

Editorial

Once more, we are pleased to be able to deliver an issue of *Wight Studies* which reflects the range of our members' interests and demonstrates how the Society continues to fulfil its objectives.

A reliable water supply is of paramount importance in the founding of human settlements; there are many place-names with a 'watery' connection on the Island – Brook, Freshwater, and Whitwell - to name but a few. In the 21st century, we take for granted a reliable water supply and appropriate treatment of wastewater. When these process do not happen, considerable disruption occurs. There are currently significant concerns over the discharge of untreated effluent into our seas and rivers. There are continued questions about the adequacy of water supplies in the light of changes in rainfall patterns resulting from a changing climate, and the pressures generated by new housing and commercial development. The paper dealing with the history of the development of Ryde's water supply and sewerage system is a reminder that previous generations have wrestled with similar problems and there are lessons to be learned from their actions and experiences.

We continue to delve into the Island's prehistory history and history with a variety of articles. Studies of the fossil remains of animals present in the Cretaceous and Tertiary rocks are ongoing, particularly at Dinosaur Isle Museum. The archaeology group are active in using cutting-edge technology to uncover remains of ancient settlements. The paper relating to the Domesday book gives further insights into how land was settled and managed at the time of the Norman conquest. The history the medieval quarrymen and stonemasons who worked geological deposits on the Dorset coast to produce ecclesiastical monuments poses interesting questions about connections between settlements.

The annual reports give summaries of recent observations in natural history. Papers discussing the biodiversity of our cliffs and limpet distribution around our shores underline that change is continually occurring and highlighting the need for long-term studies to build up a detailed picture of these changes.

One of our cover photos shows a barn owl (*Tyto alba*), Species of the Year for our *iWatchWildlife* recording project. It is one of the Isle of Wight National Landscape's eight flagship species being targeted for nature recovery. These wonderful birds, linked with our pastoral heritage have declined drastically in the UK during the past 100 years. This is thought to be due to a combination of factors such as habitat loss, barn conversions, changes in farming techniques and use of harmful pesticides. Here on the Island, they can still be seen but not in the numbers there once were. Barn owls are most active at dawn and dusk when they search for prey in open country, farmland and woodland edges. Please report sightings by email to iwatchwildlife@gmail.com, and assist in building up a picture of the distribution and activity of this beautiful bird.

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Editors of the Proceedings