

# Mendip

the  
mendip  
society

*Caring for the Mendip Hills*

The Newsletter of The Mendip Society

Issue No. 152 • March 2018



**Wassail Queen, Rosa, her Mum, Master of Ceremonies, Les Davies**

The ladies of Somerset Morris could not wait to get started. Their toes were tapping and their staves were rattling. Perhaps the chill breeze on a clear night had something to do with it. But suddenly we were off with a swing, in the car park of the very co-operative Pheasant Inn in Worth, on the Wedmore road past Wookey. Then the harmonising Barley Rye Choir gave us a wassail song before another dance, and before they knew it Somerset Morris had got the Mendip Society dancing with them, clashing staves and letting off snorts of delight if not exactly steam. President Les Davies came in with his explanation of this apple-insurance-policy-ritual-evening and announced the eating of the apple cake (thanks to Pat Hicks) to find the Wassail Queen. There were a lot of women keen to eat this cake and also many men aspiring to Queen it before The Pheasant. But the single bean was found in the slice of twelve year old Rosa who was crowned and cloaked before leading us across the road and around the orchard into a candle-lit circle.

The Queen circled the oldest tree, pouring cider from the Worth Wassail Cup, and anointed the tree with cider soaked toast. Richard fired his gun, Les blew his horn, someone set off flares into the black night and the company shouted away any 'addled ampers' in the orchard before Les rounded us off with a rhyme and a song. Gill hoped her daffodils had survived the trampling (they had) and Les finished off Roger Wilkins' cider in the bottom of the Worth cup as the company retired to the fire in The Pheasant where more surprises awaited.

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*We haven't forgotten to put in your new programme with this news—letter; your current one covers until the end of April. A new one for May, June and July will be posted out to you around May1st.*

**THE MENDIP  
SOCIETY  
A.G.M. ON  
FRIDAY 23RD  
MARCH 2018  
AT DRAYCOTT  
VILLAGE  
HALL 6.30PM**

**Remember  
ALL THE  
PAPER WORK  
YOU WILL  
NEED TO  
BRING WITH  
YOU IS ON  
THE CENTRE  
FOLD PAGES  
JUST PULL  
OUT AND  
BRING.**

## WE HAVE – WASSAILED AND MORRIS DANCED

With Somerset Morris

*Continued from page 1*

A song introduced each of the characters of a mumming play, parts were given out (the Doctor this year was played with an Australian accent by Dr Kate Rigby) and the bar became an improvised theatre for the improvised play which fortunately covered our early arrival for the carvery and desert. Amongst the now irrepressible singing there was a communal chorus of 'The Shoemaker's Kiss' and, it being Twelfth Night, the singing of the last carol of the season, 'The Christmas Tree'. After which we all went home - and took down said Christmas tree. – **Terry Gifford**

### LEARNT OF AN ISLAND OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY – by **Richard Frost**

It was a good beginning for our re-started Talks Programme as our guest speaker, **Mr. David Wallace**, told a capacity audience all about The Isle of Steep Holm; this small island lying in the Bristol Channel has been a source of interest and of Magic and Mystery through the past generations. The Island is run by The Kenneth Allsop Memorial Trust, a small self funded charity named after that well known BBC journalist.

Steep Holm is first and foremost a nature reserve and bird sanctuary, home to large colonies of Lesser Black Back and Herring Gulls, plus the largest breeding gathering of Cormorants in the Bristol Channel. Amongst the species of wildflowers and other plants, many of which are rare, is the wild Mediterranean Peony.

As expected, it has played host to the Army in both Victorian and recent times, and there is a wealth of military installations to explore; a visitor centre housed in the old Victorian barracks plays host to those there for the day, serving drinks from a small licensed bar along with home-made cakes.



Full day trips are available which necessitates catching a boat from Weston-s-Mare, sailing times being governed by the time of the tides!

This place has something of interest for everyone, and following the talk, many attendees expressed an interest in a Society visit, and with this in mind, I will attempt to arrange this later in the year.

So keep an eye on the Summer programme.

Picture is of the Bristol Queen, she usually leaves the Knightstone Harbour on the morning tide and returns on the evening tide.

### FOUND THAT THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR WAS NOT JUST ABOUT ORWELL – **Terry Gifford**

Did you know that the Clark family at Street took in children from the Galicia region of Spain during the Spanish Civil War, and that they were taught in their regional language to maintain their local culture? Or that the only Somerset man killed in that war was a volunteer from Axbridge who joined the International Brigade? All this, and more, came to light in the discussion following **Dolores Long**'s well-illustrated talk about her father's role as Commander of the British contingent of the International Brigade.

There was even a photo of her father, Sam Wild, with George Orwell. The large audience for this talk in Wells Museum demonstrated not just an interest in events in Spain, then and now, but the enthusiasm for an occasional talk about a subject apparently unconnected to our area.



Except that the audience discussion revealed that it was not unconnected to our area after all.

Picture of Delores' Father, Sam Wild, wearing the beret, in the front row, with George Orwell, the tallest man in the back row.

*Kindly provided by Delores*



### **‘STARFISH’ and SUBTERFUGE’ – PLOUGHSHARES INTO SWORDS – Roger Moses**

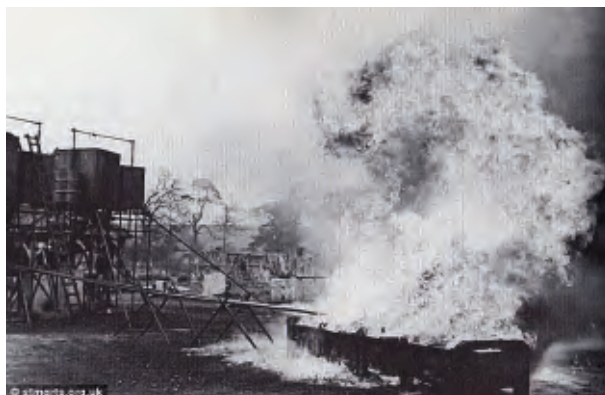
This sellout afternoon talk at Wells Museum told the fascinating story of the ingenious creations of Colonel John Turner, a retired Royal Engineer who was given the job of fooling the Luftwaffe into unloading their bombs on to empty fields instead of our cities and airfields. It involved increasingly complex installations, eventually leading to 237 “Starfish” sites defending 81 towns and cities. One of the best preserved of these is on top of Mendip! Have you ever wondered what the lines of tumps are, on top of Mendip’s highest point at Black Down? They represent the street plan of Bristol, and were made to fool German bomber crews into thinking they were over the blacked-out city.

But best to start at the beginning; John Turner started by setting up dummy airfields, complete with painted runways, and plywood and canvas aircraft. The first examples were very realistic but cost almost as much as real planes, and soon developed into simpler and very much cheaper decoys, which were still very effective. When German air raids started, the decoys included “Special Fires, or SF”, controlled oil fires which simulated the incendiary bombs of the pathfinder crews, attracting further attacks. SF became Starfish, the code name applied to the Mendip site, and eventually to all the sites.

The fires were controlled from a bunker on the flanks of Black Down, which still exists. It evolved into a more complex installation with lines of lights (on the tumps) simulating the street layout of Bristol in a poorly maintained blackout, including opening doors, moving vehicles and trains, and was supplied with electricity from 3 Coventry Climax motors driving generators in the bunker.

An important feature was the involvement of the film studios in producing the decoys and the special effects, this time for military purposes. Eventually Starfish acquired teeth, the Z guns; multiple batteries of rockets, which would fill a cubic mile of air with steel cables carrying small explosive charges descending slowly on parachutes, a fearsome minefield in the sky.

This fascinating story was told with verve by **Mike Chipperfield**, an ex-Mendip Ranger, and is a wonderful example of ingeniously turning ploughshares into swords. A special interest walk is being planned to view the remains in the future.



*Photo stmgrts.co.uk*

### **NATURE AS YOUR NEIGHBOUR by HIGGY as told by Sue Fenton**

On Thursday 22nd Feb in Winscombe, Higgy from YACWAG, aka Collin Higgins, entertained and informed with his talk and slide show about the simple but beautiful garden he designed and created at his home in Yatton. Higgy was a late volunteer in our talks programme due to a cancellation. He was an inspiring speaker, and with his excellent photographs of all things flora and fauna, totally engaging.

Partly in view of the environmental threats to many native species, his aim was to encourage native wildlife to take up residence and visit seasonally. He spoke of creatures from slow worms and dragonflies, moths and butterflies, ladybirds, frogs, toads, newts to birds and small mammals like wood mice and hedgehogs.

He demonstrated how we could easily use some of his ideas by including certain plants in our borders, particularly perennials like Echinacea “White Swan”, verbena bonariensis, inula, veronicastrum, and scabious to provide nectar for pollinators. (Picture below: perennial flowers and right: Carder bee on Purple toadflax, both by Higgy )



Their seed heads are left on over winter for the birds so giving all round use to a huge variety of wildlife. He also recommended purple loosestrife, buddleia, nasturtiums, and especially willow herb to attract, among other insects, moths like the fabulous elephant hawkmoth. If there’s room for just one tree he’d make it a rowan.

As well as suggesting leaving a patch of grass to grow wild flowers if possible, Higgy insists on the provision of water as an essential. He started by recycling a Belfast sink, then added an old bath and finally created a natural pond. In no time he had frogs, toads, newts and dragonflies.



*Higgy’s photos are copyrighted to Somerset Wildlife Photography. <http://www.somersetwildlifephotography.com/>*

His garden welcomes a host of other visitors with bird nesting boxes, bee hotels, hedgehog shelters and simple piles of rotting logs for smaller creatures. While providing for his visitors, many of which are useful predators of pests like slugs and snails and aphids, it was about establishing a natural balance in his garden to the benefit of man and beast. Now that the garden is established the benefit to Higgy is his only maintenance is cutting the grass occasionally. Nature keeps the rest in balance.

## AND NOW, TO LOOK FORWARD TO –

**FRIDAY 23RD MARCH 2018**

**THE SOCIETY AGM Draycott village Hall at 6.30pm**

**SATURDAY 14TH APRIL**

**THE PRESIDENT'S SPECIAL INTEREST WALK**

**BURRINGTON HAM AND BLACK DOWN – “YESTERDAY, TODAY and TOMORROW “**



Our President, Mr. Les Davies MBE, will lead a talking-walk around one of his favourite bits of the Mendip Hills – 4 miles of moderate walking to look at the on-going story of our local 'Common Land'.

Meet in the Avelines Hole car park about 200yds up the Combe, after the cattle grid. (Not the one opposite the Rock of Ages). Contact Les 07778674985.

*Left – Les on the Common talking about why 'salt licks' are hanging from trees?*

**THURSDAY 3RD MAY 2018**

**TALK - MANAGING NATIONAL TRUST PROPERTIES FOR WILDLIFE – by Ian Clemmett**  
**At the Wells & Mendip Museum BA5 2UE at 2.30pm.**



Ian Clemmett is the National Trust Lead Ranger for the Somerset Coast & Countryside; he will be showing us how he looks after the huge areas of 'open access' countryside owned by the National Trust in our area. With his team of four, together with other volunteers from the public on some occasions, he makes sure the land is a suitable place for the survival of the species which call it home. In this, the largest area of open landscape in the south West, the two most important and difficult to maintain are Cheddar Gorge and Wavering Down. Visitors welcome, no need to book 01275 472797

*N.T. walling group on Wavering Down*

**FRIDAY 4TH MAY 2018**

**TALK – “PANTHER BRITANNICA” - by Rick Minter**  
**At Winscombe at 7.30pm**

As a result of the many requests following up on a similar subject a few years ago, we have a talk by the region's top expert on the Big Cats which have made our area their natural home. How have these cats established themselves? What are their territories, how are they breeding and are numbers viable.

“Detective work matters, but we need to consider the wider connections of our vagrant cats and the effects of big predators in nature and on our psyche. A mystery animal is becoming real. The great challenge is to make evident what is invisible. The cats always have the upper hand so their lives will stay mostly hidden, but why not discover what we can?” – *Rick Minter*

Venue – St. James's Church Hall, Woodborough Rd, Winscombe, BA24 1BA. Members £2. and Non members £3.50p plus free refreshments. For details contact Richard on 01275 472797



**SATURDAY 19TH MAY 2018**

**WILD DAY OUT – FAMILY BIOBLITZ AND PICNIC IN SLADER'S LEIGH**

Join us for a free event for the family in our Local Nature Reserve, Slader's Leigh, a day filled with bug and reptile hunting, pond dipping, land art and more. Slader's Leigh is the perfect spot for a picnic where the little ones can enjoy some freedom to play. Toilet facilities are available, refreshments will be provided and all activities are free, but donations are welcome.

This event will be run by the Mendip Hills AONB staff, volunteers and Young Rangers, by kind permission of The Mendip Society as part of the “Naturally Healthy Month”. **Time 11am -3pm. Weather permitting. Contact 07977 402 399, & the AONB office 01761 462338 and visit our website**



**FRIDAY 1ST JUNE 2018****VISIT & TALK AT THE SOMERSET EARTH SCIENCE CENTRE, MOONS HILL QUARRY**

This is a visit and talk specifically for Society Members; hosted by Adele Avery, the Co-ordinator of the annual Mendip Rocks Festival. Because the Society was one of the three major sponsors of the Festival in 2017, and will be again of this year's 2018 Festival, Adele wanted our members to see the story of 450 million years of local geological history at first hand, and to explain what the Festival is trying to give to the public through all its activities.

Now a firm favourite with the local Community and for amateur Geologists throughout the UK, this year the Festival will run from July to October with the events, walks and activities spaced out much more over the programme.

**THE LAUNCH WILL BE ON JULY 6th & 7th**, all details will be on our website, [www.themendipsociety.org.uk](http://www.themendipsociety.org.uk)

The visit is free, starts at 2pm and is for Society members and families; Refreshments will be served afterwards.

The address is Moons Hill Quarry, Mendip Rd, Stoke St. Michael, BA3 5JU.

Follow the signs at the Moons Quarry entrance. ST 663463. For details phone Richard Frost 01275 472797

**TUESDAY 5TH JUNE 2018****A RETURN VISIT TO THE BBC STUDIOS AT BRISTOL 10AM – 12 NOON**

By popular request, a repeat visit to the Whiteladies' Road studios to see how your TV programmes are made. Group size is for 16 places at £9.50 each. Richard has to book and pay for places quite early on so please secure your place as soon as possible. Book by email or phone and send a cheque made payable to 'Richard Frost' address on your Dec-April programme.

**WEDNESDAY 6TH JUNE 2018****A SPECIAL INTEREST VISIT TO CHANCELLORS FARM, nr. Priddy 2PM**

This unspoilt, historic landscape remains an active working farm. The meadows are an unusual mixture of lime-rich, neutral and acidic areas supporting a wide range of species, including less common plants such as fragrant orchid and meadow saffron, as well as more familiar flowers. Even after 20 years, Kate Lawrence, the site manager, is still discovering new species. Kate will be our guide over these meadows, cut for hay in summer and fed to livestock over winter. These include a herd of Ruby Red Devon cattle. If all goes to plan we will also visit the rough, natural landscape next to the farm, also managed by the SWT and closed to the public generally, it being an active Rifle Range. But we cannot guarantee that this part of the visit will not be cancelled at very short notice because of live activity. Max no. 20 members only, places must be booked with Judith 01275 874284. IF there are high numbers we will run a second visit on

SATURDAY 23RD JUNE.

**FRIDAY 10TH AUGUST 2018****A VISIT TO MOONS HILL AND WHATLEY QUARRIES 10AM – 2PM**

Following on from June's visit to the SESC, this is an exclusive Society conducted tour of two working quarries.

The visit will be from 10am- until 2pm (It's the same as the one we did 2 years ago) for a max of 20 people.

There will be two trips of the mini bus, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Bring a packed lunch – lunch time from 12.30 – 1.00pm, with the second trip from 1-2pm

When members are not on the tour they will be entertained and informed inside the centre. Gill, the Centre Manager asks that we have strong walking boots/shoes, wear long trousers and cover our arms.

There will be no charge but donations will be welcome. Places need to be booked with Richard – first come, first served, by e-mail if possible please



Meet at the SESC, Moons Hill Quarry ST 663463.

Just before 10AM. before you visit look at their website at

<http://www.earthsciencecentre.org.uk>

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION – THE NEW DATA PROTECTION LAW

The law on the protection of personal data changes on 28th May 2018 and, although prompted by privacy concerns over the commercial use of personal data, it applies to all organisations, large or small, that hold information on people. Briefly, there must be a lawful basis for holding and using such information and the organisation must use it only for that purpose. It must ensure accuracy and security of data, let people know what information it holds on them and allow them to see it, have it amended or deleted or place restrictions on its use. A fuller explanation is given on the website of the Information Commissioner's Office [www.ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/](http://www.ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/).

### The information we hold on members originates from them and comprises:

- contact details - name, address, phone numbers, email addresses
- activities –whether a walker, walk leader and any record of first aid training
- subscription record - membership category, payments and gift aid
- text field for explanatory notes on the above.

We use this purely for the running of the Society and claim this as a “legitimate interest” i.e. one of the lawful bases

allowed by the regulations. Members' records are held by the Membership Secretary with a back-up copy held by the Chairman. Information may be passed to other Trustees of the Society, or an individual member acting for a Trustee, for the above purpose. Members' information is not shared within the membership at large or passed to anyone outside the Society unless the individual has given their consent (e.g. contact details in the event programme). To preserve privacy individual email addresses are not visible on email circulars.

We have deleted some information which used to be asked for on the joining form but which is no longer collected (date of birth and occupation). Also, we will delete an ex-member's record a year after his or her subscription has lapsed.

The last renewal letter was individually addressed to allow members to check and correct contact information but if any member wishes to see, amend or place restrictions on the use of his or her record, just ask the Membership Secretary. For example, some members do not wish to receive email news circulars. Of course, this may restrict the service that we can provide to that member.

We recognise the need to comply with the new law and believe we are responding in a proportionate and adequate way. – *Peter Janes is now also our Data Protection Officer.*

## From the Chair By Richard Frost

As a result of one of the popular activities of the Society, we now find ourselves the victims of our own success. Over the years, the regular Saturday walk has always attracted its own faithful following and attendees could always rely on about 20 / 25 fellow members to walk with and chat to.

However, because of better publicity everywhere bringing steady growth, we are now seeing a regular turn out of anything up to 40 walkers per session. What a nice problem to have – a lot of organisations I can think of would welcome a similar problem!

But it does cause problems! One answer is for us to have some new Walks Leaders to compliment our present stalwarts who are at full stretch to meet this challenge.

**So do you think you could become a walks leader?** It's not as difficult as you may think, - no specialist knowledge is required, no unique powers, just a love of an area you know quite well, a bit of common sense and the belief that you are helping others to enjoy what you enjoy doing. There is no intensive training programme, no exam to pass; what there is obviously is guidance and tips on what to do or not to do and help will always be on hand from those who are more experienced. Much can be absorbed just by going on our walks yourself with an experienced leader and seeing how exercising our 'duty of care' means that the risks are small and manageable so long as we control the size of groups.

Please read John Moore's report on p 9; I can only add, very strongly, that the continuation of the programme is dependent on more people being willing to lead, and that we are having to consider ways of limiting the numbers on walks. Our walks programme needs YOU.

Please have a chat with John or myself for further details. **Richard Frost - Chairman**



# A.G.M. MARCH 23RD 2018

## DRAYCOTT VILLAGE HALL

To be held at 6.30pm prompt

### AGENDA

Welcome by Les Davies MBE Mendip Society President

- 1 Apologies received
- 2 Minutes of the previous meeting on March 31<sup>st</sup> , adoption of Minutes.
3. Matters arising.
4. Chairman's welcome and report.
5. Annual report and adoption. (not in the newsletter).
6. Reports – Reserves; Membership, Rights of Way, Walks Organiser, Webmasters, (all in the newsletter)
7. Treasurer's report and adoption of accounts (copies available)
8. Appointment of Independent Examiner for Society accounts.
9. Election of Officers – President takes the Chair.  
Nomination and election of the Prime Officers  
Election of other members of the Committee, including any new nominations –  
note: all existing members of the committee are willing to stand again for election.
- 10 The Walks programme – The facts – and discussion, Peter Janes
- 11 A.O.B. – from the Chair or from the floor .
- 12 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

#### TEA AND CAKE

If any member wishes to stand for election to the Committee in any capacity including that of Chair, Secretary or Treasurer, then a written proposal must be received by me before the start of the meeting. This must state the name of the proposer and the nominee and be signed by both, the nominee also stating that he or she is willing to stand. It can be sent by an email [judith.tranter1@btinternet.com](mailto:judith.tranter1@btinternet.com) or by post (address on page 16) previously but an original copy must also be available for the records on the night. – Judith Tranter: Secretary of the Society.





## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MENDIP SOCIETY ON FRIDAY 31ST MARCH 2017 IN WELLS MUSEUM AT 7PM.

WELCOME by the President Les Davies MBE

**Apologies** received, read out by the Secretary: - Bob Rischmiller; Richard & Sue Ivens; Bill Carruthers & Veronica Parkes; Anne & Dave Bodley; David & Margaret Parker; Peter & Sue Gearing; Pat Farrant.

**Minutes** of the AGM held on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2016, copies of which were available in the hall. As no comments were raised they were taken as read and adopted as accurate, proposer Gerald Offer, seconder Martin Fewing. There were no 'matters arising' from the minutes.

**Chairman's Report** (in the March 2017 newsletter pullout 'From the Chair'). Richard recommended his report to members, with nothing to add to it this evening.

**Annual Report of the Secretary** (also in the newsletter). With no comments from the floor the report was proposed for adoption by Clive Constance and seconded by Martin Fewing. The Secretary then mentioned the reports on our two reserves, which were in the March newsletter and that from our Rights of Way Officers, David and Margaret Parker, who were thanked, in their absence for their vigilant watch on the footpaths and by-ways of Mendip. The last report was from the membership Secretary, (who was temporarily absent being unfortunately locked out of the building for a short while).

**Treasurer's Report** for the year ending December 31<sup>st</sup> 2016, copies of which were available in the hall. Society Treasurer, Marilyn Cattell, commented on the accounts and answered a number of questions on 'Pay Pal', the facility to pay for subscriptions on line, (too costly for us at present) and publicity costs. Clive Constance also reported for the minutes, the forced closure of our CAFOD a/c by the bank in 2016. The adoption of the Accounts, proposed by Denise Poole and seconded by Peter Burchill, was unanimous.

**Appointment of Auditor** The Treasurer thanked our auditor, member Don Walter for this year's accounts, confirmed his willingness to continue for 2017 and recommended his re-appointment. Carried unanimously by a show of hands.

**Election of Officers** The President took the Chair for this part of the meeting.

1. Firstly, it was necessary to ratify the co-opted election onto the Committee, shortly after the 2016 AGM, of the Treasurer, Marilyn Cattell; a show of hands was all that was required for the ratification to be agreed.
2. Election of Prime Officers – The Chairman, Treasurer and the Secretary. As there were no other nominations and the Officers were willing to stand again, all three were proposed (Gill Davies) and seconded (Keith Cattell) and duly re-elected.
3. The ratification of other co-opted committee members (John Moore and Pat Farrant) was completed by a show of hands.
4. The election of the members of the Committee other than at (2). No other nominations had been received, all serving committee members were willing to stand and the Chair proposed an en-mass election. (Clive Constance, Pat Farrant, Peter Janes, John Moore), seconded by Martin Fewing; all were re-elected.

Richard Frost then resumed the Chair.

**Change of wording** – of PART 2.8: Membership: clause (4) of the Constitution.

The Clause now reads: -

"The Trustees must keep a register of names and addresses of the members, which must be available to any member on request"

It is proposed that it be changed to read –

"The Trustees must keep a register of names and addresses of the members which shall be available to the officers of the society only, and then only in pursuit of the smooth running of the society.

By a show of hands this was carried unanimously. The charity Commission to be informed of the change.

**A.O.B.** The Chairman asked if there was any other business.

Member Terry Gifford proposed that in the light of the many difficulties that the Committee had experienced in the past year, including a great deal to do with the society website –

"That the meeting explores the possibilities of constitutional means of removing the previous Chair from the Society". There was an objection to this from the floor, that the meeting was not the place for such business, which was supported by Chair Richard Frost; the motion was re-worded to read the "Committee" instead of the "Meeting". On voting all agreed with the motion except for three (3) against and six (6) abstentions.

**Date of the next Annual General Meeting:** To be decided by the Committee next year.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming, for all the work done by volunteers during the year, the Committee, and the ladies who had made the cakes and were dispensing the teas for this meeting. (Jean and Royette, who were also AONB volunteers of the Year) The meeting was then closed. And said tea and cake served followed by

**An Illustrated Presentation by Professor Danielle Schreve : "Surviving the Last Ice Age: a Mendip Perspective"** Using evidence from a new cave sequence in the Mendips Prof. Schreve looked at the responses of different species to abrupt climate change and its implications for extinctions and early human occupation.



## REPORTS FOR THE MEETING ON 23RD MARCH 2018

### From the Chairman

2018 has hit the ground running – with talks at both venues having packed audiences, which is very gratifying. The Society continues to grow, dipping its toes into Corporate Membership and we welcome Yeo Valley and Wookey Hole as they join us. It is generally accepted nowadays that working in partnership with other organisations achieves much more than going it alone and over the past year we have joined with Somerset Wildlife Trust, the National Trust, the Somerset Earth Science Centre and of course the Mendip Hills AONB. We have been invited to renew our sponsorship of the Mendip Rocks Festival again this year; 2017 was bigger and better than ever and many events were considerably over subscribed, we feel that being involved in such a popular month long exposure of the Mendip Hills brings us into contact with a whole range of people to whom we are at present unknown.

Our team of Planning scrutinisers are hard at work both individually and supporting their counterparts in the A.O.N.B and C.P.R.E. as the flood of applications for housing developments involving vast numbers of properties are submitted for our area. Our area is not alone in this, but we are unique because we are bordering on to the AONB all around. This is a problem which can only get worse for a few years yet.

Many thanks to those who have worked hard to help the workings of the Society and in so doing ensure that the values that were put in place over fifty years ago are maintained.

### Membership

The table shows memberships in February over recent years. As members are given until the end of March to renew, the totals include those whose renewals were / are outstanding (there will be a reminder inserted into your copy if you have not yet renewed for 2018).

	<i>Feb 2015</i>	<i>Feb 2016</i>	<i>Feb 2017</i>	<i>Feb 2018</i>	<i>Subscription</i>
Single 60 +	204	205	189	210	£15
Joint / family	122	117	112	117	£25
Single under 60	38	41	47	45	£18
Life members	18	17	16	16	60+ £375 < 60 £500
Small business	2	2	1	0	£50
Large business	0	0	1	2	£100
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>390</b>	
Subscriptions paid	151	157	325	325	
Subscriptions unpaid	233	225	41	65	

Once all renewals are in we expect there to be a small increase in overall membership. Word of mouth is the best way of attracting new members so please encourage family and friends to join.

About 40% of members have signed up for gift aid. Gift aid allows the Society (as a charity) to claim an extra 20% of the value of your subscription from the Government. This is at no cost to you but you must pay sufficient UK income tax or capital gains tax in the current tax year to cover the sum reclaimed by the Society. A higher rate tax payer can claim tax relief on sums given as gift aid (see [www.gov.uk/donating-to-charity/gift-aid](http://www.gov.uk/donating-to-charity/gift-aid)). If you wish to complete a gift aid mandate or need to cancel one, please contact the Membership Secretary.

If you pay by standing order please ensure that it is for the correct amount (shown in the last column of the table). –  
*Peter Janes – Membership Secretary*

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

The new website has been up and running for nearly 18 months. Access by members is still relatively low (30 to 50 per week). Unfortunately, the old website, despite repeated requests to the previous webmaster has not been taken down which does cause some confusion to non-members. The website has been very useful for adding new events and announcing changes to the Programme.

I try to maintain an up-to-date Gallery section usually including photos from Mendip Society events such as work-days at Slader's Leigh and Tania's Wood and from walks. The Gallery has been supplemented by some outstanding photos of Mendip nature - flowers, fungi, snakes etc. Many thanks to all those who have submitted photos. I put nearly all of them in the Gallery section. However, I try to ensure that there is nothing more than a month old in the Gallery so the photos are usually deleted fairly quickly. - *John Moore - MS Webmaster.*

## Rights of Way

During the past year, we have been consulted on nine proposed Orders for the modification of the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way.

Minor footpath diversions in Cranmore, Selwood and Wookey Parishes were supported.

### BANWELL PARISH.

1 No objection was raised to the diversion of footpath AX 3/1 at Lower Rhodyate Farm but amendments were suggested to make the route more convenient to users. The proposal would also result in the diversion of a section of the Butcombe Trail.

2 No objection was raised to the inclusion on the Definitive Map of a new bridleway along Nye Drove (off Riverside). This proposal has been referred to the Secretary of State following receipt by North Somerset Council of a third party objection.

### ST CUTHBERT OUT PARISH.

No objection was raised to a claimed footpath between Upper Breach and Bath Road, South Horrington, with an Order being subsequently made by Somerset County Council, adding the route to the Definitive Map.

### WINSCOMBE & SANDFORD PARISH.

1 Thatchers Complex, Sandford. Major alterations proposed to the rights of way network through the site to segregate path users from the industrial areas; the proposed routes would be pleasanter & safer to use, so, even if some would be longer, rationalisation of the footpath network is supported.

2 No objection raised to the diversion of footpath AX 29/78 - Roman Road, Sandford. This proposal is on hold, pending receipt by the Local Authority of proof of ownership of the land concerned.

### WOOKEY PARISH.

No objection in principle to the diversion of footpath WS 16/36 - Wookey Farm, provided there is no proven need for the retention of the existing line of path. We have queried whether, rather than being treated as a diversion, the proposal should refer to the closure of the existing and the provision of a completely new path, there being a considerable distance between the two.

Over the year, a number of stiles, including that at Rhodyate, Banwell, reported to last years A.G.M., have been replaced with pedestrian gates. Again, North Somerset Council's Rights of Way Team has come up trumps! - *Dave + Margaret Parker. Rights of Way Officers. 22nd February, 2018.*

## The Mendip Society Walking Programme

Our walk leaders have supported a full and diverse programme of walks throughout the year with a walk or a special interest event including a walk virtually every week. The walks have seen a steady increase in walkers which shows we are doing something right. We've turned out in all weathers including the four successive wet Saturdays during January and February although the blizzards on March 1<sup>st</sup> have caused us to cancel a walk. The walk leaders are a huge asset to the Society and we should be very grateful for their dedication.

Unfortunately, we have lost three leaders this year. Roger Moses (knee problems). Roger has led MS walks for at least 20 years. Jo Bradshaw (work commitments) and myself (foot problems). However, we have gained two new leaders, Roger Penniceard and Beryl Howe, and I am sure they will maintain the MS walking traditions.

Although it looks as though we have a net loss of one, two others will not be leading during the Summer period because of temporary commitments. The result is that we will probably only be able to put on a walk once a fortnight. We need several more people to volunteer as leaders so that we can put on a full programme in the Autumn. - *John Moore - MS Walks Co-ordinator.*

## Financial Report for the year ending 31st December 2017 (overview)

A brief overview of the Income and Expenditure account and the Balance Sheet for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017 - the Mendip Society achieved a surplus of £1,222.95 (2016 £1,782.74 )

1. The reduction in profit was due to expenses incurred for Tania's Wood, the Society's new reserve, 2017 being the first year it has featured in the Society's activities.
2. Increases in the postage costs of magazine and programme, slightly heavier envelopes resulting in the next level of stamps being required. This was partially off set by.....
3. An increase in income with a Donation into our Heritage fund, the expenditure relating to this (which was matched by the society) was paid to the Gully Cave Excavation out of the Heritage Fund and is included in the Balance Sheet payment £1,575.
4. A reduction in Administration Expenditure which is due to the lower cost of the Society's new Web Site's running costs. - *Marilyn Cattell - Treasurer*

## OUR NATURE RESERVES

Because the last years' newsletters have carried quite comprehensive news from the two Reserves and space is tight this time, this will be only the briefest of reports. Firstly -

### TANIA'S WOOD

- We are pleased with the progress of the continuing management plan which is restoring the ancient hedge boundaries at the same time as providing needed, and popular, training in countryside skills. With the aid of three professional hedge layers we have run four, all much over subscribed, successful beginners days. The hedges are all looking pretty good too.
- We have joined with the Geocaching group of North Somerset on their annual CITO event; they had a good day learning woodland skills and we have the benefit of a large stack of wood, some to use for charcoal burning, the hedging stakes for 2018 work and a row of coppiced hazel trees
- Western Power paid us two rather devastating visits, clearing all the trees and vegetation in a 10meter strip under their three transmission power lines which cross the wood – including several very large wild cherries, ashes and worst of all a fully grown English Elm. They have the legal right to do this!
- We facilitated several great woodland days for children in Blagdon and in April 2018, Blagdon Primary School will start regular Forest school days full of activities that children always love to do in woods
- There were five work days together with the AONB Task volunteers; we cleared a lot of brash, built several log piles, had some super bonfires, and made a gate - in both sunshine and in pouring rain!

We have very good relations with the neighbouring farmer and landowners which eases the way on our days and our volunteers really like coming up to Tania's – to join us keep an eye on the website and FB page for info. For the coming year we will continue to re-instate the Deer Leap, bank, ditch and hedge, and to make the car park an easier place to park the cars in. A fine, drier year would be the best thing for the wood.

### SLADER'S LEIGH

- Work began on the 30km water pipeline put underground between Barrow Tanks and Axbridge Reservoir in December 2016; all of Spring 2017 we waited in Slader's Leigh for the Tunnel by-pass path to be started. They finally began at the end of June – just when the orchids were also just starting to show but the mass of flowers didn't seem to bat an eyelid at the disturbance and the bare patches left by the dumping of materials soon grassed over.
- The posts and rope strung alongside the path did a good subconscious job of indicating to walkers and cyclists to stay on the path and very few actually wandered off it. Gates of all sorts were put at the top of the field, they will be removed as soon as possible at the end of the project.
- The President and his trusty tractor once again cut and raked the grasses for us, for which we are very grateful. Now with signs of growth it is looking in good fettle.
- The Strawberry Line remained closed all summer because of problems with bats in the tunnel, plus the drilling of the pipe trench needed to be much deeper than was thought. Fear of vibrations from drilling bringing down the tunnel meant that two narrower pipes were laid side by side in a shallower trench instead. The tunnel still remains closed. Although all the work is finished and tested, the tunnel remains closed; because of the constant wet weather of the last few months the Line surface is a quagmire. The path in Slader's Leigh is in very good condition and the meadow is much less boggy than the surrounding fields for which we are glad.



*The tunnel is closed at the N end; the two smaller pipes wait to be buried to the S and the bad state of the Line by our gate*



**If the weather allows, and the Line and access points dry out, the surfaces will be re-instated and the tunnel opened; our path will no longer be needed. This is expected to be sometime in April, but may be well into May.**



# YOUR BEAUTIFUL COUNTRYSIDE NEEDS YOU!

By our North Somerset  
Planning Scrutiniser,  
**Katie Lewis**

*View looking west from the  
Iron Age hillfort at Dolebury Warren  
near Churchill, N. Somerset  
Copyright Mark Plevin and  
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Creative Commons Licence.*



## Your point of view?

Although it's inevitable that this beautiful view will be altered by new developments that will be implemented in the next two decades, the good news is that all of us can be involved in the design process and can influence the outcome on the Mendip Hills AONB. As a result of the Localism Act 2011, engaging with the local community is of growing importance. Public consultation is a legal requirement within the planning system which gives stakeholders (i.e. any person, group or organisation with an interest in the project) and us, the public, full opportunity to express our views.

No one can deny the need for more good quality and affordable housing in this region or the need for new transport infrastructure (road and air). The unfortunate fact is that the current proposals for these developments are 'ambitious' (n-somerset.gov.uk) and on an unprecedented, major scale for this rural landscape. Most will lie close to the north western boundary of the Mendip Hills AONB over an extensive area stretching from the M5 in the west to Bristol Airport in the east. The table below gives an overview of the most significant features within the three largest developments, all of which will be visible from nearby areas in the AONB.

Main components of major new developments near the Mendip Hills AONB

### BANWELL GARDEN VILLAGE

1,900 new homes  
Two new primary schools  
A new secondary school  
A new local centre with shops and cafes  
Banwell Bypass  
5ha employment land  
New strategic transport infrastructure

### CHURCHILL GARDEN VILLAGE

2,675 new homes  
Three new primary schools  
A new local centre with shops and cafes  
Sandford/Churchill Bypass  
Improvements to A38/A368 junction  
7.4ha employment land

### BRISTOL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT EXPANSION

Possibility of a new terminal  
New multi-storey car parks  
New hotels  
New aviation park  
An 'employment' zone for businesses

Although we all have our own reasons for joining the Mendip Society, it's very likely that we care about and respect our wonderful countryside. Collectively, it is possible that we have more in-depth local knowledge and understanding of the special qualities of the Mendip Hills landscape than the planning authorities (North Somerset Council, West of England Combined Authority etc.).

We know where the best views are from the hills, the most peaceful spots, and the special areas of the landscape that should be protected in the AONB; all of which is valuable, objective information. We can contribute this knowledge to the statutory authorities and developers by making them aware of the highly valued views and areas of landscape that should be protected when siting and designing new development to safeguard the Mendip Hills AONB. Also, we should question the need and justification for the location, type and extent of development proposed when it appears excessive, for instance the housing allocations at Banwell and Churchill. All of this can be done online through the public consultation process on the planning authority / developer's website.

## New large-scale development near the AONB in North Somerset

Knowing how and when to be involved with the various developments that are currently proposed near the north western edge of the AONB is important if we are to have a positive influence in the planning process. The most significant developments that will have an impact on it include the future housing, business, transport and wider infrastructure proposals set out in the draft Joint Spatial Plan (2017) (JSP), and the proposed Bristol International Airport Expansion.

In a nutshell, the JSP sets out the overall amount of new homes and business development, where it should be located, and the key infrastructure necessary to support it. If the proposals for new strategic development (Garden Villages) at Banwell, Churchill, Backwell and Nailsea are confirmed, the new North Somerset Local Plan 2036 will set out in detail how the proposals will be planned and delivered.

Separate public consultation exercises in respect of the JSP, the North Somerset new Local Plan 2036, and Bristol International Airport Expansion were recently completed and will be reported on in the coming months. At present there is a lull in the proceedings. The findings of each consultation will inform future proposals which will then be the subject of the next public consultation stage giving all of us another chance to influence the design of new developments. Anyone can register on each authority's website to receive details of future public consultation documents and events.

In January, the Mendip Society responded robustly to the JSP objecting to potential damage to the landscape and views from the Mendip Hills AONB, and in particular to the absence of adequate consideration of these effects when selecting the strategic locations at Banwell and Churchill. The proposals do not comply with guidance set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, which requires the highest level of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs. Although the previous draft JSP proposed to undertake a Landscape Sensitivity assessment to determine the suitability of the rural areas proposed for future development, the findings were not available for public consultation.



*View overlooking Churchill in the foreground and the Mendip Hills in the distance  
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This is of great concern because aspects of the protected landscape and views could be permanently damaged by relatively minor changes associated with new development. It cannot be assumed that any major development proposals will fully comply with legislation and national or local planning policy intended to protect and enhance the AONB. Therefore, it is incumbent on all stakeholders and individuals who care about the AONB to raise their concerns by participating in public consultation exercises and/or commenting on planning applications.

Whilst it is likely the Mendip Society will respond on behalf of its members; public consultation is a dynamic process and it's about community involvement. EVERY COMMENT COUNTS. The greater the number of comments making the same point, the more pressure it puts on the developer and planning authority to take appropriate action. It is an easy process to submit comments either in writing or online as part of each public consultation exercise. WE CAN ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR THE BETTER.



## LITTER – A PROBLEM By Peter Janes



At the time of writing it is still winter and roadside vegetation has died down revealing all the cans, bottles and junk food wrappers that idiots have thrown from vehicles. Maybe one can understand (but not excuse) the oafish impulse to throw away a container once the ghastly contents have been swallowed, but what about the neatly tied bags that can be found lodged in hedgerows?

It takes perverse deliberation to store up rubbish and then chuck it out the window rather than disposing of it properly. Then there are strips of plastic film and sacks that have blown off vehicles, and long abandoned temporary traffic signs and broken cones left by highway workers. It spoils what should be an area of outstanding natural beauty.

If anything is to be done one has to ask why people drop litter and dump

rubbish. The short answers are selfishness and thoughtlessness, but more specifically: rubbish has no value, chucking it is easy whereas proper disposal requires thought and possibly expense, the chances of being prosecuted are minute and the amount of rubbish lying around suggests no one cares anyway.

The Government has published a Litter Strategy for England<sup>1</sup> which at least acknowledges that there is a problem but which is short on commitments and timescales. Among the suggestions are: a national awareness campaign, increased provision of litter bins and heavier penalties for offenders. These are laudable but people are unlikely to change their behaviour unless there is a significant inducement to do so. Draconian penalties for dropping litter are pointless given that it is so hard to



catch and prosecute offenders and sympathy would probably go to the person prosecuted as recent television coverage of a woman fined £70 for dropping a cigarette butt in Bristol showed. It would be more effective to rely on self interest by making proper disposal easy and free of cost whilst discouraging, via taxation, the sale of items which will become waste, unless they are covered by an effective deposit / return scheme.

In the meantime people who care can help by reporting fly tipped rubbish to the appropriate council (they all have provision on their web sites) and by picking up litter around their own locality or when out walking. Many individuals already do this but if any members would like to take part in a Mendip Society litter picking group (there used to be one) please contact the Membership Secretary.



1: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england>

Photographs by Peter. Top: Lay-by on the B3135 (subsequently cleared after it was reported to Mendip Council); centre: by the Miners crossroads (a bad spot for litter); bottom: Pile of pornographic magazines dumped at Stockhill.

## AND IN THE PIPELINE:

### Learn to Dry-Stone Wall - a weekend course

**Tina Bath** will be running a beginners weekend in September for the Society, probably at chancellors Farm, where there is a nice lot of walls to choose from, whereas neither of our Reserves has any stone walls at all! Watch out for details in the July newsletter.

### Westbury Quarry – with a BANG! ST508503

Plans are afoot for a fun social event in the quarry 'sometime in the summer', with guided tours, entertainment and picnics with friends. It will, we hope, also be when some lucky raffle ticket holder gets to 'blow up a car or two', by pushing the plunger. Details in July. Photo by Christina White -Westbury Quarry, situated above the village of Westbury-Sub-Mendip and below the village of Priddy.





## News from the Hills

*From Jim Hardcastle  
Manager of the Mendip Hills Unit*

**What's the state of the Mendip Hills AONB** compared to 2009? We're preparing a new report to be published this summer that brings together lots of data on wildlife reserves, farming, and land management. This report will inform the review of the AONB management plan.

**Planners lunch and learn success.** Cindy Carter, the AONB planning Officer and our planning work placement student, hosted a Lunch and Learn session in Bath & North East Somerset Council offices to introduce planners and other staff to the special qualities of the Mendip Hills and remind them of their duties in regard to the designation of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 24 staff attended the session!

**A wild land ready for adventure?** The AONB Unit are providing subsidised training to local tourism businesses. We want to encourage them to get their visitors to experience outdoor adventure on the Mendip Hills.



The area is known for its rock & other sport and this supports many jobs and helps a strong rural economy.

**A survey of the Limestone Link path**, between Shipham and Combe Hay, will be carried out in March to record the condition of the structures and surfacing along the route, as well as producing a new route guide. This information will be used to develop future projects to ensure the whole route offers a high quality experience to walkers.

**Practical Task Volunteers** carry out a variety of tasks - conserving limestone grassland, dry-stone walling and working in Slader's Leigh and Tania's Wood and have been joined for some tasks by corporate volunteer groups such as Aster Group. As well as the regular task programme we now also have a dedicated team of dry stone walling volunteers (some of whom are MS members) who have been busy rebuilding walls at high profile sites including Deer Leap and Cheddar Gorge.



*These guys also work in the rain; see p 14 also*

## A President's View



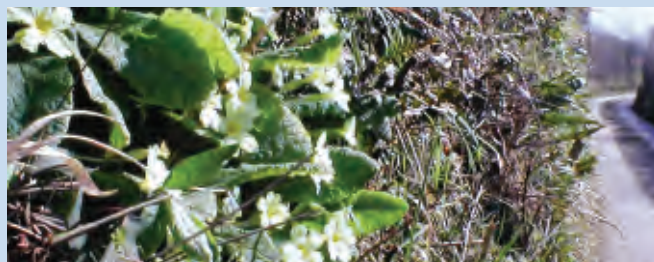
Dear all,

I have reason for hope in many ways! Firstly the sun is shining as I write this, making me think that Spring might just be on the way. The second reason is just how much is going on within the Society now. Having dropped in to listen to my very good friend Mike Chipperfield give his talk on War Time Mendip I was staggered at the number of people who turned out to listen to him; this is in no way a derogatory comment about 'Chippy', but more an exaltation at the turn around of interest in the Society's programme of events.

The walks programme is being so well attended that it seems a review of procedures is now being required to accommodate everyone. Please keep all of this interest going, and encourage friends to become involved. There is so much happening that it would be a shame to miss it - and one thing not to miss is of course the AGM. This year it is at Draycott Village Hall on March 23rd and as an added bonus we welcome another good friend of the Society, Steve Eggington, Editor of The Mendip Times.

On a more serious note, the amount of litter and fly tipping has become a concern of late. That's not only within the Society, but with the AONB as well. The Society has been adding its support to this campaign to get things cleared up. If you come across fly tipping, please report it to the Local Authority. The legislation has now changed from when I had to deal with these matters, and evidence of ownership within a fly tip can now be followed up with legal action if needed. Peter Janes also has a few good words to say on the subject elsewhere in this newsletter, plus there are all the up coming Society events, and the latest from the world of Mendip. In the meantime enjoy life to the full!

With kind regards and best wishes. – **Les**



*Primroses on a bank on one of our lanes.*

## Society Roundup

### AND NEWS & VIEWS FROM OTHERS

**Editor's Notes** – the year has gone by so quickly and - It's time for the 2018.AGM Once again we invite everyone to join the Committee for a bit of Society business , have a cup of tea and a piece of cake, a chat with friend s, old and new, and then enjoy another great talk we have arranged for you. This year we have Society member Steve Eggington, who may in fact be better known to you as the Editor of that well known publication, 'The Mendip Times'.

This year, again we have put all the papers you will need for the meeting into the centre fold of this Newsletter; PLEASE pull out the 2 pages (4 sides) and bring them along to the AGM. It makes things much more interesting if you know what's going on!

The Chairman has been busy enrolling two new members already this year – and we welcome both Wookey Hole and Yeo Valley as Corporate Members of the Society. In our next issue I will ask them to tell us a bit about their companies and how they fit into this great area we call the Mendip Hills. **NEXT ISSUE IS OUT ON 1ST JULY**



The President has been having a bit of a clear out, (I don't like to say de-clutter Les) and has found some old black & white photos from when he was working up at Charterhouse for the AONB. Here's one of them – three of our members who look as if they are conducting an ecological survey on a hedge. Do you know who they are and round about when it was taken?



This is part of our Society history and we are trying to make an archive which can be safely stored and used to make a record of the Society through the 53 years of our existence, in some form or other. We are looking for someone who enjoys seeking out and collecting, sorting and organising, researching and recording things, to be our Archivist. Others will help in any way they can but we need to be organised and ordered too! Are you that person? Please contact us to talk about it.

The picture above, and others will be displayed at the AGM for your comments.

## MENDIP HILLS FUND

The Mendip Hills Fund is a community fund set up to conserve and enhance the environment, communities and economy of the Mendip Hills.

In the Grant application round last Autumn, Blagdon Primary School were successful in securing funding to run a Forest School. For the past year a Forest School trained teacher has been running 'woodland days' on an adhoc basis during school holidays in our new woodland area of 2 acres, which we were kindly donated in Ubley, at the edge of the Mendip Hills, by Glynn England, who was our President in the 1990s.



Our work parties have ensured a safe, exciting environment for the children to have fun with learning activities; this grant means that a regular weekly day's activity can be run by the school. They will also provide transport by mini-bus which will help with our maintenance and wear and tear on the land in Tania's Wood.

**OUR FIRST WORK PARTY IS ON WEDNESDAY 4TH APRIL 2018**

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