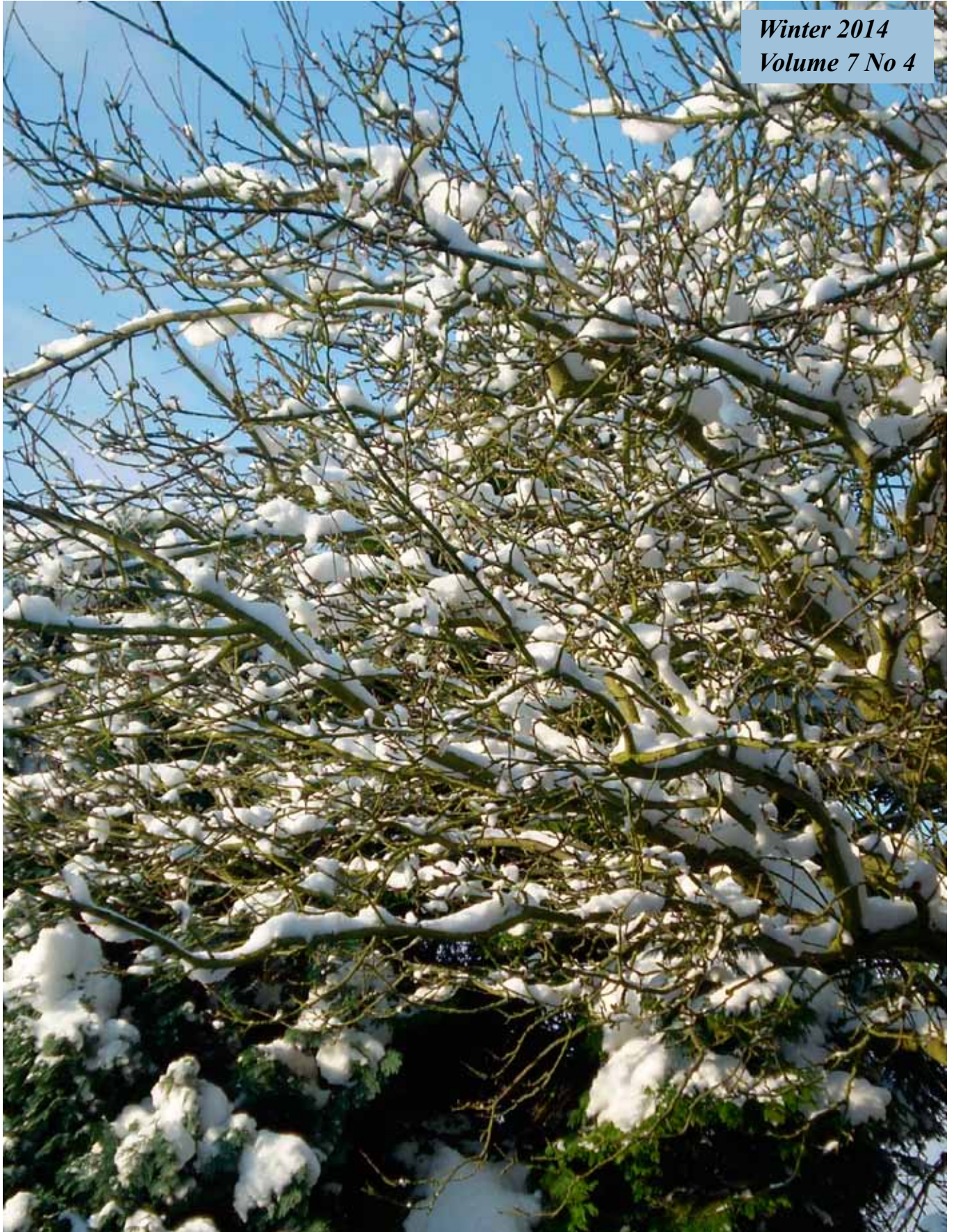


Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group



Newsletter

Winter 2014
Volume 7 No 4



MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Your Management Team meets eight times a year and the Trustees meet, at least, twice yearly and often more frequently. Sub-groups also meet to work on actions from the Group's Action Plan. The main intention of this column is to keep you up to date with some of what we've been up to, on your behalf, at all these meetings.

Firstly, the website is being updated, with considerable help from Nicola Timney – a relatively new member. Please bear with us during this period of change but already you should see some positive developments. Notably, there is now a Members Only section. This will contain copies of the group's standard forms and documents, policies, minutes of meetings and other information. The password for this section will be sent to all members in due course. Do keep visiting the website and I hope you will find it becoming more interesting and more informative, and easier to find your way around.

Secondly, the Group will soon have a presence on Facebook – again thanks to Nikki. The intention is to direct more people to the website and thus increase interest in and support for our work. With the advance of social media, this seems essential.

Lastly, the Trustees have been reviewing current policies and developing new ones. These are necessary not only to care for us all but also to meet requirements of funding bodies and other organisations we work with. Some apply to all members and others to those who actively volunteer, so please take time to read them if they are sent to you or as they appear on the website.

Although not always as exciting, or immediately rewarding, as planting a new hedgerow or clearing out a pond, this background work is vital if the Group is to run smoothly and to develop.

As always, if you do have any comments about any of the developments outlined above, do get in touch.

Joe Savill

STOP PRESS:

Members will be pleased to note that Richard Williamson the local naturalist and author has honoured us by agreeing to become the Group's President.

More information will follow in the next issue.



THE SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST IN BLOOM 2014 AWARDS (SSEIBA)

Manor Green Park and the Sensory Gardens picked up fantastic awards. The Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group were also instrumental in Selsey's winning the most prestigious Biodiversity award in the 'Community Involvement Award' section.

Manor Green Park received a Gold award in the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' category while the Sensory Garden at Manor Green obtained the top award of Outstanding in the 'Small Park' category.

The team also picked up two further awards for Selsey Town at the event: the Silver Gilt award for the Selsey in Bloom Town, and a Highly Commended for the 'Community Involvement Award'.

The photo shows our Honorary Secretary Dr Anthony Preston with David Bailey (not the photographer) on the left, who is on the committee of the Selsey Allotment Society, being presented with the awards by Chris Collins.



The award ceremony was held in the 'American Express Community Stadium', Brighton on 17 September. For those who do not know, (I did not) it's a large modern football stadium.

We started by having refreshment in the 'Corporate Coffee Lounge' before moving to the very large corporate dining and bar area where over 200 people were seated in pre-arranged groups, very comfortably, at round tables. Our hosts were Peter Holman, Chairman of South and South-East in Bloom, and Jim Buttress, former chairman of Britain in Bloom judges, Associate of Honour of the RHS, and holder of the RHS Victoria Medal of Honour. Only 63 people in the world hold this, the highest accolade in horticulture.

Peter Holman, along with Simon Oates, Director of Strategy and Communications, Southern Water welcomed us all. We were then introduced to Awards presenter Chris Collins, celebrity gardener, who has also become involved with the SSEIBA Blooming Schools campaign visiting 36 schools in just three weeks during the summer across Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. He also works with the supermarket Morrison's 'Lets Grow' campaign and ISS Education - both promoting 'seed to plate' teaching to help children learn and understand where their food comes from.

Readers may be aware of Jim Buttriss from the BBC2 programme 'The Big Allotment Challenge'. He raised a smile from the audience when he revealed that on one occasion after the show had finished he was sponsoring a garden centre by giving out and collecting trolleys. A customer asked a salesperson if he was Jim Buttriss, and when this was confirmed she said "Well, I suppose he is out of work now".

We had a great day and a very nice lunch, with red and white wine. A very satisfying additional reward.

Dr Anthony Preston

THE EILEEN SAVILL AWARD 2014

The Award for young people in recognition of their interest and practical activity related to the wildlife and the heritage of the Manhood Peninsula is given annually in memory of Eileen Savill's lifelong dedication to the young people of the Manhood.

This year there were two outstanding but very different entries - from the Apuldram Centre and Birdham Primary School - which could not be separated, so the decision was made to award each one.

The first was a sensory garden, created, under the direction of their carers and to the conceptual design of local artist and sculptor Mark Ford, by the young people who attend the Centre. The result is a delightful and tranquil place combining planting, constructions in wood and brick, and willow sculptures, all enclosed by new hedges to form a quiet retreat from the world.



Photo © 2014 Peter Warren



Photo © 2014 Peter Warren

Birdham Primary School had made a country diary spanning the school year, recording their observations of the natural world in carefully rendered drawings, their own words, and appropriate literary extracts, all assembled into a beautifully presented volume. Over forty pupils contributed to the work throughout the year, ably supported by their Headmaster and class teachers, in particular Jenny Guest who oversaw the whole project and kept the enthusiasm going for 12 months!

Presentation of the awards took place at and was hosted by the Apuldram Centre who provided tea and delicious home-made cakes. The awards were preceded by a visit to the garden, conducted by its creators who delighted in sharing their work and in the photo opportunity which followed.

Gina gave a short introduction in which she stressed the important contribution young people had to make to the future of the natural world and introduced Heather Caird, Leader of Chichester District Council, to make the awards. Heather had presented the awards each year and stressed how pleased she was with the opportunity to be involved and to meet people and learn about groups she would otherwise not come across.



Photo © 2014 Peter Warren

The prizes were beautifully carved barn owls made by Peter Warren and certificates commemorating the event and it was particularly pleasing to see the enthusiasm with which the awards were received. Indeed Birdham School decided straight away that their owl was to be called 'Swoop'.

In addition, the winners had been given further prizes of their choice. The School proudly displayed the tools they would be using in the school garden and the Centre had tall stained-glass sculptures which will adorn their garden.

For those of the Manhood Group who were there, it was a delightful afternoon, made so much more so by the enthusiasm of the prize-winners and the hospitality of the Centre and their invitation to help with the new garden in the spring and autumn.

An opportunity to reach out, a contact to be developed, and endorsement of the value of the Eileen Savill Award.

David Scott

Sally Milligan of the Apuldram Centre has led the Centre's clients on the three-year project to create the Sensory Garden, and it really is a special place now.

Sally has asked if volunteers from MWHG could help them by coming twice year, once in the Spring, to help them 'wake up' the garden and again in the Autumn, to put it to bed for the winter. She would welcome new ideas and inspiration.

I think this would be a great way for us to help them; five or six people would be plenty, and it would be especially nice if someone from our own Sensory Garden team could be included in this.

If you would like to help the Centre in this way please let me know - telephone 01243-778689, email ginacarrington@btinternet.com and in the spring when Sally contacts me I will let you know.

Gina Scott

PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

It's hard to believe it is winter already, as time has passed so quickly. There are many new developments on the horizon and to ensure that wildlife is protected for future generations to enjoy, I hope that people record their local wildlife and notify the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre at <http://sxbr.org.uk/> or iRecord at <http://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/>

Some of the species to record are: all bats, badgers, water voles, reptiles and 'Red Status' birds, which include the following:

Skylark

Lesser spotted woodpecker

Song thrush

Redwing

Starling

House sparrow

Tree sparrow

Linnet

For full details on the birds, please visit the following link - <http://www.bto.org/science/monitoring/psob>

In Chichester we are working with Graylingwell and Roussillon Park and we are hoping to engage with the students of the University of Chichester.

The 'Harvest Festival' at Graylingwell Community Garden was well attended and the delicious garden-grown soup was loved by all. The Graylingwell Community Garden is soon to be relocated as the area is to be developed for another phase of houses, so we look forward to Lindens providing us with an equivalent area for us to nurture.

At the start of November we held our first 'cycle safari', which was from Roussillon Park, across the Broyle estate and down Centurion Way along to Fishbourne and to Chichester Harbour. This included a number of stops, ending up at Fishbourne Creek, enabling us to be mesmerised by the numbers of different winter waders. We refreshed ourselves at the local public house (The Bull's Head) before our return trip. This event wouldn't have been possible without the help and support of the volunteer ride leaders, thank you.

We raised the profile of our project at the Green Fair event in October. The place was buzzing and it was a pleasure to attend and I was very fortunate to have the support and laughter of Gina throughout the day (thank you).



The Bourne area is a very special place, hemmed in between the A27, the railway line and Chichester Harbour, which has European designations for its winter wading birds and rare habitats. We have been trialling guided walks in the local area and again we are so lucky to have such a wealth of wildlife and incredible views. We continue to work closely with Tuppenny Barn, parish councils and biodiversity groups, including the Thorney Island Conservation Group.

In the Fishbourne area I am out weekly checking site signage and talking to walkers with dogs about this special site and how we can all have a positive impact, while enjoying the outdoors. We have confirmed water voles at Fishbourne Creek, where we were lucky enough to see a kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (Amber Status) flash by. Local talks in the area on 'Making a Difference' have again raised the profile of our project.

I continue to raise the profile of Recreation Disturbance issues, working with the 'Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project - task-and-finish group on dog initiatives', an exciting project, which will I hope have a positive impact on the Solent Area. We (Dave Haldane and I), led a walk for the Solent Forum (Natural Environment Group) at Medmerry and as always Dave's knowledge and entertainment made it very successful.

Working together we can make a difference so that future generations can enjoy and safeguard this special area. Many thanks to our dedicated volunteers, local groups, organisations and others who support the work we do.

Sarah Hughes

Happy Christmas to Everyone



from the Editorial Team

WATER VOLE PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

It has been all go this autumn with our last water vole trapping session at Medmerry in September with Row and Pete. We had a chance to look at the new developing water vole habitat and to see if it did in fact have any water voles living in it. Our trapping results were poor as the water voles seemed pretty shy about being examined closely, however when surveying all the ditches we did find lots of evidence that they were about. The vegetation is maturing and some sections are very beautiful with a variety of flowering species. At this time of year there was water along the whole length of the ditch but it was low in parts and starting to get overgrown. The banks are very hard and stony and this may be why we found very few burrows – it will be very interesting to watch this site further.



Photo © 2014 Jane Reeve



Photo © 2014 Jane Reeve

Thanks goes to Row and Pete for including us in this wonderful activity, and to all the volunteers that gave up their time to carry bags, traps, chopped-up fruit and vegetables. The weather was gorgeous and we felt very special being able to access sections of the reserve that are off-limits to the public. However, if I had a pound for every member of the public that asked me when the RSPB car park was going to be open, I would be very rich!

October brought a busy weekend keeping eight volunteers from the Trust for Conservation Volunteers occupied. The majority of them had come along last year and had so much fun that they chose to return.



Photo © 2014 Jane Reeve



Photo © 2014 Sheila Wilkinson

We worked on Florence Pond in Sidlesham on the first day and tidied up the banks. The second day was at Hunston where we opened up a relic pond and adjacent ditches and discovered the reason for the flooding problems in that lane! The third day was spent at Crablands cutting willow and restoring the wet meadow to its previous glory. Chichester TCV joined us so we were able to do a large amount of work and finished with a great bonfire. The Saturday night highlight was the Sidlesham Harvest Supper where we were entertained with comic sketches, singing, dancing and a human puppet show. Yet again the volunteers want to come back – we don't seem to be able to break them!

Thanks must go to the stellar team of MWHG volunteers that supported me during that very intense weekend, particularly Jill, John, Felicity, Tony, Ian, Sheila, and also the evening shift which included Bruce and Pete.

The next challenge for my super-hero volunteers was to remove the alien invasive plant, parrot's feather, from the pond in Bracklesham.



Last year, after three days, we managed to get rid of this plant but it slowly come back. We took out about 8 tonnes this time with everyone staying pretty dry. Tony was great in his chest waders and showed no fear and managed to drag out a huge amount. We found lots of water vole signs so we hope they will appreciate our efforts.

Winter is a time for practical work and our attention will now be focussed on physical management tasks. I am also developing some educational resources with the help of talented artist, Peter White, and they will be published in the New Year.

Thank you for all the support, fun and laughs that we have and for never saying no to some new scheme or project that I land on you!

Jane Reeve

MEDMERRY BY THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



Photo © 2014 John Akerman

The Environment Agency's managed realignment scheme at Medmerry has been hailed as a gold standard of flood risk management, recently winning both the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award and the Civil Engineering Project of the Year Award (£10-£50m). The scheme has won a number of other awards recently including Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management awards for Practical Nature Conservation and Stakeholder Engagement and the Tony Bradshaw Best Practice Award.

Four miles of new floodbank has significantly reduced the risk of coastal flooding to the residents of Selsey and other communities. Shortly after the scheme was completed, a series of serious storms over the winter of 2013/14 put it to the test. Local residents were pleased to report that flooding they would have expected in the past under similar conditions didn't happen, thanks to the scheme.

Following the breach of the shingle bank in September 2013, 183 hectares of important new inter-tidal wildlife habitat have been created and the RSPB is relishing the opportunity to develop the nature reserve. Specially created 'bird islands' provide higher-level roosting and breeding sites and in recent months, large numbers of birds have started using the site, including a pair of black winged stilts, more commonly found in the Mediterranean and not known to have nested in the UK since 1987. However, it isn't just birds that will benefit – across the new floodbanks on the freshwater side, meandering channels, ponds, reed beds, ditches, and grassland areas have been built, encouraging reptiles, dragonflies and mammals such as water voles. We are helping with the monitoring of the site and a report summarising the first year of survey work will be available in the spring.

The scheme is also providing a positive boost to the local economy, with new visitors coming to the area to look at the wildlife and take advantage of the new footpaths and bridleways. Contact the RSPB for the latest information on access and parking on 01243 641508 or email medmerry@rspb.org.uk.

Jeremy Colbeck - Project Manager
National Capital Programme Management Service

WINTER GARDENING

‘Well, that’s put the garden to bed for the winter’ my Grandad would declare, stamping his feet on the back-door mat and rubbing his cold hands together.

What he meant was that all paths had been swept clean as autumn leaves dwindled in a smoking bonfire at the end of the garden; shrubs would be trimmed back, perennials dead-headed and cut down, annuals dug up and thrown onto the compost and everything generally spick and span. Way back then our garden backed onto fields with untamed hedgerows and watery ditches fed by streamlets running from the chalk aquifers of the Downs, so there were plenty of refuges for wildlife beyond the garden fence.

Not so today! Intensive farming methods have seen the demise of many a hedgerow and over-use and chemicals have denuded the soil. In urban situations, with ever more land being tarmacked or paved over to accommodate cars, homes for nature are becoming fewer and gardens, large or tiny, are becoming increasingly important. So here are a few reminders of how to ‘put the garden to bed’ in the 21st Century.

- Keeping paths free from leaves and mud makes sense; but don’t put all the leaves on the compost; those open hessian bags are excellent to allow them to decompose slowly in a corner, while providing a winter home for insects and other invertebrates.
- Heaps of leaves left in a corner together with stacked wood-piles provide homes for hibernating hedgehogs and slow-worms.
- If you have a garden pond this is not the time to remove weed; many aquatic creatures will hide there, and in the sludge at the bottom. If it should freeze make sure a small area is kept ice-free. Frogs and newts may prefer to overwinter away from the water, under stones or in cracks in stone walls, so leave them be until the spring.
- Don’t be too tidy in the flower beds and borders; seed heads can look attractive with frost and raindrops on, and provide valuable nourishment for birds.
- Leave creepers and climbing plants - especially ivy - until the spring to clear to provide refuge from the elements for birds and insects. They are invaluable as food (flowers and berries) and shelter.

You may not think any of these creatures use your garden but you would be surprised. We have never seen slow-worms in ours but our neighbour says she often sees them going under the fence into our wood-pile. Well, we don’t have many slugs....

Gina Scott

Spindleberry



Illustration © 2014 Gina Scott

VALERIE GATEHOUSE

I have recently taken over Health & Safety from John Hiscock for the MWHG. Quite a few people in the group will already know me, but for those who don't here are some details about myself. I live in Highleigh, Sidlesham and have lived here now for 17 years - not a complete newcomer but I still have a few years to go yet. I originate from London and still have an accent that can be identified as coming from South of the Thames.

Belonging to the MWHG for a few years and part of ASHE since its inception has given me quite a bit of insight into the potential risks when carrying out tasks. Fortunately, there seem to have been few incidents or accidents over the years and let's hope it will stay that way. I think most of us at one time or another have made the odd joke about Health & Safety. This is hardly surprising as it now conjures up Draconian measures or simply an excuse for not doing something. However, health and safety are important and not a problem as long as common sense is applied. I now feel that I shouldn't have been leaning on those logs.



I am married to Robin who has lived in Highleigh most of his life, having been brought up here, apart from time he spent at university. Unlike my husband I experienced a somewhat peripatetic existence as a child and as a consequence have lived in many places and varied circumstances, my first ten years being spent in Islington, north London and Balham, south-west London. After having lived in various parts of the country other than London I settled for a while back in greater London in Wealdstone and South Harrow until moving to Sussex when I was twenty. This move to Sussex came about because of a couple of holidays spent here at what was at the time Green Lawns caravan park, Selsey. The caravan I stayed in was owned by the company I worked for and hiring it made for a very cheap and convenient holiday. I liked the area so much that a decision was made to move here. Even in this area I have moved eight times.

My early peripatetic existence led to an education that covered 11 schools and no National Curriculum, so quite difficult to have any continuity in subject matter. This further led to something of a shortfall in education. Over the years I have attempted to make up for this with various studies and completed an honours degree in History as a mature student through an access course which took the place of A-levels. I felt that this in part made up for what I had been short-changed on.

My job experiences have also been many and varied. Moving to Sussex I spent a few years in horticulture and later a year at Chichester College doing a City and Guilds in laboratory technology. This led to a few years as a lab technician working for the electronics firm Dowty. I eventually went back to horticulture and then on to retail, working for and retiring from Homebase.

Other volunteer experience apart from MWHG were the three years spent tutoring people with learning disability one evening a week at Bognor College. This involved helping the students with literacy and numeracy. The students enjoyed the evening as much for its social side as anything else, including the outing once a year and a party at Christmas. It was also an interesting and life-enhancing experience for me.

Valerie Gatehouse

ASHE GROUP

The ASHE group has been very busy coppicing and tidying the ponds we look after, and shortly we will be starting a programme of dipping. In the near future, the Environment Agency will, at last be starting a programme to alleviate the flooding in Earnley parish. Indications are that Morgan's Pond could be dredged and deepened during this operation. We are also very much looking forward to visiting Three Oaks nursery where Debbie and Howard are building a beautiful house made entirely of green oak.

Veronica Wilkes



Working at Morgan's Pond

PUBLICATIONS GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2013 TO 2014

The Annual Report and Accounts was produced by the Group in time for the Annual General Meeting which was held in October. Although this was distributed at the AGM if anyone needs any further copies please let us know through the Newsletter email address of newsletter@mwhg.org.uk



EAST BEACH POND

The pond owes much of its beauty to the common reeds surrounding its margin. This stately plant benefits wildlife in providing shelter, food and nesting opportunities but it is a devil to control. In recent years 2011 and 2013 CDC hired a digger to clear sections and reduce its spread but during the past 18 months the reeds have re-colonised all the areas treated. It is now down to hard work using garden shears to cut out selected areas of emerging stems, deep below the water line. With our limited resources we can only hope to keep the plant in check, while in the murky depths it creeps on relentlessly.

Litter is controlled by a weekly litter-pick which produces about half a dustbin liner of bottles, cans and sweet wrappers. Dog faeces continue to blight the site, as do the delicately knotted yet carelessly deposited black poo bags. We are fortunate that vandalism is minimal, although we do have annoying people who regularly damage perimeter fencing to create a quick entrance onto the site.

The family of swans removed by Brent Lodge in the early summer, when one of the adults required treatment for a leg condition, has now been returned. A pair of swans that moved in during their absence was soon chased off when the family re-established its territory. Predation remains high among the water birds with the highest losses being suffered by a mallard brood of 13 ducklings that was wiped out within a week. Unlike the coots, where both adults protect their young and increase the chicks' chances of survival, the mallard female is a single parent left to safeguard her brood alone.

Photo © 2014 Dave Haldane



Photo © 2014 Dave Haldane



The lone survivor of the original seven Muscovy ducks deposited on the pond is doing well. Having evaded capture when Brent Lodge attempted to remove them in the spring, this female now relies on the companionship of the mallards. People often ask if the Muscovy can cross with mallards. The answer is 'yes' and the offspring of such a union are called mulards and are sterile. So far there is no indication that our amorous drakes wish to prove a point or perhaps they are intimidated by this large and fierce-looking alien.

Dave Haldane

Just look at the colours on the wing of this Daddy-Long-Legs



Photo © 2014 Veronica Wilkes

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
St Andrew's Lodge, Selsey
Selsey Printing and Publishing
Selsey Town Council Office

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: website@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>

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

10 February 2015 (Spring)
10 May 2015 (Summer)
10 August 2015 (Autumn)
10 November (Winter)

EDITORIAL CONTACT DETAILS:

newsletter@mwhg.org.uk
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**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**



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Editorial and illustration team -
Pam Barnes, Peter Driscoll, Carole Hampton, Gina Scott, Peter White*

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