

Mendip



From the Chair

It was good to see those Members who attended the AGM at Ubley Village Hall; we had several offers to help get involved with our work.

Thanks goes to Jo Bradshaw and her husband Steve, and Liz Dagger and her husband Ian for stepping up and becoming more involved with the Society, both Jo and Liz are on the Committee and have been busy organising walks, and events to cover the next few months, the aim is to build on this have a programme of events well in advanced.

With the glorious weather the vegetation on our reserves has put on extra growth so look out for our work days, Judith and David Tranter organise the work programme so get in touch if you feel you can lend a hand with the clearing. I hope to see some of you at some of the up and coming events.

Tina



And from the Editor

One of the "privileges" of editing this newsletter, is that I get to see what every other contributor has written, before I have to decide what to put in this column. So for instance I can echo Tina's thanks to Jo and Liz, supported by partners Steve and Ian, all of whom have stepped up to become active in organising the planned activities of the society. I have witnessed a lot of enthusiasm from our new Walks and Talks coordinators, which is reflected in a full "What's on" page. I am looking forward to a whole lot of reports on these events to fill the pages of our next edition...



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I can also thank Judith Tranter, who may have stepped away from editing the newsletter, but still contributes a lot of material for each edition. And I know that Les is calling for more of our members to contribute copy and pictures. Thanks Les, I agree, more membership input is to be very much encouraged. But I also know that several of you are already getting involved, and offering both words and pictures, both of which are much appreciated. So special thanks from me must go to Ingrid Sofrin, not only for a great cover shot, but also an article with pictures, on a walk covered on pages four and five. To Mary Heffernan and Roger Harvey, for pictures to go with Peter Janes' article on the Mendip Champion Species talk & walk with Nathan Orr, and to Ian Dagger, both for his thoughts on a walk he led recently, and some guidance on how to lead walks generally, if any of you were thinking of stepping up in that way.

Peter Janes has, incidentally, also offered up a short piece on Death and Taxes. It might at first glance seem a bit of an odd subject in the abstract, but hopefully all will become clear in due course.

I have written an opinion piece on planning. To quote Les Davies. "We are not just a group of friends who meet up for walks now and then". The Mendip Society has a role to play in planning and decisions made about the future of the hills we all care about, so let's all play our part.

And finally... I have asked Judith to do a run down of recent grants that the society has made to various good causes. We have just made the process of applying for a grant much easier, by automating the procedure and making it accessible via the website, or even by scanning a QR code using your phone! (see page 9). As a society we want to be able to make these grants available to as many local good causes as possible, so the more organisations and groups that we can make aware of the scheme the better.

Cheers, Mike.

Cover Photo. - by Ingrid Sofrin.
Priddy Pool, shot on an iPhone. Settings, for the technically minded, are ultra wide 13mm and f2.2. A perfect cover photo!

E-Mail: themendipsociety.photos@gmail.com

Our 2025 AGM

The 2025 AGM was held on 12th April at Ubley Parish Hall. The hall proved to be an excellent venue in terms of location, facilities and, importantly, parking. We needed 30 members to constitute a quorum and scraped in with 31, so that was OK.

In her report from the Chair, Tina Bath thanked Richard Frost for his work on the Committee (he has stood down) and welcomed Liz Dagger and Jo Bradshaw, who are jointly taking over the role of Walks and Talks coordinator from Richard. She went on to describe the Society's cooperation with the Mendip Hill National Landscape Team, the Society's responses to various planning issues and events held at our nature reserves. Other reports were contained in the last newsletter. The Treasurer presented the financial report, and all members of the Committee were re-elected. Finally, a minor updating of the Society's constitution was approved.



Lucy Stockton. Farming Engagement Officer for MHNL gave a talk about the FiPL initiative.



Chair Tina Bath, thanking ex-chair Richard Frost for his many years of service to the society in several roles.



Members arriving for the AGM. Our recently updated Information Boards in the background - Thanks to Judith and David Tranter.



Lucy's opening slide,

The meeting was followed by Lucy Stockton, from the Mendip Hills National Landscape team, who gave an interesting talk about their efforts to engage farmers in the protection of wildlife and the landscape."

Hinton Blewitt and Litton Reservoir Walk.

The best way to enjoy the Mendip Hills is just to put your boots on and get out there for a walk.

Tuesday April the 15th dawned cool, with grey skies and the threat of showers. My plan to do the garden didn't seem a very appealing one - but wait - there's mention in the newsletter of a walk from Hinton Blewitt. I don't really know Hinton Blewitt. All the more reason to go.

A quick text to walk leader Ian Dagger resulted in an encouraging response, so off I went. Soon I was negotiating lanes barely the width of my car to get to the Ring o' Bells pub and meet up with some cheery folk who perhaps also thought a good walk on a chilly spring morning was no bad thing. Ian knows his stuff, and although I was warned that he tended to set quite a cracking pace, he kept an eye on us and adjusted the speed accordingly. It really was the best of the Somerset countryside, with rolling hillsides, banks of spring flowers, and views across to Blagdon Lake.

Ian was a mine of local knowledge, and there was much lively chatter the whole four miles round.



Striding out under a grey sky.
Photo: Ingrid Sofrin



Rolling hillsides.
Photo: Ingrid Sofrin



Fabulous views looking out towards Blagdon.
Photo: Ingrid Sofrin

Near the end we assembled at Prospect Stile, about half-a-mile from Hinton Blewitt, and at the top of a steep ascent. The climb was worth it, because the view out to Blagdon Lake and beyond is breathtaking. It was a bit too overcast for us to catch a glimpse of the Bristol Channel, much less Wales over on the other side, but it was the perfect place to stop, catch our breath, and revel in the countryside spread out beneath us.

Spirits were high as we walked down the lane. We were all set for a reviving pint at the Ring o' Bells - but to our utter chagrin it was closed for a pre-Easter spruce-up.



A short break at Litton Reservoir.
Photo: Ingrid Sofrin

Undaunted, a number of us drove in convoy the two miles or so to the pub at Litton, bringing to a close a very fine outing on Mendip.

Two views of the same walk - Ingrid Sofrin and Ian Dagger

"Hinton Blewett" - the name likely originates from the Old English words "heah" (high) and "tun" (enclosure), possibly indicating a high-lying farmstead or enclosure. The "Blewett" part of the name was added later, coming from the Bluet family who held land there in the 14th century.

Here we gathered for a walk which is a favourite of mine. The walk was originally published by the Mendip Hills AONB.

The walk starts and finishes at the Ring o Bells, setting off in a westerly direction we passed the church and the old rectory. The cottages we had passed were built for coal miners working in the Somerset Coal mines in Bishop Sutton.

Keeping on a generally westerly direction we dropped down towards Litton Reservoir enjoying outstanding views down the Chew Valley on to the Yeo Valley. On our left we could see up to East Harptree Woods with its lead smelting ponds and chimney. We commented on the pristine traditional farmland with its hedgerows and mature trees, many of them striking oaks. But a couple of things stood out. Firstly, many of the fields did not have any animals grazing them, and secondly how fields have grown by grubbing out hedgerows.

Litton Reservoir came into sight. This reservoir is really two lakes separated by a dam. Lower Litton is a shallow, tree-lined, eight-acre lake. The water is deepest near the dam. There are weed beds over much of the shallower areas. Upper Litton (11 acres) is much deeper than its sister lake and very different in character. Long and narrow with steep sides and a stream flowing in at the top end. The reservoir is owned and managed by Bristol Water, it empties into the River Chew which flows into the Chew Lake and eventually into the River Avon at Keynsham.

At this point the walk we did can be extended by walking around the edge of the upper lake. It adds about two miles to the four mile walk and takes you close to the pub in Litton originally called "The Litton"

However, we went straight across the dam and out onto the quiet lanes near Coley. The heady scent of wild garlic and Three-Cornered Jack accompanied us. Picking up footpaths across fields we followed the River Chew heading towards North Widcombe. Now on our left were the stands of Crack Willow which mark the edge of Herriot's Pool part of the Chew Lake.

Many of the cottages in North Widcombe are built of beautiful red sandstone which occurs in some of the Chew Valley villages like East and West Harptree, Compton Martin, Ubley and Blagdon.

This walk has a sting in the tail and that is the ascent from North Widcombe to Prospect Stile but if taken slowly with frequent stops to admire the ever-improving view it is well worth it. Because the views from Prospect Stile have to rank among the great views Mendip gives us. Helpfully Prospect Stile comes with a seat and one of those compass thingies which indicates all the landmarks in a compass-like design. Once we had recovered and had our fill of the views it was a short walk back to the Ring of Bells.

Here we had our only disappointment of the walk, the pub was shut for electrical work to be carried out. Cannot win them all!

Ian Dagger.



*Ian Dagger (left) with Geoff, Neil, Nick and Dianne at Prospect Stile.
Photo: Ingrid Sofrin*

Meet your new walks and talks co-ordinators.



Hello, my name is Liz Dagger. I have recently joined The Mendip Society and was asked to join the committee. Jo Bradshaw and I are planning next season's events, which we hope you will join us on and make them really socialable. I have lived in Bishop Sutton for 43 years with my husband Ian. Back in the day, my Grandparents (Albert & Ada Watts) farmed at Ubley, so my roots have always been in Mendip.

In 1987 I was one of the first people to volunteer for the newly formed Mendip Hills Rangers. My number was 007 it always made me smile. Trouble shooting to do litter picks at the Rock of Ages with Les Davies or Tina Bath. We built the easy access footpath at Charterhouse and many other projects which have improved people's enjoyment of the Mendip Hills.

I like getting my hands dirty, whether it's planting trees, making Dew ponds or trying to mend dry stone walls or attempting hedge laying, I am happy to give it a go. I am looking forward to volunteering at the Society's two Nature Reserves. I also like walking on the Mendip in all its seasons. If you have a favourite walk or know of a good speaker, please let me know so we can include your ideas in the events schedule. I can be contacted via email at: cvhsdagger@gmail.com



... And I'm Jo Bradshaw. I first joined the Mendip Society in 2011 and led walks regularly until 2016. Now, having recently retired from full-time work, I've rejoined with renewed enthusiasm and a hope to see our programme of walks and talks flourish once more.

I've lived at the foot of the Mendips since 1999, but my love of hill walking goes back even further — growing up in the Peak District, where walking was a way of life. Both my parents were keen walk leaders well into their 80s, so it's no surprise the hills still call to me.

What I've always enjoyed most about being part of the Society is meeting others who share a curiosity for this remarkable landscape. There's so much to discover — from the hidden histories and old infrastructure scattered across the hills, to the geological wonders of places like Ebbor Gorge.

Leading walks is a rewarding way to connect with others, share knowledge, and keep our local heritage alive. Whether you're an experienced walker or just passionate about a particular area, we'd love to welcome more walk leaders to help us keep the spirit of exploration alive. If you've ever thought about leading a walk — or even co-leading one — now's a great time to get involved!



Will your photograph feature on the front cover of our next edition?

We are always keen to have members send in their photographs for us to consider for our front cover.



You don't need to have an expensive camera or lots of experience, just a high resolution picture of something connected to Mendip or a Mendip Society event.

Here is the e-mail address to send your files to: themendipsociety.photos@gmail.com

More detailed instructions can be found by typing this address exactly as shown into a search engine.

<https://tinyurl.com/MS-Cover>

Or, if you have a smart phone or tablet, scan this QR code to be taken there automatically.



Somerset V Hitler - The indoor version.

Ever since I took on the task of leading an annual walk over Blackdown to tell the story of our local Starfish site and its role in WW2 history, various people have been asking me if I “had” a talk on the subject that I could give to their particular group or club.

For most of the intervening time I had been working out how I could turn a six-mile, strenuous hike over Mendip into a slide show that told the same story and evoked the same atmosphere. And so, this event, on April 26th 2025, at the Shipham Village Hall became the “test flight” for my efforts.

It is, of course, always a bit of a gamble to anticipate attendance at such an event, especially when not issuing advance tickets. Would anyone find the subject interesting? Would I be able to keep people’s attention, leave alone tell the story in an entertaining and engaging way? Would I remember where all the plugs for the projector, laptop, microphone and speakers had to go?

As we started to set up in the hall, I suggested to the various helpers that I would be happy to get anything over 40 attendees when asked how many chairs were needed.

The time drew near, and people started to arrive, it soon became clear that we were going to get far more than 40! My team of helpers, assisted by a few of the audience, were setting out chairs as fast as they possibly could. David Tranter had to keep pulling the display boards he had set up further back to allow row after row to be put out - for a while I started to wonder if the hall even had enough chairs in the store room!... Meanwhile, Peter Janes, who was manning the door was taking £2 a head from non-members and trying to encourage them to take a membership form, while the kitchen crew - slightly panicked by the huge influx of punters, sent Tina out for additional supplies for the half-time coffee and tea... All I had to do now was actually deliver the materials I had crammed into around 60 PowerPoint slides in a coherent manner... No pressure then!

As ever, Les Davies rose to the occasion and donned a WW2 vintage tin hat to introduce me. Warned not to “steal my thunder” he offered a short, but apposite introduction and handed straight over to me. Show time!...



*Society President, Les Davies MBE, “Rising to the occasion!”
Photo: Christine Edwards*



*A packed house... “Let’s hope the speaker is good”.
Photo: Christine Edwards*

Now, I would like to assure all of you who were there that I had tested the microphone before we started - and it had behaved perfectly. However, within a few minutes it became clear that all was not well, I sounded like 70’s comic, Norman Collier! Fortunately, the committee of Shipham Village Hall had covered my back, and a spare was available, so after a few moments of fumbling backstage I was back on course.

It is, of course, not for me to judge how well I did - apart from to say that the audience were polite enough to stick around till the end, to even to chuckle at appropriate moments and applaud generously at the end. What I must do however, is to offer thanks to everyone who helped in whatever way, to put this event together. To Don Brown for gathering a lot of the materials I used. To Blagdon History Society, Richard Ivens and others for additional photographs. To everyone who helped on the night in so many ways, and of course to the over 120 people who gave up their evening to hear my version of this fascinating piece of Mendip history.

Mike Harvey.

Small Grants awarded so far in 2025

As a result of increased advertising on our part, we have received a fair few varied grant applications so far this year. Each one is very different, and it is good to see the spread of work being done in the voluntary sector in the Mendip area, especially by those with which we have some connections.



We have worked for many years with **St Hugh's Chapel at Charterhouse**, a well-known landmark, but not weathering very well recently at all; the grant was for the much-needed repair of the front door.

The whole outside of the building needed repainting with special weatherproofing paint and Yeo Valley helped with this. Much can be achieved by everyone working together in partnership.

Local group **Nempnett Thrubwell Green Spaces** have been renovating their finger posts around the village for a while now. They work with the Somerset Forge for any welding and replacement of letters and arms on the old posts; we also partnered with the Forge many years ago now. The transformation of the signpost for which we gave them the grant is amazing; they tell us they are already working on another one in the village!



The sign post near the hatchery, Blagdon Lake before and after.



University of BRISTOL

Professor Danielle Schreve, who heads the Heather Corrie Chair in Environmental Change in the School of Geographical Sciences at Bristol University (but nevertheless is an ordinary member of The Mendip Society!) was given a grant towards the expenses of the summer dig by her students at Gully Cave in Ebbor Gorge. This highly important dig, paid for completely by the diggers, is reaching a critical stage as the bottom of the cave seems ever nearer to being reached and with it the appearance of MAN in the equation...

We have a group visit arranged for the Friday 1st August, see page 16 for details of how to join the group.



Soap Soup Arts became a Community Interest Company in February 2023, so that they could better serve their local community, creating accessible, innovative creative experiences and educational programmes for children, young people, adults and elderly people in the South West.

They received a 'first time grant' from the Mendip Society to purchase the raw materials for the activities planned for the finale of the Winscombe Community festival of Arts and Sustainability. 19th July 2025 12.00-18.00 Winscombe Community Centre and Green, where we will be doing flower pressing with the children to make flags which can be attached to bamboo sticks and waved in the procession. The badge maker will also be in operation. **We would be happy to hear from anyone able to help us then.** Also see page 17.

Wrington and Burrington Hedging Society

Applied for a grant towards the running costs of their 193rd Hedging competition; We agreed to sponsor the 'Beginners Class'. Although none of those we had attending our own hedge laying training classes won any prizes we were happy to see a successful day for the W&B Hedging Society.



The winner of the beginner's class, Bobby Crabb
Photo: Steve Eggington.

By Small Grants Officer - *Judith Tranter.*

Another group who had been having hedge laying training earlier in the year, was the new intake of Young Rangers for 2025.



The Mendip Hills National Landscape applied for a grant for help towards some of their new Young Ranger's kit. With a very distinctive badge on their bright orange jackets they are a very good advert for the Mendip Society.

**The Mendip Society
Small Grants
Application Form**



The Society has for a long time worked in partnership with the **Somerset Earth Science Centre** on various projects, especially in the running of the **Mendip Rocks** (See page 15) We are happy to once again facilitate the printing of the 2025 programme leaflets and with publicity in various outlets in the run up to, and during, the month of October

BATS WITHOUT BORDERS

Amanda Boyd, an individual bat worker, educationalist and conservationist received a grant to purchase five Magenta Bat5 – Digital Bat Detectors to use when leading groups of adults and young people on bat walks.



To be able to actually hear the sound of the bats flying around you in the dusk makes all the difference when studying, learning and remembering about the wildlife of our countryside.

Our Small Grants Form goes online.

As I hope you can tell from these examples, our Small Grants Scheme is active and doing great work. Through it, farmers, landowners, schools, youth clubs, charities, community groups and others, can get financial support for a wide range of schemes and activities that benefit Mendip in some way.

Over the years many good causes have been supported, and thousands of pounds have been put to good use on your behalf. Each application is judged on its individual merits by our small grants officer and the committee who discuss and approve – or sometimes reject applications

In the past, applications have been made via a paper form and an exchange of information between the small grants officer and the applicant. This has sometimes led to important details being omitted and confusion, leading to lengthy, e-mail exchanges and subsequent delays in processing applications.

Technology has now come to the rescue... We are now able to use an online form, on the society's website. Applicants can click a link or scan a QR code (see right) to be taken to a questionnaire that leads them through the process and prompts them to complete all the vital parts to ensure our small grants officer gets all the vital information delivered in one go. Better still, a record of each application is recorded on a spreadsheet, so that we can keep accurate records of every grant made. We are confident that this system will lead to much less work for our small grants officer, and a general streamlining of the whole process.

We welcome all applications, but from now on we are asking for them to be digital. Please spread the word.



Sixty years on - what are YOUR memories of our society?

I have been a member of the Mendip Society for a little over a decade, in which time I have made new friends, developed new interests and learnt a lot about the nature, history and geology of the area I grew up, and still live in. I have been to events, visits, walks, talks, film shows and more. I have discovered, explored and generally immersed myself in the hills to a degree that I never realised was possible, and still have much to see, learn and share. On this page I have spread out just a fraction of the pictures I have taken, plus a few that other people have sent in to the newsletter since I got involved in its production. And I am just one of several hundred current society members. I feel sure that between us all, we have thousands of memories to share.

And so, dear reader, I am appealing to you all, to share YOUR memories - or those of your parents in some cases, so that we can celebrate our diamond anniversary in print and possibly online as well, as a permanent record of our first 60 years.

My thanks to those of you who responded to the appeal in a recent Mendip Times, but we want more... MUCH more, in writing and pictures. Over to you, please share generously and give something back to the society that has given you so much.

Please send your memories to:

themendipsociety.photos@gmail.com

Cheers, Mike.



We want YOUR Mendip Memories

2025 marks 60 years of the Mendip Society. Originally named "The Mendip Preservation Society" we were officially founded on May 15th 1965.

To mark the occasion we are inviting current and past members (or their descendants) to share memories of time spent with the society, on or near Mendip, over the last 60 years, for eventual publication as a permanent record of the organisation and its members. Recollections of walks, talks, events and any of our wide range of activities, in written form, better still, with photographs - all welcome.

We want to ensure that as many people as possible get immortalised in print as a part of the society's history. **YOUR** memories are an important part of our story.



Mendip Champion Species with Nathan Orr.

Twelve people gathered at Mendip Activity Centre to hear Nathan Orr from the Mendip Hills National Landscape team talk about "Mendip Champion Species".

These are plants and animals which are important because they are under threat and/or are indicative of the health of an ecosystem. They are: adder, black oil beetle, dormouse, Cheddar pink, small pearl bordered fritillary butterfly, greater horseshoe bat, skylark and water vole. Nathan told us about them and described the threat which they face from habitat loss and diminished genetic diversity resulting from the isolation of shrinking populations. He then outlined the efforts being made to reverse this. He mentioned the flailing of hedges, grass monoculture and silage production as modern farming practices which have been particularly destructive to wildlife.

On the subsequent walk we saw evidence of ancient coppicing, rare calaminarian grassland (areas contaminated with heavy metals from mining), and artificial hibernaculums (or is it hibernacula?) constructed by his team for the study of adder hibernation. We learnt how to distinguish the stems of grasses etc. using this rhyme - *"sedges have edges, rushes are round, grasses are hollow, up from the ground"*.

We are most grateful to Nathan for sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with us.

Peter Janes.



Highlighting the efforts being made to care for our Champion Species.

Photo: Mary Heffernan



Nathan showing members the finer points of how to make a nest for adders.

Photo: Roger Harvey

Slader's leigh's season of falling trees and gates

The late spring/early summer in the meadow was rather one of falling chaos, with the last strong storm of Spring bringing down a huge ash tree from the far bank of our eastern boundary, Muddy Lane – exactly on top of the huge fallen oak of a few years ago. Not only that but it also brought with it two other giants falling only feet away as well. Some serious clearing had to be done, but one good outcome was that our volunteer helpers were able to take away some lovely logs to dry for next winter!



Work continued over several weeks, the area is now restoring its vegetation cover well. In April Nick Raymond, our volunteer who keeps a close eye on the reserve, sent us a photo (below left) of the top gate. We knew that the right hand gate post was rotten and needed replacing – but it was still standing!



What had happened was the bottom hinge (right), which should have been facing upwards had fallen out completely. We suspect that it may have been the result of cyclists lifting their bikes, and themselves, over the gate for speed, instead of going through the side 'kissing gate' (we have sometimes witnessed it). Nick had propped it up again but it had to be fixed as a matter of urgency. We were very fortunate that Julian Butter, also a frequent volunteer, had found a post in his shed stored from a few years ago that he thought he would never use, and so donated it to us for this urgent task.



So on 30th April the pole was taken down the lane in a trailer and three 'strong' volunteers went to work. Getting the post out was the first major job, it being set in concrete with very big stones cemented in.



As they were digging a walker, not known to them, stopped to look. "That's hard work" he said – "can I help you?" – and took up the crowbar.

Finally all was ready for the Post Fast to hold all in place making sure everything was upright of course.



Words and Pictures - Judith Tranter



The walker wields the crowbar.



Patience is needed to lift large rocks from a deep hole.



In goes the replacement post.



An absolute essential – posts must be upright or they are no use at all!



Post-Fast is poured into the hole.



...Followed by water.



the new gate is hung. Job Done!

Tania's Wood - A place with many trees, some ditches and a bank – but no deer.

In our spring newsletter there was much to do with hedging and the resulting clearance of the discarded brash - and also many mentions of "the bank". A very common or garden name for a particular piece of rising ground, which we use all the time in many situations. But - in the case of Tania's Wood it has only one very important use, of which you may not be aware.



David starts onward-stripping, the spring flowers grew beautifully in the part done in February, and Beth forks brash away.



Beth, David and John tackle the head high scrub wilderness including clearance of a buried culvert with a drainage pipe.

The western boundary of our Reserve is one section of the original boundary of Ubley Deer Park, which is documented in historical records, including deeds and archaeological surveys, highlighting its role in the landscape of the area. Ubley Deer Park was recorded in 1280 as a private deer park owned and operated by Richard de Aumaril; he was allowed to take 5 bucks from Mendip to replace 5 that had escaped from his park

Deer parks had substantial boundaries designed to allow deer to enter but not exit the park. The boundaries – known as 'pales' – were normally made up of a bank (often topped by a fence, hedge or wall) and interior ditch (and occasionally an outer ditch as well). In Tania's Wood, we have one of the best-known examples still in existence in the Southwest, ours being topped by the hedges we are still laying after all this time, and an outer and an inner ditch as well.

Many of the deer park "banks" have disappeared with farmers using the material for other things, but we will endeavour to keep ours intact by keeping it clear of trees, brambles, nettles etc., which gradually crumble it away.

After the hedging this March, for which the bank was cleared half its length, our newly qualified strimmers were in action again in April, with a great days' work clearing the rest of it. The weather this year has accelerated the growth, and we know that it will all have to be done again next year. But absolutely everything we have cleared will be popped into the fiery kiln and become part of the valuable compost maker – bio-char.

Hey Ho – the joys of a living wood- and a deer bank!

If you would like to "see – and make" [bio-char] for yourself on Saturday 11th October, please book a place with me. See our "What's on" on page 16 for details.

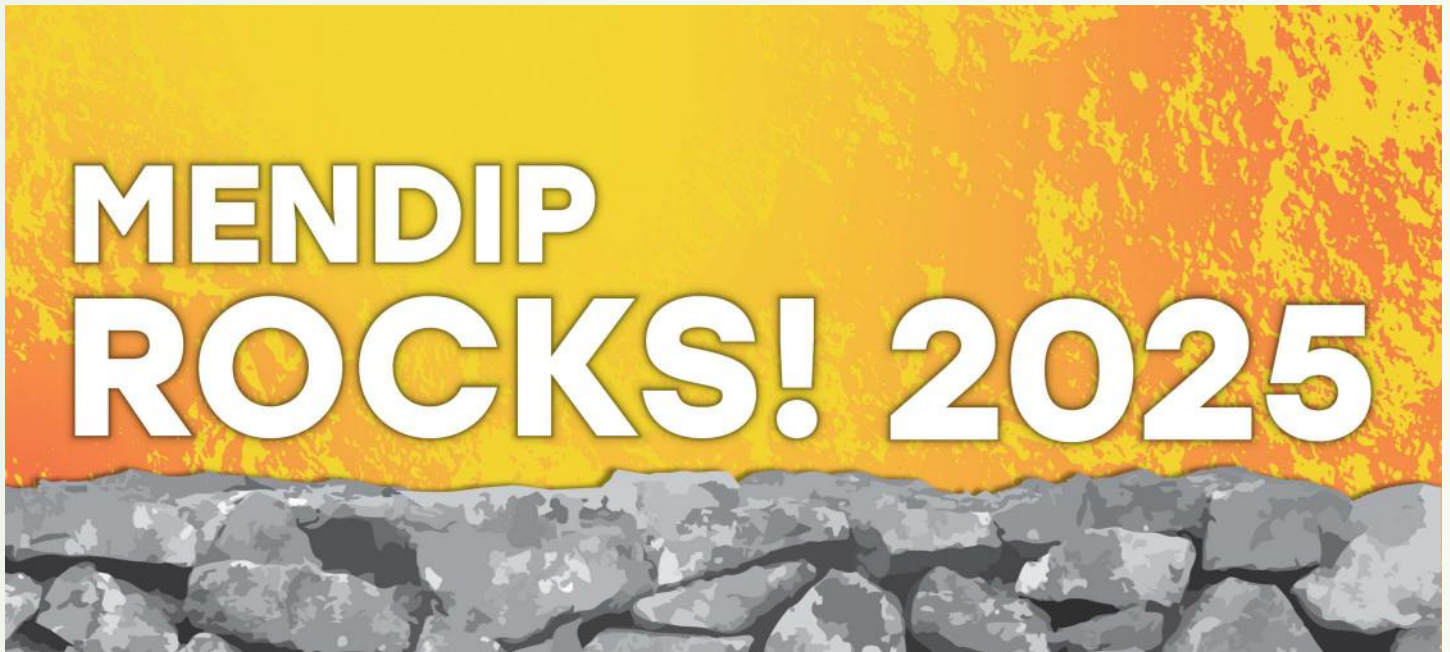
To read more about Tania's Wood, go to this page on our website.

<https://www.themendipsociety.org.uk/nature-reserves>



*Finished - to the the end of the bank, Beth, Sheena, Richard, David and Elaine.
All pictures, Judith Tranter.*

Mendip Rocks



"Once again, The Mendip society is proud to support this festival. As we go to press, full details of a doubtless packed itinerary are still being finalised, but rest assured, we will be posting more details about the whole, month-long event on our website and social media feeds in due course. Meanwhile, here is the official press release to whet your appetite...

Unearth the secrets of the Mendip Hills at the thrilling Mendip Rocks! Festival – a celebration of the incredible geology that defines our stunning landscape!

Join us for a jam-packed programme of events that bring the story of the rocks beneath our feet to life. Throughout the month of October discover how the geology of the Mendips shaped ancient landscapes, human history, and the rich wildlife that still thrives here today.

From our captivating Mary Anning Exhibition and museum open day on 26th October to expert-led geo walks, inspiring geology talks, and exclusive tours of operational quarries, there's something to spark everyone's curiosity.

Whether you're a budding young fossil hunter or a seasoned rock enthusiast – come and explore, learn, and be inspired. Mendip Rocks! is where geology comes alive!"

All events published on the centre's website with link to Eventbrite for tickets and shared to Mendip Hills National Landscape and Mendip Society's websites and The Mendip Society social media feeds.

www.earthsciencecentre.org.uk <https://mendiphills-nl.org.uk/news/mendiprocks> www.themendipsociety.org.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/themendipsociety> https://www.instagram.com/mendip_society



*Somerset Earth Science Centre Museum Open Day
(Photos supplied)*



*Wells Building Stone Trail
(Photo supplied)*

Walks, talks and events, organised by The Mendip Society

Saturday 19th July 2025 - 2:00 pm. A walk over Churchill Green and Windmill Hill. Meet in Church Lane, Churchill (by Churchill School.) BS25 5QW. An Easy walk of approximately three miles with modest ascent (Easy).

NGR: ST 437 600. What 3 Words ref: ///polices.refers.squeezed

Contact, Richard Ivens on: **01275 852786**



Friday August 1st. Gully Cave Dig Visit. Our annual visit to Gully Cave to hear about the latest finds and discoveries. Professor Danielle Schreve will be in Ebbor Gorge with her students for their annual two weeks at the cave site.

Meet at 10am in the Ebbor Gorge car park. Duration around two hours. **NB. Limited to 12 places. Booking essential.**

NGR: ST 520 484. What three words ref: ///postings.intend.atomic

Contact Judith on: **01275 874284** or E-mail: **Judith.tranter1@btinternet.com** to enquire or reserve a place.

Please be aware that the route from the car park to Gully Cave includes steep, rough steps.



Wednesday August 20th. Mendip Hospital Cemetery Visit. Meet at 11am by the entrance to the Bishop's Palace, Wells. The one with the swan bell and rampart over the moat, for a short walk (around 2.5 miles) to the Mendip Hospital Cemetery. We will be met by Clare, the Vice Chair for our guided visit. This building is a rare survival of a landscaped Victorian Asylum Cemetery, recently listed Grade 2 by Historic England, is located in a stunningly beautiful setting, abundant with wildflowers, butterflies and birdsong. Please feel free to bring a picnic and return at your leisure.

NGR: ST 551 457. What three words ref: ///class.guides.disbelief

Contact. Jo Bradshaw on: 07932 728617 (text only please) or E-Mail: **walks@themendipsociety.org.uk**



Saturday September 6th. Somerset V Hitler: A WW2 walk on Blackdown. A moderate level walk of around six miles in total (3+ hours duration). with some uphill sections and potentially rough, wet ground to cover. Suitable clothing and footwear essential – Starting from The Charterhouse Centre (Car park) At 2pm. Ending at St Hugh's Church where teas and a welcome toilet facility will be available. (Small donation appreciated). Limited to 20 places. **Booking essential.**

NGR: ST 501 557. What three words ref: ///gong.shaky.facelift. £2 for non-members*.

Contact Mike Harvey on: **07811 478748** (text only please) or E-Mail: **themendipsociety.photos@gmail.com**



Saturday October 4th. Autumn East Mendip Walk. Meet in recreation ground car park, Stoke St Michael BA3 5JL. at 10.00am. Duration 3.5 to 4hrs. 6.1miles (Moderate to hard)

A Circular Walk based around Stoke St Michael, passing Cranmore Tower, the highest point of the East Mendips and an impressive Beech Wood. Good views. Ascents and Descents are gentle. Many of the stiles are wooden or stone.

NGR: ST 660 471. What three words ref: ///buffoon.rhino.saga £2 for non-members*.

Contact Ian Dagger on: **07835 236191** (text only please) or E-Mail: **laddie05@outlook.com** to enquire or book a place.



Saturday October 11th. Bio-Char making day in Tania's Wood. We have arranged the hire of a specialized kiln and its owner to, once again make bio-char out of the mountains of brash in the wood, Places are limited to ten, meet at 9.30am to start at 10am. £10 for non-members*. **Booking essential.**

Contact Judith on: **01275 874284** or E-mail: **Judith.tranter1@btinternet.com** to enquire or reserve a place.



Thursday 23rd October. A visit to Ebbor Grove Farm - A walk and talk. Meet Neil, Lottie and the beautiful herd of Devon Reds. This regenerative farm sits just above Ebbor Gorge National Nature Reserve on the southern edge of the Mendip Plateau. Most of the farm is at about 250 metres above sea level with fantastic views across the Somerset levels to Glastonbury Tor, the Bristol Channel, the Quantocks and even Exmoor on a clear day.

Contact. Jo Bradshaw on: 07932 728617 (text only please) or E-Mail: **walks@themendipsociety.org.uk**

***NB.** Unless otherwise stated, events are free to members. Joining the society at this time of year is especially good value as your membership will run through until the end of 2026. This effectively offers new members an additional six months of membership, free!

Please note that The Mendip Society often organises other walks and events between newsletters that cannot, for obvious reasons, be included here. For the latest information and to be made aware of any late changes please visit **www.themendipsociety.org.uk/walks-and-events**

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Would members please ensure they bring a valid membership card to all events.

Organisers will, in future, check membership before starting events in order to be fair to all.

Those who fail to show a valid membership card will be treated, and charged, as non-members.

Events organised by others

July 19th. 12:00 - 18:00 Winscombe community festival of Arts and Sustainability.

In and around, Winscombe Community Centre and Green.

An exciting and vibrant range of activities and performances, celebrating the locale, and forming and strengthening inter-generational relationships, through song, visual arts, theatre and food. Plus workshops in giant puppet making, masks, carnival costume and decor.

Nb. The Mendip society will be at this festival, banners flying. Do drop by and say hi.



August 16th. 11am - 3:30pm. Mary Anning Exhibition Open Day.

To mark the arrival of the Mary Anning statue at the Somerset Earth Science Centre. Find out more about palaeontologist, Mary Anning and see everything the Somerset, Earth Science Centre offers. (see right)



September 13-14th. Chew Valley Nature Photography Festival 2025.

St Andrew's Church Chew Magna. Celebrating the bio-diversity of a beautiful locality in North East Somerset. A competition, open to all, (Extended closing date for entries is now July 6th), plus exhibitions by local photographers. (see below)



September 24th. Mendip Ploughing Society's 167th Ploughing Match.

On land adjoining Franklyn's Farm, Chewton Mendip. BS3 4SQ (Off the B3139 at Emborough. Signposts will be put out on the day). This iconic Mendip event is extremely popular with local farmers, Mendipers and the general public, There are no car parking charges and entry is free.

Through October. Mendip Rocks, Festival of Geology.

Unearth the secrets of the Mendip Hills at the thrilling Mendip Rocks! Festival – a celebration of the incredible geology that defines our stunning landscape! Whether you're a budding young fossil hunter or a seasoned rock enthusiast – come and explore, learn, and be inspired. Mendip Rocks! is where geology comes alive!

(See article on page 15 for more details.)

Chew Valley Nature Photography Festival 2025

13-14 September





Showing the wonderful biodiversity of this beautiful area through your photographs.

Helping to connect us to nature and the organisations working for a thriving local environment.

Following the success of last year's competition and festival we have simplified the rules and introduced more options for children.

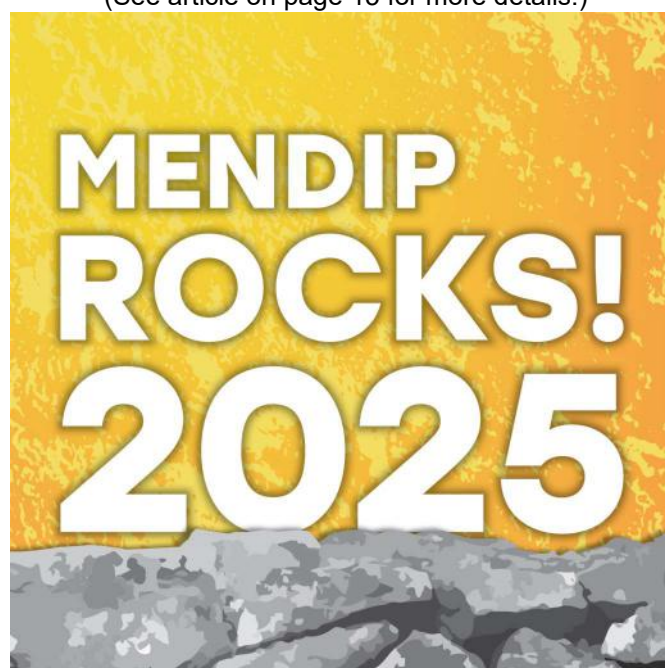
If you would like to enter, full details can be found at:
<https://chewvalleynpf.wordpress.com/full-competition-entry-rules/>

Now is the time to put your camera to work for a chance that your photograph will be chosen for the 2026 Chew Valley Nature Photography Calendar.

The (extended) deadline for entries is now 6th July 2025.

The Festival takes place at St Andrew's Church, Chew Magna.

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram or at: chewvalleynpf.wordpress.com to find out more.



Planning Matters...

Now, there is a simple two-word statement that can be read in two entirely different ways... Take your pick. Am I introducing an article all about planning – or am I stressing just how important planning is? Well both actually. I guess how you first read the headline might be a little revealing, but my purpose here is to draw your attention to everything about planning on Mendip...

Why, I hear you ask. The Mendip Society runs Nature Reserves, Walks, Talks and Social events. Well yes it does – but it does more besides. As you will be aware, if you know about the history of the society, it was originally formed to press for the Mendip area to become an AONB, and to this day, a clause in our constitution reads as follows:

“The purpose of the Society is the conservation and enhancement of Mendip and its surroundings paying due regard to it being a living, working, and recreational environment.

In pursuance of this the Society will:

3 (f) Ensure that all developments are of an improving and harmonious nature.”

So, you see, apart from all the social and educational things we try to do, the Mendip Society has a duty to pay attention to new developments, and to speak up on behalf of the hills, so to speak, in order to champion all that is best about the area – and, if necessary, to defend it against changes that are not in its best interests. This does not of course mean that we oppose every planning application or proposal for change that comes along. Throughout its history, Mendip has been shaped by its industrial uses. From farming and mining to quarrying, tourism, water harvesting, power generation, defence and much, much more. We even have an appointed planning officer, but it is a tall order to expect one individual to trawl through every planning application, in every council, just to hopefully spot the occasional cause for concern. So, this is where you can help... All planning authorities have web pages these days that can be accessed by anyone who has an interest. And every planning application is listed, in some detail, available for scrutiny and comment. The exact address will vary, but the address should look something like this one for North Somerset:

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planning-applications

In an ideal world, we would bring every application that we felt society members might want to be aware of to your notice via the website and this newsletter, but we do need your help. Please do check in on your local planning authority and flag up anything that you feel members should be aware of - and not just things you want to protest about, adding positive comments or letters of support is an important part of the process too. As an example, below is an artist's impression of the proposed development in Burrington Coombe. To date there have been 24 comments made - fourteen objecting, four supporting and six neutral observations. All of these will be taken into account by the authorities, so YOUR opinion really does matter. So go on, visit your local planning authority website, and make your voice heard.



Ian Dagger on leading walks.

If you have a favourite walk why not share it with us by volunteering to lead a walk for the walks programme?

Here is a check list of things I do when leading a walk.

Pre-Walk

- Walk the route before the actual walk.
- Give a fair description of the walk, length, terrain, possible hazards, rough time to complete and time to meet.
- Give as precise a meeting point as possible, Grid reference, What3Words and Post Code.
- Give contact details so people can raise any queries,

On the day

- Get to the start point in a good time.
- Introduce yourself to participants as they arrive.
- Assemble everyone and do introductions.
- Brief description of the walk highlighting anything like muddy sections, steep climbs, going through fields with livestock, and stiles that could be problematic for dogs or their owners,
- Reminder of the time they are likely to be walking and the weather they might encounter.
- If someone is not attired appropriately, or in your assessment might struggle with the walk, have a quiet and subtle word with them. You could be doing them and yourself a big favour by suggesting they might like to drop out of that walk on that day.

On the walk

- Keep everybody together as one group. The pace for the group is the pace of the slowest member.
- Encourage chatting, share information about what you are seeing. Check how people are.
- Carry a charged mobile phone, a simple basic first aid kit and if in winter a torch, spare food and a map.
- Keep an eye out for anyone who appears to be struggling.
- Enjoy the walk!



...And Peter Janes, tackling an awkward subject .



Death and Taxes

It is said that these are the only certainties, and while there is no avoiding the former there are things that one can do to make sure one's worldly wealth goes where you want it to when you die, and to reduce the Chancellor's take.

The first essential is to make a valid Will and nominate a capable and willing person as executor. This is a demanding job so to make things easier for them, leave a list of your assets (property, bank accounts etc.) and liabilities where they can find it. If they are a close family member consider having a joint bank account as this will enable them to pay bills without drawing on their own resources.

Inheritance tax is complicated but broadly the first £325k of the estate is free of tax while the remainder is taxed at 40%. However, amounts left to a registered charity are free of tax and if 10% or more of the estate is left to one or more charities the residue is taxed at 36%. Including charities in your Will also means that you will continue to support causes that are important to you now. More detailed information about inheritance tax is available from HMRC's website

<https://www.gov.uk/donating-to-charity/leaving-gifts-to-charity-in-your-will>.

Finally, don't take my word for it, talk to a solicitor and / or tax adviser.

Peter.

A Presidents' View.

This year seems to be flying by, more so than normal. Is this a sign that things are busy within the Society or is it a sign that we are all getting older no matter what stage of the 'ladder of life' we are at.

For the Society, nothing stands still and with some new members to the management committee, come new ideas. Ideas on how we can improve our profile, ideas on new activities that will attract new members are just a couple. These combined with our flagship newsletter is getting the word out that this is a Society that people would want to belong to.

I recently went on a tour of the new Hinkley Point power station with Sue and Peter Gearing. My thoughts on this project have up until now been neither for or against it. One thing is for sure it's happening and how it's being coordinated I have no idea, so this left me a the 'blank sheet of paper' that must be the PR departments dream.

One thing that I was heartened to hear was that the tsunami of 1607, previously known as the great flood, was being taken seriously. It didn't fill me with joy that the event might happen again, but it did reassure me that sea defences to combat such a surge were being put in place. Where that would leave the rest of us, I don't know! It might well be an interest visit for the Society and no cost was involve. How often can that be said these days?



As always, the pages of this newsletter will be filled with fact and information. Such a publication takes some putting together and no doubt Mike would appreciate membership input instead of having to rely on the usual contributions... Try him.

Thank you to everyone who keep the Society wheels turning and thank you to all members for your support. I'll leave you to enjoy the rest of our summer and with it some more fine weather, I hope.

Finally, I'm putting my money where my mouth is with a picture quiz. It not a big money prize, but there's a bottle of my Emily Elizabeth's Apple Juice for the first correct answer drawn from the hat identifying the location of this photo.

My kindest regards

THE MENDIP SOCIETY Registered Charity Number 262867 www.themendipsociety.org.uk

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