

Summer 2017

Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group



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a word from the chair

by Tim Harris

I'm writing this the day after the Wren Group's third annual bioblitz, the most successful we've held. After last year's downpours, which washed out a couple of events, the committee was this year encouraged to apply positive thought to produce sunshine, warmth and cloudless skies. Maybe we were a bit too successful, with afternoon temperatures soaring above 30C and probably keeping some people at home in the shade, but generally the conditions were ideal for watching nature.



In sweltering temperatures soaring above 30C, visitors to the 2017 BioBlitz found whatever shade they could - here enjoying a talk and walk about trees



In spite of the heat, local expert Tricia Moxey in full swing giving a talk about the trees and fauna of Wanstead Park

Twelve activities, spread over three days, attracted at least 325 participants, and there was something for everyone with an interest in the natural environment.

Tricia Moxey imparted bucketloads of fascinating information on trees, insects, wildflowers and pretty much everything else natural on walks in Wanstead Park and on Wanstead Flats. Children were able to wade about in the cooling waters of Shoulder of Mutton pond in search of screech beetles and dragonfly larvae, under the guidance of Derek and Cathy McEwan. And the nature club event in the Temple, organised by Jo Blackman and Rebecca Wynn, attracted 40 more children.

People with an interest in spiders were able to join the indomitable David Carr, who worked solidly for four hours in the blazing heat – and without a hat! – in search of our eight-legged friends. His efforts were rewarded with some nationally scarce species. A

sparkling array of butterflies featured strongly on James Heal's early morning walk around Bush Wood, including the summer's first purple hairstreak, Essex skipper and ringlet, on Saturday. And 15 early risers joined Nick Croft for a 5 a.m. dawn chorus walk around the Old Sewage Works on Sunday.

Space doesn't allow me to mention everyone who helped make the weekend a success, but Jane, David, Gill, Alan, Mirza, Jackie, Kathy, Sharon, Peter and Mark also led or co-led events, staffed the Wren gazebo or generally offered back-up. The assistance of Forest keepers Thibaud, Alison and Tristram was invaluable. (And apologies for those I've omitted.)



The value of events like this isn't only in the number of people who turn up, or the raw data we compile about our wildlife. One resident of the Aldersbrook estate who found out about the weekend when a flier came through her letterbox told me: "Groups like your's help to build a real community". In the somewhat troubled times we live in, those words ring very true.



another side of newham

Article and Pictures by Paul Ferris



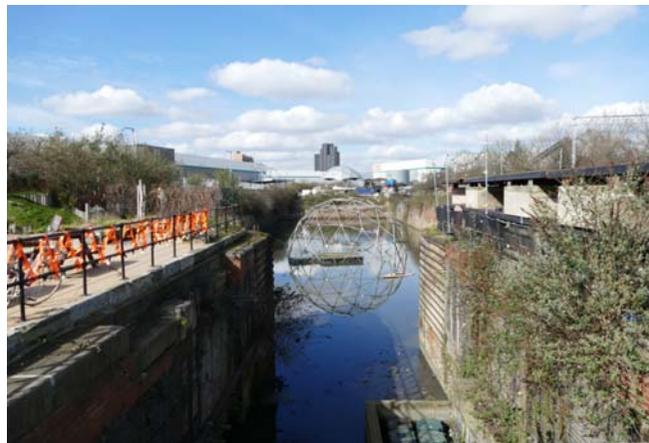
The major part of what I've considered to be my wildlife study area (patch in the parlance), and indeed historically of the Wren Group, is in the London Borough of Redbridge: Wanstead Park and almost all of Wanstead Flats, anyway. That's not to say I haven't made forays outside of Redbridge, even into darkest Newham, and have included some of my findings in my *Wanstead Wildlife* website. Indeed the Wren Group used to take a strong interest into East Ham Churchyard, but Newham, mainly, is "beyond the bounds".

I like exploring places – places that have all been explored before, of course – but not by me. Yet. So, having realised it was there, I made a circuitous journey from Bow Locks, alongside a length of the Blackwall Tunnel approach road and past an ominous security check-point to cross from Middlesex back into Essex (OK – historically so) and access something that was stupidly called 'The



Fat Walk'. Now that's a turn-off name for any footpath if ever I've heard one.

This 'Fat Walk' - which actually translates to 'wide path' - led me along the banks of the River Lea, Newham's border in these parts with Tower Hamlets. There is a strong tidal influence here. Just upstream are the tide mills at Bromley-by-Bow – huge engines powered by the tide. So when the tide is in the river is deep and strong, and when it's out there are extensive mud banks. These mud banks serve as fishing grounds for a multitude of birds, so there were many gulls of different species from Black-headed to Herring and Black-backs, as well as Cormorants and Herons. Also, plenty of ducks, including Sheld-duck and some distinctive black Mallard, plus Canada Geese, Egyptian Geese and Swans.



The dock area after volunteers cleared thousands of tonnes of rubbish

Further along – with the river to the right and the high-fenced business park to the left – reed-beds began to appear, and with them a noisy chattering of Reed Warblers. We get those around Wanstead, but here there were many, and the extensive Phragmites reed was obviously an ideal habitat.

Then I came up against a fence. The Fat Walk just stopped, exhausted. Strangely, though – it appeared to continue beyond, albeit the other side of a dock which had once had lock-gates here. There was no bridge – just a fence. The Fat Path to Nowhere.



Some time later I decided to lead a contingent of the Epping Forest Outdoor Group on a sightseeing walk along the Lea, from Stratford to the Thames at Trinity Buoy Wharf. We reached the fence, and I guessed there would be a level of annoyance that – after me explaining the problem – we'd have to retrace our steps considerably to continue. And then a gate in the fence opened, and we were approached by a smiling character who seemed to be expecting us. Or at least expecting somebody. He introduced himself as Simon Myers, the founder of the project, and proceeded to give our little group a concise but incredibly interesting account of the area, and where we were and what was happening.

Then, from the direction we'd come, the actual, huge, prearranged walking group he'd been waiting for appeared. He realised his mistake, but

before they arrived graciously invited us to walk through the fenced-off area – which was Cody Dock – and out the other end near to Star Lane, to continue our journey without the back-track detour.

Thus I learnt about and subsequently got involved with the Gasworks Dock Project and that wonderful area which we call Cody Dock. The project – founded by Simon – has led to this “lost” dock being cleared, mainly by volunteers, of thousands (no exaggeration) of tonnes of rubbish and being turned into an attractive riverside community area. Nowhere has become a Somewhere.



The dock itself – which was used to deliver the coal and coke which the local works turned into coal-gas – is at the moment a somewhat untidy area of water which is more-or-less cut off from the adjacent river. Most of the changes in water level is from surface water drainage, it is assumed, but there is a reed bed at one end which will be a feature, and usually Mallard, Coots and Moorhens floating about. When the tide doesn't suit their dabblings, groups of Teal fly in to seek shelter in the dock. Eventually, lock gates will be re-installed,



Herring Gull at Cody Dock

with a nice new bridge over the entrance, and the dock will be used for permanent moorings. Then, it is hoped, the still-barriered access to the rest of that Fat Walk – at present inaccessible – will be opened, and the riverside way will be opened towards Leamouth – where the Lea joins the Thames.



There are a number of boats around the dock that already provide living accommodation for those involved in the project, as well as the *River Princess*

– the project's own boat – which is being made ready to provide a pleasure service to show people something of the history of the river, its surroundings, and its wildlife. It will also act as a training facility, and could be used for hire for a variety of purposes.

There are gardens at the dock, including raised beds that have been planted up by all manner of visitors, from school children to corporate office workers and managers, and RHS staff and members. There is an emphasis on having native wild flowers where possible, so sometimes one has to take care as to what you are weeding!



You can sit at a bench-table in peaceful surroundings with friendly people, and treat yourself to a vegetable panini, Moroccan tagine, a piece of cake, cup of – oh, whatever – and may even experience the flash of a Kingfisher coming into the dock from the river, or hear the warning cry of a passing Redshanks, or maybe the “peep-peep-peep” or “pip-pip-pip” of a Sandpiper flying along the river. In the evening there are bats around, and always the cry of gulls and crows and

the visits to the feeders of tits, finches, Robins, Wrens, Dunnocks...



I have not really looked at the wildflowers there – not the planted ones nor the riverside ones. But the project involves a plan to “wild” the riverside path – now, thankfully, re-named the Leaway. The potential for wildlife in the area is growing, in more ways than one. A lot of it we will be familiar with here around Wanstead, but I suspect that we won’t be seeing seals and dolphins in the Roding, as have been seen by Cody Dock.

I was asked if I would contribute an article to the Wren Group’s newsletter, but really I haven’t got much to report on right now. I haven’t been out and about so much, and it’d just be a repeat of the usual early spring appearances: Early Crocus, Snowdrops, Winter Aconite, White-tailed Bumble Bee, a couple of species of hoverfly, some Red Admirals, and indeed a Brimstone. Well, there you are, I have done it. Also, I have a philosophy that here around Wanstead we have as much wildlife and environmental aspects to keep up with as we need, and should be wary of spreading ourselves

too far. It’s be easy to do reports on all those wonderful creatures our members may have spotted in the wilds of Scotland or southern Afghanistan – or even Hampstead Heath. It’d be easy to suggest a whole host of places to visit outside of our area, even locally, but this sort of information is available in so many other ways.

So I have diverged a bit from my own philosophy, but what I wanted to emphasis is that there is a wonderful project nearby, with a vision not only for people but for wildlife. This is in motion, it is visited by people walking or cycling along the Leaway discovering it by accident, by local workers who may find it a place of sanctuary (with good food) in their lunch breaks, by people who know it and come – sometimes from afar – to help out or just to enjoy it. It will be a lived-in community, and a much-visited one. It will be lived in and visited by people, who will share it with a large variety of wildlife which will also live here and visit.



I wonder if the vision that is expanding for Cody Dock – dispelling the fogs that were prevalent there in, say, the 1950’s – is not just the opposite of the fog (or at least the cut-and-mulch) that

seems to be descending at the moment on some of Wanstead’s wildlife?

Ah!, I don’t want to sound negative. Go and have a look at Cody Dock, maybe even pick up some ideas about community and wildlife – and definitely visit Nadia’s cafe!

Article and pics by Paul Ferris



Cody Dock is open during daylight hours. It is free access. The nearest station is Star Lane DLR, from where it is a 5-10 minute walk. From Bromley-by-Bow station, cross Twelvetrees Crescent Bridge and walk south along the Leaway. The best approach is from Three Mills – walk under the railway lines (District and C2C) then under Twelvetrees Crescent Bridge from where – just before Bow Locks – there is a ramp enabling access to the bridge and hence to the riverside path.

For more information about Cody Dock visit;

www.gasworksdock.org.uk

www.facebook.com/CodyDock

Find out more about the work of Paul Ferris on his excellent website www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk

plants as food for insects

Article by Tricia Moxey



When we bite into an apple we are consuming many different chemicals which have been manufactured by the parent tree to encourage some creature to help spread its seeds. The seeds are designed to pass unharmed through the digestive system, but they do contain cyanide which is released if bitten! Much of what you eat is cellulose, the building block of plant cells. The liquid within contains various energy rich sugars. Other chemicals give the apple its flavour, colour and fragrance and its waxy skin reduces water loss.

Selective breeding programmes have been used to produce some very popular varieties such as Jazz or Pink Lady and one with bright pink flesh may be the next best seller! Incidentally grapes may contain over 200 different chemicals which helps to explain the range of wines.

Actively growing plants manufacture sugars by the process of photosynthesis, but are also able to synthesise a vast array of other compounds using complex biochemical pathways. Well over 100,000 different chemicals have been identified from plants and new ones are being discovered each week. The ability to produce these chemicals is coded within the DNA of each species and so the chemical nature of each one will be unique. In addition to energy rich foods, plants manufacture essential proteins for their own growth and these chemicals enable the development of the definitive morphological features by which we name it. Herbivores eat plant material to obtain energy foods and proteins so they can survive and develop properly.



Certain plants such as the Dandelion support many different herbivorous insects as opposed to plants of Common Bent, Holly or Yew which support far fewer insects.

Certain plants such as Cocksfoot Grass, Dandelions or Chickweed support many different herbivorous insects as opposed to plants of Common Bent, Holly or Yew which support far fewer insects.



Helophilus pendulus hoverfly feeding - Pic by Rose Stephens

Herbivorous insects have many ways of consuming plants. Aphids or bugs suck the sap with piercing mouth parts. Moth or butterfly caterpillars are essentially feeding tubes with mouth parts at the head end to chew the various parts of the host plant. A gravid female insect will check the taste of the plant through her feet selecting the appropriate plant before depositing her eggs. Certain plants produce chemicals which are toxic to an insect herbivore, but many have specific bacteria within their guts which can break down the toxins. Nectar supplies fuel for many adult insects.

At this time of year we can enjoy the masses of brightly coloured flowers and observe many of their insect visitors. The colours of petals are due to a range of pigments and attract insects and other potential pollinators by luring them in with fragrances and rewards of sugary nectar. In open bowl like flower the nectar could evaporate readily, but often such flowers

have many stamens which will retain humid conditions in the centre of the flower thus reducing evaporation. Nectar within tubular flowers is less likely to evaporate but can only be reached by long tongued pollinators.

Pollen grains contain between 15 -60% of proteins but are protected by a tough outer coat. Bees are totally reliant on nectar and pollen throughout their lives and their digestive systems have the ability to extract essential nutrients from pollen grains. Bees also have the ability to learn how to navigate to find potential food resources. In addition to various species of bee, there are many other pollinating insects including, butterflies and moths, beetles, hoverflies, other flies and wasps.



Bee Wolf wasp feeding on Allium - Pic by Rose Stephens

All herbivorous insects rely on the right mix of chemicals, especially proteins in their food to supply them with the nutrients to ensure successful development from egg to adult. This is a complex series of steps controlled by delicately balanced hormones which ensure that the necessary changes occur in the correct sequence and that mature insects can find a mate and successfully reproduce.

Nearly 90% of wild flowers and about 75% of the world's food crops rely on insect pollinators with some 1,500 different species of pollinating insects in the UK. In recent years entomologists have become concerned that there has been a serious reduction in the actual number of butterflies flitting about and that there are fewer bees, too.

The 2015 *State of the UK's Butterflies* gave evidence of the serious, long-term and ongoing decline of UK butterflies, with 70% of species declining in occurrence and 57% declining in abundance since monitoring started in 1976.



UK butterflies are in decline, with 70% declining in occurrence and 57% declining in abundance. Here a Green-veined White is nectaring on Green Alkanet - Pic by Rose Stephens

A similar picture is revealed with regard to moths: the 2013 report *The new State of Britain's Larger Moths* noted that the total number of larger moths recorded in the national network of Rothamsted trap samples decreased by 28% over the 40 years from 1968 to 2007. There are concerns about bees too as the UK has lost 20 species of bee since 1900 with a further 35 under threat. These are showy insects more readily recorded than others and this widespread decline of Britain's moths, butterflies and bees is a clear signal of

potentially catastrophic biodiversity loss caused by human impacts on the environment, with major changes in land use. This serious decline has a knock-on effects on the birds, bats and mammals, which depend on such insects for food.

“This widespread decline of Britain's moths, butterflies and bees is a clear signal of potentially catastrophic biodiversity loss caused by human impacts on the environment”.



A recently published paper by German Entomologists has reinforced the UK findings but raised further alarm bells. They had been monitoring the mass of insects collected by monitoring traps in the Orbroicher Bruch nature reserve in northwest Germany. These traps caught whatever species were flying during between May and October and they compared the results from 1989 and 2013. They discovered that the actual mass dropped by 78% in these 24 years. A worrying observation as a wide variety of insects including assorted flies which are a main staple for birds feeding hungry nestlings! Although the collected samples have yet to be fully analysed, they did discover an alarming loss in the numbers of hoverflies. In 1989, the group's traps in one reserve collected 17,291 hoverflies

representing 143 species. In 2014, at the same locations, they found only 2,737 individuals from 104 species.

Since their initial findings in 2013, the group has installed more traps each year and are now working with researchers at several universities and are looking for correlations with weather, changes in vegetation, and other factors. As yet no simple cause has been identified.

The majority of the relationships between plants and animals is based on millions of years of evolution with various checks and balances in place. However, the introduction of plants and animals from other countries can cause problems, especially with crop plants which are frequently grown as monocultures. Pesticides have been developed to control outbreaks of pest species and a considerable amount of research is being carried out regarding the long term impact of these on all forms of wildlife.



Cuckoo bee, *Bombus vestalis* on bramble - Pic by Rose Stephens

Pesticides are not the only problem. The use of lead in petrol was widespread from the 1920's until its final phasing out in 1999. Once lead has been deposited, it can persist for a long time, but appears to be less readily taken up by plants growing in fertile conditions. When absorbed, it interferes with basic biochemical pathways within living tissue. Today there is a plethora of other chemicals from car exhausts which interact with naturally occurring volatile chemicals released by some plants to produce many different compounds. When it rains, these airborne chemicals are washed into the soil.



Nearly 90% of wild flowers and about 75% of the world's food crops rely on insect pollinators with some 1,500 different species of pollinating insects in the UK. Mining Bee - Pic by Rose Stephens

However since food webs are incredibly complex it is very difficult to tease out the long term impact of such chemicals on all the living organisms involved and scientists are only just starting to realise the important role of micro-organisms within the soil. There are myriads of bacteria, fungi and viruses which underpin every ecosystem, enabling decomposition to occur and releasing essential nutrients to nourish plants which in turn provide food for herbivores which then feed carnivores. Are the microbes interacting with these various chemicals to alter the way in which plant proteins are synthesised? Somewhere along the line it is

possible that something has happened to interrupt the 'wholesomeness' of plant foods resulting in this worrying diminution of certain insect species which rely on them for sustenance.

Not all bugs are bad. Insects get labeled as "pests" when they start causing harm to people or the things we care about, like plants, animals, and buildings. Out of nearly one million known insect species, only about one to three percent are ever considered pests.

If we let them do their jobs, many types of insects can actually help us out:

- By pollinating plants.

Insects like native bees, honeybees, butterflies, and moths can provide this service, helping plants bear fruit.

- By preying on pest insects.

Spiders are predators of insects. So are some types of beetles, flies, true bugs, and lacewings.

- By parasitising pest insects.

Parasitic insects, like some small wasps, lay their eggs inside insects or their eggs. This can help drive the pest population down.

Eighty per cent of UK inhabitants now live in towns or cities where gardens are important areas of green space and can be wonderful havens for wildlife of all kinds.

Many initiatives are being trialled to plant more wild flowers with the urban areas to attract essential pollinators and predatory insects which control pests. If you wish to increase the biodiversity within your own garden or allotment then it is recommended that you grow your own plants from seed, preferably organic ones, so you will know they should be free from harmful contaminants as plants grown for sale through the horticultural trade may well have been sprayed with various chemicals to deter pests.

Article by Tricia Moxey

Pics by Rose Stephens



The Royal Horticultural Society has been working with various conservation bodies to study ways of improving gardens for wildlife. See the website for more information. <https://www.rhs.org.uk>

If you want to find out more about butterflies then do check out the website: <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk>

A recommended read about this loss of insect life is *The Moth Snowstorm: Nature and Joy*, beautifully written by the award-winning environmental journalist, Michael McCarthy, who presents a clear, well-documented picture of what he calls "the great thinning" around the world and is a passionate call to action. He presents an environmental call to arms as powerful as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* published in 1962.



Way out west

Our new series of nature rambles is now well under way, taking Wren members to some of London's great places for wildlife. The two spring-time walks saw us venture over to west London, writes *walk leader and guidebook author Peter Aylmer*.

Article and pics by Peter Aylmer

Ask a Londoner to name a London river and they will say Thames. Push a bit more and you might get a blank stare. Here in the Wren group we're pretty clever, so Roding will crop up, and Lea too.

Out west, if they are very clued-in, they might say Crane. There's a stretch of it, half-way between Heathrow airport and the Thames, which forms a country park, and in the centre of that, there is a gem of a nature reserve.



River Crane

And it was all fashioned out of the former Hounslow Gunpowder Mills. The mills, once among the largest gunpowder mills of Europe, closed in 1926, and part were sold off for the park that remains today.

We joined the river near Whitton station and wandered along its south bank, noting how its curves had been augmented by incursions of stone and branch to slow and speed its course and create little micro-habitats to boost species diversity. That most attractive interloper from east Asia the mandarin duck was so at home here

he hopped about on one of these branches with complete unconcern.



Wren walkers on Crane Park Island

Soon we crossed the river and came to the shot tower, largest remnant of the mills and gateway to Crane Park Island, a two-acre nature reserve run by London Wildlife Trust. It may be tiny, but there are reedbeds, woodland and meadow here, each turn giving us a new vista. We were in mid-April, and the wild flowers which can make this an intoxicating spot in high summer were just getting under way.



Red hawthorn

All that was left now was a slow saunter back to a little park, and a café for one last stop before the train home.

We were seven strong for the Crane Park walk but alas only three for the June walk to Ruislip Woods. Maybe it was the glance at the tube map which put people off – it's a long way on the Central line to West Ruislip! But Ruislip Woods are arguably more special than even Epping Forest: they form no less than a national nature reserve, the largest ancient semi-natural woodland in London.



Coppicing in Ruislip Woods

Our walk took us from one end to the other. Birch, alder, hornbeam and wild service all flourish, but the woods' glory are the oak standards, both pedunculate and sessile: the former predominate in the extensive clay areas, with sessile on patches that have more sand or gravel. And it must hold something of a world record too: in 1992, 585 species of fungus were identified in a single half-day, by experts from a European Mycology Congress at Kew.

In the middle of the woods there's a reservoir, Ruislip Lido, built as a header lake for the Grand Union Canal.

Today it's a popular place of retreat, with pub, miniature railway and even a beach, but it's good for wildlife too. We ate our sandwiches transfixed by the swoops and dives of a common tern on the lookout for its own lunch.



On Haste Hill, above Ruislip Woods

The uphill stretch to Northwood Hills tube took us in to Metroland. From the highest point we could see how 1920s developers had carved an estate out of woodland before they stopped. On our way out of the woods, there was a final meadow to cross, and only a single street to walk down before we arrived at the tube.

now & then

In each edition of the Wren newsletter we will be showing you a picture of a street in our area taken around 100 years ago and how it looks today. Just for fun have a guess where this picture was taken (answer back page). If you would like to see your area in this slot why not get in touch and we will see what we can do.



Pedunculate oak

Nature Ramble dates

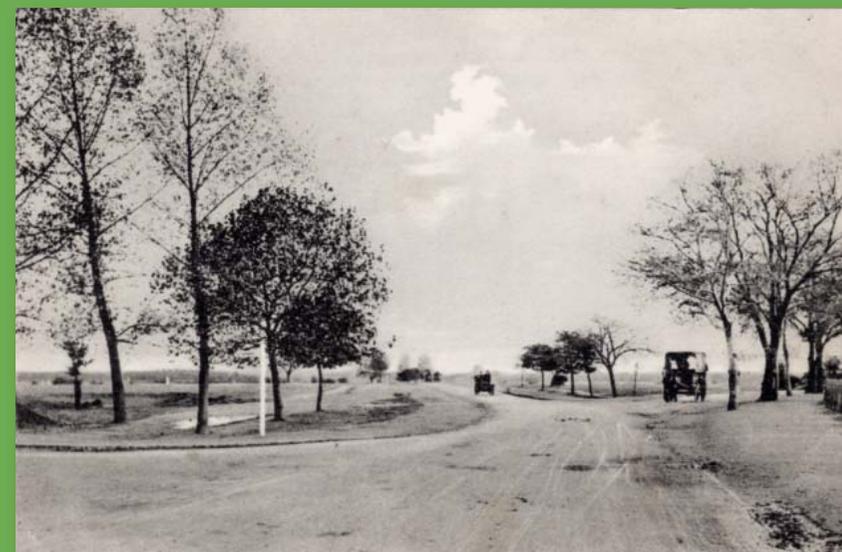
Thursday 6 July, Tuesday 15 August, Wednesday 18 October.

The July nature ramble on Thursday 6 July will see us visit the village of Downe, where Charles Darwin wrote *On the Origin of Species*. On the way we'll stride through a fine country park,

enjoy a pretty green lane, and wander through the 'orchis bank' where Darwin made some of his most important observations - perhaps the most precious nature reserve in all London. There might be time for a visit to his home at Down House too - we'll certainly see outside it.

We will be walking five miles from Farnborough to Downe. There is a café in the country park near the start. Meet: 10am at Stratford station, outside Jubilee line platforms 13-15. Just turn up, no need to book. If we do have time to go into Down House, entry is £11.80 / concessions £10.60. Bring a snack, drink and Oyster or Freedom Pass. Back at Stratford about 5pm. More information: Peter Aylmer 07884 235784 or email

peteraylmer@hotmail.com



the one that got away

Spring Bird Report by Tim Harris

The beginning of March was more winter than spring. There were still 28 Teal in Wanstead Park, but Gadwall – whose winter numbers had never reached the heights of recent years – were down to just half a dozen. It is easier to explain their decline – a lack of water on Heronry and in the Ornamental Water and the weed clearance in The Basin – than the dramatic increase in numbers that preceded it. Meanwhile, about 750 Common Gulls and 250 Black-headed Gulls remained on Wanstead Flats. Still on a larid theme, Stu Fisher found a Caspian Gull at Eagle Pond at the start of the month.



Over the course of the next couple of weeks the transition to spring began ...

Wheatear – a charismatic package of peach, grey, black and white - is the traditional indicator of spring's arrival, and this year Tony Brown's skills delivered London's first bird, on 11 March. About 10 were noted on Wanstead Flats by the end of the month. The Flats also boasted a couple of local record counts: nine passage Stonechats on 4th and 36 Meadow Pipits on 12th. Yes, larger totals of overflying migrant Meadow Pipits have been noted previously, but these birds were grounded. Stu's second excellent find in Snaresbrook was an overflying Waxwing on 19th. Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps were in song by mid-month, with the first Willow Warbler on 29th. Three Red Kites passed over our area during the month.



Little Egrets - pic by James Heal

Migrant numbers were generally low in early April, but there was an arrival of new birds on 9/10th. Then, Nick



White Wagtail - pic by James Heal

Croft found a male Common Redstart near Alexandra Pond, Bob picked out the first singing Lesser Whitethroat in the SSSI and Sean heard the first Common Whitethroat in the Old Sewage Works. Nick also chanced upon three Little Ringed Plover on the near-dry Heronry Lake, one bonus of the broken water pump. On 13 April the first two House Martins were back at their Brading Crescent colony – the only one left in our area. For the second year running, a Cetti's Warbler sang in the Old Sewage Works, this one still occasionally bursting into song right through May. Is the species breeding?

One of the most exciting discoveries was a singing Nightingale in the SSSI on 22 April. The first spring bird since one on The Plain on 25 April 2010, this tickled the eardrums of plenty of people during the day, but few managed to clap eyes on it. Another, or the same, was at Hollow Pond two days later. The first spring Woodlark of recent times was on the Flats on 23rd; generally, our birds are autumn passage migrants.

Some other first dates for migrants included Reed

Warbler on 22nd, Garden Warbler (23rd), Common Sandpiper (24th), Sedge Warbler (27th), Whinchat (30th), and Common Swift (30th). A total of 32 April Wheatears included seven on 30th and the last of the season's northbound beauties was seen on 16 May.



Male Common Redstart - pic by Nick Croft

May was pretty quiet. The year's first Common Tern was a May Day bird. Young Tawny Owls were present in Reservoir Wood, where the species had bred, at least half a dozen House Martins collected mud for nest repairs at their colony, and two Willow Warblers continued to deliver their descending cadence to the end of the month. But what about the report of a possible Bee-eater flying over Wanstead Park on 2 May? It was seen by a non-birder, and by no-one else, and we will probably never know whether it was one or not – unless someone out there has photos of a rainbow-coloured, long-streamered beauty flying over the tea hut...

Report by Tim Harris

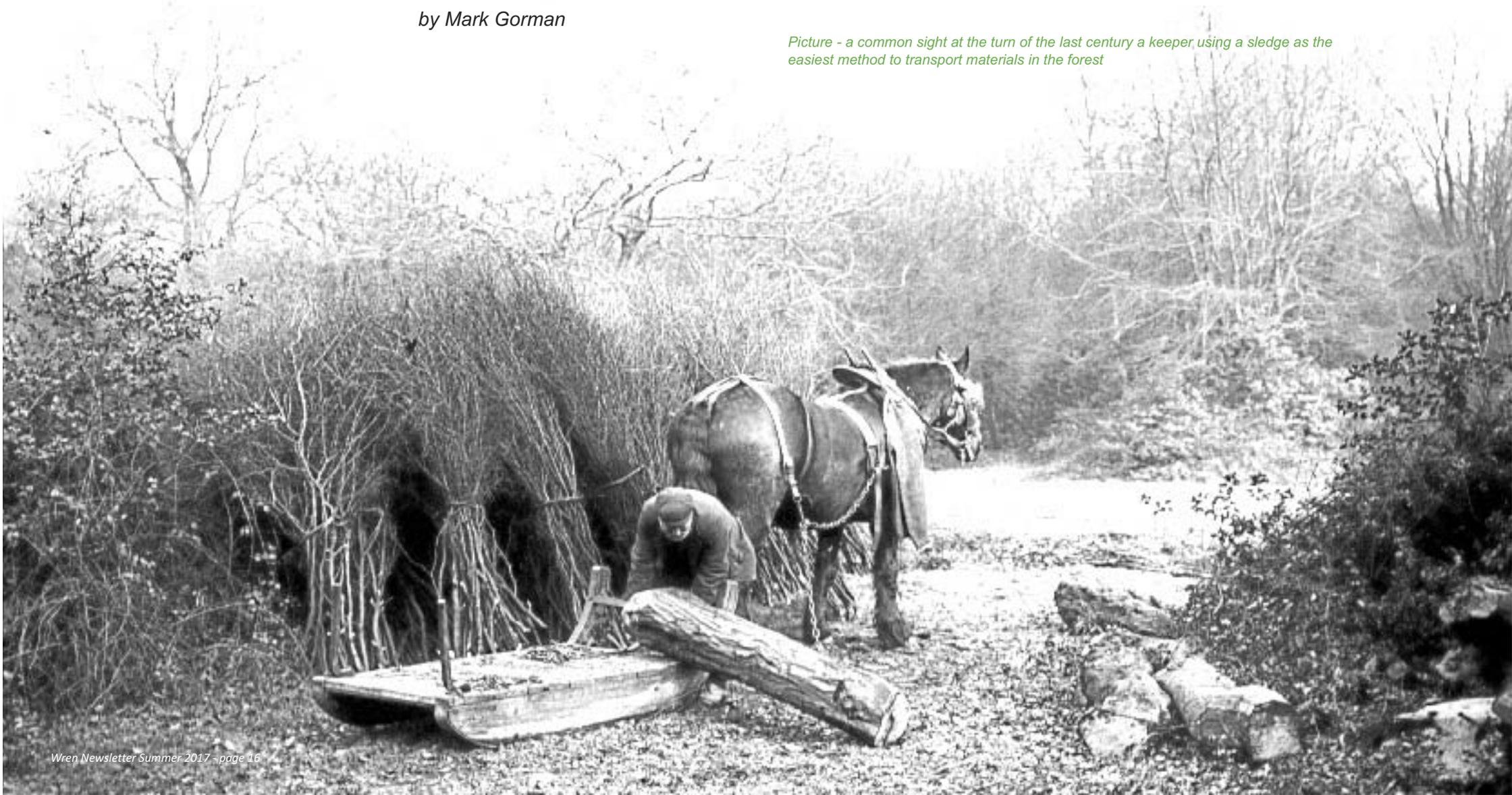


leaves from a keeper's tale

by Mark Gorman

In the early 1960s, the memories of Sidney Butt, one of Epping Forest's earliest Keepers, were recorded and published as "A Keeper's Tale". They speak of aspects of the forest which by the mid-twentieth century had long since vanished, yet half a century on we can see that a surprising amount remains. Here are some of Sidney's thoughts.

Picture - a common sight at the turn of the last century a keeper using a sledge as the easiest method to transport materials in the forest



Sidney Butt began his life as an Epping Forest Keeper at the age of 22, in 1894. At that time, he said, a journey to the forest was a day's outing by [horse-drawn] brake or bicycle or on foot along the gravel roads, lanes and fields. By the 1960s the car had brought the forest within the reach of thousands. "Change was inevitable, and I have watched the changing face of the Forest" said Sidney.



Epping Forest workers at the time of Sidney's service as a keeper

One early change that Sidney saw was the ending of lopping for firewood, with the result that the pollards' crowns grew into an unwieldy mass, their branches filling the sky, shutting out the air and light so that seedlings and flowers withered and died. Primroses and bluebells, which had been abundant, dwindled in number. Bracken also began to take over some areas, driving out heather and harebells.

Sidney might have been cheered to know that bluebells have made a comeback at least in some parts of the forest. The spring display in Wanstead Park's Chalet Wood, the result of years of volunteer clearance work each winter, is the best known, but there are also large numbers further north in the forest, for example near Strawberry Hill ponds and in Upshire.

Sidney also remembered abundant birdlife, including some which have all but vanished. Sparrowhawks could



Sidney Butt, Epping Forest keeper, in uniform around 1916. People from all manner of trades and professions joined the armed services in the opening months of the war

be found nesting throughout the forest, including in the Wanstead and Walthamstow areas, in bundles of twigs just visible thirty feet up, often in Oak trees. Other birds of prey such as the hobby, buzzard and merlin were doomed, said Sidney, "because every man's hand was against them". In the early days of the City of London's management, the Corporation and its guests had the right to shoot game, and each spring jay shoots took place, while the Keepers acted as beaters. "Sometimes many were shot; on a bad day we might kill no more than half a dozen".

Nevertheless, again despite Sidney's gloomy predictions, even birds of prey (which were hunted and shot across the forest in the early days of the last century) still make an appearance - hobbies, sparrowhawks and buzzards all among the regular visitors to Wanstead Park and the Flats. Nowadays, a bird of prey such as the kestrel has more trouble from attacking crows than being shot by the local gentry. Sidney had no time for crows. "The crow is worse than all the hawks. If you have jays magpies and carrion crows they'll take the small birds for you quicker than anything".



Forest horseman sledging logs - a common sight at the turn of the last century

Sidney Butt's memories are a unique record of Epping Forest and its wildlife a century and more ago, a time when the forest was still remote enough from London to retain the feel of a much earlier era. Yet Sidney might be cheered to know that much has survived, and continues to make up the unique habitat that we know today.

Material from Fred J. Speakman, A Keeper's Tale (1962) with acknowledgement to Nick Croft, the WREN Group and Rose Stephens for additional information plundered from their blogs etc.

Wanstead nature club

Update by Rebecca Wynn

One of my favourite things about becoming a Mum has been getting out and about and exploring nature with my children. Now I know that almost every walk needs a stick (or two or five) and that dandelions are the best flower (At two, my son used to shout “yellows, yellows” whenever he saw them).

The infectious enthusiasm of children for the natural environment, and the treasure they find in it (stones, horse chestnuts, beech nuts, bits of old leaves), is the inspiration behind a new nature club for children at Wanstead Park. Aimed at children from 2-7 years old, the club will run each quarter and explore how the park is changing with the seasons. As a parent, I am really excited to be exploring the park with other families and looking forward to what we discover and learn.

Our first club meeting was on the 18th June (Father's Day) as a part of the Wren Wildlife Group BioBlitz Weekend. This first group was a great success - we searched for seeds, bugs and flowers, planted sunflower seeds to take home, and read story books related to our summer theme.

Parent participation is a must and we hope to inspire more family adventures in Wanstead Park and the surrounds. Further club meetings are planned for autumn, winter and spring. The session costs £3.50 per child and will start at the Temple at 2pm.



hampstead walk

On a hot June 14th fifteen of us set off to explore Hampstead's hidden history and heathland, writes Jackie Morrison



Hampstead was a small “home-stead” in the countryside until the early eighteenth century when it really began to grow and flourish.

Our first stop, Church Row, attested to this. Here is one of Hampstead’s finest and oldest terraces, built c1690. Its inhabitants have included Boisie (Lord Alfred Douglas), HG Wells and Peter Cook. And you too could live here - if you had £7million.



Our own veteran walker Jackie Morrison at Hampstead on a very hot June day

Nearby is the church of 1745 whose cool, splendid interior we were pleased to savour. In its graveyard, a haven for wildlife, we found the tombs of John Constable and family and John Harrison, inventor of the marine chronometer. Other notable people buried here include Hugh Gaitskell, Kay Kendall and members of the Du Maurier family. It featured, unnamed, in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.

Charles de Gaulle, Gracie Fields and Sting also once lived nearby confirming, as we discovered, that Hampstead has been a magnet for creative and intellectual souls. It has more historic plaques than anywhere in the country.



Down steep steps we gained our first striking view of a hazy city sprawling way below us. We strolled upward past old, but immaculate, cottages - one the former home of Judy Dench. We discovered Hampstead is very hilly! Narrow paths and steps took us to a former village green, now vibrant with trees and wild flowers. George Romney’s studio overlooked it and Boswell and Johnson drank in the local Holly Bush pub. Here, too, is Fenton House, Hampstead’s oldest mansion (1693), owned by the National Trust and worth a visit.

The original Mount Vernon hospital, now apartments, towers above the green. It specialised

in treating TB, believed to be caused by miasmas in the city. The fresh air of its lofty location was considered an ideal place for a cure. Robert Louis Stevenson, a TB sufferer and patient, lived nearby.

We continued our walk up leafy lanes, noting the homes of famous people. Down Admiral’s Walk we discovered Grove Lodge where John Galsworthy lived and wrote *The Forsyte Saga*. Next door was Admiral’s House, built in 1700, once home to George Gilbert Scott. Another resident, an eccentric naval officer, fired a cannon from a poop deck on the roof to mark special days. An inspiration for Admiral Boom in *Mary Poppins* perhaps?



Eventually we reached Whitestone Pond. At 450 ft it is the highest point in London. Constable, whose house we had seen close by, immortalised its clouds and views in his pictures. Also here is Hampstead’s

Observatory, which gave the London public their first view of Mars. Across the road a flag marks where a beacon was sited to warn if Britain was about to be invaded. Across the centuries, City dwellers have taken refuge on the hill to avoid other perils - plagues, the Great Fire and floods.



We then set off into the welcome shade of the Heath, through the Edwardian opulence of Hill Gardens and the magnificent Pergola, to lunch in Golders Hill Park.

Afterwards we had a quick sing song passing the Old Bull and Bush pub. It reminded us that the Heath was, for Londoners, a place for funfairs and frolics as well as a treasured natural retreat. Behind is the small peaceful enclave of North End. Pevsner and Raymond Unwin are amongst its famous inhabitants and Dickens took his family on retreat here at Wylde's Farm. The area's tranquil, rural atmosphere

was saved by public outcry from a proposed underground station and the ruthless exploitation of sands and gravels by an avaricious lord of the manor. The Heath was then taken into the care of the City of London - echoes of Wanstead Park here?

After walking up and down through the Heath, noting the trees and plants that thrive on its sandy soils. We stopped at Hatchett's Pond once a disease-ridden swamp. In 1777 it was drained, a pond and hotels and houses built. Years later it was cannily rebranded "The Vale of Health". It is a secluded, off-the-beaten-track place offering, in times past, cramped, cheap lodgings. Those who questioned society's conventions stayed here, DH Lawrence and Leigh Hunt amongst others. Even today, Hampstead, though affluent, continues to return a Labour MP to Parliament.

Fresh water has been another of Hampstead's draws. In medieval times, rich city folk sent their laundry here for a wash in its pure streams and a dry on its blowy hillsides. In the 19thC, the River Fleet, which rises here, was dammed, creating reservoirs to supply that then-rare commodity, potable water. These are the famed Hampstead ponds.

In the early 1700's, Hampstead's natural springs were "discovered" to have medicinal qualities. This spawned a spa town, a resort as fashionable as Scarborough or Tunbridge Wells. Its assembly and pump rooms were the place to be seen! We inspected the old spring and imagined promenading down Well Walk. Its waters were bottled and sold in

London... today's Pellegrino!

People flocked to live here. We walked its streets, marvelling at the varied and beautiful houses. We admired Cannon House, an early 18thC mansion, where Daphne Du Maurier and her famous actor father, Gerald, once lived. Lower down we saw the cottages of the pickers of watercress, an important fruit of Hampstead's clear waters.



The house of Sir Raymond Unwin (2 November 1863 – 29 June 1940), who was a prominent and influential English engineer, architect and town planner, with an emphasis on improvements in working-class housing.

Finally we took a well earned rest at Keats House and admired its sprawling Mulberry tree, under which Keats, it is claimed, wrote "Ode to a Nightingale"...an appropriate end to our walk.



By Jackie Morrison

Now well out of print, the *South Essex Recorder's Country Rambles around Ilford* was published in 1910. Its author Geo. E. Tasker recounts more rambles in our local area.

The guide describes in detail 26 walks of varying length, starting and ending at a railway station or a tram terminus (as they were) in or near Ilford in Essex. Walks include areas such as Ilford, Aldborough Hatch; Barkingside; Chadwell; Hainault Forest; Seven Kings as well as the more local Wanstead Park, Wanstead Flats, Valentines Park, Wanstead and Snaresbrook.

country rambles

Route 11

From Ilford Station, Wanstead Park Road, Wanstead Park, Wanstead Park Estate, City of London Cemetery Path, Aldersbrook Lane, Romford Road, to Ilford Broadway. (About 3 ½ miles.)



Wanstead Park - Rustic Bridge c1905

There are three ways of getting to Wanstead Park, viz. :- (1) Via Cranbrook Road, The Drive, and Highlands Gardens; (2) via Belgrave Road; (3) via York Road and Wanstead Park Road. If the latter be taken, it will be found that all the houses on the W. side of Wanstead Park Road back on to the Golf Links - formerly the old Rifle Range. Almost opposite Kensington Gardens is the entrance to the links, and in the same bit of fencing is the gate opening on to the remnant of the Bridle Path, which until 1900 ran from Wanstead Flats through the centre of the City of London Cemetery down



City of London Cemetery - c1905

to the Roding, just above the place where the Aldersbrook branches out of the river, and then across the Rifle Range to the gate just mentioned along a country lane, through the stable yard of Cranbrook Hall, and round the N. side of Surrey's farm house to The Drive. This Bridle Path has on more than one occasion been the subject of considerable agitation.

The entrance to Wanstead Park from Ilford is across the meadow and the rustic bridge over the Roding (see Route 6). Bear round to the left along the fencing on the other side of which are Wanstead Sewage Farm and an Isolation Hospital - past what used to be called the Bathing Lake (or Perch Pond), to the first gateway, which opens on Wanstead Park Avenue on the Wanstead Park Estate (about half an hour from Ilford Station). Turn to the left down Clavering Road. Opposite the end of it is a small passage between the houses, which is the beginning of the Cemetery Path. Passing through the iron "Kissing Gate," the path runs between the Sewage Farm and the open

railings of the Cemetery for about a third of a mile. It then turns sharp to the right, and in 4 minutes it crosses the line of the diverted part of the Bridle Path already referred to, just beyond which is the beginning of the Aldersbrook, which is part of the W. boundary of Ilford. From here to the railway footbridge is 10 minutes' walk. On the other side of the bridge is the remnant of Aldersbrook Lane and path, which until 1900 went along inside the E. boundary of the Cemetery.



Romford Road, over the bridge to Ilford. To the left of the picture is the Mill with a ramp down to the ford from which the town gets its name. To the right of Romford Road is the Rose and Crown Public House - c1905

At the end of the lane is Romford Road, from which it takes 7 minutes to reach Ilford Broadway. To those who have never taken this walk it may not seem very desirable to approach too near a sewage farm or a cemetery, but if they do venture they will probably be surprised to find what a pleasant hour can be spent in going over the route here outlined, especially in the spring and summer while the birds are in song.

Route 12

From tram terminus at Barkingside, Fullwell Hatch, Fencepiece Road, Claybury Forest, Woodford Bridge, Woodford Bridge Road (or Roding Lane), Hatton Corner, field path to Castle, and The Drive. (About 7 miles.)

The tramways to Barkingside end at Mossford Green, one of the seven hamlets which make up this large agricultural parish. Down the lane opposite the terminus is Holy Trinity Church. Starting from the trams, proceed along the High Street; at the end of it is Fullwell Hatch, which derives its name from an old forest gate which stood here, turn to the left to the beginning of Tomswood Hill, and then to the right towards Chigwell, following the telegraph wires down Fencepiece Road. The name is derived from a piece of the forest that was "fenced in" here.



Cranbrook Road, Barkingside - early 1900s

At the top of the first hill on the left is Fencepiece Farm (Councillor G. Gott), which, with the cottages just beyond, are the last houses on the N. side of Ilford, the

boundary stone being a few yards past the cottages. As soon as Chigwell parish is entered the road begins the steep ascent of Grange Hill, which affords an excellent example of the undulating character of this picturesque parish. At the top of the hill is "The Bald Hind" Hotel, referred to in Route 13. Not very far away was an ancient palace called "Potteles Place" or "Langfords," in which resided the Duke of Clarence, brother of Edward IV. From the top of Grange Hill turn to the left towards Woodford Bridge (to the right leads to Chigwell Row and Hainault Forest - see Route 15).



Barkingside High Street - early 1900s

On the right are good views of Buckhurst Hill with its two landmarks - a square tower and a spire - and Loughton. On the left is a portion of the forest, enclosed, over which the lord of the manor of Chigwell claims rights. Tomswood Hill Road - indicated by wire fencing - is reached three-quarters of a mile from Grange Hill. It divides the remnant of the forest into two sections - the Chigwell section and that by Claybury fence. When the larger bit of old Hainault at Lambourne End was secured for the public, efforts were also made to include this smaller part, but owing partly to the action of the London County Council, who insisted upon the right to allow the patients of

Claybury Asylum to walk in the forest, the negotiations fell through, to the great loss of Ilford. The asylum is in Ilford parish, at the entrance gates of which is the extreme N.W. corner of Ilford parish. Just past the gates the village of Woodford Bridge begins. It is typical of many another English village with its houses built round the green and its pond. The church was much damaged by fire about 20 years ago, and contains nothing of special interest.



Claybury Asylum the first asylum in the country to be home to a research building, specifically dedicated to finding new ways of improving mental health. - early 1900s

Follow the finger post direction to Ilford to the left for about half a mile round Roding Lane. On one side of the lane is Great Gales Hall, and immediately opposite are the disused entrance gates of old Claybury Hall. The building has been enlarged, and is now used for private patients. At the top of the lane is the beginning of the mile-long fence on the Ilford side of Claybury Asylum. There are now two ways to Ilford - (1) over the stile and along the side of the fence to Barkingside (see Route 2), and (2) down the road to Hatton Corner and by the field path at St. Swithin's gravel pits to the Castle and The Drive. Time from Claybury stile, via St. Swithins, to The Drive, 50 minutes.



adopt a tree

It's hard to imagine that not so long ago much of the country was under water. Now we are approaching the height of summer, we stand a good chance of having a hosepipe ban.

With climate change very much in the news we should perhaps expect more extremes in our weather. All the more reason we should appreciate the benefits that trees provide.

They put oxygen in the air and take out carbon dioxide. They create cooler micro-climates under their canopies. They create much needed shade, protecting us from harmful solar rays. They even help to clean the air by filtering out dust particles and pollutants, not to mention the desirable effect they have on softening the urban landscape.

Every year your local council plant young trees in

our streets to replace trees that have died or become diseased or damaged.

Unfortunately, hot dry summers can take their toll, especially so on young recently planted trees. Though your council will probably arrange for regular watering of new plantings, drought conditions will always kill a few trees. So this year why not adopt a tree?

If you have a young street tree outside or near your house or workplace, we are asking you to water it, please. You may notice a plastic pipe sticking out of the ground next to the tree, usually with a green cap on it. It would be great if you could pour water into the pipe and around the tree pit, whenever you can during the summer months. If you can water daily, or even once or twice a week with a bucketful it would really help the tree to survive and to become established. To save on precious water use old bath water or other recycled water such as that from the dishwasher or water butt.

Your local Council will of course continue to water it's newly planted trees as part of their regular maintenance programme but trees give us so much why not give a little back - every little helps.



Article by Tony Morrison



Why you should love a tree

- Trees produce oxygen. Two mature trees will provide all the oxygen a family of four needs for life.
- Trees also act as giant filters that clean the air we breathe. Trees absorb pollutants and reduce dust levels.
- To produce its food, a tree absorbs and locks away carbon dioxide in the wood, roots and leaves. Carbon dioxide is a global warming "greenhouse" gas.
- Trees help cut noise pollution.
- Every summer sees more and more droughts in the London area. Trees help prevent water running straight down drains and out to sea. Underground water-holding aquifers are replenished with this slowing down of water runoff.
- Trees provide shade for car parking and help reduce skin cancer levels.
- Trees cool the air in built up areas by evaporating water from their leaves.
- Trees feed and shelter wildlife.
- Trees form "green corridors" connecting urban habitats with each other and with the countryside.
- Trees reduce wind speeds reducing heat loss in winter from buildings.
- In leafy streets, trees can increase property prices by up to 7% (Source, National Urban Forestry Unit).
- Research shows that a view of nearby trees improves concentration levels in schools and reduces stress level for adults at work.
- Trees provide us with timber and paper.

trees in the landscape

Second Wren Photographic Exhibition at the Temple

The Wen Group 'Wanstead 1,000' photo exhibition at the Temple has been very popular. The entries were first class and it was very hard to choose 21 photos which show the wonderful range of flora and fauna in the Wanstead area. The exhibition is still on at the Temple and some images are to be selected for cards which can be sold at a reasonable cost.

As you are such a talented bunch we are going to do it again!

Entries are invited from members of the Wren Group and also the Friends of Wanstead Parklands.

This time the exhibition theme will be **TREES**. Not just stand-alone mature trees in all their beauty, but trees as part of the ecosystem: trees exhibiting the birds, insects and fungi which depend on them, trees in their different seasons, details of tree structure such as bark and leaves, trees and how people interact or use them, and trees as one part of the whole landscape.

The area covered should be Wanstead Parklands and also Epping Forest.

To give our photographers enough time to get out there snapping during the spring, summer and autumn, the exhibition launch will be in the late autumn.

Unfortunately pictures taken on a phone cannot be accepted as they do not enlarge well, so please use a camera and take as high quality images as possible.

In future all images submitted will be the property of the Wren Group so that we can use them for publicity and reproduction.

Closing date for entries: **Tuesday October 31st**

Please submit entries to Tony Morrison: wreneditor@talktalk.net

look out for

Hints by Tricia Moxey

The tall pink spires of the Rose Bay Willow Herb often indicate areas of burnt ground as its fluffy seeds germinate on such areas of Wanstead or Leyton Flats.

Of course, the purple flowers on the Heather are a special delight on part of Wanstead Flats where this heathland plant is spreading as a result of conservation measures. 150 years ago, this species would have been much more widespread across the intensively grazed ancient common lands of the Greater London area, but changes in land use on most of them means that it is now a much rarer plant within the confines of the M25.

Brambles are now in flower, providing nectar and pollen to many insects. Brambles come in many different forms: some of which will produce small fruits, but others grow large juicy blackberries. Many of you will know a good spot to gather plump blackberries to enhance an apple pie or turn into jelly! Why not see how many different varieties you can find? The recent Springwatch programmes have shown just how many creatures nest and feed in Bramble patches, but Brambles do tend to

take over, especially in a good growing seasons when they can grow several centimetres per day!

In Australia where European Brambles are an invasive plant, DNA profiling of the various forms is being carried out to find the most effective means of biological control. In the UK much of the time by conservation volunteers is spent on Bramble 'control'.

Of possible concern to those who like to produce their own sloe gin is the discovery that a number of Blackthorn bushes in the area are infected with a fungus which distorts the developing sloes. They become like an empty bag with no stone inside. The fungus is *Taphrina pruni*, a pathogen that causes the Pocket or Bladder Plum Gall, by producing chemicals which distort the developing fruit. The twigs on infected plants may also be deformed with small strap-shaped leaves. I have seen it too on some of the fruits on the ornamental plum trees in local streets.

It would be helpful to know how widespread this is in the Wanstead area as sloes are an important part of the winter food for birds such Blackbirds, thrushes, Redwings, Fieldfares, Woodpigeons and mammals like Foxes and Woodmice.

August! June and July are the pits, birding wise, in your local inner city patch, so it's time to look at other stuff, but then August arrives and the excitement really kicks in. Expect returning waders by the end of July, and Wheatears from mid-

August. Then of course it gets manic: can't wait!

If you're in the Park around August time, Small Red-eyed Damselflies will put in an appearance, as well as Common Darter and Emperor dragonflies. Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper butterflies will be everywhere there is long grass.

Family groups of Skylarks may be feeding in the areas of long grass on Wanstead Flats come August. Also there will be Large, Small and Essex Skipper butterflies and – hopefully – Burnet Companion moths. From mid-month, more and more birds will be feeding in the Elders and Bramble bushes around Long Wood, in the SSSI and near Alexandra Lake. Look for Blackcaps, Garden Warblers, Lesser Whitethroats and thrushes. Near the end of the month Spotted Flycatchers will hawk for insects in the same area, and there may be a Common Redstart or two.

At the height of summer there are a number of flowers which catch the eye. One in particular is the white Ox-eye Daisy, which is frequently seen alongside roads. It is often included in wild flower mixtures. Red Poppies naturally grow in disturbed ground, but additional plantings have been made this year as a reminder of the start of WWI.

Other members of the daisy family in flower at this time of year including the spiky purple-headed Spear Thistle and the yellow-flowered Ragwort, Hawkbits and Hawkweeds.



Dream-Forest

by Siegfried Sassoon

Where sunshine flecks the green,
Through towering woods my way
Goes winding all the day.

Scant are the flowers that bloom
Beneath the bosky screen
And cage of golden gloom.

Few are the birds that call,
Shrill-voiced and seldom seen.

Where silence masters all,
And light my footsteps fall
The whispering runnels only
With blazing noon confer;
And comes no breeze to stir
The tangled thickets lonely.

links

Links

Got any links to go on this page? Get in touch wreneditor@talktalk.net

Wren links page <http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/links>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WrenOrg>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/wrenwildlife>

Local

Wanstead Wildlife
<http://www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk/>

Friends of Wanstead Parklands
<http://www.wansteadpark.org.uk/>

RSPB North East London Members Group
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/northeastlondon>

Wanstead Birding Blog
<http://wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk/>

Epping Forest
<http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/Pages/default.aspx>

British Naturalists' Association
<http://www.bna-naturalists.org/>

Bushwood Area Residents' Association
<http://www.bara-leytonstone.org.uk/>

East London Nature <http://www.eln.yorkshirefog.co.uk>

East London Birders <http://www.elbf.co.uk/>

Friends of Epping Forest
<http://www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk/index.htm>

East London Nature <http://www.eastlondonnature.co.uk>

Plenty of info here about walking in Essex - including the forest <http://trailman.co.uk/>

National

The Wildlife Trust <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org>

BBC Nature <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature>

BBC Weather <http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather>

British Naturalists Association
<http://www.bna-naturalists.org/>

RSPB <http://www.rspb.org.uk/england/>

UK Safari <http://www.uksafari.com/index.htm>

Natural England <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk>

The British Deer Society
<http://www.bds.org.uk/index.html>

London Natural History Society
<http://www.lnhs.org.uk/>

and finally

One of the biggest banes of nature lovers is flytipping.

The idiots that leave their rubbish on other people's doorsteps probably feel that theirs is a victimless crime. It is not.



Litter is not only dangerous for wildlife, it costs Epping Forest over £300,000 every year to collect and dispose of, and detracts from the beauty of the Forest.

In the financial year 2015-16, Epping Forest spent £60,000 clearing 790 fly tips consisting of 323 tonnes of waste across Epping Forest. This is in addition to more than £240,000 a year spent on litter management. This is all money that could be better used to provide staff or much needed upgrades to paths, structures and facilities that would benefit Forest users. However, this figure does not include the very high cost of collecting and disposing of flytips and litter from roads and borders edging the forest. Neighbouring councils clear

up this mess meaning that you directly pick up the bill in your local taxes. Moreover, rubbish is unsightly and dumped food attracts vermin and foxes. In short, rubbish spoils the use and enjoyment of the flats and other open areas in our area for everyone.

If you see somebody fly-tipping please take note of as many details as you can but please don't put yourself at risk. Remember that these people aren't renowned for their smartness, and what they are doing is illegal so they are unlikely to take kindly to people observing them. Useful information includes:

- Description of the people (gender, clothes, hair colour, distinguishing features)
- Vehicle details (make, model, colour, registration, signs)
- What you saw being fly-tipped (how far away were you, did you have a good view?)
- When and where you saw it happen (date, time, weather conditions)

Through greater awareness and working together we can reduce litter and protect people, wildlife and our green spaces.

Aside from its environmental impact, flytips and other litter also pose a variety of hazards to wildlife. The plastic loops that hold cans of drinks together (6 pack holders) have been known to catch and kill waterbirds when they end up in the ponds. Such problems can be easily avoided by simply cutting the

loops with scissors before discarding them responsibly. Floating plastic bags also look like a tasty snack to many birds and animals, but can kill if they are swallowed.



Litter is not a victimless crime - it costs local ratepayers, is unsightly, spoils the use and enjoyment of our greenspaces, is dangerous for those people having to clear it up and causes pain and suffering for local wildlife.

Hedgehogs can get their heads trapped inside plastic yogurt cartons, tin cans and polystyrene cups. Attracted inside by the leftovers, they are then unable to reverse out because of their rearward facing prickles. This can lead to a horrible death by starvation.

Broken glass can cut the feet of foxes and badgers, and unbroken bottles present a hazard to many small animals. Voles and mice crawl inside bottles to drink and then cannot climb back up the slippery sides. Lizards crawl inside bottles or cans to bask in their warm interiors or to find food. If they are unable to squeeze out again they can die of overheating.

Authorities are generally very good at picking up flytips when they see them on their rounds - often long before they are reported by the public.

However, local authorities have limited resources, especially in the present squeeze, and can't be everywhere all of the time. Also, flytips left for any period cause problems and sadly attract more rubbish so it's important to deal with them as soon as possible. You can help by reporting any flytips you see when you are out and about. Most authorities will have a page on their website where you can report anti-social behaviour. All will now have a hotline and dedicated e-mail where you can make your report. Search your local authority website to find out more.

A quicker way of reporting environmental issues whilst you are on-the-move is by using a dedicated app on your smart phone. 'LoveCleanStreets' is a free smartphone app that enables people anywhere in the world to report environmental issues to their local authority. The app can be used to report more than just flytips including: graffiti, flyposting, pot holes, broken paving slabs and abandoned vehicles.

On CofL managed property you can report fly tipping online, call 020 8532 1010 (24 hours), or email epping.forest@cityoflondon.gov.uk

There is a reward of up to £500 for evidence that leads to a successful prosecution in court.

Reports can be made with the app in less than 40 seconds. Simply take a photo, add some brief details, and then send. The location is captured automatically, and the local authority, including the CofL, is

provided with all of the information it needs to deal with the problem.

by Tony Morrison



For more information or to download the app go to <http://www.lovecleanstreets.com/reports/home>

now & then

Were you right ?

Wanstead Flats early 1900s - view from Blake Hall Road with Woodford Road (Centre Road) leading to Forest Gate and Aldersbrook to the left leading to Manor Park

