

THE YATELEY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 27
July 1986

Editor: Jean Kerr (Yateley 872265)

Dear Member

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

May I wish you a happy holiday, if you are taking one in the coming months - there will be no Society meetings during August, so perhaps you will find time to write that piece for the newsletter! Contributions by Monday 1st September please.

THE YATELEY SOCIETY MAY FAYRE STALL DRAWS THE CROWDS

One of the busiest stalls at the recent May Fayre was the Yateley Society's. For most of the day our marquee was full of visitors looking at our displays or purchasing goods from our gifts and provisions section. We could really have done with a stall twice the size.

As usual, the produce and gifts table was very popular, with all items made by members and their friends. This years novelties included teazle hedgehogs, finger puppets and pot pouri items. Hot scones were again a great success and sold out in no time at all.

This years display gave members and the public an opportunity to see details of the 'Future of Yateley' our theme for the year. The displays gave detailed plans for the Chandlers Farm Recreation Centre, Sandhurst Road to Harsey Gardens Sports Area, Yateley Town Centre development policy and details of the Blackwater Valley Project Group preservation and sporting activities.

The visual display also included a section on the activities of the Society, which helped to recruit several new members.

The stall also included a display of framed photographs of 'Yateley as it used to be' which were for sale.

Finally, we ran a competition called 'So you think you know your Yateley' which involved identifying a set of 12 photographs. Although the number of entries was disappointing the display attracted a lot of interest and discussion regarding Yateley, which is of course one of our objectives. The names of the winners will be announced separately.

The display was mounted, constructed and manned by members of the Yateley Society which always welcomes new members.

BIRD-WATCHERS IN MERCY DASH
or NEWTS BEAT THE BULLDOZERS

by Valerie Kerslake

An SOS from a Frimley resident to Peter Dinsdale on the 26th April turned the bird walk he was going to lead on the Common the next day into a newt rescue expedition. He directed us to an old garden in Frimley on which an estate of new houses is to be built. The bulldozers were expected within a few days, and in their path was a string of ornamental fish pools, long neglected and bereft of fish but teeming with newts.

The cement-lined pools, about eight in all, ranged from three feet to twenty or so in diameter. All were dark with mud and dead leaves, and some full of green algae and pond weeds, with deceptively slippery sloping edges, as a couple of us discovered to their surprise. Standing our buckets on the verge, the booted amongst us waded cautiously into the larger pools with a variety of nets that came up with something almost every time. Those with shoes and binoculars squatted around the small ones scooping with buckets and hands. The newts were spotted and plain, and all shades from greeny-blond to dark brown, with the characteristic brilliant orange streak along the centre of their pale bellies. The majority were common newts, with perhaps one in five palmate. These have webbed hind feet and a thread-like appendage to the end of their tails. Rumours of the rare great crested newt turned out to be false.

Some frogs and toads were caught also, and innumerable strings of toad spawn. One small pool was thick with tadpoles of which we collected as many as possible.

When there seemed to be nothing left to catch, the newts were loaded into the Landrover and set off to be rehoused. In fact there were still quite a number left, lurking in the mud, as Peter discovered on a final rescue visit the following day. Altogether he made four trips, accompanied on one by a party of Venture Scouts, and by his fellow rangers on another.

The newts were distributed among eleven ponds: the five on Yateley Common - Wyndhams, Hospital (or School) Pond, Stroud, the Gravel Pit and the Gas Pipe Pond (did it not have a worthier name last year?). The newly-restored village pond at Darby Green had a share and so did the pond on the Green at Yateley. The remainder went to two ponds at Eversley and two at Bramley.

Newts often live in large colonies in muddy ponds or ditches, but the numbers rescued from Frimley still seem astonishing. They were fairly easy to count as they were gently released into their new ponds and the total came to approximately 1460. A recount was not feasible.

Here, as promised, is some information about
JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY IN YATELEY

by Michael Holroyd

The latest celebrity discovered to have lived in Yateley is John Middleton Murry (1889 - 1957), the writer, editor and critic. He was a friend of D.H. Lawrence and his first wife was the short-story writer Katherine Mansfield, who died of tuberculosis in 1923. In the following year Murry married Violet le Maistre. They had a daughter Katherine and a son Colin, and in October 1928 the family moved to Yateley.

They lived in a large bungalow called South Acre, now demolished, which stood on the south side of Firgrove Road where Wren Close is now, just to the west of Aylesham Way. The house had been built by an architect for his own use and he sold it when his wife died. This may have been a Mr. St. Gerrans who had bought the land in 1924.

The Murrys stayed in Yateley only for three years. It was not a happy time. Violet, like Murry's first wife, suffered from tuberculosis and eventually died of it in March 1931. Two months later Murry married his housekeeper, Elizabeth Ada Cockbayne, at Odiham Registry Office - a marriage which was to turn out disastrously - and in July 1931 they moved to Norfolk.

Murry wrote at least two books at Yateley, including "God: an Introduction to the Science of Metabiology", and "Son of Woman", his study of D.H. Lawrence. He also kept a journal, but only brief extracts have been published and they make little reference to Yateley. Both the children have published books about their childhood, and although they were only five and six when they left Yateley, they both include some memories of the place. Colin ("One Hand Clapping", 1975) remembered an "enormous cornfield" beyond the garden. "Slow shire horses jingled musically as they dragged the ploughs, hares gambolled on the commons, and the woodland walks were secret and strangely still. There was even a white-aproned muffin man who used to stride past South Acre once a week carrying a wooden tray on his head and ringing a hand-bell." And on one occasion Colin was frightened by a convoy of tanks from Aldershot, grinding and clattering their way through Yateley.

A biography of Murry by F.A. Lea (1959) refers to a number of his friends and acquaintances in Yateley. These included Major Robinson and his wife Marion, Dr. Wingfield, Clare Farr, and Mary Horsfall. Does anyone know where they lived or anything else about them? Murry's friend Sir Richard Rees also took a cottage in Yateley - where could that have been? And an unidentified neighbour - "a well-to-do, idealistic, emancipated young woman" - made a declaration of love to Murry. Any theories?

YATELEY AREA COMMUNITY CARE

This organisation, along with many others in Yateley, makes a valuable contribution to the Community in providing help for those in need.

It currently needs additional drivers to ferry people from place to place, and home visitors.

If you think you would like to help, please ring Yateley 870032.

Winners of the Yateley Society May Fayre 'So you think you know Yateley' Competition.

As part of our Annual Display at the May Fayre, the Yateley Society ran a competition whilst encouraging the public to take notice of their surroundings. This took the form of a series of photographs; entrants were asked to identify the location of the building or object shown in each photograph.

The competition attracted a lot of interest, the eventual winner being Katie Tollit, who won a pair of books on birds and butterflies; second was Malcolm Dunn who won a basket of fruit; and third was Mrs. Anne Kingston who won a picture of Yateley. All winners also received free membership of the Society for one year.

The answers to the competition are obtainable from David Harverson, on Yateley 876914.

FLOWERS ON YATELEY COMMON - BLACKBUSHE

by Valerie Kerslake

It is said that the Common west of Cricket Hill Lane was all heather fifty years ago, but the construction of Blackbushe Airport during the second war and its later partial demolition totally altered much of the landscape and vegetation. There may have been pockets of chalkland plants before but the buried remains of concrete roads and runways has encouraged them to multiply and flourish, and now often right next to clumps of heather are the clear bright stars of yellow-wort and pink or white centaury, as well as salad burnet, marjoram and fairy flax (anyone tasting that will understand its other name of purging flax). Many wild carrots, yellow-umbelled wild parsnips and clambering mounds of blue tufted vetch also point to lime.

Heather still covers wide stretches - ling, bell heather and, in moister places, cross-leaved heath - and with it grow the small flowers that survive on the same poor acid soil. In June one can find in glades amongst the heather rainbow carpets of yellow tormentil, blue milkwort, white heath bedstraw and pink lousewort, the latter supplementing its nutritional requirements by being partly parasitic on the roots of other plants. Here and there is common dodder, another parasite whose thread-like red stems and tiny cream flowers are draped over gorse or heather without touching the ground at all, while a red haze in the distance will probably be sheeps sorrel which becomes more brilliantly red the drier the ground. Gorse is conspicuous; the large European variety flowers from January to midsummer, then dwarf gorse takes over for the second half of the year.

Some time after the last war top soil was spread over several acres of land beside Vigo Lane, resulting in an expanse of grass lusher than in other parts of the Common. Here are nettles and thistles, buttercups and clovers, all familiar from garden and wayside. They have not however overcome all the less robust grassland flowers: amongst many others are oxeye daisies, St. John's wort, several vetches and the grass pea which is virtually indistinguishable from grass until its crimson flower appears. The ground has been untouched long enough for small colonies of ragged robin, sneezewort, pignut and both yellow and purple loosestrife (not closely related) to establish themselves, and a few wild daffodils are slowly increasing nearby.

Six members of the orchid family grow in the rather woody habitats near Vigo Lane. In 1981 single scattered specimens of broad-leaved helleborine, common spotted orchid and heath spotted orchid were observed, as well as a group of nine southern marsh orchids. The latter were all picked and have not multiplied, but by 1984 the common and heath spotted orchids - and probably hybrids of the two - had increased considerably, while the helleborines had become too scattered and numerous to count. A colony of bee orchids, usually on chalk, was found in 1982, and a single common twayblade the next year. One hopes that most of these will have survived the prolonged gipsy encampments and the dismal fortifications against their return; some will have been lost though perhaps not for ever.

Towards the airport there is a good deal of short turf sparsely covering poor soil or gravel. Many tiny plants can be found here that would be crowded out in richer conditions. One is upright chickweed which has been recorded on only one other site in NE Hants. Perhaps this is not so very remarkable since one can walk over thousands of them without noticing, and their white flowers open only briefly in bright sunshine in May. Amongst others are birdsfoot - the name referring to its three seedpods; small cudweed whose slender stalk is grey with silky down; and knotted clover, usually prostrate with small pale pink flowers. In the same family are the little yellow hop trefoil, and the lesser trefoil and finally the slender trefoil with a minute yellow speck of a flower. Nearer the north edge of the airfield one can find hoary ragwort (not to be confused with its far too abundant common cousin), yellow bartsia and hay rattle - all rather unusual in this locality and the last indicative of undisturbed grassland.

Some 300 flowering plants have been recorded on this half of the Common over the past six years, not including trees and the numerous grasses and sedges. Each summer a few are missing, overcome by competitive neighbours or uncongenial conditions, though the few scattered primroses are regularly dug out. But new flowers are discovered all the time, and though we have lost the precious and diminishing heathland, the huge variety of plants replacing it is perhaps a partial compensation.

AN OLD PATH IN FROGMORE

by Jean Kerr

Some of you living 'down the other end', in Frogmore, may not realise that we have a pleasant alternative walking route into Blackwater avoiding the noise and fumes of the A30. This is the path leading from the east side of Blackwater Green, behind Blackwater Service Station through woodland and old rhododendrons beside a stream. It comes out in Rosemary Lane next to Frogmore Park Drive, and in fact runs close to the boundary of what was Frogmore Park for much of its length. It is marked on the Tithe Map of 1844 and is probably of much earlier origin. Some older residents may recall a pair of old thatched cottages which faced onto the Green at the start of this path.

When drainage pipes were laid through to Rosemary Lane a couple of years ago they took this route, and we feared the worst, but the path was re-instated with a good hoggin surface and is now settling down well. The stream has been suffering recently from junior dam-builders, and the inevitable garden-rubbish-dumpers have made their mark in places, but the birds that inhabit this little piece of wilderness between the housing estates still sing sweetly. How fortunate we are, in this area, to keep some of these old paths! Long may they remain, a pleasant interlude when returning with the shopping, exercising the dog, or just enjoying the greenery.

WALKS

by Richard Johnston

We had a very enjoyable visit to ROWHILL NATURE RESERVE near Aldershot on May 4th, and it managed to stay dry although there was a very heavy downpour just before we started. About a dozen members took part, and our walk round the reserve was conducted by the chairman of the reserve society. There was rather less to see than we had hoped because the bad weather in the early Spring had made everything very late. But some of us had our first first-hand look at toad spawn.

The second walk was to the BRAMLEY FRITH WOOD NATURE TRAIL near Bramley, near Basingstoke on June 1st. Again the weather was dull but 15 members and friends took part in this interesting ramble in a secluded and unpopulated setting, courtesy of CEEB. We were disappointed that there were only a few butterflies, but there was an excellent spread of Bluebells, many Solomons Seal and other wild flowers.

In place of the July walk we shall be joining the Blackwater Valley Project which has organised a walk to THE ROYAL OAK VALLEY, Yateley on July 6th at 2.30 p.m., led by Irene Draper. Assemble at the car-park next to the fire station (SU823607)

HISTORY MEETINGS

by Michael Holroyd

Thursday 10 July - Yateley History Trail

A report on progress with this proposed publication, and an opportunity to examine some of the sources being used, including the Census Returns for Yateley from 1841 to 1881.

Thursday 11 September - Old-time Farming in Yateley and Elsewhere

This talk will be given by one of our members, Tom Dodd, whose family has farmed in the Yateley area for well over 100 years. He will describe their farming methods, including the use of the Common for grazing, and his own experiences of farming before the introduction of large-scale mechanisation. As the owner of Silver Fox Farm, which sadly has recently been burned down, he will also tell us something about its history and tenants.

Thursday 9 October - The History of Sandhurst

Yateley has always had close links with Sandhurst. Mrs. K. Dancy, who has lived there for many years, is writing a book on the history of the parish, based partly on written records and partly on people's recollections, and in this talk she will tell us something about its development and its interesting buildings and characters.

PUBLIC LECTURE PROGRAMME

by Fergus Russell

Thursday 25 September - Room C.1.1. Yateley Centre - 8.00 p.m.
"NATIONAL PARKS OF WESTERN U.S.A." by Paul Gilley

Paul Gilley, a Biologist and House-Master at Wellington College, spent a term at a Californian School on an exchange basis a number of years ago and, later, paid another visit to stay with the many friends he had made.

Those who attended Paul's lecture on East African National Parks last September are well aware of the skill of his photography and will remember the interest which his penetrating comments aroused.

THE YATELEY SOCIETY

PROGRAMME JULY - OCTOBER 1986

JULY

Sat. 5	YATELEY SOCIETY BARBECUE	1 Broome Close	7:30pm
Sun. 6	WALK - ROYAL OAK VALLEY (A Blackwater Valley Project Walk) Leader: Irene Draper	Car Park nex to Yateley Fire Station Map Ref. SU823607	2:30pm
Thurs.10	YATELEY HISTORY TRAIL Progress report and workshop	Yateley Centre Room B.2.4	7:30pm
Sun. 13	CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE "Bracken Bashing"	Heathlands Cemetery	2:15pm
Thurs.17	A WALK ON THE COMMON WITH CHRIS .. HALL	Lay-by opposite hangar in Vigo Lane, between the Anchor and Blackbushe Motors.	7:15pm

AUGUST

NO MEETINGS

SEPTEMBER

Sun. 7	WALK - The Basingstoke Canal and Odiham Common Leaders: Tony and Mary Hocking Assemble at the north (canal) end of lane through Broad Oak.	Broad Oak Map Ref. SU 754 520	2:30pm
Thurs.11	OLD-TIME FARMING IN YATELEY AND ELSEWHERE Talk by Tom Dodd	Yateley Centre Room B.2.4	7:30pm
Sun. 14	CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE - clearing birches from heather. Meet near "The Brackens", along track parallel to Cricket Hill, south of Handford Lane	Yateley Common Map Ref. SU 818 597	2:30pm
Thurs.18	THE WILDFOWL TRUST: an introduction to the Trust's Conservation work by Rod Hall.	Yateley Centre Room B.2.4	7:30pm
Thurs.25	Public Lecture NATIONAL PARKS OF THE WESTERN U.S.A. by Paul Gilley	Yateley Centre Room C.1.1.	8:00pm
Sun 28	WALK - Fungi Hunt, Yateley Common Leader Mike Waterman	Stroud's Pond Car/ ^{Park} Map Ref. SU 833 592	2:30pm

OCTOBER

Thurs. 9	THE HISTORY OF SANDHURST Talk by Mrs. K. Dancy	Yateley Centre Room B.2.4	7:30pm
Sun. 12	CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE - clearing litter and raking up cut grass in the Royal Oak Valley	Old Welmore	2:30pm
Thurs.16	BRITISH MOTHS - An illustrated talk by Bill Parker	Yateley Centre Room B.2.4	7:30pm

YATELEY SOCIETY - OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
FOR 1986

PRESIDENT

VICE-PRESIDENTS	Edward Dawson	15 Village Way (877458)
	Sydney Loader	St. Gwithian 37 Darby Green Lane Blackwater (879430)
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VICE-CHAIRMAN	Tony Hocking	30 Connaught Close Yateley (875158)
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HON SECRETARY	Pam Harverson	1 Broome Close Yateley (876914)
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Geoff Hoare	1 Blakes Ride Yateley (872948)
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WALKS & VISITS ORGANISER	Richard Johnston	4 Dungells Lane Yateley (872832)
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PUBLICITY OFFICER/ PUBLIC RELATIONS/ MAY FAYRE	Tony Hocking	30 Connaught Close Yateley (875158)
NEWSLETTER EDITOR	Jean Kerr	1 Lowlands Road Frogmore Blackwater (872265)
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PRESS OFFICER	Margaret Taylor	Aviary House The Street Eversley (93-734804)
NATURAL HISTORY GROUP LEADER	Charles Craven	23 Walnut Close Yateley (870379)

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Royal Oak Valley/ HDC Liason	Irene Draper
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Film Group Secretary	John Barker