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Typed by Chris Parker and duplicated by courtesy of the 1st Send Scout Group

Newsletter No. 17

October/November, 1977

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NATURAL HISTORY RAMBLES

Night Walk to Farley Heath

Darkness was falling as 12 members started out over Farley Heath. A badger sett was visited, but the occupants had already left for their feeding grounds in the field at the bottom of the hill. The only sounds to be heard were made by shrews squeaking in the grass at the edge of the path. Pipistrelle bats could be seen silhouetted against the night sky.

Church Norton, Pagham

Despite rain, quite heavy at times, a good selection of birds was seen on a ramble at Church Norton, on 25th September, attended by 12 people. Among the birds seen were:- heron, shelduck, curlew, dunlin, oyster catcher, cormorant, coot, ringed plover, two swallows just about to start their migration flight, collared dove, jay, great crested grebe, mute swan, goldfinch, yellow hammer and linnet.

The Sheepwalk, Old Woking

Fifteen members came on a local ramble to the Sheepwalk, on 9th October. Squirrels, magpies, green woodpecker, heron, wren, house martin, skylark, swallows, linnets, grey wagtail, collared doves, jay and goldfinch were all seen. Also a glorious sunrise glinted through the trees, and the dew on cobwebs sparkled like jewels in the sunlight.

Church Norton, Pagham

The weather was warm and sunny for our second visit to Church Norton on Wednesday, 12th October, attended by five members. On arrival a magpie warned something was wrong, and a stoat popped its head out of a hole at the base of a tree. It came across the field to where a dead rabbit lay, and on seeing the group it ran back and disappeared in a ditch.

Two herons sunned themselves in the tall trees, cormorants and shags lazed on the sand bars. As the tide came in, ringed plovers ran out of the way of the incoming waves. Also seen were lapwings, oyster catchers, meadow pipit, redshank, skylark, pheasant, great tit, dunnock, goldfinch, mute swans, great black backed gulls, linnets, stonechat and a sand hopper.

Frensham Little Pond

8 a.m. on 23rd October saw 18 members setting out for Frensham Little Pond, a favourite spot for ramblers. The reed and sedge warblers' voices are no longer heard, but they have been replaced by the cries of black headed gulls. On the lake were moorhen, coot, great crested grebe, and mallard. A kestrel hovered and then suddenly dived on its prey. Goldcrest were seen flitting amongst the branches of the firs, also marsh tit and coal tit.

NATURAL HISTORY AUTUMN REPORT

October this year has been a real month of colour. The oaks are dyed a deeper bronze, and the laneside hawthorns are splashed pale gold, the beeches shade from copper to orange, and the birch, as becomes a "lady of the woods", wears a dress of new gold. In the hedgerow the field maple waves orange and red banners, the leaves of wild cherry glow like fire, the sycamore

dons a scarlet cloak and the countryside is gay with autumn berries and fruits. Along the Wey the reed-beds are touched to yellow with the alchemy of the season. In the sunlight the water is patterned with amber reflections. A kingfisher displays his sapphire mantle - a fisherman in gay raiment. The grey skirts of the willows are flecked with orange, and the pond beneath their shade is still emerald with duckweed.

Soon the leaves will begin to fall from Ash, Beech, Elm, Horse Chestnut, Oak, Sycamore and Walnut. Squirrels delight to sample beechmast, acorns and hazel-nuts, and woodmice enjoy a feast of rose-hips and nuts. Birds linger about the red Hawthorn berries and Thrushes banquet on the Yew. Rooks and Jackdaws hold revel where acorns abound, chaffinches and titmice haunt the beech grove.

This month most of the Swallows and House Martins will have departed, so will the Sandrail and Sandpiper. A few wild Geese, Duck, Redwings and Fieldfare will arrive.

Many birds now gather into flocks - Rooks, Finches, Plovers, Woodpigeons, Wild Geese and Swans. In the hedgerows and thickets young cock Blackbirds squabble over the borderland of winter quarters. On an old fence by a pool a Robin flicks his tail and bobs his head, then, with legs set well apart, he utters a musical challenge to a fellow Robin in the bramble.

On a warm day, when a sparkle of sunshine warms the land, a few gay butterflies may be seen - Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Copper, Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Pale Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, with an occasional blue.

Nights get darker a little earlier now, and when the new moon hangs in the sky, owls come out to hunt. October, the month of change, the time when nature's clock slows down, a hush falls over the land, to rest for the new year ahead.

Edward J. Bartlett

NATURAL HISTORY 1977 - THAT WAS THE YEAR, THAT WAS

We went on 25 morning rambles, 4 night walks and had 3 evening meetings, which would seem to indicate we did more walking than talking! A wide variety of things was seen, including: deer, fox, hare, stoat, badger, 115 different species of birds and many many other sights and sounds that our county has to offer. All we need is time and understanding to appreciate it. Perhaps we should all learn and remember W. H. Davies' poem Leisure -

"What is this life if, full of care
"We have no time to stand and stare.
"No time to stand beneath the boughs
"And stare as long as sheep or cows.
"No time to see, when woods we pass,
"Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
"No time to see in broad daylight,
"Streams full of stars like skies at night.
"No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
"And watch her feet, how they can dance.
"No time to wait till her mouth can
"Enrich that smile her eyes began.
"A poor life this if, full of care,
"We have no time to stand and stare."

Happy Rambling 1978! Ron Croucher

BLACK AND WHITE BEAUTIES

About two years ago my dad went on a Natural History Group badger watch with about five people, they were not lucky enough to see any, but the next day Dad, Mum, my brothers and I went back to the same sett for another badger watch.

My brother Derek and I sat right outside a hole; sure enough the sow poked her head out and a young cub not long afterwards.

Since then we have gone badger watching nearly every week; we are not always lucky enough to see them, but other things make the watch worthwhile. We were at one of our favourite setts one night, with a baited log right outside the hole, hoping the badgers would smell the honey and peanut butter we put on it. The badgers did not, but the mice did, and there were two or three on the log at one time.

Foxes have been seen frequently at the Chantries. On 3rd January Dad and I went there hoping to see badgers, instead foxes came out of the badger holes and barked until they decided to go on into the woods to hunt. When it was all quiet I heard something behind me, I looked round and a fox was coming up the run, but when he saw me he went back.

Not very long ago I bought a flash unit for my camera. I have taken it with me three times, but I have not got any pictures yet. I hopefully will get some in the future.

When a badger pokes his head out of a hole it really is one of the "Black and White Beauties".

David Croucher

THE LOVELACES AND OCKHAM PARK

Open Meeting - Thursday, 22nd September

Sixty-one people gathered in the Church Hall to listen to an intriguing account of the fortunes of a family by the Archivist and Historian of the Lovelace Papers, Mrs Peggy Ann Aldridge.

Mrs Aldridge was born in Ockham Park, her grandfather, "Hubbard", having been butler to the Lovelace family, and, after a close association with the family, accepted the task in 1965 of working on the amassed papers of the King, Milbanke and Byron families.

Ockham Park was purchased by the family when its estates were being accumulated, and was a 40-roomed mansion with studios at the top of the house. When the sanitation was modernised in 1933, there was only one flush toilet (situated in the servants' quarters) and two earth closets, which when being emptied, utilised the same goods lift that carried the meals from the nether regions of the house. Voysey assisted with alterations and additions to the building. A large number of inside and outside staff would share an 18 gallon barrel of ale as a Christmas present from Lady Mary Lovelace, who died in 1941.

As a member of the Byron Society, Mrs Aldridge brings erudite significance to the records of an earldom first tenured by the son-in-law of the Poet. Captain John Byron, educated at Westminster School and a French

Academy, married Catherine Gordon of Gight in 1785 when she was then aged 20, and used her money to pay his debts. The couple went to live in France, but Catherine was unhappy there and they returned for George Gordon Byron to be born in London early in 1788. The Captain went back to France and died there three years later. George Gordon Byron became a peer when he was ten years old, inheriting the estate of ruined Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire from his great-uncle. His mother went back to Scotland and died in 1852.

In 1815 when he was 27, he married Anna Isabella Milbanke and their daughter, Augusta Ada, was born in the same year. Public abuse and rumours of incest with his half-sister drove him from Britain and he spent the rest of his life on the Continent where a fever killed him in 1824. Lady Byron sometimes stayed at Ockham Park, and in 1836 helped to finance the Ockham school.

Byron's daughter married William King, the first Earl of Lovelace, and had two sons and a daughter; Ralph, who eventually became the second Earl of Lovelace; Viscount Ockham, who died in 1862, and Anne Isabella, the grandmother of the present Lord Lytton, the fourth Earl of Lovelace.

Ralph's second wife, Mary Caroline Stewart-Wortley, had three miscarriages and no surviving issue. Her paintings were exhibited at the Royal Academy, she gave the Ockham Parish Room to the Parish Council, and she died three weeks before her 93rd birthday in 1941.

The union of Anne Isabella and Wilfrid Scawen Blunt produced daughter Judith and three children who died in infancy. Many of the family estates had been sold before Judith died in 1957.

Judith and her husband Neville Lytton, had three children: Noel Anthony Scawen Lytton, fourth Earl of Lovelace; Lady Anne Lytton and Lady Winifred Tryon.

The present Earl has five children.

To illustrate her narrative, Mrs Aldridge exhibited many samples from the archives and her own personal collection:- the Royal Charter signed by Henry VIII granting the dissolved Newark Abbey manors of Send, Ripley and Ockham to Sir Anthony Browne, a portrait of the Junoesque Catherine Gordon of Gight, several paintings by Lady Mary Lovelace, a most intricate "family tree", a brick mould and some examples of Ockham bricks and a wealth of informative booklets produced by the Byron Society.

Bernard Watts

VISIT TO COSFORD MILL

On Sunday, October 5th, we enjoyed a trip to Thursley and by courtesy of Mr & Mrs Loarridge explored Cosford Mill. I expect some long standing residents of Send will remember the Loarridges, they used to live in Send - at Mays Corner - until they bought the derelict watermill at Thursley. They have spent the past 25 years restoring it.

The mill was once part of Witley Park estate, which covered a radius of five miles, and it served the estate workers and the big house. Not only was the grain ground, but the bread was baked in an adjoining bakehouse. The mill was in existence 500 years ago. The part which is lived in is original. The actual working part was demolished and rebuilt a mere

300 years ago. It was last used in 1890, the miller being a Mr Budd, whose grandson, Frank Bourne, is a shopkeeper in nearby Godalming. Mr & Mrs Loarridge had arranged a most interesting display of photographs, including one of Mr Budd the miller, and some more modern ones of the mill in its derelict state as it was when they found it, and also a fine collection taken by the magazine "Homes & Gardens" in May 1959 after it had been repaired.

Mr John Baker has written about Cosford Mill in his interesting series in the Surrey Advertiser and it is also mentioned in "Old Surrey Watermills" by J. Hillier.

Most of the machinery is still in place, although the iron axle which was used to hold the waterwheel in position was removed and sent for salvage during the 1939-45 war. One "who shall be nameless" suggested that a part of the machinery called a "DAMSEL" which revolved with the wheel, was so called because it chattered! Some of the millstones were made from Derby grit and some from French burr stone. Mr & Mrs Loarridge have made themselves a fine set of steps, down to their front door, largely from old mill stones. They have also paved the area round the door with pieces of ironstone from the nearby hammer pond which it was suggested dates from Roman times and is connected with Roman iron workings which were carried on locally. Iron ore from Thursley was used to make cannon for Cromwell.

A hole in the stonework at ground level near the door of the mill connects with another similar hole further round the wall. The miller popped a ferret in to clear rats. All very well organised.

The mill was served by three lakes, one above the other, the water being brought down through a series of sluices. The mill was badly flooded in 1968 when most of us suffered a certain amount of dampness. It was interesting to note that the branding iron used to mark the flour sacks spelt SURRY without the E, as was the custom until the late 18th century,

Natural History Group members will be pleased to hear that Mrs Loarridge takes a great interest in her local badgers and was a campaigner to have the badger tunnel built under the new trunk road that effectively cuts off Cosford Mill from the rest of Thursley - which we visited later in the afternoon, finishing in Thursley Church, which dates from Saxon times. It has a Saxon chancel with two Saxon windows decorated with later Norman crude red ochre. There are also two Norman windows in the chancel, a Norman piscina, and an oven where the wafers for the service were cooked - pre-Reformation. The font dates from 1100, but may have been retooled. A belfry was added in about 1500, the massive oak framework of which rises up through the nave. There are several fascinating memorials in the church, including one to a member of the local family of ironmasters called Yalden. An earlier Yalden, who had made cannon for Cromwell, was imprisoned at one time for infringing the timber laws, but regained favour and prestige and went on to become an MP. In the churchyard is a tombstone to a local blacksmith with a most apt obituary. Also the tombstone of the unfortunate sailor who was so brutally murdered by his ungrateful travelling companions at Hindhead.

Before leaving the church, we took a good look at the magnificent George III coat of arms prominently displayed and in very fine condition. We have a similar, but very dilapidated, one in Send Church which the Society has been hoping to have restored, but it is so far gone that our project is not meeting with much success.

Iris Watts

SECRETARY'S REPORT

New Members

The following have become members and we welcome them:

Mr I. L. Phillips, Ockham Mill, Ripley.
Mr & Mrs R. Walton, 15 Stringhams Copse, Send Marsh.

Membership stands at 73 double and 55 single, making a total of 128 subscriptions paid.

Diary Dates

The meeting point for all rambles and outings is in the elbow of the old road at Send Barns junction with Fell Hill some 200 yards south of Send C. of E. First School.

Sunday, 6th November ... Natural history walk at the Chantries, Guildford.
Meet at 7 a.m. at Send Barns.

Wednesday, 9th November ... Meet 8.45 a.m. for a walk with Ted Bartlett to see the autumn tints at Ranmore Common.

Sunday, 20th November ... Meet 8 a.m. for a natural history walk at Winkworth Arboretum, Godalming.

^{Wed 30}
~~Thursday~~, 27th November ... Open evening. "Sounds Natural" - the inside story of recording wild life - an illustrated talk by Mr John Fisher of the Wild Life Sound Recording Society, commencing at 7.30 p.m. at the Church Room, Send Road.

Sunday, 4th December ... Meet 8 a.m. for a natural history walk at the Devil's Punchbowl, Hindhead.

Thursday, 8th December ... Cheese and wine party at the Church Room, starting at 8 p.m. Tickets available from members of the Committee.

Wednesday, 14th December ... Open evening at the Church Room at 7.30 p.m. when members' natural history slides will be shown and recordings played.

Sunday, 18th December ... Meet at 8 a.m. for a natural history walk at Ash Ranges.

Wednesday, 14th January, 1978 ... Natural history sketching evening at 14 Orchard Way, under the expert guidance of Ted Bartlett. Come and have a go! Meet at 8 p.m.

Sunday, 15th January ... Meet at 8 a.m. for a natural history walk at Leith Hill, Dorking.

Thursday, 19th January ... Open evening commencing at 8 p.m. at the Church Room, when Mr Kenneth Gravett, Chairman of the Surrey Local History Council, will give an illustrated talk on "Smaller Houses under the Tudors - a Period of Change".

Sunday, 29th January ... Meet at 8 a.m. - natural history walk at Bushy Park.

NOTE:- The Cheese & Wine Party is a new venture for the Society. It is intended as a purely social evening for all members & friends. Details from Com. Membs

In the notes on Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in Send in the last issue of the Newsletter there was an editorial reference to the London Road being 'unmetalled'. In the course of conversation with our President it was clear that this is a topic on which he has some knowledge. He was therefore asked to write about it and the following is the result.

THE LONDON TO PORTSMOUTH ROAD

The statement in Send History Society Newsletter No 16, that the London Road was unmetalled must be erroneous. Metalling is the technical expression given to any hard material, nearly always some variety of stone, used in road construction; and to state that a road was unmetalled is to suggest the vehicles of that date (1897) were travelling over bare soil and little else. This could not be so, as a search in the Highway Surveyors' log and account books of the freshly formed Surrey County Council, lodged at the County Record Office, will testify.

The metalling of roads was brought to a near perfect art by the militant nations of the ancient world. An example of this art still survives in this country as the great system of military roads laid down early in the Roman occupation of England, radiating from the important centres of London, Winchester, Silchester, Cirencester & Old Sarum like the spokes of a waggon wheel. The construction of these roads consisted of a good sound foundation of large stones, overlaid by intermediate ones, and surfaced with gravel or similar material (Iron Slag in the Weald), which soon settled into a solid durable surface; the conglomeration bounded by two parallel drainage ditches alongside, to take away damaging rain and flood water.

This skill was forgotten in England until the late 18th century when it was rediscovered by two engineering giants James London McAdam and Thomas Telford, who between them built several thousand miles of Turnpike roads on much the same principles. McAdam is best known for his roads in the Bristol district and the Metropolis, and Telford for his great London to Holyhead Rd still in use as the A5. Their proven principles continued to be observed until the advent of the motor car - interrupted by one important improvement - the invention of the Steam Roller. A satisfactory prototype roller was in existence by 1853, and the first steam roller was put into public service in 1860 in Bombay, so it is unlikely that the newly established Surrey County Council were not practising the accepted methods of road making and repairs 37 years later in such a vital naval artery as the Portsmouth Road.

The motor car with pneumatic tyres created a problem for the roadmakers. The rubber tyres, at speed, produced a small vacuum behind the wheels which lifted clouds of dust in fine weather and made large pot holes by a wet suction action when it rained. The solution was the idea of pouring hot tar over the old McAdamised surface and sprinkling it with fine washed shingle or granite chips, thus fixing the uppermost material. This gave a good road grip for motor vehicles, but not horses, although most people were pleased. This method was first practised in Monte Carlo in 1902, but it must have been after 1914-18 that the Portsmouth Road was tarred. Some of us can recall the tar engine, much the shape of Stephenson's "Rocket" and pulled by a horse between a pair of Shafts.

In conclusion, Mrs Frank Sadler, whose late husband's family have lived in Kimberley Cottages in Send Road ever since they were built at the turn of the century, has told me she remembers as a very small girl, being taken by her grandmother Mrs Darling to visit an aged couple who still lived in the Turnpike Cottage adjoining the Jovial Sailor. The cottage has gone, and also the tollgate itself, which she remembers lying derelict beside the highway.

Was the Portsmouth Road unmetalled?

J. Oliver