

# Mendip



## From the Chair

The Mendip Societies AGM will soon be upon us where I will give my full report including the progress on the Committee restructure.

For this Newsletter report I would like to thank several people firstly Pat Fraser, Pat initially stepped in to help with the Minutes taking to ease the pressure off Judith, Pat sadly stood down from that role in November due to family commitments, I would personally like to thank Pat for her time, and patience, and wish her well for the future.

Richard Frost also stood down from the Committee at the end of December; Richard has held several roles on the Committee including being the Chairman.

Peter Janes has kindly taken on the role of Secretary, so he is now the 1st point of contact for The Mendip Society.

The latest talks have been very well supported with a few more booked in over the next month or so. Now that we hopefully see the end to yet another wet and grey winter it's time to get out and about and meet up on several walks we have planned, they are of different lengths to suit people's fitness ability.

I look forward to seeing you all at the AGM

Tina



## And from the Editor

When I started putting this edition together we appeared to have so little planned that I wondered how I was going to fill the pages - beyond, of course, the AGM pull-out section which takes up the four middle pages. However, as the first signs of spring make an appearance and the days begin to get longer, so the regular events begin to sprout again. So we have reports on the wassailing, our regular round-up about the society's two nature reserves, two short pieces, with pictures, on how one of our small grants went towards restoring a much loved village feature in Pensford, a follow-up on the Bio-char production last year and something about the wide range of fungi, spotted on our walk with Nathan Orr last year.



As 2025 marks our 60th anniversary as a society I have also trawled back through the archives - as far as I can, to reflect on what has changed over time - and what has not!

It's also great to see some new names on the "What's on" listings. With several of the society's stalwarts stepping back and taking a well-earned rest we are desperate for new, dare I say, younger members to step up and do a bit more of the organising, so it is great to be able to welcome Liz and Ian Dagger as walk and talk organisers, plus knowing there are others willing to get stuck in shortly. Don't let me give the impression that we now have plenty of hands making light work however. We can always use more helpers, organisers and leaders. The more people we have getting involved, the more active and attractive our society becomes to others and the bigger and stronger we all become. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

Cheers, Mike.

[themendipsociety.photos@gmail.com](mailto:themendipsociety.photos@gmail.com)

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### Cover Photo. - by Estelle Sandford.

The entrance to the Bishop's Place Wells. A phone camera shot, and a stunning picture. Thanks Estelle - Great image!



## It's our 60th Birthday!

**Yes, it's true**, the Mendip Society is 60 this year! To be strictly accurate "The Mendip Preservation Society" was formed in 1965, but as it was this organisation that agreed to change its name to the Mendip Society in 1970 – we can justifiably make the case that 2025 is our 60th birthday.

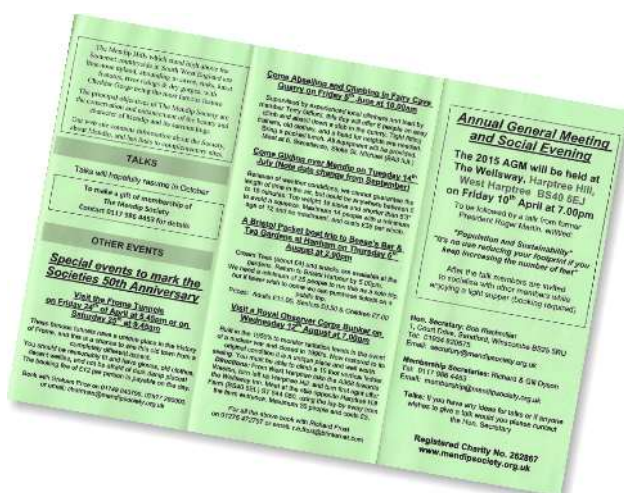
A potted history pulled from our archives tells us that on 28th February 1965, a meeting was held in Priddy with the objective of setting up a steering committee. This was followed by an inaugural general meeting on 15th of May, held in Wells Museum, which formally elected a committee, agreed the first constitution and set a subscription for membership – at 2/6d! (12.5 pence to our younger readers).

Membership grew quickly over the next few years, over 200 within the first year, 466 by the AGM in 1967 – plus another 120 due to amalgamating with the West Mendip Rural Preservation Society... A total membership of almost 600 in just over two years!

The Mendip Society was the first to propose that the Mendip Hills should become an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now known as a National Landscape), together with the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation. This is obviously something to be proud of, and a core aim of our society remains to have much more of Mendip, beyond the current official boundary, included in the protected National Landscape area.

Ten years ago, we (naturally) made a big fuss about turning 50 and according to the cover of newsletter 143 were. *"Looking forward to the next 50 years"*. So, a decade into our second half century, what has changed – and what remains the same?

Back then we had a range of "special" anniversary activities and events planned. A visit to the Frome Tunnels, Abseiling in Fairy Quarry, Gliding over Mendip, a boat trip at Hanham and a visit to a restored Observer Corps Bunker – something for everyone in fact. Two inescapable facts accompany this list... Firstly, that the names organising all these activities are pretty much the same names that still try to lay on walks and trips today – and secondly that the average cost for members or others to participate back then was around £12 a head! With inflation that is around £18 today. *(I'll just leave that thought with you all...Ed)*



And on the "What remains the same" front? On page 15 of the newsletter ten years ago, was a list of all the vacancies for people to get involved and help run the society... Newsletter editor, Talks organisers, Publicity assistants, Programme coordinator and Planning officers were all listed as required. Today the list maybe slightly different, but the problem is still a real one – we need more of our members to step up and lend a hand!

But let's not end on a negative note. This is also the tenth anniversary of Tania's Wood becoming an official Mendip Society Nature Reserve. We have substantial funds with which to do good for Mendip and its inhabitants and we are still a loud voice in support of the protection and preservation of Mendip's unique flora, fauna, history and geology. Being a part of all this should give all our members plenty to be proud of. We have an important role to play still, and a responsibility to all those who went before to ensure that our influence in keeping Mendip special endures for the future.



## Bio-char follow up, and a notice to all members

### Bio-Char – and my fruit bushes -

In the summer last year, we had an experimental bio-char day in Tania's Wood, with all the equipment and know-how supplied by Mike Reed of Chew Magna. When everything had gone completely cold, he came and fetched the huge vat the fire had been in and the large barrels of cold bio-char. We had transferred the contents of one of the barrel loads into large agricultural bags and put them in a safe place in the wood. The idea was to conduct an experiment to find out if bio-char really was as useful as a soil improver / enhancer as it was declared to be in and on all the eco-websites and magazines...



At the AGM last April I was kindly presented with a garden gift voucher for a goodly sum of money- which this month I have used to make a fruit patch with eight very splendid bushes –three different raspberries, black, red and white currants, and two different blueberries - my favourite berry. Together with a barrow load of our own compost-bin 'stuff' I have mixed shovelfuls of the bio-char, with extra amounts of the latter for under the blueberries as these do not like our limestoney soil type at all.

Now I wait to see how they thrive on my own bit of “experimental” bio-char improved garden. By the way – considering how much brash was created on the two hedging days, plans are already afoot for a second Tania's Wood bio-char day this year – watch this space. – Judith Tranter

### The Mendip Society Constitution.



The constitution is an important document as it defines what our aims are and how we go about achieving them. Like all such legal paperwork, it is necessary to review, amend and update the wording from time to time. Changes must then be approved at an AGM or EGM. At this year's AGM you will be asked to approve a few small changes, so to allow you to read and understand them before the vote we are putting a copy online that all members are invited to review. the vast majority of the wording is long established and, to say the least - dull! However, the changes are highlighted, so unless you really want to read it all, you can just scan the new bits rather than study the whole document. This QR code will take you straight to it, or visit our website and follow the link.





## Wassail! Words and pictures - Judith Tranter.

**Enacting** the traditional St. George and the Dragon on Saturday 1st February were members of the audience, plucked from their seats to be part of the Mummers play, including a young lad from Pensford who was unfazed by it all. Earlier The Barley Rye group had sung chants and exhortations round the chosen tree in the orchard of Church Farm, Burrington.



*Gathered around the chosen tree for the chants and ceremony .*

*Photo: Judith Tranter*



*Master of Ceremonies, Les Davies MBE*

*Photo: Judith Tranter*

Apple Queen Sophie, attended by her three young hand maidens had poured cider round the tree roots to encourage them to a good harvest next year.

Members of The Mendip Society, Villagers, neighbours and friends had processed from the village hall, led by Master of Ceremonies, Les Davies MBE, President of the Mendip Society, to the pipe music of Peter Janes.

With all bad spirits chased away everyone repaired to the hall for the fine feast awaiting together with hot mulled cider (pure apple juice for the youngsters it must be said).

Another Wassail, all traditions preserved and another year's harvest safe.



*Our Apple Queen and her three hand maidens.*

*Photo: Judith Tranter*



*Mummers, and audience "volunteers" - St George enters right.*

*Photo: Judith Tranter*



## St Thomas à Becket, Clock restoration.

**Following** a successful Society Grant, I am happy to report that the Tower Friends of St Thomas à Becket at Pensford were able to ensure that the much needed repairs and maintenance of the clock and surrounding stonework took place. This involved specialist attention to the mechanism of this important local structure within a conservation area. I am pleased to say that this much valued feature is restored and working as its maker envisaged.

Richard Frost



*The sad state of the clock face before restoration.*



*...and the restored face back where it belongs.*

On Saturday 9th November 2024 we, and quite a few others gathered in the Old School Room on the bridge in Pensford for coffee and cake and to hear the newly repaired and renovated Church clock strike the eleventh hour. We had all been invited, by Jane Flower, a Society member and contact for The Friends of St. Thomas a Becket Church, to be there so that The Friends could say 'thank you' for the financial help they had been given to complete the restoration of the Tower and its clock. The Mendip society was represented by Les Davies and Sue Gearing, who previously had 'opened' the newly refurbished Old School Room; they were joined by Richard Frost, Peter and Mary Janes and David and Judith Tranter.

In spite of the slightly inclement weather we were shepherded outside for a group photo, for the striking of the said clock. The Society has been invited for a group visit in the early summer, so 'watch this space'.

Judith Tranter



*A group photo while waiting for the eleventh hour to be struck.*

*Photo: Ros Anstey.*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY APRIL 12<sup>th</sup> 2025

### To be held at Ubley Parish Hall, The Street, Ubley. BS40 6PJ. 10.30am start

#### AGENDA – Welcome by Les Davies MBE, the Mendip Society President

1. Minutes of the previous meeting on April 27th 2024. – Will be available at the meeting.
2. The Chairman's Report and The Annual Report – To be read out at the meeting.
3. Summary Report of the accounts for 2024. Copies of the income and expenditure account 2024 will be available to members at the meeting, or, on request from the Treasurer otherwise.
4. Other Relevant Reports – Membership, The website, Rights of Way, Walks & Talks, Visits, and for the two Society Reserves at Slader's Leigh and Tania's Wood. Any questions and points of information on these.
5. Election of Officers –, including any new nominations: the President takes the Chair.
  - a. Election of Prime Officers – The Chairperson and Treasurer are both willing to stand again.
  - b. Peter Janes, who is currently acting Secretary has agreed, to take on this important role officially.
  - c. The other members of the Management Committee, Michael Rolfe and Mike Harvey are both willing to stand again. Any new nominations for the committee must be made in writing and given or sent to the Society before the meeting. **secretary@themendipsociety.org.uk**
6. Proposed amendments to the constitution of the society. All members have had the opportunity to review these changes so a simple majority vote by those attending the AGM will be taken to pass the amendments.
7. A.O.B. from the Chair or from the floor. The date of the Annual General Meeting 2026
8. TEA AND CAKE followed by our speaker. Lucy Stockton on the Farming in Protected Landscapes initiative.

#### 3: Financial Report for the year ending December 31<sup>st</sup> 2024

A brief overview of the Income and Expenditure Account and for the year ended 31st December 2024

The Mendip Society made a loss of £2,646.82 this was made up of a trading profit of £2,077.18 and payments from the heritage fund totalling £4,724 (2023 £3,000)

The income of the society in 2024 excluding the legacy in 2023 was similar to those of that year.

The outgoings for 2024 were lower than those in 2023 and with some variation in types of expense i.e.

- Publicity is still low, due lack of a dedicated publicity officer, although some work is being carried out by others on the committee.
- Increase in website costs because of the necessity of rebuilding it on a new platform
- News letter postage cost have increased due to increased postage charges by Royal Mail
- The decrease in Talks/Events/Course costs, was due to the decrease in activities organised during the year.
- The Small Grants made were higher than in 2023, due to the society receiving more grant requests.
- Management and Administration costs were lower than in 2023 as there were no one-off costs

The Societies Accounts show it to be in a good position.

Copies of the accounts will be available at the meeting or on application to the Treasurer after the date of the AGM

*Marilyn Cattell – Treasurer*

#### 4: Membership Report for 2024 - 2025

As of 5th February membership stands at 288 (counting joint memberships as one). The continuing decline in numbers is illustrated here and is caused largely by the demographics of our membership and the difficulty in attracting new members.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2023	2024	2025
382	366	390	385	366	351	308	298	288

Thank you to everyone who has renewed promptly – it really does make life easier for us, and a special thank you to those who have added a donation to their subscription. If there is a reminder slip with this newsletter please renew as soon as possible as your membership will otherwise expire at the end of March. If you have decided not to renew please let the Membership Secretary know so we do not keep pestering you. If you have a standing order please ensure that it is for the correct sum: £20 <60 yrs, £17 60+ yrs, £27 joint / family.

Approximately 66% of members have signed up for Gift Aid which brings a very useful additional income to the Society at no cost to the individual. If you have signed but have ceased to be a UK tax payer, please cancel the Gift Aid mandate by letting the Membership Secretary know.

Cont. ►





## Acting Secretary's Report

Firstly, a big vote of thanks to Richard Frost who has stood down from the Committee after several years of valuable service, including a spell as Chairman. Of late Richard has been managing the Walks and Talks programme and the Small Grants scheme. At the start of the year Mike Harvey joined the Committee bringing enthusiasm and a wealth of expertise in graphic design and on-line matters.

The Committee now comprises: Tina Bath – Chair, Marilyn Cattell – Treasurer, Peter Janes – Acting Secretary and Membership Secretary, Mike Harvey – newsletter / website / social media, Mike Rolfe – Planning. Judith Tranter has returned to help as a co-opted member – Nature Reserves and Small Grants.

It may be seen that several people are doubling up on roles, and that there is no-one to organise the Walks / Talks programme. This is the reason for the dearth of events (particularly walks) of late. We considered taking on a paid assistant to ease the administrative load but despite interviewing some very capable candidates it became clear that this would be beyond our financial means. The problem being that HMRC's rules on direct employment are onerous while employing someone via an agency or company adds greatly to the expense. As a small charity run by volunteers we should be able to fill all committee roles from our membership, so please consider helping out either by joining the Committee or by taking on a limited role as a co-opted member. Contact Tina Bath if you would like to discuss this.

Despite these pressures we have had an active year. Planning matters, events at our nature reserves, and various events have been covered elsewhere in newsletters. Recipients of small grants have included: the Gully Cave dig, Pensford church clock restoration, Mendip Hills Young Rangers and Ubley Youth Club.

*Peter Janes - Membership Secretary*

## The Mendip Society Website: [www.themendipsociety.co.uk](http://www.themendipsociety.co.uk)

Our website has undergone a total rebuild during the last year - though you wouldn't know it at first glance as visually it seems almost identical to the old version. Having been informed that the platform our old site was built on had become obsolete, we had little choice but to rebuild from the ground up - I hope you will all agree that it was a seamless process, with no interruption in service - full credit due to Peter Janes for this.

We also switched webmaster. Peter, who had run the site for several years, asked if I would take it on alongside publishing this newsletter and overseeing the social media feeds. This I was happy to do as it seems a natural fit for all the channels we use to communicate news to our members and the outside world to be controlled as a group. A single voice and public face for our society if you will.

As with all such things, I have ideas and plans for the future, which I hope will improve the experience for all users of our online content. As with the newsletter, a process of evolution not revolution and open to suggestion, contributions and feedback from all our members.

I will just add that we now have two social media feeds, on Facebook and now on Instagram. Either can be found from the main website through links at the bottom of our front page. If you don't already follow them, please give them a go and join in with the online version of your society.

*Mike Harvey - Webmaster*

## Annual Report for The Mendip Society Nature Reserves for 2024/5

Another year of odd weather patterns (not unexpected really), and both reserves seemingly unaffected by this –except for an increase in the growth of vegetation of all kinds in both.

We struggled to keep pathways and bramble patches under control and passable in Tania's wood and the more aggressive species of plants in Slader's Leigh meadow from taking over. One might almost call it "a takeover by the thugs", but there was still a passable show of our best-known and loved flower species out on our Meadow Open Day when we dedicated the new seat to Paul Harley and Dorothy Sage.

The Blagdon Primary "Forest School" years 1 and 2, visiting Tania's wood in April and May were very happy to have mysterious corners and stretches of tall growth to explore, and the top class, leaving that July, had a great final day event there.

We had two important training days in the wood for which the verdant vegetation growth- still standing, or cut and stacked up, was very important. On one, four volunteers did a successful training day in the use of brush cutters, *Cont.* ►



◀... which will stand us in good stead in the future. And we also held our first “biochar making” event, which produced several barrels full of the newest type of eco-friendly compostable, conservation product.

In both reserves we have had our fair share of damage this year from storms with the fiercest winds ever recorded in the UK. Two large ancient trees fell across Muddy Lane, the Eastern boundary of Slader's Leigh, almost exactly on top of the previous one down a couple of years ago. And in Tania's, several branches of the huge fir trees in the Forest School's fire circle broke off. Their composting loo with its tent shelter and the hedge surround were all completely destroyed and blown away everywhere. But it will all be cleared up and made good by the volunteers on our next work day.

We managed to give Slader's Leigh its annual haircut in a September dry period, raking up and also running a small introduction class for scything beginners the next week. The week after that a row of big hazel clumps were coppiced to provide the stakes for the two hedging training days early in 2025 in Tania's wood.

We do need to increase our volunteer base and to provide the training in needed skills, for the increased work there is to do with two reserves which are constantly growing and developing.

Our work days are not too onerous, it's good working with like-minded others, in the fresh air; and there's something about the fresh air of our bit of country-side which makes you feel better at the end of the day (if feeling a bit wearier than normal – which is as it should be of course!)

*Judith Tranter*

## Rights of Way Officers Report 2024

Rights of Way Modification Orders 2024/2025.

We have been consulted by North Somerset and Somerset County Councils on six Modification Orders.

**Churchill Parish** The largest and most complex Order we have handled relating to an extensive area of land to the north of Langford and west of Wrington.

The footpaths in the area have been neglected for many years and are largely obstructed and unusable. It is proposed to upgrade the whole area to provide a useable and convenient rights of way network. This involves the diversion of seven footpaths (AX 14/53, 14/57, 14/59, 14/60, 14/61, 14/66 and 14/67) and the provision of five new footpaths and one new bridleway. Quite a mammoth undertaking which will greatly improve and encourage public access.

Has to be a good idea and one that we fully support.

**Croscombe Parish** Diversion of footpaths SM 5/24 and 5/39. Proposed to divert SM 5/39 (currently a cross-field path) to follow more closely the field boundary and to divert SM 5/24 onto the line that has been used by the public for a number of years. Proposal will make the route easier to follow and avoid possible in-field conflict with farm stock. No objections raised.

**Locking Parish** Part of footpath AX 20/2 crosses land for which consent has been given for residential development. A diversion is proposed to avoid the development land and is no less convenient than the existing line of path. No objections raised.

**Mells Parish** Diversion of footpaths FR 10/4, 10/5 and 10/6. FR 10/4 is currently obstructed as it passes through the buildings of Hollow House. The proposed new route is one already used by the public. FR 10/5 is a cross-field path over land on which the owners wish to expand and enhance their conservation plan for the area. FR 10/6 crosses boggy ground difficult to walk and would be moved onto more solid ground. In each case, the proposals would result in an improved and more convenient route for users. Fully supported.

**Tellisford Parish** Minor and more convenient diversion of part of footpath FR 15/13 avoiding passing through the grounds of Monkspool House, Woolverton. No objection raised.

As usual, no contact with Bath & North East Somerset.

*Dave + Margaret Parker.*

*Rights of Way Officers.*

*Cont. ▶*

◀...

## Activity Report – 2024.

A lot of activity took place last year, with the Committee working hard, and mostly unnoticed. On the Administration front, Mike Harvey hit the ground running with help from two new names. Abigail David and Kate Avery sorting out the paperwork and future role of the Society. There is no end to the many projects and ideas that need to be investigated and thought out to make them work.

A major event in our hills was the birth of The National Landscapes which replaces the work of The A.O.N.B which needed a bit of streamlining. As we work close with them, it is something we do very carefully in order to achieve that we meet our aims and duties in our hills.

Our events ranged from the ever-popular Wassail held at Burrington, which is always well attended to our quiz held at the new venue at the Mendip Activities Centre, which was a success (especially to the winners!). We continue to hold our hedging days, that are always in demand, together with our stone walling courses which are an important part of maintaining that these skills are kept alive and put to work to ensure that this region continues to be unique. These activities are usually held in our own Nature Reserves at both Slader's Leigh and Tania's Wood. A new one was a Bio-char Day overseen by Chris Claxton with much activity and success. This was reported in depth in our magazine. I am pleased to report that we continue to host our various activities that include the Blagdon Primary School. Despite the seriously strong winds through the year, both reserves came through it with minimal damage, which meant that our open day went off well plus the introduction of the new bench at Slader's Leigh.

Our AGM was well attended and all those who attended were interested in the talk of "Where the hills meet the Sea", despite a last minute change in speaker! We also had a visit to the Ebbor Gorge Beef Farm which was interesting in so many ways. We also listened to Nathan Orr on his very specialist take on Fungi and the Environment. It was lovely to listen to John Price who had completed his long distance walk of The Monarchs Way which included a digital fly through the hills following Google Earth. We were pleased to see the return of Prof. Danielle Schreve on the continued work at the excavation of Gully Cave.

The walks programme continued throughout the year with days at Axbridge, Ebbor Gorge, Draycott Sleights, East Harptree, and Radstock.

Our Small Grants Scheme continued to aid projects from (R White) Dew Ponds, Stowey Church, Nempnett Thrubwell Green Spaces, St Hugh's Church Door, Burrington Primary School, Pensford Clock Tower.

As you can see, it's onwards and upwards into 2025 and I hope you can all continue to support your Society in order that it can carry on to play an important role with the Mendip Community.

*Richard Frost.*

## 5: ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

*The President takes the Chair for the election of the officers of the Society.*

1. Re-election of the Chairman and the Treasurer as prime members of the committee, both are willing to stand next year.
2. Re-election of the Management Committee. These serving members of the Management Committee: - Peter Janes, Mike Rolfe, and Mike Harvey are willing to stand again. Proposed 'election en bloc.
3. Election of members to the Committee from any received nominations.

## 6: Amendments to the constitution.

All members will have had the opportunity to review changes and amendments to our constitution which have been publicised via the newsletter and website. For the amendments to be officially adopted we must hold a vote amongst members attending this meeting.

## 7: A.O.B. from the Committee or the floor –

**Close.**

*Ends. ♦*



## Words and pictures - Mike Harvey

**Saturday November 16th, 2024**, was a damp, overcast day. A total of 16 of us gathered together at the top car park of Burrington Combe waiting for Nathan Orr to guide us over Burrington Ham and introduce us to the world of fungi. Nathan you see, is a mycologist – an expert in the study of fungi.



*Nathan Orr - and most of our group.*



*Nathan with a puffball - puffing!*

His first statement... "We may not walk very far." How right he was. At every turn his keen eyes spotted something of interest to point out, examine and tell us more about than we ever thought possible. Very soon we were all totally spellbound by the world of Mycelium, rot, lichen and the quite amazing circle of life, which fungi of all types is closely tied up with and essential to. Crust fungus, Jelly ears, Bracket fungus, Lemon Disco, Puffballs... Over the morning, we were shown something between 20 and 30 different types – some fairly familiar and obvious, others that most would have missed altogether with out expert guidance.



*Scarlet Waxcap.*



*Coral fungus.*

Alongside his ability to spot and identify various and sometimes tiny, fungal growths, Nathan kept up a fascinating commentary on the importance of fungi to the eco system and to life on Earth itself, a real eye-opener. All delivered with some of the best-known mushroom puns and fungal humour. Best of all, this walk was organised for us by MHNL and so was totally free to all participants, what a bargain and what a great way to discover the world of fungi.



## A story of two reserves - and much hedgelaying

**In the middle of December**, a work party was held in Slader's Leigh to do some coppicing of a row of hazel clumps which were encroaching into the meadow and at the end of the day there were several piles of hazel branches of all sizes, which were to be invaluable to us a few weeks later when they would be used in our other reserve in Ubley.

This is Tania's Wood where we would be holding two hedging training days and the branches which were straight and long enough to be cut and used as stakes would be needed in the final stages of laying the hedges.

The first training day, for beginners, on Saturday January 25th was thankfully a beautiful day; there is nothing more miserable than hedging in the rain – especially if you are a beginner! We have long stretches of boundary hedging, in some parts over eight hundred years old, in others planted in the last century. So that they do the job they are there for, they have to be maintained by laying them every seven to ten years. Volunteers able to help us do this are very much needed so we have a yearly programme of training days. After a beginner's day, in the following year they will tackle a more difficult hedge as 'Improvers', often going on to take part in competitions.

In Tania's Wood we were given a part of the next-door field to be our car park; its blackthorn hedge boundary would be quite a challenge



*Coppiced hazel clumps at Slader's Leigh.*



*Volunteers, Richard and Julian (pictured) removed all the brash as it was created.*



*Stake sharpening.*



*Beth & Elaine wrestle with their hedge trees.*

for beginners. It was in fact two very old, uncared for hedges divided by a deep ditch which in previous times carried away water draining off the neighbouring farm fields. It needed a fair bit of clearing out to start with, but with tutors Tina and Chris demonstrating and guiding they soon had the bare bones of the hedge ready to be laid- and at least six feet of the field area had been reclaimed for the car parking.



*The work party - obligatory group shot at the end of the day.*



*Every hedger aims to make their own mallet.*

Finally, with the day beginning to turn to dusk and become colder, the long ash stakes, brought from Slader's Leigh were sharpened and banged into the hedge, keeping it in place and in a straight line. The team could be well satisfied with the final result.



## Words and photos - Judith Tranter

The Improvers hedge training day on Tuesday 11th February was also rain free but the preceding week had been so wet we were forced to change the hedge we wanted to lay from the top of a very steep bank onto to the opposite more rounded and lower bank because the former was very slippery and potentially dangerous.

It so happened this substitute hedge was the first one we had laid, nine years ago, a couple of months after receiving the gift of the land which became Tania's Wood Reserve, from Glynn England, our Society Chairman in the nineties.



*The original "bank & ditch" of the Deer Park completely cleared with brush cutters; we aim to keep it intact, free from trees which would destroy it.*



*Beth and Sheena finish pile two.*



*The brush cutting training of a few months ago is already paying dividends – this is what the bank and ditch looked like before being cleared enough for the hedgers to even get to the hedge.*



There were three, sometimes four helpers clearing away the brash cut from the hedge continuously throughout the day, so that the hedgers could do their work. So much has been produced, there are now four huge heaps ready for another Bio-char day later in the spring.

*Left: Most of the team in front of the central length of hedge laid on top of the western side of the ditch. This hedge dates from about 1240 when it formed the boundary of the Deer Park belonging to the Lord of Ubley Manor. It is the most complete deer park 'ditch and bank' in the whole of the South West area. It is vital that it is kept laid in this way.*



## 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.



A TALK AND SLIDE SHOW  
ABOUT SOME OF THE SECRET  
WW/2 ACTIVITIES ON MENDIP.



## SOMERSET V HITLER

### LOCATION:

Shipham Village Hall  
New Road, Shipham  
BS25 1SG

**DATE:** April 26th

**TIME:** 7pm for 7.30 start  
9:30 finish approx.

**COST:** £2 (Mendip Society members free)

Can you  
**GIVE US YOUR  
SUPPORT?**



## AGAINST<sup>®</sup> breast cancer

Mendip Society member Liz Dagger has been successfully recycling unwanted bras for several years. The bras are recycled by Against Breast Cancer (ABC) and raise vital funds for research into secondary spread breast cancers.

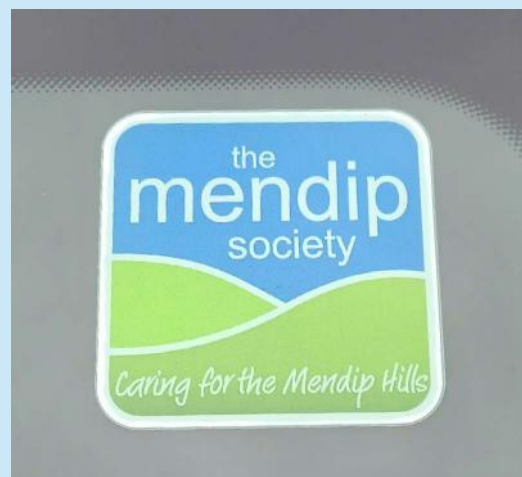
Liz has a "Bra Bank" collection point at the Doctors surgery at Chew Stoke. She will also accept items for recycling at her talk on how farmers in East Tanzania, look after their livestock without fields, on the 25th of March.

This will be at: Cross Memorial Hall, Webbington Road, Cross.  
BS26 2EL

Alternatively bring them along to any Mendip Society event to be passed on to Liz.

## Wear your Mendip Society membership with pride!

Car ( or window) stickers are now available. Unlike previous versions these are reverse printed on a low tack vinyl, meaning you can attach them to the inside of your windows and reposition them over and over again, without leaving sticky residue behind.



They will be available at the AGM and at as many society events as possible thereafter. Just ask a committee member if you cannot see them.



## Walks, talks and events, organised by The Mendip Society

### Tuesday 25th March. **Tanzania - Farm animals and Rural Life. An illustrated talk with Liz and Ian Dagger.**

Liz and Ian have recently returned from their latest trip to Tanzania and have a story to tell on how farmers in East Tanzania look after their livestock without fields. Also how they grow crops, while coping with the effects of climate change and their time spent volunteering at two orphanages a school and a medical centre.

**NGR: ST 411 547. What three words ref: ///floating.towel.recap**

**Address: Cross Memorial Hall, Webbington Road, Cross. BS26 2EL. Starting at 2:00pm**

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**Thursday 27th March. Chew Valley Lake Walk with Liz Dagger.** Meet at Woodford Lodge Car Park at 2:00pm a sociable walk with plenty of chat and refreshments around part of the Chew Valley Lake starting from the car park at Woodford Lodge. We will walk around the lake, to the Bittern trail. There are a couple of viewing points along the way, so bring your binoculars! We will then return to the Salt & Malt Tea Rooms to warm ourselves.

**Please note - Dogs are *not* allowed on this trail as it passes through bird nesting sites.**

**Parking is ticketed, but at the time of publication the machines are not working - do please check on arrival.**

**NGR: ST 565 607. What three words ref: ///lends.boater.puddings**

Contact Liz Dagger on: **07740 468 406** or email: **cvhsdagger@gmail.com**

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### Tuesday 15th April. **Hinton Blewitt to Litton Reservoir Circular Walk.**

Approx. four miles. Mainly footpaths (some maybe muddy), with some quiet lanes. One very steep ascent near the end. Excellent views of the Chew and Yeo Valleys. Bring refreshments for a brief stop at Litton dam.

For those who want a pint and a chat afterwards the Ring o' Bells welcomes walkers.

Dogs under control welcome (Path does go through a farmyard)

Meet at 10.30 outside the Ring o' Bells, Hinton Blewitt.

**NGR: ST 594 569. What 3 Words ref: ///anchorman.hook.fails**

Contact Ian Dagger on: **07835 236191** or email: **laddie05@outlook.com**

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### Saturday 12th April. **The Mendip Society AGM.** Starting at 10:30am

Including our after meeting talk: Farming in Protected Landscapes - AKA, FiPL. MHNL's Farming Engagement Officer, Lucy Stockton on the projects supported and funded in the Mendip National Landscape area by the DEFRA programme.

**NGR: ST 526 583. What three words ref: ///fire.intruded.frantic**

**Address: Ubley Parish Hall. The Street, Bristol. BS40 6PJ**

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### Saturday 26th April. **Somerset V Hitler - Talk and slide show.** At Shipham Village Hall. 7pm for 7:30 start.

As many readers will know, the annual WW2 walk over Blackdown to look at the remnants of the decoy city is a longish hike with a steep uphill climb at the start. In response to several requests it has now been reworked as a talk and slide show, enabling those who might find the challenge of a six-mile hike a bit too much to get involved - what's more, we will not be at the mercy of the wind and weather.

Sitting in the relative comfort of a Village Hall we can offer many more photographs, illustrations - and even a short film, recently acquired from the Windrose Trust, showing the anti-landing cairns (tumps) being constructed up on Blackdown. Booking not required. £2 for non-members.

**NGR: ST 444 579. What three words ref: ///punchy.emporium.roofed.**

**Address: New Road, Shipham BS25 1SG**

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### Tuesday 13th May. **The Mendip Champion Species talk and walk with Nathan Orr.** 10:00 am - 1:00pm approx.

Nathan is well-known for his work as MHNLS nature recovery ranger. He is also an engaging speaker and passionate advocate for nature and wildlife on Mendip. Come and share his enthusiasm at Mendip Lodge and a nearby quarry, talking about species and habitats, followed by lunch at the activity centre café (not included) or BYO.

**Please note, the walk to the quarry includes a steep slope which may be unsuitable for the less mobile.**

**NGR: ST 434 592. What three words ref: ///junior.vent.lyricist**

**Address: Mendip Lodge Activity Centre, Greenhill Road, Sandford. BS25 5PQ**

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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](http://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 as non-members.**

## A Presidents' View.

**Yes its AGM time again** and I'm looking forward to seeing and meeting as many of you as I can on the day. Its been a busy year and we would all like to make the next one just interesting if not more so.

The management team line up has been changed a little and as always there will be need for extra help to deliver some of the activities. No matter how small or large the amount of you may be able to offer, they would be delighted to hear from you.

From me comes a personal thanks for all the support I received at the orchard wassail in Burrington at the beginning of February. I have presided over eight ceremonies this year and am able to recite the song, blessing and farmers prayer in my sleep,( dangerous statement to make, especially on the day I forget what comes next). As with all traditions the passage of time will enhance the ceremony and now we have a piper to lead us into the orchard, so well done Peter Janes! Thanks also to David and Sophie Stead with the girls from Church Farm for carrying out the wassail queen duties and allowing us to use the orchard.

This year will mark 80 years since the end of the Second World War in Europe and I think that perhaps we should make a special effort to pay tribute to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice so that we have a free country.. Your thoughts as ever will be greatly appreciated.

Yes I know we all moan about the weather, but I hope its a good summer ahead. My column in the Mendip Times makes mention of our weather system that is special to the Hill and of the trials and tribulations of a Mendip education. I thought you might like this little gem extracted from the Charterhouse School log dated 1st March 1899. The Head Mistress was Jane Angell Lukins:

***"The work of the year has evidently been conscientiously carried out with very fair success...The licking of slates should be stopped".***

A singular feature of this school is that, as far as I can learn, the only scholars who actually belong to the parish of Blagdon are the children of the mistress.

My thanks to you all for supporting the Society and its many activities. Here's to an even more successful year ahead. Finally my picture is another rainbow in a mean and moody sky over the Yeo Valley. I have to sneak my pictures in this way, as the competition for front page copy is so high.

My kindest regards

Les.



**THE MENDIP SOCIETY Registered Charity Number 262867 [www.themendipsociety.org.uk](http://www.themendipsociety.org.uk)**

**For the secretary, e-mail: [secretary@themendipsociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@themendipsociety.org.uk)**

**For membership write to, 'The Cottage, Harptree Hill, West Harptree, BS40 6EJ'.**

**For newsletter content and pictures, e-mail: [themendipsociety.photos@gmail.com](mailto:themendipsociety.photos@gmail.com)**