundred segments. Ian called it the paddle worm because it has many stiff paddle-like bristles that project and run along the sides of its body. It uses these bristles to move along surfaces and to breathe through. The Greenleaf worm has a proboscis, a long thread-like tubular organ that shoots out of its mouth when it wants to feed. After the larvae hatch, they become part of zooplankton for a short while before settling on the seabed to develop into adult Green Leaf worms.

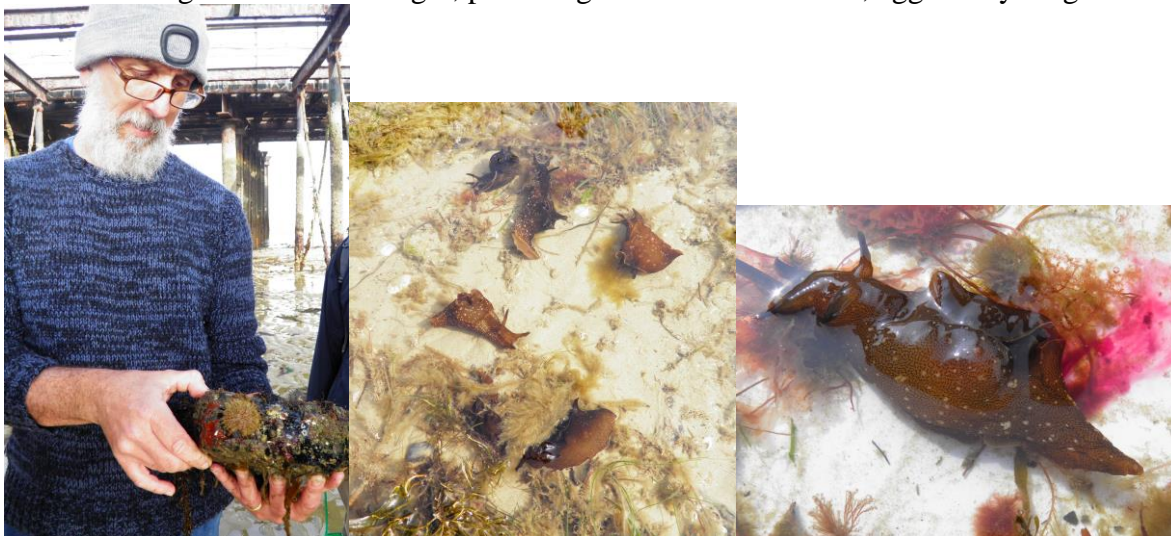
On the middle shore, we discovered bivalve shells, some covered with rough keel worm tubes, and in the pools under the pier we netted shrimps. Isolated seagrass roots signalled a treat to come. Clinging to the massive iron pier supports were several species of sponge: breadcrumb sponges covered in what looked like craters in tiny volcanic cones, and orange and terracotta coloured ones. Curious dull grey coloured forms hanging from the ironwork turned out to be a species of common sea squirt, and on the lower shore we found more colourful species. These are highly unusual creatures. The adult is a simple sessile animal that is permanently fixed to a hard surface, usually rock, from low water to depths of 650 feet. It looks like a tube of translucent jelly. It feeds by pumping water into its body through a hole in the top and straining it through a net-like structure to remove suspended food particles, then pumping it through another siphon on the side. The larvae are especially unusual: they look like tadpoles but are supported by a pliable rod. This feature, common to all sea squirts, is the equivalent of the backbone possessed by other vertebrates, and confirms that the sea squirt is a primitive chordate. It is also a hermaphrodite, producing both eggs and sperm, and fertilisation takes place in the water.

I spotted some deep pink worm-like tangles that didn't move when I touched them. I turned to Emily for help. To my surprise, they were the eggs of sea hares (*Aplysia punctata*), and later we found several of these strange creatures that look like large fat sea slugs, but are in fact medium to very large sized marine gastropod molluscs, having a soft internal shell made of protein. They have two pairs of tentacle-like protuberances, those on their head said to resemble a hare's long ears – hence their common name. Stranded on shore, the adults are bulky and unattractive, but in the sea they propel themselves through the water on jelly-like 'wings'. Some species look quite graceful, while others flap jerkily. Like all opisthobranch molluscs, sea hares are hermaphroditic and sometimes mate in chains. They feed on seaweed

and their bodies take on the colour of the algae they eat. This provides them with camouflage from predators, but they are also armed with some highly effective defence mechanisms. As we discovered, they can squirt ink from their ink glands that produces a smoke-like toxic screen, bombarding the predator's sense of smell. The toxic ink can be white, purple or red, depending on the pigments in the seaweed they eat. Their skin contains toxins to make them largely inedible, and they can secrete a clear slime that plugs the olfactory receptors of predators like lobsters.

On the middle and lower shore, we found several species of crab: the common shore crab, which preys on other invertebrates, especially bivalve molluscs, using its powerful pincers to break open their shells, the edible crab, a hermit crab lurking in its barnacle-encrusted, algae decorated adopted shell, and tiny porcelain crabs hiding under rocks. Among the molluscs we discovered were the common piddock, whose shell is adapted to enable it to bore into clay and soft rock, such as chalk and sandstone, to seek refuge from predators, the pod razor shell, whose unusual streamlined shape helps them to burrow quickly to escape danger, and three species of oyster. These are the common or native oyster, the Portuguese oyster that was farmed in the Solent until recently, and the Pacific oyster that arrived on our shores clinging to the hulls of ships, as now it clings to the iron pier structure.

On the lower shore, at low tide, we found ourselves almost under the pierhead with its ferry terminal. Here we encountered the richest diversity of marine life on the shore. This is where the seagrass meadows begin, providing shelter for seahorses, eggs and young fish.



Left: Ian Boyd with a sea urchin. Middle & Right: Sea Hares, *Aplysia punctata*
Photos: Tina Whitmore

In the pools under the pier, we found three species of sea anemone: daisy, snakelocks and beautiful dahlia anemones, looking very like the flower. The daisy anemone habitually buries most of its column deep in soft sand, mud or a rocky crevice, exposing above ground only its oral disc and surrounding tentacles. It feeds on small marine creatures and other organic matter. It can reproduce either asexually by division or sexually by producing eggs and sperm. A peacock worm tube protruded above the sand and oyster thieves sailed on the water. I discovered a rocky habitat on the other side of the pier where strings of sea hare eggs were strewn about, providing ideal shelter for crabs. I went to fetch Ian, who lifted rock after rock to reveal different species of crab, and a green sea urchin. This is a small spiny urchin that lives among seaweeds on rocky shores and on the seabed down to a depth of 100 metres it is often found on or under kelp and on seagrass beds. It feeds on seaweed, sponges and bryozoans and will also eat barnacles, muscles and worms. Sea urchins are related to starfish and are echinoderms. They used to be commonly known as sea hedgehogs.

We thanked Ian for this journey into the fascinating world of seashore life, for helping us identify species and for bringing all the equipment to facilitate this. We are also grateful to Emily for lending us identification books and hand lenses.

Saturday 8th June A Guided Walk through the grounds of Barton Manor

Some forty members took part in this tour of the Barton Manor Estate, led by joint owner Dawn Haig-Thomas. She began with a brief introduction to the history of the estate, which was listed in the Domesday Book in 1086. From the late thirteenth century, it was an Augustinian priory, a local foundation under the religious jurisdiction of the Bishop of Winchester. In 1430, after many years of bad management and undisciplined behaviour, the priory was disbanded and the estate gifted to Winchester College. Thereafter, it was let to tenant farmers for over four hundred years, until Queen Victoria discovered it and decided to rent it for a year to assess its suitability for a home for her family. The manor house had been built soon after the suppression of the Augustinian foundation, and over the centuries enlarged and renovated, mainly in the early seventeenth century. The Queen decided that the adjacent Osborne House would be more suitable as her main home on the Isle of Wight, but she also purchased Barton Manor as an annexe, to accommodate foreign royalty and visiting equerries.

When Victoria died, her successor, Edward VII, decided to keep Barton as a summer retreat, while gifting Osborne to the nation. Dawn pointed out his initials on the ornamental entrance gates to the house. His son, King George V, inherited the estate in 1910, but decided to sell it twelve years later, ending seventy-seven years of royal ownership. For the next three decades, the estate was farmed, it then housed a boarding school for fifteen years, and in 1991 Anthony Goddard turned it into a popular visitors' attraction, with a high-quality vineyard. Robert Stigwood, the film and music tycoon, bought the estate in 1991, as his UK residence, keeping the gardens and vineyards open to the public until he sold it in 2006. And in 2012 Dawn and her husband Alex took it over.

Approaching the house, the first thing Dawn showed us was Norman Gaches' carving of Bacchus, the Roman God of Wine, from a huge macrocarpa trunk, the head of Robert Stigwood superimposed on it. It was brought back to the Island and currently lies beside the driveway. Next, we admired the cork oak grove, planted by Prince Albert, who used Barton for his experiments in farming and tree-planting. He brought the young cork oaks back from one of his trips around Europe. We passed the Old Carriageway to Osborne that branches off the driveway, and climbed a flight of steps to look over the boundary hedge for a glimpse of Osborne House's Italianate tower, partly screened by trees.

The outbuildings we passed were designed by Prince Albert, who used Barton as a model farm. Whereas the façade is built of stone, to please the Queen, who believed in keeping up appearances, the rear of these buildings is made of brick. All had innovative engineering features. We passed through the entrance gates and along the side of the house, flanked by a lawn with ornamental fountains, to the front door. Dawn pointed out the medieval lancet windows, three on one side of the entrance and one on the other. Edward VII remodelled the gardens, but retained many of the eighteenth century features. The house is essentially Elizabethan in character.



Left: Barton Manor & gardens; Middle: Hazel with one of Prince Albert's Cork Oaks; Right: Felled redwoods in Barton Wood. All Photos: Dave Trevan

We crossed the front lawn, where two young boys were playing football, to the terrace with its attractive borders, and descended the staircase to the lower lawn. The haunting cry of a peacock caught our attention, and as we neared the pond, two Canada geese appeared on the water. "They had six goslings this year", said Dawn. The Middle Pond is spring-fed. We followed a narrow path all the way round it, past the daffodil field with its many species, past Robert Stigwood's statue known as Boris, sunk in concrete so it couldn't be taken away, through the little oak wood, where David Biggs previously spotted tree-creepers, and past the thatched boathouse. There are three ponds and an underground Victorian reservoir.

We reached the gardens and stopped to look at the maze, planted in leylandii by Robert Stigwood and replanted in yew by the Haig-Thomases. It consists of twelve hundred young trees, with a folly in the centre. Barton boasts a national collection of red-hot pokers (*Kniphofia*) – a hundred and twenty varieties. In the walled garden, the Haig-Thomases have restored a derelict building and constructed raised vegetable beds. The impressive indoor swimming pool is another restoration project.

Dawn led us up to the model farm buildings, which they have carefully restored, retaining all the original architectural features, one of which is to be a conference centre. Back on the driveway, she told us they are about to switch the fountains back on. She led us into the projected wildflower meadow, currently grassland dotted with a few species of wild flowers, for which she is seeking advice. Colin Pope was at hand to advise burying the nutrient-rich topsoil under the subsoil and grazing it off.

Beyond the meadow we came to a two hundred-acre forestry plantation, planted by the Forestry Commission in ancient woodland in the 1950s. The wood is still dotted with oaks.

Now that there is no profit to be made from these plantations, the Forestry Commission has drawn up a plan and asked the owners to fell fifty per cent of the Lawson cypresses and thin the coastal redwoods. "The redwood is not the best wood, but good for burning", says Dawn. The house runs on wood-burning boilers and solar panels.



The track through the wood slopes gently down to the sea, where we emerged onto a narrow strip of beach, affording wide views of the Solent. To our right, we could see extensive woodland stretching all the way to Ryde, marked by the prominent spire of All Saints Church. Dawn told us there were several anchors here, remnants of a mulberry harbour used by troops to practise landing on the Normandy beaches on D-Day, and several people hurried over to take photographs. Across the Solent we could see Portsmouth's Spinnaker Tower. "Last year we found a human skull embedded in the blue slipper clay", says Dawn. There was an almost complete skeleton, just minus the hands and feet. A forensic investigation had to be carried out, but it was dated at about two hundred years old. A relative of Dawn's found a Mesolithic hand tool here, dating from about 3000 BC. This swampy area was once home to turtles and crocodiles, as evidenced by turtle shell and crocodile scute fossils found here. Just offshore there are seagrass beds that shelter young fish and seahorses. Seeing how peaceful this coastline is, how little frequented by humans, caused me to reflect on how different it would be if the England Coast Path were to pass through the Quarr, Barton, Osborne and Norris estates. The Isle of Wight Ramblers, who have long campaigned for a continuous path around the Island's coasts, may well be responsible walkers, but the same cannot be said for the general public, who would drive away wildlife. Also, the cost of fencing off a path would be prohibitively expensive, so people would be able to wander about the estates, causing disturbance, lighting fires, damaging trees, and so forth. Dawn says that opening the beach at Osborne to paying visitors has driven disturbed wildlife to seek sanctuary at Barton. Natural England is pressing hard to get a path along this coast, but there are exemptions allowed for parkland, which Barton is, she maintains.

We were impressed with all the renovation work the owners have carried out in the seven years they have owned Barton Manor, as well as with their plans for more projects.

Dawn says they expect to stay here for another forty years, so we can be confident that the estate is in good hands.

Maggie Nelmes

Reports of Section Meetings



Looking at the Countryside

Saturday 3rd November 2018

Mottistone Common, Pay Down & Mottistone Down

About 19 members met in Mottistone Manor National Trust car park for a walk led by Frank Basford. As we walked up the hollow way leading towards the Longstone we discussed the evolution of tracks leading onto the common and saw a portion of hollow way that had fallen into disuse. Emerging onto the common we talked about its recent land use when the Longstone and the Castle Hill enclosure were engulfed within forestry plantations until these were cleared after the great storms of 1987 and 1990. We turned east onto Castle Hill to inspect the earthworks of the probable Iron Age stock enclosure before retracing our steps to the Longstone. This monument constitutes the remains of a Neolithic long barrow (burial mound) with an upstanding monolith and a recumbent stone beyond the east end of the mound. Both stones were probably originally free-standing uprights. The Rev. John Skinner made a drawing of the Longstone and recorded the long low mound behind the stones (now damaged by sand quarrying) in the early 19th century. An illustration of 1855 shows two recumbent stones although only one is now present. Did an additional stone then exist or was the drawing inaccurate? The Longstone was first claimed as a long barrow by the archaeologist O.G.S. Crawford who examined it in 1920 when it lay on open heathland. By 1955 conifer trees surrounded the monument. In that year a small excavation was undertaken by the archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes (then married to the novelist J.B. Priestley and living at nearby Brook Hill House) and Jack Jones, the Curator of Carisbrooke Castle Museum. A sandstone kerb edging part of the mound was discovered, together with a flint scraper and two sherds of pottery but no burials were found.

From the Longstone we walked west along a former Forestry Commission track offering splendid views of the chalk cliffs beyond Freshwater Bay. From the track we observed a very large Bronze Age round barrow (burial mound) situated on a prominent Greensand ridge to the north of the track. This monument is one of relatively few round barrows on the Isle of Wight situated away from the central chalk ridge or southern chalk downs. Like the Longstone and Castle Hill it was engulfed in conifer trees until the 1990s. Since that time Mottistone Common has been cleared of trees and restored to heathland. At the west end of Mottistone Common we walked through the grounds of Brook Hill House and then briefly north on the road before turning east to walk up Pay Down. Frank and Vicky Basford recalled that this land was ploughed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, causing erosion to the Pay Down round barrows. From Pay Down we walked to the top of Mottistone Down to examine the 'Harboro' group of round barrows. The place-name 'Harboro' is of Old English origin and may refer to 'the chief or most important hill or barrow'. 'Hauedburghe' was one of 16 warning beacons listed in 1324 in West Medine and a later list of beacons in

1638 included one 'on Harboro Downe'. One of the round barrows has a flattened top which may have accommodated the beacon. Most of the barrows were subject to 19th century excavation and there are records of skeletons being found. Like the Longstone, Castle Hill, the Mottistone Common Barrow and the Pay Down Barrows, the Harboro barrows are Scheduled Monuments.

From the summit of Mottistone Down we descended to the Longstone and then continued down the hollow way to the Mottistone Manor car park.

Vicky Basford

Wednesday 16th January

Godshill Walk

Just three members braved the rain for the 16th January Godshill walk. We walked through large asparagus fields that have cropped well for four years, passing the site of an old Dutch barn. We stayed a while looking at Great Budbridge Manor. Thousands of people have found shelter here through the ages. It is estimated that there has been continuous habitation in this area for 200,000 years. There have been many different buildings, and at one time there was a moat around the living area. The house we see now was built by Sir Robert Dillington in 1633. In the 13th century this was known as Buttbridge.

On to the lake at Kennerly, dug about 20 years ago, then under the old railway bridge. The disused railway track follows the old Motkin Boundary, an Anglo-Saxon boundary discovered from aerial photos by David Motkin. Jill produced a copy of the 1812 map, which pre-dates the railways. The footpath we used was then the main road into Godshill. It was interesting to note the Wyvern on the old school building of 1615, before walking up to the church. January 16th and a bank full of daffodils. We cut back along the side path through the cottages into a nice dry tea shop.

Jill Green

Thursday 14th February

Newchurch Snowdrop Walk

The spectacular sculptured blanket of mist covering Arreton valley quickly evaporated under bright sunshine as fourteen members gathered at Newchurch car park, to be entertained by two red squirrels on an adjacent garden fence. After considering the location, geology and ancient river-gravels of a more elevated East Yar valley, we recalled the history of the village, and of All Saints Church (1087) which we could enter, before viewing a fine display of Snowdrops in the churchyard. This early "little gasp of white astonishment" provides flowers for Candlemas, and also has connections with the pagan Imbolic festival. The plants have special adaptations to cold weather, and their seeds carry an eliasome appendage to attract and feed the ants that disperse them.

Entering Martin's Wood, planted in 2001 with 8500 trees and given in 2014 to Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, we recalled the remarkable lives and farming enterprises of Martin (1925-2012) and Norah (1925-2018) Boswell, before examining a mature tree exhibiting inosculation, the union of two trunks leaving a 'lucky' hole through which hands can be shaken. The 'Bioblitz' survey of 2014 and large number of rare mining-bees in the wood were mentioned, and a new threat posed by the invading exotic Asian Hornet, already present in the New Forest.



Photos: Michele van Buren

Crossing the wood, we took the path past Hill Farm to Youngwoods Copse, noting the greater extent of medieval Borthwood forest, called Bordwode in 1290, possibly where wooden boards were made. The history of Youngwoods 'Garden Village' was summarized, and the attractions of the nature reserve acquired by Wight Nature Fund in about 2000. Progressing around the western edge of this picturesque dappled woodland, we descended into the East Yar valley along a recently improved linking path and bridge financed by a donation from Janet Woodward, mother of one of the present members, Helen Danby. We talked about the valley, catchment area and former peat-extraction activities, before crossing the former railway to follow a narrow, muddy path along a short meandering stretch of the river to the weir of Alverstone Mill, where some details of the mill were given.

Returning to the old railway, now a cycle-track, we saw Alverstone Marshes SSSI, which Mary Edmunds described. Alverstone Station was supervised from 1899 to 1914 by Station Mistress Mrs Fanny Young. The history of the poorly financed Newport to Sandown Railway, promoted in 1868 but long incomplete, was recounted in terms of the rivalry between the towns of Cowes and Ryde to provide ferries for the increasing number of visitors travelling to the growing holiday resorts between Sandown and Ventnor. Nearby at Alverstone, south of the river, a lake dug in 2005 for wildlife became an important archaeological site when the remains of a possible Roman road were uncovered, and some much earlier wooden causeways over the marshes. The group then returned along the cycleway to an uphill footpath into pleasant woodlands leading to the north east corner of Martins Wood.

Mike Cotterill & Michele van Buren

Wednesday 17 April

Brighstone, Rowdown and Coombe

Twelve members met in Brighstone on a bright sunny morning. We began by considering the origin of the place-name, first mentioned in Domesday Book in 1086 and meaning ‘the farmstead or estate belonging to a man called Beorhtwig’.

Climbing to Rowdown, ‘the rough hill’, panoramic views opened out before us. We could see the manor of Waytes Court, so named after the Wayte family, owners from 1321 until the 17th century. At Barnes High in the distance Gerald Dunning found a Middle Bronze Age urn cemetery, with cremated remains buried inside burial urns – indicating a coastal community. Also on the coast we could see Grange Chine, which takes its name from the monastic farm originally recorded as ‘the monks’ grange’ c.1290, one of the many belonging to Quarr Abbey.

Moving a few steps through the gate, we were then standing at the top of Hoarstone Lane. Hoarstone – ‘Old stone’ – hints at a possible prehistoric monument which may once have stood in the area. This further raises the conjecture as to whether this might have been associated with the Bronze Age cremation urn containing human bones found projecting from a bank on Rowdown in 1919 – with presumably an accompanying barrow?

As we proceeded on the path the other side of the down, we had a clear view of Coombe Tower, or at least the prominent hillock where it once was sited. Known locally as ‘Miss Bull’s Thimble’, there are various versions of the story attaching to it, all connected with Elizabeth Bull who lived at Northcourt round the turn of the 19th century.

Arriving at Coombe Farm, Renella Phillips explained how her great-great-grandfather had once worked there as a shepherd and waggoner, and that there has been a settlement at Coombe since Saxon times, with an entry in Domesday. The farm is mentioned in the Swainston Survey of 1630. It was later occupied by the Chipp family from 1841 to 1871, who subsequently gave their name to Chipp’s Moor, still remembered in house names in Moortown Lane.

In Moortown Lane itself we stopped to look at the ship graffiti carved on a barn wall and conjectured what might have prompted their carving. In the vicinity also was Rock Roman Villa, partially excavated by David Tomalin in 1975, and dated to AD 275–300.

Next came Mottistone Mill, firmly set in Brighstone parish rather than Mottistone itself, but its provisions would presumably have gone to the once separate Mottistone parish. The mill was sketched by Turner in 1795 when he visited the Island, apparently in preparation for a watercolour commission: no watercolour is known, but we have the sketch! Longstanding members will know that from the 1950s onwards it became the home of Society stalwarts Oliver and Dorothy Frazer.

Winding along footpaths we then descended Gaggerhill Lane, stopping to look at the Old Chapel, which had served as the Methodist chapel for Brighstone right up to 1999. We were now at Hunnyhill, with its somewhat confusing range of buildings answering to that name. Hunninghill Farm is recorded as a farmstead from the 17th to 19th centuries. Lower Hunnyhill Farm is presumably the same building recorded as the Grade-II listed Lower Hunninghill Farmhouse. A Victorian house called Hunning Hall sits on the main road at the top of Chilton Lane. And the *modern* Hunnyhill Farm is currently the subject of planning approval for development. The origin of the name is for once deceptively simple: ‘the hill where wild honey is found’.

We then circled south of the village along Chilton Lane, returning via the adjoining footpath. Chilton originates from the Domesday place-name *Celatune*, meaning most probably ‘the farmstead or estate near the chine or deep valley’, or just possibly ‘the farmstead or estate belonging to a man called Cēola’. To the left of the footpath, the fields

were probably ‘open fields’ in the medieval period, i.e. they were used for strip farming – as identified in the 1630 Swainston Survey by Johanna Jones.

Jackie Hart adds the following natural history observations from the walk: Of particular interest was a Green Tiger Beetle, spotted by Michele Van Buren. Also spotted were the Orange Tipped and Speckled Wood Butterflies. Two species of introduced trees were noted in the hedgerows, Eucalyptus and Tamarisk, and a few wild flowers identified (however it was no one's speciality): White Dead Nettle, Lesser Celandine, Red Campion, Wild Garlic, Primrose, Bluebells and Ground Ivy. The hollow way we walked along was lined with Alexanders giving off a very heavy scent, and Blackthorn was still in flower in the hedgerow. Linnet, Jay, Jackdaw, Swallow and Kestrel were seen and the following birds were heard calling: Chiffchaff, Yellowhammer, Blackcap, Wren, Blackbird, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Willow Warbler, Robin, Green Woodpecker, and Pheasant.

We had the best of the morning in terms of weather, and as we circled the final short loop south of the village a sea mist was coming in fast.

Alan Phillips

Archaeology

Sunday 27th January ‘Cave Art: The Beginnings of Consciousness’ A talk by Alan Phillips

Alan explained to the packed room that the main focus of this talk would be on French and Spanish sites and that a key text, but not the only source, was ‘The Mind in the Cave’ by David Lewis Williams. As always with Alan’s talks the content was wide -ranging, well researched and illustrated and thought provoking.

Since cave art was first recognised as such around the turn of the last century there have been numerous theories and questions about its significance, but no clear or generally agreed answers.

Dating is still difficult but seems to cover a period between 35 – 11 thousand years ago from the time of the earliest *Homo sapiens*. However, recent scientific dating of symbols in a cave in Spain date them to about 65,000 BP which means they must have been painted by Neanderthals. This has huge significance for our understanding of human cognitive development.

Subject matter covers animals, human and animal / human figures, hand prints, signs, geometric forms such as lines and dots. Were they linked with hunting or fertility? Was there an association with magic? Were they symbolic or sacred? Why were the sites so often difficult to access? Was there an aesthetic sense? What was the role of music? Primitive flutes and bull-roarers have been found in some caves.

It is clear that the art is a response to a life we cannot envisage and that early humans could already conceive of an alternative reality. So the question arises - ‘what is consciousness?’ We are all aware of altered states of consciousness – dreams, visions etc– and how music, dance, drugs can alter our awareness. Yet maybe dreamlike states were as real to our ancestors as what we call reality.

Shamans, to use the current term, have throughout history and across cultures been central to rituals and liaised between the physical and the spirit world. Altered states of consciousness enabled them to travel between the two. A more recent example is provided by the San Bushmen in South Africa. Their complex world view was dismissed by Western empire-builders because it was beyond their understanding but we are now more willing to value other spiritual cultures.

Alan then focused on 2 cave sites in more detail, both in the Dordogne and both from roughly the same period. He showed many of the images and discussed what they could signify. Gabillou is a simple layout with a tunnel only wide enough for 1 person. 18 lamps have been found, giving insight into the working conditions but perhaps also the flickering light by which the images were viewed.

Lascaux is much more complex and it's possible that different areas were used for different purposes and by different people. Objects have been placed in the walls and it is suggested that the painted wall is a membrane between the real and the spirit world. This is consistent with the practices of the San bushmen. Afterwards, one of the audience gave a moving account of her own experience as witness at such a ritual. It has been suggested that when *Homo sapiens* developed cognitive ability, other abilities seemed to come as part of the mix – language, art, music, dance, religion.

Coincidentally, the artist Anthony Gormley presented a programme on BBC that evening on the same subject. His was a very personal response from his perspective as an artist and was another attempt to enter the minds of our distant ancestors.

Neolithic Enlightenment: A talk by Delian Backhouse-Fry

Following on from the previous talks tracing early human development this presentation was packed with detail showing how this period of pre-history transformed human existence. She pointed out that the term 'The New Stone Age', conjuring up images of the Flintstones, does not do justice to the complexity of this era when many of the foundations of our modern society were laid down.

A few years ago, Delian travelled to Chatal Hyuck in Turkey where much research has been done into the homes and technology of early settled communities. She also saw modern people maintaining the traditional crafts, passed on through the generations as they would have been thousands of years ago.

It all began with farming, with the planting and harvesting of grain and then other crops and the domestication of animals. The warming climate would have played a part and Delian vividly described the changes that developed from this.

The settled lifestyle that came with farming led to an attachment to a local area, a sense of ownership and focus on seasonal weather patterns. Improved nutrition led to an increase in population which put pressure on the local resources and so led to migration in larger numbers than previously.

More efficient food production allowed time to work on new technologies and some changes in roles. Pottery, basketry and weaving were commonplace. Pride was taken in the product and decorative art developed. More permanent housing was constructed and communities formed to work together. And religious / spiritual life developed; at Chatal Hyuck there seemed to be a form of ancestor worship with skulls plastered into the houses. Cowrie shells placed in eye sockets had been brought a considerable distance from the coast and may indicate trading.

Gradually the culture spread westwards but by the time they reached Northern Europe, Britain and the Isle of Wight, they were cut off by rising sea levels. Modern sailors and beachcombers know how the currents support boat travel from Europe to Britain.

The first farming cultures of Britain during what is known as The Early Neolithic were probably a mix of native and incoming groups. DNA evidence is starting to show how far they travelled and by what routes. Not only were lifestyle, food-production and house building transformed, but the landscape was altered permanently by tree clearance and by the creation of monuments. From the Ring of Brodgar in Orkney to Newgrange in Ireland to Stonehenge and Durrington Walls in Wiltshire, to name just a few, there is widespread

evidence of the focus on the seasons which underpinned all farming activity. Burial mounds reflect the sense of belonging to a community and a place. On our island the Longstone at Mottistone marks the entrance to such a chamber, with views across the landscape and probably a processional approach.

These constructions tell us about early society; large numbers of people had to co-operate for a considerable time, in some case re-visiting over hundreds of years. Someone had to organise them, there would have been specialist tasks and they had to be fed. No longer was this just a world of family groups.

In this summary it is hard to do justice to all the changes that took place in a few thousand years. Already, by the late Neolithic changes were afoot across eastern Europe that would bring new technologies and social change.

Wednesday 27th March

Visit to Butser Ancient Farm

It was a glorious spring morning when 26 members took the short drive up the A3 to Butser Ancient Farm, near Petersfield. Our hearts sank as 6 coach loads of school children arrived while we were gathering in the car park, but the staff had everything well under control. The site seemed to swallow the children and on the few occasions we came across them we were impressed by the activities provided and their obvious enjoyment.

As for us, we were delighted with our guide, David Freeman. As an experimental archaeologist he built most of the houses on the site and so could provide details about research evidence, materials, construction techniques and how the buildings have lasted over the years. He is a skilled communicator and kept us all absorbed for nearly 3 hours, from the beginners to the most knowledgeable of our group.



We began in the Mesolithic with a branch and grass 'wigwam' that would have been used as a temporary, perhaps seasonal, base. It took him 2 days to build. We then travelled through time visiting replica houses from the Neolithic, Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon. Each house was based on a specific building from excavations in England or Wales. Those of us who are guides at Brading Roman Villa were particularly interested to see a hypocaust in action and talk to the volunteer slaves tending the fire.

A few buildings were more speculative. On Iron Age sites numerous post holes have indicated smaller rectangular structures that are often suggested to be granaries. David had created a granary and used it to store grain for a year, removing enough each day to hypothetically make bread for one family. He had also made other constructions – a hen house and a latrine. Even the boundary of the Iron Age village is part of an experiment, monitoring erosion and maintenance.



There is much more to see – farm animals, vegetable plots, medicinal herbs. Whilst a guided tour such as we had is the best way to see everything, one can visit privately and explore; there is plenty of information available. A highly successful day; many thanks to Ann Ticehurst for organising it.

Helen Jackson



Botany

Saturday 29th December New Year Plant Hunt

The day dawned rather grey and overcast but that did not deter 13 people arriving at the appointed place – the footpath leading from Undercliff Dive to Steephill Cove – to see what was in flower in the official ‘plant hunt’ period. Petty spurge (*Euphorbia peplus*) was our first plant ‘in flower’- defined as having anthers and or stigmas visible. Further down the footpath we found trailing bellflower (*Campanula poschykana*), pellitory-of-the-wall (*Parietaria judaica*) and annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*).

Turning west along the path towards Botanical Gardens we found a few species which proved more difficult to identify, as the plants were not looking ‘typical’. However, time spent poring through the keys enabled us to name plants such as grey field speedwell (*Veronica polita*) and smooth hawk’s-beard (*Crepis capillaris*). One of our number made a detour via Steephill Cove to find seaside daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*) and pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*) among others, while the remainder retraced our steps and walked across the top of the slope at Castle Cove, where a rosemary bush (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) was in full flower. At Flowers Brook, the meadow had common stork’s-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*) and the stream, wavy bittercress (*Cardamine flexuosa*). There was a rather small specimen of *Echium planagineum* but it had the required flower, so it was added to the list.

Pressing on across the cliff top to La Falaise car park, we saw yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*) and hoary stock (*Matthiola incana*), and peering over the cliff edge added Laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*) and ivy broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*) to our tally. We went steeply up Bath Road and on the sharp bend, there was a fine orange nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*) just to the side of the path. We now had a total of 44 plants. In the rather neglected flowerbed at the top we found shepherd’s purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*) and common chickweed (*Stellaria media*).

Pineapple lilies (*Eucomis bicolor*) still remaining from a municipal planting scheme ten or more years ago were also visible, but as we didn't consider them truly naturalised, we didn't add them to the list.

Over the railings of Ventnor Park, we spotted some early blooms of lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*) and working our way through the park, we found a single flower of dog violet (*Viola riviniana*) in the short turf, as well as a grass which looked atypical. On examination later, it turned out to be a sterile flower of creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), so another one we couldn't count. Our return to the start along the cliff path gave us our final plant, *Euryops pectineus*, a bright orange South African daisy.

Entering the species into the website later confirmed we had seen a total of 54 plants in bloom (when the website had been persuaded to take in the whole list, not just part of it!) and for all of 30 minutes or so we were in the lead for the longest list nationally. As more lists were compiled, we gently slid down the rankings, but I am pleased to report that several of the group were keen enough to look in other areas and enter 9 more lists or the next three days. All the data will be analysed by the BSBI to produce a report which may indicate if there are any year-on-year trends emerging. Full results at <https://nyph.bsbi.org/results.php>

Saturday 19th January

Indoor meeting

The group's indoor meeting reviewed the last year's recording, looked forward to the new season and gave the opportunity to see something of the wild floras of other parts of the world.

The New Year Plant Hunt had already taken place (see above), and we looked at our species tally in comparison to lists submitted from other parts of the country. 10 lists with 68 species and 154 records were submitted from the Island. Countrywide, 644 species were observed to be in flower, and 708 lists were submitted with 14325 records in total.

There were brief reports for the two species which the group monitors: Field cow-wheat and wood calamint. Both species have done well in the last year with field cow-wheat showing some spread away from the core population and new translocations of wood calamint establishing well.

Colin Pope, the BSBI recorder reported that there was good coverage of the Island in preparation for the Atlas 2020 project. The more unusual plants reported this year included Slender Tufted-Sedge (*Carex acuta*) found at Morton Marsh by Geoff Toone. The only previous records were from Bromfield (1856), who found it abundantly in several wet meadows near Sandown. Upright chickweed (*Moenchia erecta*) was seen at the Westbrook Centre during a group meeting; sea heath (*Frankenia laevis*) has expanded its populations at sites along the Medina; and a specimen collected in 2011 from the saltmarsh at Medham has finally been confirmed as slender centaury (*Centaureum tenuiflorum ssp anglicum*). Garden centres have provided a good hunting ground for other records of new plants, where they are naturalising after having come in with horticultural material. A full report will be in the Society's journal *Wight Studies*.

Dave and Hazel Trevan have recently visited Lanzarote; Dave gave us a talk about the habitats present there and showed photographs of some of the endemic flora particularly in relation to sandy habitats.

Over the tea break, there was the opportunity to look at herbarium specimens collected by members. There was also a display of winter twigs as a preliminary to the meeting planned for Appley Park in March.

The final item of the afternoon was an illustrated talk about Patagonia, which Colin and Jillie had visited in November 2017. In the southern hemisphere this season is late spring, moving into summer. There are wild and remote regions with stunning scenery in the Torres

del Paine national park; condors soaring over the Andes and the glacier-fed Lago grey (Grey lake) with icebergs. In the harsh conditions in this part of the world a species of southern beech called *Lenga* (*Nothofagus pumilio*) forms forests. We were able to recognise some of the plant families and see examples of the species found in Patagonia. Quite a number had a specific name derived from the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan after whom the sea passage between Chile and Tierra del Fuego is named: for example, Magellan's beech *Nothofagus betuloides* (photographed supporting a large fungus *Cyttaria darwinii*, formerly an important food source) and *Ribes magellanicum*, a species of currant. It's not possible to do justice to the talk or the region in a report such as this; you'll have to go for yourselves!

Saturday 9th February and Saturday 23th March Wood calamint

The Botany group cleared the larger layby very thoroughly in February. The overwintering plant rosettes were clearly visible, so much so that in the following week they were mapped and later drawn on to a map to enable comparison with the annual assessments of flowering. The other lay by was cleared by a contractor in subsequent weeks and again the position of the rosettes was recorded. Plugs grown by Ann Campbell from seed collected in 2017 were set out in March, in an area coppiced last year. They will be monitored to assess their establishment and flowering in late summer.

Saturday 2nd March Appley Park

We are used to identifying trees by their leaves, fruit or flowers together with their outline shape and bark characteristics. In winter, their twigs are the major distinctive feature. Several new keys to winter twigs have been published recently and the botany group tested out The Field Key to Winter Twigs by John Poland.

Appley Park has a good range of trees and woody shrubs, some native or naturalised and others planted. We began by looking at the twigs of horse chestnut which are relatively large. Consequently, it is easy to distinguish the different types of scar, produced when the leaves and bud scales are shed; the colour, shape, and arrangement of the bud scales; and the lenticels, the gas exchange pores in the bark.

We split into two smaller groups to examine the twigs of other trees in the park, using hand lenses to check their features against the descriptions in the keys and to arrive at a definite identification. The first decision we needed to make related to the arrangement of the buds and leaf scars along a twig: alternate; opposite or nearly opposite; or whorled. In some cases, we had extra clues e.g. the resinous scent from hybrid black poplar or fruits still on the tree. A recording form was available for anyone who wanted to make notes of the characteristic features for future reference. A rather chill wind and the onset of rain curtailed the meeting slightly, but we hope to have a similar meeting next year.

Saturday 13th April Rowlands Wood

A select group of eleven people, not deterred by 'road closed' signs, enjoyed a visit to this site owned by the Gedling family, IWNHAS members. We walked through the woodland on east side of the road, as a preliminary visit the previous week suggested that we would find a good variety of plants here. The site is large enough for us to carry out further surveys of other areas in coming years.

There were good clumps of narrow-leaved lungwort (*Pulmonaria longifolia*) and wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and the bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) were just coming out. Common dog violets (*Viola riviniana*) were found scattered throughout, and after a lot of searching we also located a plant of early dog violet (*Viola riechenbachiana*). The hazel (*Corylus avellana*) had finished flowering but redcurrant (*Ribes rubrum*), also in the shrub layer, was well in flower. A wet patch along one of the rides had meadowsweet

(*Filipendula ulmaria*) and ragged robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*) with leaves visible, as well as wavy bittercress (*Cardamine flexuosa*), jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*) and greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*).



Looking at Narrow-leaved Lungwort in Rowlands Wood Photo: Mike Cotterill

Three orchids were found, not quite in flower, but we were able to distinguish early purple orchids (*Orchis mascula*) from common spotted orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*) by examining the markings on the leaves. Early purple orchids have lengthwise blotches and common spotted orchids have transverse spots. There was also a small patch of common twayblade (*Neottia ovata*) recognisable by the large pair of oval leaves. The flower spike was just emerging on one plant. We found one new species for the site, the relatively uncommon (on the Island) hard fern (*Blechnum spicant*) - two small patches in a ditch at the edge of a ride.

Saturday 4th May Mount Joy cemetery

This visit enabled us to make additions to the species list obtained in September 2017, picking up spring-flowering species. The early purple orchids (*Orchis mascula*) were flowering well and there was a good show of cowslips (*Primula veris*) in the older areas of the cemetery. One part of the group started recording at the top of the hill of the footpath between Whitcombe Rd and Whitepit Lane, while the others concentrated initially on the area around the chapel. It was this area which gave the 'plant of the afternoon', meadow saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*) which has been known from this site since 2001. It was presumably introduced as there are no historic records, but it is known on the Island from pollen records in the peat deposits at Bohemia Bog.

There was a notable display of changing forget-me-not (*Myosotis discolor*) along the edge of one of the paths. This plant has very tiny flowers, 2mm in diameter, which are held in a tightly-curved flower spike. The flowers are pale yellow when they open, and later change to blue. The species total for the afternoon was 118, and 49 species were additional to those we found in 2017, bringing the recent botanical survey total to 142.

Saturday 25th May Turvill's Field, Totland

Turvill's Field is a small meadow just off Madeira Road in Totland which is maintained as a public amenity, with mown paths and seats, by the Parish Council. It is thought to have been horse-grazed previously. The main part is unimproved neutral grassland with a wooded edge and central clump of trees. The soils in this part of the Island are derived from the tertiary rocks of the Solent series and are a mixture of sands and gravels with some patches of calcareous marls.

The grasses were coming into flower, making them easier to identify and we found 15 species in total. Rough (*Poa trivialis*) and smooth (*P. pratensis*) meadow grasses were abundant and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) was found across the meadow. There was a small patch of quaking grass (*Briza media*) and French oat-grass (*Gaudinia fragilis*) was also present. Glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*) was found in the areas of shorter grass, and a patch of a larger sedge was also found, provisionally identified at the time as distant sedge (*Carex distans*), a plant relatively uncommon on the Island. This was later confirmed.



Distant Sedge, *Carex distans*, at Turvill's Field Photo: Colin Pope

Both bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and greater bird's-foot-trefoil (*L. pedunculatus*) were well out and made a bright splash of colour along with the southern marsh orchids (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) and the larger hybrid *Dactylorhiza x grandis* (southern marsh x common spotted orchid). Common spotted orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) were fewer in number and only just coming into flower. Common fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), rest harrow (*Ononis repens*) and meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) were not yet flowering but later will provide colour and a good source of nectar.

The trees and shrubs included field maple (*Acer campestre*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*) and Dutch elm (*Ulmus x hollandica*). The identity of the latter caused some discussion as the leaves were relatively large and bore some resemblance to wych elm (*U. glabra*). However, as they had been galled by a mite that does not attack wych elm, Dutch elm was considered to be the most likely. Under the shade of trees and shrubs, we found woodland species such as wild arum (*Arum maculatum*), soft shield fern (*Polystichum*

setiferum) hart's tongue fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) and pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*).

Sunday 9th June

Whitefield Wood East

This meeting was arranged at the request of the site owners of the Whitefield Forest Touring Park, who have carried out various works on the site since they took it over and hold a David Bellamy award. The central part of the site is laid out for tents, touring caravans and motorhomes, and it is surrounded by woodland, which is on the ancient woodland inventory (sites which are considered to have been wooded since 1600 and appear on the earliest maps). It was planted with conifers when owned by the Forestry Commission. A woodland walking trail has been laid out and marked with signs to show features of interest.

We began recording in the grassy area near the entrance and found yellow pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*) and wild strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) on the edge of the ditches. Further along the path, the remains of early purple orchids (*Orchis mascula*) and bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) were still visible. We stopped to check the speedwell species against identification keys. Looking at the arrangement (in spikes or single), and colour of the flowers, the fruits, the shape of the leaves, as well as the growth form of the whole plant, we were able to identify wood speedwell (*Veronica montana*), thyme-leaved speedwell (*Veronica serpyllifolia*), germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*) and heath speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*). Indicators of an acid soil were tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and slender St John's wort (*Hypericum pulchrum*).

In total, we found 23 plants which are considered to be indicators of ancient woodlands in the south-east region. The 'plant of the afternoon' was broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), which was seen just coming into flower on the verge of the minor road leading to the campsite.

Anne Marston



Ornithology

Saturday 19th January

Seaview

Five members met on a cold overcast morning in Bluett Avenue for a short sea watch, visit to Hersey Reserve and then a circular walk up Oakhill, along footpaths back to our cars. The tide was high but the only winter sea birds observed were two Great Crested Grebe. Cormorant were about as were Black-headed Gull, Common Gull and Herring Gull. On the shingle there were 10 Sanderling and five Ringed Plover later joined by a further five. At Hersey Reserve we saw four Little Grebe, two Cormorant fishing, Mallard, Coot, Moorhen, seven Shoveler (three pairs plus one male had an additional female in tow), a Greenshank, two Grey Heron, and besides the same gulls seen on the Solent and beach we also saw three Mediterranean Gull. As we were leaving the reserve we spotted a Kingfisher just flying away from the sluice. Further along the beach we saw 21 Oystercatcher. On a field beside Nettlestone Hill we counted at least 180 Barnacle Geese and with them one Snow Goose and a Swan-necked Goose. Towards the end of our walk we could hear two Great Spotted Woodpeckers drumming and we located them in a field beside the footpath and also could hear a fainter drumming which presumably was another bird. During the walk 43 species of bird were recorded and one Red Squirrel which was at the Westbrook Urban Saints Centre.

Sunday 17th February**St Helen's**

11 members met on a beautiful, mild morning at Latimer's Road for a walk in the vicinity of Bembridge Harbour. Unfortunately, the tide was high at the beginning of the walk and our first port of call was the causeway to look at the old mill pond and the harbour. Mallard, Coot, Little Grebe, Brent Geese, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Black-headed Gull and several Mediterranean Gulls were noted as well as Gadwall, Teal, Cormorant, Oystercatcher and Lapwing. We then turned back and headed to the Eastern Yar Road Bridge to check the river and passed some House Sparrows on the way. We then walked along the old railway line towards Bembridge. Amongst our sightings were two Marsh Harriers flying over the reed beds and Tufted Duck and two Great Crested Grebe on the pond as was a Redshank. At least 50 Canada Geese were feeding in the meadows as was a group of 20 Curlew. Cetti's Warbler was heard calling and Skylark were singing on the wing. Back at the harbourside on distant pontoons we found some Ringed Plover, Dunlin and Turnstone. Some of our members had good views of a Rock Pipit. In all 43 species were recorded.

Sunday 17th March**Whippingham**

After experiencing a stormy Saturday, 10 members and one visitor met at the Folly on a blustery but sunny Sunday morning for a walk along the east bank of the River Medina towards Newport. We started off looking over the river and to the west bank and saw 25 Turnstone on one of the pontoons. There were six Canada Geese on the lawn of Pinkmead and on the river bank nearby 12 Oystercatcher. A pair of Red Breasted Merganser was swimming on the sea. Amongst the Black-headed Gulls there was a Mediterranean Gull with its black headed markings fully developed and subsequently we saw at least another seven. There were also Herring Gull and two Great Black Backed Gull. Curlew were on the river bank and one was quite near us on the east side of the river. Walking along we noted about 100 Brent Geese feeding along the shoreline and ten Mallard flew by at various times. A Cormorant flew and we saw 22 Mute Swan in the far distance on the river towards Newport. Sky Larks soared in the sky singing away and a male Stonechat perched on a hedge top and then the fence. Both Meadow Pipit and Rock Pipit were spotted as was a Moorhen and a number of Coot. We looked for the Peregrine in the usual places but did not see it but we did have three Buzzard and a Kestrel hovered near us and two Mistle Thrush were seen. In the grounds of the static caravans we saw a Red Squirrel. Arriving back at the cars a Chiffchaff was heard singing. In all 41 species were noted during the course of the morning.

Saturday 27th April**Rowlands Wood**

11 members met on a very cold, windy morning for a walk in these delightful private woods with the kind permission of the owners. With one eye on the weather we walked in South Rowlands wood but as it was so windy we were unable to hear or see many birds but the bluebells were in full bloom and a glimpse was seen of a Red Squirrel. The birds heard were of the usual birds of woods: Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Wren, Blackcap, Goldfinch, Chiffchaff, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Dunnock, Robin, Woodpigeon and Buzzard. We did have a look in the area near the car park and saw Moorhen and Canada Goose and some Early Purple Orchids. An enjoyable morning was had by all.

Sunday 19th May**Laundry Lane, St Helens/Brading Marsh.**

Seven people met in the unmade up road for a walk along the old railway track and along the causeway at Bexley Point and back along the fields to our cars. Although the Bittern was not calling they have been seen and heard on the RSPB Marshes this year but we did have good views of three Marsh Harriers flying over the reed beds. The other bird of prey we saw was Buzzard – at least two early on but when we were by the pools on the 'Great Marsh'

we were surprised to see eight soaring above our heads and one nearby. There were at least 30 Cormorants sitting/standing on the usual trees on the main marsh with a number of nests visible. Skylark were heard singing everywhere. A Sedge Warbler was singing and briefly flew up from bramble at the edge of the path and a number of Reed Warbler were singing in the reeds on both sides of the track as well as by the bridge in the pools area of 'Great Marsh' as were Cetti's Warbler. Four Shelduck flew and a further two were seen on this marsh. A Great White Egret was seen flying in the far distance and three Tufted Ducks were noted, as well as at least five Lapwing. At least five Mute Swans were noted as were four Grey Heron. A male Pied Wagtail was feeding a youngster on the mud by the pools bridge. Many Chaffinches were heard and some seen in the oaks lining the track, plus we heard Whitethroat and Chiffchaff. In all a successful morning with 43 species of birds recorded. Quite often our walks turn into looking at general natural history and Jim Baldwin noted the following: Red and black Froghopper, *Cercopis vulnerata*, Miridae family – a plant or capsid bug, *Rhabdomiris striatellus*, a soldier beetle, *Cantharis rustica*, Red-headed or Common Cardinal Beetle, *Pyrochroa serraticomis*, Swollen-thighed, or Thick-kneed Beetle, *Oedemera nobilis* and 7-spot Ladybird (*Coccinella septempunctata*). We also saw a Green Lacewing, a pair of Red Damselfly, a Blue tailed Dragonfly, Orange Tip butterfly, Small Heath and a number of Wall Brown butterfly.

Friday 28th June

Parkhurst Forest

Ten people met in the main car park at Parkhurst Forest at 8.30 pm for a short walk to the site where we have seen and heard Nightjars in previous years. Although this meeting was about three weeks later than usual after a patient wait a very soft churring sound was heard and a bit later much louder. After waving a white handkerchief in the air a Nightjar came to investigate shortly followed by another. As night was closing in a bird came to sit on the top of a nearby bare tree and we had good views of its profile and we could also hear it constantly calling. Two Woodcock were seen flying over. David pointed out a Glowworm in the vegetation nearby. On our way back to the car park we heard Nightjars churring so we think we probably had five birds in all. We also spotted two more Glowworms and a Toad.

Jackie Hart



Entomology

30th May

Haseley Manor

Ten members attended this meeting with fine weather and little wind. The meeting began with a walk around some of the grassy areas near the pools, ducking under the ringing nets as we progressed. This sortie with a net produced our first two species, The Snout and a Garden Carpet. A further 11 species were attracted by the lamp near the ringing hut, where we also found a dead male Oak Eggar, with its distinctive markings. The commonest species was the Common Swift, but a number of distinctive species were found, most notably a Cream-spot Tiger with its yellow underwing and red body. Two Chinese Characters were also identified resembling a bird dropping, and among the larger species were a couple of Pale Tussocks. Treble Lines and Heart and Dart are two common species at this time of year and we found examples of both, along with two more carpet species: Silver Ground Carpet, and a very faded example of a Green Carpet.

This was a very enjoyable evening and we were grateful to Anthony and Vivien Roberts for their hospitality

Richard Smout

SOCIETY OFFICERS:-

President Dr Paul Bingham, 6 Forest Close, Newport, IoW PO30 5SF

General Secretary Dr. Colin Pope, 14 High Park Rd, Ryde IOW. PO33 1BP

Treasurer Miss J. Hart, 18 Cherrytree Road, Nettlestone, Seaview, IOW. PO34 5JF

Membership Secretary Mrs T. Goodley, 15 The Lawns, Fairlee Rd, Newport, IOW. PO30 2PT

Society Address :-

Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeological Society, Unit 16, Prospect Business Centre, Prospect Road, Cowes PO31 7AD

Tel : 01983 282596 Email: iwnhas@btconnect.com Web address: www.iwnhas.org

NEXT BULLETIN

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings for 1st July 2019 to 31st December 2019 should be sent to:-

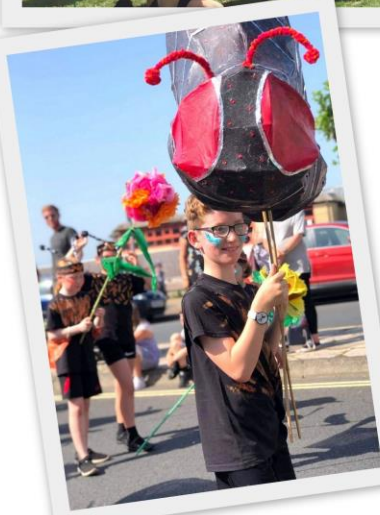
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The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be 2nd December 2019

Bulletin Editor: Colin Pope



**Glanville
Fritillary**



Spiny Seahorse



Rare Moths

Biosphere Island Mardis Gras celebrated the Island receiving Biosphere status. iWatch Wildlife were partnered with Nettlestone Primary School (Glanville Fritillary), Arreton Primary School (Spiny Seahorse) and The Learning Zone (Rare moths).