



Bulletin

February 2025

Issue No. 83

www.iwnhas.org

President's Address

As usual, it has been a busy year with a programme full of interest. I am continually surprised to realise that there are people on this small island with such a depth of knowledge of so many subjects. How lucky we are. On a fungal foray recently, I enjoyed hearing complex Latin names just rolling off people's tongues- with no hope of me ever remembering them!

The Biosphere Reserve Festival, although not directly related to the Society, had many from the Society taking part and one of the walks I went on had several families with young children on it and I was able to give out leaflets about the Society to people who were unaware of IWNHAS but said they might well be joining. The festival is already in the diary for June 2025

At the Recorder's Conference which, as usual, was well attended, there were fascinating talks about the Species Recovery Project by the Isle of Wight National Trust ecologist, how we can get involved in studying reptile and amphibians through HIWARG (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Reptile and Amphibian Group) and also discussion by Theo Vickers about his rock pooling programme involving the public- all of these may well provide new members for our Society as well.

I feel I should not finish this without marking the passing of Bill Shepard- an amazingly knowledgeable and also humble naturalist. It was a privilege to know him and hear him talk. We have him to thank for the first observations and lists of flowers here at Haseley.

By the time you read this hopefully you will all have had a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

Dr Vivian Roberts

The Society's Phenology Project for 2025

What is phenology? I hear you ask. It is the study of nature's calendar, recording when flowers first bloom, migrant birds arrive and depart and when butterflies and other insects first emerge. Of course, naturalists have been doing this for a long time and each year there are changes as a result of weather conditions. For instance, 2024 will be remembered as a poor year for insects (and creatures dependent on them) as a result of a poor, cool summer. However, when these records are looked at over a significantly longer period of time, we start to see changes and trends that are likely to be linked to a changing climate.

Around one hundred years ago, when our Society was first formed, a group of naturalists decided to record the first flowering of certain plants, first arrival of migratory birds and the first emergence of butterflies in and around Newport. They said, 'records were made by members of the Society as a contribution to the work undertaken by the Royal Meteorological Society in collecting data relating to periodic occurrences and the relation of such phenomena to weather conditions. The results were published over several years in the Proceedings.

If we were to repeat this exercise today, we would not select the same species today. For instance, we would not include Chiffchaff or Blackcap because increasing numbers of these overwinter with us now, a phenomenon unknown in the early 1900s. We would not select Cuckoo, Nightingale, Wryneck, Turtle Dove or Spotted Flycatcher as their numbers have tragically crashed although in the early 1900s they were common migrants.

What can you do to help?



We are encouraging you to record first and lasts for a number of common flowers, trees, insects and birds but rather than set up our own project, we would like to contribute the programme called Nature's Calendar co-ordinated by the Woodland Trust. That way, our observations feed into a much bigger picture and can be analysed statistically. Nature's

Calendar contains around 2.9 million records and is the largest and longest running biological record in the UK. The website is very easy to navigate. There is lots of supporting information and it is very straightforward to enter records once you have registered. We are working with the Woodland Trust to share information and we will be given access to their Isle of Wight observations to help us analyse change.

What are we as a Society doing?

As well as encouraging members and the wider public to contribute towards Nature's Calendar, we will be publishing articles in Wight Studies analysing our own datasets to look at how climate change appears to be influencing our Island's flora and fauna and our popular 2025 Recorders Conference will have Climate Change as a special theme.



The first emergence of hazel catkins has been getting earlier in the past twenty years across the country and it is no longer unusual in some places to find the first emerging catkins before Christmas in some years.

[Register](#)
[Sign in](#)

Nature's Calendar

[Add a record](#)
[What we record and why](#)
[Analysis](#)
[Blog](#)

Help us track the effects of weather and climate change on wildlife near you

What effect has recent weather had on wildlife? Does climate change affect timings in nature? Join Nature's Calendar and help scientists discover answers to these questions.

From leaf buds bursting to blackberries ripening, let us know what's happening near you. You'll be contributing to a long biological record that dates back as far as 1736.

[Start recording](#)

Colin Pope

Spanish Slug Armada!

Gardeners will testify that 2024 was particularly good for pests – particularly slugs and snails. In Newport, the ‘Spanish’ or ‘Vulgar’ slug’ *Arion (Arion) vulgaris* has been locally rampant and like other molluscs was encouraged by the damp spring and early summer. During the months of August and September, we encountered a minor ‘slug plague’ with dusk counts on our lawn (area 24 m²) peaking at 114 on September 7th (mean density ~5 per m²). However, it is not unknown for ‘plagues’ to reach densities of 50 per m² in fruit and vegetable crops! Mating pairs were first observed on 2nd September, and continued to be seen in the early half of the month. Eggs are apparently laid in soil from September and generally overwinter in the egg or small juvenile. There were still some adults at the top of our compost heap in mid-October. Slugs can be difficult to identify and morphological characteristics and colour is notoriously variable. However, most seen around Newport were very similar, with dark-brown orange body and a black rim around the breathing pore. Identification was confirmed by dissection using Rowson *et al.* (2014), which is an excellent guide. This is an introduced species from southern Europe, however although the earliest vouchered British records are from the 1960s, arrivals could have occurred much earlier. Two previous records appear for the Isle of Wight on NBN - a specimen from Firestone Copse observed in October 2013 and one from St Lawrence churchyard in October 2016.



Fig 1. (left) Spanish slugs *Arion (Arion) vulgaris* 12th August, Newport 2024.

Fig 2. (right) Mating pair of Spanish slug *Arion (Arion) vulgaris*. Newport 2nd September 2024

Between 30th September and 8th October, 343 Spanish slugs were removed from the garden, which may have been too late to avoid another invasion next season!

Reference

Rowson, B., Turner, J., Anderson, R., Symondson, B. 2014. *Slugs of Britain and Ireland*. Field Studies Council.

Roger Herbert

Highlights from my recording year

We are fortunate to live on an island with a diverse range of habitats supporting a rich variety of wildlife, but it is also amazing how much can be found on your doorstep. This year I have concentrated on species either that are close to home, or that receive less attention and are rarely recorded. Some are challenging to identify but learning something new is part of the enjoyment for me. Every day's a school day.

In mid-January I collected some rush (*Juncus*) seed heads from Sandown Levels, looking for larval cases of moths. There were lots of empty cases of *Coleophora glaucicolella*, but one had been parasitised and still contained pupae. Keeping it indoors to encourage eclosion (emergence of the adults), two parasitoid wasps emerged. The wasps were *Hyssopus olivaceus*, a known parasitoid of Coleophorid moths.



Left: *Hyssopus olivaceus*, a parasitoid wasp



Right: Mole Flea, *Hystrichopsylla talpae*

One group that has seldom been recorded is the fleas. In fact, the only serious work done on fleas on the Island was by H.G. Jeffery before 1922, although in the late twentieth century, Bob George, the national expert at the time who lived in Bournemouth, encouraged Oliver Frazer to send him fleas from bird's nests and bats. I don't come across them very often but did find the Northern Rat Flea (*Nosopsyllus fasciatus*) on a mouse trapped humanely in the garage. In March a vacated Wood Mouse nest found beneath a log, contained four different flea species, including Britain's largest species the Mole Flea (*Hystrichopsylla talpae*). It can't have been a very comfortable life for that Wood Mouse!

A number of interesting beetles were seen during the year. The first, *Pachyrhinus lethierryi*, is a weevil associated with various conifer species, particularly cypress. It's a Mediterranean species that was first recorded in Britain in 2003. A male specimen I collected in Parkhurst Forest in May was the first for the Island.



The outside wall of our house was quite productive with lots of insects standing out against the freshly painted walls. On 7th May I found a bark beetle that Mark Telfer identified as *Hylesinus wachtli*, Mark having found the first for the Island three days earlier on the wall of his house. (picture left)

Another beetle recorded for the first time on the Island was the Tasmanian Eucalyptus Beetle (*Paropsisterna selmani*). The first British record was from London in 2012. Larvae, presumed to be this species, were first recorded at Ventnor Botanic Garden on 10th June by Mark Telfer and

Tony Allen. In August, the garden's curator Chris Kidd, found larvae and adults, particularly on the *Eucalyptus smithii*. I went along a few days later finding numerous larvae and have since seen the adult beetle too.

One group always worth the effort is aphids. Some 680 taxa are known from the UK, although very few will be familiar as garden or allotment pests. Identification to species is not straightforward but is aided because many are host specific or alternate between two host species.

I recorded 24 species of aphid this year, with six of those new to the Island's fauna. The Apple-dock Aphid (*Dysaphis radicola*) was found on the roots of dock (*Rumex*) sp. While working in the garden, Rhododendron Aphid (*Illinoia lambersi*), was found on plants bought from a nursery in Essex. The Water-lily Aphid (*Rhopalosiphum nymphaeae*) was found at the garden pond and the Shiny Birch Aphid (*Symydobius oblongus*) was on a birch tree at The Heights, Sandown. In November, a post in the IW Fungi group on Facebook alerted me to another aphid, the Black-tipped Dark-veined Birch Aphid (*Calaphis betulicola*) at Hersey Reserve. I collected and confirmed the species a few days later. Finally, I found the Corsican Pine Shoot Aphid (*Cinara brauna*) by beating pine branches at Culver Parade.

Another productive area has been micro-fungi, with 11 species recorded for the first time on the Island. All were identified following microscopic examination.

Early in the year I collected a number of beetles from Haddon's Pits that were carrying so-called 'beetle hanger' fungi or Laboulbeniales. Almost every surface of the beetle *Catops morio* was covered in the fungus, *Asaphomyces tubanticus* and a rove beetle (*Sepedophilus constans*) was carrying *Stichomyces conosomatis*.

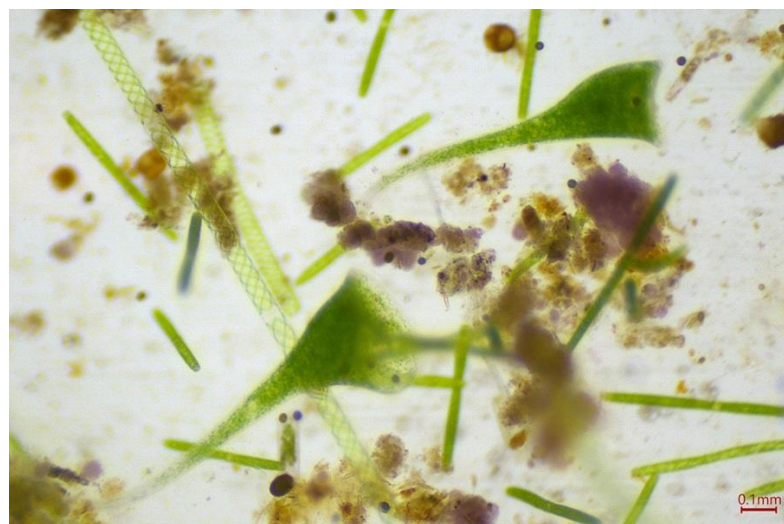


Once again, our garden proved to be a good place to look. A Japanese Laurel (*Aucuba japonica*) at the back of the garden died following the very wet spring. I examined some of the dead twigs and found the fungus, *Diaporthe aucubae*. Later in the year, a post on the British Mycological Society Facebook page alerted me to a fungus that is only found on dead leaves of *Griselinia littoralis*. We have *Griselinia* hedging along the driveway so I went straight out to check.

Sure enough, the first dead leaves I collected from beneath the hedge were covered in the fungus, *Physalacria stilboidea*. (picture above)

On the IWNHAS fungus foray to Beech Copse, Godshill I collected a bag of leaf litter to examine at home for invertebrates. Amongst the litter was a holly leaf covered in tiny yellow perithecia of the saprobe, *Calonectria lauri*. A few days later and knowing what to look for, I found some more beneath a holly tree in the garden.

Other fungi new to the Island included *Puccinia chaerophylli* on Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), the entomopathogenic *Beauveria bassiana*, *Mycosphaerella mori* on Mulberry leaves and *Cylindrium elongatum*. The latter was found on dead Evergreen Oak (*Quercus ilex*) leaves at Ferncliff Gardens.



Having found the water-lily aphid on the garden pond I thought it might be a good place to look for other species and decided to examine at some water samples under the microscope. Each time reminded of the opening sentence to 'The War of the Worlds'*, but thankfully no tripods spotted yet! The sheer abundance of life in the pond water was a real eye-opener. Everything here was new to me, so identification to species has been challenging but there were ciliates, cyclops, daphnia, diatoms, ostracods, rotifers and much more.

Two ciliates that have been identified are the large single-celled organisms, *Stentor polymorphus* (photo above) and *Stentor coeruleus*. They are usually attached to detritus but can be free swimming. The former appears to be green but the colour comes from *Chlorella*, green algae that live symbiotically within the ciliate.

Inspired by this diversity, I collected freshwater samples from other sites and recorded Duck Leech (*Theromyzon tessulatum*) and a water-flea, *Scapholeberis mucronata*. Neither had been recorded on the Island before.

Of course, the majority of the species recorded here for the first time, have been here all along but were overlooked or remained unidentified. However, there are a few, that along with the Tasmanian Eucalyptus Beetle and the cypress weevil, are genuinely recent arrivals.



Back at Ventnor Botanic Garden in June, I spotted an interesting looking jumping spider in the entrance to the hothouse. Initially presumed to be *Hasarius adansoni*, it has now been identified as *Evarcha jucunda*, a Mediterranean species that is occasionally found in greenhouses and is not thought to be able to survive outdoors in Britain. (photo left)

In September at Battery Gardens I photographed a Large Tube-tail (*Cylindromyia brassicaria*), a rare fly that is largely confined to Cornwall, Devon and Dorset where it

inhabits coastal grassland and heaths. Their larvae parasitize shieldbugs and the adults can be found nectaring on ox-eye daisies, thistles and yarrow.



Left: LargeTube-tail Fly, *Cylindromyia brassicaria*



Right: *Dialectia scalarielli* cocoon in Tree Echium



in 1967.

A short distance along the cliff path from Battery Gardens I found tenanted leaf mines of the moth *Dialectica scalarielli* in the leaves of the Tree Echium (*Echium pininana*). The first British breeding record of this moth was on Viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) at Dungeness, Kent in 2022. Since then, it appears to have become established along the south coast and has now reached the Island. It was a pleasing find after what had been a poor year for moths. The only real surprise, a single Early Oak Gall Moth (*Pammene giganteana*) (left) at the garden moth trap in spring. This is a nationally scarce species that has only been recorded twice before on the Island, the last time

Looking at such a diverse range of species has been incredibly rewarding. Of the roughly 1700 species I've seen in 2024, 250 were species I'd not seen before and around 30 were new for the Isle of Wight. We are surrounded by fascinating wildlife, there is always something interesting to find and something new to learn. I know I shall doing more of the same in 2025.

* "No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water". H.G.Wells, War of the Worlds.

Iain Outlaw

An update from George Greiff

As some members of the Society will know, I fell in love with natural history within a few months of moving from Johannesburg, South Africa, to the Isle of Wight in 2015. The amount of green was overwhelming to me, and I was spellbound by the charms of so-called cryptogams – organisms including mosses, fungi and algae. These 'hidden' organisms sparked an interest that has taken my life in a direction I never would have anticipated, and I have been invited to share what has happened since I left the Island in 2021.

Between 2015 and 2018, I studied the mosses, liverworts and hornworts of the Island. If not for the kind guidance of Colin Pope and John Norton, the difficulties associated with identifying these small plants likely would have snuffed out my interest very quickly. I cannot understate how important it was to be shown plants in the field, explore different sites and learn tips and tricks in microscopy, which is needed to identify many species. I am very grateful to Paul Bingham for giving me a compound microscope that I still use nearly a decade later.

While bryophytes have always been my first love, I tasted other avenues of cryptogamic botany in these years, including brief forays into algae and ascomycete fungi on rotting wood. More substantially, I became fascinated with lichens and the parasitic (lichenicolous) fungi that occasionally grow on them. I spent a considerable amount of time learning common lichens and encountered many new and interesting lichenicolous fungi on the Island.

I began to wonder if my beloved bryophytes also held fungal parasites and slowly began to find minute ascomycetes on some mosses and liverworts. Within a few months, I had found the second ever world record of *Bryocentria octosporelloides* on *Myriocoleopsis minutissima* on Brading Down, the original locality being in Spain. This revealed just how understudied the field was, and the vast array of fungal forms and lifestyles led me to specialise in this group, the bryophilous fungi.

In 2018, I began a degree in Biological Sciences at the University of Oxford as a mature student four years older than most of the others. I continued with natural history in the holidays. The COVID19 pandemic sliced my degree into two very different halves, and the second half allowed me to balance local natural history with coursework while working from home on the Island. During this time, Colin Pope and I did some recording in Briddlesford Copse near Havenstreet, managed by the People's Trust for Endangered Species. There, I found a fungus on a moss that fit nothing else that was known – and in 2020 published *Bryostroma popei* as a new species in honour of Colin.

While in Oxford, before the pandemic, I got funding to do an expedition to the Cairngorms where I studied fungi on montane bryophytes. This was a fantastic experience and resulted in many interesting finds. My dissertation, however, was not on this topic. I got interested in the field of evolutionary plant development (evo-devo), where various model plants are used to trace the history of plant innovations. Much of this research uses bryophytes, and I found my skills as a bryologist gave me unique insights compared to the many geneticists in the field. I ended up working on the question of how sexual reproduction in land plants evolved. Six of the seven land plant phyla have flagellated, swimming male gametes rather than immobile gametes contained in pollen. I wanted to determine what signals released by the female gametes tell these flagellated cells where to swim in bryophytes. This ancient system must have been built upon to get the complex reproductive mechanisms we see in flowering plants. Due to the pandemic, however, I was not able to tackle this question in the lab and the work was purely theoretical.

I graduated in 2021 while the world was still in a strange place. After an internship in a lab in Cambridge, I moved to the University of Bristol in the September to begin a PhD in Plant Science. It was a difficult transition from theoretical to practical work, sprints to a marathon, and it took some time to settle in. In the early years, I was able to spend more time on natural history, though it was still less than before. I went on at least one weeklong excursion a year and continued to specialise in bryophilous fungi. My PhD project is in the evo-devo field on how an important genetic pathway regulating plant architecture evolved. Much of my time in the first two years was spent producing mutant plants to analyse later. As such, it often felt like progress was slow.

However, I was able to integrate some of the new skills I was learning with my work on bryophilous fungi. I developed a method for generating DNA sequence data from small amounts of these tiny fungi, which allowed for the first molecular data to be obtained for many species. Through my own fieldwork and collaboration, I started finding new species for Britain, but also many new species to science that needed description. Two of the latter, *Bryocentria confusa* and *Endoantria benetecta*, were described in mid-2024, and work in progress to describe some of the others.

I am now in the final year of my PhD, with that work currently taking precedence over my natural history pursuits. My thesis will be submitted in September 2025, and then I will move on to the next adventure. My family still lives on the Island, and I return regularly, always delighted to explore the place that stimulated my interest in natural history.



A new species, *Endoantria benetecta* Greiff & Döbbeler, described in 2024. The fungus forms tiny orange fruitbodies (arrowed) inside the perianths of the liverwort, *Lejeunea patens*, sometimes referred to as Pearl Pouncewort. It is only known from a few records from western Scotland and Wales.

George Greiff



iWatch is the Society's Recording Project

Highlights from iWatch Wildlife 2024

Now in its ninth year, the project continues to promote, encourage and support wildlife recording both within The Society and the wider community. It also facilitates The Society's natural history engagement and outreach.

Events

Since our report in the last Bulletin, we attended our flagship event – The Wolverton Manor Garden Fair held during the last weekend of August. IWNHAS have had a presence at this established show since the Conservation Tent was introduced in the early 2000's. Once again, we were pleased to be invited and be able to showcase all aspects of the IWNHAS delivered in collaboration by both the iWatch Wildlife and Archaeology Teams.

Our theme was ‘caterpillar food plants’ in an effort to raise awareness of the ‘need for weeds’ and the importance of supporting native insect species with the often very specific foodplants they require to exist. We created an attractive display of potted plants / cut foliage foodplants, alongside hand illustrated adult versions of the dependant insect species. We also offered a butterfly craft activity and exhibited Natural History specimens via our pop-up portable museum.

We engaged with hundreds of people across the weekend and had many excellent conversations around ways to help local wildlife and explore our wonderful natural history.



IW Recorders' Conference

November brought the final event of the year supported by iWatch Wildlife – the annual IW Recorders' Conference.

Species Recording

On the 2024 species recording front, we continued with our regular ‘Species of the Month’ campaign featuring the following: Frogs / Toads & Spawn, Hare, Adder, Hedgehogs, Stag Beetles, Great-Green Bush Cricket, Garden Tiger Moth, Kingfisher, Curlew, Wax Caps and Mistletoe. We are currently programming for 2025.

Alongside this we ran ‘Species of the Year’ with Frogs & Toads being highlighted throughout 2024. We will announce our 2025 ‘Species of the Year’ in early Spring.

Hedgehogs

We continued collecting Hedgehog records from social media and at events throughout the year. Encouragingly records were up, in fact, the highest tally since the pandemic with 36 live and 9 dead hogs being recorded. With support from the IW Local Records Centre, we have also incorporated data from the IW Hedgehog Hospital into the IWNHAS database. In the coming months, we shall be sharing all IW data with the national survey ‘The Big Hedgehog Map’ (PTES) contributing to the national picture – something we do annually.

Stag Beetles

Another flagship species we always want to know more about is the magnificent Stag Beetle. Records were significantly down this year with just 6 observations (4x females & 2x males) coming from Cowes and East Cowes only. This chimes with the general and concerning downward trend of insect records throughout 2024.

Glow Worms

We were delighted to help support the re-boot of the annual Glow-worm survey at St Helen's Churchyard. Until 2008, annual surveys of the Common or European Glow-worm (*Lampyrus noctiluca*) were carried out in the churchyard by the IWNHAS, with findings of up to 45 individuals on a single night! After finding one glowing female in September 2023 during a bat and moth evening led by iWatch Wildlife Volunteers, St Helen's Eco Church decided to re-launch the annual survey with a consecutive two-night

pilot in July.

Unfortunately, the iWatch Team were unable to support the event in person due to illness, however, the Eco-church group went ahead and had a successful weekend with 7 glowing females recorded on the first night and 4 females on the second. These records are now on iRecord. IWNHAS hopes to support the survey again next year.

Huge thanks to everybody who has taken time to record, help and support others and share their observations, knowledge and experience during 2024. Thank you to all our brilliant volunteers without whom the project would not be possible. If you would like to find out more about getting involved with the Glow-worm survey or outreach and volunteering at events, then please do get in touch with Tina on iwatchwildlife@gmail.com.

Best wishes for 2025 - we look forward to another year of wildlife recording with you all!

IWNHAS would like to thank the IW Local Records Centre and IW National Landscape for funding to enable the continuation of the iWatch Wildlife project.

Tina Whitmore

Contact details: iwatchwildlife@gmail.com Facebook: @iWatchWildlife Instagram: #iwatchwildlife

Wild Winter Wonders: December's Unexpected Wildlife Encounters

The middle of December brought with it some most unexpected local species observations shared both via social media and with us directly...



Though typically a hibernating species, a **Hedgehog** was reported on the night of December 14th by Sarah Dye in Newport, then subsequently from the same location two nights later (most likely the same individual). Jacquie Oakstead from the IW Hedgehog Hospital said: "In recent years we have found hedgehogs don't all hibernate. They also seem to be breeding later and later".

December 15th revealed a stunning **Curled Octopus** (*Eledone cirrhosa*) – only the 3rd known record for the Island (left). Fiona Crouch spotted the Octopus stranded in a rockpool at Bembridge and carefully moved it to a safer spot. Thanks to Theo Vickers for confirming the ID / observation history.

An active **Adder**, also usually a hibernating species at this time of year was observed by Steven Wright in Brading on December 17th (below left).

Finally, a **Mantis Shrimp** (*Rissoides desmaresti*) was discovered by a member of the public - Jean Saunders on the North-east coast of the Island. Identified by Dr Tim Ferrero from the Wildlife Trust (right below).

...who knows what surprises 2025 may bring?



Tina Whitmore

Andy's Nature Notes, July to December 2024

July.

- 2nd. Great Black-back Gulls diving for crabs below the slipway in Wheeler's Bay.
4th. Crimson Clover found along the Western Cliffs by Roger Silsbury.
11th. A Rusty-dot Pearl and Silver Y moths along the revetment. Also a Humming-bird Hawkmoth [HBHM] and a single plant of Tall Melilot along there as well.
14th. One Common Blue, 3 Large Skippers and 2 Gatekeepers along the revetment.
16th. A Lesser Black-back Gull on the boathouse roof.
17th. A Painted Lady along the revetment and a Brown House Moth indoors. The German wind turbine carrier 'Boldwing', off the Bay heading for France. These blades are enormous.
18th. A Comma in the garden and c.20 Swifts over home.
19th. 10 Small/Essex Skippers, 2 Commas and one Wall along the revetment.
20th. A Common Sandpiper on the sea defence in front of the house and 8 Bottle-nosed Dolphins heading west well offshore. A Fulmar Petrel in the Bay.
21st. A Southern Hawker dragonfly along the revetment.
24th. Wall Brown in the garden.
26th. A Migrant Hawker dragonfly in the garden. A Jersey Tiger moth at the back of the house. Went over to the Atherfield Reservoir with Pete Campbell in the afternoon and saw 6 Emperor Dragonflies, and 12 Black-tailed Skimmers. Plus a Common Sandpiper, 6 Sand Martins and one juvenile Marsh Harrier.
27th. A Small Copper butterfly in the garden.
28th. A Female Brimstone butterfly in the garden. 2 male Chalk-hill Blue butterflies and 3 Common Blues along the revetment.
29th. A Marbled White butterfly in the garden.
30th. A bat species, probably a Serotine, flying along the revetment in the bright sunshine. 2 Small Blues along there as well. A very hot day so went for a swim!
31st. 3 Commas in the garden.



Left: Bottle-nosed Dolphins in Wheelers Bay; Middle: Brimstone in Andys garden; Right: Swifts over Wheelers Bay

August.

- 1st. 3 Willow Warblers in the garden.
2nd. Male Southern Hawker in the garden. A Fulmar Petrel over the garden.
3rd. 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls in Wheelers Bay.
5th. c. 30 Common Blues and 2 Chalk-hills along the revetment. One HBHM in the garden.
6th. A Many-plumed Moth on the front room door. A Holly Blue and a HBHM in the garden.
10th. Went to Newtown with Pete. We saw 3 White-tailed Eagles and 5 Migrant Hawkers.
11th. Ron[seal] off the revetment.
12th. Male Emperor Dragonfly along the revetment.
13th. A mackerel shoal off the Bay in the evening.
15th. Imm/female Wheatear on sea defence in front of the house.
17th. Walked along the lower slope of Bonchurch Down this am. One Adonis Blue, 25 Chalk-hills and 4 Brown Argus.
18th. 6 species of hoverflies in and around my pond, drinking from it plus a Flesh Fly and a Holly Blue in the garden. A red moon this evening.



Left: Lesser black-back Gull, Wheelers Bay; Middle: Brown Argus, Bonchurch Down; Right: Flesh fly, Cliff Cottage

20th. Southern Hawker Dragonfly and a HBHM along the revetment.

21st Visited Newtown with Pete. One Osprey, 3 Eagles, one Kingfisher, 2 Greenshanks, a swarm of European Hornets and 6 Ruddy Darters.

23rd. Migrant Hawker in the garden and a HBHM just as it got dark.

27th. 5 Whimbrel flying east early am off home.

28th. A Bloxworth Snout moth in the garden. Back up to Bonchurch Down late morning but it was too hot to go right along Saw 14 male and 5 female Adonis Blue and 5 Chalk-hills.

29th. A fresh Painted Lady and 2 Holly Blues in the garden.

30th. A steady stream of Swallows and Martins from daybreak to about 11.00 past the front of my house close in and over the sea, all easterly. 4 HBHM, one Painted Lady, 4 Red Admirals and 10 Large Whites along the revetment.



Left: Kingfisher



Right: European Hornet

Both at Newtown on 21st August

September.

1st. A Small Heath along the revetment, a rarely seen butterfly here.

2nd. 3 Wheatears and a Stonechat along the revetment.

3rd Shown a Sponge Crab caught by fisherman Geoff Blake 10 miles off Ventnor. Quite rare.

4th. 13 Painted Lady, 61 Large White and 6 Red Admiral along the revetment. The Waverley paddle steamer off home with the Prince of Wales on the horizon.

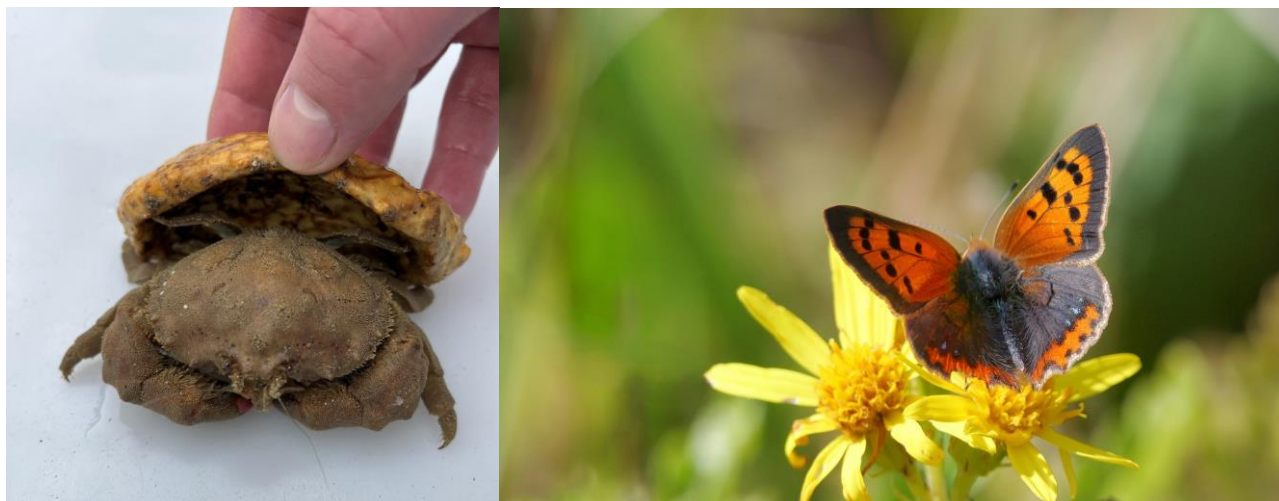
6th. A Wryneck flew along the cliffs at the back of the revetment.

8th. A Spotted Flycatcher in the garden plus 8 Willow/Chiffs and c.20 Goldfinches.

9th. 340 Large Whites, 19 Painted Lady, 2 Common Blue, one Holly Blue and a Small Tortoiseshell (my first for 3 years).

11th. 22 Painted Lady, one Small Tortoiseshell, numerous Large Whites, 2 Peacock and 8 Red Admirals. A juvenile Cormorant fishing in Bonchurch Pond.

12th. A Clouded Yellow (first this year) and c.600 Large Whites etc along the revetment. A Kingfisher on Bonchurch Pond.



Left: A Sponge Crab, *Dromia peronata*, a rarely seen deeper water crab which carries a sponge on its back, held in place by its rear two pairs of legs. Right: A Small Copper. Var. *caeruleopunctata* is distinguished by the blue markings on its rear wings.

13th. 16 Painted Lady, 4 Peacock, one Wall, one Meadow Brown, one HBHM, one Southern Hawker and a Small Copper, the variant *caeruleopunctata*.

14th. 8 Common Darters on Bonchurch Pond.



Left: A Small Tortoiseshell at Wheelers Bay, once common, Small Tortoiseshells have become increasingly uncommon; Middle: Some of a large influx of migratory Large Whites at Bonchurch revetment; Right: The Waverley and HMS Prince of Wales off Ventnor

15th. A Spotted Flycatcher on Bonchurch Pond. The Kingfisher was very elusive. Butterflies along the revetment much reduced now.

16th. A Comma in the garden plus 6 Chiffchaffs.

17th. 2 Kingfishers on the Pond now.

24th. A male Blackcap in the garden.

26th. 2 Oystercatchers in the Bay.

27th. A Goldcrest in the garden.

28th. Black Redstart along the revetment. Hoary Stock in bloom along there.

30th. A steady stream of Gannets heading west, predominately 2nd Winter.

October.

1st. Black Redstart along the revetment. Good numbers of Ivy Bees in the lawn this year.

2nd. A Clouded Yellow, a Scarce Bordered Straw moth and 2 Painted Lady along the revetment plus 2 Herons and a Wheatear.

3rd. A migrant Hawker dragonfly in the garden.

5th. A Buzzard and a Raven fighting over something along from home.

6th. 2 Black Redstarts, a Chiffchaff and a female Pheasant along the revetment.

9th. A very tame Greenland Wheatear along the revetment right by the walkway. Many people stopping to watch it from about 2m away.

12th. A male Blackcap in the garden.

13th. 2 female Stonechats along the revetment.

16th. Saw a Stoat working its way along the bottom of the cliff at the back of the revetment. I can't recall seeing one before along there.

17th. Male and female Blackcaps in the garden plus the large hover-fly, *Volucella zonaria*.

18th. A Peacock, Large Whites, Red Admirals and a HBHM in the garden. A male Stonechat along the revetment.

19th. A Clouded Yellow along the revetment.

20th. A Bloxworth Snout moth in the porch at home.

23rd. A Greenland Wheatear along the revetment all day.

29th. A young Grey Seal in the Bay today.



Left: Greenland Wheatear; Middle: Crow bombing a Buzzard; Right: Male Stonechat. All from Bonchurch Revetment.

November.

1st. A Large White and 5 Red Admirals along the revetment.

5th. A Chiffchaff in the garden.

6th. A Black Redstart feeding on the palm berries in my garden. A Rusty-dot Pearl moth on the dining room window.

8th. 5 Gannets east off the bay.

11th. Went to Newtown with Pete and saw a Pintail, Shelduck, Sea Eagle, Peregrine etc.

12th. An immature/female Black Redstart in the garden.

13th. A Song Thrush in the garden.

14th. 2 Song Thrushes, one male Blackcap and 6 Goldfinch in the garden. Saw a Heron catch a total of at least 18 fish from a pool just along from my house.

15th. A Black Redstart on the boathouse roof.

23rd. 10 Brent Geese west over the Bay flying into a gale gusting to 60mph.

26th. 5 very fresh Painted Lady in the garden plus one along the revetment. These would all be migrants.

29th. 2 Painted Lady nectaring on Winter Heliotrope back of my house.

December.

1st. A Bloxworth Snout outside of the back door at home.

6th. Visited Newtown with Pete and saw a Black-necked Grebe, 4 Great-crested Grebes, one Little Grebe, c.50 Grey Plover, 3 Spoonbills and 4 Red-breasted Mergansers.

24th. 3 Purple Sandpipers on the lower sea defence by the skate-board park towards Ventnor. A Red Admiral in the garden.

25th. A Bloxworth Snout in the porch. Purple Sandpipers still there.

26th. Purple Sandpipers still there plus one White Wagtail, one Pied Wagtail and one grey Wagtail all together in the same place.

28th. A single Purple Sandpiper on the tetrapods below the chalets in Wheelers Bay.



Left: Black-necked Grebe at Newtown



Right: Purple Sandpiper at Wheelers Bay

Andy Butler

General Meetings

Saturday 13th July **Historic Landscape of Limerstone Manor**

John Margham led a select group of seven members on a five mile walk from Limerstone Farm. We ascended north to Combe Tower and ate lunch nearby before descending south to Yafford and Thorncross and then returning to the farm to enjoy refreshments in the garden, kindly provided by Mary and Geoff Case and to look at an estate map of 1778.

Limerstone Farm was a dependent holding within the extensive Calbourne estate of the Bishops of Winchester before the Norman Conquest. By 1086 Limerstone may have become semi-independent. It is not named in Domesday Book but the Domesday Book entry for the bishop of Winchester's Calbourne estate includes the statement that 'Of this land Robert holds 6 hides, Herpul 2 hides, and Alsige 3½ hides'. Limerstone was almost certainly the 6 hides held by Robert in 1086. The place-name 'Limerstone' was first recorded as *Lemerestune* in 1252, meaning 'Lēofmær's or Lēodmær's *tūn*' but is of Old English origin. John has reconstructed Limerstone's 12th century demesne land (the home farm of the manor) in amazing detail based on an account of the manor in 1278, a 1565 manorial survey, the 1778 estate map and the 1841 Brighstone Tithe Apportionment. See his article 'Limerstone: Reconstruction of a Landscape' in *Wight Studies* 38, 12-17 (2024). The manor consisted of approximately 500 acres in the mid-sixteenth century. This was a compact landholding extending 3km from north to south centred on Limerstone Farm to the south of the central chalk ridge. It thus encompassed two of the historic landscape regions identified by John, the *Lateral Ridge* and the *Southern Vale*. Field names recorded in 1565 and 1778 provide evidence for differing zones of land-use.

The land use of Limerstone's demesne was zoned from north to south according to the potential of the land and thus reflects geological structure, geomorphology and soils. This zoning represents the intensification of land-use with the development of Limerstone as a manor separate from Calbourne, in contrast to the more extensive land-use when part of the bishop of Winchester's large Anglo-Saxon estate.

While Limerstone's demesne can be reconstructed, the manor had interests to the south of this area in *Marshefield*, Sutton Field, within Brighstone manor, and adjoining the coast at Sutton Common, shared with Brighstone. These interests may reflect the situation pre-dating the development of Limerstone as a manor separate from Calbourne. Limerstone Farm and hamlet are located within a 'preferred settlement zone', likely to have been continually occupied from at least the Romano-British period although no metal detecting has taken place and thus no finds have been recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme. However, there is the possibility of an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery site. The likely 'continuity' of settlement

and land use around Limerstone Farm can be contrasted with the 'colonization' to the south of the demesne down to the coast and further east in Atherfield.

We started our walk by crossing the Limerstone-Brighstone road from the farmhouse to the farmyard area where Limerstone had a private manorial chapel within the parish of Brighstone by the late 13th century, probably founded by Mabel de Tichbourne who was buried there in 1281. As we walked northward and upward towards Combe Tower, accompanied by Mary Case and her son George, John described the various historic land use zones we were passing through. The field-names Westfield, Eastfield, South Field and Upfield were associated with land to the south of the greensand on either side of the modern road adjoining the manorial centre. These names and their locations suggest the former existence of two or possibly three fields containing open field furlongs. Higher up, on land including the greensand ridge below the chalk, there were winterland field-names. *Winterland Gate* was located in this area and was the starting point of a 1565 description recording the bounds of Limerstone. The name suggests the use of this zone for pasturing cattle during the winter months. Unlike sheep on the downland, cattle needed a water source which was located within this area. Unenclosed chalk downland occupied the *Lateral Ridge* from the course of *Stukelpath* down along *Fruckesdene* within the dissected plateau, rising up to 199 metres at the summit of Limerstone Down and descending to the southern limit of the chalk.



The highest point of our walk was Combe Tower just below the chalk ridge which is the site of a late 18th century or early 19th century memorial tower but was also a medieval beacon site. After eating our lunch at the base of the chalk downs we walked back down to the main road and then continued to the south of Limerstone Farm where land on either side of Muggleton Lane had field-names such as *Summerleaze* and *the Common* reflecting pastoral land use on the Atherfield clay, with some meadow-land at *Russhmeade*. We briefly looked the site of the vanished Muggleton manor house, now commemorated by the name of the lane here. Muggleton would have been part of the 6 hides of Limerstone held by Robert in 1086 and

was first recorded as an independent holding in 1565. To the south of the Atherfield clay there was meadow-land (*Long Mead*, *The Common Meads* and *Middle Mead*) underlain by alluvial soils at the southern, lowest extremity of the manor. This meadow-land lay alongside a watercourse adjoining *Sheepwasshe Bridge* just to the west of the site of a medieval mill belonging to Limerstone Manor. A mill was recorded here in 1278. The field to the south of the footpath leading to Yafford was *Mill Mead* in 1565 with *Westmill Close* and *Eastmill Close* to the north. The mill is not marked on the OS 1793 map and no earthworks are shown on subsequent OS 25-inch maps. The area has now been redeveloped as fishing ponds.

Having followed the footpath through *Westmill Close* and *Eastmill Close*, we reached the south-east boundary of Limerstone Manor and turned southward onto a lane leading past Yafford Farm. We paused at the junction with Chine Lane which had formed the parish boundary between Brighstone and Shorwell in the medieval periods. At an earlier date, it had formed the eastern boundary of Winchester's extensive Calbourne estate documented in the 10th century. From this point we walked westward along Thorncross Lane, passing Durtshot Farm. Although we were beyond the southern boundary of Limerstone's demesne land, copyhold tenants of Limerstone Manor had held lands in Sutton to the south of Durtshot Lane. We turned northward at the junction with Wicken Hill Lane, the name possibly recording a *wīc* (dairy farm) - a specialised land use within the Bishop of Winchester's Calbourne estate before the Norman Conquest. Passing Thorncross Farm, we continued northward and walked back to Limerstone across the fields.



The part of our walk to the south of Limerstone Farm provided an opportunity to discover a little-known area of the Island's landscape, walking along minor roads and footpaths which I, for one, had never explored thoroughly in the past. We ended our walk back at Limerstone Farm where the Case family generously entertained us with refreshments in their garden. We were then able to inspect the 1778 estate map in the possession of the family.

Photos by Mike Cotterill

Vicky Basford

Saturday 12th October Natural England: What is its role on the Isle of Wight, a talk by Mark Larter

Mark is a well-respected member of our Society, who helped guide us through Val Gwyn's amazing regenerative agriculture project that he assisted her in creating. He also led a Botany meeting to show us his rewilding project at Great Park. Mark began his talk by quoting the CEO of Natural England, Marian Spain: "The message is clear: without the ambitious targets to tackle climate change and reverse the long-term decline in nature, we will be unable to sustain the ecosystems on which we rely for our health and prosperity."

This is a headline response to the Environment Act. For a public agency like Natural England, which is politically vulnerable, to speak out so boldly, signals the depth of concern that ecologists feel about the state of nature in the UK. There has been a 90 per cent decline in wildlife since the 1970s.

Natural England's vision and mission are to restore thriving nature for people and the planet. They aim to achieve 'Building partnerships for Nature's recovery'. Natural England is one step away from central government, but still beholden to it. Housing development will be a challenge for NE. It has a tiny budget compared to the NHS, and this has been further reduced in 2024, as well as a ten per cent cut in staffing. And what NE can and cannot do is constrained.

The NE Budget covers the following four areas:

1. Healthy Natural Environment – the National Recovery Network and Local Authorities' Local Nature Recovery Strategies. This is the most important document we have got on the Island for nature conservation and we will need it in future.
2. Enjoyment of the natural environment, connecting people with nature.
3. Sustainable use of the natural environment – recognizing natural capital. Landowners and farmers are beginning to recognize the importance of managing land in a sustainable way.
4. A secure environmental future, through partnerships, driven by evidence and expertise.

We lie within NE's Thames-Solent area. This Area covers Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, London, Oxfordshire and Surrey. With the largest local delivery team in Natural England, New Forest and Solent covers the Solent, the north of the Island, the New Forest and Chichester Harbour. The rest of the Island is not included in the priority places, but Mark is working to deliver projects there.

Mark is responsible for land management on the Island. He works with landowners to improve natural habitats. One of his projects is the Warren Farm Stewardship Scheme. The adjacent Headon Warren belongs to the Natural Trust. There is no grazing management there. Mark is keen to graze the heathland with goats, rare breed sheep and cattle "to manage the scrub and get structure back to the heathland sward". He wants to help the heather to recover.

The Species Recovery Programme is delivered through a Capital Grant Scheme. Plants include the Purple Broomrape. The Glanville Fritillary is a priority. Birds include the Dartford warbler and Nightjar. Invertebrates are a high priority on the Island. The Reddish Buff moth at Cranmore requires a lot of hard work. Arable flora is a disaster both nationally and on the Island.

Natural England was very supportive of the Sea Eagle reintroduction to the Island. We need iconic species. 37 individual birds have been released into the wild here so far. The plan was for 60. Beavers create the most biodiverse engineered landscapes. The Wildlife Trust has been working hard for several years to prepare for their introduction but has received a lot of criticism from the farming community, which is generally opposed to the open release of beavers.

The Catchment Sensitive Farming Project has been running by NE since 2006. The project works with farmers to reduce nutrient run-off and foster more sustainable farming practices.

Land Management and Designated Site Assent. There are SSSIs dotted about the Island, but there are more in the marine environment than on land.

Environment Stewardship Schemes take up a lot of Mark's time. The farming community on the Island is really embracing these schemes which offer sustainable farming incentives. The focus is on SINC sites.

Sustainable farming schemes on the Island include the following:

Nunwell Estate. Mark outlined the 145-hectare rewilding scheme, which some of our members visited last year with the Wildlife Trust. The land at the Home Farm was worked so intensively that it was unsustainable, and it caused much harm to the environment and nature. Now mob-grazing by rare breeds cattle and pigs is restoring the land.

Dunsbury Farm. Farming there was very intensive, the land crowded with sheep and cauliflowers. The National Trust bought it some six years ago and took it out of agricultural production to enable nature's recovery. It now looks like savannah grassland. The NT fenced it in and left it. Compton Farm runs the grazing, using Belted Galloway, the same rare breed of cattle kept at Nunwell, to prevent coarse grass. Mark has carried out surveys of bird species and other wildlife there on a voluntary basis.

Mottistone Down. Grazing on Mottistone Down is producing amazing results - arable flora is flourishing. Yellowhammer and skylark populations have declined, but Mark is confident that grazing will bring them back. "It's getting it right on a landscape scale, but it's not without its challenges", Mark said. "We will start to see vegetation changes we haven't seen for a long time." As their ribwort plantain foodplant is spreading, Glanville Fritillaries have moved up onto the greensand ridges from the coastal margins, which are fast eroding away.

Great Park. The rewilded land now supports meadow pipits and linnets and spreading hedge parsley, "But there is a battle with glyphosate. It's really hard to get the balance right," says Mark.

Thorley Brook, Yarmouth. There is now grazing on the marshes.

We thanked Mark for his enlightening talk in which his passion for restoring natural habitats was clear.

Maggie Nelmes

Saturday 9th November IW Recorders' Conference



This was another successful and well attended Isle of Wight Recorders' Conference, with nature enthusiasts and experts coming together to share their passion for wildlife recording. There were three insightful and inspiring talks celebrating our Island's unique biodiversity showcasing examples of projects, notable species observations, captivating images plus ways to get involved with wildlife recording locally.

Jon and Pete from **Hampshire and Isle of Wight Amphibian and Reptile Group (HIWARG)** travelled across from the mainland as first-time speakers at the Conference, and shared details about their work, local reptile and amphibian projects and ways IW Recorders can get involved.

www.groups.arguk.org/hiwarg

Theo Vickers Photography - we welcomed Theo back after his showstopper presentation last year. Theo updated us on marine records captured during his recent highly popular programme of public rockpooling events at Compton and Bembridge. www.theovickersmarinewildlife.co.uk

Paul Davies **National Trust Isle of Wight** - also returned with an update on the White Cliffs and Wight Downs Species Recovery Project which has involved surveying and monitoring specialist grassland species including the iconic Glanville Fritillary. [@National Trust Isle of Wight](#)

Thanks to **Caroline Dudley** for putting together an informative display about the IW Swift Box Scheme and of course Matthew Chatfield - our resident and most excellent MC. We couldn't do it without the support of our fantastic IWNHAS Volunteers that ensure the event runs smoothly, brought along additional cakes and decorations, and organised the teas and coffees. A delicious selection of cakes were provided by the wonderful bakers at Newport Country Market, Isle of Wight.

Tina Whitmore

Saturday 7 December Roman Vectis by Dr David Tomalin

Some twenty-five members arrived at the Arreton Community Hall one Saturday afternoon in early December, eager to learn more about David's recently published book, which well-known British archaeologists and broadcasters, Barry Cunliffe, Julian Richardson and Tracy Boorman, among others, have praised. As the first work on the Roman settlement of the Isle of Wight to be published for a hundred years, this was a fitting project to mark the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society's centenary in 2019/2020.

It was at the approach of this anniversary, David recalled, when the Archaeology section started discussing producing a book about the archaeology of the Roman occupation of the Island. Should the book be purely academic work or something that everyone could read and enjoy? They decided on the latter. Not only did they want to get the Archaeology section's work better known, but they also needed financial support. IWNHAS is no longer an exclusively learned society, but one which welcomes everyone with an interest in wildlife and/or archaeology or geology to join and learn from each other, as well as contributing to important local and national record databases.

David's book is a coffee-table hardback, running to 36 chapters and 370 pages, together with glossary and abbreviations, a bibliography listing some 630 books and academic papers, end notes for each chapter and an index. The book is attractively illustrated with photographs, maps and diagrams. It is available for our members to purchase online at a discount. Please contact our office for details of how to obtain a copy.

Evidence of a long history of trade

David selected two themes from his book, the first being discoveries of buried artefacts providing evidence of a very long history of trade between Islanders and tribes in other parts of Britain and overseas before the Roman invasion.

David showed us slides of two clay urns discovered at burial sites on the Island. The Treviska urn, named after a Cornish village, brown pottery with four handles, dating from the early Bronze Age, was found at a burial site on Week Down, Ventnor. It is quite distinctive, tempered with clay from the Goonhilly area of west Cornwall. The other urn, discovered in a barrow on Newbarn Down, Calbourne, is made of Kimmeridge clay, with a shiny, burnished finish and broken handle. Most of these urns were found in Brittany, and this is now the only one left in Britain. "It's a case of looking at these pots and asking where they came from", said David. "The history of the people of these islands is seafaring and bringing home artefacts."

The Caergilly Bowl has thin gold sheeting around the top and indented discs. Underneath the ribs of the boat are depicted, and above are waves and oars. It is an early Bronze Age representation of a boat, originating from North Wales, and it is made of Kimmeridge shale. Another slide showed an actual boat, made of yew withies, 54 feet long, which were stitched together and the joints sealed with moss. It would have taken 12 to 14 hours to reach Normandy from the Island.

There is plenty of evidence to show that Islanders were crossing the Channel to trade with tribes in what is now south-western France, long before the Romans invaded Britain. And there is also evidence that Islanders were trading with the Romans before the invasion. At Belle Isle off Brittany, for example, a graveyard of amphorae - tall, two-handled earthenware vessels of Greek origin, used for the storage and transportation of wine and olive oil - has been discovered on the seabed, the cargo of a sunken ship.

Coins were used for the bride price. At first, a man's word was his bond, but for trading with strangers far away from home, metal tokens were invented. Everything depicted on the coins was meaningful: a horse, for example, symbolized status. On one coin, two men held an amphora full of wine and another man wore a slave chain, indicating that you could exchange anything – even a man for wine.

Egyptian astronomer, mathematician and geographer Ptolemy's map of Britain from AD 25 to 130 still survives. Fifty-two copies of his iconic work 'Geographia', made by monks, are kept in southern Europe. David showed us a map of where fragments of Roman amphora were found on the seabed at Yarmouth.

Coins were an important part of tribal identity. Since metal detecting started, a thousand coins have been discovered in one field in Brighstone. They appeared to be silver coins made in Dorset – but were they? Islanders were, in fact, producing coins of their own in the style of a Dorset tribe. Coin finds indicate where on the Island most trading was taking place. David showed us a map of the Island, divided into natural zones. Most activity was taking place on the chalk hill spine that runs east-west across the centre.

Roman villas

The second theme of David's talk was Roman settlement on the Island after the Roman invasion of Britain. There are some 25 to 30 possible Roman villa sites on the Island, though some may be isolated bathhouses. Only two have survived in good enough condition to be worth opening to the public: Brading and Newport. David devotes four chapters in his book to Brading Roman villa and its mosaics.

The chalk areas and the sheep they supported were good for the Island economy. The greensand was ideal for cereal growing. Quern stones, used for milling corn seeds, and found at some of the villas, were of slightly different styles and made of different materials, indicating their origins. One was made of Alderney sandstone, another came from the Middle Rhineland, others from the Petersfield area, Hertfordshire and France. The Back O' The Wight, the south coast, was the breadbasket area, and is still intensively farmed.

The mosaic from Carisbrooke Roman Villa was discovered when stables were being built in 1859. Someone generously offered to put a glass cover over it, but the vicar promised to look after it. He left it open to the elements all winter. There were wall paintings there, too. Then he sent boy scouts to clear up the site, unsupervised. They unwittingly swept up the tiles and binned them. Only one fragment was left. Fortunately, we can see an engraving of the mosaic floor from an engraving by George Hillier. It features a twin-handled cup, signifying leisure, and lotus panels, signifying pleasure.

Through the interpretation of mosaic panels in the floors of Roman villas, we can learn a lot about the owners' world views and their lifestyles. David described the East wing mosaics in detail. The outer bay depicts activities in the sea and on land, taken from Greek mythology. In the sea, Triton, who stands for the master of the house, takes charge of everything. He carries a steersman's oar over his shoulder and holds a basket of oysters. Leucothea carries a lotus leaf, signifying pleasure, as does a centaur playing a flute. On land, the four panels feature pairs of figures from Greek mythology with a seasonal, agricultural theme. In spring, Ceres, the mother of agriculture and fertility, is handing a young man seed corn; in summer, Apollo is pursuing a nymph so Mother Earth turns her into a tree; in autumn, Lycurgus is pestering Ambrosia so Mother Earth turns her into a vine that grows up and strangles her pursuer; in winter, Attis the shepherd is warmly dressed to care for his flock throughout the coldest, harshest weather, while beside him, in contrast, a water nymph is dressed for a warm Mediterranean climate, a reminder of what the owners have left behind to settle here. In the central panel is the head of Medusa, diverting her fatal gaze from us, and in the corner panels are the four winds.

Between the outer and inner bay are the footings of an arch. The central figure here is Aratus, Greek philosopher, poet and astronomer, who identified 28 of the 33 constellations and believed that everything happening on Earth was connected to the movement of the planets. He is depicted with his instruments. When the villa was built, Aratus's works were already 600 years old but were undergoing revival.

The floor of the inner bay is thought to represent the constellations. In the corners of the inner floor are four panels representing the seasons, though the personification of autumn has been destroyed. The seasons were recognized as coinciding with the sun's solstices and equinoxes. The main panels represent the constellations, but only the innermost panel viewed from the archway has survived. It depicts Perseus and Andromeda.

We thanked him for his most informative talk and for answering our questions.

Maggie Nelmes

Looking at the Countryside



Saturday 20th July

Shorwell to Atherfield

A group of seven met at Shorwell parish hall for a walk across the moors to Atherfield. Proceeding initially up Corve Hill we then followed the footpath leading to Hill Heath, with its panoramic views over the landscape. Nearby was Haslett Farm – ‘the valley frequented by hares’ – and its surviving record of 'Robert Carpenter of Hareslade', who was a freeholder in the 13th century and occasionally in the service of the de Insula family of West Court (then called South Shorwell), administering their lands.

We passed the ruins of Smallmoor, a farmholding of 27 acres listed in the Elizabethan Royal Survey of 1559-60. The little known Cranmoor's Withybed, to the west of Smallmoor, is associated with John Cranemour, mentioned in Shorwell in 1400 and who may originally have come from Cranmore. We also learnt of St Simon of Atherfield, infamously described as ‘a martyr to his wife’, and murdered by her on 21 March 1211, for which she was sentenced to burn the following year. We are told that miracles took place at his tomb (wherever that may have been) and pilgrimages were made to the site before the cult was quickly suppressed by the Bishop of Winchester.



Next up was Dungewood Farm – ‘the enclosed farmstead of Dunna's family or followers’ – at Kingston, before arriving at an important ditch identified by Vicky Basford as separating the Atherfield Anglo-Saxon estate from Atherfield parish boundary. The name ‘Atherfield’ itself was originally recorded as *Aderingefelda* in 959, ‘the open land of the family or followers of a man called Eadhere or AEthelhere’. Atherfield later became one of the three medieval beacon sites in Shorwell parish, and is referred to in 1324 as having a watch of four men by night and two by day; its most likely location would have been in the vicinity of the coastguard lookout.

Curving round westerly on Atherfield Road, we next crossed fields with a view of the Coastguard cottages, dating from the 19th century and replacing an older coastguard station sited even closer to the cliff edge. The footpath then skirted round the rear of the dwelling known as Compton Fields, mentioned in 1249 when it was purchased by Adam de Compton, Lord of Compton in Freshwater Parish – thereby having retained its name for some 7½ centuries!

The return footpath ran in a northerly direction, roughly parallel with the outward one, and coming out onto Samber Hill: the name is probably associated with *Sanberghe* 1235, 'the sandy hill'. We then skirted the eastern edge of Yafford before completing the walk by means of lanes approaching Shorwell to arrive at our starting point.

The general consensus was that with a small group everyone can get to know one another; but it is equally true that certain walks such as this one to Atherfield attract consistently low numbers, whereas others seem to take off: a much more challenging walk up to Brook Down at a similar time last year attracted four times as many people.

Photo by Michael Fawdry

Alan Phillips

Tuesday 8th October

Niton Undercliff

After a rainy start to the morning a small group of four met at the junction of Undercliff Drive and St Catherines Road. The walk started off by ascending through the 'Tunnels' and up onto the East Cliff plateau. We took time to look at the view of the Undercliff from above, how it sits between the cliff and the sea, how it might have looked in times past, and how it has changed with development and the growth of secondary woodland on former farmland. We moved on to look at arable headlands and grant aid that enable the planting of nectar sources to encourage invertebrates. We noticed a good size flock of Linnets

We walked along a headland around a headland so that we were overlooking Niton. Following the article in Volume 38 of Wight studies about Yarbury and Bulwark Common in Niton parish we looked at these two features in the context of the article.

We then descended the Cripple Path stopping half way down to look at the greensand cliff, one of the features to define the Undercliff. We walked eastward along the Undercliff drive, looking at the woodland composition and the memorial to Francis Gray Bacon, a boy who died falling from his horse in 1892, on our way to the Elephants Hole Cave.

We all walked through the cave admiring the Cave Spiders (*Meta menardi*) with their egg sacks and noted at least two species of moth., one thought to be a Herald (*Scoliopteryx libertrix*) and the other a pale moth unidentified.



Left: Tony Tutton stands alongside the compass tree; Middle: Herald moth in Elephant's Hole: Right: Cave spider, *Meta menardi* in Elephant's Hole

Photos by Jenna Williams

We then headed back westwards discussing the road collapses and noting that the Undercliff is an area that seems to develop in its own way and is well suited to adapting to climate change. We finished the walk in the sunshine having avoided any showers.

Tony Tutton

Tuesday November 6th

Surprise November Delights

The day dawned damp and dull but we still enjoyed a surprisingly pretty four mile route joining Garstons,



Bowcombe and Froglands. There had not been a frost so the hollows were still full of autumn colour. We were pleased to see recent improvements on N108, Dark Lane, the north end of the Shepherd's Trail. This was previously a gully of deep mud which people avoided by going up the bank and into the field, now this has been filled in. The vegetation and hedges that were encroaching the path on N107 towards Garstons had recently been cut back.

From our green footpath between newly ploughed fields, in spite of the low cloud and misty conditions we were still able to enjoy views of the rolling countryside all around us. We returned via the ford, up N88 and around the castle to finish the walk. All nine of us went to the Priory for

refreshments, making a very pleasant end to our happy morning.

Photo by Serena Hayes

Jill Green

Tuesday 2nd December

RNLI Inshore Lifeboat Centre East Cowes

The RNLI celebrated its bicentennial in 2024, so it was appropriate that the Society marked this



occasion with a visit to the East Cowes Lifeboat Centre. About a dozen members enjoyed a tour of the factory, where a team of up to 70 highly skilled boat builders, fitters, electricians and solutionists work to build and maintain up to 80 boats each year. The charity is most proud that 96% of its operatives and crews are volunteers, so these professional staff represent a large proportion of the 4% that are on the payroll. The bright orange inflatable boats are very familiar in our local waters where they are on-call 24:7 to come to our aid should we need it. This includes the B-class and D-class lifeboats, and the Atlantic 85, which is a self-righting Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB). The factory operates a 'lean manufacturing process' to minimise waste and maximise efficiency, and there is a carefully managed production line. All processes are completed in-house and there are few if any sub-contractors. All electrical circuits and engine fuel systems are specially modified to withstand inversion. We were all impressed by the dedicated and helpful staff who were most willing to share their knowledge and answer questions as we visited the various stages of production.

Approximately 70% of lifeboat launches are with inshore lifeboats and all have to withstand the rigours of the hostile marine environment. Attention to detail and the highest quality of workmanship are therefore essential in the manufacturing process. Lifeboat building on the Isle of Wight started in the early part of the 20th Century where famous boat builders such as Samuel Whites and Groves & Guttridge would build launch and undertake trials of lifeboats at Cowes and East Cowes. The RNLI appointed professional surveyors and inspectors and an office was established in Cowes in the 1930s. It was the launch of the D-Class inshore lifeboat in 1963 when the charity sought a permanent base at East Cowes. New vessels are launched and tested in the Solent then transported overland, to lifeboat



stations around the UK or by sea passage if local. Decommissioned boats may be put in to storage and sent all over the world to support disaster relief, such as the recent floods in Spain.

After the tour, some of us retreated to the Lifeboat pub for soup and enjoyed a quiz organised by Mary Edmunds.

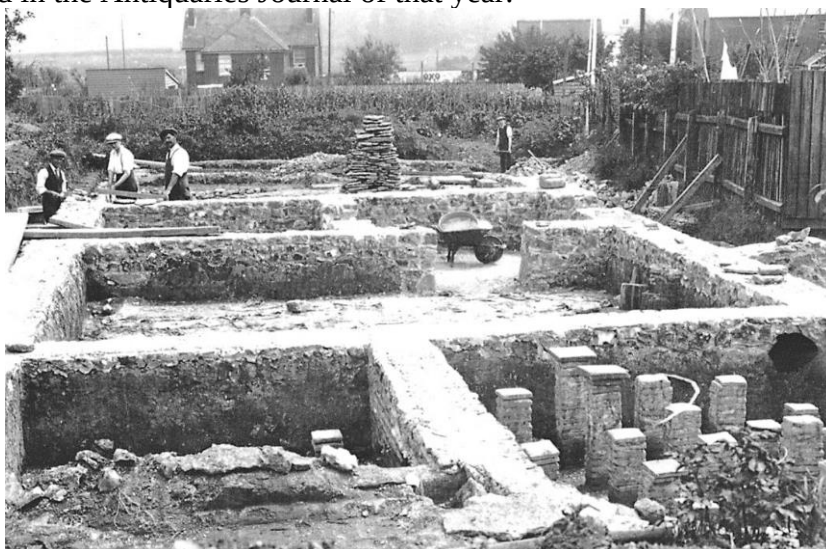
Roger Herbert

Archaeology

Wednesday 4th December - Visit to Newport Roman villa

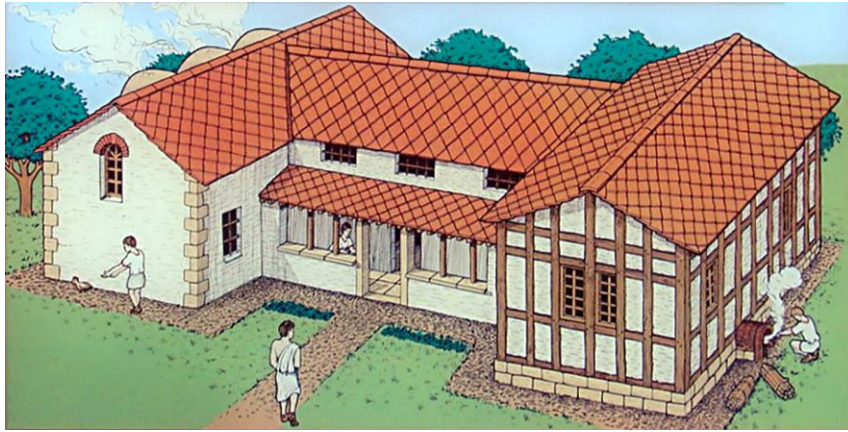
On Wednesday morning, the 4th of December, 24 members met for a private group visit to the Roman villa in Newport. This began with a brief introduction by Rachel Tait from the County Museums Service. Following this, David Tomalin gave an engaging account, partly based on first-hand experience, of the villa's more recent history, from its discovery to its preservation and present-day status.

The villa is a remarkable archaeological site located in the heart of a residential area. Workmen digging foundations in 1926 unearthed Roman tiles, leading to a detailed excavation overseen by architect and antiquary Percy G. Stone. Early discoveries included the villa's tessellated pavements, its hypocaust heating system, and its bathhouse suite. By 1929, further discoveries had underscored the villa's extensive layout and this was published in the *Antiquaries Journal* of that year.



Initial proposals to Newport Town Council to adopt the site were rejected. Thanks to public interest and the generosity of the Mayor of Newport, Alderman John Curtis Millgate, the villa was purchased by him in 1926 and preserved under a protective cover-building. On Alderman Millgate's death in 1956 the site passed to his daughter, Grace. By 1960 the building was in need of repairs and the site was again offered to Newport Town Council who again declined. The Isle of Wight County Council decided to accept the gift of the site from Grace and assumed responsibility in 1961, ensuring its continued protection.

Subsequent excavations in the 1980s and 1990s revealed stratified remains, postholes from earlier structures, and artifacts dating back to the late 1st century AD. These investigations demonstrated continued occupation and adaptation of the site over time. Down-slope, at Medina Avenue, Late Iron Age pottery indicated an earlier stage of occupation leading to the construction of the villa.



Newport's stone villa was erected sometime in the later part of the second century CE. This was a "winged-corridor" type structure, a single-story building approximately 30 metres long and 12 metres wide. The building featured a central corridor connecting two projecting wings. The walls, originally constructed flint rubble with chalk cores, were complemented by Bembridge Limestone quoins and door jambs. The interior was coated with brightly painted wall plaster. The bathhouse, located in the southwest wing, included a cold plunge bath (frigidarium), warm rooms (tepidarium and sudatorium), and a hot bath (caldarium), supported by hypocaust pilae.

Members spent an instructive morning viewing a well-preserved site and examining a well-displayed array of recovered artifacts.



The good weather made the outdoor areas particularly enjoyable, and the group took advantage of the time to examine the whole of the site. There was much of lively discussion, sharing observations, questions, and insights about the building and its history.



It was clear that this building had been set within a much larger area of Romano-British occupation. This was confirmed by past discoveries on the east side of Medina Avenue on the site currently occupied by Jewsons warehouse. Members also observed that the Jewsons site was currently earmarked for development and that the re-location site for Jewsons, on the east side of Medina Way, was a portion of the same Romano-British settlement. In both areas robust archaeological precautions would be needed. To round off the morning, several members of the group adjourned to Newport town for further lunchtime discussions.

Dave Staughton

Ornithology



Sunday 28th July 2024

Golden Hill Country Park

Ten members meet on a lovely, warm morning for a walk in the park. July is a quiet month for seeing birds and this is what we found during the morning. In the car park we could hear Long Tailed Tits and Blue Tits flitting in amongst the trees, Herring Gulls were flying overhead and Woodpigeons were just around. The notice boards dotted around the site mention Jays and sure enough one put in an appearance. Of the birds of prey, we had Buzzard, Peregrine and Kestrel. We could hear Chiffchaff calling and saw a small family. Lurking in a tree was a Spotted Flycatcher. Other birds we noted were Wren, Green Woodpecker, Magpie, Great Tit, Robin, Blackbird, Greenfinch, Dunnock and two Bullfinch flew across our path. Also noted were several Black Headed Gulls flying around catching flying ants. As it was a lovely sunny morning, we took the opportunity to look at the butterflies: several Red Admiral, one Marbled White, Speckled Wood, Small White, Peacock, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper. Not being a botanist, we did remark on the amount of Red Bartsia and Stone Parsley lining the paths and trackways. In all 20 species of birds were noted during the morning.

Jackie Hart

Saturday 17th August

West Hight Down

Seven members meet on a lovely sunny morning at High Down Chalk Pit car park for a walk in the area. We saw three species of raptors during the morning with an adult and plaintive juvenile flying around overhead in the car park. Whilst we were waiting for the meeting to begin, a Peregrine flew over and was gone. On our walk up the track a Kestrel rewarded us with superb views of it perched and flying. A Great Spotted Woodpecker could be heard and much later a Green Woodpecker. Whilst we were looking for Dartford Warblers, unsuccessfully, we saw at least one pair of Stonechat, Whitethroat, Chiffchaff and Linnet. Although we were keeping a lookout for Swallows only two were noted. A flock of some 35 to 40 Rooks were seen on the down. Other birds noted were Robin two adults and one juvenile, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Wren, Goldfinch, Crow and Magpie.

Other than these we saw a bee-fly, Red Admiral, Specked Wood, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and a very large number of Chalkhill Blues.

Jackie Hart

Sunday 15th September

Mottistone Down

Eleven members of IWNHAS joined Dave Fairlamb of Natural Links for an Ornithology Group outing to Mottistone Down on 15 September. Swallows and House Martins flew over the Jubilee car park as we assembled for the walk and small numbers of mainly Swallows continued to pass overhead flying south during the morning. A female Yellowhammer flew up from the ground and perched nicely on a gorse bush and a couple of Stonechats were busy feeding in the same area. Our attention switched into the long grass by the path as two Wasp Spiders posed in the centre of their webs.



Swallow



Wasp Spider

It was a wonderful morning to watch Kestrels, they seemed to be ever present in the air around us, with up to 5 together, probably a family group, wheeling in the breeze and calling to each other, then hovering on the hunt. A couple of Buzzards were close by at one point but rose higher and away on the thermals. As we climbed up the Down, both Jay and Green Woodpecker were heard calling and a couple of Ravens flew eastwards.



Kestrel



Raven

Several Chiffchaffs were also calling in the scrub and we even heard one singing in the woodland edge. Towards the summit there was the briefest of views of a Dartford Warbler and a few metres on we were treated to excellent views of an adult sitting on the top of the gorse, while another flew by and a third bird was heard calling. There was also a Meadow Pipit and a couple of Goldfinches overhead. A few

butterflies were still on the wing, Small & Large Whites, Red Admirals, Small Heaths and Meadow Browns. Other insect sightings included Field Grasshoppers, Common Banded Hoverflies and a Common Darter dragonfly. We returned to the car park to hear Robins in song and for some, the finale of a Bullfinch.



Chiffchaff



Dartford Warbler

Dave Fairlamb

Saturday 26th October

Bembridge Harbour and Brading Marsh

Ten members of IWNHAS joined Dave Fairlamb of Natural Links for an Ornithology Group outing to Brading Marshes east and Bembridge Harbour on 26 October. Birdwatching began by the sluice on Embankment Road, looking down the Eastern Yar and there was immediate delight with two Kingfishers active back and forth over the river. Several adult and immature Cormorants were still roosting in the riverine trees and Cetti's Warblers could be heard singing, already establishing territories for the next year's breeding season.



Kingfisher



Cetti's Warbler

Looking out across Brading Marshes from the old railway path, both Little Egret and Gey Heron were seen, and a group of 10 Greylag Geese fed apart from the Canada Geese. Further on, we spent some time viewing from the double gates and were richly rewarded with a Bittern flying low over the reeds, at least 3 Marsh Harriers hunting, 2 Great White Egrets on the wing, another Kingfisher and fly pasts of 4 Shovelers and a Wigeon. Southerly migration was still in evidence with at least 35 Swallows over the marsh.



Bittern



Marsh Harrier

A couple of Ravens were perched in the large dead tree on the marsh and 2 Stonechats were active around the nearby hawthorns, with Blue Tits, Great Tits, Dunnocks and a Jay seen at closer quarters by the path. Teal, Little Grebe and Tufted Ducks were on Bembridge pools, with Water Rail heard in the reedbed.

Oystercatchers and Redshanks were feeding on the tidal edge in the harbour and a Great Crested Grebe, Mute Swans and Gadwalls were on the water. We walked around to the Mill pond area and got close views of Black-tailed Godwits feeding, 12 in total, plus Curlews, Mediterranean Gulls, yet another Kingfisher, and Ringed Plover calling. 45 species of birds were recorded overall during our walk.

Dave Fairlamb

Sunday 24th November

Binfield to the Folly and return

Just five people met at the car park at Island Harbour on the east side of the River Medina on an extremely windy but mild morning. The light was not good either, but we did see some birds during the course of the morning. It was lovely to see a good number of Brent Geese on the foreshore and we noted and heard quite a few Oystercatchers. A small flock of Canada Geese were grazing in a meadow. The evocative call of the Curlew was heard, and we saw them both feeding on the mud and flying. Two Black Tailed Godwits were on the edge of the water and then took to the wing displaying their characteristic black tail markings. We spotted one lone Redshank. Mallard were swimming and five Moorhens swam under the pontoons at the Marina. The wreck on the other side of the river had half a dozen Cormorants standing drying their wings. Most of the small birds were absent as they were sheltering from the strong wind but we did note Goldfinch, Skylark, Robin, Dunnock and Pied wagtail.

There were a few gulls; Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Gull and Great Black Backed Gull. As we expect to see at any of our meetings Woodpigeon did put in an appearance and, of course, Crows, Rooks and Jackdaw. 22 species of birds were recorded during the course of the morning.

Jackie Hart

Sunday 22nd December

Western Yar

Ten members of IWNHAS joined Dave Fairlamb of Natural Links. The group had to contend with very blustery conditions, which made birdwatching quite tricky at times, but we did see a good range of birds, with 36 species seen in total.

The estuary is always a magnet for wading birds in winter and we had a flock of about 100 Golden Plovers in flight along with several Lapwings joining in at times. Other waders included Black-tailed Godwits, Redshanks, Oystercatchers, Dunlins and a couple of Greenshanks.

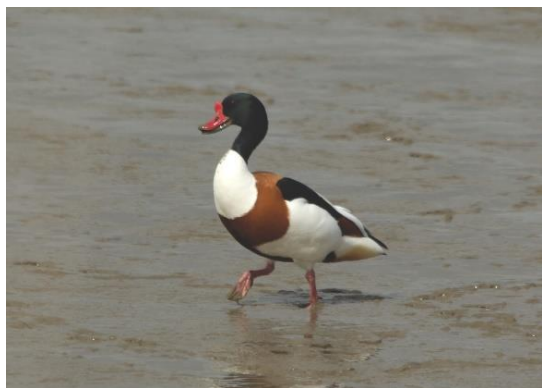


Golden Plover, Lapwings & Starling



Greenshank

The marsh and mudflats held large numbers of Wigeon, Teal and Mallards, with at least 8 Shovelers and 4 Shelducks. Brent Geese grazed the saltmarsh, Little Egrets were actively feeding in the saltmarsh creeks and Cormorants were out on the open water, with a few drying out their wings on the marina pontoons. A Great Crested Grebe was on the water, constantly diving, as it swam along towards the causeway.



Shelduck



Great Crested Grebe

A Kestrel somehow managed to hover in the strong wind, a Buzzard was seen over the Mill Copse and a Sparrowhawk flashed by into the Copse, re-emerging high over the scrape and soaring away into the west. Other birds recorded included Black-headed, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls, Great and Blue Tits, Starlings, Reed Bunting, Dunnock and Greenfinch.

Dave Fairlamb

Botany Meetings



Saturday 27th July

Headon Warren

Thirteen members met for a botanical ramble at Headon Warren. The site is an SSSI and one of only a tiny handful of lowland heath sites on the Island. Pleasant summer weather was ideal for our botanising and to admire the amazing views of Hurst Castle and The Needles.

The star plants here are the low Ericaceous shrubs. The two main genera present are Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) which has needle like leaves and Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), which has scale-like leaves. The Bell Heather was in full flower, providing wonderful carpets of reddish- purple flowers, whereas the Ling was just starting to produce its pinkish lilac flowers. A beautiful plant, one of the features of the area is Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) which we saw several times, although only in small quantities. A prominent plant making a good show with its pinky red flowers and fruit capsules with a distinctive hairy plume was the Rose Bay Willow Herb (*Chamerion angustifolium*). Large stands of the bright yellow Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) could be observed on our route.

Our best find of the afternoon was the Heath Pearlwort (*Sagina subulata*). This very rare plant was once found on five Island sites but it only persists now at Headon Warren. We were pleased to find it at a new site on the Warren.



Photos: Dave Trevan

Two kinds of Gorse can be found here. Gorse, also known as Vuzz bush (*Ulex europaeus*) is very common but on Headon Warren it grows alongside the Dwarf Gorse (*Ulex minor*). This is a much slighter shrub; sadly we didn't find many in flower. Amongst other species recorded was the Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*) a member of the *Gentianaceae* family with pink flowers. Some very fine specimens of Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and lovely stands of Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) were observed.

Once we reached the area where you descend into Alum Bay, where the views of the Needles are stunning, we decided to take a different path back. We ended up walking amongst wonderful carpets of purple *Erica cinerea*, looking across to Warren Farm. During the visit over 87 species were recorded

Dave and Hazel Trevan

Saturday 24th August

Bembridge Down



It had been a wet and windy morning and this must have put off a few people but ten of us assembled alongside Bembridge Fort and, as the afternoon progressed the weather improved and the sun came out. We walked around the Fort and were delighted to find some superb species-rich chalk grassland at the western end where we admired a delightful show of Autumn Lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*) and Autumn Gentian (*Gentianella amarella*). We were surprised and delighted to find seventeen (dead) spikes of Yarrow or Purple Broomrape (*Phelipanche purpurea*), a rare plant although well known from the Bembridge / Culver Down chalk.

We then explored the steep south facing grassland south of the Fort, finding more Autumn Lady's-tresses and Lesser Centaury (*Centaureum pulchellum*) and enjoying the views and the other plants. Altogether, sixty-eight species were recorded. Bonus sightings were many Chalkhill Blues and a sun-bathing Adder.

Colin Pope

Saturday 14th September

Appley shore

Ten members met up at the western end of Ryde Canoe Lake for a leisurely exploration of the area. Unfortunately, Nick Aston was unable to join us and two other members arrived late and failed to catch up with us. Some of the group were puzzled as to why we were meeting on a busy Ryde seafront but it was explained that, in Victorian times, before the Esplanade had been built, this was a rich botanical site beloved by many including Dr William Bromfield, author of *Flora Vectensis* (1856) who lived nearby in Dover Street. At the time, the coastal area was known as Ryde Duver, a low-lying area prone to flooding. Although

much changed, some plants recorded by Bromfield still persist on the sandy banks of the Canoe Lake, together with an eclectic mix of non-native species. We soon met some of these. Fragrant Evening Primrose (*Oenothera stricta*) was abundant and in places dominant although only a few plants were in flower. This plant was first sown on St Helen's Duver by the Victorian botanist A.G. More. A much more recent arrival was the Kopata Pelargonium (*Pelagonium inodorum*) an Australian plant with tiny cerise flowers first found here by Sue Blackwell in 2015 and thriving here despite not being known from anywhere else in the UK. We enjoyed looking at a wide range of plants before walking back along Canoe Lake Road, stopping to look at wall ferns growing alongside the wall. We spotted Wall Rue (*Asplenium ruta-muraria*), Rusty-back (*A. ceterach*) and Hart's-tongue fern (*A. scolopendrium*) but failed to refind Maidenhair Spleenwort.

We then proceeded onto the beach to look for more flowering plants. After a walk down to low tide we found one of our most bizarre flowering plants. There were clumps of Dwarf Eelgrass (*Zostera noltei*) binding the sand together. A close examination of the plants revealed small flowers and seeds hidden within sheaths. The tide was not low enough to find the second species, *Zostera marina* although we found many plants washed up. Eelgrass beds are a vital habitat for marine life, providing spawning grounds for fish and a substrate for epiphytic sea slugs, stalked jellyfish and many others as well as a food source for wintering Brent Geese. Ryde sands is an important site for both species of Eelgrass.

Some of the group finished the day with ice-creams.



Left: Examining a patch of Dwarf Eelgrass, *Zostera noltei*, on Ryde foreshore. Right: Dwarf Eelgrass with fruiting spike

Colin Pope

Wednesday 1st January

New Year Plant Hunt



This has become an annual event. Groups across the country meet up to count how many wild plants they can find in flower around New Year for the BSBI New Year Plant Hunt. We had arranged to meet up in the middle of Ryde on New Year's Day. As it happened, the weather was atrocious with very strong, blustery winds and showers. Many people called off. Nevertheless, nine brave souls met up to search the streets, gardens and esplanade for plants in flower, including two new members. We were surprised by how much we found. In the end, we had listed 44 different plants, not bad but nowhere approaching some other groups around the country.

Left: A fine plant of Jersey Cudweed, *Laphangium luteoalbum*, found in flower on our New Year Plant Hunt. This plant was first recorded on the Island in 2018 but has since spread and is now widespread. Photo: Jillie Pope

The top list was 97 species from the Swanage group! Altogether, 1,666 groups took part across Britain and Ireland. Keith and Anne Marston had carried out a search with their Eco-church group on Monday 30th and found 35 species around Fairlee. In contrast, Chris Kidd, curator, recorded 219 species and cultivars in flower on New Year's Day in Ventnor Botanic Garden.

Colin Pope

Fungi Meetings



Saturday 19th October

Borthwood Copse

We managed to pick a beautiful day and Borthwood Copse was looking splendid for our group of nine to explore. Despite the very wet autumn, fungi have failed to respond with an expected flourish. There were fungi to find but they were rather patchy in distribution. First of all, a spectacular display of Hen of the Woods (*Grifolia frondosa*) around the base of a large, dead Beech tree attracted attention. There was comparatively little in the Beech grove, normally a productive area, but the surrounding woodland produced a number of finds including a remarkable abundance of the little Holly Parachute fungus (*Marasmius hudsonii*), as beautiful little fungus. I have never seen so much before. Other interesting finds included the bolete parasitic on Earthballs, the Magpie Inkcap (*Coprinus picaceus*) and the Chestnut Bolete (*Gyroporus castaneus*). Altogether 42 species were found and named.

Saturday 16th November

Beech Copse, Godshill

14 members gathered in the carpark at Godshill for a walk along the footpath into Beech Copse. This is normally a very productive site but this time fungi were few on the ground. Nevertheless, we were able to identify 36 species including Beefsteak fungus, Porcelain fungus on dead beech trees, Clouded Funnel, the ubiquitous Honey Fungus, Earthballs and various brackets. One of the more interesting finds, discovered by Selena, was the tiny Beechleaf Parachute, *Rhizomarasmius setosus*, growing on fallen beech leaves.

Sunday 8th December

Northwood Park, Cowes

Our final foray was scheduled to take place at Northwood Cemetery but we arrived, on a blustery, cold day, to find that the grassland had been mown comprehensively so we abandoned the cemetery and went instead to Northwood Park. Our group of twelve made our way to the enclosed picnic area in the middle of the Park. This area is known to have old grassland which supports Waxcaps and other grassland fungi, unlike the bulk of the amenity grassland in the Park. We arrived to find that this area had also been mown but some time earlier allowing some fungi to reappear. In fact, we found a rich fungal grassland with eight named waxcaps including the uncommon Pink Waxcap, *Hygrocybe calyptriformis*, not previously recorded from here. We also found earthtongues, an *Entoloma* (pinkgill) and a range of club fungi. These included *Clavulinopsis umbrinella*, an uncommon brownish coral fungus which is a strong old grassland species which we rarely see.

We then moved to the churchyard but this was very poor for fungi and feeling thoroughly chilled, we abandoned the hunt. We recorded in total just 24 species. These included two distinctive and poorly recorded microfungi found on dead leaves by Iain Outlaw, Mark Telfer and Seth Gibson.

Colin Pope

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S NOTES

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to our Society:

Mr D Baker, Newchurch
Mr A Blades, Ryde
Mrs J Brooks, Thorness
Mr A Cunningham & Mrs S Morgan
Mr T Lester, Newport
Mr & Mrs K. McCann, Wootton Bridge
Mr B Money, Ryde
Ms S Peterson, St Helens
Ms M Sargent Redhill
Mr K Sheldrake, Ryde
Mr & Mrs R Spicer, Ryde
Mr R Thomas, Totland Bay
Mr G. Thomas, Niton
Mr P Webb, Ryde
Mrs Westbury, Ryde
Ms S William, Newport

We are sorry to report the following deaths:

Mr Alan Martin Member since 2012

Mr Bill Shepard Member since 1955.

Bill was the longest serving member of the Society. For many years he led the Botany Section as well as giving talks and he led many general walks. He was well known as a Newport historian and had a great interest in historic trees. An obituary will appear in the forthcoming Wight Studies.

SOCIETY OFFICERS:-

President Dr Vivian Roberts, Haseley Manor, Arreton, IoW PO33 3AN

General Secretary Dr. Colin Pope, 14 High Park Rd, Ryde, IoW PO33 1BP

Treasurer Mr Nigel Locke, 81 New Road, Brading, IoW PO36 0AG

Membership Secretary Mrs T. Goodley, 15 The Lawns, Fairlee Rd, Newport, IoW PO30 2PT

Society Address :-

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

Tel : 01983 282596 Email: iwnhas@btconnect.com Web address: www.iwnhas.org

NEXT BULLETIN

**Please send any items for inclusion in the next Bulletin, and Reports of any Meetings
for 1st January 2025 to 30th June 2025 to:**

**Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeology Society, Unit 7C, Prospect Business Centre, Prospect
Road, Cowes PO31 7AD**

Email - iwnhas@btconnect.com

The closing date for acceptance of items and reports will be 8th July 2025

Bulletin Editor: Colin Pope - colinrpoppe@gmail.com



Red moon photographed on 18th August at Ventnor. *Andy Butler*