

Autumn 2021

Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

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a word from the chair

During the last couple of years when travel has sometimes been restricted and during this time of climate crisis when some of us may have been questioning or reducing our own travel, the 'local' becomes more important.

I will have spoken before about the value of having a 'patch' - for many local birders like me, this is Wanstead Flats and Wanstead Park.

However, even birders can do more than you might think from their own homes or gardens (if they are lucky enough to have one). I'm sure many Wren members will put out bird feeders and water

(undoubtedly helpful to some of our regular birds during hard weather months in the winter, although recent research may suggest not as helpful as gardening in an insect-friendly way) to attract our well known garden birds.

I'm sure many of us enjoy garden regulars such as Blue and Great Tits, Goldfinches, Robins, Wrens, and Blackbirds amongst others. But if you watch for long enough, you may get slightly more unusual or migratory birds appearing: Blackcap, Chiffchaff perhaps, I even had a Siskin perch briefly on my garden tree last year during lockdown and was also delighted to find Willow Warbler (twice since this pandemic started and Common Whitethroat during the passage migratory seasons - like now).

If you turn your eyes to the skies, garden birds can be even more rewarding. In the last two years I have had a small flock of Redshank fly over (an incredibly rare wading bird locally although pretty common on major wetland sites and parts of the Thames Estuary), I've seen Short Eared

Owl twice out of my window, I recently saw a Raven fly over (after a birder on the patch messaged me with its presence) and had a similar situation with Osprey and Marsh Harrier. I have now clocked up 69 species of bird seen in or from my garden - not bad for an urban residential street in East London, and a friend of mine in Wanstead who takes his garden listing more seriously than me is close to 100! If you start recording Nocturnal Migratory calls (Nocmig), you can do even better.

Amazing what can be seen if you have a bit of patience and a pair of binoculars.

James Heal
Chair Wren Committee



Watching and feeding wild birds in our gardens is a rewarding and enjoyable activity, not least during these unprecedented times, as the vast majority of us spend most of our time at home.

can't see the wood for the trees

by Verderer Paul Morris

It has been a breath of fresh air to move forward from the pressures of last year on the forest with the COVID pandemic to a somewhat more normal use of our green spaces. People enjoying them for what they are. I think that the dramatic difference between the weather of last year and this year has had a large part to play in this.

It's been a chance to look at actual forest management rather than people management which seemed to be the main drain on resources last summer. We have made some changes to policies such as permitting cycling through Wanstead Park that I hope turns out to be the right decision in the long run.

It's hard to make these choices and there is a lot more consideration that goes into these decisions than people may realise but my position is that whilst I wouldn't want to see any damage or make the park busier, cause any problems I have begun to realise the impact that small changes that may seem negative can become positive in the long run.



I have personally had to make some extra effort to re-appreciate the forest for what it is as it turns out that the more involved you are with management the more you see policies over the trees, so I have personally been spending a lot more time in what I do view as my favourite part of the forest which is in and around Great Monkwood and around ancient camps. I love it, it feels like home to me and I can spend hours wandering about just enjoying being there.

Reading this newsletter means you already are an ambassador for the natural environment in one way shape or form, most probably an extremely undervalued asset, your knowledge and awareness, however large or small you may feel your contribution is means you are an intrinsic part of the long term protection and survival of our forest and open spaces along with all its natural inhabitants.

What can be hard for people who are passionate about our natural assets is to remember that it's imperative that everyone eventually learns the value and remember that it happens at different paces for many various different reasons. It's important for me that we don't forget the value of any interaction between people and the natural environment and it's one that is seen by them to be a benefit not a negative. On that basis an alternative route to cycle through a park, taking people off the roads and pavements through the lovely aspects of the park is like sowing seeds for the future.

The desire to be outside within the elements and enjoying a natural environment surrounding is something that is inbuilt in all of us, even the most hardened city dweller has an inbuilt subconscious urge to get at least a couple of weeks of the year sitting out in touch with the elements, by water especially in one way shape or form enjoying the views and the weather to refresh their soul and re-charge their batteries, it's an unavoidable necessity for pretty much everyone and yet a vast majority people feel that can only be achieved by jetting off to remote shores not realising its on their doorstep or their daily commute bypasses them through enough open space and natural wonders to recharge the batteries for the flattest of burned out souls.



I have personally had to make some extra effort to re-appreciate the forest for what it is as it turns out that the more involved you are with management the more you see policies over the trees, so I have personally been spending a lot more time in what I do view as my favourite part of the forest which is in and around Great Monkwood and around ancient camps.

However the danger we face here is environmental dissonance as this is something society is chronically suffering from. It is an ailment that people are waking up to and one that cannot be cured by "Greenwashing"

The "snake oil : cures all ailments" A cure that we are, as a society succumbing to which is a placebo that will not cure the disease, it may make you feel better that something is being done to tackle the illness yet the more you learn about and appreciate nature the more you realise the cause and affect of human intervention and even when we are trying to do good the law of unintended consequences is invoked and the knock on effects snowball towards increased placebo intervention.

"Let's plant trees, that will fix it, the trees will offset our carbon so carry on"

The upcoming topics of carbon sequestration and environmental offsetting, clean air zones all raise big red flags for me. The reason being is that to my thinking they are the "Greenwashing" placebo to treat the environmental dissonance we are suffering from. I am fairly sure if I wandered up to one of our ancient pollards or young saplings to throw a tenner at them for driving my diesel vehicle past them I would find it made no difference, it would make no difference either if I paid that tenner to my local authority to make that difference on my behalf and neither would it make any difference in my mind if that local authority then passed it onto another authority who manages woodland because the value of that tenner would have reduced to a few pounds as it travelled through the various "frameworks" on the way to reach the tree, ultimately it would still just be money. You cannot offset any damage already caused on a "do now pay later" basis to any natural living plant or creature.

Sadly this is not the answer - it's a sticky plaster that probably isn't going to stick for that long.

Offsetting to my thinking is this century's biggest scam. We may pat ourselves on the back and plant a few more trees to offset the affects of damage but the damage is still happening and increasing in effect as we fall further into the "Greenwash scam" As we travel down that path we will see more increased demands to scam further, hysteria demanding that we need to offset quicker to counteract the damage and sadly move closer towards the need for increasingly intensive offsetting.



Planting trees is fundamental for us to overcome the effects of climate change. There is, however, a time and a place. It's now easier than ever for local authorities, companies and indeed governments to hide their carbon footprint behind a giant advertisement for their new green tree-planting initiatives. As a result, it's becoming increasingly obvious that we – as consumers, researchers, or general members of the public – need to keep a close eye out for greenwashing from companies claiming to be environmentally friendly.

What is just as concerning to me is the future of offset robbery and it's already happening in local authorities whereby councils, authorities and businesses are now laying claim to offsets which naturally increases their

monetary value. This is a dangerous position for natural open green spaces to be placed in, when their financial value increases they become assets to be realised and claimed. The forest was purchased for the benefit of the people, natural offsetting value wasn't realised then but it is most certainly a shared benefit for all and yet we now find that offset is claimed, not for the benefit of us but rather to enable the antithesis to exist, thrive and expand creating further pressures on that which supports its existence.

Most of the surrounding authorities over the years have failed to recognise the importance of green space provision as "there's a forest over there, that will do" so now have to find a "magic toolbox" or big Greenwashing paint brush to pretend that their damage is being offset.

So we have now moved into an era where expansion of natural green space has to be intensified much like intensive farming to increase yield. Not yielding a better crop but capturing more carbon. Carbon capture intensive farming within our natural green spaces maybe viewed as a good thing but it is a placebo as still the concrete tower blocks go up, still people are being taken into more environmentally remote styles of living, the damage is still being done but we supposedly can feel better about it because some cows are now grazing the grass rather than a lawn lever cutting it or we are going to plant some trees.

Sadly whilst the trees are seen as the solution the wrong tree in the wrong place is worse than not planting it in the first place and what's even worse is that whilst they say they will plant, in reality many local authorities don't

want the hassle, costs or ongoing maintenance of trees on verges etc. and obstruct further down the line so we end up with hybridised versions being planted.

Carbon capture is nothing more than kicking a big carbon can down the road for our children and their children to pick up later on and they will almost certainly wish we never kicked it there for them in the first place.

The Woodland Trust is particularly concerned about the loss of valuable ancient woodland, which now only covers 2% of the UK.

Planning authorities must refuse permission for destroying irreplaceable habitats such as these but there is an important caveat: *"Unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss."*

Is planting new trees to 'offset' just an excuse for abusing our ancient woodland.

If I said to you I was going to make a dangerous product that I think I can lock up the impact for a century or so but it will benefit us in the short term and will most certainly will be a problem for others to work out later would we go with "yes, make it" or would I be faced with some quite hardened opposition heavily in favour of not making it? I think I know the answer but the key would probably be because it is a new product so it isn't worth it. That highlights the fact that we have become

dangerously accustomed to complacency of attitudes and those damaging customs that already exist and so rather than have a radical rethink we move to a position of offset and can kicking for others to resolve later.

What is worse, not knowing and innocently creating a problem or knowing and leaving it for others to work out but then have to wonder why we ignored it and continued anyway?

How is it so dangerous to the forest? Because the greenwash affect has started, the can kicking is happening. Offsetting seemingly could be now taking precedence over preservation. We have some of the oldest living trees and therefore most unique habitats in Europe. Trees that have stood since before the Magna Carta was signed, ancient pollards that have been left to soar into wonderful natural cathedrals like woodland naves but their value is potentially

diminishing because of their continued decreasing performance and ability to offset our bad habits. It's akin to writing off our pensioners because their drain on society even though they are the very fabric, support and framework of it in the first place.

To old to be of value?

Don't warrant care and maintenance as much as they once did?

Lack of empathy towards the valuable and stability of their community that they provide?

It's an all too familiar example in my opinion of society trends being pushed into natural environment management and sadly the law of unintended consequences likes nothing more than an ill-conceived plan to wreak its havoc accordingly.

So as the ambassadors of the forest and the natural environment around you so does the value of your roll increase with that of the offsetting damage that will most likely occur, you are the

eyes and ears, the early warning patrol guard and most importantly the people who will gently and patiently encourage other people around you to realise the value of what we currently have, to be aware that paying a tenner here and there to offset your journey to the office isn't going to be enough. Stop kicking the can.

Every picture you share, every person that reads your newsletters and everyone you smile at welcomingly when out and about in our wonderful forest is all part of something that is much bigger, that is happening at the moment and that will be raising awareness of the importance of our natural environment and fantastic forest, hopefully the seeds of awareness you sow will grow quickly with the people you interact with.

Much like the wood wide web of fungal networks that allow the forests to communicate in their own way each and every one of you are all the human extension to that network sharing the information and enabling support and most importantly helping people to see the whole woods through the trees.

by Verderer Paul Morris



Tree planting has become the first line of defence in the fight against climate change – mainly because it's the cheapest way of doing so and because it's often seen as a cash crop.

But while planting trees can be good, it's not always the solution – and it's not always done correctly.

river roding outfall safari

Many people love to let their dogs and children play in the shallow gravelly sections of the River Roding in summer. The water looks clean and inviting: we can see ducks paddling, kingfishers fishing, tiddlers swimming and swans guarding their cygnets. In May and June, the banks are gorgeous with cow parsley and new leaf growth. So what's the problem?

Here Wren committee member Alan James takes us on a brief 'eye opening' journey of what lies below the surface of our idyllic river.



During the month of May 2021 the Zoological Society London (ZSL) has run a survey to be carried out by volunteers of pollution from misconnections along the length of the River Roding and tributaries. Volunteers attended an online training session on what to look out for, and chose their particular section of river to survey.

This survey is part of a project called the Outfall Safari which aims cover all rivers within Greater London on a 4-yearly rotation.

Gill and I chose the section abutting Wanstead Park as far as Ilford Golf Course. It was important to do the survey after at least two days of dry weather, as anything we saw coming out of the rainwater outfall pipes would not be rain and could be assessed for pollution.



There are countless outlets into the River Roding. They are designed to take clean surface water from adjacent areas into the river and out to sea. However, under certain circumstances raw sewage and other pollutants can end up being discharged into our river. A problem that is becoming more and more frequent due to an ageing infrastructure and greater numbers of homes and other development.

So what did we find?

We made a start on Saturday 1st May, a fine sunny day, following the two days of dry weather. We were now ready to report the location of any pipes and any discharge we saw, take 3 photographs, and upload to the Epicollect5 App.



An idyllic picture of the Roding taken recently from Ilford Golf Course - but further upstream it's a different story. Pic by Redbridge Council Officer Anna MacLaughlin

Soon, we spotted a small pipe sticking out of the bank coming from Royston Gardens. Nothing was coming out of the pipe so we were about to turn away - when suddenly, the pipe started flowing! The culprit appeared to be waste water from a misconnected washing machine, illegally connected to a rain pipe. The same thing for the next outfall, and this time we could smell laundry fluid too.

This shouldn't be going into our river. The polluting outfalls that are identified are prioritised for remediation by Thames Water depending on the severity. All pollution sources will be traced, but major issues will be dealt with

as a priority. It can take a long time to trace the source of the pollution, and once identified, it is the responsibility of the property owner or landowner to rectify the problem. More information about misconnections can be found here: <http://www.connectright.org.uk>

Alas, owing to time constraints, and the uncertainty of using a new app to download the information, we decided to go home, check that the information had been received okay and then we'd finish it the next day.



The article author Alan James with his new waders - up to his knees in it as usual.


However that very next day, May 2nd, it started to rain. Then it started to pour. Amazingly, there were no two consecutive days without rain until the very end of May.

The last three outlets were pollution free; so on the very last day of May we successfully finished our survey. We walked along paths we have rarely used and saw how lovely sections of the Roding can be.

Taking part in the survey taught us to look at the river with a more discerning eye.

by Alan James





*London was struck by heavy rain this summer
that saw parts of Wanstead Park made
impassable - Photo: Cllr Paul Donovan*

**time for action
is now**

2020 has been a year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated lives, livelihoods, and communities.

Whilst this pandemic caught the world off guard, we have long been aware of the damage the climate crisis will wreak. As we approach this critical decade of climate action, we must not squander the time we have left.

Time for action on climate and biodiversity crises is now!

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently sounded a chilling warning about the future. The consequences of inaction being seen in terms of weather extremes such as flooding and heatwaves. The warnings were accompanied by real time illustrations, with the fires tearing across Greece and temperatures of 45 degrees plus in parts of Canada and Italy.

London was struck by heavy rainfall at the end of July that saw many local roads converted to rivers. The infrastructure was creaking.



London was struck by heavy rain this summer that saw parts of Wanstead Park made impassable many local roads converted to rivers - pic by Cllr Paul Donovan

The havoc brought back memories of Sir Nicholas Stern's report in 2006 for the then Labour Government, when he warned of the cost of inaction, which would be greater the longer it went on.

Needless to say, his wise words were ignored.

There has always been an attitude with governments at all levels of putting the climate and biodiversity crises on the back burner.

The problem now is that the house is on fire.

The Paris Climate Agreement in 2015 brought strong rhetoric but this was not matched by actions. There are big hopes of the COP26 meeting in November but will that be hot air or some real commitment to change?

One of the problems is the failure to accept the need for fundamental change in how we all live.

The changes mean driving and flying less, eating less meat, recycling and re-using things and developing bio-communities.

Some may see these developments as a step back but it is the present consumer based society, with its use it and throw it away attitude that has brought the present crisis.

In Redbridge, the Climate Action Plan was recently published. It seeks to cut council based emissions. The biggest emitters are buildings with 56%, then transport with 36% and waste on 8%.

Retrofitting council buildings, promoting active travel (via walking, cycling and use of public transport) and improving recycling are among the actions being taken.

But all council based activities account for only 2.4% of emissions. There needs to be a far wider effort if we are to tackle emissions in the area. Individuals must take responsibility for how they live and act.

In the area of biodiversity there is much to be done.

The Environment Act will see the need for a net biodiversity gain to be part of any new development. This should prove a powerful weapon in the effort to extend biodiversity.



Individuals must also take an active responsibility for how they live and act. A typical street in Ilford, south Redbridge. A lack of 'green' is the legacy of past council policy to do away with on-street parking - benefits of this were easier access for waste vehicles and more efficient/cheaper use of mechanical street and pavement cleaning over traditional manual road sweeps. Tree planting was also discouraged and trees even removed to cut maintenance costs. The loss of green in our gardens has a profound impact in terms of water run-off causing local flooding and loss of habitat for wildlife. Pic by local resident John Cochrane

It will though need enforcement, too often in the recent past developers have failed to deliver on biodiversity commitments.



In 2020, the Grow Zones initiative was expanded with the addition of a number of new areas in parks and on road verges. This year, the project is also experimenting with wildflower planting to explore different ways of making these areas even more floral and beneficial to wildlife. Here the author helps with wild planting on Christ Church Green and adjacent verges on Wanstead Place - pic by Susie Knox.

It is also important that the gain comes in our local area, not letting the developer put in the biodiversity improvement in some other part of the country.

Redbridge Council has just produced its green urban landscape policy, which aims to increase biodiversity. It will see more areas being able to go wild, including road verges.

There are already the Grow Zones in Wanstead - a concept being extended out across the borough. But more needs to be done on biodiversity. The actions of local government need to operate in unison with individuals. So it is no good creating a Growzone that is then effectively cancelled out in terms of biodiversity gain by people concreting over their front and back gardens.

This sort of action also adds to flood risk, reducing the area for water to drain away.

The concreting over of gardens shows people operating in individualistic bubbles, completely oblivious to what is going on in the wider community.

So there is much to do and too little time to do it. We are in the midst of climate and biodiversity disasters. Both need addressing together. Increasing biodiversity cuts carbon. The crisis is happening in real time - the time for individual and governmental action is now.

Cllr Paul Donovan.



More:

Grow Zones <https://www.wildwanstead.org>



then & now

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



Solidarity with

friends of orient way park

The Orient Way Pocket Park is a 20 year old, maturing woodland helping to protect the Lea Bridge Community from pollution and toxic fumes caused by heavy industrial traffic on Lea Bridge Road and Orient Way. The park is more than just 90 trees; it's an ecosystem maintained by many plant and animal species; it's creating the oxygen that we breathe; it's helping to ensure a sustainable planet for future generations and it's where the birds sing.

The Lea Bridge Community and Friends of Orient Way Pocket, are asking Waltham Forest Council, to stop plans to destroy Orient Way Pocket Park. Here Wren chair, James Heal, gives his view on the delicate balance between much needed housing development and the need to protect our natural environment.

Just outside the south eastern corner of the Wren Wildlife Recording Area is a small pocket park sandwiched between two major roads (including Orient Way), a train track, residential housing and warehouses. The Pocket Park contains 125 trees, some scrub area, some unmown verges and, and some landscaped lawns.

The whole area, including 122 of the 125 trees are under threat of destruction to build new housing. The local residents held a community activity and protest day on Bank Holiday Monday (30 August) which members of the Wren Group visited to show solidarity.

Orient Way Park Friends are concerned that they they are about to lose some green and tree-filled space in this highly urban area. They are concerned about the destruction of trees during this time of climate crisis, the loss of community space, and increased flood risk.

In a brief, informal survey, the Wren Group recorded at least seven species of tree growing in the area; including some mature specimen trees that have previously been subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

In the midst of the Climate Emergency and the struggle to mitigate the Covid 19 legacy, we all , humans and wildlife, need this calm, green oasis more than ever.

Friends of Orient Way Park

James Heal, Chair of the Wren Group, said: "I met a number of passionate community spirited residents - effectively neighbours of the Wren Group - desperately trying to save a precious green space on their doorstep. Whilst I am very aware of the challenges that come from housing shortages, it surely cannot be right to be destroying

green space and removing hundreds of trees during this time of climate crisis.

Whilst we visited my son played with other children in amongst the trees, making banners, and collecting fallen leaves to make leaf crowns; its seems a tragic shame that this is all due to end. On the bus journey back from the action day my wife and I saw derelict warehouse space which would surely be more suited to redevelopment than destroying a tree-lined park?"

Let's hope that Waltham Forest Council listen carefully to the concerns raised by the local residents.

Join the campaign:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-orient-way-pocket-park>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1653229131477489>

<https://twitter.com/OrientSave?s=09>

Nature is like air, water, health and well-being

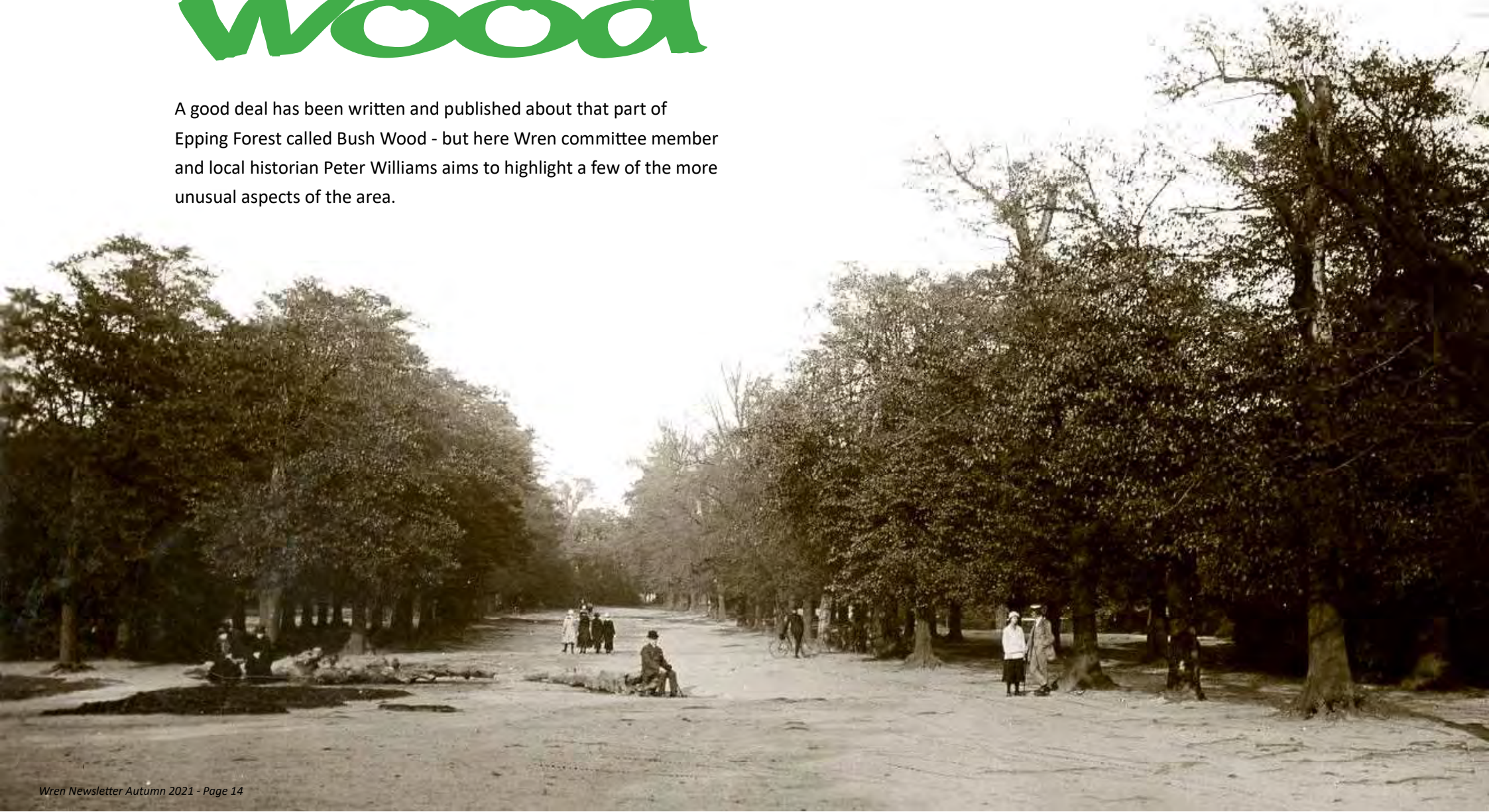
it belongs to everyone and is not anyone's to sell or exploit.

To be custodians of nature is a privilege not a business.

Bush Wood, The Avenue in the 1920s. The Avenue is one of the last reminders of the grandeur of Wanstead House and its estate, which spanned many miles from its epicentre in Wanstead Park.

Bush Wood

A good deal has been written and published about that part of Epping Forest called Bush Wood - but here Wren committee member and local historian Peter Williams aims to highlight a few of the more unusual aspects of the area.



Bush Wood is part of Epping Forest lying between Wanstead Flats to the south and Leyton Flats or Hollow Ponds to the north. To the east is Wanstead Park, and Bush Wood was once part of that aristocratic estate. South of Bush Road Bush Wood covers about 13 acres. There is a smaller section of 7 acres north of the road, which is more open and less wooded. Bush Wood runs into the Harrow Road playing fields to the south and east.

Quaker Meeting House, Bush Road

The meeting house occupies what was originally an illegal enclosure of the Forest, though the legal position was regularised 20-30 years ago. Before 1870 it was the Becontree Assembly Rooms and the practice ground of



Quaker Meeting House cemetery Bush Road. Amongst the 'plain' headstones is one to Elizabeth Fry.

an archery club. It was purchased about 1871 for Quaker meetings mainly at the expense of J. Gurney Barclay. The present meeting-house was built in 1968.

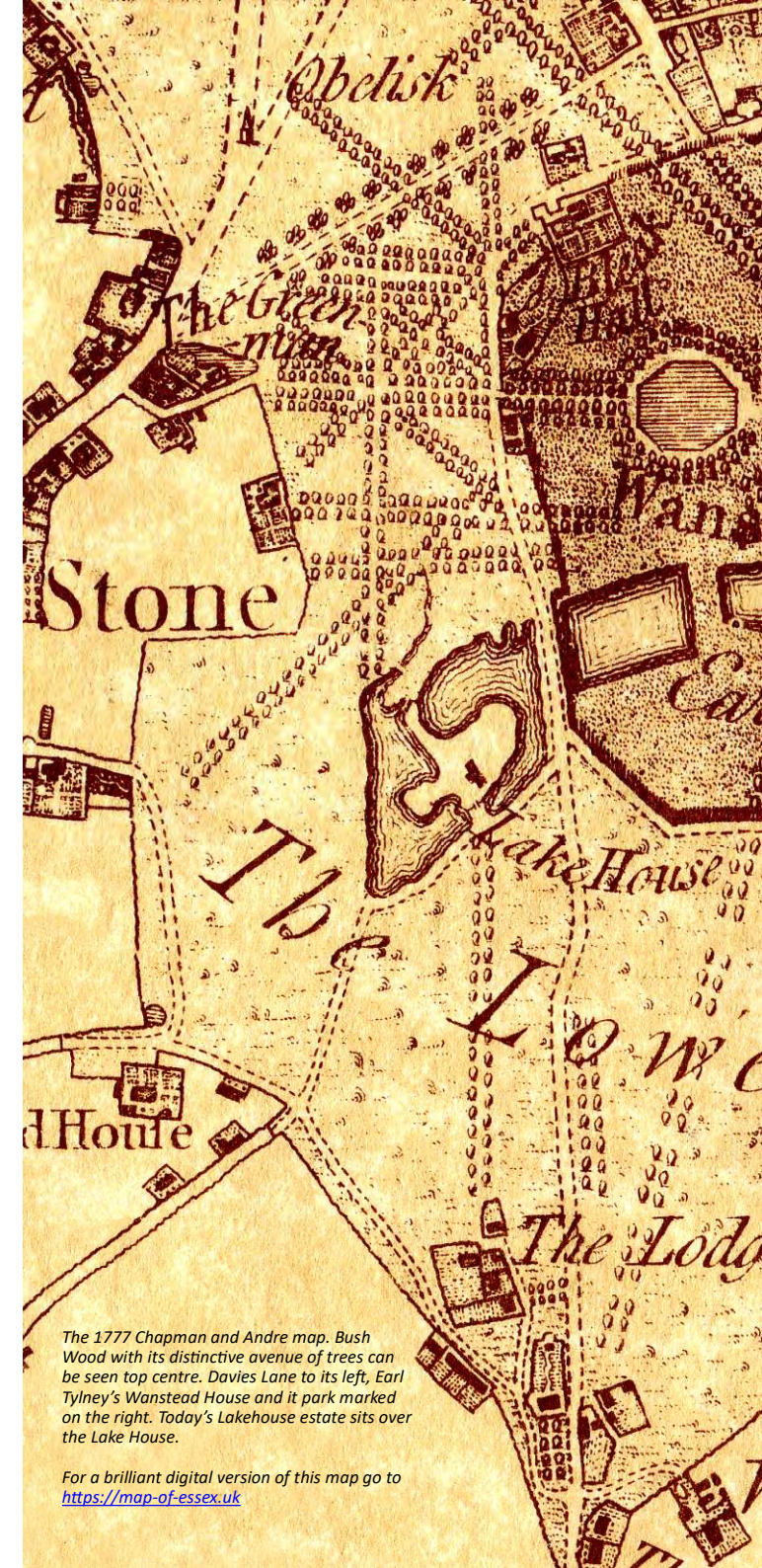
The graveyard, enclosed by a brick wall (except where this has collapsed and has been replaced by a railing fence at the south edge), consists of a grass lawn edged by the simple Quaker memorial headstones with a border of planted shrubs by the wall. Amongst the headstones is one to Elizabeth Fry. This was originally in the grounds of Barking Abbey, but was moved here for safety when a public park there was vandalised.



The lodge of the old archery rooms/Quaker meeting house demolished 1967
(Copy of photo in the meeting house courtesy of Sue McCarthy)

The presence of the Quaker meeting at Wanstead originated in a shift of population during the late 19th century. Many of the wealthy Friends (Quakers) who had attended the Plaistow meeting-house were moving farther from London, and about 1868 some of them began to meet for worship at Wanstead.

Substantial alterations were made to the archery club



The 1777 Chapman and Andre map. Bush Wood with its distinctive avenue of trees can be seen top centre. Davies Lane to its left, Earl Tylney's Wanstead House and its park marked on the right. Today's Lakehouse estate sits over the Lake House.

For a brilliant digital version of this map go to <https://map-of-essex.uk>

when it closed, and some of the furnishings, including oak panelling, were brought from Plaistow meeting house. In its early years the new meeting-house was attended by such prominent families as the Smith Harrisons, Godlees, Barclays (of the bank of the same name), and Fowlers. Between 1870 and 1900 the total membership was about 85. From 1900 it rose steadily to a peak of 234 in 1930, after which it declined. The meeting-house was rebuilt in 1968 as a polygonal structure of white brick.

The archery rooms were not just used for sport, but hosted a range of meetings and events Dickens is said to have given readings in the club.

These cuttings give an idea of the range of uses:

VOLUNTEER DRESS BALL AT WANSTEAD.—A ball took place at the Beacontree Archery Rooms, Wanstead, on the evening of the 10th, and came off with considerable *eclat*. The company included Lieut.-Colonel Capper, Major Birt, Captains Howard, C. J. Kayess, C. R. Pelly, Sewell, Davis, and Strange; Lieuts. Reynolds, Saville, and Nixon; Ensigns Geere, Elliot, Bell, &c. The attendance of the ladies was large, comprising the *elite* of the neighbourhood, numbering 180 ladies and gentlemen. The surplus, after deducting all expenses, will be devoted to the funds of the Beacontree Rifle Corps.

Essex Standard, 17 Apr 1861

VOLUNTEER DRESS BALL AT WANSTEAD.—A ball took place at the Beacontree Archery Rooms, Wanstead, on the evening of the 10th, and came off with considerable *eclat*. The company included Lieut.-Colonel Capper, Major Birt, Captains Howard, C. J. Kayess, C. R. Pelly, Sewell, Davis, and Strange; Lieuts. Reynolds, Saville, and Nixon; Ensigns Geere, Elliot, Bell, &c. The attendance of the ladies was large, comprising the *elite* of the neighbourhood, numbering 180 ladies and gentlemen. The surplus, after deducting all expenses, will be devoted to the funds of the Beacontree Rifle Corps.

Essex Standard 2 Nov 1864

The 1880/90s in Bush Wood

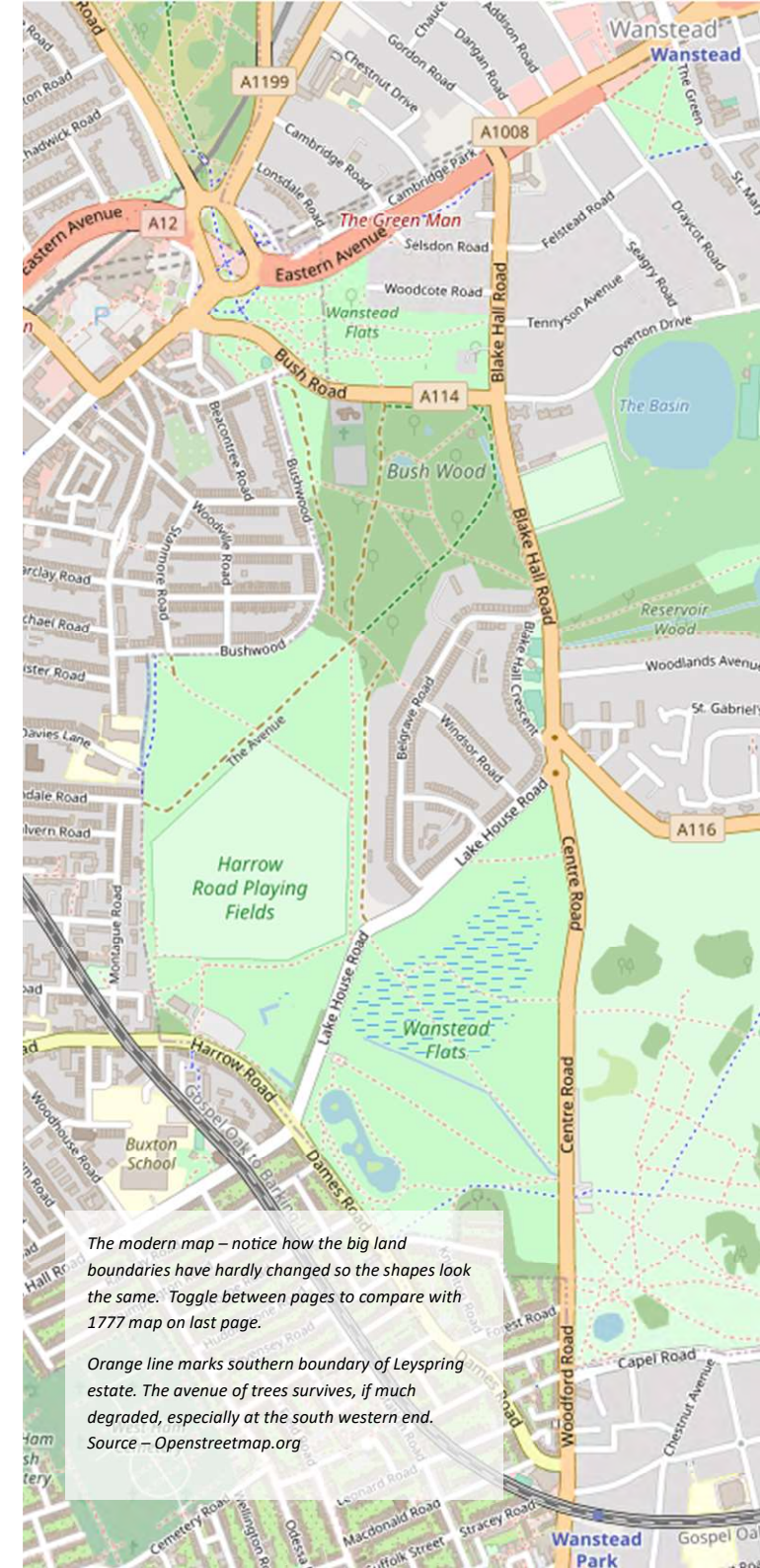
After the passing of the various Epping Forest Acts in the 1870s, Bush Wood like the rest of the Forest became public land looked after by the Corporation of the City of London, appointed Conservator by that Act.

THE RED FLAG ON WANSTEAD FLATS.

At Stratford Petty Session on Saturday eight "preachers" were summoned for breaking an Epping Forest bye-law by "delivering a public lecture, sermon, or address" without permission, in Bush Wood. They were all bound over to come up for judgment if called upon. The Flats on Sunday morning were quiet, only one or two groups gathering and debating the action of the Corporation and the decision of the magistrates. One speaker suggested that a demonstration should be organised for Saturday afternoon, to march en masse to Major Mackenzie's at Loughton and deliver a protest. In the afternoon and evening a very different state of affairs prevailed. Some individuals, who announced themselves as "Ankies Communists from 273 'Ackney-road," came upon the scene and unfurled a red flag, beneath which they delivered addresses made up of incendiarism and exceedingly bad English. The speaker in the evening announced that in case the Government found him an oakum-picking job before next Sunday somebody else would be in his place on or near Bush Wood to continue the campaign for

Chelmsford Chronicle 4 Sep 1891

Well before the 1890s a tradition had developed of holding religious and political meetings in Bush Wood, even though the byelaws of the Forest did not really permit this. The area was on the fringes of the ever growing London metropolis and was only a semi



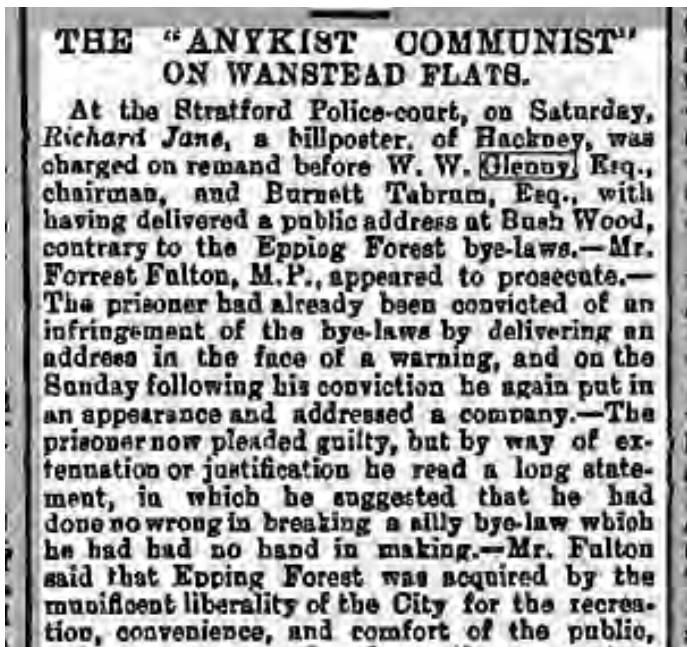
The modern map – notice how the big land boundaries have hardly changed so the shapes look the same. Toggle between pages to compare with 1777 map on last page.

Orange line marks southern boundary of Leyspring estate. The avenue of trees survives, if much degraded, especially at the south western end. Source – Openstreetmap.org

regulated space, allowing people to feel they could meet there. It was easily accessible by the new trams and by walking from the newly built up areas.

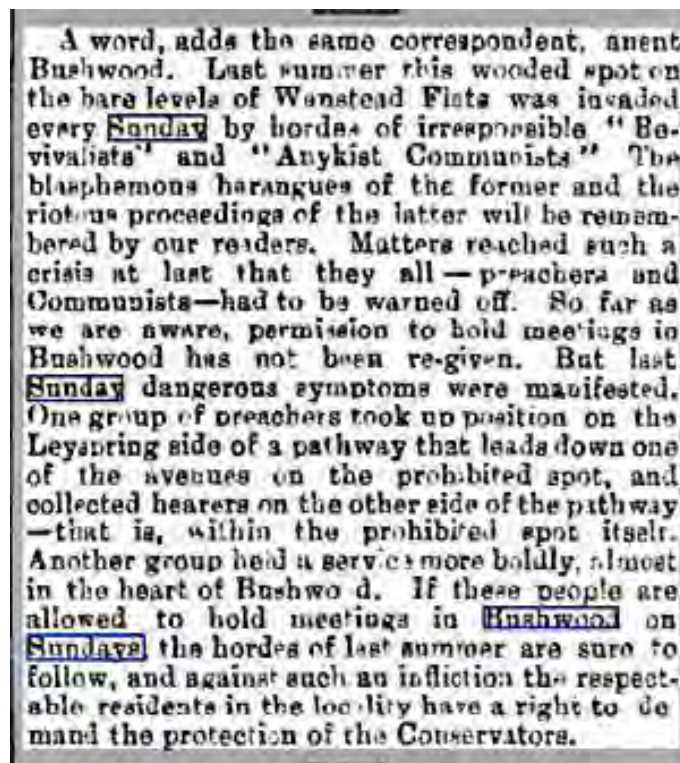
There are lurid press stories of early communists holding meetings as in these cuttings:

One of the arguments the protestors used was that there has long been a right to hold public meetings at Bush Wood but the superintendent of the Forest was now saying they could not as it broke the new byelaws from 1880. There were even prosecutions of specific speakers such as Richard Jane as here:



Chelmsford Chronicle - Friday 02 October 1891

The most likely location for the meetings it seems is the open area of grassland immediately alongside the Quaker Meeting House at the junction of Bush Road and the road called Bush wood.



The arguments rumbled on into 1892 - Chelmsford Chronicle 29 Apr 1892

Meanwhile Cambridge Park FC spent two seasons stoically playing on a pitch adjoining the Friends Meeting House at the top end of Bush Wood which had two small oaks and one May tree growing in the middle of the pitch! The Secretary wrote to the Superintendent asking for permission to remove the trees 'as they hinder the play in the matches'! They would be willing to pay for this removal process, he added.

It is not recorded if they got permission to move the trees. By 1896 the same area was being used for band concerts, where several hundred people attended. These may have had a religious flavour.

Religious meetings

PREACHERS IN EPPING FOREST.

At the Stratford Petty Sessions on Saturday William Oddy, of the Gospel Temperance Mission Hall, Leytonstone, was summoned for breaking an Epping Forest bye-law in "delivering a public lecture, sermon, or address" without permission.—Mr. Hayes, solicitor, who appeared

Religious meetings

William Oddy of the Leytonstone Gospel Temperance Mission Montague Road (now vanished), frequently ran into trouble. In 1891 he was summonsed for preaching after his licence to do so, first issued 10 years earlier, was revoked on the grounds that the increasing number of preachers in Bush Wood had led to numerous complaints.

Oddy claimed he had been preaching in the area since the mid-1870s, and declared that he had "obeyed the law of God" in preaching the Gospel. The magistrate responded that he must "render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's" and bound him over.

A few years later In March 1896, the Committee agreed to allow Oddy to hold religious services in the Forest in conjunction with Thomas Elliott. But in June, after complaint from a resident about a service near the Green Man, the Superintendent discussed with Oddy about finding a more suitable place.

It seems Oddy didn't co-operate because in July the Corporation's solicitor was instructed to withdraw his licence, though no reason seems to have given. By 1899 Oddy was once more among those applying for the "renewal" of their licence to hold religious services – but,

unlike all his fellow applicants, he was turned down.

There was other Christian preaching on the Bush Wood area too:



Forest Gate weekly news July 1896 - Image via John Walker

The following year this turned unpleasant as this report from the Superintendent shows:

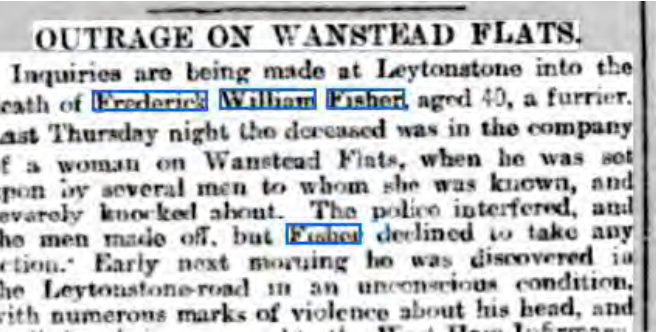
23/07/1897 "Rowdiness in Bush Wood"

"Residents in Leytonstone and elsewhere who frequent this favourite spot have frequently to endure the infliction of the rowdiness and offensive expressions from a number of lads and others, verging on manhood, who frequently make the central avenue a place to be avoided by all decent folk". A religious service where "Christian Israelites" formerly held forth, had been interrupted by a group of fellows "respectably dressed" who had been on a ramble "where drink was most available" conducted a mock service with loud singing. Socialists some years ago were not allowed to hold meetings in Bush Wood and

one lecturer was imprisoned for persistently breaking the Conservators' bye-laws.

"The Conservators of the Forest lay down very strict rules to all who hold meetings religious or political, within its precincts". Why can't effective authority be exercised over "that which is disorderly, sometimes disgusting..."

In this period there were also several reports of serious violence in Bush Wood including a murder - Frederick William Fisher (40) set upon by several men at midnight and "severely knocked about". They approached him and demanded to know who the woman was who was with him. Her brother and the deceased had rowed 4 months earlier.

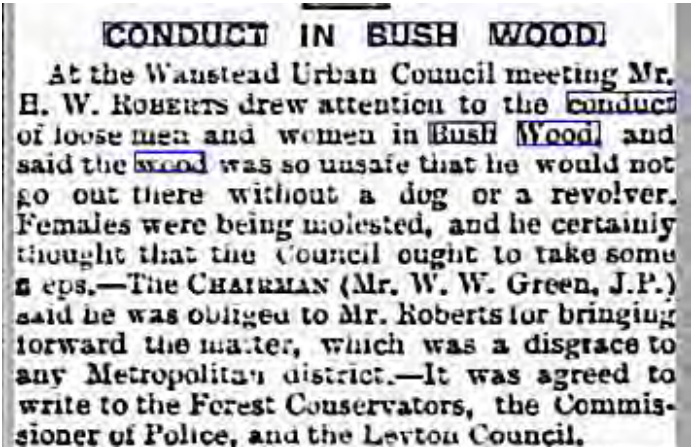


Nottingham Evening Post 07 August 1899

Concerns about personal safety continued, no doubt somewhat over-stated as these things often are:

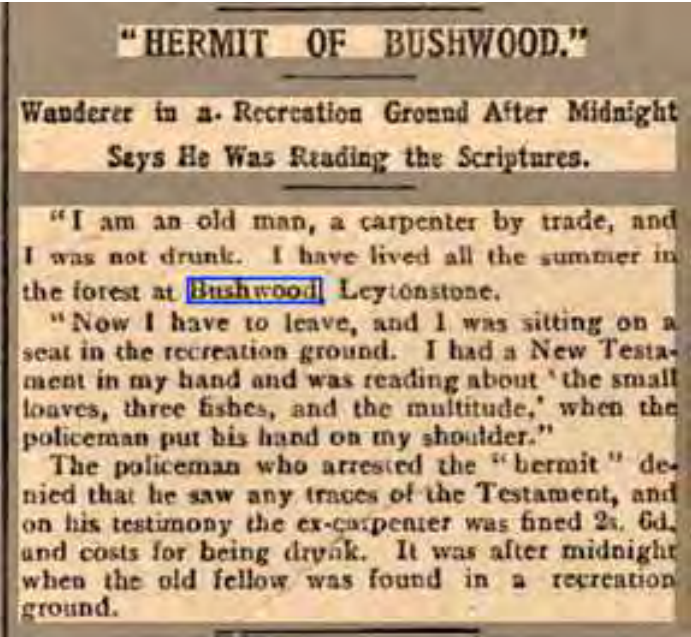
The tarmac path that runs from Bush wood through to Belgrave Road has been there for over 100 years

One very odd and interesting feature occurs a couple of hundred yards south of the tarmac path and that is a line of overlapping vertical slates cutting through an earthen path on the edge of the playing fields. They are



Chelmsford Chronicle 26 Dec 1902

clearly carefully arranged and it is a bit of a mystery why they are there. However research by local historian and photographer Russell Kenney shows the slates to lie exactly on the edge of the large water features that used to occupy the Lake House estate. This is shown in the graphic below marked with a red spot:



Rough sleeping in Bush Wood is also nothing new it seems - Chelmsford Chronicle 29 Dec 1905



Bushwood, The Avenue 1898 - The grandest were the three avenues through what is now Blake Hall Road to Leytonstone.

Police Cadet training centre

The Metropolitan Police was one of the first to introduce a cadet corps or force in 1948, intended to boost then-low recruitment levels (it was then 3,000 below its 'establishment' figure of 28,000, with officers working two of their monthly 'rest days' and being paid for this work).



Belgrave Heights (white building to the right) Spring 2021. Note the damage to the paths much widened during Covid social distancing.

Granted its first commandant Andrew Croft in 1960, the Metropolitan Police Cadet Corps or Force was based originally in the former RAF Hendon buildings on Aerodrome Road and Police Cadets were all male aged 16 to 19 and they were paid a salary. They initially served two 'School terms' at Hendon and then transferred to another establishment at Ashford Kent until the first 'term' after their 18th birthday when they were attached to one of four Cadet Centres at Kingsbury, Sunbury, Norwood and Wanstead.



The Swiss Cottage in around 1906. The Metropolitan Police did not require to obtain planning permission so this idealic scene was destroyed in 1962 to make way for the Police Training Centre - Belgrave Heights. The Avenue ran alongside the Cottage to the right of the picture.

So Belgrave Heights originally accommodated these cadets as part of their training. By the late 1990s the cadet scheme ended and the building was surplus to requirements and it was sold off for housing development. There was a local campaign opposing this as it would generate traffic on Belgrave Rd.

Bush Wood in the Second World War

To the left of the estate the Harrow Road playing fields are covered in allotments as part of the Dig for Victory campaign, turning land over to food growing. They reverted to playing fields after WW2.



RAF aerial photo Bush Wood area 7th August 1944 – note towards to bottom right hand corner the whited out area – that is a bomb impact taking out several houses in Windsor Road, Lake House estate. In October 1944, eight people were killed in Blake Hall Crescent in a German rocket attack

Conclusion

This article has tried to highlight some of the less well known aspects of the history of Bush Wood, whose avenues of trees started life on an aristocratic estate but also hosted religious and political meetings and much else besides.

You can find more details of the history of Wanstead Flats including Bush Wood in a series of booklets published by the author with others. They are available by contacting the author at pows.wanstead@gmail.com

Suntrap forest centre

The Suntrap Forest Centre has been open for over 50 years and its rich legacy continued this Summer 2021 when the centre was relaunched as an education centre fit for the 21st century.

The aim of the centre is to deliver memorable, first-hand experiences of nature that educate and inspire young people; developing respect and understanding on ways to protect the natural world – all within the unique educational setting that is Epping Forest.

Here, London Borough of Waltham Forest officer, Helen Bigham gives an overview of the recently refurbished Suntrap Forest Centre.

To address the climate emergency Waltham Forest Council has undertaken a £4.5 million investment in Suntrap Forest Centre, an environmental education site in Epping Forest open since 1967.

This commitment will ensure future generations are able to benefit from the unique educational opportunities the centre provides, building on the centre's legacy of bringing nature nearer to urban communities. Not only for teaching and life-long learning about the natural world but also to empower institutions, students, and their connected communities to act in ways to protect the environment.



The new Meadow Lodge building with full height glass walls is a short walk across the camping site. The dining facilities open-up during warm weather to provide a real outdoor eating experience with views across our wildflower meadows.

Thousands of Waltham Forest residents had their first experience of camping outdoors or exploring the forest at the Suntrap Forest Centre, but facilities needed improving

to meet 21st century expectations and environmental challenges.

The improvements implemented include:

- ☐ Refurbishment and extension of the Victorian former hospital building that includes improved four large fully equipped classrooms.
- ☐ New outdoor classroom and multi-functional space.
- ☐ Residential facilities for up to 80 visitors. This includes twenty sustainably heated wooden camping pods in two rings of ten pods surrounding large fire pits. Designed to maintain a close to nature feeling but allow usage across the year.
- ☐ The new multi-purpose Lodge that includes dining facilities with integrated toilets, showers, and lockers. Designed to seat up to 80 persons with space that expands outwards into a natural seating.
- ☐ The whole of the site is designed to be fully accessible by wheelchair users
- ☐ Wide range of sustainable energy sources are used across the site to lead by example and demonstrate best practice including ground source heat pump, solar panels for both hot water and electricity, water harvesting, food waste composting and compost toilets.
- ☐ Meat-free menu for catered bookings
- ☐ Electric charging points, 12-seater electric mini-bus, and bicycle store

- ☐ Wi-Fi across the site
- ☐ To promote biodiversity improved woodland, wet and dry meadows and four ponds (one raised for easy access) with native planting to support many different habitats.
- ☐ Animals suitable for handling including reptiles, amphibians, mammals and invertebrates

Suntrap Facts

Suntrap was founded in 1894, originally built as a cottage hospital

It then became a Children's TB Sanatorium and during the second world war became an outpost of the Royal London as a maternity hospital. In the 1950's it was temporarily converted into flats for families in need.

In 1967 The London Borough of Waltham Forest bought Suntrap for £500 to create a centre to provide outdoor activities and education.

Suntrap Forest Education Centre celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017.

On a recent visit Ms Lampard, Head of Chingford C of E primary School said:

"Suntrap does a great job in educating young people

about the environment and in particular about Epping Forest. *I think the opportunity for children to come up to Suntrap and actually learn about sustainability and take it home to their parents is amazing. The most beautiful detail has been thought about to encourage children to encourage wildlife and recycle. I love the chicken huts, with the home for bees and green growing roofs and solar roofs - children will learn phenomenally here!"*

The centre will continue to offer environmental cross curricular provision suitable for all age groups from Early Years to Post 16. Courses running from geography, science, biology, and art to bushcraft, orienteering and team challenges.



Close up shot of one of the new cedar-clad camping pods. Twenty pods each sleeping four people were built off-site and moved to their new homes in the centre's Wild Wood and Wildflower Meadow.

The wide-ranging activities are led by experienced environmental education professionals to empower visitors with knowledge and skills to act and make informed

choices to use the world's resources wisely and make a positive contribution to improve their local area.

There is an expanded weekend and holiday programme alongside bespoke corporate team away days and residentials. This will enable more families, organisations, and charities to utilise the facilities to enjoy, discover, explore, and appreciate the Forest on their doorstep.

Helen Bigham

London Borough of Waltham Forest



For more information and to sign up to the centre's free monthly newsletter visit;

<https://www.suntrapcentre.co.uk>

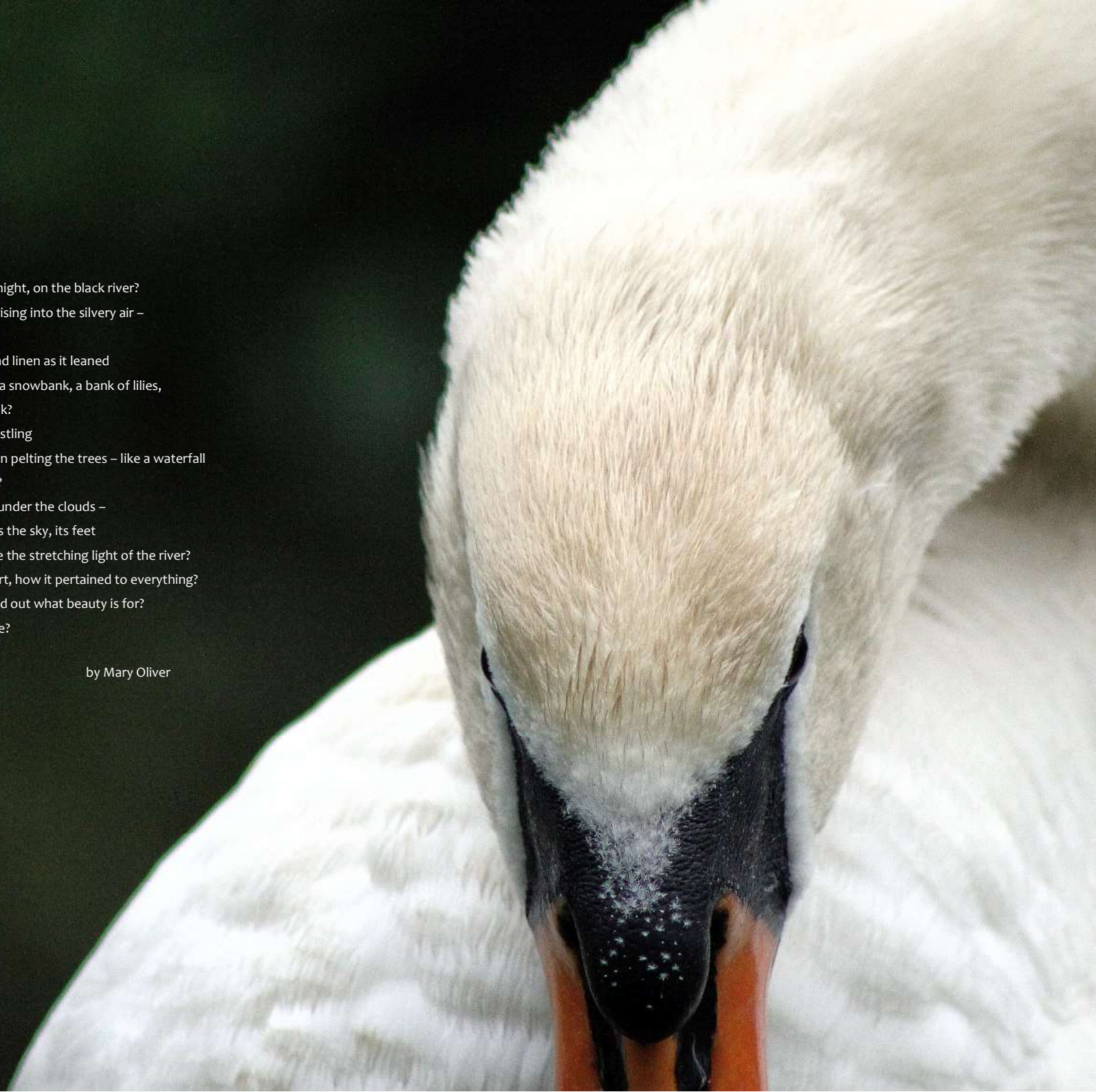
<https://twitter.com/SuntrapCentre>

<https://www.instagram.com/suntrapforestcentre>

The Swan

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?

by Mary Oliver



cow patrol

Last year some longhorn cows returned to the Wanstead Park after a 150-year absence. The Corporation of London, which manages the park, put selected cattle from its 200-strong herd out to graze last September in order to use cattle to better manage and restore the area's acid-grasslands for conservation of species, including rare plants, insects and spiders.

During that pilot, volunteers and staff monitored the animals' welfare and encouraged visitors to admire but not feed or approach the animals.

Jan Tallis became one of the volunteers and gives an account of her encounter with this very special herd.

Nutty aged eight and in calf - pic by Jan Tallis



I have been lucky enough to be part of the volunteer team who have been keeping an eye on the three British Longhorn cows that have been grazing in Wanstead Park since early August.

Gill James from the Wren Group did a brilliant job of herding volunteers! Collecting us all together early on, we were very well briefed by John Phillips, grazing and grassland manager from the City of London (CoL). We were introduced to Goose, who is grey and the eldest at 18; Nina and Nutty, both brown and both eight, with Nina coming back for her second visit and Nutty in calf.



Jan Tallis (right) and fellow 'Cow Patroller' Dianne Walls with Nina, Goose and Nutty

Volunteers were asked to keep a general lookout for the cows, making sure they were alive first and foremost: *hint*, if they are lying on their backs with four feet in the air, call the CoL team sharpish! After the general welfare role, our main purpose has been to inform park users of why the cows are there, with a bit of background about them, and to advise dog walkers to keep their dogs on the lead when they are near the cows.

Six weeks in and all has gone extremely well. It is very relaxing watching cows doing not a lot – several people have described it as a very “mindful” experience. It has been good to meet other volunteers and very rewarding to talk to park users about the cows, especially the children.

The reason why Epping Forest is grazed by the herd of around 200 Longhorns is to manage the grass land and support the ecology.

We are lucky to have ancient wood pasture, acid grasslands, heathlands with ant hills, and plenty of insects. The process of the cows grazing means that the grass remains at a variety of levels, which in turn gives different birds, insects and reptiles wonderful scrub mosaics to suit different needs, supporting a broad variety of life. Longhorn cows also browse and graze in the trees, helping to open up the canopies to allow light through and stopping them becoming too dense. And their waste matter supports all sort of life too.



Eyes tight shut for Goose aged eight - pic by Jan Tallis



Nina a veteran at 18 years - pic by Jan Tallis

The vast majority of my sessions have been calm and unremarkable; however, two stand out. The first was when my volunteer partner, Dianne, and I were watching the cows at the bottom of the Glade. All was peaceful and we were joined by three people from the CoL team, two volunteers from other grazing areas and one officer. We were chatting away when a couple with four dogs came down the Glade towards us, two of the dogs rather large and very exuberant. The CoL officer picked up on this and very quickly put himself between the dogs and the cows; we called out to ask the owners to put them on leads. The owners wanted to “debate” this, insisting the dogs were under control. It soon became apparent that they were not and were running at the cows. They were headed off and disappeared, leaving the owners to chase them. Dianne and I asked the CoL officer how he knew to react so quickly, he explained that from experience he knew that more than one dog excitedly gambolling together turns on their pack instincts and can cause them to behave aggressively.

The second, very different experience was very recently. Dianne and I were lucky enough to be on duty when Archie from the CoL and Katie came to take Nutty to where she will be giving birth. Originally all three cows were due to leave around now but the grass and the

weather have been so good it looks like they can stay for several more week. But with Nutty being in calf, she needed to be closer at hand for regular supervision.

Archie and Katie found us and the cows in the trees between Perch Pond and the Ornamental Waters. With a rattle of his food bucket, all three cows were up on their feet and moving very quickly after Archie to an enclosure that had been set up by the Temple. Followed by Katie, Dianne and I, they were quickly fenced in. The cattle trailer was then reversed into the enclosure and all gates opened. Nutty quickly trotted into the trailer, however she was rapidly followed by Goose and Nina! The process

of keeping Nutty in and getting the other two safely out was soon sorted and the trailer moved off. Nina and Goose were released back into the park. They were very distressed for quite a while – indeed Goose was mooing loudly, calling out for Nutty – it was the first time we had heard any of them vocalise. After trotting round the field between the Temple and Perch Pond a couple of times, they went back to the trees they had been in before Archie and Katie came. Dianne and I went off duty feeling very privileged to have been part of this process.

It is hoped that the cows will return next year, and maybe a few more too.

Oh, and the answer to the question “Why three?” is that that’s how many fit in the trailer, so if we do get more, there are likely to be six or nine.

Article by Jan Tallis



For those who missed John Phillips’s talk on 9 September you can find it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpwrKOGiEVk&t=12s&ab_channel=WrenWildlifeandConservationGroup



Where’s Nutty ?

Black-necked Grebe on Alexandra Pond, Wanstead Flats. First spotted by Mary on 3 May, at the time of writing, this stunning bird has now been with us for four months - pic by Jonathan Lethbridge

Summer 2021

bird report

by James Heal

The summer lull in June bled into some more unseasonally cloudy, dull, wet and windy weather which hasn't always been conducive to seeing perching birds. However, by the end of August our patch bird total for the year stood at a hefty 132 with the total monthly patch lists: June = 73; July = 72; and August = 98 (our highest month total ever) and a total of 103 species of bird recorded across the three summer months. Several of the local birders have already broken, or are well on track to beat, their own personal best year records.



In terms of successful breeding, we have had a couple of success stories from species which don't often breed locally: Pochard and Reed Warbler spring to my mind immediately. It appears that the fencing to protect our tiny remaining Skylark population may have had some success and we are hopeful that at least one pair reared a brood successfully from some positive signs.



Skylark in Wanstead Flats protected area - pic by Tony Brown

Sadly, Meadow Pipit have abandoned Wanstead Flats as a breeding location this year. Let's hope they return. Chiffchaff and Common Whitethroat breeding success seems healthy if the number of singing (early season) and juvenile birds (late season - aware these numbers can be inflated by migration) can be anything to go by although there are signs that second broods may have been thin on the ground. We believe our local House Martins - still only found at one location - bred again. To focus on one more positive: Little Grebe numbers seem to be increasing; and negative: Song Thrush: singing territories on the Flats, in particular, seem down on previous years.

Highlights

Birders often dread June - arguably one of the worst months of the year for birding interest, so it helped allay the blues when Nick found a Quail calling with its distinctive 'wet my lips' hidden amongst the grass in the fenced area of the Brooms on Wanstead Flats on 6 June. Even more extraordinarily it appears that there were two Quail calling the following day.

It would be amiss if I didn't mention our long-staying Black-necked Grebe on Alexandra Pond, Wanstead Flats. First spotted by Mary on 3 May, at the time of writing, this stunning bird has now been with us for four months and attracted a fair number of photos throughout the summer and more recently as it starts to moult towards its winter plumage.



Pied Flycatcher - pic by James Heal

July often isn't the greatest of months either but three fly-overs (sadly only seen by a small number of birders) smartened our list up: Mary had Oystercatcher circling Alex on 12 July before Jono had it 'heard only' going over

his house; our first (but not last) Garganey of the year flew over Nick towards Alex but could not be re-found; and Rob had a brace of Lapwing flying North over SSSI on 17 July (our first since the huge flocks in the February cold snap).



Spotted Flycatcher - pic by Nick Croft

Richard found an adult Cuckoo on 29 July - most likely on its way back. Nick also had an adult on 11 August. These were just precursors for a long-staying juvenile bird, first found by Nick on 15 August and then seen regularly since then, most often flying quickly between various different copses.

August could, of course, accurately be included in an autumn summary given the beginning of autumn migration (more on that later), but we stick here to a simple three-full-month definition of the season for the ease of write-ups (one swallow does not a summer make etc etc).

Nick had an Arctic Tern - only our second record for

the Patch - flying over and calling on 4 August and also a flyover Greenshank on 18 August. A visiting birder reported a Pheasant on 20 August (perhaps not realising quite how scarce a bird this is for our local patch).



Tree Pipit - pic by Nick Croft

Rob found the second Garganey of the year, on Alex, on 26 August which stayed just long enough for the first wave of local twitchers to add to their yearlists. Anyone getting there after 8am were disappointed. The following day Nick found a Raven heading west over the Flats. Jono got it from his house and I garden ticked it over Leytonstone a minute or two later. Jono and Rob also had Great White Egret heading east over the Flats on 29 August.

Curlew, Whimbrel, and Oystercatcher were all picked up on the NocMig radars while their birding masters were fast asleep so added to generic patch lists, but (*spoiler alert*) the excitement of a flock of Curlew seen during the day had to wait until September.

Early Autumn Migration

The reappearance of Willow Warbler on 7 August (the first since the last spring bird on 1 May) heralded the beginning of the ‘Autumn’ migratory period. Our first Autumn Wheatear (16 August) was our latest ever. Hopefully the table below speaks for itself.

Passage Migrants (August edition)				
Species	Bird days	Autumn Arrival	Average Count	High Count
Wheatear	7	16/08	3	12
Swallow	4	14/08*	3	6
Willow Warbler	23	07/08	3	11
Common Redstart	4	19/08	1	1
Yellow Wagtail	10	15/08**	2	4
Whinchat	8	16/08	2	4
Tree Pipit	9	18/08	2	3
Pied Flycatcher	4	21/08	1	1
Spot Flycatcher	15	11/08	3	9

*Swallow records occurred throughout the summer (probably wandering local-ish birds as they are a London breeder rather than a true passage migrant), but there was a gap between 14 July and 14 August so I have drawn a line there.
** There were also three unusual records of Yellow Wagtail in July: 4th, 17th, and 30th.

It will make sense to give a fuller picture of the autumn passage passerine migration later in the year or as part of a full year review.



If you turn your eyes to the skies you can sometimes be rewarded - here a Raven flying over this summer. Pic by James Heal

Why is Wanstead so important for

peltigera

by Bob Vaughan

P*eltigera* are a group of leafy lichens that grow in the soil, the name means “carrying a light shield” and comes from their distinctive fruiting bodies, orange in the picture below.



Figure 1 *Peltigera hymenina* - Pic by Bob Vaughan



Rose Stephens found the first specimen in 2018 on the shores of Alexandra Lake, it was tucked under a small tree and had been grazed, probably by geese.

There was a patch covering half a square metre and the smooth green upturned lobes, pale underside and plentiful orange apothecia on the lobe tips indicated *Peltigera hymenina* (Fig1). The London lichen recorder was only aware of one other *Peltigera* site in London. The national distribution map (see below) shows that is not rare but most common on the wetter Western areas of the UK.

In the winter of that year the area was flooded to the depth of a few inches. Was this the end of the Wanstead *Peltigera* story? Well, no, it was just the beginning. In the spring of that year an area in the OSW was found to contain another specimen, and nearby quite a few patches of *Cladonia*, the pixie cup lichen.



Figure 3 *Peltigera neckeri* - Pic by Bob Vaughan

In discussing the bright green *Cladonia* cups with an expert (they are probably *C. humilis*), he identified the dark green leafy *Peltigera* as *Peltigera neckeri* (see main picture). This is much more scarce nationwide so I went to look again only to find the area had been disturbed, a common hazard with soil dwelling lichen in populated areas! There was however evidence of the more leathery lobes, the dark red-brown disc shaped fruiting bodies and dark centre to the underside.



Figure 4 *Peltigera didactyla* - Pic by Bob Vaughan

The next discovery was made by Rose Stephens again, this time in a ditch that drains into Angel pond. On the vertical edge of the ditch, tucked away amongst the mosses, was a rather lovely young *Peltigera didactyla*.

This distinctive lichen has coarse grey soledia, or spore forming structures, covering the lobes when young. It was very hard to see, but other specimens have been found at the side of Alexandra Lake where the more adult form shows fewer soledia.



Figure 5 *Peltigera didactyla* - Pic by Bob Vaughan

The last *Peltigera* species to be found locally was also in the Angel area. It was rather disturbed as it was just off one of the paths. It had no fruiting bodies, but the underside has hairy root-like rhizines. It is probably *Peltigera membranacea* but the rarer *P. canina* has not been ruled out.



Figure 6 *Peltigera* sp. (*membranacea* or *canina*) - Pic by Bob Vaughan

Having four species of *Peltigera* in our area is remarkable particularly as we live in a highly populated and quite polluted part of the country. Disturbance seems to be a problem, some specimens have been grazed, dug into or just trampled. They are not easy to find, often being tucked away and they seem to like relatively well-drained open or inaccessible areas, perhaps to avoid competition. The *P. didactyla* were growing in areas that can only get a few hours of sunlight at the end of the day.

The national distribution maps of the first three species are taken from the National Biological Network with input from the British Lichen Society. The final *Peltigera* sp is waiting specific identification, or a better specimen.

Peltigera as a group are by no means common, are rather patchily distributed and can be difficult to find. We are fortunate to have so many species, and our data is now included in the database, we are on the map!



Figure 7 National distribution of *P. didactyla*

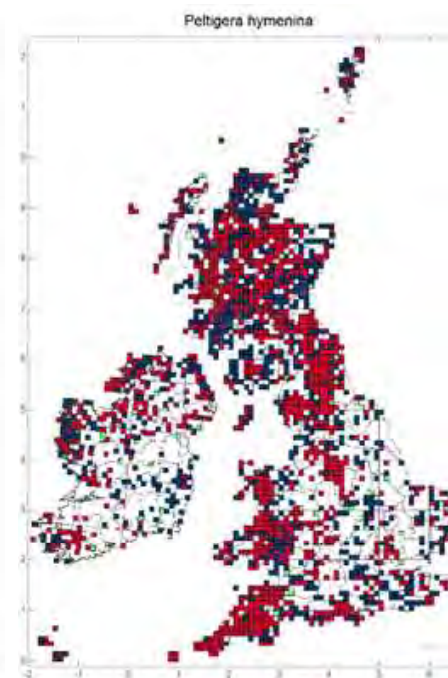


Figure 8 National distribution of *P. hymenina*



Figure 9 National distribution of *P. neckeri*

then & now

Were you right ?

Hollow Ponds, Leytonstone back in 1906 and how they look today.

The ponds were formed after gravel was extracted out of the forest land to use for road building, but this ceased in 1878 and what was left was a series of water filled pits on marshy land. A so-called 'Distress Committee' organised the work of extending the ponds by unemployed men in the early 1900's for recreational use.





..... and finally

wren practical work

Wren's practical conservation work takes place in the winter from October to March, first Sunday of the month, and midweek most Thursdays 10-12.30.

We carry out a variety of tasks including clearing scrub; keeping paths open; and various pieces of work requested by the City of London where they do not have the resources or where their machines cannot go. Some tasks suit an approach with hand tools, and keen volunteers. For example we are clearing alder re-growth on the banks of the Ornamental Waters in Wanstead Park.

You need no particular expertise or strength to join us as we can adapt work to all levels. We supply tools and gloves. We just need some basic enthusiasm and a willingness to get a bit muddy. It is a great way to keep fit, get some fresh air and meet other Wren Group members.

To join the group contact Peter Williams 07716034164 or e-mail wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com or just turn up on the day.

We may be living in and out of lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic, but outside nature carries on and summer has well and truly arrived. Maintaining a connection with nature is more important than ever if you are stuck indoors for most of the day.

Our opportunities to engage with nature may be fewer during the pandemic but there are still a number of things we can do to stay connected to nature, look after our wellbeing, and keep safe.

Instead of our usual 'Links Page' we will be maintaining a list of online resources and ideas to help keep us all engaged with nature.

useful links

Ten ways to connect with nature without leaving your home this spring

www.positive.news/lifestyle/10-ways-to-connect-with-nature-without-leaving-your-home-this-spring/?fbclid=IwAR2tI3IRsudyYpn9c_IF5YySy8bOksS-56TSXmkpr1CyGEbngbpoVGVRnfk

Enjoying nature from your home or garden is good for your mental health

www.richmond.gov.uk/council/news/partner_comment_spot/new_blog_enjoying_nature_mental_health

#VitaminN: How to enjoy nature under lockdown

www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52216267

Wildlife Watch - downloadable spotting sheets

www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/spotting-sheets

Home birds: how to spot 20 of the most common species from your window, walk or garden

www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/16/home-birds-how-to-spot-20-of-the-most-common-species-from-your-window-walk-or-garden

How to avoid people and stay in touch with nature during lockdown

www.scotsman.com/news/environment/how-avoid-people-and-stay-touch-nature-during-lockdown-2521708

Watching the birdies is a chance to connect with nature – and each other – during lockdown

www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/lifestyle/1252432/watching-the-birdies-is-a-chance-to-connect-with-nature-and-each-other-during-lockdown/

In the coronavirus lockdown, open a window and see nature at its most thrilling

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/in-the-coronavirus-lockdown-open-a-window-and-see-nature-at-its-most-thrilling-6jr8cwqcd>

Hollow Ponds - pic by Tony Morrison

