

# Mendip

the  
**mendip**  
society

*Caring for the Mendip Hills*

for the last **50** years

The Newsletter of the Mendip Society

Issue No. 150 • August 2017



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ROCKS!  
2017**



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## UP-COMING VISITS, EVENTS AND TALKS TO ENJOY

### THE PRESIDENT'S PERAMBULATON SATURDAY 12th AUGUST 2017

"To Follow the Plough". Map sheet Explorer 154, Bristol West and Portishead.

Linked to Les' talk of the same name in April. (picture right shows the valley from his farm gate back in the days of his talk!)

A very comfortable 'bimble' around the Hales Farm, Nailsea and Wraxall area of about 4 miles along wooded paths and across fields. There will be a small amount of road walking to link up paths but no more than half a mile. Meet at the road side lay-by on the junction of Whitehouse Lane and Cuckoo Lane G. Ref ST 481 730 near the entrance to Camp Lane at 10.30AM.

Bring a sandwich and drink, but we should be back in time to visit the Black Horse pub at Clapton in Gordano. Contact Les on 07778 674985 or by email: [les.davies@westcountryman.co.uk](mailto:les.davies@westcountryman.co.uk) for more info .



### OUR SUMMER SOCIAL EVENING FOR EVERYONE TUESDAY 22nd AUGUST 2017

This summer we would like to make it as an informal occasion as possible so members, their families and friends, can come and go as they like, can chat to lots of others, if they want to, enjoy and join in with some great musical entertainment, have tasty food to choose from, relaxing on a lovely summer evening on the Mendips (all members please cross fingers now!). Bring a blanket for sitting on the lawn.



We have booked the Charterhouse Centre for both sun and rain from 5pm onwards. We will put on an 'American supper'; everyone brings a plate of something – savoury or sweet, which is put on the common table and everyone helps themselves when they want. You can get to try all sorts of things you wouldn't normally have this way! Drinks are treated the same way or you can bring something special for yourself if you wish. All plates and cutlery etc supplied.

We have invited the Barley Rye Choir to come and Peter will play his pipes for us during the evening. (The Choir will sing specifically at 6.30pm and again at 7.30pm)

There will be a plate collection for the Choir's chosen charity which this year is the 'AgeUK' – North Somerset local groups.

Bring as many friends & family as you like, with a plate per person.

Donations towards the hire of Charterhouse would be appreciated.

Dusk is around 8.20pm on this date; if the skies are clear we will be able to use the Observatory to see what we can see with Dudley, the big telescope described in the last March newsletter, with the help of Mark Woodland of the Wells & Mendip Astronomers. (So lots of finger crossing please).

### WINE TASTING VISIT TO FENNY CASTLE VINEYARD, WORTH SUNDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER 2017, 2.30pm CASTLE LANE, WORTH, WOOKEY BA5 1NL – led by Terry Gifford

Why have you wine buffs not been able to find Fenny Castle wines in the shops?

Because James and Gill Cumming sell all that they can produce themselves.

In this two hour tour James will lead us through the varieties of vines, first planted in 2011, and talk about the route Fenny Castle Vineyard has chosen through the English wines industry, before offering us a tasting of four different wines and a variety of ciders. Of course, there will also be an opportunity to purchase a bottle or two.

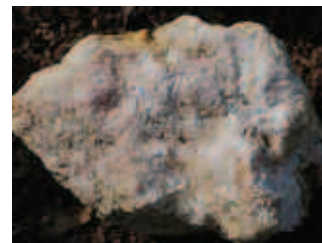
Places, for which there is a charge of £10.00, must be pre-booked with Terry by 1st September ([t.gifford2@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:t.gifford2@bathspa.ac.uk), or 01749 679128). Due to limited parking at the vineyard you can park at Terry and Gill's house, Ben Knowle Farmhouse, Worth, Wookey (first left on Castle Lane, BA5 1NL) before 2.00pm and walk up the lane. See <http://fennycastlevineyard.co.uk> for further information.





The main vineyard is divided into two distinct parts. The top half slopes steeply and the rest is more gently sloping to the south. The overall site rises from 3m above sea level to just under 50m. The geology is an interesting arrangement of Tea Green and red marl with a layer of Celestine between the two. The hill on which the vineyard stands has an area designated as an SSSI because of this interesting geology. There will be time to ask many questions of owners James and Gill Cumming such as 'do the different soils and rock types make the wine quality better or just different'?

Celestine or celestite is a mineral consisting of strontium sulfate ( $\text{SrSO}_4$ ). The mineral is named for its occasional delicate blue colour. Celestine is the principal source of the element strontium, commonly used in fireworks and in various metal alloys.



## VISIT TO BRACKENBURN, PUXTON PARK, WESTON-S-MARE THURSDAY 14th SEPTEMBER 11am



The re-scheduled visit to Brackenburn, is now on 14th Sept, all arrangements are the same, those who booked on the original date are still booked for this date, only a very few places left. Ring Judith to book 01275 874284 directions provided on booking.

## OPEN DAY AND GEO-CACHING CITO EVENT IN TANIA'S WOOD SUNDAY 24th SEPTEMBER



Hosted by Maple Leaf and Judith. Sunday 24th September 2017

Grid Ref: ST 540 588. Tania's Wood, Woodbridge Farm, Bickfield Lane, Ubley, BS40 6PX.  
(any time between 11am -3 pm)



Following on from last years event when we did so much useful coppicing, we are moving to another part of the wood to coppice another stand of hazel trees to cut stakes for the coming years hedging days, plus there will be lots of clearing out of dead trees, hedges and glades; do as little or as much as you like. Lunch around a camp fire in the Forest Schools clearing/shelter from rain and sun, (composting loo facility available ).

Bring along a picnic lunch and drinks -and even a camping chair or rug and make a day of it. Follow car parking signs.

**If the weather is really poor, check with us first on 01275 874284, before 9am; Mobile on site 07939 039554**

Left – families welcome Link to this event -

[https://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC78P7Q\\_gagb-2017-tanias-wood-cito](https://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC78P7Q_gagb-2017-tanias-wood-cito)

## HEDGE LAYING TUITION DAYS Sunday 19th & Monday 20th November

We are again offering 2 training days in hedge laying techniques at Tania's Wood; our tutors will be Tina Bath and Chris Claxton, both professional hedge layers.

Both days will run from 10am to 3pm, for a max. of 8 persons, beginner or those with some knowledge.

Because we don't have a grant this year the cost per day will be £15, includes hot lunch & drinks.

Wear several thin loose layers of clothing and sturdy footwear. Bring your own tools if you have them (bow saw, slasher, gloves etc) to get used to using them, otherwise tools are provided.

Tania's Wood, Woodbridge Farm, Ubley. Directions will be sent on booking with the Secretary by ringing 01275 874284 or email [judith.tranter1@btinternet.com](mailto:judith.tranter1@btinternet.com) and sending £15 cheque; Complete beginners catered for.

## WE HAVE –

### CYCLED FULL CIRCLE ROUND THE WORLD WITH ASTRID



Phew – and what a journey! To look at her you would never have believed it possible, slim and petite and I know she will forgive me for saying ‘no spring chicken’. And this is precisely why Astrid Domingo Molyneux set off on her two years of exciting, terrifying, often dangerous but mostly up-lifting experiences, because the time was right for her at 51 years old, to do so. What came through in her talk at Winscombe in April, was her joy at the huge number of people she met along the way who helped her out with wonderful hospitality, often saving the day for her and what glorious places she visited – all can be seen on her great website [www.cyclingfullcircle.com](http://www.cyclingfullcircle.com)

*Left – Astrid arriving on ‘that bike’ for the talk*

### THEN WE ‘FOLLOWED THE PLOUGH’ WITH THE PRESIDENT

Just one week later the hall at Winscombe filled again with members who remembered Les as Senior Mendip Warden and those slightly younger ones who know him as West Country Man, our President; there was even a visitor who had been a Primary School class mate! A lovely nostalgic meander through a time now gone for ever. But on the Coming Events pages you can find details of a ‘perambulation with Les’ through the fields and woods of those times.

### VISITED DOWNSIDE ABBEY, STRATTON-on-the-FOSSE with KATHY REDMAN

On the 3rd of May, 13 Mendip Society members enjoyed a fascinating tour of Downside Abbey and were also lucky enough to be able to view some of the rare archival treasures. This included a slave ship’s journal from 1773. The ship was sailing from Africa to the USA, and apparently the conditions on board were ‘relatively good’. The journal documented the deaths of six slaves, but no mention was made of the number of crew who died during the trip as they had little value in comparison with the slaves. We were shown an invitation to the execution of John Butler who was accused of ‘agitating rioters’ during the Gordon Riots in Bath. This started as a protest against the First Catholic Relief Act and a petition was brought before Parliament. Bath College is now near the site where he was hanged - outside of Abbey House.

A fascinating example of cross writing from 1830 was available for us to see. This method of writing was used when there was a shortage of paper. Lines of text ran vertically, horizontally and diagonally. At first glance it resembled a sort of code or puzzle. We were also privileged to see an 1539 book of ‘The travels, adventures and observations of Captain John Smith’ as well as a beautifully illuminated 14th or 15th century prayer book and also letters from the Duke of Wellington, Charles Dickens and Henry James.

The tour of the Abbey itself was fabulous. As we entered there were gasps of amazement at the spectacle before us. The community of St Gregory the Great was founded in Douai in 1606. Plans for the Abbey buildings at Stratton on the Fosse were started in 1840 and in 1882 the transept was the first part of the church to be opened. We visited the numerous chapels which were all very different but equally beautiful and each held a fascinating tale. There is so much to see that I would thoroughly recommend a visit. Although you can look around at your leisure, the conducted tours are second to none - immensely informative, interesting as well as humorous at times!







There is a visitor centre where you can have tea, coffee and cake and there is also a gift shop. You will need to check service times before planning your visit. After a delicious buffet lunch, some members departed and others joined for a beautiful walk which started from the Village Hall in Stratton-on-the-Fosse and headed along the old Roman road - the Fosse Way. This road originates from the middle of the 1st Century AD and went from Exeter to Lincoln. Various evidence of Roman occupation has been found over the years in the form of human remains, artefacts and buildings. Our route continued through Snails Bottom and beautiful woodland where the bluebells and wild garlic were much in evidence. A brief visit was made to the almost hidden Church of St Andrew's before making our way back to our starting point.

**ED – THANK YOU KATHY for a great report.**

## VISITED ONE OF THE PONDS ON MENDIP WHICH ARE BEING RESTORED

Even as the talk by **Trevor Beebee, of The Reptile and Amphibian Group for Somerset** about the restoration of the stone ponds on Mendip was happening in Wells Museum one of our members was setting about the task of rebuilding the stone walls of one such large example high on Mendip just above the Westbury Quarry. Cleared of all the slime, mud and growing trees, it was being re-pointed and made water tight by Tina Bath to form part

of the linked habitats for the great crested newt, *Triturus cristatus*; once widespread on Mendip these are now an endangered species (this applies to the ponds too!).

As well as the walls, the bottom has to be cleared and re-laid too, because of course, these ponds were also used as cart washing places as well as for stock watering. Tina and two volunteers from the Amphibian group tackle the floor – then all stonework is lime mortared to remain water-tight but also flexible.

*Photo – J Tranter*



## ENJOYED A SPECIAL INTEREST WALK AT 'ARNOS VALE CEMETERY'

On a hot and sunny afternoon, a mix of 20 members and guests got together to visit this unique site located just outside of Bristol. After decades of neglect this once overgrown area has now been transformed into 45 acres of a Victorian Garden Cemetery in a tranquil setting bound within trails and nature walks.

Our resident guide, Dave, lead us through leafy paths to visit various monuments and headstones giving us an insight into the rich vein of Victorian history; they illustrated the culture and drive which in turn lead to the making of this proud and prosperous city.

The phrase that "every grave" has a story was more than evident as Dave was always ready with a humorous and factual account of the life and times of many of the 'residents'. It is hard to believe that the first burial was in July 1839 of Mary Breillat at a time when the hillside was open fields with a clear view through Victorian smog to the industries on the River Avon. The many elaborate monuments showed just how important Victorians wanted the grandest show of wealth that they could afford, with many stones using secret symbols and signs used to express their feelings.

If you like history, then I recommend a visit to this place, and make sure you get Dave or Alan to show you around. **Richard Frost**





## ENJOYED THE PEACE OF THE WELLS MENDIP HOSPITAL CEMETERY – IN THE RAIN!

After several really hot and dry weeks the weather chose to break just as our planned visit to the cemetery in Wells was on the programme. Not deterred, a goodly group squeezed into the tiny Chapel to hear member Pete Jaggard tell us a bit about the history of the Hospital and its cemetery and how it is looked after today; he then showed us around the grounds with its poignant groups of metal grave markers and the gentle carvings of figures from whole standing dead trees, not forgetting the working bee hives busily humming. Some members left us then, with the rest led on the walk towards Dinder Wood and back along the East Mendip Way, with many thanks to Jean Mantle. And to Pete for the invitation.

*Photo – J Tranter*



## BEEN DOWN (OR RATHER 'UP') ON THE FARM

Just too late to be in the March newsletter was our visit to Fernhill Farm on the top of Mendip- a rather windy March day saw our group in the shearing shed where Andy Wear demonstrated his hand shearing skills on his spring lambs. They actually seemed to be enjoying the gentle human contact. Partner Jen showed us the end products of the fleeces in her warm studio, welcome after a tour of the farm in the March wind.

The farm is fast developing into a self-sustaining unit with its own supply of home grown resources with food from their fields and gardens, water harvesting and recycling, wood and wool to keep warm, with solar electricity and heating and a computerised log boiler. We saw the busy poly tunnels where classes are held for disadvantaged children and adults and the famous wetlands eco- treatment (WET) system, where a huge spring clearing and pruning was going on. Andy held a Q & A session as we ate our packed lunches in the renovated animal sheds, venue for all sorts of events held during the year. What a busy place!



*Our walk afterwards went through Will Woodland, now 'For Sale' and development.*

## THURSDAY 13TH JULY VISIT TO THE 'BRISTOL BLUE GLASS STUDIOS' BRISTOL

was cancelled because of low numbers booking.

## WEDNESDAY 26TH JULY VISIT TO BRACKENBURN, PUXTON PARK, WESTON-S-MARE

has been postponed until September 14th because all the 'lads' will be away playing at a County Show at the end of July. See 'Up-coming events page 3.





## GULLY CAVE, EBBOR GORGE

Those who came to the AGM in March this year heard Professor Danielle Schreve talk about the importance of the complete record of cave fill which has been recorded in the excavations there since 2006 by a team she leads from the Department of Geography at the Centre for Quaternary Research at the Royal Holloway University of London.

The dig is only for two weeks a year in their 'free' time and we were invited to go and have a look this July.

The site has changed considerably since last year. When it was put to bed for the winter at the level they had reached on the downward dig towards the cave floor there was appearing what looked like, from the inside, an archway within the rocks. Given that the team had for years, had to climb up the rock face on the outside to get into the cave, they had always felt that, to be inhabited by humans at some point, there had to be an entrance much lower down the cliff. When we arrived on July 20th they were working outside the cliff face, having removed all the loose rock etc on which we had stood when we visited previously. Painstakingly, minutely sifting and sampling makes for slow work but has to be done, bucket by yellow bucket..



*Above – by Malcolm Parsons – the viewing platform built where we sat last year, by the top cave entrance*

*Below – by Clive Burton – from the platform into the area of excavation, buckets lined up to be filled.*



*Below – Keep an eye on the area just where the young lady volunteer is leaning on her left hand, note the marker front of her. Look again at these pictures below, little did she know what exciting thing was about to happen right where she was working. Danielle was telling us why the already excavated spoil had to be moved again – when....*



"We have a break though" was the shout - and there it was – the tiny hole that is to become the lower entrance to the Gully Cave. The answer to the shout? – A stunned silence !

Then Ian scooted up the outside and into the top entrance and 'the hand appeared, ' waving from 40,000 years ago'. And so the discovery became real. You were right about another entrance, Congratulations team. Be sure to let us know what else you discover in the dig's final week

**Wasn't it fantastic that we were right there and it happened right in front of our eyes!**

**View the little video and other photos on the Website and FaceBook page.**

*Dozens of boxes of material are taken away every night to be minutely examined & recorded– it takes the rest of the year to process the two weeks' worth from the dig, taken back to London.*



## People of Mendip & the Society

**DON WALTER** *Chairman 1996-1999*



We were very sorry to learn of the death of Don Walter, there will be many of the older members who remember him with great affection. Don and his wife Pat joined the Society in October 1987; When I moved into Rickford in 1995 one of my first neighbours to call was Pat with an invitation to join in the Saturday walk, they were very keen walkers. Not too long afterwards she came again, this time with Pat

Alexander, to see if I was interested in helping with the newsletter, which Pat A. edited at the time. She didn't succeed at that attempt but I succumbed to the following one when the Society was looking for someone to take over managing Slader's Leigh from David Addison. Both Pat and Don were great personal recruiters – which we know is the very best way to increase membership.

I talked to Pat before writing this obituary she told me that before moving to Mendip from Bristol they had thoroughly researched life on the Hills and decided the Mendip Society was the way to go and had joined up before they even moved. But she was determined to not let Don volunteer for anything because, as she told me, as soon as he joined any Society the inexorable drift to 'Chairmanship' started – and he hadn't left any of the clubs and groups he belonged to in the city, behind either. She wasn't too successful though; very soon Don was elected onto the Management Committee as Secretary and did considerable work in the planning field and Pat was involved in running the walks and talks programme and the book stall.

However, in 1993, Pat, organising the AGM, got Don to help with tables etc, someone saw him at work and proposed him for the post of Vice- Chairman to Vic Dennison's Chairman. He was duly elected but following the death of Vic in 1996, became Chairman of the Society until 1999 when he subsequently became Vice Chairman again and in charge of the newly formed small grants scheme. He was also a keen and popular walks leader and he and Pat organised a very successful group visit of walks and talks for 33 members to Halsway Manor on the Quantocks in 1998. One particularly important planning project which Don was involved with was the successful opposition to Sedgemoor District Council's proposals for the development at Brean Down Fort right at the start of his tenure.

They were both greatly missed when they moved back to Bristol in 2001 although Don continued to audit the Society's accounts until his death. It was a pleasure working with Don and although committee meetings can be a bit tedious if you're not careful, we always felt we had accomplished something with Don in the Chair!

**Pat Farrant & Judith Tranter**

## CONGRATULATIONS TO MYA-ROSE

Winner of this years Environmental Youth Award, presented by Les Davies, Chairman of the Judges, at the Bath & West Show. Photo by courtesy of Mark Adler, Mendip Times



Society President Les Davies MBE wears many hats and is part of many organisations, always with an eye to furthering new ideas and projects. Mya-Rose, still aged only 15 and at Chew Valley School has founded Black2Nature which helps Black and Asian adults and children living in Bristol to get to know and enjoy the great outdoors we have in the Mendip hills and valleys. As she is also a Young Ranger for the Mendip Hills it's sure we will be seeing more of Mya-Rose in the future – especially if Les has anything to do with it.

### Calling All Walkers - Public right of Way AX15/1

You may have heard that PROW AX15/1, which for 70 years has run from Barton Road, Webbington straight up a track to the N.T. boundary, has been closed for over 2 years. Unfortunately, the Definitive Map shows the PROW in a slightly different location where there has never been a PROW. Meanwhile the upper section of the historic PROW has been excavated, a camera & 'No Trespassing' sign installed and barricades erected on NT land, to discourage/ prevent use of the said PROW. The issue is currently being investigated by SCC which is liaising with Compton Bishop PC. In anticipation of a request from SCC for statements from walkers & to assist with the speedy re-opening of the PROW, would anyone who has used the historic PROW any time in the past 70 years please contact Compton Bishop PC's Clerk at [comptonbishoppcc@hotmail.com](mailto:comptonbishoppcc@hotmail.com)

*Mike Rolfe Society Sedgemoor Planning Scrutinizer.*



## ONE GATE – ONE MEMBERSHIP – A FAIR EXCHANGE?



*Diana at her new garden gate*

When member Diana Hill, who lives in Ubley village and knows Tania's Wood well from the days when she used to do dormice surveys there with Glyn England, visited us on one work day this spring she noticed the huge piles of branches we had about. These were left after Western Power cleared a line of trees under the power cable crossing the wood. Could the volunteers make her something out of these bendy bits of wood please? Malcolm Parsons took up the challenge and made Diana what she really wanted – a 'rustic garden gate' to replace hers which had rotted and fallen off its hinges. Malcolm fitted it to the original hinges and it works beautifully. Diana was so pleased with it she gave Malcolm a membership of the society for him and his wife. A great way of increasing membership and getting a new garden gate at the same time – so yes, a fair exchange.



*Malcolm assembling the gate in Tania's Wood.*

## FROM THE CHAIR – Spring 2017

Everything continues to be well on track within our ideas and plans, the new walks programme begins in September, and our thanks go to John Moore and all the walks leaders who step up to ensure that we enjoy our regular Saturday afternoons. The walks are now beginning to attract many new members in a very encouraging way, and ensures a strong social bond that is evident amongst our regular group. Our last varied programme included visits to Downside Abbey ( thanks Kathy) and Mendip Hospital (thanks Judith) and Chancellors Farm ( thanks Gill & Kate Lawrence), and Arnos Vale. The Facebook page is proving popular with lots of comments and photos which is keeping our editors busy.

Our involvement in the forthcoming Mendip Rocks Festival will see us featured as leading some of these events with a "hands on" approach. Walks leaders, Chairman and President are all involved in events, ensuring our profile is well and truly visible.

Our bi-monthly article in The Mendip Times is proving very popular and attempts at journalism is proof that it is harder than it looks! How Les Davies manages to fill a page every month proves what a grand fellow he is !

The Society's ever growing involvement in Gully Cave at Ebbor Gorge is starting to get very exciting and it is satisfying to be thoroughly involved in this local and soon to be national project . My thanks to Judith for being the person who put this on the Societys map !

In conclusion I wish to thank all the Committee and many others who have helped and given their time to ensure that the aims and aspirations of the Society can be met.



**Richard Frost**

# The Case for High-Density Compact Cities

by Lincoln Garland CEnv MCIEEM ; Associate Director, Biodiversity by Design

As the UK's population and housing demand increases, harm to the environment can best be avoided through well-designed, sustainable, compact urban development, which promotes use of brownfield sites and avoids low-density urban sprawl. To this end, the role of the ecologist is more vital than ever to ensure that the increasingly densely populated urban realm does not become devoid of greenery and ecologically impoverished.

## Introduction

Recently I was in discussion with a Local Authority ecologist who was bemoaning the high-density new developments in his city, and the apparent adverse implications for urban biodiversity and the environment more generally. Unthinkingly I nodded in solidarity, in opposition to the 'town crammers' as they are disparagingly labelled (see Lock 2015).

To counter the wider trend towards urban densification, there has been talk of revitalising 'garden city' living in the UK. The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) published 'Creating Garden Cities and Suburbs Today' (2012); a recent Conservative-backed report has proposed a new 'Thames City' – an expanded London zone featuring 40 new garden developments surrounding the capital; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer has established a Garden City Development Corporation at Ebbsfleet in Kent.

But is low-density 'garden city' living really the urban development model that ecologists should be supporting? In this article, I argue that our profession should be more aware of the often under-acknowledged sustainability concerns linked with this approach, and instead make the ecological and wider environmental case in favour of high-density, compact city living. In taking this stance, I am not giving up on the wildlife of our towns and cities. Rather, I strongly believe that ecologists must be integral to the urban planning and design process. We must, though, become smarter in our efforts to integrate biodiversity into urban areas where space is increasingly at a premium.

## History of the compact urban living movement

Low-density garden city living was first envisioned by John Ruskin and Ebenezer Howard in the nineteenth



*Above: Relatively formal, non-native but nectar-rich, herbaceous courtyard planting within the Crest Nicholson Centenary Quay development in Southampton; design by Allan Scott Architects and Biodiversity by Design.*

century in response to the pollution, poor sanitation and overcrowding of Victorian cities. The movement gained momentum in England after 1945 when urban housing densities declined markedly in response to changing aspirations, rising incomes, and planning policies supporting spacious urban extensions and the building of new towns (Whitehead 2012).

More recently, many economists and urban planners have challenged the merits of the post-war trend towards low-density living. They argue that well-organised, compact urban agglomerations achieve economies of scale, and are more economically productive and competitive (Glaeser 2012). Although counterintuitive, the creation of compact densely populated urban centres also has many environmental benefits, recognition of which is certainly not new and dates back at least to Jane Jacobs' seminal 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs' ideas later inspired the Ahwahnee principles in the USA in the early 1990s followed by the New Urbanism and Smart Growth movements. All of these approaches to urban design seek to avoid low-density urban sprawl by promoting compact, transit-oriented, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly urban development.

Partly in response to these movements, the trend towards lower housing densities has been reversed in the UK. The mean density of new houses built in England nearly doubled between 2000 and 2009, from 25 to 43 dwellings per hectare, while densities for brownfield sites and in London rose even higher (DCLG 2010). This trend has been encouraged by





*Above: Figure 3. Living (green) roofs established across the London Olympic Athletes' Village at Stratford as analogues of four key priority habitat types; design by Vogt and Biodiversity by Design. Photograph courtesy of Olympic Development Authority*

demographic changes, i.e. a growing population and declining household size; government policy, especially protection of the greenbelt and a presumption in favour of brownfield development (the so-called 'brownfield first' policy); and market pressures.

### **Environmental effects of urban sprawl**

The environmental rationale in favour of high-density compact cities gained momentum with the arrival of the 'Urban Millennium' in 2007, when the majority of the world's population became urban for the first time in human history (UNDESA 2009; the figure is 82% in England and Wales). David Owen (2011) and Edward Glaeser (2012) have in particular championed the cause, highlighting how the post-war growth in low-density urban sprawl (including commuter settlements beyond the suburbs) has resulted in higher car usage per capita in these areas compared with more densely populated urban centres. People drive significantly more to work, shop, and take their children to school, increasing congestion and air pollution. Transport accounts for 21% of UK greenhouse gas emissions (DECC 2015), whilst other exhaust output, including nitrogen oxides, particulates, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons, has a much more immediate and local impact on both the health of people and wildlife. Low-density, leafy, residential development may include lots of green space but the environmental benefits are undone because the residents drive so much (Glaeser 2012).

By contrast, those living in urban centres are far less inclined to drive because services are readily accessible by foot or public transport. Policies are also



*Above: Award-winning linear wildflower meadow created in the heart of Bristol in Crest Nicholson's Harbourside development; design by Grant Associates and Biodiversity by Design. Photograph courtesy of Grant Associates.*

in place to constrain car use in cities, e.g. restricted and costly parking charges; road capacity not being expanded to ease congestion; and a congestion charge in London. Car use in London, and in many other densely populated cities in the developed world, is no longer growing and may be declining relatively as population densities increase – the so called 'peak car phenomenon' (Metz 2015).

In low-density suburbs, homes tend to be larger and predominantly detached or semi-detached. They use more energy because heat consumption is correlated with floor area (Palmer and Cooper 2012). These homes also have a higher wall area to floor area ratio compared with flats and terraced housing and thus have greater heat loss in winter. In 2010, the residential sector accounted for 31% of the UK's carbon emissions (DECC 2010).

Taking a global environmental perspective, urbanisation is continuing apace in the developing world, led by India and China. Global carbon emissions could soar were these countries also to adopt leafy suburbs, large homes and the cars those suburbs entail (Glaeser 2012).

***EDITOR: Lincoln Garland lives in Sandford and is a great supporter/advisor of the many residents' groups now battling against the overwhelming tide of development adjacent to the Mendip Hills in our area, threatening to join our rural villages together. This article is in two parts because of the limitations of space in the newsletter. Please keep this part 1 and combine it with part 2 in the December issue for a complete reading.***

## TANIA'S WOOD AND SLADER'S LEIGH RESERVES THIS SUMMER

We have had several good work days with the AONB Task Volunteers helping us to make the wood ready for the children of Blagdon to enjoy on their Forest School days. Obviously, especially with the smallest children, things have to be safe but they also need to have some challenges left to stretch their imagination and increase skills. We have cleared an area under a group of tall pines for their 'home base' and strung a strong tarpaulin (kindly supplied by the AONB) between the trunks for shelter from rain or sun. Nicky Orr, the trained leader, has built a composting loo even the tiniest tot can manage, they have a story telling circle made of felled tree trunks and a fire pit in the middle. All set for exploration and activities. First trial run was in the Easter holidays - great fun was had by all; now Nicky is running two sessions in August for Blagdon Youth Week. She also has a programme of holiday days in August – ffi 07967 619260/nicscientist@hotmail.com



*Left – Boys being boys: Middle – And girls: Right – “We made hard eggs with patterns on” (and ate them!)*

The felled trees mentioned earlier were not done by us but by Western Power. The wood has two sections of high voltage cables crossing over it, power companies used to go in every 5 years and lop the trees growing under them. Now the policy, to cut costs, is to completely fell everything along the line, so in May we lost 7 lovely full grown trees from the upper wood. Several tall bushy clumps lower down which were in fact growing on the Deer Leap bank, also went but we were grateful to Hi-Line Contractors who cleared those for us and chipped everything up as we were planning to clear them anyway. The big trees did not fall in vain as the rounds from their trunks fill all sorts of niches.



### Sunday 19th and Monday 20th November

On page 3 you will see that we are running two more hedging days in November; we were very pleased with the results of those we held early this year, mostly with complete beginners. This is a skill in great demand now, proved by the difficulty we had in securing the services of our tutors this time, so come along and try for yourself.

*L – the hedge laid in January this year, seen here in June*

### Meanwhile a different sort of 'laying' has been happening in SLADER'S LEIGH.



Bristol Water have been having difficulties with putting the water pipe to Axbridge Reservoir through Shute Shelve tunnel because of rockier ground, bats etc but finally closed the Strawberry Line in June and made a diversionary way through our meadow. But the Line will be open for the school holidays in August because this is the month when all the businesses and attractions along the line make the money to keep them going for the rest of the year. Our section of the tunnel by-pass starts in the N.T. car park on Winscombe Hill, going on down Yadley Lane to the reserve.

This lane had become very deeply rutted because of the water running off the hill and quite difficult to walk down, now the ruts have been filled and surfaced with spoil and will benefit our visitors no end. In the meadow at first sight in June you would be forgiven for thinking it was a scene of devastation (left).



For a couple of weeks rather large looking machinery filled with building materials came, tipped, went, scraped and dumped soil, stones, recycled plastic grids and stone dust, activity to which we had to shut our eyes and cross our fingers. The local firm which has the 'fence & construct' contract for this last section of the Strawberry Line were very good and careful for which we are grateful; once the whole project is finished, estimated to be mid November, then we can set about returning the meadow to normal. The grass grids are staying and without a liner underneath the grass should reclaim the path quite quickly, providing a firm base for an area which so often in the winter became worn, muddy and slippery. In the meantime cyclists and walkers can pass through with the flowers still in evidence to the sides of the path and the quiet seat beyond the pond still very much an accessible quiet place.



The pond is another matter altogether!



For all up-to date information on the works on the Strawberry Line please log in to their website.-  
<http://www.bristolwater.co.uk/.../work-in-your-area/southern.../>



LEFT – Somewhere, in the middle of all this vegetation is the pond, until recently a working pond, home to frogs and newts but unfortunately a bit neglected in recent years. It is slowly infilling and needs a lot of care and attention SOON. To which end we have a couple of work days planned for **Wednesdays 15th & 29th of November**, when we hope to clear the pond and coppice some of the trees which are again creeping out from the woodland edges. In September we will be cutting the meadow, either by hand or machine, but both methods need volunteers to help, especially with raking and tipping the risings. **Please keep an eye on the website and on FB 'The Mendip Society' for dates.**

### And Richard got this one in before they shut the Line – “A Walk down the Line”

At the request of the Backwell Ladies walking group, I lead a walk from the Sandford Station Heritage Centre to the Shute Shelf Tunnel on a warm, sunny day.

The subject of railways and their influence on the national and local population has always been of great interest to most of us. So what better place to describe its effect and growth than to start at The Sandford Station Heritage centre with its wealth of railway memorabilia and atmosphere. I am sure that they will all return for refreshments when it opens at the weekend ! We walked along the line describing the workings and effects of how this line was the life blood of the Cheddar Valley.

### The Backwell Ladies – Before the Off – first get them all facing in the same direction!

A description of Winscombe Station was also taken in with a stroll up to the entrance of the Shute shelf Tunnel with all its distinctive features of that age. It was a pity that on this occasion the Tunnel was closed due to the actions of Bristol Water, but a visit to our Nature Reserve at Slader's Leigh gave us the brief chance of getting a view of the tunnel, albeit it from a distance. The day was rounded off with a return walk back to Winscombe and lunch at The Woodborough with its varied menu. – **Richard Frost**



# Mendip ROCKS! 2017



As part of the Society's programme to expand our activities into East Mendip, and to play our part as sponsors of this years Mendip Rocks Festival, we shared a stand with the Earth Science Centre at the Frome Festival in July.

## MENDIP ROCKS! FESTIVAL EVENTS LISTING 2017

### “ROCKTOBER”

**SAT 30TH SEPT – SAT 28TH OCTOBER**

“Rocktober” – a month of events to celebrate the 450 million year geological history of the Mendip Hills. Events for all; family fundays, guided walks, and tours of working and disused quarries, rock climbing sessions, practical drystone walling, arts workshops and geology field visits. We celebrate the festival finale with a day of inspiring geology talks to discover “The Mendip Hills through the Time Tunnel” – at Wells Museum.

Most events free or small donation.



The plan was to promote the forthcoming month of activities, including walks, talks, and quarry visits which should appeal to those with an interest in Geology and how it affects our everyday life.

Despite the event at Frome being based around various food in its many forms, it is always the attraction that fossils and dinosaurs have on young children that prove to be the draw. The Science centre provided many examples of the local rocks which soon became the focal point of interest for the children and their parents.

Using the link of the Rocks Festival programme of events to show just how

the Mendip Society plays a part in local life kept us busy as we talked to as many people as time would allow. This is just part of our ongoing programme of promoting our activities in the hills and only time will tell if we have any success.

The Society as a sponsor of Rocktober is leading 4 of the walks on the programme – Coal Mines & Mining (Roger); A Tale of Two Quarries (Terry, who is also leading climbing sessions); A Geo-caching Teaching Walk (Maple Leaf) and Mendip Lead Mining (Richard). We will be in attendance at several large events to publicise the Festival with rock based activities, including the launch in Wells on Saturday 28th September when our stand will be outside the Wells Museum at the Cathedral Green please do come and see us. We will also be at the Ebbor Gorge Family Activity day on Sunday 22nd together with another sponsor, the Mendip Hills AONB. The programme leaflet will actually first be available on Saturday 9th September on the AONB/M.S. stand at the South West Outdoor Festival. This celebrates outdoor adventure as well as live music, film, food and guest speakers – an inclusive event with experiences for all ages and abilities. The Rocktober Festival has a huge choice of activities, things to do and see and take part in – some of them have limited places and need to be booked so the sooner you get your hands on a copy of the programme the sooner you are ensured of a place and won't be disappointed. See the National Trust website for all the SWOF details [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/days-out/regionsouthwest/south-west-outdoor-festival](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/days-out/regionsouthwest/south-west-outdoor-festival)



## News from the Hills

*From Jim Hardcastle,  
Manager of the Mendip Hills Unit*



### Behind the Scenes of the New Mendip Hills AONB Visitor Guide

A wild land  
ready for  
adventure.  
Really? This is  
the headline  
we've used in  
our new visitor  
guide though.  
So why have we  
done that?

First let's look at the primary purpose of AONB designation; to conserve and enhance natural beauty. "In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses. Reference: Countryside Commission CCP356 (1991)"

Therefore the visitor guide has to work at several levels. Most obviously it has to inform people about where to go in the area. But we also want it to be a tool for conservation management, destination marketing and economic development.

*Jim will tell us more about the new guide in the next newsletter. In the meantime download your copy at <http://www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/visiting-the-mendip-hills/>*

### Quick Update

Talking of adventure, the National Trust is organising the South West Outdoor Festival above Black Rock 8th-10th September. A weekend of adventure, speakers, films, camping and more thrown in; the web address is given on p 14.

The Class of 2017 Young Rangers will start in September. The last cohort graduated in July and two even had the chance to visit Switzerland that month as part of the Europarc Junior Ranger Camp. And we haven't forgotten the walkers. The Limestone Link will soon be getting new waymarkers and more promotion!

## A President's View



Dear all,

I do hope that you have all managed to get some time to yourselves to enjoy a real summer! It would appear that it's the warmest June for quite some time. I have compared it to 1977, not quite as hot as '76 but still warm enough. And it never fails to amaze me just how quickly the walks programme fills up. I am just about to do my annual tour with the University of Georgia USA, but on my return I will be doing the Recce for my contribution to the Society's walks in North Somerset. This is the follow up from my talk in Winscombe, 'To Follow the Plough'. Thank you to all those who turned up that night, I was quite astounded at the turn out.

Again in the pages of this edition of the Society's newsletter you will find that a lot has happened and a lot is about to happen. The summer social is being held at Charterhouse, an ideal location; unfortunately I will be on holiday, but I do hope that everyone has a great time.

Those of you who have been on Burrington Ham lately may have noticed some excavation has taken place. This is the pipeline to a new drinking trough that has been installed prior to stocking the Common again. The Commons have just gone into a new conservation scheme where livestock grazing is being seen as a key feature. I will keep you all updated on further progress.

Finally, a big thank you to all the management team who keep us going! There is always a need for extra help, no matter how much or how little time you have to spare.

My very kindest regards and best wishes to you all – **Les**

## Society Roundup

WITH NEWS & VIEWS FROM  
THE SOCIETY AND OTHERS  
From the Editor

### IMPORTANT THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

An important change to note is the way people can get in touch with us – we have now closed our P.O. box as it wasn't much used; instead we use the two addresses given in the box below.

The great news is that we have a **NEW WEBSITE** and a **NEW FACEBOOK PAGE**, 'The Mendip Society'

All we need you to do is visit them both (and click the 'LIKE' button on the latter, as many times as you can. This will push them up the Google listing and make it easier for casual Visitors to find us. Our Webmaster John Moore would like those who take photos on walks and visits, in fact on any occasion, to send them into him on this address, **mensocphotos@gmail.com**

He says: 'Please note that the Mendip Society may put on extra events and walks. (There were 5 during the last programme!) These will be publicised on our new website **themendipsociety.org.uk**

Also we will use the website to announce changes to events or walks if necessary (e.g. for exceptionally bad weather). (Also note that our old website **mendipsociety.org.uk** is now obsolete and should not be used)'

### A MENDIP YEAR

Whilst on the subject of photographs- I am very disappointed to report that I have had to cancel the project to produce a Society calendar called 'A Mendip Year 2018' – the reason? Only Les Davies the President has sent in some photos to be considered for inclusion. When I think of the gorgeous photographs that are put onto Facebook and those sent into the website I cannot understand how no-one can be bothered to send one in for a calendar. I can only conclude that calendars are 'out' this year, not thought viable or are maybe just 'passé?'. It would be good to know what you do think would be a worthwhile publicity project to pursue? Answers on an e-mail postcard please.

### WELL DONE COFFIN LANE GROUP

I was just meandering around FaceBook pages one evening, just looking you understand- when I must have pressed something because this appeared.

"And here's why @StrawbLine got it's name - it used to carry Cheddar's strawberries in it's hey day



Great to hear @BristolWater are pioneering tunnel lighting that works for people & horseshoe bats at Shute Shelve Tunnel on the @StrawbLine"

Now , I know it's Twitter but beyond that I don't use a mobile phone (no reception at home) so I have no knowledge of how it works.

But I'm sure that there are Members out there who do use a mobile and do know how Twitter works; we are looking for such person(s) who will work with us to start and maintain a Twitter feed for the Society, to compliment our website and FaceBook page. We are told it is a 'must' for communication in today's world.

Please ring/e-mail Chairman Richard Frost and drag us out of the dark ages!



**for a safe footpath and  
cycleway between Cross and Axbridge**

The year ended on a positive note with news that we can expect 2018 to see the construction of the pedestrian refuge across the A38 and a footpath linking the footpath already constructed by us around the junction of the A38 and Cross Lane to the public right of way across the fields to Axbridge. And –

Our appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against the delay in deciding our application to modify the definitive map to add the footpath at the Cross end of Coffin Lane was successful. Recognizing that the footpath was required for safety reasons, SCC were ordered to determine our application by January 2018.

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