

The background of the page is a photograph of a large, leafy tree in a grassy field under a clear sky. The image is slightly faded to allow text to be read over it.

autumn 2013

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a word from the chair

The myriad orange and brown tones of turning leaves reflected in the millpond-still waters of Perch Pond beneath a pale blue sky. The raucous calls of excited Jays as they carry their prized acorn haul to secret hiding places. Parties of Swallows and House Martins passing into a light headwind as they perform the first leg of their long journey south. And crisp cool mornings when a blanket of fog rests like cotton wool over Wanstead Flats.

Everyone has their own favourite time of year but mine is early autumn, and I think this is when our area is at its most beautiful. Of course, in the natural world nature has already started as a glance at the reports sections in this newsletter show. Migrant birds have been passing through our area since early August; take a look at Nick Croft's bird report to find out about some of the exciting visitors we've had. We can expect more new arrivals between now and the start of winter. Why not join us on one of

our monthly waterbird counts to track the return of those ducks that have been away for the summer? Or come on one of our 'awaydays' to places of natural history interest a little further afield. To get an idea of what one of these is like, see Kathy Hartnett's report of a summer trip to Vange and Wat Tyler Marshes.

Warm autumn days can also be good for insects. Sun-basking Speckled Wood butterflies and Common Darter dragonflies can still be seen in Wanstead Park well into October, and we could well encounter some on our waterbird walks. The variety described in Paul Ferris's invertebrate report gives an indication of what a good year it has been for butterflies and moths locally.

Although most plants have finished flowering, there is still plenty of botanical interest. Ever-popular botanist Tricia Moxey will be very busy on behalf of the Group this autumn, writing about oaks and acorns in this issue, then giving a talk on 'lower' plants at Wanstead House on 30 September and leading our annual fungus foray in Bush Wood on 20 October.

Most of our activities provide enjoyment and education, but lots of other projects our members are involved in can be routine, even mundane. For example, our autumn and winter practical work tasks start up

again in early October with the ever-popular boat trip to Lincoln's Island to clear the 'daffodil lawn', and discussions have now started with the Bush Wood Residents' Association to do joint conservation work. Our friends in the Lakehouse Lake Project have worked tirelessly for years to accomplish a revamped, leak-free Jubilee Pond, which can provide a pleasant environment for people to relax and – among other things – enjoy the sight of some ducks and gulls. That aim is now well on its way to being achieved, as Rob Howells describes.

The changes that have taken place in that corner of Wanstead Flats represent just the latest event in a constant process of evolution determined by geology, climate and – especially in our area – human activity stretching back thousands of years, as contributions by Peter Aylmer (Essex geology), Mark Gorman (PoW camps on Wanstead Flats) and Tony Morrison (Eastbury Manor) describe.

And I haven't even had a chance to mention a member's wildlife experiences in Scotland, our bat walks and survey work, and the various snail-racing, pond-dipping and den-building activities of the Nature Club!

I hope you enjoy the newsletter and look forward to seeing you on an activity soon.

Regards Tim



a word from the editor

Welcome to the Spring Wren newsletter. Remember this is an electric newsletter so we can include links to other sites and snippets of information. When you see blue underlined text it means that it is a link. Just click on the link for more information or to be taken to another site. Clicking the link will always take you to another

frame so your newsletter will still be there in the background – just close the new window to continue reading your newsletter.

Previous newsletters can now be found on the wren website at <http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/about-us/newsletter/>

Remember this is your newsletter and will not survive without your support so if you have any news, views or stories please send them to me at editor@wrengroup.org.uk



gossiping rambles

Taken from 'Round London' Publishing Company's *Gossiping Rambles in Suburban Essex, Epping Forest and Beyond*, published in 1908 and written by Charles William Burdett. His guide gives a marvellous setting of scene at the beginning of the last century at a time of transformation from the village era to the urban townscape we know today.

Researched by Tony Morrison

Picture - Valentines Mansion

The G.E.R. from Liverpool Street runs by way of Stratford to Ilford, near which station is a line branching off due north via Newbury Park, Hainault and Woodford, curving round till it again reaches Liverpool St., via Stratford; a true Rundreise. The portion from Ilford to Woodford is quite new, and has opened out a part of Essex which before was unserved by any railway. We take a single ticket to Ilford, 7d., as we wish to break our journey here to inspect this beautiful suburban place, and its magnificent pleasure resort Valentine Park. Probably no part of England has seen such remarkable changes in a few brief years as the one now under consideration.



The clocktower as it would have looked during the rambles of Charles William Burdett.

Standing on the crest of the hill which rises from the Roding, it has developed from a small rural village into a large and important township with many thousands of inhabitants, has a splendid town hall, and a fine service of electric cars, uniting it with East Ham, Seven Kings and Chadwell Heath, which latter place is very near to Romford. Another route runs to Barking, while yet a third goes in the opposite direction to Barkingside,

formerly a hamlet but now becoming an important part of Ilford.

Ilford "the Eastern Queen."

The population of Ilford is largely composed of City men and their families, the husbands finding Ilford to be a delightful place after the rush and turmoil of the day.



The bandstand as it was at the turn of the last century.

It has many fine shops well stocked with all the essentials of life and many of its superfluities; its social, scholastic, and religious needs are well looked after, and its handsome rows of streets, avenues, roads, and "gardens " make it a most desirable place to live in. It has three good parks, and being within so easy a distance of town is an ideal suburban residence. It has a very handsome Town Hall though it is not yet a borough, but no doubt that distinction will soon be conferred upon it. It is a place with a considerable amount of historical association, and as these are the days of pageants Ilford too is putting on her considering

cap to see if she also has not enough of interest wherewith to form one. The name of Seven Kings, (now an integral part of Ilford) arises from the fact that tradition assigns this as the meeting place of the seven Saxon monarchs who reigned in England all at one time: the Duke of Finland, and the Earl of Leicester with their respective suits also met here when the Duke was on his way to sue for the hand of Queen Elizabeth; and many other events occurred which have now passed into the domain of history.

Cranbrook Park

On leaving the station we turn to the left, along the Cranbrook Road until we reach Cranbrook Park on our right. This is quite different from the neighbouring Wanstead Park, consisting mostly of wide stretches of grass land, with here and there fine specimens of elm trees. On the left of the entrance is a pretty wooded dingle with winding walks, and the musical sound of running water we hear comes from the overflow of the boating and bathing lake immediately in front, tumbling along in a series of tiny cascades. The fine ornamental clock tower facing the lake was presented to Ilford by the same gentleman who gave the bridge over the Short Cut before mentioned. Many people are on the lake, spending a happy time in, rowing round and round; sounds of joyful laughter from youth and maiden delight the ear.

Still bearing to the left we cross the open space near the Band Stand, admiring the small but pretty beds of flowers dotted over the greensward, and stay for a few minutes to watch some of the " City Fathers " playing at the old fashioned game of bowls on the very fine green, which is one of the

best to be seen anywhere.

Smooth as careful cutting can make it, well laid, well rolled, it attracts many players, and sees many a bloodless battle fought upon its even surface. One thinks involuntarily of the good old days of Raleigh and the stout-hearted Englishmen who went on playing with the Spanish fleet in sight.



Valentine Mansion at the turn of the last century

The stirring words of Francis T. Falgrave arise to our mind on "Elizabeth at Tilbury."

"Let them range their seven mile crescent,
Giant galleons, canvas wide !
Our's will harry them, board, and carry them,
Plucking the plumes of the Spanish pride."

Happily we live in more peaceful days, though doubtless the men of Essex would again rise to repel any invader who should dare to set foot upon their beloved coast.

In itself Cranbrook Park offers no particular

features of interest to distinguish it from scores of others elsewhere.

The Valentines

But it is our nearest way to one of the quaintest and prettiest spots to be found in Essex, namely The Valentines, which immediately adjoins it. This estate belongs to the Ingleby family, and Mr. Ingleby very generously gave the beautiful grounds to the people of Ilford.



Valentine Mansion as it is today

There are several approaches to it, as it is in the centre of a somewhat extensive estate. The large house on our left is The Valentines, whence the pleasance we are visiting derives its name. We wander by the little brook, and at the end of the path we suddenly enter upon a fairy-like scene which fills us with delight. Facing us is a grand oak tree, which has withstood the storms of centuries; immediately to our right is one of the finest cedar trees in the kingdom, estimated to be at least 500 years old, and of noble, even gigantic proportions; while a beautiful sheet of water whose edge is

fringed with waving sedges fills the scene and satisfies the eye by completing the harmony of the picture. Following the path to our left we presently emerge into the Bower Walk, a very pleasing perspective resulting from the large number of arches covered with honeysuckle and other climbing plants. This conducts us to what many people consider the feature of the Valentines, the beautiful Tudor Lake, quiet, solemn, grand. Around it clings an old-world air telling of other times and other men; it suggests the gay cavalier whispering his sweet nothings in the ear of his fair lady love, or the pensive poet contemplating "a ballad to his mistress' eyebrow" as he sighs again.

Hard by is a deep recess in the wall, where the contemplative may sit to rest awhile as they muse upon the vanished glories of other days, or where the student of nature may watch the gambols of insect, bird, and animal, as they sport around him. Along the high moss-topped wall are planted many fruit trees, whose long stems and branches relieve



Originally the gardener's cottage now a pleasant cafe with outdoor seating in a walled garden.

its monotony. In the flower bed running the length of this same wall is a glorious growth of lilies of the valley, which in May and June, and sometimes earlier in the year fill the place with the delicate beauty of their fairy-like bells, which no doubt ring tunes to charm the ears of Queen Mab and her attendant elves.

Jacob's Well.

Turning to the right over the low-arched bridge, we arrive at Jacob's Well, a flint domed structure five or six feet high, which is fed by a delightfully clear spring of pure water.



The old cedar tree at the turn of the last century sadly no longer there.

It is as calm as the surface of a mirror, and as clear as the one in which Narcissus gazed when he fell in love with his own beauty, and was turned into a flower in consequence. One can almost imagine it to be the haunt even yet of some fair water sprite who eagerly emerges from the rush-grown stream near at hand, to use Jacob's Well as a looking glass for her dishevelled tresses. Fauns and pixies

no longer are believed in; the only inhabitants of the stream and pools in these prosaic days are some fine carp of very advanced age, and many ferocious fresh water sharks, fierce, cruel, and cunning, and scores of water rats which carefully hide as a rule while visitors are about; while moor hens, Egyptian geese and other water fowl animate the scene with their loves and hates, very much like those of the human bipeds who know so little about them, but who assume to know so much. These poor birds have a hard struggle to rear their young. It is no uncommon thing for a brood of eight or ten fluffy little chicks to be reduced to two or even one by the rapacity of the rats, who seize the young birds from under the very wings of their mother at times. The old birds stand guard over their offspring and do battle royal with the marauders, but even then many victims die annually. But we must hasten on.

The Bishop's Walk

Near Jacob's Well is a short but very pretty avenue of yew trees, known as the Bishop's Walk which should not be overlooked. It is just the place for a Bishop's meditative promenade, and no doubt has soothed and calmed many a turbulent mind by its quiet beauty. A gentle incline leads to a small knoll at either end, while a central seat gives a fine view of the Tudor Lake below, and the leafy avenues right and left. We stroll along one of these on our left in order to obtain a nearer view of the Cedar of Lebanon before referred to, noting on our way the glorious sheen of the dark leaves on the rhododendrons, and the more delicate green of the azaleas.

We also note the tremulous beauty of the foliage of



Cranbrook Park Tea House at the turn of the last century sadly no longer there.

a fine Indian Bean. If we happen to be here in the months of May or June, then this part of the Valentines is one grand blaze of many coloured fire. Next we pass on to stand beneath the wide spreading branches of the Cedar. Its majestic bole springs proudly up, thick strong branches finding ample support from it on every side, covered with the dark green leaves characteristic of the tree, spreading out many yards in circumference.

Having sufficiently admired this giant standing in his solitary grandeur, we turn our faces to the pathway on our right, and make our way out through the gate at the top end, leaving the mansion on our left. We are once more in the Cranbrook Road, though low a considerable distance from where we first entered Cranbrook Park; and turning to our right, a brisk walk brings us to the end of the road into the route of the electric cars which run from Ilford to Barkingside.

Researched by Tony Morrison





acorns ..

and the regeneration of oak woodlands

A bumper crop of acorns occurs every so often and these are called mast years. 2006 and 2011 were mast years and 2013 appears to be one too, but not just for acorns, as other trees are also heavily laden with fruits.

This irregularity of cropping is well documented and is linked to weather patterns.

Allowing swine to eat acorns or beech mast in woodlands was known as pannage. Often the oak trees were kept short by being pollarded and contemporary illustrations suggest the unripe acorns were knocked out of the trees so the pigs could eat them. Unripe acorns are poisonous to cattle and deer, so letting the pigs eat the green ones was good husbandry.

A good mast year meant greater food security for the human families and of course for the wildlife too. Frequently a good crop of apples and other fruits happens in the same season and so there is plenty to go round. The fruit eating mammals and birds survive in greater numbers and any seeds left over stand some chance of germinating in due course, thus adding to the stock of new trees or shrubs. Jays hide acorns in grassy areas at just the right depth for successful germination, as acorns dry out easily if not covered with leaves or soil. They do not eat all the hidden ones and some of those planted in open areas will germinate and flourish.

However, allowing pigs into woodlands comes at a price as they are omnivores and root around in the ground for sustenance. They consume roots, seeds, insects, worms and fungi and in their enthusiastic foraging churn up the ground surface, damaging established vegetation as they do so. A thousand or so years ago, pannage was well established but controlled autumnal activity with the pigs only allowed into specific areas where the damage they caused did not interfere with potential woodland regeneration sites.

Whist pig keeping continues to thrive; few individuals now own their own pigs. Most of us live in urban areas and as pigs are farm animals there are many regulations relating to keeping such livestock. However, the tradition of turning out pigs to feed on the fallen autumn fruits still survives in the New Forest, where it is carefully controlled. Certain seeds can live within their intestines for several days and pig droppings provide them with an ideal growing medium some distance from where they were eaten!

Pigs were introduced into the USA in the 16th century. Since then pigs have escaped and there are now large feral populations which cause significant ecological problems within large areas of California and Texas damaging the vegetation, competing with native wildlife and causing erosion of the land surface in sensitive areas. In the past couple of decades, concerns about the ecological impact of these feral pigs in many parts of the world have resulted in a range of scientific studies and the adoption of damage control measures.

Whilst reports of feral pigs are uncommon in the UK, since the 1990's records of escaped wild boar have increased with established populations now established in Kent, Sussex and Gloucestershire. There are occasional reports from Essex too! In 2008 DEFRA produced a Wild Boar Action Plan to offering advice to local landowners where they are found. Like the domesticated pig, wild boars are mainly

vegetarian but their diet can include insects, larvae, eggs, small mammals and carrion, but their main influence might be as a competitor for acorns, depriving jays and other mammals such as badgers of this valuable food. Fewer surviving acorns will mean less oak regeneration.

Today, free range pigs no longer have an impact on the ecology of Epping Forest as they ceased to be part of its



For the mediaeval peasant a good crop of acorns meant food through the lean winter months as their pigs could be fattened in the woods before being slaughtered and preserved to provide many tasty meals! "Harvesting acorn to feed swine"; detail of a miniature from the Queen Mary Psalter. Held and digitised by the British Library. Date 1310-1320. Copyright expired.

regular fauna some years ago. However, it is interesting to speculate as to what was their possible ecological impact towards the end of the 19th century when there were still pigs loose in the Forest in the Wanstead and Leyton areas!

This was one of the problems facing William D'Oyley, who was the first Superintendent of Epping Forest! In his recent publication about William D'Oyley (Morris, Richard. 2013. William D'Oyley Loughton Historical Society). Richard Morris quotes from the committee records on 28 October 1879 that: 'there are great complaints of the Pigs rooting and destroying the vert (green vegetation) – both in Leyton & Wanstead, otherwise that portion of the

November 8th and on no account to be allowed on it unless properly rung (A ring through the nose of the pig limiting the depth of its rooting for food and reducing damage to the ground). Note the consequence off not attending to the ringing is most disastrous to the Forest. Some people assert that pigs have a right to common all the year round. If so they should be vigilantly watched by the Reeves and if not properly rung, pounded.'

Local pig keeping declined as urbanisation increased, the animals being confined to pig farms instead. Rather than maintaining the tradition of pannage, it seems that even during the 1940s' people were being paid 1s a bushel to collect acorns from Epping Forest to be fed to pigs in sties elsewhere.

The City of London has used pigs as a management tool in some of its other woodland sites as they churn up the woodland floor and encourage regeneration of the ground flora, thus increasing biodiversity. With sufficient controls in place, a resumption of pannage might be an interesting experiment within Epping Forest!



Article by
Tricia Moxey

Forest is very free from other nuisances.'

In a separate report he also comments that: 'I have always understood that the time allowed for swine to common on the Forest is from Sept 14th to

jubilee pond update

This has been a pivotal year in the history of the Jubilee Pond. This time last year there were plans for the repair and development of the pond but no guaranteed finance to carry out these plans.

Now, the pond has been relined and the first stage of the landscaping nearing completion thanks to revenue from the rental of the Fairground Flats to the Metropolitan Police during the Olympic Games and substantial funding from the City of London.

There were a number of project and design meetings held both before and during the project. The Lakehouse Lake Project was represented at all of these meetings which enabled us to present local views and to be able to

report back to the local community with authority. Work started on site early in the spring with the relining of the pond and, when this stage was completed, was followed by the work of re-landscaping the surrounding area.

In addition to the scheduled work, the scrub along Dames Road and part of Lake House Road has been cleared and the London Plane trees along Dames Road have been lifted. The

overall result has been that the whole vista has been opened up and the pond can now be clearly seen from the road. Clearing the scrub has resulted in a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

It is already evident that the pond is being used by a far greater number of people than before and the new path and the provision of additional benches has made the area far more accessible to those with restricted



mobility. The building of a natural play area adjacent to the existing playground has proved popular and the pond in general is being visited by more family groups.

Work will start soon on installing rubbish bins, completing the cycle racks and re-instating the car park. There will be some limited planting on



*Stanley Ginsberg - Deputy
Chairman of the City
Corporation's Epping Forest
Committee addressing members
of the project*

the margins of the pond this autumn followed by additional planting in the spring. It has always been the idea that there will be minimal planting so that native species can establish themselves naturally.

We have continued litter picking

throughout the summer and will hold our first pond dip in the new pond using the platform that was finished by volunteers including members of the Lakehouse Lake Project.

Before our Annual General meeting on Monday 19th August representatives of Epping Forest and members of the Lakehouse Lake Project met by the pond and heard an address by Deputy Chairman of the City Corporation's Epping Forest Committee, Stanley Ginsberg. They

then walked around the pond to view the developments before the AGM

Now that the project is nearing completion we can start planning activities for next year when we hope to hold more activities which will enable all of the local community to both benefit from and appreciate the Jubilee Pond.

Article and pics by Rob Howell

making the landscape

It would be easy, as you belt along the A12 or head north up the M11, to think that Essex is simply that unexceptional place you have to pass through before more interesting scenes arrive. That really does no justice to the variety of the Essex landscape, and the geologic and human forces that shape it still.

Indeed, the whole point of this mini-series for the Wren newsletter is to demonstrate how much contemporary English nature writing has drawn out the remarkable that has too often passed for commonplace. Time now to examine in greater detail the geology that underpins that natural aspect.

Two 1999 books stand out: The Essex Landscape, John Hunter's study for the estimable Essex Record Office; and Gerald Lucy's Essex Rock, for the Essex Rock & Mineral Society. The wealth of technical detail in the latter is leavened by a gift for description of the prehistoric, amply realised with visuals from ammonite to mammoth; Hunter widens out his study to examine the effect of landscape on the lives of Essex men and women. It's worth quickly re-stating the basic facts about Essex geology. The far north-west of the county is chalk land, and there is chalk too in the south, mostly in Thurrock. Indeed the two are one

feature, the chalk underpinning virtually the whole county but disappearing perhaps 400ft below. Between is a clay basin; across it, half a million years ago, flowed the Thames. But even this basin is not

unvariegated. Ice Age glaciers, repeatedly pushing south – as far as Hornchurch – and retreating north, not only moved the Thames, they scoured the land-surface, dragging materials from elsewhere and uncovering new deposits. Hence in much of northern Essex, newer Boulder Clay (perhaps 80,000 years old) overlays London

Clay. The two are sufficiently different to affect the agricultural uses of the county: the former has enough chalk and lime bundled within it to be good for crop growing, whereas sheep and cattle thrive on the latter.

But Hunter goes well beyond this simple analysis, linking geology to the pattern of land-use throughout the recorded history of Essex. In this he follows that WG Hoskins, the godfather of this approach through his influential *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955). Within 20 years, Hoskins' approach had been applied to the counties bordering Essex, but not Essex itself. "Probably just as well," writes Hunter, pointing to more recent archaeological work – paradoxically, much of it stimulated by the rapid development of the county – which has helped flesh out what would have otherwise been slim pickings.

So it's Lucy to find out what was the Essex landscape, and Hunter to find out what has been, if that's not too fine a distinction. But what of what will be? As Hunter points out, a county council report of 1972 warned of an open landscape dominated by "poles, wires, pylons, crude prefabricated buildings"; the prairie-farm movement was then at its height. We have stepped back from that. But as he warns, "prosperity is a key ingredient of an integrated and harmonious landscape", and at the present time we should all be worried about that.

Article and pic
by Peter Aylmer



going bats in the park



“I can hear one over there,” 10-year-old Jacob told me, pointing to the north side of Perch Pond. He meant a bat, but I could hear nothing. Moments later the bat detector I was holding began to emit the characteristic “chip-chop” rhythm of an echolocating Noctule, probably the same individual that Jacob had heard. Proof, if any was needed, that young ears are able to hear higher-frequency sounds than adults. The Noctule actually flew in front of us, over the pond, which was still conveniently reflecting the brightness of the half-lit western sky. The high-pitched ‘shouts’ it was emitting operate as a kind of radar, with the reflected sound indicating the presence of food – moths and other flying insects.

Pipistrelle in flight - pic courtesy of Wiki

In fact, for half an hour our group of 27 listened and watched in amazement as bat after bat flew over our heads, around the trees of The Dell, and over the water – all the time giving their own distinctive echolocation calls, which were translated to frequencies audible to human ears (even grown-ups!) by the detectors. The vast majority were Common and Soprano Pipistrelles, but we did have a couple of Daubenton's Bats and another Noctule. At times, the sound of our battery of bat detectors was cacophonous. We spent some time by the Cedar of Lebanon, in the hope of getting some views of Daubenton's hunting over the Ornamental Water, but with no luck. Then, returning to our starting point at the tea hut, we were treated to more swooping, gliding and careering pipistrelles. Since the demand for places on the 15 August walk had been so great, another was organised

for a fortnight later, and this time nine participants were able to enjoy a repeat performance.



There was other batty activity in Wanstead Park during August, too, namely the Waterways Survey conducted for the Bat Conservation

Trust to enumerate Daubenton's Bats along the River Roding. Myself and Sharon Payne conducted two nighttime surveys along a stretch of the river and recorded a good number of 'passes' of Myotis bats (Myotis is the genus to which Daubenton's belongs, but it is not its only member!). Getting views of the bats skimming the water surface (a requirement for clinching their ID) proved very frustrating since only short stretches of river can be seen at any one place. With the exception of one obliging individual, the bats we kept picking up could have been Natterer's or Whiskered, though my money would still be on Daubenton's.

One surprise on our second transect was picking up the very distinctive echolocation 'shouts' of a Serotine, the first of this large bat species I have encountered locally.

Thanks to Mark Harris and Richard Oakman for their assistance on the 15 August walk. If you'd like to find out more about the UK's bats, take a look at the website of the Bat Conservation Trust: <http://www.bats.org.uk/>

Tim Harris

Photo: Anita McCullough

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.





invertebrate report summer 2013

Report and pics by Paul Ferris

At the end of May we were just beginning to experience some warmth after a long cold spring. At the beginning of June butterflies were starting to appear in greater numbers: **Small Heaths** were reported from the Plain in Wanstead Park on 1st June, as well as **Green-veined Whites**, and **Common Blue** in the Exchange Lands on 4th. So too did the day-flying moths **Burnet Companion** and **Mother Shipton** on the 5th, in the Park and the Exchange Lands respectively.

These two are closely-related species, somewhat similar in size and general appearance but with different wing-patterns. The name of the first comes from the fact that it flies at a similar time of year as the **Burnet Moth** - another day-flying moth. The Mother Shipton has a wing pattern that has been likened to a caricature image of a famous witch known as **Mother Shipton**.

As it happened, the first Burnet Moths were not in fact seen until sometime later, in mid-July. On 21st July, the Wren Group did a walk at which Burnet Moths were seen in numbers, particularly at the top of the Glade. Freshly emerged moths were flying, and their distinctive cocoons were found attached to plant stems.

There was an immediate identification of **Five-spot Burnet** (main picture), but it was necessary to point out that counting the spots depended on how you viewed them. In fact, I've never seen a Five-spot locally, and these were the more common and widespread **Six-spot Burnets**.

Back to butterflies, and the next couple of months saw quite a profusion in both numbers and species. A couple of notables spotted by Nick Croft were a **Clouded Yellow** on 11th June and a **Painted Lady** on 20th June. Kathy Hartnett also saw a **Painted Lady** in the Glade on 4th August. After the discovery of the **Green Hairstreak** butterflies in May, another new butterfly species was noted in the area on 20th July. Kathy and I were wildlife-spotting in Wanstead Park, and she asked me if **Ringlet** butterflies had ever been seen there, as she'd recently seen them for the first time elsewhere. I told her that to my knowledge, they

hadn't. Shortly afterwards, a smallish dark butterfly or moth flew up and away from me as we passed through some tall vegetation, and Kathy spotted where it landed. She looked through her binoculars and exclaimed "Paul, I think it's a Ringlet!" It was, and we both managed to get decent photographs of the – as yet – only Ringlet to have been seen in our area.



Ringlet Butterfly

As for moths other than those seen out and about, both Tim Harris and myself put out moth traps in our respective gardens, Tim's more powerful trap encouraging more specimens than mine. I experimented a bit with the placement of the trap, a couple of times putting it on the upstairs front window-sill, overlooking Wanstead Flats. This may well give rise to the possibility of some different species from the usual back-

garden position, but the limited times I've tried it makes that inconclusive. By the end of July, I had accumulated 29 species that I hadn't been aware of in the area before, twenty of these being the smaller or "micro" species. I know that Tim has also found species "new" to our area, but as yet we have not compared results. One species that has returned this year to both our moth traps and a couple of times to my garden is the impressive **Jersey Tiger**, first recorded last year and making quite a show this. Due to its large size and bright colouring, and the fact that it can easily be seen during the day, it could easily be mistaken for a butterfly. Tim also reported 12 **Small Elephant Hawkmoths** in June and July, 4 **Elephant Hawkmoths** in July, a **Gypsy Moth** on 7 August, and a **Garden Tiger** moth on 11 August. The last species has undergone a dramatic collapse in numbers in recent years so that was an exciting catch.

Talking of moths and butterflies, it is often asked what the difference is. Essentially there is no difference: they are both members of the Order Lepidoptera, with what we call butterflies being placed within a group of families towards the middle of the moths. It really is just an arbitrary name that we give them, based on a mix of their sizes, their shapes, their colours and the fact that

some Lepidoptera fly during the day and some at night. Of course, butterflies tend not to fly during the night, but certainly there are quite a few day-flying moths.



Dragonfly - Libellula quadrimaculata

We can usually easily distinguish between Lepidoptera and another group of insects, the Odonata. These are the dragonflies and damselflies - although I am often asked what the difference is between these. In this case they are divided into two Suborders, the Anisoptera and the Zygoptera. For everyday purposes, however, it is enough to say that dragonflies – the Anisoptera - rest with their wings outstretched like an aeroplane and damselflies - the Zygoptera - fold their wings back along their body. After the slow start to the year the dragons and the damsels put in a spectacular emergence in June and on some

days in both June and July, blue damselflies were seemingly everywhere - around the waters or over the grasslands. One of my favourites is the **Banded Demoiselle** - a damselfly which might be mistaken for a dragonfly - and we are lucky to have a good population of these, centred on the River Roding, it seems. The first that I noted was a female by the river in the exchange lands on 2nd June. A dragonfly species of note was **Four-spotted Chaser**. I have only seen one of these before, but on 13th July there were a few of them by the Heronry Pond one day. Interestingly, I haven't seen one subsequently.



Mesosa nebulosa beetle

In my moth trap on 25th July was a strange-looking beetle, which I endeavoured to try to identify off the internet, as my field-guides yielded no results. Trying to identify wildlife - perhaps especially invertebrates - from pictures is Very unreliable, but

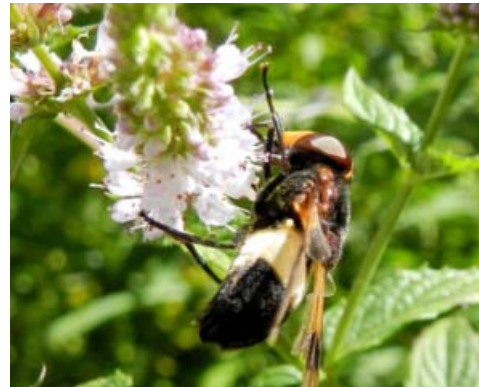


Stag Beetle - pic by Pamela Gamesby

There were similarities to an invasive species known as the **Asian Longhorn Beetle**. Now this particular beetle poses a very great threat to Woodland, And although I wasn't at all sure that it was this species, Just to be on the safe side I contacted the forestry commission and included a photograph. They showed very serious and urgent interest and sent the photograph off for identification from experts. Thankfully it came back as a representative of a native species of longhorn *Mesosa nebulosa*, which does not pose a threat.

General observations have shown a variety of other invertebrates: bees, wasps, grasshoppers and bush crickets, insects and bugs as well as others. What you notice to be out there depends on a variety of factors, not least of which is how often you go out looking. although butterflies, moths, dragonflies and damselflies

seem to be doing OK after a poor last-summer and a late start to much Spring and Summer this year, my own perception is that other creatures including beetles and bugs and hoverflies haven't been so numerous. That said, there have been a couple of sightings of **Stag Beetles** this year, including one by the Hollow Pond and another that dramatically flew over as the Epping Forest Outdoor Group was having an evening barbecue at Snaresbrook.



hoverfly - Volucella pellucens

I may be wrong, of course, and others may have been aware of lots of things that I have missed. I do do other things and in fact during August didn't do much wild-lifeing. Only during the last days of the month was I able to note that spiders seemed to be all over the garden - particularly the ubiquitous Garden Spider **Araneus diadematus** itself, and in the longer grass of places like Wanstead Flats and the Park the



Araneus diadematus - garden spider

striking Wasp Spider **Argiope bruennici**. Hoverflies seemed too at last seemed to be in profusion, including the large and somewhat bee-like **Volucella pelucens** and **Volucella inanis**.

Report and pics by Paul Ferris





The Swan

by Mary Oliver

*Did you too see it, drifting, all night, on the black river?
Did you see it in the morning, rising into the silvery air -
An armful of white blossoms,
A perfect commotion of silk and linen as it leaned
into the bondage of its wings; a snowbank, a bank of lilies,
Biting the air with its black beak?
Did you hear it, fluting and whistling
A shrill dark music - like the rain pelting the trees - like a waterfall
Knifing down the black ledges?
And did you see it, finally, just under the clouds -
A white cross Streaming across the sky, its feet
Like black leaves, its wings Like the stretching light of the river?
And did you feel it, in your heart, how it pertained to everything?
And have you too finally figured out what beauty is for?
And have you changed your life?*

<http://peacefulrivers.homestead.com/maryoliver.html>

Pic - Mute Swan early morning on Aldersbrook Pond by Tony Morrison



september in Epping forest

The month of September is a time of change for the wildlife of the Forest.

By the end of July most birdsong has already ceased and it will be another six months before blackbirds start singing again. In contrast, the Yellowhammer is one bird that continues singing throughout August. Its' simple song, often described as "a-little-bit-of-bread-and-some-cheese" is one of the most characteristic sounds of hot summer days in the countryside. Sadly, Yellowhammers are no longer heard regularly on the Forest, with only occasional sightings taking place on the exchange lands at Wanstead Park and Wanstead Flats in recent years. However, they can still be heard regularly on the farm land at Copped Hall where public access is restricted to the footpaths.

During September the fallow bucks of the Forest will be completing their yearly cycle of casting and re-growing their antlers. Antlers grow from permanent bony pedicles arising from the frontal bones of the skull. Whilst growing they are covered with soft, hairy skin which is called velvet. During April and May of each year the bucks cast their antlers and re-grow them during the Summer

months and by the end of September most will be clean of velvet and sporting a new set of antlers. The antlers of fallow deer vary greatly in size during the life of the buck, ranging from small spikes in yearlings through to large palmate structures in mature animals which are put to good use during the rut when bucks compete with each other for the chance to breed with the does. During September the bucks begin to return to the traditional rutting sites, fuelled on by an increase in testosterone that prepares them for the rut which reaches its height during October and November. For me this is the wildlife spectacle of the year, taking place just a few miles from central London while thousands of motorists drive past the Forest oblivious to this incredible display of nature by one of the largest UK land mammals.

Jordan Thomas

City of London, Forest Keeper



To find out more about the Forest's deer why not meet up with Forest Keeper, Michael Collins, who will lead the popular Epping Forest Deer Walk on Sunday 8 December 9.30am to 1.30pm, starting from Lodge Road car park. Stout footwear and outdoor clothing is recommended and, if you have binoculars, bring them along. The walk is free but due to its popularity, booking is required **020 7332 1911**.

natural highs in scotland

I love the North West of Scotland and I was lucky enough to spend a week there at the end of May, staying at Gairloch and at Plockton. I go by overnight train and my first rest after picking up a hire car in Inverness is always at the Falls of Rogie.

This time as I wound down the steep path through the tall pine woods, they were filled with the songs of Willow Warblers and Chaffinches. I spent some time at the falls where salmon leap in the breeding season, and on the way back I stopped to look up. A Red Kite was gliding along behind me not much higher than the treetops, following the line of the path with its head tucked down to search for food. Through my binoculars I had an amazing view of the bird as it reached a point directly above me. I could see up under its broad wings and observed how the bird followed the twists of the path by making subtle changes in the way they were angled as it glided forward. I had a sense of its body simply hanging underneath its wings as a person would beneath a hang-glider. (Kite is certainly an apt name for the bird). It passed on forward of me till the trees hid it from view. It was an exhilarating start to my holiday.

Pic - Star Moss growing on top of Sphagnum Moss.

Beside Loch Kishorn I walked along a forestry trail. The spruces there were impenetrable with their branches completely interlocking, but eventually I found a way into a clearing on my hands and knees. I had come out into a secret world where a deep layer of mosses had transformed everything on the forest floor into a green landscape of bristling hills and valleys.

I followed a track on the Isle of Skye from a place called the Fairy Glen. When the track ended among the heather I continued walking. A Meadow Pipit flew out from almost under my feet. I bent down and saw a neat nest tucked into a cleft between the woody stems. The four eggs inside were a mid-brown with dark brown speckles on them. I quickly moved away, allowing the bird to return.



Falls of Rogie

On the first morning after arriving at my B&B just outside Gairloch, I decided that all I was going to do that day was walk the mile to the village and back and see what I could see on the way. I left the house, crossed the road and scrambled down

onto the rocks along the shore of the loch. Immediately I was able to watch Gannets patrolling the water and diving for fish. They would fly at between thirty to forty feet with a mixture of regular wing beats and glides, followed by sudden turns if they spotted some prey. Then they would propel themselves at amazing speed to the water, folding in their wings at between fifteen and ten feet before they plunged in. At the point of impact they looked as streamlined as an arrow. They tended to arrive at the surface again after about five seconds, and at first I thought that the dives I saw were all unsuccessful, because I did not see any birds come up with fish. Later I guessed that they swallowed their prey underwater, and have now found out this is what actually happens. After recovering on the surface for a while the Gannets would make a rather ungainly and shallow take-off before climbing to the right height for hunting again.

All along the loch-sides at this time of year the sound of the Cuckoo can be heard. As I made my way along the road, I heard then saw a male with grey wings and back land on a fence-post just ahead of me. Its barred under parts were clearly visible through binoculars, and its tail was flicking up. When I walked on, it flew to the next post and I stopped to watch again. From behind the sea-wall in the village, I was able to do some great bird-watching. A group of fourteen Oystercatchers were huddled amongst the rocks on the shoreline sheltering with their heads under their wings from the wind, as the surf washed up behind them. Out beyond the breakers a Black-throated Diver bobbed among the peaks and troughs making frequent dives. While I was absorbed in watching it through binoculars, a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers appeared as if from nowhere in the same view. These two ragged-crested sawbills



Ringed plover

would swim along side by side, and then would suddenly dive simultaneously. The three birds diving in this small area gave me a pretty good idea where the fish were. From behind the sea-wall I noticed a Ringed Plover calling from a rock below me, quite close. I watched it for a long time and took photographs. When I moved along, I looked down and saw another Ringed Plover near the base of the sea-wall. This one went into a distraction display, attempting to lead me away to my left by trailing its wing along the beach as if it was injured. I was fascinated by the behaviour, but realised it must have some eggs hidden close by, down there among the stones, so I moved away, not wanting to distress it any more. By this time the wind was blowing rain into my face, so I decided to cross the road to the Myrtle Bank Hotel for a pot of hot coffee and some shortbread. I had walked just over a mile, but I had seen so much, which is why I love this part of the world. It beats walking to the pub in London.

Article and pics by Andrew Spencer



Sunday 16th June 2013

For the second in an occasional series of Wren Group 'awayday' trips, fourteen WG members visited RSPB Vange Marsh and the Wat Tyler Country Park, both located at Pitsea in Essex.

Wren group awayday

This is how the RSPB website describes Vange Marsh: "Vange Marsh is a mosaic of wetland habitats. Fresh and seawater lagoons attract breeding Avocets, Common Terns, Little Ringed Plovers, Lapwings and Reed Buntings. In winter, Wigeons, Teals and Shovelers visit the site and Bearded Tits thrive in reedbeds. Scarce Emerald Damselflies buzz around the reserve in summer. The site has a population of Adders, and Barn Owls can be spotted hunting over the marshes."

So it seemed as if there were good prospects of seeing some wildlife which we don't usually see in our own patch. On leaving Pitsea rail station we crossed the road immediately opposite, and walked past a small industrial area before reaching Vange Marsh. Alongside the industrial area was a small wild area, where we saw several Common Blue butterflies flitting around. Tim Harris and Paul Ferris were leading the walk, and Tim had just heard news on the bird-vine that a Red-necked Phalarope had been seen at Vange. This would be a rare sighting, and Tim explained that possibly the bird had dropped off at Vange en route to breeding grounds in the Northern Isles (Scotland) or Scandinavia – we would never really know. We were all excited at the possibility of seeing it, only to have our hopes dashed when we met another 'birder' leaving the site, who said the bird had flown on elsewhere about twenty minutes earlier.

Nonetheless, we headed on into the Marsh to see whatever else we could find. As we walked through the Marsh we saw and heard Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings in – not surprisingly! – the reeds around us, and also heard a Cetti's Warbler and a Sedge Warbler. We finally reached a bird hide overlooking one of the lagoons. This was not the usual shed-like bird hide, but was instead one large piece of green metal sheeting, with four 'window' slats at varying heights through which to observe the birds on the lagoon. As there was no cover at this hide, if it rained, you would get very wet indeed! We all vied for position to watch the various birds on the lagoon, which included the elegant Avocets and Lapwings, Greenshank and Oystercatchers, whilst Swifts and House Martins soared overhead.



Leaving the Marsh, we spotted a Greenfinch family in some trees, and stopped to watch the parents feeding their hungry offspring. Once we



Feeding Avocet

reached the road outside opposite the station, we then turned right, and after about ten minutes of walking we reached Wat Tyler Country Park. This park covers an area of 125 acres with a variety of habitats, hosting a rich diversity of species. The site has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Basildon District Council took control of the park in 1969, naming it after Wat Tyler, who was one of the leaders of the Peasant's Revolt in 1381, as the Revolt was begun by the men of nearby Fobbing. There is much history associated with the site, but on this day we concentrated on the natural history. Two new buildings have been added to the site in recent years: the Wat Tyler Centre opened in July 2009, and includes a cafe and rooms available for hire for business and private events; and the Green Centre opened in 2011, where visitors can learn more about environmental matters. The RSPB also have a small

visitor centre on site, and the Essex Field Club is based in the Green Centre.

We entered a hide (a shed-like one!) and watched the birds on the water through our binoculars, and had some even closer views courtesy of Tim's 'scope. After this we decided it was time for some refreshments, so we made a beeline to the cafe in the Wat Tyler Centre, before later heading on out into the general area of the park. We walked along paths surrounded either side by hedgerows, and then came to a more open area which led to Vange Creek. The tide was out, so the little boats were parked (not a nautical term, I know...) in the mud. The mud would be a good habitat for any waders.

We saw various gulls, more Oystercatchers, Common Terns, and a Redshank. We even saw a Pied Wagtail scuttling about on one of the boats. One channel off of the main creek led to a large abandoned boat at the end, which was covered in vegetation. Back amongst the hedgerows a little later, Paul drew our attention to a high-pitched birdsong nearby. This very distinctive trill we were listening to was that of a Grasshopper Warbler – a fairly rare bird to hear/see. This bird's trill can be sustained for several minutes without a break, and has been likened to the mechanical sound of an angler's reel. So high-pitched is the sound, that

some humans cannot hear it. Speaking of not hearing this sound..... Tim was up ahead of our group at this time with David, so neither of them got to hear this bird, much to their disappointment! As we were leaving WTCP, we saw a Marsh Harrier on patrol in the skies, and Tim saw a Turtle Dove – the rest of us didn't see this delightful-looking dove as it flew past, so this was Tim's revenge for not hearing the Grasshopper Warbler!



I took it upon myself to record the birds, insects and plants we saw on this very enjoyable day. All the birds and insects and some of the plants (it wasn't possible to record every single plant; that would take a great deal of recording on its own). To sum up, we recorded 59 species of birds, five species of butterflies, seven other kinds of insects, and 40 plant species.

Article by Kathy Hartnett



eastbury manor

Set in small but enjoyable gardens and hidden in a modest council estate in Barking lies an architectural gem known as Eastbury Manor House.

Inside the House you can wander through the atmospheric rooms unaccompanied where recent restoration works have revealed some previously undiscovered wall paintings! Once you've done that you can stretch your legs in the walled garden either at your leisure or as part of a tour led by one of the guides.

If you fancy taking the weight off your feet, you can enjoy a nice piece of cake and a beverage of your choice in the well-stocked Garden Tea Room. There is also the Old Buttery Gift Shop available where you can shop for momentos.

The building, as can be seen today, was commissioned by Clement Sysley in the reign of Elizabeth 1st in or around 1557. Tree-ring analysis shows that the roof timbers were felled in the spring of 1566 and the earliest dated items, such as a lead rainwater hopper head, were produced in the 1570s. The house is a two-storey red brick building with a third storey attic. The plan is H-shape around a central square courtyard.

In contrast to today, the house was originally in a very isolated position, located on rising ground with views of the Thames across open marshland to the south.

During the 18th and 19th centuries Eastbury was owned by a series of tenants such as yeoman farmers, butchers and graziers who allowed



the building to fall into a ruin. By 1814 one of the two octagonal stair turrets had been pulled down, and the whole house was under threat of being demolished until the National Trust bought the property in 1918.

The manor of Eastbury is first mentioned in 1331/2 as a demesne of the Abbey of Barking. This meant that the land was not leased out for income but the estate, in both cash and kind, was put towards the general needs of the Abbey. After the Dissolution, the King granted the land to Sir William Denham, after which it passed through a succession of owners until it was bought by

Clement Sysley, a rich merchant from East Ham.



Having no stone in the area builders rendered brick to look like masonry

Eastbury House was still a farmhouse in 1913, but plans were made to develop it as the centrepiece of a new garden suburb. A year later, at the outbreak of World War One, these plans were shelved when the House was requisitioned by the military and used as a factory to construct observation balloons for the Front Line.



By 1917 aeroplanes had replaced balloons and Eastbury was no longer needed for war work. It was

purchased by a local builder and property developer, and there were fears that it would be demolished for salvage.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings campaigned to preserve Eastbury. In 1917 the London Survey Committee published a special book, 'Eastbury Manor House, Barking', which included photographs, historical notes and architectural drawings by Hubert V.C. Curtis.



Small but enjoyable gardens with a well stocked garden cafe

In 1918, Eastbury House was purchased by the National Trust, saving it for posterity. After some restorations had been made, Barking Borough Council took over the lease of the property in 1934, and from 1935 to 1941 it became the local museum for Barking.

Eastbury Manor House was recently refurbished with the help of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and



Small alcoves in the garden walling were for straw beehives known as 'skeps'. Bees were an important source of honey for sweetening food, medicinal uses and wax for candles.

now forms part of the Borough's Heritage Services. It provides a community resource and opens its doors for visitor days, school visits, historical re-enactments, evening events and civil weddings and civil partnership ceremonies.



Eastbury Manor House
Eastbury Square, Barking, IG11 9SN

Phone: 020 8724 1000 / 1002

Web

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/eastbury-manor-house/>



autumn bird report

Mention June and July to a bird watcher and they will shudder with dread. While the rest of society welcomes the sunshine and the longer days, a birdwatcher would welcome back winter in an instant.

Report and pics by Nick Croft

Reed Warbler sighted in Wanstead Park

June

The weather was dull with a few bright spots, and the birding was dull with too few bright spots, but on the bright side- its a month closer to something exciting happening so if I can avoid self harming myself too much through the tedium of July... The bright spots being: Cuckoo reported singing down by the stables on the 6th, Turtle Dove flyover of the Shoulder of Mutton on the 13th and the first for two years. Clouded Yellow briefly on the 19th by the Shoulder of Mutton (a London year first, I believe) and not a bird, a Painted Lady on the 20th near the Esso copse, and also not a bird



Green Woodpecker are not easy to photograph. They are usually two steps ahead of you and away, laughing at your clumsy attempts at stalking. There seem to be a lot about this year, you can hear them calling everywhere or flying up from the grass, usually with a youngster in tow. Down by the Dell I came across this clumsy youngster, momentarily on it's own (hopefully) and not quite sure where to put it's big feet or what to do.

See I told you!



Turtle Dove

However we did have Garden Warbler, where last spring we had none, this year four singing birds and two that were holding territory. That they've both stopped singing doesn't mean they have moved on... The Reed Warbler gave its all on the Shoulder of Mutton, even seeing off rivals in neighbouring reed beds, but answer to his love song there was none and he too left by the end of the month

July

Well that was pretty rubbish. For the main, July is like June but spelt differently: very few avian highlights. They were happening everywhere and not Wanstead, not London, not even the South East, nor anywhere nearso it's bugs and plants and enjoying the sun, and falling asleep in the sun, or staying in bed

avoiding the sun. You get a few tantalising interludes which make you think: "next time", and then "next time" is awful, but you keep on trying. Or just stay in bed.

But we did have Crossbill on the 17th and on 2 other occasions (a total of 5 birds); Common Sandpiper on Heronry on the 20th: a year's worth (5) in one day, and then another; and on the 25th Howard Vaughan (Rainham RSPB Information Officer) reported a Great White Egret flapping north up the Roding. Odds on someone would have seen it if they had been in the Old Sewage Works. What we need now is an August of epic proportions

- ☐ Common Redstart: first returning female (4th-9th), 4 more sightings by the end of the month
- ☐ Willow Warbler: a high of 6 birds on the 7th, many singing, many not seen, till end of the month
- ☐ Sedge Warbler: possible on the 7th



Reed Warbler

- ☐ Northern Wheatear: first bird back on the 8th, but only 8 birds for the month
- ☐ Common Sandpiper: records from the park and flats
- ☐ Redshank: a first for Wanstead,



Skylark

we thought, on the 9th, but thanks to Des McKenzie who informs us of a bird seen back in 1983 by the Essex Field Club

- ☐ Reed Warbler: good passage of over 10 birds
- ☐ Yellow Wagtail: first on the 14th and virtually daily (early morning), with a high of 12 on the 26th. Some even come low enough to see (c. 20-30 birds)
- ☐ Cuckoo: 7th, 16th-24th probably the same bird throughout
- ☐ Spotted Flycatcher: First bird of the year on the 9th, and subsequently virtually daily, a high of 7 on the 31st, including 3-4

birds in the Park

- ❑ Pied Flycatcher: 7 sightings from the 10th onwards with 2 birds on 2 occasions
- ❑ Whinchat: A juvenile was first bird on the 21st -25th, thereafter numbers picked up to 5 by the end of the month.
- ❑ Tree Pipit: probably just the one bird from the 22nd, and all sightings round the enclosure at the east end of Long Wood (check the updated map)
- ❑ Stonechat: just the one record thanks to a young lad called David Bradnum - the boy has a future!
- ❑ Quail: Bob kicks game bird in to touch in the rain on the 24th



Little Egret sighted in Wanstead Park

- ❑ Crake sp: Small crake flies into the largest patch of bramble on earth in the enclosure, leaving 2 baffled birders. Size and lack of white suggest Corn Crake, but not picking up any markings on the back mean an attempt to get this past the London Rarities Committee is probably a non-starter, mind you I was having trouble picking up markings on



Whinchat

Common Whitethroat through bins the weather was that rank

- ❑ Prize bird? Barred Warbler: first seen on the 28th on the edge of the pub/Alex scrub and that was that we thought. Subsequently seen by myself and Marco Johnson on the 5th September, who will help me with the submission. Yes we are having it!

... that'll do nicely. But wait there's more

Nightingale an improbable probable turned into the definite article on the 3rd of September, another 'first' for two years, only to be trumped later the same day by the third Wryneck since 2010, which is still behaving appallingly badly and not showing for long periods of time as write this now. So the answer is yes. When the patch is good it is very, very good, and when it is bad we call it June and July.

Report by Nick Croft

Wanstead Birding
<http://wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk/>





Wanstead nature club

For children aged 7-13 years

Bring your youngster along to have fun with others learning about our local nature - birds, plants, trees, butterflies, pondlife, insects etc.

We meet at the changing rooms building, Harrow Road, Wanstead Flats E11 3QD the forth Saturday of every month 10 a.m. - 12a.m.

Run by local volunteers. Only £1.50 a session
To find out more and register to join please contact
Gill James 0208 989 4898

[e-mail gill.james@btinternet.com](mailto:gill.james@btinternet.com)

Supported by The Wren Wildlife & Conservation Group
and the City of London

Wanstead nature club

Nature Club Report by Gill James

JUNE: SNAIL RACING

We had a good look at some tasty big snails and slugs moving round upside down and all ways on their one big foot leaving a slimey sticky trail of goo behind them. We found their one breathing hole with our magnifying glasses and saw their two long and two short tentacles for seeing and smelling with.



Then we had a snail race! Joe had brought his own snail. We put stickers on their shells so we knew which one to cheer for and saw which one moved the fastest. Hassan's won the first race and Joe's the second race.

Then we went out into the little wood and looked under some old logs for creepy crawlies who like damp dark places. We found worms, beetles, spiders, centipedes, and lots of slugs and woodlice.

Then we did an experiment with woodlice. We put them into compartments in a shoebox to see where they went. Did they prefer the empty dry compartment? Or the damp dark compartment? We decided they definitely liked the dark! We could have made the experiment work better if we had made the damp bit damper.

JULY: WIGGLY WORMS & NECTOR COLLECTORS

After a two-week heat-wave today was not the best day to find wiggly worms- all the really big ones had burrowed down a long way underground to find somewhere cool and damp! However we did look at some of the small red ones which live in compost heaps and we found which way was up and which end was front and found out how to make a wormery. Worms are very useful creatures as they turn all those leaves and vegetables into soil for us to grow things in.



There are lots of bright flowers on the Flats at the moment, like purple willow herb and yellow ragwort, and they are covered in hundreds of little brown skipper butterflies searching for nectar to drink. We caught some in our nets to look at.



We played a great Nectar Collector Game. We pretended to be bees looking for nectar in the flowers- lots of getting wet with sponges and wagging of bottoms!

AUGUST- MORE NECTOR COLLECTORS, AND ANTHILLS TOO

Bank Holiday Weekend- just four children today, which is an improvement on last August Bank Holiday, when we had only one!

A drizzly morning. We looked at different kinds of dead bees to sort out the honey bees from the bigger bumblebees, which mostly live on their own in holes in the ground and not in beehives. We looked at butterflies too and Sara made a lovely butterfly sticker picture. Both butterflies and bees visit and pollinate flowers and help to grow our food.



We went into the little wood and buried two old birds nests in dry places. We will revisit them next spring to see what might be living in them! Bumblebees? Mice? Fairies?

Then we went over to the rough grassland to see what we could find living there. We found

hundreds of yellow meadow ants in the big anthills and Sara found lots of ants eggs. Joe, Hassan and Daniel found an amazingly large scary-looking black spider which may have been a wolf spider!



Then we went back to eat our Bee Breakfast: apple juice, honey and blackberry jelly on pancakes, all created thanks to a bee pollinator.

For the Diary The next Nature Club dates are:

September 21st: Den Building in Bush Wood- Wild Play led by Epping Forest 'Branching Out' officer Andrew Harby

October 19th: Woodland Stories- If you go down to the Woods today with Wanstead storyteller Marian Temple you might be quite surprised
November 23rd- tracks and signs- looking at bones....

December 21st: Woodland crafts for Christmas- and what winter birds can we see ?

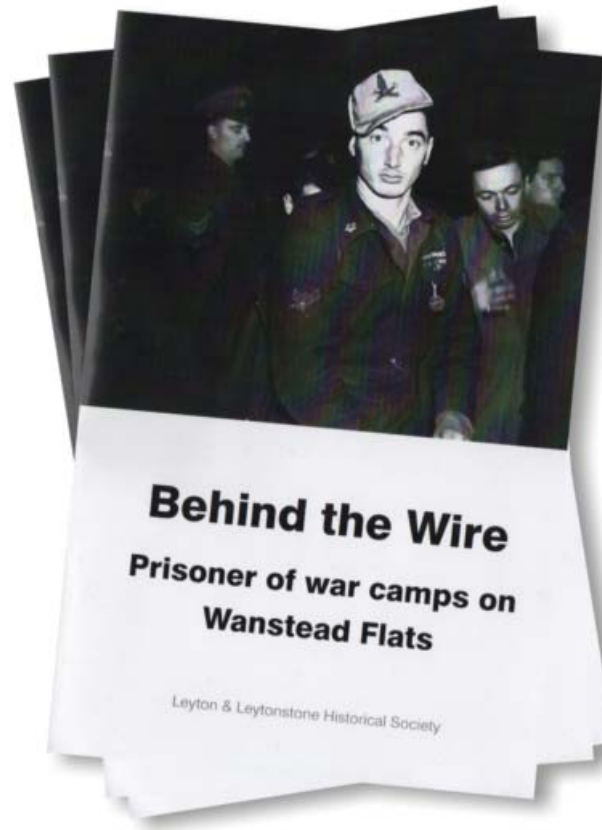
Prisoners of War on Wanstead Flats

Wanstead Flats has been put to many uses over the years. During World War II anti-aircraft batteries and allotments were established there. It was home to East Enders bombed out of their homes near the Docks, and to Italian and German Prisoners of War. A short history of the PoW camps has been produced by Leyton and Leytonstone Historical Society, telling the story of the camps.

Though Italians captured in the North African campaign were the first to be held on the Flats, the great influx was after D-Day, when hundreds of thousand of Germans were taken prisoner. Many were held in a camp at Stratford (now buried under the Olympic Park) with satellite camps in the neighbourhood, including the Flats. Local reactions varied from hostile to friendly, with some British guards complaining that the sweets and cigarettes handed through the wire to the prisoners should be given to them!

After the war a number of Germans continued in captivity, as the British authorities assessed them for Nazi sympathies, and the camp on

the Flats only closed in 1946. This booklet uses eyewitness accounts, newspaper reports and records of the City of London and the National Archives to piece together the story of the camps, a unique moment in the history of Epping Forest.



Available price £3 from the Leyton and Leytonstone Historical Society
www.leytonhistorysociety.org.uk and
Newham Bookshop.

William D'Oyley Epping Forest's First Superintendent 1876-9

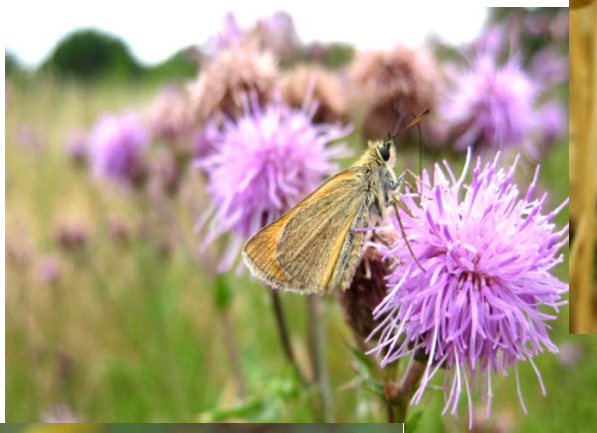
Even before the passing of the Epping Forest Act the City of London Corporation had been busy buying up rights to the forest. By 1876 they held nearly 3000 acres, and decided that staff were needed to manage the forest. For the position of Superintendent over 150 applications were received from all over England, but the Corporation chose the Loughton surveyor William D'Oyley who, together with six Keepers, began to run the Forest.

Richard Morris, one of Epping Forest's four Verderers and a forest historian, has written a fascinating account of D'Oyley's work in the early years of the City of London's stewardship. His duties ranged from ensuring that vagrants did not squat in the Forest to preventing cutting of trees and erecting of buildings. Over his three years as Superintendent D'Oyley was also responsible for beginning the network of footpaths and bridleways through the forest which still survive today. Of local interest was his planting of trees to screen the bathing pond on Wanstead Flats. The pond is long gone, but was on the flat open area near Centre Road on the Aldersbrook Road side of the Flats.

With a number of colour illustrations, this short biography will be of interest to anyone concerned with the past and present of Epping Forest. Available from Loughton and District Historical Society www.loughtonhistoricalsociety.org.uk price £5-00.

gallery

1



Fallow Deer - Andrew Spencer
Small Skipper Butterfly - Gill James
Common Blue Butterfly - Andrew Spencer

Pale Prominent Moth - Tim Harris
Grass Snake - Tim Harris
Wheatear - Nick Croft

Parakeets - John Dinely

Please e-mail your pictures to editor@wrengroup.org.uk

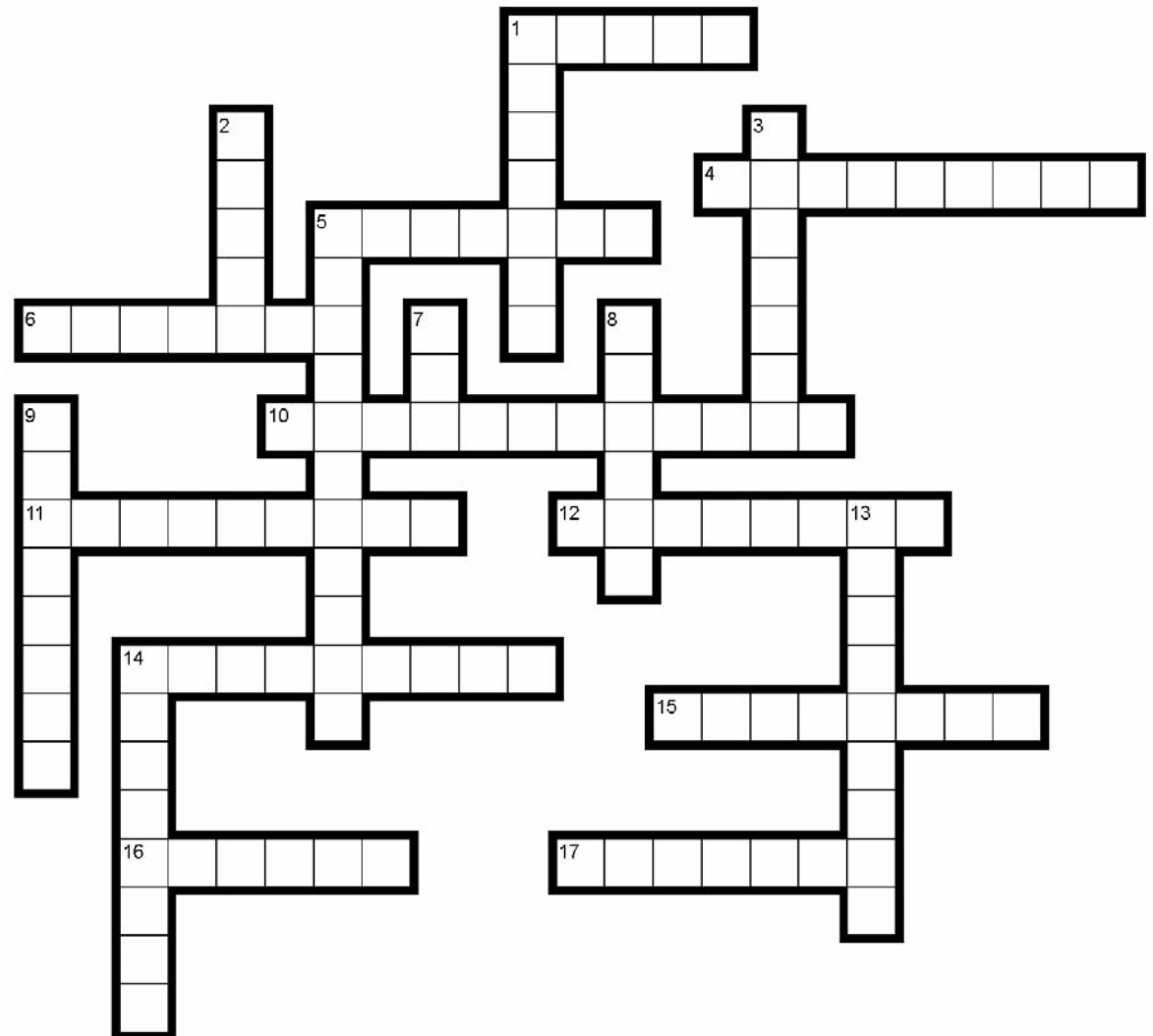
Wren Crossword

ACROSS

1. WHAT'S INSIDE FRUIT TO HELP THEM REPRODUCE (5)
4. THIS BIG CAT IS A REAL FLASHY DRESSER (9)
5. PUSH THE DOORBELL WITH TOO MUCH FORCE (6)
6. A PLACE WHERE ANIMALS AND PLANTS LIVE (7)
10. COWARDLY TOOL HITS A NAIL ON THE HEAD (12)
11. TIME GOES FAST FOR A MYTHICAL FIRE BREATHER (9)
12. HABITATS ASSOCIATED WITH WATER (8)
14. DRINK FROM A VERY CREAMY KIND OF FLOWER (9)
15. IT'S SEEDS SPIN LIKE HELICOPTERS WHEN THEY FALL FROM THIS TREE (8)
16. WHAT IS THE TALLEST AND THICKEST KIND OF GRASS (6)
17. FUN TO PLAY FROM THE HORSECHESNUT TREE (7)

DOWN

1. FROLIC IN THE CLOUDS (7)
2. A SIGN OF SUMMER THIS BIRD IS REALLY FAST (5)
3. BABY FROG FOUND IN YOUR POND (7)
5. I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT, AS BIRDIES DO (11)
7. A WISE OLD BIRD (3)
8. GROWS BACK ON TREES EVERY YEAR (6)
9. THIS SPIKEY LITTLE FELLOW IS A BIT OF A PIG (8)
13. OPEN A ? AS QUIET AS A... (9)
14. FEELING GLUM IN THE CHURCH TOWER (8)



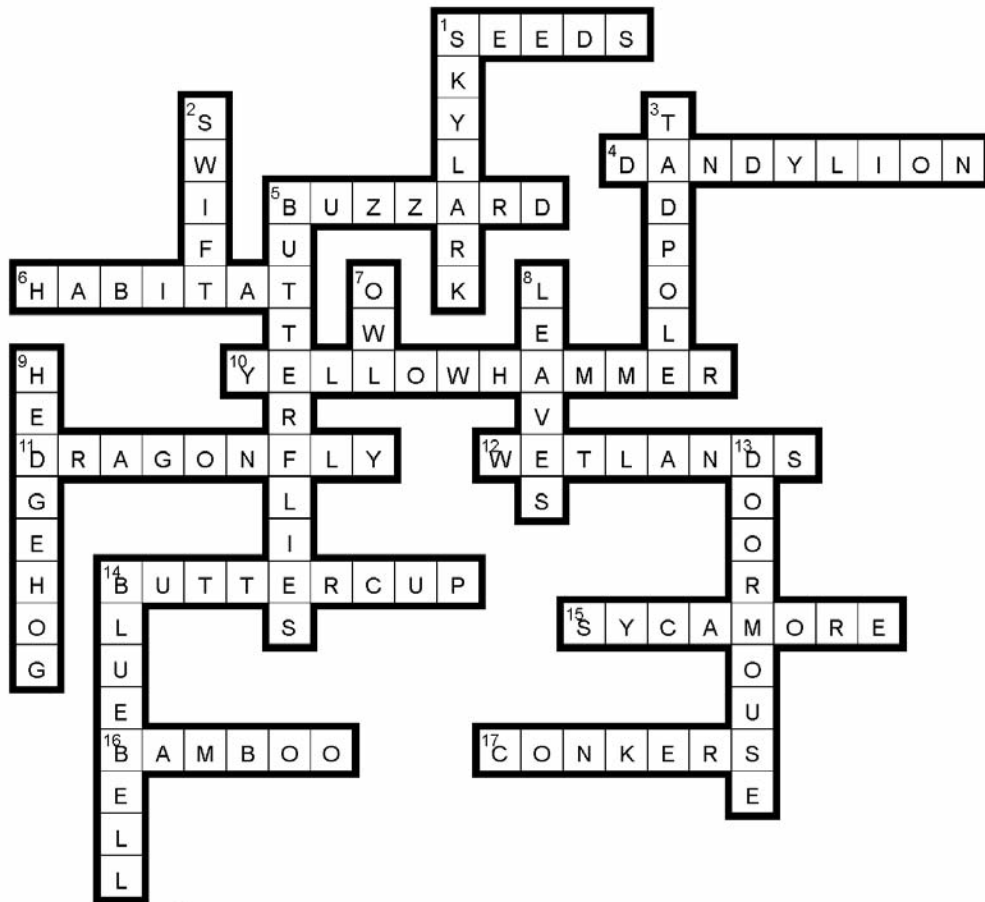
find the word

CAN YOU FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS?

EVERGREEN. CATERPILLAR. TOAD.
GREENBELT. WILLOW. SWAN. IGRET.
HEDGEHOG. BUG. STONE. TREE. SWIFT.
HONEYBEE. NEWT. BAT. SWIFT. YEW. ASH.
LEAFY.

H	A	C	B	K	T	S	T	I	O	T	P	M	E
O	Q	M	A	O	R	G	R	W	T	Z	M	H	B
N	E	W	T	K	E	V	E	R	G	R	E	E	N
E	A	W	P	J	E	E	E	T	E	F	B	D	T
Y	O	O	D	I	L	E	S	S	B	B	U	G	Z
B	O	I	G	R	E	T	O	Y	D	H	T	E	K
E	E	F	R	S	A	B	B	L	A	A	S	H	V
E	O	T	E	S	F	Q	J	G	R	O	B	O	H
D	M	Q	E	H	Y	O	S	W	A	N	Q	G	K
S	T	O	N	E	P	D	J	I	L	B	L	D	S
U	O	E	B	B	Z	D	U	L	E	D	Y	E	W
C	A	T	E	R	P	I	L	L	A	R	S	E	I
A	D	R	L	B	G	X	B	O	K	L	W	K	F
A	B	I	T	O	E	S	S	W	I	F	T	M	T

teaser answers



H	A	C	B	K	T	S	T	I	O	T	P	M	E
O	Q	M	A	O	R	G	R	W	T	Z	M	H	B
N	E	W	T	K	E	V	E	R	G	R	E	E	N
E	A	W	P	J	E	E	E	T	E	F	B	D	T
Y	O	O	D	I	L	E	S	S	B	B	U	G	Z
B	O	I	G	R	E	T	O	Y	D	H	T	E	K
E	E	F	R	S	A	B	B	L	A	A	S	H	V
E	O	T	E	S	F	Q	J	G	R	O	B	O	H
D	M	Q	E	H	Y	O	S	W	A	N	Q	G	K
S	T	O	N	E	P	D	J	I	L	B	L	D	S
U	O	E	B	B	Z	D	U	L	E	D	Y	E	W
C	A	T	E	R	P	I	L	L	A	R	S	E	I
A	D	R	L	B	G	X	B	O	K	L	W	K	F
A	B	I	T	O	E	S	S	W	I	F	T	M	T

events

September 2013

Saturday Sept 21st - Nature Club
Den Building in Bush Wood - Wild Play led by
Epping Forest 'Branching Out' officer Andrew
Harby
Contact Gill James Tel: 0208 989 4898
<mailto:illjames@btinternet.com>

Monday 23rd Sept
A presentation on Mosses and Ferns by Tricia
Moxey.
Details tbc

Monday 30th Sept
The Importance of Ferns and other 'Lower Plants'
Botanist Tricia Moxey will talk about the life cycles
of 'lower plants', such as mosses and ferns, and
the important role they play in the natural world.
7:45 for 8pm, Wanstead House, 21 The Green,
Wanstead. Cost: £1 for Wren Group members; £2
for non-members

October 2013

Sunday 6th Oct
Practical Work - Lincoln Island
Contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358
wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com

Saturday 19th Oct - Nature Club
Woodland Stories - If you go down to the Woods
today with Wanstead storyteller Marian Temple you
might be quite surprised
Contact Gill James Tel: 0208 989 4898
gilljames@btinternet.com

Sunday 20th Oct
Fungi Foray in Bush Wood, led by Tricia Moxey.
Meet outside Friends Meeting House, Bush Road,
at 10:30.

November 2013

Sunday 3rd Nov
Practical Work - Chalet Wood part 1
Contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358
wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com

November 23rd - Nature Club
Tracks and signs- looking at bones....
Contact Gill James Tel: 0208 989 4898
gilljames@btinternet.com

December 2013

Sunday 1st Dec
Practical Work - Chalet Wood Part 2
Contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358
wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com

Sun 8th Dec - Deer Walk
9.30am to 1.30pm, starting from Lodge Road car
park. The walk is free but due to its popularity,
booking is required Michael Collins 020 7332 1911.

Saturday 21st Dec
Woodland crafts for Christmas- and what winter
birds can we see ?
Contact Gill James Tel: 0208 989 4898
gilljames@btinternet.com

January 2014

Sunday 5th Jan 2014
Practical Work - tbc
Contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358
wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com

Sunday 14th Jan 2014
Practical Work - Old Sewage Works
Contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358
wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com

useful links

Got any links to go on this page ? Get in touch
editor@wrengroup.org.uk

RSPB North East London Group
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/northeastlondon/>

The Wildlife Trust <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/>

BBC Nature <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/>

City of London - Epping Forest
<http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/Pages/default.aspx>

British Naturalist Association
<http://www.bna-naturalists.org/>

Wanstead Wildlife <http://www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk/>

Friends of Wanstead Parklands
<http://www.wansteadpark.org.uk/>

East London Nature <http://www.eln.yorkshirefog.co.uk/>

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

UHK Safari <http://www.uk safari.com/index.htm>

The British Deer Society <http://www.bds.org.uk/index.html>

Wanstead Birding <http://wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk/>

Newham Story <http://www.newhamstory.com/>

Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society
<http://www.leytonhistorysociety.org.uk/>

and finally

Ringlet butterfly seen in Wanstead Park – a possible first sighting for the area

I met up with Paul Ferris on Saturday 20th July for a walk around Wanstead Park. We decided to mainly concentrate on observing insects this day, as it was quite warm with sunny

intervals. Whilst walking along the Northumberland Avenue side of the park, a dark coloured butterfly flew along from behind us, and then dipped down in amongst a patch of Rosebay Willowherb plants. The plants were quite dense, making it difficult to locate where the butterfly had landed. After scanning the plants with my binoculars, and finally finding the butterfly, I then said excitedly “Paul, I think it’s a Ringlet!” Trying to point out where

something is to another person is never easy, but



eventually Paul also had a glance of the butterfly. I pointed out the distinctive markings on the underwing (two ‘eye spots’ – ringlets? – at the top, with three below), which led me to believe it was a Ringlet, and then we double-checked my butterfly ID chart – yes, it was definitely a Ringlet. Having only seen Ringlet butterflies for my first time in the Epping Long Green area in early July, imagine how pleased I was to then see one in my local patch.

Ringlets are certainly not rare, indeed their range has expanded in the UK in recent decades, but Paul pointed out that this was probably the first sighting of a Ringlet in Wanstead Park, as he didn’t know of any previous record.

Kathy Hartnett



now & then

Were you right ?

Answer

Wanstead Flats looking from Blake Hall Road at the early part of the last century and how the view looks today.