



Wild About Beds

Autumn 2015

A great year for Autumn Lady's-tresses by Graham Bellamy

Richard Revels and a team of helpers have been monitoring the Autumn Lady's-tresses (ALTs) at Knocking Hoe this year, and over a thousand plants have flowered. This is way over estimates of flowering in recent years...and certainly the most seen since the 1970s. It will be interesting to see if there has been a mass flowering episode of ALTs elsewhere in the country. One of the last large documented mass flowering events was in 1955 and this stimulated the work of Terry Wells at Knocking Hoe, a study which is now in its 54th year.

ALTs have been declining in parts of its range and is described as near threatened in the recent *Vascular Plant Red List for England* (Stroh et al 2014). Hopefully many seeds will be set and dispersed and we can enjoy seeing this lovely late flowering orchid in other grasslands in Bedfordshire.



Flowering Autumn Lady's-tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*.
Photo by Graham Bellamy

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The Bedfordshire Natural History Society
www.bnhs.org.uk
Registered charity number 268659

Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



BedsLife
www.bedsbionet.org.uk

The BNHS

The BNHS was formed in 1946, its main function to record the fauna and flora of the county. It has over twenty active Recorders who cover many branches of natural history study and whose annual reports are published in the *Bedfordshire Naturalist* journal.

Members receive a quarterly newsletter, Wild About Beds, and programmes of meetings. These meetings include field meetings to Bedfordshire sites and occasionally farther afield. During the winter months, there are illustrated lectures normally held in Elstow, Haynes, Toddington and Maulden.

The Society depends on annual subscriptions which are devoted to its working, as all offices are honorary. Membership is open to anyone, whether resident in the county or not. If you would like to join the Society, please contact **Mary Sheridan**, Honorary Membership Secretary, 28 Chestnut Hill, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 2TR. Tel: 01525 378245, www.bnhs.org.uk.

BedsLife

BedsLife - Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Partnership is a consortium of government and non-governmental agencies dedicated to promoting the maintenance and enhancement of Bedfordshire's biodiversity. The Partnership oversees the implementation and monitoring of the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan, which can be found online at www.bedsbionet.org.uk.

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Your comments/notes on anything that you have observed in the field, on the road or in a past Wild About Beds issue are welcome/essential for continuity. Please do send articles to me either as an attachment via email or through the post. Pictures are always welcome; material required by **15 December 2015** please.

Thank you in anticipation.

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **December 2015**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

Potton Wood 26 July 2015

by Ian Woiwod

Despite a discouraging weather forecast eight intrepid members met for a field trip to Potton Wood. Unfortunately the weather forecast was if anything optimistic as the rain only became heavier during the morning and the hoped for butterflies and dragonflies did not venture out. However, an opportunity was taken to see the Greater and Lesser Butterfly Orchids orchids that we are trying to conserve in Potton Wood, the only place in Bedfordshire where they both occur. It was planned to visit Gamlingay Wood in the afternoon but by general consent it was decided enough was enough and that it was time to go home and dry out. Maybe next year?



Seven of the 'intrepid eight' who braved the weather for the Potton Wood field trip. Photo by Ian Woiwod

Chiltern Commons Project

by Julia Powell

In October 2013 Rachel Sanderson spoke at an indoor meeting about the Chiltern Commons Project funded by a Heritage Lottery fund grant. The project encouraged people to make the most of commons and it inspired and enabled people to get involved with caring for commons and studying them. This year, on 14 July, the final meeting was held to celebrate the achievements. It was based at Totterhoe and as this is our local patch Wilf and I were among the 70 delegates, all participating members of groups and organisations involved with or set up to look after our Commons. After a brief introduction, we were taken to Five Knolls on Dunstable Downs to see the remedial work on the erosion scars. This was a highly complex and the most expensive single measure undertaken within the whole project. Our own Graham Bellamy was among the experts on hand. We were told about the surveys undertaken: archaeological, botanical and for Lepidoptera. We were told how soil excavated from the building of the Gateway Centre had been retained and was used to backfill (over a liner to protect the underlying archaeology) in the deep grooves caused by bikes, horses and general footfall. This soil had been screened by the Central Bedfordshire Archaeological team prior to use. Patches of turf removed from the scars had been retained and replaced and it was now difficult to see exactly where the scars had been.

We returned to the Memorial Hall to hear Rachel Sanderson present the evaluation report of achievement versus target. Lunch followed a question and answer session.

In the afternoon, we walked up to Castle Hill, Totterhoe to hear about the common's history, the species surveys initiated and the practical work undertaken. Treating the erosion scars on the mound has given rise to an enormous amount of debate as yet unresolved. Here a separate grant, awarded later in the life of the project and including a greater sum for remedial work on the erosion scars on the mound meant changes to the project's objectives. Therefore it was decided the funds would be reallocated and we were shown how the trees planted by the Victorians had been cleared to open up the original ditch round the middle bailey.

As the project was launched here, there was a vote of thanks to all concerned including landowners and volunteers alike.

For more information about the work on commons by the Chilterns Conservation Board, contact Kath Daly kdaly@chilternsaonb.org. See more at: <http://www.chilternsaonb.org/news/242/19/Project-finale.html#sthash.E7A3D54z.dpuf>.

Books for sale

I have been given the following books for sale by Barbara Nunn, proceeds to go towards BNHS funds:

- *Biological Drawings With Notes Parts 1& 2* by Maud Jepson. First published in 1938, this is a reprint from 1982. It is a classic, currently being offered for sale on Amazon for £50+.
- *Flora of Bedfordshire* 2011 Chris Boon & Alan Outen. New copy.
- *Flora Britannica* 1996 Richard Mabey. Mint.

Please contact John Wakely vetjw@sky.com, tel 01525 860085



Hoopoe says 'wasn't that an amazing supermoon eclipse on 27 September!' and hopes lots of you were able to see it. The next one isn't until 2019!

Photo (Hoopoe) by John Pitts.
Supermoon photo courtesy
Wikimedia Commons



Birth of a naturalist (Part 2)

by Andrew Milne

In my previous article, *Wild About Beds* issue 175, I plotted my developing interest in nature study and the lead to my special interest in botany. It was 1955 when I joined the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) as a result of an article in *The Observer* about a plant atlas being prepared and the need for amateur volunteers to help. I equipped myself with *The Pocket Guide to Wild Flowers* by David McIntock and R.S.R Fitter published by Collins and hereafter referred to as Collins. This was a 1956 edition and I still have it and use it on trips round the country. It is of course in a rather battered condition but my marginal notes as to where and when I first saw a plant is a useful guide to dates and places of holidays! I also bought the botanists bible at the time, 'Clapham Tutin and Warburg' *Flora of the British Isles* CUP 1962 which I still have with various inserts from the Proceedings of BSBI. Added to these books I also got a good hand lens and an eye piece and a vasculum. Spell checker doesn't like this and today's botanists with plastic bags will wonder what that was.

I duly received my record cards and instructions from Cambridge where the project was being co-ordinated. There was the area card for recording species in a 10km square and individual cards for rare or local species. I still have the instructions for completing this one.

I soon gained a sense of the usefulness of information submitted. In 1956 I had a small group of school children on a field trip near Southend when one of them spotted a plant with pea flowers in the grass by a farm gate. This turned out to be *Lathrus nissolia*, Grass Vetchling. I sent the record to Cambridge and a few weeks later received a letter from a student at London University asking for details of its location as he was working on a monogram of the species. In 1957 with my friend John we covered a few squares in S. Wales based on Newcastle Emlyn. I can't remember anything specific from this trip but our records must have been of use.

In 1958 a request came from Franklyn Perring for a volunteer to cover the most remote part of west Ireland, Nephin Beg in Mayo. As I had family in that area I offered my services and booked a hotel and car hire in Westport. I was so busy and the weather was so good that I saw no family but collected a good number of records for the Croagh Patrick and Nephin Beg areas, using my bike, and then to Belmullet by car. I was very much on my own, even climbing Croagh Patrick with no one else in sight and no one knowing where I was. With no such things as mobile phones or hi-viz jackets I wonder now what would have happened if anything had gone wrong. On my return from Dublin airport a customs officer was searching my case where I had the vasculum. He asked what it was and on being told it had plants for identification he put everything back and shut the case. It probably wouldn't have mattered then, but one of the plants inside was Japanese knotweed! Later I had this letter from Franklyn Perring: "Sorry to bother you again, but your habit of going to unknown parts is bound to produce a crop of interesting records. Could you possibly send anything further about *Andromeda polifolia* from 84/95, a new record for West Mayo?"

(An interesting follow up to this visit: I was told beforehand that leading botanists from Dublin University would be in the area. I didn't meet up with them, but in 1999 I was in Malawi visiting a seminary. One of the Jesuit priests there turned out to be a botanist and his accent placed him firmly in Ireland. The conversation revealed that he was in Mayo at the same time as I was. Before entering the Jesuits he was a botany lecturer at Dublin.)

My next major contribution to the Plant Atlas came in May 1960. I was on a field studies course in Flatford — sleeping in Willie Lott's Cottage — with Dr. Francis Rose in charge. Lovely name for a botanist who is named in Collins as 'assisted by'. I still hear his enunciation of *Halimione portulacoides* with every vowel given its full value. One afternoon we had free time with the advice not to worry about plants, but if you do see anything interesting... I went with another student into Ipswich and walked a footpath in an area called Pin Mill Wood. On our way back I spotted a large umbellifer which I didn't recognise. There only seemed to be one plant so I cut off a flowering stem and leaf hoping that would be sufficient for my Collins to identify. It was placed in a test tube on our bench waiting for our attention when the loud voice of Dr. Rose behind us exclaimed, "Good God where did you get that!?" We explained and were told that it was not supposed to be growing further north than the Thames. It was *Oenanthe crocata*, Hemlock Water Dropwort. The record was sent to Cambridge and back came the reply from Franklyn Perring: "Very many thanks for your

letter of 26th May. I was very excited to have this record.....it is the only known record of this species in the whole of East Anglia and I don't think it has ever been satisfactorily recorded from Suffolk before this." In a subsequent letter of 11th June he thanks me for the specimen I sent and goes on to refer to a programme on the BBC called 'News for Naturalists' in which he intends to announce the discovery using it as an example of how amateurs can help by submitting records. So in August I heard my name on the BBC. Fame — but no fortune.

Next, my move to Bedfordshire and meeting Dr. Dony again.

A Rare Fly – or is it?

by Rory Morrissey

Wednesday 26 August was not a nice day, but the sun did show itself for a bit in the afternoon, although it was still quite cool. I'd been to the dentist and decided to make a short visit to the churchyard of All Saints in Leighton Buzzard. There is usually a good deal of wildlife there, but it was very quiet – a couple of butterflies, some shieldbug nymphs, a bee and the most lively of the bunch was a small fly.

I know a little bit about flies (not a lot) and I knew that this one would be difficult to identify, but it was apparently feeding on a blackberry (not the whole bush, just the one blackberry), so I thought that if I managed several photos at different angles I might have a chance of identifying it.

Having got the photos up on the computer screen and scanning Paul Brock's *Comprehensive Guide to Insects*, it looked a lot like an *Anthomyia* species. I checked with Alan Outen who quickly came back with the message that it was a female and they are very hard to identify, but I could try the Dipterists Forum, of which I am a member.

I put my three best photos on Dipterists Forum on Thursday morning and within about an hour it had been identified by the experts. Not only that, it was a rare fly, recorded previously only in two places in the UK, and added to the British list only in 2014. Its name was *Anthomyia plurinotata* Brullé. I couldn't believe my luck. Alan sent me an email saying it was a new species for Bedfordshire and he was about to database it.

It turns out that this species is actually quite easy to identify as the arrangement of dark spots on the top of the thorax is unique amongst its relatives in the UK. It has been known in Europe since the 19th century, but only appeared in the UK in 2013 near Reading. A male was found there in 2014 and it was added to the British list. A second record came from near Oxford. My sighting of it in Leighton Buzzard was only the third location.

So, is it a rare fly? Certainly it is a recent immigrant and colonist, but it seems to be fairly widespread, if not common. The thing is, not many people are looking for it, and flies are generally quite hard – or I find them so, anyway. I'm sure it's one of Alan Outen's "neglected insects", but maybe someone else will see it. Just look for the one with the four spots in a square pattern on the thorax. If it's got an extra spot in the middle it's one of the others, and you'll probably have to catch it to identify it.



Anthomyia plurinotata Brullé. Photo by Rory Morrissey



Please note: to reduce the risk of email spam being sent to contributors and others, '(at)' appears in email addresses in place of '@' in this newsletter. -Ed.

Stag Beetles at Totternhoe

by Wilf Powell

The Bedfordshire Invertebrate Group (BIG), organised by Alan Outen, met in Totternhoe on the evening of Wednesday 17 June with the primary aim of looking for stag beetles *Lucanus cervus* on the wooded slopes of Totternhoe Knolls nature reserve. Stag beetles have regularly been reported in the gardens of houses adjacent to the woodland covering the side of the knolls that borders Castle Hill road, opposite the Cross Keys public house. Laura Wagstaff, who is a voluntary warden for the reserve, led us into the woods along a path where she had recently seen adult stag beetles. Evidence of the beetles' presence was soon found in the form of the fragmented remains of a male that had evidently been predated, probably by a bird or small mammal. However, despite the group spreading out and searching the area for about an hour, no live specimens were discovered, although we were rewarded by encountering a live Lesser Stag Beetle *Dorcus parallelipipedus*, which can be mistaken for a female of its larger cousin.

The Lesser Stag Beetle is fairly common and widespread in southern Britain, as far north as the south of Yorkshire and its larvae develop in rotting timber, apparently favouring ash, beech and apple. It readily flies and often comes into gardens if there are old hedges, large trees or old orchards nearby. This one was photographed in a neighbour's garden in Dunstable. It ranges in size from about 18 – 32 mm in length compared to the larger Stag Beetle, the females of which range from 30 to 45 mm in length, while the males can be even bigger, with their huge antler-like jaws.



Lesser Stag Beetle *Dorcus parallelipipedus*. Photo by Wilf Powell

Close examination of a standing dead tree also turned up a fine male of the Rhinoceros Beetle *Sinodendron cylindricum*, the third British member of the stag beetle family Lucanidae, and not to be confused with the large tropical beetles of the same common name, which belong to a different beetle family, the Scarabaeidae (subfamily Dynastinae). This species is widespread in Britain, although usually occurring in small numbers, and bores into the dead heartwood of trees such as beech and oak and sometimes pine. The male often stands guard while the female excavates branching tunnels in the decaying wood, into which she lays her eggs. It is the smallest of the three species measuring 10-18 mm in length. It gets its common name from the horn-like projection arising from the front of the males head, but is also sometimes known as the Least Stag Beetle. Alan Outen took it home to photograph it before returning it unharmed to where it was found at Totternhoe.



Rhinoceros Beetle *Sinodendron cylindricum*. Photo by Alan Outen

Having had no luck locating a live Stag Beetle, the group diverted across the road to look for signs of the Noble Chafer *Gnorimus nobilis*, a rare beetle of the family Scarabaeidae whose larvae develop in old, decaying orchard trees. Mark Telfer had reported seeing signs of the beetle in the form of the distinctive droppings, known as frass, left behind by feeding larvae, in an old orchard near the Cross Keys pub. Unfortunately, Mark couldn't attend the excursion and the group failed to identify the exact locality.

At this point I was one of several participants who had to leave but the remaining stalwarts decided to return to the path in the woodland to have a final attempt to locate a Stag Beetle, although it was now 9:30 and the light was fading fast. However, to their great delight several beetles were seen flying, silhouetted against the dusk sky, and a superb male specimen was successfully netted so that it could be closely examined and photographed before being released to continue its nocturnal wanderings, presumably in search of a lady friend. This photograph was taken by Keith Balmer on the night. Although once common, this

dramatic insect has declined considerably and is now regarded as a globally threatened species, so it is wonderful to have an apparently thriving population in south Bedfordshire. It is even more remarkable to have encountered all three British species in the stag beetle family, Lucanidae, at the same site on the same evening. This demonstrates how important the woodland on Totternhoe Knolls is, especially the extensive presence of dead and dying timber, which is vital for the continued health of populations of these charismatic beetles. Stag Beetle larvae take 3 to 6 years to develop in rotting timber including the dead stumps of a variety of deciduous trees, seemingly having a preference for oak. They prefer moist conditions and particularly thrive in decaying timber that is partly buried in the soil, often occurring along river banks and in large suburban gardens. Most adults only live for a few months, being most active at dusk, and can be encountered between late May and early August.

Further records of any of these three beetles would be of great value and could be sent to any of the following: w.powell4(at)ntlworld.com, keith.balmer(at)wildlifebcn.org, or alanouten(at)virginmedia.com.



Stag Beetle *Lucanus cervus*. Photo courtesy Keith Balmer

Summer Programme Highlights 2015

by Julia Powell

Saturday 13 June Knockinghoe NNR and Pegsdon NR

Nine intrepid members braved the elements to see a wonderful display of orchids including the only colony of Burnt Orchids in Bedfordshire. Common Spotted, Twayblade, Pyramid and Fragrant Orchids were also seen. Those that stayed for the afternoon (when it was a bit drier) went to Pegsdon and were presented with a good array of White Helleborines and Fly Orchids. On the way round, Graham Bellamy pointed out many other chalk grass and arable plants including such rarities as Spotted Catsear and Field Fleawort.



It's a lovely view from the top of Sharpenhoe Clappers.
Photo by Julia Powell

Saturday 27 June Sharpenhoe Clappers

Graham had better weather for this trip where all target species and more were easily seen by the 16 members present. Orchids were plentiful over a wide area on both sides of the road and round the edge of the car park with Twayblade, Bee, Common Spotted and Pyramidal orchids present. The three fields that have been converted back from arable had large numbers of Pyramidal Orchids. Common Broomrape and Great Pignut were also seen. No Yellow Birdsnest orchids were found but Fragrant Orchid was present as was a White Helleborine although this had finished flowering.

species seen included Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Large Skipper and Small Tortoiseshell. On the way round a Small Elephant Hawk Moth female was removed from the path to a safe place.

Thursday 30 July Duck End NR

This was an evening visit with 13 members present. Although the site was past its best, there were still some gems to see. There was still one flower visible on the Bog Pimpernel although you needed to look carefully for the tiny flower. The effect of Yellow Rattle in reducing the vigour of the grasses could be easily

seen and we were given insight into the ongoing management plan by Honorary Warden David Withers and Sue Raven from the Greensand Trust.

Saturday 1 August Tiddenfoot Lake

A large group of 18 met Rory in the car park as we were joined by local people from Friends of Tiddenfoot Lake. After meandering around the lake spotting various plants and insects and visiting Peace Meadow, we returned to the car park where the group split and some went on to visit a site over the road. Although the weather could have been better, sightings included Common and Blue-tailed Damselflies, Brown Hawker, Common Darter, Banded Demoiselle, Red-eyed and Small Red-eyed Damselflies, Emperor Dragonfly and Ruddy Darter.



Cinnabar moth *Tyria jacobaeae* on Scabious at Houghton Regis Chalk Pit. Photo by John Pitts

Saturday 8 August Houghton Regis Chalk Pit

This meeting attracted the highest number of members of the summer as 19 of us met for a gentle walk. Michael, the honorary warden, joined us and gave a history of the pit and explained plans for its future development. Peter guided us beside the marl lake where the WLT has opened an angling club; 3-4 very large fish, probably carp, were visible from the bank although the lakeside attracted those members looking for dragonflies. We strolled over to the plateau to see a mass of Chiltern Gentians and an abundance of Chalkhill Blue butterflies, although a number of other butterfly species were also present. This is one of the best sites in the county and probably in England too for the Chalkhill Blue.

Saturday 15 August Thursdays Farm and Felmersham

Tony Smith led a group of 13 members on a private visit to this boulder clay grassland on Thursdays Farm in glorious sunshine and we were greatly entertained by numerous insects including a variety of butterflies. A Migrant hawk at rest showed well and others were seen flying. Less than half the field, which has been pesticide free for the last 19 years, was explored before it was time to head back

to the cars. A picnic lunch was enjoyed at Felmersham NR before moving on for a walk round Felmersham where some beautiful Broad-leaved Helleborines were in full flower.

Friday 21 August Priory CP

Only four BNHS members joined the Bat Group but they were given a real treat seeing bats in the hand after being caught in the harp traps. In addition to Soprano and Common Pipistrelles, Nathusius' Pipistrelle, the target species was also caught. Daubenton's Bats were seen flying as were Soprano and Common Pipistrelles. A tiny Leisler's Bat, found at Center Parcs, was brought to be taken off for some remedial therapy.

Saturday 5 September Knocking Hoe

Graham Bellamy led another visit to Knocking Hoe, this time to see Autumn Ladies' Tresses, a stunning little orchid with a twisted flower spike. Seventeen of us contributed to the current survey finding another 30-40 new specimens bringing the total seen this year at the whole site to over 1000 plants.

Saturday 12 September Maulden Wood

A dozen members gathered in the layby on a grey and slightly wet morning to join Mick McCarrick while he



Roesel's Bush-cricket *Metrioptera roeselii*, Thursdays Farm. Photo by Betty Cooke

emptied the mammal traps set in the conservation area of Maulden Wood. Of the 20 traps set, three Bank Voles, four Field Mice and six Wood Mice were weighed and sexed (and some photographed) before being released where they came from. At the request of the national Flea recorder, the bedding from the traps was also kept and carefully labelled. As a group, fleas from small mammals are under recorded and this was an opportunity not to be missed.



Field vole *Microtus agrestis*, Maulden Wood 12 September. Photo by Betty Cooke



Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus* found at Maulden Wood. Photo by Betty Cooke



'Look at the size of that field vole!' Photo by John Pitts



Photos above by John Pitts



Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, Felmersham. Photo by Julia Powell

An Unassuming County: The Making of the Bedfordshire Countryside, a new book by Brian Kerr

Beginning with the geology and soils Brian Kerr shows how farmers and land owners have shaped the Bedfordshire countryside through time. He touches on how agricultural history, especially the enclosure movement, and the development of the great parks, has influenced the present day landscape. The book describes the impact of the market gardening and extraction industries which have left a mark on the countryside. He traces the expansion of protected areas and nature reserves; and finally the recent changes resulting from modern agriculture and planning. This book would appeal to conservationists, geographers and geologists or simply to walkers who would enjoy learning more about the footpath network in Bedfordshire.

The Chapter sequence follows a chronological approach to the influences which have shaped the landscape in this little known corner of lowland England. Following an accessible and non-technical introduction to the geology, the book describes how landscape has been shaped by farmers and land managers and there is a brief account of the pressures facing rural areas within the influence of London. There is a useful Chapter on the footpath network especially the Long Distance Paths which cross Bedfordshire.

The book of 158 pages is well illustrated with colour plates, and maps. The text is enlivened with short boxes of material on interesting topics which encourage the reader to explore the landscape history of the county. There is also a well organised section of Further Reading.

About the book:

Landscape provides a rich recording of our past. By focusing on one corner of England this book traces the changes which have shaped the countryside of Bedfordshire.

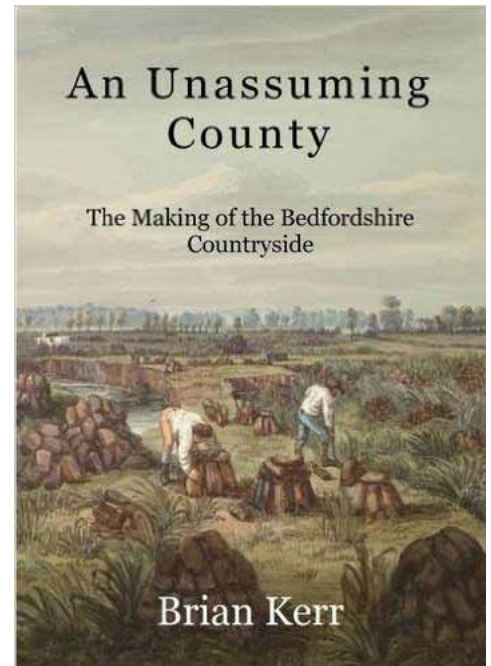
In Brian Kerr's book *An Unassuming County: The Making of the Bedfordshire Countryside*, published in 2014, he traces the history of one English county in a way which is accessible to the non scientist.

The author uses the fundamental geology of Bedfordshire to describe a number of natural landscapes. This book will appeal to those interested in nature conservation and the more casual walker.

About the author:

Brian Kerr has lived in Bedfordshire for around 25 years following a career working overseas, mostly in Africa. Trained as a soil scientist he has applied his knowledge of the environment to unravelling the landscape history of Bedfordshire. He currently holds a post as a Visiting Fellow at Cranfield University in Bedfordshire.

The book is available from Amazon and also by contacting the author on wbkerr47@gmail.com or at 07736 911508 or 01525-403014.





Events Programme Autumn 2015

Changes to the programme will be published on the web site www.bnhs.org.uk or the BNHS News Group.

In bad weather, the leaders may cancel the event if conditions are unsuitable. Please check early on the day.

All indoor talks start at 8pm except the AGM which starts at 7:30pm and all are held at Maulden Village Hall (MVH), grid reference TL048380, post code MK45 2DP.

Parking is free.

Visitors are encouraged.

A small charge is requested for refreshments at the talks and possibly on other occasions too.

Donations are always welcome.

For field meetings, wear stout footwear and warm clothing, bring a hat, water and sun cream if it is hot. OS Landranger Numbers 152, 153, 165 & 166 cover Bedfordshire.

REGRETTABLY NO DOGS ARE ALLOWED and children under 16 years must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Unfortunately some trips will not be suitable for wheelchair users and pushchairs. Please contact the leader in advance if you have any concerns about accessibility.

Please check the web site www.bnhs.org.uk or join the BNHS News Group for the latest information.

(F) Particularly suitable for families and young people.

(L) Bring food to meetings. Lunch is eaten in the car park area. If joining the meeting for the afternoon, please arrive by 1.30pm.

 Meetings organised in conjunction with the ornithological section, the Bedfordshire Bird Club (BBC).

SUNDAY 18th October, BROMHAM 11am-4.30pm (F)

Bromham Mill Apple Day Visit the BNHS stand at Bromham Mill, TL010507, MK43 8LP. See our nature table where you can touch the preserved material. Marvel at the photographs of the local wildlife. Test your knowledge with the quiz. There will be lots of entertainment and refreshments. (There may be an entry fee.)

TUESDAY 20th October, MAULDEN, 8pm

Talk "Oliver Pike, pioneer photographer-naturalist and BNHS president" by Rory Morrissey, Dragonfly recorder who has written a booklet about him. Oliver Pike was a pioneer photographer-naturalist who started as a teenager in Enfield in the late 1800s. He wrote popular wildlife books, usually illustrated with his own photographs, and made the first wildlife films that were shown to a paying audience. He moved to Bedfordshire in 1922, where his garden became a wildlife sanctuary and the location of several of his films. When the BNHS was resurrected following the end of the Second World War, Oliver Pike became its first President. At MVH

SATURDAY 24th October, BEDFORD (F)

Walk in the Foster Hill Road Cemetery, Bedford looking for some notable lichens and other wildlife. This is a Victorian Cemetery and part of the Clapham Wildlife corridor. The conserved area is chalky grassland together with a good array of both exotic and native trees probably planted by the Victorians. Meet at the old chapel TL048511, MK41 7TD. Leader: Mark Powell. Tel 07885 322270

TUESDAY 27th October, MAULDEN 8pm 

BBC talk "Woodpeckers and Woodland Birds" by Ken Smith, who has been researching woodpeckers for over 30 years. At MVH.

SATURDAY 7th November, ASHRIDGE (F)

Ramble in Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI looking at trees, commons and chalk grasslands for late Autumn highlights. Meet outside the Brownlow café SP970130, HP4 1LX.

Leaders: Sheila Brooke and the Powells.

SUNDAY 8th November, BEDFORD 

Morning walk around Priory Country Park, Bedford, including Meadow Lane for mainly resident and wintering birds. Meet outside the visitors centre TL072494 at 8.30am.

Leader: Dave Barnes.

TUESDAY 17th November, MAULDEN 8pm

Talk “Current activities of BSBI and some perspectives on orchids” by Ian Denholm. Ian is presently serving as President of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI), and is jointly (with Richard Bateman) BSBI's taxonomic referee for the Orchidaceae. He will review some of BSBI's ongoing projects to document the status of the British and Irish flora, and some current issues relating to the systematics and conservation of our wild orchids (especially the spotted- and marsh-orchids, genus *Dactylorhiza*). At MVH.

TUESDAY 24th November, MAULDEN 8pm 

BBC talk “A Lane in Brazil” by Mike Lane FRPS, professional wildlife photographer. Outstanding images of the exotic birds and mammals of this huge country, especially in the Pantanal wetlands. At MVH.

THURSDAY 3rd December, HAYNES (L)

Christmas Social evening, with seasonal refreshments. Bring along a selection of your slides, or digital photos (on a CD or memory stick) and some food to share. A chance to chat with friends and catch up on good sightings from the past year. Meet at Haynes Mission Hall, Northwood End Road, Haynes, TL099419, MK45 3PP. Doors open at 07:30pm.

SUNDAY 6th December HEATH AND REACH 11am - 3pm (F)

Rushmere Christmas Fair. Visit the BNHS stand to see the Nature Table, displays and quizzes. Buy your Christmas Tree and look for those quirky presents. Park in the Rushmere car park, SP912284, LU7 0EB. Parking £2.00.

Leader: Julia Powell. 07958 161938

SATURDAY 12th December, RUTLAND 9am 

Day trip to Rutland Water for a good variety of wetland birds. Meet in the Egleton Reserve car park SK878073 at 9.00am.

Leader: Sheila Alliez

SATURDAY 26th December, WOBURN 9.30am - 12.30pm (F)

Boxing Day Walk through Woburn Park. Meet at the Woburn Village car park, opposite the church in Park Street, SP950331, MK17 9PG.

Leader: Mary Sheridan.

MONDAY 11th January, LONDON 11am - 12 noon

Visit the Grant Museum of Zoology. The Grant Museum of Zoology is the only remaining university zoological museum in London. It houses around 68,000 specimens, covering the whole Animal Kingdom.

Founded in 1828 as a teaching collection, the Museum is packed full of skeletons, mounted animals and specimens preserved in fluid. Many of the species are now endangered or extinct including the Tasmanian Tiger or Thylacine, the Quagga, and the Dodo. A chance to visit outside the public open hours. Numbers are limited, please contact Julia Powell on 01582 661328 by Tuesday December 22nd December to book your place when full details will be given.

TUESDAY 19th January, MAULDEN 8pm

Talk “An Unassuming County – The Making Of The Bedfordshire Countryside” by Brian Kerr, soil scientist and visiting Fellow at Cranfield University. Brian will talk about his recently published book of the same title. The book shows how the geology, soils, farmers and land owners have shaped the Bedfordshire countryside through time and touches on how agricultural history has influenced the present day landscape including the impact of the market gardening and extraction industries which have left a mark on the countryside. It traces the expansion of protected areas and nature reserves, ending with the recent changes resulting from modern agriculture and planning. At MVH

If you wish to know more about any of the events please contact either Sheila Brooke [brooke.se\(at\)btinternet.com](mailto:brooke.se(at)btinternet.com) 01525 873396 or Julia Powell [JuliaCPowell80\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:JuliaCPowell80(at)gmail.com) 01582 661328