

Bulletin

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WELCOME, MR PRESIDENT, SIR!



We are delighted to welcome Matthew Chatfield as our new President. Here he is after our ‘AGM’ in October. Matthew will be known to many of you. He was, for many years, Parks & Countryside Manager for the Isle of Wight Council and he still works for the Council as Communications Officer. He also runs the design and media company, Pinkeye Graphics Ltd. and is the creator and editor of Naturenet, the internet’s go-to on-line resource for practical nature conservation and countryside management. Many of you will have met him as chair of our popular annual Recorder’s Conference.

Matthew joins us as President in these most unusual of years. We have struggled to hold a handful of meetings against a backdrop of ever-changing restrictions. Although the next few months look grim, with the role out of vaccines and improving spring weather we are hopeful that we can start to resume meetings sometime during the spring. To this end, we have moved our AGM to Saturday 8th May. You will also find a Programme of Meetings for the next six months with this distribution. We cannot of course guarantee that all these meetings will take place but, dependent upon guidelines at the time, we will try to run as many as possible. It will be particularly important that you book for any meetings you wish to attend and check whether any changes or conditions apply at the time. We will aim to keep up to date information on the web site. Please check, even if you do not normally visit our website.

In this bulletin, you can read about how enterprising the Archaeology Section have been in keeping in touch and holding meetings, where possible. There is also an account of an Ornithology meeting and autumnal fungal forays.

Hopefully, you will find something of interest in this Bulletin. Thank you to everyone who has contributed articles. We may have been constrained but nature has continued regardless and it is heartening to read of all the remarkable finds that Andy Butler has made in his Nature Diary and Iain Outlaw's discoveries when he challenged himself to find 2020 species in 2020.

We owe a particular debt of gratitude to those members who have kindly offered their help to ensure that our distributions are packaged and sent out to members. Many of you have kindly helped with this. Very many thanks also to Biltmore's for pulling out the stops and getting our Bulletin printed.

Below: Packaging August's Society distribution at Haseley Manor wedding barn socially distanced, of course!!



Editor

The 'Street' Place-Names of the Isle of Wight: Roman Roads?

There are various place-names in rural areas on the Isle of Wight which include the word 'street'. Examples include Arreton Street, Rew Street and Thorley Street. These can be divided into two categories, dependent on when the names were first formulated. Firstly, there are 'street' names which were first recorded in the medieval period. Rew Street is one of these. It was first documented as *Rewestret* in the fourteenth century (Mills 1996, 87). Another instance is Havenstreet, which was *Hethenestrete* in 1255, which was either 'street running through heathland' or 'the street (of houses) belonging to the man called le

Hethene’ (Mills 1996, 57-8). Street Place (to the east of Newbridge) is the third instance. This was *terra de Strete* in the twelfth century (Kökeritz 1940, 84). A less familiar place-name is *Stretley*, which since the thirteenth century has been known as Newtown (Beresford 1967, 445). The second type of ‘street’ place-names was not recorded until after the medieval period. To the examples of Arreton Street and Thorley Street, we can add Appuldurcombe Street, Bembridge Street, Chale Street, Chillerton Street, and Whippingham Street, to the north of Alverstone Farm. These ‘street’ names can be found on the unpublished six-inch survey of 1793 and/or the first edition of the one-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1810 (Vicky Basford email 6/9/20).

Arreton Street, Thorley Street and Yaverland Street reflect the relocation of settlement along through routes from medieval church and manor sites. The older, medieval ‘street’ names of England have been studied by Ann Cole. She concluded that ‘[Old English] *Stræt* was used of Roman roads; the Anglo-Saxons would associate a name incorporating this element with a direct and generally straight road and one which was (or had been) well constructed with a firm surface of stones and gravel laid on a raised bank or agger’ (Cole 2013, 24). A fine example of such a place-name on a Roman road is to be found on Ermine Street, now the A15, to the north of Lincoln: Spital in the Street. The first part of this name does not represent some historic reprehensible personal habit but refers to a medieval hospital! This was *apud Hospitale super Stratum* in 1281 and *Spytelothetrete* in 1295 (Cameron 1998, 115).

No archaeological evidence of constructed Roman roads has yet been found on the Island, but the association of modern roads with *stræt* place-names recorded in the medieval period raises this possibility. Rew Street was claimed as a Roman road by the Reverend Edmund Kell in his report on the excavations at the Romano-British building now lost to erosion on the coast to the west of Gurnard Luck. He regarded this site as the ‘termination of the ancient British and Roman road called “Rue-street”’ and continued: ‘This road, under various names, proceeds in a direct line through the Island to Niton and Puckaster Cove’ (Kell 1866, 351). Kell postulated that Cornish tin was unloaded at Gurnard Bay, and was then taken across the Island to a market at Niton before being exported to Gaul (Kell 1866, 357). We can dismiss Kell’s hypothesis of Cornish tin being carried across the Island, as well as his identification of Puckaster as a Roman place-name (Kell 1866, 366). Rather than being a corruption of *Port Castra*, Puckaster probably means ‘the rock or rocky hill haunted by a goblin’ (Mills 1996, 84). The identification of Rew Street as a Roman road however does deserve more consideration in the light of the place-name evidence and its termination at a proven Roman building, along with the other medieval ‘street’ names.

A study by the present author assessed the evidence for the Island road network as depicted on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map of 1810 reflecting the roads and tracks in the eleventh century. This concluded that generally this map can largely stand proxy for a late Anglo-Saxon road system although inevitably there were changes (Margham 2016). Whilst it cannot be proven, it is plausible to suggest that at least some of the through routes depicted on the Ordnance Survey first edition map were in existence early in the first millennium. The number of Romano-British villas on the Island would also suggest the existence of several roads during this period. The question is, however, ‘whether they were Iron Age or earlier tracks pressed into service or were some constructed by the Romans?’ (Ann Cole, email 20/9/20).

Rew Street runs southwards from a location adjoining the site of the Roman building on Gurnard Bay for a distance of 1.3 miles to Hillis Corner and continues on a similar alignment for 600 yards to a point where the road veers off to the south-east. The 1793 six-inch survey shows a track continuing southwards from this point, entering Parkhurst Forest at Marks Corner. It is the south-eastern fork however that passed through the forest, although not in a straight line, then leaving the forest at St Austin’s Gate, now known as Gunville. This route then carried on to Carisbrooke, as it does in the modern landscape. This route may very well have existed in the Romano-British period, but there is a problem of equating the place-name Rew Street with a constructed Roman road. This and other ‘street’ place-names do not have *stræt* as a qualifying element (such as Spital in the Street) or are not simplex names (such as Street in Somerset), which were the place-names studied by Ann Cole. It is ‘unlikely that the medieval street names in the form of ‘x street’ ... refer to roads constructed by the Romans as such roads do not bear names in that form’ (Ann Cole email 20/9/20). This would also apply to Havenstreet, on a through route from the north-east coast of the Island, a road which would have crossed the Medina at *Durneford*, now Coppins Bridge.

There is a possibility that two of the Island’s medieval ‘street’ names, Street Place and *Stretley*, do relate to Roman roads (Ann Cole email 20/9/20). Street Place is 300 yards north of Quarry Lane. This lane,

and its continuation to Five Houses, is straight for a length of 0.8 mile. It would appear to have been part of a route westwards from Carisbrooke passing Alvington Manor, through Great Park and Five Houses, and continuing on through Newbridge and Wellow to Thorley. We cannot be certain regarding the location of the *stræt* in the Newtown area, but plausibly this was the road southwards from the estuary here past Fleetlands and on to Calbourne via Barton's Corner.

With the longevity of the Island's road system, some through routes went on to be named as 'streets' in the post medieval period, namely Arreton Street, Chale Street, Chillerton Street, Thorley Street and Yaverland Street. A tentative case can be made for the existence of two of our roads in the Roman period through reference to medieval 'street' names. Rew Street also remains a possibility, not due to its place-name, but through its termination at the Gurnard 'villa' site. However, any certainty in terms of the construction or the upgrading of roads in the Romano-British period in these locations and elsewhere will have to await future archaeological excavation.

I am grateful to Vicky Basford and Ann Cole for commenting on an earlier draft of the above.

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What's in a Name?

Hoary Stock, *Matthiola incana*

Matthiola plants were so named in honour of Italian physician and botanist Dr Pietro Andrea Grigorio Mattioli (1501-1577) who researched the possible use of Stocks for medicinal purposes.

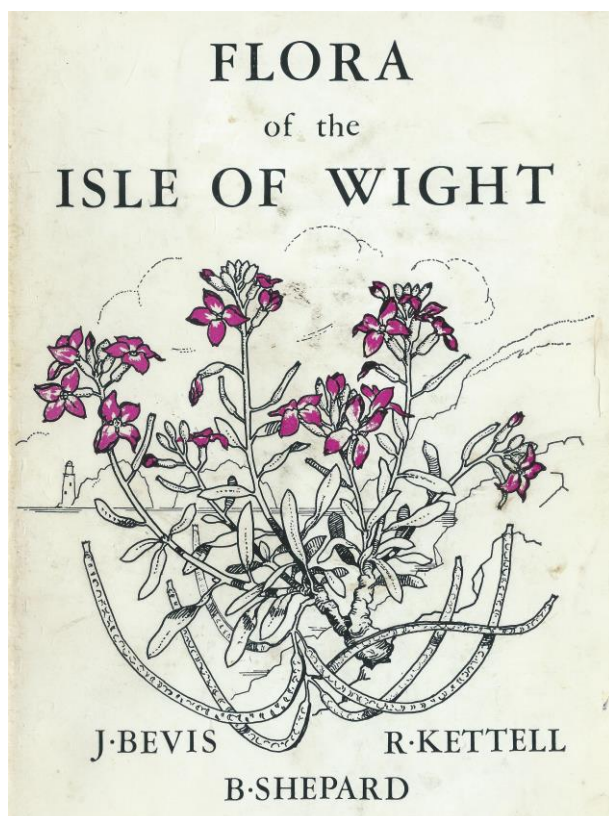
Incana/incanus is Latin for grey/becoming grey. Foliage of Stocks is covered in short hairs which give the plant a greyish-green or hoary appearance.

Many botanical field guides give the specific habitat for *Matthiola incana* as sea-cliffs on the Isle of Wight. A very attractive depiction of *Matthiola incana* adorns the front cover of the collectable book, 'Flora of the Isle of Wight' (1978) by Jim Bevis, Reg Kettell and Bill Shepard.

The English common name, Stock, is from the Old English word *stocc* (a stick) with reference to the woody base of the stem. Chambers Dictionary defines the noun Stock as a main stem or the perennial part of an herbaceous plant.

Wild Stocks are the origin of fragrant Stock cultivars grown in gardens or sold as cut flowers for the home.

Sue Blackwell



Left: Drawing of Hoary Stock by Pamela Freeman, botanical artist who retired to Bembridge and painted colour plates for Collin's Pocket Guide to Wildflowers (1956) at one time the most popular botanist's field guide.

Below: Wall butterfly on Hoary Stock on Steephill cliffs



Mount Joy cemetery, Carisbrooke: a butterfly summer.

As there was no prospect of group expeditions with IWNHAS and movement any great distance from home strongly discouraged this year, we began doing some systematic survey work in our local area. The spring weather was particularly beautiful, and summer too was on the whole favourable for butterflies.

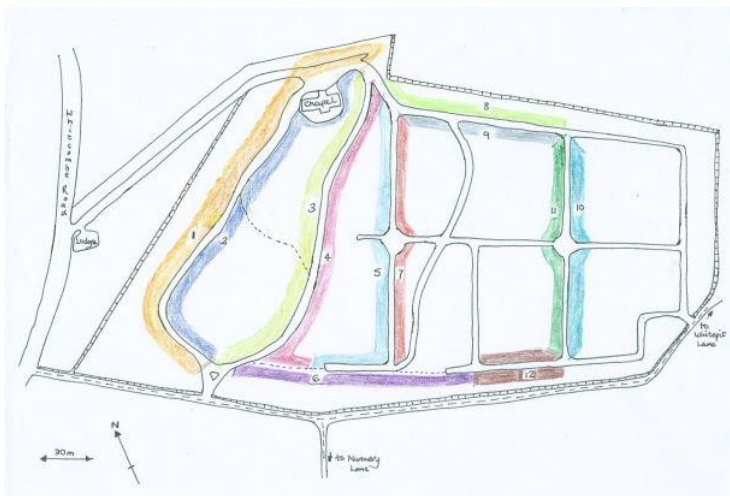
Carisbrooke Cemetery was first opened in 1858 and consisted of 5 acres (2 ha); a further 3 acres (1.2 ha) were added in 1894. It lies about a mile to the south-west of Newport town centre on a north-facing chalk slope. Approximately 200m north-south and 300m west-east, the site is bounded by stone walls, and a footpath connecting Whitepit Lane to Whitcombe Road runs to the south of the cemetery. High-quality chalk grassland is present on the site, with some planted shrubs and trees. A few small trees have grown from seed which has arrived by natural dispersal processes.

The western end of the site (approximately areas 1-6 on the map) was designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the Unitary Development Plan 2011 in recognition of its lowland calcareous grassland, a national priority habitat, and the presence of breeding populations of rare butterflies. The site is also important as a public open space. The site is noted for its display of cowslips in spring and it has populations of locally important species such as autumn lady's-tresses, and nationally important species such as the small blue butterfly. This part of the cemetery is unmown during the growing season and trimmed once in the year in late autumn. The eastern part, where the graves are generally newer, and burials still occur, is trimmed at intervals during the growing season.

Methodology

A fixed-route walk (transect) was established, and butterflies recorded along the route on a regular basis, following the guidelines of the [UK Butterfly monitoring survey](#). To ensure that the counts are standardised transects should be carried out under weather conditions that favour butterfly activity: the temperature should be above 13°C; between 13-17°C, the transect may be walked providing there is at least 60% sun; above 17°C, a transect may be walked in any conditions, providing it is not actually raining. When wind speeds are above 5 on the Beaufort scale, transects should not be walked. Butterflies were recorded in a fixed width band (5m wide) along the transect each week from the beginning of April until the end of September by two recorders. Transect walks were undertaken between 10.45am and 3.45pm and only when weather conditions were suitable.

The route was chosen to sample the habitat types and management activity on the site. The transect is about 1 km long and takes between 30 minutes and an hour to walk, depending on the number of butterflies on the wing. It is divided into twelve sections for ease of counting and reporting the observations (see map). The far eastern end of the cemetery was avoided in order to respect those visiting the graves. This fixed route will enable butterfly sightings to be compared should it be repeated in subsequent years.



Above: Map showing transect route

Below: Small Heath; Dingy Skipper; Wall Brown; Small Blue



Species observed in the cemetery

		Area of cemetery						total number of butterflies areas 1-6	Area of cemetery						total number of butterflies areas 7-12	total number of butterflies for cemetery
		1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12		
Brown Argus ^	<i>Aricia agestis</i>	*	*	*		*	*	9	*						1	10
Chalk Hill Blue ^	<i>Polyommatus coridon</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	292	*					*	8	300
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	276	*	*	*	*	*	*	23	299
Dark Green Fritillary ^	<i>Argynnis aglaja</i>		*			*		2								2
Dingy Skipper ^ #	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	*	*	*	*		*	26								26
Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	414	*	*	*			*	24	438
Green Hairstreak ^	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	*		*	*			12								12
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	48						*	2	50
Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes venata</i>	*	*					6								6
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	*	*	*	*		*	19	*	*		*			6	25
Marbled White	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	104	*				*		6	110
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	536	*	*	*	*	*	*	48	584
Orange-tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	*				*		2								2
Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>						*	2						*	1	3
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	*			*		*	4							1	5
Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>	*	*	*	*		*	16								16
Small Blue ^ #	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	25	*						2	27
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	26	*	*					3	29
Small Heath #	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	279	*	*	*	*	*	*	47	326
Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	*	*	*	*			9								9
Small tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>												*		1	1
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	*	*		*	*	*	14			*			*	3	17
Wall ^ #	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>			*	*		*	8						*	1	9
Total number of butterflies								2129							177	2306
Total number of species/area									10	6	5	4	5	9		

Species marked ^ are regarded as 'Scarcer species' by Butterfly Conservation (occurring in less than 100 tetrads in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight). Species marked # are national priorities for conservation (Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 Section 41. Species in **bold** are considered to be breeding on the site; the reasons for this assertion are given below.

Comments on the observations

Twenty-three species were recorded in total, out of the 39 species normally occurring on the Isle of Wight. Butterfly Conservation considers there are 46 breeding species in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and has divided this list into 23 'commoner species', of which the study observed 16 in the cemetery, and 23 'scarcer species', of which seven were present.

Three species, common blue, meadow brown and small heath were found throughout the site, though in much greater numbers in the more favourable feeding and breeding areas. The results show that western end support greater numbers and a greater variety of species compared to the eastern end. This is to be expected, as the areas left uncut provide both food sources and shelter for different stages of the butterfly life cycle. The botanical

quality of the grassland may also be higher in the western end of the site and this would be worth investigating further.

Plants in flower provide nectar for the adult butterflies: for example, marjoram, vetches, knapweeds (particularly attractive to marbled whites), and ivy late in the season. Caterpillars of each species have precise requirements for food plants. If plants of the appropriate species are not present, the adults cannot lay eggs: for example, brown argus butterflies require common rock-rose plants, and both are present in the cemetery. Plants also provide shelter, for roosting overnight and during inclement weather.

Butterflies seen in the eastern part of the cemetery were mostly in the sections which are adjacent to the uncut areas, suggesting that the butterflies are blown short distances here by the wind. If there are flowers here, they will use them as nectar sources.

Looking at the numbers of butterflies recorded, and considering their usual relatively limited territorial and flight range, it is likely that the following species are breeding on the site: brown argus, chalk hill blue, common blue, dingy skipper, gatekeeper, green hairstreak, holly blue, large skipper, marbled white, meadow brown, ringlet, small blue, small copper, small heath, small skipper, wall. Singles of dark green fritillary were recorded on two occasions, from the western half, so the species may be breeding. Further evidence of breeding would come from searching for eggs, caterpillars or plants with characteristic caterpillar feeding damage.

The remainder of the species recorded may have moved in from surrounding areas to find nectar, rather than being breeding species. Small tortoiseshell, peacock, red admiral, orange tip all had occurrences of their caterpillar food plants at the extreme south-east corner of the site and along the footpaths to the south. Large and small whites range widely in their search for nectar and their caterpillar food plants were not present in the cemetery or nearby.

Keith & Anne Marston

My Species Recording Challenge for 2020

Over the course of 2019, I recorded 1026 species on the Isle of Wight. I considered this to be a reasonable tally without making too much effort but surely it would be possible to do better? As the year came to a close, I wondered how I might challenge myself and decided on trying to record 2020 species on the Island in 2020. Any species would count, be it flora or fauna. This is the concept of Pan-species Listing that some may be familiar with.

From the outset, it was my hope that the records generated be completely reliable, no misidentifications, no uncertainty. There weren't going to be any issues for me identifying birds or moths but almost everything else would require at least some study. Botany, a particular Achilles' heel of mine, would need a lot of work to say nothing of bryophytes, fungi or...well the list of things I've never looked at before is quite long. Anyway, it would incentivise me into getting out and about and provide the opportunity for me to learn more about the wonderful wildlife we have here. Most importantly it had to be fun. I would try to record something each day and report my progress each week on my Facebook page. This is how it went.

January to March

Of course, it began with the traditional New Year's Day bird count which got the challenge off to a good start but with a few plant, mammal and moth species too. With seemingly relentless rain in January and February, my moth traps didn't get much use but I spent a lot of time wandering around woodland at night, turning over logs and looking under bark. This no doubt made for quite a sight but it proved to be very productive, particularly for spiders and beetles. With the right field guides and some excellent online resources, it has been possible to identify almost all of the finds. Many, like the spider *Lepthyphantes minutus* from Sibden Hill and the carabid beetle *Ocys tachysoides* from Shanklin Manor, are species I'd

never seen before. The latter was a new species for the Island. Day trips turned up some great plants including Portland Spurge at West High Down and Toothwort at Eaglehead Copse.

One thing I had never tried before was rockpooling and that has been a revelation. The diversity of our coastline is incredible. The majority of species were recorded at the rockpools but I did collect a few samples to examine more closely. A piece of Coral Weed under the microscope was full of marine isopods like *Dynamene bidentata* and *Idotea neglecta* and as I watched some of the seaweed moved. In fact, it climbed out of the petri dish! It was a bizarre crab *Pisa nodipes*, that disguises itself with seaweed.

Warmer weather in March boosted recording opportunities and the pace picked up. A very enjoyable morning at Mottistone Down provided fabulous views of an Adder along with Black Oil-beetle and Minotaur Beetle. Then suddenly everything changed. For weeks the news had been dominated by COVID19 and on 23 March we went into lockdown just as St. Catherine's Point sea watching beckoned. A few hardy souls went anyway but for me in the final fortnight of March, wildlife recording was exclusively from the garden. It was galling missing out on the spring seabird passage but thankfully activity at the moth traps was good, keeping the challenge on track and continuing to provide some new species for the garden list like a fabulous Water Carpet. By the end of March, I had recorded 516 species, 25.5% of my target so bang on schedule.



Left: *Ocys tachysoides*, a first record for the Island. **Right:** A Minotaur Beetle on Mottistone Down, one of several reported this spring.

April to June

Even as restrictions eased, access to some areas was still not possible and my invertebrate collecting permits were suspended. The reasons were completely understandable but it cost me a number of species that would otherwise have been expected. This is the only year that I haven't recorded Great Prominent or Clouded Magpie and it was June before I regained access to Parkhurst Forest after submitting a revised risk assessment to Forestry England. But with the warmer weather of spring comes the flush of new growth, the dawn chorus and the arrival of migrant birds making this my favourite time of year. There is always something new to see so, despite lockdown my challenge progressed well. I tape recorded a Nightingale singing at Sandown golf course, if anything could lift the spirits it was that. It was the first of a run of brilliant birds during a spring that saw two Blyth's Reed Warblers, a Savi's Warbler and a long-staying Marsh Warbler. The Marsh Warbler with another fabulous song full of mimicry. A night-time visit to Brading Marsh added Spotted Crake, its call reminiscent of a dripping tap.

The garden moth traps were particularly productive adding 72 species in April, 84 species in May and 133 species in June. There were lots of fabulous moths but it was particularly good to see three species

new for the Isle of Wight with *Paracrania chrysolepidella* on 02 April and both Rose Plume and *Epinotia nanana* on 24 June. At the end of May I was able to resume moth trapping at Haseley Manor quickly adding 20 species to the year list and at the end of June received permission to trap at Parkhurst Forest again. That added a further 14 species including Orange Moth, Satin Beauty and Pale Oak Beauty.

Of course, many other insects are attracted to the moth traps and the by-catch proved to be interesting too. Beetles included *Agonum muelleri*, *Amara aenea* and *Malthodes marginatus* and *Soronia grisea*; the last of those was the 1300th species for my garden since I started recording in 2012. The leafhopper *Eupteryx vittata* trapped at Haseley Manor was a new species for the county.

Making the most of my permitted daily exercise was essential. Photographing plants wherever I went added more than 200 species to the year list, Viper's Bugloss, Yarrow Broomrape, Field Cow-wheat, Crimson Clover and Wild Liquorice amongst my favourites. I tried not to neglect other insects by photographing them wherever possible but always carrying a sweep net, a pooter and collecting pots for those that couldn't be identified in the field.

I know Facebook has its detractors but it is brilliant for sharing wildlife sightings and helping with identification through the many specialist group pages. Following up on one post I was able to see the scarce beetle *Clytra quadripunctata* at a wood ant nest in Firestone Copse. The larvae of this beetle feed on plant debris within ant nests. So many fabulous insects were recorded but it was particularly pleasing to see Red-tipped Clearwing at three locations and Six-belted Clearwing at Wheelers Bay. These moths would have been very difficult to see without the aid of pheromone lures.

At the end of June, the challenge total was 1436 species.

July to September

July is normally the best month for moths with a peak in numbers and species diversity but this year the first week of August was particularly good, on one night recording 203 moth species between two sites, highlights being *Pyrausta cingulata*, Fern, Vestal and Crescent Dart. Not wanting to miss out on anything, I also twitched Plumed Fan-foot, then Beautiful Marbled, *Ethmia quadrillella* and the Island's first *Metalampra italica*. I subsequently trapped all but the last one for myself but my favourite insect of the year was an Ant-lion trapped and twitched in Bonchurch.

Having not done any planning for this challenge I just headed out wherever the notion took me. Thankfully, wherever it was, there was always something new to see. At Newtown meadows there were good numbers of *Coleophora vibicella* larval cases on Dyer's Greenweed. A few larval cases were collected to breed through but they were parasitised. Three cases produced 51 wasps, *Copidosoma peticus*, the first record of this species for the Island. Only one case was unaffected with the adult moth emerging on 29 July.

Searching Tamarisk at Newtown NNR produced the leafhopper, *Opsius stactogalus*, the mirid *Tuponia brevirostris* and the larvae of Channel Islands Pug at Bembridge Lagoons, and at Ryde Canoe Lake a scale insect that was identified as *Icerya purchasi*, an Australian species established in parts of London but previously unknown on the Island.

Ventnor Botanic Garden is a great place for wildlife, not only for our native species but also for several that have been accidentally introduced. We're all familiar with the beautiful Wall Lizards but look a little closer and you might find the millipede *Cylindroiulus appeninorum* or the Mediterranean ant *Tapinoma ibericum*. On one visit I found alates so this ant may well turn up elsewhere along the undercliff.

Lots of plants were added to the list too: Martin's Ramping-fumitory and Wood Calamint topping the list but help was gratefully accepted in finding Autumn Squill, Autumn Lady's-tresses, Green Amaranth and many others. It was quite an adventure finding Sea Spleenwort, which is found on just one hidden

outcrop at Rocken End. I couldn't have done it without help but it was worth it and the spleenwort is thriving.

Then there's all the passage migrants; Osprey, Tree Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, Whinchat, and Grasshopper Warbler coming through with Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher and thousands of hirundines. An unexpected bonus was a fantastic juvenile Pallid Harrier at Brading RSPB followed by another bonus when a Richard's Pipit flew over our garden. By the end of September the total was 1991 species, just 29 to go.



Left: Australian Fluted Scale Insect, *Iceerya purchasi*, new to the Island. **Right:** Sea Spleenwort at St Catherine's, Point, its only Island location

October to December

October started off with storm Alex but once that had blown through it was back to recording and the first of two short trips was to St. Catherine's Point where there was a small patch of Galingale in flower at Castlehaven, the only remaining native site for this sedge on the Island.

After seeing six Ring Ouzel on Bembridge Down, a second visit was made to St. Catherine's Point, this time in the hope of finding a Yellow-browed Warbler (without success) but there was naturalised Montbretia growing along the Old Blackgang Road. Stopping at Pelham Wood on my way home more naturalised plants included Himalayan Honeysuckle and *Echium pininana*. After those I needed just one more species to reach my target. There were leaf mines in the Himalayan Honeysuckle so I collected some and found them to be *Phyllonorycter emberizaepenella*. That was a lifer and was my 2020th species for the year. Time to celebrate with a few glasses of Laphroaig.

Of course, I didn't stop recording and wanted to get enough extra species so that having naturalised plants and a few aggregate plants on the list didn't matter. A moth trapping session at Parkhurst Forest to look for Figure of Eight was unsuccessful but it was great for fungi including Rosy Bonnet, Clustered Bonnet, Porcelain Fungus and Wood Blewit. Later, I was delighted to join fungus forays at Parkhurst and Lake Cemetery that added many more species.

The garden moth traps continued to produce new species including Feathered Thorn, Deep-brown Dart, Yellow-lined Quaker and Oak Rustic and in Bonchurch I twitched a few more adding Bloxworth Snout and Dewick's Plusia to the tally.

Now well past my target and with a new puppy at home it was time to slow down with just the occasional recording session. A trip to Ryde Pier at low tide added 14 more species including Leathery Sea-

squirt, Sting Winkle, Slipper Limpet and Green-leaf Worm. Then another trip to Ventnor Botanic Garden and the chance to catch up with a good friend combined with looking for more non-native species. It was a very successful afternoon with Eucalyptus Gall Wasp, Blue Gum Psyllid, the flatworm *Kontikia ventrolineata* and a fantastic bristletail that is presumed to be *Atelura formicaria*.



Left: Nationally scarce Rose Plume moth, new to the Island. **Right:** A Blue Gum Psyllid, *Ctenarytaina eucalypti*, at Ventnor Botanic Garden, new to the Island.

With two weeks left in December my challenge total is 2182 species, of those 1830 have been photographed. There were moments when I thought it would not be possible but my target was reached on 16 October and it feels as though I barely scratched the surface of what the Island has to offer. There are some records still to check with the LRC but it is likely that more than 20 species have been recorded for the first time on the Island. We are blessed with a fabulous array of native flora and fauna and a generally benign climate allowing some extraordinary adventive species to flourish. This has been a thoroughly enjoyable and uplifting project in what has been an otherwise difficult year. The healing power of nature cannot be overstated and I encourage everyone to make the most of the wonders we have on the doorstep.

I am immensely grateful to everyone who helped and encouraged me along the way. In particular my thanks to James Halsey, Anthony and Vivian Roberts, Andy Butler, Pete Campbell, Stephen Plummer, Colin Pope, Alan Brown, Ian Boyd and Tina Whitmore.

Iain Outlaw

Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*) on the Isle of Wight

Continuing the theme started in the previous Bulletin of items recovered from the Solent whilst fishing for oysters, an interesting find was this Wild Boar tusk. It came up from the shallow water off Wootton Woodside just to the west of the entrance to Fishbourne and quite close in.

The Solent was formed about 8,000 years ago as rising sea levels cut off Britain from the Continent, filled in the Solent River system and thus created the Isle of Wight. It would have been a gradual process which is still ongoing today as coastal erosion widens the boundaries in some places whilst slippage and silt deposits narrow it. Before all this happened the land area between the Island and what is now Hampshire would have been accessible to early humans. There is evidence of this going back to at least 250,000 years ago. Due to the presence of the main Solent River and the numerous tributaries that drained into it there were probably large tracts of marshland present and also areas of woodland, possibly Lime *Tillia sp*, Pine *Pinus sp*, Oak *Quercus sp* and Willow *Salix sp* in the wetter areas. Britain as a whole was thought to be extensively wooded and thus ideal habitat for wild boar.

Fossil evidence indicates that wild boar originated in South-East Asia in the Early Pleistocene, 600,000 to 450,000 years ago, and then spread west to eventually reach our shores. Like everything else they would

have retreated south during the severe ice ages (or died) and then recolonised in the inter-glacials. They would almost certainly have been here in that strange period known as the Ipswichian Inter-glacial when from about 130,000 to 115,000 years ago, the climate was benign and many species flourished but humans were mysteriously absent. Wild Boar feature repeatedly in the cave art of early man so may have been relatively common at that time. They are also a very successful animal and have gone on to be one of the most widespread mammal species on Earth; with human introductions they are present and flourishing on all continents. They are, of course, the ancestors of the domestic or farm pig.



The Fishbourne tusk is a bit of an enigma, mainly because of where it was found. Also recovered from the same shallow site was a small number of Iron Age pot sherds (identified by the I.W. County Archaeologist). The Iron Age is dated to about 800BC to 43AD so sometime in that timespan, probably early on, that particular area was dry land with Iron Age people either living there in a permanent settlement or travelling over it. The Solent by then would have most likely been an impassable barrier to many animals but Wild Boar were, and are to this day, very competent swimmers. The age of this particular tusk is unknown but in the Mesolithic era, 11,000 to 5,500 years ago, before the Solent had been formed, Wild Boar were thought to be fairly numerous in Britain and also thought to be a smaller animal than those found on the Continent at that time. The average size of a tusk from an adult animal today is about 7 inches, measured round the outside curve, which is more or less the size of this one which would make it from a mature adult. Therefore, one possibility is that the tusk came from an animal roaming what became the Solent area at the early stages of the Mesolithic, say 8,000 to 10,000 years ago, so how did it end up in the shallows off Wotton / Woodside? One obvious question to consider is, is it as old as thought? It may be from a relatively modern domesticated animal that was perhaps butchered locally and the remains dumped in the sea as everything was years ago or thrown overboard from a ship moored nearby and the remains drifted inshore. Although it has to be said that it looks and feels old, especially when compared with the Newtown hippo tusk (see last bulletin). It would be nice to think that our Iron Age ancestors living at Fishbourne dined one day off a genuine Isle of Wight wild boar but as these animals were long gone from the Island by then this is

most unlikely. What is much more likely is that this tusk is from a domesticated pig which would, in effect, have been a tamed wild boar. Wild pigs were first tamed in the Near East in about 13,000-12,700 BC and subsequently across Europe. The interaction between these Eastern tame pigs and the European wild pigs is poorly understood but what is known is that Neolithic farmers were the first to have domesticated swine of some sort or other and in good numbers. Iron Age farmers were no different and the pig was one of their staple food sources. So, back to Fishbourne and odds on that this tusk is from that era, which makes it about 2,000 years old and possible evidence of an Iron Age meal taken at the entrance to the river, that had remained there ever since until a large, heavy oyster dredge dumped it onto the sorting table at the back of a fishing boat.

Wild Boar died out on the Mainland by the 13th century but before that they had become a very rare beast. In 1087 William the Conqueror passed a law punishing by blinding anyone taking them as he was trying to preserve them for hunting by the nobility. An attempt was made by Charles 1st to reintroduce them to the New Forest, presumably with Continental stock, but this failed when they were exterminated in the English Civil War (1642-1651). Nowadays there are a number of semi wild populations in Britain that have come about from animals that have escaped from farms where boar are bred commercially. So far there are none in the Isle of Wight but it could happen. That would be interesting.

Andy Butler

A remarkable botanical find

Bohemia Bog, a tiny private acidic wetland site between Rookley and Godshill, is a botanical hotspot. It supports an incredibly rich flora of flowering plants, mosses and liverworts, many of them no longer found anywhere else on the Island. It is the last place on the Island to see plants such as Sundew, Bog Asphodel and a good range of Sphagnum mosses. The site first came to fame in 1908 when Fred Stratton found the insect-eating plant Pale Butterwort growing there. At the time, it had been lost from its two other Island sites; fortunately it still survives at Bohemia Bog. Post 1908 and particularly over the past fifty years the site has been thoroughly botanised. In recent years, conservation effort has been put in by Gift to Nature and the Wildlife Trust in an effort to arrest the spread of scrub, principally gorse bushes, across parts of the site. In 2018, a digger was brought in to uproot gorse bushes and create new scrapes around the edge of the site.

On 20th July, I visited Bohemia Bog with George Greiff to investigate how the flora had responded to the conservation work. I was kneeling down admiring a showy patch of pink-flowered Bog Pimpernel when, from the corner of my eye I became aware that some of the flowers were blue rather than pink in colour. Suddenly, I found myself staring at a flowering patch of Ivy-leaved Bellflower. I could not believe my eyes. Ivy-leaved Bellflower was last known on the Island from two herbarium sheets of plants collected by Rev. D.M.Heath from 'Godshill, near Ventnor' on 4th July 1918. Since then, generations of botanists have searched for it unsuccessfully. The delicate, trailing plant was assumed to have become extinct as sites were lost through drainage or became scrubbed over. The conservation work must have brought a long-lost seedbank to the surface.

It is strange that Ivy-leaved Bellflower has never specifically been recorded from Bohemia Bog. At the time of Fred Stratton's discovery of Pale Butterwort in 1908, the bellflower was still locally frequent in acidic wet spots around Bleak Down so it's occurrence at Bohemia Bog would not have been particularly noteworthy. However, it is remarkable that over the past fifty years it has never been noted. At a time when the British flora and fauna is under unprecedented pressure and decline it is heartening that one special plant has found its place back in our Island's flora.



Ivy-leaved Bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederifolia*) at Bohemia Bog

Colin Pope

How did Andy Yule become interested in tiny fossils?

In the last Bulletin, we reported on the remarkable fossil finds by Andy that have been recognised in his name ('Andy Yule's named specimens'). We asked Andy how he became interested in these obscure but fascinating micro-fossils and here is his account, in his own words.

Somewhen in the 1970s, I read a report in the Isle of Wight County Press that the fossilised feather of a small bird had been found in the world-famous insect beds at Thorness Bay. "What?" I said, "I'd been living at Thorness since 1951 and I'd never once heard of the world-famous beds". I paid a visit to the library where I was able to read tiny bits about the insect stone and Edwin J. A'Court Smith who discovered them. I did manage to find out a little more about Mr A'Court Smith, but I was a bit disappointed really. The man had lived in Gurnard in the 1860s. I had gone to school in Gurnard but no one ever mentioned Edwin Smith. I was a bit of a collector and had a crack at the insect stone late 70s and early 80s but my heart wasn't really in it. At the time I was finding turtle shell fragments at Thorness and Fishbourne. I even found one in Cowes while underpinning a house not far from Cowes Library. In the early 90s I was collecting and sieving some rich mud so I didn't get around to the insects until the mid 90s.

In April 1992, I was sent to an underpinning job in Solent View Road, Cowes. To be honest, I wasn't all that keen, it was a dirty job and a lot of hard work. However, when I arrived, I realised that it was the former home of Edwin Smith. I knew this from reading our Proceedings. David Motkin had written of Smith's discovery of a Roman villa at Gurnard and had told us of Smith's life story, with a photograph of him and his family (below). I was able to take a copy of the Proceedings for the present owners, Mr & Mrs Green.



Plate: Edwin Smith and family, c. 1880

In the mid 90s, I started once again to look at the insect stone. Whether it was because no one else had been collecting or I just struck lucky I don't know, but I started finding lots of insects. I recall an afternoon in August 1994 when I picked up a chunk of rock 5"x5"x7", dark grey over pale grey. I gave it a tap and cracked off a sliver of rock; it had an insect. I wrapped it up thinking "I don't want to lug this home". I fully cracked off another piece and on the newly exposed surface were insects. I repeated the sequence. I found eleven different insects in that one rock and I was hooked.

I kept collecting through the 1990s and on into 2000s. I just sort of had the knack. I kept finding amazing insects, spiders, feathers and plants. I doubt though that it's a skill, more luck. As an example, in 2003 I was working with a bricklayer and we built an extension for a family in Cowes. The daughter of the house, Jessi, seven or eight maybe, was off school with chickenpox, the spottiest kid I ever saw and I felt very sorry for her. I had given her a couple of crocodile teeth and promised her a fossil ant. When I got home, I looked through my boxes of fossils in search of a nice little ant fossil. I unwrapped a slab of insect stone which I had collected in 2001. I had split it on a bedding plane part and it was still half covered on potentially cut. I used a small chisel and gave it a light tap and lifted off the covering stone. Wow! I saw what looked to me like a moth that had been revealed, and besides the wing was a spider. I found Jess an ant and I took the moth to Dinosaur Isle to get its picture taken. The photo was sent to Andy Ross of NHM. He replied that it wasn't a moth but that he needed to see the specimen.

A year later, I was on a visit to NHM Festival of Fossils and I took the moth to Andy Ross. He told me that it was a lacewing, possibly new. I donated it to them. Andy Ross also told me that in late May 2005, a group of 30 scientists would be on the Isle of Wight to examine the insect limestone and, as a local collector, I was invited to join them. He would also be on the Island in November for a talk at Dinosaur Isle on November 13th, a Saturday.

I went along to the talk and on Sunday I met him and colleagues at Sticlets to look for fossil insects. We met up and walked to the shore across Thorness Bay. I discovered that they collect very differently from me. I hold a rock in my left hand and hit the rock with my hammer, occasionally my thumb, whereas they have hammer and bolster and place the rock on ground. Also, they were picking up practically every rock; I like to be selective. The first one I picked up and split had an insect, which I gave to A.R. I said, "Do they just hit any rock?" "Yes", they said. I like to pick the ones that look promising! I had one of those days where every piece I cracked had some fossil in it. One had a wing on. He went bananas for. It got cold and I went home. See you in May! And I climbed up the footpath and walked home.

2005 finally arrived. I was working in England, a pretty little village called Owslebury, just south of Winchester. I'd arranged to pack up on 20th May, ready for the week of collecting starting 22nd May. In early in April, I got called in for a cataract op, only for it to be cancelled until May. That was no good to me, so I put it off until June. The week began on 22nd May at 10.00am. There must have been 40 people, 35 scientists plus several members of the Geological Society of the Isle of Wight (GSIW). We set off down to Thorness Bay and across Sticeletts. The tide was fairly high. With 40 people on the strand and just four foot from the sea to the base of cliff, it was all a bit crowded! I decided to go home to my great niece's second birthday celebration.

On the Monday, I walked from Cowes to Gurnard and via the clifftop path to Thorness. They were planning on going to the shore of Burnt Wood, Elmsworth. When I arrived, Andy Ross tells me there has been a change of plan. "We're doing Gurnard today" and off we set walking over clifftop path to Gurnard. "Ah", I say, "the tide's high". "Yes, yes but by the time we get there it should be fine." We arrived at Gurnard and the sea was right up to the seawall. 33 scientists with nothing to do! "Ah", I say "I could show you the house where Edwin Smith lived". So, I marched them up to the brow of the hill and go to speak to Norman Green. He was well pleased and invited them in to look around the house. All those experts in various tribes of insects and plants! They had come from Russia, Poland, France, Germany, Spain and the UK. To all of them, Edwin Smith was a hero but in Gurnard, not so much. They all took photos of the cottage and they were all lined up outside for a group photo. After this, the tide was still high and I'm afraid I left to go home to Woodvale.

On Tuesday, 24th May, they intended to go to the shore of Elmsworth, Burntwood and Saltmead. It was not the best of days, cooler and raining. I suggested that we bus to Porchfield and walk the footpath to shore. "No, no, we'll get to the beach here and walk along to Burntwood". "Ah" I say, "the tide". We traipse down to shore and walk around the corner 300 yards or so where the sea was up to the base of the cliff. I'd been looking forward to this for months and here we are sat about like a bunch of Canutes waiting for the tide. I was cold, I was wet and, unbeknown to me at the time, I was harbouring an unwanted guest in my oesophagus. I went home!

Friday 27th May was hot and sunny but they visited the Museum to view the collections at Cothey. I took a few of my best finds along. I let them finish looking at the County's collections and then showed the items I'd brought in. However, I don't understand Russian or French, Spanish, German or Polish and they tell me I ain't too hot on English! However, I could tell they liked my stuff from the sharp intake of breath each time I unwrapped another gem and a call would go out for the beetle maestro or to the wasp and the plant duo get excited too. I quite enjoyed the day.

Andy Yule

A gall amongst fungi

Five of us met at Hildyard's Cemetery, Lake on 8th December to look particularly for waxcap fungi (*Hygrocybe* spp.). We found plenty: white ones, yellow ones, orange ones, red ones and *H.psittacina*, the Parrot Waxcap, which is bright green when young.

Halfway around, a cry went up from Jillie Pope, "Galls!". Indeed, she had found obvious galls, or where they? On a young tree of unknown species there were twenty or thirty gall-like objects on completely leafless twigs, spherical or oval, about 30mm across with 20-30 spines radiating from the main body of the putative gall.

Dissenting voices were heard. Was the tree an Oak? The bark did not look right. Although there were oak leaves on the ground around our tree, there were mature and obvious oaks nearby. Two of us thought that the mystery objects were the fruits possibly of Turkish Hazel, *Corylus colurna*.

All became clear back home. Closer examination revealed the spines to be slightly irregular, blunt and some with vague longitudinal striations and about 5mm long. Some of the galls were still green and slightly succulent and others dark brown and woody. Sectioning the objects revealed multiple larval chambers. So Jillie was right. They were galls and not exotic fruits.



These were galls induced by a gall-wasp (*Hymenoptera: Cynipidae*) *Andricus grossulariae*, native to southern and central Europe, Iberia and north Africa and described as rare. The first English record was from Berkshire in 2000 and the first Island record came from Fairlee on 10th February 2003. It has been named Anemone Gall because of its fancied resemblance to a sea anemone.

Cynipid Gall-wasps on oaks exhibit an alternation of generations. The asexual gall-wasps, which emerge in spring from the Anemone Gall without mating, lay their parthenogenetic eggs on the buds of the male catkins of Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*), Holm Oak (*Q. ilex*) and Luccombe Oak (*Q. x crenata*). In late spring, the male catkins display many hard currant-like galls with a rounded apical projection, initially green, then red, then black, about 5mm in diameter and containing one larval chamber. The emerging bisexual insects mate and lay their eggs in acorn cups or buds on trees of *Q. robur* or *Q. petraea* as we found in Hildyard's. The currant galls were found for the first time on the Island on 19th May 2006 from Osborne beach on Turkey Oak.

David Biggs



iWatch Wildlife, the Society's community wildlife recording project, continued to operate virtually throughout the second half of 2020 with public events still, unfortunately being off the agenda. Although we were unable to carry out any practical recording with the public, the restrictions certainly didn't stop the public from recording – with your help we have seen one of the best years ever for observations of two endangered species – Hedgehogs and Stag Beetles.

The Hedgehog records collected via iWatch and those individuals rescued by Save Our Hedgehogs Isle of Wight (whom have also reported a busy year) have not only boosted our local knowledge of where

Hedgehogs are forming part of the 'Hedgehog Island' project led by IW Zoo, but will also contribute to the wider national picture, once shared with the 'Big Hedgehog Count' run by PTES.

The same goes for Stag Beetles. As expected, observations were made in the historic hotspots of Cowes and Ryde over a period of a month or so in early Summer with 24 sightings in total – more than any previous year, which is fantastic news.

Since the last Bulletin, Wasp Spiders, Dark-bellied Brent Geese, Red Squirrels and the December Moth have featured as 'Species of the Month' and we are currently programming our campaign for 2021.

We would like to thank everybody that has taken time to record, help and support others and share their observations, knowledge and experience during 2020 – here's to another year full of wonderful wildlife encounters on our special Island! We would also very much like to thank the Isle of Wight Biodiversity Partnership, IW Local Records Centre and IW AONB for funding to enable the continuation of iWatch Wildlife.

Tina Whitmore

Social Media Record Champions

Do you have an interest in a particular species and / or enjoy interacting with the local Facebook nature groups? Could you perhaps spare some time to help us as a **Species Record Champion**?

We would warmly welcome any support in collecting observations and converting them into records helping to expand our local species knowledge.

Being a Social Media Species Record Champion is really just about keeping a general look out for wildlife observations of interest during your usual browsing activities, then noting some key data along with an image so it can be converted into record for the IW Species Database.

Information held in the database is valuable – it can help protect and conserve species and habitats, inform scientific research and help shape local policy and planning. If you would like to find out more, please contact Tina on iwatchwildlife@gmail.com.

Natural Wonders of the Isle of Wight – IWNHAS Centenary Project

In early 2020 The Society was awarded funding for a Natural History / Arts project called 'Natural Wonders of the Isle of Wight'. The aim was to work with schools and local groups to generate artwork based on the Island's unique biodiversity for display in repurposed display cabinets originating from Floating Bridge no. 5.

It's been a tricky project to navigate, but we are pleased to report that two of the five themed cabinets have now been completed. The first by Queensgate Primary School and the second by Drawing Ahead – an adult art group.

The Queensgate cabinet celebrates the habitats and natural heritage relevant to East Cowes and the Drawing Ahead cabinet explores The River Medina as the group is based in Newport.

Many thanks to Arc Consulting / Ecclestone George for the loan of the cabinets.



Natural Wonders of the Isle of Wight - The River Medina by Drawing Ahead Group

Tina Whitmore

Record Makers Report 2020 - part 1






We promised to report back on what happened with species recording during Lockdown 1.0 when many of us took a pause and perhaps found ourselves with a little more time to enjoy watching nature, make notes on our observations and to share those encounters with others.

The following is an interim report based on data submitted to online biological recording platforms iRecord and iNaturalist during that period. Once all the IWNHAS species data from 2020 has been received and uploaded to MapMate, we hope to bring you a follow-up report in the Spring. We have based this report on records made from the first day of Lockdown 1.0 (23rd March 2020) to the day that shielding ended (31st July 2020).

During Lockdown 1.0....

12,436 wildlife observations were made on the Isle of Wight via iNaturalist and iRecord.

There were over **1,000** more species records generated than during the same period in **2019** (10,200 records generated in 2020 / 9,000 records generated in 2019)

	<p>Insects were the most recorded group</p> <p>Within that group - Butterflies were the most recorded, followed by Moths then Dragonflies</p>
	<p>Birds were the 2nd most recorded group, with the Wren topping the recording charts</p>
	<p>Flowering Plants came in 3rd with the Pyramidal Orchid - our County Flower being the species most recorded</p>
	<p>The Meadow Brown Butterfly was the most recorded species in iRecord appearing 676 times Picture: Keith Marston</p>
	<p>Red Campion was the most recorded species in iNaturalist appearing 11 times</p>

Tina Whitmore

The British Tarantula

Well, not really, but the Purse-web Spider, *Atypus affinis*, is unique in the British fauna in being the sole representative of a group of spiders that includes tarantulas and trap-door spiders. It has been classified as Nationally Scarce but its stronghold is the south and southeast of England. On the Island, it is little known. In Morey's Guide to the Natural History of the Isle of Wight (1909), Frank Smith writes, enigmatically, that it has been 'found by Mr. Hull. On the mainland this is a southern form. Probably it is not nearly so rare as the difficulty of discovering it has led many writers to suppose.' The Reverend John Edward Hull (1863-1960) came from County Durham and was an enthusiastic field naturalist with a particular interest in the study of spiders. He discovered many species new to science and to the British list.

However, despite writing that this spider was probably not rare, no further record of it is forthcoming from the Island until a visit by Paul Seldon, one-time president of the British Arachnological Society, on 15th September 2000 when he found *Atypus* at Freshwater Bay. Subsequently the purse webs of the spider were found on Afton Down by a visiting ecologist.



Purse-web Spiders spend practically the whole of their life inside of tube-web lined burrows which they excavate in friable soils particularly on south-facing downland. Consequently, the spider itself is rarely seen. Graham Sherratt was most fortunate when he visited Mottistone Down on 11th November. He had been looking for fungi in Brighstone Forest and then decided to look at the short turf flora on the lower part of Mottistone Down before returning to his car. He came across the fast-moving spider completely by accident and was lucky to be able to photograph and identify it. The spider is striking in appearance; it is stocky with huge forward-projecting jaws. Male Purse-web Spiders leave their tube-webs in the autumn and go searching for those of the female. This can happen anytime between September and November although it believed to happen mostly at night.

Atypus affinis must be under-recorded. It is usually discovered by looking for the tube-webs in the spring but there is a solitary wasp, *Aporus unicolor*, which is a highly specialised predator adapted to entering the tube-webs where it paralyses the spider and lays its egg within the body tissue. It is not known to prey on any other species. Adam Wright has recorded this wasp at Castle Cove and Tennyson Down, suggesting that these could be additional localities for *Atypus affinis*. iRecord is promoting a nationwide survey to search for and record tube-webs.

Details can be found at brc.ac.uk/irecord/purseweb.

Editor

The Island Origin of the Word ‘Landslip’

Landslip is an emotive term on the Island, where one can easily damage property and roads. Did the term originate on the Isle of Wight? Eminent American scientist Benjamin Silliman (1779-1864), who visited the Undercliff between Ventnor and Niton in 1805, claimed the word landslip was first used on the Island.

Silliman was a graduate of Yale (1796) where he became a chemistry professor in 1802. An anti-slavery campaigner, he founded the American Journal of Science and in 1850 gave his name to the mineral Sillimanite. As a young man of 26, he came to Europe to purchase science equipment for Yale, and to study geology in London and Edinburgh. He travelled widely, had broad interests, and later published ‘A Journal

of Travels in England, Scotland and Holland and of Two Passages over the Atlantic in the Years 1805 and 1806' (1810, New York). He visited Botanic Gardens at Kew and Edinburgh, Herschell's telescope, antiquities like Old Sarum and Stonehenge, and also mines and factories, taking detailed notes. He went underground at Dolgoath Mine near Redruth, toured a broadcloth factory near Bradford on Avon, was impressed by the division of labour at a pin-factory in Bristol, and went around the glassworks and brassworks in that city.

On 12th September 1805, after leaving Salisbury on the midnight coach, he took a passage-boat from Southampton to West Cowes, and a post-chaise to Carisbrooke Castle. At 4 pm he went on horseback through Godshill to "the sea-shore at the foot of Steep-hill" near Ventnor, arriving at dusk. He climbed the hill on foot, was enveloped by mist at the top and lost the path. In darkness "a small rain, rendered the grass so slippery, that I could not keep my feet, but frequently fell, and was compelled ... to sit down, and thus slide along with my feet first ... and with my clothes mutilated and defaced, I effected my descent." After an uncomfortable night at an unwelcoming and rowdy inn nearby, he returned the next day for the hilltop views at a naval lookout station with "a telegraph, a small lodge, and an attending officer".

He then rode along the Undercliff to Niton, and beyond "till the carriage-way terminated in a foot-path, leading over the broken heaps of earth, and, until even this path became so steep I could ride no farther". Here he viewed the location of "a remarkable fall of one of these hills" which occurred six years earlier, as recorded in a tourist booklet he had bought in Cowes. In his Journal (volume 2 p.111) Silliman reprinted the booklet account taken from a letter of 9th February 1799 that referred to events the previous Tuesday. An eye-witness named Harvey, living nearby, saw how: "The ground above, beginning with a great founder, from the base of the cliff, immediately under St Catherine's kept gliding down, and at last rushed on with violence, and totally changed the surface of all of the ground, to the west of the brook, ... as if it had been done by an earthquake".

Silliman recorded that "An accident like that which is here recorded is denominated by the inhabitants a *landslip*; an extremely happy and expressive appellation; a word not found in English dictionaries, but probably invented on the spot by the inhabitants, to express an idea for which they had no adequate term."

The following day, 14th September, Silliman left the Island by passage-boat from West Cowes to Portsmouth. With a telescope he saw HMS Victory moored about three miles away off St Helens, which with "white sides, and with her three tiers of guns, made a most formidable appearance". Later in Portsmouth, he saw Nelson avoiding the expectant crowds and departing for Trafalgar "elegantly dressed", unlike his own appearance at Steephill.

Mike Cotterill

Andy's Nature notes July to December 2020

JULY

- 1st. A freshly emerged Holly Blue in the garden plus 8 Large Whites and 3 Marbled Whites.
- 2nd. Walked up to Coombe Bottom [back of old Ventnor Station], just a single Dark-green Fritillary.
- 3rd. A Sparrow Hawk hurtled through the garden.
- 6th. Visited Coombe Bottom again. 9 Ringlet, 3 Small Copper and 2 Small Skipper. A bat flying round the garden in the evening.
- 7th. Went to Atherfield and saw 22 Black-tailed Skimmers on the reservoir plus one Little Ringed Plover and 32 Tufted Duck. On to Brook Down and saw 79 Dark-green Fritillaries, 10 Ringlets and a Small Skipper. A Wall and a Humming-bird Hawkmoth [HBHM] in the garden.

9th. Strong SW wind. A Balearic Shearwater heading west in the morning off home.

10th. A flock of 6 Little Egrets flew across the bay in front of my house going east. Went to Atherfield with Pete Campbell and logged 4 Little Ringed Plover (2 adults and 2 juveniles), a family party. There were also 5 Common Sandpipers there as well. Continued to Walter's Copse, Newtown: 16 Comma, 4 Purple Hairstreak, 10 Silver-washed Fritillaries and 8 White Admiral.

11th. 4 Red Admiral, 4 Gatekeeper, 2 Ringlet, a Large Skipper and a Holly Blue in the garden.

12th. A Small Blue along the revetment.

13th. Went to Atherfield to fish for mackerel but the shoals were just too far out so I went fossilling instead. I walked round almost to Whale Chine, found a number of fossilised molluscs that look a bit like razorfish. Dick Downes said they were *Gervillella* sp.

A Golden-ringed Dragonfly in Shepherd's Chine on the way back and also the first Migrant Hawker of the year. A *hutchinsonii* variety of Comma in the garden later.

14th. A Small Tortoiseshell in the garden.

15th. Gannets diving for fish about 500m off home. A HBHM along the revetment.

16th. 6 Common Blue along the revetment.

17th. 3 Willow Warblers in the garden before 06.00 hrs. Later, on drove to Whale Chine with Pete and walked west to the Coastguard cottages where we recorded 416 freshly emerged Common Blues (a record), 5 Wall, 5 Small Copper and 12 Small Skipper. We also saw a mature female Keeled Skimmer dragonfly, at the top of Whale Chine.

18th. Pete and I went up to Arretton Down in the afternoon. There were something like 25,000 to 30,000 Chalkhill Blues on the wing, a fantastic sight! They were using Ragwort as their principal nectar source with up to 60 on a single plant but any lump of dog poo was also covered in the butterflies.

20th. Atherfield private reservoir: One male Red-veined Darter, 28 Black-tailed Skimmers and 5 Emperor Dragonflies. Also 2 Wall and, surprisingly, a Chalkhill Blue. Back down in the chine there were 3 Banded Demoiselles and a Golden-ringed Dragonflies plus 2 Dingy Skippers and 2 Wall.

21st. A Jersey Tiger moth of the *lutescens* form in the garden.

22nd. Up early to go Bass fishing at Atherfield Ledge. Went up the steps to the car park at 04.45 and disturbed a girl sat on the seat with headphones clamped to her ears and smoking a joint. When she saw me, she scarpered rather rapidly which was unnecessary. Whatever turns you on, as we used to say in the 60's! Anyway, got to the ledges and the Bass were like the Mackerel, just out of casting distance. There were 5 Common Sandpipers on the ledge and 10 Sandwich Terns fishing.

23rd. 5 plants of Wild Liquorice at St. Catherine's Point. Then we moved on up to the Oratory on the downs and saw one Clouded Yellow, a Painted Lady and 4 Wall, 3 of which were on the same small Ragwort flower, plus 4 Small Copper and c.30 Swifts over.

24th. Went to Ryde pier early am to look for a reported Rose-coloured Starling. Didn't see it. Went back in the evening to see if it came in to the starling roost by the station but no luck again. A bunch of us were stood on the platform looking just like a load of train-spotters! The things we do for our hobby.

26th. A Migrant Hawker in the garden.

28th. A HBHM and a Bloxworth Snout moth in the garden. Went over to Bembridge Ponds with Pete later on and saw 13 Redshank, 4 Black-tailed Godwits, a Migrant Hawker, 5 Common Darters, one Great-white Egret and 2 Marsh Harriers.

29th. Drove over to Atherfield and went up to the private reservoir. 3 Green Sandpipers, 1 Common Sandpiper, 10 Small Red-eyed Damselflies, 3 Emperor and 4 Wall. Stopped off at Whale Chine on the way back and had 4 Wall and about 30 Common Blue butterflies.

31st. Went to Newtown with Pete. One female Beautiful Demoiselle in the copse and 12 Whimbrel on the marsh. One Grey and 4 Common Seals in the estuary.



Left: 18th July. Chalkhill Blues on ragwort on Arreton Down **Right:** 24th July. Starling roost on Ryde Pier

AUGUST

1st. Went to Shepherd's Chine this morning. One Green Sandpiper, 130 Starlings feeding on blackberries, one Grasshopper Warbler, 3 Banded Demoiselles, one Emperor, 6 Wall and 2 Dingy Skippers.

4th. A Green-veined White, 11 Large White and 2 Small White in the garden.

5th. Over to Newtown this morning. 4 Peregrines, one Osprey with fish, a White-tailed Sea Eagle, 2 Whimbrel and 3 Common Terns.

6th. Ron, the Grey Seal, in Wheeler's Bay this morning.

7th. Went over to Bouldnor with Pete to see a Southern Migrant Hawker dragonfly. Excellent close-up views and a first for us. Also 6 Ruddy Darters, 5 Emerald Damselflies and 2 Emperors. 2 Willow Warblers in the garden early on.

8th. 60+ Jersey Tiger moths in and around the trap this morning. A record.

9th. 3 Clouded Yellow along the revetment and a male Adonis Blue in the garden.

10th. Back to Newtown where I saw one Osprey asleep in a tree and a single Spoonbill flying past the brickworks. The scarce arable plant, Round-leaved Fluellen, is spreading through my garden which is nice to see.

11th. c.100 Small Red-eyed Damselflies, 4 Black-tailed Skimmers and 2 Emperor Dragonflies. A Painted Lady along the revetment plus a Dingy Skipper. A small Sunflower in the garden has 40 flower heads on it.

13th. 2 pods of Bottle-nosed Dolphins off the revetment chasing Mackerel.

16th. 2 HBHM along the revetment. A Convolvulus Hawkmoth on a *Nicotiana* plant in the garden at 21.00 hrs. Also, about 12 Silver Y moths on one Lavender bush.

19th. A Cory's Shearwater seen from home this morning, quite close in and very good views of it. A steady movement of Gannets east all day. Heavy rain most of the day and a southerly gale.

20th. Went to Newtown with Pete, where we saw one Osprey eating a fish, c100 Curlew, a Great-crested Grebe and 3 seals. 6 *Eurydema ornatum* shield bugs along the revetment.

21st. Another Cory's Shearwater this morning heading west into a south-westerly gale, also a single Balearic Shearwater, both seen from home. In the afternoon Pete and I watched a Hoopoe in a field at Niton. 2 Adonis and 3 Chalkhill Blues along the revetment. A HBHM in the garden settled on an *Echium* leaf.

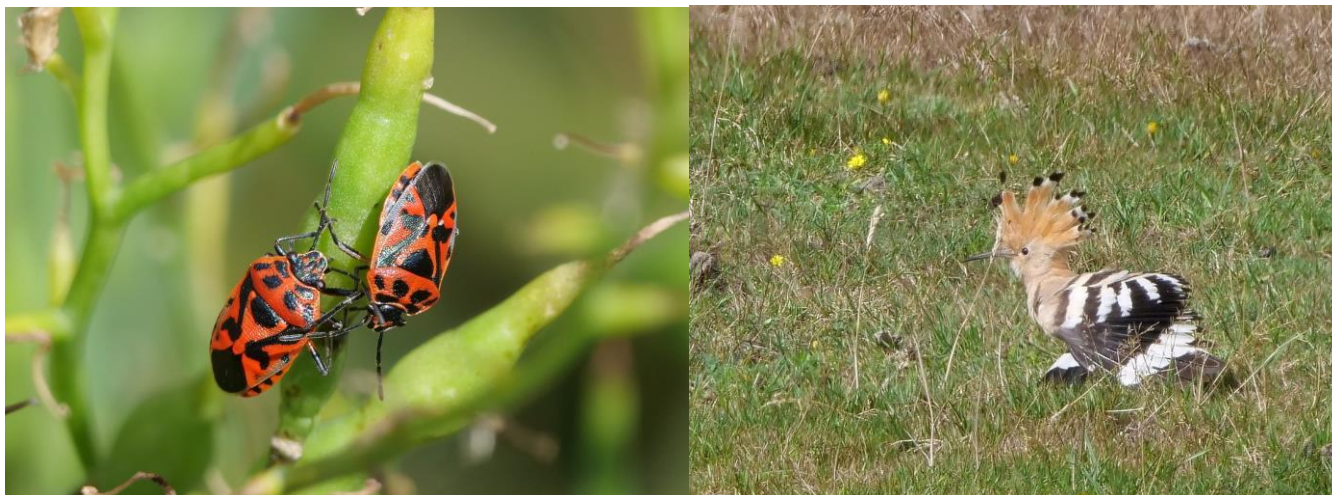
23rd. A friend that lives up from the back from my house saw a whale well out to sea late in the afternoon. From his description it was a Minke Whale. I have to say, I was very envious; I've only ever seen dead whales washed up round the Island.

26th. Went to St. Catherine's Point with Pete and Iain Outlaw to look for Sea Spleenwort. We found it but it was a bit of a struggle.

29th. 5 HBHM in the garden and along the revetment plus a Small Copper.

30th. Holly Blue in the garden and a Clancy's Rustic moth on the dining room window. A Sandwich Tern diving off the bay.

31st. 3 HBHM in the garden.



Left: 20th August Ornate Shieldbugs, *Eurydema ornata* on Ventnor revetment **Right:** 21st August. Hoopoe at Niton

SEPTEMBER

1st. 32 Little Egrets flew across the bay in front of the house, quite a sight. 2 Convolvulus Hawk Moths in the garden this evening and 4 HBHM during the day.

2nd. Hurried over to Laundry Lane in the afternoon for a reported immature Pallid Harrier. Had good views of it and also a Hobby.

3rd. Back to Laundry Lane by 0730 hrs. and got some even better views of the Harrier as well as some reasonable photos.

4th. Visited Brading with Pete. We saw c.200 Sand Martins, a Hobby, an Osprey, a Great White Egret and about 20 Yellow Wagtails.

5th. Motored round to Newtown in my son's boat from Cowes. A most enjoyable morning and saw 3 White-tailed Sea Eagles and about 100 Common Terns.

7th. 12 Wheatears on the sea defence at Monk's Bay, Bonchurch.

8th. 7 or 8 Bottle-nosed Dolphins off home.

9th. Clouded Yellow, a Painted Lady and 2 HBHM at the back of the house. 3 Turnstones, a Ringed Plover and 2 1st winter White Wagtails at Monk's Bay.

15th. Walked up to the Oratory at Blackgang with Pete. A single Whinchat, 9 Stonechats, 2 Wheatear, a Spotted Flycatcher and a Small Copper.

16th. A Beautiful Marbled moth in the trap this morning. The second one I've had here.

17th. Went over to Whitwell for a reported White Stork that was on a roof in Kemming Rd. Saw it okay not long before it took off, not to be seen again.

20th. Laundry Lane: 2 Holly Blue, 150 Siskins, 150+ Teal, 6 Migrant Hawker, 3 Common Darter, one Southern Hawker. 2 Clouded Yellow, 4 Common Blue and a Southern Hawker along the revetment.

21st Up to Ventnor Downs this morning. 2 Honey Buzzards and a Clouded Yellow. 2 Clouded Yellow and a HBHM along the revetment.

26th. 9 *Eurydema ornatum* shieldbugs along the revetment.

27th. A Wryneck in the garden this morning. Managed to photograph it with its neck swivelled round backwards (hence its name).

28th. 5 Clouded Yellow along the revetment plus a Wall and a HBHM in the garden.

29th. 10 Brent Geese heading west off home. At least 30 *E. ornatum* on a small patch of foliage along the revetment.



Top left: 1st September. Convulvulus Hawkmoths in garden; **Top right:** 3rd September. Pallid Harrier on Brading Marshes; **Middle left:** 9th September. Turnstone at Monks Bay; **Middle right:** 16th September. Beautiful Marbled moth in garden; **Bottom left:** 17th September. White Stork on roof at Whitwell; **Bottom right:** 27th September. Wryneck in garden

OCTOBER

1st. Went to St. Catherine's Point this morning to look for the rare rush Galingale. It was in full bloom, there were a number of plants at the site but it doesn't appear to be increasing much in spite of care by the

National Trust. Also saw 4 Clouded Yellow, 6 Small Copper, 12 Stonechats and 2 Green Woodpeckers. There was a chap sat up on the back cliff playing a flute, which I thought was rather nice.

5th. Out to Blackgang this morning: 4 Wheatears, 2 Skylarks, 150+ Linnets, 60 Meadow Pipits, a Peregrine, a Hobby, 25+ Stonechats, 6 Chiffchaffs, one Whitethroat, 10 Blackcaps and a single Ring Ouzel eating crane-flies.

6th. One HBHM in the garden.

11th. Clouded Yellow, Wall and a HBHM in the garden. 4 Clouded Yellow and a Wall along the revetment.

13th. A Guillemot came into the bay in front of my house chasing fish. It was within a few yards of the wall and seemed perfectly alright. It took no notice of people watching it or me photographing it. It eventually swam off out to sea.

14th. A Small White in the garden and a Clouded Yellow.

15th. Blackgang again today: 2 Ring Ouzels, 6 Yellowhammers. Lots of birds, including Gannets, diving on a large shoal off fish out in Chale Bay. Went on to Yarmouth in the afternoon and photographed a Heron taking a large ragworm out of the mud. I have never seen that before.

16th. Went up to Rew Down with Pete. 2 Ring Ouzels, 2 Fieldfares, 2 Ravens and 2 late Meadow Brown butterflies.

18th. Saw a very pale Short-eared Owl at St. Catherine's Point this morning.

19th. Back to the Point this morning and watched 3 Bottle-nosed Dolphins go by in the rough seas. Also 12 Gannets.

22nd. Pete and I went over to Thorness for the first time in ages. We saw 7 Ringed Plover, 13 Curlew, 114 Mediterranean Gulls, a Cetti's Warbler and a Water rail.

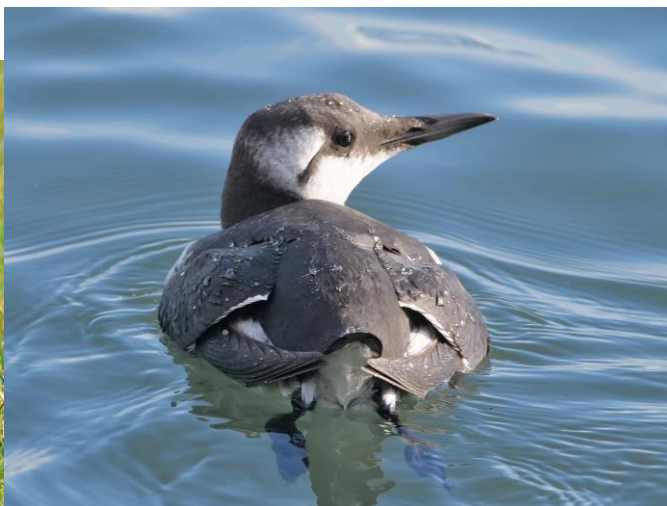
23rd. Went to Blackgang Viewpoint with Pete this morning and saw 2 White-tailed Sea Eagles out in the bay catching fish. Amazing!

24th. A South-westerly gale today. Logged about 350 Gannets heading west.

25th. Watched the eagles at Blackgang again in the morning. In the early evening, I heard helicopters out to sea. I had a look out but all was pitch black and nothing to see but I guessed it was something to do with the hi-jacked tanker Nave Andromeda. Stayed looking out and could hear a number of helicopters circling round and also hovering then, all of a sudden, lights came on a flotilla of boats and searchlights lighting up the tanker. Apparently, the Special Boat Service stormed the ship and regained possession in 7 minutes, which was cool. As this took place in the dark, I couldn't see it happening!

30th. Had a look round Bembridge Harbour. Pete counted 175 Med Gulls plus 2 Grey Plover.

31st. A Southerly gale today and saw 2 Sooty Shearwaters from home. One at 07.10 and the other at 09.25 plus 82 Gannets up to 10.15. All heading west.



Left: 5th October. Ring Ouzel eating craneflies at Blackgang; **Right:** 13th October. Guillemot at Wheeler's Bay



Above: 23rd October. Juvenile White-tailed Sea Eagles catching fish off Blackgang.

NOVEMBER

1st. Went to Puckpool for a Yellow-browed Warbler. I didn't see it. A Great-crested Grebe in close off the shore there.

4th. Stonechat in the garden. HBHM along the revetment and 4 Rock Pipits in Monk's Bay.

7th. A Purple Sandpiper along the revetment, a year to the day I saw one in the same place.

9th. A Firecrest in Rylstone Gardens.

13th. Went to Yarmouth this morning. 74 Black-tailed Godwits, 110 Teal, 300 Wigeon, 6 Shoveler, 100 Brent Geese, 2 Snipe and a Spotted Redshank, heard only.

16th. A Grey Seal off home, possibly Ron.

20th. Over to Newtown with Pete. 2 Greenshank, 30 Fieldfares, one Peregrine, 10 Little Grebes, 90 Shelduck, 6 Ringed Plover, 20 Curlew and 20 Turnstones.

22nd. Haddon's Pits, Luccombe. 2 Firecrests, 2 Goldcrests, 25 Redwings, 4 Jays, 50 Goldfinches, 6 Bullfinches and 2 Song Thrush.

23rd. An adult and juvenile Whooper Swan in a field at Atherfield. Distant views only.

24th. The juvenile Whooper swan found dead today at Atherfield. 2 Peregrines at Whale Chine.

26th. Went out to West Wight in the afternoon and had excellent views of a hunting Short-eared Owl. Also 2 Egyptian Geese asleep on the marsh. Later on, we saw a total of three Hen Harriers, 2 males and a female/immature Ringtail, coming in to roost as it got dark. An unprecedented sight on the Island.

29th. Haddon's Pits: one Firecrest, 2 Goldcrests, 20 Redwing and a Sparrowhawk.

DECEMBER

- 1st. A pair of Ravens along the revetment.
- 2nd. Went out to Blackgang Viewpoint mid- morning. About a mile out from the chine there was a massive shoal of fish up on the surface with at least 3500 gulls, 6 Auk sp, one Gannet, 20 Kittiwakes, 50 Med Gulls and c.100 Great Black-back Gulls all diving and scavenging. Also, one of our White-tailed Sea Eagles in attendance. The fish were Bass.
- 8th. We went back out to Blackgang today and what would have been another huge shoal of Bass was out there again with the same number of birds and a White-tailed Sea Eagle as well. Pete and I estimated the shoal was nearly ½ mile long and nearly that wide. A boat was out among them and catching quite a few but many had to be returned as they were undersize. Never seen anything quite like it.
- 12th. Went over to Rookley Country Park to see a 1st winter Ring-necked Duck. Good views of this American visitor and a first record for the Island.
- 13th. About 200 Gannets, 3 Scoters and 7 Auks off home in a southerly gale.
- 17th. For the past few days there have been up to 6 Black Redstarts feeding on the Cabbage Palm berries in St. Catherine Street, Ventnor. They are not too bothered by people or vehicles and fairly easy to photograph.
- 19th. A Purple Sandpiper sheltering on the sea wall round on Bonchurch front. Not at all frightened by people walking by close to it. Needless to say, none of them saw it!
- 20th. The Purple Sandpiper seen again today by Dave Nordell.
- 25th. 2 ladies in swimming at 0900 in front of home. They're more than welcome! A male Blackcap in the garden.
- 26th. Streams of Auks heading west this morning, eg c200 in 30 minutes. 2 Fulmars in the bay.
- 27th. Saw a Holly Blue round at Monk's Bay; a most unexpected sighting. A Stonechat in the garden.
- 28th. 28 White-fronted Geese Geese and 98 Golden Plover plus 20 Common Gulls in the field by the Coastguard Cottages. On to Yarmouth and saw 2 Spoonbills, 75 Teal, 150 Wigeon, 80 Black-tailed Godwits and 20 Shoveler Duck.
- 29th. Saw a fine dog Fox along by the skateboard Park at Ventnor front, he was oblivious to the racket of the skateboarders.
- 30th. 3 Black Redstarts on the Cabbage Palms in Wheeler's Bay car park. After four attempts managed to see and photograph the Kingfisher on Bonchurch pond.
- 31st. The end of a year like no other. Excellent for wildlife seen but the pits for life in general, can only hope that next year will be better for people.



Left: 1st December. Pair of Ravens, Ventnor

Right: 2nd December. Part of massive shoal of bass off Blackgang



Top left: 12th December. Ring-necked Duck, Rookley; **Top right:** 17th December. Black Redstarts, Ventnor; **Middle left:** 19th December. Purple Sandpiper at Ventnor; **Middle right:** 28th December. Spoonbill at Yarmouth; **Bottom:** 28th December. White-fronted Geese at Atherfield.
Andy Butler

MEETINGS IN 2020

Understandably, meetings were cancelled in 2020 but nevertheless, a few enterprising individuals were able to hold a small number of meetings, either remotely or in the field under appropriate conditions.

Archaeology at a Distance

Two opportunities arose in October for the Archaeology group to meet outside in socially distanced groups of 6.

Newtown

In 2011, the Archaeology Section worked with David Tomalin prior to the demolition of Key Cottage and its replacement with a modern house. The report can be found in Wight Studies Vols 30 and 31. With the summer crowds gone, we revisited the village to review our findings and share our experiences with newer members. Jackie Hart and I each led a small group.

By walking along the estuary and round the village we were able to set the plot into its geographical and historical context. Consisting of 3 burgage plots accessing the tidal lake and on Key Lane, a main route to the harbour, this was a prime spot. The artefacts we had found confirmed the main occupation eras of 13th/14th centuries and 16th century, consistent with the times of relative prosperity before and after the decline brought on by French attacks. The cottage about to be demolished was Tudor. The only possible evidence we found for a medieval building was some burnt daub which could be left from the notorious burning of the town by the French in 1377.

Our work over the last 2 years in the Shalfleet area and during our Zoom meetings also added new perspectives to our view of this area, not least the trading opportunities with the central West Wight. We walked round the salt feeder ponds along the site of the old harbour wall and, by the footbridge, were able to see the remains of the salt house where the brine was boiled for the final stage of evaporation to produce salt crystals.

This may have been of interest to us but not to the disgruntled tourists we met by the black hut at the end of the footbridge. They wanted to know where the Nature Reserve was and where to go to see the seals! We pointed out that they were standing in the Nature Reserve but they seemed unconvinced. They expected seals so where else on the Island could they go to see seals? Alas, we could not advise them.



Left: Salthouse remains, Newtown



Right: Socially distanced geophysics at Northwood House

We had a request from Tim Wander, one of the trustees of Northwood House' to carry out some Geophysics there to try and trace the route of the old tunnel underneath the lawn. This tunnel, leading from the basement to Baring Road was blocked some years ago but many Cowes residents have tales to tell about it. Island Roads had previously surveyed the route with GPR (Ground Penetrating Radar) but it was hoped we could pinpoint the position beneath the lawn. This is a smaller area than we would normally survey and our results showed that considerable disturbance over the years prevented a meaningful interpretation. For us, though, there was interest in working within the 'rule of 6'. By spreading the work over 2 days, using a different team and piece of equipment on each day, we were able to keep within the guidelines and maintain distance between team members. It was possible, but time consuming. It was good to refresh our memories after a long break and to have some sense of that 'normality' that we all crave during this difficult year.

Helen Jackson

More Archaeology in Isolation

During the current lockdown, the Archaeology Group has been fortunate to obtain geophysical surveys of a number of Isle of Wight sites. We have started to use these in our weekly Zoom meetings. We have studied sites at Gunville, Yaverland, Cowes and Cheverton near Lake. We have also considered data from the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) which records the finds by metal detectorists together with the finds and sites listed on the Historic Environmental Record (HER). The information from these two databases has been mapped using a Geographic Information System (GIS) which has allowed the comparison of the location of a range of artefacts across the Island. The group has concentrated upon the Iron Age, Romano-British and the Early Medieval.

Access to the PAS database has facilitated the extraction of the same range of data for the southern coastal counties of the mainland. This has highlighted the apparent importance of the Island during these three periods of its history. We have to remember that the area of the Island is much smaller than the mainland counties and while the data has been corrected for this we have to ask if this does concentrate the activity of metal detectorists which may result in a higher number of finds. We do have some very active metal detectorist groups on the Island who work closely with the Finds Liaison Officer (FLO). At this point we must recognise the hard work and diligence of the now retired FLO, Mr Frank Basford, and wish him many years of happy and fruitful retirement.

Hopefully, we shall soon be released back into the great outdoors and rely upon Zoom to fill those wet Wednesdays.

David Marshall

Around Barrows

Over 300 Bronze Age barrows have been identified on the Isle of Wight, although many of these are no longer visible, having been damaged by farming. There could be more. During our Zoom meetings we noticed some circular features on Lidar that might be worthy of further investigation.

These barrows were a source of fascination to later generations, from at least the Middle Ages. The Anglo-Saxons would utilise some of the mysterious mounds to inter their own dead and also create new graves close by, as on Bowcombe Down. In the 14th century King Henry III encouraged people to dig into them to find treasure, probably to augment the royal treasury. In the 19th century, in fact even earlier in a few cases, antiquarians set teams of men to work, some with more skill and care than others. In time they realised that these mounds offered more than treasure, that the broken pots and bones, and even the choice of site, could give us clues to the people who placed them there.

The barrows continue to form dramatic features in the Island landscape. Many were placed on hilltops as markers of territory which could be seen across the Island and out at sea. Others were built lower

down, on slopes or false ridges where they probably overlooked the territory of distinct communities. And others surprise us by occurring on lower ground where the reason for placement is now less easy to spot.

With the end of the first lockdown, some like-minded friends set out on socially-distanced walks, adapting them as appropriate when the ‘rule of 6’ was introduced. The miles of chalk downland lend themselves to walking at a safe distance, even during the height of the tourist season. So, it was no coincidence that we encountered so many barrows on the favoured sites of our forbears. We were able to discuss our observations with the rest of the Archaeology group at the Zoom meetings.

Ventnor Down was for us the first example of how important sightlines are in the positioning of these monuments. With views to the mainland and glimpses of Tennyson Down it is no wonder so many mounds can be found amongst the brambles and bracken. It was a beautiful clear day when we walked along Mottistone Down and stood on the barrows, looking at the panorama of the Dorset coast as well as the Isle of Wight in all directions. And was that blurry ridge in the distance the Ridgeway? A reminder that it was not just Islanders looking outwards but mainland groups looking across at us. Our Bronze Age ancestors were not ‘little islanders’; they were very aware of communities within sight as well as farther afield, as the trade in bronze axes demonstrates.

On another day we headed in the opposite direction past Brighstone Forest, where several barrows lurk in the woodland, to the spectacular sight of Gallibury Hump, on private land but visible from the Tennyson trail and once used as gallows. The remains of one of its neighbours were excavated by David Tomalin in 1979. Having escaped the deprivations of the 19th century it offered a rare opportunity to investigate Bronze Age burial practices.

Walking up to ‘Five Barrows’ at Brook from the Military Road highlights how visible those mounds were from out at sea as well as on land. ‘Five barrows’ is a misnomer as there are actually 9, with a mixture of designs – bowl, bell and disc – begging the question ‘why’? Was it changes in fashion or culture or did they signify differences between the people buried there; for instance, were female graves distinct from male ones?



Left: Five Barrows



Right: St Catherine’s Barrow

The Pepperpot on St. Catherine’s Down is of course a well-known landmark but next to it is the mound of another Bronze Age barrow. A later use was found for this mound as a lime kiln was dug into it, using the available chalk to make mortar. Nearby, at the end of Crocker Lane is a Bronze Age urn field, looking out to Dunsbury farm and more barrows. A visit during the drought in early summer revealed numerous crop marks that were far less clear on a second visit in October. But the air was clear enough for us to look inland over the farmed landscape and gain new insight into the connections between farmsteads and villages.



Left: View from St Catherine's Down



Below: Tennyson Down mortuary enclosure

A rare reminder of an even earlier age was seen as we walked up Tennyson Down from Freshwater and were passed by incurious tourists who didn't wonder why we had strayed from the path and were so interested in a patch of rough-looking grass. This was the site of a Neolithic mortuary enclosure where bodies would have been exposed to the elements and the wild creatures, before the bones were gathered for purposes we can hardly begin to understand. This was a process known as excarnation, evidence of which is present in southern Britain and Brittany.

As one explores the Island one sees the same features but from different viewpoints. This emphasises the inter-connectedness of these ancient sites and makes one wonder yet again about how our ancestors viewed and used them.

Helen Jackson

Our Ornithological Meeting at Yarmouth on 20th December

The meeting started at the beginning of the cycle track in Thorley Road and headed for the W Yar. Having had to suspend all meetings with Society members since the Covid 19 crisis commenced on 23rd March 2020 we have experimented with an outdoor meeting held under the current restrictions. This meant we had to form groups of a maximum of six people each. To help keep the two groups apart we staggered our start times with the first one leaving at 9.15 am and the other at 9.30 am.

Inevitably the total species seen between the two groups varied with Jim Baldwin's group seeing 42 species and Jackie's group 35. Having compared the two lists, we clocked up 45 species between us.

A group of six Grey Heron was noteworthy in that it is many years since I have seen so many together at this site – we now see Little Egret more regularly, as we did today. The first group saw more waders with Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Snipe and Greenshank in addition to Black-tailed Godwit, Golden Plover, Curlew and Lapwing. The second group spent some time looking at the 'water' birds for a member new to birding to see and get to know the wonderful variety in plumages. Fortunately, on our return the sun had appeared so we could see the Golden Plover in a better light as they were at rest on a far bank. Kingfisher is always a target bird here the first group was luck but not the second. We saw Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Shelduck and Little Grebe. One of the Cormorant was already showing its breeding patch and, of course, we saw Canada Goose and Brent. Cetti's Warbler was heard calling from three locations and a Water Rail heard near the converted railway station.

Jackie Hart

Foraying during a pandemic

We were unable to hold our Annual Fungus Foray this year but we have a small but keen fungi group and we were keen to hold meetings, where possible. During the autumn we held a number of meetings with select groups of up to six people.

We had experienced a particularly dry summer, lasting well into September, and so the foraying season got off to a late start. Our first two forays were held in the grounds of Haseley Manor (below). There have not been any forays held here before and we were hopeful of some good finds but unfortunately, the dry conditions meant that finds were few and far between. We did find a lot of a type of Honey Fungus (*Armillaria tabescens*), a distinctive form without a ring around the stem and looking rather different to the typical honey fungus. Honey fungus had a prolific fruiting season generally during October/November.



Other forays we held later in the autumn produced some good finds. We visited Sainham Woods at Godshill, Parkhurst Forest, Bonchurch Landslip, Northwood Cemetery and Hildyard's Cemetery at Lake. The cemeteries produced excellent shows of colourful waxcap fungi well into December. Indeed, just when we thought the season had ended, Vidya alerted us to a great show of waxcaps and other fungi in the tiny churchyard of St James', East Cowes. This was a real find of an excellent and previously unrecognised grassland fungal site.



Left: Foraying in Sainham Woods, Godshill
Hildyard's Cemetery, Lake

Right: Fine show of *Hygrocybe punicea* waxcaps in



The Goblet, *Pseudoclitocybe cyathiformis*, a late fruiting toadstool in Northwood Cemetery.

Photo by Ben Tonner

Colin Pope

Our New Year Plant Hunt in St. Lawrence, Ventnor and Bonchurch

Every year, the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) encourages people to get out and about at the start of the New Year and search for plants that are in flower. Apart from its own members, anyone can take part, both individuals and families. We were hoping to do it this year with a small group of people from our Society but due to the Covid restrictions, it was just Hazel and me.

You do not have to be an expert to take part, the BSBI will help to identify your finds if you get stuck! The idea is to choose an area and record what you see, for up to three hours. It doesn't have to be a large area, cemeteries, parks and waste ground are ideal sites to find wild flowers. Apart from anything else, the Plant Hunt presents an opportunity to get out and about after the excesses of Christmas! It also adds to our knowledge of phenology (the study of seasonal natural phenomena in relation to plant life) and climate change.

As in previous years, it was held over a 4 day period from 1-4th January. The BSBI are interested mainly in British wild flowers, not planted or garden species. However, if non- native species have become naturalized, they can be counted, in fact the non-native species often prove to be very interesting! The plants must have open flowers or catkins where the floral organs (anthers, stamens and stigmas) can be observed. Often the plants are not particularly attractive in the winter season and may have only one or two flowers, but some that naturally flower in winter can be splendid. Photographs of what you record are encouraged, and the BSBI have a Smartphone App that can be used to upload photos and records onto their website, or you can upload records from your laptop when you get home.

On Friday January 1st we did Bonchurch and parts of Ventnor. Next day we did St. Lawrence. Ventnor gave us a total of 41 plants and St. Lawrence 43. The Undercliff is an interesting area to do, as the microclimate encourages species to flower early, but also there are a number of well documented naturalized alien species that originate from warmer parts of the world.

Notable highlights were a lovely group of Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) in Bonchurch Old Church Churchyard and Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*) at Wheelers Bay where this invasive species from North Africa has colonised a large area of waste ground. I love the almondy perfume of this species but it is not to be encouraged in gardens where it would take over. You can find it in various locations in St. Lawrence as well and it has made huge inroads into a field at the end of Woolverton Road.

In Ventnor we found a naturalized stand of the winter flowering Fern-leaved Clematis, *Clematis cirrhosa* var *balearica*. Another highlight was Shoddy Ragwort (*Senecio pterophorus*) a daisy family plant from South Africa that has escaped from the botanic gardens and is seeding at the base of walls and crack in pavements in the area. Towns and villages generally yield more plants as they are generally warmer, and man-made structures such as walls provide a good habitat for many interesting species.



If you are interested in joining the New Year Plant Hunt another year or in British Wild Flowers generally, go to the BSBI website at bsbi.org For the full results of the Plant Hunt go to nyph.bsbi.org.

Dave & Hazel Trevan

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NEXT BULLETIN

Please send any items for inclusion in the next Bulletin, and Reports of any Meetings for 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021 to:-

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The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be 2nd July 2021

Bulletin Editor: Colin Pope



Fox at Ventnor Skateboard Park
Photo Andy Butler



Snowdrops, *Galanthus atkinsii*, at Ventnor
Photo Dave Trevan