

# Romsey & District Society



AGM February 14


Annual Dinner May 15



Romsey's Waterways & Fishlake Meadows

article page 3

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# Chairman's Column

First I would like to take the opportunity of wishing you all a very good 2012. 2011 was certainly a full and eventful year in the society.

We had a very successful talk by Ben Hamilton-Baillie in the Plaza, which was followed by an exhibition in the Town Hall. There is a full report elsewhere, but I would like to thank the small team who worked so hard to bring the concept of a shared surface at the heart of our town to a wider audience.

The Society was formed by a proactive group who successfully fought to prevent the wholesale demolition of houses in the town. I think the proper development of the Market Place and town centre could prove to be another significant milestone in the history of the Society. The work has to be taken up by Hampshire County Council and Test Valley Borough Council, but the Society will continue to press for innovative thought and design in the final scheme.

An equally important jewel in the crown for Romsey would be the proper development and management of the water meadows at Fishlake. Our Natural Environment committee has been working hard with Hampshire Wildlife Trust to secure the best possible future for the wetlands that form Fishlike Meadows. We want to secure good public access whilst protecting the natural environment. A successful outcome here could also have a very significant impact on future generations who live and work in Romsey. Again you can read more elsewhere in this News Sheet.

Also this year we have held the first Phil Warner Art Competition, made possible by the generous donations to the Society in memory of our late Secretary, Phil. The standard of entries was excellent and we now need to decide if this event should be held as part of the Arts Festival or made into an annual event, like the Medwell Essay Prize. This year, for the Medwell competition, we had an exhibition of the work done by Mountbatten School pupils on the history of Romsey Abbey and the photo in this News Sheet gives

an indication of the variety of methods used by the year 7 pupils. We are grateful to the Vicar for allowing us to display the work in the Abbey

Finally I look forward to meeting many of you at various events in the coming months. Please encourage friends and neighbours to come along as guests, or to join the Society themselves. Perhaps a year's membership of RDS could be the perfect gift!!

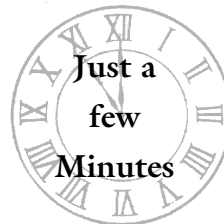
*Cheryl Collier*

July No meeting

August

No meeting

September



It was agreed that future News Sheets would be printed in colour. The Society's exhibition at the Mayor's Picnic was very well attended. Progress continues on the major bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund by a partnership led by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust and which includes the Society (see separate article in this issue on Romsey Waterways and Fishlake Meadows). The exhibition of outline proposals for the town centre had over 400 visitors and 88% approved, or were not opposed to the concept. Southern Water will respond to questions on the effect of the Abbotswood development on water supply and sewer capacity. Flooding in Greatbridge Road and Cupernham Lane roundabout were also discussed. The visit by the Portsmouth Civic Society was successful and of mutual benefit. Membership had increased by 30 but around 45 members have

not paid their subscriptions. Embley College wish to erect a plaque remembering Florence Nightingale on the main building and possibly another on the front gate carrying the Society name and in similar style to the Society plaques. This request was approved.

October No meeting

November

Purchase of a replacement tree in memory of John White was approved. The next annual lecture will be in April 2013. Twenty new members had joined the Society since September. At the opening of the new Dr. Peter Scout Centre, Society members presented a cheque for £750 (raised by La Ronde) towards the provision of shrubs or trees at the Centre. The September Stream clean was successful and will be followed by another on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2012. The report on the exhibition of Market Place proposals was amended and approved and an abbreviated version will be placed on Romsetnet. The Romsey Waterways Strategy, led by Test Valley Borough Council and with input from the Society, is described elsewhere in this issue. The views of the public have been sought and our Executive Committee has agreed a set of aims it wishes to be incorporated. Heritage Lottery Fund personnel visited some sites to be included in the proposed Lottery bid, including Fishlake Meadows and the Barge Canal. Objection was made in July to an application to build 44 houses at Nutburn Road, adjacent to the Nutburn Meadows Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, and this has now been refused,



*Geoff Morris*

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# Romsey's Waterways and Fishlake Meadows

Romsey's rivers, streams and wetlands are of major importance to the landscape, wildlife, and history of the town, and in many ways define its 'sense of place' for residents and visitors alike. Think how much poorer Romsey would be as a place to live, without the many watercourses that flow through and around the town, such as those at Sadler's Mill and the Memorial Park, the Barge Canal with its wide views across Fishlake Meadows, and the Tadburn Lake stream.



## What are the problems with our waterways & what's being done?

Problems include accumulation of silt, lack of appropriate management, low flows, and edging by concrete or steel. As a result, they are poorer in wildlife and less attractive than they once were. Access to some of them is also poor. As an example, the Barge Canal, whilst still very important, is silted, and in part heavily shaded by trees or choked by scrub, so that its interest has declined. The path is also in poor condition and not accessible to all.

A partnership led by Test Valley Borough Council, and which includes the Society, is developing a Romsey Waterways Strategy to enhance our watercourses and wetlands. The public's views on an Issues and Opportunities document published in October 2011 (which you can read at [www.testvalley.gov.uk/romseywaterways](http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/romseywaterways)) are now being used to help produce a long-term strategy and action plan, which should be ready for public consultation next summer.

## Why is Fishlake Meadows so important?

Since agricultural use and pump-drainage ceased in the mid-1980s, it has developed into a fascinating natural wetland landscape, teeming with wildlife. A designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) of at least Hampshire-level importance, it is an extremely unusual site, given the loss of wetland habitats over recent decades, in being not only fairly new, but at 146 acres, huge.

Details of the wildlife were given in the April 2009 News Sheet so the following

is just a brief, updated summary. The bird life is rich and varied, with nearly 150 species recorded. An impressive number of species breed, with the warblers being particularly numerous, including the rare Cetti's and the nationally threatened Grasshopper Warblers. Other breeding birds include Nightingales and Cuckoos, both rapidly declining species in the UK. These named species all have special protection under UK or European law, as do several others that use the site, including Peregrine, Hobby, and the rare species Bittern and Osprey.

Fishlake Meadows is very important for over-wintering birds, including many species of duck, such as Gadwall, Pintail and Teal. It is also a significant roosting or feeding site for birds that breed elsewhere, such as Swallows, Martins, and in winter dramatic numbers of Starlings.

The site also supports otters, large numbers of water voles, and seven species of bat, all of which are protected by law. It is also important for dragonflies and moths, including several nationally notable species, and plants, with 115 species recorded.

## What is the future for Fishlake Meadows?

The site is still changing, and has reached a point where conservation management is essential if the current species richness and variety of wetland landscapes is to be maintained. For instance, willow scrub is spreading into important open wetland areas, and coarse vegetation taking over meadow habitats. Views could also be improved by the removal of some dead and dying trees, whilst leaving

others as wildlife habitat. Maintaining current water levels is also essential.

At the moment the public can only really see Fishlake Meadows from the Barge Canal path and the one that crosses its northern end. But it has great potential for the public to get close to wildlife, enjoy new views and take long walks out from Romsey, by the creation of new paths and viewpoints, sited so as not to disturb sensitive species, all linked to improved existing paths. It could also be an excellent educational resource.

It is now essential that a way be found to get Fishlake Meadows into long-term wildlife management with compatible access. The owner of nearly all of Fishlake Meadows has said that he will donate it, together with a substantial sum of money, so that it can be managed in perpetuity as a nature reserve with the uses outlined above and reserve staffing to run it, as part of obtaining planning consent for some housing on his land to the east of the Barge Canal. The Society will be looking at the application in detail, including the housing proposals, before deciding on its position, but if it is approved, Fishlake Meadows will have been secured for future generations to enjoy.

## Where is the money to come from to enhance the rest of our waterways and what more could be done?

Partnership working will make better use of current resources, but there will not be anything like enough money for all that needs doing. However, the necessary funding could come from a major bid to the Heritage Lottery

Fund being made by a partnership led by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust, and which includes the Society. The project would cover the Test Valley from Mottisfont to Redbridge, but centre on the Romsey area where a large proportion of the money would be spent. Developing the bid has several stages to go through, but if successful would start in 2014 and provide over £3 million for major wildlife and access enhancements, interpretation, educational events, and public art. However, it is clear that the bid would fail unless Fishlake Meadows can be secured and managed as a wildlife-rich asset for Romsey, this being the 'lynchpin' of the whole project.

*Dr Robert Page, Chair - Natural Environment Committee*

### **Edwina Mountbatten House**



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### **Society Gift to King John's House**

Romsey & District Society has followed its 2008 presentation of tapestries to King John's House by donating a fine oak chest. Again purchased with the profits from two of the Society's Arts Festival events (Paul Gardner's Kipling talk and Chris Amery's Iliad performance), the chest was recently handed over by Cheryl Collier and gratefully accepted by KJH Manager Anne James and Gill Maddick (Chairman of Trustees).

As well as being an attractive addition to the furniture of the house, the chest will serve as useful storage for such things as period costumes – and even as an auxiliary seat!

## **Medwell Essay Competition 2011**

On Wednesday October 19, pupils at The Mountbatten School received prizes for our annual Medwell competition. The topic for this year at The Mountbatten School was on the theme A History of Romsey Abbey. The Judge, David Kessel, awarded prizes to Laura Isherwood (1st), Alexandra Walker (2nd), Loren Parkhurst (3rd=) & Jai Woolford (3rd=). For the first time Certificates of Excellence and Certificates of Merit were awarded.

based on key dates in the history of Romsey Abbey; some pupils produced imaginative display boards combining text and diaries with photographs, some pupils put their information into eye-catching scrolls, other pupils produced Powerpoint presentations. Areas researched included:- How the Abbey started, Planning of the Norman church, Life in the mediaeval Abbey and nunnery, St. Ethelflaeda, the Black Death, the Reformation with its causes and effects, Changes to the abbey, Rescue of Romsey Abbey, the Abbey today, its links to Royalty and VIPs, the Abbey and Romsey's community.



Pupils were encouraged to carry out the research both in class and at home, and to produce independently a means of telling its history around the key facts, consequently, the submissions were very varied and imaginative, including a well-documented booklet, large detailed models of the Abbey, several imaginative diary extracts

All the potentially winning entries showed such involvement that this year's RDS Chairman, Cheryl Collier, suggested funding an extra Third Prize. In November, a display of the best work was presented in The Abbey, thanks to an initiative developed by Mrs. Collier.

*David Kessel*



# An Organ for 'Romsey Church'

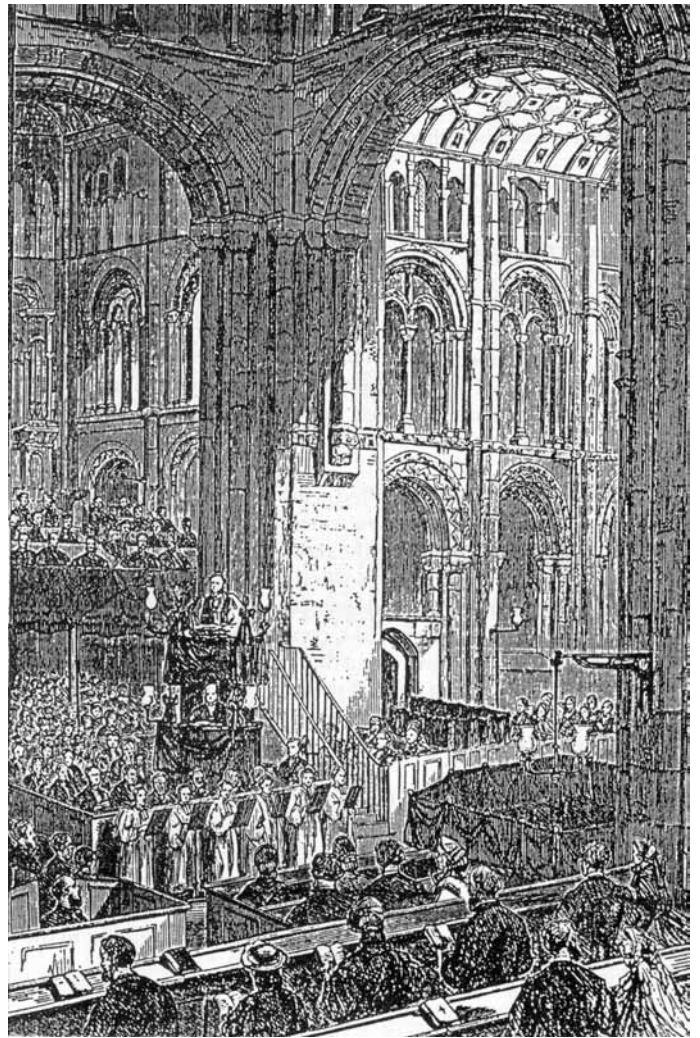
On the 11 November, 1865, the Illustrated Times published this engraving of the 'Interior of Romsey Church, Hants, showing the late Lord Palmerston's Pew'. The engraving is a view of the central space looking diagonally from the South Transept during a service. The wooden gallery in the North Transept is still in place and is well populated by Victorian gentlemen looking down on the Vicar and Clerk who occupy the two-tier pulpit in its old position by the north-east pillar.

To the left of the engraving is a thin sliver of the new organ built by J.W. Walker of London and which had then been situated in the North Gallery for almost seven years. Lord Palmerston had died in October and his pew and that of his servants was still draped in black cloth.

This representation is the only one we have of the organ when it was in this position. It shows clearly a tower that holds three of the larger pipes of either the Pedal division or the Great division of the Organ. The tower sits on casework that may be part of the present lower case. My aim is to find an engraving or early photograph of the organ in what must have been a spectacular and impressive position both visually and aurally.

Both my predecessors, Anthony Burns-Cox and Jeffrey Williams have searched for such a picture without success. This elusive vision may exist in a private collection somewhere and we would be very excited to hear from you if this is so! Meanwhile, the ongoing research has thrown much light on some very interesting politics in the Abbey during the years leading up to the opening of the new organ and its eventual removal from the gallery to ground level.

In May 1857, the firm of J.W. Walker & Sons were chosen from eight builders to provide a suitable instrument for the

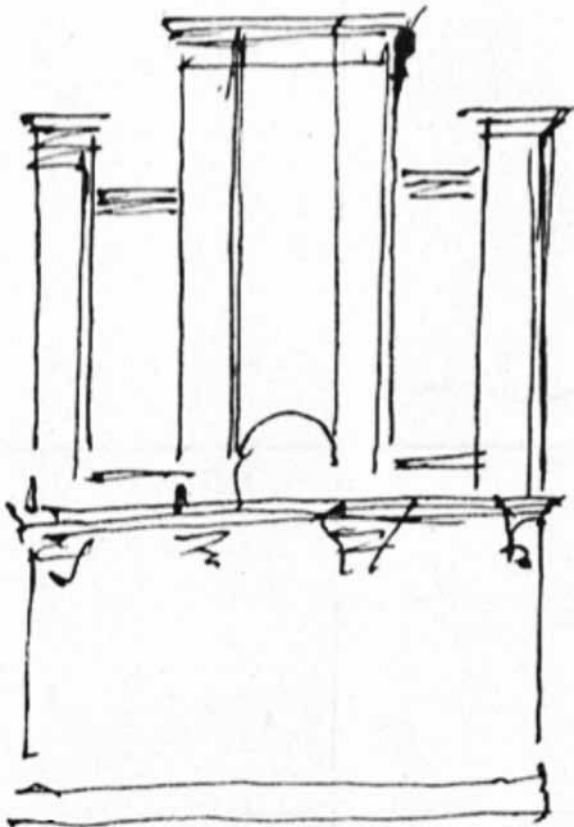


Abbey Church. Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, the eminent Oxford Professor of Music and founder (1856) of the College of St. Michael's at Tenbury was appointed as consultant. Now the decision as to where the new organ should be placed began.

Lord Palmerston did not want the organ to be positioned in front of family memorial tablets under the large West window. Many sites were proposed; in the centre of the building, under the north and south third arch of the middle aisle, 6ft off the ground on one side of the Nave, even the pipes at the West End with the keyboards 80 feet eastwards in the Nave!

Heated discussion was still under way after the decision to use the North Gallery and meanwhile the organ was being built to that design in London. On 9 September 1858, two months before the organ was to be opened, the organ committee were called to meet to discuss the refusal by the churchwardens to allow the organ to be placed in the gallery! By now it was too late, the organ was finished and would need to be rebuilt at great cost if the position changed. There was a performance given on the new organ in the factory in Tottenham Court Road, London on October 20<sup>th</sup>. It was then packed into 'cars' and taken by train to Salisbury. Because 'our trains will not travel on the narrow guage', it had to come by road the rest of the journey.

At this time and not until 1860, there was no casework around the organ. We have many letters bemoaning the lack of casing for the new organ and the raising of





subscriptions to pay for this. The Vicar wanted to use a local man to build who would be much cheaper. Walker complains that he cannot get down to this price and worries that the standard of work will be poor and 'unwieldy'.

Revd. Avery Moore was to vacate Romsey in December 1859 and wanted to get the job finished. In January 1860, Revd. Edward Lyon Berthon was inducted as the new Vicar. Minutes from a meeting held in January mention that a 'resolution helped to order case – terms acceded to by Mr. Walker'. Detailed measurements of the organ case and a small sketch in pencil of what appears to be a quickly drawn explanation of what the basic shape of the case might be appear in this document.

On January 12, the Honorary Secretaries of the Organ Committee, R.G.Linzee (of Jermyns) and C.L. Lordan, published a notice stating that the case to be provided by Walker was to cost between £125 and £140 and that subscriptions totalled £91 and 6 shillings. Parishioners interested in seeing this case completed were invited to attend a meeting in the Vestry at 4pm on the 16<sup>th</sup>. This is where the present collection of letters and documents cease for this period.

We have already noted that in the engraving of Lord Palmerston's Pew of 1865, there was casework in evidence

in the 'Old English' style. The picture below left was sent to the Vicar back in 1856 and is thought to be from the builder Bevington & Sons. In colour, the pipes are beautifully painted in a golden yellow. This may well be the drawing that Benjamin Ferrey refers to in a letter to Avery Moore in which he recommends that 'you take away the ridiculous ornamentation'. A sketch of a more sober version stripped of the cherubs, foliage and crown appears below his signature. This sketch and the 'Bevington' drawing in gold both match the artist's impression shown in the Illustrated Times engraving.

These drawing are not to scale. The wonderful water colour on the left actually measures around two feet in length. The sketch is two inches high and the engraving shown in full above is around seven inches in height. By rescaling all three, you will be able to see the obvious similarities in design. Only the right hand 'tower' of the organ case shows in the engraving.

Is this the design used to encase the organ in 1860, a design based on a submission from a competing organ builder, simplified by the Abbey architect, given a makeover by Walker and presumably agreed to by the organ committee after raising further subscriptions?

I am still unsure of the answer and there is still much research to do. What

would provide us with a conclusion to this search is a photograph or engraving of the organ in all its glory, high up in the North Transept gallery where it was to remain until 1888, the year following the Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrating fifty years as monarch.

*Robert Fielding*  
*Organist, Romsey Abbey*

## Walks report for Autumn 2011

On the September 18 Chris and Mike Wenman led a group of about 10 walkers. We started off from the garden centre at Brambridge on a riverside walk with an unpromising weather forecast. We followed the Itchen flood plain and returned along the Itchen navigation towpath. The weather held off until we reached our destination back at the garden centre. Five minutes later a torrential rainstorm flooded the centre while we tucked into a roast beef lunch.

Martin and Julie Gale always seem to get superb weather for their walks and this October was no exception. Seventeen of us met at the Cliffhanger Café in Highcliffe on a sparkling morning with a light breeze and we enjoyed every minute of a leisurely walk beside the gleaming sea.

In November Robert Grime led our local walk from Stony Marsh round Michelmersh.

**Our first walk of 2012 is on February 22. Please meet Diane and Sarah Hargreaves at 9.30 am at the Bugle Inn, GR 481243 for a walk over Twyford Downs, with an optional lunch afterwards.**

On March 24 we shall be in the beautiful area near Cheriton with Fay Grayer. Details of this walk are in the calendar.

I am sure that both regular and new walkers will join me in thanking all those who volunteer to lead our walks. Every year we all discover, through others, lovely corners of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. The frequent comment at the end of walks is "How lucky we are to live in such a beautiful area with its wide variety of panorama!"

*Sylvia Roverato*

## Volunteers at Romsey Railway Station

Now that we are encouraged to use 'green' transport how many of us regularly travel by train? In particular, how many use Romsey railway station? If you have not visited it recently, you may be agreeably surprised by the improvements.

Since the formation of The Three Rivers Rail Partnership was formed between the rail industry, local councils, rail users, businesses and volunteer helpers. Today there are at least two trains every hour between Salisbury, Romsey and Southampton. Line guides in leaflet form obtainable at the station make the journey more interesting, providing information about tourist attractions, pubs and restaurants along the route. Volunteer groups have adopted local stations with the aim of enhancing their general environment. Romsey Station was adopted in April 2009 since when it has seen a steady improvement.

Our volunteers keep the station tidy at weekends by operating a rota system. We are always pleased to welcome new members; if you can spare a couple of hours every five weeks or so (the more on the rota the less often we have to call upon members) do get in touch. Our Community Partnership Rail Officer, Mark Miller, also organises periodic group clean-ups of the area surrounding the station.

There are about three committee meetings a year when volunteers are joined by representatives from the Town Council, TVBC and Hampshire County Council who have done much to facilitate improvements including the rear access ramp, additional car parking and forecourt improvements. The meetings are held in a refurbished Volunteer Room on Platform 1.

Thanks to the Romsey & District Society hanging baskets adorn the forecourt and planters on the platforms add a touch of colour during summer. These are all supplied by Choice Plants of Timsbury. Other items of interest are two murals on each platform, both done by the Romsey Primary Schools. Inspired by 'Poems on the Underground' we display a new set of themed poetry every month in the waiting room on Platform 2 together with a seasonal painting by one of our group.



By the time this goes to press we shall have held our third "Mulled Wine and Mince Pies" evening to coincide with Romsey Late Night Shopping. Passengers are agreeably surprised to be met with free Christmas fare! We usually receive a visit from the Town Mayor and Mayoress.

One of the most successful additions is the Station Café run by Sally Lamb who was encouraged to do so by the Three Rivers Rail Partnership. It has given the station a buzz to say nothing of the aroma of sizzling bacon! Sally gives us invaluable help during the Late Night Shopping evening.

Over the summer the Partnership reintroduced the successful Free Sunday Rail-bus service. Operated by Test Valley Community Transport Services, the route this year linked Romsey Abbey, Romsey Station, Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Mottisfont

Abbey, Mottisfont and Dunbridge Station, Houghton Lodge Gardens and Stockbridge. It is hoped to repeat this service in 2012.

Future projects include landscaping the area adjacent to the new rear access and further clearing of vegetation along the station approach road. To find out more about events and projects visit [www.threeriversrail.com](http://www.threeriversrail.com).

Sadly all these innovations remain cosmetic while the fabric of the station buildings and underpass slowly deteriorate. Despite the best efforts of The Building Preservation Trust there has been little progress on the plans to transform the Station House. We are resolved to renew efforts in order to bring about the much-needed improvements.

*Shirley Rogers*  
[shirley.rogers@ntlworld.com](mailto:shirley.rogers@ntlworld.com)  
RDS representative, Railway Volunteers



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**H**e was a successful surgeon/man midwife who created his own natural history museum, collected and named the Dartford Warbler in 1773 (and Lesser Whitethroat), attempted the first summary of world birds (*A General Synopsis of Birds*) illustrated with his water-colours, wrote and illustrated a second book (*General History of Birds*) at age 82, corresponded with leading scientists of the day, including Thomas Pennant and Joseph Banks, was a member of the Royal Society, helped create the Linnaean Society, was visited by Lord Palmerston and thanked for services to science by Queen Victoria, received specimens and drawings from Cook's voyages, named many Australian birds, is regarded as the 'grandfather' of Australian ornithology and dominated ornithology in England for 50 years. Who was he? Well... John Latham of course! But you may not have even heard of him and neither had I.



## The Forgotten Ornithologist

by David Thelwell

**Dr John Latham (1740-1837)** spent his working life in Dartford, Kent and retired in 1796, aged 56. He lived for over 40 years in Romsey



and Winchester and died aged 97. His life story is one of great achievement, prodigious works, great successes and personal and family tragedy. On a local level he also studied archaeology and prepared his '*Collections for a History of Romsey*', which in the end proved too expensive to publish. It was while researching for my study of House Sparrows in Romsey that I came across this amazing man. The British Museum has seven quarto volumes containing information on the local history of Romsey, which he illustrated with drawings, engravings and plans. This gives some insight into the range of talents Latham possessed.

Latham had an early interest in natural history, but followed his father's profession as a surgeon (aged 23 and newly married) in Dartford. It was here he collected and named the Dartford Warbler. He is reputed to have made a considerable fortune in medicine and created an extensive museum of his own collection in Dartford, obtaining, stuffing, setting up and encasing most of the animals himself.

In 1781 aged 41, he started his first ornithological work *A General Synopsis of Birds* (1781-1801) published in Winchester by Jacob and Johnson, and also produced 106 illustrations. It described many new species that he had discovered in museums and collections. Much new material had arrived from recent voyages, notably those of Captain Cook. He didn't attach importance to names of the species he described, but later realised that using the Linnaean system would give him the honour of originating the species' scientific name. He published an *Index Ornithologicus* (1790), specifying a Latin name for the species he had described, but it was too late. He had delayed publication to include new discoveries, most notably the Emu. Johann Gmelin had already published his own version

of Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* (1735) and given scientific names to the species Latham had described, so Gmelin had priority.

Latham's second publication was his *General History of Birds* (1821-28), which he began when he was 82 years old and living in Winchester. This was an enlargement of his 'Synopsis' and was his greatest work, which he dedicated to George IV. He designed, etched and hand coloured all the 183 illustrations himself. At 82 he is described as retouching the copper plates with a steadiness of hand supposed to belong to the prime of life. The Latin index to his 'General History' was unfinished when he died, so more new species were latinized by others, mainly James Stephens (1792-1852). Latham published descriptions of many specimens from Australasia, including the Wedge-tailed Eagle, Superb Lyrebird, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Australian Magpie and Emu. He was the first to describe the Hyacinth Macaw. There is even a Latham's Snipe, which winters in Australia.

Ornithology and comparative anatomy (as a surgeon) were his favourite



## in Hampshire

subjects and contributed to his keen collecting of bird specimens. Obtaining specimens was then at an important stage in Europe, as scientists got to grips with finding, describing and cataloguing the world's fauna. Latham was particularly interested in drawings and Joseph Banks lent him many made by artists on Cook's voyages. The drawings of Lambert were particularly useful. He also examined specimens of Australian birds that reached Britain at the end of the 18th century. Latham was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1796, took a leading part in the formation of the Linnaean Society in 1788 and was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. He also contributed descriptions of birds in *'The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay'* (1789), helped to revise the second edition of Pennant's *'Indian Zoology'* in 1793 and wrote accounts of *'Ancient Sculptures in the Abbey Church of Romsey'* in 1801.

John Latham retired after thirty five years medical practice and sold his entire ornithological collection and library, maybe to fund his son. His second marriage came in 1798 shortly after retirement. He chose to move to Romsey, where his son was in the

brewing business. He lived in comfort in a large house in Middlebridge Street, for some twenty years, continuing his studies and describing new species. However, fate took a turn when his only surviving son, also called John, requested a loan of £2,450 for his business. He was acquiring public houses all over Romsey and farther afield, either buying, renting, leasing or mortgaging them, till he had 19 properties. He was borrowing from everyone, including his father and not paying his bills, using borrowed money to pay others. When he was forced to surrender his accounts in 1818 he owed £18,307 and was exposed as an 'amoral rogue'. Dr John Latham had lent him £7-8000, having been deceived on the ownerships of the pubs. The son was declared bankrupt in November 1817 and his father was left liable for a potential £15,000. Dr Latham was humiliated and financially destroyed and forced to leave his home in Romsey to pay the debts. The money lent for properties was given on trust and wasn't backed up by mortgage papers. He moved in with his daughter and son in law, who had a house in St Thomas' Street, Winchester in 1819. Despite all these events he is reported to have kept a placid disposition and goodness of heart and been active, patient and cheerful to the end. His daughter died in 1835 and his eyesight was failing. It was the following year that Lord Palmerston (who lived at Broadlands) paid him a visit and the year after that he passed away and was buried in Romsey Abbey. Latham lived at Ivybrook House, 44 Middlebridge Street, and it is thought he also owned or rented No. 46 (the white barn type building in the picture) which seems to have been built as a warehouse. No 46 certainly became a Wool Warehouse and later the Elite Cinema. The top floor of Ivybrook had large windows and a staircase from the outside, so it may have been workspace for weavers or similar workers. The painting by Fanny Buckel made in 1900, shows an impressive townhouse, but had become cheap lodgings by the

1960s, when it was in disrepair and eventually pulled down.

Whilst in Romsey, John Latham was most prominent as a local historian and he was twice mayor. He was also the first chairman of the Pavement Commission, which set out to pave, light and clean the streets of Romsey. The requirement to set rates for properties in the town to pay for the work, not surprisingly raised many objections on the levels of taxes that were proposed.

In his *'Collections for a History of Romsey'* Latham recounts the bounty paid on House Sparrows by the church wardens and included some claimed by his own son. Although he no doubt watched birds locally and maybe was called on to identify wildlife, there is no record of his own observations of Hampshire birds. Latham was a compiler and most notably made the first contribution of any importance to Australian ornithology.

On a letter sent by Latham to Thomas Pennant in 1773, the latter scribbled on the letter, 'Dartford Warbler a new Wren', probably the first use of the name.

I am grateful to Phoebe Merrick of Lower Test Valley Archaeological Society for bringing John Latham to my attention and providing information about this remarkable ornithologist and scholar. He seems little known in Romsey today and perhaps the only obvious existing reference to him, is Latham Road in the Cupernham area.



# John Latham, Surgeon, Apothecary and Antiquary

On October 7, Mary Howard gave a fascinating talk on John Latham. Born in 1740, in Kent, he practised in Dartford as apothecary and surgeon, the eighteenth century equivalent of a GP. There he took an interest in ornithology. He collected, he described, he corresponded. He wrote not only on local birds, but (in virtue of his correspondence with Joseph Banks, who sailed on Captain Cook's first voyage) the birds of Australia and, through others, the birds of India. Although it took some time, he eventually obtained recognition as a scholar, being elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1775.

In 1796, like many after him, he retired to Romsey. He was a moderately wealthy man and took a large house in Middlebridge Street – which was pulled down in 1967. Clearly a man of great energy, he took up another interest and became an antiquarian. Once more he began collecting, documents, this time, rather than bird skins. He set out to write a history of Romsey. In his hands, a massive undertaking. He is Romsey's first historian.

Sadly, his personal circumstances suffered a devastating collapse. His only son had set up as a brewer in Romsey. He overreached himself, went bankrupt and committed suicide. The bankruptcy also meant the ruin of his father, who had advanced money. The house in Middlebridge Street went and John Latham went to live with his daughter in Winchester. He lived another twenty years, dying at the great age of 96 in 1837.

Quite coincidentally, we received a piece by Romsey's twenty-first century ornithologist, David Thelwell, on John Latham the ornithologist who was first to describe, among other birds, the Dartford Warbler.

Mrs Howard has written a life of John Latham "John Latham, Surgeon, Apothecary and Antiquary" which is available by post from her at 17, Austen Rd Guildford GU1 3NW to members of the R&DS and LTVAS at the discounted price of £6, plus £1.80 p & p

## The River Test from Source to Sea

On December 7 a capacity audience in Romsey Town Hall heard Don Bryan give an excellent guide to the landmarks found along the course of the Test River from its official source at Ashe House, close to Overton, to the heart of Southampton Docks where it merges with the Itchen River to become Southampton Water, thence to the Solent and the sea.

The Test River historically hosted many early settlements and mills along its entire length. Mills in the upper reaches produced high quality paper. Paper from Quidhampton was used for the first banknotes and reputedly gave its name to the pound. De La Rue still has a major plant in that area. Further downstream silk, flour and timber were processed.

The waters rise from the chalk deposits to the north of Hampshire. The fast flowing pure water is ideal for trout fishing and fish farming. Reduced rainfall has depleted the aquifer so that water levels are extremely low and some ponds and springs are running dry. Despite this, the Test and the towns and villages along it remain an area of great beauty. Don's narrative and accompanying slides illustrated this extremely well.

*John Scarborough*

On Saturday August 8 some thirty people took part in the Society's Autumn Stream Clean. Five teams covered the Bus Station, the Barge Canal, Coleman's Ditch and the Upper and Lower Tadburn. Gary Woods and Andy White from TVBC were there to hand out gloves, pickers and bags and to collect the bagged up rubbish for disposal. Among the items retrieved from the water were two bicycles, several pedestrian direction signs, a large cable drum and a beer keg that was not completely empty. La Parisienne Brasserie provided a very welcome coffee to complete the event just before twelve noon.

## Annual Stream Clean



Society Stream Cleaners, highly visible before immersion



....and the results of their labours

# The Broadlands Project

(Romsey & District Buildings Preservation Trust's AGM)

Penelope, the Lady Brabourne and Richard Jordan-Brooks, Broadlands' Director of Estates helped redeem a promise she made on becoming Romsey's High Sheriff: to bring the Estate and Romsey closer together. This was done in a lively and engaging way when they attended the Trust's AGM in the Plaza on November 17.

Richard Jordan-Brooks gave a fascinating illustrated talk to a large audience. His role, in the as yet uncompleted Project, is to be the interface between the family and the large and diverse team of highly skilled artisans, in the process of managing and delivering this mammoth £5.5m privately financed scheme. The Project is to renew and upgrade all the mains services, the hot and cold water, fire, intruder alarm and IT systems in Broadlands House. Some of the problems that had to be faced at the outset were heating bills of some £50,000 a year and electrical wiring circuits and fittings that had been condemned in terms (dangerous, not to be used etc) that would cause an owner and insurer to lose sleep.

The complexity and scale of this delicate operation soon became clear when some of the basic facts emerged: removal of all the furniture and hangings into storage using a huge underground former nuclear bunker under Dean Hill; closely controlled removal of asbestos in all but 2 of the 60

rooms (requiring the airtight "tenting" of spaces within the house); the removal of virtually every floorboard; removal of electrical wiring and fixtures in such a way as to cause the minimum of damage to the historic fabric (including three staircases, large sculptures, 17 fireplaces and mirrors, four huge four-poster beds, wallpaper and joinery).

The Project also required secure fencing of the whole site, CCTV and the provision of a virtual Portakabin village of workshops, lavatories, catering, eating, resting and storage spaces for the large workforce and material. The restoration phase involved, among other things, the provision of an eight-zone heating system, 37 miles of wiring, 2.5 miles of copper piping, 118 new radiators and a new detached boiler house containing two 290kw biomass gravity-fed boilers.

Prime considerations were sustainability, back-up systems and security of fuel supply for the boilers. Eight hundred acres of managed woodland are to supply the mainly ash, beech and oak that are already being fed into the wood chip-fed boilers, and in doing so sustain Estate jobs employing traditional skills. Local firms and services had been used where practicable (for example EDP for Mechanical and Electrical aspects).

An ancient cedar tree, until recently near the main entrance gate, and a riverside swamp cypress, are to be chipped and thereby prove useful in a life after death.

With the Project in its final stages, Broadlands is scheduled to open again to the public in June of next year. Richard Jordan-Baker closed by saying that the Estate wants to recruit 46 volunteer guides who will be the first to see, explore and understand the House in its upgraded state.



This was an absorbing and often amusing talk about the future of one of Romsey's main assets and tourist attractions, witnessed in a touching and personal way by those most involved.

The significance of the House and the Estate as an entity in the landscape and economy should not be underestimated. It was heartening to see tangible evidence that Broadlands is revitalising itself and using constructively its precious heritage assets to good effect, to Romsey's advantage. A good example of this was the sum of £2.85m raised by the sale of the Broadlands Archive that had been fed back into the Project for securing the future – along with those old and exhausted trees.

(Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer guide is invited to register their interest by contacting the Estate Office by emailing [jangodwin@broadlands.demon.co.uk](mailto:jangodwin@broadlands.demon.co.uk) or on 01794 518885).

*Ted Mason*



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# Town centre Exhibition Success

The exhibition presenting Ben Hamilton-Baillie's outline proposals for the enhancement of Market Place, Bell Street and Church Street was held in the Court Room of the Town Hall as planned on the 9th, 10th and 17th of September 2011. The weather was good on all three days and the exhibition attracted well over 400 visitors of whom 382 completed questionnaires which simply asked people if they thought that Ben Hamilton-Baillie's ideas would be suitable for the town and what improvements or changes they would like to see. As was noted in the preview of the exhibition in the last news Sheet, the objective of the exhibition was to try and find out what Romsey people wanted for the town by using Ben Hamilton-Baillie's approach as an example.

We analysed the questionnaires and it soon became very apparent that the majority of people were in favour or

not opposed to the proposed scheme. In fact, the final figure turned out to be a surprising 88% leaving only 12% objecting. This figure was surprising for two reasons. Firstly, 'shared surface' schemes such as that proposed by Ben Hamilton Baillie (where the delineation between traffic and people is less clear than in traditional schemes) have courted a fair amount of controversy - but it seemed that did not worry most of our visitors. Secondly, Romsey people are not well known for reaching agreement on change: one of the most memorable stand-offs being our resistance to the council who wanted to impose main drainage in the town in the early 1930s!



Analysis of the results was quite a lengthy process for whilst 135 of the 382 questionnaires gave unqualified responses, many of the remainder had chosen to write long essays from which the essential ingredients had to be paraphrased. Top of the list, as might have been expected, was car-parking and the great majority wanted it improved

one way or another. The next most important category concerned quality of materials and maintenance as being important factors. Many of these cited the poor state of Church Place (where the little used stone bricks are breaking up over the whole area) and Market Place where some of the paving had to be relaid at huge inconvenience to shoppers and cost to shopkeepers. Matters concerning safety were next on the list with a variety of comments including the need to take care about the impact of shared-surface schemes upon the disabled, particularly the visually-impaired. There were also a number of comments on pedestrianisation, street clutter, street furniture, cycling and possible extensions of the scheme which are covered in a report written by Geoff Morris and Robert Grime that will be published on RomseyNet together with the whole content of the exhibition (type 'romseyNet town reports' into Google).

The exhibition was written and prepared by Geoff Morris who enlisted the support of John Scarborough who provided the necessary photographic

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skills and Chris Williams who had recently retired from HCC. Chris's input was very valuable because he had been involved in many shared surface schemes in Hampshire and in particular, Church Place, Latimer Street, Cornmarket and The Hundred. To develop the exhibition, some 6 foot posts and 32 feet of mdf were erected in Geoff's dining room to make an eye-level A3 mockup to which people were invited to make amendments to the script as they felt fit.

Following the exhibition, Geoff Morris and Robert Grime wrote a report on the exhibition for a meeting with HCC and TVBC members and officers in late November. This meeting decided the way forward and as a result of its effort, the Society will be assured of a seat at the table.

*Geoff Morris and Robert Grime*

## Wine for the Workers

August seems a long time ago, but shortly after the last News Sheet was distributed, the News Sheet deliverers, the poetry readers and all the others whose voluntary work enables the Society to carry out its functions were invited to take a glass of wine in King John's House Garden at the annual event generally known as Wine for the Workers.



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## We welcome the following new members

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Ray & Jane Moorman	Wellow
Philip & Elinor Gooding	Michelpersh
Arline Smith	Romsey
Joyce Smith	Romsey
Leslie & Sandra Chapman	Romsey
Roger & Mary Leppard	Romsey
Ann Beggs	Romsey
Brian Marchent	Sherfield English
Simon Troke	Romsey
Bryan Wood	Romsey
Pamela Bartlett	Romsey
Mrs Jeannie Mabey	Romsey
Therese Moriarty	Romsey
Timothy Knatchbull	London
Malcolm & Eileen Creese	Mottisfont
Tom Sargant	Romsey
Miss A Watkins	Chandlers Ford
Miss C Lassam	Chandlers Ford
Dr Samantha Price	Romsey
Gregory & Eileen McCann	Lockerley
Pat & Pam Pattinson	Romsey
John & Janet Hammond	Romsey
Kevin Kirk	Romsey
Bob & Sheena Griffiths	Romsey
Mrs Anne Hayes	Romsey

## Romsey's Written Heritage

### Annual Lecture 2011



Professor Chris Woolgar, head of Archives and Special Collections at the University of Southampton, gave the Society's annual lecture in 2011. He is the man who spearheaded the campaign to raise the £2.85m needed to save the Broadlands Archives for the university, thus ensuring their continued presence in Hampshire, to which appeal our Society contributed.

In reviewing Romsey's written records he commented that they are typical in that they form a patchwork encompassing a wide range of materials, that can be found in The National Archives, and in Hampshire Record Office as well as in Southampton University library and elsewhere.

He discussed problems associated with the preservation of archives and legal issues involved in obtaining them and making them publicly available. These arise partly because they were often generated privately although they give insights into the nation's history. Documents do not have the same degree of protection that art and sculpture enjoy, although like those they are sometimes bought as investments by private speculators.

The Broadlands collection contains many items of international importance such as the correspondence received by Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary as well as items sent to Lord Mountbatten at the time of the granting of independence to India. Professor Woolgar pointed out that the ownership of letters by people in national office is a complicated matter.

He ended his by outlining some of the exciting ideas that his Department has for making them more widely available to which we can all look forward.

*Phoebe Merrick*

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## White Horse Lunch

On Thursday September 22 Society members filled the dining room at the White Horse for our now traditional lunch. High quality and excellent value at £12 per head. Thanks to Lindsay Esplin Jones for arranging the event.

## Behind the scenes at Ikea

On Wednesday 9 Nov, 60 members of RDS, in two groups, morning and afternoon, found their way into the restaurant at Ikea. There we met our tour guide, Mark Sokol, the Environment and Community Specialist. Called 'Sparky' by everyone (presumably on account of his boundless enthusiasm), he led us downstairs where we watched two films. The first was about global population and how by helping the poorer countries to achieve better living standards, world population would decrease. The second showed the vision of Ikea; to create a better everyday life for many people by offering a range of well-designed functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them. In doing this Ikea sources natural ingredients such as wood and cotton from their own plantations across the world in order to make sure that standards are legal and efficient. A well-designed table uses wood which is not only thin to cut costs but is enclosed round cardboard to make it light and packable – a best seller. In India and Pakistan, Ikea has trained farmers to change the way they grow cotton to get a better harvest, use less water and improve profits. This cotton is used in all Ikea linens making it cheaper for customers and better for the growers. Ikea produces flat packs to increase sales and save on less transport

which reduces emissions. All Ikea buildings are moving towards being supplied by 100% renewable energy for electricity and heating.

With Ikea's emphasis on looking after the environment ringing in our ears, we were taken to the shop floor where Sparky's enthusiasm prevailed as he picked out some items of particular interest. He showed us an armchair being tested for strength and durability; how one euro from the sale of each soft toy is donated to Save the Children; that for each solar powered lamp sold Ikea donates one solar lamp free to children in India and Pakistan who have no electricity. He took us to the warehouse where we saw the recycling unit. Ikea aims to reach 100% recyclability and is over 85% now. Every item has a future use and Ikea's choice of materials makes this possible. We were shown how heating comes from underground natural heat in a joint venture in West Quay and that Ikea has installed solar panels to help with further natural heating. He told us that water is saved by Ikea by equipping taps and toilets with devices that reduce water usage by 30%.

Back in the restaurant, we were given free access to the excellent self-service food, all responsibly sourced. We came away with very changed views about this huge blue and yellow box and were very impressed by Ikea's ethics and commitment to the environment.

*Viv Robinson*



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## London Visit



On October 18 a coach load of members arrived in London for two fascinating guided tours. The first was in Knightsbridge. We began outside the V & A and explored the mews and the squares beyond the Brompton Oratory, then crossed the road skirted the bulk of Harrods and entered the tiny, and very classy, streets behind. Our guide was knowledgeable and fluent and we quickly got an insight into the people and the history of this part of the Royal Borough. After lunch, our coach took us to the Albert Hall for a tour conducted by guides just as enthusiastic as in the morning. A splendid visit, perfectly organised by Dee Tuffill.



## For your 2012 Diary

**January 17** "Birds of the Test Valley".  
Illustrated talk by Andy Lester. Wisdom  
House Centre 8pm

January 21 Burns Night Supper.  
Abbey Hall **SOLD OUT**

January 27 Poetry for Pleasure. "Coast to  
Coast" King John's House 8pm

**February 14** R&DS Annual General  
Meeting. Linden Road Hall 7 for 7.30 pm  
(See this page)

February 22 Walk Diane Hargreaves. See  
page 6.

**March 14** "The Titanic Disaster and its  
Effect on the People of Southampton."  
Talk by Geoff Watts. Town Hall 8pm.

March 16 Poetry for Pleasure "All you  
Need is Love" King John's House 8pm

March 24 Walk. Cheriton. Fay Grayer.

March 31 Stream Clean. Meet at  
Crosfield Hall 9.15 am

**April 17** "Writings on the Wall: Ancient  
Graffiti". Talk by Revd Terry Stokes Town  
Hall 2.30 pm

April 27 Poetry for Pleasure "For Those  
in Peril" (Titanic centenary) King John's  
House 8pm

April 28 Walk "The Historic Thames:  
Tower Bridge to Chelsea" Six miles in six  
hours (See this page)

## 37<sup>th</sup> A G M

### An informal meeting

Coffee, a short business meeting

A chance to question the committees

An update on planning and a slide  
presentation of some of the year's  
activities In and around Romsey

### Tuesday 14 February 2012

7pm (coffee) for 7-30 pm  
Linden Road Hall

#### Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2011 AGM (See  
April 2011 News Sheet)
3. Matters arising
4. Treasurer's report
5. Membership report
6. Chairman's report
7. Election of officers
8. Election of Executive Committee
9. Appointment of Independent  
Financial Examiner
10. Reports on the year's activities
11. Any other business

**NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEES ARE  
ALWAYS WELCOME**

Please contact the Secretary before January  
27 if you have a nomination  
Neil Duncan, R&DS Secretary  
21, The Abbey, Romsey SO51 8EN  
rdsexec@yahoo.co.uk

## WALK: THE HISTORIC THAMES

**Tower Bridge to Chelsea**

**6 miles in 6 hours**

*led by Phoebe Merrick*

**Saturday April 28th**

**Departure from Romsey Bus**

**Station 8-30 a.m.**

Travel will be by coach at a cost of £16 each (less  
than the train fare from Winchester)

The coach will take us to Tower Bridge where there  
will be time for a quick drink before we set off to walk  
upstream along the north bank of the river. There are  
lots of points of interest along the way – the Tower  
of London, Old Billingsgate Queenhythe Dock, the  
Temple. At Somerset House we will stop for a lengthy  
lunch break. Covent Garden which offers plenty of  
eating places and the South Bank complex are close by.

After lunch we will continue on our journey passing  
round the back of the Houses of Parliament and  
returning via Victoria Park Gardens to the river bank  
and passing Lambeth Bridge. Soon we will reach  
Tate Britain (free entry) where we will have time  
for a reviving drink and a quick look round. If time  
and stamina permit we will walk along to look at the  
Chelsea Embankment before returning to Tate Britain  
to meet our coach.

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# Romsey's Green-winged Orchid

How many people know that there is a scarce wild orchid growing within the boundaries of Romsey? Or that the Society's Natural Environment Committee has been seeking to protect it? In May 2004 I realised that the attractive pink flower on the grassy verge of Winchester Road was a Green-winged Orchid. The County Botanical Recorder told me that it was the first he had heard of in the Romsey area for some years, although one has apparently been seen at Abbotswood. Over the following four years it flowered annually and I hoped that eventually more would appear. In 2008 I joined the Society's Natural Environment Committee and shared the news of the orchid with them.

In the spring of 2009 I was delighted that a flower bud again appeared, but the following day I found that the verge where the plant was growing had been mown. Closer inspection proved that the flower bud was still there, though somewhat squashed, but to my horror the following week the verge was mown again, more closely. Not a trace remained of the plant.

At this stage, nothing could be done to save the flower for the current year, but we were determined to protect it in the future. Robert Page, our committee chairman, contacted TVBC early the following spring with the exact location of the plant and the person responsible assured him that from now on the orchid would not be mown. But early in May the verge was cut again and all that was left of the orchid was a rosette of leaves and a few remnants of diced petals. At least that showed that it had flowered, albeit extremely briefly!

Over the next few weeks, Robert again contacted the council, and I tracked down the hospital estates department who were responsible for their grounds maintenance. They were very helpful, but confirmed that the bank is Highways land and therefore not theirs to either mow or protect. So we decided to concentrate on reminding TVBC to stop mowing at the appropriate time.

In March 2011, Robert again emailed his council contact, who replied that he had shown the 'lad' who cuts the grass where it was on a map, and it

should be OK this year. A week later, by chance I met the council mower who knew all about it, but I confirmed for him the exact location. The grass remained uncut until two weeks later, when the area outside the hospital was strimmed. There was no sign of the orchid.

Three weeks later I saw someone else cutting the grass, so I followed him and his mower into the hospital grounds. He was a new contractor who worked for the hospital and was not aware that



he should not cut the bank. I spoke to both him and the hospital caretaker, and they were both keen to ensure that it will live to flower next year. We will make sure that we contact both the council and the hospital next March to give the plant the chance to flower again.

The Green-winged orchid is typically a plant of old meadows, where it can grow in hundreds, and is classified as Near Threatened in Britain, and a County Notable plant in Hampshire. It is unusual in that it forms its rosette of leaves in September or October which then lasts through the winter; thus it is probably less damaged by summer mowing than many other plants. Its name derives from the green veins in its raised sepals; hence it is also called the green-veined orchid. It usually flowers in early May. If you do see it, please leave it for others to enjoy too.

*Elizabeth Pratt*

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