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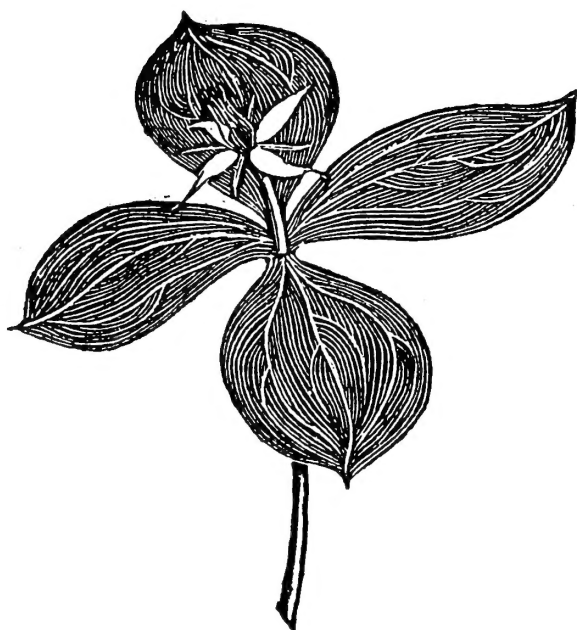
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The Reading Naturalist

No. 52



Published by the Reading and District

Natural History Society

2000

Price to Non Members £2.50

THE READING NATURALIST

No 52 for the year 1999

The Journal of the
Reading and District Natural History Society

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EDITORIAL

When I took over the task of editing 'The Naturalist', I had neither little idea how long I would continue nor what the job would entail. After six years I think it would be a good thing to start the New Millennium with a new Editor. I am very pleased to say that Malcolm Storey has agreed to take over the duties (I know he has to be elected but I foresee no problem there) and I know that I could not leave the job in better hands.

The next Issue will be the first of the 21st. Century and the 3rd. Millennium. I have always thought that the year shown on the cover should be that which refers to the activities and records for that season and this Issue is for the Society's 1998–1999 season with records for the year 1999. So it really is the last issue of the 20th. Century, and so a good time to give up the office.

As to what the job entailed, I found my first year a challenge, especially as my printer was not up of the standard required for copying. Alan Brickstock took on the unenviable task of converting my computer output to one that could be used by his printer. For that year there were co-editors! Things were better for the second year and since then have gone reasonably smoothly. I have enjoyed the task, it has kept me out of mischief for at least two months of each year and I have particularly appreciated working with the Recorders and both members and non-members who have provided the articles which have always been a feature of The Naturalist.

It had been suggested that there could be a special Millennium Issue but as there was a Centenary Year Issue in 1981 this was not followed up. However it is not inappropriate that an article should mark the end of the century. Together with the invaluable help of some of our long-time members I have included an article on '100 years of Publications by the Society' that I hope it will be of interest to members.

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OBITUARIES k

Brian R. Baker B.Sc., F.M.A., F.R.E.S.

The sudden death of Brian came as a great shock to members of the Society as he had been seen in recent days and appeared to be in good health. To many his loss is hard to bear and it is difficult to think that anyone will ever contribute more in so many capacities to the activities of the Society.

Brian was a native of Reading and lived in the town for almost all his life, only being away during his service in the RAF which he joined in 1942, part of the time being spent in Hong Kong. On leaving the Service he joined the staff of the Reading Museum and Art Gallery and in 1956 was appointed Deputy Director. He retired in 1987, though he continued to visit the Museum regularly, in fact as recently as the week before his death he had taken much pleasure in seeing the Museum's entomology collection, that is now housed in a new room and available by appointment for public study.

While at the Museum he studied in his own time at Birkbeck College, University of London, and received his degree, a B.Sc. in Natural Science, in 1956. In the following year he became a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society. In 1963 he was awarded a Fellowship of the Museums Association. He was a member of the British Entomological and Natural History Society and was elected its President for the years 1983 - 1984

Brian was a Founder member of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists' Trust who's Inaugural Meeting was held at Oxford in 1960. From that year until 1970 he was Berkshire Secretary of the Trust. In 1969, when responsible for finding nature reserves in Berkshire, he heard about a chap who owned some woodland and part of a riverbank in the Pang valley. He met the owner who agreed to lease the land to BBONT and it was later left to the Trust in Mr. Trever's will. It is now the beautiful and much visited Moor Copse Reserve.

Brian was the author of 'The Butterflies and Moths of Berkshire' which was published in 1994. This excellent reference book was a labour of love for Brian and has proved invaluable to those who are interested in the lepidoptera of the County. Other publications to which Brian was a contributing author are 'Moths of Great Britain and Ireland' and 'Wildlife of the Thames Counties'. He contributed a number of papers to Scientific Journals.

Although employed indoors at the Museum, Brian was an experienced and dedicated field worker. His knowledge of the countryside around Reading was extensive and certain areas were particularly well known. One such was Pamber Forest; his records for last summer appear in the Entomological report and he had made arrangements for other visits later this year.

Brian's activities with the Reading Natural History Society began in 1936 when he was twelve years old. He was a mine of information on those days of the Society and fortunately gave a very good account of them in articles that appeared in issues of 'The Reading Naturalist' in 1981 and 1987. His association with the Society continued for the rest of his life. In the years from 1949, when the Reading and District Natural History Society published the first issue of 'The Reading Naturalist', he was twice President, long-time Entomological Recorder and in the 1990's, Winter Programme Secretary. He was elected an Honorary Member of the Society in 1989.

Having spoken of Brian's career it is time to write of his character. All who knew him would say that he was always a ready listener, very willing to give help and advice and patient with those whose knowledge of entomology was basic compared with his own. That he was able to stimulate an interest in natural history in so many who came into contact with him was perhaps his most lasting achievement.

Brian's Presidential message in the Centenary Year Issue of 'The Reading Naturalist' ended thus:

"may our time-honoured ways long continue, may new members ever be welcomed, may knowledge be freely shared, may enthusiasm be imparted to all projects and may the friendly atmosphere which has maintained this Society this long be ever present"

Brian lived by these principles and it may be considered that there are few which could be better. He will be remembered with affection and respect by all who knew him, and we extend our most sincere condolences to Heather and to his family.

Peter Silver

Peter joined the Society 26 years ago, but his interest in Natural History went back much further than that.

His main interest and expertise were in Butterflies and Moths, and he was invariably quietly present in the background at our mothning evenings. He spent all his working life at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston. Here he assisted Gordon Eastwick-Field to run a moth trap, and compile an annual cumulative list of species of moths. For several years, after Gordon retired, Peter and I went to work early every morning to empty the trap and record the catch. Eventually, as part of the Ministry of Defence Conservation Group recording scheme, a list of over 450 species was accumulated, this being just over half the British total.

When he retired two years ago, Peter developed a keen interest in photography, mainly of fungi and latterly of orchids. It is a pity that he had so little time to explore this new field.

I was saddened when Brian Baker rang me to say that Peter had died, but I little realised that Brian himself would be dead only a few days later. Their double loss will be a grievous blow to the Society.

Alan Brickstock

Dr. Eric V. Watson Ph.D., F.L.S.

Dr. Watson joined the Society in the 1948-1949 season, was Recorder for Ornithology from 1953 to 1962, President from 1962 to 1964 and elected an Honorary Member in 1972. Michael Fletcher writes a tribute to a well-liked and much respected member.

I joined the Reading Natural History Society in 1962 and soon became interested in mosses and liverworts. Knowing no better, I tried growing them, just as I had long been growing cacti and succulents. I found it difficult. I also had trouble in naming many of these little plants, but came across Eric Watson's book, *British Mosses and Liverworts*, and saw in it that he was a lecturer in botany at Reading University.

In the mid-60's Dr. Humphry Bowen was working on a new flora of Berkshire, and was seeking records. He was glad to receive a list of the mosses I had found, and asked me to get it checked, so I approached Eric at a Society meeting. He invited me to his office at the University site in London Road, looked at my lists, and at my "herbarium" specimens, which I had stuck on pieces of paper with Sellotape. He showed me how to make proper herbarium packets for mosses. Seeing that I had become interested in these little plants, he asked me a question that rather changed the direction of my life:

"Michael, have you ever considered joining the British Bryological Society?"

I do not remember what I answered. I did not say "no", and I cannot have said "yes", since I had not heard of the Society before, but anyway, I joined it. I was a little nonplussed at first, that almost nobody else who studied mosses grew them. For most of the next thirty years I dragged myself, and sometimes also my long-suffering family, to their excursions, seeing many remote and beautiful places, and making many good friends. Among them were people whose interest in mosses had first been aroused as students at the University, who spoke kindly of Eric and of his especial concern for, and interest in, his students.

As a fellow botanist, my knowledge of Eric is perhaps rather one-sided, since he was also an ornithologist, a leading member of the Reading Ornithological Club, and an artist of some distinction. He also played an important part in the re-establishment of the British Bryological Society after the war, and his books have done more than any other person's to encourage an interest in bryology in Britain.

Many Society members will remember his annual walks in March. Over the years many different and contrasting habitats around Reading were visited, but his favourite walk, I think, was the one that started and finished at his house, going through the countryside he knew and loved the best. Such walks invariably ended in the warm lounge of his house, with tea all round, especially welcome after an afternoon of biting cold March winds

EXCURSIONS

1998

November 7th. The season began with a walk attended by nine members led by Meryl Beek in the Noney Green - Mapledurham area. A day of good sunshine but very muddy underfoot. In Bottom Wood and Gutteridge's Wood a number of fungi were found. They included many Clouded Agarics as well as Shaggy Parasol, Cramp Ball or King Alfred's Cakes, Common Yellow Russula, Black Bulgar, Wood Blewit, Sulphur Tuft, Jew's Ear, Candle-snuff Fungus and Crested Coral Fungus. The leaves of Brooklime were found in a particularly wet section of the path that is known to hardly ever dry out. A lot of leaves of Hound's-tongue were also present; it grows quite profusely on the Mapledurham and Hardwick estates. Along the open field edge, towards Whittles Farm, it was good to see and hear Goldfinches and a Yellowhammer. Redwings were also present in the open areas of the walk.

December 6th. Alan Brickstock led a meeting at Theale Gravel Pits and the Canal attended only by Catherine Butcher and Martin Sell. After a very wet morning, the weather relented, it was a dry and reasonably bright afternoon, but without any sunshine, and we enjoyed a good walk. Birds were rather sparse, but we did see a few Siskins, four male Goldeneye, one female Teal, a few Shovellers and a Ruddy Duck, as well as the usual common ducks.

1999

January 23rd. Graham Saunders led a party of about 20 members to the University Museum at Oxford. The Museum contains the zoological, entomological, mineralogical and geological collections of the University. Besides the massive dinosaur skeletons, a tiger skeleton looked rather small and how do you tell a camel from its skeleton (no bony humps!). The birds were interesting, as museums are about the only places where you can see them close up. Butterflies, beetles, fossils and mud dwelling fish added to the interest. The stone carvings and ironwork creations in the shape of leaves, flowers and creatures in the building structure provided a study in themselves.

February 21st. It was a sunny day, but with a strong bitterly cold wind, when seven stalwarts, led by Martin Sell, assembled for the long walk of about six miles around Thorney Island. There were plenty of Brent Geese in the harbour, but few sea duck – only the odd Merganser or Goldeneye to be seen. As the tide was coming in, the high-tide roost produced over 200 Knot, plenty of Bar-tailed Godwits and Grey Plover. Spectacular seascapes, with heavy showers inland, added to the enjoyment of a good day's bird-watching.

March 13th. Sean O'Leary led a walk entitled 'An introduction to mosses and liverworts' in the Pamber Forest area. This was designed to help those with no previous knowledge, to find out a bit about these fascinating and beautiful plants. The general area, with woodland, open heath and a few streams is pleasant for a walk anyway, but some good mosses were found, including *Physcomitrium pyriforme*, *Calliergon cordifolium*, and *Bartramia pomiformis*. In all about 40 species were recorded in a very pleasant locality.

March 20th. Mike Abraham led a party of eight around Moor Green Lakes and Ambarrow Woods on an overcast and rather chilly afternoon. Due to the mild winter, most of the migrant ducks had flown north, but five or six female Goosanders and two pairs of Goldeneye remained. A Roe Deer ran across the path in front of the group, and the wood at Ambarrow was full of wild Daffodils in bloom.

April 17th. The afternoon was cold and raw when twelve participants, led by Martin Sell, walked round Burghfield Gravel Pits and along the River Kennet. Two Nightingales were seen and heard, with a number of Blackcaps and a Sedge Warbler. Suddenly, along the Canal, an influx of Swallows and Sand Martins appeared, and a superb male Yellow Wagtail was spotted in a field with horses by the road.

May 2nd. The meeting, jointly with BBONT, at Moor Copse was led by Ann Booth, Martin Sell and Alan Brickstock. For once the Bluebells were at their peak, giving a wonderful display. A fine warm day was much enjoyed by two or three dozen people. Unfortunately the Early purple Orchids in Moor Copse itself had been eaten by cows: they will not be able to get in again, as there is now a fine new deer fence which will also keep out cows! There are two Roe Deer inside the fence still, despite efforts to drive them out! Highlight of the afternoon was a pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers flying around and displaying, including drumming on a large Ash tree.

May 8th. Towering trees and lush vegetation, colourful orchids, zoomorphic totems and the constant drip of water: no it's not a tropical rain forest but an outing to Clayfield Copse nature reserve. An intrepid group of a dozen souls from our Society with Friends of Reading Museum, led by David Notton, braved steady rain to follow the nature/sculpture trail. Clayfield Copse, Reading's first local nature reserve, and Blackhouse Wood make up an area of ancient woodland and park formerly part of the Caversham Park Estate. It is now owned by Reading Borough Council and managed by the voluntary group Friends of Clayfield Copse. The woodland supports a great range of tree species and wildflowers, most notably Bluebells which were in full bloom, the rare Wild Service-tree, and the tropical looking Early-purple Orchids. At the time of our visit the orchids had about twenty purple and white flowering spikes each up to a foot high and set on a rosette of spotted leaves. Other highlights included the giant Sulphur Polypore fungus with its large orange fruiting bodies growing on a fallen dead cherry tree and the woodcarvings by the Berkshire Woodcarvers, that marked the trail. No butterflies and very few birds were seen because of the weather, perhaps the most appropriate bird was a duck on a puddle in the car park! Thanks to everyone who supported this walk under less than ideal conditions.

May 9th. Martin Sell led the Dawn Chorus and the trip to the South Coast but only one member braved the early start at half past four in the morning to hear songbirds at Theale Gravel Pits. A Cuckoo was calling vigourously, Nightingales were singing at their best, with Sedge Warblers and the odd Reed Warbler chattering away in the Reeds at the edge of the lagoons. Swifts and House Martins were watched flying around just before 7 o'clock, when the Sand Martins appeared out of their artificial bank, all together as though they had been summoned; then a great rarity joined them – a Red-rumped Swallow. Down at Pennington Marsh, near Lymington, numbers were now up to five, and again, plenty of birds to see. Another rarity, a Lesser Yellowlegs, was viewed down to 25 yards and there were plenty of other waders, Black-tailed Godwits, Dunlin and Grey Plover. There was also a little Gull and a pair of Little Terns. Plants of Burrowing Clover were unusual. In the New Forest, Hobbies were performing well, and Stonechats and Dartford Warblers were also seen. Later, in the wooded area, Redstart and Wood Warblers were both flying. In all a fine, sunny and successful day's excursion.

May 23rd. Brownsea Island was the venue for the annual coach outing. It was a popular one, proved by a full coach-load of 53 members and friends! It was nice to be met by Humphry Bowen and Neville and Mary Diserens and to renew our friendship with them. After an early lunch, Humphry led a walk over various parts of the island pointing out interesting plants. In the heathland area was Heath Dog-violet. The beach area revealed Lesser Chickweed, Heath Pearlwort and English Stonecrop, local species associated with dry sandy soils. In the lawn near the church other local species included Mossy Stonecrop, Bird's-foot, Slender Trefoil, Knotted Clover and the fairly uncommon Bird's-foot Clover. The party visited the Nature Reserve, managed by the Dorset Wildlife Trust, in the later afternoon where among other plants Bog Pimpernel, Southern Marsh-orchid and the very local Dwarf Sedge were seen. The Chusan Palm, an introduced species, was in flower. The Reserve is in the NE corner of the island, in the area of the lagoon looking toward Poole Harbour. The party spent time bird watching in the hides. The slight disappointment was not seeing any Red Squirrels. They were there, as evidence of dreys in the trees and bitten pinecones on the paths revealed - perhaps the weather was just a bit too warm and our party just a bit too large! This small matter hardly affected the enjoyment of everybody – nobody was left benighted on the island, we all caught the last ferry back to Sandbanks!

June 5th. The mothing evening at Hartslock, organised by Chris Raper, was something of a disappointment, as soon after Martin Townsend and Norman Hall had set up the MV lamps the heavens opened and torrential rain continued for most of the night. The ten members who attended were fortunate to have the shelter of the Reserve caravan for the duration of the meeting. Some stalwarts stayed on until the early hours, sleeping through the downpour. About 50 species were recorded, among them were some of chalk downland, the Pretty Chalk Carpet and the Maple Prominent. Four Hawk-moth species came to light, the Privet, the Eyed, and both Elephant and Small Elephant.

June 9th. Sandra Conn kindly invited us to a tour of her grassland and woodland at Bozedown Vinery. There is a very nice chalk-downland hillside, with a good variety of flowers, including Marjoram, Fairy Flax, Autumn Gentian (Felwort), Hound's-tongue, Common Spotted-orchid, Bee and Pyramidal Orchids and Vervain in abundance – it is a pestiferous weed! We also scrambled round the rough and steep woodland. Afterwards we tasted a number of excellent wines, and some of us purchased a few bottles! We are most grateful to Sandra for showing us round, and for her hospitality afterwards.

Editor. Catherine Butcher was prompted to pen these felicitous lines on the evening's excursion:

Last night I went to a secret place, high on a grassy hill,
And watched the river wend its way past Mapledurham Mill.
Suddenly the sun went down, a chill was in the air
But I saw beauty all around and didn't have a care.

June 13th. BBONT's Summer Fair was held at Rushall Manor Farm in glorious sunshine. As well as the stalls featuring produce, books, bric-a-brac and sales goods, Martin Sell led walks through the nearby woods and the Pang valley, including the famous Blue Pool with its chalk streams of clear water bubbling up and surrounded by many different water plants.

June 19th. On a dull day only three members turned up for what was an extremely interesting visit, led by Martin Sell, to two BBONT Reserves, Asham Meads and Whitecross Green Wood. Due to the weather there were few butterflies to be seen but the meadows at Asham Meads, which are unspoiled hay meadows, were full of Buttercups, Great Burnet, and Spotted Orchids. Earlier there had been Green-winged Orchids. At Whitecross Green some Meadow Browns and Ringlets were on the wing, with the first Marbled Whites of the year and some Large Skippers. There were also four Wood Whites, one of the specialities of the Reserve. Spotted Orchids, Betony and Adder's-tongue were also to be seen.

July 3rd. On a fine, warm, sunny day Martin Sell led twelve members on the meeting at the Hampshire Trust Reserve at Noar Hill. Musk Orchids were in full bloom as were Frog, Pyramidal and Spotted Orchids with masses of huge Twayblades making a superb show. A solitary Bee Orchid was also found, plus a strange plant, probably a cross between Fragrant and Frog Orchids. There were a few Clustered Bellflowers. Not many butterflies were to be seen, apart from Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Marbled Whites and Gatekeepers. Only one Common Blue was observed.

July 10th. Rod d'Ayala was unable to lead the meeting at College Pond and Sydlings Copse but had sent very detailed and helpful notes and maps. On a hot day this enabled a small group of people, including some BBONT members who knew the site, to find their way round and enjoy and appreciate the great variety of habitats and natural history encompassed in this relatively small area. Wild Liquorice, Large Wild Thyme and Woolly Thistle were seen, and one area was remarkable for the large numbers of Burnet moths present. The resident flock of St. Kilda sheep grazing the restoration area to the north of Sydlings Copse were feeding well but wary of our presence.

July 25th. The outing on a hot, sunny day, started off at Ham Hill, a narrow Wiltshire Trust Reserve on a steep hillside, not for the faint-hearted. It has an excellent chalk-downland flora. Interesting plant species found included Fragrant Orchid, Pyramid Orchid, Musk Orchid, Fool's Parsley, Squinancywort, Knapweed Broomrape, Autumn Gentian (Felwort), Twayblade, and a dead Lizard Orchid, found by Malcolm Storey, who also discovered a sawfly, *Abia sericea*, with a local distribution on Hogweed. It's larvae feed on Scabious species. We then found out a shady field edge wherein to have our lunch. Afterwards, some of us went to Charles Flower's Wild Flower farm at Shalbourne. Unfortunately Charles was away, but a sadly small party was taken on a tractor and trailer ride around the farm by Bob Anderson. It was most enjoyable and enlightening to see this delightful farm, with its wild flower meadows, acres of flowers grown for seed, and to hear about the challenges and rewards of Organic Farming. Those members who did not come missed a superb day out.

August 7th. On a hot and sultry day six members arrived at the Grid Reference for the Broadmoor Bottom walk but due to a misunderstanding did not meet the BBONT Reserve Warden, Jonathan Easton. Fortunately Martin Sell knew the area and led the meeting around the magnificent wetland and heathland that makes up the Reserve. The heathland was ablaze with the colours of Heather, Bell Heather and Cross-leaved Heath and with Dwarf Gorse in full bloom. Sundews, Common Cotton Grass, White Beak-sedge were seen in the boggy areas, but Bog Asphodel was largely over. The high point was the sighting of a pair of Dartford Warblers at close range. A family of Spotted Flycatchers was seen at the end of the walk. Insects observed were two species of dragonfly, the Brown Hawker and the Keeled Skimmer, now a species with a restricted local distribution, and Red Admiral, Peacock, and The Grayling butterflies.

August 21st. On a fine sunny afternoon 17 members set out on a walk at Swyncombe and Ewelme led by Alice Ayres. A fine colony of Violet Helleborines was of particular interest and other plants seen were Spurge Laurel, Wild Angelica, Deadly Nightshade, Catmint, Guelder-rose, Perennial or Corn Sow-thistle, Stinking Iris and Giant Fescue. The day, however, was really made for us when we

spotted ten Red Kites and two Buzzards. They flew nearer and nearer to us, and we were rewarded by seeing them fly directly overhead. The walk was rather longer than usual but extremely enjoyable.

September 4th. The meeting, led by John Marshall to Crowsley Park and Forest, was a very pleasant walk through rough meadows and attractive woodland on a fine, very hot summer's day, and was much enjoyed by 13 people and Tilly, Alan's very friendly dog. In fact, it was so hot that we welcomed a little haze part way through the afternoon to cool it down slightly. Janet Walsh brought an old survey list for comparison with our finds. In all we found 83 species of plants, including a single specimen of Canadian Fleabane, which was a new record for the site. Among other finds were lots of Ploughman's-spikenard and Square-stalked St. John's-wort, the latter mainly very large, robust specimens. There was also Hairy and Trailing St. John's-wort, two or three patches of the rather uncommon Corn Mint, some Harebells and Adder's-tongue. There were also a number of species of fungi, most notably a large ring of Parasol Mushrooms. As this is an excellent edible species, a number of caps were taken for the pot! Less welcome were some evil-smelling Stinkhorns.

September 19th. As ever Alan Brickstock led the Fungus Foray, this season at Wokefield Common. It was advertised as an all day foray for Reading Fungus Group, but by an oversight as afternoon only for our Society. However, after a long, dry spell, the morning was an exceedingly wet one. Only Mike Harrison, from the Fungus Group, and I were mad enough to foray in the morning. The most interesting finds were *Tylopilus felleus*, which I had not seen for a year or two, and a few Chanterelles. Thankfully the rain eventually eased, and a reasonable number of forayers from the Society appeared for a pleasant afternoon. Sadly this second site, 'Frog Pond', was very dry, and things were few and far between. However, we found some nice Chanterelles, *Sparassis crispa*, *Inocybe petiginosa*, *Cortinarius paleaceus* and again *Tylopilus felleus*. Total numbers of species were 45 in the morning, 39 in the afternoon and 60 overall.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON WALKS

Alan Brickstock

The season started at Charvil Country Park on April 21st. After prolonged heavy rain throughout the previous day and night, it was a very windy, mild day, with only a few scuds of rain. This proved to be a very good walk, enjoyed by seven people and three dogs! There were lots of Swallows about, as well as some House and Sand Martins. There was also a good Heronry, densely packed with at least 16 Herons. 78 species of plants were seen, notably including some Loddon Lilies.

The May walk on the 19th. was around the Frilsham area. Frilsham has the only parish church dedicated to St. Frideswide, who had a Cell in the nearby woods. Also dedicated to her is the Priory church in Oxford. In earlier times the village was known as Fridelsham. The mill, which is mentioned in the Domesday Book, continued to be used into this century. There was an excellent damp meadow with a profusion of flowers, including Common Spotted-orchid and Star-of-Bethlehem. In all, a total of 113 plants was recorded.

The June walk on the 16th. at Tadley and Browninghill Green made up for the one that was abandoned last year due to rain. This time it was a fine, hot day, with just enough breeze to make it pleasant – a stop for a pint half way round made it even pleasanter! We started at St Peter's church, built on the site of the original village, with a tower dating back to 1685. We again put up the 'ton', recording 102 species, most notably the uncommon Stone Parsley.

I was unfortunately away on the July 21st. so Martin Sell provides this account of the walk.

On a fine afternoon ten people walked a circular course along the Chiltern foothills in the Ipsden area, covering part of the Icknield Way. On one field edge, even in a poor year for butterflies, there were a number of Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns and the odd Tortoiseshell. There were some remnants of typical chalk flora, such as Knapweeds and Mignonette, but after the recent hot dry spell, most of the flora was past its best.

Torrential rain on the way to Shinfield Green on August 18th. put off all but Jane and Gordon Crutchfield and I - and dogs Ruddles and Tilly. Ken Thomas turned up, but decided it was too wet for him. Soon after setting off, the rain stopped, and apart from one short shower the rest of the afternoon was dry and warm with sunny intervals. Not knowing what Ken had planned we made up our own route, and had a most enjoyable walk. Moral – never give up! This was not a flower rich area, but we found 64 species, including Burnet Saxifrage, Common Hemp-nettle, and Stone Parsley again. As

usual, we visited the local church, situated this time a little way round the walk rather than at the beginning. Fortunately, one of the church members was able to take Ken's place and show us round, with a lot of interesting information, largely gleaned from Ken!

To my shame, I forgot the September walk round the Harpsdens on the 15th. – so over to Martin Sell again!

On a dull, damp afternoon, a band of eight hardy souls explored the highways, byways and hidden footpaths between Harpsden and Henley. Of flowers and bird life there was not much to be seen, but the sunken footpaths and bridle-ways were of considerable interest.

For the past six years Ken Thomas has planned the Wednesday afternoon walks and this year again we are indebted to him. It is a matter of interest that over the years he has found so many different ways to go and places to see and again our most grateful thanks.

MEETINGS

Catherine Butcher

1998

October 22nd. There were 39 members at our first lecture of the season when Mr. Victor Scott spoke on "Plant Hunting in the Soviet Union". He said his talk was based on two visits to Russia, the first to the Caucasus and the second to Uzbekistan where he had been asked by the Soviet Academy of Scientists to lead an expedition of botanists. He proceeded to give a very interesting and entertaining talk about his travels, showing slides taken by himself and his wife. They flew to Tashkent which was the showplace of Central Asia and then toured by coach where they had many incredible experiences. Wild tulips and crocuses grew in abundance, also anemones, irises, long-stalked winter aconites and a very rare poppy. They travelled on the old Silk Road to Samarkand and slides were shown of mountain ranges and flowers hardly ever seen in Britain. Fields of opium poppies were guarded by soldiers with machine guns.

November 12th. 42 members heard Mr. Barry Hughes speak on "A year in the Life of a Bird Photographer". A typical year of bird watching commenced at the Chesil Bank in Spring, then going on to Israel, which is the main migratory route for birds passing through into Northern Europe and Asia. He illustrated his talk by showing slides of Great Crested Grebes, which once were nearly extinct when their pelts were used as muffs, and of the Stone Curlew – a license is required to photograph it. His talk concluded with slides, taken in the Orkneys, of Golden Plover, Arctic Terns, Oystercatchers, Puffins and other birds.

November 26th. Dr. Julian Vincent was our speaker with 47 members present. He spoke on "Smart Plants" and gave references and showed slides of potato tissue and onion skins to illustrate the changing shapes of the cells over given periods in relation to various pressures and the formation of scar tissue. He demonstrated his talk by origami folding, "plants for packaging" as it was described. A study of the poppy petal unfolding as it came to full flower provided a perfect illustration.

1999

January 14th. "The Pang Valley and Kennet Valley Countryside Projects" was our first lecture of the year given by Mr. Russell Ashfield. 43 members were present. The Pang Valley Countryside Project was set up in 1993 as an Advisory Committee to farmers and landowners, later a similar Project was formed for the Kennet Valley. Planting of hedgerows, hazel coppicing and charcoal burning are among the activities carried out and importance is given to education in country matters for all ages from school children upwards.

Editor. An article entitled "The Pang Valley and Kennet Valley Countryside Projects" by Russell Ashfield appears on page 14.

January 28th. Dr. Pat Morris spoke on "The Dormouse" to 54 members. We learned why dormice are so rare in this country. They are found mainly in southern England and are very scarce elsewhere. Dr. Morris said that he had obtained information on dormouse behaviour by the use of radio tracking. A recovery programme has been commenced and there are now over 6000 nest boxes throughout the country. There are projects to introduce dormice into suitable habitats, some in northern counties. A series of three extremely cold winters could decimate the dormouse population.

Editor. An article on Dormice by Dr. Pat Morris appears on page 17.

February 11th. Dr. Mike Majerus gave the 48 members present at the meeting a highly entertaining talk on "Ladybirds Behaving Badly". Because of their diet of aphids, ladybirds are very popular with both gardeners and farmers. Dr. Majerus explained that once the eggs had hatched the larvae developed as fast as they could by eating their brothers and sisters before tackling their first aphid meal. Ladybirds breed in large numbers, even with the wrong species. This behaviour was puzzling until it was discovered that bacteria in the eggs were killing off all the males.

February 25th. Mr. Mike Watts gave a talk on "The National Trust and Nature Conservation" to 38 members of the Society. Most people think of the National Trust's work in terms of preservation of historic houses, but it is also concerned with conservation and preservation of plant and animal life. It now owns 240,000 hectares of land that cannot be sold. Landscape illustrations followed, including rocks, fossils, woods of different kinds and some of the 600 miles of coast owned by the Trust, partly the result of the success of Operation Neptune. Many questions followed on conservation aspects.

March 11th. The final speaker of the winter season was Dr. Camilla Lambrick with "Lest we lose them - Work of the Rare Plants Group in Oxfordshire". The 42 members present were informed that the Group had been set up in 1993 with the specific purpose of trying to prevent local plants from becoming extinct. A special action plan had been formulated showing the current position, aims, action and the way forward. Targets had been set in an endeavour to restore and increase the numbers of rare plants, one of which was the Fen Violet growing at Otmoor. Much of the work involved management, cutting down scrub and creating openings. Illustrations of rare plants such as Meadow Clary, Cotswold Pennycress, Early Gentian and Creeping Marshwort were shown.

The Society has had a varied season of interesting lectures and we are most grateful to Mr. Alan Burt for arranging them.

A Christmas Party was enjoyed by all present with refreshments provided by Mrs. Heather Baker and her team of helpers. A nature quiz was formulated by Alan and Ivy Brickstock. A Members Evening was also held on March 25th. when members' slides were shown and Mr. Martin Sell played a tape recording of New Zealand birdsong.

MEMBERSHIP

At the Annual General meeting the Treasurer reported that there were eight Honorary Members and 147 Ordinary members of the Society. This was one less than the total number of members for the previous season.

A healthy Balance was carried forward, it being little changed from the 1997-98 year. Expenditure on hire of the hall, printing of 'The Naturalist' and postage was very similar to that of the previous year, however expenditure on Lecturers and the printing of the Summer Programme had increased.

During 1999, Mr. A.T. Hine, Dr. Camilla Lambrick, Mr. Brian Sargent and Miss Janet Weaver joined the Society. We welcome them and are also pleased that Ms. Margaret Mitchell and Mrs. Christine Storey have rejoined.

THE FISHLOCK PRIZE

For various reasons the Fishlock Prize has not been awarded recently. In August 1999, in collaboration with David Notton and the Reading Museum and Archive Service, a competition for the Prize was held while the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition was at Blake's Lock Museum.

The competition was for a drawing of a natural history subject, done at the Museum, based on specimens from the Museum's collections or any of the subjects portrayed in the wildlife photographs. There were two age groups, one for 5 to 9 year olds and another for 10 to 14 year olds. In each group a winner and two runners-up were chosen, as well as two highly commended entries.

From the Fishlock Prize monies, a total of £50 was given by the Society. The winner of each group received £15, and both pairs of runners-up £5. The highly commended entries received souvenirs from the Museum.

Over the four weeks of the Exhibition the competition attracted over 200 entries, all of a very high standard. The winner in the older age group was Hannah Watt with a drawing of a magnificent lion. The younger age group winner was Olivia Foster who drew a picture of a barn owl.

SOME BOTANICAL RAMBLINGS.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS BY ALAN BRICKSTOCK

This talk is just what it says - a miscellany of odd facts about plants and plant names. I am indebted to Richard Mabey's 'Flora Britannica' and various other books for most of the information.

To start with, a few confusions of identities.

I am sure that you all know that Greater and Lesser Celandine are totally unrelated, the former belonging to the Poppy family and the latter to the Buttercup family. Nevertheless, old botanists frequently confused the two. The name Celandine comes from the Greek 'chelidon', meaning a Swallow, the usual connection given is that they come into flower as the Swallows arrive. However, they normally bloom well before the Swallows arrive. An alternative derivation which has been suggested is that the name came via confusion with the Greater Celandine, from a legend that Swallows gave this plant to their blind young to open their eyes. Lesser Celandine was Wordsworth's favourite flower, he wrote a well-known poem about it, and when he died, it was suggested that it should be depicted on his grave. It is ironic that the plant eventually carved on his tomb in Grasmere was Greater Celandine. Lesser Celandines produce numerous small bulbils, looking like grains of wheat, in their leaf axils. During heavy rain, these are sometimes floated away in great numbers, and this has led to numerous stories of 'rains of wheat'.

Loosestrife is a direct translation of the Greek name: in Classical times it was believed that this plant was so powerful that 'if placed on the yoke of inharmonious oxen, will restrain their quarrelling'. Purple Loosestrife was often called 'Long Purples', but the Long Purples that garlanded the drowning Ophelia and 'That liberal shepherds give a grosser name / But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them' were almost certainly Early-purple Orchids. However, when Millais painted the drowning Ophelia, he gave her Purple Loosestrife instead - perhaps he shied away from the common grosser name.

Yet another name confusion is between the rather uninteresting Bulrush and the fat, showy Reedmace, *Typha latifolia*. When Alma-Tadema painted Moses in the Bulrushes, instead of putting him among papyrus, *Cyperus papyrus*, he painted the much more picturesque Greater Reedmace. Ever since then, the latter has commonly been known, erroneously, as Bulrush.

Even in 1952, 'Common Farm Weeds', issued by Plant Protection Ltd., includes such species as Shepherd's Needle, 'Common in Britain, especially on light soils', Corn Gromwell, 'Fairly common throughout Britain', Corn Buttercup, 'Common in Southern England', Corn Marigold, 'Fairly common throughout Britain' and Corn Cockle, 'Fairly common throughout Britain'. How things have changed!

Next, how about a few dates.

Snowdrops were frequently called 'Fair Maids of February', because they were traditionally worn by village maidens, to denote purity, at the Feast of Purification on February 2nd.

Hawthorn or 'May' was traditionally used to garland the May Queen on May Day, although it does not usually flower for a week or more lately. However, if we take account of the change of calendar from the Julian to the Gregorian in 1752, the old May Day would be our present May 12th. which is just about right.

Another example of the date change is in the explanation of the name Yellow Archangel. If we look in the Reader's Digest book, it says that the plant normally comes into flower around April 27th. 'the day dedicated to the Archangel Michael'. In another book it gives the date as May 8th. Again we have the 11-day difference, making these equivalent dates. But, as Ken Thomas pointed out to me, there is no such festival in the church calendar! Possibly as my son suggested, this was a date that was deleted from the calendar, along with many others, after the Reformation? Perhaps someone could check up on this.

Now lets look at the derivation of a few flower names.

Rowan comes from the Norse word 'runa', meaning a charm: the tree was said to provide protection against witches and evil. For this reason it was frequently planted in gardens and churchyards.

Rogues posing as fortune-tellers or magicians used to daub their bodies with the dark black dye produced from Gypsywort, in order to pass themselves off as Egyptian or African, hence giving the plant its common name. It was also known as the Egyptian herb.

Green Alkanet gives a strong blue dye, and Dyer's Greenweed gives a good yellow dye - so why green? Anyone who paints will know that blue plus yellow gives green! Other plants that were cultivated for the production of dyes included Woad, giving a blue colour, Madder red and Weld yellow.

Why are so many public houses called The Chequers? The fruits of the Wild Service tree were, and still are in some regions, called Chequers or Chokers, the tree itself often being called Chequer tree or Maple Cherry, because its leaves are blotched scarlet and copper. They were planted near to houses, farms and pubs were named after the trees. The fruits were made into a drink called Chequers, which may have been sold in pubs, although it was probably not alcoholic. The fruits were a staple diet in Neolithic times.

Birthwort was once widely given to speed up labour, and would have been grown in the gardens of Abbeys, where the Nuns had midwifery duties. Professor Warburg, of local renown, was fond of scandalizing audiences by describing Birthwort as 'a good abortifacient', only found in England in nunneries, where it is an introduced plant. Whether it was ever used to cover up rare indiscretions by the nuns will probably remain a monastic secret, but according to the Professor's widow, a Mother Superior she knew said that she'd 'got it round her nunnery, and had needed it the previous year'!

The Jerusalem Artichoke has nothing to do with the town in Palestine, as it comes from North America. The name is a corruption of the Italian *Giortasola articiocco*, meaning 'Sunflower Artichoke'.

Bog Asphodel was at one time called 'bone breaker', from the belief that grazing it caused sheep's bones to become brittle and break. The real culprit was the calcium deficiency in the poor meadows in which it grew. A similar misapprehension was apparent in the belief that cattle grazing in meadows where Lousewort grew would become infected with lice: the culprit here was the damp conditions in which this plant grows.

The occurrence of the epithet 'dog' in a plant name normally signifies that it is in some way inferior to another species (I think it should more properly be superior!). Dog-violets are not perfumed, and so they are inferior to Sweet Violet, etc. So, what is Dogwood inferior to? Well the derivation here is different. The name is a corruption of Dagwood, dag meaning a spike or skewer, as the hard wood was ideal for turning to make these implements. Other names such as prickwood and skiverwood also reflect this use. Spindle tree was used for the same purposes.

Soapwort or Bouncing Bet is a good detergent herb that forms a green lather when boiled in water. It was widely used across Europe and the Middle East. It was used by the Victoria and Albert Museum for cleaning delicate fabrics up to the 1970s.

Carnation comes from the same root as Coronation, since this flower was used for celebratory garlands in ancient Greece.

Monkshood, with its hooded flowers, was probably introduced to cultivation by Cistercian Monks at Roche Abbey in Yorkshire. It was cultivated in the Middle Ages as a painkiller and a liniment for treating Rheumatism, but 'it killed as often as it cured'!

Moonwort has 'leaves' fringed with half moons, and was once believed capable of opening locks and un-shoeing horses.

Possibly the first known official enactment requiring the destruction of a plant species is that by Henry II aimed at 'Guilde Weed' or Corn Marigold. In his 'Book of Husbandry' of 1523, John Fitzherbert includes this species in his black list of plants which 'doe much harme'. Shades of Ragwort today! Ragwort is also known as Staggerwort, because it was thought, mistakenly, to be 'a certaine remedie to help the Staggers in horses'. It has been used medicinally to treat rheumatism, sciatica, gout and ulcerated mouths and throats. However, it is highly poisonous to cattle, being 'responsible for half the cases of stock poisoning in Britain' (MAFF), as a result of which it is a notifiable weed, so that it is an offence to let it grow. Sheep apparently relish it and can eat it with impunity. It has various impolite names such as Stinking Willie and Mare's fart. It was also sometimes called St. John's-wort, as it blooms round about St. John's day, July 25th. It had an unprecedented 'explosion' in population this year. Near the M4 service station on Burghfield Road and along the road to Theale, there were literally acres in bloom in a dense mass. Most of this has now been sprayed and killed. We also saw it along miles of roadside in the New Forest. It is the food plant for the caterpillars of the attractive Cinnabar Moth, which can destroy it in great quantities. Plant and moth have frequent cycles of synchronised increase and decline.

Looking through some of the Notes produced by the Ministry of Agriculture in the early years of the century, it was interesting to see what weeds were troubling farmers then. Note 180, dated 1907, talks about the losses in crops such as Clover and Lucerne due to parasitism by Dodders: 'where dodder is found infesting a crop, however small the patch, steps should at once be taken to destroy it'. In 1909, Note 226 says that although of less economic importance, Broomrapes are especially troublesome on warm, dry, light soils, and may be the cause of much loss in clover crops.

Pheasant's Eye, an introduced species, was formerly found in chalky cornfields. It was nowhere common, but in the 18th century it was found in sufficient numbers to be cut and sold in Covent Garden market under the rather strange name of 'Red Morocco'. Today it is rare and almost extinct.

The beautiful Pasque Flower blooms around Easter time, whence its name from 'Paschal', meaning 'of Easter'. It has never been very common, and mainly inhabited undisturbed chalk grasslands, particularly round antiquarian sites. John Clare said that around Helpston in Northamptonshire it 'did grow in great plenty'. It is now a rare and very local flower.

In contrast to these declining species, Gerard in 1597 said that Rose Bay 'Groweth in Yorkshire in a place called Hooke'. Even in 1904, Bentham and Hooker described it as 'widely distributed but uncommon', but now according to Stace it is 'throughout the British Isles, and often abundant'.

And how about this? Who can guess what plant is described here? 'As the plant is injurious to most animals and man, it should be destroyed in fields. The symptoms of poisoning are want of appetite, abdominal pain, cold sweats, quickened respiration, feeble pulse, and sundry other unsavoury things. Sleepiness and collapse follow, and death usually occurs in about three days'. The culprit? Meadow Saffron or Naked Ladies, *Colchicum autumnale*. Beware Naked Ladies, they are dangerous!

Publications of the Reading Natural History Society, 1900-1999

An Editorial Review of the past one hundred years

It is fortunate that as a starting point for a review of publications of the Society since 1900 there is 'THE FLOWERING PLANTS, FERNS &c. OF THE COUNTRY ROUND READING' dated September of that year. It ran to 73 pages and listed 736 species.

After the Publisher's Preface there is a paragraph that reads:

THE READING NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Exists especially to promote the study of the Natural History of its own district. It holds meetings during the winter months, at which papers on the various branches of Natural History are read, the first gathering of the season, however, usually being a Specimen Meeting, at which members are expected to exhibit anything of interest connected especially with the previous summer's field work. During the summer Field Meetings are arranged, permission being frequently obtained from landowners to visit private grounds. There is a small Library for the use of members. The annual subscription is 2s. 6d. All nature lovers are welcomed to its membership, and the older members are always glad to render assistance to those taking up the study of any fresh branch of Natural History. The President (Dr. Stansfield, 120, Oxford Road), the Hon. Secretary (Mr. F.W. Leslie, F.L.S., Market Place Chambers), or any of the members will be glad to receive the names of applicants for membership for proposal.

It is gratifying to note that the aims of the Society have not changed for at least a century and of interest that the subscription in terms of relative earnings has actually decreased. The British Catalogue of Plants was used for the compilation of the species listed but the authors regretted that much of the list had been completed before the appearance of a new edition of the Catalogue, in which there were many alterations. A not unfamiliar story and no doubt one that will continue into the next century!

There were many records of interest, amongst them one for the Monkey Orchid, found only at what is probably its present site and another for the Soldier Orchid at Streatley.

The next publication was 'Qvaestiones Natvrales' of 1933. At that time the subscription of 5 shillings was being intentionally kept low to attract new members.

In it was a review of the Society from its foundation in 1881 to the year of publication. This said that most of the early records had been lost but the names of leading members were given with their

particular fields of interest. Dr. J. Stevens, the first President, was the first honorary Curator of the Reading Museum. The first outing was to Theale to visit the 'rabbity' of the Rev. V.H. Moyle, a member who specialised in the breeding and rearing of rabbits.

The publication included articles on Geology, Animal and Plant Ecology and Phenology with notes on local trees, orchids, pond life, butterflies and moths, and the weather.

In the Orchid article there was a page devoted to *Epipogon. E. aphyllum*, called the 'Leafless or Banana-scented Orchid' (now the Ghost Orchid). Specimens taken to the Reading Museum for identification were preserved in spirit. The Military Orchid was found growing in a Reading garden in May 1932.

Volume I, Number 1 of The Reading Naturalist appeared in 1949. There was an article by Miss B.M. Jones on the Oxford Ragwort and Reports on Geology, Botany, Entomology and Ornithology. The rest of the issue was devoted to Pamber Forest with articles on its Geology, Bird, Insect and Plant life. On the cover was a representation of a forest scene, no doubt in reference to the principal content of the publication. A note on the back cover reads 'This small edition was printed privately at the University of Reading'.

Volume 1, Number 2 incorporated 'A key to four hundred common mushrooms and toadstools' by Dr. F.B. Hora. Of the 76 pages, 57 were devoted to fungi. On the remaining pages were four articles and Reports on Botany, Geology and Ornithology. The issue was printed commercially and the cost caused the Society some financial anxiety. An appropriate illustration for the cover featured the Chanterelle mushroom.

Mr. P.A. Betts designed the blocks for the covers of the first and second issues. For the third and for all succeeding issues the cover has featured Herb Paris, a species found at Bix, a site regularly visited by the Society. This block was also the work of Mr. Betts; his contribution to The Naturalist is indeed on-going and will last as long as it continues to be published!

TURNER BROTHERS' LOCAL SERIES, No. 5.

A LIST
OF THE
Flowering Plants, Ferns, &c.
OF THE
COUNTRY ROUND READING,
WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY SKETCH,
COMPILED BY MEMBERS OF THE
Reading Natural History Society.

READING
TURNER BROTHERS, 26 28, CROSS STREET

THE READING NATURALIST
VOLUME I NUMBER 2
CONTAINING
**A FIELD KEY
TO FOUR HUNDRED
COMMON MUSHROOMS
AND TOADSTOOLS**
BY
F. B. HORA



Published by the
READING AND DISTRICT
Natural History Society
1950

Title page from the 1900 publication of the
Reading Natural History Society (x 0.75)

Cover of the 1950 publication of the
Reading and District Natural History Society (x 0.7)

Because of the high cost of printing the next issue, Volume 1, Number 3, was produced by a process of copying. The size was changed to quarto and then in 1973 to A4, though the wrap-around cover was slightly larger but in 1994 this also was reduced to the A4 size. At first reproduction was by duplicator but after 1991 photocopying was used. It must not be forgotten that however good the content, unless a copy of *The Naturalist* reaches every member the point of the exercise is lost, and here it must be recorded that without the untiring work of Shirley Townend in the days of the use of a duplicator that aim would not have been realised.

For Number 4, the 1952 issue, 'Volume 1' was not printed on the cover. It has not reappeared since, so presumably the present issue is still a part of Volume 1!

The content of *The Naturalist* has always been for the year or season before the year shown on the cover. So although the year 2000 appears on the cover of this issue, some of the contents are for the season 1998-1999, while the *Recorders' Reports* and *Weather Records* are for the calendar year 1999.

The *Recorders' Reports* have been and continue to be a most important part of *The Naturalist* and from the very first issue there were Reports for Botany and Entomology. A Report on Ornithology began with the first issue but ceased in 1965 in which year Reports for Vertebrates were introduced, and these have continued to the present day. The reports for Fungi began in 1979, though there had been several lists of fungi in previous issues. A few Reports for Geology appeared in the earlier issues but ceased in 1964. In 1993 Reports on Invertebrates other than Insects appeared for the first time. Throughout the years there have always been enough members sending in observations to the *Recorders* to make the Reports a valuable record of species found locally. The weather at Reading has been the subject of a Report since 1950. The Meteorological Station and later Department of Meteorology at the University of Reading has provided the data and fortunately there has always been someone at the University willing to write the Report.

Notes on the Meetings and Excursions of the Society have been a part of *The Naturalist* since 1959 while the Presidential Address first appeared in 1961. A list of members was given in the years between 1959 and 1986, and then a note on Membership with the names of new members began in 1994.

A Preliminary List of Berkshire Micro-fungi, by Harold Owen, appeared as a Supplement to No. 12 in 1960, and in 1978 'DIPTERA OF THE READING AREA, compiled by H.H. Carter, Reading Museum and Art Gallery' was published as a Supplement to No. 30. This gave localities and habitat type and included 1542 species, about one quarter of those on the British list.

Over the years there have been almost 200 articles from contributors. The subjects have varied widely from the scientific through the instructive to members' experiences of natural history events. The Society membership is, of course, made up of those with a keen interest in natural history though some members have, as well, a considerable knowledge and experience of the various scientific disciplines that cover the field of natural history. It is a good thing that there is a mix in the subjects of articles to cater for the levels of involvement of all our members.

There have been many distinguished contributors over the years, most have been the authors of the scientific articles but certainly the most distinguished was Prince Philip with an introductory message to the Centenary Year issue.

Many members could be mentioned who have given their time and energies to the Society's publications but the list would be too long to name them all. Without their efforts the Society would not be in its present flourishing state. However looking back over the years it is worth naming the "over 20's". Brian Baker was Entomological Recorder for 45 years and twice President, Betty Newman has 37 years as Botanical Recorder and Hugh Carter 35 years as Recorder for Vertebrates. He has also been President and was responsible for the list of Diptera, and an Index to the first 41 issues, that appeared in 1989. Alan Brickstock has been Recorder for Fungi for 22 years and twice President. The record for long-time Editor goes to Enid Nelmes who first undertook the task in 1953 and continued until 1978 though with a break from 1966 to 1969, her two terms making in all a total of 22 years.

Until 1990 the text was prepared on a standard typewriter. In 1991 Michael Fletcher was first to prepare the text of *The Naturalist* using a word processor. This continued when Frances Cook was Editor and it has made my task much easier. I think it has enabled the publication to take on a more professional appearance and I am sure that it will continue to improve in the 21st. Century.

The Pang Valley and Kennet Valley Countryside Projects

Russell Ashfield

In the late eighties and early nineties the upper reaches of the River Pang were dry. This was due primarily to the abstraction of 13.5 million litres of water per day from a borehole at Compton. The local Parish Councils formed a pressure group called the Pang Valley Conservation Trust. In April 1992, after intensive lobbying, Thames Water PLC agreed to reduce water abstraction to 5 million litres per day. The next summer water returned to the river. Following the success the Trust turned their attention to improving the land alongside the river and throughout the valley, and so the Pang Valley Countryside Project (PVCP) was created.

With support from the local authorities, statutory agencies and local parishes, funding was secured for three years to employ a full time Project officer from 1993.

Working with The John Simonds Trust based at Rushall Manor Farm, Bradfield, it quickly became evident that in addition to the role of the Project Officer advising landowners on wildlife and landscape improvements to their land, there was a need for an Education Officer to organise and lead school visits. Additional funding was sought and an Education Officer was employed in 1994.

At the end of the initial three-year period an assessment of how successful the Project had been was made. It was deemed so successful that all the funders agreed to an additional three years funding to continue its work and to extend the area to take in four new parishes. In addition, they provided more funding to start a new Project in the neighbouring valley, namely the Kennet Valley Countryside Project (KVCP). As the area was more than double that of the PVCP, funding was secured to employ two more officers.

This situation still holds true today, with two Projects employing three Project Officers, one for the Pang and two for the Kennet, and an Education Officer for the Pang.

The work of the Projects

The aims of the Projects are roughly the same, and can be simplified as:

Habitat management concerned with landscape, wildlife and archaeological features and ways by which the environment may be improved by responsible farming.

Educating the public, especially children, to appreciate country issues and to obtain enjoyment from the countryside.

Habitat management

The Projects have been involved in many aspects of habitat and landscape management work, some of which are described in detail below.

Hedgerow work

During the sixties and seventies there was a great demand from the Government for farmers to produce as much food as possible. With the increased advances in technology, farm machinery got bigger and the need for hedgerows separating small fields decreased. The government even paid farmers to remove their hedges. Now all this has changed. The Government now provides limited grant aid to help farmers restore their farms to their former glory. Farmers are so keen to carry out this type of work that the grant scheme is over subscribed every year by about one third, and this figure is rising.

Our help with hedgerows includes all aspects of restoration, including coppicing, gapping up, planting and laying. In the three years of the PVCP over 1.3km of hedgerow were laid and nearly 7.0km of new hedgerow planted. The effect this work has on both the wildlife of the valleys and the landscape aspect of this area of natural beauty (AONB) is already being witnessed. Our work also involves advice on hedgerow management, and this is just as important as planting new hedges. For example, hawthorn will only flower and fruit on year-old wood, so it is vital that hedges are not cut every year if they are to produce nectar and berries for insects and birds.

Woodlands

Major areas of the Pang and Kennet Valleys are woodland. Primarily this is hazel coppice with oak standards. The problem with most of this woodland is that it is derelict, most of the woods last being worked during the last war. As hazel is usually cut on an eight-year cycle, this has produced lots of large poor quality hazel. Also because none of the standards have been cut, the woods are dark. The Projects have been advising landowners on restoration of these woodlands, which basically involves re-coppicing the hazel, re-planting or layering where there are gaps, and felling some of the standards to allow sufficient light in for the coppice stools to grow.

Two problems were quickly encountered.

The lack of a market for the poor quality timber produced in the initial stages of restoration.

Deer, which eat off all the coppice re-growth.

Firstly, the market problem was addressed. There are three places to sell poor quality timber – pulp, firewood and charcoal. The pulp market often does not pay enough to make it viable to get the timber out of the wood. The firewood market is the same and involves a lot of processing work. There wasn't a charcoal maker in the area. The Project Officer began setting up a charcoal business. Two men were interested and started Pang Valley Charcoal in 1995, taking the poor quality timber and converting it to charcoal. This business has steadily grown and now in 1999 is completely independent of the Projects, except for us helping them to source timber. They now buy in over 150 tonnes of timber a year, which makes about 20 – 30 tonnes of charcoal, all of which is sold.

Secondly the problem of deer. Deer numbers have rocketed in the last decade, and are now causing huge problems in woodlands and gardens throughout the country. The main culprit is the Muntjac deer, which can breed throughout the year. One way of dealing with the problem is to fence the wood. This is extremely expensive though and simply forces the deer elsewhere. The only way to address the problem of deer effectively is to control them by stalking. Whilst some farms and estates do this, many don't, so the Project looked at ways to help. The Forestry Commission's Deer Initiative was designed to help set up local groups. Thus, the Pang Valley Deer Management Group was formed. Its main aim is not to cull every deer, but to get numbers to a manageable and sustainable level. It is currently co-ordinating woodland owners and stalkers, establishing which woods are stalked and which aren't, so that most woods in the valley can have some control in them. So, even where no woodland management is taking place, the deer do not pose a problem for neighbouring woodland owners who are (or want to start) carrying out management.

The Rivers

The River Pang was the initial catalyst behind the PVCP, and as such this and the River Kennet play a major part in our advisory work. Whilst both the Pang and the Kennet are chalk streams, they are quite different. The Kennet is designated as a SSSI, at least as far downstream as Woolhampton, due to its floristic diversity. It has the highest average number of species per site surveyed of any other lowland river in Britain. The river also supports a vast array of invertebrates, birds and a varied and mixed healthy fishery. The other factor on the Kennet is the influence of the Kennet and Avon Canal, as in many places the canal and the river have the same channel.

Both the Pang and the Kennet suffer from low flows. This brings with it an added problem. When the water is only flowing slowly any silt in it falls out of suspension and onto the riverbed. For a healthy fishery (and river), it is vital to have fast flowing water and a clean gravel riverbed, in which the trout can breed. One major area of river work the Projects have been involved with is fencing of the riverbanks. If livestock are allowed to tread down the banks this puts more soil into the river creating a heavier silt load and a wide pool in the river, which slows down the flow causing a siltation problem. By fencing the river this is prevented and it also allows the bank side vegetation to establish, so creating nesting areas for birds, safe refuges for fish, nectar sources for insects and benefits for many other species of wildlife. In a study on the River Piddle in Dorset, the Game Conservancy found that by simply fencing the river banks they had a 14 times increase in the number of wild brown trout in the river.

In addition to this work we have been carrying out other work along the river. This includes creating artificial otter holts to encourage the spread of the otter, building bat hibernaculums under bridges over the river and in pillboxes beside the river, and re-pollarding many riverside willow pollards that were decaying and falling apart through lack of management.

Other habitat and landscape work

Other important habitat work, which the Projects have carried out, includes:

Creation of over 50km of arable field margins

The planting of over 2000 landscape trees

Management of over 359 hectares of grassland without the use of chemicals

Restoration of over ten ponds

Planting of 24 hectares of new woodland

Management of two SSSI reedbeds

Management of over four hectares of heathland

Education

The education work in the two valleys operates differently. In the PVCP a full time Education Officer organises and leads school visits to various sites in the valley. The children study a wide range of topics including farming, rivers, pond dipping and woodland management. Last year over 6500 children attended educational visits, coming from as far afield as Slough, Oxford, Bristol and Winchester.

The KVCP is involved in organising workshops that go into the schools to discuss various issues. These include "The Salmon's Tale" which is run in conjunction with the Watermill Theatre and the Environment Agency. It looks at water usage, pollution and its effect on the environment. "Legging it on the Kennet" is run in conjunction with Learning Through Action and looks at the history and wildlife of the canal, including a barge trip on the canal itself.

We mustn't forget the adults though! Both Projects are involved in a wide range of guided walks, illustrated talks and training events, which are becoming increasingly popular. These cover topics such as flyfishing, barn owls, charcoal making, bats, hedgelaying and composting. This side of the work reaches a much wider audience than the pure conservationists, and is really beginning to emphasise the support in the valleys from all sectors of the community.

Conclusion

The local community is at the heart of both Projects. With the cooperation and help of the farming community in particular, the work of the Projects is really beginning to bear fruit on the ground. In summary, the two Projects have now secured over £1 million worth of grant aid. This is being spent directly on wildlife and landscape improvement work in the two valleys.

Editor's Note

I must thank Russell for this article following his talk to the Society on January 14th. It was well illustrated with slides showing all aspects of the work undertaken by the Projects.

I hope he will forgive me for mentioning the Rushall Manor Farm barn. It was the venue for a combined Society and BBONT meeting in June. This magnificent timber framed structure has been expertly restored and thatched and makes an ideal centre for the educational activities described.

I was one of a party who attended a pond-dipping event organised by the PVCP in June. It was entitled "The underwater life", and was led by Michael Hardy, who is well known to members of the Society. He took us to the River Pang just to the south of the Barn. We found Caddis-fly larvae in plenty, Sticklebacks and Bullheads, also called Miller's Thumb. A fish leech was attached to the head of one of the Bullheads.

Earlier in the day we had seen two large parties of school children returning from their pond dipping experience. It was clear that all had thoroughly enjoyed their day out, even if some had been obviously partially immersed during their studies!

This lecture was given to the Society on 28th. January 1999. I am most grateful to Dr. Morris for permission to precis his talk, from notes made at the time and from extracts from 'The Dormouse', Paul Bright & Pat Morris, The Mammal Society 1992.

Dormice

Dr. Pat Morris

The hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) is one of the most distinctive small mammals to be found in Britain. It is now scarce and in this lecture I will give an account of the factors which have brought about its decline.

The fat or edible dormouse (*Glis glis*) is a much larger animal, which was introduced to England in 1902 near Tring. It is fairly common in that area today. Since it is a bad-tempered animal, unlike our native species, I will say no more about it.

The Hazel or Common Dormouse is a docile animal, which has been declining over the past hundred years. It is elusive, small, nocturnal and tree living. It can be distinguished from other 'mice' by its sandy pelage, thick fluffy tail and big black eyes. It is about 70mm long with a tail of similar length. Normal body weights are around 17g, though before hibernation they may rise to as much as 40g. Juveniles are about half the size of adults.

Its presence may be detected by nests similar in appearance to that of a wren but with no obvious entrance, situated in brambles and other low-growing shrubs and by searching for characteristically gnawed hazel nut shells. These have a neat round hole with tooth marks running along the cut face, which is otherwise very smooth. This is quite different to marks on shells which bank voles and woodmice have opened with tooth marks running across the cut edge, while squirrels crack shells in half or into jagged pieces.

Because it is elusive, knowledge of its distribution is incomplete. It has probably never been numerous in this country. A Mammal Society survey published in the early 1980's showed a scattered distribution in southern England from Cornwall to Kent and in the Welsh borders. It is very scarce in the north and east and does not occur in Scotland. It is protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act and was given priority status in 1996.

It has been found that dormice will enter both bird and bat nest boxes. Those that have been specially designed for them have an entrance hole of 30mm turned to face a tree trunk with a spacing bar above and below to allow the animals to get in and out.

In the 1980's Doug Woods began setting up nest boxes for dormice in Somerset. It was found that the population density could be doubled by their use. Over the years nest boxes have enabled much information to be obtained about daily life and breeding habits. Such knowledge has made it possible to plan suitable conservation programmes for the species. Some 6000 nest boxes are in place at present.

There are on average four young in a litter and communal families are not unusual. There is one litter per annum, usually born after June. The young stay at least one month in the nest, being fully-grown in about six to eight weeks. Individuals are marked by clipping their fur and it has been found that pair bonds are established. The maximum life span is at least five years.

Dormice spend about three-quarters of their lifetime asleep. With the onset of cold weather in October they leave the trees and live in nests at ground level where they hibernate for over five months. Their body temperature falls to that of their surroundings and heart and breathing rates slow down by 90% or more. They need little energy to stay alive and this energy comes from fat reserves accumulated before hibernation begins. At this time they are vulnerable to disturbance by cattle and pigs and their woodland habitat should be fenced to keep out these animals. Hibernating dormice may be eaten by pheasants.

As well as winter hibernation dormice can also be found stone cold and torpid in the summer months. If food is in short supply or if the weather is unsuitable for food gathering, animals may enter torpor to conserve energy. This delays the onset of the breeding season. When torpid they may take twenty minutes to wake up fully and hence are very much at risk from predators.

It is not easy to monitor the movement of dormice though they can be radio-tagged. It has been found that females normally range within 38m from the nest while males may range as far as 50m. Longer

movements are infrequent but possible. But it must be borne in mind that the dormouse lives in a three dimensional habitat and may be anywhere between ground level and the tops of trees 10m high. To follow them in woodland and to plot their position in relation to a grid is thus by no means an easy task!

The dormouse has no caecum, as ruminants do, and so cannot digest cellulose. It is a specialist feeder, concentrating on high-grade nutritious foods such as hazel nuts, hawthorn flower anthers, sycamore pollen, ash keys and blackberries as well as insect larvae. There are a number of weak links in the feeding chain and late flowering honeysuckle is of importance. In mid-July, a difficult period, there are numbers of caterpillars on hazel leaves. Coppice woodland is valuable in this respect. Woodland interspersed with areas of open grassland, with trees giving dense shade or with tall and spindly trees do not make suitable habitats for dormice.

An ideal habitat should have a physical structure allowing the animals to move easily through the upper branches of the trees with easy access to the lower levels. There should be a wide diversity of these tree and shrub species. An open understorey should contain species that provide a source of food throughout the non-hibernating season. Active coppice management of hazel was traditionally practiced in parts of England, although a five-year rotation does not produce nuts. A 10 to 15 year rotation that does allow the production of nuts should be followed.

The best habitat is ancient woodland with an area of at least 50 acres and relatively few woods nowadays are as big as this. In smaller woods the density of population is insufficient to maintain a viable colony. This also applies to other species and the fragmentation of woodland that has occurred in recent years is one factor that has led to the decline in numbers of several species including the dormouse. It is important to retain hedges and other links between small woods, otherwise local extinction of dormice is likely.

Climate has a profound influence on the dormouse population. Harsh winters are good for dormice as their fat reserves last better than in mild winters when warm spells may interrupt their hibernation. Summers with long hours of bright sunshine to warm the leaves, ripen fruit and provide abundant insect life are good.

Warm and wet westerly weather patterns are bad for dormice. Spells of warm weather that lead to the early first flowering of plants affect onset of the breeding season. A mild autumn with no frost until late in the year affects the onset of hibernation. In the hundred years from 1860 to 1960 there have been five times when there have been three years in a row giving weather patterns which have been unfavourable to the breeding and survival rates of dormice.

There is a policy of reintroduction of native species when this would lead to their conservation. It should be within former natural habitats and range and require minimal long-term management. A reintroduction scheme needs careful planning and a long-term commitment with sufficient funding to set up a programme of monitoring. It is essential that the best possible knowledge of all aspects of the life cycle of the species should be investigated before beginning a reintroduction project.

English Nature has made funds available for the Dormouse Recovery Programme where there is coordination with Royal Holloway College. Dormice may be bred in captivity or caught from the wild, especially from sites affected by development. Animals bred in captivity may well take longer to settle in a new site than wild-caught ones and animals released late in the season may well survive better than ones released early unless the latter are given supplementary food. Several sites have been selected and the success of the projects is being monitored.

To sum up it is probable that the factors that have led to the decline in the number of dormice have been the loss of suitable habitats, the fragmentation of those habitats and low reproduction rates because they are on the north west limit of their distribution in Europe.

Editor's Note

The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust have done much with their dormouse conservation plan. They have put up over 1000 nest boxes and co-ordinated several nut hunts to determine which reserves have dormice. Radio collars have been fitted to animals in the Warburg Reserve and their movements have been followed. The introduction of animals from the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to a BBONT Reserve in Buckinghamshire in 1998 was very successful with their breeding in the first year. As well as the Warburg Reserve, there are probably dormice on the Baynes and Bowdown Reserves. Both reserves are regularly visited by our Society.

On the Verge of Success

John and Margaret Notton

During May 1999, there were long delays before the Council mowing men gave their expected attention to the grass verges and amenity areas throughout the Borough. Normally, this would not have been a great concern for us personally as we routinely do our own maintenance on the length of verge outside our property. However, our apathy was broken on Sunday, 23rd. May as we walked along Kidmore End Road past the Reading Golf Course clubhouse. Arising through the tall grass on the verge there were spikes of an unusual plant. Further searching found more spikes including some actually growing through the tarmac of the pavement nearby, making altogether a total of seven. Although we were reasonably certain that these were one of our native orchid or helleborine species it was not possible to make a definite identification.

On the following day, we notified Mark Hillier at the Caversham Environmental Centre of our find. He expressed great interest, as he had no previous records for orchids in that area. He encouraged us to try to protect the plants against mowing and directed us to contact Adrian Lawson at the Civic Centre. Adrian too was very interested, promised to visit the site as soon as possible and also asked us to do our best to protect the plants. He promised to issue immediate instructions to the mowing crews who he knew were scheduled to mow in the area either that day or within a day or two.

With the aid of stakes and some chicken wire we built suitable small area enclosures for the spikes growing in the grass, affixing labels asking for them not to be removed, and giving Adrian's name as authority. Not unexpectedly, our activities attracted some immediate attention from local inhabitants. One neighbour whose property overlooked the site offered to keep a watch when possible, and to let us know in the event of any disturbance. Fortunately, throughout the whole period of development and flowering of the plants there was no disturbance at all. The enclosures created a great deal of interest for many casual passers by, with several of whom we had useful conversations later on.

The mowers came and went, and the growth of the plants inside their enclosure proceeded tantalisingly slowly. Two of the spikes became afflicted with some large black aphids. By the time we were able to deal with these, using some methylated spirit, they had done sufficient damage to prevent them flowering. As time went on, more spikes were noticed in the grass, bringing the eventual total to nine or ten. By the middle of June flower buds were visible, and photographs of the first fully opened flower spikes were taken on 5th. July. Many of the spikes which were still viable eventually produced at least a few flowers, but the best blooms were those on the spikes growing through the tarmac, which may have had more moisture available at their roots. It was now possible to make a fairly certain identification of the plant as the Broad-leaved Helleborine, *Epipactis helleborine*. Although our commonest helleborine, its occurrence in the particular situation is still worthy of comment. The plants were not as big as the description in our book suggested (1), nor were the flowers as colourful, being white with only tinges of green. Both of these factors could possibly be attributed to the poverty of the site. The appearance of several spikes simultaneously, possibly from the same rootstock, with no prior record is, however, a reasonable characteristic of the species. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that the plant has been appearing unobserved, more often, if not every year. Perhaps it reaches the green root stage before being mowed off. The flowers did not seem to be visited by insects likely to pollinate them at any time while we were observing them, and none eventually set seed.

While the flowers were available, we attempted to make some inquiries about possible past local sightings. We contacted some present and past residents who had known the area for many years, several of whom remembered the undeveloped green fields, but without any success. Roy Brown, the Secretary of Reading Golf Club, kindly allowed us access to the golf course to make a quick survey. No orchids were found, though most of the ground inside the fence by the verge is now a car park.

In the future, with Council help, it is hoped that some more formal protection can be given to the site to prevent routine mowing. In any case, we shall hope to monitor the site ourselves each year to get more information about these plants and their survival.

Finally, we would like to thank all those mentioned above by name who have directly helped and encouraged us with this project, and also those who we have pestered at various times for information. We would like to make a plea to all R&DNHS members to keep a watchful eye on the verges, grassy spaces and urban hedgerows in their own areas. There is much more of interest in there than we all suspect. Anything we are fortunate enough to find will need immediate help to maintain it for the future.

Reference: (1) Orchids of Northern Europe. Sven Nilsson. Penguin Nature Guides. 1979.

THE RECORDER'S REPORT FOR BOTANY 1999

B.M. Newman

A large number of records was received this year with more members than usual contributing. The records represent a wide geographical area and include species from over forty families. Many plants flowered early in 1999, Cow Parsley was seen in full flower in January. At the end of a century it is interesting to compare the trend in current records with those of thirty years ago. Today many more records come from Nature Reserves. This is encouraging and shows increasing interest in our wildlife. Many of the remainder of the records come from churchyard walls, beside railways, and on the salty verges of motorways where maritime plants are spreading inland. There is still plenty to interest plant observers of the future.

From the EQUISETOPSIDA onward the selection of records printed below is arranged according to the "List of Vascular Plants of the British Isles" by DH Kent 1992. Where a family name has changed the older name is shown in brackets after the current name. An alien taxon is indicated by an asterisk (*). English names are mainly from "English Names of Wild Flowers" by Dony, Jury and Perring 1986. Alternative English names in common use are also given.

CHLOROPHYCEAE Green Algae

Volvox aureus

Bomb Dump, BBONT reserve, in pond around bases of emergent plants, 2.4.99 (MWS).

MUSCI Mosses

Calliergon cuspidatum (Hedw.) Kindb.

Upper Bucklebury, fertile, around garden pond, 43 Berry's Road.

A common species, but unusual to see it in fruit, 28.3.99 (MWS).

Rhytidiadelphus loreus (Hedw.) Warnst.

Bucklebury Lower Common, driveway opposite entrance to dog kennels, a patch 5m x 3m 7.3.99. {This species is believed to be a hanging basket throw-out in this part of England. The first patch, originally found by Sean O'Leary, 10 metres further south on the opposite side of the road, has persisted for several years}. (MWS).

Tetraphis pellucida Hedw.

Pamber Heath, fruiting abundantly by the path along W edge of Lords Wood. 13.3.99.

A very common species, but very unusual to see it in fruit. (MWS).

EQUISETOPSIDA Horsetails

EQUISETACEAE Horsetail family

Equisetum telmateia Ehrh. Great Horsetail

Fox & Hounds, Theale, 3.6.99 (AB).

PTEROPSIDA Ferns

OPHIOGLOSSACEAE Adder's-tongue family

Ophioglossum vulgatum L. Adder's-tongue

Crowsley Park and Forest, 4.9.99 (AB).

ASPENIACEAE Spleenwort family

Asplenium adiantum-nigrum L.

Black Spleenwort

On churchyard wall, Holy Trinity, Henley-on-Thames, (LC).

Ceterach officinarum Willd. Rusryback

A329, on parapet of railway bridge, 16.5.99 (MWS).

DRYOPTERIDACEAE Buckler-fern family

Polystichum setiferum

(Forsskal) T. Moore ex Woyнар

Soft Shield-fern

Nuney Green, 29.4.99 (J&JW).

Dryopteris carthusiana (Villars) H.P.Fuchs

Narrow Buckler-fern

Benyons Enclosure, in marshy woodland beside a stream, 30.5.99 (MWS).

BLECHNACEAE Hard Fern family

Blechnum spicant (L) Roth Hard Fern

Tadley and Browninghill Green, 16.6.99 (AB).

MAGNOLIOPSIDA Flowering Plants

RANUNCULACEAE Buttercup family

Hellborus foetidus L. Stinking Hellebore

Tomb Farm, woodland along driveway, 8.4.99 (MWS); Sulham, 13.5.99 (AB).

Helleborus viridis L. Green Hellebore

White Hill, near footpath junction, four clumps in hedge at side of path, 8.4.99 (MWS).

PAPAVERACEAE Poppy family

Papaver rhoeas L. Common Poppy

Abundant by the new Newbury by-pass between SW of Newbury and Chieveley (HJMB).

FAGACEAE Beech family

**Quercus rubra* L. Red Oak
Moor Copse, 27.5.99; Crowsley Park and Forest, 4.9.99 (AB).

CHENOPODIACEAE Goosefoot family

**Atriplex hortensis* L. Garden Orache
Near Steventon, by A34, (HJMB).

PORTULACACEAE Blinks family

**Claytonia perfoliata* Donn ex Willd.
Springbeauty
Abundant under the trees, St Michael and All Angels churchyard, Sandhurst. Localised and abundant under trees in St Michaels churchyard, Sunninghill, (LC).

Montia fontana L. Blinks
Bramshill Plantation, 5.5.99 (C&RG).

CARYOPHYLLACEAE Pink family

Spergula arvensis L. Corn Spurrey
On bare sandy ground on NW corner of Pamber Forest, 6.8.99 (KHG).

CLUSIACEAE St John's-wort family

Hypericum humifusum L.
Trailing St John's-wort
Crowsley Park and Forest, 4.9.99 (AB).

DROSERACEAE Sundew family

Drosera rotundifolia L.
Round-leaved Sundew
Silchester Common, a dense patch in a boggy hollow where the plant has not been noted in recent years, 6.8.99 (BRB).

Drosera intermedia Hayne
Oblong-leaved Sundew, Long-leaved Sundew
One or two plants among the above mentioned patch of *D. rotundifolia* (BRB). It was recorded on Silchester Common in 1963 when it was said to be an old record. (BMN).

VIOLACEAE Violet family

Viola tricolor L. Wild Pansy, Heartsease
Shinfield and Three-mile Cross, 18.8.99 (AB).

BRASSICACEAE (CRUCIFERAE)

Cabbage family

**Erysimum cheiranthoides* L.
Treacle Mustard
Corner of Pepper Lane and Wilderness Road after building disturbance, 4.4.99 (C&RG).

**Hesperis matronalis* L.
Dame's-violet, Sweet Rocket
Fox and Hounds, Theale, 3.6.99 (AB).

Cochlearia danica L. Danish Scurvygrass
Abundant by the A4 between Chieveley and Steventon, but not seen on the new Newbury by-pass between Chieveley and Newbury. It is a maritime plant which spreads along salt-treated roads inland, (HJMB).

Cardamine pratensis L.
Cuckooflower, Lady's Smock
In mown grass, Sonning Common, 10.5.99 (C&RG).

**Coronopus didymus* (L.) Smith
Lesser Swine-cress
Fox and Hounds, Theale, 3.6.99 (AB).

RESEDACEAE Mignonette family

Reseda luteola L. Weld, Dyer's Rocket
Occasional by the new Newbury by-pass between SW of Newbury and Chieveley (HJMB); Shinfield and Three-mile Cross, 18.8.99 (AB).

CRASSULACEAE Stonecrop family

**Sedum sexangulare* L.
Tasteless Stonecrop, Insipid Stonecrop
In dry mown turf edges by private road against S facing wall in grounds of Townlands Hospital, Henley, Oxon. A few flowers were seen in June. This plant is rarely grown, or offered by nurserymen, but according to Stace it is naturalised in scattered localities in England and Wales, (MVF).

Sedum album L. White Stonecrop
Flourishing colony near roadside at E entry to Hundred Acre Piece, Mortimer West End, 21.7.99 (KHG).

ROSACEAE Rose family

Agrimonia procera Wallr.
Fragrant Agrimony
Bomb Dump, BBONT Reserve, in rough grassland by turnoff to pond, (MWS).

Rosa rubiginosa L. Sweet Briar
Hartslock, 20.5.99; the Holies, 12.6.99 (AB).

**Prunus lusitanica* L. Portugal Laurel
Crowsley Park and Forest, 4.9.99 (AB).

Sorbus torminalis L. Crantz.
Wild Service-tree
Sonning Common, 30.4.99 (J&JW).

FABACEAE (LEGUMINOSAE) Pea family

**Galega officinalis* L. Goat's-rue
By M4 bridge, opposite the Black Boy public house, Shinfield, 6.6.99 (C&RG).

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Lathyrus nissolia L. Grass Vetchling
About 100 plants by track, Bramshill Plantation,
10.06.99. Not recorded for this area in "Flora of
Hampshire" 1996 (C&RG).

***Melilotus altissima** Thuill. Tall Melilot
Occasional by the new Newbury by-pass
between SW of Newbury and Chieveley,
(HJMB).

Trifolium micranthum Viv. Slender Trefoil
On the north side of the church, St Michael and
All Angels, Sandhurst, (LC).

Trifolium subterraneum L.
Subterranean Clover
Upper Bucklebury, three plants growing in
roadside verge, Berry's Road 26.5.99 (MWS).

Lupinus x regalis Bergmans Russell Lupin
Bramshill Plantation, 13.06.99 (C&RG).

Ulex minor Roth
Dwarf Gorse, Lesser Gorse
Sulham, 13.5.99 (AB).
Recorded here in 1960, (BMN).

EUPHORBIACEAE Spurge family

***Mercurialis annua** L. Annual Mercury
Earley Station, 08.07.99 (C&RG).

ACERACEAE Maple family

***Acer saccharinum** L. Silver Maple
Crossley Park, with **Viscum album** L, 15.04.99
(J&JW).

GERANIACEAE Crane's-bill family

Geranium rotundifolium L.
Round-leaved Crane's-bill
Churchyard, Holy Trinity, Henley-on-Thames,
(LC).

Geranium pusillum L.
Small-flowered Crane's-bill
Churchyard, Holy Trinity, Henley-on-Thames,
(LC).
Cutbush Lane, Shinfield, 6.6.99 (C&RG).

BALSAMINACEAE Balsam family

***Impatiens glandulifera** Royle
Indian Balsam, Himalayan Balsam
Charvil Country Park and river Loddon, 21.4.99
(AB).

APIACEAE (UMBELLIFERAE) Carrot family

Anthriscus sylvestris (L.) Hoffm.
Cow parsley
In full flower, Wilderness Road, 27.1.99
(C&RG).

Smyrniolus olusatrum L. Alexanders
Bradfield Plantation, roadsides through
woodland, 3.5.99 (MWS).

Sison amomum L. Stone Parsley
Sturdy specimens to 1.7m. near N lakeside of
Hosehill Lake Nature Reserve, Theale 5.8.99
(KHG).

GENTIANACEAE Gentian family

Gentianella germanica x G. amarella
= **G x pampplinii** (Druce) E. Warb.
Holies Down SSSI, in line with W side of inner
fence but further down the hill, 29.8.99 (MWS)

Gentianella amarella x G. anglica
Holies Down SSSI, fenced area, ten plants near
metal stake, just west of top enclosure, mostly
just coming into flower, 13.6.99 (MWS).

SOLANACEAE Nightshade family

Atropa belladonna L. Deadly Nightshade
The Holies 17.6.99; Swyncombe and Ewelme
21.8.99 (AB). Royal Berks. Hospital car park,
Addington Road, growing below fence on S
boundary of car park, with flowers and fruit
13.9.99 (MWS).

MENYANTHACEAE Bogbean family

Nymphoides peltata Kuntze
Fringed Water-lily
Fox and Hounds, Theale, 3.6.99 (AB); fine
colony in lake by Moatlands Cottages,
Burghfield, 5.9.99 (KHG).

LAMIACEAE (LABIATAE)

Deadnettle family

Nepeta cataria L. Cat-mint
Swyncombe and Ewelme 21.8.99 (AB).

Clinopodium ascendens (Jordan) Samp.
Common Calamint
Ufton Nerve churchyard wall, 22.9.99 (C&RG).

Salvia verbenaca L.
Guernsey Clary, Wild Clary
Single plant by Kennet and Avon canal near
Sheffield Bottom picnic site, 5.9.99 (KHG).

PLANTAGINACEAE Plantain family

Plantago coronopus L. Buck's-horn Plantain
Corner of Wilderness Road and Hartsbourne
Road, 9.7.99 (C&RG).

SCROPHULARIACEAE Figwort family

***Cymbalaria muralis**
P. Gaertner, Meyer & Scherb.
Ivy-leaved Toadflax
Wall by Mill House, Swallowfield, 27.4.99
Uncommon in this area (C&RG).

Linaria repens (L.) Miller Pale Toadflax
Swyncombe and Ewelme, 21.8.99 (AB).

Veronica scutellata L. Marsh Speedwell
On bare ground in channel to small round pond,
Hundred Acre Piece, Mortimer West End,
21.7.99 (KHG).

Veronica agrestis L. Green Field-speedwell
Churchyard, Kintbury St Mary, (LC).

Parentucellia viscosa (L.) Caruel
Yellow Bartsia
Two large stands of several hundred plants,
Bramshill Plantation, 13.6.99. Not refound at
location reported in Reading Naturalist No.47.
(C&RG).

OROBANCHACEAE Broomrape family

****Lathraea clandestina*** L. Purple Toothwort
Bradfield, on root of large willow. Accidentally
introduced into the garden, probably from the
old Rectory at Tidmarsh, 29.5.99 (MWS).

Orobanche elatior Sutton
Knapweed Broomrape
Ham Hill Reserve 25.7.99 (AB).

CAPRIFOLIACEAE Honeysuckle family

****Leycesteria formosa*** Wallich
Himalayan Honeysuckle
Old Copse, Sonning Common, spreading,
6.4.99 (J&JW).

VALERIANACEAE Valerian family

Valerianella locusta (L.) Laterr.
Common Cornsalad, Lamb's Lettuce
On a monument, Holy Trinity Church, Henley-
on-Thames, (LC); Beech Lane, Earley, near
Chelwood Road, 25.4.99 (C&RG).

ASTERACEAE (COMPOSITAE) Daisy family

Picris echiodes L. Bristly Oxtongue
Swyncombe and Ewelme, 21.8.99 (AB).

Cicerbita macrophylla (Willd.) Wallr.
Blue Sow-thistle
Naturalised in shady places in St Mary's
Churchyard, Langley Marsh, Slough (LC).

Matricaria recutita L. Scented Mayweed
Abundant by the new Newbury by-pass between
SW of Newbury and Chieveley (HJMB).

****Senecio squilidus*** L. Oxford Ragwort
Abundant by the A34 between Chieveley and
Steventon (HJMB).

Senecio viscosus L. Sticky Groundsel
Plentiful by railside near Cholsey Station, its
spread along railways is similar to that of *S.*
squalidus L. about 100 years earlier, 19.8.99
(KHG).

Tussilago farfara L. Colt's-foot
Fine colonies at many places around waterside
at Hosehill Lake Nature Reserve, Theale,
16.3.99 (KHG).

Petasites hybridus
(L.) P.Gaertner, Meyer & Scherb.
Butterbur
River Loddon by Swallowfield Mill, 27.4.99
(C&RG).

Bidens tripartita L. Trifid Bur-marigold
Many plants fringing waterside of lake near
Burghfield Farm, 5.9.99 (KHG).

HYDROCHARITACEAE Frogbit family

Stratiotes aloides L. Water-soldier
Hillfoot, pond by the Pound, presumably
planted, 17.7.99 (MWS).

CYPERACEAE Sedge family

Carex vesicaria L. Bladder-sedge
Fence Wood, on mud at edge of pond, 22.6.99
(MWS).

Carex caryophylla Latour Spring-sedge
Crowsley Park, 15.4.99 (J&JW).

POACEAE (GRAMINAE) Grass family

****Sasa palmata*** (Burb.) Camus
Broad-leaved Bamboo
Bowdown BBONT Reserve, head of valley F,
21.9.98. This is the large bamboo at Bowdown
as you enter the site from the Bomb Dump
(MWS).

****Pseudosasa japonica***
(Siebold & Zucc. ex Steudal) Makimo ex Nakai
Arrow Bamboo
Bowdown BBONT Reserve, head of valley C,
3.2.99. This is a small group of bamboo at the
top of the middle valley, near the old concrete
pond. It seems less invasive than *Sasa*
palmata (MWS).

Catapodium rigidum (L.) C.E.Hubb.
Fern-grass
Holies Down SSSI on ants' nest in fenced area,
13.6.99 (MWS).

Avena fatua L. Wild-oat
Occasional by the new Newbury by-pass
between SW of Newbury and Chieveley
(HJMB).

Bromopsis ramosa (Hudson) Holub.
Hairy-brome
Swyncombe and Ewelme, 21.8.99 (AB).

Hordeum distichum L. Two-rowed Barley
Occasional by the new Newbury by-pass
between SW of Newbury and Chieveley
(HJMB).

SPARGANIACEAE Bur-reed family

Sparganium erectum L. Branched Bur-reed
Fringing lake by Moatlands Cottages,
Burghfield, 5.9.99 (KHG).

TYPHACEAE Bulrush family

Typha latifolia x *Typha angustifolia*
= *T x glauca* Godron

Hillfoot, pond by the Pound, two flower heads,
pollen mostly collapsed on one side, 17.7.99
The hybrid is often overlooked as Lesser
Reedmace. True Lesser Reedmace has a
larger gap between male and female flower
heads, fertile pollen and other microscopic
differences, (MWS).

LILIACEAE Lily family

Polygonatum multiflorum (L.) All.

Solomon's-seal
Rushall Farm, 28.4.99; Tadley and Browninghill
Green, 16.6.99 (AB).

Ornithogalum angustifolium Boreau

Star-of-Bethlehem
Frilsham, River Pang and St Frideswide,
19.5.99 (AB).

Allium ursinum L. Ramsons

Nuney Green, 29.4.99; Sonning Common,
30.4.99 (J&JW).

**Nectaroscordum siculum* (Ucria) Lindley

Honey Garlic
Bear Wood, Stoke Row, 2.4.99 (J&JW).

Narcissus pseudonarcissus L. Wild Daffodil

Crowsley Park Woods, 3.4.99 (J&JW).

Ruscus aculeatus L. Butcher's-broom

Charvil Country Park, 21.4.99; Sulham, 13.5.99
(AB).

IRIDACEAE Iris family

**Iris orientalis* Miller Turkish Iris

Two patches near East Ilsley, (HJMB).

Iris foetidissima L.

Stinking Iris, Roast-beef Plant, Gladdon
Swyncombe and Ewelme, 21.8.99 (AB).

ORCHIDACEAE Orchid family

Epipactis purpurata Sm.

Violet Helleborine
A fine colony of about 20 plants, in an area
approx. 50 sq. m., Church Wood, Swyncombe,
25.7.99 (KHG).

Orchis mascula (L.) L. Early-purple Orchid

Gutteridge Wood, 80 flowers and c. 93
vegetative rosettes, 29.4.99 (J&JW)

CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks are due to the following contributors;

Brian Baker (BRB), Humphry Bowen (HJMB), Alan Brickstock (AB), Linda Carter (LC), Michael Fletcher (MVF), Colin and Renee Grayer (C&RG), Ken Grinstead (KHG), Malcolm Storey (MWS) and Jerry and Janet Welsh (J&JW).

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THE RECORDER'S REPORT FOR FUNGI 1999.

Alan Brickstock

1999 was another year when fungi were slow to start appearing, September and the first part of October providing poor foraging. Things then picked up a lot, and there were some excellent forays, although some locations remained poor. It seems that many areas, as well as ours, had some sites that were very good, and some which remained poor. Why this should be so is not clear.

A number of species showed a similar unpredictability. The false *Chanterelle*, *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca*, normally one of the most numerous of species in any Pine wood, was absent until quite late on, and it was late November before a few specimens appeared. In contrast, the usually fairly uncommon *Baeospora myosura*, which grows on Pine cones, was found in great numbers on several forays. The 'Earpick Fungus', *Auriscalpium vulgare*, was also unusually common. At Sulham, a large fallen Elm log was covered in the beautiful fruiting bodies of *Rhodotus palmatus*, and there were also four species of *Cortinarius* which used to appear regularly here some years ago, but of which there have been very few in the last few years. There were also two large rings of *Lepista irina*, a very uncommon species having a strong perfumed smell, like Irises.

The Bolete, *Tylopilus felleus*, which I had seen only rarely in the last few years, was found on both the morning and the afternoon foray sites at Wokefield; in Pamber Forest; and at the Bramshill Police College. Malcolm Storey also found it at Burnt Hill, and comments that he had not seen it for a few years.

We were fortunate in having no less than three BMS forays in our area, at the Warburg Reserve, Basildon Park and Sulham, the last one in conjunction with RFG. With two top experts, Nick Legon and Alick Henrici, present on all of these, it was no surprise that large numbers of species were recorded. Lists made 'on the day' included no less than 250 species at Basildon Park, and an amazing 270 species at Sulham. Subsequent review and revision have put the current totals at 278 for Basildon Park and 314 for Sulham. Nick Legon considered this to be one of the best sites that he had ever been to.

Without these three forays, and the annual BMS foray at Virginia Water, the total number of species for the year was, rather surprisingly, exactly the same as last year, at 375. With the incomplete lists for the four BMS forays added in, the total jumped to 550. Having the right people at the right time and place is all!

I must again thank the numerous people who have identified species, particularly Paul Cook, John Wheeley, Henry Beker, Alick Henrici and Nick Legon and several others. Most of the citations have been given as either RFG, for Reading Fungus Group forays, or BMS for British Mycological Society forays, since it is impossible to pick out the identifiers of individual species. Without them the list would be short!

The list below is a very arbitrary personal selection.

GILL FUNGI

Amanita echinocephala (Vitt.)Quél.

Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)

Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)

Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)

Amanita gemmata (Fr.)Bertillon

Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)

Amanita virosa (Fr.)Bertillon

College Wood, 22.8.99 (RFG)

Armillaria tabescens (Scop.:Fr.)Emel.

Several sites at Bucklebury Lower Common, 18.9.99 (MWS); Several clumps of this come up every year at Chapel Row (MWS)

Armillaria ostoyae Romagn.

Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)

Baeospora myosura (Fr.)Sing.

Common in numerous places this season.

Calocybe carnea (Bull.:Fr.) Kühn.

Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)

Calocybe ionides (Bull.)Donk.

Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)

Cantharellus cibarius Fr.

Found in numerous places this season.

- Clitocybe rivulosa*** (Pers.:Fr.)Kummer
Sulham, 23.1.99 (RFG)
- Conocybe pygmaeoaffinis*** (Fr.)Kühn.
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)
- Coprinus niveus*** (Pers.:Fr.)Fr.
Greenham Common, 30.9.99 (MWS)
These specimens were a beautiful milky coffee colour, rather than the usual pure white.
- Cortinarius amoenolens*** Henry:Orton
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)
- Cortinarius anthracinus*** (Fr.)Fr.
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)
- Cortinarius armillatus*** (Fr.)Fr.
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)
- Cortinarius auroturbinatus*** (Secr.)Lange
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
- Cortinarius calochorus*** (Pers.)Fr.
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)
- Cortinarius croceo-caeruleus*** (Pers.:Fr.)Fr.
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)
- Cortinarius elatior*** Fr.
Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)
- Cortinarius sodagnitus*** Henry
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
- Cortinarius splendens*** Henry
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
- Entoloma bloxamii*** (Berk. & Br.)Sacc.
Greenham Common, 19.10.99 (MWS)
A Red Data Book species, the first rare fungus for the site!
- Gomphideus glutinosus*** (Schff.)Fr.
Wellington Country Park, 10.10.99 (RFG)
Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)
- Hohenbuehelia geogenia*** (De Cand.)Sing.
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
- Hygrocybe fornicata*** (Fr.)Sing.
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)
- Hygrocybe reai*** R.Mre.
Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)
- Inocybe godeyi*** Gill.
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)
- Inocybe hirtella*** Bres.
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)
- Lactarius acerrimus*** Britz.
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)
- Lactarius cemicarius*** (Batsch.)Gill.
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)
- Lactarius omphaliformis*** Romagn.
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)
- Lepiota aspera*** (Pers. in Hofm.:Fr.) Quél.
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
Warburg Reserve 24.10.99 (AB)
- Lepiota castanea*** Quél.
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)
- Lepiota echinacea*** Lge.
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)
- Lepiota perplexa*** Knudsen
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
- Lepista irina*** (Fr.)Bigelow
Heath Lake, 3.10.99 (AB)
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)
- Marasmius recubans*** Quél.
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)
- Marasmius undatus*** (Berk.)Fr.
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS); 24.10.99 (AB)
- Melanophyllum eyrei*** (Mass.)Sing.
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)
- Mycena crocata*** (Schrad.:Fr.)Kummer
Numerous in several locations.
- Mycena olida*** Bres.
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)
Heath Lake, 3.10.99 (AB)
- Mycena rorida*** (Scop.)Quél.
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)
Lousehill Copse, 22.9.99 (RFG)
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
- Mycena stipata*** Maas. & Schw'b.
Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)
- Panellus serotinus*** (Schrad.:Fr.) Kühn.
The Lookout, 14.11.99 (RFG)
Warburg Reserve, 24.10.99 (AB)
- Pholiota tuberculosa*** (Schiff.:Fr.)Kummer
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)
- Pluteus chrysophaeus*** (Schiff.:Fr.)Quél.
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)

Pluteus lutescens (Fr.)Breas.
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)

Pluteus phlebophorus (Ditm.)Kummer
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)

Pluteus thomsonii (Bk.&Br.)Dennis
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)

Psathyrella piluliformis (Bull.:Fr.)Orton
Lackmore Wood, 22.8.99 (RFG)
Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)

Rhodotus palmatus (Bul:Fr.) Maire
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)
Warburg Reserve, 24.10.99 (AB)

***Russula amara* (=caerulea)** Kucera
Heath Lake, 3.10.99 (AB)

Russula gracillima Schaef.
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)

Russula laurocerasi Melzer
Pamber, Gravelpit Copse,
26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)

Russula lutea (Huds.:Fr.)S.F.Gray
Wellington Country Park, 10.10.99 (RFG)

Strobilurus esculentus (Wulf.)Sing.
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)

Tricholoma acerbum (Bull:Fr.)Quél.
Wellington Country Park, 22.10.99 (AB/D)

Tricholoma bufonium (Pers.)Gill.
California Country Park, 31.10.99 (AB)

Tubaria conspersa (Pers:Fr.)Fayod
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)

BOLETI

Boletus albidus Roques
Several sites in Bucklebury area (MWS)

Boletus impolitus Fr.
Upper Bucklebury, 4.9.99 (CS)
Not seen here for a few years.

Boletus lanatus Fr.
Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)

Tylopilus felleus (Bull:Fr.)Karst
Wokefield Common, 19.9.99 (RFG)
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)
Bramshill Police College, 13.9.99 (AB/BB)
Burnt Hill, 4.9.99 (MWS)

APHYLLOPHORALES

Auriscalpium vulgare S.F.Gray
'Earpick Fungus' Present in great numbers in
several locations.

Ceriporiopsis gilvescens (Bres.)Dom
Sulham, 23.1.99 (RFG)
Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)

Gloeoporus (Ceriporiopsis) pannocinctus
(Romell)Erikss.
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)

Cerrena unicolor (Fr.)Murr.
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)

Creolophus cirrhatus (Pers:Fr.)Karst.
Sulham, 23.1.99 (RFG)

Ganoderma pfeifferi Bres:Pat.
Sulham, 23.1.99 (RFG)

Ischnoderma benzoinum (Wahl:Fr.)Karst.
Warburg Reserve, 16.10.99 (BMS)

Junghunia nitida (Chaetoporus euporus)
(Pers.:Fr.)Ryv.
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)

Leptosporomyces fuscostratus
(Burt)Hjortstam
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)

Peniophora rufomarginata (Pers.)Litsch.
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)

Phellinus contiguus (Fr.)Pat.
Beenham Hatch, 25.2.99 (MWS)
On underside of wooden well cover.
Kew has only a few records of this, mostly on
window frames and thatch.

Phellinus ribis (Schum:Fr.)Karst.
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)

Phlebiella pseudotsugae (Burt)K.H.Larss.
Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)

Postia tephroleuca (Fr.)Jul.
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)

Pulcherricium caeruleum (Fr.)Parm.
Sulham, 23.1.99 (RFG)
A bright blue resupinate growing on fallen ash
twigs.

Subulicystidium longisporum (Pat.)Parm.
Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)

Trechispora microspora (Karst.)Liberta
Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)

Trechispora nivea

Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)
Possibly first British record

Tomentellastrum fuscocinereum

Basildon Park, on soil on fruit bodies of
Sebacina epigea, 9.10.99 (BMS).
Very rare species.

***Typhula spathulata* (Peck)Berthier**

Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)

GASTEROMYCETES

***Hymenogaster tener* Berk. & Br.**

Lousehill Copse, 22.9.99 (RFG)

HETEROBASIDIOMYCETES

***Femsjonia pezizaeformis* (Lév.)Kar.**

Pamber Forest, 26.9.99 (RFG/Hants.)

ASCOMYCETES

***Biscognauxia nummularia* (Bull.)Kuntze**

Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)

***Chaenotheca ferruginea* (Turner:Ach.)Mig.**

Padworth Common, 30.5.99 (AB)

Chaetosphaerella phaeostroma

(Durieu & Mont.)E.Muller & C.Booth
Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)
Basildon Park, 9.10.99 (BMS)
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)

Chromocrea aureoviridis

(Plowr. & Cooke)Petch
Sulham, 23.10.99 (BMS)

***Geoglossum cookeianum* Nannf.**

Wellington Country Park, 10.10.99 (RFG)
Virginia Water, 30.10.99 (BMS)

***Helvella crispa* Fr.**

Numerous in several locations.

Lachnellula occidentalis

(Hahn & Ayres)Dharne
Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)
The Alders, 18.12.99 (MWS)

***Lasiosphaeria ovina* (Fr.)Ces. & de Not.**

Bramshill Police College, 13.9.99 (AB/BB)
Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Brickstock (AB), Barrie Bristow (BB), British Mycological Society Forays (BMS), Gordon Crutchfield (GC), Neville and Mary Diserens (D), Hants. Fungus Group (Hants.), Alick Henrici (AH), Nick Legon (NL), Reading Fungus Group Forays (RFG), Christine Storey (CS), Malcolm Storey (MWS).

***Leotia lubrica* Pers.**

Wellington Country Park, 10.10.99 (RFG)

***Mitruia paludosa* Fr.**

Warburg Reserve, 24.10.99 (AB)

***Otidea alutacea* (Pers.)Massee**

California Country Park, 31.10.99 (AB)

***Otidea onotica* (Pers.)Fuckel**

Numerous in several locations.

MILDEWS

***Erysiphe thesii* Junell**

Hartslock, 10.7.99 (MWS)
On Bastard Toadflax, a new host record.
Known from this site for several years, but this
is a first British record.

MYXOMYCETES

***Leocarpus fragilis* (Dickson)Rostafinski**

Bramshill Police College, 13.9.99 (AB/BB)
HeathLake, 3.10.99, (AB)

RUSTS

***Phragmidium fragariae* DC**

Barren Strawberry rust
Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)

Puccinia caricina* var. *ribesii-pendulae

(Hasler) D.M. Hend.
On Nettle, Warburg Reserve 18.4.99
(AH/NL/AB)

***Tranzschelia anemones* (Pers.)Nannf.**

Makes Wood Anemone leaves tall and thin.
Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)

***Uromyces ficariae* (Alb. & Schw.)Lév.**

Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)
On Lesser Celandine

***Uromyces muscari* (Duby)Graves**

Bluebell rust
Warburg Reserve, 18.4.99 (AH/NL/AB)

LICHENS

***Cladonia foliacea* (Huds.)Wild.**

Greenham Common, 19.10.99 (MWS)
An unusual record for Berkshire

THE RECORDER'S REPORT FOR ENTOMOLOGY 1999

David G. Notton

Curator of Natural History, Reading Museum and Archive Service

The order and nomenclature used is that given in the standard Royal Entomological Society checklists supplemented by Bradley and Fletcher (1979). Records presented are selected and edited for brevity; full details of all records submitted and some voucher specimens are available for examination on application to the Recorder at the address above. It is encouraged that voucher specimens are retained for critical species

EPHEMEROPTERA

Ephemera lineata Eaton A mayfly
Hartslock Reserve, very common, 10.12.99 (MCH).

ODONATA

Aeshna grandis (L.) Brown Hawker
Lake nr Burghfield Farm and lake by Moatlands Cottages, Burghfield, 5.9.99 (KHG).

Anax imperator Leach Emperor Dragonfly
Lake nr Burghfield Farm and lake by Moatlands Cottages, Burghfield, 5.9.99 (KHG).

ORTHOPTERA

Metrioptera roeselii (Hagenbach)
Roesel's bush cricket
Hartslock Reserve, 10.7.99 (MCH).
Holy Brook nr Coley Farm, 2.10.99; Hemdean Bottom, 10.10.99 (DGN).
Pamber Forest, 20.8.99; Sheffield Bottom Picnic Site, 27.8.99; Moor Copse Reserve, 27.8.99 (BRB).
This insect has spread dramatically in recent years, for example, Marshall & Haes (1988) give the Maidenhead area as the most westerly known site in the Thames Valley (BRB). Male crickets can be located by their distinctive call, likened to the sound of an electrical discharge.

Conocephalus discolor (Thunberg)
Long-winged cone-head
Holy Brook nr Coley Farm, 2.10.99 (DGN).
Whitley industrial estate; Clayfield Copse, fallow fields with long grass; Hemdean Bottom, rough grassland, 10.10.99 (DGN).

Conocephalus dorsalis (Latreille)
Short-winged cone-head
Heath End, Baughurst, 3.9.99 (KHG).

LEPIDOPTERA

Synanthedon formicaeformis (Esper)
Red-tipped Clearwing
Edgbarrow Hill, Little Sandhurst, a female netted among heather flowers on dry heathland, identified by MCH, 1.8.99 (MWS).
An unlikely habitat as this moth breeds in willows in damp woodland, however, there are damp wooded areas nearby (MCH).

Bembecia scopigera (Scopoli)
Six-belted Clearwing
The Holies, 25.7.98 (CMR).
The Holies, 8.8.98 (MCH).
Hartslock Reserve, 10.7.99 (MWS).

Pancalia leuwenhoekella L. A micro-moth
Hartslock Reserve, very common, 10.7.99 (MCH).

Thisanotia chrysonuchella Scopoli
A pyralid moth
Lardon Chase, 30.5.98; Moulsoford Downs SSSI, 11.6.99 (MCH).
The only Berkshire records are from a small area of the Berkshire Downs, where it has been known since 1904 (Baker 1994).

Microstega hyalinalis Hubner
A pyralid moth
Hartslock Reserve, 10.7.99 (MCH).

Mecyna flavalis flaviculalis Caradja
A pyralid moth
Hartslock Reserve, very common this year, 10.7.99 (MCH).

Alipsa angustella Hubner A pyralid moth
Ashampstead Common, 19.6.98;
Hartslock Reserve, 21.9.98 (MCH).
Found around hedgerows and scrub where the caterpillars feed on Spindle berries (*Euonymus europaeus*).

Argynnis paphia (L.) Silver-washed Fritillary
Pamber Forest, 26.7.99. Form *valezina*, a dusky green form of this normally brown butterfly. This particular individual, the first noted from this locality since 1973, was observed laying eggs on the trunk of a Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), (BRB).

Melanargia galathea L. Marbled White
Emmer Green, 18.7.99 (JHFN).
Records of this species are particularly welcome for inclusion in the forthcoming Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Reading Borough.

Scotopteryx bipunctaria cretata (Prout)
Chalk Carpet
Hartslock Reserve, 10.7.99 (MCH).

Cepphis advenaria (Hubner) Little Thorn
Wildmoor Heath, found among Bilberry, (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) 24.5.98 (MCH).

Stauropus fagi L. Lobster Moth
Emmer Green, 2.7.99 (JHFN).

Eilema sororcula (Hufnagel)
Orange Footman
Ashampstead Common, 19.6.98; 2.8.98;
Upper Basildon, two larvae on Beech trunks, (*Fagus sylvatica*) 1.5.99 (MCH).
The caterpillar feeds on algae and lichens, usually in mature woodland.

Agrotis cinerea (D. & S.)
Light Feathered Rustic
Hartslock Reserve, 28.5.99 (Ms. E. Goodliffe, per MCH).

Agrotis clavis Hufnagel Heart and Club
Emmer Green, 1999 (JHFN).
Behavioural observations showed that the larvae of this species can incorporate organic matter into the soil and may contribute to soil fertility (Notton, J. 1999).

Xestia c-nigrum L.
Setaceous Hebrew Character
Emmer Green, 1999 (JHFN).
Larvae of this species may also incorporate organic matter into the soil (Notton, J. 1999).

Cerastis leucographa (D. & S.)
White-marked
Upper Basildon, 20.3.98 (MCH).

COLEOPTERA

Cicindela campestris L.
Green Tiger Beetle
Bomb Dump Reserve, sunny bank near pond, in good numbers, 2.4.99 (MWS).

Harpalus ardosiacus Lutschnik
A ground beetle
The Holies, at mercury vapour lamp, 8.8.98;
Cholsey Marsh, at mercury vapour lamp, 30.8.98 (MCH). Usually found in dry habitats such as chalk downland, but seems to disperse at night (MCH).

Harpalus dimidiatus (Rossi) A ground beetle
The Holies, found after dark near an area of chalk which had been scraped bare, 2.5.1997 (MCH).
This scarce beetle is believed to need bare, disturbed ground, with sun-baked soil (MCH).

Panagaeus bipustulatus (F.)
A ground beetle
Aston Upton Down, at base of Fumitory (*Fumaria* sp.), 20.6.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).

Cryptopleurum crenatum (Kugelann)
A hydrophilid beetle
Hurley Chalk Pit, Hurley, in moss, chalk pit, 17.1.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Hypopycna rufula (Erichson) A rove beetle
Great Wood, Skirmett, under Beech bark, 25.10.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Neobisnius villosulus (Stephens)
A rove beetle
Sonning, sandy mud by river, 13.5.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).

Gnypeta velata (Erichson) A rove beetle
Sonning, sandy mud by river, 13.5.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).

Atheta parvula (Mannerheim) A rove beetle
Hitchcops Pit nr Tubney, dog faeces, sand pit, 27.4.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Pachnida nigella (Erichson) A rove beetle
Nr Stanford Dingley, nr Bucklebury, on dead Bulrush leaves (*Typha latifolia*), 8.1.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).

Oxypoda vittata Märkel A rove beetle
Great Wood nr Skirmett, swept, 25.10.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).

Thiasophila angulata (Erichson)
A rove beetle
Englemere Pond nr Ascot, *Formica rufa* nest, 30.6.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).

Agrilus sinuatus Olivier A click beetle
Windsor Forest, Pickelherring, beaten from Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), 3.9.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).

- Ampedus elongatulus*** F. A click beetle
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, on oak log,
15.5.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).
- Procræus tibialis*** Boisduval & Lacrodaire
A click beetle
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, resting on
Beech, 15.5.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Epiphanis cornutus*** Eschscholtz
A eucnemid beetle
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, on oak log,
20.7.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).
- Rhagonycha lutea*** (Müller) A soldier beetle
Hartslock Reserve, 31.5.99 (MCH).
- Malthinus balteatus*** Suffrian
A soldier beetle
Hartslock Reserve, July 99 (CMR).
- Lyctus brunneus*** (Stephens) A lyctid beetle
Earley, inside house, 10.8.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Lymexylon navale*** (L.) A lymexyloid beetle
Windsor Forest, Cranbourne Chase, females
swarming over logs, 20.7.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Lathridius consimilis*** Mannerheim
A lathridiid beetle
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, on oak log,
30.6.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).
- Corticaria alleni*** Johnson A lathridiid beetle
Windsor Forest, Cranbourne Chase, red rotten
oak wood, 25.8.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Teredus cylindricus*** (Olivier)
A colydiid beetle
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, on Beech
tree at night, 7.8.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Mycetochara humeralis*** (F.)
A darkling beetle
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, on Beech
log, 29.5.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).
- Pyrochroa coccinea*** (L.)
Black-headed Cardinal Beetle
Hartslock Reserve, 9.5.99 (CMR).
- Hallomenus binotatus*** (Quensel)
A melandryid beetle
Windsor Forest, Cranbourne Chase, inside
rotten conifer log, 28.8.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Abdera biflexuosa*** (Curtis)
A melandryid beetle
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, beaten from
Oak, 7.8.98, (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Phloiotrya vaudoueri*** Mulsant
A melandryid beetle
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, under oak
bark, 30.6.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Tomoxia biguttata*** (Gyllenhal)
A mordellid beetle
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, on Oak log,
20.7.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).
- Oncomera femorata*** (F.)
A thick-legged flower beetle
Hartslock Reserve, 4.4.99 (MCH).
- Mesosa nebulosa*** (F.) A longhorn beetle
Hartslock Reserve, Malaise trap, May 99,
(CMR).
- Phytoecia cylindrica*** (L.) A longhorn beetle
Hartslock Reserve, 25.4.99 (CMR).
- Apion cruentatum*** Walton A weevil
Eddington Marsh nr Hungerford, swept, river
meadow, 5.6.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Apion curtisi*** Stephens A weevil
Eddington Marsh nr Hungerford, swept, river
meadow, 5.6.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Apion cerdo*** Gerstaecker A weevil
Windsor Forest, Pickleherring, beaten from
oak, 20.8.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Euophryum rufum*** (Broun) A weevil
Windsor Forest, High Standinghill, on oak log,
28.8.98 (TDH). No previous record (HHC).
- Ceutorhynchus depressicollis*** (Gyllenhal)
A weevil
Aston Upthorpe Downs, at base of Fumitory
(*Fumaria* sp.), 20.6.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Ceutorhynchus mixtus*** Mulsant & Rey
A weevil
Aston Upthorpe Downs, at base of Fumitory
(*Fumaria* sp.), 20.6.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).
- Ceutorhynchus turbatus*** Schultze A weevil
Nr Cholsey, swept from Hoary Cress (*Lepidium
draba*), by river, 31.5.98 (TDH).
No previous record (HHC).

HYMENOPTERA

Perithous albicinctus (Gravenhorst)

An ichneumon wasp

Upper Basildon, a female emerging from an old cherry stump, 25.7.97 (MCH).

Only recently recorded from Britain by Brock and Shaw (1997).

Rhyssa persuasoria (L.) Persuasive Burglar Emmer Green, 20.8.99 (JHFN).

Hockeria bifasciata Walker A chalcid wasp
Reading, reared from a microlepidopteran pupa found on a peach imported from Italy, wasp emerged 1.7.99 (JHFN/DGN).

Platygaster subuliformis (Kieffer)

A parasitic wasp

Emmer Green, 25.6.-1.7.95, on *Brassica* sp. flower head, (DGN).

New to Britain, this is an important parasite of the brassica pod midge *Dasineura brassicae*, a pest of oilseed rape and other brassica seed crops (Murchie *et al.* 1999).

Chrysogona gracillima (Förster)

A cuckoo wasp

Hartslock Reserve, 11-13.7.99, identification confirmed by Mike Edwards, (CMR).

Apparently spreading across the UK in low numbers (CMR).

Cleptes nitidulus (F.) A cuckoo wasp

Hartslock Reserve, 26-29.5.99, identification confirmed by Mike Edwards (CMR).

Tiphia minuta Vander Linden Small Tiphia

Hartslock Reserve, 24-30.6.99 (CMR).

Priocnemis gracilis Haupt

A spider-hunting wasp

Hartslock Reserve, June 99 (CMR)

P. coriacea Dahlbom A spider-hunting wasp

Upper Basildon, 4.5.98, identification confirmed by Andy Davidson (MCH).

Formerly widespread in southern England, very few recent records (MCH).

Aporus unicolor Spinola

A spider-hunting wasp

Hartslock Reserve, July 99 (CMR). The host, *Atypus affinis*, the Purse Web spider, is very common at Hartslock (CMR).

Eumenes coarctatus Latreille

Heath Potter Wasp

Wildmoor Heath, 18.7.99 & 1.8.99 (MCH).

This brightly-marked wasp makes a pot-shaped nest from mud, attaching it to gorse or other vegetation.

Dolichovespula saxonica (F.) Saxon wasp
Moor Copse Reserve, 31.3.1997, identification confirmed by Mike Edwards; Snelsmore Common Country Park, 6.4.1997 (MCH).
First recorded in England in 1987, and has been expanding its range since (MCH).

Psenulus schencki (Tournier)

A solitary wasp

Hartslock Reserve, 13-17.6.99, identification confirmed Mike Edwards & Graham Collins (CMR).

Stigmus pendulus Panzer A solitary wasp
Ashampstead Common, 20.9.98, identification confirmed by Matt Smith and Mike Edwards (MCH).

Another recent arrival to Britain, first recorded in 1986 (MCH).

Andrena hattorfiana (F.) A solitary bee
Hartslock Reserve, 22.8.98 & 10.6.99 (MCH).

Andrena labiata F. Girdled Mining Bee

Upper Basildon, 6.6.99, identified by Matt Smith (MCH).

Usually visits Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamedrys*), but this specimen was visiting the large, yellow flowers of an unidentified cultivated plant (MCH).

Osmia bicolor (Schrank)

Two Coloured Mason Bee

Hartslock Reserve, 13-17.6.99 (CMR).

Lardon Chase, seeking out snail shells in which to build its nest, 1.5.99 (MCH).

Lasioglossum malachurus (Kirby)

A solitary bee

Upper Basildon, 13.4.98 (MCH).

Nomada fucata Panzer A nomad bee

Hartslock Reserve, 25.4.99 (CMR).

DIPTERA

Tipula helvola Loew A crane fly

Greenham Common, 27.6.98 (MCH).

The Holies, 8.8.98 (MCH and Dave White).

In Berkshire found at the edges of woodland, on chalk or heathy soils.

Tipula hortorum L. A crane fly

Warburg Reserve, mercury vapour lamp, 2.5.98 (MCH). Rare (MCH).

Rhagio strigosus (Meigen) A snipe fly

Hartslock Reserve, 13.6.99 (CMR).

Thyridanthrax fenestratus (Fallén)

Mottled bee fly

Wildmoor Heath, 18.7.99 (MCH)

Rediscovered in Berkshire after a gap of about 50 years by Matt Smith, when he found it at Wildmoor Heath in 1998. In 1999 two adults were seen flying across bare sand on dry heathland, with good numbers of the sand wasp, *Ammophila pubescens*, the probable host (MCH).

Asilus crabroniformis L. Hornet robber fly

Emmer Green, basking in sun on house wall, 7pm, 6.9.99 (DGN).

Machimus rusticus (Meigen) A robber fly

Hartslock Reserve, 10.7.99 (Peter Chandler per CMR).

Nephrocerus flavicornis Zetterstedt

A big-headed fly

Hartslock Reserve, 13-17.6.99 (CMR).

Chetostoma curvinerve Rondani A gall fly

Kingwood Common, 21.6.98 (MCH).

Kimbers, Maidenhead, July 98 (Dr B. Verdcourt per MCH).

May be expanding its range (Chandler 1998).

Oestrus ovis L. Sheep Nostril Fly

Hartslock Reserve, Malaise trap, 8-10.7.99 (CMR).

Trapped just after a flock of sheep had been moved onto the site (CMR). The female fly squirts first instar larvae into the nostrils of sheep, the larvae crawl into the frontal sinus where they feed for nine months until they are fully fed, when they drop out and pupate in the soil (Smith, 1989).

CONTRIBUTORS:

Thanks are due to Hugh Carter for comparing lists of Coleoptera against the Museum database and to the following members for their submissions:

Brian Baker (BRB), Hugh Carter (HHC), Ken Grinstead (KHG), Tom Harrison (TDH), Martin Harvey (MCH), David Notton (DGN), John Notton (JHFN), Chris Raper (CMR), Malcolm Storey (MWS)

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Hugh Carter has received only one record for **Invertebrates other than Insects** this year and that is not enough to warrant the inclusion of a Report for 1999.

For records in this group there are several Phyla to choose from, Annelida, Mollusca and Crustacea and from the Arthropoda, the Arachnida. Perhaps the animals in these Phyla are not the easiest to identify but there are some guide books available and the Society does have experts who would no doubt assist with identification if asked.

It is hoped that in future years the worms, snails and slugs, crayfish and spiders will be keenly observed, so that a better picture of their representation in the Reading area will be known.

The Editor

THE RECORDER'S REPORT FOR VERTEBRATES 1999

Hugh H. Carter

FISH

Cyprinus carpio (Linnaeus) Carp
Taken at South Hill Park (reported 21.11.99)
(EP).

Carassius carassius (Linnaeus)
Crucian Carp
Taken at South Hill Park (reported 21.11.99)
(EP).

Leuciscus cephalus (Linnaeus) Chub
None at Central Library this year.

Rutilus rutilus (Linnaeus) Roach
Taken at South Hill Park (reported 21.11.99)
(EP).

Leuciscus cephalus* and *Rutilus rutilus
100lb (45Kg) of these fish were netted in
Widmore Pond, Sonning Common. The larger
ones were taken to a pond at Aldershot. (TS).

Perca fluviatilis (Linnaeus) Perch
Taken at South Hill Park (reported 21.11.99)
(EP). A perch of 5lb 6oz (2.438Kg) caught at
the Cunning Man near Burghfield was close to
the British record (EP).

Tinca tinca (Linnaeus) Tench
Taken at South Hill Park (reported 21.11.99)
(EP).

Salmo salar Linnaeus Salmon
20,000 were released into the Kennet at
Reading (reported 26.3.99) (RC).

AMPHIBIANS

Rana temporaria Linnaeus Frog
Present in two garden ponds at Netherleigh,
Pangbourne (CF).

Bufo bufo (Linnaeus) Toad
One dead on road at Hardwick, 6.3.99; one
dead on road at Queensway, Caversham Park,
19.7.99 (HHC). Group of three males on
footpath, making their way towards water on
east side of Hosehill Lake Nature Reserve,
Theale, 16.3.99; Male and female in
amplexus, Thatcham Nature Reserve, 18.3.99
(KHG). Present in two ponds at Netherleigh,
Pangbourne (CF).
Total sightings about 10 (about 10 in 1998, 5
in 1997, 50 in 1996).

***Triturus* sp.** Newts
Present in two garden ponds at Netherleigh,
Pangbourne; a male dug up whilst weeding a
herbaceous border in September or October
(CF).

REPTILES

Anguis fragilis Linnaeus Slow Worm
One at Netherleigh, Pangbourne in June (CF).

Vipera berus Linnaeus Adder
A 'nest of vipers', six individuals sunning
themselves, three completely black with no 'V'
markings, Headley Gravel Pit Reserve,
17.03.99 (KHG); One on grassland at sewage
works, Sonning Common (JW).

MAMMALS

Erinaceus europaeus Linnaeus Hedgehog
One dead on road, Caversham Park, 15.5.99.
(HHC). One "asthmatic" in Caversham park
Village (EMC).
Total sightings 8 (8 in 1998, 27 in 1997, 15 in
1996, 8 in 1995).

Sorex araneus (Linnaeus) Common Shrew
One dead in Blackhouse Wood, 10.7.99 (MJC). One dead in Littlestead Lane, 15.10.99 (EMC).

Mustela putorius Linnaeus Polecat
One female, two juveniles at Ashampstead Common, 25.6.99 (JG).

Meles meles (Linnaeus) Badger
Female with three young and two juveniles all summer. Sett in waste ground 100 metres away from Netherleigh, occupants generally making use of gardens in this road (CF). CF hears that badgers are moving down from Bozedown to Westfield Lane in Whitchurch, and from Sulham Heights into Pangbourne itself. Some people are pleased – some not! A sett near Cane End, SU 675 800, fresh material on footpath, numerous entrances, 5.12.99 (JW).

Vulpes vulpes (Linnaeus) Fox
None reported this year.
Total sightings 1 in 1998, 10 in 1997, 1 in 1996.

Muntiacus reevesi Ogilby Muntjac
Slots measuring 52 x 27mm near former Coach and Horses, 15.2.99. Muntjac seen crossing Caversham Park Road, 26.2.99. Slots in lane parallel to Caversham Park Road, 3.3.99. Slots in field between Binfield Heath and Shiplake, 16.5.99. Slots on muddy corner of Foxhill Lane, 22.11.99 (HHC)
The odd one spasmodically at Pangbourne but with no damage – she hears they are often seen at Bere Court (CF).
Female suckling young in back garden, Sonning Common, May-June 99. (JW).
Total sightings about 12 (5 in 1998, 7 in 1997, 7 in 1997).

Dama dama (Linnaeus) Fallow Deer
Slots measuring 104 x 52mm near the former Coach and Horses are thought to be of this species, as are slots at Coppid Farm nearby, Binfield Heath, 31.10.99 (HHC).

Lepus capensis Pallas Hare
None reported this year.
Total sightings 4 in 1998, 7 in 1997, 6 in 1996.

My thanks are due to the following contributors:

Elizabeth Carter (EMC), Hugh Carter (HHC), Claire Frank (CF), Jill Greenaway (JG), Ken Grinstead (KHG), Dr. T. Southern (TS), Janet Welsh (JW).

Evening Post (EP), Reading Chronicle (RC).

Oryctolagus cuniculus (Linnaeus) Rabbit
One Caversham Park Primary School playing field, 23.1.99, one there, 6.2.99, one there, 11.7.00, two there, 24.7.99, one in glade leading to playing field, 21.3.99, five Kiln Road reservoir, 30.3.99, six there, 4.5.99, none later. 38 fields beside Peppard Road, 19.4.99, one juvenile there, 21.5.99, ten adults, three juveniles there, 8.6.99, two there, 21.7.99, three Clayfield Copse, 1.5.99, one Milestone Wood, 17.5.99, five Coppid Farm plantation, 10.9.99, one dead on road Binfield Heath Lane, 14.12.99 (HHC). After the plague, the crash. Total sightings 81 (861 in 1998, 324 in 1997, 193 in 1996, itself an increase on 1995).

Rattus norvegicus Berkenhout Brown Rat
One dead on road, Binfield Heath, 10.9.99. (5 in 1998).

Apodemus sylvaticus (Linnaeus)
Wood Mouse
One dead in Blackhouse Wood, 12.9.99; one dead at Holyrood Close, 14.11.99 (HHC).

Microtus agrestis (Linnaeus)
Short-tailed Vole
One dead on Queensway, Caversham park, 14.11.99 (HHC).

Sciurus carolinensis Gmelin Grey Squirrel
One Blackhouse Wood, 29.1.99, one there, 26.2.99, one there, 11.10.99, two there, 15.11.99, one Caversham Park Primary School playing field, 29.1.99, one there, 26.2.99, one Coppid Hall near Binfield Heath, 1.3.99, one St. Lawrence's churchyard, 23.3.99, one there, 17.6.99, one Forbury, 29.7.99, one Queensway (Caversham Park Village), 6.6.99, one on bird table, Uppingham Gardens, Caversham Park, 7.6.99, one Kiln Road, Caversham Park, 14.12.99 (HHC).
One Caversham Park, 1.3.99, one 10 Northbrook Road, Caversham Park, 21.5.99 (EMC).
Total sightings 17 (21 in 1998, 28 in 1997, 54 in 1996, 14 in 1995).

THE WEATHER AT READING DURING 1999

Ken Spiers

Department of Meteorology

University of Reading

Overall this year was an improvement on 1998. Temperatures were above average throughout, very sunny at times, especially during the second half, but it was very wet at times. One thing that didn't change was the winter season, which followed the same pattern as the previous year, warm and wet.

Once again temperatures were well above average. Ten of the months recorded values higher than their long-term averages, and only June and December were below. The year's mean temperature was only second to 1990, the highest on record and equal to the years 1997, 1995, 1989 and 1959. Because of the higher nighttime temperatures, the number of air frosts was the lowest since 1994.

Although a warm and sunny year, it was also very wet. August and December were the two wettest months and with January and September, it made it the wettest year since 1974 and the eleventh wettest since 1921. This year's rainfall statistics show that the number of rain and wet days were both the highest since 1979. The rainfall on the 9th. August was 52.6mm, the highest daily total since 1992.

There was a fair amount of sunshine recorded throughout the year, with this summer season a vast improvement on last year. The autumn season was also very sunny and with the number of days recording no sunshine the lowest since 1990, it made 1999 the sunniest since 1995.

January was very unsettled. Winds blew from a west to south-westerly direction, bringing warm, moist air over the British Isles. Nighttime temperatures remained high and the lowest number of ground frosts since 1990 were recorded. The overall mean temperature for the month was the highest since 1993 and the third highest since 1959. It was very wet throughout the month, with the number of days recording rain the highest since 1988. The wettest day, the 15th., with 21.6mm, had the highest daily reading for any January day since 1958. During a short cold spell between the 10th. and the 12th. snow fell, but was small in quantity. Although January was a lot sunnier than the previous month, it was still well below average, making it the third dullest in the last twenty years.

February was punctuated by two short cold spells, the first of which saw snow lying for two days running, a rare occurrence these days. Although the month was the coldest of the winter, the mean temperature was over a degree higher than the long-term average for the month. However, on the 14th. a minimum temperature of -4.2°C was recorded, the lowest for nearly two years. Although the first part of the month was very dry the last two weeks saw rain, mostly light, nearly every day. The total amount of rain for the month was only just over half of the monthly average and together with an abundance of sunshine, over 30% above average, February was very pleasantly Spring-like at times.

March opened very unsettled, cloudy with rain at times and very little in the way of sunshine. Most of the month's rain fell during this period, with very little recorded in the second half of the month. This produced a very dry March, the eighth driest since 1960. By the 14th. high pressure had moved in from the west and temperatures began to rise, with a maximum on the 17th. of 19.5°C , the highest for any day in March over the last ten years. Sunshine was also in abundance and there were a few days with long sunny periods, which brought the total for the month to around the expected average.

April started with high pressure centered over northern France, producing warm moist air from a southwesterly direction. A temperature of 20.5°C on the 1st. was the highest for any April Fools Day since before 1960. By the middle of the month high pressure was positioned to the west of the British Isles and this produced a more northerly flow over the country. It became quite cold with showers and longer periods of rain, some wintry at times, with the 13th. recording a snow shower in the afternoon. The cold snap was short lived and temperatures began to rise as high pressure re-established itself over the country. There were reasonable amounts of sunshine especially during the last week of the month, with the 28th. recording 13.7 hours, the highest amount for any April day since 1977.

May continued the fine, dry and warm weather that had established itself by the end of April. Temperatures remained above average for most of the month, especially nighttime temperatures, making the mean minimum for the month the highest since 1964. With the warmer nights the number of ground frosts were less than normal, the lowest since 1989. Most of the rain fell in the second and third week, the total for the month was about 10% below average. However, due to a string of dry May months, this May was the wettest since 1994. A very sunny start to the month was not sustained, with the number of sunless days the highest since 1994, which helped produce the dullest May since 1994.

June started very unsettled, with half the month's rainfall being recorded during this period. Hail was reported on the 7th., the first time in June since 1988. It wasn't until the second week that temperatures began to rise, but not above the average for any length of time. The mean temperature for June was the lowest since 1991. Throughout the month there was plenty of sunshine, with the total well over 200 hours, the first time it had been over this mark since May last year. The last week saw more unsettled weather, with more heavy rainfall. The total rainfall for the month was 50% above the month's average, with two days, 1st. and 28th., both recording daily totals of well over 20mm.

July was a glorious summer month, warm, dry for most of the time, and very sunny. Temperatures remained high throughout, with the mean the fifth highest since 1971. The month did not start off too well, when in the early hours of the 3rd., 42.5mm of rain fell in one and a half hours. The daily rainfall for the 2nd. was the highest for any day in July since before 1921; this boosted the monthly total to one of the highest for July since 1991. It was very sunny throughout the month, resulting in the sunniest July since 1989. Towards the end of the month it became very hot and thundery, with a maximum temperature of 30.2°C on the 31st., the highest maximum temperature recorded since August 1997.

August for the first few days the hot weather that was a feature of the end of July continued. On the 1st. the highest temperature, 30.6°C, for four years was recorded. However it became unsettled, with rain, very heavy at times and much lower temperatures as the high pressure moved away. On the 9th. a daily total of 52.6mm of rain was recorded, it was the highest for any day in August since 1932, the second highest since 1921 and the fifth wettest day for any day of the year since 1921. Up to the 26th. it looked as if it was going to be the wettest August on record, however a dry period at the end of the month, reduced it to being the wettest since 1977 and the second wettest since 1921. Although there was only one day that did not record any sunshine, daily amounts were very low, especially during the middle part of the month. The total for the month was 16% below the long-term average.

September saw warm, sunny and mostly dry conditions for the first eleven days of the month, with pressure remaining high. Maximum temperatures on a couple of days, 5th. and 11th., reached 27.1°C, the highest for any September day since 1991. All changed by the 12th. when high pressure receded and unsettled weather spread in from the west and remained to the end of the month. Most of the month's rain fell during this period. Although not as wet as August it was still over 60% above average, making it the wettest September since 1992. The 19th. was a particularly wet day, with 26mm recorded, the highest daily amount for September since 1992. The first ten days saw half the month's sunshine recorded. There were varying amounts of sun throughout the month which brought the total above the month's long-term average, the 2nd. being the sunniest day for five years, with 11.6 hours.

October continued the unsettled September weather for a few days but by the 5th. it had changed. The weather became dominated by high-pressure systems producing days with long sunny periods. Sunshine was the main feature of the month, it being the sunniest since records were first kept at the University in 1956. In the early hours of the 6th., the minimum temperature dropped below zero. This was the first air frost of the season and the earliest one to be recorded since before 1960. There was a short snap of very stormy weather starting on the 21st. when low pressure passed over the southern part of Britain accompanied by high winds and heavy rain. During this storm the barometer reading dropped to 974.6mb, the lowest for any day in October since before 1960, at the time of observation.

November started warm, with winds blowing from a westerly direction. On the 1st. a temperature of 17.0°C was recorded, the highest since 1984. It was sunny at times with occasional rain, however high pressure to the west of the British Isles began to dominate the weather. This brought cool northerly winds over the country, with daytime temperatures between the 17th. and the 22nd. well below average. For the first time since 1994 no air frosts were recorded. Overall it was the driest November since 1984. There were varying amounts of sunshine throughout the month, with the total very near to the expected average. With the close proximity of high pressure for the most of the month, the mean pressure was the highest since 1988.

December had unsettled weather during the first two weeks, with temperatures above average. They began to drop by the 13th. as winds began blowing from a more northerly direction, due to high-pressure to the west of the British Isles. On the evening of the 18th. a low pressure system tracked its way across the southern part of the country, producing moderate amounts of snowfall. With snow on the ground and clear skies during the night, the 20th. saw the lowest temperature recorded since 1991, - 7.8°C. A snow shower was reported on Christmas day, but over the Christmas period it became very wet, making the month the wettest since 1990. A fairly sunny month, the number of days without sunshine were the lowest since 1994, bringing the total to 10% above the month's long-term average.

WEATHER RECORDS 1999

UNIVERSITY OF READING (WHITEKNIGHTS)

Mean Daily Temperatures °C	Jan	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Year
Maximum	9.1	8.6	11.6	14.2	17.9	19.3	23.7	21.5	20.6	15.2	10.9	8.4	15.1
Minimum	3.6	2.6	4.3	5.8	9.3	9.7	13.0	12.5	11.6	6.8	5.5	1.9	7.2
Mean	6.4	5.6	8.0	10.0	13.6	14.5	18.4	17.0	16.1	11.0	8.2	5.1	11.2
Range	5.5	6.0	7.3	8.4	8.6	9.6	10.7	9.0	9.0	8.4	5.4	6.5	7.8
Extreme Maximum Date	14.1 4th.	12.7 19th.	19.5 17th.	20.5 1st.	25.0 27th.	26.0 26th.	30.2 31st.	30.6 1st.	27.1 5th. & 11th.	18.1 10th.	17.0 1st.	12.6 24th.	30.6 1st. Aug.
Extreme Minimum Date	-2.5 12th.	-4.2 14th.	-1.8 10th.	-2.2 15th.	5.8 1st.	5.1 8th.	8.1 23rd.	7.0 21st.	7.1 10th.	-0.3 6th.	1.0 30th.	-7.8 20th.	-7.8 20th. Dec.
Extreme Grass Minimum Date	-8.4 12th.	-9.5 11th.	-6.5 11th.	-8.5 15th.	-1.3 16th.	-1.5 22nd.	1.0 23rd.	1.3 21st.	-0.5 10th.	-5.6 5th. & 6 th.	-5.5 30th.	-10.4 20th.	-10.4 20th. Dec.
Days with air frost	4	7	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	6	24
Days with ground frost	19	16	14	12	3	3	0	0	1	10	13	20	111
Hours at or below 0°C	-	-	14.0	10.0	0	0	0	0	0	1.0	0	52.0	77.0
Sunshine Hours	47.9	88.0	111.5	157.0	162.4	210.9	253.7	167.5	152.6	162.1	67.1	53.5	1634.2
Total													
% of possible	18.8	30.7	30.3	37.7	33.5	42.4	51.3	37.2	40.2	48.6	24.4	21.3	
Daily Mean	1.6	3.1	3.6	5.2	5.2	7.0	8.2	5.4	5.1	5.2	2.2	1.7	4.5

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Year
Precipitation													
Amount in mm	97.2	22.0	20.6	43.3	43.0	73.7	52.9	128.4	93.5	55.4	34.4	101.7	766.1
Rain days	23	13	11	15	11	13	9	19	17	10	10	20	171
Max. rain in one day mm Date	21.6 15th.	5.4 26th.	4.6 2nd.	15.1 20th.	11.5 7th.	20.6 28th.	42.5 2nd.	52.6 9th.	26.0 19th.	14.1 23rd.	9.2 5th.	17.3 23rd.	52.6 9th. Aug.
Mean wind speed mph	5.5	4.7	3.7	4.3	4.0	2.8	3.2	3.1	2.5	2.9	3.7	5.0	3.8
Snow or sleet days	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	10
Days with snow lying	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5
Days with fog at 09:00 GMT	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	8
Days of thunder	0	0	0	0	3	2	3	1	1	0	1	0	11
Days of hail	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Mean Pressure mb	1012.4	1019.9	1011.3	1013.4	1015.9	1017.4	1018.1	1012.9	1008.8	1015.1	1022.6	1010.2	1014.8
Highest Date	1042.0 31st.	1042.1 2nd.	1031.1 16th.	1027.5 28th.	1023.5 31st.	1027.7 10th.	1031.0 8th.	1026.4 21st.	1025.3 10th.	1032.3 13th.	1040.4 10th.	1030.5 20th.	1042.1 2nd. Feb.
Lowest Date	990.4 3rd.	1006.4 22nd.	988.1 3rd.	993.4 21st.	1009.2 10th.	999.7 27th.	1006.9 20th.	997.4 8th.	988.6 20th.	974.6 24th.	1001.5 5th.	986.2 12th.	974.6 24th. Oct.

Buckthorns

Alan Brickstock

There are two species of Buckthorn in Britain, Common or Purging Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*).

Common Buckthorn, also known as Highwayman, Waythorn, Hartsthorn and Ramshorn, is a small, dense shrub, usually no more than five metres high and it is widespread on chalk and limestone in Britain.

It produces two kinds of shoots. The long, growing ones have opposite pairs of finely toothed leaves. The short, transversely flowering ones have their leaves in bunches, frequently end with a long terminal thorn, and somewhat resemble the antlers of a roebuck, which may account for the English name for the shrubs. Because the flowering shoots are in opposite pairs, forming a cross, it was believed to give protection against evil, and was given another name, Crossthorn. The veins on the leaves point towards the tip of the leaf.

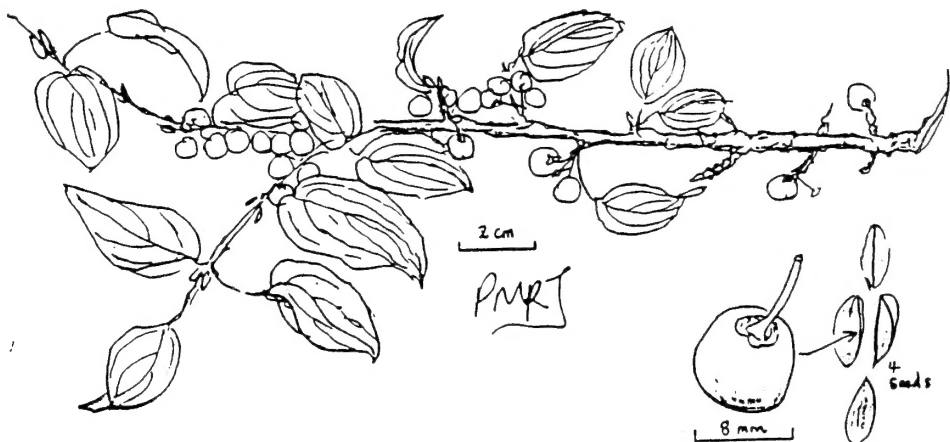
The small greenish yellow flowers are in tight bunches, and the berries are black and pea-sized, each containing four dull brown seeds. They can be used to make yellow or green dyes. Male and female flowers are on separate shrubs, but the flowers of each sex have rudiments of each other, suggesting that at an earlier stage of evolution it had bisexual flowers.

The Alder Buckthorn has untoothed, alternate leaves and is spine-free. It is more tree-like, prefers acid soils, its flowers are bisexual and have five petals, sepals and stamens whereas the Common Buckthorn flowers have four of each. Because of these differences, the species is now put in a different genus, *Frangula*. The leaves have seven to nine pairs of parallel veins, and turn golden yellow in autumn. The berries turn from green through red to purple, and each have two or occasionally three seeds. When unripe they can be used to give dyes of various shades of blue or grey. The anthers ripen before their corresponding stigma, thus favouring cross-pollination. The wood makes a very good charcoal, much used in the past by gunpowder makers, who are said to have named it Black Dogwood. It is not related to the Alder tree, although the two grow in similar places, and their leaves bear some resemblance to each other.

The berries and bark of Common Buckthorn have been used to make a violent purgative, which went out of fashion with the discovery of the milder cascara, which is made from the related North American species *Rhamnus purshianus*. However it is still used for animals, especially dogs. Rembert Dodoens, in his Herbal of 1554, said of the berries that "They be not meat to be administered but to the young and lusty people". Alder Buckthorn has a much less violent purging action.

Buckthorns, as well as Alders and legumes, have root-nodules which contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria of the *Rhizobium* family.

Larvae of the Brimstone and Green Hairstreak butterflies feed and pupate on both species of Buckthorn. Alder Buckthorn is one of the food plants for the spring brood of the Holly Blue.



I am indebted to Paul Jinks for permission to reproduce his drawing of Common Buckthorn

