



Bulletin

Established 1919

www.iwnhas.org

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President's Address

Best wishes to IWNHAS members and friends for 2019 which includes the start of our centenary year, and I suspect momentous for other reasons! We might reflect briefly on the uncertainty experienced by our founders as they recovered from war while many faced financial hardship. Our organization is non-political, but it will be important for us to be aware of the environmental impact of national changes, not least on farming that is such an important determinant for habitats.

There is still much to do for our centenary celebrations but please be mindful of the following outline calendar which includes some dates that are becoming fixed.

2019

Nov	Fri	8	pm	Inaugural centenary meeting	
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2020

Jan	Sat		pm	New Year Party	
Feb	Sat	1	1 – 5pm	Recorder's Conference	Arreton
Mar	Sat	28	1.30 – 4pm	AGM	Arreton
Apr	Sat	4	All day	Centenary Conference	Riverside
May	Mon-Fri	11-15	All day	Visit to Jersey	Jersey

	Wed	27	pm	Joint meeting with Historical Association	Riverside, Newport
Jun	Week day		All day	Visit to Natural History Museum London	NHM, London
Sep/ Oct	Sat		All day	Joint field trip with Hampshire Field Club	Field
Nov	Fri	6	pm	Closing dinner	College

Dr Paul Bingham

Congratulations to George!

Many congratulations to George Greiff who was awarded the Adult Newcomer Award UK Awards for Biological Recording and Information Sharing on 21st November at the Albert Hall, Nottingham. George was nominated by our Society in recognition of his remarkable work in recording and finding new species of bryophytes, lichens and fungi. His award is well deserved.



At only 22 years old, George is self-taught and has recently compiled a paper on the Bryophyte flora of Sandown Bay. He is developing an interest in lichenicolous fungi, an area that even experienced lichenologists often know little about. Almost all of George's records of these fungi have been new for the Island and some of his records (confirmed by experts) are new to the UK! George says, 'The Isle of Wight has been a wonderful base for local recording and identification of the groups of organisms I am most interested in. I developed my interest in cryptogamic botany when I encountered my first liverwort, *Conocephalum conicum*, growing on damp brickwork of a Victorian railway bridge. It has somewhat spiralled out of control since then and I have found many very interesting and rare species in my area. Most of these are obscure fungi, showing that amateurs can contribute to the national database.'

He is now in his first year of study reading biology at Oxford University. However, academic life has not dimmed his passion for cryptogamic botany and during the recent Christmas vacation he has turned his attention to fungi growing associated with bryophytes and has had confirmed three species which are new to the UK!

Colin Pope

Wightlink Environmental Officer

For the first time, Wightlink have recently appointed an Environmental Officer. Her name is Nicola Craig and she has kindly sent us a brief report of some aspects of her work over the few months she has been in post.

The Vertipools at Fishbourne are now award winning and will be featured on TV. They'll feature on a mainland Europe documentary next summer, a whole episode of which will feature the Isle of Wight. The programme is called 'Isles of the Queen'. Countryfile will also be filming and the vertipools were featured on the 9th December. For more info on vertipools see: <https://www.wightlink.co.uk/pressrelease/wightlinks-vertipools-amaze-marine-biologists/> and <http://www.artecology.space/vertipools/> and <http://www.artecology.space/wightlink/>

We have also been working with the Solent oyster restoration project. <https://www.blumarinefoundation.com/project/solent/> We are hoping to have oyster nurseries near to our Lymington and Yarmouth terminals. The project don't like to disclose exact locations as people then know where to forage for oysters! ... and the precise locations for those two sites haven't been determined yet.

We've also been working with Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust on their Secrets of the Solent project. Next year they'll be giving onboard talks to passengers. Hopefully they'll do some shore-based talks as well. Emily Stroud, is their community engagement officer.

Nicola Craig BSc (Hons)
Environmental Officer

iWatch Wildlife Project

iWatchWildlife is celebrating having surpassed by more than 300, their target total of 1,000 new species records for the Island since the project began. This impressive return comes after just year 2 of their 3 year project. A huge thank you to the efforts of local experts, amateur naturalists and the general public sharing their wildlife encounters and observations with us.

Records are collected via a number of channels such as our 'Species of the Month' social media campaign. This enables us to highlight species of importance and then capture and convert those species sightings into permanent records. We also capture records generated at wildlife events throughout the year. Once verified, these records are submitted to the IW species records database held by the Society.

Species groups most recorded to date are flowering plants, followed by birds and terrestrial mammals – the latter of which has significantly boosted our local knowledge of abundance and distribution; in fact 90% of all Hedgehog records submitted to the IW Species Database in the last 2 years have been generated by iWatchWildlife.

Tina Whitmore (Project Co-ordinator)

Rebellion

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is a new environmental campaigning movement that aims to create a national conversation about the ecological crisis and climate breakdown and to create an international rebellion 'that helps humanity to turn quickly onto a course that is

compatible with life on earth'. The most recent advice on climate change is that the target of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5C could be surpassed as early as 2030, giving us only twelve years to make changes of such scale that governments must take the lead. XR was launched on 31st October 2018 and began a series of mass actions in November. An Isle of Wight group has formed that hopes to galvanise the widespread love of the natural world and the dissatisfaction that many feel with the lack of policy progress and political intransigence on this subject. Persons wishing to find out more may search for the group on Facebook @XRIsoleofWight. See <https://rebellion.earth> to find out more about XR.

What's in a name? *Hesperis matronalis*, Dame's Violet

Not a violet nor even related to violets, Dame's Violet is a member of the Cabbage family, *Brassicaceae*.

Hesperos translates from Greek into English as 'western' or 'evening', the dual translation indicating that the sun sets in the west at evening time. Matrona is Latin for a married woman, a noble lady or a dame.

In olden days *Hesperis matronalis* plants were grown in conservatories by ladies who were charmed by the floral scent emitted during the evening and throughout the night. A few flowering stems, if placed in a vase and kept indoors overnight will fill the room with a delicate fragrance which will be noticed on entering the room first thing in the morning. Better still I to grow the plants in your garden where their evening fragrance may attract moths and other nocturnal pollinating insects.

Another school of thought from 'Key to the Names of British Plants' (1952) by R.D. Macleod is that Dame's Violet was an erroneous transcription from the French *Violette de damas* / Damascan Violet which mistakenly became *Violettes de dames* / Dame's Violet. *Hesperiidae* is the family name of the Skipper butterflies which are daytime flyers, so any connection with west or evening is puzzling.

Hesperia was the ancient Roman's name for the Iberian peninsula, the western-most part of mainland Europe and home to many Skipper species. However Danish entomologist and nomenclator Johann Christian Fabricius (1745-1808) gave the Skipper family its scientific name of *Hesperiidae*. Fabricius was said to have occasionally used enigmatic or ambiguous names. In the natural system, Skippers are intermediate between butterflies and moths, just as evening / hesperos is intermediate between days and night (ref: *The Scientific Names of the British Lepidoptera* by A. Maitland Emmet).

Hesperus was the name given by Greeks to the planet Venus when seen as an evening star in the western sky. In Greek mythology the Hesperides were three daughters of Evening who tended the gardens on an island at the western-most edge of the world.

Sue Blackwell

CRSBI and the Isle of Wight

CRSBI is a voluntary organisation dedicated to the recording of Romanesque stone sculpture in Britain. CRSBI stands for 'The Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland'. 'Romanesque' in England means a style of art and architecture from the Norman period, i.e. 1066 to c.1200 AD. I have been working as the CRSBI recorder for the Island which involved recording a total of twenty-one sites. These are mainly churches with Romanesque architectural features and other items such as grave slabs and fonts. I have also recorded the Romanesque capital at Carisbrooke Castle and the late twelfth century window at

Swainston Manor. My reports are now complete and can be consulted on-line. Due to a glitch at present on the web-site not all of these sites can be accessed through searching for the Isle of Wight on the CRSBI web-site. The easiest way to access a particular report is to put CRSBI followed by the appropriate place-name into a search engine. The Island churches which have Romanesque architectural and/or other features are Arreton, Binstead, Bonchurch (old church), Brading, Brighstone, Calbourne, Carisbrooke, Chale, Freaswater, Gatcombe, Godshill, Mottistone, Niton, Northwood, Shalfleet, Whippingham, Whitwell, Wootton and Yaverland.

John Margham

Glanville Fritillary Volunteers wanted!

Is anyone interested in helping with our long running project to monitor the Island's special butterfly, the Glanville Fritillary? Remarkably, volunteers in the Society have been monitoring the fortunes of the Glanville Fritillary at the main Island sites since 1979, making this almost certainly the longest running butterfly monitoring project in this country. Volunteers adopt a stretch of south coast slumping cliff and visit the area at an agreed time between mid-March and mid-April, depending upon the season, to count the number of larval webs along their stretch of cliff. From our surveys, we have discovered that numbers can fluctuate wildly from one year to the next but, following poor seasons, their powers of recovery are remarkable.

Much of the coastline is already covered but we are looking for one or two volunteers to cover a few stretches which are currently not being recorded. No expertise is required; we can provide training. What is required is a reasonable degree of fitness to cover the chosen area as fully as possible and a commitment to continue the surveys for the long term. A site visit is likely to occupy a half day each year but some keen volunteers visit their site more than once.

If you are interested then please send an e-mail to iwnhas@btconnect.com or speak to Andy Butler (butterfly recorder) or myself.

Colin Pope

British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) News

It has been a busy year for BTO volunteers on the Isle of Wight with three additional bird surveys to cover as well as the normal core surveys. IWNHAS members participated in all of the surveys and I would like to thank them for their efforts throughout the year. I will start the review of the year's activities with the three new surveys:

English Winter Bird Survey

The BTO secured funding from Natural England at the end of September to run a winter bird survey, in England, for one winter only. The focus of this volunteer survey will be to assess bird populations occupying the farmed landscape whilst monitoring the availability of food resources throughout the winter period. This work will enable us to gain a better understanding of how limited food availability during winter is contributing to the overall

decline in breeding farmland bird numbers by attempting to identify the “hungry gap”, when food is at its shortest supply. To date there has been no national-scale monitoring of the effects of agri-environment scheme (AES) management on birds in winter, which is particularly important because the most successful AES options for birds have found to be those that primarily affect birds in winter. This study will aim to collect information on the use of AES options alongside other food resources available in winter.

The new survey is largely based on the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) square protocol, involving monthly counts of birds and Brown Hare (plus other mammals seen) from December 2018 to March 2019, to capture changes in the use of farmland through the winter, but allowing volunteers to make a minimum of two visits (ideally January and February). The focus will be on BBS squares that are dominated by farmland. You can read more about the survey here; <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/english-winter-bird-survey>.

Fourteen 1-km squares have been classified as priority on the I.W for this survey and it is hoped that nearly all of them will be covered for at least two visits.

Nightingale Survey

Hampshire & IW Wildlife Trust (H&IWWT) organised a Nightingale survey during the breeding season to cover Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to try and halt the decline of the common nightingale. Trevor Codlin (H&IWWT) looked after Hampshire and I coordinated the Island coverage.

The nightingale is in trouble across the British Isles with a long-term decline across its UK range with BTO Breeding Bird Survey data for the period 1995 – 2016 showing a 59% decline. This has resulted in it being elevated to the Red list of the latest Birds of Conservation Concern.

In both counties, the nightingale has declined dramatically since the 1950’s. The survey identified tetrads known to have supported nightingales in recent years and have suitable habitat. These were covered at least twice during the 2018 breeding season. It was a bit of an unusual spring this year, with birds arriving late and in lower numbers, therefore the year may not be a true representation of the population, and it may bounce back in 2019 (fingers crossed).

For comparison we have compared the results from this year’s survey with the last BTO nightingale survey, which was carried out in 2012.

The Isle of Wight survey involved 14 surveyors covering 33 tetrads of which eight supported singing male nightingales. A total of 21 singing males were recorded during the survey period, one bird moved on after a couple of days, and therefore was considered to be a migrant, but 20 birds stayed to hold territory, of which 18 were considered to be breeding. Comparison with the 2012 BTO survey shows a decline from 30 territorial males to 20, a decline of 33%.

The Hampshire survey covered 127 tetrads but only recorded a total of 26 singing males during the survey period, of which 12 were considered to be migrant and moved on after a couple of days, leaving 14 birds remaining to hold territory. Of those six were confirmed to have bred, but it is probable the four other did also, but unrestricted access was not possible. Comparison with the 2012 BTO survey shows a decline from 66 territorial males to 14, a decline of 78%.

It is evident that the decline in Hampshire is much greater than that on the Island, and that may be due to habitat. The lack of deer on the Island provides a much dense shrub layer which is preferred by nightingales. Development pressure and loss of suitable habitat may also be playing a part. It is worth noting that in both counties a significant proportion of the respective populations are located at just one site and therefore extremely vulnerable to land use change.

We will continue to work with land owners and partners to ensure that suitable habitat is present at core sites, and look to expand the available habitat to other priority areas. But we do recognise that other factors such as those on wintering grounds and stopover sites during migration may also be having an impact on our nightingales, and as such the long term survival of the species in our two counties may be out of our control.

Thanks to Trevor Codlin for the overall results from both counties and to the Island's surveyors for taking part.

Solent Waders & Brent Goose Winter Survey 2018/19

Hampshire & IW Wildlife Trust also enlisted the help of Island volunteer surveyors to assist their staff in simultaneous four hour counts along the Island's northern coastline between December 2018 and March 2019. Brent geese were the primary species monitoring the flock size and movements between sites plus site disturbance and feeding behaviour. Waders were also monitored where possible.

The aims of the survey are to establish any inland sites on both sides of the Solent used by waders and Brent geese and to confirm how waders and Brent geese are moving between the network of sites.

I hope to bring you a summary of the Island's results in a future edition of the Bulletin.

Regarding the core surveys, the **Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)** has doubled the coverage on the Island since 2015 with 17 1-km squares covered in 2018. The 2018 results are currently being analysed and it is hoped that 2019 will receive further good coverage.

We celebrated the 90th anniversary of the **Heronries Census** in 2018 and once again our Island breeding sites received coverage. Special thanks to Toni Goodley for helping out at the twelfth hour and covering one of our key sites after the original surveyor was unavailable at the last minute. It is pleasing to report that two of our sites are now recording breeding grey heron and little egret. Both species are prone to desert if they suffer a high level of disturbance so it is important that our small breeding population is protected and monitored.

The **Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)** key sites continue to be well covered (thank you!) though there are a number of smaller sites that remain vacant, such as Wootton Mill Pond. If you're interested in taking on a site, have a look at the WeBS Vacant Sites tool (<https://app.bto.org/websonline/sites/vacant/vacant-sites.jsp>) or contact myself for further details.

Once again the **Nest Recording Scheme** was well supported by both members of the Isle of Wight Ringing Group and volunteer surveyors.

BirdTrack

BirdTrack, for those of you who are unaware, is run by the BTO and recognized among birdwatchers as the principal tool for entering bird records online. It has received some important updates recently, including updating the species list that is used and introducing a new verification system for local bird recorders. We've been working on a new easier way of entering your bird records too – take a look at <https://app.bto.org/birdtrack2/login/login.jsp>

Fantastic online resources

The BTO website hosts some really excellent online resources which are worth a look. **BirdTrends** - information from a range of key breeding season surveys and schemes. This has

recently been updated to include data from 2017.

www.bto.org/birdtrends

Bird Facts - full of facts and figures for around 270 species

www.bto.org/about-birds/birdfacts

Wetland Bird Survey Online Report

Information on wintering waterbirds from c3000 sites around the UK. Currently includes data up to 2016/17

<https://app.bto.org/webs-reporting/>

Online Ringing and Nest Recording Report

These summaries, up to 2017, provide information on the numbers of birds ringed and reports (recoveries) of ringed birds received for the whole Ringing Scheme, covering Britain and Ireland, as well as broken down by country and local bird recording area (in Britain) or county (Ireland). We are fortunate to have an excellent local group, the Isle of Wight Ringing Group, who contribute to the BTO's national ringing surveys and also host one of the national training courses at Haseley Nature Reserve.

<https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>

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

Jim Baldwin

Nature notes from the Medina Valley in 2018

- 9th January 2 Song Thrushes in song at Hurstake alongside the Newport to Cowes cycleway.
- 16th January 13 Cormorants on the upper estuary; 10 roosting on the Medina Valley Centre (MVC) pontoon.
- 19th January The first Mediterranean Gull of the year, calling over Dodnor
- 6th /7th February A Red Squirrel visits the squirrel feeder at MVC.
- 17th March 4 Golden Plover roosting on the wreck Yellowfin, in Werrar Creek; 19 Mediterranean Gulls on the upper estuary.
- 31st March 11 Mediterranean Gulls flying south over Dodnor.
- 5th May A Common Seal surfaced at Medham to inspect a group of canoeists on a safari with guide along the Medina Estuary, during their corporate day out.
- 7th May A Lapwing displaying and calling on Werrar farmland
- 28th May Two pairs of Lesser Black-backed gulls and a pair of Oystercatchers nesting on the roof of Premier Ford, and a pair of Herring Gulls on the Plumb Centre roof, in the Riverway industrial estate in Newport.
- 2nd June 1 Cetti's Warbler in song in the reedbed at Lower St Cross and another in scrub adjacent to the Mitsubishi-Vestas factory at Dodnor. A Stoat struggling to pull a Rabbit along the cycleway at Dodnor, for 30 metres, and joined by an inquisitive Carrion Crow.
- 2nd /16th June A pair of Peregrines feeding three chicks at nest box alongside the upper estuary.
- 2nd June A Barn Owl with young in the nest box behind Dodnor Cottage.

- 2nd July A Downy Emerald dragonfly and 23 Red-eyed Damselflies over the Dickson's Copse pond.
- 3rd July Four-spotted Footman moth came to MVC's mercury vapour light, a species found on the coast of the South-West peninsula, but an occasional migrant.
- 8th June 830 Common Spotted Orchids in the unimproved grassland at MVC.
- 10th July Purple Hairstreaks in the oaks at MVC, during the hot, dry weather.
- 13th July 2 adult Stoats with 4 young playing around the bird bath at MVC.
- 17th July An immature Peregrine rescued from the estuary water by a resident of the Riverside residential park, Dodnor. It was looked after by the RSPCA and released a few days later back to the Dodnor area.
- 25th July First Wall butterfly of the year at MVC, feeding on Fleabane. Garden Tiger moth in ground of MVC.
- 25th /27th July Stoat bathing in MVC bird bath and climbing the surrounding trees at speed.
- 27th July Female Tufted Duck with 9 chicks on Dodnor Creek pond.
- 11th August Sea Heath flowering in increasing number of sites adjacent to the estuary at Dodnor and Medham north creek.
- 21st August 2 Greenshank flying downstream past the MVC, calling.
- 28th August Single plant of Autumn Lady's-tresses, flowering on the MVC south lawn.
- 2nd September Adult Peregrine with immature bird calling loudly above the sound of pealing bells on Newport Minster on Sunday morning.
- 10th September Large count of 8 Grey Heron on the Werrar saltmarsh.
- 1st-/18th October Grey Wagtail, with a deformed foot, frequenting the car park and lawns at MVC.
- 28th October 2 Siskin feeding on newly formed ash buds in tree alongside Dodnor Creek.
- 2nd November Last Small Copper of the year on the concrete path at MVC.
- 21st November 6 specimens of the estuarine sea anemone *Sargartia troglodytes* on a single cobble on the estuary mud adjacent to MVC.
- 7th December A Green Sandpiper flew out of the creek at Medham, west of the cycleway.
- 14th December 4 Little Egrets towered out of Dickson's Copse pond.
- 16th December A Red-legged Partridge outside the door at the main entrance at MVC.
- 24th December 2 Peregrines hunting from Newport Minster, causing panic amongst the pigeons.
- 26th December 10 Cormorants diving in synchronized, closely packed formation, in shallow water in the upper estuary from MVC to the Newport Rowing Club, with 3 Little Egrets following on the water's edge feeding on the scattering fish.

Keith Marston

Golden Hill Country Park

Golden Hill Country Park, at Freshwater, is one of the Isle of Wight Council Countryside Sites that is now being managed by Gift for Nature. 2020 is the 50th anniversary of the site being created as a Country Park and Gift to Nature are looking to implement improvements to the site in readiness for this.

Carol Flux, who works for Gift to Nature, has asked for our support and help with this. She says:

Visits by the entomology section and useful nature details and maps from Caroline Dudley have been very helpful but our ecological understanding of the site is far from complete. This is not helpful for site management. We would be really grateful if you could

partner us in the next couple of years to help us overcome this. Personally I think there are two things we could focus on, but you may have other suggestions:

- *We hope to get a grant to enhance the site which will include some scrub removal, and work in the woodlands and ponds area (there are three). We would appreciate help in advising us as we fine tune the planning for this, perhaps in surveying the proposed areas prior*
- *We would love to increase both our species list for the park, people's enjoyment of it and understanding of the variety of habitats. We wondered whether the Bioblitz could be hosted there in 2020? It seems a good place because of the variety of habitats, availability of parking etc. But we would need a lot of support from your members to plan and deliver.*

It would be really useful if we could know whether you are able to come on board, and in what ways you suggest early days, as I could then incorporate all of this into both the funding and activity plans. I would be grateful if you could get back to me and discuss how we could take this forward.

It is suggested that our Society could hold one or two meetings at Golden Hill in 2020 but in the meantime, this is a plea to all recorders. Please consider visiting Golden Hill and recording the species you feel comfortable with over the next year. There is not a lot of up to date information on the wildlife of the site but, in particular, there is a lack of current knowledge of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, insects and other invertebrates.

If you are able to carry out recording then please send your results, together with any comments or notes to IWNHAS HQ (iwnhas@btconnect.com) where we can collate them and incorporate them into our database. You can also contact Carol Flux direct at Gift to Nature, Shide Meadows Centre, Shide Road, Newport PO30 1HR, Carol Flux carol.flux@naturalenterprise.co.uk

Andy's Nature Notes July to December 2018

July

6th. Went to Atherfield, c.30 Banded Demoiselle, one Emperor dragonfly, one Painted Lady, 2 Humming-bird Hawkmoths[HBHM].Plenty of Glanville summer webs but the Plantain is very dry due to the hot weather. Walked up to the private reservoir and saw 3 pairs of Red-veined Darters plus 2 singletons also 8 Black-tailed Skimmers.

7th. Second generation Small Blue along the Wheeler's Bay revetment. 6 Bottle-nosed Dolphins heading down Channel in the afternoon. Holly Blue in the garden.

9th. Clouded Yellow at Atherfield.

11th. Over to Clammerkin (near Newtown) with Dave Nordell, saw c.40 Ruddy Darters, c.20 Emerald Damselflies and 9 Purple Hairstreak butterflies. Had a quick look in Walter's Copse and logged 10 Silver-washed Fritillaries and 3 White Admiral.

14th. 21 Glanville webs along the revetment; plantain very dry.

16th. Back to Atherfield. 129 Glanville webs counted plus 2 Wall, one Painted Lady, 4 Clouded Yellow, c.300 Common Blue and one very worn Dark-green Fritillary.

18th. Atherfield reservoir. 15 Red-veined Darters (a record count) and 12 Black-tailed Skimmers. Checked the chine and had 3 Clouded Yellow, 2 Dingy Skippers, 5 Small Coppers plus 3 Golden-ringed Dragonflies.

19th.The large hoverfly, *Volucella zonaria*, in the garden.

22nd. Had a Beautiful Marbled moth in the trap this morning, a first for the Island, plus a Plumed Fanfoot, another rarity.

27th. Atherfield with Pete Campbell. 11 Wall, 2 Red-veined Darters, a Wheater and 2 Common Sandpipers.

29th. SW gale off home. A movement of Gannets all day plus a few Manx Shearwaters.

30th. A young Grey Seal on Monk's Bay beach.

31st. Seal still there.

August

1st. Revetment:- 4 Painted Lady, 2 HBHM & 3 Red Admiral.

3rd. Brook Down chalk-pit with Dave and John Sturt. The temperature mid- morning in the shaded car was 32 F. An excellent count of c.4000 Chalk-hill Blues all within 200m of the pit. 2 Clouded Yellow and a HBHM along the revetment later.

5th. Large numbers of the Glanville caterpillar food plant, Ribwort Plantain, have shrivelled up and died due to the extreme heat thus causing the caterpillars to starve to death. Numbers will have to be affected so 2019 will be an interesting year.

6th. A Convolvulus Hawkmoth round the *Nicotiana* this evening in the garden at 21.30.

7th. Bonchurch Down. 13 Adonis Blue, 12 Chalkhill Blue, 3 Wall and one HBHM.

8th. 2 Migrant Hawker dragonflies over Bonchurch pond.

11th. Atherfield with Dave. 7 Wall, 4 Small Heath and one Dingy Skipper. We found 5 Glanville summer webs with different instar caterpillars together in them, some 2mm long and beige and some 4mm and black.

14th. Dave and I went to Mottistone Down chalk-pit this morning. We recorded 42 Adonis Blue, c.100 Chalkhill Blues, one Clouded Yellow, 2 Wall, one Grayling, 12 Small Heath, 5 Dingy Skippers 2 Speckled Wood and one Chalk Carpet moth.

15th. The young seal is back at Bonchurch; it has been named 'Ronette'. 3 Convolvulus Hawkmoths in the garden in the late evening. Tried to photograph them but not much success.

16th. 4 Convolvulus this evening.

21st. 3 Convolvulus this evening. Have borrowed a flashgun from Dave for my SLR camera and results are much better. Earlier in the afternoon saw a Great Skua off Bonchurch beach.

26th. A westerly gale and heavy rain. Saw a Great Shearwater not far out from my house, a new species for me.

27th. Went to Newtown with Pete. Saw a single Osprey.

29th. Observed 2 Painted Lady flying in off the sea at home.

30th. 7/8 Bottle-nosed Dolphins off Bonchurch heading west.

31st. Caught my first Blue Underwing moth (Clifden Nonpareil) last night, a pretty impressive insect.

September

2nd. Saw a Honey Buzzard flying over Luccombe Down.

3rd. Went to Atherfield this morning. There was a Kingfisher over the chine stream and Blackcaps, Spotted Flycatchers and Chiffchaffs in the scrub alongside. Up on the reservoir there were 2 Common Sandpipers and a juvenile Little-ringed Plover.

4th. A Convolvulus Hawkmoth in the trap this morning. Went to Watershoot Bay near St.Catherine's Point later in the day for a Wryneck. Had good but distant views. Moved on to Newtown where there was one Grey Seal and one Common Seal.

5th. Back to Watershoot Bay and better views of the Wryneck. Got a few Photographs.

6th. A Clouded Yellow along the revetment and 3 Wasp Spiders at Monk's Bay.

7th. Atherfield again with Pete, one Grasshopper Warbler in the chine also 10 Small Coppers, one Wall and 20+ Small Heath.

10th. Distant views of an Osprey at Newtown this morning plus my first sighting of a Median Wasp in Town Copse.

13th. Went to Yarmouth. Black-tailed Godwits, Knot, Common Sandpiper, 2 Snipe, 20 Lapwing.

14th. 6 Bottle-nosed Dolphins off Bonchurch, heading west.

15th. Pete and I went to Yarmouth this morning to see a Spotted Redshank, a once common bird that is now quite scarce. In the afternoon Dave and another friend, Alan Clark, and I went to Laundry Lane, Brading, and saw one Great Egret, 2 Cattle Egrets, 2 Hobby, c.30 Yellow Wagtails and at least 300 Migrant Hawker Dragonflies.

16th. Newtown. 4 Grey Plover still in summer plumage and a female Marsh Harrier.

17th. The small Grey Seal has been in the Bonchurch area for some while now and is seen most days.

18th. 2 Western Conifer Seed Bugs on the house wall, an increasingly common insect.

24th. An early trip to Yarmouth to photograph the Spotted Redshank then on to Newtown for an Osprey and the Marsh Harrier plus 2 Whimbrel. Back home along the revetment there was one Wall, 2 Clouded Yellow, a Painted Lady, Red Admirals, Peacocks, Common Blues, Small Copper and Large Whites.

25th. Atherfield. Kingfisher still around.

26th. 2 HBHM along the revetment.

27th. An unusual sight of at least 200 Mullet feeding along the lower apron of the revetment as a wave washed them over the concrete and then back into the sea. The water was gin clear and I was able to photograph them. 4 Clouded Yellow, 3 HBHM etc as well along the lower cliff.

29th. My son took me round to Newtown in his boat to look for Ospreys. Nothing!

30th. The large Grey Seal called Ron turned up at Bonchurch today.

October

2nd. A Common Sandpiper in Monk's Bay today.

3rd. 5 Clouded Yellows, 2 Common Blue and one Small Copper along the revetment. A Kingfisher in Monk's Bay.

7th. A Lapland Bunting up on Luccombe Down Very tame and easy to photograph. A first for me.

8th. Lapland Bunting still there.

12th. Pete and I went along to Bembridge Embankment and logged a Great Egret, 4 Greenshank and a Hobby.

20th. Clouded Yellows seen every day for some while now.

21st. A Flame Brocade moth in the trap this morning. Pete and I went up to Coombe Bottom (behind the old Ventnor railway station) and saw 3 Ring Ouzels. Moved on to Atherfield and had c.400 Mediterranean Gulls and a Black Redstart.

23rd. Very brief view of a Yellow-browed Warbler near Windy Gap, Niton.

26th. Clouded Yellows still around.

31st. Better views of a Yellow-browed Warbler at Niton.

November

3rd. About 50 Fieldfares at Southford near Whitwell.

4th. Went to Bouldnor Forest with Pete and saw 7 Crossbills flying over. On to Newtown and had 5 Goosanders (first I've seen on the Island), c.100 Golden Plover and 15 Mergansers.

5th. Went back to Newtown and got some good shots of the Goosanders. 2 Common Scoters close in on the sea at Wheeler's Bay.

9th. Went to Bembridge. Great Egret and a Marsh Harrier.

18th. Yarmouth with Pete. En- route saw 80 Golden Plover at Whale Chine, 60 at Broad lane and 150 at Yarmouth. Later, a Curlew on Monk's Bay beach.

December

1st. Horrendous day, rain all day and a SW gale.

5th. A Black Redstart at the back of Ventnor Winter Gardens.

11th. 6 Goldcrests at Bonchurch Old Church.

28th. A female Stonechat along the revetment

29th. Yarmouth. C.30 Shoveler Duck.

A very quiet and dull month.

Andy Butler

Reports of General Meetings

28th July Brading, St Urian's and Yaverland: Churches and Landscapes in the East Wight

Fourteen members met at Brading for another in John Margham's series of historic landscape walks. In the churchyard he reminded us of Bishop Wilfrid's likely foundation of the church in the 7th century, though curiously it receives no mention in Domesday Book (1086). Then inside the church itself John explained his identification of Brading as an early minster church – a complex medieval settlement headed by an abbot or abbess, with nuns, monks, priests or laity. Outside again by the pound, we learnt that a minster enclosure might contain, in addition to the church, dwellings, farm buildings, workshops, gardens, orchards, and a graveyard. It would appear that the presence of a minster was instrumental in the development of the 'King's Town' of Brading.

Heading for the marshland path which crosses the Yar, John touched on the land reclamation carried out in Brading Haven from the 15th century onwards. At Centurions Copse we learnt of St Urian's Chapel at Wolverton, mentioned in the Dean's returns of 1305; whereupon much discussion ensued as to the validity or otherwise of the legend of the pilgrim, the hermit and the stone-lined well – never previously recorded until the antiquarian 'Abraham Elder' put pen to paper in the 1840s. A Domesday entry and archaeological remains, however, certainly point to the former existence of Wolverton Manor in the copse.

A brisk step along the main road and across fields brought us to Peacock Hill, with a view back across the landscape of Bembridge Farm, the likely setting of the lost medieval manors of Orham, Middleton and Hardley. We ascended the trackway to the Yarborough Monument for our lunch-stop, but a howling gale cut short our stay here! Then as we descended Bembridge Down, John told us a little more about Bishop Wilfrid and his links with Selsey in the 7th century. Anglo-Saxon finds of a barrow site, two skeletons and an urn during the construction of Bembridge Fort in the 19th century also point to a pagan Anglo-Saxon site at the highest point of the down.

South of the down we made our way along an attractive combe which delineates the parish boundary between Brading and Yaverland; then a loop across some fields brought us to Yaverland Church, where the churchwarden Jenny Ancomb and the Revd Barry Downer were on hand to greet us. This is a good example of an Island 'church-manor complex': the construction of the church most likely dates to the 1140s but there may have been a wooden predecessor long before that. John pointed out several architectural features of the building, which was once a daughter church to Brading.

We retraced our steps a short way and then traversed Gander Down, where the Time Team excavation took place in 2001, uncovering evidence of activity from the Bronze Age through to the late Romano-British period, including a round barrow and a round house.

We now arrived back at the reclaimed land of the former haven. John proceeded to read an extract from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 897 describing a sea encounter off Wight between King Alfred's forces and the invading Danes, in which the English gained the upper hand. Mention was also made of the fanciful story of the Druids in Brading Haven when it was originally dry land; the tale again appeared as an antiquarian exercise in the 19th century but there is no evidence of its having been collected as genuine folk belief.

Returning via Quay Lane brought us to Brading churchyard, where we had begun. John expanded on the theory of Brading as a 'central place' in early times (on a par with Carisbrooke/Newport), so it is all the more surprising to learn that by the later 13th century the manor of Brading had lost its independence and was subsumed as 'a member of the king and queen's manor of Whytefield'! But Edward I granted the town a weekly market and four-day fair in 1285.

It only remained for us to thank John for yet another fascinating walk with his customary range of unique historical insights. The group finally parted at 4:30 pm, a round trip lasting 6½ hours.

Alan Phillips

22nd September The Pier's Tale, an illustrated talk by Dr Ruth Waller

In her introduction, Ruth explained how she had been asked to research the heritage of the area around Yarmouth pier by the Yarmouth Harbour Commission, who had made a successful bid for lottery funding for this project. They also asked her to give as many talks as possible about the project, this being a condition laid down by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Ruth was the County Archaeologist for the Isle of Wight Council before becoming a freelance consultant. The talk was well attended by some thirty-five IWNHAS members.

Yarmouth pier is the UK's longest wooden pier, seven hundred feet long. Ruth took us on a journey through two thousand years of history. In the Mesolithic, before 4000BC, there was a seasonal hunting camp on the River Solent here, where peripatetic hunter-gatherers lived in tents made of animal skin. In the 1980s, a joint project between Maritime Archaeology and the County Archaeology Service, in which some members of our Society's Archaeological section took part, investigated Bouldnor Cliff, a Mesolithic camp radio-carbon dated to 6400 BC. They found apple, hazel and oak tree stumps, and a lobster discovered a piece of wood with flint in it that it was seen taking into its burrow. The flint was being worked when it was abandoned. They also found the remains of wooden boats, hazelnut shells eaten by hunter-gatherers, and the country's oldest string, made of nettles. What intrigued them most was the discovery of the DNA of grain, even though farming did not start here until much later. This raised the question as to whether these hunter-gatherers were already trading with more advanced cultures.

In the Neolithic, from 4500 to 2000 BC, the Isle of Wight became an island, due to climate change, rising temperatures causing glaciers to melt and sea levels to rise. There was a gradual change in lifestyle, as farming was brought over from mainland Europe. Submerged posts on the edge of Yarmouth harbour were used for fishing. Posts were erected right across the bay and were joined by a woven fence. A funnel-shaped basket was placed to fill each gap in the fence, and fish were trapped in the baskets as the tide came in.

From the Bronze Age, from 2000BC to 800 BC, three axe heads found here constitute the first evidence of a Bronze Age settlement. They were found recently, when a gas pipe was

being laid on the edge of town. These axes must have come from elsewhere and been traded with another culture.

In the Iron Age, from 800 to 43 BC, Yarmouth was perfect for settlement, its river, fields and marshes having been a source of a wide variety of foods. In 1867 a horde of seven to eight Iron Age coins, known as staters, were found near Yarmouth Common. They are now kept in the British Museum because they are of a type not seen before. Maybe these settlers melted down coins made elsewhere and refashioned them with their own design.

In the Roman period, from 43 to 410 AD, the Roman invasion had less of an impact on the Isle of Wight than on the English mainland, as Islanders were already trading with the Romans. A lot of Roman pottery has been found here, including three large concentrations of Roman artefacts found on the bed of the Solent by archaeology scuba divers. It is likely there is a shipwreck close to the pier. Very tall amphorae, used to store wine, olive oil, olives, and a pungent fish sauce called liquomen were among the finds.

In the Saxon period, the settlement of 'Ermud' was recorded in the Domesday Book that was used to record taxation. Here there were seven large households and two smallholders. The settlement was held by Saxon Lords Aelfric and Whitlac before 1066 and was worth twelve shillings. By 1086 it was worth twenty-five shillings.

The Medieval period saw the rise of Yarmouth as a town and a rise in prosperity. Its first town charter was granted in 1135 and meant that the town was self-governing, run by a group of burgesses. It was permitted to have a market that sold the very best of imported goods, including the finest silks and wools and exotic spices. Yarmouth became the most important town in the area, more important than Lymington or Carisbrooke. It was so important that King John visited it twice, in 1206 and 1213. Yarmouth reached its epitome in Norman times. It is a planned medieval town and there is a direct link between the market and merchants arriving by ship. The town has been frozen in time so that archaeologists are unable to carry out many excavations, though Ruth did find some medieval pottery here. Unfortunately, several series of events led to Yarmouth's decline. The first occurred in 1293, when Edward 1 decided to raise import taxes to deter merchant ships from landing their cargoes here, in favour of his new town of Newport. The second was the plague that struck Yarmouth's inhabitants in the fourteenth century. Naturally, those who could afford to do so left the town. The third event also occurred in the fourteenth century. During the Hundred Years War, French raiders attacked the Island's coasts, and Yarmouth was razed to the ground in 1337. As a consequence, the 180 households recorded in 1300 were greatly reduced in number.

There is some evidence of continued trade after this incident. A Spanish merchant ship, the St Mary of Santander, laden with jugs of wine, was wrecked here. The law stated that if there were any survivors of a wreck, local people were not allowed to take any of the cargo. Yarmouth men took some of the wine and were arrested.

Henry VIII had Yarmouth Castle built in 1546 by mistake. He incurred the Pope's wrath when he tried to divorce his first wife, Katherine of Aragon, and marry Anne Boleyn, and the Pope excommunicated him. England became a target for invasion, and Henry needed to build fortifications. This castle has a bastion, Henry's earliest castle design. The Santa Lucia, a cargo ship from Flanders, wrecked at about this time, lies on the seabed three hundred metres to the east of Yarmouth.

Yarmouth Pier

From the 1866 Ordnance Survey map of Yarmouth, you can see that the town was in trouble. It had shrunk so small that it was barely able to keep going. There were few houses left, and market gardens and orchards had filled the gaps between them. Yarmouth was almost cut off, as the roads were in a very bad state, and ships had difficulty in accessing the town

because the mouth of the river was silted up. Queen Victoria, who had adopted the Isle of Wight as her home, came to the rescue in 1874 with the Yar Pier Order. The pier was opened in July 1876 as a leisure pier. It brought paddle steamers, which saved Yarmouth from total decline. The yacht club was established at this time.

The pier was built in greenheart that is a hundred times more dense than oak. Nevertheless, there were several incidences of damage caused to the pier by ships in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When, in 1877, Yarmouth Corporation decided to put gates across the pier entrance to stop local louts going there at night and causing trouble, fishermen would be unable to access their boats that were moored on the pier. Their petition was ignored, the gates were installed, and local people demolished the gates. The Corporation took them to court and won, but they could not get any compensation or costs from the perpetrators because these people had sold their assets, on legal advice.

The pier master's office was built in 1927 and is now Gossips Café, and the Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners are now in charge of the pier. The wood of the pier has to withstand buffeting from the waves and the nibbling of gribbles, microscopic woodworms that eat the green heartwood in the posts below the surface of the sea.

Projects currently being undertaken

- 1 The Restoration of the Pier (Pier Pressure) - The wooden planks have been re-sanded and the name/s of the sponsor/s for each plank re-cut into the timber. The piles that had reached the end of their life have been replaced.
- 2 Pier in a Box – Local schools and the community have been invited to learn about the pier's construction, materials, engineering and project management. Public engagement is important to encourage the community to take an interest in and responsibility for this amazing structure that is an important part of their heritage.
- 3 The Pavilion will be used for displays and have a glass floor so that people can watch species of plant and animal life in the sea below.
- 4 The Pier Beneath – Dr Alice Hall and Dr Roger Herbert from Bournemouth University are in charge of this project to increase people's knowledge of sea creatures such as cuttlefish, edible crab and wrasse.
- 5 The Pop-up Pier is a travelling exhibition that will visit public libraries, community halls and other venues across the Isle of Wight.
- 6 Pier into the Past is Ruth's project that involves research into the history of the area around the pier and the pier itself, and this talk: The Pier's Tale is a summary of the findings of that research.

After questions from the audience, we thanked Ruth for a fascinating talk. She asked if we would each fill in a questionnaire as feedback to the Lottery Fund sponsors and evidence that Ruth had indeed given us the talk.

Maggie Nelmes

Saturday 29th September

Annual Fungus Foray

Our main fungus foray this year was held at Brighstone Forest. As usual, our visiting expert from Bedfordshire, Alan Outen, led the foray this time, for the first time, accompanied by his wife Patti. We were also delighted to welcome several members from the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group. Weather condition had been dry and larger fungi were hard to find, so we did not have great expectations for the day. Nevertheless, 89 species were recorded, a list helped considerably by Alan Lucas and Sue Rogerson's additions from the Hampshire Group.

On the Sunday, a smaller group met at Briddlesford Copse where we were able to record 94 species. During the weekend, nineteen species new for the Island were recorded.

Colin Pope

Saturday 10th November

The IW Green Gym

Mark Russell and Alison Hounslow presented this talk. Mark began his talk to twelve of our members by explaining the origins of the Green Gym movement. It was Oxford GP Dr William Bird MBE who, becoming increasingly concerned that those patients who weren't fit were dropping out of conventional fitness classes, began looking for alternatives. A longitudinal study on the effect of fitness on mortality was conducted at an aerobics centre on 50 000 people from October 1987 to March 1999. Lack of exercise was found to be the top cause of early death, above smoking.

Cortisol is a chemical produced by exercising. A burst of cortisol when you awaken is very good for your mental health. Just eight weeks of Green Gym can make a big difference to our mental wellbeing. So too can getting out of built-up areas and into the countryside. Being close to trees and in green spaces enhances our physical and mental wellbeing.

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers that has run Green Gyms for many years, has now been renamed The Conservation Volunteers. They approached the Footprint Trust about setting up a Green Gym on the Isle of Wight, and it began work in 2003. On their van, you can see stickers with the logos of their various sponsors, including Defra and Biffa. This funding paid for tools and the salaries of Ray Harrington-Vail and another staff member.

Mark showed us slides of Green Gym members making bird boxes, and planting disease-resistant elms at Towngate pond in Newport. He told us proudly about their oldest member, Derek Cooper, who has been attending Green Gym sessions since 2003 and is now in his eighties. The work is seasonal, and every week, every site is different. Landowners ask the Green Gym for help with tasks such as pond restoration, tree planting, path clearance and undergrowth clearing. School groups sometimes join in, to gain experience, and so do groups from the Way Forward Programme, part of OSEL Enterprises, an Isle of Wight charity that gives young people with learning difficulties work experience to help them gain employment. In January 2005, the Green Gym became independent of the Footprint Trust when the funding came to an end. The volunteers decided to continue their work but without paid staff. They set up a committee and their own account, and Mark was voted as chairman. They have worked with various agencies that have funded their work. For heathland restoration, for example, the Forestry Commission paid for van hire, public liability insurance and tea and biscuits. At Parkhurst Forest, heathland restoration is necessary to the survival of the rare grizzled skipper butterfly. At Afton Marsh, Gift to Nature asked the Green Gym for help with willow removal.

The volunteers have learned various countryside tasks, including willow weaving and hedgelaying, and they have taken part in the annual Isle of Wight hedgelaying competition. They only use hand tools – no power tools or strimmers – for insurance purposes. There are a lot of volunteers so training and monitoring them in the use of power tools is not feasible. Volunteers have helped in the annual struggle to contain the non-native and aggressively invasive plant Himalayan Balsam that grows along riverbanks. Its spread is particularly bad along the Eastern Yar. Volunteers start working upstream to prevent the plant reseeding downstream. Himalayan balsam is an annual plant that grows very tall and then dies back in the autumn. Habitat for water voles is affected by it because it causes bank erosion. It smothers other plants in spring, but leaves the banks vulnerable to erosion in the autumn and winter. The plant has very small roots. The seed heads pop and disperse, some being carried downstream by the water flow. Each seed is viable for 18 months so volunteers have to keep returning each year to remove any new plants. You can pull it out of the ground, but it snaps

easily. You cannot burn it, but if you lay it on the ground, it dries in the sunshine. It is not toxic to humans or other animals. Of course, you need to pull it up before it sets seed. It can grow up to nine feet tall in richer ground.

Green Gym volunteers have also taken part in beach cleans for the National Trust, in Watershoot Bay at Niton, Compton Bay and St Helens Duver. At Watershoot Bay, nearly all of the plastic and other materials found on the beach come from the sea: from fishing boats, cargo vessels and yachts. The volunteers have been working there for the past eight years. Each year they keep a record of what they find and send the data to industry and the Government.

Other projects include pond restoration at the RSPCA's Animal Rescue Centre at Bohemia Corner, creating a butterfly meadow at Play Lane in Haylands, Ryde, land clearance and litter removal for recycling for the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, and raking off an area of the Pan Mill Meadows nature reserve for Gift to Nature. Motivation among the volunteers varies: some are inspired by a love of nature, some do this work to improve their physical and mental health, and others enjoy being outdoors and the company. Mark and Alison encourage volunteers to go back to the sites in summer to see the fruits of their labour.

The group is encouraged to collaborate with other agencies, such as schools, community groups and churches. Schools do not have to have nature areas – it is up to individuals on the staff or parents' groups to take the initiative. St Mary's Primary School in Ryde needed help from the Green Gym to clear parrot feather, a non-native and aggressive reed, from their pond. St Helens Primary School wanted help to make raised beds. At the West Wight Sports and Community Centre the volunteers created attractive flower beds in front of the building. In churchyards they have helped conserve the diversity of wildlife that often flourishes there. They have also worked for Bodster Equine, a charity helping people to improve their mental health and confidence through interaction with horses.

They often work in nature reserves owned and managed by the Wildlife Trust, on specific projects, such as in the bee fields in Martin's Wood at Newchurch. Once a year, the Green Gym dig patches of ground to maintain the loose sandy soil habitat for the bees. And at the Trust's Bouldnor reserve they clear encroaching scrub to encourage heather and gorse to spread over the heathland.

This year, they helped remove vegetation for the Island 2000's Mummies' Caves archaeological project to excavate part of the Dodnor Mill Cement Works. And in the adjacent Dickson's Copse nature reserve, managed by Gift to Nature, they cleared the footpath.

Each year Green Gym volunteers hold 50 sessions, each Wednesday for 3 hours. This year is their fifteenth. That's 750 sessions with about 25 volunteers, a total of 56 000 hours of work on about 170 different sites. And over 600 participants, including school pupils. What an achievement! And what a difference they are making to wildlife and to community groups across the Island. No wonder they were presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the MBE for community groups, by Prince Charles and Camilla, at Ventnor Botanic Garden.

We thanked Mark and Alison for their fascinating talk and all the excellent slides that document their many projects.

Maggie Nelmes

Saturday 8th December

The Isle of Wight AONB: Plans & Projects

The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers about half of the Isle of Wight. AONBs were created by the Countryside Act of 1949. A man with a clipboard came to the

Island and decided what to include in this designation. Parkhurst Forest was left out because it was owned by the Forestry Commission and was therefore deemed to be protected from development. And the Arreton area was left out because it was earmarked for a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

For this talk, to twelve members of our society, Richard Grogan chose seven of the AONB's current projects: The UNESCO Biosphere status, Co-ordinating the delivery of Down to the Coast, Support for the Dark Skies Park, Continuing the Access Project, Increasing engagement with the Local Records Centre, Revising the Biodiversity Action Plan, and Identifying and securing new funding streams.

The Isle of Wight Biosphere Reserve status

All of the Isle of Wight has been nominated for UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status, and the decision on whether to grant us this status will be made in June 2019. A Biosphere is an area of the world that combines its conservation and culture. There are about six hundred biospheres in the world, including many of the European islands. The Isle of Wight's wildlife has been much better off than its counterparts in the rest of the South of England. Housing development poses a big threat to wildlife, but fortunately so far, the Island has been only lightly impacted, compared with some other areas of the country.

In early 2017, the AONB team decided it was time to take action to protect the Island so they applied for Biosphere status. They went to Wolverton Manor Fair and other popular events in the Island's calendar and asked people there for their views on this proposal. The results were very encouraging. The team thought we needed a buffer zone around the Island in the form of marine conservation zones. They first applied for government approval, and having secured this, submitted an application to UNESCO in September.

In June 2018 the Island's Mardi Gras carnival, organised by the New Carnival Company and whose participants are mainly schools, adopted a Global Biosphere theme, in support of the AONB's application, to raise awareness of the UNESCO designation among the population and to enthuse young people and their families. On 29 June 2019, the theme will be the Isle of Wight Biosphere.

Most UNESCO countries have one biosphere. This project showcases the Island's green credentials and that is why the AONB believes we deserve recognition.

Co-ordinating Delivery of Down to the Coast Heritage Lottery Funding

The West Wight benefitted from Down to the Coast Heritage Lottery Funding for environmental projects for five years and then it was the East Wight's turn. The East Wight covers an area of 150 square kilometres and has 25 miles of coast. The AONB has obtained £1.5 million from the Lottery and £1 million from its partner organisations and the local community. It has funded 16 projects over 5 years. Its partners include the Isle of Wight Ramblers, Vectis Housing, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and our Society, IWNHAS.

Programme A, entitled Source to Sea, has funded marshland restoration at Morton Marsh at Brading, bought by the Wildlife Trust. This reserve joins onto the RSPB reserve at Brading Marshes. It also completes an 8-kilometre stretch of marshland nature reserves, owned by the Wildlife Trust, along the Lower East Yar Valley.

Programme B, Caulkhead and Overners, funds groups getting together to protect nature conservation and heritage areas. The projects include the Isle of Wight Ramblers' restoration of public footpaths across Brading Marshes, the Wildlife Trust's Wild Beach programme for children, and the Growing Landscape, an apprenticeship scheme for young people to learn traditional countryside skills such as charcoal-making and hedge-laying.

Supporting the Dark Skies Park

The AONB is promoting a Dark Skies Park in the south-west of the Island. The initial proposal to include the whole of the Island in this project was frowned upon by the Planning Authority. Richard showed us a map of light intensity on the Island and we could see that the western half is largely free of light pollution. The AONB is talking to Island Roads and the Isle of Wight Council to get agreement not to increase light levels in this south-west area of the Island. It is also working with the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and Vectis Astronomical Society to form a submission to the International Dark Skies Association. The benefits are especially for nocturnal wildlife, and there is a tourism spin-off too. The AONB have asked Island Roads if they would turn off the street lights in this area at night.

Continuing the Access Project

In April 2017, the AONB secured funding to co-ordinate programmes of walks on the Island throughout the year. These walks are delivered by Island organisations to interpret the landscape. The programme includes sessions such as Wildlife Watch and Wild Beach for children, fossil walks, archaeology and history walks, as well as long-distance rambles. The programme can be viewed or downloaded from the AONB's website, and a hard copy is available from tourism agencies and public libraries across the Island. The AONB took on this project after the Isle of Wight Council's Countryside Section was no longer able to continue to produce it.

Increasing Engagement with the Local Records Centre

Anne Marston, who for twenty years worked as Assistant Environmental Officer for the Isle of Wight Council, has been appointed Environmental Records Officer for the AONB. She is a long-standing member of IWNHAS and leads the Botany section. The AONB team will continue to work with Recorders and members of IWNHAS to update the ecological value of the Isle of Wight. They will co-ordinate training and other activities, such as iWatch Wildlife.

Biodiversity Action Plan Revision

The Isle of Wight Biodiversity Partnership (IWBP) meets regularly to discuss island-wide biodiversity issues. Biodiversity plans are referred to in the new Island Planning Strategy, but have not been updated since 2005. It is intended that the AONB, together with the Isle of Wight Records Centre, IWBP and IWNHAS Recorders, will update the plans, their targets, priorities and costed plans, as it is too expensive to employ a consultancy.

60% of wildlife species have declined since 1970. If new development would harm wildlife, it must be mitigated. Wildlife should gain from this.

Planning strategy will be adopted in 2020. A lot of legislation has changed and there will be far more after Brexit. "We need more financial support for biodiversity", says Richard. "We will be able to show that the Island's wildlife has declined less than on the mainland, demonstrating that development is the prime cause. The Island is therefore a good place for the Government to spend its resources. We have no major infrastructure projects: motorways, large airports, or large housing development."

Identify and Secure New Funding Streams

The Isle of Wight AONB's core budget is £147 000. However, its operational budget is £539 059. The difference is grant aid and other project funding, most of which is secure until December 2020. "With the Glover Review and the Comprehensive Spending Review, changes are coming for our work into the next decade", says Richard.

Questions from the Audience

Why was Parkhurst Forest left out of the AONB? Richard said that this was because the forest was owned by the Forestry Commission (FC), and in the 1950s it was therefore thought to be protected enough. The FC is a timber production organisation. Isle of Wight forests are uneconomic compared with forests on the mainland. The FC sells its crop to private companies. “The FC makes more money from letting buildings to the Wildlife Trust at its Bouldnor Nature Reserve than from timber”, says Richard. “Alternative uses of our forests could be tourism, such as eco-lodges”.

What is the future of the rare Reddish Buff moth on the Isle of Wight? In 1977, this moth, believed to be extinct on the Island, was rediscovered at Cranmore and its habitat has been managed by the Wildlife Trust. The problem is habitat pressure, but Richard is optimistic. “Although the Trust is not finding large numbers when they trap, there are no fewer of these moths now than there were decades ago so there is hope.” Disease and climate change could, however, impact adversely on them in the future.

In response to a question, Richard gave some advice to IWNHAS on how to grow its new recording initiative, iWatch Wildlife. Our Society could apply for grant aid and increase its revenues. “You would do well to speculate to accumulate, through match-funding”, he told our President, Paul Bingham. “Of course, IWNHAS is much more community-based than conservation oriented”, he added. We may have little experience in applying for funding, but we could learn.

We thanked Richard for a most informative and well delivered talk. Having had many years’ experience managing nature reserves on the Isle of Wight, he has the knowledge and expertise to organise the projects outlined above.

I very much hope that the AONB team’s initiative and hard work will be rewarded in June 2019 with UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status for the whole Island. This would also recognise the dedication of a large number and variety of local voluntary organisations to our precious wildlife, landscape and heritage. This designation could raise the Island’s profile at an international level, help secure more grant aid and government funding for nature conservation, landscape and heritage projects, and encourage everyone to take pride in their extraordinary and beautiful Island.

Maggie Nelmes

Reports of Section Meetings

Looking at the Countryside

Wednesday 15th August

The Worsley Trail with Steve Hutt

Seven members met in Godshill car park, where the noticeboard lists the Worsley Trail and various offshoot paths – or did, now it only lists tourist-related business but no trail! (anguished note to Parish Council?) We crossed the busy Newport to Shanklin road passing behind the Griffin pub, into a steep wooded valley, once part of the Worsley estate. Here be giants; mostly beech, oak and sweet chestnut, grown tall and impressive. We passed beneath a large rookery (not so many years ago there was an outcry when a pub served up Rook Pie – thankfully discontinued).

The topography got steeper and deeper, due to eroded soft Greensand and remnant of chalk. A signpost informed us we were now on the Stenbury Trail, once a much used

approach to Appledurcombe House, the grand neopalladian house of the Worsleys. This leads to the Freemantle Gate (why Freemantle?) a marvellous eighteenth century? based upon a classical Greek portico. It is the grand entrance to Appledurcombe, carved mostly in local Greensand rock, with fine detail in Portland stone?

We voted to turn right, skirting the stone boundary wall of Stenbury Down. Clambering to the top we sat on the monument to Sir Richard Worsley (1747); now much restored with granite blocks (surely not original) and concrete. The view all round is fantastic, the chalk cliffs of Culver in the east, Tennyson Down in the west. That chalk was once the mud of the sea floor!

Someone pointed out Whitecroft tower, once a psychiatric asylum (now renamed Gatcombe Manor). It reminded one of us that it used to be considered not a good idea to be standing at the 10A bus stop in Newport as people might believe you were on your way to the hospital! We added a loop to our return journey by passing through a gate of the old deer enclosure. A lovely day.

Thursday 4th October

Visit to Haseley Manor

Twelve members met at Haseley Manor, Arreton, at the kind invitation of Vivian & Anthony Roberts, to look around the nature reserve. We were shown the ancient stew pond containing carp, used by the monks when Quarr Abbey owned the whole of the Arreton valley, Haseley & Arreton manors included. Close by the main house were several buildings such as a granary from Afton that had been rescued & rebuilt by the previous owner. The nature reserve was created in 2001, soon after the Roberts moved in, on what was unused farmland, although a remnant of ancient woodland remained on the upper slopes, with hazel a food source for Red Squirrels, & possibly the largest Field Maple on the Island. Ponds were constructed, & over 6,000 native trees and shrubs planted. Sixty bird boxes & one hundred & twenty dormice boxes were put up. Haseley is one of the most important sites for dormice on the Island. Bird ringing courses are held several times a year, when over seventy rolled up nets crossing the many paths are utilized. Experts from as far away as Alderney, all volunteers, take part. This visit took place on a rather dull day, so there was little chance of seeing late butterflies or dragonflies, but there were Mallard & a Tufted Duck on one of the ponds, a Wood Mouse was spotted running up a tree, & both Green & Greater-Spotted Woodpecker were heard calling. There were a few late flowers of water mint, fleabane, thistle, willow herb, etc. Himalayan balsam is removed by Anthony on sight, & willow has to be kept in check, as it spreads rapidly. Alder leaf beetle, thought to have been extinct, had recently appeared on several alders & eaten many leaves. One specimen was found & photographed.

We moved on past the front of the manor house, to an enormous barn which would once have been thatched – possibly the largest on the Island? Slowworms were seen in an observation pit covered by a mat that was folded back, & it was noted that a nearby pile of sand was being used as a rabbit warren. We were invited into the house for coffee & cake, & a spirited discussion ranged from plastic, rubbish, recycling & the horrid habit that some people have of hanging plastic bags of dogs' mess in bushes and trees. Vivian & Anthony were thanked for a very interesting morning.

Thursday 6th December

Newport Walk

Fourteen members met at Newport Quay for a walk led by Mary Edmunds. Passing the Riverside Centre, we turned right through the tunnel which overlooks Coppins Bridge, where we admired the Peace Tree, a large Japanese cherry planted by IW CND to

commemorate Hiroshima. We then followed the old railway track, now a cycle path, through a second tunnel, with Broadlands House on our right. This had once been the Lace Factory, owned by a Mr Nunn. At Harvey Road, we paused to look at a tree that had a mass of small fruits earlier in the year, which no-one was able to identify. Here the railway would have carried on to Wootton & Ryde. We were opposite the cemetery, which is well worth a visit in Spring to see the orchids in the older part, & we could see the lodge at the entrance to Mountbatten Hospice, the site of what was once the Isolation Hospital. Following Harvey Road & winding through the Summerfields housing estate, we came to a stile into a field which took us up to New Fairlee Farm, known locally as Mews Farm, where there were sweeping views across Newport. The day was dull, & several members said they would like to return next year on a clear day. We walked down Mews Lane, & had further views past a large solar farm to the River Medina & beyond. Turning left, we rejoined the cycle track back towards Newport, crossing Fairlee Road to go through the Arboretum, once the site of Fairlee House. This is another site worth a longer visit to admire the variety of trees, some planted as a memorial to a loved one. We walked along the quay, passing Newport cemetery, another worth visiting with more time to look at some interesting graves & trees. Five more members joined us at the Quay Arts Centre for soup & a roll, & an IW quiz, which was won by Joan Probert & her son. Mary had brought several IW books which were passed round for general interest.

Mary Edmunds

Archaeology

Saturday 30th September

In the Beginning: Delian Backhouse-Fry

Delian's talk was designed to inform members new to archaeology about the early stages of the human timeline, but also to tell us all about recent developments and evidence. At least one new piece of evidence emerged whilst she was writing this talk and there will probably be even more after several of us attend the CBA Wessex conference in November. Delian also wanted to give a sense of the global sweep but also the relevance to the Isle of Wight.

The drivers of human existence include climate (linked to the earth's relationship with the solar system) and tectonic plate movement. Evidence for historic climate change is found in cores from ice and the sea bed.

We are familiar with the terminology of the ice ages and that they created periods known as 'glacial' and 'inter-glacial', but perhaps less aware of the terms 'stadial' and 'interstadial'. Examples of the former occurred in Tudor times when ice-fairs were held on the River Thames and in Victorian times when ice-skating was popular. There was a warmer interstadial in the Neolithic, when farming spread, and in Roman times, when grapes could be grown in Britain. Some of these climate changes can take place surprisingly quickly, within a few years. Think how suddenly changes in the gulf stream and the jet stream affect us today.

On successive occasions, as the ice retreated from Britain, species of human colonised the area, only to retreat as the ice moved south again. About 15,000 BP (before present) humans were moving North in Britain and left cave paintings at Creswell Crags in Derbyshire. 2000 years later they were retreating as a Stadial reduced the region to an icy, bleak tundra.

At this time, of course, Britain was part of the European continent, being separated by rising sea-levels about 10,000 years ago, and the Isle of Wight about 8,000.

About 900,000 years ago an earlier species of human left footprints in the mud that were recently exposed near Happisburgh in Norfolk.

Nearly 500,000 years ago Homo Heidelbergensis left stone axes that were found at Priory Bay.

Neanderthals visited several times as the ice retreated, leaving, for example, stone tools in the area where Asda now stands.

And it is the study of the Neanderthals that has been transformed by analysing their genome and is a good example of how modern science is transforming archaeology. Gone is the stereotype of the hairy brute. In Spain, markings made in red ochre on a cave wall have been dated to about 65,000 BP, long before Homo Sapiens arrived. If the Neanderthals made these their minds were more complex than the old stereotype suggests. Apart from some tentative suggestions no-one has interpreted them and it may be that their mindset was different from ours, but nonetheless advanced.

Progress in DNA analysis is so rapid that we now know that 'Cheddar Man' buried in a cave some 10,000 years ago had dark skin, curly hair and blue eyes. Was he representative of the people from whom the modern Brits descend? What evidence will come to light in the near future? We now know that there were several humanoid species co-existing on our planet, with only Homo Sapiens surviving into the modern era. Yet we are told that all of us descended from those groups who evolved outside Africa carry at least 2% Neanderthal DNA.

**Saturday 20th October Time Detectives – How the humans connected with the past:
Delian Backhouse-Fry**

'Last month we looked at the basic beginnings of our species, and what they were doing in Britain in the last half a million years. The other side of the equation, of course, being who was recording these events and trying to make sense of how we all got here. Enter The Archaeologist!'

Delian then quoted from Shelley's 'Ozymandias', a reminder of how we should learn from the evidence of those who came before us. Many people think that archaeology is just about looking at the past and don't recognise its connection to the present. Mortimer Wheeler, possibly the first archaeologist to use mass media and interest the general public, was clear that archaeology is about life and he brought the subject to life for thousands of people.

The study of the past in Britain perhaps began in the sixteenth century with the publication of Camden's Britannia and John Leland's travels around the country recording ancient sites. In the 17th century Aubrey carried out a survey of Stonehenge and Stukeley developed romantic ideas about the Druids. Robert Hooke was not only a pioneering scientist; he also recognised the value of stratigraphy in the study of the past. In the 18th century John Frere was the first to understand the significance of flint tools excavated at Hoxne but his work was not valued until long after his death. General Pitt Rivers, excavating on his land at Cranborne Chase in the 19th century, began to develop archaeological practice as we know it today. Throughout this time, archaeology was an upper-class pursuit and Delian's illustrations were notable for the range of hats worn!

In the 20th century Mortimer Wheeler was instrumental in developing the concept of a professional archaeologist as compared to the gentleman antiquarian. His work at Maiden Castle aroused considerable public interest. Through the early 20th century there is a roll call of famous names and sites, such as Gordon Childe (Skara Brae), Alexander Keiller (Avebury), Richard Atkinson (Silbury Hill), Graham Clark (Star Carr). Jacquetta Hawkes, who excavated Isle of Wight barrows with Mortimer Wheeler, also wrote ground-breaking books. Some think she was undervalued because she was a woman or because her ideas were ahead of her time.

The outbreak of the 2nd World War brought work to a halt, most notably at Sutton Hoo. After the war a new generation could benefit from television and the development of university departments. Mortimer Wheeler's 'Animal, Vegetable or Mineral' is still iconic and he was perhaps the first household name in archaeology; Barry Cunliffe was also well-known. There followed ground-breaking programmes, such as 'The Ascent of Man', 'Civilisation' and 'Time Team'. Science and technology began to assume a greater role – computer analysis, geophysics, statistics. The basic skills, however, have not changed – research, record, interpret.

Delian then looked at some of the women who played a role, often in challenging circumstances. Getrude Bell founded the British School of Archaeology in Baghdad; Freya Stark travelled and researched extensively in the Middle East; Gertrude Thompson recognised the significance of Great Zimbabwe; Mary Leakey's work in Africa transformed our understanding of early humans. Now women also feature on television with people such as Alice Roberts and Mary Beard.

What are the latest developments? Lidar and advances in DNA offer new opportunities. Sarah Parcak uses space technology; images from satellites reveal amazing detail of structures and features that are not visible on the ground. What does the future hold?

Saturday 17th November

Return of the Hunters: Delian Backhouse-Fry

Delian continued her illustrated history of early humans, making connections between international, British and Isle of Wight discoveries. About 12,000 years ago the global temperature began to rise, causing thawing in both the Southern and Northern hemispheres. Changes in the wind systems about 8/9 thousand years ago helped create a wetter and warmer climate. Delian described how the people of this Mesolithic era followed the grazing herds as they moved into lands where vegetation was taking hold. A whole ecosystem gradually developed as grasses, other plants and trees took hold, small mammals then larger ones plus waterfowl and other birds. This was the last of those migrations which had taken place during inter-glacials but this time there was no deteriorating climate to drive people south again. Britain was still connected to the mainland before the melting ice caused rising sea levels to flood the channel and Doggerland in the North Sea. Delian showed a picture of what the view from Brook Down might have looked like with hills, valleys, a meandering river and forests as far as one could see. Evidence for that landscape can still be seen at Brook beach.

Evidence of these hunter gatherers was found at Cheddar, with the skeleton of Cheddar man dating from about 10,000 years ago. Recent DNA analysis shows him to have been dark-skinned and blue eyed, comparable to remains found near the Black Sea. It is thought that the optimal group size was about 24 – 30. Modern day Britons share about 105 of their DNA with Cheddar man. Star Carr in Yorkshire is an exceptional occupation site that has taught us much about the daily life of people about 1000 years before Cheddar Man, including basket making.

We have our own nationally important Mesolithic site beneath the Solent at Bouldnor, where worked flints and timbers, pits of burnt flint and seed residues have provided insight into the technologies of the time, including the oldest string in Britain found by our own members. This site was flooded when the chalk between the Needles and Old Harry rocks near Swanage gave way. Intriguingly it was about the same time that the sea broke through the Dardanelles and flooded occupation sites. Was this the ancient memory that eventually provided the source for Noah's flood?

Helen Jackson

Microscopy

Saturday 24 November Talk and hands-on demonstration by Dr Steve Sweetman

Steve gave an illustrated talk on his pioneering work with microfossils from Isle of Wight 'Dinosaur deposits' (130 million years old), and more recently his work on material of a similar age from the mainland. This involved collecting suitable deposits, washing away the clay, and sieving out tiny teeth and bones (of the order of a couple of millimeters and less), unfortunately with considerable accompanying debris. The micro material had then to be sorted by hand under a stereo microscope. Both the processing of the bulk specimen and then the sorting under a microscope, are very time consuming.

Steve began his work on Isle of Wight material in the 1970s when he was still at school and introduced Richard Ford to its possibilities. (One day, when he has time, Steve may write about this for the Proceedings). Steve studied geology at Oxford but because of financial constraints was unable to undertake a PhD at that time and pursued a career in the oil industry.

In 2001, Steve moved back to the Island. At a BBC event he showed microfossils he had sorted in the 1970s to academics from the University of Portsmouth. Following this they invited him to undertake a funded PhD which he completed in 2007. To date, Steve has processed over 4½ tons of deposit from the Island and discovered in excess of 60 species new to science. (The sorted microfossils included teeth and tiny bones of crocodiles, fish, lizards, salamanders and mammals, and in doing so Steve has become an expert in the anatomy of a wide range of Cretaceous creatures).

After refreshments, those attending were able to examine material that Steve had brought along using stereo microscopes. This included sorted material where Steve had picked out teeth and bones, some of which may be undescribed new species. Steve also provided sieved material that had not been sorted. Participants were able to experience how much sieved sample had to be sorted in order to find one tooth/bone and how difficult it can be differentiating 'finds' from debris.

At the start of the meeting, Steve explained that he had been busy in preceding days making an item for a BBC Countryfile programme. Since then, this has been televised showing Steve on the beach at Brook with fossils he had found and dinosaur footprint casts. He was then shown collecting plant debris material and with sorted micro teeth and bones that he later showed at the microscopical meeting. The programme brought home how fortunate IWNHAS members had been in hearing Steve and being able to view the teeth and bones first hand under microscopes. Steve was thanked for all the preparation he had made and for giving up a Saturday afternoon.

Paul Bingham

Botany

Saturday 21st July Sandown Meadows

On an extremely hot afternoon, the group assembled along Perowne Way and walked along a footpath into this Wildlife Trust reserve. Our immediate interest was captured by the ditch vegetation where we found water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*) and both branched and unbranched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum* and *Sparganium emersum*).

In the adjacent meadow, we looked at marsh ragwort (*Senecio aquaticus*) to appreciate the features which make it distinguishable from common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)—principally the large lobe at the end of the leaf and the larger ray florets on the flower.

We were very grateful that the Reserves manager had arranged for a path to be cut through a reedbed into an area of fen where there are a number of rarer species. We were pleased to find tubular water dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*) at what is possibly its last remaining Island site, cyperus sedge (*Carex pseudocyperus*), ragged robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*) and marsh pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), among others.

August

Wood calamint monitoring

Members of the group met on site to monitor both the translocation plots and the laybys at various dates in August. The plant continues to flower well along the roadside in the main lay-bys although increasing competition from the strongly growing hemp agrimony, dewberry, hogweed and burdock is beginning to make recording more difficult.

Translocation plots have been set out in various parts of the wood. The most recent one, planted in March of this year has established and flowered extremely well. We have generally observed good establishment in the first year whenever new plots have been set out. However last year's planting has now been completely overgrown by coarse vegetation. It is possible that there are plants surviving, but they could not be found.

Flowering on other plots (set out between 2014 and 2016) continues to occur where the ground remains relatively free of competing vegetation (whether low growing bramble or regenerating hazel coppice).

Saturday 8th September

Headon Warren

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) is currently engaged in survey work to produce updated plant distribution maps for Atlas 2020. Previously records have been reported at a hectad (10km x 10km) or tetrad (2km x 2km) scale, but the new atlas aims to have as much data as possible at the monad (1km x 1km) level of recording. All our survey work is contributing to this project but our meeting on Headon Warren was specifically aimed at monad recording. This site covers four 1km grid squares (SZ3085, SZ3086, SZ3185 and SZ3196) and the majority of records for this site are currently attributed to SZ3085. We divided into two groups and with the assistance of map reading and GPS, we obtained records from SZ3185 and SZ3186. Once the two groups were sufficiently separated, recording went relatively smoothly!

The final lists for the squares were largely similar with ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), the more uncommon dwarf gorse (*Ulex minor*) bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and wood sage throughout. Umbellate hawkweed (*Hieracium umbellatum*) a relatively uncommon plant was also found in both squares. However, SZ3185 had fewer species in total, possibly as a result of the conditions here being harsher as it is more exposed to the prevailing south-westerly winds.

Saturday 15th September

Dicksons Copse

Our annual meeting to look for galls, leaf miners and micro-fungi in Dicksons Copse Local Nature Reserve gave us the opportunity to appreciate all the access and interpretation improvement works which have been undertaken by Island 2000 Trust as part of the Dodnor

Rediscovered project. Scrub has been cut back, path surfaces improved, and signage and route markers installed.

As ever, we were challenged to see if we could improve the species tally for the site, which we did quite comfortably by the end of the meeting. Of the 23 galls recorded, one was new for the site, the Artichoke gall caused by the gall wasp *Andricus fecundatrix* on the buds of English oak (*Quercus robur*). Leaf miner species also numbered 23 in total, of which 9 were new, and we found 14 micro-fungi of which two were new.

Anne Marston

Ornithology

Saturday 25th August

Blackgang

Five of us met at Blackgang Viewpoint on a sunny clear day with a slight wind. As some of the members had difficulty walking, we decided to walk along the cliff and back and not do the inland path.

The following birds were seen or heard: Magpie, Swallow, Herring Gull, Jackdaw, Black-headed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Carrion Crow, Buzzard, Kestrel, Feral Pigeon, Raven, Stonechat, Wren & Blackbird. There were quite a few Common Blue Butterflies and 1 Speckled Wood.

Toni Goodley

Sunday 16th September

Ventnor Downs

There were six members for our walk on Ventnor downs on a sunny but blustery morning. The usual casual route along the footpaths was taken. A few migrants were seen with Swallows, House Martins and Meadow Pipits noted. A male Stonechat was seen as were another three female/immatures. A Buzzard and four Kestrels were also seen flying. A Great Spotted Woodpecker was heard calling from the woodland and we also noted Crow, Jackdaw, Robin, Magpie and Woodpigeon.

Jackie Hart

Saturday 6th October

Culver Down

Just four of us met on a very overcast morning with rain expected imminently. As there had been Ring Ouzels reported on Culver Down during the previous few days, we headed off smartly towards the most likely spots. However, we did not encounter any. We did see Swallows flying ready to depart and about 20 Meadow Pipits. We also had two Buzzard, a Kestrel and a Sparrowhawk. There was a male Stonechat, Pied Wagtail, Goldfinch, Dunnock, Robin, Jackdaw, Rook and Crow as well as a Blackbird, Great Tit and Herring Gulls. No sooner than we got near to the fort than the rain came down about three quarters of an hour later than forecast so we turned back.

Jackie Hart

Sunday 18th November

Newtown National Nature Reserve

Nine members met at the National Trust visitor centre car park for a walk on the reserve led by Nicky Falconar. It was a beautiful morning with bright sunshine although the

sun was low in the sky making bird watching at Causeway Lake rather difficult to begin with. Two Mistle Thrush made an appearance in the conifers near the car park, a good omen. The fields at Fleetlands Farm were peppered with Starling, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew and Lapwing and many Wigeon were on the mud at Causeway Lake. As we walked in the flower meadow, there were streams of Brent Geese flying by. We saw three Great Crested Grebe in Newtown River as well as some Cormorant and two Little Grebe. Three Red Breasted Merganser flew towards Main Marsh. We also saw at least four Grey Plover, a Turnstone and a few Oystercatcher. A flock of Golden Plover were beautifully lit up in the November sunshine on Main Marsh and three Canada Geese were seen. Another three Great Crested Grebe were spotted. From the main hide we saw 16 Teal and some were lucky enough to see a Kingfisher. In all 33 species were noted.

Jackie Hart

Sunday 2nd December

Yarmouth

Seven members met at the beginning of the cycle path in Thorley Road for a walk led by Toni Goodley to Barnfields. We were very fortunate as the threatened rain held off until towards the end of the walk. Our first stop was the flooded area on Rofford Marsh where we saw both Black-headed Gull and Herring Gull, Wigeon, Mallard, Shoveler, Teal, Moorhen and a Little Grebe. There were also 28 Canada Geese and a smart male Pintail. We noted four Cetti's Warbler singing; in fact they were very persistent. Claiming territory perhaps? A flock of some 30 Snipe rose from the reed beds on Roffords and flew off towards the west. There were also a couple of Black-tailed Godwit but by the time we arrived at the W Yar we saw a large flock of them feeding on the estuarine mud. Two female and a male pheasant were also lurking by the hedgerow at the back of the marsh. Along the cycle path were Blue Tit, Great Tit, Blackbird, Woodpigeon, Robin, Wren, Dunnock, House Sparrow and a Bullfinch was heard calling.

Along by and on the river were Cormorant, Redshank, Mute Swan, Great Black Backed Gull, Curlew, Dunlin and Oystercatcher. A flock of about 50 Lapwing were flying about. Brent Geese were on the river marsh and at Barnfields amongst the Wigeon and Teal was one Greenshank. In all 41 species were noted during the course of the morning. We ended up having a hot drink at 'Off the Rails'.

Jackie Hart

Entomology

Tuesday 10th July

Pan Mill Meadows

Five members met near the northern edge of the reserve, close to the bridge over the River Medina, on a sunny warm afternoon. This was a highly successful visit, helped by the favourable weather conditions. We began by searching the well vegetated bank on the north side of the road, where there were lots of bumblebees, in particular *Bombus lucorum* and smaller numbers of the tree bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*. Harlequin ladybirds and their larvae were also particularly common. Six butterfly species were found, with Meadow Brown and Small White the commonest species, and a male Chalkhill Blue which had strayed from its usual habitat. A Migrant Hawker was also observed. There were a number of new records for this site, including the Marble Gall and the Knopper Gall. Of particular interest was the discovery of a powdery mildew on meadowsweet, *Erysiphe ulmariae*. This is only the second known record for the Island. More striking still was the identification of a female alder-leaf beetle, *Agelastica alni*, a distinctive metallic blue beetle, with a slightly peach-orange stern,

which has extended its range rapidly in recent years. This is the first record that we are aware of for the Isle of Wight, but it is likely to become familiar in years to come, as it is easy to identify once located.

Blackcaps were heard, we had a very fine view of a Buzzard, and a family of Moorhen were making their way up the Medina.

Saturday 21st July

Golden Hill Fort

Six members met at the car park near the entrance to Golden Hill Fort, passed en route by guests heading off to a local wedding. Before the start of the meeting a member had brought along a fine example of a Wood Wasp or Horntail, found near his home in Totland, which we were able to admire. There had been light rain overnight, the first for nearly six weeks, and it may have helped to make the meeting more productive than it otherwise might have been. There were some areas which were surprisingly rich in flowering plants, especially the north outer embankment to the fort which was a mass of Melilot, Parsnip and Giant Willowherb, a most attractive combination. This may help to account for the good numbers of butterfly species seen here and on waste ground near the car-park, nine species in all, including Essex Skipper and Brown Argus. Common Blue and Gatekeeper were the commonest species. Ringlet and Red Admiral were also seen and there were at least 7 sightings of the migratory moth, the Silver-y.

The most distinctive species seen on this visit was a yellow and black hopper, *Evacanthus interruptus*, which was common on the parched grassland on the north-east side of the outer earthworks. The more familiar cuckoospit insect, *Philaenus spumarius*, was also common. Both Seven-spot and Harlequin Ladybirds were seen, and there was considerable interest in a fourth or fifth instar of the Tortoise Bug, and in a grass bug, *Stenodema laevigata*, both of which were new records for the site. Among the Orthoptera was a Long-winged Conehead, and a number of Meadow Grasshoppers.

Other species included Pheasant, Coal Tit, and a Green Woodpecker.

Tuesday 7th August

Whale Chine

Four members met on an afternoon which marked the end of a long hot spell of weather. Within five minutes a short sharp shower freshened the air, although temperatures rose again later despite extensive cloud cover at times.

In some years this is an excellent site for blues, but only one was seen during the course of our visit. A number of Meadow Browns were seen, and there were sightings of a Wall Brown, near the Whale Chine car park, and a single Grayling, a short way along the cliff path towards the coastguard cottages on Atherfield Point.

One of the highlights of the visit was the site of four Wasp Spider webs in grass behind the cliff-top, three of the webs being occupied. Two crickets were seen, a couple of Speckled Bush-crickets, and a single Long-winged Conehead.

The most significant discovery was the mine, on mugwort, of *Trypeta artemisiae*. This is a tephritid fly, a red data book (notable B) species, and was found near the car-park. Two striking galls were found, producing swollen stems on Creeping Thistle, *Urophora cardui*, and on Hawkweed, *Aulacidea hieracii*.

A number of birds added to the interest of the afternoon. Three Ravens were seen, and the raven's nest on the side of the chine was an impressive sight. Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and Buzzard were over the cliffs and on the cliff edge a single Wheatear. A couple of Sky-larks were seen, and a couple of Swallows were on the move.

Saturday 20th October

Alverstone

This was a pleasant sunny day. Members who attended worked together to identify a range of species. There were no outstanding species recorded. However, Large White, Speckled Wood and Red Admiral were seen, and a number of bees including the Common Carder Bee, *Bombus pascuorum*. A number of galls and mines were recorded, seven for diptera species, ten for Lepidoptera and a couple for Hymenoptera, including *Pontania proxima* on Crack Willow. Grey Willow provided evidence of four species, the galls created by two flies *Iteomyia capreae* and *Iteomyia major*, and the mines of a couple of moths *Phyllonorycter salicicolella* and *Stigmella salicis*.

Richard Smout

Advanced Notice

Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeological society

100TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

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

Venue: Riverside Centre, Newport, Isle of Wight

Saturday 4th April 2020

Please add this date in to your diaries. We are excited to have already some excellent speakers confirm their availability. A programme is being developed on the broad theme of ‘*Environmental Change on the Isle of Wight*’, which is fitting for our 100th anniversary as we reflect on the islands past, present and future landscape, seascape and species distribution. You will hear more about this in forthcoming months. We are also hoping to develop an associated schools programme leading up to the conference and there will be a poster exhibition.

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NEXT BULLETIN

Items for inclusion in the next Bulletin and Reports of Meetings for 1st January 2019 to 30th June 2019 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

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

Bulletin Editor: Colin Pope



Dr Steve Sweetman's recent appearance on BBC Countryfile. He led the Microscopy Meeting held at the Medina Valley Centre. Below: A sample of Cretaceous micro-fossils from which he has identified many new species.

