



# The Bergh Apton Newsletter

February - March 2015

Issue No. 137

## Editorial Comment

In this editorial I would like primarily to thank those people who over many years very generously have delivered or distributed (can't make up my mind which) this Newsletter as well as the 11 says; some have retired after doing it for a long period and it is fortunate that they have been replaced by other generous folk, thank you one and all. I personally feel

that the written word is a very essential part of communication even today with many types of social networking, we should remember that both books and magazines will be with us for a very long time but without distributors their message would be a loss to all mankind.

*Milton Harris* (Editor)

## LANTERN MAKING WITH KATE MUNRO

On Wednesday 3rd December, Class 3 at Alington and Bergh Apton Primary School were fortunate to have artist Kate Munro spending the day with them. All of the children got to make their own lantern. They sculpted a willow frame and soaked different coloured paper in glue to mould around the frame to make the "glass" effect. They then put a battery powered "candle" inside. The lanterns looked fantastic when finished and the children really benefitted from having an extended amount of time to create a beautiful object to decorate their homes this Christmas.

The lanterns will be displayed at the school before being taken home. Thanks to the BACAT for funding this project, the children and staff really appreciate it!



## COUNTRY DIARY

### THE CORNER OF HIS EYE

A day cold as sea shells, his breath smokes and the silence sings in his ears. It is the Winter Solstice, one of the hinges of the year. It is foggy and frosty and the day, young as yet, seems to hold its breath. Winter is bolting and barring the door to the coming of the Oak King. The lane is flanked by high banks and the winter weary tussocks of grass lie long and lank. The hedgerow at the top of the bank is a huddle of black shadows. Late autumn had buttered the field maple leaves and, alone of all the trees in the hedge, it held stubbornly on to them. Now and then a stir of air brings two or three floating down and he catches them, a handful of fairy gold and, like those deceitful coins, they will soon shrivel and turn to dust. Rain runnels lace the high banks and knuckled roots have elbowed through. The little Holly King, the robin, perches among them singing his wistful ritual song to the Solstice. The banks and lane are like a suburb of the wood, they know different changes of light, lives briefly lived, seasons which keep the balance of the year, changes of weather, they are a constant in continual change. The wood keeps its secrets to itself, fox, deer and mouse know, sparrow hawk and pigeon know but they too stay mum. Scrambling to the top of the bank he looks out over the field. Rain has filled ruts and hollows, furrows and folds and it reflects the light, calligraphic swirls over the skin of the land telling of more secrets. Out of the corner of his eye he catches a movement in a big sprawl of brambles and there is a wren, quick and quiet as a thought it moves. Then, there is another, a pair of cutty\* wrens. They search the thorned stems moving deeper inside, living up to their name 'Troglodytidae', a cave dweller. In a few days time he thinks it will be St. Stephen's Day and for generations it was traditionally the day when a wren was hunted and killed. Its body was fixed to the top of a pole and a

great wreath of holly and ivy surrounded it. The Wren Boys went from door to door singing their song:

The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,  
St. Stephen's Day was caught in a furse,  
Although he is little, his family's great  
I pray you good lady, give us a treat.

The story tells that Stephen had been preaching and he was running for his life from those who would kill him because of this and he hid. A wren near where he was hiding from his pursuers began to sing very loudly and attracted their attention, Stephen was discovered and ston to death. Hence the hunting of the Cutty Wren. In the song he is referred to as the king of the birds, another story in which the birds held a competition to see who could fly the highest and be given the title of King. Up they all flew and away the eagle soared, high as a giant can hurl and just as the birds were going to call him the winner, above him who should be flying but the wren! He had held onto the eagle's back, not just cutty but canny as well! Hunting the Cutty Wren died out in the early 1900's, other days, other ways. However at Middleton in Suffolk a similar tradition was born and the wren this time is carved from wood and is honoured and celebrated by song, dance and story by a side of Molly Dancers, 'The Old Glory'.

\*'Cutty' means small or short. You will doubtless have heard of the 'Cutty Sark', she is the last of the tea clippers and is preserved in dry dock in London. The name comes from a poem by Robert Burns which tells of a witch, Nannie, who wore a 'cutty sark', a short shirt. The clipper's figurehead is the witch.

Pat Mlejnecky

## Conservation Trust Annual Report 2014

In comparison with recent years, the last year was one of quiet consolidation. Much of our effort has focused on clearing-up Valley Marsh after the trauma of last year's cricket-bat willow extraction, mainly by filling ruts, and burning residual brash and top wood. The vegetation has remarkably recovered well, with a diverse and colourful display this summer. The site has already benefitted from the improved light regime and reduced transpiration of water. However, all this may belie a longer-term problem, as because of the deep ruts, we are no longer able to use our power-scythe over large areas of marsh, which consequently have not been cut. We are currently considering the use of a tracked digger to grade the

surface of the most rutted areas and clear the ditches; another possibility is the introduction of grazing animals to replace cutting, if we could overcome the animal husbandry and welfare challenges.

It was a good year for public engagement. We were well represented again at 'Wild about Norfolk' on 12 October 2013. Work days have been augmented by volunteer groups and some not quite so voluntary but good-natured community service. There have been repeated visits from various combinations of Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. In the summer we hosted them for an afternoon, when activities included pond-dipping from our new platform; in the autumn, they came on three consecutive evenings, enthusiastically pulling sycamore seedlings and raking-up cut vegetation. We are grateful particularly to Jacquie Ratcliffe and Shirley Rimmer for organising and managing these events.

The autumn fungus foray on 20 October 2013, ably led by Alex Prendergast, was as usual our best attended field event, attracting members of South Yare Wildlife Group and other local people. The traditional 'do-it-yourself' Christmas party was held Flint Cottage on 21 December and proved as convivial as ever. The similarly traditional midsummer barbeque and bonfire on the 'millennium pageant' field was held on 21 June, courtesy of Christopher and Liz Meynell. Our 'Breakfast with the Moths', with Judy and John Geeson, on 29 June 2014 hit a magical window in otherwise rainy and wet weather to reveal a beautiful gallimaufry of moths. Bob Kerry led two further, productive hedge survey evenings on 6 June and 17 July.

Following on from the second of these, the annual outing to a site of conservation interest was to Peewit Farm, Briston, near Melton Constable, on 20 July; here we were taken on a farm walk by Herbert Kittle, who was the winner of the Norfolk FWAG Conservation Prize, and who showed just how wonderfully colourful and biodiverse a sensitively managed farm can be. We thank Herbert for his hospitality and Shirley Rimmer for organizing the event. Another innovation, on 14 September was a 'Reptile Ramble' on our own reserve. Sheets of roofing felt, distributed two weeks earlier as refuges, yielded slow worms and newts when they were inspected with the help of Christian Whiting, who entertained the group with a wealth of information on 'herps'.

Tony Davy

## ROBERT WILLIAM (BILL) BOARDMAN (1935-2014)

Bill Boardman was a distinguished horticulturist with an encyclopaedic knowledge of plants. Over many years he and June created the magical 'Garden in an Orchard' in Mill Road, probably more densely packed with interesting and unusual plants than anywhere this side of the Cambridge Botanic Gardens. Bill's Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) was not a lot smaller than the Cambridge one, itself the first one to grow on British soil since the Mesozoic (the 'living fossil' having been rediscovered in China in 1941). Nor should we have been surprised that among Bill's records of fungi new to Norfolk were an Australian truffle found only in association with *Eucalyptus* roots and the 'Orchard Tooth', a rarity of decaying apple trees. Many people will have come to appreciate the garden as a favourite with artists and visitors alike in successive Bergh Apton Sculpture trails, or for a truly atmospheric open-air production of *Orpheus and Eurydice* by Claxton Opera.

Bill had been interested in horticulture since childhood and after school did a year's practical training with Daniel Brothers of Norwich. Then he studied for two years at Writtle College to obtain a Diploma in Horticulture, before his national service in the Royal Artillery. He and June were married in 1960, and in 1964 they bought the plot of land in Bergh Apton to start a nursery, moving into the newly built house in 1966. Soon Bill was exhibiting at the Chelsea Flower show, a fixture he subsequently missed only 3 times. In 1976 he was invited to join the Royal Horticultural Society's committees and judging panels and he had worked enthusiastically as a judge ever since. Recently, while in hospital, Bill was delighted to receive the rare accolade of honorary membership of his RHS committee. More locally, he had a high profile as one of the judges of 'Anglia in Bloom', criss-crossing the region to engage with the competing local communities. He was also a past President of the Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society. Bill's career also had a more scientific strand. When he closed his own nursery, he was appointed Horticulture Manager at the John Innes Institute in 1970; there he interacted with some of the most famous plant geneticists and breeders of the time, becoming involved with plant tissue culture and controlled crossing.

Early retirement from the J.I.I. in 1985 enabled Bill to focus on the garden in Bergh Apton, which was kept immaculate for open days and visits from both experts and the general public. He and June could be found working away there in daylight hours on almost any day of the year. Bill was particularly proud of his series of new delightfully



*Fond memories of a lovely man.*

yellow-tinged, elegant Snowdrops that arose as seedlings in the garden (hybrids of *Galanthus plicatus*): 'June Boardman' is already available commercially to galanthophiles (as he called Snowdrop enthusiasts) from Avon Nurseries; 'Bill Boardman' and 'Catherine Boardman' are likely to follow.

Many friends enjoyed Bill's gregarious hospitality, perhaps savouring a glass of wine from a bottle procured on one of his famous cross-channel jaunts. He was involved with charitable work with the Round Table and the Freemasons. He also loved to travel more widely; this usually involved seeing as many as possible of our exotic horticultural imports from all over the world in their native environments. Above all he was a family man, immensely proud of his children Catherine and Peter, and grandchildren Tom, Ellie, Jake and Oscar. Bill died at home on 14 November 2014, surrounded by his garden. He had been making a characteristically valiant and positive recovery from a stroke in August and, only three days earlier, I had been repeatedly dispatched to get tomes from his 'Library in a Loo' to verify botanical matters under discussion. We extend our deepest sympathy to June and his family. Bill will be greatly missed by the village.

Tony Davy

*Thank you*

I was so touched by all the cards and emails that I received after John's death and I want to thank you all from the bottom of my heart. They encouraged, helped and supported me in a difficult time.

Maria Phillips.

## Dates for your diary

### FEBRUARY 2015

4 <sup>th</sup>	19.30	B.A. Village Hall Management Committee meeting at Village Hall
11 <sup>th</sup>	19.30	B.A. Society talk 'Lithuania At Last' in Village Hall
18 <sup>th</sup>	10.00-12.00	Coffee n Catch Up at the Village Hall
19 <sup>th</sup>	10.00	BACT Workday. Meet at Church Field
21st	19.30	BALHG annual dinner at village hall
21st	10.00	BACT Workday. Meet at Church Field
24th	12.30	Tuesday Friends lunch at Church

### MARCH 2015

5th	19.30	P.C.C. meet at church
10th	19.00	South Yare Wildlife group talk at village hall
11th	19.30	B.A. Society talk by Ray Warnes on Antarctica
18th	10.00-12.00	Coffee n Catch Up at the Village Hall
19th	10.00	BACT Workday. Meet at Church Field
21st	10.00	BACT Workday. Meet at Church Field
24th	12.30	Tuesday Friends lunch at Church
28th	09.00	11 Says stuffing at Bramerton Village Hall

## Regular Activities

<b>Monday</b>	17.00	<b>Dog Training</b> Village Hall
<b>Tuesday (Alternate)</b>	10.00-13.00	<b>Painting Class</b> Village Hall
<b>Thursday</b>	19.30	<b>Sing-a-Long</b> Village Hall
<b>Friday</b>	10.00-11.45	<b>Yoga</b> Village Hall

## Activities Contacts

(BACAT Workshops) Pat Mlejnecky: 01508 480696  
 (Conservation Trust) Stephanie Crome: 01508 480573  
 (Local History) John Ling: 01508 480439  
 (Village Hall) Hilary Ling: 01508 480439  
 (Painting Class) Barbara Fox: 01508 550168  
 (Singing) Karen Bonsell: 01508 480018  
 (Bergh Apton Society) Lynton Johnson: 01508 480629

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 Bergh Apton Community Arts Trust, Bergh Apton Conservation Trust, Bergh Apton Local History Group, Bergh Apton Village Hall, Bergh Apton Parish Council & Bergh Apton Parochial Church Council.



**The Copy Date for the next issue is 10th March.**

Please send articles to me  
 Milton Harris [Editor] at  
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*Thank you*



The South Norfolk Players will be performing  
 'Confusions', a comedy by Alan Ayckbourn  
 in Brooke Village Hall  
 Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> - Sat 21st February 2015.  
 Bar open 7.00 pm  
 Curtain up 7.30 pm.

Tickets at £6 will be available from Brooke Post Office or from Jane Mears (01508 558014) any time after 1<sup>st</sup> Feb, or pay on the door. We look forward to seeing you.