February 2012

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Bulletin

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Contents

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

As the winter storms hustle through our Island home, I hope you are all looking forward to the Spring and all sorts of walks, forays and projects.

This year we say goodbye and give many thanks to Lynda Snaith, our Programme Secretary for many years. She is retiring and handing over this difficult job to Maggie Nelmes.

We are progressing on the website and hope to have an updated version running as soon as possible.

Despite the dire effects of our national economy, we are picking up a steady stream of new members, whom we welcome to the Society.

With my best wishes to you all for 2012.

Delian Backhouse Fry

NOTICE BOARD

The late Mr. Laurie Tiller

Toni Goodley has kindly donated microscopes, lights and ancillary equipment, belonging to Laurie, to the Society. This equipment will be available for loan to members.

Nature Notes

The Hornet. *Vespa crabro***.**
The most mis-recorded of all our wasps. Most reports occur in the autumn when the queen wasps are on the wing, always without supporting evidence. The Society has just four records of the Hornet occurring on the Island and here is the fifth, with photographic evidence. Found by Jan Smallman of Rew Street, Gurnard 29-9-11 and taken to Barry Angel for verification and photographing**.** (**Photo page 17**)

The Society has no evidence of this species breeding on the Island.

Inosculation.
The dictionary definition of this is quite specific, "to unite or be united so as to be continuous". As a botanical term, inosculation describes the occurrence of one limb of a tree joining a neighbouring limb in a perfect graft and continuing as a single limb.

I am aware of three such occurrences involving a Sycamore, an Ash, and an Oak. It is a difficult condition to spot and may prove to be not uncommon. This condition probably occurs only in fairly large limbs, as in smaller branches wind movement would prevent such a union.

Inosculation does not include two plants sharing the same root area and emerging in close proximity and then parting. Finally I doubt if the union of two different species would be compatible.

If you are aware of any such occurrences I would be grateful for the information.

Multi-headed Daisy
The accompanying photo **(Photo page 17)** is again by Barry Angel of a specimen that occurred in one of his meadows. I believe there is a name for this, but I am unable to recall it. Would be grateful for any reports.

Barry Angel has also drawn my attention to the flower of the buttercup. Five petals? Pick a few and count them.

Sugar Maple *Acer sacharum*
The leaf is represented on the Canadian Flag

Has anybody seen this species on the Island? I would be grateful to have any sightings.

Bill Shepard

Shutes on the Island

Members will have seen my paper on Island hill names in the most recent *Wight Studies*. I am continuing with my work on topographical place-names and one of my projects is a more detailed study of 'shute' names and locations. I published a list of 28 shute names from the Island. This has now crept up to 30! Several of the names are not to be found on any published map or other source that I am aware of and are not named by local 'street' signs. I have listed these from Islanders' personal knowledge of locations.
Is there anyone who can add to my list?

My present list is as follows:

1. *Arthur's Shoote* (now known as Snookes Hill)
2. Barrack Shute
3. Beaper Shute
4. Berry Shute (Billingham)
5. Blackwater Shute
6. Blythe Shute (Chale)
7. Bonchurch Shute
8. Brighstone Shute
9. Brook Shute
10. Cheverton Shute
11. Clatterford Shute
12. Gusters Shute (Calbourne)
13. Hallett Shute (Norton)
14. Hutt Shute (Appleford Road)
15. Knighton Shute
16. Longbridge Shute (also known as Newchurch Shute)
17. Longlands Shute (Bembridge)
18. Longlane Shute
19. Loverstone Shute
20. Lime Kiln Shute (Mersley)
21. Marshcombe Shute
22. Newport Shute (Mersley)
23. Old Shute (Upper Ventnor)
24. Presford Shute
25. Princelett Shute
26. Pyle Shute
27. St Lawrence Shute
28. Shorwell Shute
29. Steephill Shute
30. Stone Shute (Blackwater)

I intend to publish my work on Shutes in the Journal of the English Place-Name Society. Any further contributions will be gratefully received and will be acknowledged when published. I can be contacted at 24 Woodpark Drive, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, HG5 9DL; 01423 862726; or johnmargham@yahoo.co.uk

John Margham

Religion and Ritual in Wessex
CBA Wessex Conference November 2011

After a welcoming address from **CBA Wessex chair Marjolein Butler**, **John Gale** from **Bournemouth University** gave an account of some recent work on Dorset round barrows. Pointing to the complexity of evidence of funerary practice surrounding round barrows, as among the most numerous and readily identifiable prehistoric features surviving to the present, he described two very different studies undertaken in the Allen Valley on Cranborne Chase and on the South Dorset Ridgeway in the west of the county that re-affirm this central theme. The continued use of round barrows dating from the later Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods through to the Iron Age and even Anglo Saxon periods, after more than 200 years of study still challenges interpretation and defies any over-simplification of meaning behind the belief systems under which they were created. He said there had been a move towards looking at the broader landscape to try to understand how and why they were created. Some of the Dorset barrows were built in a cluster on one side of a river valley, while at least one barrow clearly shows signs of having been cleared then rebuilt.

Professor Joshua Pollard, of Bristol University, followed with a talk called 'The Sacred Chalk: Landscape and Religious Life in Wessex During the Neolithic and Bronze Age'. Prof Pollard argued that the position of Wessex as a setting where eastern and western Neolithic identities met was instrumental in the area becoming host to some of the greatest monumental landscapes in British prehistory, such as Stonehenge and Avebury. Peoples from Wales could have met with the traditions of the Thames area here, and perhaps even their contemporaries from northern England. He further suggested that the chalk itself had special qualities, as a building material as well as visually, that led to its use in creating monuments. In fact, chalk and water in the landscape seemed to be important factors in the development of prehistoric Wessex, with naturally occurring sarsen stone also among key elements. One particular landscape enigma provided final powerful food for thought from this speaker: the White Horse at Uffington. This dynamic, highly stylised chalk figure does not seem to have been made to be seen from below, but appears to be galloping towards the west. Prof Pollard maintained this suggested it was tracking the movement of the Sun, like the 'sun horses' of Scandinavian culture, hitherto not noted in Britain.

Ronald Hutton, Professor of History at Bristol University, was next up and perhaps something of a 'star turn' with his talk on The Druids. His thesis, familiar by now from his popular books, begins from the standpoint that there is really no sound and irrefutable proof for the existence of ancient Druids in mainland Britain. And certainly, he maintains, nothing specific links ancient Druids to Wessex. Instead, the Druids' association with the area is a modern one, he says, which nevertheless holds a powerful fascination in the mind today. Prof Hutton delivered a masterful exposition of his position before going on to talk about shamanism (another of his specialities) and the role of the prehistoric tribal character, possibly not dissimilar from the shaman, in British culture who was engaged, elected or accepted to deal with the supernatural. Prof Hutton also ran through a brief but lucid summary of the history of accord and discord at Stonehenge before concluding with a discussion of the current thorny issue of reburial of ancient pagan remains which, sadly, has become a fresh bone of contention (no pun intended!) between archaeologists and one faction of the neo-Druid community. A personal highlight of Prof Hutton's talk was his assertion that neo-Druids and archaeologists can both potentially learn from each other, as the Druids strive to reconstruct the way our ancestors worshipped/celebrated, and the archaeologists do the spadework and cut the hard proof (and the templates for the reconstructionists) out of the ground.

Professor Andrew Fitzpatrick, Wessex Archaeology, presented Iron Age Shrines. In this talk, Prof Fitzpatrick examined some of the Europe-wide finds that have shaped our modern view of Iron Age beliefs, in particular. He was keen to stress that in Iron Age Britain, as farther afield, there was not one clear religion, or set of religious practices. Also, it appears from the archaeology that spiritual practice and belief was as much an everyday household feature as it was organised group episodes. He cited

house bone deposits - and the fact that Iron Age houses were oriented towards the rising Sun. He also spoke of the unique Chiseldon cauldron hoard and a possible case of animal sacrifice, as well as distinctive potential Iron Age shrines at Danebury, Hayling Island and Westhampnett. He also saw evidence for 'specialist priests', much more along 'shamanic' than more modern 'traditional religious' lines. Prof Fitzpatrick also concluded: 'People lived with their gods all the time.'

Professor David Hinton, of Southampton University, provided a powerful Dark Ages perspective with his presentation entitled Anglo Saxon Religions and Ritual. Post-Roman Britain seems to have been something of a bubbling and patchy melting pot, with belief and ritual practice both mixed and fairly wildly oscillating. It seems clear from some finds (including the Isle of Wight's) that Christianity and Pagan practice were relatively easy bedfellows for quite some considerable time before the former finally supplanted the latter as the religion of choice in these lands. But did Pagan and the later Christian Roman beliefs and practice survive into Saxon times? Place names seem to suggest that might be so - although this does not seem to obtain on the Isle of Wight. Prof Hinton, incidentally, concluded with an appeal to all those who would shortly be heading home: Beware of that primal Saxon obsession, Elf Shot!

Dr Simon Roffey, Winchester University, 'An Archaeology of Medieval Charity and Religion: A Case Study from St Mary Magdalen, Winchester'. Although on the face of it, not a great fit - especially chronologically - into the broader landscape of this conference, this well-delivered presentation proved both fascinating and illuminating. Charity was, apparently, one of the 'higher virtues' of early Christianity - and thus, of course, one of the most important to promote, for anyone with wealth. Hence the early flurry of founding of 'hospitals'. The Winchester site, under excavation for around five years now, appears to have started out as a pre-Conquest leper hospital - although Prof Roffey was keen to stress that other disfiguring diseases were also then included under the 'banner' of leprosy. The site is complex, multi-layered and difficult to unpick, but also seems to be yielding some useful information. For example, it seems that in the 12th century and before, it was well understood that leprosy was not as contagious as was previously (and subsequently) thought, so leper hospitals were not necessarily built outside urban areas. Indeed, they were apparently built on the major routes and just on the outside of our towns and cities, presumably with a view to collecting as many alms as possible, the lifeblood of these religious/hospital communities.

* **CBA Wessex chair Marjolein Butler** concluded with thanks to all and a brief and amusing summary of the conference ... and a reminder to all to beware of that dreaded Elf Shot.

Maurice Paul Stafford-Bower

LIST OF RECORDERS. 2011

FUNGI
Vacant

VASCULAR PLANTS
Dr C.R. Pope
14 High Park Road, Ryde, I.W. PO33 1BP ' 611591 colinpope@colinpope.plus.com

MOSSES & LIVERWORTS
vacant

MARINE (except birds) **TRICHOPTERA** (caddis flies)
TRICLADIDA (flatworms) **PLECOPTERA** (stoneflies)
HIRUDINEA (leeches) **EPHEMEROPTERA** (mayflies)
Dr.R.J.Herbert. 3 Trevor Road, Newport, I.W., PO30 5D 521040
roger.herbert59@btinternet.com

ODONATA (dragonflies etc)
Miss Elaine Rice. 25 Bannock Road, Whitwell PO38 1LF 730187 Erice73737@aol.com

HEMIPTERA (bugs)
GALLS
Dr. D.T.Biggs. 76 Albert Road, Gurnard, Cowes, I.W. PO31 8JU ' 292595
COLEOPTERA (beetles)
B.Shepard. Flat 18, Furze Brake, Whitepit Lane, Newport I.W. PO30 1NJ ' 526059
LEPIDOPTERA (butterflies)
Andy Butler, Cliff Cottage,, Wheelers Bay, Ventnor PO38 1HP ' 854925
LEPIDOPTERA (moths)
S.A. Knill-Jones. 1 Moorside, Moons Hill, Totland, I.W. PO39 0HU ' 752605
DIPTERA (flies)
HYMENOPTERA (bees, wasps etc)
Adam Wright. 10a Victoria Street, Ventnor, I.W. PO38 1ET ' 856319
aswrightento@yahoo,com
MAMMALS (except marine)
REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS
R.Grogan "Kervil Cottage", Hollow Lane, Chillerton, Newport, I.W. PO30 3ET
'72125richardg@hwt.org
LICHENS
Mrs, Sheila Street, The Haven, Old Vicarage Lane, Newtown I.W. streetecology@yahoo.com
BIRDS
The Isle of Wight Bird Recorder. Dr.Robin Attrill, 17 Waterhouse Moor, Harlow, Essex. CM18 6BA Robin@rpattrill.freeserve.co.uk

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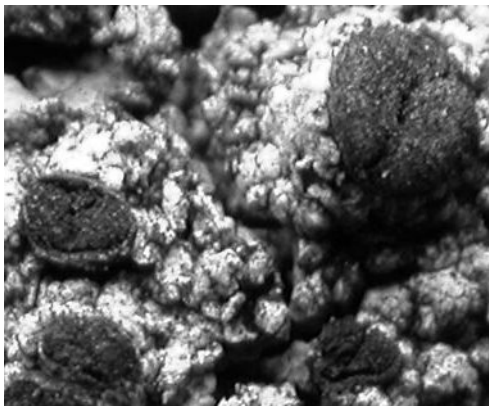
Lichens on fences and gates at Newtown

I am lucky enough to live within the National Nature Reserve at Newtown. My house is surrounded by ancient woodland adjoining flower rich meadows. Opposite my house is a gate leading into Walter's Copse, which is predominantly Oak, Ash and Hazel. The National Trust was given a donation to replace the gate and supporting fence. However the original gate was still in good condition and best of all was covered in a healthy growth of lichens. (**Photo** - Gate & Fence, **page 15**) Luckily, the National Trust wardening staff are extremely knowledgeable on the local flora and fauna and could see the importance of the gate for its lichen flora. They suggested to the donor that they replace the gate supports but leave the gate in situ. This they did and now the lichens can be enjoyed each time the gate is used.

Opposite Harts Farm on Gold Street, there is another gate that has a scarce lichen growing along the whole length of the top bar. *Cyphelium inquinans* is predominantly a northern pinewood species that has spread south with atmospheric acidification. It has a thick warty thallus (body containing fungal and algal cells) and large black fruits that leave a sooty black mark when rubbed.

Cyphelium inquinans

This gate (**Photo -** Gate Section**, page 15**) has a healthy lichen population of at least ten species growing on it and when it needs replacing should be left nearby, maybe alongside the hedge so that new lichens can colonise the wood of the new gate.

Similarly old fence posts can be left in the line of a new fence as seen here alongside the saltmarsh. (**Photo** - Fence Posts & closeup, **page 15**).

We are lucky here on the Island in not having too much air pollution to affect the lichen population. Gates and fences provide a niche habitat for species that grow on lignum (dead or worked wood) as opposed to species that grow on bark.

New lichen species for the Island

Whilst attending a botany meeting at Lake recently, Eric Clement from Gosport found a lichen new to the Island, *Pleurosticta acetabulum.* (**Photo page 15**). It was discovered growing on the seaward side of a maple tree in the car park above Little Stairs Point. Eric had already found the same species in a similar situation in Gosport. It is mainly a southern and eastern English species but is becoming more frequent in the north, possibly due to global warming.

New lichen species found at Newtown

A meeting of the Wessex Lichen Group was held at Newtown NNR in June and proved a very productive day with 112 taxa recorded. This included 107 lichens, two lichenicolous fungi and one related fungus recorded by lichenologists, plus two tree living fungi not normally recorded by lichenologists. An impressive five species of lichen were new to the Island, two were rediscoveries of species not seen for years, including a vulnerable BAP species, and 15 have rarely been recorded from the Island. The majority of the lichens recorded were growing on the magnificent old Oaks and a very rare species *Bacidia incompta* was found on a rain track on lignum in the hollow of an ancient Oak.

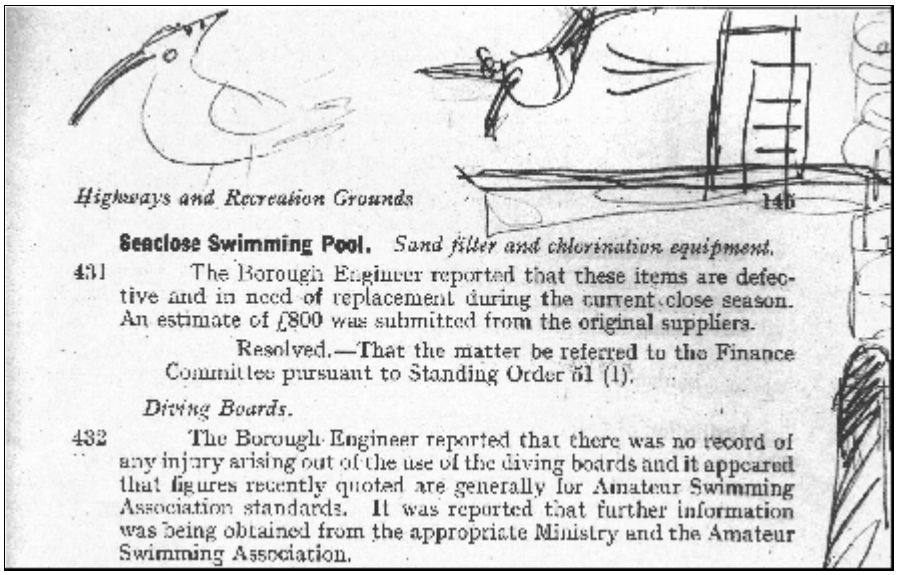
Sheila Street

A Hoopoe Doodler

Looking through some carefully bound minutes of Newport Borough for the 1960s I was surprised to see the number of doodles in the margin. Some of these were directly relevant to the topic under discussion: car allowances were accompanied by a speeding vehicle and a man smoking a pipe on a penny-farthing, while a decision on a dockside crane showed an excellent ink drawing of the machinery being debated. The drawings were on a set of minutes allocated to the Borough Treasurer's department, and were drawn during dull moments (assuming there were some) in Council meetings. There are a large number of drawings of councillors and fellow-officers, many of whom are smoking pipes; others include a hovercraft, two biplanes, a tennis match, a unicyclist, four fish, two dogs, a swan and a tufted duck. It seems remarkable that, given the state that the minutes were in once the doodling had taken place, the copies were carefully bound and given a leather spine, while the edges of the paper (and therefore some of the images) were trimmed.

Some research revealed that the Borough Treasurer at the time was Ron Machin. The possibility that they were drawn by Mr Machin himself increased when the doodles came to a halt shortly after a minute announcing that the Borough Treasurer would retire in May 1968. Ron Machin was our Society's President from 1966-68, and was particularly interested in fishing and birdwatching. The identification of our doodler was finally confirmed by the appearance of two drawings of a Hoopoe (one of which is shown here) in the agenda papers for the 18th October 1966. The bird report for the same year records a Hoopoe at Shorwell from the 15th October "until it was last seen going to roost on 21st". The four observers were Barry Angell, Mrs Godfrey, John Stafford and Ron Machin. Assuming that there was no identification guide smuggled into the meeting under the Borough Treasurer's desk, this is an extraordinarily good picture to be drawn from memory. The recollection of a good day's birdwatching must have made all the

discussions on diving boards at the Seaclose swimming pool, and the Joint Main Road Sub-Committee bearable.



Highways and Recreation Grounds 145

Seaclose Swimming Pool. *Sand filter and chlorination equipment.*

431 The Borough Engineer reported that these items are defective and in need of replacement during the current close season. An estimate of £800 was submitted from the original suppliers.

Resolved.—That the matter be referred to the Finance Committee pursuant to Standing Order 51 (1).

Diving Boards.

432 The Borough Engineer reported that there was no record of any injury arising out of the use of the diving boards and it appeared that figures recently quoted are generally for Amateur Swimming Association standards. It was reported that further information was being obtained from the appropriate Ministry and the Amateur Swimming Association.

Perhaps our next step should be to see whether any of our own Society papers for the 1960s carry the same wealth of drawings in the margin, or did the minute secretary of the day make sure that they were never on the President's desk for long enough to be made into works of art.

Richard Smout

Reports for General Meetings

9th July **Visit to Ryde Cemetery**

Twenty-six members gathered at Ryde Cemetery, where we were introduced by Richard Smout to our two guides Janette Gregson and David Earle from the Ryde Social Heritage Group, and we thereupon divided into two groups for a tour round the historical gravestones.

By 1840 the churchyard at St Thomas's was becoming full and George Player, the Lord of the Manor, donated one acre of land on what was then the outskirts of the town for a new burial ground – this area is now referred to as the Old Parish Cemetery and a cornerstone still survives marking its boundary. It is now also a nature conservation area with a profusion of meadow plants and insects.

The oldest burial found, of 1842, is that of a young American, Lawrence Brown, who fell from a ship off Ryde and was unavoidably drowned. Buried here are also many of the men and women who helped in the development of Ryde, including an imposing monument to Thomas Dashwood, who built Brigstocke Terrace, the Town Hall, St Thomas' and Holy Trinity churches, as well as many private houses – and even St Catherine's Lighthouse. He originally came from Whippingham to Ryde in the early 1800s to make his fortune, and it certainly paid off. An example of his tenacity can be seen when one November he was commissioned to carry out some work, most likely a piece of furniture; despite having no resources of his own he walked to his father's workshop in Whippingham, constructed the piece, strapped it to his back and then walked back to Ryde and presented it to a delighted customer the next day! By the time he died in 1861 he had become the wealthiest man in town, and his son, also Thomas, became the first mayor of Ryde in 1868.

The Chapel to St Paul was consecrated in 1840, but when two further chapels were subsequently built, it was used for many years as the town mortuary and is still known locally by that name, still possessing a mortuary slab. The Social Heritage Group currently use it for training sessions, such as making greeneries taken from the churchyard itself to place on burials.

Near to the chapel door is a group of three graves of distinguished doctors, among them Ambrose

Dodd, the founder and chief fundraiser for the IOW Infirmary based in Ryde, but who sadly died in 1847 before the foundation stone was laid. In the same area lies the headstone of the remarkable George Dash, who worked for the Infirmary for over seventy years. Among his first jobs was pumping water from a well twice a day, heavy work which led to a strong physique, enabling him to carry patients. When he married, a lodge was built for him at the front of the hospital. His work included hospital porter, gardener and even night porter, but when it was discovered that he had also been dressing wounds and extracting teeth in the absence of the house surgeon, this was a step too far and he received a telling-off! By 1900 he was more-or-less retired but continued living in the lodge and gardening, eventually moving to Carisbrooke and dying there in 1923, aged almost 100.

By the late 1850s the Old Parish Cemetery was filling up and four acres of land were purchased from the Player estate: one might argue that it had been a shrewd move on Player's part to donate the original acre! This area has since become known as the Old Cemetery (as opposed to Old Parish Cemetery and the New Cemetery). It was at this time in 1862 that the two central chapels were built, replacing St Paul's, as well as a lodge for the cemetery superintendent.

An impressive and quite unique grave in this area, built to his own design and including decorative tiles, is that of architect Thomas Hellyer, responsible for St John's Church Oakfield, the Infirmary, the Binstead Church rebuild, the Royal National Hospital at Ventnor and many others. This grave was completely obscured by brambles for many years and was restored during the recent restoration project. An imposing obelisk marks the Carter family plot: Francis Carter was a well respected carriage and harness maker and kept livery stables employing twenty-five people locally.

There are 52 Commonwealth Commission war graves in Ryde Cemetery, each marked by a simple white Portland headstone. An older grave with an intriguing metal object on top is in memory of a lieutenant killed on 1st July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme – the metal object being a heliochronometer, a kind of sundial. We also passed the graves of William Rickard, one of two VC holders in the cemetery, in his case for an act of bravery in the Crimean War; and that of Peter Grundy, killed by a booby-trap bomb in 1979 whilst on active duty in Northern Ireland, aged 21 years: still poignant and meaningful to a lot of people.

After the tours there was a chance to view, in the two central chapel buildings, the Heritage Learning Centre with its wealth of information, mapping project, and excellent exhibitions on all aspects of old Ryde. We learnt that as recently as 2005 the cemetery was almost derelict and a haven for vandalism and misuse. But with funding from the IOW Council and Heritage Lottery Fund as well as the enthusiastic commitment from the Social Heritage Group, the Ryde Cemetery Restoration project was born.

This consisted not only of conserving the cultural heritage of the cemetery, but of its nature conservation too. The now 12-acre cemetery is a remarkable ecological area, rich in wild flowers and hosting a wide variety of flora and fauna. As Colin Pope pointed out, the Old Parish Cemetery was established on ancient meadow land which had always been left for grazing, with no use of herbicides in the area, so old grassland plants such as Quaking Grass and Salad Burnet were much in evidence, as well as Knapweed and Mouse-ear Hawkweed. This is also the only known site for Harebell in the north-east of the Island; and much in evidence was a rare, pale yellow Bedstraw which is a hybrid between Ladies Bedstraw and Hedge Bedstraw – the most Colin had ever seen anywhere. During a survey carried out a number of years ago, Margaret Burnhill recorded over 160 plant species in the cemetery, and 33 species of tree.

Richard Smout led a team on an entomological search which yielded Meadow Brown, Holly Blue, Marbled White, Red Admiral and Small Copper Butterflies, as well as a Six-spot Burnet Moth and a Common Field Grasshopper. A dead Slow-worm had also been found at the very start of the meeting.

This visit proved a real eye-opener, not only to the wealth of social history that lies, quite literally, buried beneath one's feet in this unsuspected area of Ryde, but also to the staggering achievement of the heritage group in restoring and uncovering this history, along with much else in Ryde, within a relatively short number of years. Their website is well worth a look at http://www.rshg.org.uk/ or www.rydecemetery.org.uk/. Better still, pay a visit yourself: the cemetery is open every day, and the Learning Centre can also be visited daily between 10am and 4pm, subject to seasonal fluctuations and staff availability.

Alan Phillips

13th August **Fort Victoria Country Park**

If you thought you knew Fort Victoria Country Park, you are in for a surprise! Bob Edney, the Isle of Wight Council's Countryside Officer, begins his tour by showing us a strange looking edifice hidden in the woods close to the fort. There's a sealed chimney stack and below, in a depression in the ground, what looks like the foundations of a building. But wait a moment, what's that bricked-off door? Bob tells us how the chap who dives in the well at Carisbrooke Castle ventured through it and discovered an underground room, surprisingly well preserved. Steam engines were installed here to provide light for searchlights in the Solent. This is just one of a number of tunnels and bunkers in this area. Fort Victoria was one of a series of forts, built on both sides of the Solent to defend Portsmouth and repel invaders, in the mid nineteenth century, when France was again the threat.

The Council has received a Lottery grant to make some improvements to the Country Park. Part of their management plan is to weed out self-generating sycamores to let in more light. There is a variety of trees here, including Corsican pines, whose cones are nibbled by red squirrels. A straight roadway runs through the woodland, parallel with the shore, built by soldiers in the 1870s, with drainage ditches. The Council plans to make a feature of this avenue, by widening it to create a ride for the future, and to let in light to encourage more wild flowering plants to grow. Coppicing is practised for the same reason and the Council has planted hazels, creating an understory to provide nuts for squirrels and dormice. Unfortunately there are signs here of the dreaded Dutch elm disease. The coastal path is to be routed past the fort to promote the various commercial enterprises there.

In the woods we see Oliver Frazer's nature trail. Oliver, a keen naturalist, was once a leading member of our society. We also find sculptures carved from natural wood by Paul Sivell, well known on the Island for his work. The Council plans to create features like these all along the roadway and is open to ideas from the public. Bat boxes have been attached high up on the trunks of trees.

Last winter, with the help of home educated children, the Council created woodland glades. They cleared sycamores and planted hazels. Wild flowers are spreading here and soon buzzards will be gliding overhead, as they do in glades created at Miill Copse, indicating that rodent life is flourishing below. A gap in the trees also opens up a spectacular view across the Solent to Sway Tower in the New Forest. People are encouraged to stay on the paths where the cliffs are eroding, as adders live in the cracks.

We find a variety of wild plants. *Enchanter's nightshade* grows along the roadway, along with *black bryony, wild clematis, arum lily* and *woundwort*. Where the path emerges from the woodland at the avenue's end and climbs up to a viewpoint, we find *fleabane, greater knapweed, lady's bedstraw* and other late summer flowering plants, basking in sunlight. There's also a wonderful view of Hurst Castle, perched on its shingle bank that juts out a mile into the Solent and considerably narrows the channel through which ships have to pass. These are treacherous waters to navigate, with a strong current and sandbanks, and any mid nineteenth century invader would have had to run the gauntlet between the formidable batteries of heavy guns on either side of Henry VIII's Hurst Castle and the many smaller forts built at that time along this Island shore. Directly below us, jutting out into the sea, is Fort Albert, now privately owned. The channel here is twice as deep as it is at Ryde. In winter, Bob tells us, shingle is pushed up by the current and forms little islands. At the western end of the park there is a sealed-off military area where a hospital and lookout post were sited.

We return to Fort Victoria along the shore. On the sheltered crumbling cliffs we find *carline thistle, yellow wort, coltsfoot* and *hemp agrimony*, and on the shore *grass-leaved sea orache*. *Sandwich terns* are screeching and the ringing of the bell buoy just offshore lulls us with its rhythmic chant, the rhythm of the waves. Above the beach we find layers of Lawson's cypress from Mill Copse, near Yarmouth, retaining the low sea wall. Bob tells us how it has been pickled in seawater to preserve it. This is a good example of recycling commercial trees that once darkened our woodland and smothered the natural vegetation on the woodland floor. *Marram grass* from Norton Spit has been planted here in front of the fort. It needs shifting sands to grow.

Bob Edney demonstrates great enthusiasm for and knowledge of countryside management, and once again he has given us a fascinating tour. We look forward to seeing this country park transformed.

Maggie Nelmes

17th September Parkhurst Forest – A History, by Clive Chatters

The original definition of a forest was not an area covered in trees, as it is now. Over a thousand years ago, when the first records mention Parkhurst Forest, it was an area over which the Crown exercised certain rights and privileges. It could have any landscape. And for most of its history Parkhurst Forest was not covered in trees. Nowadays it is only a tiny portion of what it was, due to the encroachment of farmland.

This was Clive Chatters' introduction to his walk through the Forest, based on his research for our Society's Proceedings published in 1993. After the Norman Conquest a Lordship was granted, affording a considerable level of power and independence which appears to have been extended to the administration of the Forest. Whilst the Lords claimed a wide range of rights over the forest, they also granted rights to others. In 1075 ownership reverted to the Crown, but was granted to the de Redvers family in 1101. In 1293 the Crown bought the Lordship back from Isabella de Fortibus.

By about 1800 Parkhurst Forest was similar in appearance to the New Forest today. It was about one-third trees and two-thirds open space. Herds of *fallow deer* grazed there, together with *geese, sheep, pigs, wild ponies and cattle*. But the New Forest has an acid soil.

The first evidence of the granting of common rights in the Forest dates from about 1135. The recipients were the Burgesses of Newport. The Lords also granted rights of pasturage to various religious orders on the edge of the Forest. They did, however, reserve the right to exclude livestock from the commons when deer were giving birth in spring. Evidence appears to show that the Forest also housed one of the earliest commercial *rabbit* warrens in Britain.

As well as the commoners' livestock and rabbits, the Lords' cattle, pigs and geese also grazed the commons and the pigs browsed beech-mast and acorns. The Lords had the right to gather firewood, and *bracken* and *broom* were used for animal bedding. A record of sales from the Forest in 1270 includes peat, leaves, bark, loppings and felled timber. A little later, a record shows that fifty sheep were grazed there. The Lords employed staff to regulate activity in the Forest and when the Crown took over, the management of the Forest remained about the same. Bailiffs and other agents managed all of the Crown's land on the Island.

In the sixteenth century the Crown sold the Forest grazing rights to sheep farmers which was cause for bitter complaints from the Burgesses of Newport. They feared that sheep farming was impoverishing Newport and forcing people to leave at a time when the threat of invasion by Spain was heightened and people were needed to defend the Island.

In the early seventeenth century parts of the Forest were enclosed and the Crown tried to abolish the right to gather firewood. This was at a time when Charles 1 was eager to increase his revenues from the Crown estates throughout the country.

More documentation is available for the eighteenth century than for the previous two hundred years. In mid century the Crown tried to claim royalties from the commons adjacent to the Forest, but one of the owners, Winchester College, disputed this right. In his report of 1770, the Surveyor General stated that the Forest was about three thousand acres and contained a keeper's lodge and 200 deer, and that the soil belonged to the Crown, but the herbage was subject to common rights. Among the first enclosures of the Forest at about this time, one was for a workhouse, now part of St Mary's hospital, and another for a barracks, neither of which met with much opposition. Towards the end of the century important areas of the country were being mapped by the founders of the Ordnance Survey. The Forest was mapped by Captain Mudge, revealing "classic pasture woodland of scattered trees and glades within open landscape".

By the early nineteenth century, when the Crown sought an Act of Parliament to enclose the Forest, there was little timber of any value left there, but the soil was pronounced good. The whole forest, some three and a half thousand acres of which about one third was woodland, had been open to grazing by deer, cattle, pigs and geese. Foraging by animals produced wood pasture, open in character with many ancient trees, especially oak. These provided fuel, building materials and by-products such as bark. The trees were managed to provide food for livestock, being shredded and pollarded. The remaining two-thirds of the Forest were mainly heathland interspersed with grassland 'lawns' on richer soils which were heavily grazed by livestock. Broom, gorse and bracken were cropped on dry heath and peat was dug from wet heath and maybe also from valley bogs. The Forest was the last significant common in the

north Wight to be enclosed. The Crown cited the need to supply timber to the Navy as justification for the enclosure of the whole of Parkhurst Forest along with twenty-seven thousand acres of forest in the South of England.

From the early nineteenth century onwards the Forest was used to produce timber or for farming. Planting in Parkhurst followed the methods used in the New Forest. Oaks were interspersed with a sprinkling of Spanish chestnuts, but the heavy clay soil caused acorns and oak seedlings to fail and soil improvement was either impracticable or too expensive. The Forest made a large deficit in the first half of the century and it has remained unprofitable ever since. By the end of the nineteenth century much regret was being expressed for the wholesale destruction of this once valuable landscape and for the loss of its open space for fresh air and exercise.

On our walk through the Forest Clive pointed out a variety of habitats. Wild flowers that grow on the verges in the forest rides once flourished in the rich wildflower pastures. We found *narrow-leaved lungwort* that is still common in Parkhurst, but very rare in most of Britain. *Butchers broom* and *holly* are classic plants in wood pasture and from them you can map where ancient trees grew. "Parkhurst Forest is remarkable in the great diversity of woodland species that survived grazing or have colonised the site since enclosure", Clive writes. We scoured an area of the Forest in vain for *pearl bordered fritillary* butterflies, this being their only known site on the Island, where they feed on violets. Hobbies have bred in the trees here. We did see a *southern hawker dragonfly* and a *devil's coach-horse beetle*, very fast moving and wingless, the female bending her abdomen like that of a scorpion.

This was an enjoyable walk, giving valuable insights into a way of life that is long since past here on the Island, but which we can still see practised to a certain extent in the New Forest.

Maggie Nelmes

22nd October Mammals of the Wight – A Historical Perspective

This was a joint meeting with the Hampshire and Wight Wildlife Trust, designed to build on the paper in the current Proceedings, 'Wight Studies', entitled 'Wild Land Mammals of The Isle of Wight: A Historical Based Review'. The speakers were Derek Yalden, President of the Mammal Society, Richard Smout, County Archivist, and Richard Grogan, Head of Conservation at the Hampshire and Wight Wildlife Trust and our Society's Mammals Recorder since the 1990s.

Setting the scene, **Paul Bingham** described how the Isle of Wight was connected to the British mainland more recently than was previously thought, and it was severed and rejoined several times as sea levels rose and fell, allowing land mammals to cross at times, and then cutting them off. Some of the earliest fossilised mammals in the country were found on the Island. **(Picture page 18)**

Derek Yalden - 'The Evolutionary Importance of Island Races or Endemic Species' and illustrated this with slides, comparing the size and colour of bank voles from various British islands and parts of the mainland and the shape of their teeth. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries theories were put forward as to how these voles reached the islands. Then there was the question of the wood mouse: why do some Scottish islands have one form of wood mouse and other islands scattered about them have another form? Could the mice have reached some islands earlier than others, during warmer periods? These island races have generated a lot of scientific interest.

Charles Darwin recognised the evolutionary importance of endemic species when he compared finches from different islands in the Galapagos archipelago. These islands have very different habitats and the finches had had to adapt to eating different food, resulting in gradual changes in the shape of the bill. Some rodents, such as the Galapagos rice rats, have adapted in similar ways. Unlike the British islands, the Galapagos are oceanic and have never been connected to the mainland. They are remote, being about a thousand kilometres from the nearest mainland. So how did the ancestors of these mammals get there, long before human intervention was possible? Did they float there on vegetation? Mammals don't adapt to change as well as birds and some of the species that first colonised these islands are now extinct.

Due to post-glacial sea level rise that cut Britain off from France, and Ireland from Britain, Ireland has only twenty-four species of land mammal, Britain has forty-seven and France ninety-two. The pine marten occurs in Scotland and Ireland and right up to the north of Scandinavia. There is also a thin

distribution in the Mediterranean. Pine martens must have crossed over to Britain on the land bridge after the last Ice Age, about eight thousand years ago. Beech martens, on the other hand, must have arrived too late in the north of France to get across the Channel.

Islands can play an important role in the conservation of mammal species, by providing safe refuge. By introducing alien species, humans sometimes endanger indigenous species. An example is the sikha deer whose introduction to Scotland could endanger the red deer that live in good numbers on most Scottish islands. Although sikha deer are much smaller than red deer and do not normally hybridise with them, they could mate with juvenile red deer, and thus the red deer could be wiped out. That is why it is now illegal to take deer from the mainland to the islands.

Similarly, The Isle of Wight provides a sanctuary for the red squirrel. In 1920 it was widely distributed in Britain, but by 1970 it only occurred in Southern England on the Island. On Anglesey all the grey squirrels were killed to preserve the reds and a close eye has to be kept on the bridges that enabled the greys to cross over the natural barrier of the Menai Straits. That is one good reason for the Isle of Wight not to have a fixed link to the mainland.

When the Island was separated from the mainland after the last Ice Age, there was some deciduous woodland and still some pines. The habitat should have been suitable for red squirrels, dormice and deer. Being a relatively small area, there may have been only thirteen wolves and lynx, whose territories are large, and some ninety-four pine martens. It would have been easy for humans to wipe them out.

Richard Smout – 'Bucks and Tapes, the Royalist and the Churchwarden'
Richard searched through the archives for mention of mammals and found Sir John Oglander's seventeenth century writings to be a good source of information, especially about deerSir John, born at Nunwell,.(**Picture page 18)** a country estate at Brading, was a diarist and antiquarian. A Royalist sympathiser, he was Deputy Governor of the Island from 1624 to 1643 and he was also Sheriff of Hampshire. Yet these were turbulent times and he was twice imprisoned. He was wonderfully curious about the natural world.

In 'A Royalist's Notebook, the Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander' by Francis Bamford, published in 1936, Richard read that bustards were seen here in 1632, but 'the Isle of Wight has neither lawyers nor foxes'. In 1574 Sir Edward Horsey imported live hares to the Island, as although there were plenty of rabbits, there were no hares. Evidently the imported hares thrived and a Rowlandson print from the early eighteenth century depicts beagling for hares. Foxes were reintroduced to the Island much later. Sir John wrote more about deer than any other wild animal. There were nine deer parks on the Island and in Avington Forest, **(Picture page 18)** later renamed Parkhurst, there were deer farms and deer chases. Every single death of a deer was recorded and was accountable to the Crown. In 1633 Sir John posted notices in churches warning people of the consequences of poaching deer. He recorded how a stag had swum over the Solent from Beaulieu and was pondering how deer had got to the Island in the first place. Was there once land between the New Forest and the Island?

Parish records are another source of information about mammal populations on the Island in Tudor times and beyond. Churchwardens had the right to destroy 'vermin', which could include any mammals not used for hunting. Only five species were paid for, including hedgehogs accused of taking eggs and sucking cows dry, and stoats. Moles were only killed in St Helens. Accounts of payments made for killing vermin survive from seventeen parishes. By the 1760s most parishes in the East Wight were paying for the killing of small mammals, but as numbers increased, churchwardens paid less. Payments were inconsistent: some parishes paid out far more than others. In St Helens, between 1793 and 1812 an average of 62 hedgehogs a year were killed, whereas in Godshill more stoats were killed than hedgehogs. By the 1820s this practice was fading, probably due to the cost – for St Helens it was the third largest expense in the early 1800s – and also to the growth in keepering and private estates.

Richard Grogan - The Current State of Mammals on the Isle of Wight
The Isle of Wight is blessed with a wide variety of habitats for wildlife, due to its varied geology. It has wetlands, woodland, farmland and chalk grasslands. Of the 58 species of mammal in Britain, 32 are found on the Island. There are no feral deer, but there are deer farms and deer can swim across the Solent. There are no feral mink and no grey squirrels. According to a recent hedgehog survey conducted by

our Society, there is a perceived decline in numbers here in recent years. The Isle of Wight is an important national refuge for a number of species of mammal: the red squirrel, common dormouse, water vole, Bechstein bat, Barbastelle bat and brown hare.

Barn owl pellets are analysed to find out the distribution of some species of small rodent and insectivore on the Island. There are large populations of woodmouse, field vole, common shrew and stoat. The weasel is known from only sixty records, but this may be because the weasel is smaller, quicker, and evades humans. Both species are fairly widespread on the Island.

Badgers were widespread on the Island in the 1840s, when they were introduced, but by 1900 had disappeared. This may well have been a result of intensive badger baiting, a gentleman's sport. In 1925 they were reintroduced, to Havenstreet, and have thrived ever since. They tended to avoid the clay soil and colonise the south, but in the past twenty years they have spread to the north. The increase in badgers may have caused the hedgehog decline. They both feed on worms and when they meet, badgers may kill and eat hedgehogs.

The hazel dormouse, a native species here, is internationally rare and has declined in Britain. Yet it has a wide distribution on the Island, inhabiting about two-thirds of our woodland. It is a very good indicator of the health of woodland, favouring a thicket of undergrowth that is removed by large populations of deer on the British mainland.

The water vole, also a native species here, is nationally protected, being the fastest declining mammal on the mainland, due to predation by American mink. Here it is found in thirty per cent of water courses. A survey in 2010 indicated a slight decline.

The brown rat, an introduced species, is present in sixty-six per cent of the water courses surveyed in 2010. It may displace the water vole. If a water course is grown over, the water vole will leave.

The fox was introduced into the Island in 1845 for hunting. The only previous record was one skeleton, which may have been brought here for its fur. There is no evidence that the fox is native here, but since its introduction, it has flourished. It is highly adaptable and has moved into urban areas to increase its chances of survival.

The rabbit was introduced into Britain. One of the earliest warrens was on the Island. Rabbits were highly valued as a food source, and as numbers grew it became the poor man's food.

On the edge species include the otter. The last recording of an otter breeding on the Island was in 1957, but they still breed in Hampshire. This is a nocturnal species. It can swim the Solent on a slack tide and in 1996 and 1997 two otters were recorded at Newtown. They also visit Bembridge Harbour and Wootton Creek. The Newtown estuary is probably the only place with enough room for otters to breed. As populations rise in Hampshire, there is no reason why otters shouldn't spread to the Island.

The harvest mouse, which may be native to the Island, was last recorded here in 1980, but it may be confused with the dormouse and may still occur.

Priorities for the future are to protect the rarest mammals: the red squirrel, dormouse and water vole. What we do for the red squirrel seems to benefit the dormouse, too. For the water vole we need to improve the habitat of our waterways. Trapping and recording in areas where they were last seen will establish whether harvest mice are still present here and in what numbers. As for the hedgehog, we need to know what is causing its decline: whether housing development is pushing it, together with badgers.

In response to a question about the threat to Island mammals from deer escaping from deer farms, Richard replied that red deer are not a problem, as they are solitary, but fallow deer are a threat, as they live in herds. Grey squirrels and American mink also pose a threat to our wild mammals and mink were farmed here from the mid 1960s until 2003, when mink farming was finally banned by UK law.

Seals visit the Island from Sussex, where there is a small population of both common and grey seals. They visit the Western Yar and Newtown and used to breed in Scratchells Bay, near the Needles.

This afternoon of talks provided us with some fascinating insights into the significant role that islands can play in the evolution, decline and survival of mammal species. And we have learned which species need protection on our island and what needs to be done for each of them.

Maggie Nelmes

Lichens on Fences and Gates at Newtown, Pages 6 & 7

Gate & Fence

Gate Section,

Fence Posts & close up

Pleurosticta acetabulum

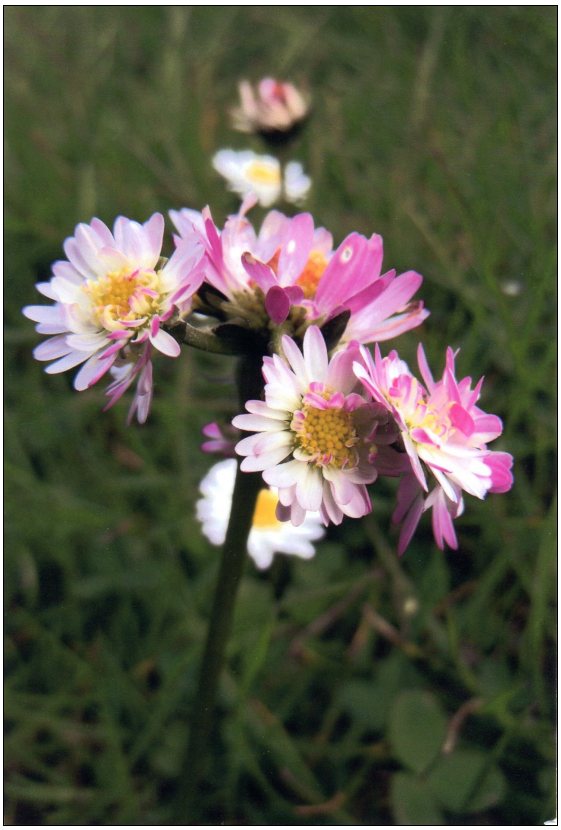
Norris Castle Farm

Norris Castle

Norris Castle

Pea Gall,
Norris Castle, Page 29

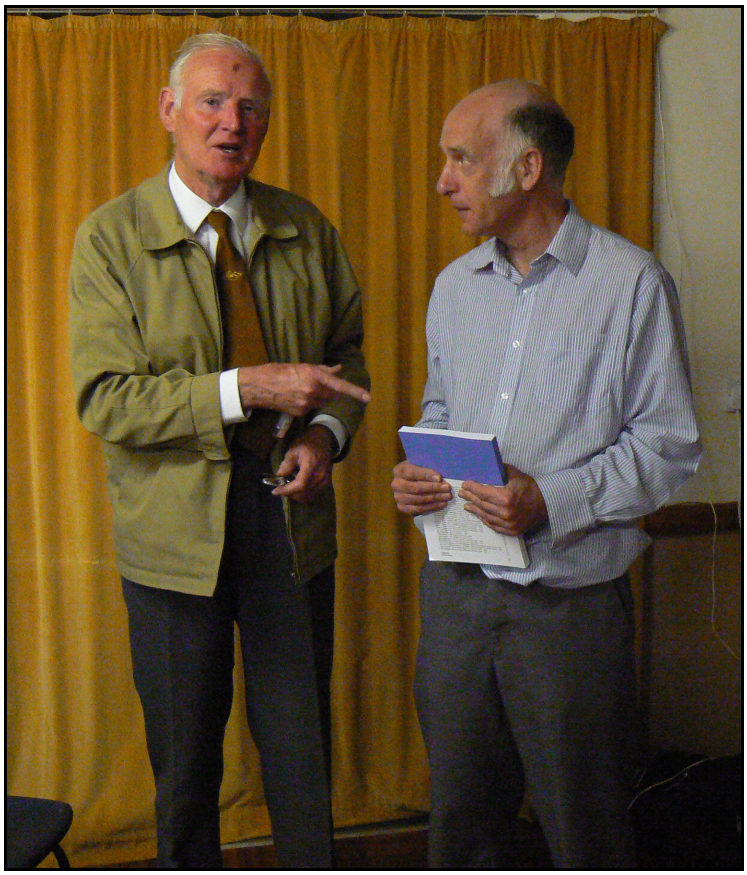
Spangle Gall,
Norris Castle, Page 29



Multi-headed Daisy,
Nature notes , Page 2

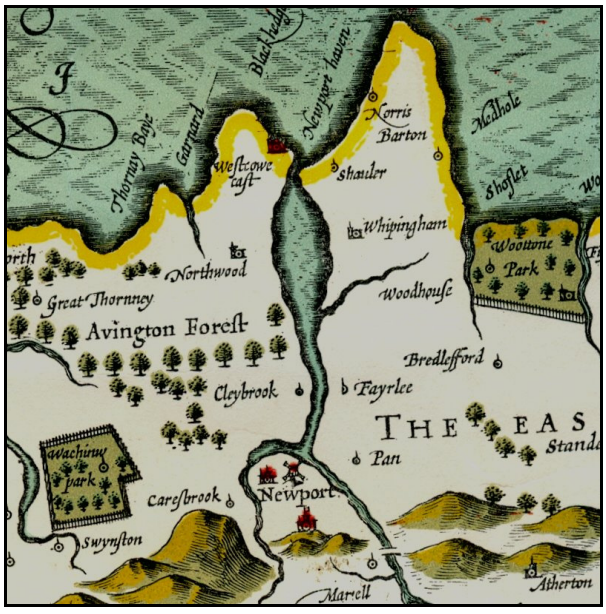
Hornet,
Nature notes, Page 2

Mammal of the Wight,
General Meeting, Pages 12 & 13



Derek Yalden and Paul Bingham

Sir John Oglander at Nunwell , 1622.



Avington Forest

12th November Jacquetta Hawkes – Archaeologist and Writer

This illustrated presentation in three parts follows on from the paper by Dr Margaret Jackson: 'Remembering Jacquetta Hawkes (1910-1996)', published in the 2010 & 2011 edition of our Society's *Proceedings*, 'Wight Studies' Volume 25.

Part 1. Introduction and slide show, by Margaret Jackson

Jacquetta Hawkes was often described as cold and austere, but Margaret remembers being intrigued, when she watched her on television, by her enigmatic smile, indicating 'hidden depth'. She has that same smile on a photograph taken when she was a little girl.

Brook Hill House, in the West Wight, was Jacquetta's home in the nineteen-fifties, which she shared with her second husband, the writer JB Priestley. The building of this imposing mansion, perched on a wooded hilltop and commanding wonderful views of the coast and downs, was begun in 1910 for Sir Charles Seely. Jack Priestley held his famous classical music concerts there, to which he invited many celebrities of the day. Jacquetta's shyness at these social events may have been wrongly interpreted as coldness.

Johanna Jones, the previous President of our Society, was in the audience today and Margaret invited her to talk about the next slide, a photo of a Ford motorcar. Johanna described how she met the Priestleys, soon after she moved to the Island with her husband Jack, on his appointment as Curator of Carisbrooke Castle Museum. Jack had no car and had to cycle all over the Island to visit archaeological sites. So when the Priestleys moved to the Midlands, they gave Jack Jones their Ford 'taxi'.

Another person who recognised Jacquetta's kindness was Paul Bahn, who co-wrote 'The Shell Guide to British Archaeology' with her. He was young and felt daunted when he visited the Priestleys at their home near Stratford-on-Avon, but she soon put him at his ease and they all watched television together.

As an archaeologist, Jacquetta was particularly interested in ancient cultures centred on the Mother Goddess. A carving of the Goddess of Laussel, found near the caves of Lascaux in the Dordogne and dating from about twenty thousand BCE, reveals a massively rotund female figure holding a horn with thirteen notches that may represent the moon. A small statue of a Minoan snake goddess, dating from about sixteen hundred BCE, was found on Crete. And in Norfolk at Grimes Graves a carved female torso, discovered in the nineteen-thirties, caused great excitement, though it is now thought to be a fake.

Among Jacquetta's other passions were wildlife and art and she illustrated her book 'The Dawn of the Gods' with frescoes giving impressionistic portrayals of wildlife. These frescoes were painted to create an atmosphere and Jacquetta loved their delicate richness of colour and shape. Her weaving together of art and archaeology set her apart from other archaeologists of her day. They favoured a rigidly scientific approach, as technology was introduced for dating, analysis and reconstruction.

Margaret believes that Jacquetta was underrated as an archaeologist because of her mission to popularise archaeology. She was an excellent communicator who inspired others through her writing and broadcasts. She was intuitive and used her imagination to make connections with the past, seeing human life as a continuum. Nowadays we make these connections, but in Jacquetta's day the approach to archaeology was more intellectual. Jacquetta had a holistic approach, making connections between other disciplines, such as natural history and art.

Part 2 . The Woman Behind the Archaeologist, presented by Sheila Burch

Jacquetta's first husband, Christopher Hawkes, was a brilliant scholar and a leading authority on Celtic Britain. He had a large circle of friends at Cambridge, but he had been twice jilted at the altar before he met Jacquetta. His domineering mother drove a wedge between him and Jacquetta, maintaining that she was not good enough to marry her son because she had not been presented at Court. And so Jacquetta married Christopher with a sense of dread, unable to bear hurting him by calling off the wedding. Together they had one son, Nicolas.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Jacquetta joined the Civil Service. Christopher was Senior Keeper at the British Museum and she helped him to pack up its treasures to be taken out of London for safe keeping. She was Principal UK Secretary to UNESCO, and in 1951 Archaeological Advisor to the Festival of Britain, for which she was awarded the OBE. She excelled as a film maker and designer and

wrote many newspaper reviews. She was also a collector of visual art and loved wearing elegant clothes and make-up.

Disappointed in her marriage, Jacquetta eventually fell in love with the poet and music critic Walter Turner. Under his friendship her poetry blossomed. But Walter died young and Jacquetta was inconsolable. In 1953 she divorced Christopher and married Jack Priestley. He shared her fears of the dangers that unchecked technological progress posed to the environment.

Not afraid of espousing controversial causes, Jacquetta became one of the founders of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, in response to British nuclear testing in the Pacific. She felt that women had an important role to play, declaring that men had got beyond killing each other and were preparing to kill women too. She led the London to Aldermaston marches, wearing distinctive hats. She also campaigned for the legalisation of homosexuality and for 'Real Education'. She was a good organiser and a persuasive advocate.

Jacquetta travelled widely and wrote a number of books, mostly about British archaeology. She felt a strong association with Stonehenge, seeing its significance as ritualistic and religious rather than scientific. She believed that any connection with the Druids was conjectural, as Stonehenge dated from a much earlier period. She put forward an idea to create a museum at Stonehenge. In 1980 Jacquetta was invited to be a castaway in the radio series 'Desert Island Discs'.

Part 3 Two publications by Jacquetta Hawkes, presented by Alan Phillips

'A Land', a book published in 1951

Jacquetta was very forthright in her views and in this book she declares that mankind needs to relearn the wisdom of our forebears for our own survival. She uses the metaphor of 'Mother Earth' to explain how the modern world is in great need of rebalancing its relationship with the natural world. During the Industrial Revolution thousands of years of living in harmony with nature were abandoned. By deserting the countryside to live in industrial towns, people were turning their backs on our past and forming a destructive relationship with the land. This treatise is a precursor of the environmental movement.

Jacquetta was among the first scholars to ascribe a belief in the Great Goddess, or Mother Earth, attended by her son and lover, to prehistoric Britons. The myth was widespread in the ancient Near East and Jacquetta now located the goddess in Britain also, a bold hypothesis which remains controversial to this day. Just as the Mother Goddess had been one among a pantheon of gods and goddesses in the ancient world, if she ever existed in Britain it was likewise one among many, and not necessarily the dominant goddess that Jacquetta implies. She nevertheless uses it as a metaphor to illustrate how urgently we need to reconnect with the natural world, and this idea was later taken up by the feminist and goddess movements.

'Man on Earth', published in 1954

This is archaeology and geology on a global scale and it focuses on human consciousness. In Jacquetta's hands it is also a work of philosophy. Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection she finds inadequate: there must be another force behind the flourishing of art, as seen in cave paintings. She writes about the inner mystery of consciousness, but does not try to explain it, for although she claims not to be religious in a conventional sense, she takes a spiritual approach.

In this book she compares the harmony between humans, nature and the divine in ancient Egypt with the separateness of the Sumerians who were more pessimistic and talked of privileges, not rights. In Greek philosophy there is a lack of harmony, as in Plato's schisms. Jacquetta believes that humans and their psyche are one. Eastern mystics have mastered the integration of the psyche, she writes, and she draws a parallel with the psychological ideas of Jung, who sees a need for the reintegration of the personality in harmony with nature.

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About forty members attended this meeting and we are grateful to our three presenters for a thought-provoking afternoon. Dr Christine Finn has posted her biography of Jacquetta Hawkes online, having so far been unable to find a publisher for her book. Some of our members attended a talk that she gave at Brook last year. It seems that the charge levelled against Jacquetta all those years ago for being too lightweight and subjective has stuck. None of her books are now in print. But isn't it time to re-evaluate

her ideas and beliefs in the light of current thinking? Wasn't Jacquetta a highly perceptive scholar who was simply ahead of her time? Her passion for popularising archaeology inspired ordinary people and led to a great increase in demand to study the subject. She was a forerunner of the Green movement. And landscape archaeology, which is gaining in popularity now, resonates with her multi-disciplinary approach.

Maggie Nelmes

10th December Rare Plants seen in Britain in the last Thirty Years by Paul Stanley

Paul's interest in botany started in the late nineteen-seventies, when his sister was studying for an A Level in Biology and he helped her to find plant specimens. Since then he has developed a keen and discriminating eye for finding new plants and this passion has taken him all over Britain and beyond. He frequently travels to Scotland, where he is West Perthshire's County Recorder for The Botanical Society of the British Isles.

He began by showing us slides of ferns and their allies, rare specimens he has photographed in remote parts of Scotland and Wales. As well as describing the often inhospitable terrain where they grow, he sometimes had an amusing anecdote to tell. When a woman fell down a land drain in 1889, she found a rare *Killarney fern* that tends to shelter in very deep holes. In 1896 a very well-known botanist of the day discovered the *Killarney fern* on a mountain in Caernarvonshire, but kept its location a secret. It was only rediscovered there in 1967, by a local policeman. The *Killarney fern* can grow at very high altitudes, in conditions that are close to those of its natural habitat in the Killarney Mountains of south-west Ireland.

Some of the plants Paul showed us are growing right on the edge of their range here in Britain. One of these is the *oblong woodsier*, probably Britain's rarest plant. It has been found growing in the Moffat Hills of Scotland, but the heart of its distribution is Scandinavia. Our climate is not suitable for it, especially now with climate change, and heavy grazing on Scottish hills is also taking its toll. Yet it thrives under cultivation.

To be a rare plant hunter you have to be intrepid. Many of these species grow in remote areas and in inaccessible places. Along with the *oblong woodsier*, the *serrated wintergreen* grows in pine woodland abutting onto scree, which smothers it. The *Alpine woodsier* grows in Snowdonia at a higher altitude, on a corrugation of calcareous rocks. It is probably a true Ice Age relic that is just hanging on.

Some rare ferns and a number of rare flowering plants have been discovered in the far south-west of Britain and in the Channel Islands. On the south coast of Jersey a series of south facing granite headlands are home to some very unusual flora, including the *shaggy mouse-ear* that also grows on the Isle of Wight, on the chalk cliffs of Tennyson Down. The climate in the south-west is considerably milder than in most of Britain, and some rare plants found there are more common further south in Europe. The *slender birds-foot trefoil*, recently found on the Island in parched grassland by Geoff Toone, may be benefitting from global warming. It has also been found in West Sussex. The *Jersey forget-me-not*, on the other hand, is disappearing rapidly from Jersey ponds, due to the introduction of sweet flag and the intrusion of willow and birch.

'Agricultural improvement' is responsible for the decline in population of many plants in recent decades, which may explain why some species are only clinging on in the less densely populated and under-industrialised areas of Britain. The economies of Cornwall and the Channel Islands are largely dependent on the tourist industry and the coastal cliffs there are mostly protected from development for wildlife and green tourism.

Other parts of the country where Paul has found and photographed rare plants are the Cotswolds and the Chilterns. The Chiltern Hills are unusual in Britain in that they mimic the chalk grassland of the Continent more than any other area. They have warmer summers and much colder winters. The delicate bell-flowered *fritillary* grows in flooded alluvial meadows once contiguous with the Rhine Valley. The Chilterns has two distinct areas of chalk grassland: that on the north-west facing escarpment and the dry valleys that run north-west to south-east. The *monkey orchid* was first discovered in 1666, where the Thames cuts through the Chilterns at Wallingford. In the 1930s it was ploughed up and subsequently believed to be extinct. But one remaining plant was discovered and since then, with good habitat management and rabbit-proof fencing, this number has rapidly increased to several hundred plants in that area.

However, this population may be vulnerable to natural events. The *military orchid* is another example of a plant brought back from the brink of extinction. A very attractive species, it was known in the Chilterns in Victorian times. Then it disappeared, until in 1947 twenty to thirty plants were rediscovered. The site was kept secret, but numbers dwindled in the late 1970s and 80s. Now, with better management, there are some two to three hundred plants. The *fringe gentian* went unrecorded for a hundred years, after its original discovery in 1875 was rejected by the local recorder. In 1976 it was rediscovered on a hill near Wendover and sent to the British Museum where it was recognised as a species of Continental chalk grassland.

Further south, along the Channel coast of England, Paul has photographed some rare species of orchid. The *red helleborine*, found in Hampshire, is Britain's most threatened orchid. The *early spider orchid i*s common along the Dorset coast. Yet the Isle of Wight has much more suitable habitat, at Yarmouth and on Tennyson Down. So why are these orchids not found in larger numbers here? Numbers of the late spider orchid were decreasing rapidly at twelve sites in the Dover area when the Channel Tunnel works in the late 1980s only hastened its decline. Compensation was paid. On the other hand, *fly orchid* numbers seem to be increasing.

What struck me in particular about Paul's talk was his phenomenal memory for dates and places and for the names of the people, often just ordinary folk, who discovered or rediscovered the rare plants he featured. He spoke for an hour and a half without notes, until he had shown us a whole carousel of slides, and he was prepared to continue with a further sequence, if we had not had to call time. A combination of beautiful photographs and interesting anecdotes, together with sheer admiration for Paul's dedication and the depth of his knowledge, kept me riveted.

Maggie Nelmes

Reports for Section Meetings

Access

17th July St Helens/Ashey/St Johns – Glow-worms

The St Helens Churchyard count was led by Chris Lipscombe. Numbers attending were 12: this was encouraging as last year there was no public or Society interest. Chris's walk resulted in only six glow-worms seen, whereas in other years 30 to 40 were a regular number.

I planned a different approach to the count this year and tried out a couple of other sites, but ended up with egg on my face as the two sites I nominated, Ashey Cemetery and St Johns at Ryde, had none. The thing that I found most disturbing this year was light pollution. Though deep in the countryside, the visit to Ashey burial ground was notable for the number of solar lights, coloured as well as white, scattered around the area. Any hope of seeing glow-worms was nil as males would be confused and avoid the area. It also destroyed my night vision, so I think this area can be written off for the near future.

It seems weather was also a contributory factor. Peter and Sheila have been recording for a number of years in the Fishbourne area. Here numbers remain about the same as other years, however their first sighting was July 1st, whereas other years it has been as early as June 4th.

Helen Slade is going to write her monthly article in the County Press on Glow-worms, we will then see if this is the same in other parts of the Island.

Colin Black

13th August Brighstone Forest and Limerstone Down

After early morning drizzle the weather brightened as we started this walk from the Jubilee Car Park on Mottistone Down. This was a two and a half hour stroll which included the heathland trail in Brighstone Forest, with an additional excursion to see the view from Limerstone Down.

We took the Tennyson Trail eastwards with wonderful views south over the Back of Wight. A Chiffchaff was seen among the Sycamores and there was Marjoram by the side of the path. As we walked up the slope the plant species changed with Bell Heather, Harebell, Wood Sage and Ploughman's

Spikenard. There were good numbers of birds of prey: Buzzard, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel, but the most striking birds were the Ravens, with up to five in the sky at one time.

In Brighstone Forest we found a patch of Common Centuary with white as well as pink flowers near the junction onto the heath, and plenty of Tormentil. By contrast Ling was hard to find, the largest quantity being close to the triangulation station on the heath. At this point there was a discussion about the early days of map surveying on the Island. The first survey had taken place in 1793, in response to the need for accurate maps for defensive purposes. On these first maps you can trace the vantage points that were used for the survey, sometimes a barrow, sometimes (as at Mottistone and Calbourne) the church tower. The modern plantations, which date from after the Second World War hide these vantage points from one another, so the same surveying techniques would not work nowadays.

After passing through a beech plantation and taking a forestry track, lined with Hemp Agrimony, we regained the heath and headed off, past a Whitethroat, to admire the fine viewpoint at Limerstone Down, looking over the parishes of Brighstone and Shorwell. This was the area where John Dennett was surveying for the tithe commissioners c1840. He had two wonderful excuses for the delay in producing the map. The first was the demand for his life-saving rocket equipment, and the second was the density of the fog, which meant that his surveyors could not see far enough to map the area properly. We then walked back to the Tennyson Trail, with a nice view of a Red-legged Partridge by the gate onto the Down, and returned to the start of our walk.

Richard Smout

18th October **Northwood Park**

Seventeen members assembled by The Royal Yacht Squadron for the walk round Northwood Park, led by Colin Black with help from Bill Shepard and Dr David Biggs. We started walking westwards, towards Princes Green where we stopped by the umbrella tree – a Weeping Ash, an ornamental variety of the Common Ash. This tree was planted in the late 1800s and was a favourite spot for courting couples.

We crossed the road towards Holy Trinity Church, where Irish Yews lined the path by the church and Bill Shepard drew our attention to a Myrtle in full flower, often used in the bride's bouquet. We stopped to learn the history of this Church. Built in 1832 by the architect Benjamin Bramble, it was constructed of Isle of Wight yellow brick, from a brickyard near Gurnard. A wealthy widow who lived at The Royal Yacht Squadron financed the building: it gave her son a living and is known as the Yachtsmen's Church.

We crossed the road into the park, up an impressive flight of steps. We were then told about a tunnel which ran from the Manor to the bottom of the step, as an escape route to flee the Island if necessary.

An Algerian Oak next to a Cork Oak was the first tree to be seen. We turned left on to a footpath where we again saw an Algerian or Mirbeck's Oak, which keeps its leaves into the new year. It was introduced into France in 1845, and King Louis Philippe sent acorns to Queen Victoria as a gift, some of which she passed on to the Ward family, so this was one of the first in England. They also flourish in Osborne House Gardens. The canopy is 35m across.

The Cork Oak, the fifth type of oak on the trail, is an evergreen tree and a native of Spain and Portugal. The cork can be harvested up to 12 times in the tree's life and does not damage the tree as a new layer grows. The trees are however under threat as plastic has now become the preferred stopper for wine.

The Common Oak, the oldest tree in the park, was possibly an old hedgerow Oak, a survivor of a more pastoral landscape on the north side of the church. We measured the trunk, the circumference of which was 3.4m, making it possibly 200 to 300 years old.

We turned off the path to look at the tallest tree in the park, a specimen much battered by high winds, with many broken limbs but a straight trunk. The circumference was of 5m.

Further along the path we stopped to look at a Cockspur tree, which had huge thorns 2 inches long. It belongs to the same family as the Midland Hawthorn. We then walked across the grass to see the Tulip Tree with its distinctive leaves, there were no flowers as they come before the leaves.

Next to it was a Judas tree, which gets its name from the area it grew in Judea and according to myth is the species of tree from which Judas Iscariot hanged himself. However, it is also a native of southern Europe.

We now walked back towards St Mary's church and in the churchyard we saw the famed Monkey Tree. Among the gravestones and next to an English Yew, a Wayfarer tree had been planted and we wondered why?

Walking out of the churchyard we passed an Oriental Plane, with starry leaves and knobbly trunk, then across to the western edge of the park to see a Whitebeam. We were now nearing the end of the walk, back past a house where David translated the Latin both over the portico and on its southern end.

We walked north towards the sea where we saw the largest and fattest tree in the park, a Turkey Oak, introduced from Eastern Europe in the 1700s. It is also known as the Cuckoo Tree, as a small Holly flourishes in its branches. Out came the tape measure again, the trunk circumference measured 4.7m and the canopy 40m in diameter.

Many Galls were found on this walk and David told us that some of them were from the warmer climate of southern Europe, as the result of climate change. Jackie Hart found one on the Turkey Oak that was new to the Island.

Down the steps, to finish the walk at the Yacht Squadron. Many thanks to all those who attended.

Colin Black

6th December **Newport**

My apologies to everyone looking for the Anchor on Newport Quay – I had the wrong end of the boat, it was the Propeller.

When I arrived 21 members were waiting for the start of the walk and Bill Shepard and Dr David Biggs were there to give expert advice and to make the walk more interesting.

We started by walking north along the quay and past the yachts lifted out of the water for the winter. Two Mute Swans were seen, a male and female Mallard and also a Mallard cross, which had a light brown head.

We walked up a steep path to the recreation ground, and stopped by a Midland Hawthorn full of berries. One was cut open to see if it had 1 or 2 pips: two in this one, the Common Hawthorn only has one pip. Next to it was a Pyracantha, or Firethorn, with yellow berries (atalantioides). This area was known as Seaclose Field, owned by the Shepard family. We then walked past the playing fields towards the Arboretum; on the river masses of Seagulls were resting as it was near high tide.

The first interesting tree in the Arboretum was an English Oak with three trunks, the middle one dead with a large split in the trunk and two healthy trees growing from the base. Now off the footpath and onto the grass, in front of us was a London Plane in its full glory with coloured bark and autumn leaves. Next was a Weeping Ash, with boughs down to ground level. An Alder was nearby, also a flowering Cherry (*Prunus padus*). Next to it was a Crab Apple still full of apples, I tasted one and to my surprise it was sweet not bitter: Bill thought it was a cross Crab rootstock with a grafted Dessert apple. (*Malus sylvestris*).

We then took an interest in a Eucalyptus (*Gunnii*) with a long narrow-shaped leaf. David found a Gall only found on the Gum tree and caused by a minute wasp (*Ophcelimos maskilli*).

We walked across to one of the ponds where we saw a Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), a deciduous Fir, an unusual tree. At its base, it has knee-like roots out of the water; these allow the tree to breathe, the other roots are in the pond.

Two others trees we looked at were a Turkish Hazel with multi nut clusters and a Snake Bark Silver Maple. A Quince was cut and sampled but not very nice, the Crab Apple was better.

The tallest tree in the area is a Wellingtonia, related to the Giant Redwood but does not grow as tall as the Redwood, though is larger in girth. One of the largest has been measured at 75m in height and 25m in girth in its native California and is estimated to be 3000 years old.

We were told about the Fairlee House Ice House, which is now thought to be under the steps leading to the car park. The owners of Fairlee House were the Oglanders of Nunwell and it was used as a night stopover if a social evening in Newport ended after dark. The drive to Brading at night on rutted tracks was once a dangerous one. We walked up the old drive to the main road, lined with Turkey Oaks. One had a visible hole in the trunk high up, where a colony of wild Bees had a nest.

We crossed the main Ryde to Newport road to take a footpath to the old railway line. Here we saw the last bush of interest, a native of Chile, some times called a Beauty Bush (*Kolkwitzia boria*).

Then onto Bridle Way N118 past Little Fairlee Farm with its electric gate, on to a green lane where a flock of Redwings were seen and over two stiles to New Fairlee Farm. We took a new footpath past the farm on to N117 back into Newport. The footpath was in a very poor state, the tractor route was deep in mud, so we walked on the very rough grass past the farm where a new Gall was spotted by David, on an Oak Bud (*Andrecus solilcirius*), it had not been seen on the island for some time. I will inform ROW about this path. We crossed a very poor stile on N117 to a path beside the hedge, where clumps of Gorse were in full bloom; then a road walk through an estate to meet again the old railway track through the old tunnel into Newport and the Quay. We then retired to The Bargeman's Rest for some well earned Coffee and food.

Colin Black

Archaeology

Archaeological Section Report

Once again we seem to have had an interesting year in Archaeology. As part of the Below the Ground Project, the geophysical gang investigated an enormous field at Hale Farm, with the kind permission of Mr David Brown. The dry spring we had, made it seem like investigating the Gobi Desert. But we prevailed, and managed to match up some of the features seen in the air photographs. However, the presence of power lines and land drains meant we only got a fleeting glimpse of what appears to be a Middle Bronze Age site.

In May, David Tomalin, Jackie Hart, Jessie Booth and Delian Backhouse-Fry journeyed to the Dorset border to visit Martin Green at Down Farm, the scene of tremendous archaeological excavations and discoveries. Martin's book, "Ten Thousand Years on a Chalk Downland Farm", earned him a PhD from Reading University. His personal museum on the farm is wonderful and has an astonishing array of finds dating from the Mesolithic onwards, all collected by Martin since he was a boy.

At the end of May, we were summonsed to Newtown to geophys a couple of burgage plots that formed part of a development area. We did Magnetometer and Resistivity Surveys, but did not locate any buildings using the equipment. We then found ourselves involved in an intense survey of the area that turned up a remarkable collection of pottery and artefacts that closely followed the recorded history of Newtown itself. A report will be in the next Proceedings.

We made another visit to Binnel Bay to note the progress of the coastal erosion of our Beaker site. Although the cliff had almost gone, the lens of the site was still visible, and we did find further pottery sherds. Report to follow. We then spent September washing and sorting pottery for the Newtown Report.

The long hot autumn encouraged some interesting expeditions. John Cleaver from Newnham Farm let us geophys a large Barrow on his fields and we managed to find some interesting flints on the site, before the torrential rain descended.

In November, we set off one balmy day, to walk from Carisbrooke Castle to Bowcombe. We have been interested in locating the church mentioned in the Domesday Book, which no longer exists. We also looked in a field that the Society in the past had investigated, which even now has a spread of Roman pottery. A fascinating part of Island history to be examined.

Our final expedition was to Quarr Abbey and Binstead Church, led by Dr Tomalin – finishing up with scrumptious cake at the new Tea Rooms at Quarr.

This coming year we have several projects in hand including further research on Hubert Poole – the glass slides that Andy Butler saved turned out to be most exciting. There are pictures of various sites on the Island, which we propose re-visiting and photographing the current status – if indeed they still exist!!

Delian Backhouse Fry

16th & 17th July **The Romans in Britain**

Saturday

This weekend continued the format of a Saturday talk at St Lawrence Village Hall by Delian Backhouse-Fry, followed by a visit on the Sunday, in this case to Newport Roman Villa.

Beginning with Caesar's two invasions of Britain – if they can be called such – in 55 & 54BC, Delian stressed how there were already huge interlocking communications in place before he arrived, and indeed it was British scouts who were initially sent out by Caesar from Gaul. The first expedition was however less than successful, with initial difficulties in landing and a simple negotiation of hostages to be sent to Rome, followed by a hasty retreat to avoid stormy weather destroying the fleet. A return visit the following year with five legions and 2,000 cavalry was moderately more successful: several military encounters took place in Kent and London and fortifications were built, though even now no Roman soldiers were left in Britain to enforce any settlement.

By the time of Claudius's invasion proper in 43AD, most players had come to know each other very well. But the British tribes were not united, and King Verica of the Atrobates fled to Rome to ask for help – what an invitation! An invasion force was assembled and despatched from Gaul, probably landing at more than one location, maybe including Richborough or Chichester. The British were pushed back to the Thames and a message was sent to the emperor Claudius, who arrived complete with war elephants and heavy armour, which must have overawed any remaining native resistance.

The conquest of southern England was helped by Rome's new allies: King Cogidubnus was installed at Fishbourne, where the huge palace was built as a reward from Claudius, who meanwhile had returned to Rome for his victory procession. Sussex and Hampshire had proved broadly compliant but there was fierce resistance from the Durotriges tribe in Dorset, resulting in the destruction of several of their hillforts. As for the Isle of Wight, as so often it is difficult to be certain; but – as David Tomalin pointed out – Vectis ware and the huge number of Durotrigan coins found on the Island indicate cultural links with Dorset, whilst our *interests* seem to have paralleled those of the coastal Atrobates of Hampshire, i. e. compliance with Roman rule.

Delian concluded with a look at Roman cultural life, and how on the Island inhabitants would most likely have adopted Roman fashions, as opposed to Romans settling locally in any numbers. The social order underpinned everything, and if you were enterprising enough you could climb the system: the most important thing always was to become a Roman citizen. The Roman equestrian elite may well have mirrored in its symbolism that of the Epona horse religion already strong in Britain, especially as Romans adapted local religions rather than changing them. A very interesting discussion followed, especially on the theme as to what extent the British would have learnt and spoken Latin.

Sunday

Delian led eighteen members on a guided tour of Newport Roman Villa. Originally an Iron Age farm site, the Roman villa was built in 270AD – reinforcing fortifications at Southampton and Portchester where Saxons were already making inroads – and the building appears to have simply collapsed by 325. A corn drier at the front of the building rescued from Newchurch stands duty for one we know to have been there in Romano-British times: the corn would have been exported, with the money in turn helping fund one of the best-preserved bathhouses in southern England, which greeted us as we entered the building.

Villa inhabitants and probably friends would have first entered the *frigidarium*, which as its name implies, was the coldest room – men always preceding women – then proceeded to the slightly warmer *tepidarium*, and via the very warm *sudatorium* to the hottest room, or *caldarium*. The whole was heated by hot air from a furnace passing under the floors of the bath chambers. Slaves would have made the preparations, oil was used instead of soap and scraped off the body with a 'strigil', and women went in for elaborate hairstyles and make-up to show their social standing. Bath-time was essentially a social event and the menfolk discussed business, farming and other social matters.

Passing on to the dining room with its tessellated floor and fireplace, we admired the (modern) painted wall panels of a peacock, symbol of everlasting life, and horns of plenty, which, based on wall-plaster found on site, may well indicate what might have originally been here. The kitchen walls have

been reconstructed of stout oak timbers and wattle-and-daub to give solidity and warmth, as would originally have been the case: pigs' blood was also very popular for providing an overall pink finish. The wealthy villa owner would have been self-supporting in food.

The uncovered remains of Roman walls now 'outside' the main area may have contained a reception room, bedroom, women's or even slaves' quarters. The mistress of the house would have been in charge of the herb garden, where Roman plants including figs, fennel, sage and a grapevine are currently growing, alongside a statue of Flora, the Roman flower goddess. A look inside the activity room concluded an informative tour and a most interesting weekend.

Alan Phillips

Botany

16th July **Brading Marshes**

Unfortunately this meeting was cancelled as a result of heavy rain.

6th August **Borthwood Farm**

Borthwood Farm in the Eastern Yar valley has a variety of interesting habitats, largely on the acid Lower Greensand. By kind permission of Mr Denness we met in the farmyard and before we had even entered the field of our intended survey, Hazel Trevan had found Musk Storksbill (*Erodium moschatum*), a Nationally scarce species, on a grassy bank beside the path. The field we were there to look at is grazed unintensively by horses and sheep and clearly this has helped to conserve its considerable diversity. It slopes down to border the marshes by Scotchell's Brook and contains a newly created pond, interesting wetland and some dry acid grassland all of which harbour notable native species.

Hedges to the south contained Hop (*Humulus lupulus*), known to have been cultivated in the distant past on the nearby Oglander Estate, and a broad range of other species suggesting that the hedges are probably ancient. In the damp south-east corner Sue Blackwell discovered Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*), now anything but 'common', and Oval Sedge (*Carex ovalis*) and with them a white froth of Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre ssp palustre*). Here two species, the Tufted Forget-me-not (*Myosotis laxa*) and the increasingly rare Creeping Forget-me-not (*Myosotis secunda*), were accompanied by Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and Yellow Loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*).

Nearby some small boggy pools held, in this uncommon habitat, Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), unfortunately not flowering (it's very decorative), and Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*); this last one of a total of seven species of Rush found in different parts of the field. On the upper margin of the pasture the extremely rare Small-flowered Catchfly (*Silene gallica*) was found, with just a few flowers still showing, extending the known site to the north into this new area.

A total of 137 species were recorded at the meeting and we are hoping to revisit the farm, to look at other promising areas, next year.

Geoff Toone

3rd September **Lake Cliffs**

A bright and breezy afternoon gave ideal conditions for plant recording. We set off in a northerly direction along the cliff top from Winchester House, then down along the Esplanade to make a circular walk to look at late summer flowering plants. Along the cliff top we found a number of species, which had 'jumped' from nearby gardens and had become naturalised, including Pot Marigold (*Calendula officinalis*), Pink Sorrel (*Oxalis articulata*) and Greater Quaking Grass (*Briza maxima*). The latter has been recorded here since 1981.

At the base of the cliff there are plants such as Red-hot Poker *(Kniphofia uvaria)* and Hydrangea *(Hydrangea macrophylla)*, which have arrived after cliff falls. Some of the beach hut owners, who were rather curious about a group of botanists peering closely at small insignificant plants in the gravel, remarked that the garden species had been planted as an improvement on the brambles! There is still

some natural vegetation in the damper patches including Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and a clump of Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) was noted in a location where it had not previously been observed.

Towards the Shanklin end, Heathers (*Erica cinerea* and *Calluna vulgaris*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) were visible growing out of the upper parts of the cliff, a reminder of what would have been the natural vegetation of the cliff top before the area became built up.

Anne Marston

1st October **Swanpond Copse**

What better way to spend an unseasonably hot October afternoon than in the shade of the ancient woodland of Swanpond Copse! English Oak *(Quercus robur)* forms a significant part of the canopy. We were set the challenge of increasing the number of gall causers, leaf miners and micro-fungi associated with oak from two to ten!

In total 22 species of gall causer, 18 species of leaf miner and 18 species of micro-fungi were identified, on 25 species of plants. About half of these plants were host to more than one of our target species with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) having five – two gall causers and three leaf miners and Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) having four - three gall causers and one leaf miner. English Oak however had the highest total with six gall causers, three leaf miners and one micro fungus - a powdery mildew called *Erisyphe alphitoides* so, as we had reached our target, we were allowed to go home!

Anne Marston

Entomology

8th July **Jersey Camp**

This was our second visit of the year to the excellent facilities provided by the Camp. Despite encouraging weather earlier in the day, conditions declined during the evening with a stronger than expected breeze. Nineteen species were identified in all. These included a couple of Elephant Hawk-moths, and three Lunar Spotted Pinions. A number of distinctive species were seen. These included a couple of smaller moths, the Gold Triangle and the Kent Black Arches. A July Highflyer and the Scarce Silver Lines were two greenish coloured moths with distinctive and beautiful markings. Other species which were easy to distinguish were Black Arches, Iron Prominent, Oak Hooktip and two Dunbar.

Once again we are very grateful to David Maidment and his colleagues at Jersey Camp for hosting this event.

15th July **Nansen Hill**

David Biggs and two other members met on a warm, sunny and slightly breezy afternoon, at this site between Shanklin and Bonchurch. Seven species of butterfly were seen, including Ringlet, Marbled White and Small Heath, and there were some possible sightings of Dark-green Fritillaries.

Among the flies there was evidence of *Loewiola centaureae* galling Great Knapweed, and this is only the fourth site on the Island for this species. A Summer Chafer was the most interesting of the beetles, while both the Sloe Bug and the Forest Bug were found. The rust fungus *Puccinia violae* on a Violet.

The migratory Silver-y Moth was seen, but the find of the day was an attractive black and white micro-moth, *Syncopacma larseniella.* This was sent off for identification and turned out to be a new county record. The first sighting for Hampshire was in 1975, but this may be partly due to the difficulty in distinguishing this moth from other similar species. The larva feeds on Bird's-foot Trefoil, a food plant in plentiful supply at this site.

4th October **Copse Mead, Shanklin Cemetery**

The weather at our meetings this year has been very mixed, and this was a day which was rather unremarkable from this point of view. This is a relatively new reserve for the Wight Nature Fund and lies on

the north-east side of the cemetery. At the end of the meeting we went across to the entrance gatehouse to the cemetery and admired the building and the funeral bier inside. We were very grateful for the help and advice that we received, as we walked around the reserve, from the warden, Rosemarie Holmes.
Although this was an entomological meeting there were a number of bird species seen too. These included Raven flying over, a resident Kestrel, and visits from Long-tailed Tits and Chiffchaffs.
Two migratory moths were found, the Vestal and a Silver-y. We saw a fine example of the Squash Bug *Coreus marginatus*, and were pleased to find a couple of Long-winged Coneheads. We spent some time looking at the difference between this species and the long-winged version of the Short-winged Conehead !
In the sheltered area along the hedgerows in the North-eastern corner of the reserve there were large numbers of bees visiting the ivy. They had distinctively marked abdomens with bands of yellow on a dark background. These were a Mining Bee, *Colletes hederae*. They had first been seen in England ten years earlier, but are spreading rapidly, and being an autumn-flying bee, they were certainly present in large numbers when we visited. Coincidentally they were featured in a gardening article in the Isle of Wight County Press that month.

Richard Smout

Fungi

The summer months were rather damp and fungi appeared early giving us hope for a successful autumn foray season. However, this was not to be.

11th September It started off promisingly enough with our first foray in Sainham Beech Copse in Godshill. We found The Blusher, *Amanita Rubescens,* Sulphur Tuft, *Hypholoma fasciculare,* The Deceiver, *Laccaria laccata,* Amethyst Deceiver, *Laccaria amethystine* and Scurfy Deceiver, *Laccaria proxim.* Porcelain Fungus, *Oudemansiella mucida,* Brown Rollrim, *Paxillus involutus,* Deer Shield, *Pluteus cervinus* and Willow Shield, *Pluteus salicinus* as well as four Russulas that like Beech woods: Purple Brittlegill, *Russula atropurpure,* Geranium Brittlegill, *Russula fellea,* Beechwood Sickener, *Russula mairei* and Ochre Brittlegill, *Russula ochroleuca*. All told 47 species were identified including ten microfungi.

2nd October Our second visit was to Norris Castle, (**Photos pages 16 & 17**) by kind permission of Mark Coventry. By then we had had several weeks of very dry weather so we counted ourselves lucky to identify 56 species including 3 slime moulds and 13 microfungi. We found several Waxcaps: Golden Waxcap, *Hygrocybe chlorophana,* Blackening Waxcap, *Hygrocybe conica,* Parrot Waxcap, *Hygrocybe psittacina,* Cedarwood Waxcap, *Hygrocybe russocoriacea,* and Snowy Waxcap, *Hygrocybe virginea.* We found Collared Earthstar, *Geastrum triplex* and Common Puffball, *Lycoperdon perlatum.* Several Brackets were found including Southern Bracket, *Ganaderma australe,* Chicken of the Woods, *Polyporus sulphurous,* Bay Polypore, *Polyporus durus (badius),* and Tuberous Polypore, *Polyporus tuberaster.* Most of the macrofungi were found either in the grassland or growing on wood.

15thOctober The next meeting was our annual foray when the New Forest Fungi Group joined Alan Outen and us. By now the ground was bone dry and very little was about. We desperately hunted around the Mottistone Manor grounds and managed to find 68 mainly obscure species there and on the Common behind the estate. Of the more sizeable fungi we found Yellow Fieldcap *Bolbitius vitellinus,* Yellow Club, *Clavulinopsis helvola,* Apricot Club, *Clavulinopsis luteoalba,* King Alfred's Cakes, *Daldinia concentrica,* Star Pinkgill, *Entoloma conferendum,* Southern Bracket, *Ganoderma australe,* Oak Curtain Crust, *Hymenochaete rubiginosa,* Dyer's Mazegill, *Phaeolus schweinitzii,* Charcoal Burner, *Russula cyanoxantha,* Leopard Earthball, *Scleroderma areolatum,* Common Earthball, *Scleroderma citrinum,* Scaly Earthball, *Scleroderma verrucosum* and Dead Man's Fingers, X*ylaria polymorpha*. After lunch we decided that we needed a new location and members of the Society and Alan went to Sainham Beech

Copse in Godshill and identified 44 species. Here we found a nice specimen of Beefsteak Fungus, *Fistulina hepatica.* The next day was spent at Briddlesford Copse where 60 species were identified. We found quite a number of branches covered in Glue Crust, *Hymenochaete corrugata,* which we have not found anywhere else this year. All the fungi during the weekend were very hard to find.

30th October The next meeting was in Firestone Copse, normally a very good wood for fungi, but we still had not had much rain and the ground was very dry. However, we did manage 48 species of which six were microfungi and one was a Bolete Mould. Last year the British Mycological Society found some rare Toothed Fungi here and we went looking for them and found two, Zoned Tooth, *Hydnellum concrescens* and Black Tooth, *Phellodon niger* down near the creek. We also found False Deathcap, *Amanita citrina* and Fly Agaric, *Amanita muscaria,* as well as Trumpet Chanterelle, *Cantharellus tubaeformis,* Horn of Plenty, *Craterellus cornucopioides,* Saffron Bolete, *Leccinum crocipodium,* Root Rot, *Hetrobasidion annosum* and Birch Polypore, *Piptoporus betulinus.*

12th November We met at Borthwood Copse where the conditions had improved and 58 species were identified including only one microfungi and one slime mould. Included in our finds were Wood Blewit, *Lepista nuda,* Stump Puffball, *Lycoperdon pyriforme,* Turkeytails, *Trametes versicolor* and Candle Snuff, *Xylaria hypoxylon.*

27th November The final meeting was at Parkhurst Forest. It happened to be on a day when the Beavers had arranged an orienteering morning and loads of adults and children turned up at the same time. We managed to find a part of the Forest where they did not go. 55 species were identified including seven microfungi and three slime moulds. Two of these were encasing several grasses along one side of the trackway. We found The Goblet, *Pseudoclitocybe cyathiformis,* a fungus that typically appears late in the season as well as Clouded Agaric, *Clitocybe nebularis*. We also found Bleeding Conifer Crust, *Stereum sanguinolentum.* A few of us ended up at The Old Stag for a drink, something to eat, review the fungi season and discuss next year.

Jackie Hart

Ornithology

23rd July. Eight members met at Luccombe Downs on a lovely morning for a walk on the top on the Downs. As we parked at the far end car park, we were pleased to see that there were no ponies present – they used to be very fond of radio aerials! During July many of the birds seem to hide themselves away to moult after their breeding season so we did not have high expectations. There are at least two breeding territories of Dartford Warbler in the vicinity, so we were hoping to catch a sighting of at least one bird. In actual fact, not long after the beginning of the walk, when we had stopped to look at a lovely male Stonechat, along came a Dartford and flitted about in the gorse bushes not far from where we stood. It stayed around for sometime and all of us managed to get good views. There were a number of Meadow Pipit, two of which were seen to carry food and we believe that another Meadow Pipit close by was their offspring. A number of Linnet were also around as they breed up here. At least three Buzzard were seen during the course of the morning, the number could have been higher as we saw them in the area throughout. We heard and saw Green Woodpecker and heard Great Spotted Woodpecker. We also saw Kestrel, Common Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, one Swift and the occasional Barn Swallow. Down on the rocks below we saw Cormorant and Herring Gull. Carrion Crow, Rook and Jackdaws were also seen. In all 20 species were identified during the course of the morning.

21st August. Nine members met at Jubilee car park on Mottistone Down for a walk on the Down to the Long Stone, over Castle Hill, up Strawberry Lane and return to the car park. Although we had a brief shower soon after setting off the remainder of the morning was sunny and warm. Both Blackcap and Common Whitethroat were heard in the car park. In the past, the fence line between the down and the

forest has been good for Redstart and Spotted Flycatcher at this time of the year but not this year. A Redstart did show itself later in the morning and, in fact, we saw a good number – at least ten plus one juvenile, mostly in the valley from Castle Hill to Strawberry Lane. It was in this area that we also saw at least three Spotted Flycatcher. Common Whitethroat and Willow/Chiff were heard throughout the morning. We had a good view of a Raven flying overhead. A Dartford Warbler put in a very brief appearance, not seen by many of us and a Dunnock tried to confuse the issue. A Wheatear was seen on top of a Hawthorn on the Down and later in the valley, also from Castle Hill we saw another four. Both Buzzard and Kestrel were seen as well as Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Bullfinch. In all 27 species were recorded.

24th September. 18 members met at the National Trust chalk pit car park in Totland for a walk on West High Down. Caroline was unable to lead the walk so David Biggs kindly did the honours. It was a lovely autumn morning and there were fine views of a variety of migrants. The warblers were represented by three Blackcap, three to four Dartford Warbler, and 10 Chiffchaff. Five Sand Martin, numerous Swallow and House Martin flew by and we also saw three Stonechat and four Wheatear. We had three species of birds of prey: one female Sparrowhawk, three Buzzard and four Kestrel. There were four Jay, three Magpie, two Raven an abundant number of Carrion Crow and Jackdaw. In all we saw 32 species during the course of the morning.

7th October. Ten members attended a meeting on Culver Down on a cold and windy morning. Some migrants were still around and during the morning we saw quite a few Swallow and Meadow Pipit as well as one Rock Pipit. We had very good views of a Raven, six Wheatear, nine Chiffchaff and 25 Long-tailed Tit. We also saw ten Blue Tit, three Great Tit, 30 Goldfinch and three Chaffinch. There were three Buzzards flying. 28 species were seen.

20th November. 16 members meet at the car park in Shalfleet for a walk up to the Quay and in the fields nearby. It was a very mild morning but we started off in a thick mist. However, it soon burnt off to reveal a beautiful morning. The tide was low and ideal for us to see both waders and ducks. We had very good views of Fieldfare, Mistle Thrush and Redwing in a garden as well as on the Hawthorn bushes lining the trackway. We saw Redshank, a Greenshank, Curlew, Oystercatcher, Grey Plover and about 90 Lapwing and a Snipe flew up off the marsh. We also had Grey Heron and Little Egret, Brent Geese, Mute Swan, Shelduck as well as Mallard, Wigeon and Teal. The bird of the morning was a Merlin sitting on a small brick building on the marsh. Previously a Sparrowhawk had flown over and disturbed the birds. The meadows produced Carrion Crow, Buzzard, Long-tailed Tit, Rook and Linnet.
43 species were noted during the course of the morning.

17th December. 13 members meet at the beginning of the cycle path in Thorley Road, Yarmouth for a walk along the path to the flooded area beyond Mill Copse. It was a cold but bright morning. Much time was spent looking at the birds on Rofford Marsh where we saw Grey Heron, Mallard, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Teal, Wigeon, Moorhen, Shoveler, Little Grebe, Pied Wagtail, Pheasant, Meadow Pipit and Black-headed Gull. Although there was quite a lot of water lying we managed to find at least 15 Snipe and spent some time looking at them through the telescopes. A pair of Reed Bunting was seen through the telescopes on the seed heads of the reeds lining the far bank. At the same time a warbler was seen to flit out of view a couple of times but was not seen again to identify. A Cetti's was heard. We had both Redwing and Fieldfare flying over and a Song Thrush sang near the old railway station. At the estuary we added Brent, Grey Plover, Redshank, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Herring Gull, Little Egret and Cormorant to our growing list. A Kingfisher was spotted through the scope sitting on a pontoon in the far distance and a flock of about 70 Golden Plover were seen on the far marsh.
We counted 52 species – a good number to finish off the year.

Jackie Hart

Membership Secretaries Notes

New Members

Deaths

Society Officers

President Mrs Delian Backhouse Fry, Hereward, Old Park Road, St Lawrence, IOW. PO38 1XR

General Secretary Mrs. L. Snow, Ein Shemer, Upper Hyde Farm Road, Shanklin, IOW. PO37 7PS

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

Membership Secretaries Mrs T. Goodley, 18 Pell Lane, Ryde, IOW. PO33 3LW

Next Bulletin

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings for 1st January 2012 to 30th June 2012 should be sent to:-

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The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be **12th July 2012**

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