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## **President's Address**

As I write this, we are experiencing the possibly the warmest, wettest and most turbulent winter weather since records began. Many people had daffodils flowering in their garden on New Year's Day. By the time you read this, we may be plunged into an icy cold snap but, nevertheless, the impacts of climate change are evident all around us. In the last couple of years, it has become a popular event amongst botanists around the country to count how many plants they can find in flower on New Year's Day within a three hour period and this year, members of the Botany Group went to Ventnor to take part in the New Year Plant Hunt. We were able to find 58 plants in flower, quite a respectable score and something which would have been unachievable ten years ago. This was however, feeble compared to Chris Kidd's New Year count of 287 cultivated plants in flower at Ventnor Botanic Gardens, a figure to rival that of Tresco's Abbey Gardens on the Isles of Scilly, the country's premiere garden growing tender exotic plants.

Over the past year, we have been steadily making progress towards streamlining the organisation of the Society and improving our service to members. We now have a new website and an improved Wight Studies journal, both of which have been well received. We have some better display material, such as easily transported information screens and a box of exhibits to use at public events. We have continued to provide material for our monthly slot in the County Press, with contributions from a number of members of the Society. Behind the scenes, in our office, we have new computers and work is progressing well to improve the library and to sort out our backlog of papers, journals and artefacts. Some of this requires us

to dip into our financial reserves to some extent but it is important, indeed essential, for us as a charity to demonstrate that we have a long term strategy and that any funds accrued are used wisely to further the objects and objectives of the Society.

Whilst writing this, I have learned of the sad loss of Chris Lipscombe just after Christmas. Chris was a very active member of the Society for over forty years, moving to St Helen's when she retired from teaching. She continued to be involved in the Society right up to the end. She took over the extremely successful Access to the Countryside Section, just one of her many achievements. Chris was due to celebrate her 98<sup>th</sup> birthday in April and was fortunate to have been able to remain active and engaged throughout. At her funeral service, the Crematorium was packed to capacity, quite an achievement for someone of 97 years and testament to how well liked and appreciated she was by many people in many different walks of life.

**Colin Pope**

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### **Sir John Gardner Wilkinson and the Isle of Wight**

I first became aware of the artwork of Sir John Gardner Wilkinson back in November 1986 when I attended lecture entitled 'Egypt and England; An Anglo-Saxon Tour in 1847'. This was given by Martin Biddle at the fourth annual Brixworth lecture, a fine Anglo-Saxon church in Northamptonshire. I resolved to find out more about Sir John and his sketchbooks, and finally got round to perusing them at the Bodleian Library in July 2015!

Sir John Gardner Wilkinson (1797-1875) is best known as the founder of British Egyptology. His sketchbooks were preserved at Calke Abbey in Derbyshire. These portray the range of his interests, including ancient Egypt, continental Roman sites, Anglo-Saxon and Norman architecture, as well as manor houses, water mills and landscapes. The Anglo-Saxon tour of Martin Biddle's lecture title refers to a series of architectural drawings that Sir John produced of major Anglo-Saxon churches in Northamptonshire and adjoining counties, and in Sussex. In the mid 1840s, Sir John made at least one visit to the Isle of Wight and during his time here was busy with his sketchbooks. In addition to the six examples of his work reproduced here in this *Bulletin*, he produced the following: landscape sketches of Shanklin Chine, Seaview, Steephill, Godshill church and Sandown Bay, an architectural study of Brading church from the west, various studies of Yaverland church, and a pencil sketch made inside All Saints at Newchurch.

My motivation to explore the sketchbooks of Sir John Gardner Wilkinson was to find drawings of Island churches before Victorian 'restorations' showing architectural features which no longer exist. I only found one example of this in the sketch at Newchurch which shows a fine Romanesque (Norman) window. I did however find a range of illustrations from the Isle of Wight which deserve to be better known.

**John Margham**

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### **British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Isle of Wight News**

The winter has been a busy one for BTO survey volunteers with the Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey (NEWS) being run during December and January alongside the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) core counts. Garden surveyors have also been active with Garden BirdWatch (GBW) and the Goldfinch Survey (further details later in this article). Many

thanks to all who have participated in the above surveys, your efforts are very much appreciated.

### **Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)**

With spring just around the corner, attention is focused on the BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). The survey is designed to be a simple and enjoyable birdwatching exercise and involves three visits to the 1-km survey square. An initial visit to plan your route and record the habitat is followed by two early-morning spring visits (one visit in early April to mid-May and the other visit from mid-May to late June) to count all the birds you see or hear while walking two 1-km lines across the square. Comparing these annual counts enables the BTO to monitor the population changes of over 100 bird species. The only skills required are the ability to identify common birds by sight and sound.

We currently have a number of unallocated 1-km squares so please contact me if you are interested in covering any of the following (you can cover more than one square if you wish):

#### SZ3489 Norton

This square was surveyed from 2005 to 2012 so ideally the route should remain unchanged to ensure consistency in the data reporting. 57 species have been reported from this square with the route including Salterns Wood.

#### SZ3890 Cranmore

The square incorporates part of Cranmore Avenue and Bouldnor Cliff down to Bouldnor Copse. A mixture of habitat which should produce some interesting results.

#### SZ4085 Chessell Down

This square was surveyed between 1994 and 2009 so, as before, ideally the route should remain unchanged. 60 species have been reported from this downland and arable square.

#### SZ4387 Five Houses

The square covers a habitat of arable and woodland.

#### SZ4479 Shepherds Chine

This square has been surveyed between 2006 and 2015 so ideally the route should remain unchanged. An interesting square which incorporates the chine and the sea with 67 species reported.

#### SZ4483 Limerstone Down / Fore Down

A downland square which incorporates parallel footpaths making it an ideal route for this survey.

#### SZ4787 Bowcombe Down / Plaish

Mixed habitat with parallel paths so again it would make an ideal survey square.

#### SZ4976 Niton Down

Predominantly a downland square overlooking Blackgang Road to Gore Cliff.

#### SZ4996 Cowes

Mainly urban, a key habitat for this survey to ensure a proper mix of habitat for reporting purposes, but also includes Northwood Park and the Esplanade.

#### SZ5186 St. George's Down

This square was surveyed from 2000 to 2004 so ideally this same route should be used. 44 species have been reported from this downland square.

#### SZ5276 St Lawrence / Undercliff

The square was surveyed in 2015 but the route did not fully represent the habitat. Therefore a new route could be used in future.

#### SZ5294 Osborne Estate / Barton Manor

Landowner permission will be required for this square which includes part of Osborne Wood in the north and Barton pond in the south of the square.

#### SZ5392 Wootton Bridge

An interesting square which features Brocks Copse Road and part of Palmers Road. This includes Palmers Farm and Westwood Farm so it could feature a number of species.

#### SZ5882 Shanklin

A nice mixture of urban and coastal habitat covering the cliff path walk to St Boniface Road and west to Sandy Lane.

#### SZ6088 Carpenters Road / Rowborough / Beapers Shute

This square was surveyed from 2005 to 2009 so ideally the route should remain unchanged. 43 species have been recorded from this square. Landowner permission required from Beaper Farm and Hill Farm.

If you are interested I can send copies of maps for any of the above squares plus any further details about the survey or you can also visit <http://www.bto.org/bbs>. The BBS results for the Island will be published annually in the Isle of Wight Bird Report with updates in the BTO IW newsletter and IWNH&AS bulletin. All volunteers receive a hard copy of the national annual report.

### **House Martin Survey**

The summer House Martin Survey records have been submitted online and the national records are being analysed. From an Island perspective records were received from 22 out of 26 allocated 1-km squares. Only two squares recorded occupied nests; SZ5282 (Godshill) and SZ6084 (Sandown) which underlines the need for this survey.

Many thanks to the following for their work with the survey during the summer; John Adams, David Beckingham, James Gloyn, Derek Hale, Dave Hunnybun, Sue Lupton, Chris Meaney, Doug & Verna Milford and John Willmott.

I would be interested to receive any 2015 breeding records for the House Martin casual survey so if you have any records of occupied House Martin nests for 2015 please can you forward the information to me as soon as possible.

The BTO has received the necessary funding, mainly self-generated by donations, to undertake the second phase of the survey in 2016. This will concentrate on nest activity so it will be ideal for those who have access to a nest site. You will not be asked to look inside the nest but record the nest activity from ground level.

### **Heronries Census**

The Heronries Census is the longest-running bird survey with records going back to 1928. As the breeding season is about to start please can you advise me of any active Heron nests seen on the Island in 2016 excluding the Bembridge and Gatcombe areas.

### **Garden BirdWatch (GBW)**

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

It is a self-financing scheme with a £17 annual subscription although this includes a free copy of "Garden Birds and Wildlife" by Mike Toms and Paul Sterry upon joining plus you get a quarterly Bird Table magazine.

Further details are available at the following link; <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw>

### Goldfinch Feeding Survey

While Garden BirdWatchers are telling us that Goldfinches are becoming increasingly common in gardens, we don't fully understand the reasons for this. How important is the food we put out or the plants we grow? Do they truly prefer nyger seed or is sunflower seed their choice treat? There is still time to participate in this survey, which runs until the end of February and you can enter any records you have for earlier in the winter.

You don't have to be participating in the Garden BirdWatch survey to take part in the Goldfinch Feeding Survey. We want you to spend two minutes watching the Goldfinches in your garden, and tell us how many you see and what they are feeding on. We are also interested in how their feeding behaviour changes throughout the winter so if you regularly get Goldfinches you can help us by reporting more than once.

Finally if you encounter an injured bird on the Island please contact Wild Bird Aid (formerly Wight Nature). Key contact numbers are as follows;

- Nikkie Barton Phone: 07562 322191

Species: Waterfowl (swans, ducks, geese including Canada geese) as well as 'game birds' (pheasants, quails, woodcocks and partridges)

- Claire Newsome Phone: 07874 660863

Species: All seabirds including gulls as well as pigeons and doves

- Sandy Riggs Phone: 07979 882756

Species: Pigeons and doves

- Kerstin Voigt Phone: 07935 487306

Species: Corvids (ravens, carrion crows, rooks, jays, magpies, jackdaws), birds of prey as well as swallows, martins, nightjars and swifts.

For further details please use the following link; <http://www.voigt-web.co.uk/>

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

**Jim Baldwin**

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### **Update of the status of the Gold Case-bearer Moth (*Coleophora vibicella*)**

This rare moth did well at Lower Hamstead in 2015, but not so well in the Newtown meadows. The table below shows its varying fortunes at the four known Island sites over recent years. The numbers are of the cases counted.

Site	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Lower Hamstead					6	89	51	227
Newtown meadows	33			50	103	720	729	264
Brickfields						7		6
Porchfield rifle range					10	4	9	9

**D.T.Biggs**

### **An alien species to keep a look out for**

Whilst scrabbling about in the leaf litter at Ventnor Botanic Gardens, collecting some millipedes, I was aware of a lot of very lively jumping creatures which were larger than springtails. They were various sizes and the largest ones were up to 1 cm in length. They were remarkably similar to the sand shrimps which you find on the beach under washed-up seaweed but these were terrestrial shrimps. They were landhoppers, *Arcitalitrus dorrieni*, a native of eastern Australia in New South Wales and Southern Queensland. It was first discovered in 1924 on Tresco, on the Scilly Isles, believed to have been accidentally brought in on tree fern trunks. It is now well established in southwest England and also occurs along the western coasts of Britain as far north as the Scottish Western Isles. It is probably spread via plant nurseries and garden centres. This is the first record from the Island.



It is in fact common throughout the Gardens and it is likely that it is also established elsewhere on the Island. John Harrison believes he has seen them in his gardens at Northcourt Manor, Shorwell. If present in reasonable numbers, as they can be during the damper months, they are easily found under stones, dead wood and leaf litter in gardens and damp scrub. They are shiny and dark brown in colour and orange when dead (there is another much rarer species which is much paler) and can jump several centimetres into the air. Do have a look for this interesting and harmless naturalised amphipod and please let the Society know if you find any.

**Colin Pope**

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### **What's in a Name? Bluebells**

Latin and English nomenclature for bluebells has undergone many changes over several centuries. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, botanists and herbalists such as John Gerard (1554-1612) and Nicholas Culpepper (1616-1664) called the plants *Hyacinthus*

*anglica* or English Jacint. It is interesting to note that the letter J was absent from the classical Latin alphabet. These days, Latin-Americans and Iberians pronounce J as a very soft h, whilst elsewhere in Europe J is pronounced as y, which makes the words hyacinth and jacint very closely linked. In jewellery, a jacinth is a variety of zircon.

When renowned Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) published his new system of plant classification, *Species Plantarum* in 1753, he named the plants *Hyacinthus non-scriptus*. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, two popular choices of new nomenclature were *Scilla non-scripta* and *S. nutans*.

*Scilla* is a genus of bulbous perennials which includes *Scilla verna* or Spring Squill and *Scilla autumnalis* or Autumn Squill. Both species are blue flowered. *Nutans* is Latin for nodding, so what we now call Bluebells were historically included in the *Scilla* genus and referred to in English as Nodding Squills, as listed by J.E. Smith in his English Flora, published in the 1820s. Subsequent botanical authors used varying Latin and English terms according to their era and choices of reference material, eg. Dr W.A. Bromfield, *Flora Vectensis*, posthumously published in 1856, referred to *Agraphis nutans* / Wild English Hyacinth, Bluebell.... G. Bentham in his 4<sup>th</sup> edition of The Handbook of the British Flora (first edition 1858) referred to *Scilla nutans* / Bluebell Squill.

During the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, four out of five editions of the immensely popular Flowers of the Field by Reverend C.A. Johns, listed either *Scilla festalis* or *S. nutans* / Wild Hyacinth or Bluebell. There was a notable change in the 1919 edition to *Endymion non-scriptum*.

In Mythology, Endymion was a beautiful young shepherd with whom the Moon goddess, Selene, fell in love. A spell was cast over Endymion that he should neither grow old nor die but remain forever in deep slumber, young and beautiful for all eternity beneath Selene's loving lunar gaze.

The connection between Endymion and Bluebells may seem vague, but could be that Bluebells too should remain eternally beautiful to all who gaze upon them. Consider the opening lines of John Keats' poem entitled Endymion : 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever; it's loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness...' Reverend C.A. John's explanation is that the Bluebell's drooping inflorescence represents the sleep of Endymion.

*Endymion non-scriptus* was the accepted nomenclature for many decades until the early 1970s when botanical authors started to acknowledge the latest change to *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*.

The Latin suffix *-oides* means -like, or having the appearance of. *Non-scripta* is Latin for not written or unmarked. Compare this with Dr Bromfield's use of *Agraphis* from the Greek; the prefix *a-* means without and *graphis* means writing.

In Mythology, Hyacinthus and Apollo were taking part in a friendly sporting contest in the forest when a discus thrown by Apollo was blown off-course and hit Hyacinthus' head, killing him. From the blood-soaked ground where Hyacinthus lay there sprung up fragrant blue flowers. The perianths were marked with dark streaks in the likeness of Ai, interpreted as Alas!, the word cried out by the distraught Apollo as he knelt in sorrow beside the lifeless body of his dear companion. The flowers were named Hyacinthus in honour of the deceased youth.

Britain's wild Bluebell perianths do not have any dark floral markings so are deemed not directly related to those fabled flowers of ancient legend, as scholars of antiquity may have fancied, hence *Hyacinthus non-scripta*, like a Hyacinth unmarked.

In the 2015 national survey by Plantlife International, Bluebells were voted by the majority of the public as Britain's favourite wild flower.

Sue Blackwell

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### Some Botanical Highlights of 2015

Every year produces new and interesting discoveries and 2015 was no exception. The first of these came from a visiting botanist with a particular interest in orchids. Stephen Oakes-Monger phoned me on 11<sup>th</sup> May to tell me that he had found an **Early Spider Orchid** (*Ophrys sphegodes*) in flower on Tennyson Down. This is an elusive species with us but, in recent years, single specimens of this orchid have appeared sporadically on Tennyson Down, never in the same place twice but always in the vicinity of the Monument. When one is found, it can be remarkably difficult to re-find, but I met Stephen the following day and he led me to the spot. The great rarity of this plant is in marked contrast to its abundance on the limestone on Purbeck, Dorset, within clear sight of Tennyson Down.

Later in the year, in July, I was delighted to come across a population of several hundred **Marsh Helleborines** (*Epipactis palustris*) growing in a previously unrecorded site on a damp cliff ledge to the west of St Catherine's Point. Although there are no recent records from this area, there is a Victorian record of Marsh Helleborines from Blackgang. My guess is that they have persisted, undetected, in small numbers at Blackgang providing a seed source to colonise a suitable area of slumped ground once this became available.

Tony Stoneleigh has continued his meticulous monitoring and counting of the **Field Cow-wheat** (*Melampyrum arvense*) at St Lawrence bank. This year, his count was the highest he has recorded since he started monitored. He counted 1710 flowering plants on 30<sup>th</sup> June. This is the highest recorded count here since 2001 and is testament to the management of the site by Jamie Marsh on behalf of the Wildlife Trust.

On a visit to Quarr Abbey in September, I was interested to come across a large population of **Orange Balsam** (*Impatiens capensis*) growing in a fairly inaccessible location amongst willows at Quarr Abbey marsh, close to the sea. There has been a history of occasional records of this plant from this general area since 1947 but this generally has involved just one or two plants. Clearly, the core population occurs beneath willow scrub around the marsh. Although this attractive plant is not a native, it is far from being an invasive species with us.

In late November, Paul Stanley phoned me to say that he had found a strong population of **Balm-leaved Figwort** (*Scrophularia scorodonia*) growing at Bembridge Point, on waste heaps near the entrance to Bennett's yard. I told Anne Campbell, who is recording for the Atlas 2000 project in the Bembridge area and she told me that she had noted the plants there in August and had been meaning to go back to identify them. Balm-leaved Figwort is a native species of Southwest England but it has been spreading its range eastwards in recent years, helped no doubt by a succession of mild winters. Its arrival on the Island was no doubt aided by vehicle movements but it seems likely that this plant will now become a permanent resident with us and is likely to start spreading.



Sue Blackwell found another unlikely plant in November growing on the south facing bank of Ryde Canoe Lake. She could not identify it from Stace's *Flora of the British Isles* but the reason for this is that it is not described in that book. After much deliberation, and with the invaluable help of Eric Clement, it was named as **Kopata Geranium**, *Pelargonium inodorum*, a rather nondescript, weedy Pelargonium from southern Australia. This is the first British record of it as an established species. It remains a mystery how on earth it arrived here as the plant does not appear to be in cultivation in this country.

Finally, a most exciting report came from Dave Dana, not a true plant but a fungus. He noticed an interesting fungus growing on a large fallen ash limb in private woodland at Appuldurcombe. From the picture he sent, it was very clear what this was and I was thrilled to visit the site with him and inspect the first Island record for **Coral Tooth** (*Hericium coralloides*). This beautiful fungus is nationally rare but it is also of interest because it tends to be associated with ancient woodland sites where there has been an historic management of wood pasture, ie grazing by livestock alongside woodland management. One of the classic localities for Coral Tooth is the New Forest, where it occurs on a small number of ancient beech trees. Interestingly, we know that the woodland scarp above Appuldurcombe House was historically managed as wood pasture and we know that, at one time, this area was grazed by deer (probably fallow deer). Ecological evidence for this type of management here is provided by the rich collection of old woodland lichens made from here during Victorian times. It is therefore a delight to discover that a remnant from this historic management survives to this day.

Colin Pope

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## Andy Butler's Nature Notes July to December 2015

### July

1<sup>st</sup>. Dave Nordell, Peter Hunt and I went over to a private site near Atherfield to look for Red-veined Darters. We managed to find a total of 4 so and spent a few hours taking plenty of photos.

2<sup>nd</sup>. A fresh Clouded Yellow along the revetment this morning.

3<sup>rd</sup>. Up to Newport this morning with Dave and Peter to see the White-letter Hairstreaks that Rob Wilson found on the 30<sup>th</sup> June. There were 4 in the Elm where originally seen and possibly two more in adjacent trees. Nice to see this butterfly again in the Island and I'm sure it is elsewhere but just needs finding.

6<sup>th</sup>. 4 Privet Hawkmoths in the moth trap this morning as well as a Birdwing moth, not rare but nice to see. There was also a rather late Glanville Fritillary along the revetment, plus a fresh Painted Lady. My son reported 2 Glanvilles in Bishop's Acre at the bottom of Leeson Rd.

8<sup>th</sup>. Jersey Tiger moth in the garden of the '*lutescens*' (ie. yellow) form underwing instead of red.

9<sup>th</sup>. Dave and I walked round to Luccombe Bay to check out the Marsh Helleborine that is found on the undercliff. It's hard to estimate the numbers but there was probably in excess of 1000, so doing okay.

10<sup>th</sup>. We visited Walter's Copse today and recorded 6 Silver-washed Fritillaries and 6 White Admiral.

11<sup>th</sup>. There were about 100 Marbled Whites on the bank just to the west of my house and the local House Sparrow gang were busy taking them as they emerged, much as they had when

the Glanvilles were emerging at the same site.

18<sup>th</sup>. Went over to a friend's farm at Porchfield where we counted at least 30 Silver-washed Fritillaries nectaring on Bramble blossom alongside a wood in a hundred metre length. This is the most I've ever recorded at any one site. There was also one of the form *valesina* amongst them.

21<sup>st</sup>. A Common Sandpiper along at Monk's Bay this morning. A second generation Holly Blue in the garden as well as 2 Painted Lady and one of the large hoverflies, *Volucella zonaria*.

25<sup>th</sup>. Went over to Porchfield again this morning and saw 15 Silver-washed including another *valesina*.

27<sup>th</sup>. Although it was a very windy day, Dave and I drove over to St. Helen's Duver for a look round. We recorded two Purple Hairstreaks and at least 12 Migrant Hawker dragonflies.

Haven't been over there for ages.

29<sup>th</sup>. 2 Humming-bird Hawkmoths in the garden and 8 Common Blues along the revetment.

30<sup>th</sup>. Back to Porchfield where there were 10 Silver-washed fritillaries plus 4 *valesina* form.

## August

1<sup>st</sup>. 6 Jersey Tiger moths in the trap this morning.

3<sup>rd</sup>. Plenty of moths coming to the trap overnight and in the day, Humming-bird Hawkmoths, Peacocks and a Wall Brown in the garden. The latter is becoming increasingly scarce nationwide but still relatively common in the Island.

6<sup>th</sup>. 18 Med Gulls flew past the house heading west.

8<sup>th</sup>. For the past two days there have been large shoals of Mackerel off Ventnor very close in and appearing to be heading up Channel. I've not seen numbers like this for some years now. Saw about 20 Chalk-hill Blue butterflies on Bonchurch Down.

9<sup>th</sup>. Had a Toadflax Brocade in the moth trap this morning. Possibly the first record for the Island.

12<sup>th</sup>. Walked along the revetment to Bonchurch first thing this morning. There were 4 Oystercatchers in the bay along from home and in Monk's Bay, 5 Ringed Plover, 4 Dunlin and 2 Sanderling. Behind the revetment 11 Common Blue Butterflies.

13<sup>th</sup>. Waders still at Bonchurch.

15<sup>th</sup>. Dave and I went along to Shepherd's Chine, Atherfield, where we had 33 Common Blues, 3 Clouded Yellow, 5 Painted Lady, 2 Red Admiral and one Small Tortoiseshell.

16<sup>th</sup>. 31 Common Blue and 5 Painted Lady behind the revetment.

17<sup>th</sup>. Two Ni moths in the trap.

18<sup>th</sup>. Another two Ni moths this morning.

21<sup>st</sup>. 4 Clouded Yellow and 8 Hummingbird Hawkmoths along the revetment.

24<sup>th</sup>. A Common Sandpiper along at Bonchurch beach.

25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>. Horrendous weather these last few days with constant rain and strong southerly winds.

28<sup>th</sup>. A sudden change in the weather with just a fresh wind and sunshine. Amazing to see today 6 Clouded Yellow, 8 Hummingbird Hawkmoths, 20+ Large White, 4 Holly Blue and a few Painted Lady.

29<sup>th</sup>. Heard about a juvenile Dotterel being seen up on Freshwater Golf Course. Pete Cambell and I shot off up there and sure enough there it was. They are always very tame and this one ignored the golfers and their buggies, as well as the birders, so everyone had good views of it. On the way back we stopped off at Brighstone and saw an immature Marsh Harrier. Not a bad day!

30<sup>th</sup>. A Redshank and a Wheatear along at Monk's Bay.

31<sup>st</sup>. There was a flock of 11 Common Sandpipers along the revetment this morning, the most I've seen at one time ever.

## September

1<sup>st</sup>. One Common Sandpiper at Monk's Bay.

2<sup>nd</sup>. About 40 Common Blues in Shepherd's Chine plus 6 Silver Y moths. One Adonis Blue behind the revetment back at Wheeler's Bay.

3<sup>rd</sup>. At least 11 Hummingbird Hawkmoths along the revetment.

4<sup>th</sup>. 2 Clouded Yellow along the revetment.

6<sup>th</sup>. Dave and I went up to Bonchurch Down this morning. We had 58 Adonis, 2 Chalk-hill blues, 30+ Brown Argus, 30+ Common Blue, 2 Painted Lady, 20+ Small Heath, 30+ Large White and one Holly Blue. There were 32 Painted Lady along the revetment as well in the afternoon.

8<sup>th</sup>. 6 Clouded Yellow along the front.

9<sup>th</sup>. Watched a rat eating Blackberries about 8ft. up in a very dense bramble bush just along from my house.

10<sup>th</sup>. Over 50 Common Blue at Shepherd's Chine.

13<sup>th</sup>. Pete and I went over to Atherfield and walked up to the big reservoir to the north of the chine; there was a single Green Sandpiper there and a Grasshopper Warbler nearby.

14<sup>th</sup>. Had a report of a Wryneck at Culver so nipped up there with Pete and managed fleeting views of it; it never stayed still long enough to take a photo.

15<sup>th</sup>. Had an Osprey fly close by me at Monk's Bay this morning.

16<sup>th</sup>. A Dotterel was reported on Luccombe Down this morning, I managed to see it and get some photos but the weather was awful with an easterly gale and heavy rain.

17<sup>th</sup>. The weather is better and I went up to see if the Dotterel was still on the downs. It was, but only briefly as it was chased off by dogs and never returned.

18<sup>th</sup>. 2 Greenland Wheatears along the revetment feeding on Dark Bush Crickets. Also 5 Painted Lady and 4 Clouded Yellow there.

20<sup>th</sup>. Plenty of butterflies about today which included 5 Hummingbird Hawkmoths at the back of my house. Watched an Oystercatcher levering off limpets from the rocks along the bay. Not an easy thing to do I would have thought but it made short work of it and is something I have not seen before.

24<sup>th</sup>. Had a Grass snake in the garden.

25<sup>th</sup>. There was a report of a Greater Yellowlegs, a rare American wader, seen in front of the Folly Inn along the Medina. Went over there in the afternoon with Pete and had distant views of it to the north of the Folly but in a bay that we couldn't access.

26<sup>th</sup>. My son offered to take me down to where we saw the Yellowlegs yesterday in the tender to his boat which is moored on the Medina. The tender is a very small all rubber dingy which was a bit of a squeeze for us both but never the less I managed to get some reasonable photos of the bird.

28<sup>th</sup>. Still plenty of Hummingbird Hawkmoths about.

## October

8<sup>th</sup>. A red-veined Darter dragonfly along the revetment.

8<sup>th</sup>. A late Small Heath butterfly on Culver Down.

11<sup>th</sup>. 2 Ring Ouzels and 7 Ravens on Ventnor Downs.

14<sup>th</sup>. I went out to Niton along the old Sandrock Road to Windy Gap this morning, not much about but from the top of the cliff there I spotted 7 or 8 Bottle-nosed Dolphins heading up

Channel past the Lighthouse. Back at home there were 2 Clouded Yellow, 3 Small White and a single Hummingbird Hawkmoth.

16<sup>th</sup>. Up to the Needles with Pete just after it got light to see a juvenile Cuckoo that had been spotted there; it was feeding on Fox moth caterpillars. There was also a Little Owl down near the cliff edge and 1000's of hirundines in the area. We saw a male Peregrine take one of them (a House Martin) about 15 feet alongside us.

19<sup>th</sup>. 5 Bottle-nose Dolphins off Wheeler's bay about 5pm.

20<sup>th</sup>. Dolphins heading down Channel at about 2.30.

23<sup>rd</sup>. Pete, Dave and I went out to Atherfield, not much about but we spotted the Dolphins off the ledge about a mile out. They were obviously feeding and slowly moving west.

25<sup>th</sup>. 2 Swallows over the house this morning. Along the revetment there were 12 Large White, one Clouded Yellow, 3 Small Tortoiseshell, 3 Red Admiral and an Opium Poppy in flower in my garden.

27<sup>th</sup>. Dave and I went over to Southford, near Whitwell, and had good views of about 120 Fieldfares and 30/40 Redwings plus a Black Redstart in the waterworks compound.

28<sup>th</sup>. A Black Redstart at the bottom of Shore Rd, Bonchurch. 5 Vapourer Moths flying round the garden.

### November

6<sup>th</sup>. Winter Heliotrope in bloom on the bank at rear of house.

7<sup>th</sup>. Pete and I went over to the Hersey reserve at Seaview this morning. It was pouring with rain and blowing a gale but there were 25+ Snipe, 13 Little Grebes sheltering and a Fox doing his best to catch one of them.

10<sup>th</sup>. 2 Red Admiral in the garden and violets in flower there as well. Along the revetment there are a few plants of Hoary Stock in flower. None of these would normally be flowering at this time of year.

11<sup>th</sup>. Went over to Bembridge Marshes with Pete. We had 3 Marsh Harriers and a Short-eared Owl.

18<sup>th</sup>. One Comma and a Red Admiral in the garden.

21<sup>st</sup>. About 250 of the large jellyfish, *Rhizostoma pulmo*, washed up in Monk's Bay.

28<sup>th</sup>. Red Admiral in the garden.

30<sup>th</sup>. 3 Black Redstarts feeding on Cabbage Palm berries in St. Catherine's St.

### December

1<sup>st</sup>. Watched a Cormorant catch and kill a large Carp in Bonchurch Pond. It was too big for the bird to swallow so it left it floating on the surface. An Angle Shades moth in the garden.

2<sup>nd</sup>. A Dark Bush Cricket in the garden.

6<sup>th</sup>. Dozens of 'By the wind Sailors' washed up in Monk's bay. First I've seen since 2006. They are not a type of jellyfish as is commonly thought but a colony of polyps. They originate in the Central Pacific Ocean.

7<sup>th</sup>. Went to St. Catherine's lighthouse for a look along the cliffs and down into Watershoot Bay. Not much about but found a squid lure in the tide wrack. A Red Admiral in the garden in the afternoon.

11<sup>th</sup>. 5 Rock pipits along the revetment.

12<sup>th</sup>. Disturbed a hibernating Peacock in the woodshed.

16<sup>th</sup>. About 12 Gannets approximately 200 yds offshore diving and catching what was probably mackerel.

18<sup>th</sup>. Silver Y moth on the dining room window in the evening.

19<sup>th</sup>. A Twenty-plume moth and 2 Winter Moths on the window this evening.  
28<sup>th</sup>. Went to Yarmouth with Pete and Dave to see a Grey Phalarope. Had reasonable views but it was too distant and the light too poor to take any photos. A nice end to the year.  
30<sup>th</sup>. Another Grey Phalarope has been seen in the same area as the previous one, not often we get two in the Island at the same time.

**Andy Butler**

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### **Volunteers needed for IWNHAS displays**

Wolverton fair was really buzzing this year with a car park pretty full by lunchtime on the Saturday despite dull conditions and a morning shower, and full with overflows on the Sunday. The IWNHAS stall was well attended, two new members signed up on the spot and many membership forms were taken away for thought. Next year it is possible that the Environment Tent in its usual form will not be funded but we still hope to be represented there. This year I struggled a bit with the rota for people to man our stall. My current volunteer list is outdated and we need to draw from a wider base than just the Display Sub-committee and Council. There is also a need for Society displays at other times eg Bioblitz, and displays as the need arises.

If you would like to be included on a list of helpers for these occasions, please let me know via the Society, and if you would like to be part of an informal little sub-committee that rethinks and evolves the displays you would be very welcome.

We also need more specimens for display, either suitable for mounting in plastic blocks, if fragile, or robust enough to survive repeated handling. The latter would be best common and replaceable eg mermaids purses, fossils, skulls, bones, pressed flowers (or fresh ones?). We need a badger skull for contrast with our beautifully prepared fox one, maybe a hare skull to sit beside the rabbit. The razorbill skull was of huge interest. Eagle? Seagull? No-one saw the resemblance to puffin. As someone pointed out, 'this sort of thing used to be in every child's bedroom' but now it is electronics and games. We can foster this interest. Do please check if you have specimens stashed away (but nothing irreplaceable or that you are very fond of).

**Daphne Watson**

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### **Message from the Librarian**

Further to my message in the last bulletin I have now sorted the surplus copies of the Proceedings. There are copies available for most years from 1950 - 2010. If you would like any please Email me at [rosemount25@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rosemount25@yahoo.co.uk)  
I will also bring some copies to the AGM for members to help themselves.

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

**Helen Jackson**

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## Reports of General Meetings

**11<sup>th</sup> September**

### **Whippingham Heritage Trail**

St Mildred's is a most unusual church, designed by Prince Albert, who also collaborated on the design of nearby Osborne House. Situated high above the River Medina, it has lovely views. This is a peaceful corner of the village of Whippingham, with its fine row of almshouses and a few large houses tucked away from view. Queen Victoria bought a cottage here to house a lavatory for her own use when attending church services.

We arrived early to visit the church before the start of the walk, led by local historian Sarah Burdett. On my way to the more lowly toilets in the churchyard, my attention was drawn to a majestic slug gliding purposefully over the cover of a rainwater tank as the sun rose higher in the sky and the protective shade retreated. When it came to the end, it stretched out its body as it lowered itself over the edge, with measured poise, into space, still clinging on with its foot, until it finally managed to reach a lower surface. Two men stopped to see what I was watching and also fell under this shape-shifter's spell.

St Mildred's replaced an early nineteenth century church designed by the famous architect John Nash, who had himself replaced a medieval church, because Queen Victoria did not consider Nash's church grand enough for the Royal Family. Albert's design is an imposing building, with a massive fortress-like tower and spires like daggers piercing the sky. Inside, the church is cruciform in shape, and at its centre is my favourite architectural feature: the lantern tower. When you stand there and gaze up and up, about a hundred feet, you are rewarded with a magnificent view. If you prefer, you can gaze instead into a strategically placed mirror that reflects the tower. I also loved the rose windows, one at the end of each of the transepts, miniature copies of windows in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

As you near the altar, on the left of the chancel is the Battenberg Chapel, a shrine to Queen Victoria's youngest daughter, Beatrice's husband. The couple lie in a huge marble sarcophagus, topped by a cruciform shaped sword. Other members of the family are commemorated with wall plaques. The prince's banner and helmet are also displayed here. My eyes were drawn to the beautiful marble carving behind the altar of The Last Supper, a royal family gift in memory of Queen Victoria, and then to the Royal Pew, facing the Battenberg Chapel. The Queen's chair is in the centre and on the walls are impressive memorials to Albert and their children who died before her.

Out in the churchyard, Sarah showed us a wealth of gravestones ranging from those commemorating eminent members of the Queen's household to loyal servants. John Samuel White, owner of the important Cowes shipyard, and Uffa Fox, the renowned yachtsman, naval architect and boat designer and once a close friend of Prince Phillip, are buried here, along with young naval cadets from the Osborne Royal Naval College, who died in 1917 of a measles epidemic. Sam Saunders, owner of the innovative East Cowes shipyard, who died in 1933, has a family vault here, marked by an obelisk, the metal dolphins at whose base are badly in need of repair.

We followed the footpath that skirts the graveyard and leads across fields, above the river, to the Folly Inn. This was the location of the famous Folly Works, where Sam Saunders built the first successful amphibian flying boat in 1913 and seaplanes during the First World War, culminating in the Princess class long-range seaplane that could seat a hundred passengers. Saunders-Roe was formed in 1929 and built a variety of boats, planes and hovercraft, as well as rockets that were tested at Highdown, near The Needles. During the Second World War the SARO works, as they were called, were one of the main suppliers of laminated timber and plywood.

We followed a narrow path beside the river that opened up into fields and saltmarsh before we reached Island Harbour. This is a good place to see wading birds, such as oyster

catchers, curlews and little egrets. Information boards identify some of the wildlife to be found here, according to the season. We crossed the lock bridge at the entrance to the Marina. Sarah explained that this was once a mill pond and pointed out Tide Mill House that is all that remains of East Medina Mill. At the end of the lane we came to the main Newport to Ryde road, but after a short distance were relieved to turn off into East Cowes Road, now by-passed by the main road and a haven of tranquillity. We passed Brickfields Cottages, built for the workers at Prince Albert's model brickworks sited here. Crossing the main Whippingham Road, we walked up quiet Alverstone Road, adorned with an archway of oaks, to Alverstone Farm. As one of Prince Albert's model farms, this was once an example of how a good dairy farm should be run. The house is huge and gaunt, its only redeeming feature being a royal crest and date plaque on one wall.. At the top of the hill we found Alverstone Lodge at the entrance to the once royal Barton Estate. Turning left along another country lane, we soon entered the village of Whippingham, where Sarah showed us an attractive row of six cottages designed by Prince Albert as Osborne Estate workers' homes.

Whippingham Community Hall was built by Sam Saunders in 1931 for holding village events, but during the Second World War, Saunders-Roe moved their administrative offices there because they feared their factory might be attacked. From 1950 to 1983 it was an annexe to the village primary school, but since then has returned to its original function. At the very end of the road we came across the forge, originally the smithy that served the Estate. Crossing the main road, we followed Beatrice Avenue past the former primary school, recently taken over by a private school, that was built in 1864 and funded by Queen Victoria, who took a keen interest in the education of Estate workers' children. We noted the elaborately decorated chimneys and bell tower. Across the road is the entrance to Padmore House, which we could glimpse further down the lane, once the home of Sam Saunders and later a hotel where Prime Minister Edward Heath used to stray during Cowes Week. Soon we caught sight of the distinctive church tower of St Mildreds and made our way to the peaceful walled garden to eat our well earned packed lunch.

This four mile walk is packed with historical interest, and, as the Heritage Trail leaflet produced in 2008 by Whippingham Community Association states: "Much of the building, landscape and riverside are still as they were 150 or so years ago". Sarah Burdett is the author of 'The Book of Whippingham' and runs East Cowes Heritage Centre with her husband David. Last year she gave us a fascinating illustrated presentation there about the maritime history of Cowes.

Maggie Knelmes

## **2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> October                      Annual Fungus Foray weekend**

(including main meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> October at Osborne Estate, courtesy of English Heritage)

Once again the foray was enjoyable and productive and we were fortunate to be blessed with glorious weather. Following my arrival on the Island on **Friday 2 October**, three of us visited Jersey Camp at Porchfield for a leisurely general natural history ramble. Nonetheless we recorded 32 species of Fungi and 40 other organisms. Fungi of interest included *Lactarius controversus*, *L. semisanguifluus* and the pyrenomycete *Guignardia istriaca* on the old dead cladophylls of *Ruscus aculeatus*. This is one of several species that superficially just appear like black dots on this host and thus need microscopy to ascertain the species. This one was new to me. *Lactarius controversus* is a large species which has a white cap often with indistinct pinkish zones, pinkish crowded gills and an acrid taste. It is associated with poplars and willows (as here). *L. semisanguifluus* is in the '*deliciosus*' group but associated with pines. The cap and stipe are shades of orange but with lilac tinges and staining green. The orange milk quickly turns wine red.

On **Saturday 3rd October** a large party gathered in the carpark of Osborne House for what proved to be a superb foray with no fewer than 192 species of Fungi recorded. Toadstool species worthy of note (for various reasons) included *Amanita gemmata*, *A. phalloides* (Deathcap), *Asterophora parasitica*, *Aureoboletus gentilis*, *Gomphidius glutinosus*, *Hygrocybe intermedia* (one of an impressive total of nine waxcap species), *Lactarius semisanguifluus* (again, one of nine species of this genus), *Lepiota clypeolaria*, *L. ignivolvata*, *Leratiomyces ceres*, *Lyophyllum gangraenosum* (= *fumatofetens*), *L. konradianum*, *Mycena crocata*, *M. diosma*, *Pholiota tuberculosa* and *Suillus granulatus*. Alan Lucas and Sue Rogerson from the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group identified the infrequently recorded corticioids *Phlebiopsis roumigerii* (= *ravenelii*), *Scopuloides rimosa*, *Trechispora nivea* whilst three microfungi on land plants are also of interest, these being *Leptotrochila ranunculi*, *Septoria unedonis* and *Spilopodia nervisequa*.

The morning of **Sunday 4th October** was spent at Combley Great Wood which also proved to be extremely productive with 146 species recorded in the morning and with very many interesting finds. Among these were the toadstools *Amanita pantherina*, *A. phalloides*, *Asterophora lycoperdoides* and *A. parasitica*, *Cortinarius* cf *saniosus*, *Entoloma sinuatum*, *Hebeloma radicosum*, *Lactarius chrysorrhoeus*, *Leccinum aurantiacum*, *Pluteus leoninus*, and *Tricholoma portentosum*. Of the non-toadstool Basidiomycetes a large and impressive ring of *Clavariadelphus pistillaris* attracted a great deal of attention whilst other very good finds included *Amphinema byssoides*, *Laxitextum bicolor*, *Pseudocraterellus sinuosus*, *Ramaria flaccida*, *Thelephora penicillata* and *Lycoperdon echinatum* (the last often over-recorded by beginners but this was the 'genuine article!'). Microfungi species not often recorded included *Cercospora scandens*, *Ramularia rhabdospora* and *Mycosphaerella hedericola* in the *Septoria hederae* anamorphic state.

My thanks to all those who participated in the foray for their interest, enthusiasm and collections contributing to these lists. Thanks also to those others who have contributed identifications, in particular members of the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group and Dr David Biggs. I am also very grateful to my very good friends Stephen and Carole Plummer for their very kind hospitality during my stay on the Isle of Wight and to Dr Colin Pope for his selection of such productive foray sites and to the land-owners for granting permission to foray. Finally, my thanks again to all my many friends on the Island and to all participants on the forays, for their excellent company and support.

**Alan Outen**

### **7<sup>th</sup> November - A Barrowful of Ideas to Help Wildlife Overwinter and Plan for Spring, an Illustrated talk by Ian Boyd**

For this talk, Ian delved into his years of experience in working with community groups to raise awareness of the wildlife living in their gardens and green spaces, and to help them do small things to support that wildlife. Ian is good at building a rapport with families and at thinking of creative ways to engage children in wildlife activities, such as rock-pooling and pond-dipping. He is a founder of Arc Consultancy and also works for a housing association as a consultant.

The most obvious way to help wildlife overwinter is to feed the birds that live and forage in your garden, taking care to protect their feeding sites from predators, such as cats. Provide a varied diet, to cater for the specialised needs of different species.

If you want to build up wildlife populations and encourage wildlife to stay in your garden, you need to provide places where they can overwinter and breed. Ian recommends



you do not tidy up your garden too much in autumn, but leave some leaf litter in piles to provide shelter for invertebrates, such as centipedes, millipedes and woodlice, representing food for some hungry mammals. He cautions over burning log piles on Bonfire Night without first checking for hedgehogs, reptiles or amphibians sheltering or hibernating there.

Many bird species need an insect diet, and while most invertebrates are dormant in winter, spiders are active, and a good food source for birds. Conifers, especially dwarf varieties, provide a micro-climate for insects, their dense foliage attracting several species of bird, including chiffchaff, gold-crest and fire-crest. Hollow stemmed plants, especially umbellifers like fennel and alexander, provide all kinds of invertebrates with shelter, and birds can forage in the cracked stems. Avoid bamboo, however, as it is an introduced species and can be a menace. Dwarf elder is not as huge as elder, and native hogweed is packed with hibernating earwigs, ladybirds and harlequins. Even if the plant's stem is broken, there remains a subterranean chamber.

The invertebrate world is opportunistic: provide a habitat and they will find and exploit it. Ian suggests providing a diversity of micro climates for invertebrates, such as shady, damp and dry spots, to attract as many different species as possible. Anything with holes or perforations will do, including air bricks. You can drill holes in fence posts garden seats and other wooden structures without damaging them. Eccleston George is a local landscaping business that specialises in making hard features, such as benches and walls, with built-in wildlife habitats. Martin's Wood, formerly known as The Bee Fields of Newchurch, was planted with mixed woodland some fifteen years ago and is now a Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve. Its sandy soil attracts 120 species of bee and wasp, and here Eccleston George has built hollow concrete benches, with access holes, that now contain bumble bee, mining bee and mason bee nests.

You can purchase swift nests, bird and bat boxes and bug houses from garden centres and other retailers, but you can also make your own. Swallows will nest in barns, but martins and swifts need houses, the built environment. You can make a bug hotel in a hollow dome with holes in the bottom and a lot of sticks inside. This can be fun to make, especially if you decorate and personalise it.

How about creating a marine wildlife garden? There are artificial rock pools at Bouldnor, Sandown and Bournemouth, concrete structures, and it is amazing how fast they populate, says Ian. You can create structures that have no natural equivalent and just be creative.

Provide a habitat for one species, and one by one other species will follow until you have a whole ecosystem. That's how nature works. Hang up a piece of wood drilled with holes, and leaf litter bees will colonise it, attracting cuckoos and other birds. These may attract birds of prey. Dig a pit, fill it with sand, and mining bees will make access holes in it. Drill holes in the ends of logs for nesting chambers and make log piles. Beech and oak are good, but birch rots too fast. Incorporate smaller material inside the log piles to provide shelter for reptiles such as common lizards and slow-worms that are surprisingly common in gardens. Log piles provide them with insect food. Dappled shade under trees is a good place for log piles. To provide diversity, stand some logs on end, as well as horizontally. If you have any spare turfs, roll them up with the grass on the outside and incorporate them into your log pile to provide grassland with crevices.

To make a wildlife friendly rot pile, mix fibrous material with grass and leaves to make it aerobic. Twiggy material will take a long time to rot, but will provide a good habitat for slow worms and amphibians. If you lay down black roofing felt near your compost heap, in sunshine after rain, you will probably find amphibians and reptiles, as well as invertebrates, underneath. This can be used as a test of the wildlife in your garden.

Another important garden habitat is water, but you don't need a big pond. Many smaller ponds are better, creating a complex of micro wetlands for diversity. If you use plastic gardening buckets, you can vary the habitat and it can be temporary. Be careful not to buy invasive species of pond weed from garden centres. Check on the Defra website first. You can also share plants with neighbours or buy online.

Ideally, every part of your garden should be edible so choose plants for their nectar and berries. Fennel is a particularly good choice: moths lay their eggs on it; it has hollow stems for invertebrates; and its big flat umbellifer flowers attract insects in summer, among them hoverflies, bees and ichneumons. Hogweed is probably the best umbellifer, but fennel, with its wonderful scent and feathery leaves, is arguably more attractive. Dwarf elder provides hollow stems, flowers and berries and it is a long season plant. Sweet woodruff or bedstraw is the choice of many moths, including the exotic elephant hawk moth. It spreads very quickly. Every part of honeysuckle is edible. It can be used as ground cover or trained up a fence. Ivy is the best plant for wildlife in winter. Its leaves are big and shiny, ideal for insects to sunbathe on; it produces nectar rich flowers in autumn when most plants have finished flowering; its berries ripen much later than most, in winter, and last until spring; and its bushy foliage provides shelter for wildlife in winter and good nesting habitat for birds in spring.

Ian has other ideas for creating mini wildlife habitats in your garden. He suggests bundle planting: creating a mini copse of rowan, with its big flower-heads and bright berries, by planting a cluster of them, all in the same hole. Willow pegs are amazingly productive. Plant them, each with a bud at the top, as long as possible, ideally 6 to 8 inches. They are very good for aphids, including the Great Willow aphid. You can harvest willow pegs from the countryside. Micro Gardening uses raised beds containing different types of soil to create mini gardens that you can take with you. You can create diverse habitats, such as woodland, meadow and heath.

Consider the connectivity of your garden - can wildlife move in and out? Fragmentation of habitats is largely responsible for the decline in some species, especially in amphibians. Often wildlife cannot get into small urban gardens unless there are gaps under the fence. I once discovered chicken wire preventing migrating toads from returning to their ponds and asked the garden's owner if he would cut holes in the wire to allow them access. Fortunately he agreed. Roads form a barrier, and claim many lives. For some species there may be a glimmer of hope. Where there are trees on either side, rope bridges can be built for red squirrels, and for badgers, when roads are constructed, tunnels can be dug underneath. Sadly such projects are rare. Tree and hedgerow planting are, however, creating corridors of hope for wildlife, preventing isolation and in-breeding in pockets of habitat.

As urbanisation spreads, wildlife relies more and more on gardens for its survival. We can all help to enrich the habitats in our gardens by following some of Ian's many inspiring tips and words of advice in this talk.

Maggie Nelmes

## **12<sup>th</sup> December      ORCA, Looking Out for Whales and Dolphins**

I first heard about ORCA from one of our members, who met Anna Bunney, their Community Wildlife Officer, on a ferry and recommended we invite her to come and give us a talk.

I soon realised that it is not unusual for passengers on ferries and cruise ships to meet Anna or some of the organisation's volunteers, as ORCA has established agreements with European ferry operators and cruise liner companies to allow volunteers to travel on their ships to carry out surveys of whales and dolphins. In return, the volunteers engage passengers and crew in sighting and identifying dolphins and whales, enhancing the sea crossing experience, and wildlife experts join cruises to give lectures.

ORCA is a Non-Governmental (NGO) and Not-for-Profit Organisation based in Portsmouth, and dedicated to the long-term protection of orcas and their habitat. Although the Bay of Biscay has the highest density of cetaceans in Europe, where 19 species can be found, you may be surprised to learn that the Channel is an important habitat for the harbour porpoise, bottlenose dolphin and common dolphin. ORCA's work can be divided into four main areas: saving large whales, protecting vulnerable habitats, inspiring people, and giving talks in schools. Chris Packham is a patron and joins one of ORCA's mini whale-watching cruises every year. He is also the presenter on a video produced by ORCA.

Of the 87 species of whales in the world, 32 are found in Europe and 8 of these in the Channel. Anna gave us a presentation about the largest species in the world, the blue whale, and the smallest, the vaquita, found only in Mexican waters and critically endangered due to trawling. She explained how some species inhabit shallow waters, whilst others are deep divers. There are two types of whale: the toothed and the baleine. Dolphins, porpoises and killer whales are toothed whales. They use echolocation because their very good eyesight is impeded by murky water. The baleine whales have either one blowhole or two. They feed through rorquewell pleats, taking in seawater and filtering out food from it, before releasing the water through the blowhole. They feed on tiny fish, krill and plankton. Humpback whales feed in a group: one blows bubbles around a shoal of fish and the rest of the group rise up towards the surface with mouths agape.

Volunteers at ORCA are trained to recognise the signs on the sea's surface indicating the presence of whales beneath. These include splashes with waves going the wrong way, blows that are water shooting up into the air, and many birds diving in one spot revealing the presence of an abundance of food. Whales herd shoals up to the surface.

Anna showed us pictures of the species we might see in European waters and described their characteristics. The following are some of the species you might see off the Isle of Wight. You can only spot harbour porpoises in calm weather off Ryde and the south coast, as, with their light coloured stomach, they blend in with the water when they are hunting. The bottlenose dolphin is large and gunmetal gray, with a friendly face, but it is notorious for bullying the smaller porpoise. The common dolphin is known to bow-ride ships for up to an hour. They can be recognised by the yellow and gray figure-of-eight on their side. They mingle in large pods and are very sociable. The minke whale is the smallest of the baleine whales. Its habitat is shallow water and it can be found in the Channel. Minke whales are solitary, and if you see two together, they will be a mother and her calf.

As well as whales and dolphins, ORCA volunteers record other marine life they encounter on their ferry crossings and cruises, such as sea turtles, sharks, manta-rays and seabirds. They provide this data to any organisation that requests it. If you wish to become a volunteer, go to ORCA's website for details of how to become a member of the Society, and the dates and cost of their Marine Mammal Surveyor Course. You can also book a mini cruise, taking you on a three-day trip to the Bay of Biscay.

Anna went on to describe the common threats human activity poses to marine wildlife. These are the following:

- Litter, especially plastic, dumped in the oceans from ships and from the land. Huge numbers of birds and marine mammals are killed each year by ingesting plastic, inadvertently. They can choke on it and it builds up in their stomach until they have no more room for food. Then they starve.
- Fishing gear, such as net, floats and hooks are discarded and wildlife gets tangled in it. Drowned or unable to dive for food.
- Noise pollution from sonar, large container ships, oil rigs and wind farm construction interferes with echolocation, leaving dolphins disorientated, isolated and vulnerable to stranding. It also drives marine mammals away from their feeding grounds, causing

starvation. Once established, however, wind farms have been found to be beneficial to marine mammals, as the artificial reefs they create provide feeding grounds.

- Water Pollution from chemical cleaning products, such as detergents, are threatening the health of marine mammals. Alternatives, such as the Ecover brand, are now widely available in supermarkets. Face scrubs, toothpaste and other personal care products may contain polyethylene, microscopic plastic beads, ingested by small fish and absorbed up the food chain, right up to humans. Organisations such as Greenpeace can advise on alternative healthy products via their websites, and you can read the small print on the label to avoid products containing polyethylene.
- Whaling is still being carried out by Japan, Norway and Denmark, despite international laws to ban it. Only 1% of Icelanders eat whale meat, but tourists do. It contains dangerous levels of mercury. In the Faroe Islands, the slaughter of pilot whales and other species is a tradition that the Faroese are determined to continue, despite the cruel methods they use and the pointlessness of this activity, given that the meat contains dangerously high levels of mercury for human consumption. Anna says they are especially defiant in the face of all the adverse publicity generated by international wildlife protection organisations.
- Captivity in marine parks and dolphinariums is causing highly intelligent marine mammals both physical and mental suffering. In the wild, killer whales or orcas travel long distances in family groups. In captivity, they are confined to lonely lives, cramped in small tanks, and made to perform meaningless tricks. Traumatized young, snatched from their family in the wild and sold to marine parks, are kept in isolation or with non-relatives that bully them. Is it surprising therefore that they are driven mad? When some dolphin trainers realised what was happening, they took part in the making of the film 'Blackfish' to expose the marine mammal entertainment industry. It feeds off the mass slaughter of wild dolphins for months every year in a Japanese cove called Taiji. Marine park trainers visit the cove to select attractive young animals from the families of orcas that Japanese fishermen have rounded up and driven into their traps. The fishermen make large sums from the sale of these young. They then brutally slaughter the rest of the family that are worth little to them, as the meat contains dangerous levels of mercury.
- Overfishing and by-catch causes the death of many sea mammals caught in trawler nets and unable to get out.

What can we do as individuals to help protect marine mammals?

- Reduce, reuse and recycle plastic;
- Tell our friends and family about the risks to wildlife caused by humans and what they can do about it;
- Use environmentally friendly cleaning and personal care products;
- Buy sustainably caught fish, especially tuna that are hunted by dolphins. Greenpeace did a survey of brands and published the results recently. Look at their website. Look for rod and pole and other sustainable methods of catching tuna on the product label.
- Support charities that are campaigning to protect marine wildlife. The Wildlife Trusts are campaigning to create more Marine Conservation Zones around British coasts. You can sign up for their newsletter by going to their website.

This was a very interesting and enlightening talk from a fairly local organisation.

**Maggie Nelmes**

## Reports of Section Meetings

### Archaeology Section Activities

Quarr Abbey has continued to occupy us. We aim to learn more about the story of the whole site from the establishment of the medieval Cistercian abbey up to its destruction during the Reformation. Geophysical surveys in some fields and exploration in the woods has produced intriguing evidence that there is still much to investigate.

In June we carried out our own small excavation where a culvert takes a stream under one of the tracks leading from the main road. Various walls indicate past activity here and a small building that has not yet been identified.



In September Matt Garner of Southampton City Archaeology Service again directed a 3 week dig in the field containing the old abbey ruins. This year a team of students joined us; some of our team worked alongside them in trenches whilst others continued with our wider investigation.

We have also begun geophysics at Knighton in the field where Laurie Fennelly identified a medieval kiln and Iron Age buildings in the 1970s. This will continue when the ground dries out.

Walks have included Wellow, St. Catherine's Down and Stenbury Down. A particular focus has been to match the present geography with older maps and evidence of old boundaries and field systems. Why are there strange dog legs in some places? How old are some of the boundaries? How do they relate to ridge and furrow farming or even to Iron or Bronze Age field systems?

All these projects have much still to investigate so we will be very busy in 2016. As usual we meet on Wednesday mornings, weather permitting, and always welcome members. Plans are posted on the Archaeology section on the website.

### **10<sup>th</sup> October Buried in Orkney**

The first of the talks based on the visit to Orkney by members of the archaeology section was led by David Tomalin and focused on evidence for ritual and burial traditions during the Neolithic period.

We began at the World Heritage Site on Mainland, where the local sandstone enabled and inspired the residents to erect stunning monuments enhanced by the water and the views possible in a treeless landscape.

One of the earliest stone circles in Britain is the Stones of Stenness with 12 standing stones, a causeway over the surrounding ditch and a central hearth. Hearths like this are a typical feature of many of the houses excavated on the islands. Two of the standing stones are positioned with their angular tops facing each other and mirroring the island of Hoy.

The Ring of Brodgar is a huge stone circle, 104 m in diameter with perhaps 60 stones originally and a ditch cut 3 m deep into the bedrock. The approach to and the walk round are awe-inspiring.

The creation of these monuments took place over a considerable period of time and it may be that the process of construction was more significant than the finished result. Maybe they were the focus of family or social groups, maybe they were a way of keeping testosterone-fuelled young men out of mischief!

Connecting the two circles lies the strip of land called the Ness of Brodgar where the current investigations are uncovering houses and probable ritual buildings. What happened here and their link to the circles is not clear, but the intriguing finds, including deposited cattle skulls and walls decorated with incised marks and pigments point to the significance of this site.

Not far from this complex is Maes Howe, a huge burial mound probably built on the site of an earlier henge. The stone passage and interior with massive slabs and a corbelled roof is aligned with the midwinter solstice sunset over Hoy.

Stone circles are only found on Mainland in Orkney. Other islands do, however, have tombs and they show a variety of complex designs, including the chambered Tomb of the Eagles, the massive Midhowe stalled cairn and the circular two-story Taversoe Tuick.

The islands of Orkney in Neolithic times were home to established communities with a sophisticated sense of ritual that we can only guess at. Naturally one compares all this to the stone circles and burial mounds of mainland Britain and in particular Avebury and Stonehenge. David Tomalin drew our attention to the prevalence of grooved ware pottery, which shows clearly the links that existed along the east coast of Britain and into Wessex.

To the modern visitor Hoy is an ever-present feature with its dramatic hills and crags visible from the World Heritage Site and beyond. Is it coincidence that there is no evidence of settlement on this island and that the only tomb discovered there, The Dwarfie Stane, hollowed out a huge block of sandstone is so different from the tombs seen elsewhere? Was Hoy always a special place?

Much is still to be learnt about the people who left us such rich evidence of their spiritual life but we can share with them a sense of awe at the grandeur of these monuments and their connections to each other and the environment.

## 24<sup>th</sup> October Trip to Stonehenge

There were two main reasons for this trip – to experience the new visitors’ centre and to reconsider the Stonehenge landscape in the light of the talk about the Orkney monuments on October 10<sup>th</sup>.

Our first destination after leaving Southsea in the minibus was Woodhenge and Durrington Walls. The former has been marked out from the evidence of postholes; colour-coded metal posts help one understand the layout of this series of concentric circles.

By contrast Durrington Walls covers a vast site although all that can now be seen is a curved section of bank. Useful display boards help the visitor understand how the site might have looked in the past. Recent excavations uncovering the remains of houses led to the theory that this was the settlement for the people who built Stonehenge. Animal remains indicate feasting at certain times of the year. The site is bordered by the River Avon and it is thought that boats could transport people and goods down-stream to where a landing place has been identified at the start of the ‘Avenue’, the probable processional way leading up to Stonehenge. Some suggest that Durrington represented the ‘land of the living’ and that the remains of the deceased were taken by this route to Stonehenge, the ‘land of the dead’.

Matters have recently been complicated by Geophysical surveys revealing a row of dozens of standing stones that followed part of the boundary bank of Durrington and were later toppled and buried. No doubt there will be further investigation and a range of theories offered as to the significance of this feature.



The cold rain had set in by this time so we were glad to reach the warmth of the new Stonehenge visitors’ centre. The building with its full-length glass frontage is designed to ‘float’ in the landscape; efforts to blend the car park into the environment have been less successful. But anyone who visited the site in the past will appreciate the improvement. Shuttle buses now take visitors to within a few hundred yards of the monument. From there a

short walk with no traffic allows you to appreciate the wider landscape and the view of the stones as you approach. The fencing as you walk round the site is minimal and the path curves so you come quite close to the stones at one point. Your view is unimpeded and that is why I am happy that we cannot get in amongst the stones.

After the shuttle bus disgorged us into a crowded, but warm, shop there was time to visit the new museum and information centre. Modern displays offer concise, tourist-friendly information about the history and significance of the site, including more about Woodhenge and Durrington Walls. There is a good range of artefacts, including grooved ware pottery. The latest discoveries at Durrington show we can never be confident we have all the answers about this area –what, how and why. And whilst the similarities with the Orkney sites are intriguing, the differences show that we cannot underestimate the complexity and cultural sophistication of life in Neolithic Britain.

### **21<sup>st</sup> November Living in Orkney**

The limited evidence on mainland Britain for Neolithic homes, mainly post holes, makes the stone-built homes of Orkney exceptionally fascinating. Being so close to a 5,000 year old domestic setting is spine tingling and the hints they give to prehistoric life are intriguing.

David Tomalin's talk combined the hard evidence with ethnographic comparisons to pose questions about a period full of mystery.

He began, as in the last talk, at the World Heritage site surrounding the Ness of Brodgar. Barnhouse village, near the Stones of Stenness presents the typical buildings with side alcoves, probably for storage and sleeping, and the central hearths. The buildings currently being excavated on the Ness itself share those features but are a different shape. David posed the theory that mainland Orkney was occupied by different groups in the North and South, each with their own stone circle and with the Ness as the meeting point.

There is evidence from modern island communities of social groups occupying their own space and meeting for trade and matchmaking, necessary to keep the peace and avoid in-breeding.

Skara Brae, in the northern part of the island, has some similar features to the other sites, such as hearths and alcoves, but some differences in design. Perhaps most famous are the stone dressers, placed facing the door perhaps to display items of significance or status to visitors. Maybe the best pottery? Maybe evidence of intrepid travelling?

That maritime travel was widespread is evidenced by the distribution of grooved ware pottery, seen from Orkney down the east coast of Britain and round to 'Wessex' and along the river systems. David suggests it may not be the pottery that was transported but the tradition of making it; forming alliances through swapping of family members and marriage would make long-distance travel safer and again increase the genetic pool. Marriages of convenience feature throughout history and it seems possible such connections go back much further.

The talk finished on the Links of Noltland on the Northern coast of Westray, where the current excavations are revealing remains of more stone houses. Here the 'Westray Wife' was found, the earliest carving of a human found in Scotland, providing a moving link to the people who occupied this windswept site so long ago.

**Helen Jackson**



## Botany

### Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July                      Wootton Common

Wootton Common is an area of unimproved grassland lying south of Lushington Hill and it was reached via the Newport –Wootton Cycleway and Quarrels Copse. We were guided to the site by Bob Edney Isle of Wight Council Countryside Officer who had cut a path through the more overgrown parts of Quarrel's Copse.

One of the site's special plants is Yellow Bartsia (*Parentucellia viscosa*) which the majority of the group had not seen before, as it has only been found on two sites on the Island in the last twenty years. It was found scattered through quite a large area of the site. Corky-fruited Water Dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*), Dyer's Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*), Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), all plants associated with unimproved grassland, were found in varying quantities. The damper areas had Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and several species of rush: Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Toad Rush (*J. bufonius*), Compact Rush (*J. conglomeratus*) and Soft Rush (*J. effusus*).

### August 28<sup>th</sup> and September 3<sup>rd</sup>      Wood calamint monitoring

Various members of the botany group met on two dates to assess the flowering of Wood Calamint both in the laybys (where it has been present for many years and where the Society carries out conservation management each year) and in the areas where plug plants have been introduced over recent years. The number of flowering spikes on the laybys was slightly down on last year's total but when the results are plotted on a graph the trend is still upward.

The original translocation plot between the laybys had a good flowering year but there is some encroachment of coarser vegetation into the plot which if left unchecked could prove a problem in future years.

The areas which have been planted up following coppicing operations in 2014 and 2015 have shown good establishment and flowering of the plug plants with a survival rate of 90% in the first year and 87% into the second year. These plots are some distance from the lay-bys so we have made progress in creating sub-populations in the wood which are away from the road. We will continue to monitor these areas in future years.

### Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September                      Brading Marshes

We looked at the northern end of the RSPB reserve during this meeting, just south of Embankment Road. Just into the reserve there was evidence of saline influence, as we found a variety of halophytes (salt-tolerant plants) growing around the wetter areas. These included Grass-leaved Orache (*Atriplex littoralis*), Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*) and Sea Club-rush (*Bolboschoenus maritimus*). It was interesting to see Sea Arrow Grass (*Triglochin maritimum*) and the much rarer Marsh Arrow Grass (*T. palustre*) growing in close proximity.

Several plants of Oak-leaved Goosefoot, (*Chenopodium glaucum*) a relatively uncommon plant of enriched waste ground were seen in a cattle-poached area. In the surrounding short turf, we found Sea Milkwort (*Glauca maritima*) and Celery-leaved Buttercup, (*Ranunculus sceleratus*) and Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*).

The ditches had Grey Club-rush (*Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*), Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Nodding Bur-marigold (*Bidens cernua*) and Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpiodes*) in amongst the Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*).

Towards the end of our survey, we found Marsh-mallow (*Althaea officinalis*) around the edge of one of the larger pools, again indicating a saline influence.

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September      Mill Copse**

Ten members met at the main car park in Yarmouth and walked towards Mill Copse. Before entering the Copse we looked at a gross example of fasciation of creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and discussed the possible causes, and then at the pallid discoloration of other thistle plants caused by the recently invasive bacterium *Pseudomonas syringae*. In the Copse we walked around as a loose group finding and discussing the causative agents of various galls, and leaf miners and finding rusts and leaf spots.

After two hours we had found 16 galls, 24 leaf miners (of which seven were new for the site) and 13 micro-fungi of which four were new. The one saw-fly mine we found in bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) that of *Metallus pumilus* contained a larva. So far as I know, this is the first time a larva has been recorded on the Island. Morey found an adult in 1907 at Rookley and Saunt similarly in 1934 at Shorwell. The afternoon finished with tea and cakes at “Off the Rails” café.

David Biggs

**Ornithology**

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July      Fort Victoria**

Twelve members met at Fort Victoria on a cloudy but mild morning for a short sea watch followed by a walk through the Country Park to Cliff End and return via the meadows. Unfortunately, there was not much movement over the sea although we did manage to spot a Gannet, Cormorant and some Black-headed Gulls. In fact, there was not a lot of bird life altogether, with Toni pointing out at one stage we had spotted more species of butterflies than birds. We did manage 25 species by the end of the walk with ten species of butterflies. The only warblers seen in the trees and hedgerows were Common Whitethroat and Blackcap. There were Sky Lark singing over the meadows and a Greenfinch was seen and heard near the bungalows. The Common Buzzard did not put in an appearance but a Kestrel did. Both Barn Swallows and House Martins were hawking for flies and a few Goldfinches were seen in the scrub area.

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August      Culver Down**

Eleven members met at the far car park at Culver Down for a casual walk on the Downs. We were hoping for returning migrants. An early sighting was a male and female Stonechat who were very obliging and allowed us to have good views of them. Three Buzzards were soaring on the thermals with one being harassed by a Peregrine; the latter flew off right and another one was spotted flying left over the cliff edge. Another two Buzzards were seen later – does that make five altogether? We also saw two Kestrels. Two Meadow Pipits were seen together, one carrying food. Herring and Great Black Backed Gulls were flying around. Willow Warblers and Chiff Chaffs were in many of the bushes but we had a good view of one on a fence wire on the cliff edge. There was also a Common Whitethroat. There was a small flock of Gold Finches flying overhead and a few Linnet. Near the Old Coastguard cottages were another two Stonechats, a male and a juvenile. Barn Swallows were hawking for food before flying off as were a party of House Martins by the monument. 23 species of birds were noted. Besides birds we saw eleven species of butterflies: Chalkhill Blue, Holly Blue, Common Blue, one Brown Argus, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Marbled White, Large White, Speckled Wood and two lovely Clouded Yellows.

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September      Ventnor Downs**

Eight people met at the car park nearest the radio station on Ventnor Downs for a walk led by David Biggs. The sun was shining, conditions just right for a pleasant slow wander

along looking for migrants. The first thing we all noticed was that the Barn Swallows were on the move, a constant flow of them gradually flying to the southwest although many were wheeling around catching flies. In amongst them were House Martins and some Sand Martins. A Raven could be heard calling and at one point was seen perched on one of the radio masts. Although we were expecting to see a number of Northern Wheatear only one was noted. There were several Meadow Pipits and one male and three female or immature Stonechats as well. By far the most common migrant seen was the Common Redstart with at least six counted. Two Spotted Flycatchers, a Common Whitethroat, several Chiffchaffs and some Willow/Chiffs also were seen. We eventually spotted a Whinchat and whilst watching this bird I looked behind me and spotted a Dartford Warbler. The Dartford was very obliging as it flew from gorse bush to gorse bush so everyone could see it. Of our common birds we noted Robin, Wren, Dunnock, Kestrel, Buzzard, Starling, Magpie, Woodpigeon, Green Woodpecker, Crow and Jackdaw.

### **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October                      Tennyson Down**

Eight members met at the National Trust chalk pit car park below Tennyson's monument on an overcast morning for a walk led by Nikki Falconar. We took the path leading up to the side of the down to the west looking out for any birds in the hedges and trees. Along the way we noted Robin, Rook, Jackdaw, Chaffinch, Wren, Crow, Magpie, Blackbird, Jay, a female Blackcap, at least four Blue Tits together, a small party of Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler and Kestrel. Overhead we saw Swallows and House Martins, Goldfinch and Herring Gull. When we got to the top of the down we found the wind very keen and cold however, we spotted a male and female Stonechat and a juvenile. We were on the lookout for Dartford Warbler but perhaps the wind was too strong for any to show themselves but we did disturb a Short-eared Owl which flew off. Nikki took us over the stile on the cliff edge and on the way we saw Meadow Pipit, Raven and Wheatear. Pied Wagtail also flew by. We took the next stile over the fence and made our way back up to the top of the down and return to the cars rather colder than when we set out. 25 species were seen in all.

### **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November                      Shalfleet Quay**

Nine members met at the car park in Shalfleet for a short walk to the Quay on a very cold morning. The very strong wind kept many of the birds away. The larger birds, Woodpigeon, Jackdaw and Rooks were still about. At first the tide was still quite high and the Mallards were swimming in Shalfleet Lake with a Redshank feeding on the exposed mud. Later the tide dropped and we saw Wigeon in a flock of about 40 swimming towards the far side and about 50 Teal on the mud in a far inlet. A Little Grebe was constantly diving for food and a family of seven Mute Swans were together. In amongst the Black Headed Gulls were two Mediterranean Gulls. A Little Egret flew up the channel. There were three Curlew, one separate from the others only had one leg but it did manage to feed. In a far field there were about 200 Brent Geese and approximately 100 Lapwing. A small flock of Starling flew around the marsh area and a Kestrel was seen. In a sheltered part of a hedgerow a Blue Tit was seen. As the weather conditions were rather against us we did not linger on the jetty but made our way back to the cars. In all 21 species was seen, a rather disappointing tally.

### **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December                      Seaview**

Ten members met in Bluett Avenue in Seaview for circular walk, led by Anthea Blackwell, on a very windy morning. It started off with bright sunshine but gradually the weather changed to light rain. The sea was rough so we did not attempt any sea watching but walked along the old toll road where we saw four species of gulls: A Great Black Backed Gull, at least six Herring Gulls, Black-headed Gulls and two Mediterranean Gulls. Cormorant

and six Oystercatchers were also seen. A visit to Hersey Reserve enabled us to see two Little Egret, at least 10 Little Grebe, 14 Tufted Duck, 6 Common Snipe, at least 12 Teal, a Buzzard, Grey Heron, 12 Coot, Mallard and a Moorhen. A Kingfisher was seen on several occasions flying by. Way in the distance, on Nettlestone Hill we could see the Barnacle Geese feeding in the field and were still there when we passed by about an hour later. I counted 220 but some were obscured by trees so the final figure would be more than this. Seaview Wildlife Encounter (used to be Flamingo Park) closed suddenly at the beginning of November and it will be interesting to see how long these geese stay faithful to the area. Previously they were fed by the Park. During the course of the walk we also saw or heard Wren, Jay, Kestrel, Robin, Magpie, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, pair of Chaffinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Rook, Crow, Jackdaw and Pied Wagtail. In all 35 species were seen. In the trees near the Wishing Well we were entertained by two Red Squirrels chasing each other up and down the trunk of a tree.

**Jackie Hart**

## **Entomology**

### **Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May Haseley Manor: Moth trapping**

This was an evening visit for moth-trapping at a site which we visit regularly rather than frequently. Once again we are grateful to Anthony and Vivian Roberts for their hospitality and the use of one of their ringing huts to study the moths that were attracted to the light. We have not always been fortunate with the weather at this site, but after a miserable drizzly morning the day improved considerably, and by the evening the weather was good enough for a successful meeting. After a slow start a total of 26 species were found although no species was found in any abundance. Brimstones and Flame Shoulders were the commonest moths, but only four examples were found of each. An Iron Prominent was found, as were two Coxcomb Prominents. Other species which attracted particular interest were Chinese Character, Peach Blossom, Figure of 80, Red Twin-Spot Carpet, Sandy Carpet, Sharp-Angled Peacock, Peppered Moth, Pale Tussock, Whitepoint and Gold Spot.

### **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May Bioblitz at St Helen's Duver.**

An afternoon walk was arranged to coincide with the Bioblitz starting from the sea-mark which was the old church tower. A number of members of the Society took part, but it was a little disappointing that no members of the general public who were outside the Society joined us on the day. This was not a particularly good day for insects owing to the cold westerly wind which swept across the Duver. However where there was shelter there were some successes, and so we concentrated our efforts on the banks behind the sea shore to the north of the church. A Cinnabar was the only moth seen on the walk – butterflies included Red Admiral, Large White and Common Blue, with Small Heath, and Speckled Wood seen outside the confines of the walk. White-tailed and Tree Bumblebees were also recorded, as was a single Emperor Dragonfly. However the greatest time was spent looking at a family of five Common Lizards, basking in the sun on one of the banks.

### **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July Ventnor Downs**

This day never lived up to the glorious forecast, with its implied promise of heat exhaustion and dehydration for enthusiastic entomologists. On Ventnor and Luccombe Downs there was no trace of the heat. The atmosphere was rather humid, but there was low cloud, and a lot of breeze. Full sun was hard to find. For much of the visit there was a steady movement of swifts south, although never in great numbers. Our main focus was on butterflies, and the walk produced a total of seven species, but none of these were in great

numbers. Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers were most common, but Small Skipper, Red Admiral, Marbled White and Small Copper were also found. In two locations, one on Ventnor Down and the other on Luccombe Down, Graylings were seen on bare or sparsely vegetated ground, and offered excellent views. Two migratory moths, Rush Veneer and Silver Y were also recorded. Amongst other species we found the final instar of the Gorse Shield-Bug and studied the ground beetle *Carabus nemoralis*.

### **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August Bouldnor Forest**

This afternoon visit to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust reserve was made a good deal easier thanks to the help of Jamie Marsh in providing us with vehicular access, for which we were very grateful. Earlier we had travelled in convoy from the Bouldnor Viewpoint car park. The day was mild, but this was another meeting where the weather disappointed, on this occasion providing us with a good deal of intermittent drizzle. This was a new venue for the entomological section, and there was plenty of interest to see. This was a good meeting for Orthoptera, with Meadow Grasshopper and three species of cricket being recorded: Dark Bush-Cricket, Speckled Bush Cricket (both in some numbers) and Long-Winged Conehead. Butterflies included Small Heath, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Ringlet. Among the moths were Silver Y, and Rush Veneer, *Pyrausta aurata* and another pyralid, *Agriphila straminella*. Evidence of mining by two further moths which may be new for this site were of *Phyllonorycter acerifoliella* and *Stigmella peciose*. A number of bugs were seen including the Tortoise Bug, and both Green and Gorse Shield Bugs. Also new records for this site were *Corizus hyoscyami* and *Dereocoris ruber*. Good numbers of the dragonfly *Sympetrum striolatum* were seen and among the hoverflies one of the larger species *Volucella pellucens*.

Outside the entomological world, buzzard, green and great spotted woodpeckers were in evidence, along with a jay, and a couple of toads were discovered.

### **Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> August Mottistone estate**

This was a very enjoyable and successful meeting, beginning at the National Trust carpark, walking up to the Longstone and then continuing around west along the path overlooking the Back of Wight. This was a very warm and muggy day, with cloud coming in and taking some of the heat out of the afternoon visit.

This meeting was notable for a whole range of species, and the ornithologists in the group were well served with excellent views of raven and buzzard, and a brief glimpse of a pied flycatcher in sycamores and then on dead branches of trees to the north-west of the Longstone. A couple of young adders were also found on the heathland, and a common lizard as we began the descent back to the car park.

As far as insects were concerned there was a wide range of species to enjoy. These included Chalkhill and Holly Blue, Jersey Tiger, Straw Dot and Large Yellow Underwing. The Fleabane was attractive to a number of species including the micromoth, *Apodia bifractella*. Large numbers of the tachinid fly *Eriothrix rufomaculata* were seen as well as a nice example of *Linnaemya tessellans*. Hoverflies were particularly well represented with ten species being recorded, again the Fleabane proving a popular location for this group. These records included the attractive and distinctive species *Chrysotoxum bicinctum* and the wonderfully named *Xanthogramma pedissequum*. A Southern Hawker gave good views, while other species recorded included a male Bee Wolf and an Ant Damsel Bug.

This felt like the most successful visit for the section this year, and it will be interesting to revisit at different times of the year in the future to get a wider sense of the range of insects to be found here.

**Richard Smout**

### **Fungi Group**

In addition to our Annual Foray, described under ‘General Meetings’, the Fungi Group met at different venues on six occasions during autumn. All of our meetings were interesting and full details of what we found can be seen on the Society website under ‘Groups’. We started on a gloriously sunny day on Ventnor Downs (27<sup>th</sup> September) and finished on a dry but very blustery morning in Firestone Copse (29<sup>th</sup> November). I’m most grateful for those who regularly attend, finding lots of things we might otherwise miss and helping with naming specimens.

Amongst our interesting finds this year were the special Amanita, *Amanita ovoidea*, which is only known in this country from St Boniface Down; troops of tiny fenugreek scented stalkballs (*Phleogena faginea*) lining the underside of a fallen giant beech in Borthwood Copse; two species of rare tooth fungi in Firestone Copse; and two species of Pick-a-back fungi growing on the fruiting bodies of old toadstools. Our finds through the autumn included a few which were firsts for the Island.

**Colin Pope**

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## **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY’S REPORT**

### **New Members**

### **Deaths**

**Toni Goodley**

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**Society Officers**

**President** Dr Colin Pope, 14 High Park Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight PO33 1BP

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

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

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

**Society Address :-**

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

Tel ; 01983 282596 Email: [iwnhas@btconnect.com](mailto:iwnhas@btconnect.com) Web address: [www.iwnhas.org](http://www.iwnhas.org)

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**NEXT BULLETIN**

Bulletin Editor: Colin Pope

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings for 1st January 2015 to 30th June 2015 should be sent to:-

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

**The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016**