

## Another precious Yateley Gem

The Royal Oak Valley, which runs from the Royal Oak Pub on the Reading Road, right up to the common has recently been designated as a Site of Importance to Nature (SINC).

It has been given the designation because it contains a type of woodland known as alder swamp that is rare in Hampshire and for its interesting variety of flowering plants and invertebrates living within a wet meadow in the north of the site.

The ranger for the Royal Oak Valley, Tim Ackroyd commented:

"The Valley should not be underestimated as an important area for wildlife and the local community. Hart Countryside Service has made considerable progress in improving this green refuge within Yateley town over the past six months continuing on from several years of work."

He thanked the Yateley Society and Blackwater Valley partnership volunteers for their support.

"We also rely on the local community to be our eyes and ears and to treat this wildlife haven with the care and respect it deserves," he concluded.

## We can continue to make a difference

Members belong to this Society for various reasons. One of them is their concern about overdevelopment in Yateley in general and encroachment on the conservation areas in particular. We know that some of you joined us to support our stance on Clark's Farm over the years. Almost a year ago I shared with you the EC's concern that we were losing key figures from our planning team and seemed unable to replace them. Our strategy for recruiting replacements from within the membership is one of offering personal development by organising the course of planning seminars which is in place for the last three Wednesdays in November.

A lot of thought and effort has gone into setting up this user-friendly course, in conjunction with two neighbouring civic societies.

**It is not too late to book yourself on this course.** It is free to members and its aim is to inform us about the ever changing planning process. If you expect the Society to continue to fulfil its hitherto key role in monitoring and influencing building development in Yateley please get involved.

You will learn a lot and be in a better position to protect our environment by working alongside others in the Society.

Roger Coombes  
Chair



To book, contact Roger Durdle  
01252 409808 [roger@durdle.com](mailto:roger@durdle.com)

## ***Moving forward...***

At our September meeting, Roger Durdle introduced the audience to the new information packed website.

Roger started by explaining that the Executive Committee had decided that the society needed a new website to provide a better experience for casual and dedicated visitors following suggestions from the floor at the AGM. The main criteria were to provide a more modern look and feel, improved navigation and ease of feedback

Roger explained that fortunately his son, Howard, is, in his own words, a computer geek, who was happy to help so he and Howard had met with Jo Hill in March to kick off the project culminating in the launch at the meeting. It was explained that one of the advantages of the re-launch was that we were able to use a new domain name

[www.yateleysociety.org.uk](http://www.yateleysociety.org.uk)

and Google searches for the Yateley Society now put this at the top of the listing – an improvement over previous arrangements.

The audience was then treated to a tour of the website to show the improved content with up to date information on recent news, upcoming events, links to archive material, membership details, links to other organisations and information for visiting speakers. Each page has a “contact us” tab allowing an email message to be composed and sent quickly and easily. The tour ended with a look at the society’s Twitter page.

To finish Roger told of new developments in the pipeline – an online survey or questionnaire facility that would greatly assist in gaining opinion on important subjects and, further down the line, “then and now” photographs of buildings and other landmarks.

Please take a look and let us have your comments.

If anyone wishes to help with the project, please contact Jo Hill 01252 640909,  
[contact@yateleysociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@yateleysociety.org.uk).

## **Christmas Present Idea**

A reminder that Yateley Society members may purchase a copy of Graham Fleuty’s hardback book “Yateley Men at War – Heartbeats of Remembrance” for the pre-publication price of just £10.

Contact Jo Hill for details of how to obtain a copy.

## **Nominations for Officers**

We would like to remind all members that under the Constitution of the Society all Officers of the Society must relinquish their office every year and shall be eligible for re-election at the Annual General Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012. The Officers of the Society consist of Chair, Vice Chair, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer.

Whilst the existing Officers are prepared to put themselves forward for another year the Executive Committee would be very interested in receiving new nominations for all or any of the Officer roles.

Nominations must be made in writing to the Honorary Secretary at least 14 days before the AGM. Each nomination must be supported by a seconder and the consent of the proposed nominee must have first been obtained.

## Parson Darby myth re-explored

There are several variants of this legend but one of the most specific states that Parson Darby was hanged from the yew tree in the garden of the Yew Tree Inn at Darby Green in 1841. He is stated variously to have been the vicar, rector or curate of Yateley or Eversley, preaching in church on Sundays. On weekdays he would rob the mail coaches crossing Yateley Common, or wider afield.

One version gives colourful details of him riding up to Monteagle House, dressed in his ecclesiastical garb, ostensibly to visit one of his flock. There he changed into his highwayman's clothes, strapped on a couple of *pistole* and a mask, mounted another faster animal from the farm, and stopped a coach on Hartford Bridge Flats - galloping back with the loot, which he then conveniently lodged in the cellars to be disposed of later. He would change horses and hack quietly back through the village.

This Monteagle House version states that he was hanged at Gibbet Hill near Bagshot. Naturally enough the Camberley version has him gibbeted in Camberley, but is very specific about the location:- opposite the Wooden House Tavern between Middleton Road and Gibbet Lane -- precisely where he shot dead the driver of the Royal Mail coach.

Both the Darby Green and Eversley versions have romantic stories of his fondness for the ladies, stating that in 1841 he was finally betrayed by one. In the Eversley version his ghost is still supposed to walk the treed avenue of Glaston Hill House, said to have been his parsonage. Both these variants have him hanged on Darby Green, the Eversley version stating that he was taken there by his Eversley parishioners so as not to hang him in his own parish, because he had been very generous to the poor of Eversley.

The Darby Green version has it that Parson Darby used to do his drinking at the Yew Tree Inn, that he was finally caught in the Inn, and immediately hanged outside, exactly where the bus stop now is. Most published versions of the myth state that Darby Green was named after Parson Darby, following his hanging there.

HOWEVER....

This post was received recently on the Heathland History Forum:

<http://heathhist.pbworks.com/NotesQueries>

I read with interest the [material about the Parson Darby myth](#). At the risk of telling you something you already know, I think this story has been conflated with that of **Robert Darby who robbed the Western Mail** on Blackwater Heath (Blackbushe?) on 29 July 1751. He was caught at Gravesend, imprisoned in Southwark, carried back to Blackwater Heath on 24 April 1752 where he was executed and his body hung in chains. His wife had £600 taken from the Mail quilted into her stays. He must have come from a wealthy family because his brother, William Darby, put up £6,000 bail for his own court appearance for "*aiding, comforting and receiving his brother after he robbed the Western Mail*". The sources for this are the newspapers in the Burney Collection.

**Bob Clarke: Basingstoke VCH Project**

*Robert Darby was the son of a Hampshire clergyman, and hence fits into the romantic notion of the "gentleman highwayman" He had committed a number of robberies, including one for which he was tried and acquitted at Winchester Assizes ca1751, and was caught on a vessel at Gravesend, tried at Kingston assizes, and executed following a mail robbery on Blackwater Heath, Surrey He was executed at or near the place of this robbery (So that clears that up then doesn't it! - Ed)*

But if you know different – be sure to join in the debate.



## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

We are working on the programme of events for next year. Our remit has always been to find topics of interest connected to Yateley or our corner of Hampshire. Perhaps we should widen that remit? We are open to suggestions from all members. What would you like to hear or learn about? What would you like to do or where would you like to visit? Do you have any names or contacts that you could give us so that we can make the arrangements? Please let us know.

In the meantime, we have included the CPRE events in our list, to which all our members are welcome. If you require any further details, please contact Jo Hill.

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Thursday 17 November 2011	Colin Grey- Fleet Pond Society It's been a few years since Colin updated us on the latest issues challenging Fleet Pond and the progress the Fleet Pond Society has made.
Thursday 15 December 2011	The Ghost of Yateley Past!! Our Christmas Special will focus on an interactive discussion with some long-standing Yateley residents recalling Yateley Christmas Past. Join us for mince pies, a glass of Christmas cheer and some jolly company.
Thursday 19 January 2012	Yateley Common Ian Stoneman, Senior Ranger, will update us with the results of the recent consultations and future management proposals and also the Yateley Society backed Pond Dipping Platform project.
Thursday 16 February 2012	Our AGM! Not as "dry" as it sounds. We will debate some local issues and try to come up with a united front. To help us, there will be a glass of wine and nibbles on hand!
Wednesday 21 March 2012	Living with Environmental Change -A CPRE organised talk by the Earl of Selborne at Itchen Abbas Village Hall. Tickets £15 and this includes canapés & a drink
Wednesday 25 April 2012 11am-3.30pm	CPRE Combined trip to Hill Farm Juice & Hill Place in Swanmore. The tour will start at Hill Farm Juices an award winning Hampshire company. A tour of the farm and working practises will finish with a tasting session. There will then be a tour of the Hill Place, a Georgian country villa, which featured on the Channel 4 programme 'Country House Rescue'. £5 for members & £7 non-members

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**The Conservation Group normally meets at Wyndhams Pool, Cricket Hill at**

**10.00 am on the last Sunday of every month.**

Everyone is welcome to join in the fun. The aim is to help the Yateley Rangers in all sorts of tasks in the upkeep of Yateley Common. To find out more, please call Mike Mann on 01252 877741

*Our monthly meetings take place at The Tythings, Reading Road Yateley at 8pm unless otherwise stated. Members and non-members welcome, admission free.*

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