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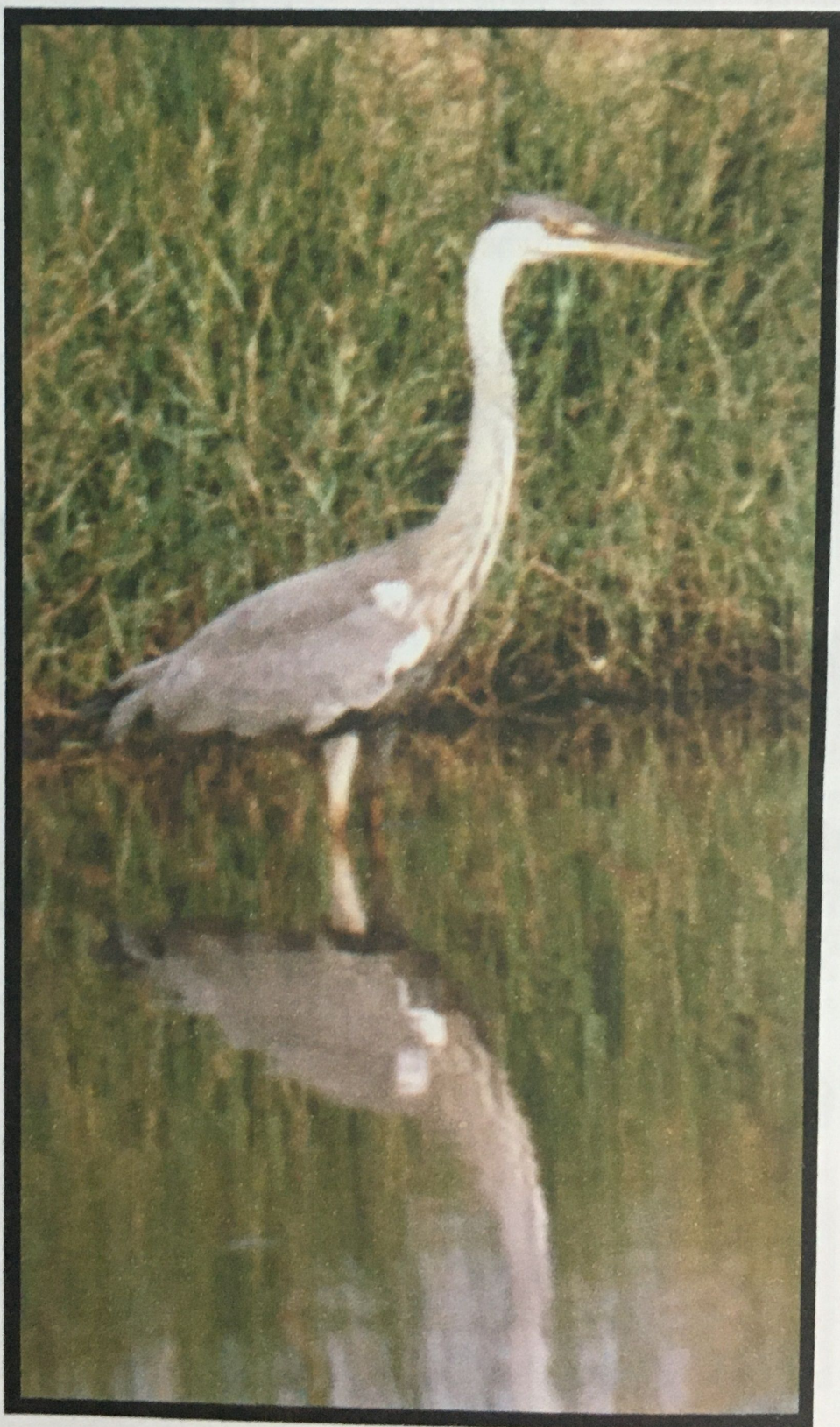


**"The Excellent Newsletter
of Manchester Wildlife"**

*John Vidal, Environment
Correspondent, The Guardian*

50th Edition - Summer 2001

Magpie



Editorial

I feel that the 50th issue of Magpie is cause for some celebration. Who would have thought, back in 1986, that we would have come this far. As a special treat, we have decided to bring you a colour edition (members only), in the hope that it will bring a little brightness to your day. This will probably not happen again as, even using the least expensive method of colour printing (inkjet, straight from the computer) it's fairly expensive and, more importantly, very slow. I even had to buy a



Send in
YOUR Story

Editor's Office 0161-437 7040

new printer to achieve an acceptable quality. I hope you like it. All the Colour photographs were taken on Bruntwood Meadows by myself.

We have a good variety of articles, for your interest, including much on Global Warming and its symptoms, and a few historical stories so that newer members can get an idea of what we get up to in our spare time. So, without more ado, I will let you get on with your reading.

Future Forests

This subject had an airing in Magpies 48 & 49. We have recently learnt that F1 motor racing operates a policy of planting trees to absorb the CO₂ created by its activities. This, as suggested in Magpie 48, could be to ease their conscience; assuming they have one.



We claim that this newsletter is printed on recycled paper. On this occasion, in order to obtain a good quality of print, on the cover page, we have used a quality inkjet paper. The remaining pages are of recycled paper.



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

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HEDGEHOGS

by Anthony Phelps

I don't usually see many hedgehogs - in fact, it's been several years since I've had a sighting. However, during the first Bank Holiday weekend in May, I saw two, one on the Sunday, and another on the Monday.

On the Sunday, I was strolling through Southern Cemetery, and saw this shape, which is really quite distinctive. I spent some time with this hog, gathering slugs and worms, and gradually getting to the point where it ate my offerings almost as soon as I'd placed them in front of its nose, rather than staying stationary until I'd moved a distance away. I really can't resist stroking hedgehog's noses - such a difference from the sharpness of the spines on their backs. If you've never heard one searching for food, and eating, it's quite an experience, as they are such noisy beggars, snuffling around as if they're searching for a handkerchief - I suppose they don't really need to hide and be quiet, as they are quite well protected.

On the Monday, I was just turning into Clyde Road for home, at about 5.00 pm - it was still light - and there was another hog walking up the drive of the large house on the corner. Just like buses - wait several years, and a couple turn up together!



The latest thing, according to my friend at work who heard the news article, is drunken hedgehogs. She was telling me about how she'd been setting out slug traps laced with copious amounts of (cheap) beer, as she's keen to do things the organic way, and, after hearing this news item, was worried that she might have been the cause, or at least one of the causes of this phenomenon.

I'd heard of other species which, whilst not necessarily managing to feed in Wilmslow, still find themselves intoxicated - butterflies and even elephants - which found themselves in this state through feeding on naturally fermenting fruit. However, I'd not had reports of hedgehogs before, as they are not fruit eaters.

All I could think of is that, they'd found the hog equivalent of a fast food outlet, with the food already pre-marinated, and simply tucked in. At least it'll save my friend from having to pick out the drowned slugs from her beer traps!

If you see any hogs, sleeping, and perhaps snoring in a state of intoxication, please let me know.

GLOBAL WARMING

the end of wildlife as we know it?

by Pauline
Hocking

95% of world scientists are convinced - global warming is a fast unfolding fact. Sea levels are rising, glaciers are melting back, the Arctic ice is full of holes, the Antarctic is losing big chunks of itself and the costs of world weather catastrophes crash through record upon record upon record.

Incredible but yes, there are sceptics. President Bush is pally with a good few. They're well researched because rich oil companies don't seem to mind backing their studies and are optimistic, even excited by the results. "The future will be more fertile thanks to global warming", smiles the Climate Coalition and encourages environmental inaction.

But most intergovernmental scientific bodies paint a grimmer picture, each new set of predictions out-shocking the last. On January the 22nd, 2001, the UN reported that, in the worst case, sea levels could rise by 88 cm (34½ in) by 2100 making tens of millions of people homeless in China, Bangladesh, the Nile delta and other low lying regions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts the Arctic could soon be completely ice-free in summer. It also reports that, if the West Antarctic ice sheets melted, the sea levels would rise to such an extent that, in this area, only the pinnacle of Manchester's CIS building would be above water.

Of course, there's the theory that global warming could actually turn off the ocean current which feeds the Gulf Stream, leading to a possible ice-age. This is used by the sceptics as justification for inaction, yet, whichever climatic direction we're eventually heading in, change will be of a like that civilisation has never lived through and that intricate ecosystems are already not withstanding.

What will be the implications for wildlife? Scientists have already documented links between climate change and impacts in over 420 habitats. Alpine plants, in Europe, are moving between three and 12 feet higher each decade. These examples have to be just the tip of a titanic iceberg?

I remember the first time I suggested to someone that global warming would provoke massive species loss. The person felt that the impact would be minimal, if not negligible, and that chemical farming, invasion of habitats, human warfare, amongst others, were much greater threats. I agree we have all these but contend that global warming will be, and is, the biggest threat of all; the proverbial straw that will break the last integral thin threads holding our ecosystems together.

Just take ocean ice, which is gradually changing in form. All species which depend on it, to access feeding grounds, are thrown into confusion. We currently witness thousands of seal cubs stranded off the northern coast of Russia. Polar Bears are savaging bins in Northern Canadian towns, despite their fear of humans, because they are desperate.

Hundreds of thousands of species, including humans, are affected by the higher than usual ice thaws, and heavy rain, lifting the waters of the River Yem (Siberia) two metres above its norm.

Let us also consider that oceans need to warm, only slightly, for certain species of fish to be unable to breed (e.g. North Sea Cod), thus throwing the whole food web, that depends on those fish, into decline. Coral goes brown, brittle and dies with warmer temperatures and, therefore, all coral reefs must be seen as currently under threat.

Many of those who study climate change, and its effects on life, do so in a linear rather than a complex fashion. The aforementioned Climate Coalition isolate a crop and use computer models to project how it will fare in CO₂ rich climate and shout, "hurrah", when it demonstrates greater leaf growth. Yet an exploration, using simple logical thought, reveals the more complex effects and knock on effects of global warming, on life's wondrous web, is enough to indicate the all pervasive nature of the damage and the need to ring alarm bells and state unequivocally that something has to change.

The situation cannot be overstated. Emissions today are dictating the climatic conditions eighteen years hence, such is the time lag, and they are at a record high. The oceans have so far offset about half of the temperature rise of the last century but have almost reached absorption capacity and negative feedback, such as extra methane released by the extra heat from geological strata, obliterates any positive feedback at a rate of 3 to 1.

A new age of even more powerful "greenhouse" chemicals are being thrown on the market every day, with no checks or controls from a global warming point of view, such as HCFCs - the gasses used, as propellants, to replace the ozone gobbling CFCs. Business, life and humanity's general view of the future carries on almost as before. The "market" increasingly determines our lives, and all "higher" decision making, and therefore a halt on the exploitation of the earth's resources, because of global warming, is not possible since it conflicts with economic (financial - Ed) interests.

This is a world emergency, and emergency measures ought to be the order of the day of the type which would halt the stranglehold of the market influence on human activity. Indeed, I believe that the market can no longer be the determining factor and all material, and economic resources, modern technology and human thought should be concentrated into the development of new sustainable trading systems, or lack of them, that might support quality of life with minimal, or no, environmental impact. A call to democratise the big corporations - we cannot control what we do not own - is one that some anti-globalisation protesters believe could be a massive leap in the direction of sanity, in our global affairs and the hope that, though global warming can now not be avoided, its severity can be minimised.

THE GREAT MILLENNIAL FLOODS

by
David
Bishop

"Global warming: It's with us now" (Guardian headline, 31.10.2000)
The autumn of 2000 and the winter of 2000/1 have seen much rain and large areas under water. There have been serious floods in the South East, the Midlands, the Welsh Marches and Yorkshire. Michael Meacher has blamed "global warming", because of elevated CO₂ levels in the atmosphere, for these catastrophes, but with the recent protests over fuel prices, it admirably suits his purpose to do so. The day I hear any politician say anything sensible (or truthful) about anything to do with the environment (or science or technology, for that matter) I will expect imminent aerial porcine phenomena! Does Mr Meacher really believe in global warming? The minds of politicians are so infinitely devious that it is impossible to answer such a question! For that matter, do scientists believe in global warming? An article in the Observer (5.11.2000) suggests that it may be difficult to separate out the effects of elevated CO₂ from the natural "noise". Dr Andy Baker of Newcastle University is quoted as saying, "We have shown that nature is able to repeat current events without the help of global warming", but further increases in global temperature, "could exaggerate the natural variations and could create even more severe bouts of flooding." The natural variations referred to are believed to be driven by changes in the sun's activity; the most recent and dramatic manifestation of which was the Little Ice Age which lasted from the late sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, and hence the World definitely is warming up from that low. On the other hand, Dr Mike Hulme at East Anglia University states, "There is no way that these fluctuations are being caused only by warming after the Little Ice Age. That is quite insufficient to explain the weather changes we have seen since the 1980s. Only the input of greenhouse gases, and in particular CO₂, can account for the things that we have experienced recently." I suppose that both of these gentlemen agree that pumping the atmosphere full of CO₂ is a bad thing - what they disagree about is timescales.

So, global warming may have a role to play now (and certainly will have in the future) - rainfall levels may be elevated as a result of a warmer atmosphere, but I think that the real culprit is more mundane and more insidious and you'll rarely see it mentioned by the mass media or invoked by politicians. This real culprit is land drainage. Over the last couple of hundred years, this island, on the damp fringe of the Atlantic and notorious for its rainfall, has been turned, from a sort of water-absorbing sponge, to a steeply pitched roof. From the Middle Ages onwards, huge efforts have been made to drain the low-lying areas of the British Isles, with varying amounts of success. During the Nineteenth Century the introduction of new technology, such as steam pumps, meant that a real impression could be made on really wet areas, such as the

Fens, the Mosses of North West England, the Lincolnshire Carrs etc., etc. During the Twentieth Century, and particularly after the Second World War, the technology became really sophisticated and, because drainage was unquestioningly seen as, "a good thing", every square centimetre got drained, whether it needed to be or not. Add to this the vast areas of land which have been covered by bricks, tarmac and concrete, and the land just doesn't hold water any more. During times of low rainfall, the water just runs off into the sea and the numerous reservoirs, which disfigure our uplands, just can't hold enough (anyone remember the droughts of 1995?). During periods of high rainfall, such as this autumn and winter, the constrained and straitjacketed watercourses can't cope with their fast-flowing burden and so, burst their banks. Particularly at risk, of course, are the new developments within flood-plains. Building within flood-plains is a practice so perniciously stupid and greedy that it almost beggars belief! I can't resist including this priceless quote from Pierre Williams of the House Builders' Confederation, "Developers can only put in planning applications, they cannot decide where houses are built,..." "It is up to [councils] to assess the flood risk with the help of the Environment Agency (!)" (Guardian, 1.11.2000). As we all know, when developers say "jump", council planning departments say "how high?" so it looks like no one is responsible for building in flood-plains!

Oh yes, and, "...a new planning policy guidance note from the Department of the Environment, likely to be issued in four months, will not ban flood plain development outright. Housebuilders have successfully argued that this would force up the price of land in risk-free areas..." (Observer Business Section, 5.11.2000). Phew! For a minute there, I thought that Developer's profits might be at risk, rather than just ordinary people's lives and property!

One of the best books available on land drainage is, "Taming the Flood" by Jeremy Purseglove (Channel 4 Books for Oxford University Press, 1988). Mr Purseglove is an "insider"; he worked, for ten years, as a Senior Landscape Architect, for the Severn-Trent Water Authority. His book, and the Channel 4 series that went with it, grew out of his experience in that role. The book is an encyclopaedia of British wetlands and a history of their management over the centuries (it would be nice to see a new edition of this book, one which brings the story up to date and examines the role of the Environment Agency). The book doesn't, explicitly, link drainage to flooding but it strongly implies that a link exists; here is a relevant passage:

"In 1984-5 the Government,....., directed that urban flood alleviation take precedence over agricultural drainage. But,....., with local political control of land drainage still remaining firmly in the hands of influential farmers, environmentalists should not be too optimistic... The need and will to tame the flood lie deep in the heart of agriculture, and farmers are well aware that they have in their hands a neat knot of issues concerning the fate of the man in the flooded street, as well as the profit of the man in the undrained field. This is a knot that their opponents will

have difficulty in untying. Rivers do not conveniently cease to flow and flood at the point where urban interests give way to agricultural land. It is always entertaining to hear agricultural drainage men dreaming up epithets such as "flood alleviation" to give a more acceptable image to their activities. "Please do all you can", announced the Association of Drainage Authorities, following the major axing of agricultural drainage in 1985, to spread the word that land drainage means safety from flooding and starvation" (!)

More recently Sarah Fowler, of the RSPB, was more forthright. Noting that 15,000 homes are to be built on the flatlands of Cambridgeshire, she commented, "This will produce more concrete and hard surfaces leading to massive water run-offs, raising the likelihood of more flooding." She also noted that the problems were compounded by the Ministry of Agriculture's encouragement of intensive farming which led to the drainage of wetlands in low-lying areas. "These floodplain wetlands were a safety valve and we've replaced them with houses and under-drained (sic -?) farmland, ...so we have much higher flood peaks in a much shorter time-scale because there is nowhere for the water to go." (Guardian, 1.11.2000).

I think that the really pernicious problem with "development" and "improvement" is that we, very rapidly, forget what we have lost. A famous author, on the British countryside, pointed out to me, a few years ago, that few people now remember what the countryside, with its hay meadows, woods, old trees and hedges, was really like before agricultural "improvement" took off, after the War. Likewise, we have also forgotten the water-holding capacity of that countryside; consider the following:

In his book, "Country Rambles and Manchester Walks and Wild Flowers" (my edition is dated 1882 but the "Country Rambles" part was first published in the late 1850s) the botanist, Leo Grindon wrote this account of the "Mosses" (ie peat bogs) of Lancashire and Cheshire:

"Owing to their immense capacity for absorption, many mosses swell into mounds higher than the surrounding country, as happens at Carrington; and after heavy rains this enlargement is so increased that distant objects are concealed from view until evaporation and drainage have caused subsidence to the original level. Before Ashton Moss (between Droylesden and Ashton-under-Lyne) was drained, trees and houses were often lost to view for many days, by persons residing on the opposite side."

Ashton Moss appears to have been drained in about 1843 and now, I believe, has had a superstore built on it! Carrington Moss lasted longer until it finally succumbed to the "improvers"; the Altrincham naturalist, T.A.Coward wrote a fascinating, if harrowing, account of its gradual "reclamation", spanning the years 1884 to 1921, in his book, "Bird Haunts and Nature Memories" (1922).

Incidentally, Leo Grindon did not regret the loss of the mosses and other wet habitats - in this he was a typical Victorian. In his "The

Manchester Flora" (1859) he describes the loss of Baguley Moor, on which grew the Marsh Gentian: "This beautiful plant (the gentian) formerly grew in abundance on Baguley Moor, a place once famous among botanists, but now converted by the plough into productive farmland, and serving greater and wider uses... To some it is a cause of regret that rich botanizing grounds like Baguley Moor should be taken away; but nothing can be lamentable which is productive of benefit to the whole community. The right onward furrow of a generous utility is more to be admired than the bloom of a thousand gentians."

But it wasn't just in the North West that all this drainage went on. My parents live in Cambridgeshire, on the edge of the Fens. Not far from their house is a vast, empty, black prairie, which is marked on the Ordnance Survey map as, "Whittlesey Mere". This mere was once the largest inland lake in England - greater in area than Windermere but only about 2m deep. Adjacent to this large stretch of open water was a raised bog called, Holme Fen. Whittlesey Mere was drained, in 1851, by local landowners using a steam pump. The next year an iron post (reputed to be from the Great Exhibition) was sunk into the peat of Holme Fen, such that its top was flush with the surface. In the intervening years the peat has dried out so much that the post is now completely exposed. A notice, next to the post, reads: "The men who saw the last of Whittlesey Mere were standing 13ft above your head!"

The relentless draining of the Fens carried on into the Twentieth Century and, today, there is very little of the original Fenland landscape left. The ruthlessness of this process is best illustrated by the story of Adventurers Fen, near Ely. Before the Second World War this sizeable remnant of Fenland belonged to the High Tory Wildfowler, J.Wentworth-Day. In his book, "The History Of The Fens" (1954) he described how he took his rich Tory friends (many of them landowners) shooting over the Fen in the 1930's. During the War the County Agricultural Executive Committee decided to drain and plough the Fen and none of Wentworth-Day's influential friends could save it. He could only rage, ineffectually, "Is the world any better for this change in my fen, or in the ten thousand acres of other fens which they have drained, burned, grubbed up, and cultivated during the War? Materially, yes. Spiritually, no. Economically, again no.... The bill for our County Agricultural Executive Committee is 25million pounds a year. Do the Committees grow 25 million pounds worth of food each year? The answer, I think, is no."

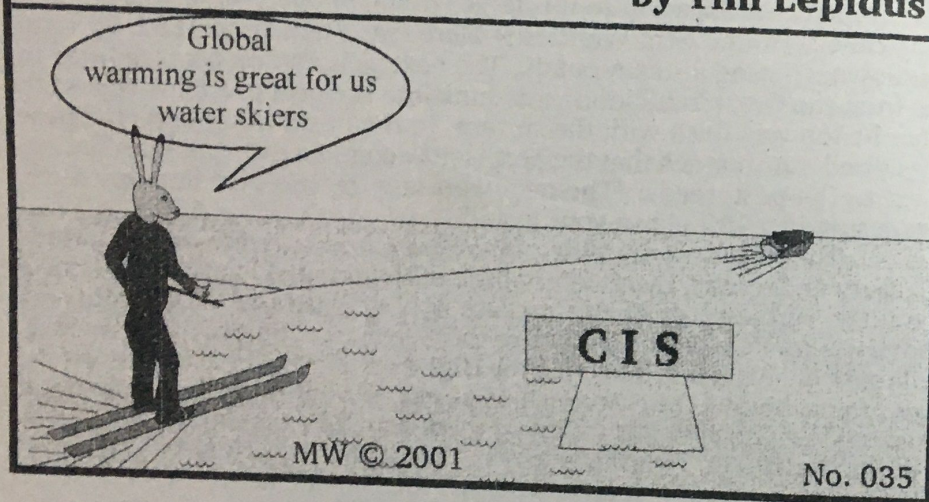
Ironically, the Fenland experienced little flooding during 2000/1 (as far as I know) but it is the most ruthlessly drained area in the country and one wonders how much it costs to keep it flood-free. Nevertheless, the great Archeologist, Francis Pryor, who excavated the remarkable Bronze Age settlement of Flag Fen, near Peterborough, wrote these chilling words in 1991, "The draining of the Fens has traditionally been put forward as an account of man's victory over nature. More recently, attitudes have changed, especially among people who actually live in Fenland: many of us rarely see water from one day to another, yet we all

have serious doubts about the future, if sea levels continue to rise and if the greenhouse effect really does begin to bite, then will our houses remain above water in, say, twenty years time? Today we live in an over-drained, ecologically sterile fen landscape, but there is always the danger of catastrophic flooding." ("English Heritage Book Of Flag Fen Prehistoric Fenland Centre").

Although attitudes, in the Twentieth Century, have changed somewhat since Grindon's day, I gloomily predict that the response to the floods of 2000/1 will be more drainage. After all if you've dug yourself a very deep hole, and the surrounding countryside has long ago disappeared from view, the only thing left to do is to keep digging - even when the hole begins to fill with water!

March Hare

by Tim Lepidus



THE GOOD NEWS COMES LATER

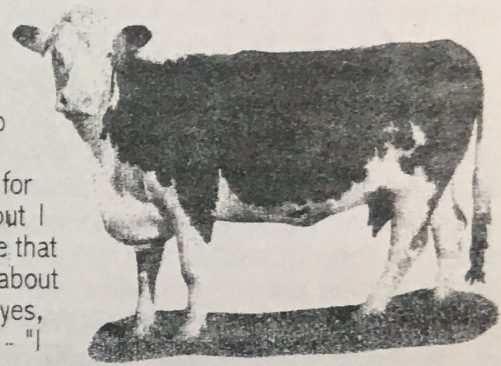
The previous two articles may seem a little pessimistic. We make no apologies for that; the Magpie likes to tell it how it is. However, we have been promised, for the next issue, an article which will show us what can be done to counteract the worst effects of global warming. I'm looking forward to that. So keep your peckers up there are solutions, if only those in a position of power will put them into action. If you have any suggestions for combating global warming, and making the world a safer place for wildlife, why not write to me and we can publish your ideas in these pages. We would like to hear your views; particularly on how to use less fossil fuels, which seems to be the main problem. Politicians are always urging us to use public transport instead of the car but you never hear them suggest that people, and goods, should travel less. We should live nearer to our work and buy local produce; but is that possible?

Foot and Mouth

by Anthony Phelps

I don't know about you, but until last weekend, when I was down in Hampshire, my life has been mostly untouched by this disease, apart from being unable to visit Wigan Flashes, although it's now open again. Until I went to the south, I can say that I'd not even seen a real disinfectant mat, or a footpath closed sign. Now, of course, my "disease-free status" - something the Government seems so keen to keep (in the middle of an outbreak?) - has been "compromised", as I've actually had to cross several mats, and dip my boots in disinfectant. The strange thing is, that this gave me my closest encounter with livestock (Friesian Cows) since the outbreak. I was in Lulworth Cove, and climbing the path leading to the Durdle Door, I was only about 20 yards from a single-strand electric fence with a herd of cows alongside it. My friend and I actually took pictures of ourselves with the herd in the background, (although the main reason was the deep blue sky against the green of the pasture - not the fact that this could have been a "last chance to see" photo opportunity - honest!).

I expect you've all been waiting for a typical vegan, "told you so" article, but I hope you'll be disappointed. Yes, it's true that I am puzzled by seeing farmers crying about having their animals slaughtered, and, yes, the thought does go through my mind - "I thought that's what was supposed to happen". However, I'm digressing into the typical vegan/vegetarian article I said I wasn't going to write. Sorry!



There are several puzzling things about F&M that I've picked up since learning about this disease. Firstly, why is it so dangerous? Early on during this outbreak, I listened to a Senior Vet talking about it, and he said that it was "only a minor inconvenience to animals". Apparently, most recover (like most diseases, there will always be a few that will die), although I'm told that it can take a few months to recover, and that they are never exactly 100% the same as before catching it, however there is a slight reduction in milk yields from the cattle involved. It was probably this slight drop in food quantity per animal, during a period of increasing food production, that the Government at the time felt was unacceptable, and they introduced the draconian measures for eradicating the disease that we've all been suffering recently. I later learnt that it's almost impossible for humans to be affected by it (although today I've learnt about a farmer who is being tested for possible F&M at the moment, but his circumstances are so unlikely to affect the majority of us - ie he was carrying an animal carcass when it exploded, and some of the "liquor" entered his mouth and he swallowed it - that I think you'll agree that it's not your everyday, run-of-the-mill occurrence).

Why, then, do the Government act like it's a plague sent by the divine deity to destroy humankind? The only reason I can gather from the evidence over the weeks,

is this "disease-free status" that Britain is so proud to hold. That's it, as far as I can work out.

What does "disease-free status" actually mean? It means that we're able to continue to be cruel to animals by transporting them vast distances in lorries and ships and planes to foreign countries (who don't tend to be as humane when killing them as we are).

A lot of people, even non-vegetarians, are beginning to question the sanity of the Government's actions. Why is there a need to transport live animals? Even if you agree that eating animals for food is acceptable, then surely each country should breed, and supply their own - why make a global trade out of other living species?

So, apart from this "need" of man to trade in the lives of other species, what else does "disease-free status" allow us? In fact, nothing that I can find.

So, we have the daily spectacle, on the news, of slaughter, either on farm, or involving live transport; army personnel being involved in burials; and even burning in huge pyres; poor deer being shot, simply for going too close to Manchester Airport; and, for people who like to wander the hills dressed as sheep, added an extra dimension of excitement! However, despite the common-sense that says that this burning could cause the disease to spread, it's only now that this is being questioned. Another example of not believing a Government statement that says "Don't worry, this is safe"! I think it's a pretty safe bet that none of the burial sites or pyres were anywhere near any government minister's homes!

All this without even getting onto the "sensible" option of vaccinating animals against catching the disease.

I think you probably agree with me that, for something that isn't really dangerous, either to animals or people, for businesses to go out of business, for people to lose their jobs, and for hundreds of thousands of animals to be killed, it is decidedly weird, even for MAFF!

Now I'd like to pose another quandary - one that I've not yet had a satisfactory answer to from the Environment Agency (maybe tonight, at the Wildlife Working Group meeting?). What is the consequence of all the disinfectant from the mats, and people's boots, being washed into the drains, and ending up, untreated in Britain's river systems? I've asked a couple of times, but can gather that no one's actually done any research into this. It could be disastrous, but no one can tell me. I hope I don't hear a Government spokesperson say "Don't worry - it's perfectly safe".

Now for the good news. With most of the country "out of bounds", wildlife has not been suffering any disturbance. This can only be good news for ground nesting birds, and especially plants. However, because of the restrictions, nobody can monitor whether this is true or not!



TV Appearances

by Anthony Phelps

It's been quite a year for appearances - not quite halfway through, and I've noticed two of our members on television already (to be fair, I didn't see one, just heard about it!). First off was Ian, who was asked to appear on Channel M. I think you can guess that this is the one that I didn't see (and hadn't even heard of, and certainly wouldn't know how to tune in!). He went for the recording on Friday 23rd March - the topic being the election and the environment. He said he got a few good digs in about unsustainable development - especially re: the Airport and Sainsburys.

The other I had no clue about, prior to seeing it on BBC1's "Animal Hospital", hosted by Rolf Harris. My ears pricked up at the mention of Barracks Pond, as I'd heard this discussed at the Wildlife Working Group meetings, which Ian and I attend quarterly. The programme was about the amphibians which breed therein, who now have to cross busy roads to get to the water. Luckily, there is a local group who, bedecked in hi-visibility jackets and armed with buckets, patrol the roads, and drains, collect these animals, count them, and then place them in the pond safely. The reporter sent to cover this event, obviously had a phobia about toads, and who was it under the peaked cap giving her a lesson in how to catch and handle a toad but our own Dave Bentley, one of our Bury members, and pond specialist. I wonder whose hands were featured in close-up handling the only Great Crested Newt they found that night - hope he had a license!

Foot & Mouth Update by Witha Smallpea

During one of my rare awake moments travelling into work on the bus the other week, I glanced at the front page headline of that day's free paper, the Metro. It said something like - "F&M caused by Eco-Terrorists". What rot! Another in a long line of feeble excuses attempting to guess at the cause of this (as harmful as flu) disease (I really don't know what all these top government scientists do all day!).

As most "eco-terrorists", myself included, are not inclined to harm animals - quite the opposite, I really couldn't see the point in this accusation. Surely, if we were able and willing to create a virus to release into the environment, then surely we'd create one that attacked farmers, huntsmen and slaughter house operatives, who actually cause more distress and harm to animals than F&M could ever do!

Some you lose, Some you win

Yes, I have regrets

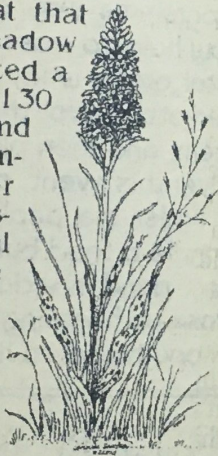
by Merton Niven

This is a complicated story, so I want you to follow me very carefully. It all started in the summer of 1985 (shortly after the group was formed and predating Magpie) when founder members, Shaun Wilson and Rachel Harvi, found an area of wildflower rich meadowland, near Manchester Airport. They asked me to have a look to see if I agreed with them. I did but, this being in the early stages of my expertise in identifying wildflowers, thought a third opinion should be sought. The only person I knew, at the time, who could fulfil this role was Sam McKernan, who was the Deputy Chief Warden of the Mersey Valley. We made an appointment to meet, on site, and he asked if it was all right to bring a local botanist along (a fourth opinion).

On the appointed day, Shaun, Rachel and myself were again on the meadow when Sam, and David Bishop rolled up. This was the start of a long association with David and we found that he did indeed have an extensive knowledge on the subject of wildflowers, certainly much greater than mine, at that time. The upshot was that he agreed that the meadow had considerable wildlife value and we commenced a detailed survey of the area, eventually finding 130 species of wild plants which included trees and grasses. We found five Orchid species. We contacted the Joint Reclamation Team (now the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit) and Dr. Ray Gemmel visited the site and, although he agreed it was of local interest, he said it was not good enough to be included on the register of Sites of Biological Importance. More of which, later.

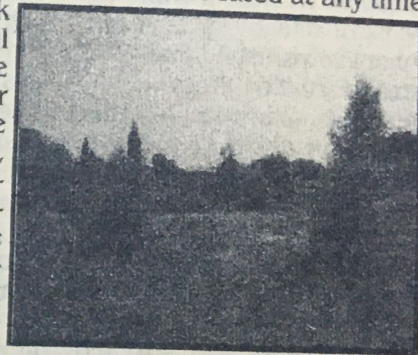
The next thing we hear is that there is a planning application by Ringway International Developments, for commercial development of the site. Of course we put in an objection. The matter went to a public inquiry which was called, the Ringway Local Plan Public Inquiry. We attend the inquiry (I was somewhat nervous about this) and we co-operate with the Woodhouse Park Tenants and Residents Association, which is chaired by Len Birchenall, who were also objecting to many of the Plan's proposals. Our main objections were; the commercial development of the land between Woodhouse Park and the airport, the link road, on this land, to the proposed second terminal and the rail loop on this same piece of land (this is where the regret comes in).

The inquiry started in December 1985 and lasted for a fortnight. We are ready with some good arguments. We wished to call Dr. Gemmel, as a witness, so we asked permission of the Joint Reclamation Team, which they refused. On telling this to the inquiry inspector, he subpoenaed Dr. Gemmel to appear. He still insisted that the site was not of SBI quality but admitted that it had considerable wildlife interest. Even so I think he was a help to our case. The



upshot of all this was that the inspector decided that the area of land between Woodhouse Park and the airport should not be included in the airport operational area, except for the part needed for access roads, and should not be developed until at least 1995. He also agreed that there was no need for a rail loop as in and out working, on the airport rail link, would be practical. So, in effect, we had a victory at our first public inquiry; or so it seemed at the time.

Because of the loss of part of the site to the access roads, we decided that it would be a good idea to transplant as much as possible to a nearby, safe, area. Part of Painswick Park was chosen and it was prepared by stripping topsoil, to reduce fertility of the soil. The donor site was extensively surveyed so that we would know where all the important plants were and could be located at any time of year. The actual transplant took place over two weekends; in April and July of 1991. The Airport gave us a small amount of funding for these events. It is unlikely we would accept funding from them, again, as their environmental record since, leaves a little to be desired. I recently visited the site (right) and it is looking good, despite lack of management, and at least three species of orchids have survived.



The next problem was the Manchester City Unitary Development Plan; the land was designated for "prestigious" commercial development. The site had recently been made a Grade A SBI (so much for Dr. Gemmel's opinion!) and, because of the UDP, the landowners became aware of this. They bulldozed the meadow, which actually improved it. They ploughed it, which had some effect, and they ploughed it again, which destroyed most of the wildlife interest. In the meantime, there were several planning applications for car parking (certainly not "prestigious"), to which we objected and the Council refused but, somehow, it became a car park and the site was destroyed. Strangely, the land was owned by the Airport (Ringway International Developments) and therefore by the City of Manchester. If there had been a rail loop, on the land, development would have been more difficult, though not impossible, but there would have at least been a deep cutting round the meadow which would have been colonised by many of the plants growing on the meadow.

This brings us up to date. The good news is that, the airport rail link is in a deep cutting, the banks of which are very wide with a poor soil which should suit many wildflowers. This connects to the Heald Green Cutting, which is great for wildlife (21 species of butterflies), making a wildlife corridor from the Mersey Valley to the airport. Wildflowers are already starting to arrive; there is a small colony of orchids near the airport station. So, it's not all bad news and there is some hope for the future.

"DADDY, WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE GENE WAR?" by Witha Smallpea

This phrase was the caption to a cartoon in "Splice" (with a credit to www.subvertise.org for its use), and showed a traditional family with dad (in jacket, waistcoat and tie) in his armchair, son (in shorts and long socks) playing with his toy soldiers on the floor at his feet, and daughter on his lap asking the question, after obviously reading about the wars in the book on her knee. All of them were wearing "goldfish bowl" domes on their heads, and the door in the background had a "bio-seal" label.

It reminded me of a conversation I had with Dan Hooper (Swampy as was) a while ago. I've always felt that my contribution to the cause of activism isn't that much - I've never lived on a protest camp, although I've visited many, helping out when I could, and I've never been arrested for "the cause". I've always admired those who "went that extra mile", and, I suppose, felt them to be worthy of hero-worship. One of the reasons why I didn't get involved in all the "Swampyism" of the airport campaign (I didn't meet him until well after the evictions: I did meet Animal, although that was off-site) was that it all detracted from the real reasons for the action taking place, and concentrated all the press coverage (including the ridiculous, and some would say unadvised appearance on "Have I got news for you" - even Animal was subject to adverse press publicity, with the biography of her in "Just 17") on just one person. I've always felt that I came to activism too late in life, and that if I'd become involved whilst a student, or unemployed, would have done more. I suppose you could say that I feel that I've got "something to lose" (job, savings, etc), and therefore limit my involvement. I don't feel as if I've been tested, and wonder how I'd cope if I was in situations that others find themselves in. It's almost as if I feel like a "second class" activist - looked down on by those in the first division.

I'm sure it's not really like that at all - every little bit helps, and if everyone does what they feel able and comfortable to do, and commit to their own personal limits, then "the cause" can only benefit from it.

I've been on loads of demonstrations, and enjoyed them all - it's amazing to be in a massive crowd of people, the majority of whom are there because they believe the same things as you do. Many people are afraid of joining in, for fear of arrest. Yes, there is a "thick blue line" of police, but in nearly all the cases I've been involved with, they tend to help the cause, by holding the crowds on the streets far longer than the crowds actually wanted to be there - causing even greater disturbance to traffic flow. What I'd say is go with people you know, and trust, and generally, if you don't want to be arrested, you won't be. Also, nearly all the activists arrested recently that have gone to the courts have been found not guilty, and that has been the case for quite a while now - and that includes people "disarming" Hawk jets, Trident submarines at Faslane, trashing GM crops, and so on. It seems that when a jury hears the evidence, they can't find it in themselves to lock the people away any

more. The Law Makers seem to be out of step with the general population. However, they keep trying to criminalise our legal right to protest at injustices. The latest being the Anti Terrorism Act, which came into effect on Monday 19th February 2001 (I have written about this in past Magpies). So far, apart from "proscribing" several foreign organisations as "terrorist", no home-grown activist has been charged with offenses under this new Act. It has been suggested by some legally minded people, that this new Act goes against the also very new Human Rights Act, and that if anyone challenged their charge, it would, most likely, fail, and make a mockery of the Government's powers. It does seem strange to me that they've not exercised it yet - maybe they're afraid it'll fail, so will leave it on the shelf - I hope so.

Piccadilly Gardens

I think the Council are extracting the "michael" about the regeneration of the Piccadilly Gardens; unless you're Steve McQueen from the Great Escape. A line on the large sign, inside the fortress, reads, "Public access to gardens maintained throughout". They must be joking!

Bushwacked

Talking about Global Warming, which we were, did you hear that George W. Bush has refused to sign up to the Kyoto Agreement on Global Warming. His reason being that it would not be in the economic interest of the USA. Now we know what the "W" stands for! Someone ought to tell him that, if Global Warming does take effect, it would definitely not be in the interest of the US economy.

Even from a purely financial point of view, the cost of clearing up the floods in the Mississippi, and more recently in Texas, amounts to billions of dollars. How many times must the Mississippi flood to make the President aware that changing, and more severe, weather conditions are an economic burden to any nation. Can anyone remember who said, "It's the economy, stupid"? It's a safe bet that George W. can.

Greenpeace are asking us to boycott Exxon/Mobil (Esso, in this country). The reason? They were the biggest contributor (of the oil companies) to George W's campaign funds. Now it's pay back time, so what honest politician could let down his friends by signing the Kyoto Agreement!

Paper Mill Sludge

You may remember the article "More Recycling", on Paper Mill Sludge, in Magpie 49. The subject came up on Countryfile (BBC 1 - 8th of July). We send a copy of Magpie to the BBC. Could this have been an influence on them to cover the subject?

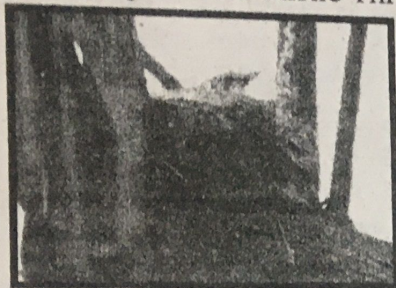
MW on the Net - visit www.bridge5mill.org - click on the **Tenants** button and go to Manchester Wildlife.

MEMBERS PAGE

WITTINGTON HOSPITAL - www.westdidsbury.org.uk

Send in Your Story

We have reported on this matter before. Just an update to say that local action groups (including MW) are working hard to ensure that the wildlife interests of the site are protected when the hospital site is redeveloped. The photograph of the Mistle Thrush, on nest, was sent in by an MW member



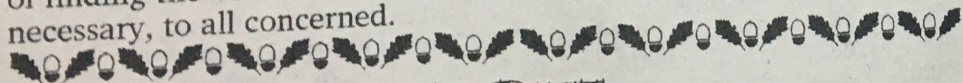
who is also carrying out an extensive survey of the area. There are bats, at the hospital, but a proper survey has not been carried out. A large colony of House Martins are nesting under the wide eaves of the Victorian buildings. Unfortunately, the developers intend to demolish these buildings. There is no reason why they should not be converted, as was the case with Salford Hospital. More next issue.



BECAUSE I'M WORTH IT

A member has sent us a letter from L'Oreal, which states ".....that L'Oreal has carried out **no** animal testing since 1989 on the entire range of its cosmetic products." they go on to say, "L'Oreal has a long-term commitment to an extensive programme of research into the development of non animal alternative methods of safety assessment." (This is a slight contradiction of their first statement as it implies that they have not, yet, developed non animal tests for all their products - Ed.)

It is gratifying to know that some members will go to the trouble of finding the "truth" about matters reported on in Magpie. Apologies, if necessary, to all concerned.



RE-PEAT

We had another letter, from a member, concerning Anthony's article. "Manchester City Council and Peat". It was thought that we were too quick in going to the press. This may have seemed to be the case but our correspondence, with council officials, extended to three letters in each direction. It was when we did not seem to be getting anywhere that we issued a press release on the subject. We were not sure that the press would publish but felt that it was the only way to ensure that the matter of the use of peat would get the attention it deserved. We still have to follow up the story to make sure that Manchester City Council is no longer purchasing peat, but going for alternatives; like the compost which anyone can make in their own garden!

Huntingdon Life Sciences - update

by Witha Smallpea

I've written about this company before, I know, but they recently hit the headlines again, as it looked as if they were going to close, because of The Royal Bank of Scotland calling in their loan. However, at the eleventh hour, and it really was so close to the midnight deadline that someone did come into work the next morning saying that they'd closed, a then unnamed American company had bailed them out. It has since come to light that it is actually the investment group Stephens Group, which has provided them with funding until 2006. Prior to that, HLS were due to go into receivership over £22 million owed to RBoS and two US banks.

Most of the British press coverage, and even that of our wonderful Home Secretary Jack Straw, has centred on the actions of the animal rights campaigners with their long campaign trying to close the company down. However, there has been relatively little explanation as to why HLS should have got into so much debt in the first place.

There have been several documentaries showing activities within HLS which should have caused them to be closed down immediately. One was on Channel 4, "It's a Dog's Life", which showed HLS workers punching and shaking beagle puppies, and even admitting to falsifying the results of test results "to save time". As a result of this programme, two of the workers featured were convicted in court of cruelty, although it is possibly true to say that the evidence of their falsifying test results had a greater negative impact on their business, than the cruelty exposed. The filming for these documentaries was carried out secretly by undercover investigators, and the actions of the workers convicted of animal cruelty showed that they just didn't care who saw what they were doing.

Some of the major drug companies decided to withhold their testing business from HLS pending a Home Office investigation. It was reported that in the first half of 1997, HLS lost £308,000 compared to a profit of £2 million the previous year.

In July 1997, Home Office Minister George Howarth told the House of Commons that he would withhold HLS's certificates of designation (these allow HLS to test on animals) until certain conditions were met. This was because of breaches of two of the standard conditions which apply to all certificates of designation, including care, treatment and handling of animals, and allowing staff to undertake health checks when they were clearly incompetent to undertake such tasks. It was following this announcement that HLS's shares went into freefall. The last time I bothered to check on their share price, it had fallen again from 10p to 2.75p.

Since then, the actions by "Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty" (SHAC) has kept the lab in the news, but it must be acknowledged that it is HLS's own actions that got them into trouble in the first place.

Following Channel 4's documentary, the Daily Express featured a report based on documents leaked from HLS, entitled "Diaries of De-

spair". This was about xenotransplantation experiments on behalf of Imutran. There was evidence in the documents of suffering involving pigs, monkeys and baboons. This differed from the published evidence in scientific papers, which didn't mention any animal deaths in the experiments. Another case of falsifying research data.

It was then that major shareholders, including a major bank, decided that they would put pressure on the company.

I have a friend at work, who was explaining to me that he believed the Government would never let HLS go under. He said that HLS had now become a "cause célèbre", and as the Government was "pro-science", and the animal rights campaigners' actions were obviously being shown as "anti-science", then HLS could never be seen to fail as a result of the campaign against it. He added, "if HLS closes, what will be next?". HLS's testing is, in my opinion (and that of others) not good science - based as it is on animals - as animal testing results simply do not prove anything is safe for humans (history has shown this to be true). I know that I am an idealist, but HLS is wrong, their testing is unnecessary, as well as cruel. I, personally, would dance on HLS's grave when it closes, as I hope it will do very soon. Will you join me?

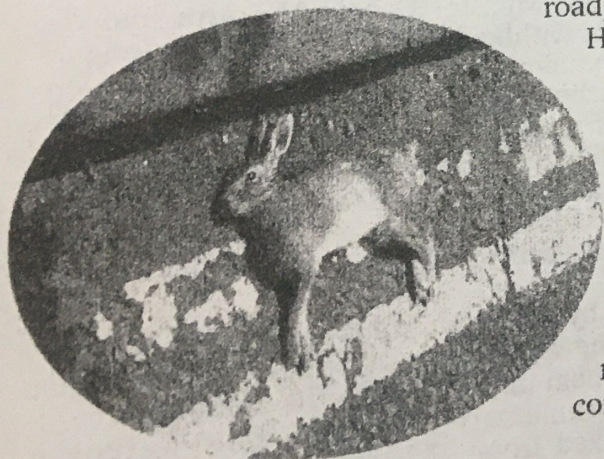
Since then, the Government has decided to bail out HLS by agreeing to the Bank of England becoming their new bankers. In my opinion, this effectively means that HLS is now the Government's own, pet, sponsored torturing and killing department.

[The writer of this article is a supporter of NAVS (the National Anti-Vivisection Society), from whose magazine, The Campaigner, the information for the above article came. They can be contacted at: 261 Goldhawk Road, London W12 9PE, or via their website www.navs.org.uk].

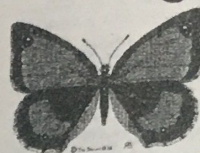
MARCH HARE IS DEAD - LONG LIVE MARCH HARE!

Cycling round the airport perimeter road, recently, I spotted this Brown Hare, at the side of the road, on the bridge over the M56 airport spur. It was obviously dead; sad, but it does prove that there are hares in the area; unless this was the last! Being quite near to the Painswick Park transplant site, there is still some open countryside where hares may roam. Let us hope that this continues to be the case.

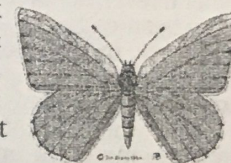
Ian Brown



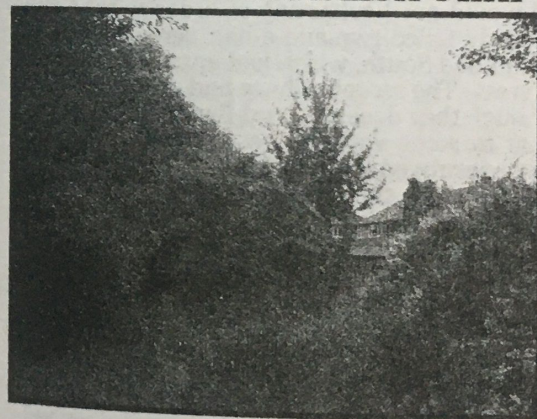
Wigan Flashes, and other walks



The 9th of June saw the second Wigan Flashes Open Day. We were not able to advertise this, in advance, as it was arranged at very short notice. Only two **MW** members turned up, which was probable just as well; the weather was very poor. We did not see a single butterfly! The spectacle of the day was the large number of Swifts, swooping over the lakes and the canal; I've never seen so many at one time! However, we will be having two more walks on the Flashes. This may seem a little excessive but, as we have said before, it is not to be missed. If enough members turn up, we may not go on about it so much. The August walk is to see the Gatekeeper butterflies, and other insects, and the September walk should coincide with the second brood of Common Blues. The walk to Clayton Vale, after the **AGM** did not take place. The Ashton Canal tow path was being repaired and, as the weather was poor, we decided to give it a miss and some of us went to the Occasional Cafe instead. The Bollin Valley walk also did not take place. This was because of foot & mouth. I was prepared to do an alternative walk, round Wythenshawe woodlands, but no one came! For details of forthcoming walks see the events list on page 24.



Reddish Mini-wood



This was one of our more successful projects. We were commissioned to design a landscape plan for an area of litter strewn rank grassland which was surrounded by houses. We decided that tree planting was the best solution. The Stockport Conservation Volunteers, local people and ourselves cleared the site and planted several areas with various native

trees. We subsequently managed the area until it was taken over by the Woodland Trust as one of their urban woodlands. We offered to continue management but have not been contacted by the **WT**. (They once sent someone, from Wales, to cut the grass.) Despite the recent neglect of the Mini-wood, it is looking great; far better than before, and it is certainly an excellent habitat for birds. We will be visiting the site in late September.

Times Past - articles from previous Magpies

The History of Hough End Clough - by Shaun Wilson (from Magpie No. 5)

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 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 long 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 of the "best wooded" part from the rest. The 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 were the garage now stands, just east of the Alexandra Road South bridge.

An article in the "City News", in 1912, reminisced about the Clough in the 1880s. It "possessed considerable natural beauties, and wildlife, 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 promoted 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 the 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 1860s, "It was the favourite resort of most of the

naturalists and botanists who then lived in Hulme. The brook was then comparatively clear, the haunt of Kingfisher and, occasionally, 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, 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.

Woodhouse Park Inquiry - by Ian Brown (from Magpie No. 1)

Just before Christmas (1985) I attended the public inquiry into the Ringway Local Plan on behalf of the Manchester Wildlife Group. We were objecting to some of Manchester City council's proposals for development in this area. In particular, there is a strip of open countryside, between Woodhouse Park and the airport, which the local authority wish to destroy with light industrial development. It is a fine example of species rich grassland, with ponds, marshy areas and mature hedgerows. Whilst it is not spectacular in the manner of the Yorkshire Dales or the Lake District, it is a very pleasant area which acts as an open break, for the Wythenshawe people, from the airport - which is to be considerably expanded.

A local residents' organisation, and some individuals, also objected to the proposed development, as the area is much valued as a little piece of countryside on their doorstep. A major problem is that the main owners of the land - a property speculator and the local authority - would probably see a 30-fold increase in the value of their land if development goes ahead. With such vast amounts of money at stake they will obviously be determined to capitalise on their investment.

Our main case for objection rested on the fact that there are many acres of derelict industrial land, in the Manchester area, which should be developed before open countryside sites are used for such purposes. The City council had an advantage, over most objectors, in that they could afford the services of a skilled barrister (courtesy of the ratepayers) to present their case! Most objectors could not afford such luxuries as they had to pay their own expenses; but this was taken into account by the inquiry inspector, a very fair and astute man who did not appear to miss a trick (he caught out the assistant planning officer, lying!). We were also lucky to gain support, which we did not expect, from two objectors, namely, the Ministry of Agriculture and Macclesfield Borough Council.

The inquiry itself was a most absorbing affair but it was necessary to attend every day to make sense of what was going on. We must now be patient and await the result, but we do hope it will be in favour of saving what little is left of open countryside in Manchester.

Manchester Wildlife - Events and Meetings

August 2001

Saturday 4th - Wigan Flashes Walk - Meet at 12 noon outside the main entrance of Wigan Wallgate Station. Regular trains from Victoria, Salford Crescent and Oxford Road. Wear good walking boots and bring waterproofs, food and drink. Contact: Ian Brown - Tel. 0161-437 7040.

Tuesday 21st - Social Meeting - Time 7.30pm at the Old Monkey Public House (upstairs lounge - ask for Ian Brown or Anthony Phelps), junction of Portland Street/Princess Street, Manchester. Convenient for Piccadilly Gardens Bus & Metro Station. Contact: Ian Brown - Tel. 0161-437 7040. (Note - Social meetings are now on the third Tuesday of each month)

Saturday 18th - Walk along the River Irk - Meet at the Metrolink entrance of Victoria Station. Stuff to bring, same as Wigan Flashes. Contact: Anthony Phelps - Tel. 0161-829 5473.

September 2001

Saturday 8th - Wigan Flashes Walk - Meet at 12 noon outside the main entrance of Wigan Wallgate Station. Regular trains from Victoria, Salford Crescent and Oxford Road. Wear good walking boots and bring waterproofs, food and drink. Contact: Ian Brown - Tel. 0161-437 7040.

Tuesday 18th - Social Meeting - Details as for August the 21st.

Saturday 29th - Walk to Highfield Country Park and Reddish Mini-wood - Meet at 11 am on the old railway bridge, Nelstrop Lane North (south of Barlow Road), Levenshulme. Stuff to bring, same as Wigan Flashes. Contact: Ian Brown - Tel. 0161-437 7040.

Thursday 27th - General Meeting - Time 7.30pm at Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

October 2001

Tuesday 16th - Social Meeting - Details as for August the 21st.

November 2001

Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th - North West Bird Fair - at Martin Mere (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust) - Entry £5.25 for non members. Tel. 01704 895181.

Tuesday 20th - Social Meeting - Time 7.30pm at the Old Monkey Public House (upstairs lounge - ask for Ian Brown or Anthony Phelps), junction of Portland Street/Princess Street, Manchester. Convenient for Piccadilly Gardens Bus & Metro Station. Contact: Ian Brown - Tel. 0161-437 7040.

(Note - Social meetings are now on the third Tuesday of each month)

Thursday 29th - General Meeting - Time 7.30pm at Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

Social Meetings - Change of Date

It has been decided to change the dates of our monthly Social Meetings. They will now be held on the third Tuesday of each month (instead of the second Tuesday). This will enable our members, who are also members of other groups, like Friends of the Earth, who have meetings on the second Tuesday of the month, to attend our meetings if they wish. Our Social Meetings are fairly informal affairs. We do discuss matters of conservation interest, and ongoing projects, but we do not make any binding business type decisions. Do come and join us for an enjoyable evening in "town".

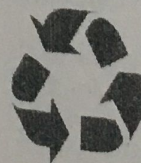
Useful Contacts

RSNC Urban Wildlife Partnership	01636 677711 (day)
English Nature	NW Regional Office, 01942 820342 (day)
Cheshire Wildlife Trust	North Group, Trafford, Liz Blackman, 0161-962 6748 Wilmslow Group, Tony Browne, 0161-436 1761 Stockport & Tameside, Eric Stead 0161-494 9130 Bolton Wildlife Project, Mick Weston, 01204 361847 (day)
Lancashire Wildlife Trust	
Medlock & Tame Valley Conservation Association	Mildred Burlinson, 0161-330 2721 Salford & Trafford, Val Sutton, 0161-872 7640 (day)
BTCV	Sale & Altrincham, Shelagh Aston, 0161-860 6910 Bolton, Rick Parker, 01942 817302 Bury, Lawrence Kitchenson, 0161-796 6404 (day)
British Trust for Ornithology	Gr. Manchester Bird Recorder, Judith Smith 01942 712615
Red Rose Forest Team	Jane Whitaker, 0161-872 1660
RSPB	Bolton Group, Tony Johnson, 01204 468850 Manchester Group, Simeon Rydz, 0161-434 2720 Stockport Group, Brian Hallworth, 0161-456 5328
Advice on Birds in Distress	Three Owls Bird Sanctuary, 01706 642162
Bat Groups	South Lancashire, Angela Graham, 0161-797 4745 Cheshire, Mike Freeman, 01606 41581
Butterflies/Moths	Barry Shaw, 0161-491 0753
Mammals/Insects	Bolton Museum, Steve Garland, 01204 522311 (day)
Amphibians/Ponds	Dave Bentley, 0161-724 8602
GM Police Wildlife Liaison Officer	Inspector Denise McGowan, 0161-865 1666
Mersey Valley Wardens	Sale, 0161-905 1100 (day) Chorlton, 0161-881 5639 (day)
Croal/Irwell Valley Countryside Service	Nicky Greek, 01204 334343 (day)
Stockport Countryside Ranger Service	0161-477 5637
Trafford Council	0161-912 3206
Manchester Sustainability Group	Adrian Pearce, 0161-234 4594
Manchester Recycling Officer	Pete Stevens, 0161-234 4629
Stockport Recycling Hotline	0161-474 4747
Manchester FoE	0161-834 8221
Networking Newsletter	Michael Bane, 0161-226 9321
Bolton Greenwood Group	Ian Brown, 0161-437 7040

Manchester Wildlife is a networking organisation. You are included on our Contacts List; are we included on yours? Please inform us if any details are incorrect.

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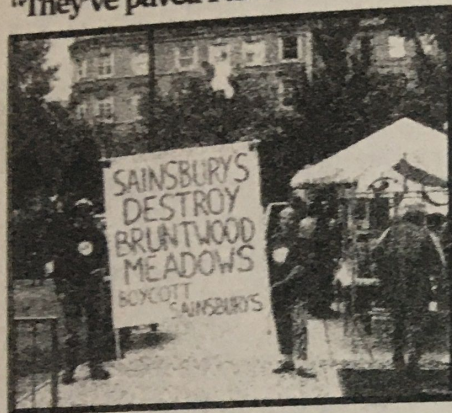


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Sainsburys Destroy Bruntwood Meadows

"They've paved Paradise and put up a parking lot" - Joni Mitchell

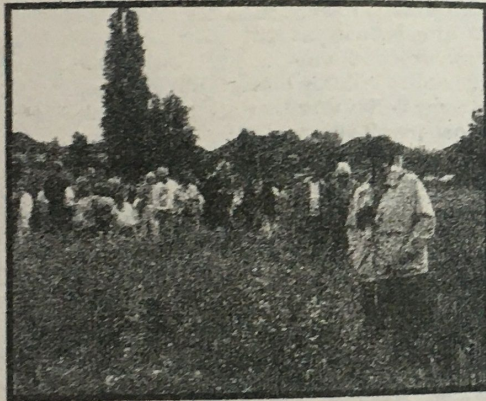


Why would members of Manchester Wildlife walk, carrying an enormous banner, from Bruntwood Meadows, in Cheadle, to Peace Square, in central Manchester (Global Forum 1994)? Why would we organise the event, "Last Chance to See - Bruntwood Meadows"? The banner tells the story and we invited anyone who cared to come along and see Bruntwood Hay Meadows, probably the most beautiful area of countryside in South Manchester, before it was destroyed by a huge Sainsburys superstore and 2,000 car parking spaces. A good crowd turned up, including Stephen

Day (MP for Cheadle) and local Councillors. As I remember, it was a beautiful day and those who came had a thoroughly enjoyable time, but a sad one because of the thought of what was to happen. We also staged a picket (four men and a dog) outside Sainsburys Stockport store.

You might think that all this protesting was a little late but it all started in 1987, when a planning application was lodged for the above mentioned superstore. Because of its size it was called in for a public inquiry, which included a similar development by Tesco and Marks & Spencer at Handforth. I attended, on behalf of Manchester Wildlife, to object to both schemes. I thought I put up a good argument. I had surveyed the Bruntwood site for both butterflies and wildflowers. I found far more species of the latter than did the "expert witness" for Sainsburys. I was admonished, by the inquiry inspector, for "offering untutored opinions"! A bit rich as, in my untutored opinion, the ecological witnesses for the developers appeared to be a little suspect, when it came to wildlife expertise. Or maybe they didn't care! I was told, by Dr. Ray Gemmell, that (in his tutored opinion) the witness for Tesco was "most unsound"! Since 1939 we have lost 97% of our wildflower rich meadows. Had I known that, at the time, I may have been able to be more convincing.

What really scuppered our chances of defeating the planning application was the fact that, Sainsburys, Tesco and Marks & Spencer, offered to pay for part of the A34 Handforth by-pass. This road was absolutely essential for access to the superstores. Prior to the public inquiry, this road was of low priority, there were



not the funds available, locally, and it was only planned to be a single carriageway road, which would not have provided adequate access. Stockport Councillors were opposed to the development but, when the offer of paying for the road was made, their planning officers declared their position to be neutral. To avoid embarrassment, the Councillors were forced to agree. A clear case of the tail wagging the dog.

The inquiry was part of a series to decide which two, of 12, superstore applications should be approved. The above, and the Trafford Centre won. Hence our protests, particularly against Sainsburys, which may not have been an outstanding success. The media did not seem to care; did anyone? Well yes, some did, but not enough. However, it is gratifying to note that, since then, Sainsburys have lost their top spot in food retailing. Did we have anything to do with that? I do hope so! The only problem is that Tesco are now in top spot. The banner had two more outings. On the opening day of the superstore, at Bruntwood, I sat by the entrance with the banner prominently displayed; all day! The management were not best pleased but, when they came over to ask me to move, I told them what I thought of Sainsburys and their appalling environmental record. I got rather angry; I still do. It also appeared outside Stockport Magistrate's Court, when some brave souls stood trail for protesting at the store on opening day. They got off!

After the inquiry, Bruntwood Meadows was declared a Grade C Site of Biological Importance (SBI), by the GM Countryside Unit. They visited the site in September, after the hay had been cut! I protested and suggested that a visit should be made in early June. This was done and it became a Grade A SBI. A little late but it suggested that my opinions were not so untutored, after all. I think that, considering the national rarity of unimproved hay meadows, it should have been a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

So where does this leave us? We have lost most of a fine wildlife area; impoverishing the biodiversity of the region. We tried to start a boycott of a large global company. Did we succeed? Maybe not, but perhaps we played a part in starting the movement against globalisation. This is much in the news, at the moment. When you consider that the golfer, Tiger Woods, receives more sponsorship money, from Nike, than all their factory workers in Indonesia are paid, we can hardly be surprised that some people protest against such inequalities!

March Hare

by Tim Lepidus

No. 001



The first March Hare cartoon - from Issue No.10, Summer 1988

Bruntwood Hay Meadows

There are still hay meadows at Bruntwood Park but they are a mere shadow of their former glory. The Devilsbit Scabious on the North-East meadow (right) is still an amazing sight. Most butterfly species are still to be seen but in much reduced numbers; Meadow Browns, which could once be counted in hundreds can now be counted on the fingers of one hand. Orange Tip's have not



been seen, this year, and their food plant, Lady's Smock is no longer to be found on the site. Ragged Robin has also disappeared from the meadows but, ironically, has been planted in the drainage ditch to the east of the superstore; as has Snake's Head Fritillary!

Hay is still cut on the meadows (left) so this should ensure that the biodiversity, of what remains, will be maintained. Bruntwood Meadows are still worth a visit and, despite the proximity of the A34 by-pass, are a fairly tranquil area. Herons can be seen, on the old pond in the east, and Common Blue Butterflies, on the meadow to the west of Bruntwood Lane, where Common Spotted Orchids can also be found. Some of our members will not revisit Bruntwood Meadows, because they remember how they used to be. Don't let this put you off. Maybe we should organise a walk there, next year.

