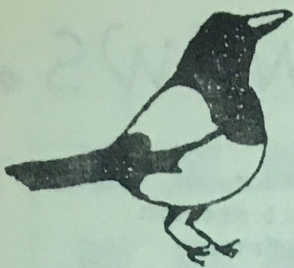


Newsletter of the Manchester Wildlife Group



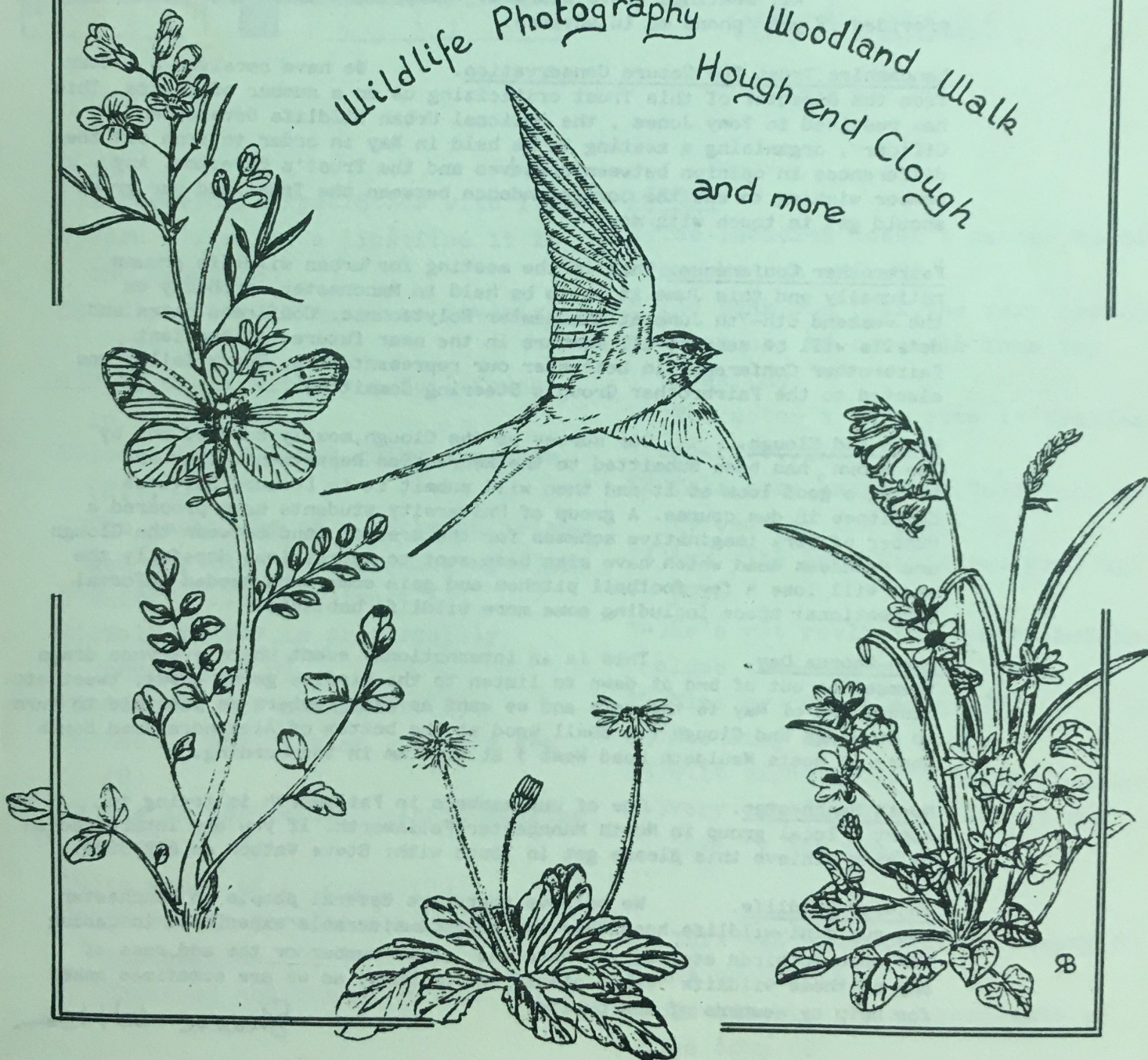
The Magpie

Number 5

Spring 1987

In this issue

Wildlife Photography Woodland Walk
Hough end Clough
and more



NEWS... NEWS... NEWS... NEWS.

Incorporation.

We are at long last registered as a company limited by guarantee. Copies of our rules are available to all members on receipt of 50p and an S.A.E. I will summarise the most important aspects of the rules for our Summer newsletter. For the present the following are the officers of our group: Shaun Wilson (Chair), Rex Turner (Vice-Chair), Marie Turner (Treasurer), and Rachel Harvi (Secretary).

Meetings. All members are welcome to our monthly meetings at which they are entitled to vote. Days other than Thursday have been chosen to encourage members who find other weekdays more convenient:

Wednesday 29th April at 59 Park Road, Stretford

Tuesday 26th May at 82 Crantock Drive, Heald Green

Wednesday 24th June at 13 Ruskin Avenue, Rusholme

All meetings above start at 7.30pm. Transport can usually be provided if you 'phone me in advance.

Lancashire Trust For Nature Conservation.

We have received a letter from the Director of this Trust criticizing us on a number of points. This has resulted in Tony Jones, the national Urban Wildlife Development Officer, organising a meeting to be held in May in order to iron out the differences in opinion between ourselves and the Trust's Director. Any member wishing to see the correspondence between the Trust and our group should get in touch with me.

Fairbrother Conference. This is the meeting for urban wildlife groups nationally and this June it is to be held in Manchester, probably on the weekend 6th-7th June at Manchester Polytechnic. Confirmed dates and details will be sent to all members in the near future. At the last Fairbrother Conference in Leicester our representative, Unity Kelly, was elected to the Fairbrother Group's Steering Committee.

Hough End Clough.

Our survey of the Clough, mostly carried out by Ian Brown, has been submitted to the Recreation Department. They are having a good look at it and then will submit it to Leisure Services Committee in due course. A group of University students have prepared a number of very imaginative schemes for the area of land between the Clough and Princess Road which have also been sent to Recreation. Hopefully the area will lose a few football pitches and gain some much needed informal recreational space including some more wildlife habitats.

Dawn Chorus Day.

This is an international event where everyone drags themselves out of bed at dawn to listen to the birdies going tweet, tweet etc. Sunday 3rd of May is the date and we want as many members as possible to turn up at Hough End Clough (a small wood at the bottom of Alexandra Road South where it meets Mauldeth Road West) at 4.00 am in the morning.

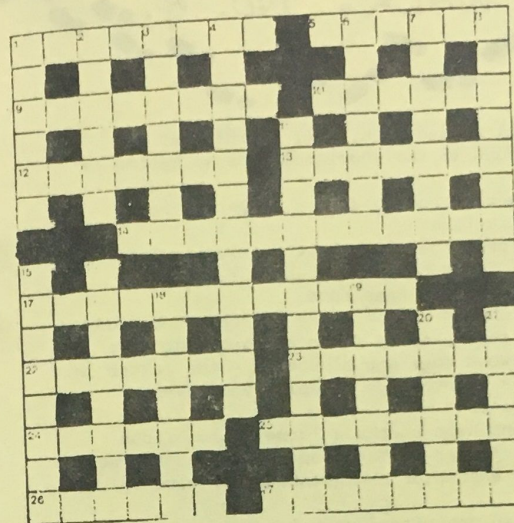
North Manchester.

One of our members in Failsworth is trying to start a local group in North Manchester/Failsworth. If you are interested in helping achieve this please get in touch with: Steve Watson on 682 3579.

Injured Wildlife.

We believe there are several people in Manchester who run mini-wildlife hospitals and have considerable experience in caring for injured birds etc. If you have the 'phone number or the address of any of these wildlife "vets" please let us know, as we are sometimes asked for help by members of the public.

Shaun Wilson



A Wildlife (mostly)

Crossword!

by Mike Savage.

No prizes ~ answers
next issue.

DOWN

- 1) A commercial spot? Stick with it. (6)
- 2) Turn a fish on a line; find it in the grass. (6)
- 3) Oddly cheap, it makes me liverish. (7)
- 4) Note stock, without a foil; found in 11. (5,7)
- 6) Location 23 - not going anywhere. (2,1,3)
- 7) The genealogy of a backward Irishman may take some digging up. (3,5)
- 8) Daisy is. Timothy isn't. (8)
- 11) Talk, Beatty, is proverbially complex. (6,6)
- 15) Cutters for a rambler. (8)
- 16) Meet a shy juggler - he's a gem (8)
- 18) Use it for walls - pebble-dashing? (7)
- 19) It would if it could! (7)
- 20) In rabbit territory, it might be distasteful. (6)
- 21) Hardened and ruined, ruined. (6)

ACROSS

- 1) The location doesn't matter to his eye; he ran off. (8)
- 5) The peak, the peak, the very peak (3,7)
- 9) A measure of tar, made from two tubes. (8)
- 10) The motor's favourite is trodden underfoot. (6)
- 12) Take some kangaroos, Teddy, and get to bed for the night. (7)
- 13) Lax with loot? Can't you grow up? (7)
- 14) He's got revolting habits, but he's close to Mummy's heart. (6,6)
- 17) Mint or cornsalad? (5,7)
- 22) Standing above a step. (7)
- 23) 6! It might get its talon in. (3,4)
- 24) Very ungodly types (non-U) may live by the sea. (6)
- 25) Yuri was; alternatively, twenty (8)
- 26) Me or Red? (6)
- 27) Sounds like 'e yearned; must be tied down. (8)

WILDLIFE WHERE YOU WALK. No. 4.

The History of Hough End Clough.

This is a marvellous well wooded park, full of interest and variety. Much of the wildlife interest is found in the woodlands here so Spring is the best time to do this walk.

1. The entrance here gives access to a very pleasant track running parallel to Princess Road known as Gib Lane.

2. Just where the lane forks the grass here is usually left to grow as a meadow and in a good year you will see hundreds of cuckoo flower in amongst the grasses. Take the left fork and enter Gib Lane Wood.

3. This mainly oak woodland is not as dense as the other woods in the park so enabling more light to reach the woodland floor and encourage the growth of wild flowers such as red campion, wood sage and bluebells - the latter in enough numbers to rival any wood found in the countryside. Keeping your eyes peeled continue along the lane until you come to:

4. A small, neglected pond here sports a large stand of our native iris (yellow flag) which should be in flower in May despite the considerable shade cast by the trees. The tiny flowers of enchanter's nightshade can also be found near the pond.

5. Turn right here down an unsurfaced path leading away from Princess Road. Hedge Garlic can be found hereabouts and the wood as a whole is alive with birds. I have not spotted any rarities but it is nice to see the usual garden visitors in their natural habitat. Turn left when you reach the next path.

6. This path will lead you out of the wood. You should then turn right onto another track which you follow over the brook and along its southern bank.

7. The scene here is pleasantly rural - the grass is left unmown at the sides of the brook, which is bordered by large hawthorns (in blossom in late Spring). You will find a few more wild flowers here such as speedwell and cow parsley. Unfortunately the rest of the brook sides further along are not so interesting, so it is best to head for:

8. Here you can turn right onto a road which can be followed to the greenhouses by taking the first left. As you enter the greenhouse driveway bear right and you will shortly reach a series of small lakes bordering Mere Wood. There is a small selection of wildfowl here including swans and coots. (9).

10. Nan Nook Wood is the only other wood to which the public are allowed access. There are several tracks leading to it but it is quite a distance and is too shady to support any woodland plants - although I did find two Welsh poppies on its perimeter ! If you can get to it you will appreciate the contrast between this wood and Gib Lane Wood. The latter will soon look like Nan Nook Wood with its dense canopy and barren undergrowth unless it is sensitively managed. There are also several ponds in Nan Nook Wood but you will have difficulty finding them due to the neglect they have suffered.

The woodlands in Wythenshawe Park must be amongst the finest in the city. A degree of sensitive management is needed however in order to conserve and improve the woodland flora for future generations to enjoy.

by Shaun Wilson.

Judging by the size of Hough End Clough as drawn on the 1848 O.S. map, it appears that the Clough is the last remnant of a much larger and ancient wood. In 1848, Chorlton Brook was well wooded on either bank from its present eastern limit right up to Hough End Bridge (Nell Lane). A substantial strip stretched northwards and also covered the area now built on as police stables. A pond is also recorded near the present day scout hut. Hough End Hall, built in 1596, was named after the Clough which is evidence of the age and local importance of the wood.

The Clough's most famous mention is recorded in the James Clayton Chorlton Manuscript of 1926. This recounts the adventures of one of Chorlton's ancestors who, when Prince Charles reached Manchester in late November 1745, hid his horses in the Clough to prevent the Jacobites commandeering them. The manuscript states: "The Clough has a stream running through it for about two miles, and was then, and is now, well wooded. The stream in the course of ages has worn the land below the general level about 18 to 20 feet, and this has no doubt at some previous time been caused by the badgers blocking the stream and making little meadows in the Clough covered with lush grass." The horses were hidden in these lower meadows which can still be seen today, although the explanation that badgers caused them is a little eccentric !

A cutting from the Manchester City News of 1889 reveals the pressures mounting up against the Clough. The then owner, Lord Egerton, was offering to give the Clough to the Withington Local Board as long as they maintained it as a public park. The Board declined on the grounds that the brook was too polluted and would need culverting in order to take the rubbish away. Egerton had recently felled two-and-a-half acres of woodland in order to extend Alexandra Road South which had apparently cut off the "best wooded" part from the rest. The then recent railway had also spoilt the area, and the article states: "Although they declined Lord Egerton's offer, he (Alderman Gaddum) hoped that in some way the beautiful trees of the Clough would be preserved. Once destroyed they could never be replaced".

Unfortunately, the 1894 O.S. map shows many irreplaceable trees had indeed been felled in the name of progress. The woodland had been cut back to barely larger than exists today, the pond had disappeared and Alexandra Park railway station built where the garage now stands just east of Alexandra Road South bridge.

History of Hough End Clough cont.

An article in the "City News" in 1912 reminisced about the Clough in the 1880's. It "possessed considerable natural beauties and wild life rare in the vicinity of a great town. I have some recollection of snakes - harmless ones I suppose - having been noticed in it." This article prompted many letters which were reproduced a week later. One stated that the area used to be very boggy as the whole of what became Whalley Range and Moss Side used to be an enormous mossland. Apparently, heather and peat could still be seen near Alexandra Park station - the last remnants of the moss. Hough End had been nicknamed "Ooze End" or "Uzen" as a result.

Another letter quotes one David Dyson, naturalist, writing in 1850: "A famous place for land and freshwater shells is Hough End Clough". The letter continues that, in the 1860's "It was the favourite resort of most of the naturalists and botanists who then lived in Hulme. The brook was then a comparatively clear stream, the haunt of the kingfisher, and occasionally, of the heron, wild ducks, both mallard and teal, being regular visitors. Leo Grindon, in his "Manchester Flora", frequently mentions it as the locality for various species of fungi. In the vicinity of the Clough were hedges of wild rose, and sloe, commonly known as blackthorn; but these have long since vanished." The letter also mentions common lizards, slow - worms and grass snakes.

In the same edition of "City News" a poem written about the Clough in 1870 by Kate Taylor was also reproduced and mentions "Crowds of anemones" which probably meant the woodland floor was covered with our native wood anemone in spring.

The 1933 O.S. map shows Mauldeth Road West for the first time - its construction taking another swathe of woodland with it, whilst constricting the Clough to its present size. An old, undated photograph from John Lloyd's "Looking back at Chorlton - cum - Hardy" (publ. 1986) shows the Clough looking very open and shrubless, which, with the map evidence and the scarcity of extant mature trees shows that very little of the original woodland has survived the impact of the past century's building works.

by Shaun Wilson.

[P]

Car Park

[T]

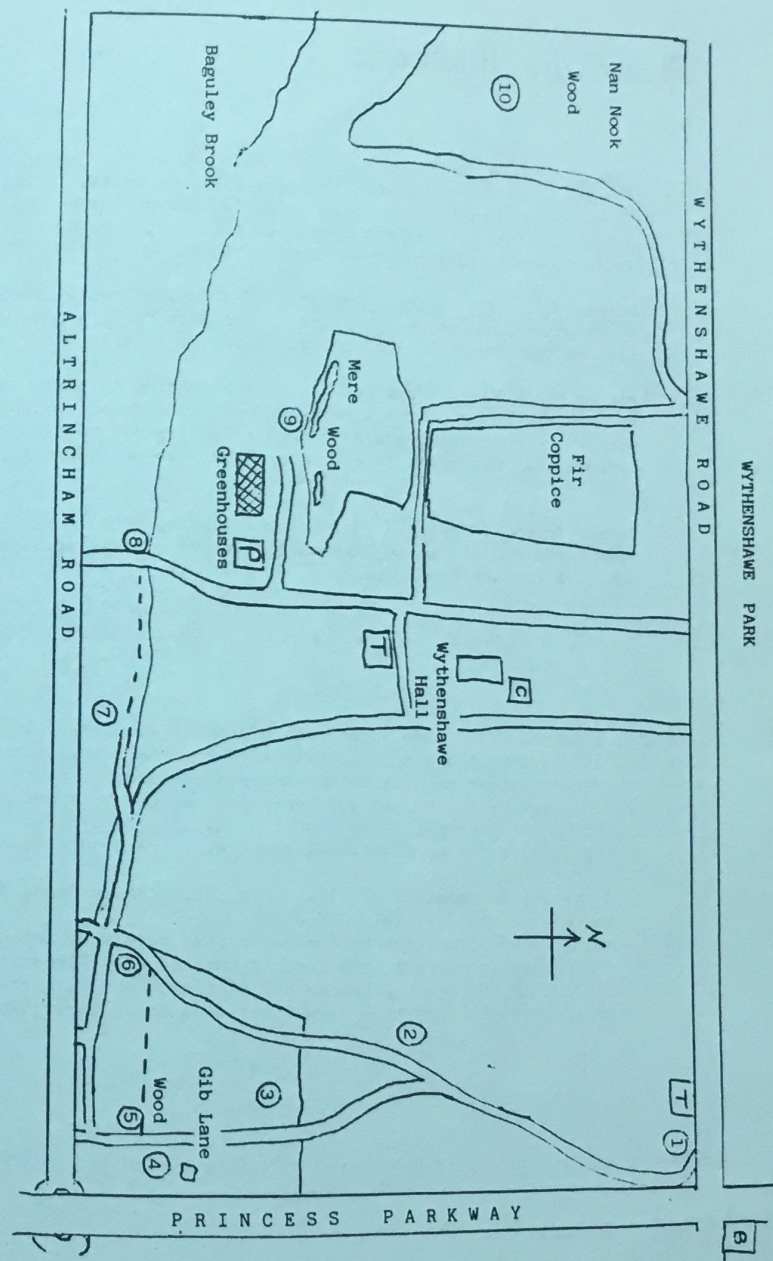
Toilets

[C]

Cafe

[B]

Bus stop



Planning Matters

Hyde Fold Farm, Burnage.

Barn Owls have nested here for many years, until this year when the shed the owls nested in was demolished. As further development is planned here, Ian has persuaded the owners to erect a Barn Owl box in the hope that they will return & much of the greenery is to be retained along the nearby footpath.

Norris Hill Farm, Heaton Norris

The Public Inquiry into the proposed housing development here started on the 24th March and we wish the Four Heaton's Open Space Society the very best of luck in their opposition.

Micker Brook Valley, Cheadle.

Application to build here has been withdrawn because of the strength of public opinion against it. Mr. Blundell, one of the residents, hopes to form a local group to help conserve and improve this important local space. They have our support should they need it.

Curzon Green, Offerton.

A housing development in this area has been postponed and as we have made comments on this application we will be watching further developments.

* * * * *

Manchester Wildlife Group aims to protect places of wildlife interest and provide new wetland, woodland and meadowland habitats in our gardens and local neighbourhoods. At present we depend almost totally on our members' subscriptions to cover our running costs. Members receive the Magpie quarterly and can get help and advice with their wildlife gardens. If you want to know more about the group please contact Shaun Wilson at the address below. Articles, letters etc. are also always welcome.

Copyright Manchester Wildlife Group, 31, Stanley Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 8HS. Tel. 226 2029.

While every effort has been made to make sure that information given in the Magpie is correct, the group cannot be held responsible for any mistake in the text. Likewise any person undertaking any project based on information from this newsletter does so at their own risk.

Manchester Wildlife Group is Registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee
No. 2091456