

Bulletin

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President's Address

This year was an extraordinary and tumultuous one for UK wildlife and countryside policy - a tumult that continues and is not likely to be resolved any time soon. Over the autumn, the chaos unleashed by the Government of the moment was all over the news. Coverage focussed on the damage to the economy, but this was not all that was going on. No less important was the proposed deregulation of environmental protections which was rolled out in the same spirit of disruption. Ministers proposed removing all environmental laws originating from Europe; weakening post-Brexit farm subsidies intended to improve soils, alleviate flooding and boost biodiversity; create investment zones with minimal planning regulations; repeal rules about water pollution; start fracking, and drill for more fossil fuels. Any one of these would have caused huge controversy in less volatile times. For them all to arrive at once was quite the bold move.

The proposals led to the formation of an unprecedented coalition to condemn what was dubbed the 'attack on nature'. Elements of these extraordinary schemes were weakened in the subsequent months, as a successful campaign led by the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts was taken up by voices across the political spectrum from the Trades Union Congress to the Institute of Directors. Even William Hague and Michael Gove spoke out against their own party. Perhaps the most significant legislative proposition yet to be withdrawn is the Brexit Freedoms Bill - memorably christened by the Wildlife Trusts the 'Bulldozer Bill' because it could eliminate over a thousand laws which protect species and habitats, as well as those limiting pollution of water and air. Individually, many issues of concern arise. But perhaps the biggest is the unwelcome resurgence of the dangerous overarching assumption that the only way to economic success is to allow the destruction of the environment.

It is no surprise to me that when I converse with people both within and outside the Society about these policies, I am sometimes asked what the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society is doing about the campaign. They are sometimes surprised to learn that - unlike some bigger wildlife charities - we are not engaging formally in this national debate, just as we do not take a stance on local controversies. I thought it might be worth setting out why this is so.

It is not because we cannot. If our Council so directs, there is nothing to stop the Society writing letters of complaint or support on any topic it sees fit. Furthermore, members of our Society clearly will have views on this and many other matters. So, there is no lack of capacity nor inclination. But we choose to conduct ourselves as a 'learned society'. This term covers a wide range of activities, although campaigning and political activity is not amongst them. I am sure that many Society members, like me, will also support other organisations which do express views on behalf of their members. I trust that the thoughtful and well-

informed members of our Society will sometimes take the time to write to their elected representatives and make their thoughts known directly. But our Society prefers to work in a different way.

We see the role of the Society as advancing knowledge and understanding primarily through a scientific approach. This is true for both natural history and archaeology. We discover, record and promote information using proven methods. This can then be relied upon by others who might be involved in significant decisions. For example, data produced by the Society and its members in recording wildlife and heritage is regularly a material consideration in local planning determinations; and data submitted to national recording schemes goes towards national policy in a similar way.

So let us value the special status that our Society has earned. We value scientific discourse, and above all we seek out and propagate evidence and data to support decisions that might have wider implications. Without our efforts, and those of many similar societies and groups across the country, even the great debates of our times would be less well-informed and have less evidence to support or refute their arguments. To enter into those arguments ourselves would risk weakening the authority of that evidence. I trust wisdom and evidence-based reasoning, along with public engagement, will in the end produce better results for the Isle of Wight, and for the whole country.

Matthew Chatfield

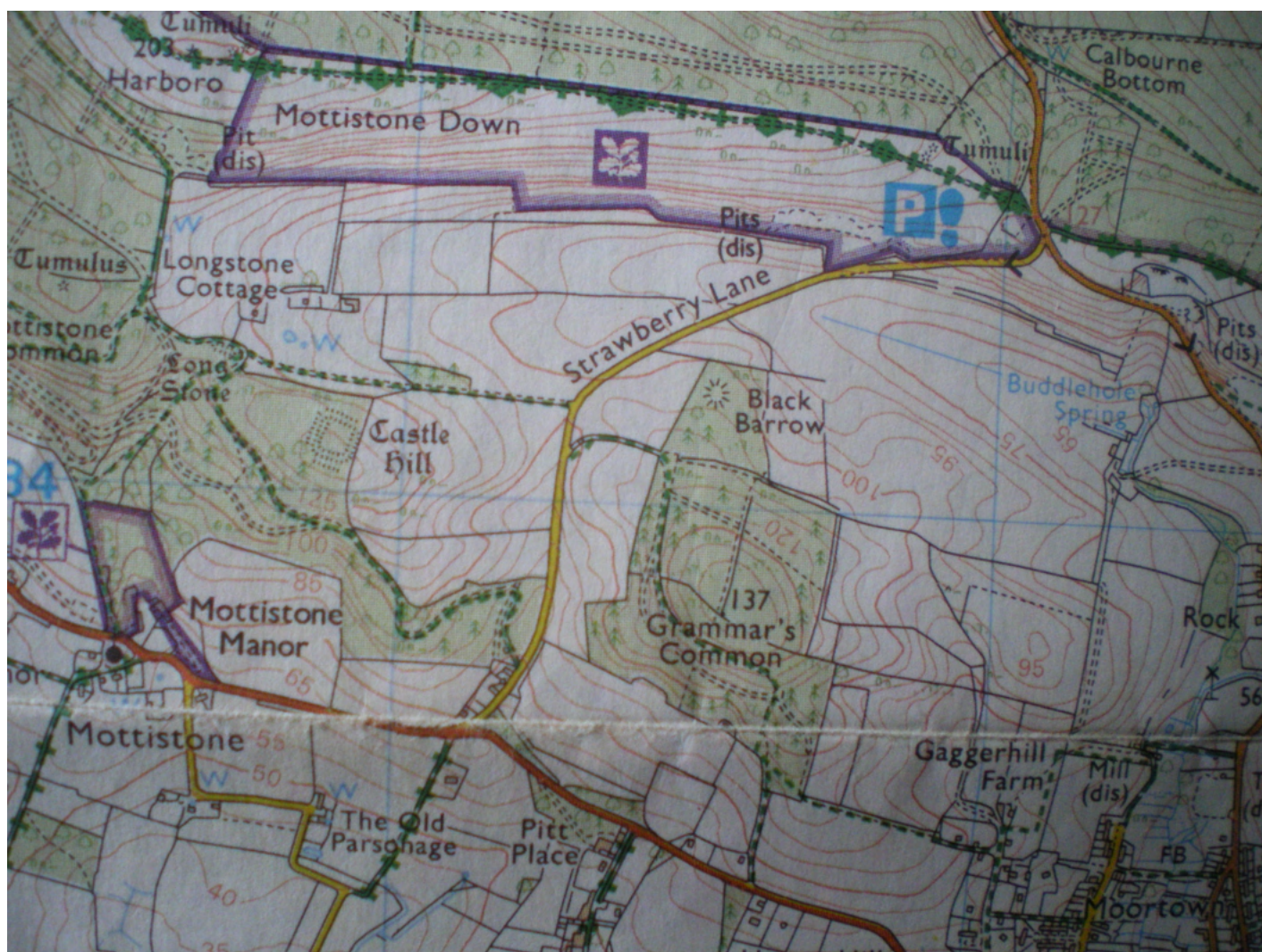
Black Barrows in the Landscape: Place-Names, Folklore and Archaeology

Black Barrow in the Isle of Wight

Black Barrow in Brighstone parish is situated 670 metres NNE of Longstone Farmhouse. It is a scheduled ancient monument and the scheduling entry by Historic England concludes that Black Barrow is a man-made round barrow: “The barrow has a mound which measures *c.*48 metres east-west, *c.*52 metres north-south, and is *c.*5 metres high. Surrounding the mound is a ditch from which material was quarried during its construction... Never having been excavated, it will contain archaeological remains and environmental evidence relating to the landscape in which it was constructed. This is by far the largest and most unusual barrow on the Island and one of only very few situated on Greensand”.

Black Barrow in fact possesses a shape not unlike Silbury Hill, but is now rarely visible, being shrouded in private woodland which retains the name Grammars Common (though the common is long gone). It is referred to in the Historic Environment Record as a bowl barrow – as opposed to a disc or bell barrow – but is quite unique in that standard Island bowl barrows look nothing like this one.

However, given that the site has never been excavated, Historic England’s interpretation that the barrow is man-made is not shared by everyone. It is possible that it may in fact not be a burial site at all but a natural formation endowed with special significance in ancient times and given this name. This is the view put forward by Grinsell and Sherwin in their survey of Isle of Wight barrows in 1940: “Black Barrow [is] the name of a natural eminence which is marked in error as a tumulus on 6” O.S., 1909 edition. It is curious how often the name Black Barrow is applied to natural hills”. They go on to mention two other such barrows as being natural formations, including Black Barrow at East Lulworth (which is also confirmed as a natural mound; see below). Indeed, Black Barrow does not need to have been a genuinely constructed Bronze Age barrow to have been of significance: it would have been seen as a noteworthy feature by our ancestors and provided a focal point in the landscape, perhaps all the more so for having been a natural or maybe even a ‘magical’ occurrence.



Being situated on greensand, the attribution of 'black' to its dark-coloured soil as is the case with some of the other examples cannot really be said to apply in the Island case. But the traditional relationship between the term 'black' and dark or sinister associations is not one to be easily dismissed. A contributor to the Modern Antiquarian website states that this barrow has a "strange atmosphere which I didn't much care for!" – and having once been in there I would have to agree. However, whether this was always the case before it became badly overgrown with decaying trees and undergrowth is impossible to say.



The one piece of traditional 'folklore' I am aware of in association with the Black Barrow comes from a Brook local resident who spent all his life living in the area. According to this, there was once a big battle

fought in the area and the dead were buried in the barrow. It doesn't matter so much whether there is any historical truth attached to this or whether any battle was so fought; what matters is that it was a long-held folk belief that it was so (unlike, for instance, the many stories attached to the Longstone claiming to be ancient but which have been invented in the last twenty or thirty years). There were once no doubt similar versions of the story and probably other, different, stories associated with the barrow, and it would have continued to have an importance and stand out as a significant monument in the lives of many local residents over several centuries.

Some Comparative Examples

The ascription to Black Barrow as being "by far the largest and most unusual barrow on the Island" has several parallels, though I was initially surprised to find fewer examples round the country than I had been expecting, despite many place-names beginning in 'Black'. But persistence paid off and eventually a number of Black Barrows, or versions thereof, were uncovered, mainly in southern England.

Of the Black Barrow in the parish of East Lulworth, **Dorset**, the Survey of English Place-Names gives as its etymology 'probably dark-coloured hill'; and interestingly, somewhat like the Isle of Wight, states that "although marked as a tumulus, it is in fact a natural mound". Another bowl barrow on the summit of a knoll called Black Hill is situated in the parish of Burley in the **New Forest** (Historic England 10090270).

Black Hill Barrow in the parish of Troston, St Edmundsbury, **Suffolk**, is described as "a very fine large mound, almost resembling a castle-mound", 120 feet in diameter and 9.5 feet high. It is badly overgrown and planted with young firs, with many animal holes in the mound (Historic England 1017791); this sounds very like the condition of the Isle of Wight barrow.

Another Black Hill Bronze Age barrow exists in the Breckland parish of Weasenham All Saints, **Norfolk** – 50 feet in diameter and 3 feet high.

A Black Barrow is described as "a striking feature in the landscape, and mentioned in several perambulations of **Exmoor Forest** from 1279"; it is variously referred to as *Blakeborgh* (1279), *Blakebergure* (1301), and *Blackborowe* (1621). The bowl barrow is 22 paces in diameter and 6 feet high, and "is gutted in the centre, north and west, with material probably used for a wall across its centre". It was used as a boundary marker for the forest, as detailed during the reign of Henry III; and sits on the boundary of Oare, Exmoor and Porlock parishes, Somerset. (Exmoor National Park HER; Historic England 1006205)

A Black Barrow near Lanivet in **Cornwall** was "one of five barrows shown on the Tithe Map...", and was presumably the "Black Barrow, diameter 60ft recorded by Thomas on the north side of the new turnpike road" (Historic England Research Records). No further information is provided, and the barrow is presumably no longer in existence.

In an article on 'Black' place-names in **Dartmoor**, Devon, landscape historian Tim Sandles (who maintains the 'Legendary Dartmoor' website) states: "Think of the word 'black' and you will be hard-pressed to come up with anything that does not have dark or sinister associations... [However,] there is a much more agreeable reason why so many places on Dartmoor are 'black' and that is quite simply in some instances thanks to the presence of peat." It then goes on to list sixty locations on Dartmoor with 'Black' in the name! "So basically you can pay your money and take your choice as to the meaning of Dartmoor's 'black' places. They could be in areas of peat or dense coverings of heather or maybe beacon fire locations, possibly even bleak and remote locations." The latter would however not be easily translatable to the Island site, which is on greensand.

The suggestion of 'black land' as uncultivated land comes up more than once. "The locals called it the 'Black Barrow' because the grass wouldn't grow on it" – possibly indicating that something bad had happened there.

Further afield, regarding the Black Mountains of south-east Wales, "some say that it was the Saxons who provided the name for they always saw these mountains from the eastern side of the Wye". Given that it was the Saxons who came up with the names for Wales and the Welsh, meaning 'foreigners' – as opposed to the native Welsh names *Cymru* and *Cymraeg*, meaning 'fellow countrymen' – this sounds like a quite plausible explanation.

Finally, it might be worth mentioning Black Combe, a fell in the Lake District. Julian Cope, the rock star who wrote *The Modern Antiquarian: A Pre-Millennial Odyssey through Megalithic Britain*, when he is not given to flights of fancy has some useful thoughts to contribute: "... and beyond, rising out of the flat fertile

coastal plain, glowed a wonderful Mother mountain... clearly a recumbent figure... her name was Black Combe... looking for all the world like a pregnant Mother on her back”.

An online etymology states that the name of the hill is taken from its prominent corrie [a steep-sided hollow], dark in colour and itself known as Blackcombe. Cope however refers to “Black Annis, whose reputation as ‘the destroyer’ somewhat explains Black Combe’s similar dark reputation”. He opines that the coming of Christianity discouraged people from visiting any more and ostensibly quotes a local saying: “Nowt good comes round Black Combe”. However, Black Annis, a genuine bogeyman figure in English folklore imagined as a blue-faced hag or witch with iron claws and a taste for human flesh, seems to haunt the countryside of Leicestershire rather than that of Cumbria.

Conclusions

In the end, all we are left with are random clues and circumstantial evidence – which goes for many of the other ‘Black’ place-names generally. Therefore, any conclusions for a site such as Black Barrow must inevitably be tentative. Never having been excavated, we cannot say for definite whether the Island’s Black Barrow is natural or man-made, but whatever the case it is likely to have been accorded special significance as a consequence of its extraordinary size, shape and place in the landscape, and this seems to have been a common feature of other similarly named sites. Whether the site’s ‘dark’ associations were always a feature which resulted in its naming, or an attribute which has been acquired since, is likewise a matter for conjecture. But the idea of ‘black land’ as uncultivated land, with the further suggestion of something ‘dark’ having happened there, is a feasible one which suits the Island example well, and accords with the one piece of folklore that we have for the site, of battle-dead being buried there. There would undoubtedly once have been a number of similar folk stories attached to the barrow which, like so much else of the Island’s folklore, were never recorded and are now lost for good.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr Vicky Basford for reading through this paper and making various helpful comments.

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Alan Phillips

A Visit to Bill Shepard



Bill has been a member of the Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeological Society for longer than anyone else. He first joined in 1955. He is also, by far the oldest member of the Society at 101 years of age.

Bill has been a natural historian all his life. He has been the Botany Recorder for the Island and was co-author of the 'Flora of the Isle of Wight' (1978). He is also a renowned Newport historian and has written many books on the history of Newport. He is now living in Blackwater Mill Residential Home, where he is well looked after. On 18th September a group of Society members visited him there for tea. We had been invited by Penelope, the manager, to look around the grounds. The staff are very proud of the grounds which include remains of Blackwater Mill, the old millpond, a stretch of the river Medina and ornamental grounds well cared for and planted with very fine exotic and native trees. We met Bill sat by the millpond admiring the fine old weeping willows lining the banks. He was in good spirits and enjoyed meeting us.

Are you able to offer your help?

Every Thursday morning, our headquarters at Cowes are manned. There are always jobs to do, answering e-mails and telephone messages, printing out programmes and documents, sorting out the library, organising our filing system, sending out messages, going through our archives, and much more. We are hoping to move offices within the Prospect Business Park building which will require more sorting out and rationalising what we keep.

Are you able to give up a couple of hours each Thursday morning to help Jackie and Colin keep the hidden machinery of the Society running at our base in Cowes? If you might be able to help, please either e-mail iwnhas@btconnect.com or leave a message on 01983 282596

Newtown Seal Survey

Many members who visit our coast frequently will have noticed that seal sightings are becoming more common. Even just ten years ago, encountering a seal off the shore would have been a rare treat! Now however, both Grey Seals and Harbour (or Common) Seals can be expected in most coastal areas and at all times of year. This is a surprising expansion in the range of both species, as our region is very busy with commercial and recreational craft, and other sea users.

As both species are nationally protected, it is important to establish if anywhere around our coast might support a resident population of seals. At Newtown, sightings of Grey and Harbour seals have increased significantly, with combined peak counts now approaching 20. In collaboration with the National Trust (NT), a few of us have started to monitor seal numbers at Newtown and plotting their position to try and identify regular haul-out and feeding sites. From the NT boat, we have been able to take excellent photos and we hope to be able to recognise individuals from the colour and pattern of the pelage. We will then be able to establish for how long they are staying in the harbour.

It is assumed that Grey Seals (Fig 1), of which the UK has 40% of the global population, are 'passing through', perhaps on route to breeding sites. However, some individuals have been known to stay longer, such as Andy's 'Ron' (seal) at Ventnor. Some Grey seals observed in the Solent may have been released from the rehabilitation centre at Gweek in Cornwall, or other sanctuaries. Yet Grey Seals are also known to cross the English Channel from breeding sites on the north coast of France. Satellite tracking of Grey Seal pups in the south-west of England has shown that they can travel 1000km (621 miles) in their first eight weeks, so it would not be unusual to spot them here! On Boxing Day 2021 a small Grey Seal pup was seen at Newtown for the first time and its progress was followed till the summer of 2022 (Fig 2). Breeding Grey Seals in the region have not been recorded in recent history, and we can only be certain of local breeding success if they are observed suckling their mother.



Fig 1 Grey Seal



Fig 2 Grey Seal pup. Both Newtown Estuary April 2022

Globally, Harbour Seals (Fig 3) are much more widespread, though in the UK they are less common than Grey Seals. Largest numbers are to be found in Scotland and at locations on the east coast of England. The only Harbour Seal ‘rookery’ on the south-east coast of England is at Chichester Harbour, where numbers of seals have been rising steadily since the early 1990s.



Fig 3. Harbour Seal, Newtown estuary July 2022

According to Chichester Harbour Conservancy, in 2021, peak counts of Harbour Seals and Grey Seals across Chichester and Langstone Harbour were 57 and 20 respectively, with highest numbers observed between July and September. Seals from Chichester Harbour have been tracked foraging in the eastern Solent between Southampton Water and around Selsey Bill, including visits to Island harbours and creeks between Newtown and Bembridge.

During the 1980s, numbers of Harbour seals plummeted by 50% due to outbreaks of the fatal Phocine Distemper Virus. Although there has been a recent decline in the Scottish population, rising numbers on the English coast could be indicative of lower levels of the virus. There is also evidence that as some of the main haul-out sites are now ‘full’. Seals are looking for new sites, which would explain the increase in sightings around the Island. Next year we shall be synchronising our surveys more closely with the Chichester Harbour Conservancy to try and get a better estimate of Solent populations.

If you do come across a seal on land, stay at least 50m away, put your dog on a lead and walk away. Never touch a seal as you could get hurt. Do not assume a seal pup is abandoned as its mum may be feeding nearby. If you find a stranded or injured seal, then contact ‘British Divers Marine Life Rescue’ <https://bdmir.org.uk> who will advise further. If you see a live seal on the water, do not chase or swim towards it – in fact seals may follow you! Only watch for 15 mins and if you are in a boat, travel at slow speed. Any records of seals around our coast are of interest so please send your sightings to Roger Herbert (roger.herbert59@btinternet.com).



Fig 4. The head of the Grey seal has more of a 'Roman nose' in profile.



Fig 5 Harbour seal's head is more 'dog-like' in profile.

Further updates will be published in the Bulletin.

Many thanks to NT Staff and Volunteers for support with the boat work – particularly Robin Laing, Davie Flannagan and Carole Truman. Photos by Keith Marston.

Roger Herbert, Keith & Anne Marston

What's in a name?

Ground Elder, *Aegopodium podagraria*

The generic name *Aegopodium* is interesting in that translations into English from Greek and Latin differ. Historically, *Aegopodium podagraria* was given the English common name of Goatweed from the fanciful belief that the plant's foliage was similar in shape to a goat's foot. The Greek word *aigos* means goat, while *podium* is a derivative of *podos*, Greek for a foot.

In the more recent past, *A. podagraria* was commonly known as Goatweed. A personal interpretation is that from the Greek language. *Aegopodium* can be divided into two elements: *Aegis* was the name of the shield belonging to the Greek god Zeus, while *podium* refers to a foot. Thus, when translated into English, *Aegopodium* would mean protection for the foot, protection being synonymous with shield. However, a similar Latin word *aeger* means sick or diseased and when coupled with *podium* would mean diseased foot.

These two latter interpretations seem to make perfect sense when considering that historically *Aegopodium podagraria* plants were used by herbalists as a cure for gout. The medical term for gout, especially in the foot, is podagra, hence the specific name of *podagraria*.



The current English name for the plant is Ground Elder with reference to the foliage being likened to the leaves of Elder trees.

Sue Blackwell

(Illustration from Sowerby's English Botany, 1865)



Helen Danby came across an interesting find in her woodland, Saltern Wood at Norton in August. Whilst inspecting the woods with her gardener, they came across a Honey Bee's nest being constructed on the branch of an oak tree directly below a box put up for Red Squirrels. This is a feral nest built by a swarm of bees settling under the branch of the tree.

A Cicada in Newport!

During the period of extreme heat this summer, staff at Rouse Ltd, financial planners based in Lugley Street, Newport, were amazed to hear what sounded like a cicada. Cicadas are loudly-singing insects that might typically be heard on summer nights in much warmer areas such as southern France or Spain. They do not normally live on the Isle of Wight.

Ben Silk and Mark Holland-Washington recorded the song of the insect in the garden in Lugley Street and soon realised what an unusual visitor they had. Mark said: "We recently moved into the refurbished Lugley House, and my colleague Ben Silk first heard this noise as we were leaving at the end of the day. It was so loud we wondered at first if it was the sound of renovation work still going on, but to my surprise it sounded like a cicada. " Mark made a recording of the song and contacted the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society headquarters. The report sounded both convincing and unbelievable!

Iain Outlaw visited Rouse Ltd and was able to confirm and photograph (left) the insect as a cicada, normally found much further south. Iain contacted Dr Joe Botting of the National Hemiptera Recording Scheme to let him know about this discovery. He was able to confirm that there have been several foreign cicadas spotted this year across south-eastern England. It seems that the high temperature is now allowing nymphs to emerge from transported soil, rather than there being any resident breeding population, but the trend is pointing in that direction one day soon.



This is not the New Forest Cicada, Britain's only native species (although not recorded in the past twenty years) but a continental insect. Iain considers that, given that the song is continuous rather than oscillating, it is likely to be *Cicada barbara*, native across North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula and Southern France. The nymphs live underground where they feed on sap from tree roots for up to three years. They emerge as adults from July to September but only live for a few weeks. Only the males sing, to attract females. They are usually found in open woodland, rural or semi-urban areas. Males sing from trees or bushes and also from posts, fences and buildings.

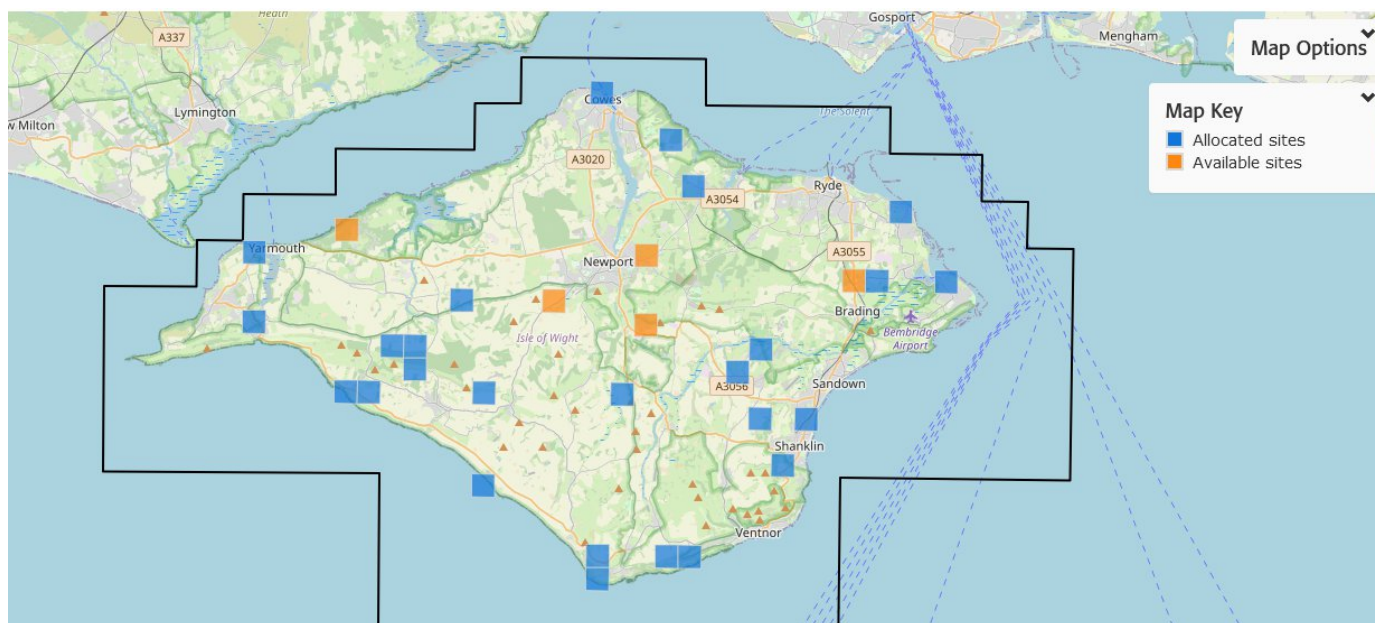


This is not the first Cicada recorded from the Island. Here is part of a fossilised Cicada wing found by Andy Yule on the beach at Thorness and photographed by Alex Peaker.

British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) News



Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)



The 2022 BTO Breeding Bird Survey received its best coverage to date on the Isle of Wight. Of the 26 1-km squares allocated to counters (blue squares on the map), I received data for both early and late visits

from 24 squares with an early visit only from another square. This represents a 32% increase in coverage compared to 2021.

The methodology of the survey is the BTO randomly allocates 1-km squares to each region. If all squares are allocated, the BTO randomly allocates further squares.

The surveyor makes two early morning spring visits to the 1-km square, between early-April and mid-May and mid-May to late-June, walking two parallel transect routes, divided into ten sections. The birds seen in each section are recorded.

A total of 78 species were recorded from the two visits made to each site with the ten most recorded species as follows:

Position	Species	% of 1-km squares recorded	2021 Position
=1	Woodpigeon	100	=1
=1	Blackbird	100	=1
=1	Wren	100	=4
=4	Jackdaw	96	=1
Position	Species	% of 1-km squares recorded	2021 Position
=4	Robin	96	=6
=6	Carrion Crow	92	=6
=6	Goldfinch	92	=4
=6	Blue Tit	92	=9
=9	Dunnock	88	=11
=9	Chiffchaff	88	=6

No major changes in the top ten most recorded species in comparison to 2021. Dunnock moves up at the expense of Great Tit which dropped down from equal 9th to equal 11th.

It is worth noting that House Sparrow showed a 10% increase in the number of squares present in comparison to 2021 while Song Thrush was recorded in 10% less squares than in 2021. Only three 1-km squares recorded Willow Warbler, a depressing statistic in comparison to 30 years ago when it was classified as a “Common Breeding Summer Visitor” in the Isle of Wight Bird Report.

Many thanks to the following BBS surveyors in 2022: Jess Aldred, Jim Baldwin, Ian Boyd, Peter Burgess, Dave Fairlamb, James Gloyn, Mark Larter, Patricia Lockwood, Kevin Lover, Sarah McWilliam, Tony Sztypuljak, Andrew Twyman and Daphne Watson. If anyone is interested in taking part in the BBS for 2023, please contact me as we have available sites, especially around the Newport area (orange squares on the map).

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

Sixteen sites received coverage for the July 2021 to June 2022 count year, the same number of sites as in the 2020/21 reporting year.

62 species of waterbird were recorded plus 6 Category E species (Escape & hybrids). The table below lists the top 8 sites (Foreland and Hersey were joint 8th) which recorded the most waterbird species seen during the reporting year (excluding Escapes and hybrids).

Site	Site Status	Number of species
Brading Harbour (Bembridge Hbr & Brading Marshes RSPB Reserve)	Very High Priority	49
Newtown NNR	Very High Priority	43
Western Yar	Very High Priority	40
Medina Estuary	Very High Priority	32

Thorness Bay	Very High Priority	29
Wootton Creek	Very High Priority	28
Kings Quay	Medium High Priority	24
Foreland	Very High Priority	23
Hersey NR	High Priority	23

Brading Harbour has recorded the most waterbird species each year for WeBS since 2015/16.

The largest concentration of waterbirds recorded at a site during a day was 4,434 at Newtown NNR on 19th December 2021. Three other sites recorded over 1,000 in a day; Brading Harbour (2,951 on 23rd January 2022), Western Yar (2,199 on 23rd January 2022) and River Medina (1,286 on 21st February 2022).

Counts were made along the Western Yar (Yar Estuary) (Kevin Lover), at Newtown NNR (John Willmott *et al*), at Thorness Bay (Dave Hunnybun), along the River Medina (Medina Estuary) (Keith Marston), at Carisbrooke Pond (Richard Knight), at Towngate Pond (Jackie Hawkins), at King's Quay (George Rowing *et al*), at Wootton Creek (Derek Hale), at Bathingbourne Reservoir (Jon Sparshott), at Ryde Canoe Lake (Charlotte Goswell), at Ryde East Sands (Charlotte Goswell), at Hersey NR (Jackie Hart), at Sandown Meadows NR (Patricia Lockwood), at Sandown Canoe Lake (Tracy Dove), at Brading Harbour (Brading Marsh and Bembridge Harbour) (James Gloyn *et al*) and at Foreland (Mark Buckley). Many thanks to all of the above counters and their respective teams for the excellent coverage throughout the reporting period.

Further analysis of this survey will be available in the next Bulletin when hopefully the national report will be available.

Woodcock Survey 2023

In a recent review of the population status of birds in the UK, the Woodcock was 'Red Listed' as a bird of European conservation concern because of a long-term decline in breeding numbers and range. The purpose of this national survey is to provide an updated national population estimate and assessment of range change compared to the previous surveys in 2003 and 2013. In addition, habitat use will be investigated to improve our knowledge of habitat requirements, which can improve future woodland management for Woodcock.

The Isle of Wight has been initially allocated eight 1-km squares to cover. Dave Hunnybun is covering Parkhurst Forest as part of a long-term survey, but the other seven squares are currently available at the time of going to press.

The available squares are as follows:

SZ3385 Tennyson Down	SZ5291 Fattingspark Copse
SZ4384 Brighstone Down	SZ5294 Barton Wood
SZ4784 Newbarn Down	SZ3890 Bouldnor reserve (HIWWT)
SZ5590 Firestone Copse	

The methodology for the survey is as follows: A total of four visits will be required:

April: one daytime recce to establish the best place to locate the count point.

May to June: three visits to the count point at dusk, at least one week apart, between 1st May and 30th June. If no woodcock are recorded on both of the first two dusk visits, there is no need to make the third visit.

Each count lasts 75 minutes. Counts should commence 15 minutes before sunset and finish 60 minutes after sunset.

If you are interested in taking part in the Woodcock survey, you can register to take part or obtain further information at <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/woodcock-survey>. Any problems or queries, please contact me.

Contact details: **Jim Baldwin (BTO Regional Representative)**

Amanita ovoidea is spreading!

The Bearded Amanita toadstool, *Amanita ovoidea*, has been known from St Boniface Down at Ventnor for a number of years now. It was first found here in 1989 and it fruits abundantly in most years. This is a spectacular large white Amanita associated with Holm Oak resembling a half-buried ostrich egg when young. It is a widespread Mediterranean species but the steep, sunny slopes at Ventnor is the only known regular British location and consequently it has become a site of pilgrimage for some keen mycologists during the autumn.

Now, it would seem that it is spreading. At our fungus foray in Beech Copse this autumn we were joined by Phil and Veronica Barden who were here on holiday. They had been walking the footpath above St Lawrence and noticed *Amanita ovoidea* growing associated with Holm Oak on the chalky slopes just to the east of St Rhadegund's Path, a very similar habitat to those at Ventnor. They went back after the foray to take pictures and they found 66 fruiting bodies, a remarkable number, around SZ532766.

Amanita ovoidea forms a mycorrhizal association with Holm Oak roots and it is surmised that fungal spores arrived from across the Channel. Holm Oak does occur as a native species in coastal north-western France where there are records for the agaric. I am grateful to Phil and Veronica Barden for alerting me to this new observation and for providing the photographs to illustrate this article.



Colin Pope



Despite the uncertain times for meetings post Covid, iWatch, the Society's outreach project led by Tina Whitmore, has been busy. We have taken part in a number of events. 'Into the Wild' on 29th June was our first event of 2022 where we were invited by the Wildheart Trust to represent IW conservation and biodiversity alongside Wildlife Trust / Wight Squirrel Project. We carried out species recording on the day

alongside 2 x activities based on key species (clay hedgehogs and paper swift making) alongside our natural history specimen handling collection. This was followed up by a Bioblitz event on 30th July when Society recorders recorded 343 during 24 hours at the Wildheart Trust at the request of Lisa Banfield. Species records included a new moth for the Island, *Isophrictis striatella*.

We attended Ventnor Day on 6th July, a large, community celebration event held at Ventnor Park – music, stalls, exhibitors, food etc. and our first public event in Ventnor. It was a very busy day, with lots of interest. The Archaeologists were also present at Ventnor Day.

Our exhibits at Wolverton Manor Garden Fair this year



As usual, the Society was present over the weekend at the Wolverton Manor Garden Fair in the conservation tent, courtesy of IW AONB. We had a larger site in the centre of the marquee which enabled both the archaeologists and natural historians to display more material. Our exhibit this year had a garden wildlife theme eg. moths as pollinators and plants for pollinators, hedgehogs and ladybirds alongside our Nat Hist specimens and two activities (mini-bug house making and decorate a paper moth on paper seeded with wildflower seeds). It was a very busy and successful weekend, with high quality engagement with local residents and was also very productive in the capturing of scores of Hummingbird Hawkmoth Records!

We were pleased to be part of the revival of the Fort Victoria Foray on 24th September to help celebrate and raise awareness of the IW Biosphere Reserve. We talked about moths as pollinators and had a moth trap on display. We also ran a moth related craft activity in tandem a seaweed transfer activity alongside a pop-up display of coastal related specimens. We also kept a rough tally of species spotted during the event.

In addition to events, Tina has been active through social media promoting our Species of the Month campaign, species of the year (the declining two-spot ladybird) and recording Hedgehogs with the help of the local Save our Hedgehogs group. iWatch Facebook account has 1,029 likes and our Instagram account has 411 followers. Two electronic 'Recording Now' newsletters have been sent out.

We have also supported the Hampshire Swifts Swift Box Scheme on the Island. To date 15 Swift boxes have been successfully installed across the Island. There is a considerable demand for Swift boxes but we are reliant upon the availability of the Hampshire team to deliver this and they are already very busy in Hampshire.

Tina Whitmore

Huge thanks go to Tina for all the work and time she puts into the iWatch Project and to the IW AONB Project and IW Biodiversity Partnership for providing funding to enable this work to go ahead.

The First Snowdrop

Fair Maid of February
 virgin princess
Grace of the spinney
 flawlessly dressed
 Silently waking
 in wintery light
Morning's perfection
 a wedding in white
Immaculate maiden
 awaiting her beau
In seasonal fashion
beneath veil of snow

Sue Blackwell

Birds from HMS Endurance, 1977/78

John Wilmott gives us an account of six months spent in the South Atlantic in 1977 working aboard the HMS Endurance.

Part One

Having watched the film 'Scott of the Antarctic' way back in the 1950's, I was left with a schoolboy's dream to be able to visit that vast, cold continent. Little did I realise that the dream would become a reality when serving in the Fleet Air Arm and volunteering for service on the Antarctic survey vessel HMS Endurance in 1977. She was originally built as a supply vessel by Denmark for their operations in the Arctic, not as an ice breaker, and she was named Anita Dan. Purchased by the Royal Navy, she underwent a multi-million pound refit to enable her to carry out hydrographic work and to be able to engage in helicopter operations to carry out that task. My job was as an electrical engineer maintaining the two Wasp anti-submarine helicopters that were embarked.

Deployment day, after a month's workup period, was 9th November, steaming out of Portsmouth for our long journey south. It was amazing how unpleasant and violent the seas were off St Catherine's Point. On entering the Bay of Biscay, surprisingly the seas were much more regular and we began to observe sea birds including Gannets, Great Shearwater, Great Skuas and Kittiwakes.

Saturday 19th November was an ornithologist's day to remember. By this time, we were passing over the African continental shelf which apparently due to the NE winds, Gulf Stream and Canary Islands stream forces the cold water welling and with that upwelling masses of sea life. Numerous species of seabirds

abounded. There were many flocks of one hundred or more Grey Phalarope, the total amassing well over a thousand (*left below*). There were only very small numbers of Red-necked Phalarope with them. Also in good numbers were Cory's Shearwater and fewer Great Shearwater. Ever-present Gannets, Great and Arctic Skuas. It was interesting to observe the difference between the heavy, almost labouring, Cory's compared to the more elegant, graceful Great Shearwater. Throughout the day, Leach's Storm Petrel were seen. A few days later, we had our first casualty on board, an exhausted Leach's Storm Petrel. After a few hours rest on my bunk, it had recovered and was ready for release (*right below*).



As we neared the Equator through the doldrums, far fewer birds were seen but on Wednesday 23rd November, six herons surprised us by appearing out of nowhere in the mid-Atlantic. They were obviously very tired and wanted to land on board so we quickly lowered the flight safety nets, closed the hanger doors and waited. It was not until after sunset that they landed on various parts of the ship. The herons were still with us at first light, one in the crow's nest, two on the hanger roof etc. By noon they had all departed, bar one that was extremely weak and eventually crashed into the sea well astern of us. I was able to identify them as first winter juvenile Purple Herons. Out of interest, it was at this time that the Navigator had located an 11,600 ft mountain rising from the seabed and promptly named it officially as 'Victoria' after his dog.

We crossed the Equator at 06.00 hrs on Friday 26th November with King Neptune putting in his usual appearance later in the day for the Crossing the Line ceremony. That day the only bird we saw all day was a lone Storm Petrel. Also on this day, to relieve boredom, the ship's Physical Training Instructor organised an 'It's a team knockout competition' on the flight deck involving all sorts of physical exercises. To our surprise and pleasure, the Senior Rates team won, collecting a case of beer as winners.

Now off the South American coast our first shore-going visit was to Rio de Janeiro, which proved very popular with the ship's company. Visits to the impressive statue of Christ and Sugarloaf mountain were made. It was here that I experienced how small a world we live in. I was showing a family of English people round the ship, the father worked for Vospers on contract in Rio. Showing them my cabin, the daughter looked at one of my family photos and said, 'There's Annette'; they went to the same school in Fareham!

Leaving Rio and now into December, we saw Brown Boobies and, on 4th December, our first Albatross, a Black-browed, in company with Great Shearwaters. What a magnificent sight to see this bird gliding effortlessly over the waves with its eight-foot wingspan (*left below*). By the way, this was at latitude 28° 32' south, 46° 49' west. The ship had a brief stay in Montevideo, which we all loved as they are so friendly a people and we were able to enjoy their monstrous steaks. As we continued south, so we saw more and more different species but it was 5 Wandering Albatross together with 25 Black-browed Albatross, 14 Great Shearwater, 14 White-chinned Petrel and 4 Giant Petrel that will remain in my memory, what a sight! It was also in this area where I saw my first Wilson's Petrel, the feet definitely do extend beyond the tail and, if close enough, the yellow webs can be seen especially as they feed, bouncing up and down on the water. Apparently, the name petrel came from the old Portuguese sailors who thought they reminded them of St Peter walking on water (*right below*). These latest sightings were at 38° 40' south, 56° 20' west, now off

the Argentinian coast. It was only a day later that we saw our first penguins, just two, but we were unable to identify them.



We arrived at Port Stanley in the Falkland Isles on 13th December, where we remained for five days. The Falkland Islands consist of many islands that total in area about the size of Wales and are as far south of the Equator as Birmingham is north of the Equator. But of course, Birmingham doesn't suffer the effects of the roaring forties and furious fifties. The locals were very pleased to see us and made us most welcome. Many invites to the ship's company for hospitality were gratefully received and enjoyed. Of course, in return many guests were entertained on board. What amused me were the number of buildings that had painted red roofs, the colour of Endurance's hull!

Leaving Stanley on 18th December we steamed south passing Cape Pembroke where I counted 165 flying Black-browed Albatross, quite a sight. Just to the south of the Falklands lies the uninhabited island Beauchene where a huge colony of Black-browed Albatross breed. The stench of guano was awful. We were now steaming across the notorious Drake Passage heading for South Georgia, what a magical sounding name that is. Before we arrived at South Georgia, we began seeing yet more species of birds including an ethereal Light-mantled Sooty Albatross and grey-head Albatross. I could always tell the Grey-headed at a distance from the Black-browed because it flies with its head slightly down. Some of the smaller species including Blue Petrels and Pintado Petrels or Cape Pigeons. It was especially rewarding to see White-bellied Storm Petrels in the wake; they are so agile.

The ship arrived at Grytviken, South Georgia, on Christmas Eve anchoring in Cumberland Bay, from where we could see the little cemetery where Sir Ernest Shackleton is buried (*middle over*). Mount Paget provides a wonderful backdrop to Grytviken with the snow-covered peak. It was a very special place to spend Christmas Day and we even had a church service in the nearby little Swedish church that was especially opened for us (*left over*). Grytviken was founded by C.A.Larson in 1904 when he set up the first of seven whaling stations. Whaling ceased on the island in 1965. Just before going to the mess for Christmas dinner, I went up onto the flight deck with some bread and sat on the deck and in no time at all, I was feeding nine very friendly Great Skuas around my feet. They had no fear of me at all (*right over*).



Lying just south of South Georgia is Bird Island, home to thousands of breeding birds in particular Wandering, Black-browed, Grey-headed and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. It really was my privilege to be taken onto this island to see for myself. The helicopter took me ashore with my guide, a British Antarctic Survey bird man. After vacating the helicopter, the first task was to walk through a colony of Fur Seals. Although not aggressive unless their pups are threatened, the guide advised me to be careful. Fortunately, we had no problems. We moved on first of all to an occupied nest of a pair of Wandering Albatross, an amazing experience. The birds, of course, were completely unafraid of us and they were such beautiful creatures. Two things struck me, one was the size of their feet, huge, and also the fact that the wings being the length they are, spanning some eleven feet, have a double wing fold so they are not trailing on the ground when folded. Unlike the Wandering Albatross, the Black-browed and Grey-headed Albatrosses nest in colonies, whilst the Light-mantled Sooty nest in looser colonies. To see the Black-browed Albatross on the nest make the birds seem ornamental, so perfect is their plumage. The final bird that was introduced to me was a juvenile White-chinned Petrel that was taken out of its nesting burrow for health checks. The chick really was a picture and felt quite comfortable when handled. The White-chinned Petrel is also called the Shoemaker as when in its nesting burrow it utters a strange tapping sound.





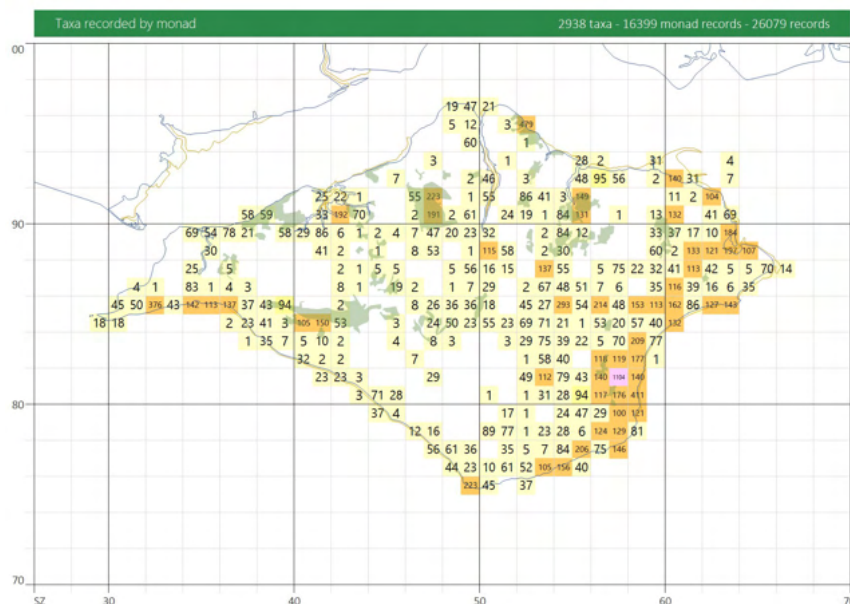
John & a member of the British Antarctic Survey team visit Bird Island with Wandering Albatross

.....to be continued

John Wilmott

Pan-species recording challenge 2022

After a relatively quiet 2021, I decided to have another go at an IW species recording challenge, similar to my efforts in 2020 (see Bulletin 75) but this time without setting any target. The rules were simple: any species of flora or fauna would count as long as I saw it for myself, even if it was found and identified by someone else. That meant I could twitch birds or insects and count fungi from the IWNHAS forays. The crucial factor was that the data were reliable and identifications certain, using dissection or microscopic examination where necessary and verified by national recording schemes where possible. I've learnt a lot since my previous attempt but there would be a lot of study required this time too. The year was a great success, so much so that it is impossible to describe more than a few of the highlights.



January-March

It was never my intention to go 'all out' but to set a sustainable recording pace throughout the year. That said, there was a degree of picking of low-hanging fruit in the first couple of months. The tone was set on day one by staying in East Wight for the New Year's Day birdathon which added a modest 70 bird species but 93 others. Although most were common or even ubiquitous species there was a scattering of scarcer species like the bristletail, *Dilta littoralis* and the sea slater, *Lekanesphaera hookeri*. That was followed by a successful IWNHAS plant hunt at Bembridge. A long plant list was supplemented with the fungus *Arrhenia spathulata* growing on the moss, *Syntrichia ruraliformis*. There was just one previous IW record of the fungus, then in Bembridge Churchyard I found the scale insect, *Parthenolecanium pomericum*, the first for the Island.

Over the next few weeks, I tried my hand at various sampling methods such as 'tussocking', which provided good numbers of millipedes plus a few beetles like *Badister bullatus* and the tiny carabid *Syntomus foveatus*. 'Seaweed shaking' proved less successful than turning over a few rocks but rock-pooling produced lots of common species like Broad-clawed Porcelain Crab and Star Ascidian but also the strange-looking sea spider, *Ammothea hilgendorfi*, a North Pacific species that in the UK was first recorded from Southampton Water.

Surprisingly low returns from the garden moth traps were worrying, particularly the low numbers of *Orthosia* species, but that might have been weather related. More profitable was using every opportunity when away from home for wildlife recording. A visit to St. Mary's Hospital gave me the opportunity for a mooch around the grounds where I found three species on aphid that were new to the Island on a single pine branch. Another aphid new to the Island, *Aphis gossypii*, was found at Whitefield Wood while my long-suffering better half did the weekly grocery shopping.

I tried to get out somewhere new every other day, even if for only an hour. That kept the species list growing and included some great finds. Beetles were an early focus and I found Sibden Hill to be good for *Vincenzellus ruficollis*, the spectacular Snail Hunter (*Cychrus caraboides*) was found under a log in Borthwood Copse and *Ocys tachysoides* found in Shanklin was confirmed by dissection. I made three attempts to find the pill millipede, *Trachysphaera lobata* at East Cliff, Bembridge without success but did turn up several other beetles during the search. Those included *Laemostenus complanatus*, *Lordithon trinotatus* and *Omalium rivulare*. Carrying an old sheet with me proved useful by laying it beneath any likely looking vegetation and giving the branches a bash with a stick. Gorse was particularly productive with more beetles like *Andrion regensteiniense*, *Exapion ulicis*, *Micrambe ulicis* and even *Rhyzobius chrysomeloides*.

Lots of spiders were beaten from vegetation too. Although in the past put off by the fact that many spiders require microscopic examination to identify, I intended to make more of an effort this year. *Trachyzelotes pedestris* was recovered from a grass tussock on Culver Down, the beautiful *Gibbaranea gibbosa* was found at Haddon's Pits and Sibden Hill, *Agalenatea redii* was beaten from gorse at Mottistone Down.

There was a dip in recording in mid-February thanks to storm Eunice but by the end of March the challenge was going very well with 821 species recorded.

April-June

Moth survey work and collecting permits allow me access to some sites fabulous for wildlife recording, for which I am very grateful. The National Trust and Forestry England estates are brilliant but this year the Haseley Manor Nature Reserve and the largely unexplored Osborne House grounds have been exceptional. As the weather warmed and moth survey season took off, so did the number of species recorded. It gives me a real buzz each time I visit these sites, you just know there is going to be something good to see.

The three months of April to June saw an incredible 490 Lepidoptera species added to the tally. I started a regular moth survey for English Heritage in the grounds of Osborne House in 2021. One of my early finds was a Scarce Merveille du Jour, a species not recorded on the Island since Victoria's time; a fact

not lost on English Heritage. However, I had only found a single individual so was delighted to see two more this year. Other great moths from Osborne included Beautiful Snout, Olive Crescent, Satin Lutestring and the Island's second record of *Musotima nitidalis*, an accidentally introduced New Zealand species.

Haseley Manor Nature Reserve is the most reliable site for Sharp-angled Carpet and three were recorded there in June. Next a Dewick's Plusia appeared, previously considered a scarce migrant but now appearing more frequently and established in parts of Southern England. A real surprise was a rare migrant Orache Moth. Also found at Haseley were Spitting Spider, Lesser Woodlouse-spider and Death-watch Beetle.

A less welcome find was the Island's first Zigzag Elm Sawfly at Osborne. First recorded in Britain in 2017 and spreading fast, it was only a matter of time before it arrived here. I subsequently found it at more than 30 locations across the Island.

Visiting somewhere different each time I took our Cocker Spaniel out for a walk allowed me to add lots of plants to the list including Field Cow-wheat, Greater Butterfly-orchid, Nottingham Catchfly, Wild Liquorice and Yarrow Broomrape.

Many other interesting species were recorded. After years of frustration at having failed to find a Stag Beetle I was able to twitch a fabulous male specimen found in Ryde, one of more than 100 beetle species added during this period. Another great find was a calling Field Cricket, incredible how far the sound carries. By the end of June the tally had jumped to 2019 species.



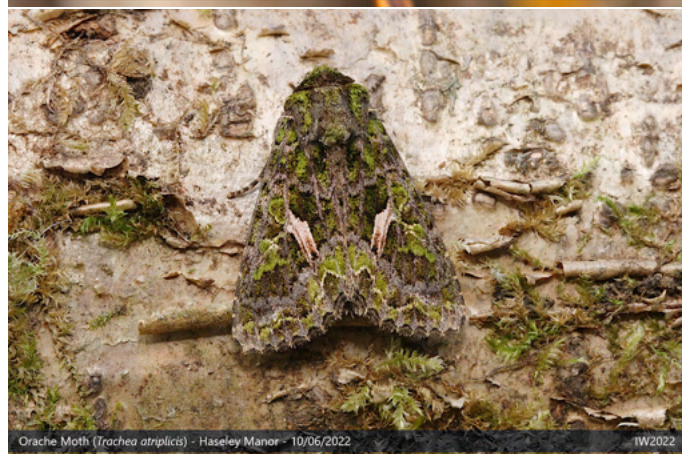
Adonis' Ladybird (*Hippodamia variegata*) - St. Helens Duver - 18/05/2022

IW2022



Dewick's Plusia (*Macdunnaghia confusa*) - Haseley Manor - 30/04/2022

IW2022



Orache Moth (*Trachea atriplicis*) - Haseley Manor - 10/06/2022

IW2022



Spitting Spider (*Scytodes thoracica*) - Haseley Manor - 30/04/2022

IW2022

July-September

Moth diversity and numbers peak in July so despite the phenomenal spring there were many others to be found now. Trapping in Parkhurst Forest produced the first Clouded Magpie of the year, this species seems to have had a very good year with 15 at my traps, 10 of those in the garden. Also from Parkhurst Forest the fabulous Orange Moth, Small Black Arches and the Australian import, *Barea asbolaea*.

Further moth trapping at Osborne produced the first IW record of *Blastobasis rebeli* along with Dusky Hook-tip, *Ethmia quadrillella* and Clifden Nonpareil. Another fabulous find from 2021 was a rare migrant moth and first for IW, Ringed Border. Well this year, and with the assistance of James Halsey, we trapped 13 Ringed Border, suggesting this rare migrant is now established at Osborne.

Other locations were productive too: at West High Down with Crescent Dart, Radford's Flame Shoulder, Small Purple-barred, Square-spot Dart, Tawny Shears, *Pyrausta cingulata* and *Tebenna micalis* among many others. A session on behalf of the Wildheart Animal Sanctuary in Sandown recorded 101 species including the first *Isophrictis striatella* for the Island, along with *Grapholita funebrana*, a scarce species here.

In early November 2021 I found pupae of the moth *Choreutis nemorana* on a fig tree in Shanklin. The first British record of this moth, also known as Fig-tree Skeletonizer, was from Hyde Park in 2014. This was the first record for IW so I collected several pupae but all had been parasitised. This year I found larvae and pupae on a tree in St. Lawrence. More pupae were collected and bred through, the first adult moth eclosed on 07 September. Fig trees affected by this moth were found at a further five locations across the Island by the end of the month.

At the start of July, Andy Butler and I paid a visit to the Blackgang Terraces making the trek from Rocken End and it was worth it. A Clouded Yellow flew past as we walked in, and at the terraces we saw the target species, Keeled Skimmer, Cliff Tiger Beetle and Royal Fern. A bonus was finding Beautiful Yellow Underwing on heather there. The same week a trip to Bouldnor added Emerald Damselfly along with Black-tailed Skimmer, Emperor Dragonfly and Ruddy Darter. At Bembridge Lagoons I finally found some Starlet Sea Anemones, apparently not a native species despite the scientific name suggesting an IW origin, *Nematostella vectensis*.

This time of year is great for Hemiptera and 2022 was no exception with a further 62 species recorded. This is a hugely varied order incorporating scale insects, aphids, leafhoppers, shieldbugs and others. Brightly coloured Rhododendron Leafhopper can be abundant on the host plant as it is at Sibden Hill, while many others are rare or rarely reported. During an IWNHAS botany walk at Mottistone Common I found nymphs and adults of the bug, *Alydus calcaratus*, a species of dry heathland that has not been recorded on the Island since 1923. Of course, the hemipteran highlight was the incredible discovery of a cicada in Newport in August. I was fortunate enough to see and film this amazing insect and was able to identify it as *Cicada barbara*, an accidental import. Its natural range is North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula.

A few more spiders for the list included *Parasteatoda tepidariorum* and *Uloborus plumipes* from the hothouse at Ventnor Botanic Garden, *Micaria pulicaria* on the Luccombe Ledges and Green Crab Spider and *Cyclosa conica* at Osborne.

Flora are still a challenge for me but I'm making some progress. After a lot of searching, I eventually found Frog Orchid in West Wight. Some, like the Wood Calamint, are at known locations. Autumn Lady's-tresses was found on lawns in Shanklin, Autumn Squill is common on St. Helens Duver. Sea-milkwort was recorded at Bembridge Lagoons, Water-plantain at the New Bridge Ponds and Sharp-leaved Fluellen at Nunneys Wood. At home, Spotted Spurge appeared between the slabs of the patio.

Towards the end of September the focus moved to fungi. The first IWNHAS foray at Beech Copse produced 35 species including Wood Woollyfoot, Scarletina Bolete, Stinkhorn and Velvet Brittleleg. The following day a foray at Firestone Copse, organised through a Facebook Fungi group, added another 15 species including a fabulous Orange Bolete and Grey-spotted Amanita. During the foray I collected a small carabid that proved to be *Asaphidion curtum*, the beetle was carrying one of the so-called 'beetle hanger' fungi. These fungi are host specific, the fungus associated with *Asaphidion* being *Laboulbenia thaxteri*. I found plenty of other fungi for myself including Hairy Nuts Disco (*Lanzia echinophila*) at America Wood and Borthwood Copse, previously recorded only from Sainham Wood. Holly Parachute (*Marasmius hudsonii*) previously recorded only from Parkhurst Forest was found at several locations in Parkhurst and Borthwood Copse but also from my own garden which backs onto Hungerberry Copse, so perhaps it is just overlooked.

A further 630 species recorded by the end of September brought the total to 2649 for the year.



Ringed Border (*Stegania canaria*) - Osborne - 18/07/2022

IW2022

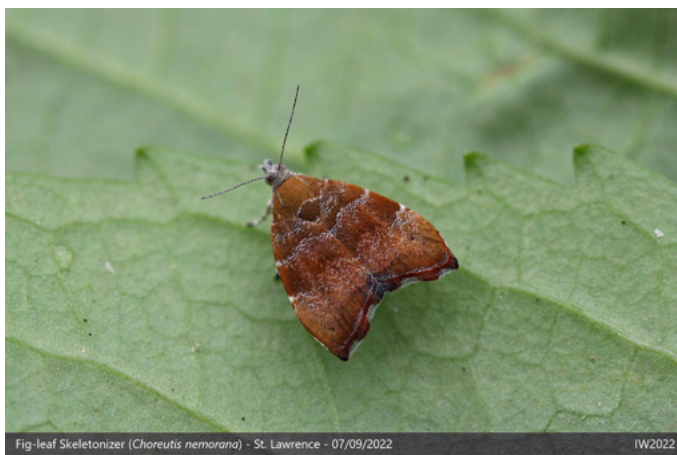


Fig-leaf Skeletonizer (*Choreutis nemorana*) - St. Lawrence - 07/09/2022

IW2022



Hornet Robberfly (*Asilus crabroniformis*) - Mottistone Down - 28/07/2022

IW2022



Starlet Sea Anemone (*Nematostella vectensis*) - Bembridge Lagoons - 27/07/2022

IW2022

October-December

Moving into autumn the pace began to slow but further fungus forays at Parkhurst Forest and Martin's Wood added significantly to the list. Allan Jackson kindly showed me some excellent fungi at Quarrels Copse and Combley Great Wood including Dog Stinkhorn, Magpie Inkcap and Fluted Bird's Nest. I caught up with the spectacular *Clathrus archeri* in South Wight and *Clathrus ruber* at Ventnor Botanic Garden. Then, alerted by a Facebook post, a small group of enthusiasts went to see Orange Ping-Pong Bat fungus found in Parkhurst Forest. First recorded in Britain from Cornwall in 2012 but spreading quickly this was the first record for IW. Research published in October 2021 demonstrated *Favolaschia calocera* is a species complex, the taxon found in south-west England, and presumably the one here, was raised to species rank as *Favolaschia claudopus*.

Having spent very little time on the coast I decided to do some more rock-pooling and visited Nodes Beach, Freshwater Bay, Ryde Pier and the Horse and Yellow ledges. Among the marine gastropods found were three species of sea slug: of those *Elysia viridis* is particularly impressive, it's green with electric blue spots. Originally from the North Pacific, the invasive Leathery Sea Squirt was found at Ryde Pier as were Sand Mason and Green-leaf Worm. Freshwater Bay provided Black-footed Limpet, Red Spire Shell (*Barleeia unifasciata*), Shanny and Shore Clingfish. These are all common coastal species but some scarcer species were found too. A seaweed sample from Yellow Ledge contained the non-native tanaidid *Zeuxo holdichi*, and a second sample contained *Cleantis prismatica*, the first IW record for this isopod.

There wasn't much time for wildlife recording in the final weeks of the year but I spent some time looking for bryophytes and recorded a number of species from the widespread and common *Polytrichum juniperinum* to the rare *Philonotis marchica*. The latter taking several attempts despite knowing where to look and a recent cliff fall a few feet from the site highlighting its precarious status in Britain. On Luccombe Down the *Polytrichum* also yielded the bryophilous fungus *Octospora rutilans*. A very brief visit to Ventnor Botanic Garden produced the fungus *Hypomyces rosellus* in leaf litter along with the slime mould *Craterium minutum*. A few more fungi at the end of the year included *Mycena tenerrima* on the trunk of an oak tree at Shanklin Big Mead, *Fomitiporia hippophaeicola* on Sea Buckthorn at St. Helens Duver and also in Shanklin

an interesting ascomycete on fallen bay leaves with perfectly triangular apothecia. I suspect this is *Coccomyces delta*, potentially new to Britain so samples have been sent for expert examination. That would make a nice way to end the recording year!

By the end of December I had recorded 2936 species, 700 of those new to me and about 35 are new for the Isle of Wight. We are so lucky to have such a range of fantastic habitats on the Island, providing a wonderful diversity of species but it is also amazing what can be found on your own doorstep. An incredible 1600 species were recorded within 2km of home.



Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) - Firestone Copse - 25/09/2022



Uresiphita gilvata - Shanklin - 25/10/2022

It only remains for me to thank everyone who helped and supported me along the way. In particular James Halsey, Stephen Plummer, Colin Pope, Toby Beasley, Anthony and Vivian Roberts, Andy Butler, Mark Telfer John and Shena Maskell, and Alan Brown.

Iain Outlaw

Andy's Nature Notes: July to December 2022

JULY

2nd. A Jersey Tiger moth in the garden, the earliest I have ever seen one.

4th. Went to Blackgang Terrace with Iain Outlaw this morning. We saw 2 Golden-ringed Dragonflies, 10 Keeled Skimmers (*right opposite*), one Common Darter, plenty of Royal Fern, c.100 Cliff Tiger beetles, 3 Palmated Newts (first I've seen there), a European Corn-borer and a Beautiful Yellow Underwing (moths), 7 Ravens and a Clouded Yellow along the shore. Wild Liquorice in flower at Windy Gap (*left opposite*).

5th. Visited Brook Down with Pete Campbell. We saw 302 Dark-green Fritillaries and c.20 Chalkhill Blues.

6th. Walked up from home through the Holm Oak wood on Bonchurch Down and along the lower path to Nansen Hill. 5 Dark-green Fritillaries, c.30 Ringlets, c.100 Marbled Whites, one Small Copper, 6 Small Heath, 2 Chalk Hill Blues, 2 Small Tortoiseshell. A Bloxworth Snout moth in my front room in the evening.

7th. An adult and juvenile Sandwich Tern in Wheeler's Bay.

8th. Went to Atherfield with Pete. 2 Golden-ringed Dragonflies, 5 Emperor Dragonflies, 2 Red-veined Darters, 3 Black-tailed Skimmers, one Sea Eagle, a juvenile Marsh Harrier, one Sparrow Hawk and about 80 Sand Martins.

10th. A Humming-bird Hawkmoth (HBHM) in the garden and a Painted Lady.

12th. Another Jersey Tiger in the garden. The Round-leaved Fluellen in flower and spreading into other parts of the garden.

14th. Dave Nordell and I saw 5 Mediterranean Gulls along at Monks Bay close in.

16th. Pete and I went up to Arreton Down to count Chalkhill Blues. We had a minimum of 20,000; a fine sight. We also went into Newport to look for White-letter Hairstreaks at Towngate. Total of just 2.

17th. We had a look in Combley Great Wood this morning. 12 Silver-washed Fritillaries, 8 White Admiral, 3 Golden-ringed Dragonflies, one Emperor and one Southern Hawker dragonfly. Later on, Dave and I saw a Small Blue along the revetment.

18th. Visited Atherfield with Pete. 10 Small red-eyed Damselflies and 3 Black-tailed Skimmers.

- 21st. Dave and I saw an adult female Red-veined Darter along the revetment.
 22nd. Went to Laundry Lane for a Purple Heron. Didn't see it and it poured with rain.
 27th. Saw and photographed a Silver Y moth taking water in my pond. Very unusual.
 29th. Newtown with Pete. 2 Ruddy Darters, 2 Emperors and 4 Migrant Hawkers.



AUGUST

- 1st. A Willow Warbler in the garden (*left over*). Clouded Yellow along the revetment.
 3rd. 2 Painted Lady in the garden. 6 male Chalkhills along the revetment and 7 Common Scoters heading west late in the day.
 5th. A male Southern Migrant Hawker flew by me, close to, along the revetment plus 5 Clouded Yellows. c.40-50 Bumble Bees on one Lavender bush in the garden.
 7th. Pond at St. Lawrence. 7 Emperor Dragonflies, 3 Black-tailed Skimmers, 2 Common Darters, 2 Golden-ringed Dragonflies and 2 Clouded Yellow at Battery Bay. 5 Clouded Yellow along the revetment.
 8th. 12 Painted Lady, 6 Clouded Yellow, 8 Common Blues, 6 HBHM, 3 Chalkhills all along the revetment (with Dave). 38 Jersey Tiger moths in the trap last night.
 11th. A fresh Adonis Blue in the garden.
 14th. Dave and I counted 7 HBHM, 2 Clouded Yellow and 2 Painted Lady along the revetment.
 15th. 15 HBHM along the revetment and a Migrant hawk in the garden.
 18th. 2 Gannets diving for fish about a mile out from my house.
 21st 2 adult Grey Seals in the bay this morning. One was probably 'Ron' and the other was his double making it the 'Two Ronnies'!!
 24th. Dave and I counted 27 HBHM along the revetment, never seen them so numerous.
 28th. 12 Painted Lady on a Buddleja bush along the revetment, possibly an example of reverse migration. A Striped Hawkmoth in the trap last night, my second (*right over*).
 29th. HMS Prince of Wales aircraft carrier, pride of the Navy, broke down off here and had to anchor overnight. It was towed away in the morning. Tut tut!
 30th. A sick Gannet drifting by off home on the tide; a victim of Asian bird flu. Very sad to see.
 31st. A Southern Hawker Dragonfly along at Monk's Bay.



SEPTEMBER

2nd. A Wall Brown butterfly along the revetment.

3rd. A Short-winged Conehead bush-cricket along the revetment (wonderful name!) and a Crucifer Shieldbug (*right opposite*).

4th. And today a Long-winged Conehead bush-cricket along the revetment.

8th. 4 Porpoises close in off the bay.

10th. Atherfield with Pete. 6 Wall, 4 Clouded Yellow, one Small Blue, c.50 Common Blue, 7 Small Skipper, 10 Small Heath, a Greenshank, c.1500 Hirundines, 100 Linnets and c.50 House Sparrows.

11th. Bonchurch Down. 6 Spotted Flycatchers, one male Adonis, 3 Small Copper, 3 Small Heath, 5 Common Blue, c.100 Rush Veneer moths, one Wall Brown, one Clouded Yellow and 3 Meadow Brown. Another dying Gannet drifting by off home.

12th. 10 Buzzards over Bonchurch Down.

14th. 2 Spotted Flycatchers and a Chiffchaff in the garden.

15th. 'Ron' off Monk's Bay.

17th. A pod of 8 Bottle-nosed Dolphins off the Bay in the afternoon (*left opposite*). Pete had a Wryneck in his garden.

19th. Saw a Gannet dive down off home and catch a large Garfish. After a bit of a battle, it managed to swallow it. 7 Clouded Yellow along the revetment.

20th. Pete and I went up to St. Catherine's Down and had a Bee-eater calling above us heading east. It was seen shortly later at Ventnor We also had a Whinchat, 6 Stonechats, 3 Sparrow Hawks and 8 Wall Brown.

21st. Went for a swim.

28th. Pete and I saw 3 White Storks at Brighstone (*opposite*). They are from the Knepp estate in Sussex.



OCTOBER

1st. c.30 Crucifer shield bugs along the revetment. Identified by Iain Outlaw.

4th. A Red-legged Partridge along the revetment.

5th. 62 Auk sp. Heading west between 0700 and 0750 into a SW gale.

8th. Pete and I had a look along the coast from Flowers Brook to Battery Bay. A juvenile Dartford Warbler by the Botanic Garden (*bottom left over*) and further along 13 Long-tailed Tits, 20 Chiffchaff, 20 Common Darters, 2 Clouded Yellow, a Spotted Flycatcher and one HBHM.

10th. 13 Goldfinches, 14 Chiffchaffs, one male Blackcap and a HBHM in the garden plus a Green Woodpecker that appeared to be taking the small mining bees in the front lawn (*top right over*).

11th. Culver Down with Pete. 2 Dartford Warblers, 2 Sea Eagles and a Sparrowhawk. A Sandwich Tern and an Oystercatcher at Monk's Bay.

12th. A male Emperor Dragonfly at St Catherine's.

18th. Went to Culver with Pete to see a Snow Bunting. We had good views (*bottom right over*).

20th. HBHM, 4 Chiffchaff and male and female blackcap in the garden. 2 Black Redstarts catching flies along the revetment (*top left over*).

22nd. Between 0745 and 0820 about 1200/1300 Auks flying west off home. 10 Brent Geese close in later in the morning also west. Ron seal in the Bay.

23rd. 2 Clouded Yellow along the revetment.

29th. Visited St.Catherine's Down with Pete. One Black Redstart, one Greenland Wheatear (1st winter), 600 Linnets, 5 Yellowhammers, 200 Goldfinches and 8 Stonechats.

30th. A Sooty Shearwater off home going east at 0810.



NOVEMBER

1st. 20 Brent Geese west off home.

3rd. 4 Stonechats along the revetment.

4th. 2 Clouded Yellow, 2 Painted Lady, 2 Rush Veneer, 5 Stonechats and one Chiffchaff along the revetment.

7th. Over to East Cowes with Pete to see an Eastern Yellow Wagtail. We had good, close views (*top opposite*).

8th. Back to East Cowes to collect droppings from the wagtail to send off for DNA analysis to confirm identity.

11th. A Holly Blue in the garden.

12th. A pair of Stonechats, a Grey Wagtail and a male Blackcap in the garden.

13th. Went to Chale Recreation Ground with Pete and logged a Woodlark.

14th. A Silver Y moth in the garden. 2 Red Admirals along the revetment.

17th. A Large White in the garden.

18th. Stonechats in the garden again, feeding on the Cabbage Palm berries. Never seen this before.

19th. A Painted Lady and a Large White in the garden. Another Painted Lady along at Monk's Bay. A Fulmar Petrel flew east over home.

29th. 2 Black Redstarts around Wheeler's Bay Car Park.



DECEMBER

- 1st. A Painted Lady in the garden all day.
 2nd. Kingfisher back on Bonchurch Pond. Another Painted Lady at Monk's Bay. A lady swimming in Wheeler's bay.
 7th. 2 Song thrushes and 2 Blackbirds in the garden eating myrtle berries. 2 Red Admirals on the Hebe flowers.
 8th. At least 4 Blackcaps, 3 Black Redstarts, 3 Song Thrushes and a Blackbird on the Cabbage Palm berries at the back of my house. Another view of the Kingfisher.
 10th. Went to Compton with Pete. A female Goosander on the pond alongside the Military Rd.
 15th. A juvenile Ringed Plover along the revetment (*above right*).
 16th. Early morning trip to Merstone with Pete to see 3 Bean Geese, a rare sight on the Island. Also c.100 Golden Plover in the fields nearby.
 25th. About 100 Gannets flying west off home in an hour late morning.
 29th. The pair of Stonechats are in my garden most days.
 31st. A few Gannets heading west. A wet and windy end to the year. Roll on the Spring!

Andy Butler

General Meetings

Saturday 30th July

Shalfleet, Churchills, Wellow and Ningwood

Sixteen members gathered at Shalfleet Church for another of John Margham's annual early medieval landscape walks, this time encompassing a 7½-mile circuit.

In the churchyard John drew attention to Shalfleet's name as *Scealdan fleote*, 'the shallow fleet', purported to have been recorded in a charter of King Egbert of Wessex in AD 838, though the document may well have been a fabrication. The name was recorded as *Seldeflet* by the time of Domesday Book in 1086: '(place at) the shallow stream or creek'. John also discussed the nine burials of c.700AD excavated by Kevin Trott in 2005, though we can't be certain whether these were pagan or Christian. There also remains a major disparity between the church's original status as a minster church for the wider area, and its likely downgrading as a local tower-nave church for the manor in the early Norman period. The minster model that works so well for other superior churches such as Carisbrooke, Calbourne or Brading does not appear to fare so well for Shalfleet. The early Norman tower-nave church may also have had an additional defensive role as a lookout or beacon site.



Striking out on a footpath southwards, we noted the Caul Bourne which formed the western boundary of the bishop of Winchester's extensive Calbourne estate and its purported early ninth-century charter, probably a fabrication in the tenth century to justify possession of the estate. We passed Shish Ford – *sciēte*, 'corner of land' – first recorded in 1255. John observed that the place-name Street Place (Farm) may be significant in connection with an east-west Roman route along the line of Quarry Lane.

Passing though Newbridge – *Newbryge* 1378 – we determined upon Chessell Copse as our lunch stop as it provided perfect shading from the sun.

Then as we reached Churchills Farmhouse in Dodpits Lane, John introduced David Marshall, who elaborated on the geophysics and fieldwalking carried out in the area by the Archaeology Group. This confirmed the area as a potential 'productive site' – probably a trading site – with extensive metal-detected finds of coins (*sceattas*) dating to 650–750, as well as metalwork. David conjectured that Caedwalla's invasion of the Isle of Wight in AD 686 may have been on the pretext of converting the population but that trading was his real objective. The site may have been on an important routeway; and with the early Saxon cemetery at Chessell Down not far away, there may have been an elite centre in the area that people passed through – a whole mixture of people from northern Europe, not just Jutes as we've often been led to believe from a reading of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. The large number of Romano-British coins also found on-site indicate that the area may have already been an important trading centre in the Roman period, and that this continued through to the mid-Saxon period. À propos the name Churchills, first recorded in 1295, as well as the important find of a 7th/8th-century skilnet apparently used for baptism ceremonies in the vicinity, there was also some discussion as to whether the name records the presence of a church here in the early medieval period, or simply land belonging to Shalfleet Church.

Proceeding in a north-westerly direction brought us to Hummet Copse in Wellow, one of three in West Wight, where we stopped to consider the name's likely origin as a dialect word meaning 'hump' or 'hillock', but which never made it into any dialect dictionary.

Arriving at Wellow Manor Farm, John pointed out that the estate listed as *Welig* – '(the place at) the willow-tree' – in King Alfred's will of c.880 probably refers to this same Wellow. It was a royal manor in 1086.

Next stop was by the little bridge further along the lane. This was a location on the bounds of a grant made in 949 by King Eadred, 'King of the English', of one hide to his man Ælfsige for his services as goldsmith and silversmith; whilst the estate is not named, it can be identified with Ningwood. We skirted round the estate of Ningwood on footpaths without visiting the village itself. *Ningewode* (1189) refers to 'the wood that has been partly enclosed or taken into cultivation'; interestingly, it had appeared as *Lenimcode* in Domesday Book, reflecting its Norman-French rendition with the definite article '*Le*'.

Some of us familiar with Preston in the Ryde area were surprised to discover the same name in the context of this walk: *Ningewode cum Presteton* would appear to have been granted during the reign of Henry I to the canons of Christchurch, later confirmed by Baldwin de Redvers when the place-name was first recorded. Despite this documentation, this instance of the place-name Preston ('priests' *tūn*) appears to

have originated due to its former connection with the minster church at Breamore further up the Avon Valley which was documented in Domesday Book.

A final stop to consider the location of Ælfsige's 'one hide' of land, which included 'from the wooded hill along the slade [shallow valley] to Wullaf's leap'. The latter may refer to a pre-Conquest deer park in this area. Deer parks are usually thought of as having originated in the Norman period, and we know that the area to the north of Ningwood was a deer park in 1278; but this later medieval deer park may thus have had an Anglo-Saxon precursor.

Twelve of us made it to the finishing-point in Shalfleet churchyard where we had set out, and where it only remained for John to pose some unresolved questions. What was the relationship between the churchyard and the adjoining mid-Saxon inhumation site? Was this mid-Saxon cemetery a successor to the Chessell Down pagan cemetery? The identification of the church tower as a tower-nave serving the household of the manorial centre is at variance with a big parish and former minster *parochia*: was the minster church downgraded and if so when and why? Was the Shalfleet charter purporting to date from AD 838 'authentic'? If so, a grant of 40 hides to the church of Winchester would date to a little after the decline of the Churchills Farm 'productive site'. Was Churchills the site of an early medieval church or does the name reflect ownership of this area by Shalfleet Church? And if so, is this anything to do with its mid-Saxon use as a trading centre?

John was almost apologetic that he was unable to answer some of these questions – but as we pointed out, without his expertise and diligent research no-one else would have been capable of asking them in the first place!

Alan Phillips

Saturday 1st October Steyne Wood Battery and Thornycroft Boat Testing Tank, Bembridge

This joint meeting with the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society (founded in 1885) was originally planned by Paul Bingham to celebrate our Society's Centenary in 2020, when he was our president. Due to the Covid pandemic, however, this special meeting had to be postponed, so our societies were delighted when we were at last able to visit this remarkable site last October.

Some forty members of both societies gathered in woodland, which served as a temporary car park. There we were welcomed by Mark McNeill, Chair of the Classic Boat Centre Trust, who introduced us to our host and guide, Dean Lyle, who is married to a direct descendent of Sir John Thornycroft, Southampton ship-builder and owner of the Basingstoke motorworks, who bought the estate from the Ministry of Defence in 1909. It is now up for sale, for the first time since, for over £2 million.

The first thing to understand is that the thick belt of woodland that screens the Battery from the road and blocks the view to the coast was not there when it was constructed between 1889 and 1894. This was the highest point in Bembridge, and, as such, the best place from which to observe ships in the anchorage of St Helens Roads and the approaches to Nab Passage. The Battery's purpose was to prevent enemy ships anchored off Sandown Bay from opening fire on the British Naval Fleet in Portsmouth Harbour. It was intended to hold up the French Fleet and bolster defences on the Island. But even as it was being finished, it was obsolete, and the guns were never delivered. It was decommissioned in 1898.

We could see Bembridge Fort from the estate's western boundary, perched high above the coastal plain. Ever since 1860, Napoleon III had been threatening to invade Britain, in revenge for its perceived ill-treatment of his grandfather, Napoleon Bonaparte. The Battery was dug out by hand, using local labour. Bembridge Fort was a new kind of fort, a Twydall, designed to be invisible. It was garrisoned, and only a mile and a half from The Battery. There was a telegraph or heliograph link between them. In the event of a French invasion, half the garrison would run downhill to boost manpower at the Battery. From the west, as we could see, there was a forty-yard killing-ground and a non-climbable fence and ditch, but the Battery was built in the expectation of an invasion from the west and not well defended from other directions.

We crossed the ditch via a bridge to the parade ground. This is now the site of the main house, built for Sir John Thornycroft and his family in 1909, an attractive, six-bedroom residence, with a free-standing annexe, outdoor swimming pool and lawn tennis court. The well goes down ninety feet. This parade ground is surrounded by a ditch.



Photos: Pat Luckett

We crossed the ditch on the opposite side and came to the gun emplacements. Our host had shown us the model of a gun designed for the Battery, a nine-inch muzzle-loading gun, costing £700 in the 1890s. The six gun-emplacements here face towards the Solent. Portsmouth is due north, seven miles away. This is known as a high-angle battery because the guns, designed to fire 360-pound shells, would have been pointed high in the air, having an optimal firing angle of 51 degrees. This is because the French ships had very hard metal hulls that shells could not pierce through, so they had to be aimed high to come down low, through the wooden deck. The gun operators would have had to rely on Bembridge Fort to guide their firing, as at this low level, they could not have seen the ships until they were about ten thousand yards away. But the shells would have taken too long to reach a moving target before it passed by. Even though the guns were never fitted, all the facilities necessary for the Battery to be operational were constructed before it was decommissioned. As well as the gun emplacements, there were two cartridge shell stores for the nine-inch, twelve-ton, muzzle-loading guns. We crowded into one of the shell stores, lighting our way through the tunnels with our mobile phones. In the shifting lobby, there were coat pegs, where the men changed into special clothing. This building is very well preserved, with all its original paint and wood. Its perfect brickwork, brushed with a coating of lime, and raised pointing served to prevent an explosion from the accumulation of shell dust on and between bricks. There are recesses in the wall for acetylene safety lamps. The magazine is vented from above. The workers would have filled the shell cartridges with gun powder from lead-lined containers, propelled the shells along corridors, one leading to each of three gun-emplacements from each store, via a hatch that is now bricked in.

Before Sir John Thornycroft had the Boat Testing Tank built, in 1910, he carried out his experiments in a lily pond. The tank is housed in a two-storey building with a domed glass-panelled roof. It is one of the first buildings of this scale to be constructed using poured concrete and is a fine example among very few surviving in England, which later became a Listed (Grade II) building. We climbed an outer staircase to reach the front door to the viewing gallery above the tank. Model boats were pulled back and forth across the tank, which resembles a swimming pool, on a string, to test the hull design for speed. A model of a motorboat dating from the First World War, a boat that was actually put into service, has a notch cut in the hull to make the water move more quickly over it. Here Blanche Thornycroft, Sir John's daughter and the first woman to be accepted into the Institute of Naval Architects, worked to perfect hull design of national significance, for both naval and civil ships. On either side of the tank, there is a well, but the water had to be drained in the late nineteen-sixties, when pupils from neighbouring Bembridge School broke into the building and one of them drowned.

It cost £1400 to construct the Battery's earthworks and buildings, three of which remain – the guardhouse, forge and shell cottage, which have since been converted into living accommodation. In 1909 the whole eighteen-acre estate was valued at £1 million, yet the Ministry of Defence sold it to Sir John Thornycroft for only £639. They must have taken into consideration that the Battery itself was of historic and novelty value only to him.

Historic England's Stated Reasons for Scheduling the Battery as a Monument in 2015

“Steyne Wood Battery, a late-C19 High Angle battery constructed between 1889 and 1894, is scheduled for the following principal reasons:

* *Survival/condition: this is one of the best surviving Victorian batteries currently known including sharp profiles to its earthworks and quite extraordinary survival in its Bomb Proof Stores and Cartridge and Shell Stores including original external and internal fixtures and fittings and painted signage;*

* *Rarity: Steyne Wood Battery is one of only six High Angle batteries ever built in England, designed as a response to increasingly armoured enemy warships, and is one of only four survivors. It therefore represents a very rare site type nationally;*

* *Diversity: all of the fort's principal features survive including all six emplacements, one unusually retaining a derrick for lifting shells, its Bomb Stores, Cartridge and Shell Stores, parados, parade, Twydall profile rampart, remnants of its outer palisade (which rarely survive) and ancillary buildings including its Position Finder Store; also a rare survival;*

* *Period: the battery had a short but clearly-defined period of use and is representative of that period in terms of cutting-edge fortification technology; also as it was not subject to later adaption its form remains highly legible;*

* *Documentation: the historical documentation for the battery, particularly a fulsome set of original plans and sections allows favourable comparison between the design and execution and aids our understanding of the components and layout of a High Angle battery;*

* *Group value: Steyne Wood Battery forms one component in the extensive and continually developing defences of Portsmouth Harbour and the Isle of Wight and therefore possesses group value with other contemporary fortifications."*

Maggie Nelmes

Saturday 15th October

Parkhurst Forest

Our Annual Fungus Foray took place at Parkhurst Forest this year. We are normally accompanied by mainland experts on our annual foray to help us with identification but Alan Outen from Bedfordshire is no longer able to join us due to deteriorating health and members of the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group were unable to travel across this year. A group of thirteen set off from the main carpark in the direction of Signal House. Our progress was slow as we made good finds in the woodland fringing the trackway. Fly Agarics (*Amanita muscaria*) are always popular and they were showing very well, together with False Death Caps (*Amanita citrina*), two types of Grisettes, and a variety of Milkcaps and difficult to identify Brittlelegills (*Lactarius*). We were very impressed by the size of Powdery Pick-a-back fungus (*Asterophora lycoperdoides*) growing parasitically on specimens of the Blackening Brittlelegill. We spent some time looking at spectacular clumps of a fungus growing around the base of willows in a dried-up depression. They looked like the deadly poisonous Funeral Bells but on subsequent microscopic examination proved to be Sheathed Woodtuft (*Kuehneromyces mutabilis*). Iain Outlaw found some lovely specimens of the beautiful and local Holly Parachute (*Marasmius hudsonii*) growing on a fallen holly leaf. On our way back to the carpark, where we stopped for lunch, we met a couple who had been collecting fungi for the pot. They had an impressive collection of very fine Ceps and Chanterelles.

After our lunch break, we drove to the north end of the forest to continue our foraging around Marks Corner. Here we found some different fungi including the Beech Milkcap (*Lactarius blennius*), Panther Cap (*Amanita pantherina*), Bitter Oysterling (*Panellus stipticus*) and Sulphur Knight (*Tricholoma sulphureum*). In total, we were able to find and identify 93 different species. This included some which had to be taken back for microscopical examination.

Colin Pope

Saturday 12th November

Recorder's Conference

After a break of a couple of years, our Recorder's Conference returned this year in November. We were delighted to welcome over 60 participants for what is traditionally the Society's most popular meeting.

We welcomed Evie Furness from Swansea University to talk about Seagrass restoration on the Isle of Wight. Evie works for Project Seagrass, a marine conservation charity dedicated to ensuring that Seagrass (*Zostera*) meadows are protected globally, for the biodiversity and people that depend upon them. Evie described the various projects in the UK to replenish damaged Seagrass meadows and research to better understand how Seagrass can be propagated and reintroduced. The Isle of Wight is unusual in that along the north coast, Seagrass meadows are currently expanding and recolonising areas from which they had been lost. It is proposed that trials will be carried out here looking at different methods of reintroducing Seagrass in order to ascertain which methods are most effective and can be utilised more widely. Evie's talk was well received and she later commented that it was a lovely event with so much enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm was also shown to Steve Egerton-Read for his talk on Progress on the White-tailed Eagle Project. Steve is employed by Forestry England. He described how, following the first introduction of six Eagles to the Island in 2019, young White-tailed Eagles have been exploring the British Isles and the continental coasts. Radio-tagging has enabled very detailed recording of individuals movements and habitats. Two of the birds have formed a strong bond and are spending much of their time on the Island. It is hoped that they may eventually breed here. Due to the worsening situation with Avian Influenza, to which eagles are susceptible, no new birds were released in 2022. The decision with respect to 2023 will be taken nearer the time but it may be necessary to request an extension the five-year licence from Natural England to release birds.

Colin Pope was the final speaker. His topic was Changes to the Island's Flora post 2000. This will be subject of a forthcoming paper in Wight Studies.

Colin Pope

Saturday 10th December My Life in Nature Conservation, by Dave Fairlamb

Dave is well known to some of our members for the wildlife walks he has led for us in the past few years. His friendly and relaxed manner, together with his enthusiasm for and knowledge of all kinds of wildlife, have made his walks popular. We therefore decided to ask if he would give us a talk, and he suggested this one about his long and eventful career in wildlife, which he gave to an audience of some forty people at our first General section talk since the Covid pandemic struck in March 2020.

Dave moved to the Island a few years ago, when his partner got a job here. He decided to start his own wildlife walks and holidays business, Natural Links, when, by a stroke of bad luck, the Covid pandemic struck, making this more challenging.

At the beginning, Dave was born in Hexham in the Tyne valley, near Hadrian's Wall. The river here was polluted, but has been cleaned up recently, and otters have been sighted.

When he was four, he stayed with relatives at Seahouses, a small port on the Northumbrian coast near the towering battlements of Bamburgh Castle. This is no ordinary harbour, however, but the gateway to the legendary Farne Islands, where many species of seabird breed. Dave's first wildlife inspiration was here, when hearing a bird screeching overhead caused him to fall in love with sea birds. It was an arctic tern, known as the sun-seeker because it experiences two summers every year by migrating from its breeding grounds in the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions of Europe, North America and Asia all the way to the Antarctic and back again some six months later. Its annual round-trip is up to 44,100 miles, by far the longest migrations known in the animal kingdom.

Dave's first 'big break', as he calls it, came in 1987, when he got a job working for the National Trust on the Farne Islands. He lived in the Peel Tower, a small fortified stone keep or tower-house, built mainly from the mid-fourteenth century to about 1600 along the English and Scottish borders and in the Scottish Marches and Northern England. These were watch towers, where signal fires could be lit to warn of approaching danger. Cattle rustling was often the main purpose of border raids. In Dave's Peel tower "there was no electricity and no mod cons". From March to December, he was tasked with monitoring seabird colonies in spring, and with managing tens of thousands of Atlantic grey seals in autumn. Farne has one of the biggest colonies of seals in Britain. Dave and his colleagues had to count the seal pups and spray-paint

them to avoid counting some twice. They painted them red, until visitors mistook the paint for blood and thought they were shooting them!

“We all longed to work for the RSPB”, Dave said, and two years later, he landed a job with them at Bempton Cliffs in Yorkshire, in their centenary year. There spectacular cliffs rise to over 330 feet along a six-mile stretch of coast, from Flamborough Head northwards towards Filey. They are the second highest chalk cliffs in England after Beachy Head in East Sussex. These precipitous cliffs attract many species of seabirds to nest on their inaccessible ledges, including gannets, puffins, razorbills, guillemots, kittiwakes and fulmars. Dave says there were about a thousand pairs of northern gannets, the largest seabirds with a six-foot wing-span.

After working at Bempton all year, he “was lucky” to get a winter contract at the RSPB’s Old Hall Marshes Nature Reserve on the Blackwater Estuary near Maldon in Essex. There were big sea walls. He remembers having to go out before dawn in temperatures of up to minus 15 degrees Celsius, during a particularly cold winter. Brent geese overwinter there, migrating from their breeding grounds in Arctic Siberia to Southern England and France. These are the dark-bellied breed, the same as those overwintering in the Solent.

Dave’s first contract in Scotland was in Renfrewshire, just south of Glasgow. He spent a summer there, at the RSPB’s Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve, set amid gently rolling green pastureland dotted with woods. This is one of the few wetlands left in the west of Scotland and is home to whooper swans, widgeon and a wide variety of ducks in winter, but Dave spent a summer there, observing fifty pairs of great crested grebes, whose elaborate courtship displays are a strong visitor attraction.

His next posting was to Loch Leven in Kinross, north of Edinburgh, where he was tasked with returning farmland to wetland. Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned on Castle Island in this loch. The reserve is a fuelling-station for up to twenty thousand pink-footed geese that fly in from Iceland every autumn. It is also home to snipe and breeding waders, and osprey visit the loch to fish in summer.

The estuary, coastal and offshore regions of the Firth of Forth, its islands and surrounding areas are home to an abundance of bird species of international importance. On Fidra Island, there is a natural rock archway and sea cliffs where Dave was tasked with putting shelters around the nests of roseate terns to protect them from marauding gulls. He suggested running seabird tours by boat along the Forth estuary, and these became very popular. It was amazing to see puffins near the Forth Road Bridge, with the city of Edinburgh as a backdrop. Dave also suggested creating a Scottish Birdwatching Fair. The first one was held in 1994 or 1995, attracting only 600 participants, so they broadened its scope and it became the Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Fair. Five years later, some 12,000 people attended over two days. It became too big and began to disturb wildlife so now it is held in Musselburgh, a town near Edinburgh. Dave also set up the Forth Seabird Group.

“The RSPB is a fantastic employer”, he said. He spent a lot of time at their Headquarters at Sandy in Bedfordshire for staff training. They also trained staff to be trainers. And they expected high standards to be maintained at their visitor centres. Dave was tasked with visiting all reserves to monitor their visitor standards. “It’s all about engagement, holding events to inspire visitors” he says. Dave was involved in setting up a group called Mountains to Marine, which carried out bird surveys on big estates in Torridon, one of the wildest areas of Scotland, and at Cape Wrath.

For nineteen years, he was manager of Mershead Nature Reserve on the scenic northern shore of the Solway Firth, which forms part of the border between England and Scotland, in Dumfries and Galloway. The Reserve is, according to the RSPB website, “an extensive wetland and saltmarsh area, a haven for breeding waders, wintering wildfowl and year-round bird and wildlife watching. Spring is particularly magical when the wet meadows fill with lapwings and skylarks”. Dave oversaw a big reedbed development project, with pools monitored for natterjack toads. He developed a visitor centre and education project. Among the diverse bird species seen at Mersehead, there were spoonbills, harassed by gangs of grey heron, and barnacle geese, overwintering from Spitsbergen Island in Norway’s Svalbard archipelago in the Arctic. Basking sharks passed by on their way northwards, and otters frequented the intertidal area. The tadpole shrimp, only 1.5 inches long, a living fossil, whose eggs can be dormant for forty to fifty years, can also be found there, as well as in the New Forest.

“Every seven years, you got a sabbatical, for personal development”, His first, he spent in Vancouver, to develop his youth-hostels scheme. There he watched hummingbirds and killer whales. His

report led to the RSPB working with youth hostels in Britain on wildlife projects. His second sabbatical was spent on the steppes of Kazakhstan, where he observed the sociable plover, a northern lapwing occasionally seen in the UK. They are attracted to land close to villages because the vegetation is short from grazing and ideal for nesting. Dave found a lot of these birds and concluded that they are not endangered, as was thought. He also observed many species of lark, including the black lark, and the demoiselle crane, the smallest of the crane species, that is thriving in these grasslands near water. He also saw herds of gazelle.

Dave's next career move took him just a short distance along the Solway Firth to manage Caerlaverock Wetland Centre, owned by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Sir Peter Scott set up this organization when he experienced a conversion from shooter to nature conservationist, after wounding a swan but being unable to retrieve it to end its suffering.

From there, Dave moved a long way south, to Arundel in West Sussex, also run by the Trust. "Brilliant visitor centre, staff and volunteers", says Dave. The Wetland Discovery Boat Safari takes visitors on a twenty-minute guided trip. "There is so much wildlife here", said Dave. Water rail live in the reedbeds, there is a reintroduction programme for water voles, it is a great place to watch dragonflies and find the ruby-tailed wasp. And did we know that grass snakes have their own barcodes? Each snake has its own unique pattern of black-and-white markings so you can get to know them individually.

After six years working for the WWT, Dave moved to the Thames Estuary, where he worked for Essex Wildlife Trust for two years, as leader of a conservation team, tasked with putting a staffing structure in place. And then he joined his partner on the Isle of Wight.

Here Dave set up his business, Natural Links, to encourage people to engage with nature, and for environmental consultancy. On the Island, he leads wildlife walks, organizes events and holidays for hospitality businesses, and contributes to local festivals. He is branching out, working with Independent Arts to help people with mental health problems to recover through nature therapy, and holding birdsong sessions for people with sight impairment. He also runs wildlife holidays on the mainland, from the New Forest to Northumberland, and is planning wildlife safari tours in Southern Africa. His environmental consultancy work involves advising on land management for wildlife and carrying out mandatory environmental impact assessments for planning applicants.

We thanked Dave for a fascinating talk about his wildlife journey.

Maggie Nelmes

Looking at the Countryside



Tuesday 9th August

St Catherine's Down

14 members set off from the Blackgang Viewpoint Carpark on a hot day for a walk across St Catherine's Down to look at some of the features of the Down including local history and surrounding landscape. We stopped to look at the wall that is crossed on the National Trust boundary which dates from the 16th century and it is recorded that it was built in an attempt to settle a dispute about grazing rights.

We continued onto the highest point of St Catherine's Hill marked by the Oratory's sturdy tower and earthworks as well as the adjoining bronze age barrow to the east. We talked about the story of the foundation of Oratory and documentary and physical evidence relating to it. Prior to the dedication of the Oratory to St Catherine, possibly in 1312, it is thought that the Down has been known as Cheall or Chale Down.



We walked northwards and noted how the grassland on the hill was in a very droughted condition and it was a cheering site to see a bright looking clump of harebells to freshen the scene. On the north and western face of St Catherine's Hill we looked at the extensive 'Marl. quarries and noted that there is documentary evidence to suggest that quarrying was going on in the 13th century and that the extensive size of them suggest continuity of use over several centuries.

As we continued northwards along the Down, noting another bronze age barrow and an area of acid grassland, we saw several bird species including goldfinches, linnets, buzzards and quite a few kestrels. We looked at the Hoy Monument and reflected on the irony of the stone plaques on either side of the monument before proceeding back under the welcome shade provided by the woodland and shrubs of the western side of the Down. At one place we noted two of the Islands commonest willow species growing side by side, the goat and the grey.

Towards the southern end of the Hill, we stopped to view a greensand outcrop marked on the map as Tolt Rocks. There are several outcrops of rock further to the north but because of the sizable flat area at the base of the outcrop it was identified as a sizable quarry. Here we speculated on the use of the quarry stone and lamented that documentary evidence rarely stated where materials from quarries were used.

The walk concluded back at the Viewpoint Car Park where some participated in a well-deserved ice cream after a very warm morning!

Tony Tutton

Friday 7th October

Chillerton Adventure

On a lovely October meeting, nine members met to enjoy the countryside from the Green at Chillerton, at the bottom of Hollow Lane. Our walk went north past Tolt Copse on the side of Chillerton Down. Buzzards, like other birds of prey, were once so persecuted that the Island only held one breeding pair, in Tolt Copse. On our walk up to Garstons we could hear the guns from the shoot. We could see the beaters across the valley in the distance. The Bowcombe Estate is the largest by area on the Island and its main business is running shoots.

We were pleased to see the old waymark depicting a shepherd's crook denoting the Shepherd's Trail. All of our walk was on footpaths, bridleways and little lanes with the G on the footpath arms to say we were in Gatcombe parish.



We enjoyed our visit to St Olave's Church with its beautiful stained glass windows from five Pre-Raphaelite designers. The most remarkable glass is Medieval, the oldest on the Island, dating from 1430. The recently cleaned wall hanging was worked by local people. It is so good, showing so much local wildlife: bee orchids, moles with piles of earth and all manner of butterflies, birds and local flowers. We spent some time discussing St Olave, his life and times. He lived when Ethelred was on the throne. The original church was dedicated in 1292. The stone is Ventnor Greensand, formed 120 million years ago. In the porch there are timbers from the ship HMS Thunderer, built in 1831. Other churches also house timbers from this ship because she was scrapped here on the Isle of Wight.

From the church we walked up through the wood then followed the path down to cross the stream back along the road to the green. We had been lucky with the visibility and been able to enjoy fine views.

There are many good walks from Chillerton. The Parish Council has a series of downloadable leaflets. Paper copies can be obtained from Rookley Post Office and Chillerton Gallybagger Inn.

Jill Green

Friday 2nd December Newport walk

I was pleased to welcome 10 people and a dog by the propellor at Newport Quay for the last LATC walk of 2022. The propellor came from the barge Yellowfin which was deliberately scuppered further down the river Medina because harbour dues had not been paid and is still visible at low tide. We looked at the plaque commemorating where H.M. Queen Elizabeth stepped ashore in 1965, and photos of the trains which crossed the river to Newport station until the railway closed in 1968/9. We walked past the Riverside Centre and through a tunnel to look at the Peace tree, a large Japanese cherry planted by IW CND in 1970, a beauty when in bloom.

Returning to the path, now a cycle track roughly following the old railway line, we went through another tunnel to St. Paul's View Road, and looked at Broadlands House, once Nunn's lace factory employing 60 girls and 20-30 "winding boys", later a reformatory and now Crown offices. The cycle track continued to cross Halberry Lane and the entrance to the hospice, now called Mountbatten, formerly the Island Isolation hospital. John Edmunds had been a patient with diphtheria in 1929 when many Island children died. He survived and his parents wrote to thank Doctor Wallace who they believed had saved his life. His son Matthew still has the reply they received back, thanking them! We looked next at St. Paul's cemetery, and hoped to return in spring and summer when there are normally lots of orchids to be seen. Despite campaigns for several years, local landowners refused permission for the track to continue past Mews Lane, so cyclists are forced to use the pavement from here as far as Belmont Lane. We crossed the busy Fairlee Road and walked through the car park of Medina college to the Arboretum, the site of Fairlee House which was demolished by the Council in the 1970s to make way for Medina High School.

Remains of the Fairlee House walled garden, several trees of interest and two ponds can still be seen and there was an ornamental Malus loaded with large red berries. I have some of the history of the house as my mother worked there for the Busk family in the late 1920s. We joined another cycle track which was created as part of the Safe Routes to School initiative and runs into Newport Quay, passing a huge plane tree and triple stemmed oak. We stopped to admire the old winch crane which has been preserved on the quayside and was still working unloading barges in the 1970s. We went into Fairlee cemetery, built in 1858 after Church Litten became full. Some of the gravestones have a variety of lichens growing on them, and there are some interesting trees worth noting. With the weather turning chilly it was a pleasure to arrive at the Quay Arts, where some of the group left, the rest staying for a welcome bowl of soup, and a quiz to round off the year.

Mary Edmunds

Archaeology

Saturday 16th July Limerstone Down and Rancombe

When the first Covid lockdown ended and we were allowed to meet in groups of 10, Alan Phillips led members of the Archaeology Section on a walk from Shorwell. We were fascinated by the hidden stories he told us about and this led to online discussion and further research. This walk, which revisited the route, took place the day before an amber weather alert came into force so the group of sixteen members and guests were very fortunate to enjoy a clear, sunny day with a fresh breeze. We were pleased to be joined by Vicky Basford, but Frank, who might have more information about some locations, was unable to be there.

At the start of the walk we talked about the flint working site discovered in a back garden on Farriers Way in 1962. Excavations in 1963 and 1965 produced over 400 worked tools and nearly 1200 waste flakes, including microliths, scrapers, burins, awls, a small pick and the tip of an arrowhead. It was concluded that

there were two separate sites, one dated between 10,000BC to 4000BC and the other between 4000BC and 2350 BC.

We then walked diagonally up the hillside, stopping about halfway along to look across to Westcourt farm, previously one of 3 Shorwell manors. The field across the road from the farm was found to be highly significant in 2004 when a metal detectorist discovered the remains of an Anglo-Saxon sword and several items of jewelry. Becky Loader from the Archaeology Unit led an excavation which found evidence for a grave, although no human remains had survived due to soil chemistry. Amongst other items recovered were pieces of metal which proved to be a helmet. This is an incredibly rare find; it is early, 5th- 6th century, Frankish in design and plain (unlike the famous Sutton Hoo helmet) so was probably a battle helmet. The scatter of finds suggested that there were about 8 or 9 burials but ploughing has destroyed all evidence for graves.

We then walked up to the ridge, or hog's back. In 1920 the tenant farmer at Rancombe farm was out rabbiting with his ferrets when he discovered a cremation urn in a pit in a hedged bank. An excavation was carried out by O.G.S Crawford, who found a second urn inverted over burnt bones and several other pots. It is probable that there was a Bronze Age barrow there that has since been lost to ploughing, so as we walked along the bank we could not know where the barrow had been.

There was a second mystery in connection with this site. In 1982, C.J. Arnold published his book 'The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of the IOW'. It includes a short chapter titled 'Rancombe Down'. He describes 3 'previously un-noticed urns', found in Carisbrooke Castle Museum and containing a label '*Rancombe Down, Shorwell, found with others 1920, with incinerations*'. The illustrations in Arnold's book show typical Anglo-Saxon pots, whereas Crawford shows photographs of typical Bronze Age collared urns. There is no such place on the Island as Rancombe Down, just the farm referred to by Crawford. So, something strange was going on here. The most likely solution is that at some time in the dusty past the Rancombe Down label got into the Anglo- Saxon pot by mistake. It was probably originally with the Bronze Age pots. And the reference to Rancombe Down rather than just Rancombe is another mistake. What about the Anglo Saxon pots? David Tomalin, who was curator at Carisbrooke Castle Museum at the time, noticed that one of the pots was mended in a particular way as described by Rev. Skinner. (who excavated sites on the Island in the early 19th century). Since Skinner excavated the Saxon cemetery at Chessell it seems likely they came from there.

We next discussed some of the stories of Rancombe Farm. It was situated in the valley below the ridge, accessible only by a track but it was abandoned during the Second World War and no buildings remain. As we walked along the ridge we were able to identify the rough, disturbed ground where the farmstead once stood.



the impress of an earthenware mould or crucible suggests the possibility that some kind of metal smelting may have been carried on. According to the HER (Heritage Environment Record) 14 coins were found in a small area and probably represent a hoard lost about the end of the 4th century; the pottery appears to date from the same period. Reports can be found in IWNHAS Proceedings for 1933 and 1944. Another

We continued westwards to meet the footpath which leads from Limerstone to Brighstone Forest. Here we had a glorious view to Tennyson Down and the Swanage cliffs. It was near here that H.E. Pritchett and G.A. Sherwin carried out an excavation in 1932. Workers digging into the earth bank had found Roman pottery and coins along with an iron socketed knife, several rings, nails, and a circular buckle. The only semblance of structural remains were the flint foundations of what was apparently a small rectangular hut with wooden superstructure, and indications of a few other huts on the west side of the bank. The finding of a quantity of crude iron ore, lumps of molten metal, and a piece of lead bearing

intriguing account exists in the Proceedings from 1937 where Sherwin describes an excavation of a barrow by Pritchett. This barrow is now ploughed out but it is described as very close to the Romano-British site.

This is a walk with no obvious archaeology but full of hidden stories. I was pleased that some members later investigated further and added to my knowledge. Before we turned to retrace our steps someone asked me, 'Is this a special area or is it typical of the Island?' I could not answer; this area continues to throw up new questions!

Saturday August 20th Godshill to Great Budbridge.

About a dozen members joined David Marshall on a beautiful morning for a delightful walk which examined local features in the context of the wider landscape and viewpoints. We took Footpath 46 towards Moor Farm and soon had a sense of what so many Island walks offer; within only a few metres, the landscape can open-up to reveal a whole new vista with more local features.

David started by sharing the 6" map of 1862/3 which showed that a chunk of land adjoining Godshill was still part of Arreton parish. We then looked at the map of the 7 medieval mother parishes. The well-known 'bacon-slice' design, planned to share the natural resources, was complicated by the 'detached land units'. Arreton had retained a piece of land suitable for grazing oxen and so invaluable to maintain ploughing capacity. Godshill parish itself was based around Appuldurcombe House, hence the often seen griffin / wyvern symbol which was part of the Worsley family crest. Old tithe maps help explain the distribution of land with field names often indicating the useful and less productive land.

We then walked to Moor Farm where we looked at the map of manors listed in Domesday, noting how these again reflected the quality of land and the main routes. We walked over the Eastern Yar to Budbridge Manor, a well-maintained Jacobean house. Study of a Lidar image showed its relation to the river and other topography, not to mention a curious rectangular feature which begs further investigation.

After passing a row of large greenhouses, sadly unused but apparently in good condition, we crossed another small bridge to follow the path round Munsley Bog. This is unusual for the Isle of Wight as it is acidic and particularly useful for pollen analysis which can offer evidence of environmental change since the Ice Age. It is a 'perched bog' sitting on an impermeable layer which protects it from a deeper permeable layer.



We then came onto the old railway track and looked at another Lidar image where a clear rough area was explained as 'slumping', caused by earth slippage over long periods of time. The route took us across the main road and back to the old railway at Scotland Farm, where Godshill station is now a private house. David explained that the path we had just followed was part of the 'Motkin boundary', an Iron Age feature that has been identified running from Palmers Brook near Wootton, then following a very direct route to Whitwell. We were looking at a field adjacent to that route which last year was the subject of an archaeological assessment by Kevin Trott prior to development of the site for housing. Several of our members spent a few days helping there. As well as quantities of Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery, evidence for a ditched enclosure was discovered. The 2metre depth of the ditch suggested that this was a defensive structure and evidence of a wooden stake supported this theory. Was this early Iron Age

enclosure, adjacent to the Motkin boundary, related to it in any way? Perhaps this boundary feature was as important in its day as the boundary along the River Medina which now separates the East Wight from the West Wight

It was also notable at this point that we had views of so much discussed on the walk – the median ridge, the less fertile gravel uplands, Appuldurcombe Down, St Catherine's Down to name but a few. This was a fitting place to finish our walk with its insights into the landscape that our ancestors had occupied and worked in this small area of the Island.

Thursday 12th October Archaeology trip to Hengistbury Head

The 14 members who crossed to Lymington had a glorious day for their exploration. It was mild and sunny, with clear blue skies that gave us far-reaching views showing how strategic the position of this headland was from the time of the first humans who colonised the area after the last Ice Age. Our guide, David Freeman, led us along the track that encircles the headland and gave us a thorough and fascinating picture of changes over the millennia.

The most visible archaeology is to be seen at the start of the walk near the Visitor Centre: an early Iron Age earthwork, consisting of a double ditch and bank, stretches across the approach to the site. Its purpose is unclear, there is no evidence that it was defensive. The largest of 13 barrows identified on the headland can be seen as you set out on your walk. The cremated remains were of a young woman buried with finds, including small gold cones, that show she was of high status.

At the end of the last Ice Age, two rivers brought alluvium which created sand and gravel deposits. Underneath this the rock contained about 30 % iron, which contributed to the importance of the area. A distinctive feature are the 'doggers', lumps of ironstone resembling bollards, many of which were removed in the past to extract the ore.

As we walked along we looked across at Mudeford Spit, created by longshore drift and forming a narrow entrance to Christchurch harbour. This has been important for trade since the Bronze Age. We looked back to a beautiful view of Christchurch Priory. The first Saxon settlement, a pagan one, was in the angle between the 2 rivers. The later, Christian one, was around the site of the current priory and separated from the older one by marshes.

We stopped by the site of a late Iron Age village. Evidence for about 20 houses has been found, about 7 to 8 metres in diameter. There were 2 basic designs, one plank built and one stake built, but no posts used such as can be seen on other Iron Age sites. A very curious, unusual feature is small fences surrounding each house. The reason is not known; were they marking ownership or personal space? David suggested that with many incomers and visitors, including accommodation for sailors, the village may not have been as communal as others elsewhere. There was a mint here, producing Durotrigian coins. Gravel was brought to the shore to create a firm base for pulling boats onto. The River Avon was probably navigable up to Salisbury.

Our next stop was to note some Victorian impact. A fenced off area containing non-native plants was the site of an intended kitchen garden. In the late 19th century, Mr Selfridge of department store fame planned to build a castle on the headland. Fortunately, he began by commissioning the garden but ran out of money before he could start on the building. Another Victorian activity was iron extraction on a more industrial scale than in prehistoric times which has left huge spoil heaps. They also removed some of the doggers from the beach which caused erosion. A track leading uphill was the site of a wooden railway for transporting the ore. A large lagoon, now a haven for wildlife, was originally dug out as a Victorian dock.



Photos: Mike Cotterill

After passing the upmarket beach huts, which sell for eye-watering sums, we climbed steps to the headland with its stunning views to the Needles and across Bournemouth beach, Poole harbour, Swanage and the cliffs beyond. How fortunate that this was not ruined or made inaccessible by Mr Selfridge's castle. As we returned along the Western edge we passed a paleolithic site which is now right on the cliff edge but would have been more inland. Next was a mesolithic site: quantities of worked flints from both periods were later seen in the museums. The scrub on the inland side covers about 11 eroded Bronze Age burial mounds. Neolithic field systems have been identified on Lidar.

Pools are flooded evidence of the Victorian iron mining. In Norman times this ironstone was used to build Christchurch castle.

As we descended the steep path to return to the Visitors Centre we had a clear view of the Iron Age bank and ditches stretching the width of the peninsula; the ends are now lost to erosion.

We were then ready for lunch and time to look in the small but very informative museum which contains some finds and some replicas from the area.

After lunch we headed into Christchurch to the Red House museum. We expected to see more finds from the site but there was much more than we anticipated and we had to rush through before the museum closed. Another small, but excellent museum. Some members appreciated the free access to drawers with further samples to study and photograph. Of particular interest was the Iron Age Armorican (Britanny) pottery as it is possible that it can also be found here on the Island. It has long been believed that trade between the Isle of Wight and Hengistbury was well established before the Roman invasion. Pottery and Durotrigian coins are just some examples of the evidence to look for.

This was agreed to be an enjoyable and fascinating day with many of us planning to return and spend more time there.

Sunday 19th November The Piscina Mirabilis

Anyone who has read 'Pompeii' by Robert Harris will be aware of the Aqua Augusta, the ancient Roman aqueduct that provided water to various communities around the Bay of Naples, and of the Piscina Mirabilis. This was a huge water storage cistern that served the town and naval base of Misenum.

David Millar and his friend John Allen were exploring the northern part of the bay away from the main tourist sites when their interest was aroused by this building. There was only a small information board instructing visitors to apply for access to the keyholder, a woman living nearby. As engineers they had many questions as to how and why this massive project was undertaken and how problems were overcome. Written and archaeological records are limited (no report could be found from an archaeological excavation in the 1920s). David believes, with some justification, that the aqueduct is one of the wonders of the ancient world. About 64 miles long, it was built to supply water to Misenum but spurs were added to feed several other towns, creating about 101 miles in all. Information is sparse, few written records survive and much of the route is unknown since most of the structure was probably robbed out after it fell into disuse about 520 CE. Surprisingly, the Piscina survived, possibly because it was used for storage. It is huge, 16% larger than

Waitrose in East Cowes and can be seen on Google Earth. David showed us some of his photos and it looked in remarkably good condition.

David's presentation detailed their main lines of enquiry and how they applied their own engineering knowledge to the physical and documentary evidence to arrive at the most likely answers. For a non-specialist like myself this was clearly and concisely explained. I will not go into detail here as David and John are happy to share the resulting paper on request and a copy is available in the IWNHAS library. (Apply to Helen for copies of the paper: rosemount25@yahoo.co.uk)

Helen Jackson

Ornithology



Sunday 24th July at Blackgang

Eight members met at Blackgang viewpoint car park for a walk led by Jim Baldwin. An overcast start with sunshine later in the morning although a brisk wind kept temperatures down. A Blackcap was heard in the car park before we set off along the path at Gore Cliff. A brief sea-watch at Blackgang produced the only Gannet of the morning, along with Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull and Great Black-backed Gull. Two Peregrines were seen briefly flying along the edge of the cliff. C.140 corvids (c.80 Jackdaw, c.30 Carrion Crow and c.30 Rook) were observed in an adjacent field which had flowering Ragwort so a likely food source of caterpillars and other insects. Passerines were in small number with only two Linnet and four Goldfinch representing the finches and a couple of Skylark was seen plus a solitary Swallow. We continued along the path until we were adjacent to St Catherine's lighthouse and then opted to return along the same route rather than walk inland. Two Ravens were seen and heard on our way back to the car park. 18 bird species were recorded during an enjoyable morning which also produced a good count of over 20 Wall butterflies which appeared to be newly emerged. Other butterflies seen were 6 Marbled White, 4 Common Blue, 2 Large White and singles of Painted Lady and Small Copper. Also recorded were single 6-spot Burnet and Jersey Tiger moths plus two caterpillars of the Cinnabar moth on ragwort. A couple of Bloody-nosed Beetles were also observed.

Jim Baldwin

Sunday 21st August at Bembridge

12 members met at Latimer Road St Helens on a beautiful morning. Our first stop was on the bridge overlooking the Eastern Yar and we then walked along the footpath that runs adjacent to Embankment Road to Harbour Farm entrance. We then walked east a little way by the road beyond the houseboats so that we could get a good view of the mud flats before turning round and walked by the road back to our cars. Some extended the walk and had a look at the mill pond. It was a delight to show two new members a variety of birds from a much-loved walk of mine. There were at least 14 Cormorant roosting on the trees lining the river and 8 Tufted Duck swimming on the river. Two Great White Egret were seen flying and the size difference was very evident when compared with four Little Egret. A White-tailed Eagle was perched on the tree with a nesting platform in the distance. Fortunately, we had the telescope which gave us a better view. Several Cetti's warbler gave their very distinctive call as were a couple of Water Rail. We had a distant view of a Peregrine flying, as well as Kestrel, Buzzard and a Marsh Harrier. There were 11 Black Tailed Godwit in one of the pools. 15 Sandwich Tern were roosting on the mud flats as were two Common Gull, Great Black Backed Gull, Herring Gull, Black-headed Gull and Mediterranean Gull. Oystercatcher, One Whimbrel and a Redshank were seen. The mill pond produced 14 Redshank, 6 Ringed Plover, 2 Greenshank, 1 Common Sandpiper and 43 Mediterranean Gull. In all 40 species were recorded.

Jackie Hart

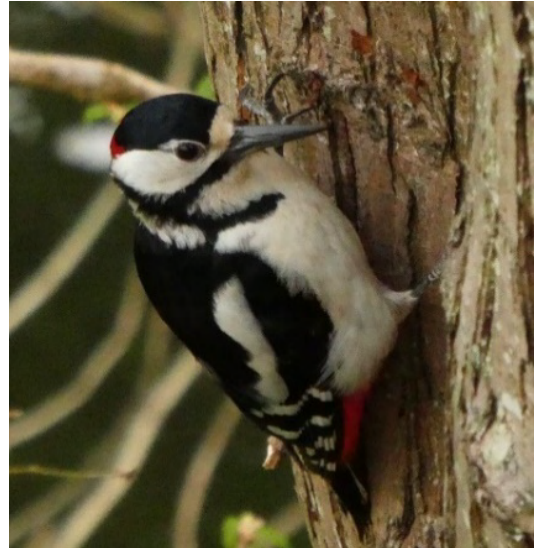
Saturday 17th September at High Down

Sixteen members of IWNHAS joined Dave Fairlamb of Natural Links who led the walk on a lovely morning.

Starting from the National Trust car park at the old chalk quarry near High Down, we walked along the main footpath on the northern slope of Tennyson Down and there were several Chiffchaffs in the hedges, along with Robins and Chaffinches. Kestrels were seen on several occasions, especially when we reached the open ground of West High Down, where we also had views of Buzzards and a Great Spotted Woodpecker.



Kestrel



Great Spotted Woodpecker

The gorse covered ridge of the Down is always a good site for Stonechats and it did not disappoint, with at least 5 Stonechats seen, with a few Meadow Pipits, Skylark and Linnet. With bird migration in full flow, it was no surprise to have a constant flurry of Swallows flying by, with well over 20 recorded during our walk.



Stonechat



Skylark

Long-tailed Tit and Great Tit were seen on our return to the main path back to the car park. Several species of butterflies were on the wing including Red Admiral, Small White, Chalk Hill Blue, Gatekeeper, Small Heath and a Small Copper. An impressive array of Parasol Mushrooms was also spotted on West High Down.



Dave Fairlamb

Sunday 16th October at Niton

4 members met at the small National Trust car park at the end of the Old Blackgang Road at Windy Corner. It was a beautiful, clear morning with fabulous views. Whilst in the car park we saw 4 Ravens, a Peregrine, two Buzzards, a Jay, and two Magpies. We then walked in the fields down to the stile at St Catherine's Road, up Sandrock Road, along Old Blackgang Road before once more walking along the fields. Unfortunately, there was not much bird life around although we did hear and see Chiffchaffs. Other than that, there were Jackdaw, Robin, Blackbird, Wood Pigeon. Crow, Blue Tit and Great Tit and a Kestrel hung in the wind. The stunning views made up for the lack of birds.

Jackie Hart

Sunday 20th November at Yarmouth

Seventeen members joined Dave Fairlamb of Natural Links for an enjoyable morning's birdwatching.

Meeting at the start of the Yarmouth to Freshwater cycle track in Thorley Road, we immediately had signs of autumn with small groups of winter thrushes flying over, with at least 24 Redwings, a couple of Fieldfares and a Mistle Thrush. The water levels on Rofford Marsh were very high but did we did still manage to see a Common Snipe on the far bank, while dabbling ducks amongst the reeds included Shovelers, Teals and Mallards. A Cetti's Warbler was heard singing and a couple of Chiffchaffs were calling, with one eventually seen feeding in the reeds, almost certainly birds that will overwinter.



Common Snipe



Shoveler (male)

As we neared the Mill, a flock of Golden Plovers were seen flying high and as we reached the main estuary, large numbers of Wigeon were on the water, many calling as they pair bonded even at this stage of the year. Several species of waders were on the mudflats and saltmarsh including Curlews, Black-tailed Godwits, Redshanks, Lapwings and Dunlins and as we watched, a Kingfisher flashed by.



Dunlin



Kingfisher

Making our way along to the Mill Copse pool provided some excellent birdwatching, with first, a Peregrine flying fast over the copse, followed by a sighting of a female Marsh Harrier quartering low over the reeds at the back of the pool. A few other new species for the day were added to the list at this point with Little Grebes, Mute Swans and Cormorants on the open water, Grey Plovers, Oystercatchers, Little Egrets and Grey Herons on the saltmarsh edge and several passerines including Rock Pipit, Pied Wagtail and Stonechat. In all, 52 species were recorded during the walk.



Grey Plovers



Rock Pipit

Dave Fairlamb

Sunday 18th December at Newtown

Just 3 brave souls meet at the car park on a very wet morning. We decided on a quick visit to the field overlooking Causeway Lake before headed to the bird hide for shelter. We could see a few Teal, Wigeon, Mallard and Pintail, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit from the field. Although we were shielded from the rain in the hide visibility was very poor and we spent about an hour there. Dunlin, Redshank, Grey Plover were in the scrape and on the main marsh a flock of about 20 Knot was seen with a larger number of Golden Plover nearby. Cormorant were hanging around and a Little Egret feeding. We also saw Black-headed Gull and Brent Goose. On the way back to the car park 2 Collared Dove, Great Tit, House Sparrows, Jackdaws and Woodpigeon were noted. We finished with mince pies and a hot drink in the car.

Jackie Hart

Botany Meetings



Sunday 14th August Thorness Bay

As we drove over to Thorness Bay, the temperature was hovering on 32c! In spite of that, twelve members and guests showed up for an afternoon of botanising and recording in this interesting site which is accessed through Park Dean Resorts holiday camp. We all managed to park near the entertainment complex which is a ten minute walk from Thorness Bay area. We found the reception staff there very helpful and they supplied us with maps of the extensive site. Thorness Bay is an SSSI, and comprises about 3 kilometres of little disturbed coastline which includes soft maritime cliffs, intertidal sand and shingle interspersed with rocky outcrops and brackish marshes known as Thorness Marshes. We arrived on a high spring tide which made access along the beach rather tricky in places.

The site comprised a range of botanically rich communities. Previously nearly 200 species of plants have been recorded there. As one would expect after such a dry hot period, many of the 'normal plants' were quite dried up but the more specialised plants that are specially adapted to growing in extreme environments looked fine. Common adaptations we observed were plants with a tight rosette habit of growth, waxy, hairy, glaucous or spiny leaves and deep taproots. These modifications all help to conserve water and limit transpiration and protect against salt spray.

We were fortunate in having Colin Pope and Anne Marston with us to help with our observations. We observed Small Wood Reed (*Calamagrostis epigejos*) and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) which grow on the more mature cliff slopes. There were some wonderful stands of Marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*). Other notable species observed were Sea Kale (*Crambe maritima*), a halophytic (salt tolerant) plant with large, very thick and waxy leaves which can be grown as a blanched spring vegetable. Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*), always a star of maritime communities was observed, with its metallic blue flowers. The gorgeous Yellow Horned Poppy (*Glaucium flavum*) was seen but the flowers were mainly gone over leaving the long, horn shaped capsules. In the marshy areas the observed *Limonium vulgare* Sea Lavender in flower. Annual Seablite (*Sueda maritima*) and Greater Sea Spurrey (*Spergularia media*).

One curious plant we saw was Prickly Saltwort (*Salsola kali ssp.kali*), a species in the Amaranthaceae family, whose leaves are tipped with rigid woody spines. This plant is usually seen on the driftline but is becoming increasingly rare due to trampling. Sadly no one found Henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), a rare plant of coastal sites of which Thorness Bay has previously held the largest population.



Dave and Hazel Trevan

Monday 12th September Mottistone Common

This meeting was scheduled to take place on Sunday but as this coincided with the final lap of the Tour of Britain Cycle Race many roads were scheduled to be closed and it was decided to postpone the meeting and try for the following day. In the event, the death of the Queen meant that the Tour of Britain was cancelled. A group of seven turned up on Monday to walk up onto Mottistone Common to record heathland plants. It was a very pleasant walk with splendid views but proved to be very disappointing for heathland plants. The combination of a very hot, dry summer and the increase of bracken, gorse and bramble over the best heathland areas resulted in a much impoverished flora with very little in flower. We convened at the Longstone and walked over to the Longstone cottage pond but the water level was very low here and we failed to find Opposite-leaved Pondweed for which this is possibly the last remaining Island site.

Sunday 1st January 2023

It has become a national tradition amongst botanists to celebrate the New Year with a wild flower count. This is organised nationally by the BSBI to find out how many plants are in flower around new year across the country. This year, our group met at Shide and walked through the Gift to Nature site by the river Medina into Newport. There were fourteen of us and, before returning to our cars some of us warmed up in the Bargeman's Rest with welcome glasses of mulled wine. This year we found a total of 31 wild plants in flower; not bad but poorer than in recent years. We think this was due to the hard frosts we experienced in December which finished off many of the plants that would have continued to provide a few flowers for the New Year. Nationally, the highest total was 76 from a group in Cornwall. Indeed, the highest counts overall came from SW England, which escaped the worst of the December cold snap. Most counts were considerably lower.

Colin Pope

Fungi



Saturday 24th September Beech Copse, Godshill

Our group of 15 met in the main carpark at Godshill and walked slowly along the footpath through the fields to Beech Copse. We walked slowly because we kept making finds along the way. By the time we reached Beech Copse, there was not time to complete the circuit of the wood but we nevertheless made good finds beneath beech trees and in the wetter parts of the woods. 43 species

We were joined by Phil and Veronica Barden, who were here on holiday. They told us of their remarkable find of the very rare *Amanita ovoidea* on the clifftop at St Lawrence, reported elsewhere in the Bulletin.

Sunday 2nd October Firestone Copse

Torrential rain in the morning put most people off coming this morning. Nevertheless, eight of us set off. We especially welcomed Mary & Eric Steer, members who live on the mainland and are rarely able to get to our meetings. We found lots of interesting fungi and by the end of the morning, the rain stopped and the sun shone! 37 species.

Saturday 15th October Parkhurst Forest

Our Annual Fungus Foray took place at Parkhurst Forest this year. We are normally accompanied by mainland experts on our annual foray to help us with identification but Alan Outen from Bedfordshire is no longer able to join us due to deteriorating health and members of the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group were unable to travel across this year. A group of thirteen set off from the main carpark in the direction of Signal House. Our progress was slow as we made good finds in the woodland fringing the trackway. Fly Agarics (*Amanita muscaria*) are always popular and they were showing very well, together with False Death Caps (*Amanita citrina*), two types of Grisettes, and a variety of Milkcaps and difficult to identify Brittlegills (*Lactarius*). We were very impressed by the size of Powdery Pick-a-back fungus (*Asterophora lycoperdoides*) growing parasitically on specimens of the Blackening Brittlegill. We spent some time looking at spectacular clumps of a fungus growing around the base of willows in a dried-up depression. They looked like the deadly poisonous Funeral Bells but on subsequent microscopic examination proved to be Sheathed Woodtuft (*Kuehneromyces mutabilis*). Iain Outlaw found some lovely specimens of the beautiful and local Holly Parachute (*Marasmius hudsonii*) growing on a fallen holly leaf. On our way back to the carpark, where we stopped for lunch, we met a couple who had been collecting fungi for the pot. They had an impressive collection of very fine Ceps and Chanterelles.

After our lunch break, we drove to the north end of the forest to continue our foraying around Marks Corner. Here we found some different fungi including the Beech Milkcap (*Lactarius blennius*), Panther Cap (*Amanita pantherina*), Bitter Oysterling (*Panellus stipticus*) and Sulphur Knight (*Tricholoma sulphureum*). In total, we were able to find and identify 93 different species. This included some which had to be taken back for microscopical examination.

Saturday 22nd October Martin's Wood, Newchurch

Ten members met in the Newchurch carpark for a visit to Martin's Wood. In recent years, this mixed planted woodland on sandy soil has proved to be an interesting mycological site. This time was no exception. Death Caps were frequent and there was a good show of fungi under plantations especially milkcaps (*Lactarius*) and Brittlegills (*Russula*). One fungus, Copper Spike (*Chroogomphus rutilus*), was recorded for the first time post 2000 but the star find was the beautiful little Scarlet Bonnet (*Mycena adonis*). Altogether, 47 species were recorded..

Saturday 19th November Parkhurst Forest

This was a return visit to Parkhurst Forest but nothing like our earlier visit on 15th October. This time fungi were much harder to find and it was clear that we reached the end of the peak fungus season which had been so good this year. We had nine 9 members and we recorded 42 species.

Saturday 3rd December Shanklin Cemetery

For our final foray the weather had turned decidedly grey and chilly. Nevertheless, a group of nine of us met up at the cemetery entrance and proceeded to look for grassland fungi. Although the autumn had been particularly good for woodland fungi, waxcap grasslands generally had been less productive and today was no exception. We found a good range of grassland fungi but only in small quantity. However, we were all hugely impressed by two very large clumps of Orange-peel Fungus (*Aleuria aurantia*), the biggest any of us had ever seen, and it was nice to find a group of Beaked Earthstars (*Geastum pectinatum*) beneath some conifers. Altogether we recorded 33 species.

Colin Pope

Librarian or Library Administrator needed

For personal reasons I will soon need to step down from this role. It is not an onerous task but it is satisfying and is important to the aims of the society.

Put simply, there are two main aspects to the role.

A visit to the office every few weeks is sufficient to access new publications and keep the stock in order. Every September the librarian packs and posts about 20 mailings to institutions,. After collecting publications and envelopes from the office this can be done from home and only takes a few hours. You just need a computer and printer.

If you are willing to help our Society with this task or would like more details, please contact me. I will of course offer any help and advice required.

Helen Jackson : rosemount@yahoo.co.uk

Thankyou

You have probably received your Bulletin and other papers through your letterbox. For several years, Dave & Hazel Trevan have been responsible for organising the distribution of the mail-outs and we are extremely grateful to them for doing this rather complex task. Many thanks also to the team who 'stuff' the envelopes and to those who distribute mailings in their local area. We are very grateful to Colin Boswell who is taking over Dave & Hazel's role.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S NOTES

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

We are sorry to report the following deaths:

Some of the fungi found on our forays this autumn.



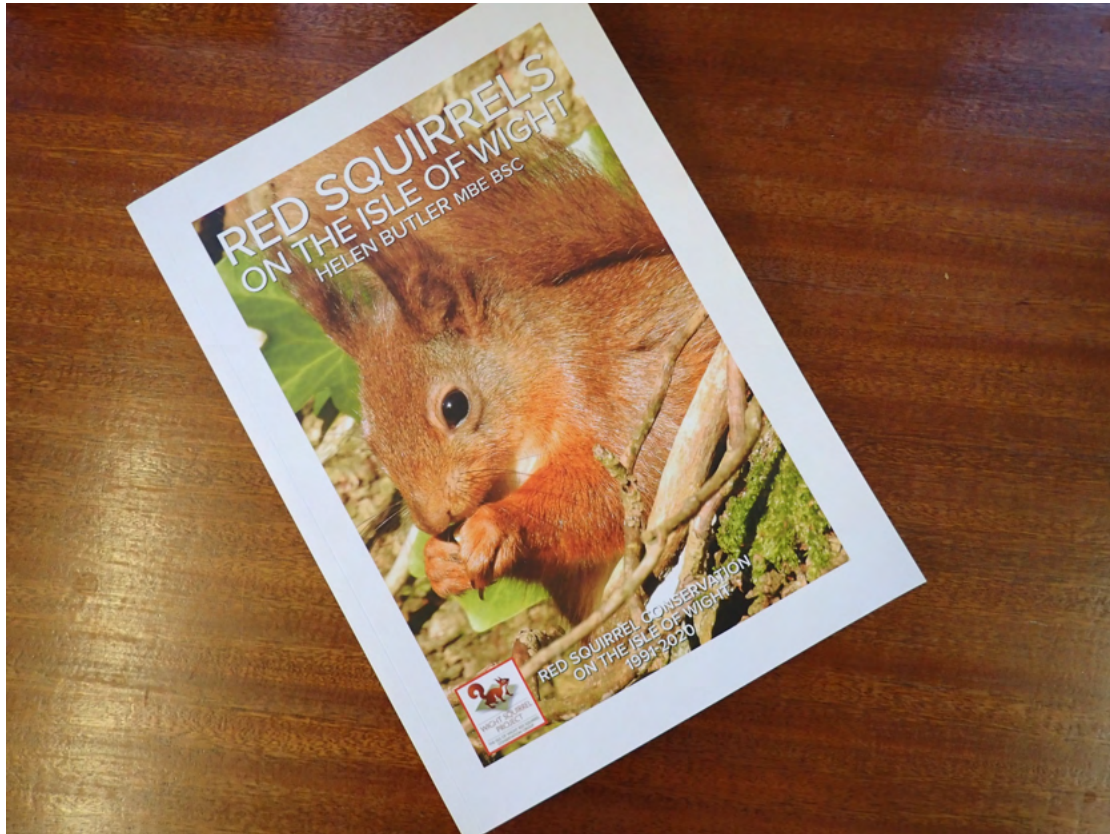
Left: *Amanita franchetti*, An uncommon Amanita found on a very wet foray in Firestone Copse on 2nd October
 Right: The Silky Piggyback fungus, *Asterophora parasitica*, only grows on the decaying fruit bodies of Brittlegill, *Russula*, species. This year we found some particularly fine specimens such as these in Parkhurst Forest on 15th October



Left: The beautiful little Scarlet Bonnet, *Mycena adonis*, in Martin's Wood, Newchurch on 22nd October
 Right: A spectacular clump of Orange Peel Fungus in Shanklin Cemetery on 3rd December



Left: Hummingbird Hawkmoth photographed by Andy Butler in his garden in August
 Right: The first Island record of the isopod, *Cleantis prismatica*, on the beach at Yellow Ledge, Shanklin. Iain Outlaw



We are very pleased to have received a copy of Helen Butler's book for our library. This is a comprehensive account of the biology and ecology of Red Squirrels on the Island and the research which Helen has undertaken both with volunteers and in collaboration with Bournemouth University. The book is available for loan.

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NEXT BULLETIN

Please send any items for inclusion in the next Bulletin, and Reports of any Meetings for 1st January 2023 to 30th June 2023 to:

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The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be 8th July 2023

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