



January 2014

Issue No. 61

Bulletin

Established 1919

www.iwnhas.org

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President`s Address

Unbelievably, it will be three years in March that I took up the role of President of the IWNHAS. We had completed our move to Cowes from Salisbury Gardens, after being given notice by the Council. We have, with the help of Jackie Hart managed to keep our financial ship on course, and although we have lost some members, we have attracted new members, who will add to the lifeblood of the Society.

As you all know I am an archaeologist, and our Section has done very well. We are looking forward to an interesting future. Dr Colin Pope, our President Elect, has great experience in Botany, Ecology and Natural History, which I know he will enthusiastically promote.

Our future as the IWNHAS depends heavily on our Members. Our monthly column in the County Press needs some input from all of you. We thank Helen Slade who was the previous Correspondent for all her hard work and I look forward to receiving some interesting items from the Members. It has been pointed out to me that I usually include something about the weather. So for future reference, the winter of 20013/14 has been an unusually stormy one. The jet stream started to travel at great speed and the result of that was a set of massive Atlantic storms, with some of the biggest waves ever recorded. Much damage and flooding has occurred, but so far, we have not been buried in snow. I am writing this in January so maybe by the time of publication, things could have changed. Mild weather, to date, has resulted in early spring growth of the bulbs.

Thank you to all of you and I know our dear Island is all the richer for having you as members of the IWNHAS.

Delian Backhouse-Fry. BA Hons, Msc, Arch.

NOTICE BOARD

Email Addresses

Emails to some of our Members are being returned to us.

We would be grateful if you could advise us of any updates or change to your E addresses

Many thanks

A Gall new to Europe found on the Island

Mrs P Chalkley who lives in Wootton noticed strange plants growing near her bird feeder. Her daughter Catherine took a plant to Colin Pope, who identified the plant as Niger *Guizotia abyssinica*. Niger seeds from East Africa are particularly attractive to Goldfinches. Entwining the Niger plants Colin found the climbing stems of Yellow Dodder *Cuscuta campestris*, a new plant for the Isle of Wight. But this was not all, Colin also found numerous purple galls on the leaves and stems of the *Guizotia*. He showed them to me and I thought they might be caused by fly larvae. However, on opening one under the microscope I was startled to see dozens of eel-worms (*Nematoda*) emerging, looking like a writhing mass of Medusa's locks.

Dr Brian Spooner had published a check-list of gall-inducing Nematodes in 1999 and *Guizotia* was not included there as a known host plant. I telephoned Brian and he recommended that I send specimens to Dr Rebecca Lawson at the Central Science Laboratory in York. I therefore collected more material from Mrs Chalkley's garden and sent whole plants, seedlings and Niger seeds to the C.S.L. on September 8th.2013.

Dr Lawson confirmed that the galls were caused by the eel-worm *Subanguina guizotiae*, an African species not previously recorded from anywhere in Europe. On the telephone to me she said that these specimens had been "the highlight of my year". Such is the life of the microbiologist.

(Photo page 14)

David Biggs
Gall Recorder

Nature Notes

East Cowes can hardly be described as a tourist attraction, but it has a splendid promenade with a view of a broad swathe of the Solent that is used by the shipping from and to Southampton. But that is not the object of *my* winter visit. I walked along the promenade and had a careful look over the retaining wall. A finer view of Turnstones cannot be obtained on the Island and, if the tide is high, they are waiting for the water to recede to resume feeding. This of course was a winter visit.

East Cowes now has a summer attraction for me, a three acre mature woodland that has come into the public domain. It gives the impression it was constructed with the now enveloping development, completely encased by a supermarket, a medical centre and domestic dwellings, and comes as a complete surprise when first discovered. Its composition is such that it suggests former parkland and this is supported by a single visit by Sue Blackwell, recording 102 species. You cannot enter a woodland whose contents were for utilitarian purposes and record this number. Further support for its former parkland status is the presence of two mature Oaks with four meter circumference

This is a wonderful amenity for the residents, as rides or paths have been contracted from all directions and the few trees felled in this operation lie beside the tracks, the upper surface sawn flat so that they make excellent seating. The debris has been chipped and form a carpet on the paths making for dry walking. It is a paradise for dog walkers and as a children's playground, but with no green corridor to further woodland is unlikely to attract fauna.

The following is a report from a Hampshire newspaper of the 1850s:

New Cemetery on Mountjoy

"Tenders have been received for two chapels and a lodge and a boundary wall around a piece of ground known as Hanger Hill, recently purchased as a cemetery."

There can be little doubt that 'hanger' referred to woodland, or the northern escarpment, of which a fragment of the wood remains to the present day.

Unusual Apple.

A phone call from a Mr. Yule of Park Road, Cowes, offering me an apple seemed a generous offer, but I had to collect it from Newport and I had the inclination to refuse but subsequent information convinced me this was a "must see" situation. It was a small apple with two inflorescences. On dissection they originated from two separate seed sources. Why the fruit did not develop into two separate apples I do not understand. (Photo page 11)

True Weevil.

A picture of a beetle was passed to me having been photographed in Martins Wood, Newchurch, by James Gloyn. It was a True Weevil, *Apoderus coryli*, found almost exclusively on Hazel, *Corylus avellana*. The female draws leaves together to form a cradle in which the eggs are laid. The larvae pupates and as adults hibernate through the following winter. The beetle has been recorded since the time of Morey 1909, but what I have never seen is the cradle for the young. (Photo page 11)

Willow cone gall?

A specimen was found in the newly named Castle Copse at East Cowes and is exclusively found on Willows. The Willow produces its leaf buds on the side of the branch and the leaves are parallel. These galls appear on the upper side of the branch and emanate from a flower bud. Had the bud developed normally it would have produced a catkin. The gall has the appearance of a fir cone and its texture is just as hard. Please report any further discoveries.

Thorn Apple *Datura stramonium*

A member of the Solanum family, a casual plant not usually persisting in any one station, occurring annually in July to October in cultivated and disturbed waste ground. It is recorded every year in varying numbers, formerly almost always present on our refuse tips. At Harts Farm, Rookley, it has appeared annually for many years in permanent pasture. Formerly it was grown in cottagers' gardens and the leaves smoked as a cure for asthma, but as Bromfield remarked, "must be used with circumspect."

The object of repeating the above from *Flora of the Isle of Wight*, published in 1978, was the occurrence of this species during the November bird walk from Merstone to Horringford and back. It is to be seen every year in the only arable field adjoining the cycle track between Horringford and Merstone.

(Photo page 11)

Bill Shepard

Parasitic Wasp

In September of 2013, some leaves on the Olive Tree in our garden at Northwood were stuck together. On examination, I found a web between the leaves and a wasp in the process of expanding its wings. It turned out to be an emergent parasitic wasp from a nest, which also had larva in it. **(Photos page 11)**

The wasp was sent up to the parasitic wasp expert, Dr Gavin Broad, at the Natural History Museum, who identified it as:-

"*Meteorus ictericus*, a parasitoid of the family Braconidae (subfamily Meteorinae). This is a frequent parasitoid of various tortricid caterpillars on trees and shrubs. *Meteorus ictericus* has happily adopted some non-native tortricids as hosts, such as the Light Brown Apple Moth *Epiphyas postvittana* and the Summer Fruit Tortrix *Adoxophyes orana*, as well as various native species, so I guess it's not too surprising to see one reared from a host on Olive. The webbing is presumably the webbing spun by the host tortricid larva, whereas the flimsy, ovoid cocoon of the wasp itself is distinct."

As yet, the larva has not been positively identified, but might be the Olive Leaf Moth *Prays oleae*.

This is the first record for this wasp that we hold for the Island

Mike Cahill

More on the Large Gold Case-bearer (*Coleophora vibicella*)

In Bulletin No.60 for August 2013 I mentioned that this Red Data Book moth had increased at Newtown. I am delighted to report that the numbers for 2013 have increased further with Newtown Meadows producing 720 cases, up from 109 in 2012, Lower Hamstead yielding 89 cases up from 6 in 2012 but surprisingly no increase at Newtown rifle range.

David Biggs

Reports of General Meetings

27th July

St George, the Hatt and a Hump: Talk and Walk

As thirty-five members gathered in St George's Church, Arreton, for a talk by **John Margham**, we were played in, most appropriately, by a CD recording of the Winchester Troper, which, dating to c.AD 1000, contains some of the earliest Anglo-Saxon music known. John proceeded to discuss the architecture of Arreton church and its parallels elsewhere, St George's cult and its relationship to church dedications, and outlined a church dedication ritual.

Arreton was one of a large group of churches on the Island held by the Abbey of Lyre (or Lyra) in Normandy, and is listed in Domesday Book in 1086, though the reference to Lyre takes the church back a little further than this, to the Norman Conquest. Does any of the fabric of this early church survive? A superficial examination would suggest that it does; a more detailed examination of the nave suggests that it does not. One must conclude that the earliest fabric of Arreton church does contain some elements of Anglo-Saxon workmanship, but dating to after the Norman Conquest.

John pointed out that Arreton is the only church on the Island dedicated to St George. The early story of St George with the widest currency is set in Nicomedia, a town on the east shore of the Bosphorus. Popularly associated with the Crusades, his cult had in fact reached Britain as early as 679, and was firmly established in the English church in the later Anglo-Saxon period. However, the saint's popularity in church dedications certainly appears to have been given a new impetus by the First Crusade (1096-99). It is highly likely that Arreton church was rebuilt in the early 12th century and rededicated to St George. John then described in some detail a 10th-century church dedication ceremony such as might have taken place at Arreton.

Following the talk, twenty members joined John for a 5½-mile walk in the vicinity. Taking the sunken way up from Arreton Cross, we arrived atop the field newly re-identified by John as 'The Hatt', an important meeting-place for the hundred of East Medine, with its outstanding views [see *Wight Studies* 27 (2013)]. We made this our lunch-stop. (**Photo page 12**)

From there we descended the track northwards to Great East Standen Farm, mentioned in Domesday Book, and then turned off onto the footpath running through Standen Copse, which would have provided the manor with many woodland resources in the medieval period. Next up was Little East Standen Farm with its small round farm building which would once have been a working horse mill.

Continuing on the footpath we then came in contact with the Motkin Boundary, that much-quoted but somewhat enigmatic linear bank and ditch running ten miles from King's Quay in the north to St Lawrence in the south, and discovered some decades ago using aerial photography by local archaeologist David Motkin. Crossing the road to Standen Heath (next to the Lynnbottum refuse site), John explained how an excavation of the Motkin Boundary here involving OSL [optical stimulated luminescence] dating seems to suggest both Late Iron Age and 8th-14th century activity associated with the ditch.

Next taking the footpath to Combley Farm, John commented that, surprisingly, this name does not appear in Domesday but was first recorded as *Combelia* in 1228, when its grange was restored to Quarr Abbey and in fact became the largest Quarr grange, running to over 800 acres. Its meaning is 'the wood pasture in the bowl-shaped valley'.

We then proceeded up to Gallows Hill, otherwise known as Michal Morey's Hump, another hill-top site which can be identified as an Anglo-Saxon meeting-place based on circumstantial evidence. Arreton Down is the location of one of two instances of Gallows Hill on the Island, the second being within Shanklin parish. The site was originally a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery.

After descending Arreton Down and just before we arrived back at Arreton church, John regaled us with both a humorous account of Æthelred II 'the Unready' as well as a more serious perspective which recorded that after a reign of 38 years "he had held his kingdom with great toil and difficulties as long as his life lasted" (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*). The link with the Island is that he spent Christmas 1013 here,

probably at Bowcombe; the link with Arreton was more tenuous – Æthelred died on St George's Day, 23rd April, 1016.

Yet another fascinating insight into the Island's Anglo-Saxon past and landscape history with John Margham, this time a double event embracing both talk and excursion. Look out for his accompanying article in the *Proceedings*.

Alan Phillips

**9th November Biodiversity and Land Management in the National Trust:
an illustrated talk by Tony Tutton**

A historic wall at Mottistone Manor represents the varied geology and landscape of the Isle of Wight in its mixture of local building materials. For its size, the Island has a great variety of scenery and wildlife habitat. There is heathland, particularly well represented at Headon Warren, chalk down, as at Tennyson Down, sand dunes at St Helens Duver, saltmarsh at Newtown, reed beds at Freshwater, sandstone cliffs along the Back of The Wight, and ancient woodland. Varied habitat attracts varied wildlife.

'Biodiversity' is a new term, perhaps coined in response to the realisation that so many species that we took for granted several decades ago are now in sharp decline. And land management for wildlife is not set in stone, says Tony, but debateable, controversial even. You have to manage land by intuition, assessing each area individually.

The National Trust had three founders, the best known of whom is Octavia Hill, the social reformer who, in 1884, was asked to preserve Sayes Court Garden in East London. The idea for the National Trust was born and the following year it was founded. A year later they bought their first building and in 1899 their first nature reserve. The National Trust Act was established in 1907, giving the Trust's aims as the permanent preservation for the nation's benefit of land and buildings of beauty or historic interest. On the Island St Boniface Down was given to the Trust in 1922 when the slopes were still bare of holm oak forest.

In the early 1990s, Clive Chatters had an article published in an environmental magazine that was highly critical of the National Trust for poor land management. This had a profound effect, says Tony, and brought changes. The Trust appointed a nature conservation advisor to every region, supported by a panel, a biological survey team and a team of rangers. The rangers are much more knowledgeable now than they were twenty years ago, and they manage grazing animals, as well as habitats.

Most of the Trust's land on the Island is in the south and the west and there is a lot of downland and grassland. Coombe Bottom, on the slopes of the downs above Ventnor, was wall-to-wall blackthorn scrub in the early eighties, isolating wildlife species. Cutting the scrub on those very steep slopes, using a chainsaw was very hard work and time-consuming, but now the chalk plants are re-colonising. The Trust is using machinery more and more, finding that JCB diggers are the best way to clear scrub, and the land recovers quickly.

Tennyson Down was gifted to the Trust in 1924 by Hallam Tennyson, but the Tennyson Estate kept the grazing rights and the land was neglected. Scrub invaded, but sea and wind exposure kept it from growing right on the cliff top. The Trust is breaking up the canopy, but leaving the mature trees standing, forming glades in the woodland.

Gorse flourishes on the chalk downs. Its resplendent colour and wonderful, sweet, coconut-ice scent attract insects which in turn attract the rare Dartford warbler, yellowhammers and linnets. Gorse's spikes protect it from being eaten by grazing animals and it provides shelter and protection to insects and birds. A good way to keep gorse from getting too straggly and dying is the historic method of burning. This is carried out on a rotation, one patch at a time. Different species of wildlife prefer a different height and condition of gorse, so an eight to ten year rotation of burning produces different age-groups of bushes.

At Afton Down, the Trust has erected rabbit proof fencing to keep rabbits from damaging the golf course. The whole of the down is owned by the Trust and the golf club has the course on a 99 year lease. The south-facing slope below is colonised by some interesting plants.

Grazing is very important on the downs to keep the scrub in check. Galloway cattle have been grazing Brook Down for the past fifty years, but grazing has been established here for hundreds of years.

There are twenty different breeds of cattle in Britain, and land managers need to study them to select the most suitable breed for a particular habitat. The Trust owns a flock of about a hundred Hebridean sheep which are small and biddable and eat the scrub. Feral goats graze Bonchurch Down. Originating from the Cheviots, some goats were taken to the Valley of Rocks on Exmoor, and later some of the herd established there were brought to Ventnor. Goats can cause serious erosion, so they need to be kept in enclosures so that they do not spread. The Trust cuts an area and the goats, that are grazers, keep the scrub in check. Goats breed well and can become too numerous, but so far the Trust has managed to give the surplus goats away. Holm oak, though an introduced species from the Mediterranean, is now so well established on the down that it is here to stay. The Trust will accept it, Tony says, but will try to manage it.

Land managers often have to make difficult decisions. One of the dilemmas they face concerns cowpats. Cowpats are a very important habitat for beetles and worms, but cattle have to be protected from parasite infection, and chemical wormers harm beetles and worms. Another problem is posed by rabbits, that have made a comeback after myxomatosis, but the disease is still present, causing populations to rise and fall. The Trust accepts that rabbits are there to stay, and on balance are more beneficial than harmful.

It is important for the Trust to maintain good relations with local farmers. In recent decades farming has intensified, hedgerows have disappeared and many farmers have lost their relationship to the land, running their farms like an industry and forgetting about stewardship. The Mottistone Estate, however, is still farmed traditionally, the stubble left for over-wintering birds and the gorse providing insects with protection and shelter. Here there are good sized populations of brown hares.

As The Trust's Land Manager, much of Tony's work is business oriented, getting financial returns. Whereas there used to be deficits, now the Trust makes a small profit on the Island and this is ploughed back into conservation. Hay meadows and hedgerows are not only attractive landscape features, but also good habitats for wildlife. Trust volunteers are taught hedge-laying skills.

The Trust owns some ancient woodland, such as Borthwood Copse, which was originally part of a wood pasture system, much more open than today, and hunted over by the likes of Isabella de Fortibus in the Middle Ages. Tony says the Trust is considering re-introducing grazing there. Old hazel coppice could be re-established and separated from grazing areas. A bit could be cut each year to let in more light for spring flowers. Nightingales would be attracted to the woodland floor and red squirrels and dormice to the hazel coppice. As Borthwood is now flanked by housing estates, red squirrels have been attracted to breed here by the extra supply of food available from bird tables. There are also wood crickets and a great variety of fungi.

Old buildings in the countryside can also be a good habitat for masonry bees, swallows, bats, barn owls and wasps. To carry out work on buildings with resident bats, permission must be sought and it must be done when the bats are most dormant. The Isle of Wight is a stronghold for the grey long-eared bat, but nationally it is very rare. Some roost in cliffs at Rocken End, but they need good quality grassland. This bat demonstrates that landscape scale is important, and all wildlife groups need to work together to plan on a large scale. There is a bat steering group on the Island that is setting targets.

Public access to Trust land can cause problems, especially when dogs are running loose on the downs where there are ground-nesting birds, such as skylarks and pipits. On Brook and Compton Down, skylarks flourish because there are few dog walkers, but on Ventnor Down the level of disturbance is high. But the Trust tries to take a balanced view, as in some habitats certain species benefit from trampled ground. Lichens, for example, thrive on the Tennyson cliff edge which is also heavily grazed by rabbits, and at St Helens Duver, whose sandy soil creates drought conditions, trampling is good for plants.

The Duver used to be shifting sand dunes until the sea wall was built and constrained the habitat. Wildlife needs to move about and the Trust has therefore opened up the Duver to natural processes.

Newtown is also left to natural processes as much as possible. It is a mix of shingle, mud, saltmarsh and woodland bordering creeks. The diversity of habitat here attracts many species of overwintering birds. Islands have been built, using a JCB digger, for nesting gulls, and the lagoons have to be maintained. The hides attract a lot of visitors and volunteers act as guides. The Trust values education, but nowadays there are fewer school visits and more family events, based in the visitor centre. Volunteers and the Isle of Wight Biological Survey Team carry out important research and recording here.

Crumbling cliffs are important wildlife habitats and there is still a huge amount of rotational slippage

on the Island. At Compton Chine a new chine is forming which is opening up opportunities for new species of plants and insects. Hoary stock grows on the cliff face and a species of mining bee bores burrows in the soft sandstone. Bees and other insects need wide cliff-top margins to be left uncultivated for wild flowers to grow. The Glanville Fritillary butterfly is clinging on to its last known stronghold in Britain, the Island's south coast. Not only is it being threatened by climate change, but the cliffs are getting steeper and less suitable. In wet summers like 2012, it finds it hard to breed. In France it is common, and as the climate warms, numbers may increase here and populations spread inland.

St Helens Ledges and Culver Reefs are very important examples of seabed habitat. The Trust can only deal with pollution problems facing the seabed at national and international levels. At the base of the high chalk cliffs there are caves, in which lichens and weeds grow, but the Trust leaves them alone. To carry out any intervention work, and even for access, the Trust must seek permission from Natural England, a government organisation.

St Catherine's Down's acid grassland is not species rich, but it contains important historic monuments, especially the medieval lighthouse and ancient burial mounds, and old field patterns and quarries sculpture the downs. From the top there are wonderful panoramic views. For all these reasons St Catherine's Down is a very special place and well worth preserving.

Tony concluded by commenting on "the sheer randomness of nature conservation" which requires a highly flexible approach. We cannot control everything, and especially not the weather. Yet every now and then a new species of flora or fauna appears, such as the golden-eye lichen, and an old species returns, like the peregrine and raven. The natural world never ceases to surprise and delight us.

This talk, illustrated by a number of attractive and informative slides, gave some thirty members of our Society fascinating insights into the complexity of the role of the National Trust on the Island in managing their land for wildlife. Tony's role must be very demanding: co-ordinating the management of such a variety of buildings, landscapes and habitats, liaising with farmers, contractors and visitors, supervising rangers, other employees, volunteers and the biological survey team, and giving presentations to groups like ours.

As Tony says, there are no hard and fast rules in nature conservation. It must be difficult deciding which species to favour when considering habitat intervention, but Tony's principle is to intervene as little as possible. And then there's choosing your methods. Using a JCB for scrub clearance proved highly efficient, but could not be used on very steep slopes. Management plans have to be based on research, past experience and detailed consideration and preparation. It is clear to me that Tony has a deep respect for wildlife and the countryside which motivates his management decisions. He values traditional farming methods that make provision for wildlife, through such practices as hedge-laying.

Maggie Nelmes

14th December Living at Brading Roman Villa: an illustrated talk by Pat Barber

When I first visited Brading Roman Villa, in about 1979, I remember finding it covered by corrugated iron sheeting, which did not adequately protect the fragile mosaics from the damp. It was owned by the Oglander Estate, on whose land half of the villa stood when it was discovered in 1879. The other half they had bought from the farmer who had been the first person to come across some of the mosaics while digging on his land. In 1994 the Estate handed the villa over to a charitable Trust, and ten years later a new building, comprising a visitor centre, exhibition room, shop and cafe was opened.

Brading Villa, one of the UK's finest Roman sites, with its well preserved mosaic floors and collection of Roman pottery, coins and tools, was well worth preserving, and therefore attracted generous grants to provide a climate-controlled building. It is run by two different organisations. The Oglander Trust manages the facility, by maintaining the buildings and employing staff to run the facilities, whereas The Friends of Brading Roman Villa provide voluntary support to the Trust in various ways. Our speaker, Pat Barber, is Vice-Chairman of The Friends.

Pat showed us a picture of the villa dated 1880, produced by Price and Price, the archaeologists who excavated the buildings. It was a large courtyard villa that had started out in the mid first century AD as

a simple dwelling attached to a farm, and been extended and enhanced gradually over the next hundred years. By the mid second century it was a large and impressive stone villa, built around three sides of a central courtyard.

So what was the Romans' Isle of Wight, which they called Vectis, like? Pat showed us an outline map and pointed out how the Island was a bit bigger then, sea level being some two metres lower than it is today. Vicky Basford did some research on coastal erosion for the 1980 Vectis Report and produced Grange Chine maps showing how the coastline had receded on this part of the south coast between 1794 and 1977. A hundred to two hundred metres had eroded, but not uniformly. On the north coast, Gurnard Roman Villa succumbed to the waves in the 1860s, and the Quarr and Fishbourne Roman salt kilns are now below high water. To allow the salt to dry, they had to be above sea level. The Bembridge marshes, which were reclaimed in the seventeenth century, were underwater in Roman times. Ships could sail up the Eastern Yar River to Brading, which was an important trading port.

There is a lot that archaeologists do not know about the Roman Villa, such as what the rooms were used for, as no furniture or artefacts were found there. But what they do have is pottery, much of it from broken bowls, jars, pots and such-like, which have been painstakingly pieced together and are on display at the museum. What is surprising is how many different kinds of pottery were found in one dwelling. Vectis ware was everyday crockery from kilns on the Island, one of which was found at Newnham Farm at Binstead. Rowlands Castle ware came from just north of Portsmouth and Grog-tempered ware and Alice Holt ware were also from Hampshire. There was New Forest ware, Black-burnished ware from Poole Harbour and Oxford ware. Pat showed us on an outline map of Britain where each of these types of pottery has been found.

The owners of such a large and comfortable villa as Brading could afford to shop for pottery from beyond our shores. And sure enough, items made in different parts of Gaul (France) and in the Rhineland were found here. The Samian ware from Central Gaul is especially decorative and sophisticated. Distribution maps show that these foreign makes of pottery are not commonly found in this country.

The question arises as to how the villa's owners obtained their pottery. The main form of transport must have been by water, and the villa is close to Brading, at that time situated on a navigable river. There are no known Roman roads on the Island, but there must have been tracks, and evidence has been found at Brading of wheeled vehicles. Pat showed us a photograph of a linchpin, made of copper alloy and iron, which held the wheel onto the axle. Another photograph showed a T-piece, which linked a shaft with a wagon. In 2010 a ditch was excavated, which Professor Barry Cunliffe of Oxford University, who led the Dig, thought was part of a road leading to the villa. But where it came from, we do not know.

Brading was not the only Roman villa on the Island; there were a number of others scattered about. There were also Roman settlements, field systems, and industrial sites, such as salt and pottery kilns. At the time of the Roman invasion there was an Iron Age farm at Brading, and another at Bowcombe, near Carisbrooke. Villas grew out of farm dwellings and flourished, but towards the end of the Roman occupation, they were in decline, and by 400 AD all that was left on the Island was some kind of 'squatter' occupation at Rock and Brading Villas. What caused this general change in fortune on the Island, we do not know.

Pat's talk sparked a number of questions from our audience of some thirty-five members. It was well researched and documented, even though this period in the Island's history is not well known. I couldn't help reflecting on how the fortunes of this site have improved in the past decade: the fine, purpose-built visitor centre and exhibition room which replaced the corrugated shack, followed by Professor Barry Cunliffe's Big Dig, which lasted several summers and raised the villa's profile even higher. And backing these ventures are The Friends, holding talks about Roman times, organising fund-raising events and providing voluntary help.

Maggie Nelmes

Reports on Section Meetings

Archaeology

Wednesday Activities

The numbers joining in the Wednesday gatherings have risen this year, with between 12 and 16 people joining us most weeks.

Geophysics has included Span Farm (Wroxall), Newnham Farm (Binstead), Garlic Farm (Mersley), and Yarmouth (looking for evidence of an earlier church). There was a small excavation at Newnham, but with no significant finds.

We've continued to monitor the cliffs at Yaverland, Brook, Chilton Chine and Binnel Bay; no new archaeology found but interesting rocks and fossils have continued to delight us.

Walks have included Stenbury Down, Wroxall Down, Thorness, Bowcombe, Bonchurch and Headon Warren.

We paid a very interesting visit to the Dinosaur Farm on the military road. We were impressed with Oliver's commitment to revive and develop this valuable resource as an education and research centre. His infectious enthusiasm, depth of knowledge and clear presentation kept us all interested.

We were also fortunate to see Mr Sutton's collection of vintage tractors, of particular interest to those with a mechanical bent.

Planning around the weather and the farming calendar has caused us some problems as we have a mixture of one-off activities and lengthier projects and also sometimes need to seize an opportunity at short notice. In 2014 we may organise the Wednesday meetings differently and hope all interested members will help with a review of our programme.

Helen Jackson

19th October

Fenland Landscape and Archaeology

Dr David Marshall began this interesting talk on a completely new area (for us) by pointing out that the Fens were not, as is often thought, marginal, but in fact constituted the richest place in England during the Late Middle Ages. Most of them were drained several centuries ago, and were owned by very few people indeed, the Duke of Bedford prominent among them, and local inhabitants tended to be pushed out of the area, with many traditional ways of living lost as a result.

The Fens are divided into three Levels – South, Middle and North – and four different kinds of landscape: Silt Townlands, Peat Fens, Fen Islands, and Marshland. Producing four maps, David challenged us to identify which was which.

The Silt Townlands contain a little Bronze Age and Roman archaeology. The place-names are Anglo-Saxon, many ending in *ey* 'island', e.g. Gedney in Lincolnshire. The much-occurring names 'dike' and 'dyke' refer to 'ditch' and 'bank', respectively. The landscape is rich and arable, and salterns are a common feature. An area called 'Roman Bank' is one of the few wild areas in the Fens and, curiously, not Roman at all but more likely Early Medieval. It was of great benefit to medieval inhabitants of the townlands to have marshland within easy reach for fish and wildlife. Original villages tend to have grandiose parish churches, much greater than warranted, demonstrating the extraordinary richness of this particular landscape.

The Peat Fens are also a man-made landscape, produced by draining the peat. Some of it is very early, dating to the 10th century. The soil is again very fertile, with horticulture – evidenced by the many nurseries and glasshouses – as well as agriculture. The Holme Fen Post which was sunk in at ground level in 1850 shows the phenomenal rate of shrinkage over the years, with at least four metres of peat having disappeared. 'Roddons' refer to the dried raised beds of watercourses after the latter had drained away; houses were often subsequently built on them.

Within the Fens there are a few hills, which have historically been called 'islands' as they remained dry when the low-lying fens around them were flooded. The largest of the fen-islands is the Isle of Ely,



Apple Twins
Nature Notes, Page 3



True Weevil
Nature Notes, Page 3



Thorne Apple
Nature Notes, Page 4



Parasitic Wasp, Page 4



Web on Olive leaf,
Parasitic Wasp Page 4



27th July The Hatt Meeting Place. Page 5



Visit to Avebury
Page 16



18th Sept Ashey Amble
Teasle Marble Moth. Page 18



18th Sept Ashey
Cushion Bracket. Page 18



17th Oct Borthwood
Honey Fungus. Page 19



Botany - Marsh Cinquefoil Page 16



17th Oct Borthwood
Queen`s Bower Hill. Page 19



New Gall to Europe *Subanguina guizotiae*
Page 2



20th Nov Rew Street
Glistening Inkcap. Page 19



20th Nov Rew Street
Brent Geese Page 19



17th Dec Shorewell
Cup Fungus. Page 20

We then took the road that follows the route of the Avenue. We stopped halfway along to look at the stones, but this was not a day to walk along the processional route.

After a warm meal in the pub we were able to explore the site of the largest stone circle in the British Isles.

It can be difficult to make sense of this site, with so many stones missing and the confusion of buildings, roads and fast traffic. Don's tour, section by section, really helped us understand the scale and layout of this amazing place.

Don explained that the avenue is not straight and believes the route follows an energy line, finally leading the participants into the circle of stones. There were 2 inner circles, each of which would have been the focus of ritual.

And this is the only place from which Silbury Hill can be seen, its top peeping over the intervening land.

The size of the surrounding bank and ditch is staggering. We could not begin to estimate the man-hours involved in its construction with antler picks and shoulder blade shovels as tools. And why? Will we ever understand what drove people for whom life must have been constant toil to labour so hard and so long?

We then drove to Devizes museum where they have recently opened a new prehistoric exhibition. As one would expect in this county, there were some stunning artefacts clearly displayed with good contextual information. For me some of the most memorable were the jadeite axe, the archer's wrist guard, several gold ornaments and a necklace made of hundreds of amber beads.

We saw and learnt so much in one day and as always are extremely grateful to Don Bryant for his genial and informative leadership. Also thanks to Delian for organising the trip.

(**Photo page 12**)

Helen Jackson

Botany

13th July

Cridmore Bog

Cridmore Bog is a Site of Special Scientific Interest in the upper Medina valley. It is a wetland site which has undergone a restoration scheme in recent years. The group split into two in order to record the species present. A small group looked at the northern part of the site, which is wetter, more difficult to move around in and more fragile as a habitat. Cotton Grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* were species of particular interest seen here and not in the larger area to the south.

The larger group explored the southern area. Marsh Cinquefoil *Comarum palustre* or *Potentilla palustris* (**Photo page 13**), Heath Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, all relatively uncommon on the Island were present here and also in the northern area. Other more familiar plants of wetlands in the southern area included Ragged Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, Gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* and Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata*. Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria* were also found in small quantities.

3rd August

Copse Mead Nature Reserve, Lake

The meeting to record plants at Copse Mead had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances

7th September

Mottistone Down

We walked across the southern slopes of Mottistone Down to look at the autumn chalk flora. In the first few minutes, several clumps of Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis* were discovered. Carlina Thistle *Carlina vulgaris* and Eyebright *Euphrasia officinalis* were still flowering, but other species were less easy to find as many were past their flowering phase. However distinctive leaves made some plants such as Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor* Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* and Rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium* easy to identify.

Not quite halfway along the Down, a fairly predictable species list was coming together quite well and the group spread widely across the slope. A shout of delight went up from Paul Stanley as he had just discovered a sizable clump of Dwarf Sedge *Carex humilis*. This is only the second Island site for this plant; Paul found the first site for this plant on north Afton Down in 2006.

After this excitement we continued to the western extremity of the Down, finding among other species a small quantity of Bastard Toadflax *Thesium humifusum*, another rare plant. We returned by climbing steeply to the main track and following it downhill. Here, clay with flints overlies the chalk and on this soil type, we added the acid-loving Dwarf Gorse *Ulex minor*, Ling *Calluna vulgaris* and Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* to our list.

28th September

Knighton Wood East

This woodland is on a greensand spur just south of the Downs road. It is plantation woodland on an ancient woodland site which is being restored over time by the removal of planted conifers and their replacement with species such as Hazel. A wide track contours around the woodland and most of our recording was done on this route. In the large open glade we found Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea* with small projections on the upper leaf surface. These are called lighthouse galls and are caused by a gall midge, *Rondaniola bursaria*. Beech *Fagus sylvatica* leaves had a similar-looking swelling, caused by a different gall midge called *Hartigiola annulipes*. Eighteen galls were found in total, 5 on herbaceous plants and 13 on woody plants, six of which were on Oak.

We also recorded 33 leaf miners, mostly micro-moth larvae or flies. The 21 microfungi were mostly powdery mildews or leaf spots of various species.

On entering the wood, we were set the target of recording at least ten new species for the site. Our final total was 72 species, half of which were new to the site.

Anne Marston

Entomology

9th July

St Helen's Duver

At last an entomological section meeting took place on a hot sunny afternoon, although there was quite a stiff breeze. Six butterfly species were found. The commonest species was Meadow Brown, but there were also a number of Marbled Whites and Small Tortoiseshells. Singles of Small Copper, Small Heath and Speckled Wood completed the tally. Caterpillars of the Cinnabar Moth and Yellowtail were found, meadow grasshoppers were very common, and Dark Bush-cricket was also seen.

10th August

Afton Down

This year National Moth Night was running from the 8th – 10th August and the emphasis was on looking for tiger moths. As the local branch of Butterfly Conservation were running evening events, it was decided to hold a day time meeting. This afternoon visit was run in the hope of finding Jersey Tigers. In tandem with this a butterfly count was run on the sunken road above the cliffs on the eastern side of Freshwater Bay. Conditions were far from ideal, being largely overcast and breezy. In the timed count five butterfly species were seen including Common and Chalkhill Blue. Later in the afternoon and where the grass was shorter, larger numbers of Chalkhill Blue was found, along with a single Marbled White. A number of Silver-ys and Six-spot Burnet Moths were seen, and caterpillars of the Cinnabar Moth were found. A fine iridescent chafer was found, probably a Rose Chafer, and two examples of the common hoverfly *Episyrphus balteatus*.

21st September

Rew Down

This was a meeting during which the weather declined markedly, ending in drizzle and very murky conditions. The meeting was well-attended, and a surprising number of moths were seen for a daytime meeting. Rush Veneers and a few Silver-ys were observed, and there were a number of grass moths seen, most of which proved to be *Agriphila geniculea*. A Turnip Moth and Asetaceous Hebrew Character were also found. Four butterflies were seen: Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown and a

single Adonis Blue which attracted a good deal of interest. There were also good numbers of field and meadow grasshoppers as well as dark bush crickets. A Slow Worm tail was also spotted.

7th October

Jersey Camp

This was our second visit of the year, and as the first visit in May had been entirely insect-less it was pleasing to hold a meeting that was a good deal more productive. Fifteen species were seen in all, and the two commonest species were Red-Green Carpet (9) and Barred Sallow (6). Three species of under-wing were seen, Large Yellow, Lunar, and Broad-bordered. Other species included Dusky Thorn, Brindled Green, Angle-shades, Blood-vein and Whitepoint. We are very grateful to Dave Maidment at the camp for laying on facilities for us for the evening.

Richard Smout

Looking at the Countryside

18th September

Ashey Amble

A group of 16 people and 3 dogs set off for a walk over Ashey Down to Bloodstone and Eaglehead Copses on a grey morning after rain. Within yards of the car park we found a beautiful big 'Robins Pin-cushion' Gall, on a wild rose, the fluffy pinkish green ball is caused by a Gall wasp and contains its larvae. As we walked across the field below the Seamark we enjoyed extensive views over the Solent. Near the Pillow Mounds we found a ring of the Fairy Ring Champignon, *Marasmius oreades*. There was some discussion about the origins of the mounds, they are probably the remains of medieval rabbit warrens. Nearby were some teasel heads, which David Biggs pulled apart to show us the moth larva that resides in the middle, these were Teasel Marble Moth *Endothenia gentianaeana* (Photo page 13). Apparently most teasels contain one. An avenue of trees near the old waterworks provided plenty of interest both in identifying the varieties, which included Large-leaved Lime, Rowan, Cherry, and an ornamental Whitebeam which had clearly been planted, as well as Field Maple, Norway Maple, Spindle, and Oak and in the galls, miners and mildews that are David Biggs's special interest. Jackie Hart spotted a large white fungus in a nearby field that turned out to be an *Amanita echinacephala*, the Warty Amanita. There were some Ivy Broomrapes at the bottom of the avenue and we admired some huge old oaks near the waterworks.

In Bloodstone Copse we went to the source of the Monkton Mead stream and talked about the story of Bloodstone Copse and the cause of the 'blood splashes' in the stream at certain times of year, which are in fact algae. Delian Backhouse-Fry told us that the area had been part of an estate owned by the Romano-British emperor, Ambrosius. Carefully avoiding the badger latrine we retraced our steps a few yards and continued through the Copse finding some nice fungi on the way. The best find was two Sessile Earthstars, *Geastrum fimbriatum*. Along the road we found Jelly Ears, *Auricularia auricula-judae*, growing on a branch above our heads. David found a Scrophularia Weevil on Figwort and in showing it to us nearly squashed a magnificent large, green, moth caterpillar (probably some sort of Hawk Moth). At this point the group split. Some headed for home, the rest of us went through the field managed for butterflies by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. There weren't many butterflies, but we found a bracket fungus growing on old Blackthorn trees. This has been identified as Cushion Bracket *Phellinus pomaceus* (Photo page 13). Overhead we heard the croak of Ravens. The final few yards along the side of the road still yielded interest for the botanists: the best find was the last, when Dave Trevan nearly trod on a patch of Autumn Gentian, *Gentianella autumnalis*.

A most informative walk thanks to the combined expertise of everyone.

17th October

Borthwood

Nine people met at Queens Bower. We set off past the Isle of Wight cheese company and into fields towards Skinners Hill. This is a very pleasant path crossing a campsite and pastureland overlooking a hidden valley. We found several fungi, notably two sorts of Waxcaps, the Meadow Waxcap *Hygrocybe pratense* and Snowy Waxcap *Hygrocybe virginea*. We also found a Russula with a dark greyish cap

possibly *R. cyanoxantha*, crumbs from the cap coloured our hands purple! Mike Cotterill investigated the oaks growing in the hedges and found Spangle Galls on the leaves. These galls are the asexual stage of the life cycle of gall wasps, later they breed sexually and produce a different sort of gall in the leaf buds. A little further on, he also found Oak Oyster Gall. We also found Oak Blister Gall, Silk Button Gall and the more familiar Marble Gall on English Oak. This too is the asexual stage of a gall wasp, which interestingly, moves to Turkey Oak for the next stage.

From the fields we had a good view of the little tree topped hill that gives Queens Bower its name (**Photo page 13**). Alan Phillips read us the section from his Cock and Bull Stories that tells us that the Queen in question could be Phillipa, Duchess of York who had a small lodge there, from which she could watch the hunt, in the 1400s. On the other hand the 'queen' could be Isabella de Fortibus who had a hunting lodge there in the 13th century, or Queen Anne who came there for hawking in the 18th century!

In the hedges we found Blackberries, Hips, Haws, Rowan berries, Honeysuckle berries, Hazel-nuts and, strings of glowing Black Byony berries. By the path we found one solitary Red Cracking Bolete which obligingly turned blue when bruised. We encountered some unusual 'wildlife' along the way, 2 plastic owls on top of a derelict car, a wooden bird on a gate and 2 wooden meerkats, a parrot and a crocodile at the bottom of a garden. As we approached Borthwood we admired the exotic pink and orange berries of Spindle.

Borthwood Copse is recorded in the Domesday Book and its name then suggests that it was the wood where one got 'boards'. The name in its current form dates back to the 1700s. It has been a source of building wood for a very long time. We had a very pleasant meander through the wood. A Red Squirrel was sighted by most of the group, and we found several nice fungi, including a magnificent tiered clump of Honey Fungus *Armillaria mellea* (**Photo page 13**), some clumps of Yellow Stagshorn, *Calocera viscosa*, and on some beech logs we found massive Southern Brackets *Ganoderma australe* that must be several years old, as well as some Candle Snuff Fungi *Xylaria hypoxylon*. Thank you Alan for the historical info about Queen Bower and Borthwood and Mike for interesting facts on the sex lives of Gall wasps.

20th November

Rew Street Ramble

Despite wet and windy weather 8 of us met halfway along Rew Street. We walked up through Dukes Farm (by permission of Mike and Dave Flux) to the wartime buildings overlooking Thorness Bay, where apparently there had been an anti-aircraft gun. The splendid view encompasses the Solent from Hurst Castle right round to Southampton Water, and inland to Sticelett, currently enduring temporary works where a hole has been drilled under the Solent to take a new electricity cable. We walked through a collection of holiday cabins, some of which are based on old railway carriages, to the coast. The weather and season was not conducive for much in the way of natural history, however on the way down to the bay there is a field with many white thistle plants, this *Apical chlorosis* and stunted growth is caused by a bacterium *Pseudomonas syringae*. There were 40 or more Brent geese at the water's edge (**Photo page 14**). At the back of the beach, as expected, we found Winter Stalkball fungi *Tulostoma brumale*, the only place on the Island it is found. Alan Phillips gave us some background on the local place names. Thorness is derived from old English for 'thorn enclosure'. The name Sticelett can be traced back to the 10th century, when it meant 'the head of Stith's stream'.

As we walked up past the works for the electricity cable we looked back to see 3 Little Egrets cowering on the leeward side of a hedge! In Sticelett Copse a few Spindle bushes were fruiting and there were thickets of Butchers Broom with its bright red berries. We found a few fungi including a splendid patch of Glistening Inkcaps, *Coprinus micaseus* (**Photo page 14**).

One of our number, Bridget King, was born in Rew Street and had lived in the area all her life until a few years ago. She recalled when her family, the Fluxes, owned Dukes Farm in the 1930s when it also had a bakery. After ten years or so they had to sell it but it was bought by another branch of the Flux family and it is still owned by them today. She had a wealth of knowledge of former inhabitants of the area.

Fortunately the heavy rain held off until we were indoors with coffee and cake.

17th December

Shorwell Squelch

On a greyish but dry morning 12 of us set out from Shorwell village hall, down Russell Rd and then across fields towards West Court. The fields were very squelchy after two days of heavy rain and we had to pick our way in places. We crossed the stream that comes down through the village from a spring near North Court. It flows quite fast and is very clear with a sandy bed, where Water-cress grows in profusion. We were able to get a good look at West Court, one of three old manors in a very small area around Shorwell. All three manors are in the Domesday Book. In 1316 West Court was known as *Suth-shorewell*, or 'the south manor of Shorwell', and most of the existing handsome building dates back to Tudor times.

By the road to Brighstone we looked at the village Pound. It is believed to date back to the early 19th century and is a listed building, it was also unknown to Bill Shepard until this walk! On a bush by the pound David found a green, cup-like lichen and a tiny black cup fungus that grows on the lichen *Xanthoriicola physiae* (**Photo page 14**). In the pound a Red Campion was flowering. After a few yards on the road we turned back on the other side of West Court and down to a marshy wooded area. The foot-path relies on boardwalks to cross this jungly area where the stream spreads itself out and almost disappears. We emerged from the woodland at the back of Wolverton Manor. A bush on the corner of the buildings was full of House Sparrows and a Dunnock was also sighted. David saw a Spotted Woodpecker nearby. The magnificent manor house dates back to the time of James I, and there is also a beautiful collection of old farm buildings, a huge thatched barn with tiny triangular windows, a granary store up on staddle-stones, and one of the more ordinary looking barns has a lovely old Tudor style door.

We turned back to the village across the front of Wolverton manor where we had a good view and could admire the building. We also saw the site of the original 13th century manor house, which is still surrounded by a moat.

We returned to the hall for mince pies and tea and coffee and Howard showed us pictures from earlier walks. Thank you to Mike Cahill for bringing along the laptop and projector.

Lesley Atkins

Ornithology

20th July.

Fort Victoria.

15 people met at the Country Park on a hot morning for a brief sea watch followed by a walk through the woods to Cliff End, a little way down Monks Lane and then across the fields to make a circular walk back to the car park. Unfortunately, not many birds were around however we did have a fine selection of butterflies! Over the sea, we had Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Tern sp., Cormorant and Gannet. A Mediterranean Gull was also seen in the playing fields at Brambles Holiday Centre. In the woods we had Wren, Long-tailed Tit and Great Spotted Woodpecker and later we saw Goldfinch, House Martin, Swallow and a Green Woodpecker with a juvenile. Along the fields we heard very noisy Buzzards and when we went to investigate saw that an adult was being harassed by its two juveniles for food. Later we heard Pheasant and saw two Bullfinch, Common Whitethroat and Blue Tit as well as heard Greenfinch. In all 25 species were identified.

We had very good views of some White Admiral butterflies in the wood, and other species noted were Small Copper, Gatekeeper, Peacock, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood, Green Winged White, Ringlet and Large Skipper.

31st August.

Mottistone.

Eight people met on a sunny and cloudy morning with a cool north-westerly breeze. Migrating birds had been reported all week so we had high hopes for our walk this morning although the wind had by now changed direction. Our walk started at Mottistone Jubilee car park and we walked along Mottistone

Down, Harboro, along the footpaths to Mottistone Common and the Long Stone, over Castle Hill, up Strawberry Lane and back to the car park. We welcomed Vidya to our midst and were delighted to be able to show her good views of Common Redstart that were very obliging along the fence line between Mottistone Down and the plantation. The telescope came in very useful so all our members could study the bird. We saw at least seven Common Redstart during the course of the morning. Only a few Swallow passed us by and one Sand Martin was noted. We heard Willow/Chiffs at the start of the walk and had at least five Common Whitethroat. One Wheatear appeared. We also saw three Kestrel and two Buzzard. At Castle Hill we saw a Raven followed almost immediately by two Ravens. 19 species in all were seen, but we did also have a fine selection of butterflies: Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Clouded Yellow, Large White, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Adonis and Small Heath.

28th September

Ventnor Downs.

Nine members met on a miserable morning. Fortunately it had stopped raining by the beginning of the meeting. Although there had been a good migration during the week the wind changed for this morning's walk and not many birds were seen. There were flocks of Meadow Pipits with at least 40 seen. Swallows were still passing through with at least 20 noted and there were a few House Martins. Other than this we only had Magpie, Carrion Crow, Woodpigeon, three Kestrel, a Buzzard, a Peregrine, Green Woodpecker and Dunnock. A very disappointing morning for birds.

13th October.

Blackgang View Point Car park.

Six brave people turned up for this Sunday morning walk. Rain was forecast but we did manage to set off in the dry. The plan was to walk along the cliff top towards Niton and then return inland along the bridle path. Drizzle started to fall and then more persistent rain set in before we got half way so it was decided to abandon the walk and returned along the cliff path. 15 species were seen in all including Raven, 55 Herring Gull, three Common Gull, a Great Black Backed Gull, Cormorant and Pheasant. A few Swallows flew along the cliff edge and a Wren was spotted in the rough vegetation by the side of the path.

16th November.

Merstone.

It was unfortunate that unforeseen circumstances meant that Sue Blackwell was unable to lead this walk. Fortunately Bill and Alan Shepard came and recommended that we reverse the route that I was going to take as the slopes were easier! Ten people took part on this overcast morning including Avril who was over from Norfolk for a few days. We headed to Hurringford along footpaths through agricultural land and returned along the old railway track. Unfortunately it was a quiet morning for birds with 24 species seen. There was a flock of winter thrushes but as the light was poor and they were totally silent we were not able to identify them although they were possibly Fieldfare. There was a flock of Long Tailed Tit and Goldfinches at the old Railway Station where we parked. Later on in the morning we saw Reed Bunting, heard and saw a Goldcrest and a Cormorant flew over at one point.

15th December.

St Helens.

The planned walk to Laundry Lane and the new wetland area near Bexley Point was unable to go ahead as the Water Company had closed off the track whilst they install new water pipes. Instead Anthea lead us down to Embankment Road along the old railway line towards Bembridge as far as we could go and then returned along the road overlooking the estuary with a stop off to look at what was in the mill pond.

Eight brave people turned out as the forecast was for rain and high winds. It was miserable and damp to start with and on occasions rained more heavily. When planning the walk the state of the tide was not an issue and unfortunately it was high tide at about 11am – not an ideal time to choose. Despite the unfavourable conditions we enjoyed our walk and managed a respectable 37 species. Rooks and Jackdaws,

Black-headed Gulls and Mediterranean Gulls were on St Helen's Green. Later on we saw a female Red Breasted Merganser fly by, 26 Brent flew over, there were 17 Cormorant on their favoured trees on the marsh, 13 Teal, 3 Shoveller, several pairs of Gadwall, at least 32 Mallard, 7 Little Grebe, 3 Shelduck and another 4 Mediterranean Gulls. We also noted 2 Common Gull, some Herring Gull and a Great Black-backed Gull. On the big pond by Harbour Farm we saw at least 17 Pochard, mainly males, and a couple of Tufted Duck, surprisingly few in number. And while watching, 4 Greenshank flew in. On the pontoons Lapwing and 5 Sanderling roosted. A large flock of Lapwing were noted flying over the RSPB reserve – in excess of 200 birds.

Jackie Hart

Membership Secretary's Notes

New Members

Society Officers

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

General Secretary Ms J. Tolley, 31. Glynn Close, Seaview, IOW. PO34 5JZ

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

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

Society Address :-

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

Tel ; 01983 282596

Email: iwnhas@btconnect.com

Web address: www.iwnhas.org

Next Bulletin

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings
for 1st January 2014 to 30th June 2014 should be sent to:-

M. Cahill . 4 Nodes Road, Cowes, IOW. PO31 8AB
Telephone 01983 – 248054
Email - cahill@onwight.net

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

The Editor wishes to thank Alan Phillips for his help with proofreading.

