



BOURNEMOUTH NATURAL SCIENCE SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Share our love of science

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2018/19

It has been a busy period for the Society, with work started for the restoration of the Lantern Roof, thanks to Colin Lord and the Trustees.



Much work on the collections has been proceeding, with new accessions being added and restoration to cases, casts of fossils, whilst students have been working with us on projects to benefit us and their own studies. Research has been ongoing into the Romano British Heads, from Monmouth, which are on show in the museum, and are on loan from a local family. This research has been supported by the Archaeology department at BU and involves



members of the family in Wales who are trying to piece together the story.

Hopefully the story can be related to members and a report will be written with Miles Russell from the University as co-author. Watch this space!

We have had many interesting lectures from all sections of the Society and a successful Open Weekend. Thanks must go out to all the people who brought their expert knowledge and collections along, and members and volunteers for helping the events run smoothly. Onto the future and more visitors, educational links and new recruits. Remember we are always looking for more help on Open Days and elsewhere, so don't be shy to let us know if you have any ideas how we might promote ourselves and enrol more members.

Bryan Popple

BNSS GARDENING

I wonder how many readers of this Newsletter venture into the BNSS back garden? If you don't you are missing a treat. For the past five years I have been one of the small band of members who work there each week.



I am still discovering plants I had not noticed before, and others that spring into renewed life as we give them space and daylight by cutting back the “thugs” like bay and bramble.

As autumn recedes, and leaves are mostly on the ground, evergreens come into their own. Berries on cotoneaster, holly and pyracantha are displaying their wares to passing birds. It will not be long before the amazing perfume of wintersweet (chimonanthus praecox) can be sought out on the back wall of the lecture hall. The very first camellias, perhaps Bow Bells or Inspiration will bravely appear before Christmas. Spiky mahonia, making a bold colourful statement with its bright yellow cluster of flowers, can soon be discovered tucked in to otherwise dark spaces. At ground level too there are gems to be found – today (late November) I saw a purple violet!



Space permitting, there will be pictures and updates on our garden, on each of the seasons in this newsletter.

Jill Abbot

WANTED

Society Archivist

For the past sixteen years, John Cresswell has adopted the role of Society Archivist, providing exhibitions, talks and printed articles, and information for outside researchers.

The BNSS has proved a fascinating trove of local and international history with its own story and those of its members. With sources like its own publications, there are loads of photographs and ephemera, newspaper articles, covering activities, episodes and personnel.

Boring, it ain't!

John has been obliged to retire through ill-health and is hoping someone else will carry on the fascinating stories yet to be revealed. Contact a Trustee, if interested.

John's last prepared talk demonstrated from various sources how Society members were active in the First World War. If you missed it, John will send you a copy in electronic form: contact j.cresswell486@btinternet.com

John will be sorely missed. He is sorely missed. I am sure he misses the BNSS even more so, but ill health and having to change buses has put a halt to our most regular visitor. Someone to set up the projector, be a trustee for many years, do the organisations at talks, welcome guests, show people round the building and persuade them to join (me), do the tea, do the washing up, spend 6 months preparing one-hour one-off talks, plus being the Social Archivist. Even if you are just considering the role, contact a trustee or John, health permitting, he will encourage and mentor you beyond the call of duty.



John and Passenger Pigeons

Considering a Career in the Natural Sciences?

I still remember when I first stepped into the Bournemouth Natural Science Museum on an Open Day back in 2009, and being blown away by the experience. The amazing diversity of objects on display provide a treasure trove of information, and the dedicated volunteers bring the place alive through sharing their expertise and passion on a huge range of subjects.

I was itching to join as soon as I turned 16. Being able to attend fantastic regular lectures and travel on excursions throughout the south has been invaluable in providing a good knowledge of nature and the sciences.

Wanting to put something back into the Society that had given me so much, I began volunteering in the Geology department with Ray Chapman. For us to acquire accreditation as a museum, volunteers were needed to catalogue existing specimens in the collections and cross-check old records – some of which went back over 100 years! I also began helping out on Open Days, sharing what I had learnt about the fossils and minerals in our collection. Through this, I was able to develop my self-confidence and improve at talking with the public.

After completing my Geology Master's at Plymouth University in 2016, it was a struggle to find a job in the field I loved so much. With so many applicants for each position, it is very challenging to stand out in the current job market. But, I never stopped learning and developing my communication skills through volunteering at BNSS. BNSS also enabled me to gain links with the National Trust, and several local animal rescue charities.

Interviews included one at Kew Gardens as 'Mycology Digitisation Officer', for which I was narrowly pipped to the post. One of the jobs I applied for was as an Educational Warden at the 'Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre' – a small educational charity with a focus on Jurassic fossils and protecting coastal environments, and became my work-place. I definitely couldn't have come this far without the support of all the amazing volunteers at BNSS and through experience gained by talking to the public, especially young children. I would also like to give a massive thank-you to Ray Chapman for encouraging me to give a lecture last October on Jurassic dinosaurs, Steve Limburn for providing me with Humphrey the Madagascan Hissing Cockroach, and Mark Spencer for showing me the incredible world of insects. If you're interested in a career in Natural Sciences, and want to stand out from the crowd, get involved with BNSS!

Will Fisher



Lantern Update

As those of you who have visited the BNSS in the last few weeks will know the lantern restoration project is finally under way. After an earlier competitive tender process the successful company, RT Carpentry Ltd have now started work.

Work began mid-October with a scaffold tower being erected on the west side of the building to roof height. From there a scaffold walkway was built over the top of the roof to give access to the lantern. A further, but larger, galvanised metal roof was then built over the top of the existing metal roof so that rain is thrown away from the lantern onto the outer roof slopes.



At the same time a secure compound was created at the base of the scaffold tower, which fortunately only took away a small number of car parking spaces.

Inside and on the first floor landing, below the lantern, a scaffold platform has been erected just above the top of the room doors, which we were pleased to see was achieved without limiting access to any of the rooms or cupboards. In addition a layer of board has been placed over the scaffold platform to create a barrier to dust etc from the repair work.



This took up the first two weeks before the actual repair work started. In partnership with our architects, RLM Architects, and in compliance with our listed building consent, it was agreed exploratory works would take place to carefully remove the glass from the lantern to enable the condition of the timber to be properly assessed.

This established that the main damage to the lantern was in the south east corner. The architects then prepared a repair plan which was sent to Bournemouth Borough Council for approval.

At the time of writing (mid November) we have now received that approval and repair works have re-started!



Colin Lord

BARTON-ON-SEA and KARL MAYER-EYMAR

Their Contribution to the Sciences of Geology and Palaeontology

The cliffs at Barton-on-Sea have long been a source of well preserved fossils with more than 500 species having been recorded. Since the eighteenth century many collectors have been attracted to Barton some becoming acknowledged experts in their field.



Karl Mayer

(age unknown).

One Swiss expert who never visited England but recognised Barton's importance was Karl Mayer an authority on stratigraphy which is the science of defining and categorising the earth's geological strata.

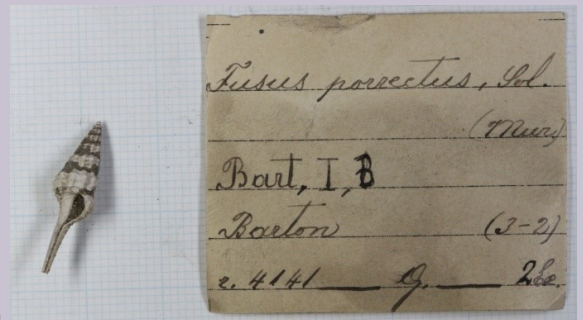
In 1857 Mayer published a paper in which he proposed the subdivision of the geologic period from 65 to 2.6 million years ago, into twelve stages naming each after localities where the geology was found to be similar.

Although Mayer never visited England, having been aware of Barton's importance he procured Barton fossils via dealers to add to his extensive collection gathered during his many expeditions in Western Europe and the Mediterranean and chose to name Stage IV Bartonian.

His original classification has been modified many times since but only five of his stage names are still in use of which Bartonian is one.

Barton fossil label handwritten by Karl Mayer

Courtesy of Basel Natural History Museum



Mayer changed his name to Mayer-Eymar in 1881 and died in 1907 never having married.

Today, Barton fossils can be found in many national and international collections. Some still contain uncatalogued fossils which may prove to be rare or scientifically important material.

Barton Cliffs are recognised by the International Commission on Stratigraphy as the world type locality for the Barton Beds and are designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) being described as "One of Britain's most important stratigraphic and paleontological sites."

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The full text of this paper can be viewed at:-

<http://miltonheritagesociety.co.uk/chapters/barton-on-sea/bartoncliffsandkme>

If you would like further information please contact David at:- mail@davidewhall.plus.com.

'Back from the Brink' Field Meeting at Holt Heath



A dozen arrived at White Sheet Plantation ready to identify birds, insects and plants despite the predicted high temperatures.



They included both BNSS members and those coming on a 'Back from the Brink' (BfB) advertised walk since this was a joint event. BfB is a large nationwide conservation scheme which aims to save 20 threatened species and benefit 200 more.

Holt Heath, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), is included in the local "Adding Diversity to Dorset's Heaths" component project. We had previously heard talks at the BNSS about the project from Sophie Lake and Caroline Kelly of 'Plantlife', during the Spring, and Caroline jointly led this walk.



We looked at both 'dry' and 'wet' (not so very!) heathland areas to the east of the car park, and the area around the pond. In the 'wet' area, we found bog asphodel, flowering sundew and a bog bush cricket. Ten species of birds were recorded but our target species the woodlark was not seen. Near the pond, there were damselflies and many silver-studded

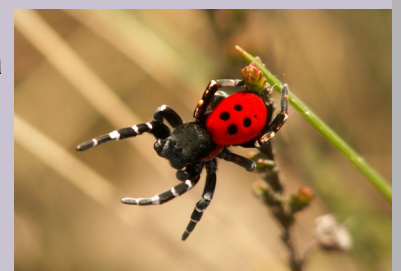


blue butterflies (a primary target species of the project). Ten species of butterflies were seen and seven species of moth. Failing to find the target plant - the marsh clubmoss, Caroline and Steve braved the fierce sun to locate it on another bog whilst the rest of us returned to the cars only delayed by Jonathan's find of bagworms on our returning path. These strange creatures look like a terrestrial caddisfly.

Thanks due to Caroline, Ian, Steve and Jonathan for their expert knowledge.

Breaking News: As part of 'Back from the Brink', Caroline gave a talk to us on 24th November, on the striking Ladybird Spider, and the progress they are making as they try to conserve it.

Grenham Ireland, Science Chair



BNSS Autumn Fair

This, our renamed Open Weekend, saw a drop in number of visitors. We missed out on publicity, which was afforded to the rescheduled Arts Festival.



However, as usual it all went smoothly and enjoyed by all, judging from the comments. A new feature and definite highlight for many was the 'flintknapping'

exhibited by Mike Trevarthen. With a few deft strokes Mike could turn a lump of flint into a finely chiselled sharp-edged axehead,



illustrating how our ancestors probably produced tools. His partner Ciorstaidh Trevarthen, Dorset Antiquities Officer, was on hand to identify peoples' interesting finds, which they could bring in from their own individual collections.



On the Sunday Karen Brown brought in her metal detecting machine and children were able to hunt for 50 pence pieces and old



Victorian hardware. Once again showing the benefits of hands-on and great fun!

Our volunteers' hard work was rewarded with a much better take on donations and sales at the end of the weekend. This alone makes our charging for



weekend opening worthwhile as an exercise.

Thank you to everyone who supplied cakes and time to ensure the weekend went smoothly.

Mary Thornton



Dates for your Diary

Next year's coach trip - provisionally - **Thurs June 6th**

The morning is to be spent at Ryewater Nursery Butterfly Sanctuary, followed by free time for lunch in Sherborne, one other location in Sherborne, and a cream tea, but full details to be confirmed in the next newsletter.

Next Open Weekend a Spring History Fair **13/14 April**

Saturday 2nd February 2019 Development Afternoon. We will be asking a professional how to best maximise our offer to both members and the public. Please come along in the afternoon of 2nd February to make your point, share your views, listen to plans and work out how best to proceed as a volunteering workforce playing a role in the running of a museum and society in Bournemouth.

Talk by Isabella Tree on **5th Feb** This will probably follow a book-signing session in Bournemouth, and she will be talking about Knepp, THE in-place amongst naturalists and conservationists. If anyone would like to visit, please contact me or Ashley.Leftwich If there is sufficient interest, we may organise trips from the BNSS by cars or mini-buses (Knepp cannot handle coaches), so ensure you are on the society's email list.

You may have noticed a lack of mycology walks this autumn, and there were a few reasons for this, but walks are an intrinsic feature of the BNSS. It can be a hindrance to volunteer to lead a walk if it is difficult to commit several months beforehand, something that affects me for example, so one possible solution is doing joint walks with 2 leaders. So we could consider birding/botany walks, and then if a guide went sick, or was suddenly called elsewhere, there is a fall back (dare not use the word backstop!). If you are willing to lead a walk, be it history, natural history, archeology, or maybe just somewhere scenic, contact me, Mary Thornton, or talk it over with other members. It also means we can combine natural history with archaeology for example, as we did at Down Farm.



Mary Thornton visited Mary Arnold, now too frail to call at the BNSS, where she was President, and the Mammals specialist, during the early 1990s. She recounted how she organised a talk by Jane Goodall on her chimps. Dora Durrell was a member and through her Gerald Durrell was to give a talk, but he died before it came about.

In those days the building was looked after by the 'House Committee' and she recounted how her husband would climb the roof to fix the tiles. She recalled Honor Dickinson, as the person responsible for 'Members Afternoons', and was instrumental in galvanising members to make things to sell to raise money for the society. 'Things' included beautifully embroidered table cloths, some of which were to remain in use for many years. (Anyone got any ideas about refreshing this type of scheme?) Mary had much admiration for Honor as a member who looked after everybody else.

Mary met Mary in early November, days after her 100th birthday, she has always stayed in contact with some members, always asks about the society, and her last words to her were that she was looking forward to heaven.

Thank you for the comments regarding the newsletter, and to those requesting a hard copy (which I admit is preferable), these are available for £1 at the BNSS. If you do like it, it is thanks to your contributions, the articles or photos submitted, so keep doing so, and can be on any subject you wish to do with the Society, even if salacious or critical. Keep sending to ianjulian@virginmedia.com.

Find us on Facebook and follow @BNSS1 on Twitter and Instagram!

