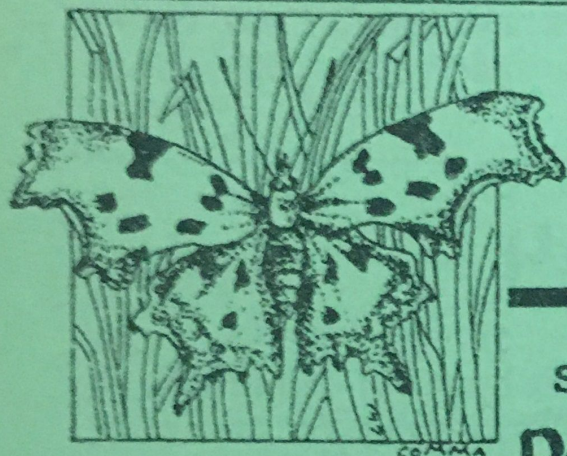


THE MAGPIE

Manchester Wildlife's Official Newsletter

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It's Butterfly Time

STOP PRESS

Bruntwood Meadows Latest

The most recent proposal, by Sainsburys, for development on Bruntwood Hay Meadows was for a superstore of 330,000 sq. ft. with 2000 car parking spaces. This was Sainsburys third try (they already have permission for 250,000 sq. ft.) and as the size was considerably increased we sent in our objection to Stockport Council. The application was refused by the Cheadle Area Committee but at the Development Services Committee the Councillors were minded to approve but referred the matter to the Secretary of State asking him to call a public inquiry. We wrote to Michael Howard, with copies to local MPs, supporting an inquiry but we have just heard that he has decided he will not call one. Stockport planners tell us that, subject to legal requirements, the plan will go ahead. This is bad news for the hay meadows. We knew that Sainsburys did not wish to have the smaller development as they could not fill it themselves and may have had trouble letting off surplus space. With John Lewis as a partner they can fill the larger store; a public inquiry would have delayed matters and there might then have been a chance to save Bruntwood Hay Meadows.

Editorial

Editor's Office 437 7040

At the time of writing we are not sure where this newsletter will be printed. The reason for this is that the Community Resource Unit at Longsight Library, where we have been printing for some time, has been closed by the City Council. We are not sure of the exact reason for this but assume that it is to save money. While appreciating that the council may be short of cash it would seem that the saving would be minimal when it is considered that the benefit of the Resource Unit to community groups was without price. It seems that funding can be raised to stage a chess tournament, which I would have thought to be of limited interest to Mancunians. Why can't such funding be used to finance services which are of vital importance to the community. //

Members' Day

The details of this event are contained in the Members' Day Supplement. There are some changes but we have an interesting programme with two excellent speakers. This will be a must for all who are dedicated urban wildlifers, so:

DON'T MISS IT - MAKE IT A DAY TO REMEMBER

With all the activities taking place our greatest need now is for members to help; making scones and flapjacks, beforehand, but particularly on the day we will need help in setting up, assisting in running the event, organising car parking, helping with refreshments, etc. If you can spare a little of your valuable time contact Unity Kelly (Tel 226 4583), after 14th April; she will be pleased to hear from you. Only with your help can we hope that the day will be a complete success. //

Butterfly Survey 93

Our Butterfly Survey is to continue into 1993. A survey form is included with this newsletter. If you are in any doubt on how to carry out the survey send a Stamped Addressed Envelope (A5 size), marked "Butterfly Survey", to the Editor. //

Please note that all cheques, for membership subscriptions etc., should be made payable to - Manchester Wildlife and sent to the Treasurer, Ian Brown. //

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Roads to Ruin

by Jon MacGregor

The destruction of Twyford Down has received much coverage in the media. Perhaps more so than any other act of destruction of this country's environment and heritage. However, though primed by all of this information, I was still unprepared for the sight of the diggings as I climbed over the fence at 7 am one Saturday. A bright white gash has appeared in one of the country's most beautiful and protected sites. The contrast between the gorgeous music of the dawn chorus and the rumble of the machinery as it awoke with belchings of smoke was continued throughout the day. The birds seemed to be singing more defiantly than ever.

Twyford Down is supposed to be one of the most protected parts of this country. It is an Area of Outstanding National Beauty, it has two Sites of Special Scientific Interest and two Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Yet, despite all this protection, and over twenty years of campaigning against the extension of the M3, the area is being trashed for the sake of cutting five minutes off the journey time between Winchester and Southampton.

The system designed to, supposedly, protect our environment

has been ignored. There has been a catalogue of abuse, for example: appointing environmental consultants after the route was chosen; being "economical with the truth" about where the SSSIs and SAMs are (were); ignoring European Directives on Environmental Impact Assessments. The list goes on, and there is another list of the abuses of the rights of people who have spent years fighting the road.

One of the densest concentrations of motorways in the world is planned for Greater Manchester. Some of the plans are: widening the M6, M63 and M62; extension of the M66 and the Greater Manchester, Western and Northern Relief Road, along with plans for a new road to the airport. Much of this will pass through green belt and quiet rural areas. So, what hope is there for those who doubt the need for these developments? We can campaign, but the Government must be feeling quite secure in the knowledge that it has been able to destroy one of the most highly protected areas in the country. What opposition will come from the destruction of mere greenbelt?

Currently the plans being drawn up for Manchester are all separate. However, when looked at as a whole, it becomes apparent that what is planned is the equivalent of an M25 for the city; a motorway all the way round. What is needed is for the campaigns against each bit of destruction to be co-ordinated. It is vital that people in the south of the city realise they are fighting exactly the same road as those in the north. Without this sort of co-operation, the road lobby will win, and many of the remaining wildlife habitats will disappear, as surely as the great beauty of Twyford Down is now being destroyed. //

A little bit of good news! - There has just been a public inquiry into the proposed Hereford by-pass, which was planned to cross the Lugg Meadows. The inquiry inspector turned down the road as in his opinion it was more important to save an ancient water meadow than to save motorists five minutes on their journey through Hereford. An excellent decision but it will probably not make any difference to the many other damaging road schemes planned for our beautiful countryside. //

A MATTER OF LAW

by John Anthony Turner

Your Treasurer, Ian Brown, and myself attended the public inquiry into the A34 Wilmslow and Handforth Bypass on behalf of Manchester Wildlife in October 1991. One of the issues we advocated was that the scheme would contravene a piece of legislation called the Bern Convention that seeks to protect the habitat of species listed as Appendix II to the convention. Thirty of the birds recorded on the site of Bruntwood Hay Meadows are listed as Appendix II. The scheme would therefore be unlawful to implement. (Britain signed the convention on May 28th 1982 and is therefore obliged to adhere to its provisions.)

The Inspector's Report was made public just before Christmas. For reasons that are not absolutely clear at the moment, the Inspector has not referred to the Bern Convention in his Finding of Facts and has recommended the scheme goes ahead. A complaint has been lodged to the Supervisor to the Inspector Panel at the D.O.E in Bristol and the reply states: "I can do no more than that (referring to my letter) in relation to this particular scheme. Neither am I able to comment on the more general legal point which you mention." A reply to the complaint to the Minister is a long time in coming! Are we having the law of the land abused in the interests of motorists or in the interests of multi-national supermarkets such as Tesco/Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury because they proffered £Xm towards the cost of the roads? Either way, this nation can find little comfort when the law of the land is abused in the interests of the road lobby or commercial greed.

The only salvation would appear to be the EC on requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment on the A34 but their response seems a long time in coming. //

Bike to the Wild

Moss Side to Macclesfield
by Unity Kelly

A rush of blood to the feet on the Monday after Christmas, plus the prospect of a winter sun tan, sent me pointing my 5-speed British Eagle to the south. With nothing more life pre-

serving than a thermos of hot chocolate and a woolly hat, I set off at 11 am. With no definite plan of action, and steering by the sun, I soon reached Stockport, via Levenshulme and the old Manchester Road. By dodging down Sandy Lane I avoided an unfamiliar spaghetti junction and gingerly tried a bit of rough stuff through some fields which brought me to the banks of the rippling River Tame. There is a most confusing array of rivers, new roads and old railways, going every which way. Two very traditional gents guided me over the footbridge (by Tiviot Way) and pointed me up the green hill where I found the famous Brinnington Tunnel, now part of a walkway linking the Tame and Goyt valleys. There is a splendid view of handsome and historic mills and the Goyt looping round old water meadows.

I pointed the bike at the sun and set off down hill, skimming across sheet ice. Picking up a track by the nearest mill, I reached the hectic rush of Stockport Road West. The sounds of foraging goldfinches and the insistent songs of dunnocks and wrens drew my attention to an area of rough meadow - this would be good for butterflies I thought. I've since discovered that this meadow is in the path of the proposed motorway link between Hazel Grove and Denton - sic transit gloria munda - very sic!

Spotting a sign for the valley way, I turned off into the tranquillity of Woodbank Park. This is a fine spacious and hilly park with splendid trees (apparently the road is coming through here too - and the owl filled Crookilley Woods to the north). Following the sinuous curves of the Goyt, overhung by sandstone cliffs, I pressed on into the shade, and the unknown. At this point there was probably a recommended detour but I found myself carrying the bike over fallen trees and balancing on frozen clods across a steep bank. It all added to the sense of exploration! The path eventually settles down into a delightful undulating woodland trail, following the river. Emerging into the sunlight and pausing for a hot drink I waved to a herd of cows. Here must be the real countryside. This delightful woodland meander continues, sometimes high above the river and elsewhere at the water's edge. It was so peaceful, even mysterious, and yet the housing estates were only just behind the row of hills above. A wedge of real farmland, with ancient farmsteads, which separates Bredbury from

Stockport proper. Such green lungs are a priceless asset to any borough until the road lobby gets at them that is! Eventually I came to a foot bridge; the woods went on but instinct took me across and on to a farm lane. This leads to the A626. Adjusting to fast traffic, I realised I had been this way before, but by canoe, finishing a trip above the weir under the Otterpool Bridge.

There is an excellent pub beside the Goyt and I decided I could afford a chili con carne. To my amazement it was only 1.30. Restored, I cycled uphill into Marple and turned off at Rose Hill Station to follow the Middlewood Way. It was the day to do the "Way" at speed as it is not that enthralling on foot. Unlike the Goyt trail, this was "high street" - and a good thing too. Scarlet berries of guelder-rose decorated the banks and flocks of tits and finches were everywhere. There was a lovely view across to the Cage at Lyme Park and the hills beyond. Should I try to cycle across to Disley or via Poynton Coppice to the Bollin and Styal? The railway cutting became shady so I moved up to the canal tow path and rattled along past the hedgerows and fields and into picturesque Bollington. Macclesfield Groundwork is busy doing good works here encouraging people to explore the canalside heritage. A crimson sun gave way to a winter dusk and I realised I needed a bridge if I were to get into Macclesfield and back home. A passing jogger assured me that I could get all the way to Stoke on Trent but at the next canal bridge I exited right and gliding downhill to the station I found a homely local train awaiting. A bargain at £3.20 and it was still only 4.30. Anyone game for the next trip? //

Even Unity's story of her cycle ride reveals the damage to our countryside by new roads. The prospect of a motorway in the presently peaceful Goyt Valley is too horrifying to contemplate. While there is good news from Hereford, too many roads are being pushed through without the benefit of having an Environmental Impact Assessment, especially in areas of proved environmental importance like Twyford Down and Oxleas Wood. The Department of Transport are the promoters of road schemes and they also give themselves permission to build those same roads; a bit like the City Council giving planning permission to build on their own land! More on this anon. //

Manchester Wildlife - Your Winning Team

On February the 23rd we took part in the third Mersey Valley Countryside Quiz and, with an unchanged team of Unity Kelly, David Bishop, Anthony Phelps and Ian Brown, emerged in the winning position for the third consecutive year. Two easily confused teams, Harry's Trousers and Son of Harry's Trousers, both conservation volunteers, were second and fourth; third were the Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the Try Hards, a three person team of mixed origin, tried hard but came last.

The fact that only five teams took part could mean that some have been put off by our domination of the event. If so, then the fact that we have retired from the event may be good news and we hope that there will be a big turn out of teams for 1994. We have volunteered to set the questions; this could prove to be more difficult than competing. It was heartening to discover that the team we beat into second place in 1992, the Lyme Park Wardens, used to be regular winners of the Cheshire Rangers Countryside Quiz.

Community Forest Awards

All this success came only a few days after discovering that we were winners of the Barclays Community Forest Award for the Red Rose Forest. Our Entry was for woodland management work and our bodging and chair making enterprise which was supported by photographs of bodging in action and chairs, stools and other turned items. There was one award for each of the 12 Community Forests and the presentation took place at the Barbican Centre in London. Chris Baines was there to do the honours and Manchester Wildlife was represented by Ian Brown and Anthony Phelps. An enjoyable time was had by all in the Conservatory, which was rather like an indoor tropical rain forest and appropriate for the occasion. //

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