

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group



Newsletter

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A TRIBUTE TO SELSEY RESIDENT SIR PATRICK MOORE

BY DR BRIAN MAY CBE

For many years Patrick has been a dear friend and a kind of father figure to me. I am going to miss him terribly, as are all his close friends and colleagues; and the world has lost a priceless treasure, that can never be replaced.



Patrick was the last of a lost generation, a true gentleman, the most generous in nature that I ever knew, and an inspiration to thousands in his personal life, and to millions through his 50 years of unique broadcasting. It's no exaggeration to say that Patrick, in his tireless and ebullient communication of the magic of astronomy, inspired every British astronomer, amateur and professional, for half a century. Most astronomers I know will tell you that Patrick is the reason they first looked through a telescope. Through his countless books and articles and TV appearances, he somehow captured the adventure of the Universe and brought it to us.

He knew the Universe in a way which will never be equalled. Patrick did not just know the facts - it was as if he lived out there, could find his way around it - knew it like the back of his hand. To the very end of his life he was actively distilling new discoveries into channels which made them not just accessible to astronomers, but also understandable to the general public - a rare gift, which he never tired of using to the full.

In his private life Patrick was astoundingly giving. His dedication to young aspiring Astronomers was legendary. He replied to every letter, responded to questions, helped young students with gifts of equipment, and the most precious gift of all - his time. He personally tutored some that he thought particularly promising, and sponsored others through higher education; in general, he gave away any income he ever made, to the point where he had no security himself, except that which his friends supplied. He was honoured by many Universities with degrees and fellowships, and, though he always insisted he was an amateur astronomer, his contribution to pure research was considerable. He made the first finely detailed map of the Moon's surface, which was the one consulted by the first Astronauts to walk on it. From the days before astrophotography was well developed, his notes and drawings from his thousands of hours of pure observations are now a valuable archive.

Patrick was also a great caring human being, and a campaigner for the rights and welfare of animals. Privately, his cats were the loves of his life, and in public he was outspoken against cruelty of all kinds. His demolition of Theresa May's defence of Fox Hunting on a TV program is legendary. More recently he spoke out against the government's proposed massacre of badgers, and attempts to repeal the Hunting Act.

Patrick had other talents too. He was a life-long devotee of cricket, and bowled a mean googly in his day. He was an accomplished musician, played both piano and xylophone with great success in public, composed music for these instruments, and also for brass bands, much of which was recorded. He wrote science fiction novels, plays, spoof operas, and satirical commentaries on the foolishness of bureaucracy, under the assumed name of R.T. Fishall. He enjoyed good-naturedly ribbing those who believed in flying saucers, or Astrology, but had an open mind as to whether intelligent life might exist elsewhere in the Universe.

The honour he was most proud of was being made a Fellow of the Royal Society - the only amateur astronomer ever to achieve this distinction, but he was also made a knight of the realm in 2001. Patrick will be mourned by the many to whom he was a caring uncle, and by all who loved the delightful wit and clarity of his writings, or enjoyed his fearlessly eccentric persona in public life.

Patrick is irreplaceable. There will never be another Patrick Moore. But we were lucky enough to get one.

*Dr Brian May CBE
Astrophysicist and Musician*

PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

Despite the weather, volunteers have come out in force to enhance and improve biodiversity. What a pleasure it is to do my job working alongside such fantastic people! Thank you!

I continue site checks at Fishbourne and carry on promoting issues with recreational disturbance and how we can all play a part in protecting our wildlife and important habitats.

I attended the open day on the aspiration of the Saint Peter Project (Fishbourne), which is an excellent project and hopefully will enable further education on the importance of our harbours and provide a better understanding of the pressures.

Working closely with Chichester Community Development Trust (CCDT) and the local people, I continue to raise the profile of MWHG and our aims as a group. Events have included: Graylingwell Community coffee morning; Graylingwell Christmas Event, Community Gardens & Wildlife & Art Workshop.

Graylingwell Orchards are developing well. It has been very exciting to uncover orchard trees, some of which are consumed by brambles and ivy. Though brambles and ivy are very important to wildlife, our efforts are to propagate the remaining trees, enabling us to have a local stock of our trees. Apple varieties include: Orleans Reinette; Laxton's Superb; Sussex Mother; Lord Lambourne; Cox and William Crump. Pear include Black Worcester. With more working parties to uncover the trees, we hope to identify further varieties. The working parties have brought together people from different backgrounds and it is excellent to see people working together to achieve so much. Thank you!

In order to improve the delivery of the project and to take on additional sites, various changes have been made to my role. My focus is now on developments to the north of the A27. I continue to work four days a week at Fishbourne and Graylingwell but I also now include recreational education and awareness work in and around Roussillon Barracks and the Nutbourne/Hambrook area.

Graylingwell before work started



Photo © 2012 Sarah Hughes



Photo © 2012 Sarah Hughes

The team after the work was finished

At Roussillon I have attended the ‘welcome drinks’ enabling me to talk to the new residents about biodiversity opportunities in the local area. Working with CCDT we hope to manage ‘The Spinney’ which is a small area of trees, some of which (Silver Maples) have Tree Preservation Orders.

I have been busy at the Nutbourne/Hambrook area, working with the local community to raise the issue of recreational disturbance, the impacts on wildlife and how to link up wildlife areas. One alternative guided walk has been tested in the local area and biodiversity improvements have been made at Hambrook ditch (water vole habitat) with assistance from Chichester District Council.

I have raised the profile of our group, the importance of biodiversity and the impact recreational disturbance can have on our wildlife, at talks, walks and displays, these include: Friends of Old Bridge Meadow (Bosham); Maybush Copse Committee (Chidham); Saint Richard’s Lodge (Chichester); Christmas Bazaar (Southbourne); Brent Lodge Christmas Market (Sidlesham) and a Guided Walk at Sidlesham Quay led by Bill Martin and myself.

In addition to the above I have attended: Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project Mitigation Workshop; Wetland conference (Pulborough); Team Leaders’ meeting; Management Committee Meeting and the MWHG Christmas Gathering, which was as always fantastic. Thank you Bruce and Sheila.

I took some time off over Christmas and got out and enjoyed this incredible area, rich in flora and fauna. I have been fortunate to work with some of the MWHG projects over the peninsula. Special thanks to all who helped at the working party at Brandy Hole Copse (especially Pete White). The work completed will enable sites across the peninsula to benefit and improve biodiversity and wildlife connectivity.

Many thanks to ALL volunteers for their continued support with the project.

Sarah Hughes

WATER VOLE PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

This tends to be a quieter period for me with less field work and more report writing and following up contacts with landowners. This time of year is normally good for practical work on many sites, an opportunity to remove vegetation, dig out silt and open up banks. However, this year, with the high water levels and flooded ditches and ponds, it has been a challenge and prevented some work being carried out. Just before Christmas we had a Water Vole Patrol get together and I gave out some awards:



Photo © 2013 Jane Reeve

Vole Patrol

Sheila and Bruce Wilkinson – Hardy Veterans
Anthony Burden – Most Enthusiastic Volunteer
Dave and Ann Haldane – Most Glamorous Couple
Trevor Gibson-Poole – Helping Everyone
Veronica Wilkes – Most Impressive Refreshments
Ian Godfrey – Most Active Newcomer
Felicity McStea – Volunteer to attend the most surveys

I feel very lucky and honoured to have such a committed group of volunteers to work with.

On Friday 8 February we had a rather impromptu water vole get together at Sidlesham Village Hall. The Environment Agency were supposed to be giving a talk to the Group and interested landowners about the water vole habitat and mitigation work they carried out at the Medmerry realignment site. Unfortunately, they pulled out last minute but with the hall booked, the food prepared and volunteers poised it seemed a shame not to make the most of the opportunity so Jill and I created a new agenda and presentations were written. We had a wide audience with farmers, parish councillors and students, as well as our loyal volunteer membership. The emphasis of the day was water voles with presentations on:

Water vole ecology and the conservation issues facing us;
The UK Biodiversity Action Plan Targets and Water Voles on the Manhood Peninsula;
The Habitat Creation Scheme at Medmery (thanks to Salix);
Water voles and their favourite food; and
A talk by Sarah Hughes about her valuable work.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the event and lots of food was demolished.

A special mention must go to Veronica Wilkes and Anthony Burden who were the first to arrive to get the hall ready and then the last to leave once it was tidied up. They didn't stop all day, along with other busy bees, and I want to thank everyone for all their time and effort.

Jane Reeve

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group



Volunteers' News

ASHE GROUP

Gina and David's shed was erected and is filling up with equipment. Also, Jane's super idea to plant an English Orchard on the Sidlesham recreation ground finally became reality on Saturday 15 December when ASHE group members met with local families who came along to plant a tree and put their name on it for the future. The selection of trees was made by Paul Barnett who grafted the trees which included not just Apples, but Pears and Plums.



Photo © 2013 Veronica Wilkes



Photo © 2013 Veronica Wilkes

On Saturday 12 January Florence Pond in Church Farm Lane Sidlesham was surveyed. Although it was possibly the coldest and wettest day since time began, we all enjoyed it. Trees were identified and a pond dip was taken. There is a great deal of life both under water and on the surface. Water Voles have been seen here and photographed.

ASHE group is very grateful for the help and encouragement given by Sidlesham Parish Council with both these projects, in particular Councillor Paul Bedford who himself is a member of ASHE.

Veronica Wilkes

MILE POND FARM, DONNINGTON

In mid-January MWHG volunteers revisited Mile Pond Farm at Apuldram to undertake maintenance work on the native hedgerow they had planted back in spring 2011. (After all the rain, it was with much relief that we woke to a dry, frosty morning. Snow blew in the following day, so we were fortunate indeed.)

Whilst tackling the tall weeds and long grass that had grown up amongst the young hedging plants, it was rewarding to see that this site has already become a haven for invertebrates and small mammals. We were not alone in observing the creatures that sought shelter there. Perched on a telegraph pole nearby, a Kestrel probably had more than a passing interest in the Field Voles that scurried out of our path, but it didn't venture down whilst we were working. A pair of Robins had no such inhibitions and followed us closely, picking off an easy meal as we disturbed the ground.

Photo © 2013 Felicity McStea



Yellow Meadow Ants

Photo © 2013 Felicity McStea

We came across earthworms, snails and ladybirds but our most fascinating find came about as we inspected rabbit guards for any whips that hadn't survived. On removing some of these plastic tubes, we discovered that colonies of Yellow Meadow Ants *Lasius flavus* had opted for high-rise living and built their nests inside. Chambers were clearly visible, running through the soil that had compacted around the bamboo cane; like a large kebab! (Pied Wagtails worked the field, we heard a Great Tit, saw a Carrion Crow and a large flock of Woodpigeons in distant flight. A Mute Swan flew overhead and Trev recognised the distinctive call as a Green Sandpiper did likewise.)

By mid-afternoon we had cleared most of the hedgerow, leaving just a short stretch to finish at our next working party. Our thanks to The Apuldram Centre for use of their facilities. (Having convenient access to the site and a comfortable lunch break in the shop/cafe was very welcome on a cold winter's day.)

Felicity McStea

EAST BEACH POND, SENSORY GARDENS AND NEW ORCHARD

ALL THREE SITES ARE DOING WELL. Thanks to the diligent work, carried out on a regular volunteer basis, by our happy band of pilgrims.



Photo © 2013 Barbara Bond

East Beach Pond in its winter garb. The duck population perfect their ice-skating skills, but also keep an eye open for food.

Of course it would be a great deal harder without the right tools for the job. We have the Chichester District Council, Parks & Gardens Department, to thank for their help in this direction.



Photo © 2013 Barbara Bond

The trees and bushes in Sensory Garden area are developing into a very attractive site much appreciated by local residents.

It's clearly winter, judging by the appearance of most of the bushes and trees in the Sensory Garden.

David Deveraux

We are encouraged by a slight increase in numbers of volunteers. Particularly noticeable with the group taking care of the Sensory Gardens area.



Photo © 2013 Sarah Hughes

This shows the concerted effort of our team of helpers digging out the grass from around the fruit trees in the Orchard.

Some of the apple trees in the Orchard are very rare indeed, with only one or two other examples to be found anywhere else in the UK. If you haven't visited this site yet, it's well worth taking the time to walk round and take note of some of the varieties of fruit trees being cultivated there.

SELSEY COMMON

The regular work programme at this site was suspended in mid-summer 2012 after two volunteers developed rashes on the face and neck as a result of coming into contact with hairs shed by the caterpillars of the brown-tail tussock moth. Litter clearance and regular surveys were still carried out throughout the six-month lay-off. The indications are that Selsey Common is now clear of the moth, at least for this summer, as no new nests were found. Unfortunately there are nests in nearby Kingsway.



Photo © 2013 Dave Haldane

On Friday 11 January 2013 I met with Sarah and a three-man team from CDC to organise cutting pathways through the extensive bramble cover found on this site. The aim was to reduce the depth of four large stands of bramble allowing access and more effective control of the nest and caterpillars of the brown-tail tussock moth, should we experience an invasion at some future date. It also gave us the opportunity to cut out a wide section consisting of low developing bramble, that threatened to reduce further the grassland and wildflower character of the site.

The operation was carried out in a very satisfactory manner in just over two hours and we were relieved that no wildlife was distressed or injured during the operation. There is always a risk when cutting through heavy undergrowth that hibernating wildlife might fall victim to the cutting machine.

Work now continues at this small but important wildlife site on the first Tuesday of each month. Extra volunteers are always welcome.

Dave Haldane



Photo © 2013 Dave Haldane



WALKS LEAFLETS OUTLETS

Our walks leaflets can be purchased from the following places:-

Chichester District Council, Selsey Office
Hunston Post Office (Tramway Walks only)
Raycraft, High Street, Selsey
RSPB Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve
Saint Andrew's Lodge, Selsey
Selsey Printing and Publishing
Selsey Town Council Office
Tourist Information Centre, South Street, Chichester
Tourist Information Centre, Midhurst

MWHG Website

www.mwhg.org.uk

At the moment, the only section which is regularly being updated is the "Current Programmes" page. New content and updates are regularly required for example on wildlife, heritage, etc.

All contributions welcome.

email: newsletter@mwhg.org

USEFUL WEBSITES

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group - <http://www.mwhg.org.uk>
Recording the changing seasons - <http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/>
Local wood recycling - http://www.aldingbournetrust.co.uk/services_recycling.htm
Local - Bags made from 100% recycled clothing - <http://www.thegreendoor.co.uk/>
Sussex Bat Group - <http://www.sussexbatgroup.org.uk/>
UK moths - <http://ukmoths.org.uk/>
Bug life - <http://www.buglife.org.uk/>
Mammal Society - <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal/>
Green shop - <http://www.greenshop.co.uk/>
Environmental calendar - www.countmeincalendar.info
Swift Conservation - <http://www.swift-conservation.org/>
Wildcare Shop for products relating to ecology, Park management or conservation - <http://www.wildcareshop.com>

2013 DEADLINES

10 May (Summer)
10 August (Autumn)
10 November (Winter)
10 February 2014 (Spring)

EDITORIAL CONTACT DETAILS:

Gina Scott
newsletter@mwhg.org.uk
Copy date for next issue 10 May 2013



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**



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Editorial and illustration team -
Gina Scott (Editor),*

Pam Barnes, Peter Driscoll, Carole Hampton, Peter White

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