

Autumn 2018

Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

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a word from the chair

Regular readers of the Wren newsletter will know how much value we place on that wonderful expanse of open space bounded by Aldersbrook Road, Capel Road, and Lake House Road: Wanstead Flats. Many people know it for its football pitches, as a place for going for a picnic in summer, or for walking the dog.

But, of course, its patches of acid grassland and scrub are also important for rare spiders and insects, populations of London-scarce butterfly species such as Green Hairstreak, Brown Argus, (not so) Common Blue, and Small Copper. And the most important Inner London breeding site for those special ground-nesting birds, Meadow Pipits and Skylarks.

Wanstead Flats is an environment that is not stranger to pressure, but its grassland ecosystem holds together - just. And that

word 'just' is the reason I think it would be a grave mistake to organise additional large events there. The 'just' could be *just* enough to push this unique habitat over the edge. And there is a precedent. After the police muster station was installed on the western Flats in 2012, Skylarks stopped breeding in the Site of Special Scientific Interest to the west of Centre Road. They have not returned.

What concerns me is that the construction and later de-rigging of a large events arena - even though its footprint is not on the key grassland - would impact on the areas around it. Cherry-pickers, trucks, and scores of contractors will add extra disturbance. Then the event itself, with 40,000-50,000 people descending on the site, will add much more. The idea that festival-goers will remain confined to the arena is naive. They will walk through the grassland en route to and away from the arena. Some will picnic and have BBQs in the surrounding grassland. Others will attempt to camp there. The pressure on the grassland around Alexandra Lake will be particularly extreme, but the whole area will be affected.

While at the time I'm writing this it is not clear what the exact nature of the event or events will be, anything organised during the summer months will be devastating

for the remaining populations of larks and pipits. Bear in mind that we had just five pairs of Skylarks this year and even fewer Meadow Pipits. For the larks in particular, if they go, there's little chance of them coming back.

I understand why the proposal has been advanced. Funds available for financing the operations of Epping Forest have been cut, and there's a need to fund the shortfall. I believe the City of London should be looking at ways to supplement the income it provides for the Forest. And I don't believe for one moment that that is not possible. The Flats is arguably the most important part of the Forest. Why? Because of its close proximity to so many people. But this proposal - and if it takes place it won't be a one-off, it will be an annual event - will jeopardise those intangible elements that make its 'natural aspect' unique. Even people who wouldn't know a Skylark from a Blackbird benefit from the magic of the former's exuberant song. Let's keep them singing!

Tim Harris



Nature is like air, water, health and wellbeing
it belongs to everyone and is not anyone's to sell.

To be a custodian of nature is a privilege not a business

a little known stream

The Alders Brook

Aldersbrook Lake not long after it was dug in 1906/7 by unemployed men under the control of the West Ham Distress Committee. London Plane trees - newly planted with protective wooden stakes today obscure this view of the Courtney Hotel.

Just in front of the right hand tree in the picture you can see a concrete culvert coming into the lake. This culvert takes surface water from the adjacent road. This, together with the run-off water from Wanstead Flats forms the starting point for the Alders Brook.

Local expert and naturalist Paul Ferris tells us more



Just after the recent Great Fire of Wanstead, I heard a report that the Fire Brigade was using a water tender to pump water into Alexandra Lake. I don't know if they'd previously extracted water from the lake to assist in the supply, but it made me think...

If the fire service does make use of supplies from lakes and other standing waters from time to time, then there must be a filter to prevent such items as fish, crayfish, water beetles, bread, chapatis and small previously-swimming children from being sucked into the tanks. Otherwise those tanks may well develop a secret, little-known ecological system. Or perhaps these items just come out under pressure, or with a good cleaning?



Photo 1. Alexandra Lake: overflow and outlet structure

However – to continue...

With the lake in mind, and the recent changes to the once-pavement-now-cycle-super-highway/pavement along the lake's edge opposite Aldersbrook's parade of shops, I recapped a bit on the lake's origins, and re-visited the now defunct (or probably so) pond overflow and outlet structure (*photo 1*). Maybe a bit of explanation may be of interest?

Alexandra Lake and the City of London Cemetery

The lake was dug sometime around 1906/7 by unemployed men under the control of the West Ham Distress Committee. This was an effort to control flooding which took place from time to time in the vicinity of Wanstead Park Avenue and Aldersbrook Road, that road having cut off the natural drainage of Wanstead Flats at this point. The course of the natural drainage was down a shallow valley running more-or-less north-east to to the River Roding. The valley may be seen after entering the City of London Cemetery at the main gate and turning left into Church Avenue. Church Avenue dips and then rises again towards the church, (*photo 2*) and that dip continues to the right as an unnamed road which continues generally eastward towards the North and South Chapels and the crematorium buildings, which are built within the valley. East of the crematorium buildings, and as seen in the photograph taken from St. Andrews Road (*photo 3*), the



Photo 2. The dip in Church Avenue, where the old valley of the Alders Brook would have been

dip is very pronounced, and the valley – which is indeed known as Catacomb Valley – culminates at the catacombs and columbarium.

Before the cemetery was created the land was part of a large estate neighbouring the even larger one at Wanstead. In 1786, after a succession of owners, a

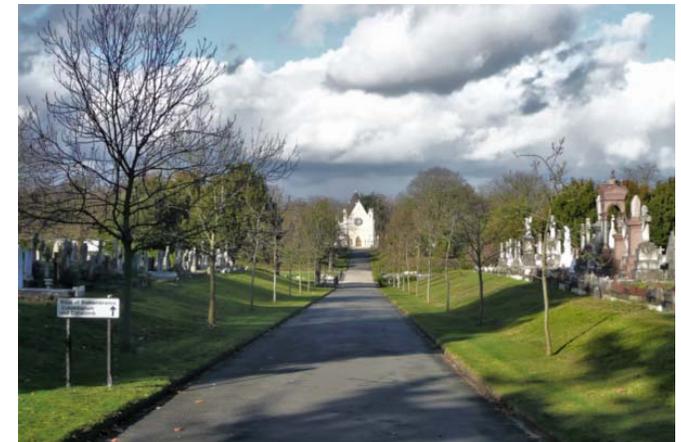


Photo 3. A more pronounced dip, looking down St. Andrews Road

manor house that existed there was disposed of and sold to Sir James Tylney Long (Lord Wellesley) of Wanstead Park. He pulled down the mansion and built a farmhouse on the site, and this was demolished shortly after 1854 when the City of London Corporation acquired much of the land for the cemetery, and – importantly – also gained rights over Wanstead Flats which eventually helped lead to the preservation of Epping Forest.

In the time of the Aldersbrook Manor, that area in front of the catacombs was an ornamental lake known as the Great Pond, and was of course created by damming the stream that helped drain part of Wanstead Flats. Beyond the Great Pond was another ornamental lake known as the Great Canal.

The Hidden Stream

Apart from such clues as the (probably broken) outlet structure at the N.E. point of Alexandra Lake, the shape of the valley itself, the area fronting the catacombs and indeed a significant depression – though much hidden by vegetation – where the Great Canal was, there is little to suggest that a stream ran here. There is certainly no sign of above-ground water, unless you count the pond by the South Chapel (*photo 4*). However, one may observe a series of manhole covers proceeding from near the Superintendent's house to the catacombs. Thus one can surmise that the run-off from the Flats is now piped through an underground drain, and talking with the cemetery's manager has confirmed this.



Photo 4. South Chapel, with the pond to the left and the catacombs in the distance.

The land rises significantly to the east of the Catacombs/Columbarium. This was the end of the lake and those structures have, effectively, been built into its bank. It is necessary to go up the flights of steps to the terrace (*photo 5*) above the Columbarium to follow the course further. Following the same general direction it is possible to see more manhole covers (*photo 6*) until the



Photo 5. Flight of steps leading to the terrace above the catacombs. This would once have been the east end of the Great Pond

rising ground of the new burial section is met. These must be quite deep manholes.



Photo 6. A view from the terrace, looking east towards the Birches. The manhole cover indicates that the brook is now below ground, and flows almost along the sight-line of the centre of the photo.



Photo 7. The manhole (temporarily covered) that was exposed when the rubbish tip (The Shoot) was removed.

Until 2014 part of the area where the Great Canal used to be was known as the shoot, and was used as a tip for waste material that accumulated in the cemetery. This had necessitated covering the once-open stream in a

conduit, and the tip itself had grown into significant heap, with the stream far below. During 2014 the waste material was removed in preparation for landscaping, so that instead of a hill there was now a depression. Looking at the site in February 2014 I noticed a temporarily covered hole at the bottom of the hollow (*photo 7*) and on close inspection could actually hear water running below. The area has now been landscaped, and has been settling down prior to being used for burials, although there is still a (temporarily) covered manhole (*photo 8*) access to the stream. This must be a very deep manhole! Beyond the landscaped area, the land drops again and some almost-impenetrable woodland lies beyond, stretching to the cemetery's eastern boundary fence. This is the area now known as The Birches, (*photo 9*) and it is in here that the Alders Brook first makes an above-ground appearance.



Photo 8. The manhole access is visible still on the newly-landscaped area.



Photo 9. The Birches Nature Reserve

The Alders Brook

The Ordnance Survey Map appears to show the Alders Brook as nothing more than a channel of the Roding, but it is not that at all; it is a stream in its own right. The stream is little known; it is probable that many residents of nearby Aldersbrook – named of course after the stream – are unaware of its presence...

The Alders Brook is a tributary of the River Roding, and first becomes visible within the The Birches as it emerges from a large concrete conduit into a small pond (*photo 10*), almost invisible as it is surrounded by trees and other vegetation. This area of the cemetery may have been left almost undisturbed since the cemetery was created, presumably because the presence of the Alders Brook made it unsuitable for burials. At some time – I suspect the 1960s or 70s – the pond was created to help enhance the wildlife aspect of this remote area. Water flows almost constantly from this

culvert and, together with the pond, now constitutes the first visible source of the Alders Brook. In 2004 volunteers from the 21 Royal Engineers ACF started work on clearing a path through the trees to assist access, and the area was designated a Nature Reserve and named The Birches.



Photo 10. The conduit from which the underground brook emerges into the Birches Pond

The outflow from the pond passes via a culvert beneath the cemetery railings and under the Bridle Path – the public footpath which follows the cemetery boundary fence. On the east side of the path the stream – which can now properly be called the Alders Brook – can really be seen as such, although – depending on weather conditions – sometimes there is not much flow. Its course takes it just a few metres eastward to a point where it divides north and south. The north branch, however, is stagnant water which in a hundred or so metres encounters the flood bank of the River Roding. It

is interesting that on many maps including present day ones, the brook appears to join the Roding at this point. It seems that at some time the waterway that now comprises the Alders Brook was indeed a channel of the Roding, and the brook itself fed into the channel, quite possibly near to where it now divides north and south.

Adjacent to the northern arm of the brook, between it and the cemetery fence, is an area of land which – although incorporating an electricity pylon – is a pleasant enough spot, far enough away from the noise of roads to have a sense of peacefulness about it. It is an area of scrubby vegetation for the most part, with plenty of the ubiquitous bramble, but with some pleasant oak trees near to the bridle path, some silver birch and – increasingly – both holm and Turkey oak. At the top of the Roding embankment, where the arm of the brook ends, the river itself comes into view, accompanied by a bank-top track which affords some long views across the golf course to Ilford, ahead to the high trees of Wanstead Park, and some nice river meanders. Although the bridle path continues northwards towards the Park, the open land here eventually meets the old gates and fence of what was the Redbridge Southern Sewage Treatment Works, now known as the Exchange Lands, and which is part of Epping Forest.

The brook proper, however, flows southwards following a course between the London Borough of Newham's Bridle Path Allotment site and, on its east bank, Ilford Golf Course (*photo 11*). Between the allotments and the golf course the brook is not accessible to pedestrians.



Photo 11. The brook, outside of the cemetery, and between the Bridle Path Allotments and Ilford Golf Course. This isn't really accessible and rarely seen by the public.

South of the allotments, between the cemetery railings and the brook, there is some open land known locally by some as 'The Butts'. This possibly refers to the area at one time being used as a practice ground for archery; the 1816 map shows the area as 'Brick Clamps' but just across the stream is 'Gun Mead'. It is at this point – at

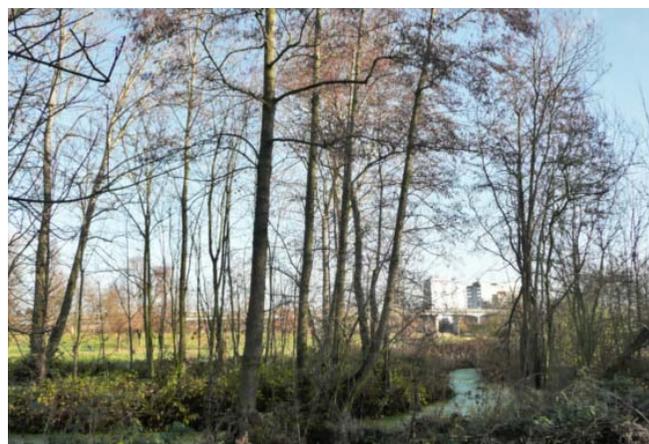


Photo 12. The brook passes beneath alder trees by the Butts

the southern end of the allotments – that the stream actually flows between a group of alders (*photo 12*), but the name may not refer to the tree but to it being an "elder" brook. (i.e. "older")

Access to the Butts, and hence to the Alders Brook, may be made from Romford Road at Little Ilford via a foot-tunnel which passes under the railway line, or by way of the footpath which follows the perimeter of the cemetery either from Rabbits Road or from Empress Avenue, although the Empress Avenue length is so overgrown at present as to make this almost impossible. However there is also access from the north via the Aldersbrook Exchange Land.



Photo 13. Construction of the Roding Valley Way. The original Bridle Path is now impassable.

Prior to 2007 the area had an incredibly rural feel for part of Newham, with even something of a wildflower meadow at the Butts, together with a gentle stream.

However in 2007 this effect was considerably spoiled by the laying of a 2 metre wide track, which was to become part of the Roding Valley Way, a combined footpath and cycleway through the London Boroughs of Redbridge, Barking & Dagenham and Newham. Instead of using the existing bridle path along the edge of the cemetery, the new route was insensitively laid across the meadow! (photo 13) For some years local conservation groups – including volunteers from the Wren Group – had attempted to enhance the meadow-like aspect of the area, but this would not now be a viable option. All too often it is subject to fly-tipping and, particularly during 2015 and 2016, evidence of occupation in the form of ‘camps’ could be found, reference perhaps to the numbers of refugees present hereabouts?

North of the allotments, the creation of the new path has considerably improved access to the area for



Photo 15. The water-control barrage. Not a pretty sight in this photograph. The ‘pondweed’, though, is actually a fern.

pedestrians as well as cyclists, and is a much easier walk in parts which were almost invariably muddy and overgrown. However, the surfaced route veers away from the existing route to pass through the old gates of the Exchange Land site of Epping Forest. This means that this land, with its wealth of flora and fauna, now suffers a disturbance which it had not previously endured, and – for pedestrian visitors – a change in the ambience of the place. It is a shame that some lovely and unique wildlife areas have suffered – and all – in my view – unnecessarily, for the route of the existing path – the bridle Path – was perfectly adequate. It could have and benefited from surfacing – particularly at its northern end – but as has been mentioned has now become almost derelict.

The brook (photo 14) supports a variety of plant species, and these are most abundant at the Butts area – that is to say, nearer to the foot-tunnel and the railway lines.

Species found include water fern *Azolla filiculoides*, purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, amphibious bistort *Persicaria amphibia*, water pepper *Persicaria hydropiper* and water mint *Mentha aquatica*. A full list of the plants of this area may be found by looking at the WansteadWildlife website.

At the southern end of the Butts, the brook encounters a concrete barrage (photo 15), presumably some form of flood control. At this point, there can be a riot of colour or – when that has died back as can be seen in the photograph – a collection of rubbish. The brook then disappears from view as it passes under the main Liverpool Street railway lines, under which there is a foot/cycle tunnel allowing access to and from Little Ilford. The brook of course continues beyond the barrage, but is, sadly, inaccessible to pedestrians. It can be viewed from Lugg Approach (photo 16), which is a short road off the Romford Road that now leads to a



Photo 14. A well-vegetated selection of plants growing by the brook



Photo 16. Overgrown banks of the brook seen from Lugg Approach. The brook can sometimes be choked with vegetation here.

training establishment for railway tunnelling skills. Here the stream can be full of vegetation (as well as rubbish) and the banks have been overgrown with the invasive Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*. During 2015 much of the Alders Brook south of the railway lines had fences with notices warning of control areas regarding the knotweed.

I believe that it should be possible to clear the stream-bank and tidy up the general environment so that a walking-route along the brook could be established, as an alternative to the present one. The present one is signposted as The Roding Valley Way, and makes use of Aldersbrook Lane – the remnant stretch of an old route that was the approach to Aldersbrook Manor but which now passes through a housing estate – and a stretch of the busy Romford Road. Considering the effort that has been put into the creation of the cycle route, perhaps this should have been considered.



Photo 17. The Alders Brook flows into the Roding near Ilford Bridge. It can just about be made out slightly to right of the centre of the picture.

At relatively small cost compared to all the other work being undertaken hereabouts – particularly relating to the Crossrail project – there may have been an opportunity to give pedestrians and perhaps cyclists access to the banks of the Alders Brook here? This would also enable more direct and pleasant access to and from Ilford town centre from Wanstead Flats and to the Roding Valley Way route for Wanstead Park and beyond – a benefit to Redbridge as well as Newham residents.

Eventually the brook emerges from its over-vegetated cutting to join with the River Roding at Ilford Bridge, from where it can just about be viewed. (photo 17)

So that is the Alders Brook. Originating as run-off water from Wanstead Flats, originally piped below Aldersbrook Road via the overflow structure and still beneath much of the City of London Cemetery, helping to form an almost invisible “lost” pond in a nature reserve, appearing for a short stretch as a stagnant arm, disappearing behind allotments, re-appearing by the trees that may give it its name, potentially a rather lovely stretch and full of wildlife by the Butts, disappearing again through an ugly barrage beneath railway lines, and inaccessibly flowing through an often weed-choked channel behind buildings near the Romford Road. Finally, a brief view of its confluence with the River Roding, if anyone takes a moment to look while crossing the river from Manor Park to Ilford.

And to return to that probably-blocked overflow structure at the edge of Alexandra Lake: At the time of

writing, the water-level in the lake is quite low, exposing much of the bed of the lake all around and presenting a particularly unpleasant aspect behind the relatively recent willows opposite Aldersbrook Parade, where mud is exposed and litter has accumulated. The lake needs water, and as was reasoned a few years after the lake was created, some of this could be taken from rain water in Aldersbrook Road itself. Drains were created in the gutter, and ceramic pipes encased in concrete fed water from the drains into the lake. One or more of these can just be made out in the Edwardian photograph (front), and there is still a clear example at the N.W. edge of the lake. (photo 18)



Photo 18. The remains of the Edwardian drain at NW corner of Alexandra Lake

However, to keep the lake from flooding onto the road, the overflow had been created. A reasonable balance: take water from the road when required, and if too much then let it overflow by means of a pipe under the road as the source of the Alders Brook.

The inflow pipes became broken and clogged, and the outflow was not maintained. In fact both aspects were, essentially, forgotten about.

With the recent creation of the cycle path, very sensibly the path was made v-shaped along that stretch opposite the Parade, and there are a series of drains in the “V” to take away any excess water should the lake become too full. But where does that water go? Not – I suspect – into that pipe beneath the road and the cemetery, i.e. as water for the brook, but probably down storm drains. Those would, presumably, be the same storm drains as the road uses – if not into the sewers then some other underground route to meet eventually with the Roding

or the Thames. But NOT into the (to me) sensible route to supply the Alders Brook! Maybe some Borough Engineer can elucidate on this; I am not a hydrological engineer, and much of the information above has been the result of my own observations and suppositions.

There is an interesting pdf file available at:

<http://content.tfl.gov.uk/sustainable-urban-drainage-november-2016.pdf>

which looks at Sustainable Urban Drainage. I suspect that this might contain some good ideas for the Corporation of London/Epping Forest and our local councils to make better use of one of our most precious

resources, to help water supplies to our local ponds, lakes, brooks and other wet areas (e.g. on Wanstead and Leyton Flats where some valuable marsh or bog-type habitats have almost disappeared) and indeed water-courses such as the Alders Brook.



Article and Pics by Paul Ferris

Read more about Paul and his work on his excellent website <https://www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk>



The route of the Alders Brook through the City of London Cemetery

autumnal fruits

as reliable food sources

Weather patterns seem to have an impact on fruit production and this has resulted in a bumper harvest this autumn of berries, apples and acorns. In early September I spent a pleasurable hour or so picking juicy blackberries from my wild garden which were an ideal addition for a tasty crumble! There were many out of reach which I left for the wood mice, foxes and birds which feast on them at this time of year. The rich supply of sugars in such fruits also attract many insects too.

Sitting still and making careful observations can provide much information about the habits of wild creatures and this can help all of us understand the complex checks and balances which enable plants and animals to depend on each other and thrive.



Blackberries.

A wonderful example of such detailed work can be found in *Birds and Berries* written by Barbara and David Snow which chronicles their detailed findings over some four years of watching birds feeding in the countryside in and around Buckinghamshire. Such studies are of immense help when deciding where to go to watch for winter visitors such as Fieldfares or Redwings. Planting nutritionally rich fruiting shrubs in gardens will feed various winter visitors. Some supermarket car parks have been planted with Buckthorn and its yellow berries are a welcome food supply.

The ripe fruits are often red or black and contain much smaller seeds which pass through the digestive system to be deposited in a nutrient rich package elsewhere! You only have a look beneath a perching place to see how many young plants are there which have grown from seeds dropped by birds.



Ivy Berries - ripe berry is particular favourite of the Woodpigeon

Size matters as many fruit eating birds found in the UK do not have a large gape and swallow the fruits whole. Fruits such as Blackberry, Dogwood, Elder, Honeysuckle, Ivy and Privet have a size range of 7-10 mm and are consumed by a wider range of species including Blackcaps, Robins and Starlings. The investigations by the authors suggest that many fruit eaters consume can consume between 6- 8% of their body weight in a feeding session! Starlings consume large numbers of soil invertebrates, as its beak is designed to probe rather than to pluck fruit so larger fruits are avoided. They will peck at Cherries and leave the stone hanging!

Hedgerows and other habitats containing Hawthorn, Sloes and wild roses are ideal autumn feeding stations for members of the thrush family. Blackbirds take a range of fruits including haws, rosehips, sloes, Dogwood, Buckthorn, Elder, Yew and Holly, though haws seemed to be the preferred fruit when a choice is available. Song Thrushes prefer Yew, sloes, Elder and Guelder Rose, tending to avoid rosehips. The larger Mistle Thrush shows a strong preference for sloes over haws and also feeds on the white Mistletoe berries. Redwings and Fieldfares find sloes too large to tackle, preferring instead to feed on haws.



Hawthorn berries - ideal autumn feeding stations

Woodpigeons eat Elderberries and Ivy when ripe but survive on a more varied diet of other plant material. Overwintering Blackcaps were observed to lurk inside a Holly bush in between selecting ripe berries at intervals of about 10 minutes during the short hours of daylight!



Acorns are large and plump this autumn and comparisons have been made with the weather conditions experienced in 1976

Our current concerns with calorie counting and amounts of fat or protein in food is not shared by wild creatures as they instinctively know that fattening up for winter is vital for their survival. Juicy fruits contain energy rich fats or sugars which make an important contribution to the diet. Taste may be as important to wild creatures as it is to us, but analysis of the energy yields of dry fruits are very similar being between 3 to 4 kcal per g of the dry pulp. As

Dogwood, Ivy and Spindle contain more lipids (fats) perhaps new plantings should include more of these to help support a greater range of birds?

Common and Lesser Whitethroats have been recorded as eating Blackberries and Elderberries and Spotted Flycatchers occasionally eat small fruits if insects are scarce.

Alder, Ash, Birch, Hornbeam and Maples tend to produce regular crops of seeds to feed specific seed predators. Siskins on the Alders, Lesser Redpolls on minute Birch seeds and various finches on the Hornbeams. The Oak tends have mast years when a mature tree can produce as many as 90,000 acorns. Certainly, the acorns are large and plump this autumn and comparisons have been made with the weather conditions

experienced in 1976 which was also mast year and the bumper crop of acorns then resulted in some good woodland regeneration in parts of Epping Forest, where they had been planted in grassy areas by the Jays. Acorns provide food for other creatures too,

As birds are important agents for the dispersal of many plant species, it will be interesting to monitor the recolonization of the burnt areas of Wanstead Flats to record just how many species turn up there as a result of seeds dropped by passing birds!

by Tricia Moxey



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 ahead). If you would like to see your area in this slot why not get in touch and we will see what we can do.



Invasion of the emeralds

On 6 September 2015, while drinking tea in Gill James's back garden, we saw a damselfly fly onto vegetation by her pond. It turned out to be a Willow Emerald, and it represented the first record for the area. Its previous absence was perhaps not surprising because prior to 2007 there had only been two sightings in the whole of the UK. After an influx in 2009 the species began to breed in east Suffolk, south Norfolk and north Essex.



The male Willow Emerald damselfly that turned up in Gill James's garden in September 2015

Speculation was rife about whether this smart little damsel would continue to colonise, or whether the population would fizzle out. Nothing more was seen of the Willow Emerald for two years, then on 15 October 2017 Kathy Hartnett saw one perched on a willow branch overhanging water at the west end of Heronry Lake, an area she has named 'dragonfly corner'. This was the first record for Wanstead Park.



On the sides of the thorax are distinctive yellow spur-shaped marks.

This year, everything has changed. Kathy seems to have been on a mission to find the emeralds, and she and Paul Ferris were successful on 1 September, when they found one perched on top of a blade of grass at 'dragonfly corner'. Then, a fortnight later, Kathy found at least six individuals there, including two mating pairs, perched on willow branches, with an additional mating pair



The black-lined pale wing spot is very distinctive.

on a willow branch by Shoulder of Mutton Pond the following day. On 17th she and Paul found an incredible 13 mating pairs on willow branches at 'dragonfly corner', along with other singles. They also found signs of egg-laying ('oviposition scars') on at least two willow branches. And there were also two mating pairs at the corner of Shoulder of Mutton Pond. On 26 September, Paul Ferris saw one pair coupled, but 5-10 individuals, on lake-side willows on the south side of Alexandra Lake.

Willow Emeralds lay their eggs in twigs of willow and alder where they overhang water. The egg-laying female punctures the twig, using serrations on the underside of the ovipositor, her egg-laying organ. This produces oval-shaped galls, definitely something to watch out for.

Article and pictures by Tim Harris



butcher bird

Nick Croft describes his discovery of a Red-backed Shrike, whose old nickname was Butcherbird, on Wanstead Flats.

On 28 August, having finished my three-month stint caring for my mother, I was eager to get out onto the patch. It didn't take long to see there was nothing of note in what was left of the SSSI after the fire, or the brooms or Long Wood so I found myself east of Alex Lake by mid-morning. I cut across the 'pub scrub' after failing to find any Redstarts in the hawthorns and with Blackcap my only reward. In the hawthorn behind the Blackcap, however, there was another bird. It looked like a Whitethroat with its back towards me, but there was something 'not quite right' about it. Lazily, I decide to skirt around a bush and take its photo just to be sure but, of course, before the auto-focus kicked in - it kicked off. For the next hour or so I wandered around the area and was just about to give up when this Red-backed Shrike popped up on a dead tree in the

scrub. Phone and fingers failing me, I managed to tweet out our monster mega and wait for the barrage of calls, messages and twitching colleagues (well at least Bob!). Nothing.

I called Bob: no answer. I tried Tim on the off-chance he was working from home. He was, and sounded amazed! The shrike had now returned to the bush I'd found it in, and there it lingered for about 20 minutes, disappearing just before Tim, and others, rolled up. The bird did appear, though, the first in the area since 1 November 1980 in the Old Sewage Works.

The little beauty graced the pub scrub for the next 11 days and, based on a description given by an Indian gentleman of a bird chased by Crows from Centre Copse, was probably here for 18 days in total. In the end it was seen by well over 100 people. Once a widespread breeding bird in the UK, Red-backed Shrikes are attempting a bit of a recolonisation. Here's hoping!





history the fire revealed

On 15th July 2018 at about 4pm a very large fire broke out on Wanstead Flats which turned out to be the largest grass fire ever attended by London Fire Brigade, that is largest in terms of attendance of appliances rather than acres burnt - the fire covered about 40 acres, not the 90 acres mentioned by the press. At its height there were 40 pumping appliances, plus support vehicles. There have only been three 40 pump fires in London since 2012 and one of those was Grenfell.

One of the unexpected benefits of the fire is that it stripped the soil of ground cover and revealed surface remains from previous eras.

The July 2018 fire covered an area of known World War 2 activity on the flats, and the opportunity was taken in the days after the fire was out to walk over the burnt area with some care. An initial sketch map was prepared to identify some remains, and then on 23rd Aug there was a proper walk over with City of London heritage staff, who also had a sophisticated GPS/GIS mapping device.

Photos were also taken with a smartphone on the initial walk about and that allows basic geo-location.

The fire started at the extreme west by Jubilee Pond and spread rapidly east in the westerly breeze leaping Centre Road in 2 or 3 separate locations which then coalesced.

The fire brigade stopped the fire just short of Aldersbrook petrol station, and that was the eastern extent.



The area covered by the fire: Source: NPAS via Twitter

East of Centre Road

The aerial photo below covers part of the same area with Aldersbrook petrol station to the right, and Centre Road angling across top left hand corner. We know this was taken by the RAF on 7th August 1944.



Source: RAF air photo 7th Aug 1944 (raf_106g_la_29_rp_3309) via Historic England national monument record NMR Swindon, used with permission.

The round feature near the centre of the photo is the so called "radio direction finding" site, a circular aerial array approximately 170 metres across. No photos are known to survive of this but it might have looked something like this:



High frequency direction finding (via Google) – or circularly disposed aerial array (CDA)

On the 1944 air photo moving north from the large circular feature are many black dots laid out in several parallel rows, which are probably small uprights set into lumps of concrete as part of the aerial array.

After the fire several dome shaped lumps of concrete appeared scattered over this area south of Long Wood. They have one flat surface in which there is a small central hole about 1-2cm across. The bottom is curved, pudding bowl in shape about 30-40cm in diameter. In one case observed, a fragment of metal survived in the hole. They might have been bases of guy ropes to hold up other aerial features.

It was observed that some of these upturned pudding bowl shaped concrete lumps were irregular in size and shape and were probably not made in a mould but by

simply digging a small hole in the ground surface and pouring in wet concrete that was left to set.



Author photo 30 July 2018 domed concrete remains to left, possible base of small aerial features.



Another of the pudding bowl shaped objects though this one is more cylindrical, this time with the hole clearly shown, and the remains of a metal post of some sort (scale just over 3 inches). The rough nature of concrete also shown with pebbles from the flats possibly. Author photo.

In the same area south of Long Wood there is a good deal of what looks like demolition rubble. A possible interpretation is that these are the remains of the military huts we know to be in this location. In situ hut bases are located under the trees in Long Wood.



1944 RAF air photo extract – four huts shown adjacent Long Wood. Since the war the tree cover of Long Wood has extended to the east and covered these huts. Two hut bases remain visible (2018) in the wood.

These huts are associated not with the aerial array but with the anti aircraft Z battery. This was a rocket based system derived from Royal Navy technology intended to bring down enemy aircraft. It is known a Z battery was installed on Wanstead Flats in the second half of the war just to the south of Long Wood. (The large 4" naval gun based anti aircraft guns on Wanstead Flats were further to the east). A Z battery in Victoria Park was

implicated in the Bethnal Green tube disaster as the crowd is said to have panicked at the massive noise of the battery firing, believing it to be enemy action.

The huts were needed for telecommunications equipment for the control of the rocket battery and for mess facilities for the men.



Z battery on Merseyside (Source Wikipedia)

The rockets shown were about 3 inches in diameter. On 23rd Aug 2018 shrapnel was found in the area in the area south of Long Wood.

Note that during fire fighting operation week beginning 16th July 2018 the London Fire Brigade requested help from the City of London Epping Forest to open up the surface soil of the flats to allow better penetration of water and to speed up the process of damping down to



Aluminium shrapnel 10cm x 7cm probably from Z battery rocket

prevent further outbreaks of fire. Fire brigade officers were quoted as saying:

“Firefighters continue to work hard in arduous conditions over a wide area to properly damped down the grass fire as it can smoulder and travel across dry ground. We’re also working with partners and specialist mechanical vehicles are being used to turn over parts of the land”. Deputy Assistant Commissioner Pat Goulbourne

<https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/incidents/2018/july/grass-fire-in-wanstead/>

The City asked a farmer to bring in a disk harrow to do this.

Paul Thomson, Superintendent, also issued a statement to local councillors on 18th July:

“The City Corporation contract partner G Matthews & Son has provided a subsoiler and power harrow to break

the baked surface of the soil pan that has prevented effective dampening down by LFB hoses. The machinery has broken the soil pan down to 10 inches, with the power harrow providing restoring levels with a fine tilth. The cultivated surface has dramatically improved infiltration by water from hoses and bowsers. “ (quoted in Forest Gate north ward report) This process no doubt



July 30th 2018 immediately east of Long Wood, in an area known as the enclosure. Assumed to be water supply pipe to military huts for Z battery. This was removed by City 24th August and dumped.

dragged to the surface remains not previously seen after other fires in the area e.g. August 2006.



Brick scatter/demolition rubble just east of Long Wood 30th July 2018. This was uncovered by the harrow in an area previously covered in grass adjacent to main path. Probably demolition rubble from Z battery huts.

In late July we discovered an intriguing grey object marked “.....ADTY NUERNBERG” (earlier letters cut off) about 5cm long and similar in shape and size to a fat children’s crayon. The material appears not to be metal



Author photo of possible German munition

but possibly an early plastic like Bakelite. It has not been possible to identify what this is for sure, and research continues. However the speculation is that it is some form of munition from a German aircraft that that was over the Flats. Alternatively it could have been dropped by an inmate of the German POW camp on the Flats.

SSSI site west of Centre Road

This is the known site of the German POW camp. See references below. The July 2018 fire affected part but not all of this area. In the area south of the POW camp this was seen:



Author photo 23rd Aug 2018 – unidentified – possible base of gate post?

Despite a careful walk over August 2018 no other new features could be identified west of Centre Road. The power harrow was not used on the SSSI site, except in a line on the southern edge adjacent to fair ground.

There are rectangular concrete features in situ on the POW camp site but it is not certain what they are:



Author photo from 2016 of rectangular concrete feature near Lake House Road. Area not burnt in 2018 and now overgrown.

Other objects revealed east of Centre Road

It was not only wartime material that was revealed. Field walking also uncovered evidence of the use of the flats in late nineteenth century as a holiday resort where many thousands came on Bank Holidays –



Part of possible stoneware ginger beer bottle marked LEYTONSTONE – author photo

The large aerial array

Cropmarks relating to large circular aerial array east of Centre Road:



Drone footage of circular markings
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LMGTKC_P_M

In this still from drone footage from YouTube and the circular feature can clearly be seen in the evening light bottom and right. Straighter lines are paths.



Source LB Newham GIS mapping system. The aerial circle can be seen just south of the label "Click to start drawing".

Also note on this image the clear outline of football pitches under what is now the model aero club field to the left. There have not been pitches here for many decades, and emphasises the longevity of cropmarks. These pitches may well date back to the pre WW2 period.



The 2006 fire also affects the area. The circular aerial feature can be seen to right; model aero field to left by Centre Road :Source Google Earth 2008 two years after fire swept this area.

Taken 27th August 2018 Wanstead flats, this is part of the circular aerial feature than can still just be discerned in the long grass. Author's red rope laid along the line of the circle which is c.170 metres across. The fire did not reach this area to uncover any clearer remains of the circle.

Written and researched by Peter Williams



Litter kills

People's rubbish doesn't look nice and spoils the enjoyment of our green spaces for everyone. But aside from its environmental impact, flytips and other litter also pose a real hazard to wildlife.

If you see a flytip or excess litter on Epping Forest land please report it.
Call 020 8532 1010 (24 hours) or mail epping.forest@cityoflondon.gov.uk



Adopt a tree pit

help reclaim Wanstead's streets for wildlife

Who'd have thought the humble tree pit would provide a valuable wildlife habitat? But in September 2018 a study of 1,500 street tree bases in Paris concluded just that, assessing that these little areas of vegetation act as stepping-stone habitats between more important green spaces like parks and gardens.

Paris is in the midst of a local government initiative to turn the city from grey to green, with a goal of adding 100 hectares (247 acres) of vegetation through green walls, roof gardens and urban agriculture by 2020. 'License to green' encourages all Parisians to plant more trees and gardens on vacant areas of land – anything from a small strip of grass on a pavement to a full-fledged community garden.

Not so in London. Here the loss of vegetation appears to be progressing unabated. The London Wildlife Trust estimates that an area of vegetated garden land equivalent to two Hyde Parks is being lost every year. Wanstead's lovely street trees may create an illusion of leafy suburbia, but look a little closer and it's clear that the majority of front gardens are now paved or mostly paved.

It's against this backdrop that those little patches of soil at the base of street trees suddenly take on greater significance as a potential spot for vegetation and life. So this autumn, why not adopt a tree pit or two near you and create a little stepping stone for wildlife? All you need to do is email Cleansing.Services@redbridge.gov.uk by 1st December 2018 to tell them the location of the tree or trees you're adopting, then from 2019 any spraying of weed killer on the base should cease.

Next spring, clear any weeds and add some dry-tolerant, insect-friendly vegetation (nothing too big that will impede the footpath or road). There are loads of options – spring bulbs and primroses, small evergreen shrubs like hebes, lavender and thyme, and perennials like Russian sage, asters, verbena, sedum and geraniums. There are loads of ideas for easy-to-grow wildlife friendly plants at www.wildwanstead.org. Wildflowers are also a good option, especially where there's not much soil – although the council recommends including some plants that make it very clear to the contractors who spray the

streets that the pit is being cultivated, to stop it being accidentally sprayed – wildflowers start to grow at the same time that weeds come through so can easily be mistaken at first.



There are some fabulous tree pits around Wanstead, and even some entire roads of planting where residents have taken on looking after all the bases in the street. Tree pits might be small, but each one has the potential to be a little patch of meadow for hungry bees and other insects. So if you live near a street tree, why not adopt it in 2019 and help reclaim Wanstead's roads for wildlife.

Susie Knox
Wild Wanstead



until we meet again

Walk leader Peter Aylmer says goodbye after four years of nature rambles through London's green spaces.

It rained, hard. Very fitting that, for it rained hard on the first of my walk leads for Wren nearly four years previously. That day, only one other person turned up; it's a measure of progress that three others joined me this time.



Wren walkers at the Ingrebourne Valley visitor centre

But enough of the damp for a moment. There was a bigger crowd the month before, when a lucky thirteen set out from Upminster station for a stroll around its nature reserves. Yes, Upminster and nature; they do go together. We set out first for Cranham Marsh, which if not a mudbath at least still showed a bit of green luxuriance at the height of that drought of a summer, before tracking through parkland laid out for the country estate of a Lord Mayor of London in the eighteenth century.



Restored New River in Canonbury

The Thames Chase community forest, which at roughly 25 is a bit younger than the parkland, is another piece of 'designed nature' but no less welcome for that. It's still a work in progress, as we found when we were forced into a mini-trespass through as yet undeveloped woodland to avoid a nasty road walk. Come back in ten years to enjoy more properly!

By then the Chase will be contiguous with the Hornchurch Country Park, formerly one of the Battle of Britain's main fighter bases RAF Hornchurch, and home to a fantastic

visitor centre run by the Essex Wildlife Trust – well placed for lunch. The way back to Upminster runs along the River Ingrebourne, a 27-mile Thames tributary which still, even so close to a large town, has quiet reed-fringed stretches.



Stretches of the original New River decorate Clissold Park

At eight miles this was probably the longest Wren nature ramble of all, so there were some tired legs back at the station, but it opened a few eyes as to what is available not far away from us.

The wet walk in August was wholly urban but not totally different, in that we were following a watercourse, though this time the artificial New River. The 'New' means 'new in 1613', when it began its task of supplying London with clean water from Hertfordshire. It still does – the Lea valley reservoirs would be lower without it, though these days it's truncated at Stoke Newington rather than the original Clerkenwell.

We started from the latter however, for the course of the original can still be discerned through the gardens and roads of Highbury and Canonbury, a fascinating glimpse of inner

north London. Things got drier after our lunch stop in a deserted Clissold Park, thank goodness, and we were soon at the twin Stoke Newington reservoirs, of which the easternmost now hosts the wonderful Woodberry Wetlands. From here, a short stretch of working river with panoramic views round to Ally Pally soon brought us to Green Lanes station, convenient for a return to the east.



Cattle grazing by the Ingrebourne

And that was the end of my Wren Group walk leads. Later that month, Barbara and I moved to Sheering in Essex, the start of some fine countryside that I know in part but am itching to explore more fully. But I'll be forever grateful to the opportunity that the Wren Group gave me to show off London's many and varied green spaces to so many of the membership. I'll never stop coming back to east London – I have too many friends here, and a strong emotional pull dating way back – so plan to keep in touch with people, and I'll be following the group's progress too. And if you're ever on the B183, say hello!



Giant House Spider This spider is probably the one that you'll see the most this autumn, with it choosing to hide in homes, attics, sheds and out buildings, and spinning thick sheet web with tubular retreat. The *Eratigena Atrica* can survive several months without food or water and is around 10mm to 14mm in length. However, including the legs it can measure up to 60mm (yikes) and females tend to have a broader abdomen. They are seen all year around but mate in the autumn time.



spiders are on our side

If you have a house, you probably have house spiders. They might live in your loft, cellar or on your windowsills - or they might just be sitting there and watching you from your houseplants. But despite their reputation as creepy interlopers, most house spiders haven't simply wandered away from home: Our houses are their natural habitats.

Some people think of spiders as insects, grouping them together with six-legged invaders like cockroaches or ants. But they're not insects, and they don't want to raid our cupboards. Much like their outdoor relatives that eat pests, house spiders just want to quietly kill the insects that are after our food. If anything, they're on our side.

The spiders found on your windowsill are descendants of 7 foot-long marine animals that lived 480 million years ago. True spiders evolved about 300 million years ago, which means they pre-date dinosaurs - not to mention humans. They were here first and they've been living with us for a very long time. In fact, many house spiders are now specially adapted to indoor conditions like steady climate, sparse food and even sparser water.



The giant house spider, now with the scientific name *Eratigena atrica*, is one of the biggest spiders of Central and Northern Europe. (Wiki)



In this country the daddy long legs spider *Pholcus phalangioides* is found indoors in houses, outhouses and cellars etc. It favours undisturbed parts of houses where its untidy web passes unnoticed or is permitted to stay. (Wiki)

house spiders can be helpful

Spiders are an efficient defence against pests like aphids, moths and beetles. House spiders offer similar benefits indoors, helping to keep down a wide variety of insects without the need for harmful insecticides. Spiders feed on common indoor pests, such as cockroaches, earwigs, mosquitoes, flies and clothes moths.

If you want to make sure your house spiders are pulling their weight, check under their webs to see what they've been eating. Many web-dwelling house spiders simply drop the remnants of their prey to the floor after eating, which can make an annoying mess but also provide evidence of their contribution to the household.

Male house spiders are seen at this time of year running around people's houses as they are looking for a mate. Female house spiders remain behind skirting boards on

their webs so it is usually the males that are seen running along floors and walls in homes.

Spiders are not invading your house for the winter — they are hiding out there all year round

It's often thought that spiders come in for shelter from the cold and as cold weather approaches an army of spiders invade our homes - but in fact they've probably been with us all along. In fact, our eight-legged friends often appear to become more frequent and vast in size as summer turns to autumn when the weather is not particularly cold says Chris Cathrine (British Arachnological Society).

“generally only about 5 per cent of the spiders you see indoors have been outdoors and house spiders that are thrown into the garden by well meaning householders will probably die from the cold.”

Geoff Oxford, British Arachnological Society

Although some house spider species can survive outdoors, they may not do well there, and some may die rather quickly when removed from the protective indoor habitat. So you're not doing them a favour if you evict them – no matter how carefully.

“It is unlikely that the large specimens we see in our houses in autumn have come in from outside, as is commonly assumed. They may well have spent their entire lives in our company without us being aware of it.”

Geoff Oxford, British Arachnological

Just as indoor spiders are suited for indoor conditions; it wouldn't really suit outdoors spiders to come indoors. Spiders are cold-blooded, not attracted to warmth and are able to live at temperatures all the way down to -5C - those that are used to living outdoors would probably die off when they arrived indoors. However, sometimes outdoor spiders do wander inside. If you release one of these outside, you might actually be doing it a favour. Just be sure to let the right one out.



Steatoda nobilis - commonly known as the false widow spider - is native to Madeira and the Canary islands, and is believed to have arrived on British shores via a cargo transporter before 1879 (Wiki)

The 'spider season' is a period in early autumn, usually around the beginning of September, when large house spiders are far more visible around UK homes. This is because male spiders, after a summer of gorging



Gray cross spiders are reportedly common on man-made objects, yet rarely found on vegetation (Wiki)

themselves on moths, flies and other insects, become sexually mature and start emerging from their domestic hiding places – in search of a mate.

This year, however, the season started in August which is earlier than usual. According to experts, it all comes down to that much-talked-about heatwave we've been having. The warmer weather has provided the ideal conditions for spiders to grow quickly with better access to food thanks to a boom in insect population.



The sector spider, which eats small insects, is found all over Britain all year around, often on window frames and inside homes (Wiki)

Researched by Tony Morrison



More

<https://metro.co.uk/2016/09/06/uk-spider-identification-17-common-british-spiders-you-might-find-this-autumn-6110982/>

getting your hands dirty



Wren's practical conservation work takes place in the winter from October to March, first Sunday of the month, and midweek most Thursdays 10-12.30.



We carry out a variety of tasks including clearing scrub; keeping paths open; and various pieces of work requested by the City of London where they do not have the resources or where their machines cannot go. Some tasks suit an approach with hand tools, and keen volunteers. For example we are clearing alder re-growth on the banks of the Ornamental Waters in Wanstead Park.



Wren has built up a good reputation with the City and we are trusted to get on with key tasks. One of our main achievements over recent years has been to extend the area in Chalet Wood where the bluebells show, perhaps by 30% over 15 years. We have also laid timber edgings to delineate the paths in the bluebells to reduce trampling. This winter we hope to get the City to supply us with some larger logs to make this even more effective.



You need no particular expertise or strength to join us as we can adapt work to all levels. We supply tools and gloves. We just need some basic enthusiasm and a willingness to get a bit muddy. It is a great way to keep fit, get some fresh air and meet other Wren Group members.



To join the group contact Peter Williams 0208 555 1358 or 07947 819472 or e-mail wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com

fighting for the forest 150 years on

You have probably never heard of George Peacocke, a Member of Parliament in Victorian England who represented Maldon in Essex. Yet he deserves our hearty thanks, for exactly 150 years ago this year, in 1863, he became the first politician to speak up to save Epping Forest from the developers.

Introducing a motion into the House of Commons to prevent enclosure of Crown lands up to 15 miles from London, Peacocke pointed out that apart from Victoria Park the people of East London had no other large open space near them apart from Epping Forest. The needs of this “densely packed” population were increasing as London’s population had grown by nearly half a million in the previous decade, he said. He also asked his fellow MPs how they would react if it was Richmond Park that was threatened rather than space near East London.

Though the government opposed Peacocke’s motion, his speech led to a Select Committee which reviewed enclosures in Epping Forest, and recommended that some of the forest should be kept for recreation.

The alarm had been raised because increasing areas of forest land were being fenced off, either for farmland or

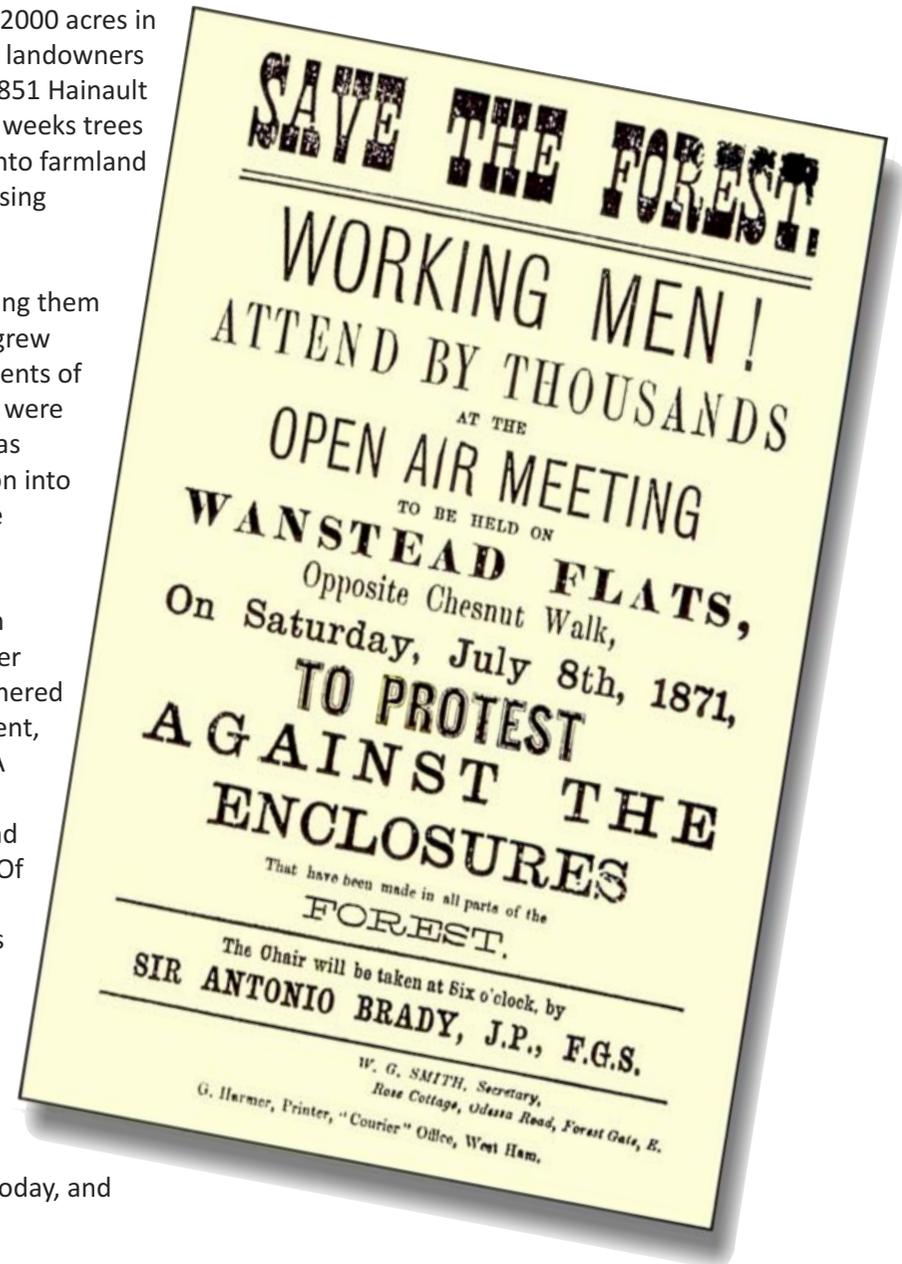
building. The government was selling the Crown’s centuries-old rights for as little as £1 an acre (the price paid by the Mornington estate for nearly 2000 acres in Wanstead, including Wanstead Flats) and landowners were making plans for development. In 1851 Hainault Forest had been abruptly enclosed; in six weeks trees were felled and a large area was turned into farmland (and subsequently of course became housing estates).

This brutal action shocked many, awakening them to the threat of development as London grew rapidly. It became clear that the governments of the day, far from protecting open spaces, were interested only in making as much profit as possible from the Crown lands. Conversion into productive farmland or housing therefore seemed to them a good option.

Epping Forest was only one of many open spaces threatened in these years, and after 1863 the campaign to save the forest gathered strength both inside and outside parliament, becoming part of a national movement. A number of its leaders went on to found mainstream organisations to preserve land and buildings such as the National Trust. Of course, the campaign for Epping Forest ended in victory 15 years after Peacocke’s speech, with the passing of the Epping Forest Act, but only after many hard-fought battles.

So we should remember with gratitude George Peacocke and his allies, who fought for the forest we now enjoy today, and ensure that we keep their spirit alive.

Article by Mark Gorman



Above - original flyer highlighting the fight later on in the campaign

don't forget

It's that time of year again to keep an eye out for our feathered friends.

Provide fresh clean water every day.

Give kitchen scraps like cheese, cooked potato and bread.

Clear up uneaten food at the end of the day as it could attract rats.

Avoid giving salted nuts and only give peanuts from a good supplier.

Clean feeding areas regularly to prevent any disease.



don't miss

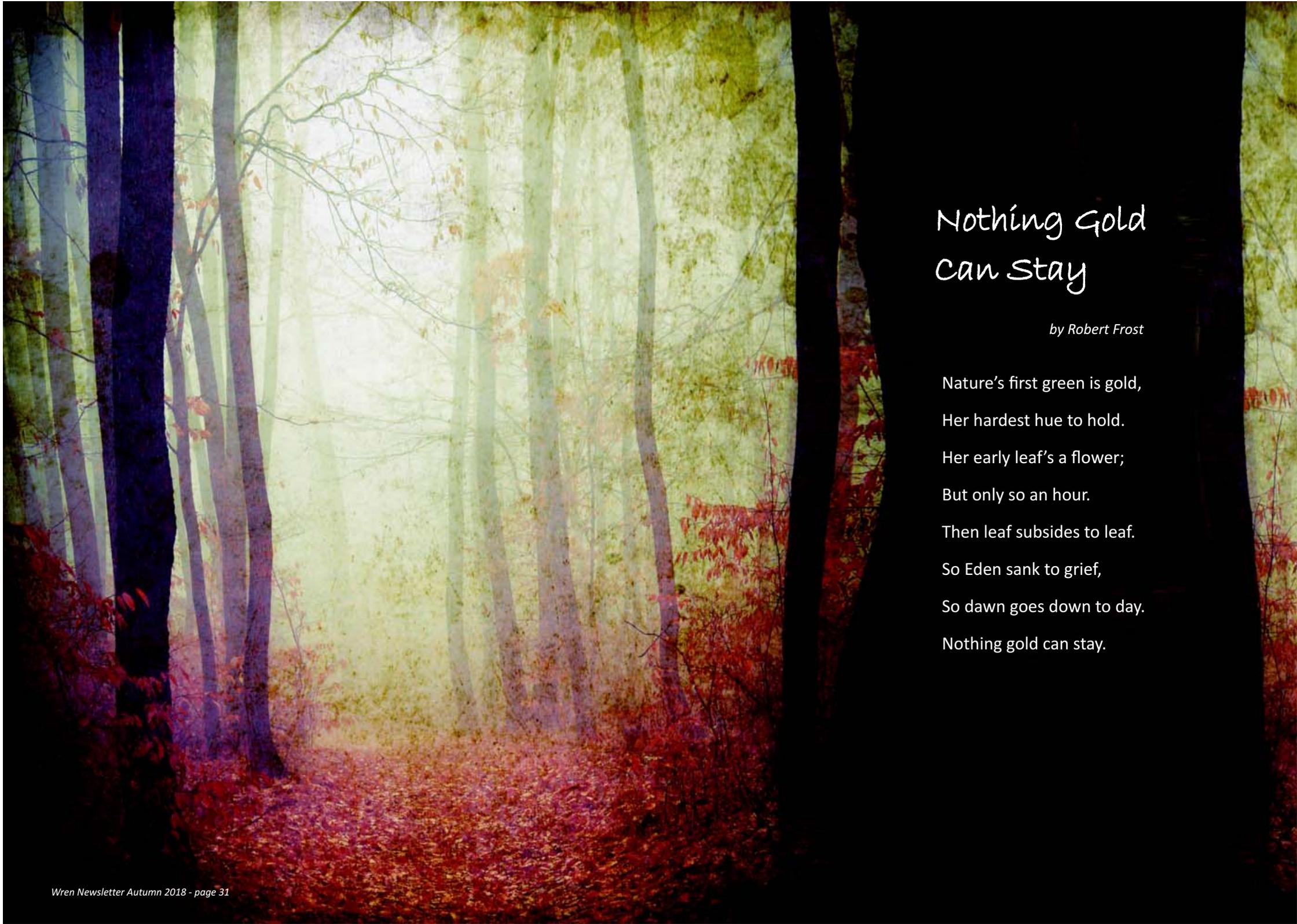
Mon 22nd Oct - Walk at Shoeburyness led by Jackie Morrison. Enjoy sea air and views and areas conserved both for their special natural habitat and history. About five miles mostly on easy flat paths.

Meet Barking station at 10.00 just inside the mainline ticket barrier to catch the 10.18 C2C train that arrives Shoeburyness 11.07.

If you are over 65 you can buy a Senior Rover ticket for £6 return and other tickets with discounts at Barking mainline ticket office. This is just the other side of the ticket barrier. Check out the C2C website for details. There is a nice cafe there for coffee and sandwich purchase if you are arriving early. There will also be stops for toilets and a cafe on the walk or bring your own food.

Please confirm if you are coming by texting Jackie on 07488911846 so I can advise you of any alteration or cancellations in case of bad weather.





Nothing Gold Can Stay

by Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

and finally

Autumn is the time when the fruiting bodies of many fungi appear. They are sensitive to changes in temperature and rainfall and records indicate that they may be appearing earlier or later than in previous years. Ones to look out for include the Fly Agaric, Brown Birch Boletus, Puff Balls and the Stink Horn but of course there are many others too!

Some species of tree are noted for their vivid coloured leaves in the autumn. These include varieties of Cherries and Maples which

often have red leaves as does the Hawthorn. Birch, Poplars and Hornbeam fade to various shades of yellow and leaves Beech become a glorious deep gold before turning brown. The leaves of our native Oaks turn a russet brown. Brown shrivelled leaves may remain on the twigs of young Oaks, Beeches or Hornbeams throughout the winter and act as a leafy frost resistant overcoat, keeping the tender twigs a little warmer!

Tricia Moxey



*Parasol Mushroom
by Tony Morrison*

now & then

Were you right ?

Wanstead Flats Bandstand around 1914 and how it looks today but not as you may think the bandstand adjacent to Angel Pond. This is the bandstand at the Wanstead Flats 'triangle' at Manor Park, erected by East Ham Corporation. I framed the recent picture by the position of the London Plane trees - see how they have grown in more than 100 years.

The site of the bandstand can be seen defined by a copse of trees behind the Epping Forest sign. More recently the site was occupied by an underground bunker, now buried.



events diary

Thurs 18th Oct - 10am-12noon. Meet by the Temple, Wanstead Park, bottom of Warren Drive entrance to park. Leader Peter Williams 07716 034 164 or 8555 1358. All tools and gloves provided but come dressed for mud in case.

Sun 21st Oct - Wren Group Mini Bio Blitz. 10am - 1pm approx. East Ham nature reserve, St Mary's churchyard, Norman Road, East Ham, E6. Park on street. Leader Penny Evans / Tim Harris

Mon 22nd Oct - Mon 22nd Oct - Walk at Shoeburyness led by Jackie Morrison. Enjoy sea air and views and areas conserved both for their special natural habitat and history. About five miles mostly on easy flat paths. Meet Barking station at 10.00 just inside the mainline ticket barrier to catch the 10.18 C2C train that arrives Shoeburyness 11.07.

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Please confirm if you are coming by texting Jackie on 07488911846 so I can advise you of any alteration or cancellations in case of bad weather.

Thurs 25th Oct - 10am-12noon. Meet by the Temple, Wanstead Park, bottom of Warren Drive entrance to park. Leader Peter Williams 07716 034 164 or 8555 1358. All tools and gloves provided but come dressed for mud in case.

Sun 28th Oct - Fungus walk with Tricia Moxey 11am meet at corner of Bush Wood and Bush Road - do not park in Quaker Meeting House car park.

Thurs 1st Nov - 10am-12noon. Meet by the Temple, Wanstead Park, bottom of Warren Drive entrance to park. Leader Peter Williams 07716 034 164 or 8555 1358. All tools and gloves provided but come dressed for mud in case.

Sat 3rd Nov - Nature Club meeting. Mary Holden to do nature club meeting for youngsters at 11am at Temple. £3.50 going to Friends of Wanstead Parkland.

Sun 4th Nov - 10am-12.30pm then first Sunday of each month. Meet by the Temple, Wanstead Park, bottom of Warren Drive entrance to park We will start work on Chalet Wood, the bluebell wood, to get ready for next year's amazing display.

Thurs 8th Nov - Practical Work meet. Meet by the Temple, Wanstead Park, bottom of Warren Drive entrance to park. Leader Peter Williams 07716 034 164 or 8555 1358. All tools and gloves provided but come dressed for mud in case.

Sun 11th Nov - Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) – Tim Harris to lead. Meet at 10am by Tea Hut, Wanstead Park.

Thurs 15th Nov - Practical Work meet. Meet by the Temple, Wanstead Park, bottom of Warren Drive entrance to park. Leader Peter Williams 07716 034 164 or 8555 1358. All tools and gloves provided but come dressed for mud in case.

Sat 17th Nov - Lichen walk (TBC). Look out for details.

Thurs 22nd Nov - Practical Work meet. Meet by the Temple, Wanstead Park, bottom of Warren Drive entrance to park. Leader Peter Williams 07716 034 164 or 8555 1358. All tools and gloves provided but come dressed for mud in case.

Thurs 29th Nov - Practical Work meet. Meet by the Temple, Wanstead Park, bottom of Warren Drive entrance to park. Leader Peter Williams 07716 034 164 or 8555 1358. All tools and gloves provided but come dressed for mud in case.

links



Links

Got any links to go on this page? Get in touch
wreeditor@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/>