



# Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

*Adela reamurella (female)*  
Picture by Rose Stephens

## SUMMER 2015

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



# a word from the chair

Hopefully you'll be reading this in time to participate in our bio-blitz on the weekend of 26-28 June. The aim of this latter-day Domesday Book of the natural world is to celebrate the nature on our doorstep.

## no trees were harmed .....

Welcome to the summer Wren newsletter. This is an online newsletter so we can make it as long as we like and have as many pictures as we want without a single tree being harmed. We can also afford to go 'off-piste' now and then to embrace interests on the periphery of the group's traditional subject of wildlife, such as walks, places to visit and local history etc. By doing this I hope that there will be a little something of interest to everyone. I also hope that we might get a wider audience and more people interested in what we do.

In this tiny corner of London between Forest Gate, Leytonstone and Wanstead we have an amazing diversity of birds, butterflies, wildflowers, moths and beetles. We shouldn't be shy about it: we should be shouting it from the rooftops. And if you don't believe me, just take a look at the photos in this newsletter, from Rose Stephens, Nick Croft, Kathy Hartnett and others.

Photography is a great way of bringing nature to people, especially young people. And I hope this is reflected in a good entry for the photographic competition being organised by the Friends of Wanstead Parklands.

Much has been written about the disengagement of children from the natural world. Given that there is so much to look at in our area, wouldn't it be great if local schools used this free,

ever-enlightening resource far more as an educational vehicle? If you know a teacher, why not have a word with them about getting them into Wanstead Park or Wanstead Flats. And if you are a teacher, how about having a word with your head teacher?

All the best Tim Harris  
Chair of the Wren Group



The Friends of Wanstead Parklands photo exhibition is part of the 2015 Wanstead Park Festival and will be on display early July in The temple, Wanstead Park. More information can be found at; <http://www.wansteadpark.org.uk/>

However, this is your newsletter and will not survive without your support so if you have any news, views or stories please send them in. Similarly, if you would like to see any changes in the newsletter either in the way it looks or the content please get in touch with me at [wreneditor@talktalk.net](mailto:wreneditor@talktalk.net)

Members often ask me for previous newsletters - these can now be found on the wren website at <http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/about-us/newsletter/>



# *the wonderful nature of flowers*

*Article by Tricia Moxey*

We enjoy seeing the bright colours of flowers throughout the summer, whether they are growing in the wild, in gardens or even wrapped in cellophane as a gift! We may be able to name a number of more common ones, but correctly naming some of the less well-known ones can be a little harder.

Luckily there are a number of beautifully illustrated guide books and photographs on websites to help you, but in reality checking out the correct identity often requires comparisons with more than one illustration and description - and please discuss your finds with like-minded folk too! It can be a challenge to do so, but getting the name right is very satisfying! We should try to learn one new fact per day so why not learn how to recognise a new plant each day?

*Common Poppy, Valentines Park, by Tony Morrison*

There are about 2,500 native species of flowering plants in the UK and a great many introduced ones which have escaped from gardens, so that means that there is a good selection to choose from! There are well over 500 different plant families from around the world and one way to become more familiar with some of them is to visit gardens where there are specific collections. Of course, Kew Gardens is first on the list, but the RHS Gardens are good too as are many of the wonderful gardens lovingly tended by enthusiasts all over the country.

species are usually confined to the coast! However, it is at the local level that this information can be of increasing value and help monitor detailed changes in the vegetation of streets, parks, gardens, woods, river banks, built structures, in fact anywhere plants can flourish.

Grigson's, *The Englishman's Flora*, and my own copy is much battered through frequent use. Today of course, the Latin names are standardised and there are still a few folk who can recall the regional variations in names of wild flowers.

Plantlife, a charity which encourages a greater appreciation of wildflowers, has been running an online vote for the favourite flower in the different parts of the UK and the result has just been announced with England voting for Bluebell; Wales - Primrose; Scotland - Primrose; and Northern Ireland - also Primrose.



Knowing where native plants can be found is an important mechanism for looking at their distribution in relation to the underlying geological formation, topography as well as the influence of climate. This can be shown at a national level which paints the broad picture - alpine plants will obviously be restricted to mountains and coastal

Centuries ago, Herbalists made lists of useful plants and where they grew. The Spiny Rest Harrow on Woodford Green was first noted there by Richard Warner who recorded this and other plants he had found in his *Plantarum Woodfordiensis* published in 1771. There are earlier plant lists which survive, such as one for Tottenham from a century earlier (1638), which names nearly 300 plants in what was then a rural area of north London! They learnt to recognise a good many plants and no doubt had their own names for them. Such historic and regional common names for wild flowers have been compiled in a wonderful reference book, Geoffrey

*Spotting something new and unrecorded is always a possibility and conversely the demise of the last remaining specimen is of considerable concern.*

In 2007, Plantlife announced the establishment of 150 Important Plant Areas (IPAs) across the UK, landscape areas nominated for their internationally important wild plant populations. Epping Forest is included in this list on account of the number of special habitats and rare plants, especially those found in its ponds and heathland locations.

Further details on the website: [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk)



We appreciate that the Wanstead area is a superb location for many different bird species. All of them will use plants in different ways; some will eat the seeds produced by the various 'weedy' species such as the docks, dandelions, vetches or chickweed. A great many others will eat the invertebrates found on the diverse range of plants or in the soil and the predators such as Kestrels will eat voles, which of course eat plant material.

Varied vegetation provides shelter nest sites and good foraging opportunities too. Linking the

distribution of successful nest sites with the nature of the surrounding vegetation will be a vital step in the process of planning any future management of this outstanding ornithological site.

It is important to keep looking at well-recorded sites to check that cherished plants are still there and to monitor the encroachment of others such as Cow Parsley, Alexanders, Nettles, Danish Scurvy Grass, Green Alkanet or Crow Garlic. Spotting something new and unrecorded is always a possibility and conversely the demise of the last remaining specimen is of considerable concern. An excellent starting point to check if a plant has been recorded in the local area is Paul Ferris's wonderful website: [www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk](http://www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk). He has recorded 780 higher plants in the area – how many of these can you recognise?



Wild flowers are all around us and of course for

some a visit to a spectacular wildflower site is a must to see various orchids or other rarities! But the more commonplace ones can still be amazing, even the smallest ones have incredible details when viewed through a lens. It is important that we encourage others to share in the delights of plant spotting, challenging friends and family members to see who can find the greatest number in their own gardens, allotment, park or other habitat. A lawn can have more than 25 species growing in it. Is yours a grassy monoculture or a wildflower meadow? A bit of friendly rivalry does no harm, and of course different plants provide food for many different creatures too!

Article by Tricia Moxey



*Some of my essential identification books are:*

*Blamey, Marjorie. (2005) Marjorie Blamey's Wild Flowers by Colour. A & C Black.*

*Keble Martin, W. (1965) The Concise British Flora in Colour. Ebury Press and Michael Joseph.*

*Stace, Clive. (1991) New Flora of the British Isles. CUP*

*Streeter, David. (2009) Collins Flower Guide. The Most Complete Guide to the Flowers of Britain and Ireland. Collins.*

# Wanstead nature club

*Why not come along with your child to have fun with others learning about our local nature – birds, plants, trees, butterflies, pondlife and insects etc.*

*The group meet at the changing rooms, Harrow Rd, Wanstead Flats, E11 3QD every month. Sessions are planned for July 11th, Aug 15th and Sept 12th.*

*The group is run by Wren committee member Gill James and volunteers. Only £1.50 a session. To find out more about the group or to register contact [gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)*



## March: Foxes and frogspawn

We often see foxes in our gardens and roads so we found out a few amazing facts about them and drew some nice pictures.



Three fox facts: Did you know that a fox can run at 30 mph? And its hearing is so good it can hear a watch ticking at 40 metres away? And foxes use 28 different types of calls to communicate with each other?



Then we examined some fresh frogspawn. It was very gooey like soft jelly and had little black spots like eyes. We drew it. Will it look the same when we come back next month? We went to see it in the Cat and Dog Pond and we saw a heron flying away. Maybe it had been eating the frogspawn. There were lots of dead frogs lying about which maybe were worn out after laying all that frogspawn.

We looked at a pretty newt with an orange tummy and made drawings and models of it. Then it went back in its pond in Gill's garden...

## April: Flower bombs and more frogspawn

In April the flowers in the little wood near Harrow Road are a riot of blue and white comfrey and green alkanet. These are flowers which come out in early spring before the leaves on the trees emerge and make the ground under the trees too dark and shady for flowers.

We took apart some tulip flowers to find out what the bees are doing when they visit flowers. We found where the pollen is which the bees collect and we found next year's seeds at the bottom of the flower which the bees pollinate.



Then we went and threw some flower bombs! These are clay pots which are full of wildflower seeds. You throw the pot, it breaks and the seeds scatter, and the pot dissolves in the rain later. We

did a map of where we threw them so we can go and look in the summer and see if anything grew.

We had another look at the mass of frogspawn wriggling madly in the Cat and Dog Pond. The jelly we saw in March has collapsed and the baby frogs now have bodies, heads, tails and gills to breathe through, but no arms or legs yet. We will look again in May to see what they do next!



## May: Eggs, nests and sparrow food - and something weird....

We had a good look at an old sparrow's nest which was made of grass twisted round and round and we listened to the chirpy sparrow song - cheep cheep! The parent sparrows can eat seeds, but

their babies are too little for this and need to eat insects. We saw lots of sparrows hunting in the long grass for caterpillars and insects and flying back to their nests in the hedges and buildings nearby. So we went on an insect hunt with a big net and caught lots of tasty bugs.



We also played the sparrowhawk game. Sparrowhawks hunt and eat small birds like sparrows. We took turns being the sparrowhawk and the rest of us were trees with sparrows in them and we had to throw the beanbag sparrow back and forth and hope the sparrowhawk did not catch us!

We looked at how our tadpoles were doing after two months in the Cat and Dog Pond. They now have little back legs and long tails. The reeds are now very high.

And we found something very strange in the pond - a little tube made of tiny sticks stuck together with



a hole in the middle. Inside was a little insect called a caddis fly, which walks around with its own portable home-made house stuck together with silk like spiders make.

Report by Gill James



## Watch out for .....

*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.*



# bug life

*Article and pictures by Rose Stephens*

Wren member Rose Stephens is a self-taught naturalist and artist who was born in Newham and still lives there - in Forest Gate, close to Wanstead Flats.

Rose has built up a collection of artwork using various mediums. Through her love of all things to do with nature and her passion for art, she manages to produce work that is original and different from her contemporaries. Her love of nature shines through in her work.

In the past Rose has used photographs as a basis for her work - painting from pictures taken in the area. More recently, she has started to express her fondness of all things natural solely in the media of photography.

Rose has an extraordinary eye for seeing the detail in the nature around her. This she has recently used to her advantage by taking up 'macro' or close-up photography.

Nowadays Rose spends much of her time seeking out invertebrates in Manor Park Cemetery, Wanstead Park and Wanstead Flats. In many cases her searches have produced species that are scarce, or even previously unknown in our area. In Rose's own words:

I am not really good at the technical side of a camera. I just do a few adjustments sometimes and see what happens. The camera I use is a Panasonic FZ200 and also a compact camera Panasonic TZ60. I have bought a Raynox Macro attachment lens for the Panasonic which you can buy on Amazon for around £40.00. That brings things a lot closer and magnifies things that the normal camera lens can't.

When taking pictures each situation is different. Sometimes I use the normal lens and stand well back and take the photo from a distance, other times I use the magnifying lens and then there may be times when I have to get in awkward places and so I use the compact camera. I normally weigh up a

situation and think of the best way to tackle it - there are no rules really.

If I can get close to an insect then I will but you have to be patient and calm and not make sudden movements. Then I think about the best angle to get, thinking about what part of the insect is best for identification. Sometimes I use flash, but prefer not to - some insects don't mind; others don't like it.

*Like everything I do, I teach myself, by normally just making lots and lots of mistakes until I get it right. Then after that it is just down to practise.*



I think the main thing is you have to love what you are taking photos of when it comes to nature. If you want a technical photo then that's what you will get. If you have an understanding of what you want to photograph then you're much more likely to capture the feel or character of the subject.

The following are pictures and observations made by Rose from the spring.

### *Ballus chalybeius* (Covering picture)

This is a member of the Salticidae family of jumping spiders. It is one I haven't seen before but is apparently widespread in the South-east. I saw this one in Manor Park Cemetery on top of a gravestone, which is

where I find quite a few jumping spiders. They prefer a woodland habitat, particularly with Oak. With their beautiful colours and markings these really are such characters.

### *Myathropa florea*

I spotted a mating pair of these hoverflies in Manor Park Cemetery right next to my foot. I bent down to investigate and then another male zoomed in and landed on top. There was a great explosion of these hoverflies in April-May in the cemetery. These have a few common names like Bat Fly or Skull Fly as the thorax has a pattern similar to a skull or like a batman.



## *Mintho rufiventris*

I spotted this little fly, which is around 7-9mm in length. This little fellow is quite rare, mainly found in the South-east and East Anglia. It's interesting as its host is *Orthopygia glaucinalis* which is normally associated with haystacks and thatch. I found this one in Manor Park Cemetery on 28 May, where it had settled on a gravestone.



## *Merodon equestris*

This is a bumble bee mimic which has a variety of forms. I was struck by its likeness to a Tawny Mining Bee. I spotted this on Wanstead Flats, near Alexandra Lake. It is believed to have been introduced to Britain in the 19th century through the import of Daffodil bulbs, which is generally where their larvae are found.



## Tawny Mining Bee (*Andrena fulva*)

When I first spotted one of these females I was struck by how beautiful it was, especially the brightly coloured golden orange hairs. I saw this one on Wanstead Flats; there is quite a large population of these around Alexandra Lake. If you sit by the lake edge on a warm spring day you may see them going in or out of their nests. Look for the tiny holes made in the ground or in the side of the walls of the bank. *Andrena* species bees are soil-nesting insects;



very few nest communally, although looking around Alexandra Lake it looks more like a colony of various *Andrena* species bees. They carefully make a nest with chambers. There they they collect pollen and mix it with nectar and make a paste on which they lay a single egg, then they leave the nest and seal the entrance, which moves us on to the next bee...



## *Nomada lathburiana*

When I first saw one of these nomad bees I thought how wasp-like it looked. This species of bee mainly targets the *Andrena* species bees. They lay their egg on the cell wall of the unsuspecting *Andrena* bee and when the egg hatches it eats the larvae and the supply of pollen and nectar left by the female *Andrena* bee for her young. This one I found on a gravestone in Manor Park Cemetery. I noticed straight away it was different from the usual *Nomada flava* or *Goodeniana* that I see. It had such bright red hair on the thorax. It's not surprising that I saw this particular nomad bee is there as its host is *Andrena cineraria* (Grey-haired Mining Bee). The cemetery has a great many of these very striking and beautiful bees. I saw this one on 30 April.

## *Andrena fulvago*

This is a small bee very distinguished by its orange hind legs and orange hairs on the tip of the abdomen. I spotted this in Manor Park Cemetery. It's the only one I have seen, and it isn't one of the more common species. I spotted this one on 5 May.



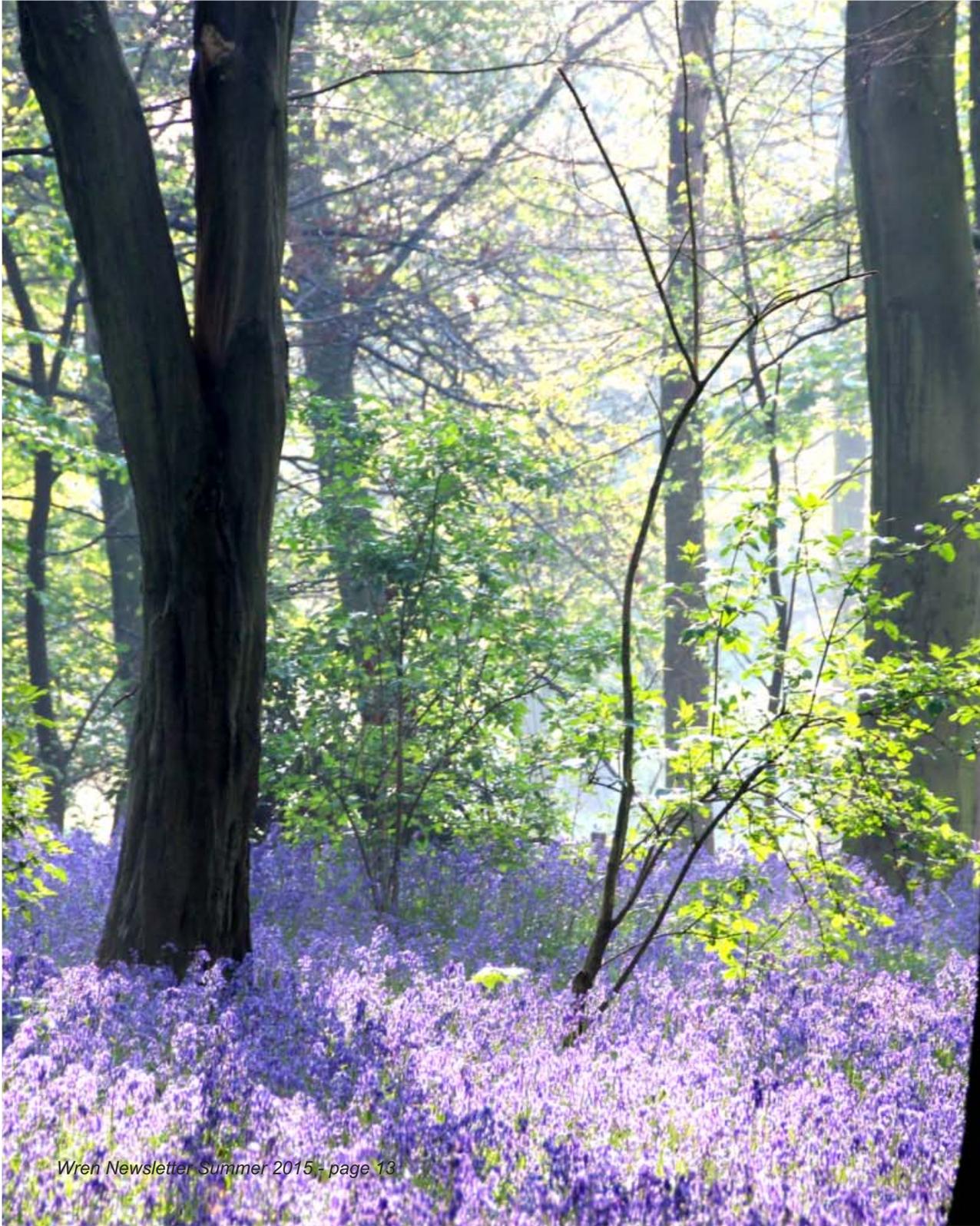
**The Wren Group is trying to get a bee expert to visit the area to provide some identification tuition, the aim being to then conduct regular survey work of these fascinating – and vitally important – insects. Please get in touch if you'd like to get involved in bee survey work, or just find out some more about them.**

## Wasp Beetle - *Clytus arietis* (Main Picture)

I first spotted one of these longhorn beetles on an oak tree in Manor Park Cemetery but have since seen them on Wanstead Flats. As the name suggests, it does look very wasp-like and very attractive. These are found mainly in woodland areas and this is mainly where I have seen them. Plantation Wood on Wanstead Flats is a good place to see these and lots of other invertebrates. Oak trees are a great place to start if you want to find insects!



*Wasp Beetle (Clytus arietis)*



## The Bluebell Woods

Hush! ...

The heart slows down, the mind is cast aside.

Let silence, only silence be your guide

Through the amethyst torches of this temple:

The bluebell woods! So delicate, so gentle!

Hands joined together in sisterly compassion,

They share tales and dew and a procession

Of petals and almighty crowns of trees.

Inside these woods, your greatness cannot cease.

Perfume fills the air, perfume soft and white.

It's the primordial smell, flowing from light.

An endless floral sea – below and above...

The bluebell woods: Spring's promise of love.

Embroidered in grace, the small bells chime

A healing melody from once upon a time.

The choir of leaves echoes; your spirit is in trance.

Inside the bluebell woods, all you can do is dance.

*By Nadia Norley*

*Picture - Bluebell Wood, Wanstead Park, by Tony Morrison*

# spring bird report

A sublime spring ..... come sun, wind and rain the Wanstead Birders were out there, and all things considered a pretty good spring was had by all.

*Report and pics by Nick Croft*



## March

It started pretty well, but how we forget that things can go a bit flat. And they did. Of my birds to watch out for only Rook and, of course, Wheatear came through. A rush of four separate one-day Stonechats gave us hope of some early migrant movers, backed up by singing Chiffchaff (at last) also on the 7th. Stuart Fisher then pitched in with the first Red Kite and a jaffa of a Mandarin before a frenzied five days brought us Short-eared Owl, Rook, Sand Martin and Wheatear.



Blue Tit fledgeling

### Some highlights

- Snaresbrook Court appearances again for the Firecrest
- Four Stonechat days and four birds (2 males)
- Mandarin and Red Kite on the 9th (another Kite on the 19th)
- Woodcock sightings in the SSSI



Song Thrush

- 2 Sand Martins by the end of the month
- A Water Rail returns to the Shoulder of Mutton
- Rooks on several dates
- A good month for Peregrine sightings
- Short-eared Owl poser
- Oh, and a rather smart five-day male Wheatear

With ducks down and gulls going, the only hint of winter was the weather and a few tardy thrushes in the form of Redwings and Fieldfares lingering to the end of the month. Coming the other way were Stonechats, followed by Chaffinches then an increase in Meadow Pipit movement into April. The Skylarks started setting about territories, to be joined by three Meadow Pipts singing from the brooms. By the end of the month Blackcaps had arrived, but not in the numbers that Chiffchaffs had reached by then - the bird chorus has gone up a notch or two. But then it was April: Where to start? I have said that April is the second best month of the year; I may have to revise that statement.

## April

96 species (excluding Stu's Mandarin and Brambling and Nick Tanner's probable Great Northern Diver), 29 new for the year (including those mentioned above), blockers unblocked, records broken, another pair of boots destroyed - the month had everything!

- Swallow (1-Apr)
- Shelduck (3-Apr): with a record flock of 8 doing the rounds by the end of the month
- Hooded Crow (4-Apr): the first since 1962/63
- Diver sp (probably Great Northern Diver) (4-Apr): would be a first for the area
- Willow Warbler (5-Apr)
- Brambling (Snaresbrook) (8-Apr): the latest ever record
- Golden Plover (9-Apr)



Wheatear



- Green Sandpiper (9-Apr): a dizzying 7 birds (including a flock of 4) more than the last few years combined
- Ring Ouzel (10-Apr):
- Yellow Wagtail (10-Apr)
- Sedge Warbler (13-Apr): 2 birds
- Grasshopper Warbler (14-Apr): the first singing spring record I am aware of
- Red-legged Partridge (14-Apr): first since 2006 (may now be in Hyde Park via Walthamstow)
- Common Whitethroat (14-Apr)
- Tree Pipit (14-Apr): unusually 3 together and unusually in the Old Sewage Works
- Common Redstart (14-Apr): only 2 birds this spring
- Yellowhammer (15-Apr)
- Whinchat (16-Apr): earliest spring record and a singing male

- House Martin (17-Apr)
- Swift (18-Apr): earliest spring record and 5 birds by the end of the month
- Lesser Whitethroat (20-Apr): up to 10 singing birds by the month's end
- Garden Warbler (Leyton Flats) (21-Apr): ours was back on site a few days later
- Reed Warbler (24-Apr)
- Wood Warbler (25-Apr): first singing bird for many a year
- Common Sandpiper (25-Apr)
- Spotted Flycatcher (26-Apr)
- Ringed Plover (26-Apr): first sightings of 3 birds over the fairground after calling birds previously
- Redshank (27-Apr): another of Barry Bishop's contributions (he also found the partridge)
- Hobby (28-Apr)



Add to that a record count of Shoveler (62) in the park, well over 400 Meadow Pipits moving through on their northern migration, a Short-eared Owl, several Red Kites, a Firecrest holding on at the



beginning of the month at Snaresbrook, and a (small) hat-full of Rook sightings - all in all a pretty damn good month, and that's not even including a modest number of Wheatears.

## May

It was always going to be a slight anti-climax after a record-mullering April, but May was a tad rubbish. Since virtually everything came via the month just gone, we would have at least expected some of our favourites to have lingered into May. Alas no! No Wheatear at all and only one female Whinchat to keep us happy until August.



## Impressive yes?

Not only did all our favourite birds evaporate, all the interesting warblers stopped singing, which is good as it means they were getting down to business. The Garden Warbler was seen carrying nesting material and by the end of the month Common Whitethroats were fledging. The Willow Warbler was still singing, but not as much as before, though we don't know whether that is good or bad in his case, but the Reed Warbler finally got his act together – and the reeds at the Shoulder of Mutton to his liking - and promptly pulled.

Swallows kept on coming through beyond the end of the month, our House Martins are a full complement of between 8–10 birds, and a few Sand Martins popped in and out again. Swift numbers rose, mostly on the grottier days, of which there were plenty.

Four Gadwall pretended that they were interested in settling down, but it was a lie and they had all gone by the month's end (though I suppose they could be on the Ornamental Waters if someone could be resolute enough to go and check!). For only the second time in recent years a six-raptor day was had on 17th: 3 Red Kites, 7-8 Common Buzzards, 2 Hobbies, a Peregrine Falcon, a Kestrel, and 2 Sparrowhawks. One of the better days of the month, it also featured nearly 40 Swallows, 8 House Martins and a few Sand Martins moving north.



## ... and so to the highlights:

- James Heal contributes 2 Common Terns (the only ones so far!) over Alex on the 17th
- The only Whinchat, a female in the Old Sewage Works (only my second ever there) on the 16th
- Cuckoo slips on to the list on the 27th
- Jono and I play raptor top trumps: a six-species special on the 17th
- Gary Hewitt wins bird of the month with his flyover Great White Egret on the 24th - while out jogging
- Stu gets a wayward Lapwing on the 14th

But August feels like an awful long way away...



*Article and pics  
by Nick Croft*

Follow Nick on his excellent blog at <http://wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk>

# bluebell

Almost half the global population of these lovely wild flowers can be found in this country, so there are plenty of places to soak up their beauty and scent. What's more, their presence often indicates you're walking through ancient woodland. One great show locally is in Chalet Wood in Wanstead Park.

But this show didn't happen without a little bit of help. The Wren Group has been working on this wood for years to improve this show. Earlier in December the group got together to clear the area of brambles and line pathways with timber logs to give our little floral friends a chance to bloom again in the spring. From all of us couch potatoes - a big thank you to everyone who helped our little floral friends put on such a great show this year.



There is a superstition that anyone who walks in a ring of bluebells would be subject to 'fairy enchantment'. Also that bluebells rang to summon fairies. However it would be extremely unlucky for a human to hear a bluebell! On a more positive note, some believed that if you wore a wreath made of these flowers you could only speak the truth.

Or optimistically, if you could turn one of the flowers inside out without any break or tear, you would win the heart of the one you love!

To join the group that carry out practical works such as that in Chalet Wood contact Peter Williams 0208 555 1358 or e-mail [wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com](mailto:wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com)



# alive with butterflies



Marsh Fritillary is a butterfly I had never managed to see. There are no colonies near East London; indeed, the nearest reliable ones are a long way west of here. But on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June an opportunity arose to get out of town with my camera – so I headed off bright and early to Cotley Hill in Wiltshire, an area of chalk downland owned by the Ministry of Defence but managed for butterflies. Timing is crucial with butterflies: the adult stage does not last long, and the weather has to be right - rain or strong winds would have wrecked the project. I arrived at Heytesbury, at the bottom of the hill, before 10 but it was already warm although there was a slight breeze, and the sun was shining strongly. Any fears I had that I might struggle to find my quarry were quickly dispelled and within 10 minutes I'd seen at least a dozen of the fritillaries, though they weren't always particularly obliging when they saw me approaching camera in hand.

For anyone who hasn't been – and this was my first visit - Cotley Hill comes highly recommended. The wildflowers were gorgeous and the chalk escarpment was liberally carpeted with bright yellow Bird's-foot Trefoil. On the lower slopes were plentiful Common Spotted Orchids. And the birdsong was like a throwback to a long-gone era. Corn Buntings jangled, Yellowhammers did their "little bit of bread and no cheeeeeeese" thing, and Linnets, Willow Warblers, Lesser Whitethroats and Skylarks made up the rest of the avian choir.

There must have been at least 250 fritillaries in the few hectares I wandered through. And vying for my attention were Adonis, Small and Common Blues, Brown Argus, Green Hairstreak, Large Skippers and both Grizzled and Dingy Skippers. Touches of scarlet were added by Six-spot and Five-spot Burnets, tiny green Forester moths crawled over hawkweed and there were Mother Shipton moths as well. I spent four hours at Cotley, but would happily have camped out for four days. The only sobering thought after such a joyous session is that sights like this would once have been common in many more places. How much longer before even Salisbury Plain becomes denuded of so much that is beautiful?



Report and pics by Tim Harris



# moth and butterfly report

Our regular spring butterflies duly appeared, though generally in small numbers, perhaps a reflection of cool and often windy conditions. On those few-and-far-between warm, sunny, windless days the Long Wood area and the Old Sewage Works stood out as the best.



Mother Shipton

One notable feature of spring was the continued growth in numbers of the Green Hairstreak population on Wanstead Flats, including 30-plus seen around an oak in Long Wood by Kathy Hartnett in late May. Then, on 6 June the Painted Lady influx reached us, with several of these beautiful butterflies seen at the eastern end of Wanstead Flats. As summer moves on, let's hope for more records of Ringlet (following on from the last two years) and Brown Argus, which has been seen at three different locations in recent years but seems incredibly



Common Blue - female

thinly spread. And maybe there'll be a Marbled White or Clouded Yellow to celebrate?

For moths, it has been an unusual spring, with only small numbers reported in local light-traps until mid-June, although the variety did not disappoint. In addition to my garden actinic trap, on some nights I also ran a mercury vapour trap, courtesy of Tom Casey, who kindly lent it me. Between mid-March and mid-June these traps had attracted some 140 species, notably a Swallow Prominent, whose caterpillars eat willows, poplars and aspens, and which had not previously been recorded in



Holly Blue Butterfly

our area (7 May); the heathland-loving Latticed Heath on 13 May; Broom-tip, one of our local specialities, on several dates; and a Bordered Straw on 5 June. The last is a migrant from the Mediterranean region and turned up as part of a mini-influx in southern England. How remarkable that a moth that has travelled all that way should turn up in a London back garden. The following weekend, with warm days and overcast nights, proved to be excellent for moths with more than 50 species visiting my garden. Hawkmoths were in short supply, however. I recorded just three Small Elephant Hawkmoths while Paul Ferris attracted a Lime Hawkmoth to his light-trap.

Meanwhile, in our local wooded areas and on the grassland of Wanstead Flats, there were good numbers of several species of longhorn moth, most spectacularly



Burnet Companion

including Yellow-barred Longhorn with its incredibly long antennae – in the case of the males, four times the length of its body! Hundreds of grass-veneers could be seen by day on the Flats and other day flying species included Mother Shipton, Burnet Companion, Silver-Y, Cinnabar and Straw Dot.

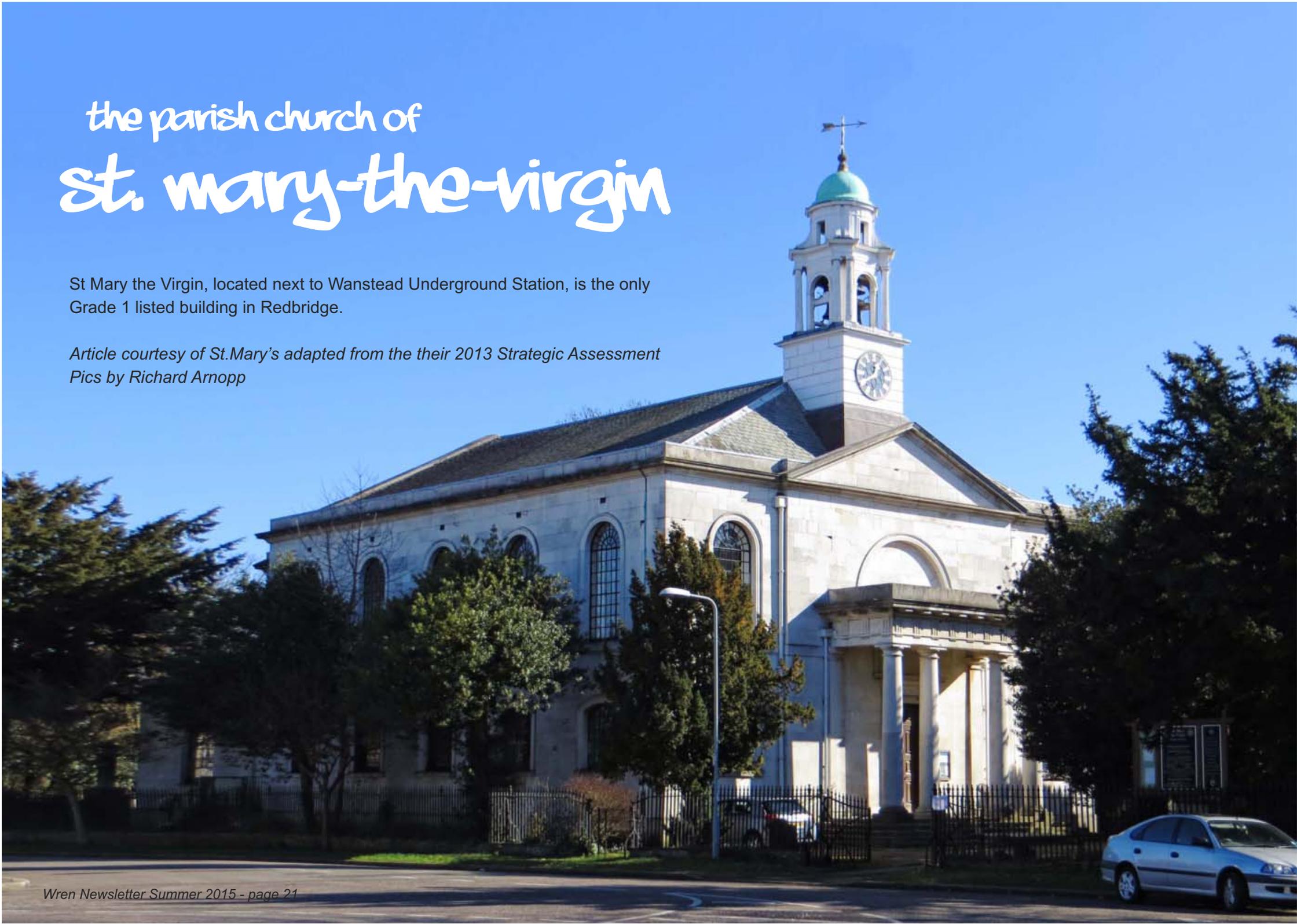
Report by Tim Harris  
Pictures by Kathy Hartnett



# the parish church of st. mary-the-virgin

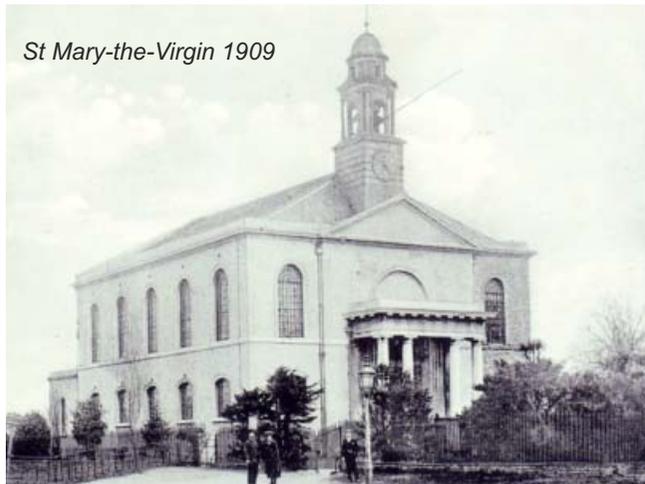
St Mary the Virgin, located next to Wanstead Underground Station, is the only Grade 1 listed building in Redbridge.

*Article courtesy of St.Mary's adapted from their 2013 Strategic Assessment  
Pics by Richard Arnopp*



St Mary's is considered to be the finest example of a small Georgian church in the Diocese. It is English Heritage Grade I listed.

The first church on the site was built probably about 1200 A.D. and was sited some 70 feet south of the present building. The first Rector known was in 1207 A.D. (see list of Rectors).



Royalty, including Queen Elizabeth I, were frequent visitors to the church, which was rebuilt in the 16th Century and enlarged early in the 18th Century. The artist J.W.M. Turner, then about 14 years old, painted a water-colour of the old church, and a copy is in the church.

The present church was built at the instigation of the Rector, Dr Samuel Glasse, very soon after his arrival in the parish (1786). The site was given by Sir James Tylney-Long, who also provided a large share of the cost of the building, some £9,000. The church was designed by the architect Thomas

Hardwick and consecrated by the Bishop of London on June 24th, 1790.



The building is of Grecian style, and is entered via a high porch with four columns. Hardwick was much influenced by Indigo Jones (St Paul, Covent Garden) and Wren (St James, Piccadilly) and by Gibb's St Martin-in-the-Fields. The seating is in high box pews, all having doors with locks - but since the abolition of pew rents, the keys have not been used. There is a gallery round three sides.

The church was young enough to escape 'modernising' by the Victorians and so remains almost exactly as built - the only major alteration being carried out at its centenary when the front two pews were modified to form inward facing stalls for the choir, who, up to that time, had been accommodated in the gallery beside the organ.

A much appreciated feature of the church is its excellent lighting, both by large, clear windows by day, and by unobtrusive electric light by night. The elegant pulpit has unusual supports for its canopy, being in the shape of two palm trees. This is a

token of the Childs family's connection with the East India Company. An interesting feature of the church is the wrought iron railing with gate, taking the place of the chancel screen, or rood screen. A similar railing forms the altar rail.

The sumptuous monument, by John Nost, on the South side of the chancel was transferred from the old church, and commemorates Sir Josiah Child, who died in 1699. Sir Josiah was a merchant banker and Governor of the East India Company. The Child monument is matched on the North side by a private pew which was probably used by members of the Tylney-Long family, Child's descendants.



The organ in the West end of the gallery was originally supplied in 1847, with 15 stops and built by Hill. It has since been twice reconstructed, first in 1923 by Spurdon-Rutt and increased to 27 stops, and finally by Robert Slater & Son in 1974 and now has 31 stops.

At the East end of the gallery are the only two stained-glass windows dating from 1790. On the North are the Arms of George III, and on the south, those of Sir James Tylney-Long, who was heir to Sir Josiah Childs' grandson.

There are two small memorials on the stairs which were transferred from the old church. The extensive vaults beneath the nave are not open to the public.

A slab on the site of the sanctuary of the old church, in the present graveyard, commemorates a former Rector of Wanstead, Dr. James Pound, a personal friend of Sir Isaac Newton. His nephew James Bradley, curate in the parish, became Astronomer Royal.

Nearby is a memorial to the Wilton family in the form of a Watcher's Box, from which watch was kept to forestall body snatchers. Joseph Wilton was a founder member of The Royal Academy, a sculptor of national repute. Restoration of the memorial was jointly funded by The Royal Academy and the Heritage of London Trust in 1992. The memorial is said to resemble the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Also can be found is the grave of Thomas Turpin, possibly an uncle of the notorious Dick.

The old, dead yew tree, standing on the highest spot, is said to be over 1,000 years old, and to have supplied material for bows for the Battle of Agincourt.

Just beyond the East end of the church, there is a monument to Vice-Admiral Robert Plampin, who had the misfortune to arrive too late for the Battle of Trafalgar.

Article courtesy of St Mary's  
Pics by Richard Arnopp



# the big interview

Recent recruit to the Wren Group Iris Newbery describes herself as having many natural history interests though “not being an expert in any”. Naturalists who have benefitted from her enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, all things natural may consider she is being too modest.

A member of Butterfly Conservation, the Dragonfly Society, the Essex Wildlife Trust, the Essex Field Club, the RSPB and the British Naturalists' Association, Iris still volunteers for the Friends of Copped Hall Trust every Sunday morning and often drives other naturalists around our area in search of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Here Iris talks to Tim Harris about a few of her experiences.



Q Tim: How did you first become interested in wildlife, Iris?

A Iris: I first became interested in natural history in about 1984, when a photographer gave a talk on photographing butterflies to the camera club I belonged to. I thought I'd like to try, and attended a workshop held by the Epping Forest Field Studies Centre. (By the way, Tricia and Paul Moxey were running the Field Studies Centre at that time.) There I was asked if I belonged to Butterfly Conservation; I'd never heard of such an organisation, but joined straight away.

The upshot of this was that Essex and Cambridgeshire members of the group were asked to form the Cambridge and Essex Branch, and I became branch organiser for 17 years.

After a few years photographing butterflies I was asked by a friend to give a talk. Rather than just showing pictures of adult butterflies I decided to buy a butterfly cage and breed Orange Tip butterflies, in order to photograph the whole life cycle. I found an egg on a Garlic Mustard plant, put the plant in a pot of water in the cage and took photos when the egg emerged as a caterpillar, then became a pupa, and finally as an adult. This I did with several other species of butterfly until I had enough images to make a varied talk. I gave this talk, and another on Epping Forest, to various organisations all over Essex for about ten years.

Q Tim: And butterflies led to other areas of natural history?

A Iris: My focus on butterflies led to a growing knowledge of wild plants and trees, since butterflies lay their eggs on so many of them. This also led on to an interest in dragonflies, as I saw a great many of these while out recording butterflies. I soon became a member of the Dragonfly Society.

As branch organiser for Butterfly Conservation I was invited to stay at the Juniper Hall Field Studies Centre, near Dorking, to help with a Butterfly Festival. There I met John Bebbington, the warden. Hearing of the trips he led to photograph butterflies and orchids in the Dordogne, Switzerland and the French Pyrenees, I subsequently went on several of these holidays. Since John is an expert on moths and took a moth trap with him on these trips, I soon became interested in these as well.

When I retired from work I joined Tricia's WEA class and became interested in all aspects of natural history. So as you see, one thing led automatically to another, but the areas that interest me most are still butterflies and dragonflies.

Q Tim: What experiences have made the greatest impression on you?

A Iris: One of the most amazing was watching the Orange Tip butterfly

change from an egg into an adult butterfly. I got goose bumps watching it emerge from the pupa. Another was photographing a Downy Emerald dragonfly through all its stages at Wake Valley Pond in Epping Forest. This came about as a member of the Dragonfly Society had recorded one flying there, but it wasn't known whether the species was breeding at the pond. The Society obtained permission to drag the pond to search for the larvae and discovered that it was, thus proving that the dragonfly was breeding there. So the following year a few members gathered at the pond to count the exuvia (the cast-off outer skins of dragonfly larvae when they emerge as flying adults). As the camera could be set up on a tripod ready for each stage, some of us managed to record the emergence of the adult dragonfly.

Q Tim: What's your favourite area for nature-watching?

A Iris: Epping Forest has to be high on my list of favourite places. I moved to Epping with my husband and our two children in 1961, and it has changed a lot since then. But it's right on our doorstep and there's so much to see.

Interview by Tim Harris



# Wren rings London

Over the year, Wren Group walkers, led by committee member Peter Aylmer, have been making their way round the Capital Ring, a 78-mile path encircling London.

So far we've completed the south London section, bringing us through wonderful places for wildlife such as Oxleas Wood and Richmond Park - and learnt a lot more about the capital as we do. Crossing the river to the West of London to Perivale and beyond.

# perivale's surprise

As brooks go, this was less remarkable than most. We'd been following the River Brent upstream, as the Wren group continued its way round the Capital Ring, past pollarded willows with a waste transfer station on the other bank – London doing its good cop, bad cop thing again – and over a road into Perivale Park, basically a big recreation ground.

With a brook. Not even the Brent itself; just a little side-stream which wandered a mile or two towards Northolt. And from it, a regular chirruping sound, which many – your writer included – might well have thought was a very brave grasshopper, this being April. But we had Wren President Richard and sharp-eared Anita in our number, and they stopped.

*“Grasshopper Warbler?”*

*“Could be ...”*

And we hung around to check, Anita making a quick recording on her phone for confirmation later. No visual siting, but good enough to post on the web for this rare summer visitor. Notwithstanding Pintail and Tufted Duck, this was our best nature spot yet. Soon, we headed along the Grand Union Canal to climb Horsenden Hill, with a magnificent panorama of Harrow and Sudbury before us.



The month before, we'd spent an enjoyable few miles river-side, first by the Thames and then joining the Brent close to its confluence at, well, Brentford, home to the afore-mentioned waterfowl. We'd finished with a chance to relax in the country park at Hanwell. Time and again, we've found that places we might have thought of as anodyne little suburbs have a character and life of their

own – and why not, plenty of people no doubt don't give the likes of Wanstead or Forest Gate a second thought.

That Horsenden Hill view was tempting, for it scoped out the next stage: up the hill into Harrow, past the famous school before a plod through north Wembley and a finish across the open ground of Fryent Country Park. And it would be May, England's precious spring time. Quite a group I might have with me, I thought. But it rained. These days, the Met Office pretty much gets the day forecast right, so one by one on the eve and morning of the walk, apologies were given.

Now the rule is, one other person turns up, I'll walk with them. And there waiting for me was Nev, who'd not had a chance to join a Capital Ring walk before. So off we went, and had a thoroughly good time. Rain wind or shine, the Ring has plenty to offer – but hurry, we'll likely have finished it in August, and the July stage takes us round the Woodberry Wetlands, a London Wildlife Trust project which project leader David Mooney mentioned to the Wren group at our recent AGM.



*Walk and Talk by Peter Aylmer*

*Next walks - Tuesday 23 June (note change from 16 June), Thursday 16 July, Wednesday 19 August*

*Meet 10am at Stratford station, outside Jubilee line platforms 13-15. Just turn up, no need to book.*

*Walks are between five and seven miles, check Wren Facebook page for updates.*

# Water rails at cley marshes

I visited Cley Marshes Nature Reserve on the North Norfolk coast on the Saturday of the Easter weekend. The reserve comprises a vast area of reed-bed with a system of scrapes overlooked by well-positioned hides.

I went into the middle of three hides that are set together at the end of a board-walk. I looked out over some scrapes with reed-bed stretching away all around them. Along the skyline there were sand-dunes with the sea beyond. On that day I had the hide completely to myself, so I moved to each of the slots in turn, looking out at the birds. There were a large number of Shelduck dotted about over the scrapes as well as Godwits, Avocets, Redshank and Lapwings. I also had a sighting of a Marsh Harrier which is probably the species that draws most people to this reserve. I followed the harrier with my binoculars as it glided in from a headland in the east. It was visible low over the dunes and then came nearer before it dropped down into the reed-bed in the middle distance.

Eventually I found my way to two slots at the right

of the hide which are angled away from the main frontage, so that you can see over the perimeter of the scrape area. After a while, to my delight a Water Rail emerged for a short time from the reeds at the edge of the water, then disappeared back inside them again. It came out a little nearer to me a second time, and then a little further away the time after that. I thought the bird was moving around out of sight behind the reeds. *Then two of them came out together.* This must be a pair I thought, and at this time of year potentially a breeding pair. To strengthen this idea, on one foray one of the birds made a quick dart out, grabbed a piece of reed lying on the water and then dived



back into cover. The birds probably made six or seven appearances while I was there, separately except for that one time. I was able to watch them feeding, lifting each foot gingerly from the water, holding it in the air, then carefully placing it down again so as not to disturb the organisms they were trying to catch. One of the birds came as close as ten metres away from me. I took a series of

photographs with my camera on the continuous shots setting. I was completely alone the whole time and had this brilliant experience all to myself. I went to the visitor centre and reported my Water Rail sightings to a staff member of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and he wrote it up on the board.

I returned to my brother's place in Dereham where I was staying, and in the evening I decided on something I wanted to do. I would go back to the reserve the next day (Easter Sunday) to try single-mindedly to capture moving pictures of a Water Rail.

A few people were in the hide when I got there again, but the slots in the corner were unoccupied. I quietly took up position with my elbows on the ledge and my camera poised in front of me on the movie setting. I stared intently at the empty patch of reeds where the birds had been the day before for over half an hour, starting to lose hope. Then I thought I glimpsed a movement behind the reeds, but nothing came out.. Minutes passed. More false alarms. Then at last – there was a Water Rail.

I took movie clips of three different appearances by a Water Rail before I got the best one which you can see by clicking on the link. When I had taken this film I told the other people in the hide, "There's a Water Rail over here." I hadn't told them before, because I know how susceptible these birds are to noise, and the others did get quite excited when they crowded over to look. I was pleased that everyone, including a guy in a motorised wheelchair, managed to get good sightings, and it was wonderful the way everything had worked out.

Article by Andrew Spencer



# record chat

by Tim Harris

After seeing this pristine-plumaged Whinchat on an unmown strip between blocks of football pitches on Wanstead Flats in April – and after Nick Croft's great photos of the bird - I was inspired to look back over our spring records.

To put things in context, this gorgeous bird winters in sub-Saharan Africa and breeds in uncultivated, often damp, areas in north-west, northern and Eastern Europe – though sadly no longer in London, where the last confirmed breeding was at Rainham in 1989. Pairs have certainly summered in that area since then, but for Wanstead its status is of a passage migrant in autumn and to a lesser extent in spring. Returning birds are regularly seen in some numbers in late August and September, when Wanstead Flats is one of the best London sites (with a peak count of 13 in 2009). Notably also, autumn birds tend to stick around for a few days.

Spring migration is much more of a rush and passage dates are more tightly concentrated. When trawling back through old bird reports I was surprised to find years when no spring birds had been seen at all, though we are hampered by a very incomplete set of local records. In the years 1976-81, during which there were

published records, the only migrant noted in spring was a male on 8 May 1977. The recent picture is healthier, though whether that represents more individuals stopping off here on their way north – or simply much better observer coverage – is impossible to say.

One thing is clear: the male Whinchat found at the western end of the Flats by Dan Hennessey on 16 April is the earliest record we've had in the recent sequence of reports, dating back to 2009. Indeed, it could be the earliest record ever. It is also an exception to the rule of thumb that passage locally is pretty much confined to the last week of April and the first week of May. Assuming Dan's individual and the bird found at the eastern end of the Flats two days later were the same (and they may well not have been), there have been five April birds and eight in May, with the latest being a male near the broom on the Flats on 11 May 2012 and a female in the same area on the same date in 2014. There have been seven males, three females and three unspecified. The best recent springs were 2012 and 2014, with at least three birds each, though there's still plenty of time for that total to be matched this year! And the best places to look are on and around the broom south of Long Wood, in the SSSI and in the scrubby grassland opposite the Golden Fleece. And here's to plenty more!



*Whinchat on Wanstead Flats by Nick Croft*

# beeyond the call of duty

Last spring when I was listening to the radio in the garden I spotted a very bedraggled bee in the corner of my eye. It was struggling to move and looked as though it was about to die. As luck would have it the conversation on the radio turned to how to save struggling bees. I listened to the simple instructions and I rushed into the house to mix up some sugared water (one spoon of sugar and two spoons of water) and poured a few drops next to the bee. It sensed the solution and within a few minutes of having taken a few sips it flew off. It was a lovely feeling being able to help as opposed to helplessly watch it die.

Please note that it is not a good idea to give honey, artificial sweeteners or demerara sugar.

*Story and pic by Jenny Duval*



# Wrens take gold!

Work on the Wanstead breeding bird survey came to an end in mid-May after two months and hundreds of hours in the field. For those who rose at dawn to work their patches, listening, counting and mapping each and every avian songster, it probably seems like we know every patch of bramble and hawthorn, every blade of grass and every oak .....

there's a reason for  
that: we do!



*Wren by Neil Bowman*

Work started on 15 March and finished on 16 May. Wanstead Flats was divided into four workable zones; Wanstead Park into 10; St Mary's churchyard was another zone; as was Gilbert's Slade. A total of 25 species were selected for survey. The chosen ones were Stock Dove, Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Song and Mistle Thrushes, Blackbird, Common and Lesser Whitethroats, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Great and Coat Tits, Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Goldfinch. Blue and Long-tailed Tits were omitted because they are hideously time-consuming to survey. Waterbirds were also left out. In retrospect it would have been good to have included Jays, and it would have been better to have started counting Great Spotted Woodpeckers earlier than we did; by mid-March drumming activity was already on the wane. Next time!



*Blackcap by Nick Croft*

counting singing male birds on transects, we went for a more comprehensive approach of trying to log and map each territory, something that required several visits. Individual zones were surveyed up to eight times, giving a pretty accurate (though no survey is ever going to be completely accurate) idea of numbers. It was heartening to revisit an area and record the same number of territories, though that didn't always happen. During April there were 'spikes' in the numbers of singing Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps as they arrived back in our area, resulting - for example - in 16 singing males of the latter species in Bush Wood on 16 April. There is a strong possibility, since this figure was not repeated, that some of those birds were still in transit and would not go on to establish long-term territories in the area. Therefore, such spikes were removed from the figures.

So what of the results? A grand total of 1,181 territories were mapped. For key species (Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Song Thrush, Common and Lesser Whitethroats) it is hoped to produce digital maps; these can be used as a conservation tool with

authorities such as the City of London Corporation, for example. The most territory-rich areas were around the Ornamental Waters (171 mapped territories, though actually in two zones); the Long Wood-brooms area of the Flats (134 territories); and Bush Wood (126 territories).



*Songthrush by Nick Croft*

Unsurprisingly, Wren was the most numerous species in pretty much every zone. There were at least 161 singing males in the Park, 81 on the Flats and 22 at Gilbert's Slade. Great Tit was the runner-up on the Flats, but Robin took the silver medal in the Park and at Gilbert's Slade, with Parus major edged into third spot. Other species that fared especially well were both Blackcap and Blackbird, bizarrely with 100 territories each, though I reckon the Blackbird figure is an underestimate.

Heartening also was the total of 43 Song Thrush territories, with both the Old Sewage Works and Bush Wood holding at least seven singing males.



*Greenfinch by Nick Croft*

Rather than adopt the tried-and-tested method of

Grand totals of 57 Chiffchaff, 20 Green Woodpecker and 19 Stock Dove territories were also impressive, though the Great Spotted Woodpecker score (20) must surely have been an underestimate; once birds stop drumming they are quite hard to locate for a couple of months. Common Whitethroats probably took a hit as a result of the scrub clearance work carried out over the winter but still mustered at least 38 territories. It's possible that this involved some 'bunching up' of birds in suitable habitat, and this may mean productivity per pair is reduced – but we'll probably never know.

Of course, there are plenty of breeding birds outside the clearly defined areas surveyed. The City of London Cemetery wasn't part of the study but on a recent visit I noticed as many singing Chaffinches there as in the rest of the area combined. Manor Park Cemetery is another area that would warrant a survey. And, of course, the leafy gardens of the area support good numbers of Blackbirds, Blackcaps, Dunnocks, Robins and more. It's my impression that Goldfinches may be our area's commonest breeding finch this spring, but most of these great little birds probably breed in people's back gardens. Maybe

in future we should encourage more reports from local residents?

Unsurprisingly, given the paucity of records in recent times, Nuthatches and Treecreepers did not trouble the scorers much. At Gilbert's Slade there were two pairs of the former and one of the latter; although another Nuthatch was present in the park at the start of the survey period it either went quiet or moved on and is not included in these figures. No Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were found and two other iconic species – Skylark and Meadow Pipit – could muster only six or seven and four territories each. Another sad sign of the times are the totals for Willow Warbler and Garden Warbler, just one territory each. A Grasshopper Warbler was reeling in the Old Sewage Works on one day in mid-April but was just a one-day bird, though a Wood Warbler in the SSSI did stay for two days.

What of the future? It would be good to do a re-run every other year (I'm not sure that I have the

stamina to do it annually!) but next year I'd like to have a go at the local cemeteries to fill in those particular gaps, and maybe to broaden the scope of the survey around Snaresbrook and Leyton Flats.

Finally, many thanks to those from the Wren Group and Wanstead Birders who helped, including James Heal, Simon Raper, Debbie Burkett, Mary Jane Rawlence, Dan Hennessy, Nick Croft, Jo Harris and Bob Vaughan (apologies for any omitted from the list).

Report by Tim Harris



## 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.



# events diary

## June 2015

**Thursday 18th** - Wild Flowers in Wanstead Park, a walk led by botanist Tricia Moxey. Meet outside Riding Stables, Empress Avenue, 7:30pm

**Tuesday 23rd** (note not 16th as previous) - Capital Ring Walk led by Peter Aylmer. e-mail [peteraylmer@hotmail.com](mailto:peteraylmer@hotmail.com) for more details.

**Friday 26th** - Bat Walk. Meet: 9:00 pm by the tea hut in Wanstead Park. Duration: up to 2 hours. Leaders Keith French and Andy Froud

**Saturday 27th** - Bio-blitz activities in Wanstead Park and Wanstead Flats. Activities will include guided walks looking for butterflies and dragonflies, pond-dipping, moth-trapping, and an evening bat walk. Look out for more details on our website and Facebook page!

**Sunday 28th** - Bio-blitz activities in Wanstead Park and Wanstead Flats. Activities will include a dawn chorus walk, guided walks looking at wildflowers and dragonflies, and pond-dipping at Alexandra Lake and Shoulder of Mutton Pond. Details on our website and Facebook page.

## July 2015

**Saturday 11th** - Wanstead Nature Club for Children Meet: Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats - 10.00 a.m. Cost: £1.50 per child. Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 e-mail [gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

**Thursday 16th** - Capital Ring Walk led by Peter Aylmer. e-mail [peteraylmer@hotmail.com](mailto:peteraylmer@hotmail.com) for more.

**Thursday 30th** - Bat Walk. Meet: 8:30 pm, by the tea hut in Wanstead Park. Duration: 2 hours

We will walk around the lakes where most of the bat activity, lingering to watch them on their hunting missions and listen to their feeding calls.

## August 2015

**Saturday 15th** - Wanstead Nature Club for Children Meet: Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats - 10.00 a.m. Cost: £1.50 per child. Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 e-mail [gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

**Wednesday 19th** - Capital Ring Walk led by Peter Aylmer. e-mail [peteraylmer@hotmail.com](mailto:peteraylmer@hotmail.com) for more details.

## September 2015

**Saturday 12th** - Wanstead Nature Club for Children Meet: Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats - 10.00 a.m. Cost: £1.50 per child. Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 e-mail [gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

**Sunday 13th** - Waterbird count. Meet: 10:00 am, by the tea hut in Wanstead Park. Duration: 2 hours

The first of the autumn's waterbird count look for ducks that have just arrived from places far and wide.

*Soldier Beetle on Wanstead Flats  
(Cantharis rustica) by Rosemary Stephens*



# links

## Links

Got any links to go on this page ? Get in touch  
[wreeditor@talktalk.net](mailto: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 Naturalist Association <http://www.bna-naturalists.org/>

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

UHK 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>

# and finally ....

## Help us score 400!

The Wren Group Bio-blitz on Friday 26<sup>th</sup>, Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June has three aims: to excite the imagination of local people by showing them what's on their doorstep and how it can be identified; to add to our own sum of knowledge; and to demonstrate to all who will listen just how important our area is for all things natural – flora and fauna. It should also be a whole load of fun.

We are hoping to involve as many Wren Group



members as possible – and anyone else with an interest in nature. Some of our own members, including Tricia Moxey, Derek McEwan and Nick

Croft, will be leading activities. And we have experts coming into the area from places as far-flung as Sheffield.

Apart from giving people an experience they'll



remember, we're hoping to list 400 species over the weekend. If we do, you can bet that some of them will never have been recorded locally before. So why not join in? Even better, bring your friends! Here are some of the highlights.

**Friday, 9pm**, outside the tea hut, Wanstead Park. *Bat-detecting*. Join Keith French and Andy Froud, authors of *Social Calls of the Bats of Britain and Ireland*, on a bat walk in Wanstead Park. They will use bat detectors to locate and identify pipistrelles and hopefully Daubenton's and noctule bats. Keith and Andy will explain something of the lifestyle of these flying mammals and the important role they play in our ecosystems.

**10pm**, The Temple, Wanstead Park. *Moth-trapping*. Join Graham Smith, Anthony Harbutt, Jono Lethbridge and Tim Harris as they set up light-traps to attract moths. If the weather is dry and warm we could see hundreds, and the variety of species in Wanstead Park is impressive. Either come straight to The Temple or join us after the bat walk has finished.



**Saturday, 11am**, Centre Road car park. *Wildflowers and grasses*. Botanist Tricia Moxey will lead a walk through the wonderful acid grassland of Wanstead Flats, looking at the incredible array of wildflowers and grasses. From late morning until mid-afternoon, a team of insect specialists will be collecting, examining and identifying beetles, weevils, moths and flies in the same area. They will bring interesting 'finds' to our stall at the car park.

**2pm**, Centre Road car park. *Skylarks and butterflies*. Gill James will lead another walk on

Wanstead Flats, this time looking at displaying skylarks and meadow pipits, grassland butterflies and wildflowers.

**Sunday, 5am**, outside the tea hut, Wanstead Park. *Dawn chorus walk*. For the very early risers, this walk is not to be missed. Nick Croft, of Wanstead Birders fame and who has local rarities such as Blyth's Reed Warbler, Wryneck, Jack Snipe and Lapland Bunting to his name, will lead a walk around the Park, probably ending up in the Old Sewage Works. The tea hut will be opening up at 7:30 to cater for the early birds.

**11am** onwards, outside The Temple, Wanstead Park. Local artist and teacher Nicola Cunningham will be getting the kids involved by constructing an art installation with a natural history theme. There will also be a nature table, a quiz trail and

children and grown-ups will be invited to submit their photos for a not-too-serious competition.

**11:30**, from The Temple. Derek McEwan will lead a *pond-dipping* team to Shoulder of Mutton Pond, while Tricia Moxey takes people on a tour of some of the Park's most interesting trees and wildflowers.

**2pm**, from The Temple. While Derek takes his pond-dippers to Alexandra Lake on Wanstead Flats, those interested in butterflies and dragonflies will have a chance to explore the lakes of Wanstead Park.

Interested? If you'd like to help on the day – or if you have any queries, please contact Tim Harris at [tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk) or on 07505 482328.

We hope to see you there!



## now & then

Were you right ?

Forest Gate Fox and Hounds on Junction of Forest Lane and Woodgrange Road in 1904 and how it looks today. The clock was moved when the road was widened.

On the far side of the crossroad you can see a hut with a ladder standing beside it. This was an early fire station.

