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The Selborne Society Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Happy new year to our members. It is perhaps a cliché at the start of a new year to reflect on the previous one and what we've achieved but things perhaps become clichés because they sort of make sense.

Lots to celebrate from 2017, here are just a few highlights. April saw the official opening of our Bluebell Centre by our president, Lord Selborne, and entomologist and broadcaster, George McGavin. There is a video of the event that you can find on the Society's website. It's been great through this year to see the centre used by our members and visitors; years of hard work paying off.

Open Day was a success as always with thousands of people enjoying our woods. It may all seem effortless to visitors but there is a lot going on both in front and behind the scenes to keep it all running smoothly.

Management of the reserve, studying its wildlife and adapting our management approaches accordingly, is a challenge. 2017 was the first time in many years when we have not had grazing on the reserve - we have instead taken a hay cut off the fields. Our intention is to reduce the nutrients going into the grassland which (contrary to how it sounds) tends to reduce the richness of wildflowers and associated fauna. We'll be looking over the next few years to see how this approach, probably combined with some degree of grazing as well, makes a difference.

Our archaeologists have been working through the year identifying and classifying the materials dug up in the spoil from the Bluebell Centre. Still lots of work to go there but interesting materials showing up make it clear we are only the last in a long line of people to have our woodland in their lives (even if perhaps it was not always a wood for all of that time).

You'll have seen in the last newsletter that we have undertaken a restructuring of how the society's council organises the business. Constitutional change can be dry stuff of course but the point of it all is not about committees, budgets and all that (important though they are) but to ensure that members who are enthusiastic can get involved in, and feel involved with decisions about, the work of the society without the need to become trustees of the society and attend council meetings. So if you've been thinking you'd like to get more involved, have ideas about how we can develop the society and have been put off by the formality of council and structures now is your time to step forward.

So another year has passed and so much achieved (I've mentioned only a tiny fraction here). At the time of writing I'm preparing for the annual crow count project - a survey we've been running for a few years now (based on an idea Andrew Culshaw, Martin Smith and I had) to survey just one of the species. For me this survey now comes to mark the start of the Perivale Wood year.

So, 2018, here we come!



David Howdon

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NOTICES

ARE YOU ON OUR MAILING LIST?

You are doubtless aware that members receive the Society's newsletter three times a year. Some of you receive this in paper form, usually hand-delivered by volunteers. Others have opted to read the newsletter and other communications from the Society on their computers. Going "electronic" helps us save paper, time and postage.

We would like to increase the numbers of members receiving our information electronically, if they are happy to do so. If you are willing to make the change or if you have recently changed your email and want to let us know, please email your full name, postal address and your email address to us at:

contact@selbornesociety.org.uk

Many thanks! Deb Worsley

OPEN DAY 2018

Open Day will be on Sunday 22nd April this year, to ensure we have the best chance of a good display of bluebells. There will be a £1 entry charge for all adults this year.

Set up will be done on Saturday 21st April from 10am, and we welcome help with a wide range of different jobs that need to be done on that day. If you know you can come, please let us know so we can plan the jobs. If you have a preference for the kind of work you do, tell us that as well. Email contact@selborne.society.org.uk or let us know by post or phone.

As always, we welcome donations of home-made biscuits and cakes, including gluten free and dairy free ones. Bring these along on Saturday or the day itself, marking your donation with the ingredients please.

We will be aiming to reduce our carbon footprint by using compostable cups and plates, donated by local business Packaging Environmental. Please make sure you use the marked bins properly if you have any waste, as we have had recycling contaminated with other waste in previous years.

If you plan to bring donations for the plant stall, please ensure plants are neatly potted up, and are named so people can tell what we are offering. We won't be able to take plants that aren't labelled.

Finally, animals will not be admitted to Open Day this year, with the exception of Assistance dogs. This is a nature reserve, not a park, and dogs can carry diseases which affect foxes. We know most dog owners act responsibly, but a small number don't, and we feel it's appropriate to avoid any of the issues that have occasionally arisen in the past.

Let's hope we get a good dry day, and can all enjoy the woods at their most beautiful.

Vivienne Cane-Honeysett, Open Day Coordinator

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Members are reminded that subscriptions were due on 2nd January. Rates for 2018 remain the same as last year, as follows:

Adult subscription	.....	£10
Couple at same address	.....	£15
Juniors	.....	£3
Lifetime membership	.....	£200
Joint Life Membership	.....	£350

NB: make your cheques out to

*"The Selborne Society **Limited**"*

and send to the Membership Secretary at:

89 Daryngton Drive, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 8BH

Please include a SAE if you would like your membership card to be sent to you directly. Otherwise, it will be enclosed with your copy of the next newsletter.

Rae Hall, Membership Secretary



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NEWS FROM THE RESERVE

HAVE YOU LOST A FOOT?

Perivale Wood Heritage and Archaeology Group (PWHAG) have surveyed the field outside the Bluebell Centre with a metal detector in December and January. We did this to gain experience of surveying with a metal detector within the reserve. We selected the field outside the Bluebell Centre for our first survey as it had been somewhat turned over during the building of the Bluebell Centre and thus excavation by trowel during the survey would not cause significant harm to the botany of the reserve. We also knew that there would be nails, screws and other metal bits and bobs to find.

In December the area was kindly mowed by Peter Warne, allowing us to mark out the area using our home-made giant set square into 4 metre squares using pegs and strings to produce a grid to work within. We surveyed the field in 1m strips, marking each signal with a numbered, brightly coloured lollipop stick. We then excavated using a spade to cut the grass roots round signal and neatly remove a sod, dug out with trowel, and replaced the sod. We noted the location and depth of the find, what it was and what it was made of. All this information was added to the plan and feeds in to PWHAG's safe system of working and metal detecting procedures.

We found a lot of 21st century rubbish, mostly aluminium, e.g. foil and can ring pulls. We also found some notable items, including a horses' hoof pick and the foot from a tent pole. So if you lost tent pole foot in the field (hence the headline) in the past year or two please let us know if you would like it back!



The plans for PWHAG this year have four main components – they are to sort through and classify the finds from the test pit, to commence floatation analysis on the soil samples taken from the test pit and from the HS2 boreholes, and in late September, Project Paddock will be launched. PWHAG would also like to launch the Selborne Society Young Archaeologist

Club (SSYAC) but we are in desperate need of volunteers. It would be for a morning, every second Saturday of the month. You don't need to know anything about archaeology – you just need to have an interest in working with children aged from 8-16.

If you are interested in helping out with any aspect of PWHAG, then please email us at:

contact@selbornesociety.org.uk

Thank you, PWHAG

NO ACTIVITY FOR OLD MEN?

It is said that planting trees is a young person's game, however there are exceptions. For some time now, Peter Warne and Len Lewinton have been collecting saplings for the 'fence that wants to be a hedge', which is made of hazel posts and binders and is just inside the front entrance of the Reserve. Some treelets were planted in it by the Rangers last March, but it turned dry so only a handful survived.



So on 14th November 2017 Peter and Len planted their trees (note that November is THE month to plant trees because it's damp and cool, so the small trees can grow some roots even if nothing seems to be happening above ground).

They dug holes near each of the hazel posts and popped in one of a selection of Ash, Hazel, Holly, Elm, Hawthorn or Oak in each spot then some woodland soil was added and heeled in. The plan is that in the future they will grow so the fence will become a hedge, which can be trained like the one behind it.

Peter Warne

MOTHS OF PERIVALE WOOD: 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Regular moth recording sessions took place at Perivale Wood throughout 2017, involving a varying mix of me, Neil Anderson, Fiona Barclay, Stephen Menzie, Barbara Mulligan, and Max Whitby. The total number of species recorded at 202 was down on 2016 when we had a total of 213, and is our lowest annual total since 2012. Six new species were recorded and these are discussed below.

Additional photographs of many of the moths mentioned in this section are available online at:

<https://tinyurl.com/2017PWMoth>

SPECIES NEW TO THE RESERVE

DEPRESSARIIDAE

Agonopterix ciliella. Very similar to *A. herciana* which is common in the reserve. The species is identified from the pattern of lines on the cilia of the hindwing. Rachel Terry confirmed the identification of this specimen, which came to one of our light traps in June. The larvae of this species feed on a variety of umbelliferous plants, so it could well breed on the reserve.

TORTRICIDAE

Grapholita lobarzewskii. This nationally scarce species has caterpillars which feed inside apples. The specimen here was attracted to light in June and identified for us by Rachel Terry.

GEOMETRIDAE

Thera obeliscata (Grey-pine Carpet). This is a common species which has been recorded on several occasions from other sites in the area, but this record of one at light in September was the first for the reserve. It can be confused with other species in genus *Thera* but examination of the antennae allow a safe determination and this was carried out by both me and Rachel Terry. As indicated by the vernacular name the caterpillars of the species feed on conifers which perhaps explains why it is not regularly recorded in the reserve.

Theria primaria (Early Moth). It is perhaps surprising that this common species (the caterpillars of which feed on blackthorn and hawthorns) has not been recorded from the reserve before. There is one other local record of one found by day on Horsenden Hill in 2013. The specimen for the reserve came to actinic light in February.



Theria primaria (Early Moth)

Photo: © 2018 David Howdon



Earias clorana (Cream-bordered Green-pea).

Photo: © 2018 David Howdon

Mythimna albipuncta (White-point). Until the 1980s this grass-feeding species was an immigrant moth in Britain. Since then it has established itself and spread up from the south coast reaching at least Oxfordshire. Immigration of the species still continues so it is not possible to say whether this was likely to be a locally bred specimen or not. This specimen was attracted to light in May.

MOTHS OF PERIVALE WOOD: 2017 ANNUAL REPORT



Mythimna albipuncta (White-point).

Photo: © 2018 David Howdon

NOLIDAE

Earias clorana (Cream-bordered Green-pea). One of the advantages of our new Bluebell Centre is it provides a convenient electric socket at the end of the Paddock which has allowed me to get a moth trap under the willows by the Sluice Pond. In May this paid off by providing a specimen of this nationally scarce (willow feeding) species. With one record it is not possible to conclude that it is locally breeding but it is encouraging that we found it by the right food plant.

OTHER NOTABLE RECORDS

NYMPHALIDAE

Argynnis paphia (Silver-washed Fritillary). There is one other record of this butterfly from the reserve in 1961 so it has been quite a long wait for us to get our second one. This one was particularly obliging, flying onto my regular butterfly transect survey on 2nd July.

David Howdon

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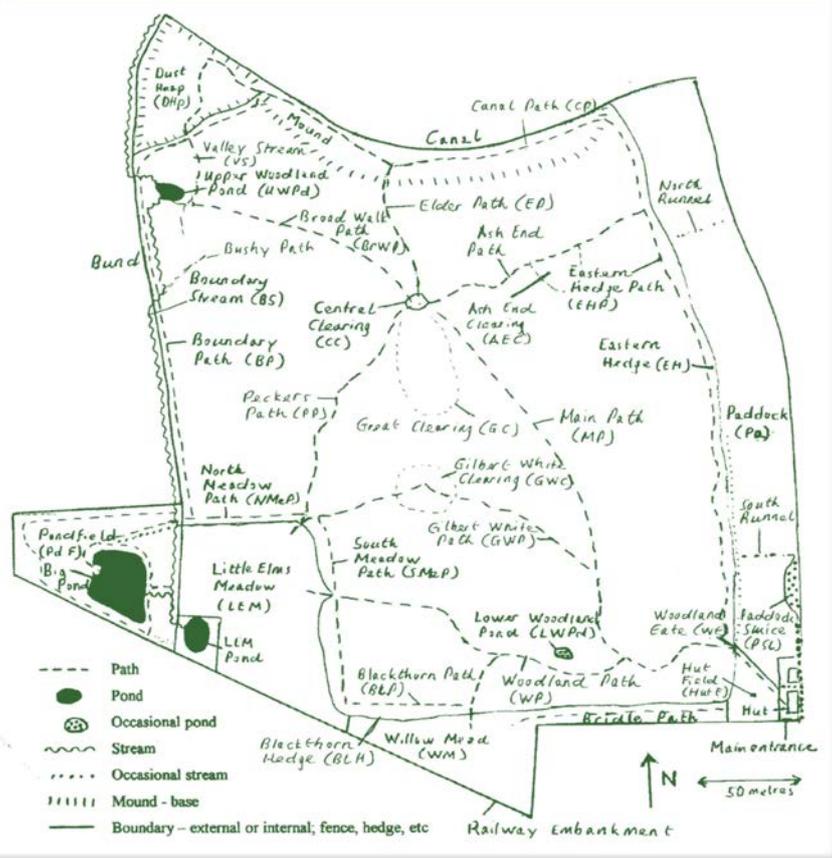
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Nic Ferriday writes:

This revised map may be of interest to members and readers of reports on the flora and fauna of Perivale Wood, such as David Howdon's annual Moth Report.

It's a map showing the 'official' names and abbreviations of locations in the Reserve. They are useful in discussions and particularly when recording observations.

NB. There are at least three abbreviations missing: Big Pond = BPd, LEM Pond = LEM Pd, Bridle Path = BrP.



AWAY FROM THE RESERVE

WINTER FUNGUS ON HORSENDEN HILL

I have long wanted to join the Selborne Society's New Year walk on Horsenden Hill and this year 2018, as the walk was a few days after the holiday, I finally managed it.

A previous brief visit was made in summer en route to a lecture commitment in the early 1990s as I brought Horsenden Hill into the discussion of my paper on Nonsuch Park in *The London Naturalist*, 1994. This year's walk explored new areas and with the guidance and background information given by Martin Smith, a former site Ranger.

It was a dry day, overcast and not too warm, so we generally kept going, stopping occasionally when there was a feature to be pointed out. On the final lap my attention was taken by clusters of a bright orange fungus on the trunk of a dead elm. The dark base to the stem (stipe) and the orange-cream mature gills, plus the time of year, immediately identified it as Velvet Shank (*Flammulina velutipes*).



Velvet Shank fungi

This is in the Knight family (*Tricholomaceae*) and has a white spore print, in spite of the colour of the gills. A lookalike, often found around the year, is Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*) but that has lemon-yellow gills, maturing olive green and a black spore print and is in another family (*Strophariaceae*). Spore colour is very important in identifying a fungus to family.

Velvet Shank is a mid-winter speciality and likes elm, but grows on other dead wood too and may be found on old sycamore stumps as it is a saprophyte. Cultivated forms of this species are grown in Japan for culinary use where they are known and marketed as Enoki but cultivated ones grown in bottles tend to be pale with longer stems. These are now stocked in some supermarkets.

June Chatfield

MICKLEMERE NATURE RESERVE - THE VIEW FROM MY WINDOW

Well nearly! Just across the A 413 from our house to be precise although the geese and swans often fly over our house early morning/late evening. Then down Mill Road lies the entrance path to the hide just before the watermill (a lovely place and worth a visit).



Here - in relative comfort - you can gaze across a grassy meadow to the open water at the birds. Binoculars are useful but you can still see a lot without them. Micklemere Reserve is part of historic grazing meadows that follow the course of the River Black Bourne. In the early 90's construction of the nearby bypass blocked the natural drainage pattern

and created a semi-natural wetland, prone to regular flooding and creating a large shallow lake that can remain all year if there is sufficient rainfall. Most years it almost dries up during the late summer and autumn rescued again by the November rains.



The reserve is managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and whilst access is restricted it is possible to do a complete circuit by following Mill Road past the historic watermill as far as Grimstone End and over a bridge and along a track as far as the old water works (now converted into two luxury homes). Cross the A1088 - Norton Road - and go up the hill (permissive path) as far as an old lane. Here look back down to see Micklemere spread out below. Go left along the old lane as far as the bypass – cross with great care – and follow the path soon passing a school and reaching the village high street by the ‘Greyhound’ pub.

This part of Suffolk is a joy to explore. Heavily farmed but still with lots of hedges, streams, woods, and good habitats. It’s a good distance between the main towns and villages even now with all the building going on. Bury St Edmunds is not too large and has the abbey ruins and gardens at its centre and some good walks around. I still come to Perivale at times and have a walk around the wood. Good to see it is all well cared for!

Cheers, Tom Berry

WINKWORTH ARBORETUM OUTING

24th October, 2017

Upon our arrival, the usual routine for all of us was, of course, the facilities then a cuppa in the café. This time the weather stayed reasonable with (thank goodness) very little of that wet stuff! Then, what a beautiful and tranquil surprise awaited us to enjoy in all its autumn glory.

Like myself, many of us made our own way into the arboretum but as we went along then other members of our group met up ‘by coincidence’ en route.

My walkabout took me through Holly Wood and around the perimeter of Sorbus Hill then down to Rowe’s Flashe Lake. Then onto and around the perimeter of Rowe’s Flashe Meadow and through Phillimore Wetlands finally gradually working our way back to the starting point and, of course, the café!



Our gratitude must be extended to Dr Wilfred Fox who purchased the 110 acres of wooded valley back in 1937. Over the next fifteen years he transformed the place with skill and vision on how to plant different species of trees in the right places to quote, ‘paint a picture’. In 1952 he gave this land to the National Trust which continues to look after its only arboretum to this day. The place boasts at least six champion trees amongst its many, many other species and varieties for us to enjoy.

During our journey home I was handed some leaves to identify as to which tree they belonged too. I can safely say that the large orbicular leaves were Mitchell’s Whitebeam (*Sorbus thibetica* ‘John Mitchell’). This is a cultivar of the Tibetan Whitebeam from South West China and the Himalayas. The tree was first raised from seed at Westonbirt Arboretum in 1938 and is named after the then curator. Incidentally, there is another cultivar named after the great man, Sorbus ‘Wilfred Fox’ produced by Hillier’s nurseries in the 1930’s and of course, there’s a specimen at Winkworth!

John Wells

WHAT ARE WE HERE FOR?

We are here, really, for "education about natural history" and one way in which the Society has fulfilled that objective has been to organise evening talks, in the winter months. We've been organising them for years - they are mentioned in the 1975 Annual Report, so there's a 43 year track record and that's just the first entry I can find - they may have been held before then and not reported, and I don't have records going back before 1973 readily to hand.

I remember giving a talk on beekeeping probably about 20 years ago - I remember it was late in the year for beekeeping, and I took an "observation hive" - glass sided and full of bees, which I had get back into their proper home the very next day, to minimise the risk of them coming to harm. I also remember one member nodding off - a learning moment for me as the speaker.

They were formerly held in the Greenford Community Centre, but of course now we have the Bluebell Centre, so we've moved there; and a great venue it is, too!

We have had some fantastic speakers and topics - highlights for me were Wendy Yorke, who spoke on the Thames Wilderness Project, and Glenn Millar from British Waterways (as it was then) who spoke on the Ecology of the Canal - sadly he's died, or we'd get him back. Jo Becorelli spoke about spiders, bringing a selection of pickled ones from the Natural History Museum with her - some proper giants! And Erica McAllister - also from the NHS - talked about flies - she has a reputation for being quite saucy, and her Twitter handle is @flygirl. Brenna Boyle has encyclopaedic knowledge and talks on a variety of topics, so in December spoke on "Discovering Winter Wildlife in London".

We've had a couple of talks about Swifts, first from Ed Mayer of the Swift Conservation Trust, and another from Catherine Day, who is Ed's successor; these were both inspiring and as a result we hope to have some kind of project involving Swifts, very possibly developing a swift tower at Perivale Wood to help these spectacular, though "endangered" or "near threatened" birds.

The local environment has been covered too, with Steve Lazelles coming to speak about water quality and a citizen science project monitoring it - a great piece of work. Another citizen science project has been Victoria Burton (@soilscolar) on Earthworm Watch - finding out why these critters are so important was fascinating.

Our last talk was from Gino Brignoli on ants. There are, apparently, 16000 species identified; in a rainforest, ants and termites (which are actually related to cockroaches) make up 30% of the total animal biomass. The largest ant is about 4 cm/1¼ in. long; the smallest, 1mm/0.04 in. The largest known colony is an astonishing 6,000 km. long, running along the south and east coasts of the Iberian Peninsular, extending into the South of France. Globally there are 10 quadrillion ants alive at any one time; they make up about 15 to 20 % of all terrestrial biomass. Nature is fascinating and mindboggling!

While or speakers are experts, they make the topics accessible and fascinating, there is something there for everyone - for instance, I learned a lot from Gino, but there were other experts who had made a point of coming, and who were not disappointed!

It's not all work - there's a break for refreshments, chat, and there are always questions.

The talks are only held in the winter, and this is being reviewed as, sadly, attendances are not always great. Speakers are sometimes disappointed by the number of people who attend; they've taken the time and trouble to prepare, arrive, probably get quite nervous, before realising that there are only 10 or 15 people in the audience.

We are thinking about whether we therefore need to change the programme in any way - do them in the summer when warmer, lighter evenings might encourage better attendance, for instance, or vary the range of talks. If there's a topic you'd like to see covered, then do please say and we'll try to find a speaker - and better, if you are an expert keen to share your knowledge or know of such a person, do let us know and we'll see if and when we can fit you in! .

We are already planning for the Autumn, and have pencilled in Sean McCormack from the Ealing Wildlife Group on Facebook to speak about Birds of Prey. These can be great evenings and it would be wonderful if we could fill the Centre with an enthusiastic crowd every time.



Andy Pedley

