

winter 2013



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a word from the chair

Last Saturday morning the sun was shining and I decided to go for a walk in Wanstead Park. I'd been told there were lots of Gadwall there so I decided to start counting them. Maybe it was my subconscious finding a way to get me out of Christmas shopping, or maybe it was the unusually mild temperature that encouraged me to count every single Gadwall on every single lake in the park. Whatever the reason, I amassed a grand total of 307 of these charming ducks – not only a site record but a figure that makes the park a site of national importance for the species! Thirty years ago Gadwall were virtually unknown in our area. In this age of depressing stories about humanity's affect on

wildlife it's encouraging to know that not all change is bad.

As this is the season for reflecting on the year gone by, it's worth pondering a few other good changes locally. The area's first colony of Green Hairstreak butterflies was discovered on Wanstead Flats in the spring. And the first Ringlet was seen in Wanstead Park. In fact, dozens of insect species were recorded for the first time in 2013, though in the main this was probably down to more people looking harder for them. And more different types of birds have been recorded on the Wanstead Flats/Wanstead Park 'patch' this year than ever before – and the year's not quite over yet.

But there have been bad changes as well: almost no Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, declining numbers of breeding Skylarks and the continued colonisation of our lakes by potentially damaging alien plants.

Some change is cyclical, controlled by natural forces – not least our fickle climate – that are beyond our control. However, other

bad changes are within our power to limit or prevent. We need to recognise when they are taking place, understand why they are occurring – and determine to take appropriate measures to correct them. As ever, our group has an important role to play in this.



Enjoy the Festive Season, and I hope to see you in 2014 - Tim



a word from the editor

Welcome to the Winter 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

friends of epping forest to operate high beach visitor centre

The Friends of Epping Forest are now getting ready to help re-open the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at High Beach from April next year.

Since 2012 the visitor centre at High Beach has remained open only at weekends and Bank Holidays, following the opening of Epping Forest's flagship award winning visitor centre, 'The View' in Chingford. Now this new partnership will enable the visitor centre at High Beach to continue and develop its services for visitors.

The View - located on Rangers Road - is open daily 10am-5pm and is the City of London Corporation's most visited information point in the Forest, providing an events space, information about the story of Epping Forest and how to make the most of a visit to the ancient woodland. Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, built in 1543, and Butler's Retreat café, are next door.



To facilitate the changes and developments at the visitor centre at High Beach, it will now be closed from 29 December until April

2014, enabling new recruits to be trained to work in the Centre.

Article by Lisa Gazeley - CoL

To find out more or to register your interest in becoming a volunteer at High Beach, ring 020 8418 0730, email

Judith.adams21@btinternet.com

or visit the websites of the Friends of Epping Forest or the City of London Corporation:

www.friendsofeppingforest@org.uk

or

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/eppingforest

We welcome this opportunity to help retain and develop the services for visitors at High Beach, a very heavily visited part of the Forest. Recruitment for volunteers has begun and this is your chance to share your love of this ancient woodland with others and enable them to explore and understand more of the Forest.

Judy Adams, Chairman of the Friends of Epping Forest,

now & then

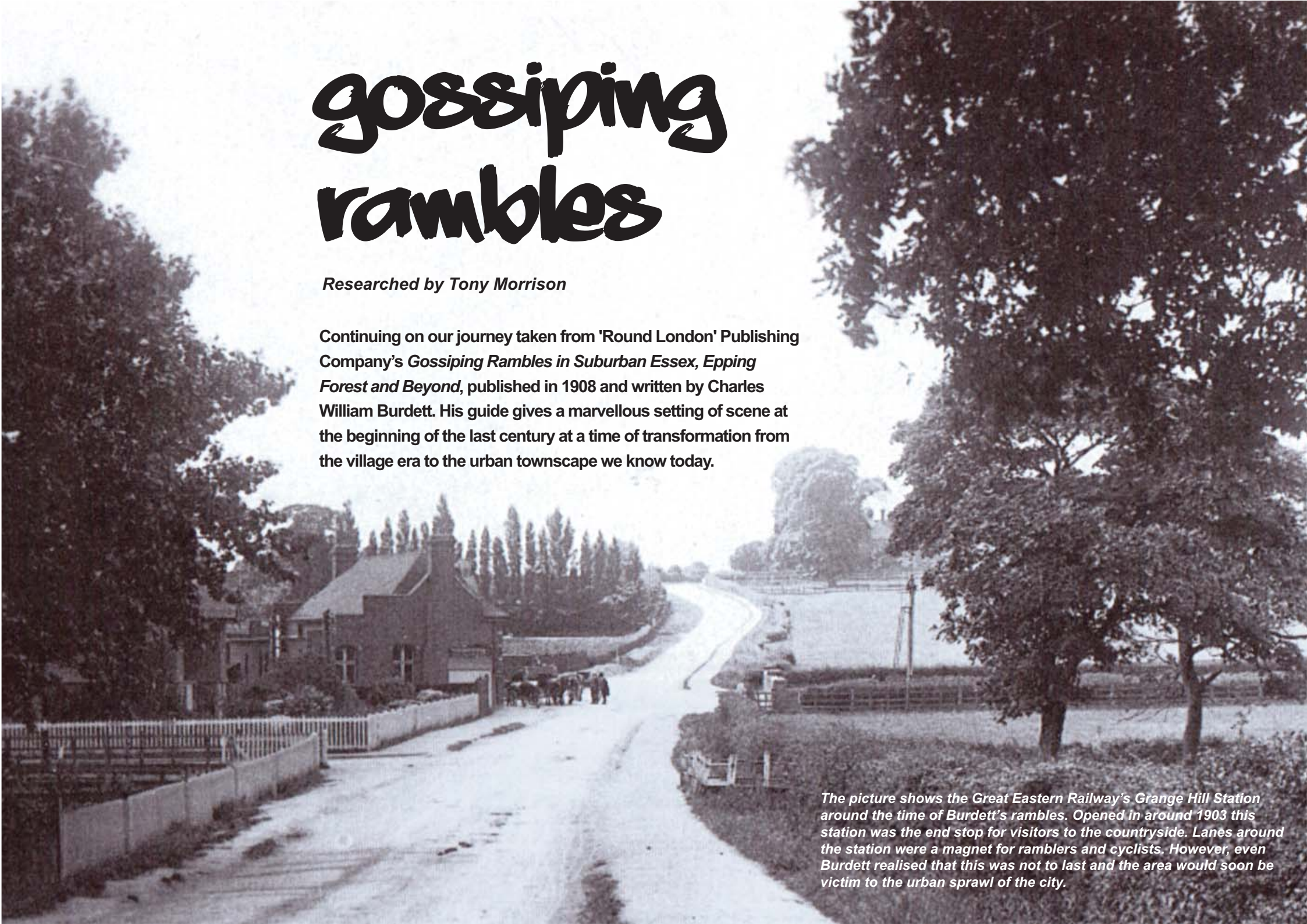
In each edition of the Wren newsletter we will be showing you a picture of a street in our area taken around 100 years ago and how it looks today. Just for fun have a guess where this picture was taken (answer back page). If you would like to see your area in this slot why not get in touch and we will see what we can do.



gossiping rambles

Researched by Tony Morrison

Continuing on our journey 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.



The picture shows the Great Eastern Railway's Grange Hill Station around the time of Burdett's rambles. Opened in around 1903 this station was the end stop for visitors to the countryside. Lanes around the station were a magnet for ramblers and cyclists. However, even Burdett realised that this was not to last and the area would soon be victim to the urban sprawl of the city.

Just across Barkingside station, and we are fortunate enough to be in time for a train. We book to Grange Hill, passing Fairlop and Hainault stations on our way. The distance is not very great, but the brief rest refreshes us. At one time these names suggested the leafy avenue and the wooded dingle, the sturdy oak and the giant elm, but the glories of Hainault have gone.

As the train speeds along we see only fields and hedges of just the ordinary kind to be seen anywhere; here and there a tall tree lifts its head above the hedgerow, but once beautiful forest of Hainault is now no more. Fairlop Oak is gone, celebrated in many a song and merry jest, and beneath whose welcome shade Queen Bess is said to have rested, and certainly beneath which many a happy group has footed the swift hour away in the jocund dance. Cultivated desolation reigns in the place of the natural wildness that formerly characterised the lovely district.

"All in a Garden Fair."

The tale has often been told, but never more scathingly than by the late Sir Walter Besant in his charming book "All in a Garden Fair." He was a devoted lover of the forest, and knew it intimately well. He describes how the good people of the neighbourhood had taken the eighth commandment out of the decalogue, as being

awkward and in the way, "and had given up their whole leisure to carving bits out of the forest, and adding them to their own gardens, sticking up palings round these bits, here a cantle and there a snippet, here a slab and there a slice; a round corner, and a square corner, a bare piece of turf, or a wooded clump: and all so



Chigwell Post Office and Radleys in 1913 and how it looks today.



neighbourly, encouraging each other the while with a 'Brother, will this be to your mind?' or 'Help yourself neighbour,' and 'Let me recommend, sir, another slice,' or 'A piece of the woody part, dear friend.' "And then in his own inimitable style Sir Walter goes on to describe the former glories

of the forest, its wild animals, its trees and its flowers. But the filching and appropriation he satirises so keenly reached a climax in 1851, when a firm of agricultural implement makers acting under instructions took down gangs of men, who with steam engines, anchors, chains, and other like instruments of destruction,

uprooted in the short space of six weeks about 1,000,000 trees, driving away the deer, and reducing this once lovely spot to the bare monotony of the cultivated field and paddock. Isolated patches of the original forest were left, and one of these still stands to charm and enrapture the lover of

nature by its wild untrammelled beauty. Let us enter it to see what may be seen as far as time permits. Turning to our right on leaving the station we ascend the hill towards Chigwell Row, via Manor Road.

Chigwell Row

As we proceed we note the fine gardens on our left, filled with splendid ash, weeping willow, copper beeches, and many other garden trees, and wonder if their fortunate owners appreciate them as highly as does the passing stranger. Presently on our right we spy a little wicket gate, telling us this is the entrance to the "Recreation Ground." Ye gods what a fall is here! from Hainault Forest to a recreation ground! However, it is the spot we want, so we enter. A small sheet of water just inside the gate is called Cox's Pond. We shall do well to remember this landmark, as we may require to find it again. Walking across a small green and noting the high square towers of Chigwell Row church obliquely on the left, we plunge into a path leading into the undergrowth, and follow its devious windings as best we may. To a group of happy lads whom we discover playing in a glade we put the question as to where the path leads which we are following? We soon discover these youngsters are by no means upon their native heath. They are

genuine cockney lads, out for a holiday, perhaps making acquaintance with the wild grandeur of nature for the first time. They answer, "We don't know, sir! we're strangers here, but if you go a bit furdur yer can't get out, 'cept on yer hands an' knees! an' then yer gets inter the corn-fields." We decide not to try that particular mode of exploration, and push on in the orthodox manner. Says Sir Walter Besant, in the book before referred to, "There are pools in the forest, but most of them are shallow, there are marshy places and quags, but a wet foot is the worst that can happen ... it is not a very great forest, beside the New Forest or the Forest of Dean it is small, but it is real forest, it is wild. An active lad would soon cover the whole ground." And wild enough we find it to be. But virtue is its own reward. By pushing on, turning here and twisting there we find ourselves at length in one of the most primitive scenes possible to imagine. The interlacing boughs of hornbeam, beech, and oak form a canopy overhead, which seems full of "dim religious light." Gnarled and twisted trunks meet the eye in every direction, lichen covered, moss encrusted, storm marked trees everywhere. Surely this is the forest primeval! Delicious glimpses of leafy alcoves, fitting home of gnome and faun; thickets through

which only a four-footed animal could find a way, soft patches of green flooring carpeted thickly with delicate grasses, other patches still brown with the fallen leaves of yester-year; Nature in one of her wildest and most unfettered moods. Hark! what noise is that? Some tragedy of the woods is taking place near at hand, a shrill, frightened scream from a terrified bird, a fierce rush of wings. Presently we arrive at the scene of the murder, for murder it is. The ground is thickly strewn with the soft white feathers from the breast of a wood pigeon, the branches round about bear traces of the sanguinary struggle which has just taken place, overhead is part of a bleeding wing, fixed high in a forking branch, doubtless dropped there by the marauder; who wings his flight to enjoy his bloodthirsty meal in solitude. We hear discordant bird-notes in the distance. But the ground must suffice our meaner powers; as Longfellow says

"We have not wings, we cannot soar."

After winding in and out for some further distance we are hopelessly lost. We are in a small open glade, hemmed in on every side with blackberry bushes giving promise of thousands of the luscious berries later on in the season; tall trees

overtop the brambles, but there are thickets all around. One of us boldly essays to find a path, and in one minute is completely lost to sight, so thick is the undergrowth. It is literally a question of fighting one's way through, and we realise, however faintly, what the explorers of an Asiatic jungle have to contend with. At length we find a path and a group of small boys who are exercising forest rights by collecting a sackful of broken sticks. One of these becomes our guide, philosopher and friend, reconducts us to Cox's Pond before mentioned, and is sent away rejoicing with a small *douceur*. We leave this portion of the forest with regret, but time presses, we must away. The memory of its wild untamed beauty will linger with us for many a day to come; we shall often hear the echoes of the strange weird noises found in its deep recesses. Owing to this very wildness it is hardly the place for a lady, as skirts and dainty head and foot gear would get sorely mangled and torn, but for those who are not afraid of these obstacles it more than repays a visit, as it is doubtful if such a purely wild woodland spot exists anywhere else within the precincts of the whole of Epping Forest. It extends in patches from Chigwell Row to Dog Kennel Hill on the one side; and by Cabin Hill and Crabtree Hill to Lambourne End on the other.

Chigwell and Charles Dickens

We retrace our steps for a few hundred yards towards Grange Hill, until we reach a road running at right angles to the Manor Road, along which we are walking. This turn will take us to Chigwell, some half mile or so away. This pretty little village has been immortalised by Charles Dickens in *Barnaby Rudge*. Writing to his friend and biographer John Forster, Dickens says in one of his playful moods:-

"Chigwell, my dear fellow, is the greatest place in the world. Name your day for going. Such a delicious old inn opposite the churchyard - such a lovely ride - such beautiful forest scenery - such an out-of-the-way rural place - such a sexton! I say again, name your day."

The "Maypole."

The "delicious old inn" is still standing, and has undoubtedly stood there for centuries. May it continue to stand for centuries yet to come! It was a famous place long before Dickens gave it an added lustre. Those who are fond of ancient hostelries should certainly see the "King's Head," as the place is rightfully called. Dickens gave it the name of the Maypole in *Barnaby Rudge*. Its many diamond-paned

The Kings Head, located on Chigwell High Road (A113), is a Grade II listed building constructed in the 17th century and extended in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The building which faces St Mary's Church was made famous by Charles Dickens in his 1841 novel Barnaby Rudge in which he changed its name to the 'Maypole'.*

Dickens frequently visited Chigwell, which he described in a letter as "the greatest place in the world...Such a delicious old inn opposite the church...such beautiful forest scenery...such an out of the way rural place!"



windows, its deep low doorways, its low ceilings crossed by massive oak beams; its walls lined with oak panels, dark with age but most carefully preserved, are just as they have been for long, long years. In the entrance hall is a mysterious looking deep recess, in which half-a-dozen men might hide. At the back of the house is a pretty little lawn, edged with parterres of gaily coloured flowers. On the left hand is an archway of green, in front of which stands a venerable old apple tree now tottering to its fall, senile arms outspread as though in feeble expostulation with the decay which is overtaking it. Through the archway is yet another little lawn, trim, clean, circumspect; a long, high, thick hedge divides the two. Here in olden days the monks and abbotts and friars wandered in pensive mood or told their beads, for the ancient hostelry was once a religious house. Here Queen Elizabeth too has

wandered, for it has been a royal resting place on more than one occasion.

Coventy Patmore

We next spend a few minutes in the exterior inspection of Chigwell Church, and note the massive solidity of its flint-built walls, ashlar fronted ; its curious steeple. An outside view has to content us, as the door is locked; so we turn our step towards Chigwell Station, noting the panoramic effect of Buckhurst Hill in the distance, (for we are 210 feet above sea level) and book to Liverpool Street, via Woodford; the birthplace (1823) of Coventy Patmore, the author of *The Angel in the House*, a charming poem which has made his name famous. Here too in 1771 was born the wise, witty, and genial Sydney Smith, the most jocular parson who ever lived, possessed of a mind stored with learning, as full of wit as an egg of meat, many of whose jeux d'esprit are still current and are sometimes passed off as original creations by their purloiners. His memoir by his daughter, Saba, Lady Holland, is filled with choice specimens and offers many a laugh; it will repay perusal. Soon we arrive at Liverpool Street, perhaps a little fatigued by the events of the day, but caring nought for that, for we have passed a day Wonderland, and its memories will abide.

blooming marvelous

Perhaps one of the best places to appreciate a show of bluebells is in Chalet Wood, within sight of the Temple and convenient for visitors to Wanstead Park from either the Wanstead end at Warren Road or the Aldersbrook end at Northumberland Avenue.

The bluebells in Chalet Wood are all of our native species, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, and Wanstead Park holds an important population of them. However, many other woodlands have been invaded by the more vigorous Spanish Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*), which are sold as garden plants and if discarded may interbreed and spoil the native population. And Chalet Wood is threatened in the same way; along much of Northumberland Avenue - which borders Wanstead Park to the south, Spanish Bluebells are flourishing, discarded from houses along the road. Even very close to Chalet Wood itself, between the Sweet Chestnut avenue and the vegetation that borders the southern edge of Chalet Wood, clumps of the invaders are present. I suspect it wouldn't take much to dig these out and dispose of them

before they hybridise with our own species - but without permission from the Park's owners - the City of London Corporation - this would be illegal.

But this show doesn't happen without a little bit of help. There are problems with invasive bramble and - sad to say - people. Because of the nature of the wood, particularly during the autumn and winter, there are few clearly defined pathways through the woods; even those that are tend to get covered in leaves. This means that in early spring, just as the bluebells are beginning to show above ground, people tend to wander at will - and damage to the plants and compaction of the soil means that the plants struggle each year to make any new ground. Even the visitors that come to enjoy the show can add to this, by walking amongst them (however pleasant this may be), or stepping on them to take photographs.

The Wren Group has been working on this wood for years to improve this show. Earlier in December the group got together to clear the area of brambles to give our little floral friends a chance to bloom again next spring.

To join the group contact Peter Williams 0208 555 1358 (or 07947 819472 on the morning)
wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com



the last forest

Though Essex is one of the less-wooded counties – around 6% of its area, although this figure is increasing – relics of four great forests remain. Epping we all know about, and Hainault is close at hand; Writtle is the forgotten one; but in many ways it is Hatfield that is the great survivor.

Why such a claim? As Wren members, we all know of the great struggles of the 19th century against enclosure and for access that secured the 'open aspect' of Epping Forest in perpetuity. But time to quote the great recorder of English forests, Oliver Rackham, in *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape*



(1976):
"Hatfield is the only place where one can step back into the

Middle Ages to see, with only a small effort of imagination, what a Forest looked like in use."

It is only in Hatfield, he states, that one can see "all the elements of a medieval Forest", in terms of factors such as tree-life, habitat and livestock. And so, having set the claim, he proceeded to prove it, in a 1989 work devoted to Hatfield, *The Last Forest*.

Note the capital F in the quote above. A Forest, to Rackham, is not a forest. In other words, it does not have the contemporary meaning of a place with a lot of trees. There are a lot of trees in Hatfield Forest, but that's not why it's there. It's there because it provided royal sport for the Normans and the successors, in the hunting of deer and other game. Indeed, those who walk in upland Britain will travel mile after mile in

Forests denuded of trees since the Iron Age, but formerly (and often still) of great importance for deer-stalking. Let's look back at that quote again. It ends with the phrase 'in use'. If the capital F immediately accords the meaning of 'use by Royals' (or, as Rackham makes clear, for Royals; kings were busy people who tended to get others hunting for them), that is merely one social layer. Indeed the supply of deer to palaces was "a relatively minor use of the land," says Rackham: "the main users were local countryfolk and their lords". Take one example, pannage: the large number of stout oaks in the Forest produced many acorns, on which the pigs of local farmers flourished in good years. And coppicing and sheep-grazing, as in Epping, would have been important too. Another use is shown by the former road that passes through the open ground of the Forest; and since the

18th century, the lake created by damming Shermore Brook has sustained both fishing and other leisure, first for the owners, but since acquisition by the National Trust in 1924, the public.

And you can still buy venison from the Forest. Try it, if you're a carnivore; lean and delicious.



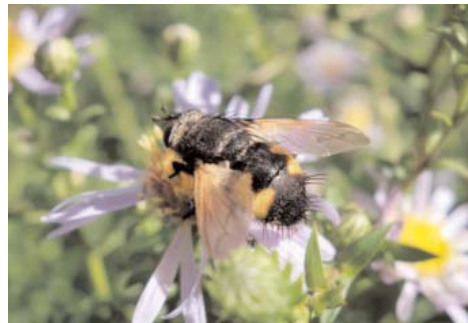
Article and pics by
Peter Aylmer



invertebrate report winter 2013

As I mentioned in my last report, I *didn't do much "wild-lifeing"* during August, and indeed that trend continued into the winter months. I certainly did not get out into our "wild" areas much to look at things, so from a personal point of view can only really report from what was going on around my garden, and home.

Hoverfly numbers built up a bit in the garden, but I felt there were not so many in numbers of individuals; with regard to species, there was nothing that I saw out of the ordinary. One frequent visitor to – particularly – my Michaelmas daisies was a somewhat hoverfly-looking fly – quite large and with a somewhat bristly black-striped orange abdomen. This was ***Tachina fera***, a common-enough fly during the summer months and because of its size, quite distinctive. There were bumble-bees, too, including the orange-abdomened **Common Carder Bee**, *Bombus pascuorum*. As for wasps, well my garden had plenty of



Tachina fera

visits from solitary Hornets, *Vespa crabro*, but usually moving on quickly. I quite like hornets, although the mention of them often leads to somewhat worried reactions. In fact, as wasps go, they are probably less aggressive than other species that we may encounter and the toxicity of their sting is supposed to be not that much more than other wasps.

However, reports in the newspapers during the latter part of summer warned of a possible "invasion" into Britain of another species of hornet, *Vespa velutina nigrithorax*, which DEFRA says



Common Carder Bee, *Bombus pascuorum*

is 'invasive and predatory', and with a vicious sting. This Asian species was accidentally introduced into France in 2004.

As always, going into September, spiders became more prolific in the garden, and I took quite a few photographs of various specimens. However, the identification of spiders is something that I am not skilled in, and as in so many instances, identification from photographs may just not be possible. There were certainly some familiars: *Araneus diadematus* - which is the **Garden Spider** otherwise known as the Cross Spider, from the pattern on its back - was very much in evidence. Lurking as always on the vegetation was ***Pisaura mirabilis*** - one of the nursery-web spiders. These are very active hunters and are quite distinctive in the way that they hold the front two pairs of their long legs straight out in front of them whilst detecting prey, or simply resting. My Michaelmas daisies tend to attract a nice lot of insect species, and taking advantage of

this were a few specimens of the small ***Misumena vatia*** crab-spiders, which have been called the "White Death Spider". Not all individuals are white, having an apparent ability to change their colour to suit the flower that they may be on. I am not sure just how much variation in colour is possible, but my observations have shown them to be between very white and bright yellow. There was at least one other species of crab-spider in evidence in the garden. This was the small-but-familiar **Zebra Spider** *Xysticus cristatus*. This is the black and white spider that sits on walls, watches you carefully as you approach and jumps out of the way if it feels threatened, which also lends it its other name of Jumping Spider.

These were familiar species, but for about a week there was a new-to-me greenish spider living on the top surface of a rose-leaf. It had created a fine web across the leaf and used its position to trap prey and to gather it up and consume it on the spot. I saw a hoverfly or two, plus some other small



***Nigma walckenaer* Spider**



Black Lace Weaver Spider

flies and even a spider, either being consumed or having been (mostly) consumed. A fascinating little creature, which I identified as **Nigma walckenaeri**, its green colour enables it to blend in well with the leaf surface, but also makes it distinctive. I learn from Wikipedia that until 1993 it was only found in London and the Home Counties, and that it may originally have been imported into Kew Gardens. It is a European species, with some populations in Asia Minor and North Africa. Another spider that caught my attention was – and still is – living on the outside of my kitchen window. It is a species of **Steatotoda**, although if you look that up on the internet relating to the UK there is a lot about *Steatotoda nobilis*, the False Widow Spider. I don't think my one (ones) is that, and is probably a quite common native species. The False Widow has had a lot of press coverage as it is poisonous and does bite, but as with many things, they are not really a threat unless mis-handled. There were, however, a few threatening-looking spiders in my compost bin, and a tentative identification was *Amaurobius ferox*, the **Black Lace-weaver**. The young of

this species devour the mother after hatching; a few days after laying a second set of eggs on which her newly hatched spiderlings feed. Apparently she encourages her offspring to devour her! This species is also said to bite humans - unpleasantly.

Spiders apart, most else that I saw was of not great account, although I did enjoy finding the colourful bug *Graphocephala fennahi* – commonly referred to as the **Rhododendron Leafhopper** these days – for the first time this year in Wanstead Park on 23rd September. Rhododendron leaves are a good place to look for them, though they may be found on similar plants.



Gipsy Moth - Pic by Tim Harris

I stopped moth-trapping as early as August, so missed out on a lot of specimens and species. A few that I did encounter included the rather nice caterpillar of the Yellow-tail, *Euproctis similis*, and a couple of times **Nettle-tap** moths, *Anthophila fabriciana*, both in my garden. Near – almost in – the New Crematorium Pond in the City of London Cemetery was the **Small**

China-mark, *Cataclysta lemnata*. This little, mostly-white moth may be commonly found by the banks of the Perch Pond in Wanstead Park (particularly at the east end where the destructive waterside-vegetation slashing is undertaken each year at totally the wrong time!), and exists in this habitat because the larvae are semi-aquatic and feed on Duckweed. This probably does not upset the ducks too much! In a similar fashion as caddis-flies, they build a case from bits of vegetative material.

Luckily, Tim Harris continued moth-trapping at his home near Bush Wood much later into the year and he reported that the warm nights in early August enabled the Lakehouse moth trap to record 110 species, which included a number of species not before recorded in the area. August seemed to have been the prime month for moths as numbers fell dramatically during September when a total of 50 species were noted in the trap. Even so, Tim recorded many species that were new to him and quite a number new to the area. One particularly nice visitor was a **Garden Tiger**, on 11th August. This used to be a common species, but in recent years there has been a significant decline in numbers of that species. **Jersey Tigers**, on the other hand, have shown a marked increase in numbers; both Tim and I caught a few of these and even neighbours reported seeing them in their gardens. The total moth species



Garden Tiger Moth - Pic by Tim Harris

for the year at Tim's Lakehouse trap was 225, with 89 being new ones to that trap. In my trap at Capel Road, with its considerably shorter up-time, there were 168 species, of which 31 were new to me.

I haven't much to report on either butterflies or damselflies and dragonflies as I wasn't out there much to see them. Tim reports that there were four **Common Darters** hawking (and in one case mating) at the southern end of the Ornamental Waters around midday on 10th November, and I did see a **Red Admiral** butterfly well into November, but of course you don't see much at all unless you are out there and looking.

Report and pics
by Paul Ferris





autumn bird report

Report and pictures by Nick Croft

I used to hate the winter, the short days, the long nights, the cold and worrying about my heating bills. Not anymore, there's stuff to see and while there's not much time to see it, the stuff can be rather exciting and miles better than the lack of stuff to be seen in the long days of summer. So now Autumn/Winter are my favourite seasons, up there with spring. Now I just have to worry about how much money I spend on coffee and bacon rolls from the Esso Garage.

Whinchat by Nick Croft

A new patch record has been achieved: we have now seen 135 species this year and with a few weeks to go, we may get more. It's been so good some of the Old Guard have returned. I met up with Mike Dent one morning on the flats. He told me that in his time, they never ventured out here.

September

A month any bird observatory on the coast would be more than happy with. A report for every day of the month and I don't recall that happening before. It started on a high and just about finished at the same level.



Red-crested Pochard is a large diving duck. Its breeding habitat is lowland marshes and lakes in southern Europe and Central Asia, wintering in the Indian Subcontinent and Africa. Wikipedia

The attendance register

Whinchat (80 bird days, the most prolific of the scarce migrants)
Yellow Wagtail (33 days, and probably the only



The wrynecks are a small but distinctive group of small Old World woodpeckers. Like the true woodpeckers, wrynecks have large heads, long tongues which they use to extract their insect prey and zygodactyl ... Wikipedia

count of individual birds)
Spotted Flycatcher (33 days, down on previous years, I reckon)
Tree Pipit (11 days, a number of birds staying local for a few days, but still a good count)
Wheatear (9 days, all female/juv types: where are all the males?)
Common Redstart (7 days and well down on last year)
Pied Flycatcher (5 days and probably a couple of individuals involved).

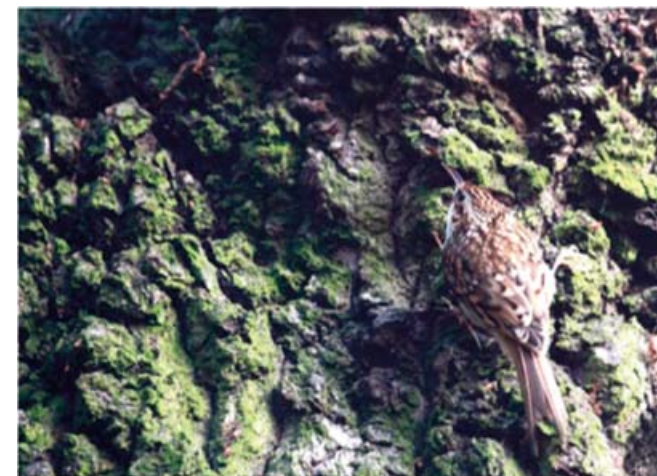
In addition:

- Green Sandpiper: 1st Sept (calling in flight across the flats)
- Nightingale: 2nd-3rd Sept
- Wryneck: 3rd-9th Sept.
- Barred Warbler: 5th Sept.
- Sedge Warbler: 11th Sept. We were expecting

more

- Red-crested Pochard: 17th-24th Sept. Origins unknown (better not ask too many questions) and luckily departed before blotting its copy-book too much.
- Common Snipe: 12 Sept. A ten-bird record count from the flats.
- Hirundine movement: 23rd Sept. Small (600+) by comparison of some of the figures being seen elsewhere that day.
- Wigeon: 24th Sept
- Jack Snipe: 29th Sept. only the third record for the patch.
- Redwing: 29th Sept. An indication that winter is coming.

Goodbye to our warblers, now departed for sunnier climes: Chiffchaff were still singing, but not in the numbers of previous years and Blackcap still lingered in the blackberries and elders. In their place finches and buntings are returning and with



The treecreepers are a family, Certhiidae, of small passerine birds, widespread in wooded regions of the Northern Hemisphere and sub-Saharan Africa. The family contains ten species in two genera, Certhia and Salpornis. Wikipedia

them the migrant thrushes:

The wintering ducks are coming: Teal on the edges of the Alex, Shoveler numbers rising as are Gadwall, Tufted Duck and Common Pochard. The Great Crested Grebe on the Basin managed to raise one chick, while the Little Grebe have all gone for the late brood strategy which appears to have paid off.



The Lesser Redpoll is a small passerine bird belonging to the genus Carduelis in the finch family, Fringillidae. It is the smallest, brownest, and most streaked of the redpolls. Wikipedia

Also successful were the Hobbies, with one young seen round the nest site by the Temple. Three Kestrels taking it in turn to be mobbed by the crows and parakeet on the flats, and Sparrowhawk sightings are almost daily. Only 2 Common Buzzards this month, and no Peregrine sightings.

In addition to (almost) daily records of Yellow Wagtail, Meadow Pipits have started moving through with 40-plus birds on occasion. Pied Wagtail have taken a liking to the 'Police Scrape', while it appears I was hasty in saying the Grey's

had failed to raise a brood, with a youngster in tow of the pair frequenting the Heronry. Also back: Siskin heard on two occasions, Linnet in with the Pied Wagtail on the Police Scrape, a few more Chaffinches. One or two Reed Bunting have returned, and an interesting bunting was picked up by the Alex but refused to reveal its identity.

The one big day of hirundine movement duly came and went: mostly Swallows and House Martins, but with a smattering of Sand Martin in the mix - the only ones seen all month, while our resident House Martins were still feeding over the nest site till the end of the month.

October

A time of thrushes and finches: summer meets winter, the days disappearing, fungi and fruit, and wind and rain.

Those heading for the out door:

- 2 Spotted Flycatchers (different birds on the 5th and 6th and the latest on record)
- 7 Yellow Wagtails (last being on the 13th)
- Wheatears until the 15th
- Whinchat, a late record on the 12th
- Tree Pipit, a late record from 16th-19th in the SSSI
- Late Swallows (2) on the 23rd

In transit

- Ring Ouzel: 3 or more birds from the 10th-13th (with a possible record from the 22nd), short but sweet and some showy individuals and not the usual runaround
- Big movements of Redwing on the 10th and

- 11th (1650 + and 400 + respectively)
- Stonechat(s) on the 6th, 12th, 17th, 26th and 30th



he Ring Ouzel is a European member of the thrush family Turdidae. It is the mountain equivalent of the closely related Common Blackbird, and breeds in gullies, rocky areas or scree slopes. Wikipedia

Arrivals

- Bramblings (five on the 10th, and singles on a couple of occasions later in the month)

and finally...

- Yellow-legged Gull on the 12th and 13th
- Mediterranean Gull: 'Valentino' pays a visit
- Oystercatcher: Tim, working late, gets the bird while walking home

A young Common Whitethroat on the 4th was the last of the other warblers, while Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps managed to make it to the end of the month, but now we are just talking singles. Very few Goldcrests have arrived yet and there is no

sign of the Firecrests: a Nuthatch is the best that Bush Wood had to offer.



The Spotted Flycatcher is a small passerine bird in the Old World flycatcher family. It breeds in most of Europe and western Asia, and is migratory, wintering in Africa and south western Asia. It is declining in parts of its range. Wikipedia

Raptors came in the form of one Peregrine, a Common Buzzard, no Hobby and on a few days Sparrowhawks, including one that probably deserves a bit more time (if it had allowed): a really small bird which shot over Shoulder of Mutton on the 27th - Sharp-shinned Hawk, anyone?

November

... could have been worse...

- A week's worth of listening to Mealy Redpoll in Shetland pays dividends with confirmation that we do have them occasionally on the patch
- Mediterranean Gulls: two first winter jobs on one day and the adult lingering by the Alex for most of the month

- Yellow-legged Gull: just the one this month
- Treecreepers return to Bush Wood.
- Firecrests also returned to Bush Wood. Only two so far...
- Water Rails back by Shoulder of Mutton. Two birds that can be coaxed into a sharming showdown
- Woodcock: two sightings of yet another returning winter bird

It's been noticeable that while there have been more Redpoll, including the Mealy, Siskins haven't moved in any numbers at all with just a few singles over the Flats.

On the 25th there were 25 Song Thrushes around the flats including a number of singers, Blackbirds peaked at over 40, Chiffchaffs hung on through the month with a couple of birds; just the one Blackcap, though, at the beginning of the month. Goldcrest sightings are still low, but that's probably down to the mild weather.



The Common Blackbird is a species of true thrush. It is also called Eurasian Blackbird, or simply Blackbird, where this does not lead to confusion with a similar-looking local species. Wikipedia



The Blue Tit is a small passerine bird in the tit family Paridae. The bird is easily recognisable by its blue and yellow plumage, but various authorities dispute their scientific classification. Wikipedia

Skylarks (12) are favouring the police scrape with a growing number of Linnets for company, while there are fewer Meadow Pipits. The scrape also draws in the Pied Wagtails in a pre-roost get-together.

The importance of the patch for wintering Gadwall was could be reinforced on the next WeBS count, with numbers already pushing the 200 mark across the patch. A couple of Wigeon sightings and a smattering of Teal, and the return of good numbers of Pochard mean its worthwhile checking the park again.

Report and pictures
by Nick Croft



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

a thoroughly good day out

William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow

Over the last two years, the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow has undergone a complete transformation with a £3.5 million refurbishment made possible by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The refurbished gallery opened to the public on 2 August 2012. Like many people I have always been aware of Morris' background in design and interested in his socialism. After a recent visit there, I have been finding out more about the building itself and its significance as a heritage site.

Background

The William Morris Gallery is a beautiful 1740s Georgian Grade II listed former 'Water House' (the name derived from the ornamental moat in the gardens at the back) with original features including oak-panelled and marble-flagged

entrance hall with fine plasterwork, now refurbished and with new extension by Pringle Richard Sharratt Architects. It was formerly the home of the designer, craftsman, poet and socialist William Morris (1834-1896) and now it is a museum of his work and that of his followers in the Arts and Crafts Movement.

From 1848 to 1856, Morris lived here, with his widowed mother and his eight brothers and sisters, from the age of fourteen until he was twenty-two. The young Morris used the garden moat for boating and fishing in summer and for ice-skating in winter. William Morris apparently wrote some of his earliest poetry seated in the tall window on the main staircase, and his friend Burne-Jones, on a visit to the Morris family in the 1850s, painted studies of the trees on the island.

Since 1950, the Morris family home has been the world's only public museum devoted to William Morris's life, work and influence, with internationally important collections reflecting the impressive range of his activities. As well as a comprehensive visual survey of Morris and his circle and the firm of Morris & Company, the Gallery displays work by members of the Arts & Crafts Movement which Morris inspired, and by the



painter and designer Sir Frank Brangwyn RA, who began his career as an apprentice-draughtsman with Morris & Co. in the 1880s. After its opening in 1950 by the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, one of the Gallery's first visitors was H.M. Queen Mary, whose husband George V had given Morris & Co. the Royal Warrant for its contributions to the 1911 Coronation.



When the Morris family left the house in 1856, its next occupant was the publisher Edward Lloyd (1815-1890), the proprietor of Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper (from which the music hall star, Marie Lloyd, took her stage name) and of The Daily Chronicle. Before he became a 'respectable' establishment figure, Lloyd originally made his fortune from publishing brazen plagiarisms of Dickens's novels (such as

'Nicholas Nickleby') as well as bloodthirsty melodramas. In 1899, the Lloyd family donated the house and grounds to the people of Walthamstow and 'Lloyd Park' was opened in July 1900. A blue plaque on the east bay of the Gallery's front elevation commemorates the building's two most famous residents, William Morris and Edward Lloyd. If you walk a little way west

along Forest Road, you will find another blue plaque inset in the wall of the Fire Station. This records the location of Elm House (which was demolished in the 1890s), where William Morris was born on 24th March 1834. Historical importance of the Gallery The William Morris Gallery is widely

regarded as a fine example of Georgian domestic architecture dating from about 1744 (the date scratched on a brick found in the upper east wall). Records indicate, however, that there was a house on the site – or perhaps on the moated 'island' to the rear of the present house – as far back as the 15th century. The existing house was variously known in its earlier history as The Winns or Water House.



A map drawn in 1758 shows the building with its original east and west wings, but without the two semi-circular bays on the south front which were added some thirty or forty years later. Both wings were apparently additions to the original structure of the house. Today, only the west wing of the building remains, the east wing having been demolished in the early 1900s. This was to make an entrance from the front to the back of the grounds when these were laid out as a public park. Of the lost east wing, the only remaining trace is now the outline of the roof levels, still visible on the existing east wall of the house. As this roof outline runs across a blind window on the eastern

elevation, it strengthens the argument that the wings were a later addition.

From one of the few early photographs of the rear elevation of the building, it has become clear that the now demolished east wing was of two storeys. It housed the kitchens, laundry and

usual domestic offices, as well as accommodation for the servants. Early in the nineteenth century, a further extension was built onto the front of the west wing, containing a large drawing room with full-length mirror panels on the walls and double doors which opened out into a conservatory at the west end.



One of the finest features of the exterior is seen as the Corinthian-style porch with its fluted columns and elaborately carved capitals. The original windows on the front elevation (those in the three centre bays) together with the use of band- or string-courses and the upper cornice – added at the same time as the two semi-circular bays – were intended to give order and symmetry to the façade of the building.

The main doorway originally led directly into the marble-flagged hall, its broad proportions echoed in the upper landing on the first floor. Both



these areas retain many of their original features: panelled door-cases, as well as fine plasterwork on the ceilings and also across the main beam in the hall, which supports the upper landing. The staircase has carved ends to the treads while the



walls in the main hall and on the staircase and upper landing are timber-panelled up to dado level, the plasterwork above having panels with decorative surrounds. Some of the original coved panelling and dentillated cornices can be seen in a number of display rooms on the ground and first floors. The refurbishment of the whole building has involved stripping back all the interventions that had been added over the last 100

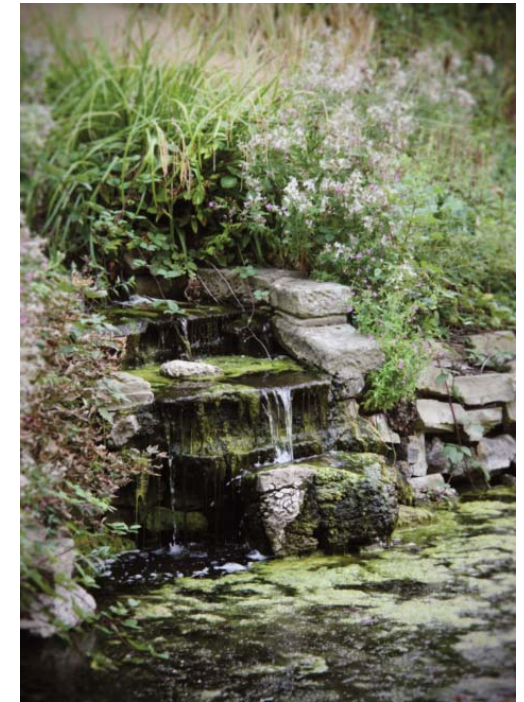
years, to get back to the base building, with its fine panelled walls, timber shutters and elegant windows. The exhibition has been completely reconsidered and William Morris is now re-interpreted following new

themes developed by Benedetta Tiana of the BT Museum Consultancy. The exhibition design was carried out by GuM Studio, with graphic design by Thomas Manss and Co, and works closely with the historic architecture of the building. Many new objects from the collection are now on

display, and the exhibition covers all aspects of Morris's work, including production from his workshops, his best-selling products, the Morris and Co shops, his many commissioned projects, and his political work and interest in the environment. The collection certainly reflects Morris 'in the round' as a fascinating and multi-talented historical figure and the added significance of the gallery being his house and of architectural importance adds a further dimension to any visit there.

As with many heritage sites these days, there have also been moves to make the gallery a more attractive place to visit. The gallery has been extended with a new east wing, which contains badly needed new facilities, a tea room, shop, special exhibition gallery and a conditioned object and archive store as well as being fully accessible. The entire

building has been refurbished, offices have been created in the basement, and a new learning centre and library



now occupies the second floor. The emphasis on education and learning there will hopefully interest children and young people in the life and career of William Morris and the historical importance of the gallery that was once his home.

Article by Kathy Baker



jubilee pond update

This has been a seminal year in the development and history of the Jubilee Pond. A year ago the pond leaked and had a sad and neglected appearance.

Since then, a great deal of work has been done to repair and develop the pond. Many meetings were held to establish the most efficient and sustainable way of not only repairing the pond but also scheduling and identifying the resources required and deciding on how best it could be developed in order to have the widest appeal to the widest visitor profile. Members of the Lakehouse Lake Project committee were invited to, and attended, virtually all of these meetings and were able to provide local knowledge that helped form opinion.

The main contractors started work in the spring of this year. The first phase of the project was the relining of the pond and putting a new surcharge on this lining. This operation was carried out in two stages. First, water was transferred from the

northern to the southern end of the pond and a dam built so that work could start on that area. On completion the water was pumped back and similar work done on the remaining section. Water was then pumped into the completed pond from the existing borehole.

The second phase was the landscaping which has included a new accessible pathway, the provision of a number of new benches, and a natural play area. Picnic benches and litter bins were also installed. Also included in this phase was the building of a pond dipping platform. The decking of this was built by members of the Lakehouse Lake Project working alongside Forest staff and other volunteers from Epping Forest.



“We can all enjoy improved access, more places to play, more seating, increased biodiversity and reduced anti-social behaviour.”

Judy Adams, Chair of Friends of Epping Forest, which helped with the planting,

It was decided after thorough consultation that there would be minimal planting this autumn, in order to allow native vegetation to re-establish itself, with further planting taking place in the spring. This method will allow the pond to develop naturally in keeping with the aim of providing a conservation area.



Over two days, volunteers planted pre-seeded coir mats and coir rolls around the pond with native species such as water mint, reeds, water lily and water forget-me-not - which will improve the lakeside habitat - and a grass-seed mix was sown to improve biodiversity.

Volunteers erected fencing around part of the southern end of the pond and planted several species of water plants and reeds. This has proved effective as there is a noticeable difference in the re-growth of vegetation within the fenced area and that outside. A second planting was carried out around two of the islands with maturing plants in coir ‘sausages’ placed around the shoreline. Unfortunately these plants have been devoured by the Canada Geese and it is hoped that a method of protecting this planting can be devised by the spring.

“We’re glad to have been so involved and to have influenced the project from beginning to end, from design drawings to site meetings.”

Lakehouse Chair, Dennis Stone

When the work on the pond had been completed and the barriers removed there was a noticeable increase in the number of drinking dens around the pond and rough sleepers in the area. Members of the Lakehouse Lake Project had already, in consultation with Epping Forest Centenary Trust, carried out some

scrub clearance along Dames Road in the previous autumn but this summer Forest staff ‘lifted’ the trees. This meant clearing the undergrowth around the trunks, removing any suckers and cutting the lower branches. Not only has this helped alleviate the anti-social behaviour but has opened up views of the pond from the road.

The birds seemed to have been



Some areas of new growth have been protected from grazing geese by temporary fencing.

undisturbed by the construction work and have adapted well to their new environment (the Canada Geese a

“We are so pleased to have had the opportunity to revitalise such a popular part of Epping Forest, for the enjoyment of all of London’s communities. The active role played by the local community in looking after this pond is very welcome.”

Gordon Haines, Chairman of the City of London Corporation’s Epping Forest Committee

little too well). A pond-dip in the autumn showed that the ‘usual suspects’ are returning and it will be interesting to see how these populations are re-establishing themselves when we carry out the spring pond-dip.

There is still a lot of work needed to maintain and improve the pond in the future but for now the pond is in good heart and being used by an increasing number of people. It is a truly local amenity made possible to a large extent by the local people themselves.

Rob Howell
Lakehouse Lake Project
Pictures City of London



st gabriel's bat

When St Gabriel's successfully applied to English Heritage in 2012 under their Repair Grants to Places of Worship scheme we were asked to undertake various surveys and reports as condition of the grant: drains was one, and, more relevantly here: bats. Having concluded that as far as could be seen we had no bats in the church we were given the go-ahead to do the high-level repairs to the parapets and brickwork of the chimney. The condition placed on us in that report was that the work to the brickwork should be concluded by the end of October to allow for the possibility of bats to hibernate. That, as far as I thought was the end of the matter.

Then, during the summer of 2013 I was alerted to the rather worrying news that a bat had been discovered in the cracks of the chimney. This would not have been visible to the initial survey as it required scaffolding in order to access. My heart sank, as it was the kind of news that could mean long delays, greater expense and general headache! I tried to tell myself that providing a home to a bat was a good thing and we should be grateful that it was outside, rather than inside the building.

The work to the chimney stopped immediately and we took advice to confirm the bat's presence. The 'bad news' was that it was indeed a bat, a pipistrelle - the good news was that as it wasn't yet time to hibernate so here was a decent chance that the bat would move on, rather than stay put. To our great relief that was what happened. The next chapter is complicated and I risk



Picture shows where the crack in the chimney stack has been retained.

misinformation here, but from what I understand two alternatives lay before us:

The first alternative was the one we were desperate to avoid – this would require a full survey of the site over a three-month period, including 3-night observations before a licence could be granted to undertake the works as we had originally planned them and to provide an alternative roosting location for the bat. Not only would the cost of a full survey be expensive but would delay the repairs and require re-scaffolding etc.

The alternative we were able to implement once the bat departed was to revise our repair of the chimney to retain the nook for the bat in perpetuity and do the rest of the repairs around it. Once we found the empty nook and called in the ecologist Huw Bramhall again to confirm the absence of the bat the work could begin. If it were to return the work would again need to stop and we'd probably be forced into seeking a licence. Fortunately for us, our tiny friend found alternative accommodation at least until the work to the chimney had been completed. Perhaps we will never know if he or she returns because now that the scaffolding is gone it's hard to see that high. But, at least there's a home prepared just in case!

Article by Gill James





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

SEPTEMBER: DEN BUILDING AND FIRELIGHTING

We collected lots of branches from the wood to build our dens. First of all we had to find two big strong branches that ended in a Y shape to make a strong frame for our structures. Andrew Harby, a City of London officer, showed us how to do



this. Then we built them up round the sides with lighter branches and finished them off with lots of dry grass to fill the gaps. The girls worked together very well and made splendid dens! Afterwards we had to put all the branches back where we found them.



Then Andrew showed us how to make a small fire. We learnt how to make sparks with flints. We used the spark to light a piece of cotton wool smeared with vaseline in a little twist of dried grass. It worked brilliantly- we soon had lots of little fires going! We had ten children plus two toddlers and lots of mums along to help out- what an exciting day.

OCTOBER: FUNGI HUNTING & LEAF MAGIC

Daniel brought along a stick insect which had very sticky feet!

The weather is still warm, the leaves are mostly still on the trees and there are lots of insects still around. We looked at different leaf shapes and tried to learn their names. Some leaves are quite easy, like holly which is spikey and evergreen, and oak which has wavy edges. Then we went on a fungi hunt and found lots of tiny fairy bonnets and some great big parasol mushrooms. We also found a couple of very busy and buzzy wasp nests!

We also found a mystery object: a strange star pattern underneath the bark on a fallen log. At first we thought this was a fossil, then a fungi, and finally we decided it was made by the larvae of a wood beetle. Then we made brilliant leaf firework pictures with brightly coloured Autumn leaves stuck on black paper. We had seven children today.

NOVEMBER: WORMS AND WOODLAND TALES

Daniel brought along some more sticky stick insects, Menuo had researched October's wood beetle at home, and some children brought along lots of worms for our wormery. We put layers of earth and coloured sand in stripes in the wormery box, which has see-through sides. Then we added the worms and some leaves on top. Zachary got to take this home for a month to see what

the worms do next! He will have to keep it in a dark place and make sure the worms are kept damp and have enough leaves.



Then we went for a walk into Bush Wood. It was cold but sunny and the leaves shone golden on the trees. We carried story sticks like little fishing rods and tied things we found like feathers and leaves onto the wool on the sticks. We spread a tarp on the ground and sat down. Then Marian, our story-teller, plucked a story off the cuff of one of our jumpers and told us a wonderful story. It was lovely to sit in a real wood listening to a story told by a real live story teller!

Today we had fifteen children and lots of mums and dads.

Report by Gill James



Starlings in Winter

by Mary Oliver

Chunky and noisy,
but with stars in their black feathers,
they spring from the telephone wire
and instantly

they are acrobats
in the freezing wind.

And now, in the theater of air,
they swing over buildings,

dipping and rising;
they float like one stippled star
that opens,
becomes for a moment fragmented,

then closes again;
and you watch
and you try
but you simply can't imagine

how they do it
with no articulated instruction, no pause,
only the silent confirmation
that they are this notable thing,

this wheel of many parts, that can rise and spin
over and over again,
full of gorgeous life.

Ah, world, what lessons you prepare for us,
even in the leafless winter,
even in the ashy city.

I am thinking now
of grief, and of getting past it;

I feel my boots
trying to leave the ground,
I feel my heart
pumping hard. I want

to think again of dangerous and noble things.

I want to be light and frolicsome.

I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing,
as though I had wings.



behind the wire

On 7th November Wren members Mark Gorman and Peter Williams gave a talk "Behind the wire - POW camps on Wanstead Flats". This was at CoffeE7 on Sebert Rd, the wonderful cafe near Forest gate station. Peter explained he has long had passion for landscape history and archaeology and in 2001 he started walking his dog everyday on the Flats. He noticed various lumps and bumps and cropmarks in the dry grass and wondered what the history of the Flats was.

He got to know Mark a few years ago through Wren Group practical work and they discovered they had a common passion for local history. Mark introduced Peter to a sub-group of the Leyton and Leytonstone Historical Society (LLHS) that were doing a study of the Flats. The group has some funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and managed to employ a professional researcher briefly who taught them how to do proper oral history using a digital recorder.

Mark interviewed several older

people in the area with memories of the Flats in the war. Using these and other written sources from the National Archives in Kew and the London metropolitan Archive (who hold many papers on Epping Forest) the group gradually pieced together the story of the POW camps. A big breakthrough was acquiring a digital copy of an RAF air photo from 7th August 1944 which clearly shows huts and tents. Mark recounted the



story of how many Italians arrived in 1942 after their defeat in North Africa after El Alamein. German POWs arrived after D Day (indeed the Flats were used by Allied forces as a muster area) and the flats was a sub-camp of the main camp in

Stratford. There were fascinating first-hand accounts of inspectors of that camp.

Mic, the patron at the cafe, did the 30 or so people present proud with wartime music, served potato flobbies from an austerity recipe, camp coffee (not a patch on their usual wonderful coffee) and even managed to find some theatrical barbed wire in his attic. Mark also

put on a small exhibition of Flats photographs courtesy of Tony Morrison.

If you missed the talk Mark and Peter are thinking of doing it again in the New Year. If you would like a

ticket (£6 incl. light refreshments) email pows.wanstead@gmail.com and they will gauge if there is enough demand. You can also buy a copy of the 30-page booklet on POWs from the LLHS website or Newham Bookshop.

Update by Peter Williams



There is to be a repeat of the excellent talk about the Prisoner of War camps on Wanstead Flats together with a look at other uses of the Flats over the past 100 years. The talk will be given by members of the Wanstead Flats History Group, Leyton and Leytonstone Historical Society.

Wednesday 22nd January 2014
from 7pm at CoffeE7, 10 Sebert Road, Forest Gate E7 0NQ. Tickets £6-00 (including soft drinks and buffet) from CoffeE7 or write to

Mark Gorman
151 Capel Road
London E7 0JT

For more details phone Mark Gorman on 020 8553 5220

or e-mail lucasgorman@aol.com

or wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com



bee aware !

British Bees are under threat mainly due to changes to the way we manage our countryside. More efficient agricultural techniques has meant far fewer wildflowers in the landscape and as bees rely on flowers to feed it is becoming more difficult for them to survive.

Bees are extremely important to the British countryside, not just for biodiversity by pollinating wildflowers which helps insects, mammals and birds survive but by pollinating crops that we rely on as a food source such as tomatoes, peas and many fruits contributing hundreds of millions of pounds to the UK economy.

The UK has 24 species of bumblebee and eight of these can be found across a number of habitats including many gardens where ornamental flowering plants provide a valuable source of nectar in the spring that is now missing from much of the countryside. You can help bees by planting flowers that are rich in nectar and pollen and that flower in stages through the spring and summer such as:

- ☐ Green Alkanet
- ☐ Betony
- ☐ Aquilegia
- ☐ Borage
- ☐ Comfrey
- ☐ Foxglove
- ☐ Lavender

The more plants that flower throughout the year the better it is for the bees especially in spring as the Queen comes out of hibernation and is looking for food and at the end of summer when she needs to fatten up ready for hibernation. Bee careful not to plant invasive species that might spread into nearby native woodland!

Glenn Mulleady

Forest Keeper, City of London Corporation

mind those deer

Peak time for deer vehicle collisions

Road traffic accidents involving deer present a major problem in the UK as well as in many other countries in Europe. The problem is very acute in Epping Forest due to the high number of cars that travel the Forest roads, both day and night and the disturbance to deer caused by dog walkers who can often unknowingly push deer on to the roads and into the path of on-coming vehicles. October through to December is considered a high-risk time as many deer will be on the move for the autumn mating season, also known as the rut. On-going highest risk times are from sunset to midnight, and the hours shortly before and after sunrise.

Across the UK it's estimated there could be between 40,000 - 74,000 deer-related motor vehicle accidents a year, resulting in 400 to 700 human injuries and about 20 deaths, with a cost of over £17m. The combined economic impact of injury accidents and car damage is likely to exceed £50 million per annum.

The Deer Initiatives top tips for avoiding a road traffic collision involving deer include:

Be aware that further deer may well cross after the one you have noticed, as Fallow Deer will more often move around in groups than alone.

After dark, do use full-beams when there is no opposing traffic. The headlight beam will

illuminate the eyes of deer on or near a roadway and provide greater driver reaction time. But, when a deer or other animals is noted on the road, dim your headlights as animals startled by the beam may 'freeze' rather than leaving the road.

Don't over-swerve to avoid a deer. If a collision with the animal seems inevitable, then hit it while maintaining full control of your car. The alternative of swerving into oncoming traffic or a ditch could be even worse. An exception here may be motorcyclists, who are at particular risk when in direct collisions with animals.

Only break sharply and stop if there is no danger of being hit by following traffic.

Try to come to stop as far in front of the animal(s) as possible to enable it to leave the roadside without panic.


Report any deer-vehicle collisions to the police who will contact the local person who can best help with an injured deer at the roadside.

Do not approach an injured deer yourself, being in close proximity to a human can increase its suffering, it may also be dangerous.

To find out more on safety advice please visit www.deeraware.com

Jordan Thomas

Forest Keeper, Corporation London



During the winter months seeing evergreen trees and shrubs reminds us of the continuity of growth. It is probably for this reason that the long tradition of bringing evergreen branches into the home during the dark days at the turn of the year still survives, it helps to cheer us up!

evergreen

There are many legends which surround our native evergreens, the Yew, Holly and Ivy and these are well described by Richard Mabey in his 1996 publication *Flora Britannica*.

The leaves of evergreens are by their very nature tough and leathery, lasting for more than one season before turning yellow and dropping off. Their chemical makeup makes them less palatable than deciduous plants, so they are avoided by many herbivores, both big and small. Cattle, sheep and deer will eat Holly leaves and so do a few invertebrates. However Holly and Ivy berries and the red arils on Yew are eaten by a number of birds and the nectar-rich flowers of Ivy provide valuable fuel for autumnal insects such as bees, wasps, moths and flies.

All green plants need sunlight, water and carbon dioxide for photosynthesis. When the ground temperature falls below freezing, water cannot be taken into the roots. To overcome this problem, deciduous trees lose their leaves and become dormant during the cold winter months, but many evergreens can continue to make food via photosynthesis even at low light levels provided the ground remains unfrozen. They too shut down in periods of intense cold.

The Holly is native to western and southern Europe. It is a pioneer species that can recolonise clearings, but it also thrives under shade, growing slowly into a tree 10 m tall. It often forms an impenetrable understory in Oak or Beech woodlands and there are good examples of this in parts of Epping Forest.

The leaves on the lower limbs have three to five sharp spines on each side, pointing in alternative directions, while leaves of the upper branches lack spines. Such tough leaves take several years to rot down once they have fallen from the tree.

The Holly is dioecious, either growing as male or female plants; the females will produce the familiar bear berries, usually red, but sometimes yellow. Each fruit contains 3 to 4 seeds which are spread by passing through the digestive system of the seed predator! They germinate two or three years later often beneath a perching post. Planted as a hedge Holly forms a good stock proof barrier providing some shelter from biting winter winds and also good nesting sites!

With the spread of the railway lines out of central London, it became fashionable to plant Holly or other evergreens in the front gardens of the larger houses. Sadly, as many of these front gardens are now given over to parking spaces for cars such hedges have been removed, but where they do survive their visual importance is recognised and they have become a feature within conservation areas.

In addition to the dark green of the common Holly, a number of distinct

varieties, some with variegated leaves have been selected for planting in gardens or in public parks and certain weeping forms were popular in cemeteries. The City of London Cemetery is an excellent place to see many of these forms. Many Holly leaves have a dark blotch on them. This is caused by a single tiny larva of the Holly leaf-miner *Phytomyza ilicis*, a small black fly. Some of the larvae are eaten by birds, including blue tits, which peck out the insect leaving a v-shaped tear on the leaf.

The female adult Holly leaf-miner flies lay her eggs on young holly leaves in June and July. The eggs hatch and the larvae crawl out feeding by making a tunnel and eating the leaf from the inside. Each larva carries on eating throughout the autumn and winter reaching a maximum size in March. It pupates between March and May, but before pupating, the larva prepares a thin triangular area on the underside of the leaf. In late May and June, the insect presses against this thin area, and the adult fly emerges from the leaf, leaving an emergence hole about 1mm wide underneath the leaf. Holly flowers are the food plant of the Holly Blue butterfly which has two broods a year. This butterfly passes the winter as a pupa in the ground and the adults emerge in April, mate

and the females lay eggs on the unopened flower buds. The caterpillars eat the contents of the flower buds and they pupate at ground level before emerging in early August. The females of the second brood feed on Ivy flowers before descending to the ground to pupate in the autumn.

Ivy is a native evergreen climber which frequently grows up tree trunks, holding fast by many adventitious roots which stick firmly to the bark. It will also clamber up walls and fences and in gardens it can become something of a pest as it can spread along the ground too. Once it has reached a certain height, it will produce flowers on branches which have a tendency to form a bushy shape. Most healthy trees will shade out the Ivy growing up the trunk, but a thick cover of Ivy round a tree could be hiding a hollow trunk. A thick tangle of Ivy provides shelter and food for many invertebrates including certain caterpillars, spiders and snails. For many birds such as Wrens and Dunnocks there is shelter in cold weather, tasty food to be eaten and potential nest sites too. If the clambering Ivy is in danger of overtopping a wall, keep it trimmed back as it can form a top-heavy leafy mop covered in autumnal flowers and then black berries. However, as it does produce irritating toxins do be

careful when cutting it back. Variegated forms of Ivy and Holly provide winter contrast in a garden, but both grow well and look their best where there is some sun.

The evergreen Yew can grow into a tree 20 m. The highly toxic, flat, dark green leaves are arranged spirally on the stem, but on many shoots they are twisted into two flat rows either side of the stem. An understory shrub in deciduous woodlands, it is now becoming more frequent within Epping Forest as birds such as Thrushes and Blackbirds distribute the seeds. As individual Yew trees can reach a considerable age it is often associated with ancient sacred sites and is frequently grown in churchyards and cemeteries.

Trees with fine needle like leaves such as the pines, firs and spruces can survive snowy conditions as snow slides off their branches.

Article by
Tricia Moxey



**Getting to know Epping Forest -
Six youngsters from Newham are
introduced to Bush Wood**

forest & schools

As the Community Liaison Officer at the City of London - Epping Forest, my role involves getting new audiences out to enjoy and experience the Forest in all sorts of different ways. The role is mainly aimed at youth groups and underrepresented groups who may normally face various barriers to visiting and making sure they get a fulfilling and enjoyable experience while they are here. It can be hugely rewarding and I hope I have empowered a few people to improve their connection with the Forest and wildlife in general.



Chigwell School volunteering on Wanstead Park this summer

The role enables me to work alongside staff from a number of different organisations and as part of a recent project I have been working with a team from Kids Company for Rokeby School in Canning Town. Having first helped them to deliver a project on Wanstead Park this summer, the second group of youngsters from Rokeby visited on Friday 15th November. The group are taking part in a 'Forest School' project, outdoor education aimed at learning personal, social and technical skills while improving knowledge of the environment.



Checking out a 'den' with the Wanstead Nature Club

Forest School is growing in popularity in the UK and can be very effective for young children and has a place alongside classroom based learning. The scheme has obvious benefits for all but can be especially beneficial for youngsters with low attention who may not thrive in a

classroom environment. The calming influence of the natural environment can be the perfect place for the development of social skills and emotional intelligence, areas generally overlooked in a traditional learning setting.

For their first session, the Rokeby kids got to grips with some new tools and helped us to clear some Holly and bramble from Bush Wood. Along the way, they learned to work as a team and why the work they were doing was important. Over the next few weeks they became more and more comfortable with their surroundings. They definitely found it a very rewarding experience and the physical work helped what is a very active group to work off some steam, making them more receptive to listening and learning. In later sessions, the group also took part in bushcraft sessions, learning skills such as fire lighting and orienteering, and how to do these safely and responsibly.

This is just one example of the community work we undertake at the south of the Forest through our Forest Keepers, Visitor Services, volunteers and organisations such as the Epping Forest Centenary Trust and Wanstead Nature Club. In the last few months alone and just in the Wanstead area, we have introduced youngsters from



Redbridge 'Fun for All' took part in a day of bushcraft and species spotting on Wanstead Park in August

Redbridge 'Fun for All' group for minority and disabled families to Wanstead Park through an exciting day of fire lighting, den building and species identification. The 'Happy Loppers' have been working on conservation tasks at Bush Wood and Leyton Flats with Epping Forest Centenary Trust and the Friends of Bush Wood have now started regularly running practical projects on the site. This kind of outreach work is vital for the long-term health and protection of the Forest in a fast changing capital city, and by being more inclusive we ensure that not only do the next generation show a greater consideration and care for our green spaces but they are also more invested in securing and supporting their future.

Andrew Harby
Community Liaison Officer
City of London - Epping
Forest



2014 is the year of the dog in epping forest!

In 2014, we have put in place a series of events to promote responsible dog ownership. Dog owners form a large section of our users, particularly in the southern end of the Forest and Wanstead Park. We welcome dog lovers and most of us are dog lovers too, but like all our visitors they must adhere to the Epping Forest Byelaws as well as more recently other legislation such as Section 55 to 67 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (Dog Control Orders).

As an organisation, we work closely with partners such as Local Authorities and the Police to deal with irresponsible or anti-social behaviour issues linked to dog ownership. There have been two prosecutions this year but we recognise that dealing with the problem starts with education.

As a result, we will be working with local Animal Behaviourist Charlotte Keane, of Urban Canine, to deliver a series of talks throughout 2014 which we hope will be thought-provoking and informative at the same time. To reach as many people as possible we will hold them bi-monthly at Harrow

Road Pavilion and the View Community Room. Tim Harris will be guest speaker at the first event, on Thursday 16th January at Harrow Rd, to focus on Skylark conservation on Wanstead Flats, the impact dogs can have and how dog walkers can help in protecting this nesting site. The rest of the dates are as follows:

Harrow Rd Pavilion: 13/03; 13/05; 18/09; 13/11

The View Community Room: 13/02; 17/04; 14/08; 16/10; 11/12

Entry is free and details can be obtained from www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/eppingforest or www.urbancanine.co.uk

In addition, we will also be holding two dog days, one at Wanstead Park on the 8th June (Paws in the Park!) and one at the View on the 6th of July (Paws at the View!) in association with Guide Dogs for the Blind. These will include a fun dog show, activities, information and hopefully the Wren group can get involved in some way.

Thibaud Madelin
Forest Keeper
Epping Forest
The Warren
Loughton, Essex IG10 4RW
Tel: 020 8532 1010 / Mob: 07802 380 945
thibaud.madelin@cityoflondon.gov.uk

gallery

1



3



2



5



4



6



1. Youn Naturalist - Gill James
2. Common Darter Dragonfly - Andrew Spencer
3. Fly Agaric - Jackie Morrison
4. Tiger Moth - TimHarris
5. Greylag - Nick Croft
6. Longhorn - Tony Morrison

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

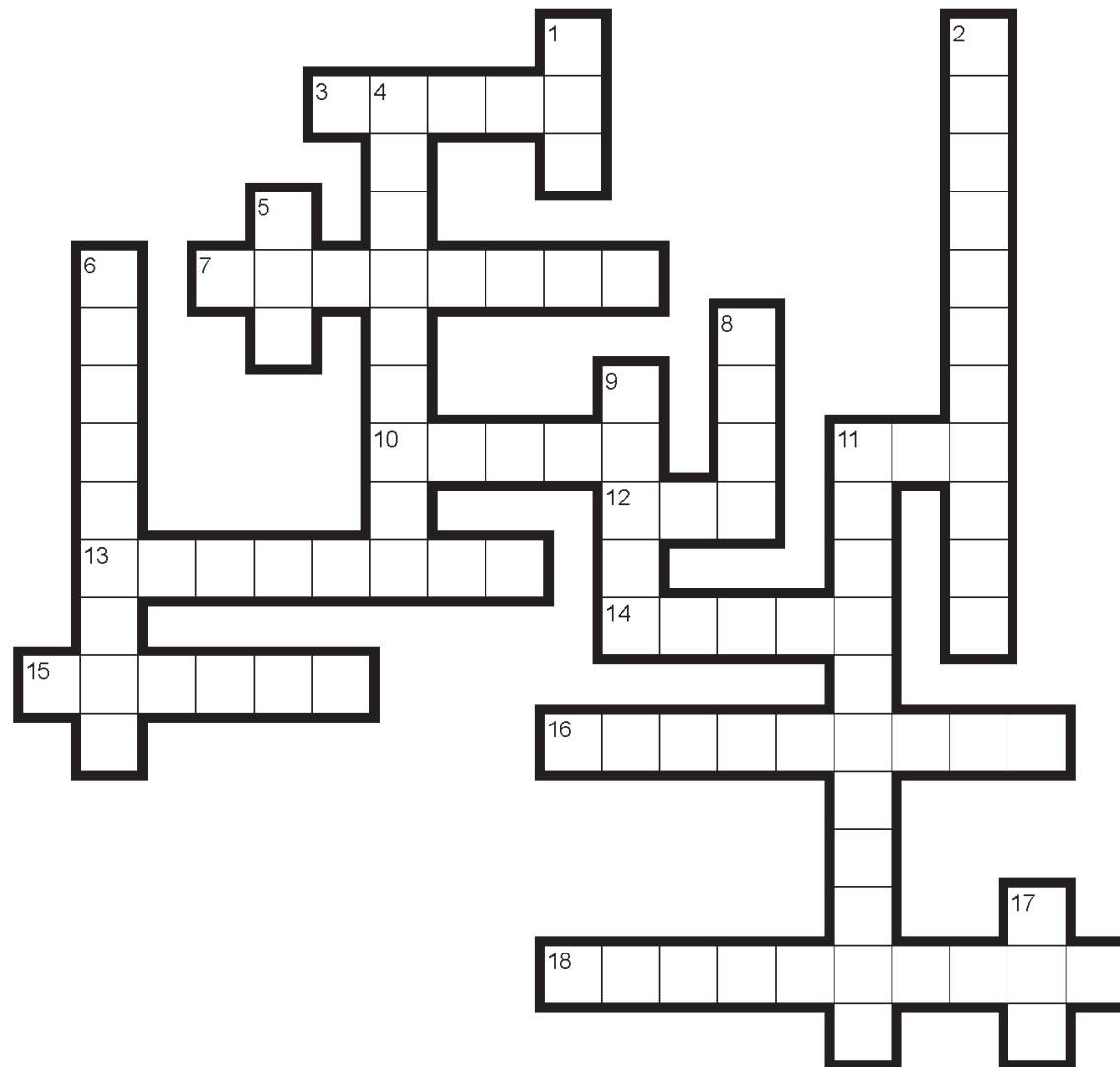
Wren crossword

ACROSS

3. ACCORDING TO THE BARD THIS LITTLE MOUSE-LIKE PREDATOR NEEDS TAMING (5)
7. THIS FLYING INSECT IS A BIT OF A SWEETIE (8)
10. THIS SNAKE IS VERY GOOD AT SUMS (5)
11. THEY CALL IT A FLYING MOUSE IN GERMANY (3)
12. THIS INSECT IS A REGULAR LITTLE SOLDIER (3)
13. A FLOWER THAT RINGS WITH THE COLOUR OF THE SKY (8)
14. A SIGN OF SUMMER – THIS BIRD IS REALLY FAST (5)
15. IF YOU ARE LUCKY THIS WILL HAVE 4 LEAVES (6)
16. A TREE THAT HAS LEAVES EVEN IN WINTER (9)
18. GREEN OR SPOTTED BIRD IS A BIT OF A HEAD BANGER (10)

DOWN

1. THIS BIRD IS A BIT OF A HOOT (3)
2. WHAT IS THE NAME FOR A COLLECTION OF STARLINGS (11)
5. NAME GIVEN TO A MALE SWAN (3)
6. THIS BIRD IS A BIT OF AN ANGRY WILLIAM (9)
8. A BIRD'S ABODE (4)
9. NOT ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE (5)
11. "I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT" AS BIRDIES DO (11)
17. A BUSY LITTLE BUZZER (3)



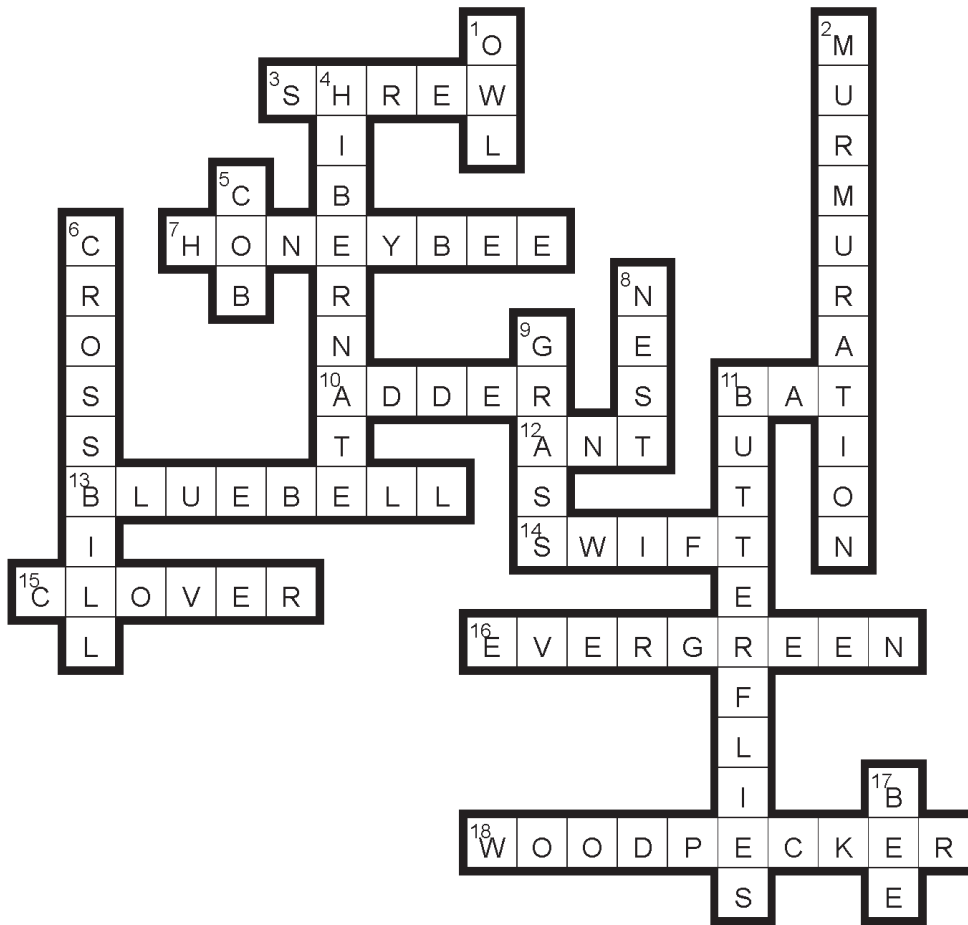
find the word

CAN YOU FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS?

SWAN, LARCH, EVERGREEN, TREE,
YELLOWHAMMER, ENVIRONMENT,
HEDGEHOG, NATURE, MUNTJACK, BIRCH,
RABBIT, NIGHTINGALE, BAT, HABITAT, WILLOW,
STOAT, STEM

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

teaser answers



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

events diary

JANUARY

Sunday 5th January 2014

Practical work in Wanstead Park

Work location the old sewage works site cutting back bramble that is spreading meeting place Aldersbrook riding stables, Empress Ave E12 5HW - not our usual place near the Temple.

Leader: Peter Williams

Enquiries: 0208 555 1358 (or 07947 819472 on the morning) wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com

Mond 6th January - New Year Social 7.30 pm onwards

Bring your own booze and food

44, Grosvenor Road, Wanstead, E11 2EP

Saturday 11th January 2014

Wanstead Nature Club for Children

10am-noon, Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats

Cost: £1.50 per child

Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 gilljames@btinternet.com

Sunday 12th

January 2014

'Awayday' trip to Abberton Reservoir

Details to be confirmed

Tuesday 14th January 2014

RSPB North-east London illustrated talk: Lee Valley's

Waterworks Nature Reserve

8pm, Gwinnell Room, St Mary's Church, 207 High Road, South Woodford E18 2PA.

Speaker: David Farthing

Cost: £3 for RSPB and Wren members, £3.50 for non-members (no charge for schoolchildren)

Enquiries: 020 8989 4746

Saturday 18th January 2014

Guided walk: Waterworks Nature Reserve 9.30am

Leaders: Daniel Whitelegg and Debbie Burkett

Cost: £2 for RSPB members, £3 for non-members

Enquiries: 07582 996315

Booking essential

Sunday 19th January 2014

Wanstead Park Waterbird Count

Collecting data for the national WeBS survey

10am. Meet by refreshment kiosk in Wanstead Park

Leader: Tim Harris

Enquiries: 07505 482328 tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk

Wednesday 22nd January 2014

"Behind the Wire" PoWS on Wanstead Flats in World War II

A talk about the Prisoner of War camps on Wanstead Flats and a look at other uses of the Flats over the past 100 years. The talk will be given by members of the Wanstead Flats History Group, Leyton and Leytonstone Historical Society.

From 7pm at COFFEE7, 10 Sebert Road, Forest Gate

E7 0NQ. Tickets £6-00 (including soft drinks and buffet) from COFFEE7 or contact Mark Gorman

Tel: 020 8553 5220 or e-mail lucasgorman@aol.com

FEBRUARY

Sunday 2nd February 2014

Practical work in Wanstead Park

work location the old sewage works site cutting back bramble that is spreading

meeting place Aldersbrook riding stables, Empress Ave E12 5HW - not our usual place near the Temple.

Leader: Peter Williams

Enquiries: 0208 555 1358 (or 07947 819472 on the morning) wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com

Saturday 8th February 2014

Wanstead Nature Club for Children

10am-noon, Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats

Cost: £1.50 per child

Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 gilljames@btinternet.com

Sunday 16th

February 2014

Wanstead Park Waterbird Count

Collecting data for the national WeBS survey

10am. Meet by refreshment kiosk in Wanstead Park

Leader: Tim Harris

Enquiries: 07505 482328 tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk

Monday 17th

7.30, Coffee7, 10 Sebert Road, Forest Gate.

Illustrated talk: the Skylarks and other birds of Wanstead Flats

Speakers: Tim Harris and Nick Croft.

Cost: £1 members, £2 non-members

Enquiries: 07505 482328 tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk

MARCH

Sunday 2nd March 2014

Practical work in Wanstead Park

10am-12.30,

meeting place to be confirmed by email nearer the time

Leader: Peter Williams

Enquiries: 0208 555 1358 (or 07947 819472 on the morning) wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com

Saturday 15th March 2014

Wanstead Nature Club for Children

10am-noon, Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats

Cost: £1.50 per child

Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 gilljames@btinternet.com

Sunday 16th

March 2014

Wanstead Park Waterbird Count

Collecting data for the national WeBS survey

10am. Meet by refreshment kiosk in Wanstead Park

Leader: Tim Harris

Enquiries: 07505 482328 tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk

and finally

It's that time of year again to keep an eye out for our feathered friends
Provide fresh clean water every day
Give kitchen scraps like cheese, cooked potato and bread.
Clear up uneaten food at the end of the day as it could attract rats.
Avoid giving salted nuts and only give peanuts from a good supplier.
Clean feeding areas regularly to prevent any disease.



now & then

Were you right ?

Answer

Manor Park at the junction of Romford Road and Forest Road in 1913 and how it looks today.