

THE YATELEY SOCIETY

Newsletter No. 29

January 1987

Editor: Jean Kerr (Yateley 872265)

Dear Member:

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This is my last newsletter as editor, and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking those of you who have contributed during my two years. Tony Hocking has volunteered to take on the editorship, and contributions for the next issue should be sent to him (Yateley 875158) by Monday 6th April.

The Secretary has received the following, praising the Society's work:-

"I am extremely impressed with the work you cover, your social activities and the presentation of your newsletter.

Well done

Maria Garford"

The above was clipped onto a copy of the Camberley Society's newsletter. I think Mrs. Garford is the secretary.

The following is the first paragraph of a letter from Colin Noad of 8 Pedlors Grove to Hart District Council, copy to the Yateley Society, regarding the Royal Oak Valley:-

"First, may I congratulate you on your efforts to renovate the Valley and to construct a pleasant walk through it. Well done - it looks really nice."

He goes on to talk about dumping and rain washing away the path.

EUCALYPTUS, LIQUIDAMBAR, METASEQUOIA GLYPTOSTROBOIDES

by Valerie Kerslake

These and other superb and colourful trees can be found in a remarkable group on Monteagle Farm, now part of the huge new Monteagle development. They were probably planted about 1950 by a keen horticulturist who then owned the land, but, half-concealed in a small valley, they may not be known to very many people. I found out about them only when planning permission was sought for that section of the development.

The eucalyptus gunnii is larger than any I have seen in this locality, both broad and tall and quite untouched by the recent bitter winters that damaged so many gum trees. Close beside it are a white poplar, a Japanese cedar, a silver maple, two red oaks, two metasequoias and a number of smaller trees and shrubs. The larger trees are all fast growers and flourish on wet ground; they may have been planted to soak up the moisture in the marshy hollow. Particularly interesting is the metasequoia.

It was thought to be extinct, and known only from fossils until 1941 when a number were discovered in Western China. By 1948 seeds had been distributed to botanists in various parts of the world including Britain, and very soon the seedlings - which grow three or four feet a year - were big enough to provide cuttings, allowing metasequoias to be planted all over the country. There are two or three more along the wooded boundary of this site, the tallest being perhaps 70 feet. In this country they might eventually reach 100 feet. The metasequoia is very closely related to the swamp cypress (one of which also grows on the boundary); both are described as turning salmon-pink or brick-red and finally brown in the autumn, and shed not just their needles but the little branchlets as well.

The Yateley Society has applied to Hart for Preservation Orders for all the trees. We feel moderately optimistic since the Hart tree and landscape officers seemed quite impressed, mentioning that most of the outstanding trees in Hart are rather elderly. Bovis would need to make some changes and leave out a few houses planned for this swampy meadow. Buyers of the remaining houses would have a marvellous bonus in a group of trees to delight many generations of occupants.

ALL THE TREES OF THE PARISH

by Norma Dowling

Yateley Town Council has approached the Society to see if we would carry out a survey of all the trees in the parish to find those most worthy of preservation. A list of them would then be sent to Hart District Council with a request that they be considered for preservation orders.

It would be a big undertaking. The parish includes Darby Green and half of Frogmore and stretches to the boundary with Eversley, and we are fortunate in having thousands of trees. Two YS members have already said they would be willing to help; we shall need more. Will anyone interested in taking part or who has suggestions or is just curious please ring me (870226) or Valerie Kerslake (872240) and we will try to get together to talk about it as soon as possible.

MOTHS FOR BRACKEN

by Valerie Kerslake

Those who joined in the bracken-bashing sessions last summer hope we made a slight dent in its spread on Yateley Common, but according to an article in the New Scientist (11.9.86), biological control seems likely to be more worth while for the country as a whole. Experiments are under way with a fungus at Strathclyde University, and at York with two varieties of South African moth. The caterpillars of one of these gobble up the bracken leaves with great voracity; the other starts on the leaves and then migrates to the stem which it tunnels into near the base causing severe damage to the plant.

Rearing insects in captivity on cut stems and pot plants is difficult, but the scientists concerned foresee greater problems of a non-biological sort. Other countries have used

biological controls for more than a century - the weed or pest is never eradicated, merely reduced to manageable proportions - but it has hardly been done here, let alone on a native plant. Probably the only sort of precedent is a small beetle from Belgium called *Rhizophagus grandis* which the Forestry Commission first released experimentally in 1983 to prey on the devastating great spruce bark beetle detected in Britain the year before. (The Times, 27.11.86.) So far little *Grandis* is thought to be performing well. One hopes the moth will too, but there is a lack of administrative machinery for assessing its pros and cons: safety, efficiency and cost; the likely effects on farmland, heathland, landscape generally and flora and fauna. Luckily few of the latter seem to be associated solely with bracken.

There will be legal problems also. One would concern commoners with rights of "estover" which include cutting bracken as bedding for livestock. We might learn what our local commoners feel about it. (All those who have read this far and have rights of estover please raise their hands - or better still, send their comments to the editor.)

The eventual decision on controlling bracken biologically will no doubt have bearing on similar future policies, including the controversial question of releasing genetically engineered viruses to control both weeds and pests as these become more and more resistant to pesticides.

BLACKWATER FAIR

Sydney Loader found this information about Blackwater Fair in Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald's book 'Garden alive' (in stock in Hampshire County Libraries):

"The cattle were Welsh Blacks from the summer and autumn fairs of Wales. And the droves were huge: Sidney Webb, in his English Local Government, puts the total destined for London and southern England at 30,000 head annually. The great cattle fair in this neighbourhood was at Blackwater on 8 November. Blackwater was a 'cattle Clapham Junction'. It was there that the huge herds were split up to take different routes for London, the coast and various parts of south-east England. In autumn and winter the herds of Welsh Blacks, small tough beasts with long horns, and their mounted drovers 'gabbling a strange tongue' (all, of course, spoke perfect English when need arose!) were a familiar sight in this neighbourhood. Cobbett mentions herds of two thousand and more.

Ten miles was roughly a day's journey for a herd. So far as possible hard roads were avoided, the herds keeping (as they did all the way from Wales) to tracks across commons and heaths. Indeed, the drovers would add a day to the journey by 'going round' rather than take their beasts on the roads. The drovers had to know the country very well indeed; had to know how the commons and heaths followed on. And, particularly, they had to know the ponds, for watering was very, very important, and had to arrange to arrive at them at a reasonable time. (Food could always be bought - indeed, the passing of

the Welsh Blacks brought good trade to the farmers along the route - but watering 150 or more head of cattle at the end of a day's march could prove a real problem."

NEWS FROM FROGMORE AND DARBY GREEN

by Jean Kerr

Hawley Council have applied for the footpath from Rosemary Lane to Blackwater Green to be added to the definitive footpath map. This is the old path I described in the July newsletter. Although old established, it had somehow been left off when footpaths were registered - perhaps because at that time it was so overgrown.

Another path previously little walked and overgrown is now being more used, I am pleased to see. This is the driftway which runs from Cuckoo corner on the eastern part of Yatley Common to the sharp bend of Cobbett's Lane. This forms a continuation of the rather overgrown track running west from the corner of The Flats (next to the gas pipe sign). (It is still hard to picture this as it was before the first world war - a track suitable for a horse and cart to take a short cut from York Town to the Old Baptist Church at Cricket Hill.) I saw bunnies on the path last time I walked that way, so go quietly!

Pond Farm at Darby Green has been sold complete with land prior to the auction, and we hope the new owners will enjoy living in this interesting old house.

The restored Darby Green Pond which gave Pond Farm its name is settling in, after a shaky start. Pond weed and water buttercup are colonizing, and a family of ducks was raised on the pond last year.

TOADS CROSSING - HELP

by Valerie Kerslake

Every spring thousands of toads are run over during their annual trek back to mate and spawn in the pond where they were born. The sight of so many flattened corpses on the road last year moved Malcolm Pope to organise a toad rescue scheme for 1987; his leaflet about it will accompany this newsletter.

The main migration normally takes place over a fortnight or so in March. The toads usually move at night, preferring wet nights, and what they require are lollipop persons to help them across the road by popping them into buckets and setting them down on the other side. (And it needs to be the side they were aiming for.)

If you do not often pick up toads remember that they are not slimy, though likely to be wet if it is raining. Nor do they bite, like little furry mammals, or frantically fight to get away. In fact they are usually too weary to struggle, especially those luckless females who, heavy already with eggs, have an eager male riding pick-a-back. Malcolm Pope will need a good many volunteers to draw on to make it a successful toad rescue, so please fill in his card if you think you might spare a few hours on one or more evenings. Each child must be accompanied by an adult, and

reflective or light-coloured clothing should be worn or it may not be only toads that are flattened on the road.

In this locality toads are common - and so are frogs and newts who can also be seen on the move in the breeding season, though they are more willing to branch out and try a new venue. We should not take any of them for granted; in some parts of the country all these amphibians are becoming so rare that children may grow up without ever meeting a wild toad or frog.

HISTORY MEETINGS

by Michael Holroyd

Starting in February, History meetings will normally be held on the last Wednesday of each month.

Tuesday 6 January Mrs. S. Beer will give an illustrated talk on the history of Eversley, based on her study of the parish records and other sources. Although Charles Kingsley will be mentioned, the main emphasis will be on some of the less familiar inhabitants of Eversley and its many interesting buildings.

Wednesday 25 February Sydney Loader will give an illustrated talk entitled "Rambles in West Cornwall". Sydney first visited Cornwall on a cycling holiday in 1937, and since then he has spent many other holidays there. His collection of slides includes many of historical sites and monuments.

Wednesday 25 March Tony Hocking will give a talk on the brief history of the Surrey Borders and Camberley Light Railway. This was a miniature railway which ran from the old British Car Auctions site at Frimley Bridges to York Town, Camberley. The line opened in 1938 and carried thousands of people, with special excursions being run from London by the Southern Railway. Unfortunately in 1939 the war forced its closure and the engines and rolling stock were sold.

Wednesday 29 April Michael Holroyd will give a talk about local place-names - what they mean and what they can tell us about the past. This will cover names originating at any time from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present, including the names of villages, farms, roads, fields, and streams.

WALKS

by Richard Johnston

As was the case last year, there will not be any walks in January, February or March, but they will resume in April with a Spring walk on Yateley Common, when we will see what we can find at the less well-known western end of the Common, which despite being an SSSI has been badly damaged by motorcycle scramblers.

We have had three walks since the last newsletter. On September 28th our resident mycologist Mike Waterman led a "Fungi Hunt" on Yateley Common. Unfortunately I was not able to go on this walk, and I hear that the party tended to break up into separate groups, but I'm sure that those who did go enjoyed themselves because the fungi were very abundant this year.

We had a walk round Odiham on November 2nd looking at the way in which old houses have been remodelled over the centuries to keep them in the current fashion, looking for the evidence which shows where this occurred. Only four of us turned out for this walk, which I found rather disappointing, but those who did attend found it really very interesting.

The walk on Yateley Common on 30th November led by Gordon Harland to try to see the extent to which the view over Yateley from Hartfordbridge Flats described by A.C. Benson in 1902 could still be seen today was rather thwarted by the misty weather. But it was a good walk nonetheless, and at a good speed rather than the usual lazy pace.

I am still looking for willing volunteers to lead future walks, or at least to suggest possibilities.

CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE

by Charles Craven
(Yateley 870379)

We have the tools. We have the site. We have the blessing of the Park Ranger. We even have insurance in case somebody inadvertantly chops a leg off. All we need now are additional volunteers to make the Conservation in Practice sessions less lonely affairs.

The next session in this long term project to preserve the lowland heath ecology of Yateley Common is on Sunday, 1st February, at 2.15 pm. Please come along and work off some excess Xmas-turkey and/or aggressions by helping to clear birch scrub from the heather. A few people carrying out this work on a regular basis is all that is required to really make an impact on the Common.

BATMAN COMES TO YATELEY

by Charles Craven

On Thursday the 15th January, the Yateley Society's 1987 Public Lecture Programme gets under way with an illustrated talk on British bats presented by Hampshire naturalist Andrew Watson.

The talk will cover the general ecology of bats in Britain with particular reference to the Greywell Tunnel colony on the Basingstoke Canal. The tunnel, now an SSSI, is generally considered to be the country's single most important site for bats.

The talk will be supported with maps, diagrams, photographs and slides and will also include a demonstration of the conversion of ultrasound to audible signals using electronic equipment.

Not to be missed!

T H E Y A T E L E Y S O C I E T Y

Programme January - April 1987

January

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|-----------|---|--------------------|--------|
| Tues. 6 | THE HISTORY OF EVERSLEY
An illustrated talk by Mrs. S. Beer | Y.C.
B.2.4 | 7:30pm |
| Thurs. 15 | PUBLIC LECTURE - BATS IN BRITAIN
(Including the Greywell Tunnel) A talk
by Andrew Watson --NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE | Y.C.
C.1.1 | 8:00pm |
| Thurs. 29 | ***** A.G.M. *****
NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE | Y.C.
Green Room | 8:00pm |

February

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|-----------|---|------------------------------|--------|
| Sun. 1 | CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE -
Improving the Society's area on the Common Common
(Unless stated otherwise in the local paper)
Meet near "The Brackens" along track parallel
to Cricket Hill south of Handford Lane. | Yateley
Map Ref. SU818597 | 2:15pm |
| Thurs. 12 | Monthly Review of Local Planning | Y.C.
B.2.4 | 7:30pm |
| Thurs. 19 | PUBLIC LECTURE - FROGS, TOADS & OTHER
REPTILES by Howard Inns of the Zoological Society | Y.C.
C.1.1 | 8:00pm |
| Wed. 25 | HISTORY - RAMBLES IN WEST CORNWALL
An illustrated talk by Sydney Loader | Y.C.
B.2.4 | 7:30pm |

March

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|-----------|---|------------------------------|--------|
| Sun. 1 | CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE -
Improving the Society's area on the Common Common
(Unless stated otherwise in the local paper)
Meet near "The Brackens" along track parallel
to Cricket Hill South of Hand Lane. | Yateley
Map Ref. SU818597 | 2:15pm |
| Thurs. 12 | Monthly Review of Local Planning | Y.C.
B.2.4 | 7:30pm |
| Thurs. 19 | General discussion evening -
with a film "Wind Across the Heath" | Y.C.
B.2.4 | 7:30 |
| Wed. 25 | HISTORY - THE SURREY BORDERS AND CAMBERLEY
LIGHT RAILWAY. A talk by Tony Hocking | Y.C.
B.2.4 | 7:30pm |

April

- | | | | |
|--------|---|-------------------|--------|
| Sun. 5 | WALK: The Western end of Yateley Common.
Assemble at Little Vigo, opposite The
Anchor, Vigo Lane. | Map Ref. SU810597 | 2:30pm |
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Sun. 12	CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE - Improving the Society's area on the Common (Unless stated otherwise in the local paper) Meet near "The Brackens" along track parallel to Cricket Hill South of Handford Lane.	Yateley 2:15pm Common Map Ref. SU818597
Thurs. 16	Monthly Review of Local Planning	Y.C. 7:30pm B.2.4
Thurs. 23	? Lecture from a Civic Trust speaker?	Y.C. 8:00pm C.1.1
Wed. 29	HISTORY - LOCAL PLACE NAMES A talk by Michael Holroyd	Y.C. 7:30pm B.2.4