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Holderness Countryside

Journal of the South Holderness Countryside Society



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Poem Death of a Tree

No 130. Free to members. Available to non-members for a minimum donation of £1.50

Heronsew at the beginning of a tentative etymological trail to Withernsea

Peter J Cook

I can remember my father pointing to a Grey Heron and saying, "*Sither, heronsew*". Dad was a prolific writer of poems, prose and short stories in his native Holderness dialect so, for 60+ years, I thought that heronsew is a uniquely Holderness dialect word for the grey heron. However, near Helmsley in North Yorkshire there is a wood called, "Heron Seugh Wood". Spotting this on the Ordnance Survey map rekindled my memory and interest.

My research into the origin of the word started with the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (SOED) where I found heronsew, heronshew and heronshaw described as archaic or dialectic words referring back to Middle English. They also refer to Old French 'heronceau' and earlier to 'heronciel' meaning a little heron. There is a phrase in Hamlet II ii, "*I know a hawk from a handsaw*", 'handsaw' being a corruption of the word heronshaw. In Shakespeare's time therefore, handsaw was a word in use for the heron in the dialect of a place far from Roos.

This bit of research reminded me that the word 'shaw' in Suffolk, where I lived for a few years, means a shelterbelt of trees bordering a field. There is a Shaw Farm at Rimswell with strips of woodland close by, so perhaps there's a connection? The word shaw is derived from Old English *sceaga* meaning a wood and in the SOED a shaw is defined as a thicket, copse, or small wood and as a strip of woodland bordering a field. The surname 'Shaw' is said to be from the description of a person who lives by a copse or thicket. It seems likely to me therefore that heronsew etc could also relate to **a place** where herons abide i.e. a heronry.

I then looked up Wythenshaw and found that this place name originates from 'withy wood', withy being a branch of a willow tree. Both of the prefixes Wid and Wit are from Old English 'withig' meaning 'by the willows', again '**by**' inferring **place**. This triggered a train of thoughts to Withernsea. Some sources reckon the 'withern' of Withernsea is derived from whitethorn (i.e. hawthorn) and that Withernsea means, "whitethorn by the sea". However, the sea was miles away when the settlement that became Withernsea was first named 'Witfornes'. 'Sea' in this case could be a variation of shaw, like '-sew', derived from 'sceaga'. Witfornes was close to a mere where one would expect willow to grow. My thesis is that the name Withernsea means, "a place by a willow (=Wit) wood (=Shaw)", similar to Wythenshawe. Comments please.

Toffling Hill Reserve – our latest investment making a better place for wildlife

Peter J Cook

Toffling Hill Reserve is now owned by the SHCS and vested in the Custodians of the Charity Commission in the names of Andy Mason and myself as Trustees of the SHCS, as from 02 October 2017.

It is early days yet. The site was bought by the previous owner in 2002 and we have been given a lot of historical data and photographs. It has been lovingly and sympathetically developed and maintained by Dr Janice (Jan) Crowther and her late husband Dr Peter Crowther, an expert on moths. Rather than making, we will be maintaining a better place for wildlife.

We have risk assessments to do and work to minimize risks to complete; boundaries to secure; access gateway permitting people but not motorbikes to create; history and data files to generate and informative and promotional material and signage to produce. There's quite a lot to do this Winter before we can develop and formalise a management plan. We need to know what is there and where it is so that we can continue with sympathetic management.

Watch the SHCS website (holdernesscountryside.gov) Toffling Hill tab, this journal and ebulletins for news of developments and ways in which you may be able to help.

Friday October 13th Illustrated Talk

The presentation was given by Martin Standley and was entitled "Yorkshire Wildlife". Martin is a member of a photography club and has connections with YWT and Spurn Bird Observatory. His primary interest is ornithology and his presentation reflected this interest although other species were represented in his excellent collection of pictures, which he accompanied with clearly audible explanations throughout.

On a personal note, may I state my total admiration for the tenacity of photographers such as Martin, who, as he explained, may spend up to twelve hours in his tiny portable hide, lying prone on the cold earth heavily disguised as a mammoth cow-patt, just to get a picture of a particular bird.

The SHCS was well represented at the meeting along with some new faces and totalled twenty-two people present. Altogether an enjoyable evening with a half-hour presentation to start with, followed by the usual coffee break during which we were able to "catch up" with old friends, then Martin finished with about three quarters of an hour showing more of his images.

The presence of our membership secretary served to remind some of our members that their renewals were due for payment, and she even enrolled two new members to the Society.

Freddy

Member's meeting November 10th

Sixteen people attended this evening including one non-member from Patrington who had seen a notice in the local shop

The illustrated presentation was originated by Peter Cook MBE BSc, who unfortunately was unable to be with us on that particular evening, and was delivered by David Constantine. The presentation explained how the presence of certain flora in any given location would show that the particular area in question was once an ancient woodland. In today's terms this would in all probability be the grounds adjoining an old established church, and this fascinating explanation outlined the various clues in a floral form which may be present to point the investigator towards a final conclusion, and to determine as to whether the particular area was once, for instance, a church in a clearing in a forest.

Amongst the various plants illustrated were some examples of flora which, in past years, would have been used as a medicament for an illness, or for a flavouring in food, and warned that some plants which could be used for human consumption, sometimes had a counterpart so similar in appearance to be able to deceive the investigator, but were poisonous if ingested.

David Constantine also showed some of his own recently captured images of Toffling Field, the new Reserve illustrating the sheer profusion of growth in this small area. This latter part of the presentation gave a first glimpse of our recently purchased piece of land in Hollym. Toffling field. A 1.8 acre unspoiled area about 500 metres from our Ivy House headquarters. An area which already has a record of over 500 different species on site. Peter himself has already identified over 180 species over the last few weeks. Work has taken place to open up the now overgrown pathways by strimming, and later, the Young Nats will pay a visit, in order to rake the cut grass into a pile for grass snakes.

Altogether a very interesting evening. More Please.

Freddy

The Young Nat's Page

Once again over these last months, our Young Naturalists have been working hard to achieve the next level of the RSPB awards.

But it's not all work and no play for these youngsters. This is a friendly club where everyone, including the leaders are all known by their Christian names. There are often "mad exploration sessions" in which everyone hunts for a certain thing, be it a certain tree, or leaf, flowers, or even conkers. We are to have another "Bug Hunt" in the near future. We'll see what we can find.

The interest that these children have developed in the subject of Natural History over the years, is extremely gratifying to see. Their enthusiasm in all the different elements hopefully will, I hope, result in some eminent botanists or entomologists of the future. This really would be something for our little club to be proud of.

Now, as you may see in the picture, we have three members with their Silver Award Certificates. Congratulations to you all, and to Margaret and her team. All those hours of "back-room" preparation have borne fruit.

The next step, we are looking to earn the GOLD. It will not be easy. There are six more disciplines of the eighteen required to fulfil. We shall see.

2018 will see our members, and probably their parents as well, paying yet another visit to an interesting wildlife area, and as our club is democratically managed, the final destination will be discussed with the members. Hopefully, they won't all get wet through this time. (i.e. Rock-pooling ?)



Beginner's Photography!

This photography lark should be easy, I thought. Everyone's doing it, I thought. I'll give it a go. That was my first mistake! Armed with no more than my mobile phone and sheer determination I started the challenge. I'll record the projects that the Young Nats do, I'll record the change in the flora and fauna at Ivy House, visiting wildlife in the beautiful South Holderness countryside.

My first attempts were in the last Journal – the Young Nat's recycle and reuse project. OK. I can do this. Let's try some wildlife at Ivy House.



Not quite central, light shining detracts a little from the spots, but I got a ladybird. I can feel my confidence raising, and with the gazillions of types of ladybirds I don't need to know its name in Latin. You can tell what it is.

Let's try another. A trip to Bempton cliffs with the Young Nats should give me ample opportunity to catch a glorious photo of a bird in flight. And this is where it starts to go wrong. It turned into one of those 'It was there when I pressed the button' moments. We've all had them I am sure. I can't be the only one who has a host of pictures with a smudge in the middle, or the edge of a wing, or a dot in the distance, or a tangle of undergrowth that until that moment had the most wonderful lizard sitting there. Look on the bright side – not been arrested yet for crouching in the undergrowth with my bum in the air looking for some brightly coloured beetle that just 'beetled off'!



Back to things that either don't move or can't move. A bit safer. Surely I can't go wrong here. Fabulous selection of fungi at Ivy House. Every time I see one I marvel at the colours, the shapes, and the way many of them have been nibbled by connoisseurs unknown. Fairy rings. Blobs on fallen logs slowly oozing the bits of wood back to nature. The gooey looking ones, ones that look like blackened twisted plastic, cups up, cups down, on trees, on the ground. I photographed them all.

Would be really great to actually find out what these are – I think to myself – Peter will know. Google will know. 'Did you get a picture of the gills?' he said. 'Whaaa!' I said. Colour. Texture. Shape. All necessary for identification.

HOLLYM CARRS NATURE RESERVE MONITORING REPORT

Re-profiled ponds and Greater Water Parsnip monitoring, 2017.

Date: 19 August 2017; Peter J Cook

Ponds that we re-profiled in November 2016 under Higher Level Stewardship, Capital Works Programme, were assessed for water level against the re-profiled bank and for aquatic and riparian plant species. Grapnel trawls were taken at 10 m spacing and populations of Greater Water Parsnip (*Sium latifolium*) were inspected.

Pond 1: Water level in a week of exceptionally high rainfall (w/b 12 August) was level with the shelving at the base of the bank which is the ideal level for this time of the year. No Great Crested Newts were observed.

The following emergent plant species were noted: Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*), Amphibious Bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), Ivy-leaved Duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*) and Least Duckweed (*Lemna minuta*). The following submerged aquatic species were trawled: a Water Starwort (*Callitriche* sp. (possibly *obtusangula*) and Horned Pondweed (*Zannichellia palustris*). Other marginal marsh species were: Celery-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), Thread-leaved Crowfoot (*R. trichophyllus*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*) and Toad Rush (*Juncus bufonius*). Most of these species have been recorded here historically and have been given the opportunity to thrive by re-exposure and removal of competitive species.

Drying Pond: Recent heavy rainfall had washed down clay and the water column was brown turbid in this new pond designed to dry out in late summer to prevent fish infestation that poses a risk to Great Crested Newt reproduction. The water depth was about 8 cm and there was evidence that it had been almost dry before the recent heavy rainfall. The repeated wash-down of clay and soil will raise the bottom of this pond and annual monitoring for a few years should form the basis for need for further work.

Species of plant already colonizing this pond were Common Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), *A. plantagoaquatica*, Sea Club-rush (*Bolboschoenus maritimus*), *Z. palustris*) and a stonewort, *Chara vulgaris* var. *longibracteata*. Both *J. articulatus* and *J. bufonius* were on wet marginal clay.

Pond 2: This was similar to Pond 1 with substantial populations of *S. latifolium* occupying pockets of reed bed.

Pond 3: Populations of *S. latifolium* were not seen this year. Submerged aquatic flora consisted *Z. palustris* and the stoneworts *C. vulgaris* and *C. globularis*. At the pond edge were: *J. articulatus*, *J. bufonius*, Lesser Pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*) and *B. maritimus* (see Technical note), Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) and Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*).

Technical note: *Bolboschoenus laterocarpus* has been recorded in UK inland freshwater sites and the identity of this population of *Bolboschoenus* was checked. *B. maritimus* was confirmed.

Least Duckweed is an invasive alien species capable of overwintering on the surface of standing water posing a potential light penetration problem.

POWERPOINT WITH TEXT – A SILENT PRESENTATION STYLE

Peter J Cook

We are finding it increasingly difficult to find speakers willing to turn out on a Friday night and also both embarrassing and costly to engage people to speak to sometimes fewer than 20 people. Our October meeting turned out to be an opportunity to try something different as it happened to coincide with me being out of the County.

I had produced a brief (20 minute) continuous-loop presentation on the various uses, including medicinal, of woodland plants surviving in a Holderness churchyard. This was for a Heritage Weekend event which had proved popular. It was a Powerpoint continuous slide show with photographs of plants interspersed with pages of text explaining their uses and ecology. The speed of the presentation was set slow to enable both reading and discussion, and was without distracting background music.

However, the show was too short for a Society meeting so I padded it with more species pictures and accounts and also with a section about Toffling Hill reserve and how this recent purchase by the Society, and nature reserves in general, can be regarded as 'mitigation' for the progressive loss of plant species and habitat due to heavy-handed urban tidying. Feedback I have had so far has been positive. Far more information and entertainment can be packed into such a show at low cost, and presentations can be both colourful and thought-provoking, and deliver messages.

If anyone would like to see more of this type of presentation please let us know. We are not suggesting that every open meeting would be like this.

WITHERNSEA MILLENNIUM GREEN – A LITTLE-KNOWN NATURE RESERVE

Peter J Cook

In 2000 the Withernsea Millennium Green was finally established on the old Withernsea to Hull railway line and the adjacent cleaned-up gas works after a long fund-seeking campaign. It was a major undertaking with the gas works clean-up costing more than £600K and sundry other costs amounting to a further £70K. It brought a very large area of green space into the protection of Natural England and the Millennium Commission through a Charitable Trust and was one of the most ambitious and costly of 245 Millennium Greens to be developed nationwide. The full package of funding helped Withernsea to get Single Regeneration Budget finance for several developments across the town, and provided an area on which to develop a £180K adventure play park. The whole project was recognised by the Department of the Environment in my award of the MBE. This land has recently gained further protection as a Local Wildlife Site, for it has a rich fauna and flora and has free access at all times. It is well worth a visit.

Now, 17 years later, the Charitable Trust originally set up to oversee management of this important asset is declining in number due to ill health of Trustees and is looking for new blood. It is also converting to a Charity Incorporated Organisation. Anyone interested in a guided tour and/or becoming a Trustee or CIO Director should contact me please. In the build-up to this project, beginning in 1998, the SHCS membership was consulted and gave its support.

'Holderness Countryside' goes to York - and a plea

Peter J Cook

The Society holds a full set of '*Holderness Countryside*' in the Ivy House Centre, which may be accessed for research by members – just ask. This set goes back to 1982 and includes some of the issues produced for schools.

In parallel with collating this full set from various collections bequeathed to the Society (from e.g. Dr Crackles and Frank Kennington) I was also able to supplement my own collection running from 1991 to date with early issues to form a second complete set, housed at home.

In September I received an e-mail from the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union asking if the Society (we are an Affiliated Society in the Union) had any publications that they could file in their library, at the moment housed in the College of St John in York.

I jumped at the opportunity to 'downsize' my own library by donating the full set of to the YNU archive. This is an opportunity to display our progress and achievements as documented in *Holderness Countryside* over these past 35years.

This highlights the importance of publishing a regular journal such as *Holderness Countryside*. Without it we will die and without a permanent home for our record, we will pass into oblivion. The publication must contain accounts of what we do as we do them and must contain articles of interest to the full cross section of our membership.

As a plea therefore: – please support this publication with articles ranging from simple one-line observations to full-page reports.

Robert Bruce Re-enactment in Withernsea

For younger readers, King Robert Bruce of Scotland is said to have watched a spider trying to swing by a thread from one place to another and in doing so, he realised that he needed great patience to succeed in battle against King Edward I. He pledged that if he saw the spider fall for a 7th time he would give up his crown. The spider did succeed and Robert Bruce went on to win.

I often have reason to stare at a wall, the latest being while trying to come up with a very sound reason for not changing the colour I gave it 17 years ago. On this occasion I spotted a small brown blob in the corner about half way up and thought it was no good reason for re-painting the whole wall. A little later, the blob was higher than before and I realised that it was a daddy long-legs spider. It continued climbing until it got to the picture rail, from which it fell to the floor. About half an hour later I spotted it again, all legs and knees having another go. Again it reached the picture rail and fell to the floor. I took pity on it, carefully picked it up and, standing on a chair, placed it on top of the picture rail from where it moved up into the corner of the ceiling. It set up home there until I had to move it to another room, having finally given in to pressure to dawb paint on everything.

Google Pholcus to get descriptions of this spider. It has an appetite for other species of spider and is worth having around the home.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS.

Unless otherwise stated the venue is Patrington Church Hall at 7.30pm.

The hall is situated behind the HOLDERNESS INN on HIGH STREET.

Alternative access can be gained via NORTHSIDE COURT but car parking limited.

DECEMBER 8th – Members' Night.

To all members. This is your night. A time to put on a show, bring some food, and entertain each other.

There will be a good raffle, so save your small change. You could be lucky.

A NOTE TO ALL MEMBERS.

Just a gentle reminder.

There will not be a January 2018 meeting.

Normal meetings will resume in February.

Good wishes to all members for a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

DEATH OF A TREE. Gill Hart.

I was once a stately spreading tree with roots set firm
in forest, dark. Until a woodcutter branded me.
Then later...sliced into my bark.

Having stripped me of my beauty I'm left naked, on
the ground, then roughly maneuvered like booty.
Held captive, in a timber compound.

Like a patient as I lie on this gurney with tight chains
across my heart, awaiting the sad, lonely journey
to where my new life will start,

I'm re-calling the previous season when I set so
many seeds.
A new life - a sapling - a reason to fill the void
that I leave.