

Mendip



From the Chair – Tina Bath

After what has been a fabulous summer the Mendip Societys' two reserves have both shown a perfect display of flora and fauna – in Slader's Leigh the vast volumes of plants have now gone to seed and the cutting and raking are in progress; the Society, pre-covid, had cut the reserve using scythes and fully intend to return to scything this year, if all works out as planned..

As part of the Mendip Hills AONB 50th Anniversary 5 trees were planted in our reserves – Green Beech, Sweet Chestnut and Hornbeam in Tania's Wood and a Rowan and an English Oak in Slader's Leigh. The latter was planted by a student and staff from nearby Sidcot School. We are proud to host this number of the 50 trees, all of which are all also part of the Queens Green Canopy. L- The stake going in; C Sidcot Student, staff & David Tranter; R The new oak tree in July.



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Tania's Wood has had its paths kept open by Society volunteers, so Blagdon Primary could run its Forest School during the summer term and the final year leavers could really enjoy their last Forest School day at the end of term.

We hosted a Diggers Supper on one evening at Chancellor's Farm (thank you to Kate Lawrence) during the Gully Cave dig; we were quite cosy in the classroom; thank you to the members of the Committee for your hard work.

Now to the rest of the year:-

The Society is sponsoring the printing of the classes schedule at the Annual Mendip Ploughing Society Match on Wednesday the 28th September, our Marquee will be there flying the Flag, please came along and say hello.

October will see the opening of this year's Mendip Rocks Festival- again a joint event with the Earth Science Centre and the AONB, with plenty of events taking place including a 'Haydon Colliery Geo Walk' on the 23rd October lead by our walks leader coordinator Richard Frost. We are sponsoring the Posters and Leaflets for the event.

In November we partner The Windrose Rural Media Trust in an evening of film, songs and music from 50 years (and more) of Mendip Life and Times and People – to be held in Shiphams village hall on the 19th from 7-9pm, tickets will be bookable on Event Bright from September 1st and also by phone through Peter Janes and the AONB (see p 17).

It looks like it's going to be a very busy Autumn – we do hope that members will join in with some of these events and help bring the Society back to 'buzzing activity and enjoyment'. We would welcome any offers of help at any of these events – please contact myself or the Secretary- details on the website or the last page of this newsletter.



The New Boy

Hello.

My name is Mike Harvey, I have been a member of the society for around eight years, but very much on the fringes until recently due to other commitments. However, having now retired from full time work, I feel I will have a bit more time to indulge my interest in our local area and, following an appeal from Judith, have offered to help out with this newsletter and some of the other tasks required to keep information flowing around the society.

A little background about me.

I grew up in the area (Weston-super-Mare) and spent a lot of my youth roaming the Mendips, walking, caving and generally enjoying the countryside. My family can trace our local roots back several hundred years, so my affinity with Somerset and the Mendip hills runs deep. My partner and I now live in Churchill where she keeps and rides horses and I indulge my love of photography and exploring the countryside. I am also an Honorary Industrial Fellow at Bristol University and a director of a Not-for-Profit company which aims to promote the creative industries in the South West.

My role (as I see it)

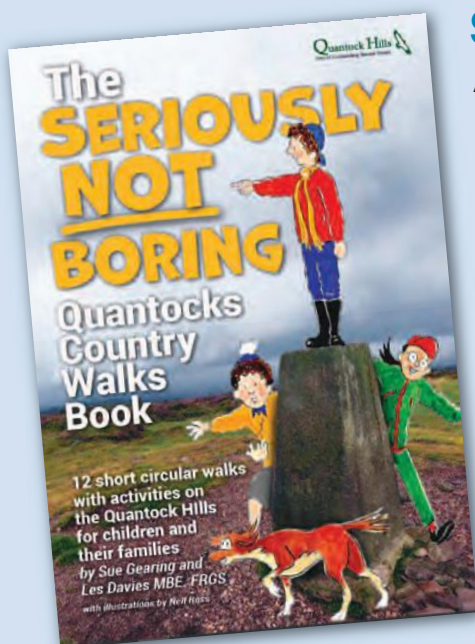
What I am not here to do is upset the apple cart or start a revolution. My hope is that by supporting Judith and others already involved I can help the newsletter evolve and develop by offering help as and where they feel appropriate. This may well involve overseeing new features, helping with graphics and layout, plus a bit of feature writing, editing etc. For now, here are a few specific things that I have been asked to look at.

Cover design. My plan is to start to use the front cover as a showcase for members photography. The Mendips are such a photogenic area I feel sure many of you have great images to share. I'll outline the sort of thing we are looking for elsewhere.

Gully Cave Visit. The subject of my first article for the newsletter.

Book Corner. Featuring books by local authors, especially on subjects of interest to members. This may start slowly, but I hope it will develop over time.

I hope to meet and get to know more and more of you all over the coming months and would welcome your thoughts, suggestions and criticism (be gentle please!). So, if you see the chap above, probably pointing a camera at the wildlife when you are at a society event, come and say hi. – **Mike Harvey**



STOP PRESS – from the Editor

An exciting new walk book has just been launched with twelve walks exploring the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Part of the 'Seriously Not Boring' walking book series developed by our own local authors Sue Gearing and Les Davies, the book allows people to explore the wonderful Quantock Country as well as providing a host of activities for people of all ages.

The walks range from between 2.4 to 5.2 miles and are based on the hilltops, the coast and the historic fringing farmland allowing readers to explore areas of the Quantock Hills usually hidden from visitors. They include fun things to do - such as making a compass in a puddle, sticky stones, building a small shelter and finding the age and height of a tree. So - join Tom, Mia, Kate, Sam, Harry and the Scamp the inseparable dog on these circles of discovery and adventure.

The book will be available to buy from the Quantock hills website at <https://www.quantockhills.com/publications> and from Brendon Books in Taunton. Reasonably priced at £5 plus £2 postage.

Cover Photograph Criteria – Mike Harvey

Would you like to see your picture on the front cover of our next newsletter?

(Please say yes – I don't want to be the only one). Then here are a few simple guidelines we need you to follow.

Please do be aware that I will choose based on these "rules" and my decision will be final, i.e. not open to discussion.

(Judith says so!)

1. The only prize is the acclaim and kudos of having your photograph featured on the front cover of The Mendip Society Newsletter – but what more do you want?
2. The image should be of something connected with the Mendips, or an event run by The Mendip Society.
3. The image should be the members original work, permission to use it is implied by submitting it for consideration. We reserve the right to use any image submitted, with credit to the photographer, in any other form associated with The Mendip Society. This may include, but is not limited to; Posters, Banners, leaflets, Website, Social Media etc.
4. The image needs to be in portrait format or large enough to be cropped into a portrait layout. (See 6 below).
5. The image needs to not be too "busy" with plenty of room to place logos and straplines without obscuring important details such as faces etc. Critically nothing of interest should be too near the edges of the page.
6. The image needs to be a digital high resolution one that can fill an A4 page without becoming fuzzy or pixelated*. Some camera phones will take images suitable for use, most modern digital cameras will certainly be able to do so.



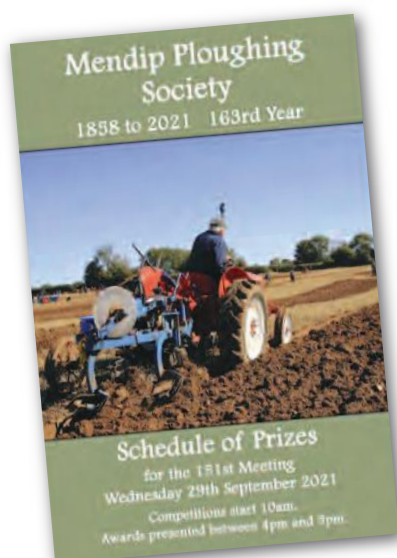
I look forward to seeing your images and choosing one to feature next time around. Please send as JPEG or PNG files to: photos@themendipsociety.org.uk or by using a file transfer service if you prefer with this e-mail as the target.

Previously we have used wettransfer.com, a free service for files up to 2Gb. (Though please don't make your photos this big!) You do not need to open an account with them, just follow the on-screen instructions.

Oh, and one last thing. In order to be in time for the next edition, please send your pictures by November 20th latest.

*For the technically minded, ideally around 2550 X 3580 pixels.

IT'S GOING TO BE A BUSY AUTUMN – IN SEPTEMBER THERE IS: The Mendip Ploughing Society ploughing match 2022 on Wednesday 28th September



on land at '100 Acres', Yoxter, Priddy, Wells BA5 3BS,
by kind permission of Yeo Valley Farms Ltd.

All the times and prizes of the tractor and horse ploughing classes, plus those of the walling and agricultural classes will be printed in a schedule like the one for 2021 shown on the left sponsored by The Mendip Society.

We are pleased that once again we will be sponsoring this year's schedule, to give our support to the promotion and encouragement of the countryside and its farmers and the traditional skills that are needed to maintain the Mendip way of life.

We will be there, with the Society gazebo, supporting our dry- stone wallers and promoting our Small Grants Programme; help on the day would be very welcome. Come and enjoy a 'grand day out' free entry and good parking, marvellous views, lots of activity - the perfect place to capture that photograph which could adorn our front cover in the December issue wouldn't you say?

THE BEDMINSTER COALFIELD

A SOCIETY VISIT by Richard Frost

I have long had an interest in the mining industry, especially when it was in its early days. Ever since Neolithic Man started digging with very basic tools right up to the present day with all its progress in often incredible projects, it is a record of great achievement. The Industrial Revolution began about 300 years ago with Britain leading the way; all over the country Man started to extract minerals with great energy. In our own area, the Somerset Coalfield covered a big part of North & East Somerset and Bristol plus South Gloucestershire.

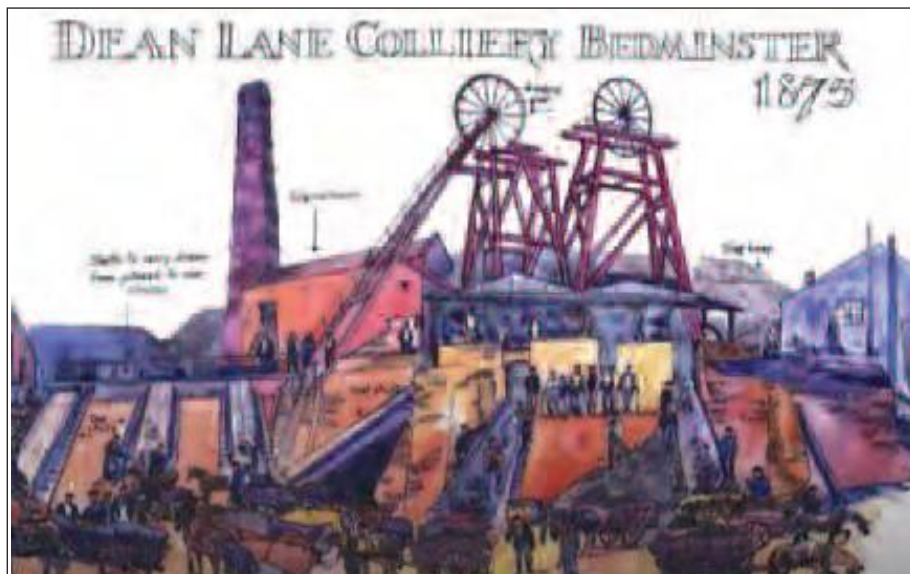
I thought to myself – So if I am interested in all this, maybe others are as well?

So armed with as much interesting information as I could gather, I led a walk around the suburb of Bedminster to visit as many of the sites of the old working coalpits of this small area as it is possible to access. As our group of about twelve walked about the area many questions were asked about the conditions and the Community as we visited places; now mostly developed over time, some of which required quite an active imagination.

Mining started in the late seventeen hundreds when Bedminster was a rural area and over the next hundred years its population went from 4,000 to 20,000 with the result that the area went from green to 'black grim' in that time.

During its time, the depths worked varied from 250 to 3,000 feet showing the fast growth of technology and product demand. The seams were notoriously thin – between only two to four feet thickness as an average. The number of pits varied but there were about 18 main sites producing 525,000 tons in 1870 to 1,072,300 tons in 1912.

The coalfield finally closed in 1925, the last pit being the South Liberty Pit; its site is now a long established industrial unit. On the walk we were in quite suburban areas where the pits were sited, taking quite a lot of imagination to think just what it had looked like in those days, however, it's always good to discover small clues in places, and some stories too.



For example the Deans Lane Pit which was one of the earliest and biggest. The place is now a park and where the shaft was is now a children's swing area and the actual workings extended under what is now Temple Meads Station. The miners working the seams called the odd rumbling noise they could hear 'a Ghost Train', whereas it was actually the new-fangled railway running not far above them! The most southerly point was under Dundry Hill about 4 miles away. The Deans Lane pit closed in 1906 with the loss of over 400 jobs.

Mining was a very dangerous occupation with flooding the main problem as pits broke through into another nearby which had been abandoned and flooded. Gas was a more minor problem but the explosion at

Deans Lane in 1886 killed 10 miners with another 10 at Malago Vale in 1895. Frequent rock falls were an everyday hazard and dust a long term problem. Bad ventilation added to this. Until 1815 most pits were worked with open candles which ignited frequent methane explosions. These were later replaced by safety gauze lamps, which were not liked by the workers because they blocked out a lot of working light. This device was invented by George Stevenson (of train fame) but Sir Humphrey Davy, who lived in Hotwells, got the credit, for the Davy Lamp which is still in use today!



Always remember that early mining was a family affair with wives and children playing their part; young children hauled tubs (drams) through narrow and dark tunnels; although outlawed in the late 1800's, many owners turned a blind eye for many years!!

The day finished for most of us at the Jolly Colliers, a traditional miners pub in West Street.

All this happened in almost living memory and certainly in the days of our Great Grandfathers and our present social conditions are so very far removed from those early days. The pace of our development is almost scary! **Richard Frost**

I am often reminded of those days when travelling into Bristol as I pass along West Street, which has been recently closed for extensive road works. And I wonder if all those old pits are the causes of the subsidence and large pot holes? It really does make you wonder; If you have an interest in this or any old Industrial Archaeology matters, then I would recommend reading "Bristol's Forgotten Coalfield, Bedminster" which is a very detailed history of this subject It's by Mike Taylor & Maggie Shapland (2012). ISBN 978-0-9572331-0-2.

Gully Cave 2022 – Words and pictures Mike Harvey

As many members will be aware, the society has supported the work of Danielle Schreve, Professor of Quaternary Science¹ and her team from Royal Holloway University at the Gully Cave research dig for several years now. On July 26th I joined a small party of members on a visit to the site to see for myself what your contribution is funding.

We met, in the Ebbor Gorge car park at 10am. Les Davies and Sue Gearing led us down the steps into the valley floor, via a fabulous life size wicker bear sculpture which loomed over the path and provided an early opportunity for a group shot.

A similarly stepped path led us back up the other side of the gorge, then off down a precipitous path with a rope handrail to the dig itself. Our group gathered around, leaving room for the diggers to pass with buckets of spoil and Danielle launched into a brief history of her involvement and the site itself.



Although the cave was recorded on an old map of the gorge and “exposed” to David Thurlow (The then Natural England Warden for the area) by a tree falling in the great storm of 1987. In 2005 when Danielle’s team first picked their way across the hillside and found what is now regarded as the upper entrance, nobody had ever fully explored it. Crawling in they discovered a limestone roof, sediment and some badger bedding, but could not see very much and therefore had no idea what the overall dimensions of the cave might be.

Returning the next year the team had their first season of excavation under a permit issued by the National Trust, owners of the land.

A trench was dug into the red limestone brachia on the North side of the cave, leaving the South side untouched. Samples of the sediments were carefully collected and taken back to the university for a process called “wet sieving”, by which they were able to identify the tiniest bones and teeth from things like mice, shrews, voles and lemmings. Some of which are known not to have lived in the area since the last ice age, all proving that the site was of interest and particular value.

Apart from 2008, when Danielle was a new mum (her son Tom is now on his first digging season as part of the team!) and an enforced break for Covid, a team led by Danielle has visited for a two week dig every year since and many important finds have been unearthed.



Top left: The bear in the woods.

Bottom right: Professor Danielle Schreve.

¹ The scientific study of the last 2.5 million years

As the diggers have gone deeper, some amazing finds have been made. Sometimes of course there are periods when nothing of note comes to light, on one occasion a depth of over two metres and two years digging yielding nothing at all. But the team kept the faith and their persistence has been rewarded. In fact even these “unrewarding” periods have a value, as Danielle explained, one can read periods of climate change through history by the way the layers of sediment are laid down and what they contain – a historical fingerprint of sorts.

As the dig progressed, it was realised that the upper cave they were in was actually the result of a rock fall into a lower chamber. By breaking up the boulders it became clear that a lower entrance must have once been open, as many bones were discovered beneath the boulders. This led to a new excavation in through the entrance we see today and many more interesting discoveries. These include everything from flint chippings that show signs of being worked and occasional reindeer bones, to pollen grains that give clues about the environment over time. Plus of course, some much more spectacular finds such as almost complete skeletons of Wild cat (don't call it a “Scottish” Wild Cat!) and Arctic fox. Bones of long extinct species that show signs of being gnawed by predators such as spotted hyenas, even evidence of a bear den with milk teeth lost by the young bears.



Danielle went on to explain how this almost unique historical record which runs over a roughly 50,000-year period was eventually capped off by flowstone, leaving it sealed and untouched until her team found it, making the contents of Gully Cave unparalleled in Britain and one of the most important finds of its kind in Western Europe.

We then had a chance to view and ask about some of the most interesting and spectacular finds. Jaw bones with a full set of teeth, skulls, the piece of flint and bones with gnawing evidence visible. The most recent major find, a Woolly Rhino humerus was too valuable and delicate to have out on site, but a photograph was passed around and is reproduced here.

Lastly, after a bit of a Q and A session and another group photograph with Danielle outside the dig we all started on the climb back out to our waiting cars.

All agreed I think, that the visit was a fascinating insight into a complex and important project that still

potentially has many secrets to offer up. Danielle was effusive in her thanks for our continued support, but it is us who should thank her I feel for revealing such an important part of Mendip history.

Top right: Jawbones, one stained by Manganese Oxide

Bottom left: Beth Verge with her Woolly Rhino find. Photo credit: Danielle Schreve.

Following the two weeks of on-site digging Danielle reported back to The Mendip Society that she was “Very happy indeed with progress”. This year finding over 300 bones, teeth and bone fragments - a record! They still have not found the floor of the cavern and there’s still a good depth of fossil-rich sediment dipping down in the area of the lower entrance. Everyone is therefore looking forward to 2023 and yet more revelations.

Below are a few more pictures of our visit.



Top left: Perfectly preserved teeth, still in their jawbone,

Centre: A selection of significant finds. Right: A complete Wildcat skull

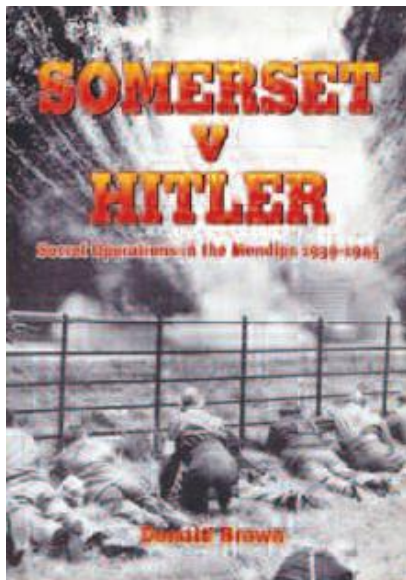
Bottom: A group shot with Danielle surrounded by society members. Plus a few of the dig team getting in a well-deserved tea break in the background.



Book Corner by Mike Harvey

Another new feature for the newsletter and one that I hope will develop over time. I'm not a critic – far from it, but I am an avid reader and have a particular interest in local history.

Two titles to bring to your attention this time around. The first – out of print, but hopefully available second hand or through libraries. The second – not out yet! [How am I doing so far?].



I have to confess to this being a personal homage to my old headmaster Donald Brown. Though no longer with us he was a Mendip Society member for many years and well known to a lot of members, even giving talks and leading walks on his specialised subject. However, on the assumption that not every member will be aware of this book, I wanted to make it my first review.

Somerset V Hitler is a fascinating collection of snippets of information illustrating local activities in support of the war effort. From the recollections of a young lad convinced his mum had given a lift to an enemy soldier, to details of secret bunkers prepared and stocked with food and weapons by brave men who would act as a resistance movement should the country be invaded.

Starfish sites designed to trick enemy bombers into dropping their loads away from important targets are also covered in some detail, and of course, as many will know, bunkers and other evidence of the Blackdown site can still be seen today. Several other remnants of the local war effort are also still in existence and this book points out many of them, alongside documenting the local Home Guard, Observer Corps, Land Army and others.

If you have any interest in local 20th century history, please do seek out a copy of this fascinating book and discover for yourself just what went on and how much evidence of it can still be found today – with a little effort.

A Mendip Corner - Sketches in Verse Is the title of our second book.



This is a collection of poems by Rickford author Mike McLennan with illustrations by another Rickford resident, Jeff Martin.

As I write, the work is nearing publication and Mike hopes it will be ready for the Christmas market. Any profits made from sales of the book will be divided equally between Holy Trinity church, Burrington and the Children's Hospice South West.

Meanwhile Mike has been kind enough though to offer me a preview of one of the poems contained in the book, "The Old Orchard" as a taster of what is to follow. I won't give away too much, but here is a tiny teaser from the middle of the piece:

*"Ah let me smell the smell of apples on a cold, sharp autumn day,
The smell that permeates the air and lingers all around,
Let me pick the ripest fruit that hangs so tempting from the boughs,
And gather up the windfalls scattered freely on the ground."*

What I will say is that having read the whole poem through several times, I could almost sense the sights, smells and feeling of being in the orchard with him and was immersed in the scene he had set. He tells me the collection is widely varied, but if they all paint as vivid a picture as The Old Orchard does, then it should be worth the wait.

ED: Mike McLennan will be having a book launch in Burrington Village Hall as soon as his book is published. We will put the details on the Website when they are available.

THE MENDIP SOCIETY VISIT TO LEIGH DOWN STONE CIRCLES, MAY 10TH 2022



1 About 11,700 years ago, glaciers permanently receded from Britain as the last Ice Age ended, but sea levels were lower. Hunter-gatherers migrated into Britain via a land bridge and established a small population. These are the populations to which Cheddar Man (alive around 10,000 years ago) belonged.



2 About 6,000 years ago, farmers originating from the Mediterranean moved into Britain. Their ancestors had come from modern-day Turkey. This farming population was probably much larger than that of the hunter-gatherers, and brought new technologies that marked the beginning of Neolithic (or New Stone Age) Britain, Neolithic communities who were responsible for the huge megalithic monuments such as Stonehenge.

3 About 4,400 years ago, a second population of farmers entered Britain, bringing with them distinctive Beaker pottery. This population came over from continental Europe. Their ancestors had mostly come from the Eurasian Steppe. They brought new technologies that marked the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Early Bronze Age. We know them as 'The Beaker People'.

FIRST – A LITTLE HISTORY



May 10th 2022

On a lovely sunny day just over a dozen Society members, travelling from all sides of the Mendips, met in a neatly mown open space on the crest of a hill between Winford and Regil. We had come to meet Nic Colton, the owner of a unique place in the Mendips - and in Mendip history.

Nic's family has lived in the locality for generations, his mother was born in nearby Stanton Wick and grew up with the local stories of 'The Legends of the Stones', passing them on to Nic as a small child; ghostly stories which kept him well away from the mysterious circles of stones around the hilltop. Then aged 6 years old he had dreams of 3 huge stones, and a large tree on a hill top with a track leading to them. What else could he do, when in the late 1970s, having decided to buy a plot of land 'somewhere in the Mendip area outside of Bristol where he lived, he saw some land for sale on top of a hill known locally as Leigh Down – with 3 huge stones and a tree- but buy it? Rough, unused, overgrown it has absorbed his free time ever since, as have the ancient stones which abound in the small area on the top of the hill.



Nic dowsing the Portal stone with a crystal.

In the same way that there are some people who can, with the aid of metal dowsing rods, detect the presence of water underground, Nic Colton discovered that he could 'dowse' the energy from the ancient stones lying buried where they had fallen. Fallen, maybe broken, and covered by activity and agriculture during the some 4000 years which have passed since the rituals and beliefs of the Beaker People first erected them there. With the aid of a crystal stone he has accurately found, and re-erected, several avenues of stones, connecting at least 5 stone circles, some small, others stretching round the whole hilltop. He knows that there are many more yet to be found, some crossing the boundaries of his land into that of his neighbours, being part of other monuments built by the Beaker People long ago. And beneath the stones so far discovered, in digging them out to re-erect he has found traces- flints and other stone tools, of those farming peoples who first cultivated these heath type uplands of Mendip.

After an introductory talk we were shown around the whole site. Over many years Nic, and his family and friends who came to help and enjoy the work with him have changed the site to one of beauty and historical record, planting many hundreds of trees, often reclaimed from places where they were being uprooted, making shelters from the sun and rain so that long weekends could be spent on tasks such as excavating ponds, creating hedges, wicker fences and other other necessities. Everything was done by hand using all recycled materials.

One stone circle was important in that it was aligned so that the sun, rising and setting upon the summer and winter solstices would be on a specific stone – a Calendar Circle as it were. Another important place on the site where Nic demonstrated his dowsing was at the site's lowest point, where two stones formed the 'entrance, or portal', to the whole area and where the greatest force of energy was felt by himself. (see picture on the previous page). The view from the top of the hill, where, when Nic bought the land, had the one and only, very big and old, tree on it, was magnificent, right over the Vale of the Chew, across the surrounding hills and beyond.



Top – Three large stones, and a tree on the hill top. L – the avenue to the top circle. R – small circle. Photos Roger Harvey.

Tea and biscuits, and chat with Nic brought a marvellous experience to a close; Nic is very willing to host another visit by the Society, if there is the demand for one next Spring. – *Judith Tranter*



BADOCK'S WOOD, Bristol – part of the Ancient Canopy to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Sent to us by member Roger Moses

"The Queen's Green Canopy" recently named the network of 70 Ancient Woodlands and 70 Ancient Trees across the United Kingdom which will form part of the "Ancient Canopy", chosen to celebrate Her Majesty's

70 years of service. The initiative was launched by His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, who is Patron of The Queen's Green Canopy, whilst under one of the 70 Ancient Tree dedications- namely the old Sycamore located at Dumfries House in Scotland.

The 'Friends of Badock's Wood' (FOBW) are delighted that their wood has been chosen as one of those 70 Ancient Woodlands to be dedicated to The Queen in celebration of her Platinum Jubilee. Badock's Wood has been woodland continuously for the last 500 years, and an area inhabited by humans since the Bronze Age, being used for post-war 1940's prefabs until the 1980s.

Badock's Wood has played a huge part in local people's lives. It has been used by local people as a resource in past times and more recently as a place of great importance and solace for the people of Southmead and surrounding neighbourhoods, during the recent pandemic, and has been publically recognised by the Lord Lieutenant of the County and City of Bristol, as a valuable place as well as a natural asset for the city as a whole.

L River Trym in Badock's Wood

Photo Credit: Frances Robertson / FOBW



Frances Robertson, Secretary of Friends of Badock's Wood said, "Badock's Wood is a hidden haven for wildlife. The Friends group along with other local organisations and community members have worked together for over 20 years to keep Badock's Wood a lovely place for everyone. We are going to celebrate this award and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by planting a Jubilee Copse of 70 trees, commissioning a sculpted Jubilee Bench and planting an oak tree near the bench in the Autumn during tree planting season. "We are also hoping to work with the Southmead "Meadows to Meaders" community project to have a roaming performance about the history of the woodland and the people who lived here. For example, many of the children of the families who moved into the prefabs post war, now somewhat older, remember living in the area around the Bronze Age Burial Mound with this fabulous

woodland as their garden. We look forward to a fantastic year of celebration and community fun. More details will be published on our website in due course"

Cllr Brenda Massey, Councillor for Southmead, said "These Ancient natural spaces hold significance and meaning for so many people in many different ways. They are symbols of community pride, places to connect socially and vital spaces for health and wellbeing activities. By sharing the stories behind the Ancient woodlands and trees, as well as the incredible efforts that are made to protect them, The Queen's Green Canopy aims to raise awareness of these treasured habitats and the importance of conserving them for future generations. Established over hundreds of years, the chosen woodlands and trees represent the diverse canopy of the four nations, it is a celebration of our living heritage. All the woodlands and trees have a story to tell. Some are famous specimens and others have a local significance".

Taken from the Press Release by Frances Robinson on May 4th 2022 on the occasion of the Award to Badocks Wood as part of the Queens Green Canopy of Ancient Woodland; sent in by The Mendip Society member Roger Moses. Ffi see Website - www.fobw.org.uk

For interest and background information : The Queen's Green Canopy

The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) is a unique tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022, which invites people from across the United Kingdom to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee".

<https://queensgreencanopy.org/>

Also a part of the Green Canopy are **The 70 Ancient Woodlands and 70 Ancient Trees** across the UK.

Inclusion on the QGC list is a symbolic gift which involves the voluntary dedication of forests and woodland – there is no land/title transfer.

The nominated Woodlands and Trees met a specific criterion set out by the QGC. There is no set age for a tree to be considered ancient, as different species age at different rates. Further information is available here:

<https://queensgreencanopy.org/ancient-trees-and-ancient-woodland/>

The dedicated trees and woodlands occur in rural and urban spaces, natural and planted settings. There is a range of ownership including large landowners, local authorities and private individuals.

Badock's Wood is owned by Bristol City Council and managed by the City's Parks Department. It was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 2008, 10 years after the Friends of Badock's Wood community group was set up. The Friends group has worked with the Parks Department and other partners to ensure this valuable ancient woodland and surrounding meadows was maintained and enhanced to make it the hidden haven for wildlife that is so treasured by the local communities today. The Friends of Badock's Wood continue to do so today.



Above: The woodland edge in springtime.

The 'Friends' are a group of local residents and other interested people who help keep the wood a haven for wildlife and a lovely place to walk and experience the local nature of a riverside, woodland and wildflower meadows.

Note: -

ROGER MOSES moved from Mendip to Bristol a few years ago and has resurfaced as Vice Chair of The Friends of Badock's Wood, something which we applaud very much – proving that you can't keep a good naturalist – and ornithologist – down.

THE WALKS PROGRAMME – AN UPDATE by the Editor

If you have been keeping a weather eye on our website recently, maybe for perhaps one reason only, you will not have failed to notice that we have had very few walks posted there recently. For those of you who are regular and avid walkers this must be very disappointing, and the Committee apologise very much for this. We do not know the reason for this but your Committee has decided on a means to go some way to remedy the situation. For those who have been members for a good few years, will remember that on our programme we used to have 'special interest walks', i.e. walks that were planned with a specific purpose and route in mind – be it historical, geological, artistic, or environmental- you name it, we tried to find a leader who was an expert or an enthusiastic, keen, and knowledgeable amateur for the subject of that walk, and we found that they were well received..

This is what we are planning to begin again – there are so many subjects to be explored on Mendip and the immediate surroundings, there's sure to be something to appeal to each one of us. So PLEASE do look at the website to catch them – not one every week maybe but often enough. If you don't like using the computer could I emphasise the value of the members emails sent out by Peter Janes covering everything which falls between issue dates. Just ask to be put on the list membership@themendipsociety.org.uk

And if you have any suggestions for a special interest walk you would like to see arranged, or of course , if you would like to plan one yourself, please let us know – IT WOULD REALLY BE VERY APPRECIATED AND GIVE A BOOST TO OUR ENTHUSIASM LEVELS IF WE HAD SOME FEEDBACK FROM ALL THOSE MEMBERS WE BELIEVE TO BE STILL OUT THERE, SOMEWHERE.

AND FINALLY

With the postal strikes we have been having it may come too late for some members to know that there is an example of a 'special interest walk' planned for **Wednesday 7 September Backwell Lake**. Meet at 7pm in the carpark signposted 'West Backwell Bowling Club Carpark' (sign is smallish, black on white background), immediately off the main A370 in West Town, Backwell (BS48 3BJ, ST483683). Walk around Tennis Courts & across Playing Fields and open fields to view the evening birdlife. Contact: Elma Porter 01275 235732. No need to book.

(If you are on the e-mailing list mentioned above you will receive an e-mail about it a few days before hand.)

TANIA'S WOOD – BLAGDON PRIMARY FOREST SCHOOL REPORT

Blagdon School Year 1 has attended a term of Forest School sessions at Tania's wood this spring. The children carried out minibeast searches, identifying different spiders, butterflies and even a Cardinal beetle larve. They used a saw and measured wood to make a small table, used hammers to make leaf prints and worked together to make mini dens. It was so great to see children coming back to Tania's wood every week, noticing the changes in the plants and trees and feeling close to nature. Jenny Campbell, the Headteacher, said "It has been lovely to see their confidence grow as the term has gone on and to have all of the Year 1s enjoying nature activities as a group together."

As Covid had stopped last year's planned sessions, Year 2 were also able to have a Forest Experience day this year and year 6 had a Forest Celebration day in the woods before they left Blagdon School for pastures new in the autumn, having fun creating big dens, completing challenges such as making and eating s'mores.



Editors note:

Photos by Nicky Orr,
far L – a cosy grass den;
L – S'mores are good; below
a Cardinal Beetle larvae.

Maybe to many other members as it was to me – 's'mores' was a new word.; it seems it is a combination of 'some' & 'more' & is a gooey sweet thing made of chocolate, marshmallows and some sort of cracker & can be toasted over a camp fire.!

Lovely!

Blagdon Primary school really appreciates using this brilliant woodland to engage with children in outdoor

learning. So, a massive thank you to The Mendip Society and all their volunteers for the hard work they do in keeping Tania's wood so accessible for us. **Nicky Orr, Forest School Leader.**

TANIA'S WOOD SUMMER REPORT by Judith Tranter

Like everywhere else, our woodland has been impacted by the unusual weather conditions this summer –but the effect on the wood as a whole, as it has also been in Slader's Leigh meadow, has been somewhat startling – the growth of everything can only be called "luxuriously rampant" and most of our work parties have spent their time clearing paths to enable a way through and rescuing the rows of hazel whips, planted in Spring 2021, from a loving vegetation embrace. Amazingly one of the hazels has grown so well it even had some full sized nuts on it! And as on page 2, where we received two of the AONB's 50th Anniversary Trees for Slader's Leigh, here we were delighted with a donation of three beautiful large trees to plant and nurture; they are also part of the Queens 'Green Canopy'. I think we can safely say Tania's Wood has had a 'blooming marvellous summer'!



Above: Hazel nuts.
To the right: The Green
Beech in the hedge;
Sheena with the Hornbeam
and The Sweet Chestnut.

MENDIP ROCKS! 2022



A festival of events running during October 2022 to celebrate the awe-inspiring
450-million-year geology of the Mendip Hills!

A BLAST FROM THE PAST!

Saturday 1st October at Westbury Quarry
10:30am - 3.30pm

NIGHT TOUR OF WOOKEY HOLE CAVERNS

Wednesday 5th October at Wookey Hole Caves
7 - 8pm

GEOLOGICAL SECRETS OF HAPSFORD BRIDGE AND VALLIS VALE GEO WALK

Thursday 6th October
10am - 1pm Meet at the Somerset Earth Science Centre

TROPICAL CORAL SEAS AND VOLCANOES GEO WALK

Saturday 8th October at Sand Point, Kewstoke
10am - 2pm

BATTS COMBE QUARRY TOURS

Wednesday 12th October
10am & 2pm.

HALECOMBE QUARRY TOURS

Friday 14th October
10am & 2pm. Meet at the Somerset Earth Science Centre.

GEO LECTURE DAY

Saturday 15th October at the Somerset Earth
Science Centre,
2pm - 5pm.

WHATLEY QUARRY TOURS

Thursday 20th October - Tours at 10am & 2pm. Meet at
the Somerset Earth Science Centre

THE BUILDING STONES OF WELLS GEO WALK

Friday 21st October at Wells
10am to 12.30pm.

SOMERSET EARTH SCIENCE CENTRE MUSEUM AND OPEN DAY

Saturday 22nd October
10am until 3.30pm.

HAYDON COLLIERY GEO WALK

Sunday 23rd October at Radstock
1pm - 4pm.

GORGE-OUS CHEDDAR!

Saturday 29th October at Cheddar Gorge
12pm - 5pm

Many events require booking and some have a small charge - please see the website for further details.



Please visit the Mendip Hills AONB website for more information and to book onto an event:
www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/events or phone 01749 840 156.



Brought to you by:



A BUSY AUTUMN AHEAD – FIRST UP – THE MENDIP ROCKS FESTIVAL RETURNS!

Mendip Rocks! Festival is organized by the Somerset Earth Science Centre in partnership with the Mendip Hills AONB and The Mendip Society

After a two year absence this popular festival returns to Mendip, launched with “A BLAST FROM THE PAST!” family Open Day in Westbury Quarry on Saturday 1st October. The quarry is a wonderful place for wildlife and was the film location for the BBC’s Deadly Dinosaurs and Deadly Predators’ childrens’ programmes. Page 15 shows the wide range of different events to be enjoyed throughout the month of October, until the Finale on Saturday 29th October – “GORGE-OUS CHEDDAR!”. No prizes for guessing where that might be held.

We will be at both events with our gazebo and activities – both great days out, do please visit us.

A Blast from the Past

Below: This was in 2019, when the lucky winning raffle ticket to blow up the car was won by Sophy, seen here with her family and Nigel Taylor who wired the car up for detonation. She made a badge to mark the occasion with our popular badge making machine afterwards.



Photos left and centre courtesy of Mark Adler, taken for the Mendip Times.



Take a walk back in time and experience the world of extraordinary dinosaurs and ice age animals; enter the raffle draw to win the opportunity to blow up a vehicle! Other attractions include abseiling, geology and wildlife tours, rock and fossil displays, face painting, plus photo opportunities with Rexy and Roxy the T-Rexes. Light refreshments available.

Details: www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/event/.

Raffle tickets £2 on the day (cash only). On site parking must be booked in advance: £5 per car. Please add parking when selecting your tickets. Booking is with Event Bright – this is the link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-blast-from-the-past-tickets-394968921677> / or ring 01749 840156

Haydon Colliery Geo Walk 23rd October 1-4pm

This event is singled out from all the others because it is being lead by Richard Frost, our walks Organiser. Meet on Waterloo Road near The Radstock Museum, BA3 3ER / What 3 Words///stocky,tweed,unsettled Grid Ref; ST 550689.



A fascinating guided tour of the Haydon colliery area with The Mendip Society’s expert Richard Frost. Learn about the history of Somerset coal mining and its influence on local railways. The walk will also visit World War Two and geological Site of Special Scientific Interest sites. Please wear suitable footwear. Walking will involve some moderate hills and wet fields.

Booking required. £5 per person. Visit www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/event/ or ring 01749 840156

GORGE-OUS CHEDDAR! Saturday 29th October. 10am-3pm in Cheddar Gorge.

Join us at one the Britain’s most spectacular landmarks for the festival’s finale and to celebrate the Mendip Hills 50th Anniversary as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Enjoy Cheddar Gorge’s many impressive vistas while learning more about its geology, biodiversity, and history. Activities for all the family. For more information, please see website: www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/event/

Booking not required. **Small cash donations for tours and activities on the day. / or ring 01749 840156**



Windrose
Rural Media Trust



AND IN NOVEMBER:

"50 YEARS AND MORE OF MENDIP IN FILM WITH SONGS AND MUSIC"

**in Shipham Village Hall –
SATURDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 7-9 PM**

Celebrate more than 50 years of Mendip's oral history, traditions, communities, people and places which are preserved on film. For those who are new to the area you will get a rare insight into how life used to be and for those who have lived here for a long time, it is a chance to relive some of those times from the past and enjoy the

memories. Perhaps you'll see someone you know in the films, some of which are silent and these will be accompanied with music and song, on stage. .

Windrose Rural Media Trust's community film archive is an important catalogue of rural life, rescued and restored by volunteers. This live concert is produced and performed with love and enthusiasm by those same volunteers, who acknowledge the grants given by The Mendip Society and the Mendip Hills Fund.

VENUE – Shipham Village Hall. Tickets £10 adults, under 16 £5 including drink & biscuits in the interval.

Seats must be booked in advance for capacity reasons, through Event Bright – this is the link for this: -

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/50-years-and-more-of-mendip-in-film-with-songs-and-music-tickets-399962728287>

Alternatively you can book by ringing The Mendip Society on 01761 221995 or The AONB on 01761 462338 and paying by cheque. Leave a message for a ring back if there is no answer at that time.

Booking at Event Bright closes at 5pm Friday 18th November.



ALSO IN NOVEMBER:

A MENDIP SOCIETY TALK – CECIL SHARP AND FOLK SONGS OF SOMERSET, ON TUESDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 2022. At 2PM at the Wells and Mendip Museum, Wells.

Chris Storie will talk about Cecil Sharp and Folk Songs of Somerset at Wells & Mendip Museum, 8 Cathedral Green, Wells, BA5 2UE at 2pm on Tuesday 15th November 2022.

Cecil Sharp was one of the most important collectors of English folk songs in the early 20th century and did much of his work in Somerset. In this area alone, he collected over 1,600 tunes and songs, **gathering them from 350 source singers**. He went on to collect in 15 other counties, taking down folk dances, including sword dances and rapper dances from Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland.



At a time when the oral transmission of folk songs was dying out because of the availability of recorded popular music, he collected hundreds of songs that would otherwise have been lost and made them known to generations of school children via books of folk songs. The later resurgence of interest in folk music would not have happened without him.

Chris will be accompanied by Bernard Coulter in the performance of some songs. Together, they run a local folk club.

There is no need to book for this talk. Members are free, non members £3. Contact Richard on 01275 472797 for more information.

Above left - Cecil Sharp. Above right - Lucy White Somerset folk singer by Cecil Sharp in c.1905



Over the Hill and far Away! A Les Davies Saga

For the first time since July 2019 the University of Georgia, (UGA) resumed its UK study tour with some changes. Again I was asked to be the landscape guide for UGA, much of which being in Scotland this time. With the removal of my many previously visited sites, including Mendip from the itinerary, I was going to be out of my comfort zone. It must however be said that countryside issues and tourism are the same no matter where you are. So what, I am asked is the definition of Les Davies being outside of his comfort zone? My answer to this question is simple and straight forward, it's being anywhere North of Bristol without my Landrover. Both of these things were to happen on this trip!

I joined the UGA group in Cambridge on the evening of the 7 July, all that day was spent travelling on National Express coaches to get there from Bristol via Birmingham. At 7.30 in the evening I arrived in Cambridge, a lovely city almost completely owned by the University, and made my way to Sidney Sussex College. I finally staggered into the College porters' office and was given the keys to a guest room. Opening the door I found a suite of rooms designated for visiting VIP's. Had they already heard that I was coming!?? Everything was straight out of 'Goodbye Mr Chips'. I even went out and tried the key in the door again to be quite sure.

My Impression of a quiet University City where students with long flowing scarves rode ancient bicycles, was shattered by the reality of young people riding electric scooters and e-bikes on the pavements, along the road and anywhere else they could get through. Every 'Nutter' in town seemed to be out that night!

The following day was spent moving by coach to the Lakes..At least I knew where I was there, but already the first Covid case of 6 had struck the group. The Lakes were much as they always are, glorious in fine weather. The group task here was to look at a long distance path proposal called the Windermere Way. This would entail the construction of luxury lodges and surfaced pathways for the exclusive use of a paying clientele. It was upping the rural economy, but at what cost was the question they looked at. In groups they role played their part in support or in opposition based on the evidence they were able to present to a panel. What I wanted to impress upon them was that when dealing with the countryside it is not just the economy...it's the way of life that has existed for generations and shaped a landscape that cannot be replaced!

Onto Fort William in Scotland. This was to be the end of the tour for me as I went down with the 5th case of Covid. In doing so I had to isolate as the group moved off to Skye, the Cairngorms and finally down to Edinburgh, where I hoped to catch them up before I returned home. That isolation so far from home was a feeling of abandonment and a need to survive. Any thoughts I ever had of living in a log cabin were destroyed by my time in that Lodge below Ben Nevis. Much of it was spent sleeping and resting. Luckily I was well stocked up with Yorkshire tea and Muller Yoghurt. I lost weight but didn't starve.

Once clear of isolation I travelled down to Edinburgh on the West Coast Railway, possibly the most spectacular train journey in Britain, as it winds through some wonderful mountain scenery. On arrival in Edinburgh I needed a taxi and help would come from an unexpected direction. A Parking Officer offered to walk with me to York Place where I would be staying and so escorted me right to the door. I will now look on Parking Officers in a kinder light!

My flight back home the following day was delayed, but I finally arrived at Bristol late in the afternoon. I had booked a taxi to take me from the airport to Green Ore on Mendip where my Landrover was waiting after repairs... that journey cost me £60.00! Was I truly back home surrounded by familiar and comforting things. I began to question where my comfort zone really was.

The picture I have chosen was one moment from my time at Fort William. This is where the Jacobite Steam Railway, (now more commonly being called the Harry Potter Railway) crosses the river Lochy at Inverlochy. In the background is Inverlochy Castle, or at least the ruins of it.

As ever beauty is in the eye of the beholder and now it looks tranquil and idyllic. At the time, as you can imagine, I was not in the right mood to appreciate it!



A tribute to the late, great Nigel Taylor

On Tuesday 14th of June a great friend of the Mendip Hills passed away after a long fight against cancer. Many have paid tribute to this incredible man, who stood head and shoulder above the rest of us in his love for and devotion to the Mendip Hills. Nigel Taylor was a close and supportive friend. He fought to save the Mendip Hills Wardens during the re-structuring of the AONB in early 2000. So powerful was his persuasive nature that he managed to mobilise a huge ground swell of support for his cause. It was this that led him into politics, for which he will be particularly remembered in the post of Chairman of the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership and Chairman of Somerset County Council. I will leave others to pay tribute to his political life, but I would like to say a few words about the friend I knew.

Nigel was a working man who began his career in farming. We had both attended Cannington College in the days when it was 'Somerset College of Agriculture and Horticulture' in the 1970's. His interest in explosives however led him down a different road that stayed with him to the end. If it needed explosive engineering you could count on Nigel Taylor being there. He was also a retired police officer with a long and distinguished career in the Special Branch, including counter terrorism and Royal close protection.

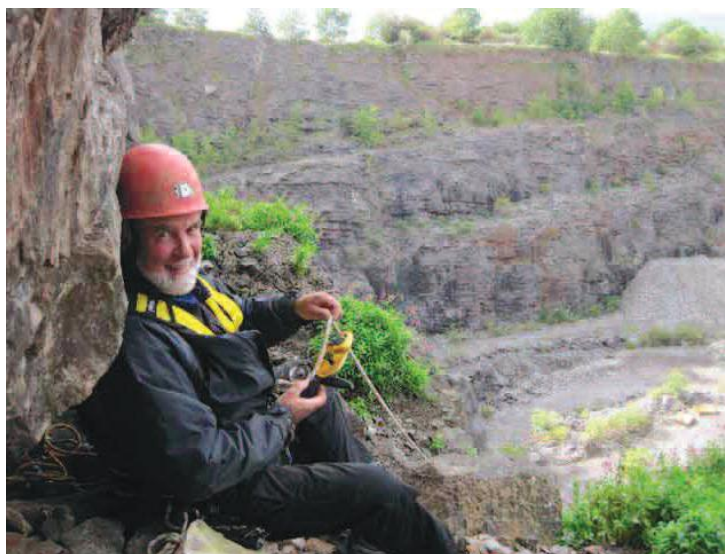
From my perspective he was the greatest friend anyone could ever have. He was always there when things went wrong and always there to provide practical support. He had a terrific sense of humour and would engage me in 'the banter', an area which I have to say he did not do well! I still laugh at those moments that have provided me with 'catch phrases' enough to last my lifetime.

He loved the countryside and went to enormous lengths to protect his beloved orchids that grew in the grassland at Westbury Quarry and in his paddocks at home in Draycott. The small orchard he planted has been providing my 'Emily Elizabeth's Apple Juice' with fruit for several years. His chickens and geese had the run of the place, whilst his adopted stray cat "Rami" lived in the comfort of a hay bed in the barn. Animals were such a big part of Nigel's life, no doubt coming with him from his farming days.

I once told him that his campaign picture and poster, (found under my windscreen wiper blade) saved me a lot of money. Instead of buying a new fire guard to protect my grandchildren, I had only to place his picture on the mantle piece and they wouldn't go anywhere near the fire!

Many of you will remember his impassioned farewell at the last Mendip Society Annual General meeting in Winscombe. He encouraged us all to get more involved with the Society, its aims and objectives. He is gone, but will never be forgotten. Mary Elizabeth Frye's emotive poem was written for just such a person as Nigel:

Nigel at work in his favourite place, Westbury Quarry.



**Do not stand by my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.**

**When you awake in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand by my grave and cry;
I am not there, I did not die.**

How do you deal with such a loss! For his widow Vivi, his family and friends the grief is enormous. We all have to deal with such grief at some stage in life, often several times, but that does not make it any easier. No words of comfort, sympathy or empathy can change what has

happened or ease the pain. Only the passage of time and the return of those happy memories can help. Without knowing, I looked at that bright sunny Tuesday morning of the 14th of June and said to myself "Nigel... This would be a good day to go" and he did, stepping quietly out of this life into the next. Nigel lies at rest in Priddy Church Yard, again another community for whom he did so much during his life.

Les Davies

SOCIETY ROUNDUP REST IN PEACE DEAR FRIENDS

It is with great sadness that we write here of the passing of two Society members, both of whom were either past or present members of our Management Committee

Jean Buckler Our hearts go out to John, Jeans' husband as we learn of the passing of a kind, caring Society stalwart. Jean and John joined the society in 1984 straight after they moved to Compton Bishop because they believed we had the same aims and values as they did. Jean started as a supply teacher at Churchill Secondary School (as it was then) and retired in '97 as their Head of the Science Faculty. In this, as in so many other parts of her life, people said of her 'Jean never put herself forward for any role, but she always ended up running it – because they knew that she would – and most definitely – could'.

She was passionate about the countryside, it's wildlife and nature and was advising schools on how to rewild their grounds before the rest of the world had ever heard the phrase before. Passionate about it, she started the first 'Wildlife Gardening Group in the area for the SWT and their own house garden was a 'showcase' one, many times enjoyed by our society members whenever our walks ended anywhere near Compton Bishop, with tea and cakes on a lawn covered with fritillaries (*ED – my lasting memory!*). Obviously it was also very bird friendly as Jean, a lifelong member of the BTO, recorded there over 12,000 species sightings for the organisation over the years.

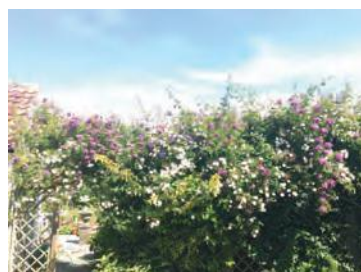
Most members will remember Jean in connection with our book stall, which she, with John often helping, ran at our talks and at many other events. She ordered and kept a constant stock of those in subjects she thought would interest members and visitors – until the advent of the 'on-line' purchasing took hold and it became unviable. To me, she was a passionate lady, who 'said what she meant, and meant what she said' and was never afraid to do it, never pushed her opinion on you, but could be relied on to quietly, and efficiently, get on with it. The world needs people like Jean- and she will be very much missed.



This newsletter has been helpfully printed by Ian Taylor
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Clive Constance Clive was a serving member of our small Management Committee; he had recently been suffering from low levels of oxygen in the blood and had been unable to return to Rose Cottage, the house he had shared with Dr. Gerald Offer in Burrington for many years. We heard from his nephew that he had passed away peacefully on 23rd July, (of congestive heart failure) at home in Durham, aged 84.

Clive Eric Constance, born in January 1938, a long time member, was first elected to the Committee at the AGM, in 2012 as Treasurer. Then, in 2016, he became the Small Grants Officer, bringing his own brand of 'officerdom' to our proceedings.



His home 'Rose Cottage' in Burrington with its cottage garden hosted our meetings many a time. Named after the rose hedge (left) maybe?

But Clive never talked much about his working life before his society

committee work but we knew that he valued the peace and beauty of the Mendip greatly and wanted to protect this in his volunteering with us. We knew he disappeared at intervals which we gleaned from remarks was to run large music camps and concerts in different parts of the country, never guessing that in his career he was Deputy Principal and President of Hatfield College Association, University of Durham and latterly a self employed 'Approved Teacher and Coach of Singing' at the University and also at the Royal college of Music. He had a fine tenor/baritone voice of professional standard and was a mainstay of several music societies and their residential music weeks. He sang here in Somerset as soloist with us in the Somerset Symphony Chorus, We're only sorry that we couldn't give him the opportunity to use his talent and passion in our society activities; we will miss his forthright, common sense views in our committee deliberations. *ED – I am indebted to Society member Roger Starr for this information on Clives' career.*

