



GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

newsletter

www.gefweb.org.uk

JUNE – AUGUST 2015

LITTERPICKING TO IMPROVE OUR WATERWAYS

Text and photos by Ann Harvey, a volunteer with Surrey Care Trust

A RECENT ARTICLE by John Bannister highlighted the welcome work of Artington Parish Council in collecting litter from its parish. Any litter is unsightly and some litter, such as broken glass, is a danger to people and animals. Paper waste is unsightly, but if it is digestible and rots down easily, it may be of little danger in comparison with plastic bags, especially if swallowed by animals. We would like to think that littering is a consequence of carelessness and not with the specific intention of harming anybody (although recently broken glass appeared to be specifically targeted at children using a Godalming play area).

As you would expect, the Wey Navigation, and the pathways near it, have their share of litter problems.

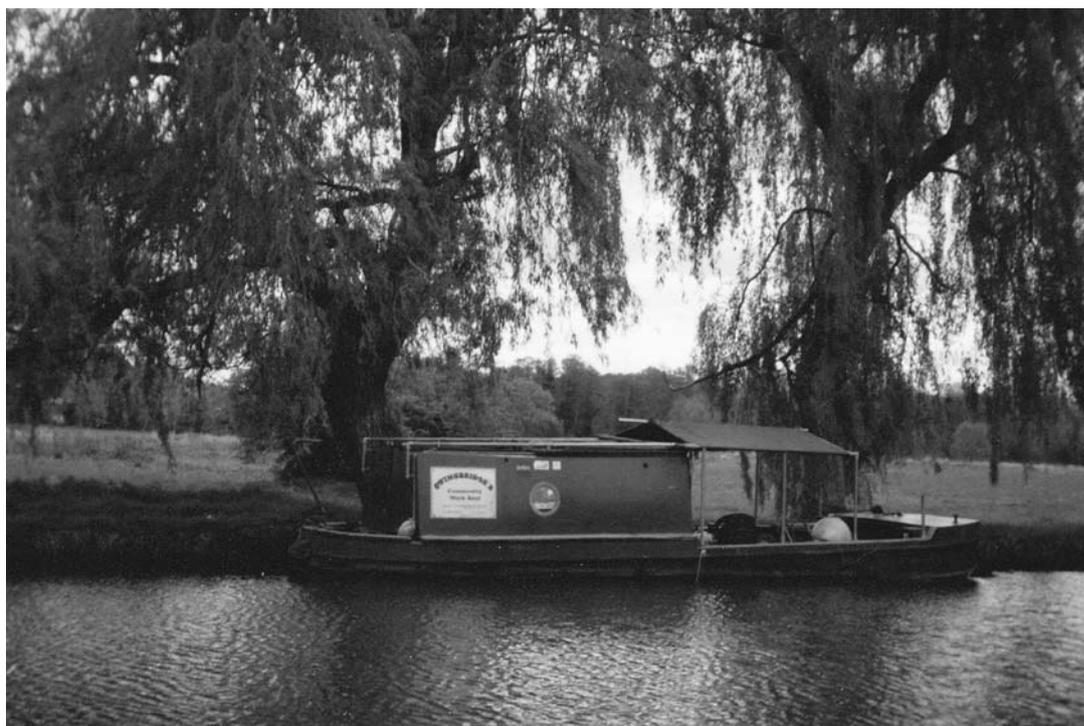
It seems litter is a consequence of where people go! But help is at hand in the form of *Swingbridge II*.

Who or what is Swing Bridge II?

Swingbridge II is the community workboat of the Surrey Care Trust. Some people may know *Swingbridge I* better, the boat based at Dapdune Wharf that enables groups of people to experience the therapeutic effects of a peaceful excursion on the Wey Navigation. Its hydraulic wheeled chair transfer system enables even the most physically disadvantaged to participate fully.

Swingbridge II is aptly called the 'community workboat' but its remit is much broader than just litter picking in a particular area. Litter is picked

Swingbridge II, the community workboat of the Surrey Care Trust, at moorings near the Rowing Club in Guildford. You are most likely to see it on the Wey Navigation, although it also takes volunteers to clear other local waterways.





This stretch of water, behind the Millbrook car park, is notorious for amassing debris.

wherever the boat is working. Most of the year it works on the Wey Navigation, but occasionally it ventures onto the Basingstoke Canal and the Thames.

Those who benefit most

The ethos of the Surrey Care Trust is "helping people turn their lives around". Hence, in addition to at least two fully qualified and experienced skippers being on board, some people will be 'on placement': they may be coming off alcohol dependency, recovering after brain damage, or learning new skills after difficult times in schools. One day is reserved for community service. Again, the Navigation has a therapeutic effect and teamwork, with visible outcomes, is satisfying.

Where *Swingbridge II* works on the Thames, the river is much broader than the Basingstoke Canal and the Wey Navigation, so bushes growing at the water's edge are usually not a hazard, whereas bushes and plant debris on the narrower waterways may impair visibility. Think about the twists and turns on the Wey Navigation, and the need to have as much notice as possible of other boats approaching. These may include large day-hire canal boats, with inexperienced crews, down to small rowing boats and canoes. Even *Swingbridge II* may present a temporary hazard as its crew try to cut back invasive vegetation or remove floating debris, which may also become entangled around propellers.

Before any operation, risks must be assessed: the



Using traditional skills – hedge layering opposite Guildford Rowing Club.

safety of the people working with *Swingbridge II* is paramount. In 2014 the growth of floating mats of *Hydrocotyle* (floating pennywort, an invasive species) was so dense in a feeder stream for the Mill Pond near Coxes Lock, that the flow of water was severely reduced. Clearing sufficient *Hydrocotyle* was a hazardous task – the river bed was not stable underfoot, there could be a sudden rush of water as the channel became free and initially the water was up to people's waists. Safety lines, and mooring the boat as close as possible, were necessary precautions. The work described above is of course a consequence of the natural cycle of life and, if plants stopped growing, it would indicate something was badly wrong. However, man-made litter is no part of life's cycle.

Really thoughtless

Probably the worst littering we experienced was on Desborough Island (in the Thames between Walton and Shepperton Lock), popular with many sorts of people, from ordinary walkers to professional dog walkers, campers and fishermen/women. Debris thrown into the Thames may end up on its little beaches: we have had bookshelves, small tables, even an old safe. Some abandoned carrier bags

contained large quantities of fishing line, which spilled out over the beaches. This presented a serious hazard to inquisitive swans and their cygnets, who might swallow the lines which then interfere with their ability to feed, leading to slow painful deaths. The broken glass near three tree stumps suggested they had been used for target practice! Our work on Desborough Island was on behalf of the Thames Landscape Strategy "to Conserve, Enhance and Promote the Arcadian Thames between Weybridge and Kew", an enterprise which celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. Consequently, we also needed to be mindful of clearing paths and plant growth to promote the appeal of walkers' views. Is there a similar strategy for the Wey Navigation in and around Guildford?

It's more than litter clearance

Swingbridge II used traditionally-layered hedging to improve a section opposite the Guildford Rowing Club. Currently in Guildford you need to 'look the right way' to avoid seeing the less attractive places, such as debris at the back of the Yvonne Arnaud car park, and the area behind the Electric Light building, where plant growth may soon impede water flow from drainage pipes. Sounds familiar?

What's going on here?



See next page

It's Guildford's Repair Café

Broken chair that needs repair? Found a hole in your favourite jumper? Don't throw it away, come along to the Repair Café.

We all have things we mean to repair but have not got round to yet. Now there is a new place you can go to repair small items free of charge, thanks to our new pop-up Repair Café.

Repair Café is an international movement which helps people to repair and re-use to avoid waste, learn valuable skills and save money. Guildford Borough Council held its first Repair Cafés at the Park Barn Community Centre in February and Furniturelink in April. People popped in with a camera, bikes, jumpers, trousers, furniture, lamps and sewing machines to repair on the day. We had a fantastic response from those who came along, with one member of the public saying: "Great advice and help from the repair supervisors. I was talked through step by step and in layman's terms."

We are planning Repair Café events to occur approximately every 2 months at various venues in Guildford borough. To find out where the next Café is located please visit www.guildford.gov.uk/repaircafe.

Come to the Repair Café and learn how to fix the items yourself, with the help of volunteers who have knowledge to show you and can answer your questions. Seamstresses, DIYers, the Bike Doctor and a PAT electrical appliance tester will be available to give practical advice and help people make all possible repairs, free of charge. Clean, broken items that can be brought along include clothes, toys, bikes, crockery and chairs.

There are a few house rules for the Repair Café, which can be found on our website at www.guildford.gov.uk/repaircafe.

If you can spare a couple of hours to help on the day, we are looking for all sorts of repairers – especially electricians to carry out repairs to small electrical appliances – to teach and share their skills with the local community.

By promoting repairs, Guildford Borough Council would like to help reduce waste, save money and resources and cut carbon dioxide emissions.

For more information or to volunteer please contact climatechange@guildford.gov.uk or phone 01483 444509.



WINNERS and LOSERS from the fall in oil prices

John Bannister

IN NOVEMBER last year OPEC (the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) made a decision not to go on acting as the world's swing producer for crude oil supplies. OPEC, comprising countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Abu Dhabi, Nigeria etc, with control over 80% of the world's oil reserves, has historically supplied the world with more or less crude oil to satisfy demand and to keep the price stable and high. With a high oil price this allowed their competitors – the international oil companies Exxon, Shell, BP, Chevron, Statoil etc – to exploit very high cost crude oil from ever more extreme, riskier and marginal sources such as Canadian tar sands, deep offshore water, gas-to-liquids, Arctic oil, "fracking" etc.

OPEC effectively slashed the price of global oil by announcing it would now act to protect its market share and very quickly the price of crude went from around \$120 to about \$50. Saudi knew its production costs were very low and nowhere near the \$100 needed for tar sands, deep water and shale oil to be profitable. So what have been some of the consequences of this?

We saw one result at the petrol pumps, with prices falling as oil companies slowly passed on the lower price. There is no evidence I've seen that people are driving a lot more. Alternatively, any money saved will probably end up being spent on consumables. Poorer people, if they have a car, will put the money saved to an essential use. But the potential is there for people to be more relaxed about using a car when they should walk or take a bus or train, and thereby there will be greater harm to the environment.

Over the last few years the US has boosted its oil production, overtaking Saudi Arabia to become the world's biggest producer by "fracking" to produce shale oil and gas. Our papers have been full of this development. Politicians long to copy the US as a way to lower domestic energy prices (it took Saudi Arabia to do that). Environmentalists have been making the case for the environmental damage that "fracking" causes. Look at a Google map of Texas or Dakota and you'll see

thousands of acres densely covered in drilling rigs "fracking" for oil and gas. "Fracking" causes significant environmental harm including pollution of drinking water aquifers with chemicals, very high water usage, leakage of methane which is a very potent greenhouse gas, shalequakes enough to cause property damage, and the destruction of the landscape by the number of rigs. It is a short-term production method, quickly exhausting the oil tapped. Tougher environmental controls are being talked about in the US but meanwhile compensation claims are coming forward.

So the US has ceased to be an oil importer. This is the vision that has Cameron and Osborne slaving at the mouth, not to mention Labour and the Lib Dems.

Today the oil price has risen slightly to about \$60 per barrel. Even at this price "fracking" is uneconomic and many (smaller)



Air pollution in Beijing hardly makes for a happy smiling selfie!

companies are in financial trouble. Einhorn, a US "short seller", says these companies are throwing away investors' money and describes Pioneer Natural Resources as the "motherfracker". If other countries now think twice before selling out to "frackers" the environment will have gained. One of the biggest worries is that criminal politicians are giving subsidies to fossil fuel companies in return for campaign donations. Certainly this is true in the US and what happens there often ends up happening here.

Coal fails every test of sustainable development, and even carbon capture and storage is not looking promising. It is the dirtiest fossil fuel by far. Coal competes with

Swarms of urban bees

Many households concerned about the future of the British bee have taken up beekeeping, and the number of hives in urban areas has increased dramatically. In Greater London there are now estimated to be over 5,000.

Recently, bees have descended on high streets and cars across the south of England. Police in Chichester had to put up a cordon to protect the public from bees that settled in the middle of town.

Francis Ratnieks of Sussex University said experienced beekeepers give hives more space to prevent swarming, but novice beekeepers might not know to do this.

(Source: Daily Telegraph, 13 May '15)



Beans for all

The world's largest container ship, the *Globe*, docked last month in Southampton. It's more than 70 metres high and more than 400 metres long



Its capacity is such that it can carry, for example, 900 million cans of baked beans – that's 60 beans for every person on the planet.

(Source: BBC News and Waitrose Weekend)

Deadly sharks?

In 2014, sharks killed three people. In the same 12 months we killed 100 million sharks.

(Source: Radio Times, 2-8 May '15)

From horror to haven

Last year, Animals Asia announced the biggest bear rescue ever attempted. It is working with a state farmer who has decided to stop the barbaric practice of keeping live bears to extract their bile, which is used in traditional Chinese medicine. The farm is being turned into an enormous rescue centre for bears. There are an estimated 10,000 bears in about 100 farms in China alone, and thousands more elsewhere in Asia.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, June '14)

Flying hazard

Scientists at the University of California measured UV radiation in the cockpits of planes during flight. As a result, airline pilots are being advised to wear sunscreen at work because they can be exposed to the same levels of radiation as people on sunbeds.

(Source: i, 18 Dec '14)

Entomology with a difference

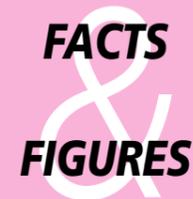
The famous army officer, chief scout and spy, Lord Baden-Powell, took on the persona of Englishman abroad during the Boer War. As he blundered about with a butterfly net and notebook, nobody suspected that his sketches of butterfly wings concealed the outline plans of fortifications he found in the hillsides, complete with details of gun emplacements.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, May '15)

Seabed mining

It's estimated that up to a third of future mineral production could come from beneath the oceans. More than 25 exploration permits have already been granted, covering 1.2 million square kilometers of seabed, an area five times the size of the UK, much of it in the Pacific Ocean. Scientists and campaigners predict that it will wreak havoc on wildlife.

(Source: Independent, 28 Feb '15)



gas for power generation, so coal prices have fallen in the US and worldwide. India and China remain committed to coal for electricity generation. So much so that the US wants to build export terminals on its west coast to export its massive coal reserves, and Australia likewise wants to blast a port through the Great Barrier Reef to get Queensland's huge coal reserves out to India. The UK Standard Chartered Bank is helping finance India's Adani. All this is terrible news for the environment, and environmentalists quite rightly are fighting these kinds of developments with everything they have. India and China need electricity, but it should be clean electricity from renewable sources.

China has enormous air quality problems from coal-fired power stations, but it was



Imagine a terminal built on the Great Barrier Reef to export Queensland's coal to India

also the biggest installer of solar PV and wind energy in 2014, installing over half the world total. The costs of these renewables continue to fall fast across the world and renewable electricity is winning out on price per kWh against fossil fuels. The last thing we want industry to do is to lock-in high carbon fuels that we will be stuck with for the next 50 years. The decisions we make today are the decisions for 2070, and by then global climate change will be so much worse than it is today, and by 2050 the UK is committed by

law to cut its carbon emissions by 80%. Since the UK has exported most of its high-carbon manufacturing to China and India in particular we are duty-bound to help these countries decarbonise their economies, otherwise we are guilty by implication. UK imports are not included in our carbon budgeting.

So the key decision for the Climate Change Conference in Paris this December is to help India and China to transition quickly to renewable electricity. Falling fossil fuel prices will delay the time by a few years when renewable electricity grid prices drop below the lowest fossil fuel equivalent from coal. This will damage the environment.

Gas and oil are used in petrochemical plants to make all kinds of chemicals including plastics. Recycling plastics has become an extremely important alternative source of plastics. Industry has invested heavily in recycling plants, in the UK's case in the last few years, and some of these are now feeling the pinch as lower fossil fuel prices mean virgin oil feedstock starts to compete with recycling to provide plastics. Every company faced with this situation looks at every means to cut costs to stay competitive. The environment will be the loser if lower cost virgin fossil fuels start to outcompete recycling.

It is slowly dawning on pension funds, markets, organisations and individuals that if we want to stay below a 2°C global temperature rise we must leave most of the planet's fossil fuels in the ground, and it will be wise to switch out of oil and coal companies before they are left with worthless stranded assets. The maths are simple: to have an 80% chance of staying below 2°C, above which climate scientists say runaway climate change will

happen, then 565 billion tonnes (GT) is the most carbon dioxide that the world can put into the atmosphere from now on. Proven reserves of oil, gas and coal identified for extraction amount to 2,795 GT, five times as much as any sensible politician would risk.

Unfortunately we have very few sensible politicians, so any action must come from ordinary citizens lobbying banks, pension funds, financial institutions, thinking about their investments and by highlighting the billions used to subsidise fossil fuels.

In depth

Cuvier's beaked whales dive deeper (to nearly 3km) and for longer (2hrs 18mins) than any other mammal.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, Jun '14)

A humane cull?

In 2013, 247 culled badgers took more than five minutes to die. Yet if a vet were to allow any animal to survive for five minutes, conscious and screaming, he would be struck off.

(Source: Badger News, Autumn '14)

Cross-party agreement

In February leaders of the three main parties signed a new pact to work together to tackle climate change. This included a promise to end unabated coal burning for power generation – the UK being the first major world economy to do so.

(Source: Greenpeace UK)

FACTS & FIGURES

Soil matters

This year, 2015, is the UN's International Year of Soils, and the Soil Association is campaigning hard to raise awareness of the need for healthy soil. Every minute we lose the equivalent of 30 football pitches of fertile soil, and 40% of all agricultural soils are seriously degraded.

Invertebrates, including worms, have declined by around 45% over the last 35 years. It can take up to 1,000 years for just 1cm of topsoil to form.

(Source: Soil Association, Apr '15)

St John's Churchyard **NOT** for sale

Donna Collinson

THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS at Westminster have decided not to allow St John's plans to sell off the west churchyard to proceed.

Guildford Environmental Forum's March-May newsletter with its headline article "**FOR SALE? St John's Churchyard, Stoke**" was presented to the Church Commissioners on their site visit prior to the Oral Hearing on April 22nd. They were very impressed with the thorough research, and with the petition and 84 representations presented to them in support of saving the churchyard, including from the national charity 'Caring for God's Acre', Guildford Environmental Forum and Guildford Greenbelt Group.

Due to the remains of Admiral Sir James Stirling, founder and first governor, being located in the west churchyard there were many representations from West Australia and Dr. Steve Errington flew in to speak at the hearing.

The Church Commissioners' reasons for stopping St John's plans were:

- * that St John's had no proper costings for exhumation and reburial of the 1,200 remains in the west churchyard or potential 3,600 in the east
- * that mechanical exhumation had been proposed
- * that no official pre-planning meetings had taken place with Historic England or Guildford Borough Council
- * that there was no guarantee that planning permission would be granted
- * that the community had been divided by the proposed scheme

St John's may return with new plans in the future so the online petition will remain live. The total online and onpaper number of names is some 1,800. In the meantime Mark Woodward has been encouraged to rebuild bridges with the community.

During the campaign Tree Preservation Orders were issued on seven of the nine yew trees and the box tree. A spring botanical survey was undertaken, and a



further summer survey will be conducted by the Pewley Down volunteers.

Professional genealogist Rosemary Morgan is heading a project to map and photograph the remaining memorials, then to upload the data onto the websites 'Billion graves' or 'Find a grave' so that descendants may be able to visit their ancestors at St John's churchyard.

We would encourage all who enjoy the churchyard as they pass by in and out of Guildford to pop in and enjoy the 'green oasis' that has been recognised for its environmental and historic value. This living sanctuary is now saved for the future, including the wonderful yew trees, three of which are found to be over 350 years old. Despite the traffic it is a tranquil place full of birdsong, wildlife and wildflowers.

Puttenham Camping Barn celebrates its 10th birthday



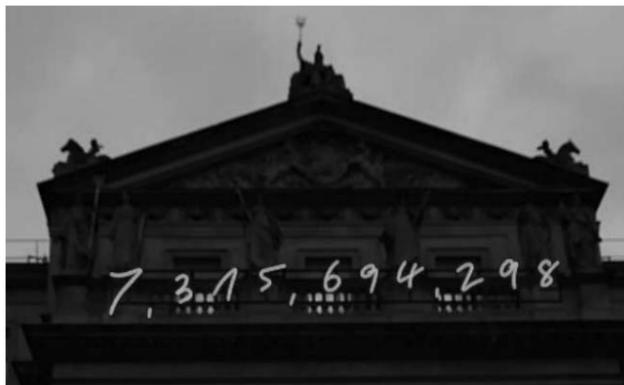
John Bannister and Chris Meeks, prime movers in the development of Puttenham Camping Barn, at the event to mark 10 years of its existence

WHAT NOW SEEMS LIKE an age ago Guildford Environmental Forum was heavily involved in the construction project for the conversion of part of a 17th century listed barn in the delightful village of Puttenham to a Camping Barn.

We acted as project managers and fundraisers for the £120,000 needed to complete the project. We made a big effort to build it to high ethical and environmental standards using lime mortar, rainwater harvesting, solar PV and solar hot water. We worked with Richard Bicknell, a joiner and builder, to whom we are eternally grateful, and various sub contractors.

The camping barn was handed over 10 years ago to Chris Meeks and the team he has built up to serve walkers and cyclists using the North Downs Way and the surrounding area. Today it stands proud, is part of the Youth Hostel Association network and is in immaculate condition, as we saw at the 10th Birthday Celebration held on 9th May.

John Bannister



Going up, and up, and up

In March this year, Gavin Turk placed his installation artwork "Now" on top of Somerset House's new wing in London. It is a neon sculpture of the estimated global population on Tuesday 17th March.

Zero-emissions black cab

London's only operating zero-emissions black cab, the Metrocab, is going into volume production in Coventry next year. Up to £50m is being invested in the production run by owners Frazer-Nash Research and Ecotive.

The hybrid Metrocab is driven by two electric motors, with a 1-litre petrol engine range extender. Even the more power-hungry modes allow the cab to produce 98 miles per gallon – about three times more fuel-efficient than a standard London taxi. The associated lower running costs could save a London cabbie between £20 and £40 a day.

A small trial fleet of Metrocabs is already being operated in London by Comcab. It's the first zero-emission taxi to be licensed by Transport for London (TFL) to operate on a trial basis as a London Hackney Carriage.

There's value in landfill

A team of scientists from Cranfield University has analysed samples from four different UK landfill sites, finding metals that could be worth a total of £360m. The four sites contained copper and aluminium, palladium (used in cars' catalytic converters), and neodymium, which can be used to create super-powerful magnets.

The recovery of only rare earth elements and critical metals would not be economically viable, but recovering copper and aluminium makes sense. Further resource recovery would be possible with the extraction of larger metal items and the reprocessing of plastics, adding even more value to the operation.

The UK has around 4,000 landfill sites, potentially containing up to £360bn of valuable metals.

England's rubbish in 2013 – a shameful record

The Communities and Local Government Committee studied all cases of littering throughout England in 2013. It published the following findings in March last year.

- 20% increase in fly-tipping in the past year
- 20% increase in fast-food litter in the past year
- 35.2% of total litter consists of smokers' materials
- 26% of total litter consists of chewing gum
- 16% of total litter consists of food packaging and food
- £717m-£850m estimated annual cost to local authorities of clearing up litter
- £56m estimated annual cost of clearing up chewing gum
- 852,000 incidents of fly-tipping dealt with by local authorities in 2012/13
- 5,500 people convicted in magistrates' courts of littering in 2013
- £140 average fine

Our bees in danger again

Neonicotinoids are the powerful pesticides that Europe banned last year. An influential group of scientists recently concluded that these chemicals don't just kill bees, they wreak "havoc" on other insects and plants in the countryside too. Now an application has been submitted to the government by the chemical companies asking for the ban on neonicotinoids to be lifted for some crops planted this autumn.

The campaigning organisation 38 Degrees has started an urgent online petition to Elizabeth Truss MP, Secretary of State for

Environment, to refuse permission for any exemptions to the ban. Members wishing to sign the petition will find it on <https://secure.38degrees.org.uk/keep-the-ban>



www.38degrees.org.uk

GOOD NEWS

BAD NEWS

compiled by Clare Windsor



www.rspb.org.uk

The wonder of raptors

John Bannister

ONE OF MY SEASONAL pastimes is keeping an eye on our local raptors. By local I mean anywhere I can reach by walking, cycling or public transport as I have no car. They are like a barometer of the health of our environment. Tawny owls calling in the cemetery, the kestrel that appears from time to time on the topmost twig of a huge beech tree, the increasing over-flights of red kites with a pair nesting not that far away, the fairly common sparrowhawk (above), barn owls along the River Wey, and the now ubiquitous peregrines (overleaf) and buzzards. Some of these, like the kestrel and the barn owl, suffered population falls because we failed to safeguard their habitats, and they are only hanging on because of the efforts of organisations like the Hawk and Owl Trust putting up nest boxes and the amazing successes that have resulted.

A welcome summer visitor to Thursley Common is the hobby (below left), that looks like a small peregrine with its moustachial sideburns. It feeds on dragonflies and swallows. All raptors eat other birds and animals as they have done for millions of years, perfectly adapted but only, I hasten to add, to feed

themselves. If they can't feed themselves they die. The only merlin I've ever seen was on Bodmin Moor flying at speed just off the ground.

We humans come into conflict with raptors whenever our desire to make as much money as possible puts them in our firing line. A prime example is the hen harrier (below right) that breeds on the heather moorlands of northern England. The hen harrier nests on the ground and eats small birds and mammals. It has large wings and, like the marsh harrier, quarters the ground low down with legs and talons hanging ready to pounce. Grouse nest on the ground and most gamekeepers don't like hen harriers because they sometimes predate young grouse, and wealthy people pay large sums to shoot grouse. Gamekeepers have always been about killing "pests" and they used to nail their victims on a wooden fence maybe thinking, wrongly, that this would act as a deterrent to other miscreants. Nowadays, however, they are very furtive and conceal their victims because it is illegal to kill most wildlife, certainly raptors. Increasingly, gamekeepers acting illegally are being caught, imprisoned and



www.educationquizzes.com



www.birdguide.com



that less than 20% of racing pigeon losses were down to peregrines. The RPRAs want hard evidence. It has written to every cathedral in England asking for information on pigeon rings

found. But it is not the gamekeepers who should go to jail but rather the landowner who directs his employees and rakes in the cash for shooting grouse. The state of hen harrier populations in this country is so dire that a working group has been trying to come up with a solution that conservationists and landowners can both agree on.

One such solution is to agree a cap on hen harrier numbers on any one estate, leaving sufficient grouse for shooting. It is called brood management and as soon as the cap looks like being reached young hen harriers will be removed, reared in captivity then released in the wild in a different location. On the plus side it is hoped this would extend the hen harrier breeding range and lessen illegal killing. The theory remains to be tested and the Hawk and Owl Trust has entered into an agreement with Defra to conduct a 5-year trial of brood management on the basis of certain provisos – one being that if a moorland owner is found to have interfered with or persecuted a hen harrier on their estate, the Trust will pull out from its involvement with the trial. Vested monied interests have the support of several conservative MPs, like Owen Patterson the former conservative Environmental Secretary, so the risks are high.

Raptors are always coming up against monied interests such as global agrochemical firms like Syngenta and Bayer selling pesticides and herbicides, grouse shooting moors, and the Royal Pigeon Racing Association (RPRAs), to name a few currently in the news. They are shot, poisoned and trapped. For example peregrines, having just managed to survive DDT organochloride poisoning (a pesticide so slow to break down it is still found on every continent in the fat layers of animals), once again pigeon fanciers are campaigning against peregrines because they do sometimes predate their prize birds. The RSPB carried out a study a few years ago that concluded

found in nest boxes on cathedrals. Chichester has refused so far to talk to the RPRAs but Derby is one cathedral that has agreed, so one assumes others will be weighing up the balance of working with the RPRAs.

Both sparrowhawks and peregrines are implicated in racing pigeon kills from data in the existing records. But money of course is behind this as it is betting and winnings that are driving this conflict with very large bets being placed on pigeon racing and birds changing hands at high prices. I can understand owners caring deeply for their birds, but once released surely they have to take the consequences. Peregrines home as well and will quickly return to their territory if anything like trapping and relocating were considered a valid solution. In any case they distribute themselves very widely, as seen with peregrines moving into towns and cities. The Queen is reported to be an avid pigeon fancier and is patron of the RPRAs. So I'm afraid it is money that talks and the value of nature has a tough fight on its hands.

Happily I can report that our local peregrines are raising three chicks this year and it is the fifth year that the same falcon has bred here successfully. Both birds share the parenting, very delicately tearing off morsels of meat and placing them in the mouths of their young one at a time. Soon the young will fledge and move away to face their own dangers, but hopefully to nest on a rocky cliff or on a tall building in the centre of a busy city. Most people will look up in awe at the flight of a peregrine but may not even notice a passing flock of pigeons. But of course the racing pigeon connoisseur will look up anxiously at both the peregrine and the passing flock.

www.thecharterhouseoflife.co.uk

Signs of the times

by Forum member Michael Tanner

Like many of you, I live in the affluent suburb of an affluent town in one of the most affluent and influential parts of this affluent country and not infrequently suspect that this might not be a good starting point for making observations about the human condition. I am writing this in early May, and in just over five days the dust of general and local elections will have settled enough for us all to see a little more clearly where we are heading. I wonder what consensus the current crop of comedians will arrive at: the best of them certainly have penetrating insights before they are exhausted and resort to producing the quick and dirty laugh.

From my home, the university, the hospital, the Research Park and the Sports Park are all about a mile. Hectares of impeccable turf, avenue upon avenue of choice trees and shrubs, carp-filled ponds, grace their precincts. The superstore is discretely positioned, the railway invisible, the Guildford Bypass out of sight, though not out of sound. Just past the western limits of Alexander Fleming Road, with its neat apartments and shaved verges, the earth-moving machines rest like models of dinosaurs, their day not yet over.

Walking in early spring across those manicured stretches of green turf, through a fine drizzle, I put a huge flock of gulls to flight. They had been resting, but now became a whirling blizzard, something to dominate, mesmerize the mind – like that myriad of ideas that the human mind conveniently coagulates into 'tions' and 'isms' the better to control them, file them away into convenient boxes. Seeing where and when I was and the drift of my thoughts, the metaphor was almost inevitable: universities, research parks, hospitals, imminent elections: inspiration, aspiration, perspiration, desperation, socialism, liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, nimbyism, et ad infinitum. The Green Movement

seems not yet to have acquired an 'ism', a good sign perhaps.

But, of course, there were other starting points to this train of thought, e.g. certain signs all round the hospital and one 'Ya Boo!' response to these signs. I refer especially to

'No smoking beyond this point

This Hospital operates a strict no smoking policy to promote better health'

and to the hundreds, sometimes thousands (no exaggeration) of fag-ends strewn on verges and borders a metre or two beyond it. Other starting points could include the current revelation that we who deliberately chose, 15 or more years ago, to drive diesel-powered cars had been falsely persuaded that diesel was less toxic than unleaded petrol. We did not then know that laboratory tests and road conditions produced quite contrary indications.

But my anxieties are by no means solely fuelled by the part vulnerable science may play in our choices between smoking/non smoking, driving petrol or diesel, eating this or that, the quick fix or the properly thought-out and probably painful therapy. They are fuelled much more by something ill-defined in our societal nature, that allows greed and power in their various guises to obfuscate the truth that most human beings are otherwise capable of discerning for themselves.

Whom, therefore, do we blame and who will bear our shortcomings into the desert? Whatever its colour, my flag would proclaim the end to crass advertising, the failure of media effectively to shoulder moral responsibility, its/their corruption of the young, and the end of blind belief in the economists' version of growth in the areas of commerce and industry. Just possibly, in the lead-up to the imminent elections there has emerged a recognition of what is really missing from manifestos (and that isn't simply the statistics to fund the promises).

So, we lurch onwards towards The World Climate Summit, in December, in Paris. I haven't heard much about that recently from the hustings. Copenhagen was a disastrous let-down. Now, thanks to continued research and a string of natural disasters we are much better informed, but do we have the moral strength and the appetite for the inevitable sacrifice? Keeping up appearances has become our outstanding and potentially fatal talent.



Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future.

Join us in our work for the town and have this newsletter posted to your door four times a year. Forum membership costs only £10 per year or £15 for a couple, and new members are warmly welcomed.

Please contact Adrian Thompson on 01483 222687 or e-mail adrianthompson46@talktalk.net



CALENDAR

All the Forum's Group meetings are open to the public



Saturday 4 July

Pewley Down Pyramidal Orchid Count

organised by Pewley Down Volunteers. Last year we counted 4,782.

Meet at 1000 on Pewley Down.

Monday 6 July

GEF Biodiversity Group. Lizzie Croose, Mustelid Conservation Officer for The Vincent Wildlife Trust: **"The Return of the Masked Mustelid"** about polecat recovery in Britain. 1900. Guildford Institute, Ward Street, Guildford. *Please note different venue from usual.*

Saturday 1 August

Pewley Down Chalkhill Blue Butterfly Count

organised by Pewley Down Volunteers. Last year we counted 3,411.

Meet at 1000 on Pewley Down.

Sunday 6 September

We will be **apple pressing at National Trust Winkworth Arboretum's "Live Local Love Winkworth"** event.

Please come and help or support Transition Guildford. Bring your apples and plastic bottles. 1100 to 1600. Contact John Bannister, 01483 570468.

Tuesday 8 September

Transition Guildford with Surrey Wildlife Trust:

Scything course for beginners and improvers with Mark Allery. This is the fifth year we have run these very popular courses, at Rosamund Community Garden near Longdown Road. 1000 to 1600. Contact Louise Shorthose on 01372 379509 or John Bannister on 01483 570468.

Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 October

We will be **apple pressing at the Surrey Hills Wood Fair, Birtley House, Bramley.**

Lots of events here. Bring your apples and plastic bottles and take home your juice.

10.00 Contact John Bannister, 01483 570468.

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

Chair / Biodiversity – Raymond Smith

7 Felday, Holmbury St Mary, Dorking, RH5 6NJ
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Vice Chair – Damien Short

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Transport – Alastair Atkinson

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Waste and Recycling – Position vacant

(Contact Raymond Smith: see Chair's details above)

Sustainable Building – Position vacant

(Contact Raymond Smith: see Chair's details above)

Community Projects – John Bannister

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Tel: 01483 570468 E-mail: johnw.bannister@virgin.net

Schools – John Bannister

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Treasurer – Adrian Thompson

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Membership – Position vacant

(Adrian Thompson pro tem: see Treasurer details above)

Newsletter – Clare Windsor

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Please send contributions for the next issue to Clare Windsor by Monday 10 August.

The views expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of its contributors and Guildford Environmental Forum.