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SANDHEATH ARMY CAMP  
"REDCOATS IN SEND IN THE MID 18th CENTURY"

This article is an attempt to place on record evidence and deductions as to the location of an army camp in Send in the mid 18th century.

Primary sources of evidence and information are as follows:-

A. War Office Documents from Public Record Office - London.

1. WO.17 - 102, 107, 137, 139, 142, 143, 193 - Monthly Returns. These give details of monthly locations of regiments and officers. They show that various regiments camped at Sandheath in 1759, 1760, 1761 and 1762.

2. WO.27 - 6 - Inspection Returns and Courts Martial. This gives details of soldiers' height, age, length of service, while being inspected by Cornwallis, the Major General of the army at that time, in Send Camp.

3. WO.5 - 46, 47 - Marching Orders 1759. These are letters ordering various regiments to move to Send Camp and also to move from Send to other towns.

4. WO.1 - 859 - War Office "In-letters" 1759.

5. "Army List" of Officers prepared for Col. Williamson of the 18th Regt. of Foot 1761, listing officers in each regiment.

6. WO.12 - Muster Lists, shows names of all men in each regiment. e.g. 8th Regt. = WO.12 - 2566, 30th Regt. = WO.12 - 4561.

B. General Documents

1. Send St. Mary's - Register of marriages and births 1759, 1760, 1761. Guildford Muniment Room. (shows soldiers' marriages).

Wey Canal Accounts - 129/7/1 and 129/7/2 - Guildford Muniment Room (shows existence of Sandheath Wharf).

3. King George's Army 1775/1783 P R.N Katcher - Osprey - Woking Library (shows regiments' colours and Colonels).

4. The New Cambridge Modern History Vol. VII The Old Regime - Brooklands College Library (describes style of war in period).

5. Labourers in Husbandry 1741/89. Rev. D. Davies - contains letters from Rector of Barkham near Wokingham, Berkshire (gives details of living conditions in the period) - Weybridge Public Library.

6. The History of the 2nd Queens (Royal West Surrey) Vol. 3 - Col. J. Davies (1895) - Woking Reference Library (gives details of soldiers' rations and pay in the period).

Each July during 1759, 60, 61 & 62, some 3,000 soldiers arrived at Sandheath Camp to live in tents until the October, when they moved on to their various winter quarters. While in camp, they would be reviewed by the Major General of the British Army and prepare for future campaigns.

Letters show that during 1759 some 500 French prisoners were "received" at Sandheath en route from Chatham to Winchester. A battalion of the 5th Regiment escorted these prisoners to Winchester, a colourful event for a small village such as Send at the time.

So far, I have not found any reference to the exact location of the camp, but have collected evidence which I feel helps to narrow down the possibilities.

In the summer of 1759, the population of Send and Ripley stood at less than 1,000 people. A family, husband, wife and two children, would depend for its existence on obtaining farm work from a local landowner. His 40p wages per week would be used as follows:-

5 gallons flour	20p
yeast/salt	1½p
1½ lb. bacon	5p
1 oz. tea	1p
¼ lb. sugar	2p
¼ lb. butter	2p
¼ lb. soap	1p
candles	1½p
Worsted	1½p
½ lb. cheese	1½p
	<u>37p</u>

The flour was for bread (some 2 loaves per day) and the bacon was boiled with a few vegetables "obtained" from the local farmer to make a stew to last the week for the children.

It is a reflection on the times that the "ordinary soldier" received some 30p a week (before stoppages) and his Colonel some £8.50 a week. Obviously this was in the "good old days" before Trade Unions?

George III was soon to become King of England, Pitt was Prime Minister and the "7 Years War" was raging in Europe, with France as our enemy. War was also raging in the Colonies, both India and North America, Minorca and Gibraltar. The "Black Hole" of Calcutta (1756) with Clive, and the famous battle for Quebec with James Wolfe (Junior) defeating Montcalm and the French in the September of 1759.

Of our 3,000 soldiers in Send that summer of 1759, some 300 had possibly fought at Culloden (1745) and were likely to be sent to France, the West Indies and America within the next few years for the American War of Independence.

There were French prisoners in England at the time and four famous infantry regiments who had been wintering in barracks at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Exeter were ordered to Sandheath for review and recuperation. They marched some 10 miles a day (a quiet pace?) with all their equipment and baggage to set up camp in our village.

There were the famous "redcoats", some with "mitred" (Bishops) hats, some tricorne (Dick Turpin variety). They carried: 15 lb. flintlock - "Brown Bess" rifles with 12 inch bayonets; plain black shoes with rounded brass buckles; heavy linen gaiters over their shoes, breeches and waistcoat of white linen or wool; their coats of "brick red" wool reaching almost to the knee, lined in white wool,

The coat had cuffs of a different or facing colour for each regiment.

The regiment number was on pewter buttons. Across his shoulder he wore a cartridge box of black leather suspended by a whitened buff leather sling. The box held some 30 rounds of ammunition. (Has anyone found any old bullets or buckles in their back gardens?) He carried a haversack made of linen with three pewter buttons across his shoulder and on top of a tin canteen.

In 1759, the following regiments were in Send:-

5th Regt. of Foot - Lord Bentinck's (Our local nursery at Send Dip?) - motto "wherever fate calls" - some 850 men who had marched from Exeter and were later to move on to winter at Reading.

8th Regt. of Foot - King's Own - Col. Edward Wolfe's Regt. This was James Wolfe's father and the regiment had been involved in the Highland massacres at Culloden under Cumberland. Richard Onslow had been Colonel of this regiment in 1739 (could this be why they had chosen Send for their camp?) They moved on to Canterbury in the autumn.

33rd Regt. of Foot - Lord Charles Hays' Regt. - motto "fortune favours the brave". They had come from Portsmouth barracks and went on to Ipswich and Colchester in the October.

34th Regt. of Foot - Thomas Earl of Effingham's Regt. (a local figure?) This regiment had been defeated at Minorca some three years earlier and had subsequently suffered a lot of desertions. In the October they moved on to Bromley and Croydon.

Why collect all this information? - simply this, I am trying to build up a picture of the situation in Send, in order to get clues so that the exact site of the camp can be located. So far I have failed, or have I?

Where was the camp? - Some clues.

Like all good soldiers they were interested in Wine, Women and Song (younger readers can read on safely).

The soldiers needed access to beer, bread and a church, probably in that order in the 18th century. Evidence shows that Send St. Mary's was used for marriages, 24 in 1759, 14 in 1760, 22 in 1761, and 8 in 1762, by the soldiers. There were some 28 Christenings in 1759 at the Church, which means that some of the wives were pregnant while marching from Portsmouth (October - 9 months = February happenings).

Was the New Inn at Cartbridge in existence in 1759, or perhaps one of the inns at Old Woking? (Miss Bayliss has provided some clues here.) I would also like to check the Parish Registers at St. Peter's (Old Woking) for this period, any offers? Has anyone a record of drinking wells in Send?

#### Who Supplied the Bread?

Each soldier was issued with a 6 lb. loaf every four days (there was no NAAFI or organised catering). ie He would eat a sliced loaf each day. This means that some 3,000 loaves a day (2 TONS a day!) were provided. The total cost would be £15 a day, sufficient to keep a family for a whole year. This was big business by any standards, and it would be useful to know:-

- who made the profit?
- was the bread baked in Send?
- was the bread or flour shipped down the Wey Canal from Guildford?

The soldiers also received 1 lb. of salt beef, 1 oz. cheese,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. peas and 1 oz. oatmeal plus potatoes and vegetables daily.

The Wey Canal was worked in 1759, and Sandheath Wharf was operational. Mysteriously, the accounts for the four years in question are missing from the Muniment Room records in Guildford. The records do show that the Rt. Hon. Arthur Onslow was receiving money from the Wey Operations at that time—for groats?

With the known links between Richard Onslow and the 5th Regiment, Arthur Onslow and the Wey Canal accounts and Onslow's land ownership on Sendheath, it is possible that somewhere in the Onslow family papers (not available for public view) the clue to our Send Camp may be found.

For 3,000 men, sanitary arrangements for the summer of 1759 in a small village like Send must have been a problem. No doubt there are some very fertile patches in Send, this would help locate the camp. There used to be some very productive Nurseries behind Vision Engineering, could this be the site?

Now to the women; in 1759, Thomas Buckeridge was the Vicar at St. Mary's and he solemnised the soldiers' marriages. The regimental chaplains officiated in the marriages of 1760 and 1761.

Mixed quarters were not accepted at that time and the women and children (known as camp followers) would set up their camps nearby.

Assuming that say one in ten soldiers were married, then some 300 wives and say 100 children were camped on the heath. It is reasonable to assume that they would want to be near to water and wood for fires. Possibly near the Wey would be attractive.

Only one of the ladies is officially recorded as local, Mary Henris (a widow of Guildford) who married William Holbrook of the 8th Kings Own on Thursday, 5th September, 1759. The Christian names of some of the wives are particularly attractive; Hannah, Prudent, Isabell, Martha, Jane, Catherine, Sarah, Adonah and Alice. With names like these the title "camp follower" would today seem a bit crude.

For accommodation, the soldiers slept six to a tent, by regiments. Some 14 acres would be needed for a regiment in camp (a rectangle 170 yds. x 400 yds.) Thus some 56 acres total for four regiments (which includes a parade area for each regiment in their rectangle). Allowing 1 acre for camp followers, we are looking for:- 57 acres in Sendheath, near a pub, near a river, near Send St. Mary's, near Send Wharf (Wharf Lane), near a road.

A check of maps at the time, including an Army map of 1789, shows only "Sendheath" covering an area bordering the Send Road, including Vision Engineering, the Co-op, Lemons Store, Heath Drive, past the Church Rooms, stopping at the Village Recreation ground.

A closer look at the 1845 Tithe Map shows some interesting land ownership:-

1. A Mr. Drake owned 12 acres of FURZE, behind Lemons Store, a triangle shape bordering the Send Road and Potters Lane.

2. John Joseph Webb Weston owned 20 acres of HEATH backing on to Mr. Drake's land, but further down Potters Lane.

3. Onslow owned 9 acres covering the Church Rooms, the Send Surgery and the Recreation Ground. The regiments would have needed all this land and 16 acres more. Did Onslow ask Drake if he would mind some of his old comrades camping on his "FURZE" for a couple of months in the summer of 1759? Sounds reasonable, what do you think?

c 1976 Pat Thurbin

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#### BIRD WATCHING AT CHURCH NORTON

On Sunday 3 October, after an uncertain start, a small party of members eventually gathered together at Church Norton to see what the autumn migration of birds would bring to this famed resting post.

Our only disappointments lay in our limited abilities to identify all that we saw. The first attractions were the great tits, blue tits and sparrows which flew down to meet us and to accept crumbs while they were being photographed. A walk along the shore in a brisk breeze encouraged us to find a leeward bank where we were able to steady our binoculars and note what we could.

We had already been schooled to recognise the gulls, oyster catchers, ringed plover, red shank and sand piper, and a quick recourse to our books enabled us to identify a pair of terns and turnstones. One flock of migrants the size of buntings eluded our attempts at identification, but another passing cloud of birds readily showed themselves to be goldfinches as they turned and flashed their colours in the sun. Wheatears and greenfinches were seen, and the occasional curlew was seen and heard.

As the morning advanced, so the tide receded, to make room for the increasing number of ornithologists whose migration appeared to be terminating at our vantage point, and so we decided to return to our cars and disperse.

Mary and I then turned a mile or so along the road to the sewage lagoon near Sidlesham. This is usually a good observation point and on this visit we saw a solitary greylag goose, a pair each of shoveller and shelduck, a solitary black-tailed godwit, and many more common birds. We returned home about mid day feeling thankful for an invigorating and enriching experience.

Ken Dawson

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#### DISCUSSING THE WEATHER

In the short article on the drought in the previous edition of the Newsletter, we commented about Englishmen reputedly discussing the weather whenever two of them gather together. This observation we have since realised was first made (like so many other quotable observations) by Dr. Samuel Johnson. The full quotation is "It is commonly observed that when two Englishmen meet their first talk is of the weather; they are in haste to tell each other, what each must already know, that it is hot or cold, bright or cloudy, windy or calm." It appeared in "The Idler", No. 11, 1759. It is clear from this that in some respects Englishmen have changed but little since the time which Pat Thurbin writes of in the earlier pages of the Newsletter.

Les Bowerman

A YEAR TO REMEMBER

Surrey has been one of the hardest hit counties in this year of the drought, at least as far as heathland fires are concerned. Vast areas have been blackened, especially across the South West side of the county. Places like Thursley, Frensham, and Witley have perhaps suffered the worst. Nearer home, the Horsell Common and Wisley areas are partially destroyed, ruining many habitats of many creatures and plants, some of which are very localised.

On a recent examination of the two local areas, I found that all the species of solitary ground wasps which make their home on the common had taken a particularly heavy beating. Spiders which colonise this type of habitat, such as the Funnel Trap spider, have perished - this in itself is a very serious situation, especially where the Funnel Trap spider is concerned, as it is the only representative of its order in the British Isles, and the only living creature we have which has no less than four lungs.

All species of ant have suffered, but more so the large Wood Ant, whose domed nest was no barrier against the flames. Four Nightjars were found on Horsell Common huddled together at the base of a Scots pine; these birds were burnt, although they could still be recognised.

With the coming of the rains, everything very quickly freshened up, even young heather shoots appeared, seemingly overnight. But the type of damage done to ground hugging plants is such that it will take many years to return to its original state, perhaps in the region of fifteen to twenty years.

Some of the activities of the natural history group have not been as well attended as earlier in the year. This has been mainly due to holidays - but things will no doubt pick up a little now that the autumn is here, and it is hoped that more members will make the effort to attend some of the proposed walks, etc.

On 22 September the Society held an open meeting at the Church Rooms, Send Road. There was a good attendance, and during the course of the evening our President outlined in great detail the best way to cook a Canada Goose... Everyone present listened intently, right up to the very last delicate detail, when they were told eventually, to throw the cooked bird away and drink the gravy, which, according to the recipe, must have been pretty potent.

Recently a walk was enjoyed by a number of our members, when their route took them across the Pyrford Court Estate. Among the more interesting sights was a very active rabbit city, and a close view of a whitethroat.

Ron and Jean Croucher kindly played hosts to members when they met for an informal chat about cameras and equipment - I believe the meeting proved to be interesting for those present, and it is hoped that more pictures will be available for building up a library.

Ted Bartlett

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ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN SEND - PART 2

Early Victorian methods of education relied heavily on the monitorial system, for the keynote to the teaching of the masses had to be cheapness. In effect, older boys and girls taught the younger ones and so helped the Master to run the school. It was claimed by the National Society that the annual cost per child was about 4/6d. Teaching materials were kept to a minimum and those that were purchased had a long life. Small children were

taught their letters and numbers on a sand tray which could easily be smoothed over and used again. Older children had slates, but only very capable children were allowed pen and paper. Reading cards were fixed to the wall and children progressed from two-lettered words to three-lettered words and so on. Everything had to be learned by heart. Discipline seemed to rely on censure and praise and prizes for good work. Physical punishment appeared to be disapproved of, in the beginning.

There was no secondary education for poor children in the 19th century. Children left school when they reached Standard 7, or before, if they qualified by age. However, a boy or girl could become a pupil teacher in a school approved by the H.M.T. The Master could earn extra money for taking pupil teachers, since he was required to give instruction for 1½ hours a day before or after school. It paid the Master to keep the standard high at his school in order to qualify for taking pupil teachers, and so supplement his income. Pupil teachers could sit for the Queens Scholarship Examination at 18, and if successful enter a teacher training college. If they finished their training they became certificated teachers which entitled them to proficiency grants towards their stipends and a pension on retirement.

Evidently Send School qualified at some time to have pupil teachers because in 1871 one of the charities in Send, the Dame Haynes Charity, granted two girls £20 a year to be apprenticed as pupil teachers, one at Send School and one at Ripley School. Unfortunately no names were mentioned. The same charity gave small gifts of money from time to time to both the schools; the receipts for these were found in the Parish Chest.

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The Master was required to enter in the Log Book any happenings at the school, i.e. attendance figures, causes of absenteeism, changes in curriculum, staffing, accidents etc., and from these Log Books of the past a picture of the daily life of the school can be visualised.

The Log Books for Send School prior to 1922 have so far not come to light, but there are Log Books for Ripley School from 1885 onwards. They were so closely similar to one another that it can be assumed that events that affected Ripley School also affected Send School, and the same attendance officer, Mr. Frye, served both schools. In the Log Books for Ripley School many children were mentioned by name and there was also a full list of the Master's lessons for each year. Staff were noted and included the monitors by name, indicating that the system was still in use in 1885. The Inspectors wrote their reports into the Log Books and the visits of Mr. Frye were recorded since he was a weekly visitor, and it was from these entries that it became apparent that all was not well with Mr. Frye. His visits ceased for six months over the winter of 1889 and the spring of 1890. The Master recorded in the Log Book in 1890 that he had had to ask Mr. Frye to leave the school because he used insulting language in front of the children. Mr. Frye was duly called to appear before the school committee to explain his behaviour, but alas Mr. Frye became insane and was removed to the Surrey County Asylum at Brookwood, a sad way for the first attendance officer to end his career.

The Log Book entries reflect the events of the times both nationally and locally. Low attendance figures due to infectious diseases link up with national epidemics. The school was closed for several weeks at a time at the end of the 19th Century because of Scarlet Fever, Measles, and Whooping Cough. They swept through the school and so many children were affected that the school had to close.

Local events such as a ploughing match, a fair and May Day played havoc with the attendance figures, and many boys were absent during the shooting season earning themselves some pocket money "cover beating". One benevolent lady in Ripley tried to encourage better attendance by offering a suit of clothes or a dress to boys and girls who made 100% attendance throughout the year.

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was recorded. The school had a holiday and the children joined in the celebrations. Some children were in the Jubilee Procession and had their photographs taken.

The early starting age of some children was remarkable. In the 1890's several children aged 3 years were admitted to the school.

In 1896 the whole school went on an outing to the Crystal Palace, so called because it appeared to be made all of glass. Built by Joseph Paxton to house the Great Exhibition of 1851, it later became the pleasure resort of London, for it covered 28 acres and was surrounded by 100 acres of grounds. Unfortunately it was accidentally burnt down in 1936.

In 1899 the Boer War started and the children of Ripley School collected money for war funds. The Log Books record the relief of Mafeking in May, 1900, and the end of the war in 1902, but did not record the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 in the 64th year of her reign. The passing of the great queen did not appear to be marked by even a day off for mourning, although there were coronation celebrations when Edward VII was crowned.

Events would have followed the same pattern in Send throughout this period, and in 1889 Mr. and Mrs. Lance Rawes came to the school as Master and Mistress, and the school embarked on a time of great stability, for they were to stay at the school for many years. More will be written about their time at the school in the next issue of the Newsletter.

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### SECRETARY'S REPORT

#### New Members

The following have become members of the Society since the last edition of the Newsletter was published:

Mrs E. Worner, The Nest, Send Hill.

Mrs R. Bain, 2 Burpham Cottages, Jacobs Well.

Mr & Mrs C. Raisey, 32 Wentworth Close, Newark Lane, Ripley.

We are pleased to welcome them to the Society, which at 1 November consists of 168 members, i.e. 50 single and 59 double subscriptions.

#### Visit to Newark Priory - Sunday, 19 September

Approximately 60 people attended this outing to one of the most notable historic features in the locality. The remnants of the massive flint-rubble walls blend perfectly into the peaceful meadow between the River Wey (named Abbey Stream on the current Ordnance Survey maps) and what was the eel-trap stream before it was enlarged by the making of a new cut to by-pass the eel-trap as part of the flood relief measures between the wars. The basic history of the Priory, insofar as it is known, is set out in the standard county

histories Manning & Bray, Brayley and the Victoria County History. A more detailed account appears in Surrey Archaeological Collections Vol XL, written by Captain C. M. H. Pearce, FSA, who lived at Ripley Court and was the Surrey Archaeological Society local secretary for Send & Ripley. In 1928 Captain Pearce undertook a comprehensive excavation of the Priory for the Society and his report, including plans and photographs, also appears in Vol XL. All of the books mentioned are available in the reference sections of the local public libraries.

Our Chairman, Ken Bourne, summarised the basic story of the Priory for the benefit of the party at the start of the visit. For the information of those of our readers who do not already know it, and are unable to go to the sources mentioned, I repeat it here.

The Priory was founded by Ruald de Calna (not Calva as most of the history books put it) and his wife, Beatrice de Sandes, some time after 1171, but before 1199. It was a priory of Black Canons of the order of St. Augustine of Hippo (not to be confused with the St. Augustine who brought Christianity to Kent in 597 a.d.) and was dedicated to St. Mary and St. Thomas the Martyr. The place was formerly called Aldebury, which indicates a very ancient burial place or a defensive site (noted in "Antiquity" Vol XLVIII No. 189). It came to be known as the New Place, Newsted, and of course Newark. The Priory was dissolved on 15 January 1539. In Surrey Archaeological Collections Vol XXXIV, is published an account of the Church and other goods at Newark Priory at the time of dissolution. The account mentions "Sente barnes". The buildings were destroyed piecemeal and the materials used for roads and building until Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons, who died in 1768, reputedly stopped the practice.

Jim Oliver pointed out the significance of the various parts of the ruin, with the aid of a scale model of the complete priory made by Charles Thurbin. Basically, what remains is the south transept of the Church (the part most clearly visible from the road), the north and south walls of the presbytery, the south wall of the choir and parts of the north wall, parts of three walls of a chapel leading from the east side of the north transept, and part of the south wall of a passage between the south transept and the chapter house. Lack of space precludes even a résumé of all the significant details, most of which are however set out in S.A.C. Vol XL, as already noted. Among the most interesting features are traces indicating how the presbytery was vaulted, and the signs indicating where the two separate chapels on the south side were roofed. There are recesses in the presbytery wall where sedilia had been. Another recess in the south wall of the most southerly chapel indicates by its proportions that there was a rare double piscina here (not noted as such, elsewhere). A substantial proportion of the gatehouse foundations is to be seen at some distance from the other remains. The probable course of the water supply can be traced.

Pat Thurbin, who with his father had taped out on the ground the outlines of the buildings of which there is now no visible sign, gave a short talk on what life would have been like for the canons living there.

Our thanks are due to Mr Linnell of Homestead Farm for permission to visit the site.

#### Natural History Open Meeting - Wed., 22 September

Some 50 people were present for this meeting arranged by the natural history group of the Society. The main feature was the display of slides

taken and shown by Ted Bartlett, coupled with his expert commentary on them. A further selection of slides, mostly taken locally, was shown by Ron Croucher with others by Peter Hookins.

Visit to Tilford Agricultural Museum - Sunday, 10 October

Having been arranged by the Committee at short notice, this outing was announced at the open meeting on 22 September, but it was not possible to mention it in the previous Newsletter. Apologies, therefore, to any members who were unaware of it. The museum is run by Mr Henry Jackson, who very kindly agreed to open it especially for our visit, his season normally ending on 30 September. It is in a beautiful woodland setting beside the Tilford to Frensham Road. It is worth a visit to look at the trees alone, for they include many rare and interesting species, all grown by Mr Jackson from seed. However, the main purpose of our visit was to inspect the extensive collection of rural equipment ranging from farm waggons from many counties to a hop bagging machine. Of particular interest is the wheelwright's shop, which was in operation at Lurgashall from 1767 to 1961, complete with ledgers for the whole period. Other comprehensive items are the smithy and the farmhouse containing innumerable objects bringing back memories of pre-war life.

Drawings in the leaflet about the museum are by Denis Somerfield of Send.

Forthcoming Events

- Sunday, 14 November ... Natural History visit to Frensham Little Pond. Meet 7.30 a.m. at Send Barns Lane.
- Wednesday, 24 November ... Open meeting at the Church Room, Send Road, at 8 for 8.15 p.m. Talks and discussion by members.
- Sunday, 28 November ... Natural History visit to Ranmore Common. Meet 7.30 a.m. at Send Barns Lane.
- Sunday, 13 December ... Natural History Group walk, meeting at Send Barns Lane at 7.30 a.m.
- Sunday, 2 January ... Natural History Group walk, meet 7.30 a.m. at Send Barns Lane
- Wednesday, 5 January ... Natural History Group indoor meeting at 8 p.m. at "Samovar", Manor Road, Send Marsh. Cars cannot be parked in Manor Road, but may be left beside the Green.
- Thursday, 13 January ... Open meeting at the Church Room, Send Road, at 8 for 8.15 p.m. Speaker to be announced later.
- Sunday, 16 January ... Natural History Group walk, meet at Send Barns at 7.30 a.m.
- Thursday, 24 February ... Annual General Meeting at 8 for 8.15 p.m. at the Church Room, Send Road.

N.B. For the benefit of new members, the meeting place in Send Barns Lane is in the elbow of the old road near Send Barns Farm, south of the First School. The Natural History Group wishes it to be known that they can give only five minutes' grace after the advertised time of meeting, before moving off to wherever the destination may be.

Closing Date for the next Newsletter is Monday, 3 January.

## BIRD WATCHING IN WALES

Ken and I have recently spent a holiday in the mountains of Wales. The weather was very obliging by raining at night and leaving us with clear skies and passing clouds by day.

At Aberystwyth we were amused to watch a cormorant fishing below the promenade at high tide. We tried to estimate where he would surface, but we were never right. Also, we watched, with morbid interest, a gull devouring an eighteen inch eel; after nine inches had been swallowed, the eel began to wriggle, and the gull looked decidedly dyspeptic after he had struggled to complete the meal.

Around our shepherd's cottage we saw several buzzard, one of which perched on a fence post not far from our door. We also had a green woodpecker as a near neighbour and saw him every day. At night the only sounds to be heard were the owls in a nearby forest, and of course the constant bleating of sheep.

We visited the Elan Valley where Birmingham's water supply was a mere stream in the bottom of the chain of reservoirs. And in the new reservoir in the Berwyn Mountains, we walked into a large farmhouse which in wetter seasons is completely submerged. The outside walls, which were three feet thick, were still standing; the huge chimney, washed clean of soot, was a fascinating structure. The roof and inside walls were missing, but the plan of the house was easily discernible. It was during this trip that we saw a merlin.

At Aberaeron, a charmingly well preserved Georgian seaside town, we were able to walk along the stony beach by a glassy sea, and watch many different species of shore birds - three types of plover, curlew, red shanks, oyster catchers, terns - foraging among the debris of the previous night's storm. Whilst behind us in the hedgerows were the expected common birds, plus a flock of twite, which I had never seen before.

Ken wanted to see a kite. It was the main ambition of our holiday. We searched high and low. Two days before the end of the holiday we were driving down the mountains toward Tregaron when Ken suddenly shouted "KITE." I jammed on the brakes, and even before I had stopped the car (on a bend with the bonnet in a bank!) Ken was gazing heavenward saying "I don't believe it. I'm seeing things!" There were six of them. They were soaring over one particular area, and although we tried turning off the main road, we couldn't find what the attraction was, and can only assume there was a sheep carcass somewhere because the kites were accompanied by ravens, crows, magpies, and other scavengers.

On the day we drove to Snowdonia, the weather was crystal clear and the mountains magnificent, but we saw no unusual birds and were a little disappointed. However, at the foot of Snowdon we had the pleasure of watching a weasel in action. He had us hypnotised for almost half an hour as he slithered up and down a small tree, raced in and out of a small pile of rocks and rolled over with back-breaking contortions.

Mary Dawson

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### BACK NUMBERS OF THE NEWSLETTER

If any members have back numbers which they do not wish to retain, I should be grateful if they could be returned to me. We have very few back numbers and they are sometimes useful.

The Editor