

THE YATELEY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No 20
October 1984

Editor: E J Tipton (873378)

Dear Member

How uncommon do you think this Society of ours is? A local interest society usually has only one pivot; either local history or natural history. For example the Inverness Society, founded in the late 1800's, concentrate exclusively on natural history. The Highland history and Gaelic culture of Inverness are not neglected, but each has its own separate society, founded much later and intent upon the study and nurture of one central interest, one strand alone of the fabric which is the town's cumulative persona.

Likewise many societies, affiliated like ourselves to the Civic Trust, are concerned only with the history and preservation of their town's individual architectural heritage. The Ludlow Society, for example, achieved some distinction in "The Times" some days ago: it is being accused of proliferating blue plaques over too many of the town's numerous historic buildings. Would that our Society had a chance of a similar danger.

By encompassing more than one interest, our Society is attempting something which is apparently very uncommon, but which has obvious sense. Anyone familiar with Susan Dawson's description of the structure of habitats will agree that Yateley is itself a habitat. It has strands of interdependence which are quite as vulnerable as any of the extraordinary connections which Sue has shown us in the butterfly world, or of which Jonathan Webster made us aware with his reptiles and amphibia.

In beginning to describe how historical Yateley has evolved, the Society's local history group are also revealing the underlying geological influence of the common and the Blackwater valley upon the human pattern of succeeding centuries. In concentrating on the Royal Oak Valley the natural history group have encountered human communication problems with the county council and local neolithic rubbish-dumping habits quite as much as the various plant and animal life which is the reason for their project. Meanwhile the planning and conservation group, apparently preoccupied with wearing fingers to the bone with letter and evidence writing, are gradually piecing together the jigsaw of history, geology, natural history and sociology which will reveal just how susceptible a human community is to radical alterations of its physical structure.

None of the groups within the Society operates in a vacuum; each borrows or uses people, information or resources from the other groups. The May Fayre exhibit is the particular occasion when we can demonstrate the inter-relation of our interests - Yateley Common was this year's theme - but the intermingling process goes on all the time. Where our difficulties lie is in enabling each group interest to expand while at the same time keeping the coherence between the groups which allows The Society as one body to go forward.

It is becoming clear that the occasions when The Society meets as a whole have perhaps been too few. Perhaps in future our programme needs to be tailored to allow for regular joint meetings of all members. We have so much

talent and knowledge amongst our members that we could easily run an entire year's programme on our own resources. The 'corporate image' of The Society is unusual and exciting. In the Programme you will find a special evening arranged for Thursday 6 December for us to get together and 'be' The Yateley Society. We hope that the occasion will mark the beginning of a new awareness of our Society and of the contribution it is trying to make to the community. Please come.

RETURN TO 'B' BLOCK

From Thursday 11 October the weekly evening meetings of the Planning and Conservation, History and Natural History groups will be held in Room B.2.3 in the Yateley Centre. This is the school's History Room and is up one flight of stairs in B Block (where the Entrance Hall and Enquiry Desk are.) Long-standing members will remember that this is where The Society used to meet in its early days, before we graduated to the Youth Suite. The reason for the change is to escape from the rather noisy heating system in Room C.1.3. All Group-meetings are open to all members and prospective members of The Society, and new recruits are always welcome.

HISTORY GROUP MEETINGS

by Michael Holroyd

On Thursday 11 October we shall have a discussion on possible Society publications on the history of Yateley. A number of suggestions have been made at various times, but so far we have avoided committing ourselves to any particular plan. We may still not be ready to make a decision, but there would be advantages in having some idea of what we are hoping to achieve.

My own preference is for a publication of the 'history trail' type, consisting of descriptions of walks round different parts of Yateley, with accounts of what can be seen of its history. This would have the attraction of being probably within our capability, of enabling us to include a lot of material we already have, and of appealing to a wide public. On 11 October we can discuss this and any other suggestions, and consider what they would involve.

On Thursday 8 November Don and Alison Ridgers will give us a talk on Yateley Wills, 1550 - 1700. This work was begun in the WEA course with Caroline Powell and Agnes Stephenson. Don and Alison have continued into the 17th century and have particularly been following up references to pottery manufacture which has also involved them in some practical experiments. It will be interesting to see whether we can link the information from the wills with information about Yateley's houses and inhabitants from other sources.

On Thursday 13 December I shall give a talk on the history of the A30 from Bagshot to Basingstoke, and Yateley's connections with it. This will concentrate mainly on the turnpike era but will include some earlier references, including an extract from the Patent Rolls of 1406 authorising the collection of tolls for the repair of the road.

STARVEACRE AGAIN

by Michael Holroyd

In the last Newsletter I put forward the suggestion that the four acres of land "near Blackwater," enclosed from the common for the employment of the poor and sold by auction in 1847, was the area which subsequently became known as

Starveacre. This suggestion has now been confirmed.

A visit to Reading Library and a search through the microfilm file of the "Reading Mercury" eventually revealed an advertisement for a sale by auction to be held at the Dog and Partridge, Yateley on 27 October 1847. The auctioneer, Mr. Hellis, had been instructed by the Visitor and Guardians of the Farnborough Incorporation to sell "a piece of freehold land, containing about four acressituate at the south east side of Yateley Common, near Blackwater, adjoining Mr. Norris' Larch Plantation."

This description clearly refers to Starveacre. So we now know how this piece of land came to be enclosed from the common and made available for building. The next questions are: Who bought the land, and how did he dispose of it? Who built the houses, and when? What sort of people came to live in them? If anyone knows any of the answers, or would be interested in trying to discover them, I should be glad to hear from them.

ENCROACHMENT - A TRADITIONAL LOCAL INDUSTRY

by Michael Holroyd

The history of any common tends to be largely a record of encroachment, resisted or acquiesced in - a constant tug-of-war between private and public interests. Yateley Common shows many examples of this, and at one time two "haywardens" (i.e. hedge or fence wardens) were appointed, whose main job was to prevent encroachment.

It is perhaps not altogether surprising that attempts are still made to take over bits of common, and more frequently bits of roadside verge, by extending gardens beyond their original boundaries. This is a contentious subject, and one in which The Society has hitherto been reluctant to become involved. The difficulty of being sure of the true boundary, a feeling that some cases at least are fairly trivial, and a reluctance to inform on our neighbours, have all tended to make us turn a blind eye to the problem.

However the Executive Committee recently discussed the subject of encroachment in the light of some recent examples, and decided it was something The Society had to oppose. The irregular roadside verges on many of Yateley's old lanes are an important feature of the district which should be preserved. Often they have historical significance, and they can also provide wildlife habitats. Sometimes too they can provide a refuge for the pedestrian. Whilst some cases of encroachment, whether on the common or the roadside, may seem unimportant, it is a situation where the 'domino effect' applies, and one successful incursion may be followed by many more.

For these reasons the Executive decided that The Society would be avoiding its obligations if it failed to tackle the problem. Two recent cases of encroachment have been reported to the County Council and one has already been resolved satisfactorily. Members are asked to report cases of possible encroachment promptly to the Executive Committee.

NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

by Irene Draper

There will only be one more group meeting before Christmas, on Thursday 18 October when we shall discuss our programme for 1985. The November meeting will be replaced by a lecture, to be held on WEDNESDAY 14 (for details) see below.)

Unfortunately our outdoor meeting in the Royal Oak Valley in May came to an abrupt end when the heavens opened. Since then the weather has been kinder and weekly visits were made during June and July. We have added 18 more plants to our Species List making approximately 76 in all. Geoff Hoare has kindly taken a series of colour slides and Stephanie Pattenden has colour photographs. So we are now building up a photographic record of the Valley through the seasons.

Tony Hocking has produced a delightful design for noticeboards for the Valley. Hampshire County Council Recreation Department are very impressed with the design and have agreed, if Tony can produce four copies, to mount them on boards. Permission still has to be obtained from Hart to erect the boards.

The meadow area was a delight in June and July when Rosebay Willowherb, Yellow Loosestrife, Meadowsweet, Common Valerian and Marsh Thistle were in bloom. We were especially delighted to find many more Ragged Robin plants this year and hope they continue to increase in number. With all the warm weather during these months the Valley was particularly good for butterflies. On 27 July we recorded Brimstones, Ringlets, Peacocks, Meadow Browns, Large Skippers, a Common Blue, Large and Small Whites, and Gatekeepers. In July we were fortunate to find an Elephant Hawk moth; the larvae of this attractive moth feeds on the abundant willowherb in the Valley.

On 15 July Robert Guest led a walk in Alice Holt Forest. Unfortunately, this was not well attended which was a pity as, after a dull start, the sun came out and we were delighted to see White Admirals and beautiful Silver-washed Fritillaries. We picnicked in blazing sunshine, though the clouds did roll in soon after lunch which spoilt our chances of seeing Purple Emperors.

For our second outdoor meeting in July, Mike Waterman led a very interesting walk around The Flats area of the common. There on the wet heath we were shown Bog Asphodel and Round-leaved Sundew. The weather was sunny but quite cool so we were able to look closely at Silver-studded Blue butterflies as they rested on the ling. We got close enough to see the tiny silver studs on the underside of the hind wings! We also peered at Small Skippers and were able to identify them as Essex Skippers. Robert Guest had identified Essex Skippers earlier in the month - the first time they have been officially recorded in Yateley, although because they so closely resemble the Small Skipper they may previously have escaped recognition.

In June we were pleased to have David Jones, Chairman of the Fleet Pond Society, come to give a talk and slide show on the Fleet Pond. We hope to arrange a Society visit to the pond in the New Year.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for our group meetings in 1985 do please come to our October meeting.

YATELEY COMMON NEEDS YOU

by Valerie Kerslake

A task force for working on the common is planned for Sunday 21 October. Will you come and help? All ages are welcome, and non-members too. A few canine observers are usually in attendance as well. We should meet at Wyndhams Pool car park at 10.30 am or 2.30 pm or both for those who have the time and energy. The precise task will have to be settled nearer the day,

but the Warden has made a few suggestions, including shifting unwanted pine seedlings to where they can make a useful screen, and sowing more heather over the water-main. Last winter's efforts with the heather did not bring spectacular results but a keen eye can discover quite a lot of tiny seedlings scattered over the scar. With another sowing and not too dry a spring next year they may get well away. Sowing heather is a conversational rather than an arduous activity, and all one needs to bring is a wide-mouthed carrier bag into which to collect the seed from nearby areas of heather.

Tough gloves would be useful for pulling out the little pines, and also for clearing young birches from the heathland - a more vigorous job that we have undertaken several times but which requires doing regularly in many parts of the common.

If you have not yet taken part in one of these working parties try it this time. Even when cold, wet and foggy it turns out to be an enjoyable couple of hours, and one finishes with a satisfactory sense of achievement - with visible results.

YATELEY COMMON UNDER SURVEILLANCE

by Valerie Kerslake

If you happened to see a group of people with pencils and clipboards striding briskly around the common last February, it may well have been the team of young biologists taken on by Hampshire County Council - with the assistance of the Manpower Services Commission - to survey all the county's commons. It seems a formidable task; apart from Yateley Common which covers almost 500 acres there is another 160 acres of heathland at Broxhead owned by HCC and a good many other pieces of commonland of various sizes and sorts.

Since their work on our common took place mainly in the winter, the survey team, led by Teresa Farino, were anxious to see any available species lists compiled at other times of the year, and with an exchange of information in view they came last July to meet some of the Natural History group at Irene Draper's house. We gave them Mike Waterman's enormously detailed chart of fungi, and the lists of birds, trees, flowers, butterflies and dragonflies recorded by members over the past few years. They unfurled a photocopy of their huge map of Yateley Common with the different types of habitat and vegetation carefully delineated and labelled. The plants marked were chiefly gorse, heather, trees, rushes and grasses; which are as baffling to us as to most amateur botanists. Making a map of that sort was actually one of the earlier aims of the group, though one that faded away as it became apparent how much time it would require, quite apart from the expertise.

Teresa asked us where particularly interesting plants were to be found, and that showed up another of our deficiencies since we find it difficult to tell just what is considered interesting round here. (We had in fact hoped for a little guidance from her.) However, we pointed out where various kinds of orchids grow, and sundews, centaury sneezewort, vetches and wild daffodils, and also showed them where the harvest mouse was found last year.

The map was left for us to keep. They intend to colour their own copy according to the types of vegetation - a truly gaudy affair it will be since they have distinguished 38 separate categories. Any artistic volunteers for ours?

EVERSLEY GRAVEL

The Society has made a small contribution to the £10,000 which the Eversley and Bramshill Gravel Committee will need in opposing an application by Brazil for massive gravel extraction on the Welsh Drive near Blackbushe. The public inquiry has been adjourned until November 21 and 22 when the barrister engaged by Eversley will be heard. Those of you who attended the Hill Farm inquiry and later the District Plan inquiry will recognize the barrister; he is Mr. Robin Purchas, previously heard pleading the cause of Charles Church in Yateley. Now on the other side, it is to be hoped that his formidable powers of argument will win the day for Eversley and banish the spectre of scores of lorries per day trundling through Eversley Street having entered the B3016 around Hawkers' Lodge.

As usual, if you have a spare hour and can get to Eversley Village Hall do sit in on the hearing and support Eversley's case with your presence. The hearing begins at 10.00am on Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 November.

PUBLIC LECTURE PROGRAMME

by Fergus Russell

Wednesday 14 Nov "SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS, A WILDLIFE TAPESTRY" by Simon Pepper
Room C.1.1

Yateley Centre
8.00pm

Simon, a brother of Sally Gray who is a Yateley Society member, is a graduate of Aberdeen and London Universities and is an expert naturalist. He and his wife Morag have a farm in Aberfeldy in Perthshire and since 1973 have organised and led holiday courses each lasting a week in four areas of the Highlands: Highland Perthshire, Glencoe and Lorn, Argyll and Kintyre, and the Isle of Mull. The HQ in each area is based on a carefully selected small local hotel and from there walks and expeditions are arranged: 10 is the maximum number in each group. Simon spends a week in November each year lecturing in England: after Yateley his next engagement is in Worthing, where he has been invited to return following his lecture there a year ago. His talk is illustrated with slides and he will bring some brochures, since more energetic Society members may find the holiday courses appealing. The brochures certainly make most interesting reading.

NB NB NB ... This talk is on Wednesday, not our usual Thursday.

Thursday 22 Nov
Room C.1.1

Yateley Centre
8.00pm

"A TREK THROUGH NEPAL TO THE BASE OF ANNAPURNA" David Mordaunt

David Mordaunt has twice led Royal Geographical Schools Expeditions to the Arctic and, in the New Year, is having a sabbatical term to lead a Schools Expedition to Greenland. Last year the Royal Geographical Society asked him to lead a trek for members, of all ages, of the Society through Nepal to the base of Annapurna. His slides of scenery, flora and fauna will be of great interest and he is of course an experienced lecturer. David is on the staff of Wellington College (he teaches Maths) and was a housemaster for several years. He is a keen mountaineer and owns a croft in Skye. He is also a very good cricketer; a former Sussex and Berkshire player, he has been on MCC tours to Canada, South America and East Africa.

VISIT OF NEWLANDS SCHOOL

by Michael Holroyd

Newlands Junior School, in Dunggells Lane, has been given architectural awards by the Civic Trust and the Royal Institute of British Architects, and an Education Design Award. Parties of architects come from all over the country to see it. On Sunday 2 December there will be an opportunity for members of the Society to see it also. You may remember it was featured in The Society May Fayre exhibition last year. Mrs Bone, the Deputy Head, has kindly made the arrangements, and the Headmaster, Mr Lewis, has given permission for us to be shown round. Come and see Yateley's most famous modern building and see whether you agree with the judges.

SOCIETY EVENING

Thursday 6 December Films + Wine and Cheese = pre-Christmas get-together
Room C.1.1 for all The Society.

Yateley Centre
8.00pm

"The Village" tells the story of the evolution of the English village and asks whether it can survive.

25 mins.

"The Living River" is the story of Hampshire's River Test.
30 mins.

Two contrasting films and a modicum of hospitality will, we hope, persuade many of you to come and enjoy a pleasant evening being The Yateley Society. There will be a small charge for refreshments.

BOLD BAD BARON?

The Hart & Rushmoor District Branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England is this year holding its AGM in Yateley. One reason for this is that they anticipate needing a larger hall than usual, not because the business of the AGM will draw members in droves, but because their guest speaker is likely to attract widespread attention in this beleaguered part of North East Hampshire.

He will be none other than Mr Tom Baron FRICS, Secretary of the Volume House-builders Study Group; or if you prefer, one of the leaders of Consortium Developments, the would-be builders of new settlements in certain nearby selected areas. The chair will be taken by Mr. David Astor, national Chairman of the CPRE. A grandson of Nancy Astor, Mr Astor farms in Oxfordshire and is on the SDP Agricultural and Rural Affairs committee. Like Lord Melchett, who addressed the Yateley Society two years ago, Mr Astor believes that the countryside is a national, as well as a private, asset. Since Consortium Developments are currently seen hereabouts as potential destroyers of countryside without just cause, it will be enlightening to learn how Mr Baron views his role.

The business meeting preceding the address will be chaired by Lieut-Col J.H. Carver and will commence at 7.30pm in the Main Hall, Yateley Centre.

OMENS IN ENTRAILS?

Letter from the Ed's daughter to "Watch" magazine;

Dear Watch,

On the 27th September at about 6.45pm a sparrowhawk landed in our back garden less than 10 metres away from the kitchen window. In its claws it was clasping a live dove. We own 50 doves who live in a dove loft. Some of the doves have taken to roosting on the mulberry tree outside the loft. My father was the first to notice the sparrowhawk on the lawn. He suspected that it had taken the dove off the mulberry tree. The sparrowhawk is slightly smaller than a dove: it took a long time for the hawk to kill the dove by pecking at the dove's head. The dove struggled occasionally with the hawk on top of it. My father quickly got his camera and crept outside to photograph the sparrowhawk. Just as he took it the hawk flew off with the dove in its claws. It landed at the bottom of the garden. Next day there were just a few feathers left, not even any bones.

(Heron had been granted planning permission for the Montegale Lane site the previous day.)

THE YATELEY SOCIETY: PROGRAMME OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1984

Thursday	11	Oct	History	<u>Possible Future Publications</u> Group discussion 7.30pm Room B.2.3 Yateley Centre
Thursday	18	Oct	Natural History	<u>Programme for 1985</u> Group discussion 7.30pm Room B.2.3 Yateley Centre
Sunday	21	Oct	Working Party	<u>Yateley Common</u> Sapling clearance and heather sowing to assist the Warden Meet at 10.30pm and/or 2.30pm at Wyndhams Pool carpark. Tough gloves and wide-mouthed carrier bags needed.
Thursday	24	Oct	Half-Term	No meeting
Thursday	1	Nov	Planning/Conserv	Monthly meeting 8.00pm Room B.2.3
Sunday	4	Nov	Walk	<u>Finchampstead Ridges and Ambarrow Hill</u> An autumn walk led by Irene Draper. Some paths may be muddy so bring suitable footwear. Meet at 2.00pm at SE end of Finchampstead Ridges (top of Wellington Ave) on B3348 (Grid ref 810634).
Thursday	8	Nov	History	<u>Yateley Wills 1550 - 1700</u> Talk by Don and Alison Ridgers (see Newsletter) 7.30pm Room B.2.3 Yateley Centre
Tuesday	13	Nov		CPRE Annual General Meeting Guest: Mr. Tom Baron 7.30pm Main Hall Yateley Cen.
Wednesday	14	Nov	LECTURE	<u>"SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS: A WILDLIFE TAPESTRY"</u> by Simon Pepper (see Newsletter) 8.00pm Room C.1.1 Yateley Centre
Thursday	22	Nov	LECTURE	<u>"A TREK THROUGH NEPAL TO THE BASE OF ANNAPURNA"</u> by David Mordaunt (see Newsletter) 8.00pm Room B.2.3 Yateley Centre
Thursday	29	Nov	Planning/Conservn	Monthly meeting (brought forward one week) 8.00pm Room B.2.3 Yateley Centre
Sunday	2	Dec	Visit	<u>Newlands School</u> An opportunity to look around this award-winning school, by kind permission of the Headmaster; We may have a short walk afterwards if time permits. Meet at 2.30pm in the carpark in the school grounds off Dungells Lane.
Thursday	6	Dec		<u>Society Evening</u> A pre-Christmas gathering with films, wine and cheese (see Newsletter) 8.00pm Room C.1.1 Yateley Centre
Sunday	9	Dec	Working Party	<u>Royal Oak Valley</u> To tackle what may have appeared since our onslaught in June. Meet at 10.30pm at Old Welmore where it crosses the valley. Gardening gloves are de rigueur.
Thursday	13	Dec	History	<u>Yateley and the A.30</u> Talk by Michael Holroyd 7.30pm Room B.2.3 Yateley Centre