

THE NORFOLK NATTERJACK



The quarterly bulletin of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society

No.26

August 1989

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JOHN FENTON

It is with great sorrow that we record the death on the 21st May 1989 of John Fenton.

For many years John has shared his professional skills in the production of the annual Bird & Mammal Report. He also gave much pleasure to a wide audience throughout the region with his regular series of lectures illustrated by his own excellent slides. His interests covered birds, insects and particularly the varied life of the Seashore. His great knowledge was disseminated in his own light hearted, distinctive, but very informative style. Despite his illness he gave his last lecture to the Society at the Central Library on the 26th April.

He will be greatly missed by his many friends in the Society. we extend our sympathy to Jean and family on their sad loss.

D.A. Dorling.

ERIC LISTER SWANN

Norfolk lost one of it's renowned naturalists in the passing of Eric Swann on 22nd May 1989. He was a past President and a Vice President of the Society, with a lifelong interest in botany his herbarium contained some 5750 plants.

With his great friend the late Dr. Charles Pech he was coauthor of the Flora of Norfolk published to commemorate the Society's centenary in 1968, which he followed up with a supplement in 1975.

For his services to the B.S.B.I. he was made an Hon. member and also President. He disliked crowds, but he was a wealth of information when accompanying a friend to some obscure corner of the county.

He will be greatly missed by his many friends in the Society. We extend our sympathy to Marjorie and family on their sad loss.

Ken Durrant.

THE SOCIETY IN 1946

I recently met Colin Dack who twisted my arm to scribble a few lines for the "Natterjack". In the last issue Colin evaluated on the changes effecting the Society by 2010. Since I joined in 1946 there have been many changes and the most singnifieant in my mind is the great difference in how one become a member over 40 years ago. Younger members joining to-day will have no idea that in those days one was extremely fortunate to be allowed to join. Whereas to-day

the Society welcomes as many new members as they can enrol with open arms.

From the age of fourteen, when the late Sidney George, who was a great all round enthusiast in both natural history and archaeology realised that I was interested in natural history took me under his wing and gave me much encouragement. With long working hours then, I had little leisure time and other interests, including cricket and football took up most of it. I felt sure that Sidney was disappointed that I spent more time playing sport when he was prepared to do his best to help me to become a better naturalist. He used to say, if only you would take more interest in natural history I will do all I can to persuade the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist's Society to admit you as a member. I must have been a great disappointment to him during my teens as I saw less and less of him and when the war started I joined the R.A.F. and did not see him for a few years.

Having spent two years in hospital during the war my early interest in natural history proved to be of great benefit, as I took the opportunity to read all the natural history books that I could find on the library trolley that came round the ward twice a week. This I feel, greatly contributed to my eventual recovery.

After being invalided out of the R.A.F. I resumed my friendship with Sidney and when the war ended he put my name forward as a suitable person to join the Society. I can remember to this day how nervous I was on the evening he took me along to the meeting when I was elected.

Having sat listening to the interesting records of the leading naturalists of the day for one and a half hours, the chairman asked if there was any other business. At this point Sidney stood up and after a long elaboration as to why he considered that I was a suitable person to be enrolled as a member of the Society, he proposed my election. This was seconded by Major Anthony Buxton and upon being put to the meeting, I was accepted as a new member. At this time the annual Transactions of the Society carried the names, addresses and date of joining of all its members. If this was still carried on to-day, Colin would find his computer most useful.

Shortly after joining I attended my first excursion with the society to Blakeney Point. Petrol was only obtainable for essential purposes and this proved a problem, but a former friend of Sidney's came to the rescue. He had to make a legitimate journey to Blakeney and agreed to take four of us in his farm van.

This was a day I shall never forget, as in addition to seeing many migrant birds for the first time, I was introduced to several well known naturalists, including one of the most remarkable characters I have ever met, the late Philip Rumblelow of Yarmouth and from that day we became close friends until his passing on 26th. May 1954. Like Sidney George, he was a great collector of just about everything and I could write a book on the many interesting and informative hours I spent in his company. On one visit to his home he ask if I would like to see his collection of coins. When showing them, he handed me a small one which he said was one of his greatest treasures. It was a Great Yarmouth farthing and if my memory has not failed me it was dated 1663. After looking at it closely I told him that I once dug one up, dated the same year as his. He looked at me in amazement for a minute and then said in his quiet manner, "Surely not". Where and how long ago, were his next questions. I replied, in our garden at Watton when I was 15. He was a gentleman, who I am sure would not disbelieve anyone, but he was completely stunned by my reply. His next question was "What did you do with it"? When I informed him I had given it to Sidney, who insisted on giving me a half crown for it, his face changed completely. Well, well, he said, what a remarkable coincidence - this

is the one that you dug up and Sidney gave it to me years ago as he already had one, amazingly, his was dug up in Yarmouth.

George Jessup.

WINTERTON DUNES

Sunday 16th April

Cold windy weather greeted the 20 or so members who gathered at Winterton Car park "for Natterjacks". However conditions improved in the shelter of the dunes and there much of interest to be seen. Reg Evans mentions particularly a Sand Spider *Arctosa perita* which did not seem any the less active in spite of the cold day. A Common Lizard, however, was so sluggish as to be easily taken but recovered quickly in the warmth of the hand. Tufts of the rather rare Grey Hair Grass *Corynephorus canesceus* were seen - this has also occurred on other coastal sand dunes - and in one area Marram Grass Galls were found, the distorted stems of the grass being infested with a chalcid *Ecorytome* sp.

Perhaps it was primarily the weather that kept the majority of the party to the dunes nearer the car park but there was reward for the half-dozen stalwarts who battled on to the original scrape. It was gratifying to see generous double strings of Natterjack spawn in all of the pools while in one a pair was found in the process of mating and spawning. This made the effort of coping with cold and wind well worthwhile - with the added treat of the sighting of a male Wheatear on the return trek to the car park.

J.A. Dawson.

MOSSYMERE WOOD

Sunday 14th May 1989

A bright day greeted members of the Society who were joined by North Norfolk Naturalists for a pleasant walk through Manningtons Mossymere Wood in undulating countryside. On a 1560 map Mossymere is spelt 'Mossimeer'. The spelling 'meer' distinguishes it from 'mere' a lake and means a bank or boundary. This probably refers to the mossy banks found in most ancient woodland and possibly to the fact that three parishes met in the wood (from M. Appletons notes on the History of Mossymere).

The party of 64 walked along wide paths through mixed woodland looking at the ground flora - an abundance of Bugle, Wood Speedwell, Yellow Pimpernel, Wood Sorrel and Climbing Corydalis. A spring fed pond had been cleared of fallen trees and dug out to encourage water creatures. A visit was made to the large steep-sided hole known as Devils Dish.

Much of the wood is carpeted by Bluebells - the deep blue contrasting with the white of Bird Cherry which is also abundant throughout. In one of the main 'meadow' areas a few early purple orchids were seen with Twayblade (the latter not yet in full flower). Also large patches of Crosswort and in a muddy pool the Ivy Leaved Crowfoot. During the afternoon a close look at the small stream bank revealed a variety of mosses including the lovely *Thuidium tamarascinum* and the liverwort *Pellia epiphylla*. Still in flower was the Moschatel (or Town Hall Clock).

A number of birds were heard including the Cuckoo, Blackcap, Chiff Chaff, Willow Warbler and numerous Chaffinches. Large numbers of bees and others insects were visiting the flowers of the Bird Cherry. Also seen were the Orangetip and Greenveined white butterflies.

The Society's Specialist Groups (Reg Evans, Rex Hancy & Co) were

"somewhere in the wood" collecting information and passing on their expert knowledge (see separate report).

Our thanks to Lord and Lady Walpole for access to the whole area and to Mike Appleton for his help.

Anne Brewster.

HONEYPOT WOOD

21st May 1989

A perfect day for such a venue for those of us who ignored the "Road Closed" signs, left up after the council workmen had finished work for the weekend. Unfortunately one or two members were unable to find their way in, but they finished up at Gressenhall and saw David Bellamy instead.

We were welcomed into the wood by Chiff Chaffs persistently calling. The Bugle *Ajuga reptans* en mass presented a fine show, as did the Water Aven's *Geum rivale* and Herb Bennet *G. urbanum*, it was also pleasing to find so many fine hybrids between them *G. x intermedium*.

The Buttonhole plant or Spring Beauty *Montia perfoliata* was just past its best but still impressive, Twayblades *Lister ovata* and Early purple Orchids *Orchis mascula* were still out as were the Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, although many of them had five leaves instead of four.

The Great Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, for which this wood has always been renowned, were well advanced but the flowering heads were not yet open.

Wall and Small Copper butterflies were numerous, as were many hoverfly species. *Leucozona leucorum* being very conspicuous with its white and black abdomen.

Many of the Oaks were found to have been galled by the Cynipid wasp *Neuroterus quercus - baccarum* which produced the Currant galls on the male catkins and leaves. On emerging they will produce the Common spangle galls on the leaves in the Autumn.

Ken Durrant.

WHAT WAS IT?

28th May 1989

While talking to a neighbour on 18th May I noticed a large bird apparently hovering in the sky. First thoughts were that it was a Kestrel which is the usual local predator however it was clearly too large and also much higher than the usual hovering height of Kestrels. It began to circle much as a buzzard, eagle or vulture does, rising on a thermal until it was almost out of sight, just below a white cumulus cloud in an otherwise clear sky. We looked away a moment and when we looked back it had gone, perhaps obscured in the base of the cloud. While the height is uncertain the direction was a few degrees west of North since Bluebell Road runs due North - South. This would be in the general direction of Costessey and could be the same bird reported circling over that area in the E.D.P., on 10th May which a later correspondent recorded as probably an Osprey. 27th May there was another mention in the E.D.P., recorded as a buzzard or eagle seen over Quebec Park, Dereham. It would be interesting to know if any member definitely identified the bird.

P. Cambridge.

HORSEY MERE AND DUNES

4th June 1989

We were welcomed near the mill by Mr. John Buxton on a very windy and showery morning. The party split up into two, one taking the offer of a boat trip across the mere to see the Great Crested Grebes and Bearded Tits, also the Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis*. The other party taking the marsh path to Waxham Cut and back. Many of the Common Reed *Phragmites australis* were found to have been galled by the dipteron *Lipara lucens* forming the familiar cigar galls, on opening a number of them they were found to have been parasitised by the Chalcid *Pteromalus liparae*. A Marsh Harrier was quartering the marsh ahead of us.

After lunch and another heavy shower we all made our way to the dunes, here the bank sheltered us from the very strong wind coming off the sea. Wall, Small Copper and Small heath butterflies also took advantage of this, Assassin flies *Dysmachus trigonus* were sheltering where the sand was bare ready to pounce upon any other insect with the same idea. One even tried to attack a Small Heath butterfly.

Caterpillars of the Garden Tiger and Drinker moths were found, also many specimens of the variable banded snail with the brown lip *Cepaea nemoralis*. The Viviparous Lizards were taking advantage of the intermittent bursts of sunshine. One specimen was minus tail having no doubt sacrificed it to some predator. Larks and Meadow Pipits kept up a tirade of song.

Every Cat's - ear *Hypochoeris radicata* found had been galled by the gall wasp *Phanacis hypochaeridis* as witnessed by their swollen and twisted stems. Before taking a photograph of one particular contorted specimen, members were given a demonstration on gardening in the photographic sense by Colin with his secateurs. Hawkweeds were similarly galled, but higher up the stems, by another wasp *Aulacidea hieracii*. Weld *Reseda luteola* and Tansey *Tanacetum vulgare* were also present. At the edge of the sand dunes two mummified Drinker moth caterpillars were taken attached to rushes, suspecting them to have been parasitised I was not surprised when a week later each produced an Ichneumon wasp *Rogas unipunctata* Thun. through a hole chewed at the rear end of the corpse.

We returned to the mill via the fields, the path was lined with Wild Radish *Raphnus raphanistrum*. Nearly home we passed by a herd of cattle containing a huge Charollais bull, to the trepidation of a few of the members, but he continued chewing his cud and ignored us.

Ken Durrant.

PROGRAMME 1972 - 1990

Norfolk is a large county especially if you have to arrange excursions for a Society such as the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' with widespread membership.

The Robinson family have been doing this for a number of years - finding suitable sites, keeping up to date with contacts, making numerous telephone calls and making sure the leader turns up. For the indoor meeting (where the Lecture Room has to be booked well in advance) the problem is to find a speaker who is free on a particular evening. Also added to this a good coverage of habitats and of course subjects in natural history to cater for all tastes and you have a Programme such as the 1989/90 now in use.

Our thanks to Joyce, Bob and Diane for their dedication over the years. Also for their continuing interest in the Society especially with the Photographic Group.

Anne Brewster.

SOCIAL EVENING

If no-one has any better suggestions, we propose to organise the Social Evening on 11th November this year in the same way as we did last year.

Rex and I are willing to carry out the arrangements as we have for the past two years and invite volunteers, who like cooking to add to the diversity of dishes. So if you would like to offer to prepare a goodly portion of your favourite recipe, please let us know - you will be reimbursed for the cost.

The charge for each ticket will be £2.75 so save up your pennies and book early, numbers will be limited to around 60.

Tickets will be on sale after the summer break when we begin evening meetings indoors, or phone us at home from September onwards.

Rex and Barbara Hancy. (Norwich 860042)

WORKSHOPS

19th October 1989. Norfolk Moth Survey annual review meeting.

24th October 1989. Fungi workshop.

All workshops are held at 7.30 p.m. in the Castle Museum, Norwich, where car parking is free (no competition with theatre goers !)

The Microscopy Group holds meeting every couple of months. Please contact Tony Irwin at the Castle Museum (Natural History) if you would to be put on the mailing list.

Tony Irwin.

Many thanks to members who bought houseplants at the meeting in the Library Lecture Theatre on 10th May.

The sale raised £3.50 which I have sent to Harry Nicerson of the Marine Life Rescue at Bacton. Harry worked hard caring for and rescuing some of the seals in the recent epidemic and has at present several injured seabirds in his care.

Barbara Hancy.

I would like to attend the indoor meeting (and some of the outing far afield from my area) but I do not like to drive into the City after dark. Is there any member near me who would be willing to give me a lift, if I came to their house if it is out of the way to come to Swannington. I am over 70 and unused to driving in the city.

Miss Jean Mayhew 5, Swan Close, Swannington, Norwich. NR9 5NG

Tel:- Norwich 860850

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NEXT NATTERJACK. I must have all contributions for the next Natterjack well before the **1st October 1989**. So that the information about the Society's Social Evening can be with you in good time. Contributions to Colin Dack, 12, Shipdham Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk. NR19 1JJ.

Will members please carry on collecting the petrol / oil gift vouchers. Vouchers collected will be used to exchange for prizes for the Society Social Evening Raffle. Please give the vouchers to Rex Hancy or Colin Dack.