

Mendip

the
mendip
society

The Newsletter of The Mendip Society

Issue No. 162 • September 2021

Caring for the Mendip Hills

COMING OUT OF COVID19 PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS – NORMAL WORKING



Community groups do vital research, which otherwise would not happen and our heritage has never been more under threat from development as it is now. Please – Time is short – Turn to page 18 first and take this opportunity to make a difference to the Mendip Hills.

Right – Working underground

Below – In Tania's Wood



From the Chair, the Secretary and the Editor

The Secretary

It's still too early to see how life, our society and society generally have been altered since the pandemic, or to see what has remained the same. Have we become a kinder, more thoughtful society...or not? Maybe you can make the case either way depending on how you see things; are we a more inclusive, caring society or a more unequal and polarised one? The one thing which everyone can see in a positive way is how concern for and appreciation of the natural environment has been sustained through the pandemic; the huge number of national and local organisations, from big charities to small village, quickly formed, groups which are putting their money and their expertise and manpower where their mouths and ideas are, has been driving the agenda forward.



We need The Mendip Society to be up there with the best of them, and here is where I introduce our new Chairman, Tina Bath. But first, a quick run through the results of the AGM, held a long while ago now it seems; as we are obliged to do.

Held through the newsletter, digital and postal means because of the pandemic restrictions on Friday March 26th 2021, we managed to conduct all necessary business. 78 members voted, enough to form a sufficient voting quorum

- 1) The Chairman's /Annual report was adopted, approved by 57; 21 didn't cast a vote on it (perhaps they didn't notice it marked 'Vote Needed')
- 2) A summary Accounts report was presented but couldn't be adopted because they had not been audited
- 3) Election of Society Officers, a) The Chairperson – Tina Bath was unanimously elected. b) The Management Committee, with one exception, Sheila Dixon, was willing to stand again and were elected en bloc by 78 'yes' votes.
- 4) Approval of an amendment of the Constitution proposed by the Committee in order to be able to hold future Annual General Meetings in a manner acceptable to the Charity Commission in whatever circumstances prevail at the time. 67 votes recorded approval of the amendment; 11 didn't vote at all or abstained, the proposal was therefore carried.

The date of the AGM 2022, and venue, if a live meeting is possible, to be decided later.

N.B. The accounts have now been audited and lodged with the Charity Commission; the Treasurer has notified that our auditor, David Woodliffe has now retired and she is appealing to the membership for anyone with professional skills to contact her with a view to assisting us next year with the auditing of our accounts.

(treasurer@themendipsociety.org.uk) **Judith Tranter**

And now – writing 'From the Chair' is Tina Bath, who, whilst not wanting to be called Chairwoman is happy with either Chairman or Chairperson (the photo is taken in Tania's Wood with Bailey, during hedge laying time this Spring).

Hello I would like to introduce myself to those members who do not know me. My name is Tina Bath and I am the new Chairman/Chairperson, taking over from Richard Frost whom I would like to thank for all his enthusiasm and hard work as the Mendip Society Chairman over the past 5 years, along with the rest of the Committee who I know do so much for the society.



Richard is not leaving us – in fact I have a feeling he is going to be pretty busy organising various Society activities for us.

Just to fill you in on a bit of my background; I was born and brought up in Ubley and have spent pretty much all my life working in and connected to the Mendip Hills. Most of my adult life has been involved in Nature Conservation and promoting Rural Skills whether that is through direct work, or through training programmes.

Some of you will have heard of or met me whilst I was employed as one of the Mendip Hills AONB Warden's, so like you I am passionate about protecting the special qualities the Mendip Hills has to offer. I also believe that it is very important for us to respond to harmful planning developments both on, and beyond the fringe of the Mendip escarpments.

I enjoy involving our members, local trust's and other societies, in a common goal to enhance the Mendips' natural beauty and we will offer different ways in which people can volunteer on organised practical activity days, including leading walks, or manning the marquee at local show's and events. As with the rest of the world everything other than essential working came to a standstill due to Covid-19 but thankfully things are returning to some sort of normality; recently we were able to pull our Walks leaders together for a Leaders' briefing combined with a First Aid basic casualty care course. The Mendip Society is sponsoring the Mendip Ploughing Society class schedule for the Match in September and will attend with

our marquee to promote ourselves and a new Small Grant Scheme for Farmers and Landowners to create or restore Landscape features or habitats. Then in October we have arranged Dry Stone Walling tuition dates for both beginners & improvers; so – any member who has always wanted to learn ‘how it’s done’, now’s your chance, contact us directly.

Photos, left, by David Tucker – ‘Before & After’ illustrating the sort of task our wallers usefully complete to maintain the Mendip distinctive character.



‘Wanderlands’, is a new tree planting and biodiversity enterprise which creates sustainable environmental and educational experiences to help reduce the effects of the climate crisis. Focused on improving biodiversity through tree planting and rewilding to offset businesses’ carbon footprint, it has acquired land in Croscombe, a rolling hillside which also contains an old dew pond. Society volunteers will be joining with the Somerset Reptile and Amphibian Group to clear and re-instate this; if you are interested in this, there are the photos of the 16 dewponds already restored on the ‘Somerset Reptile and Amphibian Group’ website.

The 2 reserves owned and managed by The Mendip Society have been well used by the public for exercise and or for some of our society members to get out and spend time carrying out maintenance activities to keep on top of the scrub, grassland, track ways, and hedgerow management at Tania’s Wood. Slader’s Leigh will have its annual scything and general clearance work commencing shortly, the hedge laying training will also be located around the boundary there this coming winter. We have also been contacted by the Mendip Hospital Cemetery Group who would like us to help create a Children’s Remembrance Garden there, as many under 12 Year olds did not have their graves marked. Lots of opportunities to get involved if you would like to be.

The Mendip Society will continue to respond to Planning Applications opposing new developments that increasingly ‘lock-in’ the Mendip Hills, where the scale of development detracts from the openness and tranquillity of the countryside both in and around the Mendip Hills. Many Villages risk losing their unique identity, and require better public transport linking them to road and rail networks.

Tina Bath

From The Editor



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We are a very lucky society; we have a very ‘hands on’ President and also Chairman – I would love ‘A Hands-On Tree’ to come and live in Tania’s Wood Nature Reserve!

Right at the start, I must apologise to members for the late production of their newsletter: there has been the failure of my computer and delayed decisions about future activities, which had to go in and ... I could go on with reasons. But mainly, I have to admit to being in the apathetic doldrums as an editor, with a good dose of writers block thrown in. There should be no reason for this, I have not had covid, I have had ample opportunity (mainly untaken) to exercise and to go places, a nice little sunny garden to potter in – all the things that a great many have not had over this 6 months or so, but.... I have come to the conclusion that I should take a break from the editorship of the newsletter and regain my momentum and my ‘oomph’.

So – I really am looking for a member with a bit of a liking for exploring different avenues to gather articles of interest and relevance to the society, to involve as many members’ experiences as possible, but also to put their own stamp on the production of the next newsletter or two, or even more if wanted. As much help as wanted given, plus photos if needed. Contact me **01275 874284** please.

In the meantime there is a lot of information in this issue about how to access other information and how we are starting to run as a society in normal, if slightly different, mode again – if anything is not clear please do ask – all the committee contact details are on the website, along with photographs and updates of news on the home page. Plus, of course, we have our Face book page for even newer updates and news. Don’t forget the ‘the’ in both addresses.

www.themendipsociety.org.uk
[//www.facebook.com/themendipsociety](https://www.facebook.com/themendipsociety)

Judith Tranter

HISTORICAL SOCIETY SNIPPETS – from past Newsletters

December 2000 Newsletter 100

MENDIP SOCIETY GRANTS SCHEME

How a little help can go a long way

MEMBERS will be interested to learn the up-to-date position on projects which are being helped financially by the Mendip Society.

Winscombe Millennium Green

The Interpretation Board, partly financed by a £650 grant by the Society, will soon be installed.

Buckland Dinham

The restoration of an old stone building as part of the village's Millennium Garden project is now complete and a grant of £100 paid.

Rickford Millennium Project

A grant of £238 towards the cost of a footpath sign and a cobbled area near the already completed seat and "Mendip" stone stile was agreed. (See report this page)

St Aldhelm's Well, Doultong

The Society has offered £500 towards the cost of repairing and restoring St Aldhelm's Well. This ancient holy well is fed by a spring which rises in the hillside close to Doultong Church but is in urgent need of repair. The Shepton Mallet Society, which owns the site, is a small registered charity and is faced with the prospect of raising £7,535 to complete repairs and to safeguard the well for future generations.

Hutton Restoration Projects

A 50% grant of £333 has been offered towards re-instating the village pump and replacing a rusty chain-link fence on the village green with a hedge.

Could all recipients provide me with photographs of finished projects for publication in future editions of the Mendip Newsletter, please?

Don Walter, Grants Officer

Price £1 where sold

Happy Christmas to you all

MENDIP

The Newsletter of the Mendip Society



100th!

This was a special edition – our hundredth newsletter AND the 35th Anniversary of the Society; it was also Christmas in the first year of the New Millennium – what better special credentials could it have?

With Tina announcing a new strand to our Heritage Small Grants Scheme on page 2, the obvious 'historical snippet' would be the item listing the projects being helped financially by the society during this year. We can also now update two of these grants, albeit in different ways.

And here your Editor has to declare "an interest" – in the year 2000 I was a very new member of the society and also of Rickford Y2K, a village group which had big ambitions to celebrate the New Millennium, including planting an orchid, (achieved in 2004) refurbishing the original village water supply pumps and replacing the original finger post on the ford. So – nothing ventured – nothing gained, I applied for a grant towards replacing the directional sign post at the heart of the village, the ford, and to our great excitement it was granted. It somehow felt like the starting gun of all our plans. Don Walter, the Grant Officer at the time wrote "the wooden, traditional style guidepost, at the meeting point of footpath and road, by the ford in the village



The finial on the top of signpost – and the pump.



of Rickford, near Burrington Combe ... has been hand crafted from seasoned oak by Roger Baker, a woodcarver living in the village. ...the carved finial echoes the finials on the restored cast iron Victorian standpipe on the

riverside nearby. A field wall was rebuilt and afforded a good place for an integral stone seat and then an old stone stile was found and installed as the start of the footpath across the field. In front of them all were laid reclaimed Victorian granite cobbles – the grant enabled the village to buy the genuine articles.

Referencing the last sentence written by Don Walter, above.

It would really help us with the decision making involved in the process of awarding grants to the projects which are submitted to us for consideration if the groups, charities or individuals concerned could give us feed back and also progress reports and results on completion, and also what happens to the project in the years hence. So, Hutton – how does your village pump and the hedge on the village green look now – have you laid the latter yet? We would love to know.

And Doultong, does the spring still feed into the Holy Well near the Church. Do let us know please.

For many members the Swan Inn at Rowberrow has been a familiar place, for many years, in fact for 19 years exactly. In the December 2002 newsletter this photo appeared, taken by Brendon Cottrell. It was printed in glorious black & white with this report by Brendon.

"The first Mendip Society walk to start from the Swan Inn at Rowberrow and by kind permission of the landlord we were able to use Inn car park. My picture shows Shirley Kent our walk leader with her party ready to set out to walk to Tynings Farm then up the hill and over the top to Rowberrow Bottom. A walk of five and a half miles on a beautiful summer afternoon with fine views from the top to South Wales and Exmoor".



Photo kindly given to us by Shirley for our archives, which shows how important it is for such items to be saved (and hopefully given to the society for its archives at some point), we are very grateful for all such donations.

And here, I must tell members about a really special donation we have received back in the spring this year. A long time member Elizabeth Hawkes kindly sent us, out of the blue, a cheque for £500, to be spent on whatever we thought best for the society at this time. So, to coincide with the launch of a new addition to our already running Heritage small grants scheme, we are planning to run two dry stone walling skills courses open to members of the public, in October this year. The new grant will be aimed at private landowners and farmers, for the conservation, creation and management for wildlife in the local landscape and different habitats on Mendip. In the running of these type of projects the importance of stone and hedge boundaries is high; giving volunteers the skills in the maintenance of walls and hedges can only be a bonus to their achieving a successful outcome. So we say a very heartfelt 'thank you' to Elizabeth for her lovely surprise donation which will pay for these two walling courses, and also for some hedge laying training in the beginning of next year.

Finally, December 2022 is likely to be a month to remember in the Mendip Hill Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In our newsletter of 1973, the reports of the end of the struggle to get the area we know today designated as one of the outstandingly beautiful parts of Great Britain was recorded thus:-

11. The Designation Order for the Mendip Hills AONB was eventually signed on 14 February 1972; and submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Secretary of State confirmed the designation order without modification on 1 December 1972. Covering 202 square kilometres the designated area (Map 2) stretched from Bleadon Hill in the west to the A39 Bath-Wells road in the east, including the greater part of the Mendip Hills.

We can be sure that there will be 'some' celebration of such a 50th Anniversary as this! Watch this space .

AND NOW – SOMETHING TO BE LOOKING FORWARD TO:

THE Chairman, speaking from the Chair refers to the new grant scheme we are launching, together with our Sponsorship of the competition schedules for Mendip Ploughing Society Match –to be held on land at Green Ore Farm, Green Ore, Nr Wells, BA5 3EP on Wednesday 29th September 2021. In 2019 two members of the society won places in the beginners walling classes; with no match last year, several of our dry stone wallers will be trying to do even better this year. With an increasing interest in maintaining these iconic features of the Mendip hills, we are also going to be running two training weekends, one for beginners on 2nd /3rd October and one for improvers on 16th/17th Oct., both located on Chancellor's Farm, Plummers Lane, Priddy. With an accredited trainer, there will be 8 places on each weekend, both days of which must be attended; the course tuition will be free, thanks to the wonderful donation mentioned above from Elizabeth Hawkes.



Places are sure to be filled quickly so if you are interested in learning this very fulfilling skill please contact me as soon as you can.

The society will be having a presence at the Ploughing match in September with a gazebo and displays, so if you are happy meeting people and talking about the society – and would like an enjoyable day out in the fresh air, with lots to see, please also contact me – judith.tranter1@btinternet.com / 01275 874284.



YEO VALLEY ORGANIC HAS FUTURE PLANS

Tim Mead of Yeo Valley Farms tells us how taking up a cycling challenge (and going rather slowly at the bottom of Burrington Combe) coincided with the opportunity he saw to make Burrington Combe more accessible, in what could be a visitor gateway to the beautiful Mendip Hills for walkers, cyclists, families and nature lovers of all ages to enjoy. He said:

“My first memories of Burrington Combe were when I was about ten or eleven years old, and my father used to drop me, and a trailer loaded with sacks of potatoes down there to sell;” Tim’s family started farming in the Yeo Valley at Holt Farm, Blagdon, 60-years ago. Today, the family-owned business which derives its name from the river Yeo flowing through Blagdon Lake, is Britain’s largest organic brand.

Now the family business is setting its mind on making parts of the Mendip AONB more accessible, uniting regenerative farming practices (which help fight the climate crisis by pulling carbon from the atmosphere and sequestering it in the ground), with sustainable travel and tourism and showcasing the farming system upon which the business is based.

Tim is now sharing his vision for the development which will promote responsible travel to the Mendip Hills and provide much needed visitor facilities including cafes and car parking from the very spot he once sold the family farm’s potatoes.

Tim revealed provisional plans going to council planners at North Somerset to The Mendip Society in May this year, including a transformation of the Burrington Inn site; walks and sculpture trails within the 600 acres of woodland at Hazel Manor Farm (Compton Martin) and café and parking facilities at Ubley Warren farm. The Yeo Valley Way, a series of trails crossing Yeo Valley Farms land, will connect Hazel Manor and Ubley Warren farms as well as providing connections to the existing public Right of Way network including The Mendip Way.

The four-and-a-half-acre site at Burrington was purchased by Yeo Valley in 2017 and now the potential visitor destination is possible due to the sale of the company’s dry-goods site in Axbridge. “At about the same time the Burrington Inn site went on the market we were looking at winding down our dry goods site in Axbridge, which was no longer fit for our business needs (we had outgrown it). This meant that if we could sell the Axbridge site with planning permission, we could reinvest the proceeds into our other sites around the Mendips.”

Yeo Valley, along with rural diversification and development experts Rural Solutions, have submitted pre-application plans to the planning officers of Mendip District Council and North Somerset Council for the Burrington Combe site, Ubley Warren and Hazel Manor.

BURRINGTON AND UBLEY



BURRINGTON COMBE

At Burrington Combe the proposals are to create a 'Yeostel', with up to 30 serviced bedspaces in shared accommodation, suitable for school, youth and activity groups together with up to 20 individual pods. There will also be outdoor activity equipment hire and sales, plus an adventure café & takeout, alongside offices, education and training suites that can be used by local businesses, groups and organisations.

At Ubley Warren Farm, a new Mendip Discovery Centre is planned, providing much needed visitor infrastructure and information (parking, WCs, EV charging, food and refreshment) as well as bike hire and orientation.



This will be the trailhead of the Yeo Valley Way and will provide a link to the Hazel Manor reserve. Tim added: "There is real potential to help visitors to the area understand more about the countryside, farming, and nature. We hope that Hazel Manor will be a backdrop for some of the UK's leading regenerative farming practises. It could mean that people will get to see first-hand what regenerative organic farming means in practise and how integrating livestock within natural surroundings has mutual benefits for all, including the climate, the health of our land, the animals and ourselves."

HAZEL MANOR

At Hazel Manor visitors will be able to experience trails linking panoramic viewpoints across the Yeo Valley with secluded glades and species rich woodland. A series of hidden woodland retreats will provide special places to stay and a dedicated space looking out towards the Yeo Valley will host pop up events.



Following feedback from local authorities, Yeo Valley and Rural Solutions would like to submit a full planning application.

Tim added: "By providing a spot where people can eat, sleep, shop, walk and cycle the Mendip Hills, we hope to provide facilities that can complement but also ease the pressure on existing hot spots, that gives local people and those travelling from further afield a reason to stop and to spend their money in the local economy and to have a positive and memorable experience."

WHAT MEMBERS HAVE BEEN DOING WHILST WAITING FOR NORMALITY TO RETURN

Whilst being able to get out to join in previous activities, there has still been more time than usual to enjoy doing something completely new, or maybe continue with a creative hobby you have grown to love.

Our Treasurer, Marilyn Cattell, has produced some stunning embroidery work of a sort she's never tried before. We knew she excelled at embroidery, but have a look at these: *Photos L – by Roger Moses, Owl bag, and one side of the basket and R – by Marilyn – the other side of the basket and Russian Doll bag.*



Marilyn tells us this about this new addition to her hobby skills:-

The embroidery is called Redwork and is based on the version that was developed in America in the late 19th early 20th century. It used red thread because it was one of the first colourfast dyes to become available, so it could be used to decorate household objects particularly quilts. Also it used mainly basic stitches such as backstitch or outline stitch, and because of this it could easily be done by children.

It has now had a resurgence among crafters and I was introduced to it by one of my embroidery tutors Annette Boulton whose basic outline patterns I used for the designs on both bags, although the interpretation in shades and stitches are my own, I have tried to stick to what I consider basic stitches such as back stitch, stem stitch, chain stitch, buttonhole stitch, straight stitch, and a few French knots, what I have done is add some embellishments that would not have been seen in original Redwork such as appliqué, buttons, sequins, beads and rhinestones

As to how long it takes that depends on the stitches used and how long you can spend on it at a time.

ED: It doesn't sound all that 'basic' to me Marilyn, but it certainly looks amazing.



David Tucker, aka Tucksey, contributed to the newsletter a couple of years ago, when he first came to join us as a volunteer in Tania's Wood reserve (and emotionally has never left!). He, along with many others loves the wood, although not always being able to say why. But he has obviously said enough to his Grandson in Nailsea, to make him want to go there himself. So a short while ago David took him to see what he had been doing, including the hedge he helped lay, about which he is very proud. Now, the little lad also loves it!

The wood has exploded with growth and colour and beauty this summer, we have merely kept the reins on it along the main paths so that visitors can actually walk along them, to explore inside. Magic for a little boy, when the growth is higher than your head, and Grand-dad is there to make sure you don't get lost. And of course you want to see what Grand-dad has been doing all winter and spring when he disappears 'off to the wood'!



*Photos by
Tucksey L-R*

1. Help! Grand-dad, I'm lost in the jungle!

2. So this is the hedge that is laying down – looks good enough to me.

3. Did a space ship land here?

Because we know that nearly every child would enjoy playing in Tania's Wood (you only had to experience the visit that the top class of Blagdon Primary School, made before the end of the summer term to be sure of this), it is our aim to be able to open the reserve to as many families, especially those with children, as possible, on as many days throughout the year as possible. By providing activities that children and parents can do together we hope to foster a love and careful knowledge of the countryside that will last and stand them in good stead in the future.

We would also like to make a corner of our car park field suitable for the visitors to bring a picnic and rest when necessary. We thought to provide a couple of the picnic tables with the attached seating if we could; if anyone has one of these tables which they no longer need, or knows of a neighbor maybe, who has, and would be happy to donate it to us, we would be very grateful for it. If it needed a bit of TLC that would be no problem at all, we can collect it also.

We aim to make the reserve better known to all our members because we are so lucky to have one of the best remaining remnants of an historical Mediaeval deer park boundary – the 'Deer Leap', as part of our reserve boundary. We try hard to maintain it as it should look and are working towards providing a 'permissive public footpath around the wood, to aid the awareness of this historic site. And better still, you could make it part of an exploration of the famous 'Monarch's Way' which can be joined by walking out of Tania's Wood, through the Public Right of Way kissing gate in our reserve car park, across the next field and there you are, on the 625 mile escape route taken by King Charles in 1651. (We probably weren't managing Tania's wood then!)



In a previous newsletter we have seen some of Terry Gifford's poetry, and it seems he still has the inspiration to put his observations into verse. (ED note: a 'tup' is a word, widely used in Scotland, for a male sheep, or Ram of breeding age). And also in full flow, Alan Litten has a 'Knotty Problem'.

"The Travelling Tup" – By Terry Gifford

*A tup tripped into our lives off
the lane last Saturday evening, early.
A neighbour knocked at the door:*

*There's a sheep behind your shed.
We saw it walk in through your gate.
In the ditch there I confronted,*

*Black-faced, snub-nosed, planted,
the Derby Ram: Quite the biggest ram,
sir, that ever was fed upon hay.*

*He was not to be moved. I reached
Down for a stick. Unimpressed,
Immobile, a long look of disdain*

*from the Boss. Shouting, waving,
(but not advancing) I watched it
choose to turn and skip up onto*

*the front lawn, browse a new tree.
It was not the voice of my education
that made me suddenly run indoors*

*for walking poles. My wife had opened
a gate to the back garden. It recognised
a gaping gap and trotted through, stones*

*rattling, to quietly graze. My wife
had opened the gate to the pasture
where ewes and half-grown lambs*

*were feeding, fattening, electric fenced.
It recognised a gaping gap, untroubled
by bursting through three electric wires.*

*We rang around. Friends rang around.
No tup missing. Sunday morning, first
glance, it sat, a giant amongst minnows.*

*Second glance, gone. All gates still locked.
Only allegory lingered in the meadow:
the recognition of a gap, a black, blunt*

*nose for a gap between drought
and deluge, between flood and hill,
travelling the lanes of our future.*

A Knotty Problem

In lockdowns –
have some playtime,
To occupy your mind,
I'll set you a problem,
The answer you must find.

Time is like a piece of string,
It can go on and on,
And if you have a piece,
Here's something to ponder
upon.

Place one end in your left hand,
The other end in your right,
Now tie a knot without letting go,
Keep holding both ends tight.

I tried this on a friend once,
Who said that she was sure
That she could do it in a flash,
(She'd seen it done before.)

You need a piece that's not too
short,
About the length of your arm,
Which gives you room to
manoeuvre,
While you don't come to harm.

Don't give up, it can be done,
Just think the problem through,
And if you are half clever,
The solution will come to you.

ED: Said solution can be found
on page 20

THE MENDIP SOCIETY NATURE RESERVES – JUDITH TRANTER

Both our Reserves have been fully open this summer and have been busy doing what they do best – growing an amazing amount of vegetation, including a good array of lovely flowers.

Slader's Leigh Meadow has arguable had its best season in many a year, after the dry spring which delayed the orchids by a week or two, the sun and rain then brought the field into a cloak of blues and mauves, with first the betony and then the knapweeds and finally the scabious, all with the contrast of the creamy white froth of the meadowsweet. And a lovely surprise when all had started to fade and die, to find hidden amongst the grasses, a good quantity of yellow rattle dried heads. We had scattered a few seeds several years ago and thought they had come to nought, but they were just biding their time it seems! Here is a summer snapshot.



L-R Marsh Orchid; a quiet green corner; purple of Betony; mauve of Knapweeds; sky-blue of Scabious; creamy white of Meadow Sweet; dry brown of Yellow Rattle seedheads; sweetly scented Lime flowers.



This summer, for the second year running, the ancient Small Leaved Lime, now rapidly escaping its protective surrounding fencing, has flowered, but on the higher branches facing the south and the sun. This makes it very difficult to get close to them and to find out if the seed is fertile or not. But it is strong proof of our changing summers.

In the reserve we have long stretches of hedge boundaries. Hedgerows are hugely important but often taken for granted refuges for wild plants and corridors for wildlife to move through. Hedgerows help slow down the runoff of water, guarding against flooding and soil erosion, and act as barriers to help prevent pesticide and fertiliser pollution getting into water supplies. Studies show they can improve the quality of air by helping trap air pollution.

But more than half of hedgerows in the UK have been lost since 1945, or are degraded relicts of their former glory and often poorly managed. When the Society took over Slader's Leigh in 1986 it was half of a much longer field, so volunteers planted a new hedge boundary across the length. In 2011/12 we created a pond just inside the boundary, but first we had to lay the hedge which had grown wayward and spread into the meadow. Now, it needs doing again.

Over the last five years we have run beginners hedge laying training weekends every autumn/winter season, in Tania's Wood, Ubley, simply because we have what seems like miles of very out of condition hedge boundaries, and even beginners can achieve very good results under the guidance of Tina and Chris our tutors.

So this year we will be running the beginners hedge laying weekend in Slader's Leigh so keep an eye out for the details in the next newsletter.

Tania's Wood Ubley By the start of the bird nesting season, when all work on hedges must stop, we had managed to plant nearly all of the little whips we had been sent by the Woodland Trust and 'I Dig Trees', (part of the charity The Conservation Volunteers), just a few were left to find a space in a garden in Clevedon to grow bigger until the autumn). Hundreds more will be speeding their way to us this October/November to form a new hedge which we are going to plant on an adjoining paddock belonging to the Granddaughter of Glyn England, who deeded Tania's Wood to the Society 6 years ago; she has only a flimsy wire fence to keep out the cattle that graze the next door field. Plus – we are also contributing to the Government's target of 30,000 hectares of new trees in the UK each year, to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

The section of hedges we have laid and bulked up with whips every year are all doing very well, however, this year because of the pandemic and stretches of lockdown we couldn't have our usual training sessions; however, what we could do, because we are a charity in the pursuit of our normal charitable work, for much of the time we could work in a large area in the open air with a group of up to six. There was fierce competition for the six places so we had to have a rota for once or twice a week working in the wood on hedging and also coppicing overgrown hazel trees. Hard physical exercise but big rewards with high levels of well being and satisfaction generated and huge satisfaction in the amount and results achieved.



After the Feb 2020 course, the last long stretch of overgrown hedge at least 6 meters high, was left to do, together with a row of large hazel trees running close to it; the willing (read crazy?) volunteers decided to finish the job by themselves. Over the course of a few weeks the thick bramble stems, which grew from one side, through all the branches and then rooted down on to the other side were forcibly and painfully cleared. Then the high trees were cut and bent and shortened and eventually all laid into the neat hedge seen below, and approved by one Grand-son, see p 8. The brash produced from the hedge, and the row of coppiced hazels was enormous, but by building a couple of bug hotels, making a stack of perfect stakes for next years' hedge laying, filling some bags for volunteers home fires, making pea and bean sticks for the neighbours and finishing with a nice warming fire for ourselves, it was all utilised to perfection.



And at the rate of growth seen this year it wasn't long before the scene changed again and the coppiced hazels stools were covered high in the new emerging branches. And we found ourselves having to use our scythes to cut ways through the grass, nettles and scrubby fledgling bushes in order to move about anywhere in the wood.

At the beginning of July we had good reason to hold a big work day, which turned out to be one of the wettest days for a long time. Blagdon Primary School asked if their top class could make one last visit to the wood before they made the change to their Secondary Schools in September; the past term for them had been



a bit miserable as they hadn't been able to do any of the lovely activities, or go on any of the trips that the top year usually did. The school wanted them to have a day to remember. There have been no Forest School sessions during the pandemic at all so we had to have a real good 'clean and brush up' so they could use their usual base camp/fire circle, get to the composting loo site and actually get up to the top of the wood. There they actually started their own bug hotel – with some rather large logs! They can come anytime!



R – Top class: photo by Nicky Orr

GULLY CAVE – FROM THE BEGINNING by Judith Tranter with David Thurlow



For five years now we have been following, and supporting the progress of the excavations at the cave on the hillside of Ebbor Gorge, known as Gully Cave. Led by Professor Danielle Schreve, students from the Royal Holloway, London University have spent two weeks of their summer break for the past 13 years digging down through the layers of earth, debris, vegetation and rocks. The society has been lucky in being able to visit these past 5 digging years in the eager anticipation of being there in the year when the floor of the cave is finally reached. Although it didn't happen to be this year, the work has progressed so well, it can't be long now.

The photograph above was taken by David Shears on our visit on Tuesday 17th July this year; looking upwards past all the years of digging history it is of the

originally found cave entrance (although now not exactly 'as found'). It made me wonder, not for the first time – 'how was it originally discovered – and more importantly 'who discovered it?' With the help of Malcolm Parsons, a volunteer on the packing and clearing up last day of the two week dig, who had met another visitor at the dig that day, one David Thurlow, and then of Danielle herself who put me in touch with David, I able to find the answers. (For those who would like more detail about the background and the dig itself, there is an excellent report given by Danielle to Harrow & Hillingdon Geological Society on this link -

https://www.hhgs.org.uk/monthly_meetings/previous_meetings/wolves_and_wildcats/wolves_and_wildcats.htm

David Thurlow is the retired Natural England Warden for Ebbor Gorge and Rodney Stoke, and he was in the story of Gully Cave (almost) from the beginning. This is how he told it to me.

"It was as a result of the 'Big Storm' of October 1987 (mainly remembered for Michael Fish's weather non- warning!). With winds gusting at up to 100mph, there was massive devastation across the country including here on Mendip and a lot of trees were blown down, so we had a lot of checking work to do, on the roads and paths, including on the rocks and cliffs of the gorge itself. I found a large ash tree which had blown down, pulling its roots out of the ground leaving a small 50cm slit underneath. I poked a stick into it and it seemed to go in and down a very long way. I went down on my belly and started to crawl in, but gingerly because it might have been a badger sett, so not too far in, but I thought it was definitely an entrance to something. There had been a lot of caving activity in the gorge in the 60s, and



GULLY CAVE E.C.

CM 52554854

A472 L10 VR4 Ebbor Gorge, high on left bank opposite Tower Rock, below gully near south end of highest cliff, in wood. In Nature Reserve, controlled by Nature Conservancy, no digging. Wide choked archway. Badgers inhabit it and an impenetrable tube above. Sep56 (Caves of Ebbor Gorge).



it was thought that all the possible caves had been found and mapped, but Tony Jarrett, caver and owner of the shop 'Bat Products in Wells, became interested in it and thought a bit of an archaeological dig would be a good idea. But nothing came to light in the small cave we dug out, except that Willy Stanton came forward and said that he had found this entrance and called it 'Gully Cave', as it was near the top of a gully. It gets a 3.5 line mention in Barrington and Stanton's "Mendip: The Complete Caves and a View of the Hills" in 1977.

Willy Stanton thought I was confused over the various cave names in the Gorge and gave me a map showing the whereabouts of all the caves, and so everything went on as normal. However talk did eventually get to my boss at Natural England, Dr. Andy King (himself a Paleontology geologist) and he contacted Danielle in about 2005 and asked her to look in the cave. I'm not giving anything new away when I say that she was rather reluctant to go down (because there might have been cave spiders! But – that was the start of it all and by 2006 the team from Royal Holloway were on their way on this amazing excavation" I go along for a couple of days every year if I can, I don't think of it as 'my cave' at all, but it's great to think that I had a hand in getting it going in the first place so everyone will get to know all about it in the end.

Left – taken by Joan Goddard, the original 50cm first slit entrance is under the blue tarp, the present level entrance is below. How deep the cave is now! Above – the picture taken at the time of the discovery.

Ebbor Gorge, ST 5255 4854, Excavation Gully Cave 14th season 2021 (missed 2020 thru pandemic)
Mendip Society visit on Tuesday 27th July 2021, 23 members attended.



Volunteers from the society and from the AONB Rangers & volunteers spent two days in July with Danielle clearing the piles of accumulated Breccia, soil and vegetation from the area in front of the cave entrance, for an immediate start to the dig.



*Above – It is a long walk up to cave, but we all made it.
Left – The Finds Table.*

Below – by the trench outside the cave to find the cave end wall.



Photos taken by Lauren Holt, David Shears, Joan Goddard and Greg Villis.

NEWS FROM THE WALKS LEADERS



On Friday August 6th nine Society Walks Leaders, together with Les Davies, assisted by Richard Ivens, David Tranter and Malcolm Parsons, also walks leaders with other groups, met up at Chancellor's Farm, courtesy of the Somerset Wildlife Trust and Farm Manager Kate Lawrence. It was a day of getting together for the first time in 18 months- to refresh their first aid knowledge and to discuss the future running of the walks programme and then a short walk around the Reserve with Kate and Richard Ivens refreshed their navigation skills. The Society Chairman, Tina Bath, popped in with a delicious lunch, to introduce herself.

Inside the meeting barn at Chancellor's Farm

guide through the website' with the leaders, in order to address certain worries the leaders had about large numbers on walks, together with their liability, and walkers safety, whilst leading walks through the society. He was assisted in the preparation of this by member Shirley Ousley, who will be the Walks Administrator for the new system, as detailed on the following page.

In the afternoon the Leaders refreshed their knowledge of the first aid they would be most likely to call upon in the event of any untoward accident or incident during a walk. The Mendips do have long stretches of flat walking trails on the plateau which are exhilarating to stride along, with a gentle wind and the sun at your back- but there are also many areas of loose rock, stiles, steep slopes and awkward drops which are not so easy to navigate. So, far from excluding these things from their walks, the leaders are competent to anticipate and manage them.



Walks may sometimes only be added a short while before the actual date so regular logging on is recommended.

www.themendipsociety.org.uk

SOCIETY WALKS We are now able to resume a programme of walks.

Please note: Walks will **not** be published in a printed programme as that requires them to be arranged several months in advance. Please refer to the 'WALKS' webpage for details of all walks. Owing to the limited number of Walks Leaders we may not be able to run a walk every week. If you would like to lead a walk please contact the Walks Coordinator.

1. To manage numbers, booking will be needed for most walks. Follow the appropriate link to **SignUpGenius**.
2. Non members are welcome on walks but we ask for a donation of £2 each. Some walks aimed at attracting non members will be advertised in the local press.
3. You are responsible for your own safety and for ensuring you choose a walk you can manage and are adequately equipped. **Do not attend on the day if you feel unwell or display Covid-19 symptoms.**
4. Unless otherwise stated, dogs on leads are welcome. Be aware that we may encounter cows.
5. Walks are graded as **Easy. Moderate. Harder.** (See webpage for details.)
6. Although we do not pass members' contact information to third parties, SignUpGenius' may do so as described in their Privacy Policy. For any queries please contact the Walks Coordinator.

Walks are advertised as follows on SignUpGenius, by Shirley Ousley, the Walks Administrator
Saturday 25th September 2021 Burrington Ham and Blagdon

On the day of the walk please do not attend if you are feeling unwell or display any symptoms of COVID 19. Please contact the leader, Clive Burton, tel. no. 01275 848052 or 07970609783 to record your absence.
 Meet at the car park at the bottom of Burrington Coombe, ST477 591 (BS40 7AR). Start time 2pm. An easy walk through woods and fields. Approximately five miles. Dogs welcome on a lead.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4DA4AA2BA6F8C34-saturday2>

Note from the editor – If you would like to join the walks but do not use the internet, please tell the Walks co-ordinator- contact on the back page. If you find you cannot get onto the Sign Up Genius page check your 'settings', it has been found that if you have set "allow no adverts" it will block this website because it does have adverts.

Peter Janes will be leading a walk aimed at non-members, to be advertised in the *Mendip Times* October issue, but members are welcome to join too. **Sunday 3rd October 2 pm. West Harptree and Hinton Blewitt.**

Meet at Herriots Bridge on the A368 at the south end of the Chew valley Lake (BS39 5XR) ST 571 581. Five miles starting with a stiff climb. Dogs on leads welcome but we may encounter cows. Moderate.

Non members very welcome – Contact: Peter 01761 221995 .(booking not necessary)

BOOKS, VIDEOS, REPORTS AND INTERESTING PDF's GALORE and AN OFFER

With the changing ways of doing most things these last 18 months, we are relying on better communications between us all, this is a page of bits and bobs which I hope members will glean something of interest from.

However, I realise that it definitely means there will be a lot more 'links' to be copied to be able to retrieve this information; this is wearysome and prone to mistakes.

OFFER – if you would like to receive all the links which have been used in this newsletter on one e-mail so they are clickable for ease of use, simply send an email request to judith.tranter1@btinternet.com and I will return it.

It's always interesting to be sent the description of new books and other sources of information, absorb them in varying degrees of intensity – and then pass on the details to others, and here is a small selection of some such items. Thanks to Sylvie Browne who, via the Cheddar Valley U3A, heard about a new book called '**Geology for Walkers**' from the author himself, one Steven Peacock.

Steven writes "My book is written by a geologist and walker, and constructed as a 'companion for the scientifically curious' – rather than as a textbook; it is aimed at the outdoor enthusiast / hobby geologist interested in learning more about, and developing a deeper appreciation for, the geological story around them. Overall, the goal is to add a new perspective to your walks – one that demonstrates it really is more than "just a rock".

It's available on Amazon @ £12. Link: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B091JJTZST>

The introduction page is a great picture of Llanberis Pass, from a family holiday visit, quite the rockiest place around, with the quote from his kids "Dad-it's just a rock!". I was hooked instantly because this is just what my boys were always saying to me (as they refused to carry something 'special' for me down a mountain); it's only a bit of old rock Mum. The book is full of fresh, beautifully colourful, clear relevant diagrams, drawings and photographs.

Steven also offered to 'send a peek inside' the book so that we could get a preview of what the book is like. I asked and received a pdf file, which gives a 'big peek' inside, too big, at 5MB to add to the printing size of this newsletter. However I will add it to the email of links. *R – an anticline –syncline pair of folds; St Ann's Head, Pembrokeshire Coast Path.*



In July, Blagdon History Society sent out the latest 'Blagdon Life & Times', from which I have reprinted the article on CHERT (on p 16); there were several sections on the making of the Blagdon Reservoir. A bit later the society hosted a zoom talk by Jacky Kerly, which was fascinating and well received; attending the talk was Cat Lodge, Senior Archaeologist at North Somerset Council, who a few days later sent them a copy of "Bristol Water - a social history". This is a 2021 publication by the company to celebrate their 175th anniversary. Again, this is a pdf which is too big to put in the newsletter.

Associated with the talk on the Lake we heard from Lesley Ross of the Harptrees History Society about their reprint of a book we used to have on our bookstall at talks for many years 'Before the Lake'. Here Lesley reports on the reprint.



"Chew Valley Lake was built in the 1950's to provide water for Bristol. The River Chew once flowed through a productive valley with many farms, cottages and mills home to farming families some of whom had lived in the valley for hundreds of years. Hedges with tall elms and oaks lined the lanes which crossed the valley linking the farms with the hamlet of Moreton and the surrounding villages. Everything had to be cleared except, intriguingly, one small bridge which appears when the water level drops.

'Before the Lake; Memories of the Chew Valley' was researched and written by the Harptrees History Society. The book traces the long history of the valley, from its earliest known visitors over 10,000 years ago, through occupation by Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Normans and later residents. It also recounts why and how the valley was flooded. Its main theme, however is to tell the story of what life was like in the

words of the people who lived, worked and visited the valley. Sadly, many of the people who were interviewed are no longer with us but their memories live on in this book.

The book has sold extremely well for many years but a recent reprint will enable a new generation of families to learn about the valley as it once was. It can be purchased for £12.95 from East Harptree Community Shop or by emailing lesleymross@yahoo.co.uk.

Lincoln Garland, the ecologist who conducted the breeding birds survey along the Strawberry Line last year, has just published an article entitled – "Auto-rewilding Birdlife Along the Bath River Line" on the Nature of Cities platform. This is an in depth study of the wildlife of Bath and its river.

"By shining a light on the many urban avian dramas along the Bath River Line, I reveal the amazing behavioural adaptations of birds to our highly human-modified world. Moreover, I suggest that there are as many opportunities for city-dwellers to connect with fabulous wildlife and, in particular, birdlife, as there are for their rural counterparts".

The link – <https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2021/08/17/auto-rewilding-birdlife-along-the-bath-river-line/>

TALKS AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE?

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent restrictions all 'live' meetings were abandoned instantly and it took a little while for an alternative to come to the fore – the ZOOM meeting. We, like most other groups, dabbled at putting on our talks over the screen waves, with our first one, 'Escape Across the Mendips, the flight of Charles Stuart' being given by John Price in August 2020, then two more in 2021 by Professor Danielle Schreve on 'Stones and Bones', followed by 'Volunteering on Skomer' by Dr. Roger Moses. All very successful – but there it has stopped.

We have shared the links to presentations by other groups and I'm sure that many members have also watched those put on by many other groups they research, belong to or learn about. The one most essential ingredient is however – the host of the meeting, who armed with a 'licence' from Zoom, can call and conduct a meeting lasting long enough for a good talk length and for a large enough number of attendees to be viable.

Obviously we would like to be able to restart our talks programme, and thought to offer some for this autumn season as normal by Zoom and plan a 'live-in-a-hall' selection for the New Year 2022, which of course, is dependent on our being able to meet together as we did before.



All we need now is a volunteer to host the Zoom talks for the society, (we would pay for the licence); we are looking for someone who is at home with this technology and would be happy to run perhaps one talk a month please. We already have the first talk lined up Contact secretary@themendipsociety.org.uk

As any talk details would be too late for this newsletter, we would send out a round robin as and when, so if you are interested in attending our talks, digitally or in person, it would be best to join our data base maintained by Peter Janes, Membership Secretary, the address is on the back page.

All manner of groups, large and small, charity or village are starting to operate freely now, some are a bit slow off the mark and a few have had to call it a day for all sorts of reasons. Some are even in the process of expanding, making it easier by the use of really well produced newsletters. One such newsletter arrives by email from the Blagdon Local History Society, and the latest issue carried the news of the closure of the long running group of CHERT which at their latest on-line AGM decided to disband. Some of our members were members of CHERT for many years, closely involved in their work and projects, so I asked Vince Russett, the author of the article, for permission to reproduce it – so here their expert archaeologist writes about their achievements over the past 20 years.



Charterhouse Environs Research Team, 2000-2020: a Retrospect

By Vince Russett, former North Somerset County Archaeologist

"Everything ends, and that's sad. But everything begins again, and that's happy. Be happy". The Doctor

CHERT was a community archaeology project at Charterhouse on Mendip. These projects rely on a group of volunteers, guided by a professional archaeologist, first Penny Stokes, then me, to record the history and archaeology of their local landscapes. Having previously run successful community studies at Downhead and Ashwick, Penny (then of Mendip DC) began a similar study at Charterhouse. After the emergency of foot and mouth in 2001, Penny asked me to take over, and we returned to fieldwork. I was astounded when I discovered that despite how well-known it was, no-one had even surveyed the earthworks of the Roman town before.

Our first work, then, was to collect together all the air photographs that we could, all the previously published (and unpublished) work at Charterhouse, historic photographs, including roads washed away by the 1968 floods, Bronze Age barrow excavations near Tynings Farm in the 1930s, and photographs of the Charterhouse Centre when it was a school in the 1920s. Even in 2002-3, we took an interest in the military history of the area, helping Somerset County Council to survey a uniquely surviving rocket battery site from WW2 near Tynings Farm. Our first survey however, was of the ruins of Edith Coles' cottage, in Velvet Bottom, where in 1871 six adults, a teenager and a baby had lived in a small two room building.

We rapidly expanded to three or four teams going out surveying each Tuesday, and rituals like the pub lunch (but with laptops!), the summer barbecue, summer coach trips to special sites and Christmas lunches added a social bonus. Eventually, even trips to Europe happened.



L - Summer BBQ 2009

In 2005, CHERT were part of the BBC Time Team's Big Roman Dig, allowing us to excavate in the Roman town, although frustratingly, worries about heavy metal contamination in the soil led to our section being curtailed on health and safety grounds. Geophysical survey equipment was made available to us through the Council for British Archaeology, which expanded our areas of work: we surveyed the humps and bumps of abandoned buildings, the old Roman town at Charterhouse (showing it was at least twice as big as previously thought), recorded the old boundaries of the land written down in 1181 (which turned out to be much the same as the 19th century boundaries of Charterhouse), recorded spreads of prehistoric flints, post-medieval rabbit warrens, and 19th century lead mines



A special project was to survey the MoD land at the Yoxter ranges, at the top of Cheddar Gorge. Because these had been in military hands since the 1930s, and thus protected from 20th century destructive agriculture, this promised a treat of prehistoric and later landscapes. It was a little galling to find that the area had been heavily mined for lead, and most of the landscape was the result of its being recovered from that in the 18th century.

So what did CHERT achieve in its 20 years?

It generated hundreds of surveys of sites, which will become more important as 'points in time' as the years go by; these are now in public ownership in Wells Museum. It raised awareness, both locally and regionally of the importance of Mendip: it directly inspired the then English Heritage to run a major survey of the Mendip AONB, but probably most important of all, it inspired a group of friends to spend many happy days roaming and recording our ancient precious Mendip landscape.

Website: <https://www.blagdonlhs.com/> **You Tube Channel:** [Blagdon Local History Society](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpCaBEw-IMgeXFAd6PphXIQ?)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpCaBEw-IMgeXFAd6PphXIQ?>

Email: blagdonlocalhistorysociety@gmail.com



And a Project for the Future - from the "Friends of Mendip Hospital Cemetery"

In the peaceful, colourful grounds of a cemetery in Wells, back at the end of May when it first opened for the summer with a plant sale, we met up with the Chairman of the above group, Pete Jaggard; he introduced us to Jean MacCormack, who is the driving force behind everything to do with the "garden" part of the upkeep of this lovely area. She told us of her newest project, and sent us a short item for the newsletter.

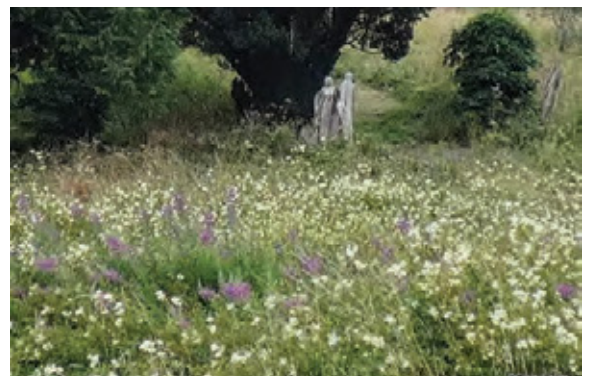
"Mendip Hospital Cemetery is the last resting place for 2,900 souls from the old Victorian Lunatic Asylum. The cemetery ground (not attached to the old hospital) was consecrated in 1874 and finally closed in 1963. The burial site was rescued from "developers" by a group of "Friends" in 2002 and is now a registered charity whose function is to maintain, enhance and preserve the ground as a cemetery first and a wild-life haven second. With all this in mind, we are struggling to cope with the 3-acre site, which is basically a field, but we do have plans to develop certain areas of it for the benefit of those visiting their relatives' graves and as a quiet place of reflection.

We would like to create a Memorial Garden for the children buried in the cemetery with no marked graves, (a design has been drawn up) and consists of a dry-stone wall forming a semi-circle around a central paved area with a log hedge forming the opposite side (mirroring the wall). Any help from dry-stone wall builders would be wonderful. There is a copse (self-seeded) in another corner of the cemetery, which we would like to improve. Help with clearing and creating a path through it, constructing log benches and making a small boundary hedge with saplings, which could later be laid, would be useful. The main work in the cemetery is the grass cutting and hedge pruning. If anybody would like to come and scythe our burial sections they would be welcomed with open arms! And anyone with a hedge-trimmer would be very useful to us". For photographs and more information visit:

www.mendiphospitalcemetery.org.uk/

<https://www.facebook.com/mendiphospitalcemetery/>

ED: At the mention of dry stone walling we could not help but enquire a bit further for more information of this lovely children's corner and of course, how we could be of help in its progress. Suffice it to say plans are afoot so watch this space. A great many lovely photos have been taken by Chris Fisher and are on her Facebook page (here with her permission).



<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=vulcanb&set=a.4403858172981174>

A GREAT BLOW FOR THE WORLD OF ARCHAEOLOGY by Judith Tranter



This photo was taken by Roger Moses and it appeared in the newsletter of December 2003; it shows Dr Jodie Lewis, at home on Mendip with Society members, pondering the significance of the East Harptree Cist. (The replica foot relief stone is the vertical one to the right. The original is in the Bristol City Museum). After the visit she wrote an article for the newsletter, and the Editor then, Peter Gearing wrote this introduction:-

“Dr. Jodie Lewis is a good friend of the Mendip Society, having successfully ‘walked the walks’ and ‘talked the talks’ for the society over a period of time, sharing her immense knowledge of Mendip archaeology. Having been a lecturer at the University of Wales, Bangor, University of the West of England and the University of Bristol as well as working in Field (Commercial) Archaeology, she has now moved on to become Lecturer in Archaeology at University College Worcester. While wishing her well, the good news is that the Society has not lost her. She says, “I have no intention of losing

Mendip contact as I have lots more research planned in the area and am keen to stay involved with the Mendip Society’.”

Jodie Lewis is a good friend of the Society – and now there is a pressing need for us to do something for Jodie, as Senior Lecturer of Archaeology at the now ‘Worcester University’

Out of the blue there appeared this announcement by Cat Lodge, Senior Archaeologist at N.Somerset Council.

“The University of Worcester have today, (17th August 2021) taken the decision to no longer offer Archaeology as a discipline with effect from the end of 2021/22 academic year. The decision was made by the University Executive Board (UEB) in the context of ‘low numbers of applications received over several years’ and ‘limited evidence to support the view that such a course of study was likely to be viable on an ‘ongoing basis’. Staff were not consulted in this final decision process”.

The full petition can be read here <http://chng.it/wRYj4rC2> where there is also a ‘sign button’.

For those on Facebook, there is a daily testimonial by ex-students and from groups like ours who have benefited from the visits of the Archaeology Faculty, led by Dr. Jodie Lewis – “[save worcester archaeology](#)”.

Every summer the students studying for this degree come to the Mendips as part of an on-going exploration of an area that Jodie knows so well, and work with the local archaeological groups, receiving visiting group like ours with good natured enthusiasm, humour and clear explanations of their work and its importance. They interact so well with the communities, and generate such enthusiasm and passion that they are now a part of the life of Mendip. All the strong, well run groups which now exist locally would not be here without their input in years past.

As I write this now a few thousand have signed, but many more thousands are needed to change the UEB’s mind; the society has signed it and a letter of protest has been sent to the UEB at Worcester. We are asking all members who can access the petition to please sign it and share to friends and colleagues also. **THANK YOU.**

A PERSONAL PLANNING POINT of VIEW from Society member Paul Selby

Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council is hoping to build a new community centre for art exhibitions, drama and dance and youth activities. Winscombe Community Association (WCA) took over the old Winscombe School, in Sandford Road, more than 30 years ago but it is now looking to build a new facility to make it more accessible to the community.

The group has set up a project entitled WinSpace – short for Winscombe New Space – and it is now exploring funding options, saying “What the village needs has changed over that time and will go on changing”.

Paul was horrified by the ideas being put forward for building on a popular, well used green open space, the loss of a historic building and everything that went with the plan and moreover his questions were being ignored and everything steamrollered ahead.

So he did what we try to promote to members in our newsletter to do whenever such a situation arises – make your own objections known, do not leave it to everyone else. He leafleted his neighbouring residents and they held a mass meeting on the 8th July at the car park of the present Community Centre in Sandford Road, meeting with the Chairman and others, when, he writes “There were very heated discussions on a wide range of issues.” He wrote – “It was admitted that they hadn’t considered the local neighbourhood concerns and had “got it wrong”. He confirmed that our issues were recorded and will be mentioned at the next AGM, however, it was later communicated that nothing could be done until the outcome of the planning application to North Somerset Council was given. At the time of writing no decision date on the application, made in June this year, was given.

Here I must apologise to Paul, that we have run out of newsletter space and the very valid list of concerns cannot be included. But it is now recorded that at least one member has done what we have urged everyone to do, and that is to make your views known. Go to <https://planning.n-somerset.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=makeComment&keyVal=QR5F8GLPJVK00>

News from the Hills



From Jim Hardcastle, Manager of the Mendip Hills Unit

A major new fund to help farmers and land managers in the Mendip Hills AONB has been announced called Farming in Protected Landscapes. Through the programme, farmers and land managers can be supported to carry out projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and cultural heritage, or support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses. This is a programme of funding for one-off projects covering these areas of work, not an agri-environment scheme.

To help do this, Defra is introducing the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, which will run from July 2021 to March 2024. The programme will be open for applications from July 2021. The fund will be available to help farmers in all our 'Protected Landscapes' – National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These unique and special places are living, working landscapes that also support a huge range of habitats and species, and they are enjoyed by millions of people every year. By supporting the farmers, land managers and people who live and work in these areas, we can help protect these exceptional places and support local communities.

In the Mendip Hills AONB, the AONB Unit will be awarding approximately £450,000 between now and the end of March 2024.

The programme is part of Defra's Agricultural Transition Plan. It has been developed by Defra with the support of a group of AONB and National Park staff from across the country. The Mendip Hills AONB Unit has appointed a Farm Engagement Officer to help farmers apply and a Local Assessment Panel to ensure awards are independently decided. For more information visit

<https://www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/caring-about-the-aonb/farming-in-protected-landscapes/>



New AONB Staff Patrick & Megan looking after Farming in Protected Landscapes

A President's View



Another Newsletter and another month into 2021!

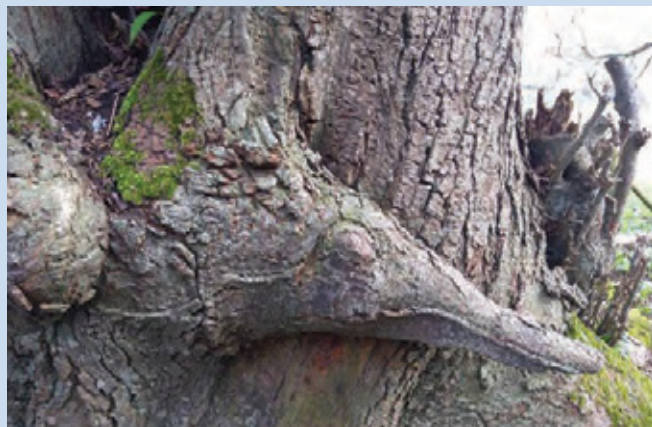
I like to think that some sort of normality is starting to emerge. The walks will begin again soon and with hope a talks programme as well.

The other good news is the Nature Reserves are literally blooming with the recent good growing conditions and help will be needed to mow the grass and rake up if anyone is feeling in need of some physical exercise. Work parties have returned to Tania's Wood and there is a bit of summer left to be enjoyed.

All sorts of activities and issues hold the attention of the Society, from planning right through to public access. The management team continue to work closely with the AONB in delivering a coordinated approach to Mendip. Keep your finger on the pulse, as your views on such things as planning issues count. Direct representation to the planning authorities is often the best way to cut off one side of a communication triangle. Tina Bath, our new Chairperson is getting to grips with the job and doing some wonderful work. The management team are still meeting and small grants are being awarded to local innovations. The newsletter will be filled with articles and views for you consider. One thing is certain and that is we do not stand still!

Finally I have added a tree shape for your enjoyment. The series in *Mendip Times* was well received and feed back from our own Judith Tranter provided a 'Scary Beast' from Tania's Wood. This is a much more demure mouse from King Wood thanks to Sue Gearing. They are after all a bit of fun and read into them what you will!

With my kindest regards to you all. **Les**

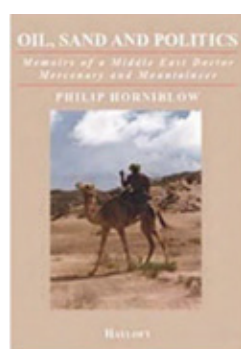


SOCIETY ROUNDUP – Judith Tranter & Pat Farrant

Philip Horniblow, OBE, mountaineer, soldier and doctor, May 1928 - August 2020.

The Society, and myself very personally, are very sad to announce the death of member Philip Horniblow, last year at the age of 92; unfortunately we were notified by his daughter Cathy just too late for the last newsletter in March this year. I say 'personally', because when I started as the manager of Slader's Leigh, back in the early 2000s, Philip was one of my first and most stalwart of volunteers, becoming a good friend and supporter over the years.

But, although he contributed to our general knowledge of 'life and everything', including how to drink cider for lunch and still wield a scythe efficiently, we just didn't know what an amazing person we had in our midst. However- the story of his life is revealed in his own book, "**Oil, Sand & Politics: Memoirs of a Middle East Doctor, Mercenary & Mountaineer**" – published January 1, 2003, Illustrated by Philip Horniblow (Author).



Unfortunately, the book is long out of print and the few copies the publisher had left went in a flash after Philip was the subject of a BBC broadcast last year on 'The Last Word', (but there is a paper back re-print in the pipeline, details when available).

Just to wet the appetite this is a review of the book from 6 years ago by an American reader, Malcolm Warneford-Thomson, who wrote: -

5.0 out of 5 stars James Bond reincarnated!

Reviewed in the United States on Aug 21, 2015

Fascinating! A great account of Phillip Horniblow's own adventures, which might have been more at home in a James Bond movie. You cannot make this kind of stuff up! What a thrilling read, I always knew that still waters ran deep!

Philip was a kind, gentle Gentleman always backing the underdog and keen to get to work on the hardest of tasks. Here he is with Sue Gearing and Les Davies in 2003 in Smitham Woods having just installed a rustic seat on the path, made suitable for wheelchair users included, to the chimney restored by the Society. Incidentally, the seat was made by the same woodworker, Roger Baker of Rickford, who made the waymark signpost shown on p 4.



There must be many who worked with Philip on the different restorative projects - ponds, flues, flower meadow, wood – that he was involved with. When the new reprint comes out I hope to complete my article begun here, in honour of a lovely man and a fine member of ours.

Philip, Sue Gearing & Les Davies on the new seat

Colin Neathey

We were sorry to learn of the death of Colin Neathey on 22nd July 2021. When the Society needed a Treasurer in 1993 Colin, with his banking credentials, was the obvious choice. He held this position until 1997 overseeing the renting of our office in Silver Street, Cheddar. Colin and his wife Mary lived in Wedmore where they were very involved in the life of the village. During this time Mary began indexing articles of interest contained in the Newsletters and she continued doing this until 1997 when ill health stopped her. This task provides an invaluable source of information and sadly no one has taken it over. When his wife died, Colin moved to London to be near his family but continued his membership in order to keep in touch with Mendip. He was a cheerful and helpful member of the committee albeit for a short time.

Pat Farrant

THE KNOTTY PROBLEM



and the solution is;
Place the two ends of your piece of string on the top of a chair back. Now fold your arms and without unfolding them pick up the ends. Now unfold your arms and the knot will appear!

This newsletter has been helpfully printed by Ian Taylor of W-s-M
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