



**There's a chilly theme** to the newsletter this December. As I begin the newsletter, snow has fallen in October in London for the first time since 1934, and is covering our lawn, so it's not surprising that some people query 'global warming', but the statistics stack up against the doubters. One can feel a chill at the thought of possible future climate changes and all that entails. Read about global warming on page 5, and earlier freezing times in Earley on page 6; fancy leaving work early to skate by moonlight on the local lake? Sutton Seeds' workers did.



Here's a riddle for you. What's the connection between an inspired gardener to King Charles I and creator of the first curiosity museum, a favourite child's game, and a small moth? (No giveaway page number!)

Christmas has come early to the EEG. We were delighted to win first prize of £500 in the Dorothy Morley Conservation (Community) Award. Runners-up were Friends of Ruscombe Wood, and Tilehurst GLOBE. We were also very pleased to receive a further £60 from the Waitrose 'Community Matters' project, when we were pitched against worthy projects like the Thames Valley Air Ambulance and the Multiple Sclerosis fund. You can read more about the awards, how we won them and what we hope to do with the money on page 3.

We often read of sightings of extra-terrestrial aliens, but we have been invaded by some earthbound ones from Mother Nature. We need your assistance in rooting these out. To assist in protecting our own native species, consult page 3.

Regretfully, page 4 has the last instalment of Alan Broodbanks' Earley childhood memories, which has been so popular with our readers, but we have more coming from other members.

Looking ahead to 2009, let us hope there's good news for the planet. Perhaps, with political changes in the US, the outlook may be better.

**Items of special interest:**

**A threat to our trees**

'Firewood' - a poem

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**'Get to know your Earley'**

**Big Houses of Earley**

At one time Earley possessed several large houses and estates. The poor, who in earlier days had lived in flimsy hovels on the Heath, would be amazed at the dwellings inhabited by Earley residents today. These now occupy the sites of vanished estates such as Erleigh Court. A respected historian, Ernest Dormer, suggested that a manor house had stood there before the Norman Conquest. Dormer described the south side of the house as being delightfully quaint and irregular. Parts of it dated back to Tudor times but, as with all houses, various owners repaired and altered it. It was demolished in 1935. Amongst its owners were Lord Stowell, and Lord and Lady Sidmouth (Lord Stowell's daughter).

'Earley Days' (pub. Earley Local History Group) states, 'the House was approached from London Road by an elm-lined narrow drive through white gates. The grounds of the Court covered all of what is now **Chiltern Crescent, Delamere Road, Hilltop Road, Whitegates Lane, Byron Road, Milton Road and Erleigh Court Gardens** (the site of the kitchen garden). On the south side there were tennis lawns, formerly a pond connected with the farmhouse. Another road that commemorates Erleigh Court is **Sidmouth Grange Close**, site of Earley Court Farm, which was next to the Court.

Dormer laments the passing of the large Earley estates: 'The whole area is rapidly undergoing transformation and within a few years many who return to this neighbourhood might be pardoned if they fail to recognise the locality...the passing of Erleigh Court will be attended with regret and when once concrete ways have been formed through its ancient parkland it will be difficult to recall the pastoral beauty that once lay at the town's end.' (Berks Archaeological Journal Autumn 1934). *Nothing much changes!*

## “Under the wilting chestnut tree”

### A plant-hunter’s trophy



Our much-loved horse chestnut tree was thought to have been introduced from Turkey in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It may have been popularised here by John

Tradesant, famous plant collector and gardener to King Charles I. By the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, John had it growing in his South Lambeth garden. The trees were slow to escape from cultivation and were originally regarded as mysteriously romantic and powerful trees. Early plantings were in parks and grounds of big houses; Sir Christopher Wren designed the famous mile-long Chestnut Avenue in Bushy Park, planted in 1699.

### Child’s Play

The first record of the game of conkers (cheggies, obbylonkers) was in 1848 in the Isle of Wight. This may have started when the trees began appearing in public places and streets. One spoil-sport council has planted trees that do not produce fruits, presumably citing that old chestnut (sorry!), Health and Safety.

Picture: Horse chestnuts in Avalon Rd, in healthier days; they appear on the Maiden Erlegh estate in the 1881/7 OS map.

There is a world conker championship held in Ashton, Northants every year.

### Small moth, big trouble

You may have noticed the early browning of the horse chestnut tree leaves in the last couple of years. The culprit is a small leaf miner moth with a grand name - *Cameraria ohridella*. It affects the white-flowering horse chestnut, *Aesculus hippocastanum*. The caterpillar of this moth mines within the leaf, and up to 700 mines have been found on one compound leaf. Held to the light, the mines appear translucent. The infestation, although unsightly, does not appear to affect the health of the tree, which produces leaves the following year. It was first noted in this country in 2002. The spread of the moth is thought to have been aided by vehicular transport. Just to confuse us, a fungus *Guignardia aescul*, presents a similar appearance but is not translucent when held up to the light. Removal and

‘Obbly obbly, onker  
my first conker’

destruction of fallen leaves, such as composting, over autumn/winter may reduce levels. There are no chemical treatments with current

approval for use in the UK. Local trees, such as those in Avalon Road, were affected, but still produced conkers.

(Ref: *Flora Britannica* by Richard Mabey and RHS website)

Beechwood fires are  
bright and clear

If the logs are kept a year

Chestnut only good they say

If for long it’s laid away

Make a fire of elder tree

Death within your house will be

But ash new or ash old

Is fit for a Queen with a crown of gold

Birch and fir logs burn too fast

Blaze up bright and do not last

It is by the Irish said

Hawthorn bakes the sweetest bread



Elmwood burns like churchyard mould

Even the very flames are cold

But ash green or ash brown

Is fit for a Queen with a golden crown

Poplar gives a bitter smoke

Fills your eyes and makes you choke

Apple wood will scent your room

With an incense-like perfume

Oaken logs, if dry and old

Keep away the winters cold

But ash wet or ash dry

A king shall warm his slippers by.

### GREEN HEROES Charles Waterton 1782-1865

Charles who? you might ask. He was one of our first conservationists, and a great English eccentric; he lived at Walton Hall, Yorks. You couldn’t make his life story up. As a child, at night he climbed into an oak tree to watch a family of foxes. As a young man, he struck up a friendship with Sir Joseph Banks, who urged him to explore the poison, curare. He spent many years travelling abroad, visiting British Guiana and many of the islands, gathering knowledge of the local wildlife, always curious to find out more about the birds and other wildlife he encountered. After several years he returned home, horrified to find that wildlife was being persecuted, and birds of prey were being poisoned out of existence. He made his park into a wildlife sanctuary, planting trees and ground cover, making boxes, constructing holes, erecting perches and resting-places, building a special bank for sand martins; he loved old, hollow trees. He defended every living creature except rats, but had no wish to turn wild creatures into tame ones. He was ridiculed as a false romantic. In 1830 he opened his park and his museum free to the public. He encouraged local farming people, coal miners, factory workers and children; lunatics from the asylum were also welcome and he let them view the lakeland birds through his telescope. He was a man ahead of his times. His house is now a hotel; the sand martins’ wall has been broken up for ballast for a squash court. To learn more about this remarkable man, read his fascinating life-story in *Charles Waterton: 1782-1865, Traveller and Conservationist* by Julia Blackburn, ISBN 0 09 073600 4



L to r: Helen, Alan and Chris

## The Dorothy Morley Conservation Award

We were delighted to win first prize of £500 in the coveted Dorothy Morley Conservation (Community) Award, which is administered by the Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. Dorothy Morley was a committed environmental campaigner and the award rightly perpetuates her memory. The presentation was organised by Helen Phillips of BBOWT, and presented to our Chairman, Alan Broodbank, by Chris Williams, also of BBOWT.

EEG was congratulated on the support given by its members, who regularly turn out on Wednesday mornings, in helping to improve a variety of wildlife habitats in the Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve. The group was also praised for its excellent community involvement, its newsletter and website and partnerships with local businesses and other groups. If you would like to help improve your environment and get some exercise for free into the bargain, join the Wednesday group in the Reserve. Phone Grahame Hawker on 07796 170 689.

We intend to use the award to purchase equipment for insect study, which will be put to good use in projects with children, and for explanatory signs in the Reserve.

### Waitrose Donation

We are also very grateful to receive, through votes made by shoppers, £60 from the 'Community Matters' project by Waitrose in Woodley. This is particularly helpful since, as we have free membership, we do not receive any financial income.

## ALIEN INVASION

The aliens in question are not little green men, but green plants. Two easily spotted culprits are **Himalayan balsam** and **Giant hogweed**. **H. balsam**, also known as Indian balsam, jumping jack and policeman's helmet, was introduced into the UK in 1839, but escaped over the garden fence. Another name is Indian Touch-Me-Not with good reason; when the seeds are ripe one only has to touch the seed pod and it explodes, showering seeds a fair distance; these are then water-borne. Children love them! It colonises damp areas, particularly river banks. It can be controlled by cutting down to ground level just before the flowering stage in June. It can also be pulled out. **Giant Hogweed** was introduced to Britain in 1893 as an ornamental plant. After escaping, it colonised wasteland and riverbanks. It closely resembles the common hogweed except for size, as it can grow 15-20 feet. As many might testify, its stems, edges and undersides of the leaves contain poisonous sap which can cause blistering and irritation of the skin. Cutting down, using caution, the stems with a sharp scythe before flowering may help to control this plant. Also the crown may be dug out just below ground. Both these plants leave the river banks bare in winter.

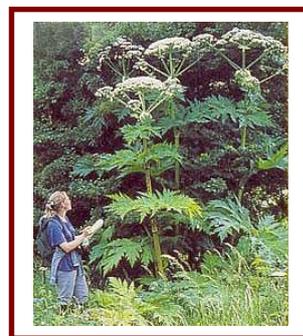
Less picturesque plants, but equally unwelcome, are three which were introduced to enhance or oxygenate our garden ponds - **Floating pennywort**, **Australian swamp stonecrop** or **New Zealand Pigmywort** and **Parrot's feather**. **Floating Pennywort** was brought to Britain in the 1980s for tropical aquaria or ponds. By 1991, it was present in the wild. It grows into a dense mat of vegetation, starving the water of light, nutrients and oxygen, killing many of the species living in it. It has phenomenal growth and can double its weight in 3 days. It's hard to control and can reproduce quickly from the smallest shoot fragment. **Australian swamp stonecrop** was introduced from Tasmania in 1911 but since 1965 has been aggressively spreading in the wild. It forms a mat over the water surface which grows upwards like a huge sponge. Anything living under it will be killed. **Parrot's feather** was first found in Britain in 1960 and has spread to about 150 sites. It is widely grown in garden ponds, but may be spread by fragments in the soil of pot plants sold at aquatic garden centres. It grows in ponds, reservoirs, gravel pits, streams, canals and ditches. **Grahame Hawker**

All the above plants crowd out native species and efforts are being made to eradicate them. Posters will be displayed, showing pictures of the alien plants, on the public notice-boards. 'Google' for plant photos, info. on [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk), search 'Weeds'. To report a sighting contact Grahame Hawker on 07796 170 689.

### An alien in the Nature Reserve?

On the spur of the moment, I decided to take a quick turn round the Reserve. It was getting towards the darker part of the winter afternoon, with a foggy veil over the lake. As I approached the seat commemorating past water bailiffs, I thought the figure perched tidily on the bench had a familiar look. Then I remembered an earlier encounter, the 'visitor from space', or so he claimed. There was no chance to retreat. As I came level with him he greeted me enthusiastically and patted the seat next to him. I sat reluctantly, not wishing to offend a fellow-walker although, as I recalled from our previous encounter, one somewhat short of a few cogs in the wheel.

"Quite a while since we last met", he commented. He added, "Things don't seem to be getting much better". Hesitantly, I agreed with him, wondering what was coming. "We can still see the fires burning in your forests from space, you know. They don't seem to be slowing down". I replied rather huffily, "Oh, I think they are. You see, we're buying the forest up so it can't be destroyed." "Well, it doesn't show from where I'm looking". I decided to go on the offensive, and call his bluff. "So what planet do you come from, then? Sorry, but you don't look any different from us." Enigmatically, he countered with, "That's for me to know. We're still keeping a close watch on you, observing some of your feeble efforts to get into space. Our assumption is that this is in preparation for colonising somewhere in space when your own planet can't support life any more. This could have grave consequences for us. Do you realise the number of people on your planet has doubled five times in the last 3000 years, and is roughly 6 billion?" He added condescendingly, "Of course, my billion is one thousand million. Nice to talk to you again". The feeling wasn't mutual and to my relief he rose to leave, and quickly disappeared into the gloom. I determined that the next time I spotted him, the best course of action was evasion.



## THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY

### *A trip down Memory Lane by Alan Broodbank, our Chairman (part 6)*

*Alas, the final instalment of Alan's childhood memories. Read how Earley was changed forever*

Back to "our" woods now. The first signs of impending change to this rural idyll came in about 1954 or 1955, when Hillside and Silverdale Roads were metalled.

Just after this time, one afternoon we were playing in the field by the stream when we suddenly became aware of a hammering sound emanating from the woods. Being inquisitive, as all youngsters should be, we immediately set about locating the source of this intrusion into our area, and crept, Red Indian style, through the undergrowth until the hammerers came into view, although they couldn't see us. We were intrigued to see them nailing a sign to a tree, and decidedly unimpressed by the wording on it, "No Entry. Trespassers will be prosecuted"! One of the older boys who could read explained to us what it meant, after which followed a brief discussion, in hushed tones, about what should be done about it. Of course there wasn't the slightest chance of anyone taking any notice of what it said; these were our woods, ours to play in and look after, and probably had been for centuries, and that was how they should remain. If ever there was an incentive for us to go into the woods even more than usual, that sign was it! I can now reveal that that sign was removed almost as soon as the men had left, but even after all these years the children's code of conduct means I cannot reveal the name of the person responsible! All I can say is that he grew up to be a passionate lover of wildlife and a fervent conservationist, the roots of which were established in the fields and woods of Earley.



It was a dreadful day for us when, completely out of the blue, "they" started to destroy our treasured woodland in order to extend and build houses along Silverdale Road and commence the Maiden Erlegh estate. Trees that were like old friends, and had been there peacefully and reassuringly since time immemorial, were ruthlessly felled by the placing of explosives under the roots. Our field was used as a dumping ground for clay excavated by the builders, completely destroying it as a habitat, and Burnet moths and

skylarks and myriads of other species could never breed there again.

We are indeed fortunate that some far-sighted person proposed that at least part of the old woods be preserved as a conservation area. Incidentally, I've heard the woods called by a number of names over the years. Usually they were just referred to as "The Woods"; sometimes it would be "The Big Woods" in order to distinguish them from "The Little Woods", a small copse suitable for tiny children that was on the Northern side of the Muddy Patch (where nos. 35 - 39 Silverdale Road now stand) and where someone had built a superb tree house. To folk from the Mill Lane area the woods were "Black's Woods"; presumably after Mr. R. Black, a one-time owner of the Maiden Erlegh stud farm. One or two older people called it "Earley Forest", and I was once shown an ancient map with the area marked in this way.

I could write very much more about the natural history of Earley, but hope that what I have written gives a reasonable picture, and will be of interest to future natural historians. The current Nature Reserve gives some idea of what the woods used to be like, although the field is virtually unrecognizable, forming gardens for a number of houses. We may not now be able to see the splendid white admiral gliding through the glades, but on the other hand speckled wood butterflies still occur in abundance, and may even be more plentiful than before, as indeed may be holly blues, white letter and purple hairstreaks. At one stage, there was a risk of rhododendrons swamping much of the undergrowth, but thankfully an enlightened conservation policy has reversed this trend, and carpets of wood anemones and bluebells are still a beautiful feature in springtime. Cuckoos may be but rarely heard now, but grey wagtails still nest alongside the stream, kingfishers still flash dazzlingly across the lake, the heron still fishes, a sparrowhawk still hurtles aerobically through the trees, and in springtime the woods still ring to the chorus of blackbirds, song thrushes, robins, blackcaps, chiffchaffs, willow warblers, nuthatches, greenfinches and many more. I hope that, whatever happens, this priceless natural habitat will be retained and preserved for all time, and that it will give the same boundless pleasure to future generations as it did to mine. **Alan Broodbank**

Our thanks to Alan for a very rich and absorbing account of his early childhood in Earley, which many children of today would envy.

We would love to hear childhood reminiscences in Earley from other members. Write to newsletter editor, at 2 Reeds Avenue or [sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com](mailto:sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com).

## Revamp of the butterfly garden on Instow Road

Due to the input of EEG members and other volunteers, one bed has been planted up with a variety of nectar plants which attracts butterflies, bees, moths, hoverflies etc. to stop for a 'pub break'. Other beds contain at least one of the food-plants of the caterpillar of every British butterfly. (Ed: Check out the lovely, informative website [www.butterflygarden.co.uk](http://www.butterflygarden.co.uk) by the late Linda Walls, maintained indefinitely by her family at her request)

### Chalk-loving wild flowers

A chalk bank has been created, which has been sown with a seed-mix suitable for freely-draining lime-rich soils; the chalk was provided free of charge. This makes the third scallop in Instow Road, all of which have been created to provide microclimates for different wild flowers. The seed mix on this final scallop included kidney vetch and marjoram.

### Improving the Island

Selected trees have been laid down into the water. When these resprout they will mask the concrete wall around the island. Initially the island may look less attractive, but long term there will be a big improvement. It will also help provide a fish refuge, and offer nesting sites to coots and great crested grebes. **Grahame Hawker**

### Some recent news on global warming:

- ❖ The thickness of sea ice in the Arctic dramatically declined winter for the first time since records began in the early 1990s. **BUT** a recent study also stated: *"It's dangerous to extrapolate out because colder weather would mean the ice could recover again"*. The Met Office warned: *"There's clearly a decline over the last 30 years and we can detect a human signal in that, but the change in the last couple of years could be due to natural fluctuations in the weather."*
- ❖ From James Cameron of *The Times*: *"We must acknowledge that climate change is still seen by many as a threat for the future, a risk approaching slowly from afar. But the best evidence of the physical consequences of climate change shows that we face catastrophic losses over a century and real economic losses within years. London is as much at risk from rising sea levels as from financial meltdown."* He seems in little doubt!
- ❖ Hundreds of **Bewick's Swans** that migrate to escape the Russian winter have not yet left their breeding grounds and arrived in the UK (28.10.08). Channel 4's news website states: *"Around 300 Bewick's Swans were expected at Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Centre on October 21, but experts say the Arctic weather is now so warm there is no need to rush back."* **BUT** on Oct 28 from Wildfowl & Wetland Trust website, *"Contrary to recent press reports, the Bewick's' late arrival is not unheard of. Although WWT usually expects the first swans to arrive at Slimbridge around 21 October, in the late 1960s the swans didn't arrive until 9 November and in the early 1990s we saw the first Bewick's arrive on 3 November"*. Julia Newth, research officer at WWT, said: *"There's still time for them to break the record for late arrival, but we are certainly not in a position where Bewick's swans are no longer coming to Slimbridge. Earlier today I heard of around 450 Bewick's in north-west Holland, so this is a clear signal that the mass migration is well underway."* (Update : The first Bewick swan arrived at Slimbridge 6.30 am 1 Nov. By 8 Nov eight Bewick's swans had arrived. They need a north-easterly wind to get them from Holland to the UK.)
- ❖ *"Climate change at the poles is man-made"*. So says a report by the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia. The report shows that not only the Arctic but the Antarctic has been subject to the changes in the global climate over the past 60 years. It states, *"...the study conclusively shows that humans are responsible for the significant increases in temperatures observed in the Arctic and Antarctic for the past half century"*.



last

**Footnote:** Global warming benefits some. Temporary skating rinks are all the rage; this year there are 52 in the UK. But according to the companies hiring these, they are now finding lucrative business in Scandinavian countries as "...their lakes and rivers have not frozen over this year. It's sad to say but there is a good commercial future in global warming." The Dutch now hold their January 200 km speed skating marathon on an Austrian lake at Weissensee, as the Dutch canals no longer freeze like they did in the past. Read on for stories of freezing winters in earlier times.

## A Look at Old Earley

Whiteknights Lake, Earley, showing people skating and walking on the ice during the great frost of 1929. The man in the foreground and the boy on the right with a stick are wearing skates. Skaters can be seen in the background on left. It was frozen over in 1929, frozen for about six weeks in 1946/7, and again in 1963 and 1980. **Skating is now forbidden**, though this seems an academic matter with warmer winters.



today instead of Saturday.' (Baskett's diaries, MERL)

### RECENT TIMES

More recently, the husband of one EEG member remembers 'skating on the lakes as a child'. One member has memories of skating on Whiteknights Lake in 1947, when the lake was crowded with skaters, and another member writes that her sons 'remember Maiden Earley Lake freezing, and a 'guy' driving a Ford Escort on to the ice in about 1982!' Yet another member's teenage memory of about thirty years ago is sliding on a sledge down the south bank onto the frozen ME Lake. The lake is deeper now and therefore would be much more dangerous. In 'Earley Days' p.175 (Earley Local History Group) H.R. Smith recalls, 'In the frosts of 1891 and 1895 a lot of skating was done on the lakes of Whiteknights and Bulmershe, as well as over flooded land in the latter year.'

### THE STUARTS POPULARISED SKATING

The Dutch made great use of skating on their frozen canals as a means of transport from town to town, and to markets, sometimes travelling 40 to 50 miles this way; by the 1600s it was an important Dutch recreation. When the Stuart Royals were exiled in Holland, they learnt to skate, and brought this skill back to England with them. On Dec 1 1662 Samuel Pepys saw an extraordinary sight on the new canal in St. James' Park: '...and then over to the Parke where first in my life, it being a great frost, did see people sliding with their skeetes, which is a very pretty art'.

### THE BRITS LEAD THE WAY

The UK has a reputation for inventing sports, and England and Scotland did much to advance skating, both figure and speeding as a sport. The first skating club in the world was formed in Edinburgh in the 1700s. The first treatise on ice-skating was written in 1772 by Robert Jones, a lieutenant of artillery. British army officers stationed in Philadelphia in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century enjoyed ice-skating, and inspired the city youth to take to the ice. One youth was Benjamin West, who was a particularly talented skater; an artist, he became President of the Royal Academy. In some European countries there were great carnivals and balls on the ice. In Britain the 'posh' Victorians introduced a more stiff, upright style, straight legs, and arms at side (anything fancy was thought to be bad taste), but other countries adopted a more artistic style, which eventually spread. Gradually, design of skates and skating styles changed over the century till we reach the truly athletic challenge of the present-day sport.



Ref: *Ice-skating: A History* by Norman Brown; *Suttons Seeds, A History 1806-2006* available from Earley Town Council 0118 986 8995 (see page 8). My appreciation to Gerry Westall for providing the photo, and also belated thanks to him for providing much of the information on Earley's involvement in World War I in the Sept newsletter.

### TIME OFF FOR SKATING

*Sutton Seeds, A History* by Earley Local History Group (see below) has a reference to Sutton staff having time off for ice-skating. Between Jan 30 and Feb 20 1895 they received six half-days. (*The Met Office confirms that the month of February in 1895 was colder than the exceptionally cold and protracted winter of 1740, although the coldest of all was probably 1684, when the diarist John Evelyn took a coach to Lambeth along the frozen River Thames.*) In Jan 1896 it was noted that several half-days had been given for skating that month. On Jan 13 1908 all staff left at 5 pm for skating, and in Feb 1908 it was decided the firm could not grant a half-day off for skating due to pressure of work, but agreed all departments could leave at 5 pm as there was a full moon. A notice was put up in 1912: '31<sup>st</sup> January 1912. We wish as far as work permits that all should have a half-day's holiday for skating

### You may not know this about skating...

\*During the Great Frost 1683, King Charles II arrived on the frozen Thames in a sledge drawn by a skater. The Dutch sailors, from the commercial fleet moored in the Thames, careered up the Thames on skates to show off their skills to amazed Londoners.

\*Queen Marie Antoinette was a proficient skater. Queen Victoria took to the ice and this persuaded Victorian women that it was not a fatal sport!

\*During the hard winters of 1939 and 1963, when the Cam froze, undergraduates skated the 15 miles from Cambridge to Ely.

\*It could be fatal; drowning did occur. A ladder and a rope were taken by prudent skaters in case ice cracked.

\*Wordsworth was a keen skater, first out on the ice and it's said he could carve his name in the ice. Goethe was a passionate skater and would skate for hours.

\*Speed skating was particularly popular in the Fen country, probably introduced by the Dutch; it has a rich history of speed skating competitions. To this day there is still a skating fraternity.

\*Telephones hum when there is a hint of ice in the Fens, but a significant comment on the Welney and District Skating club website states, "Skating in Welney today is restricted by global warming causing warmer winters, much to the frustration of the members of the Welney and District Skating Club".

Sheila Crowson

## NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

Ed Milliband is to head the new **Energy and Climate Department** which has been welcomed by many Green groups.

From the Woodland Trust Nov 6: '**The Climate Bill** has worked its way through Parliament - and has been approved. And it includes a higher target of 80% for carbon reduction emissions, annual targets, a greater emphasis on adaptation, plus - just this month - the inclusion of international flights and shipping emissions in reduction targets!....(It is) a major success for **Stop Climate Chaos** - the biggest and most effective coalition fighting climate change. In the debate, Ed Milliband even said: "I pay tribute to the scientists who detected the problem, the campaigners who fought to bring it to public attention, the green movement that mobilised for change, and above all, the members of the public who wrote to us in record numbers, asking for a Bill that met the scale of the challenge."

*Independent Newspaper* website, Oct 7: '**Google Earth** goes underwater. Web users are to be given access to undersea landscapes, including the habitat of threatened species that live off the coast of England, as part of Google Earth. The Government's conservation agency Natural England has contributed

information about 43 marine sites around the coast of England that offer some protection to species such as the basking shark, as well as seahorses, corals and algae. One of the sites users can visit "virtually" is Lundy Island, off the North Devon coast, England's only statutory marine reserve and a no-take zone banning fishing and enabling wildlife in the 3.3 kilometre area to thrive. In the UK, a **Marine Bill** is set to be introduced in the next session of Parliament which will include powers to create marine protection zones and prevent damaging activities such as dredging in those areas.

**Reading Rising Tide** are a local climate change campaign. They are currently campaigning to get shops and offices locally to turn off unnecessary lights. They are looking for people who would be willing to take part in a monitoring exercise. If you would like to be involved, please e-mail [reading@risingtide.org.uk](mailto:reading@risingtide.org.uk) or phone John on 0118 941 5144.

## NEWS FROM EARLEY and WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

**The patter of tiny hooves: Have you had one of these little creatures nibbling your plants? Judging by the antlers, they definitely do not belong to Santa!**

One was recently spotted in the middle of the night in a garden in Wokingham Road, near the 3 Tuns



crossroads. Another resident of Winnersh was amazed to find the cyclamens she had planted the day before had been eaten to the bottom

of the stem. The culprits were unmasked when her son's girlfriend rose early to leave for the airport; on opening the door, she was terrified by a thunderous noise and instinctively covered her face. On plucking up courage, she peeked to see a herd of **muntjac deer** hurtling down the road. These are now seen in many urban habitats, and have a fondness for eating garden flowers. You may have heard them barking; Margaret did in High Tree Drive about 2 am. on Oct 15. Has anyone else had a visit from these deer?

**Alice:** A reminder of autumn: Sep 17 "It was very pleasing on Sat. afternoon to be able to sit in sunlight

in the garden and watch the butterflies (mostly whites and red admiral) on a buddleia, and even more pleasing when 2 small tortoiseshells arrived and sunbathed for a long time - it's ages since I've seen one in the garden.

**Margaret**, in her regular monthly survey for October, on the 6<sup>th</sup> noted "a **sparrowhawk** which brought down a **wood pigeon** opposite our house on grass edge and ate it; did not mind being watched and photographed! **Crows** and **magpies** also watching close by!" She also observed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> a **jay** burying acorns in the rose bed.

**Gillian** observed a **nuthatch** on Oct 27 and coal tit on Oct 28, both on seed feeder. She also had an unusual entry for October. On the 29th: "**green woodpecker** sitting in the snow in the middle of the lawn at 8 am."

**John & Josephone** e-mailed on Nov 15 that "two weeks ago we were amazed to see a Peregrine Falcon in Rushall Close. It had taken down a pigeon, and it calmly proceeded to kill it and eat it at the side of the road! "We were delighted to see such a rare visitor, and we wonder if there have been any other local sightings? I managed to take a photo of the bird, and there is no doubt as to its identity." (Photo now on EEG website. On small problem is the lack of a black moustache which is characteristic according to the RSPB of a peregrine. )

## LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- December:** Our December Members' Christmas social. Monday 15 December 7.30 to 9.30 at the Interpretation Centre, Instow Road. Pop in at any time to meet committee members. There will be seasonal refreshments, and music and songs to entertain.
- January:** The EEG AGM will be held just prior to **Kennet Valley and Its Management**, a talk by Karen Davies on Monday 12 January. The short AGM will be at 7 pm, followed by the main talk at 7.30, the Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre.
- February:** **Sustainable Energy**, a talk by Ian Gough on Tuesday 17 February. 7.30 start. Venue is yet to be finalised, so check website, posters on local notice boards and local press for details.
- March:** **RESCUE (Rivers and Environmental Spaces Clean-up Event)**. We had such a good turn-out last year for our litter clean-up event, that we'd like to make it an even better one in 2009. Many members complain of litter spoiling Earley, so don't just talk the talk, walk the walk, and help clear it up. It will take place on **Sunday 15th March 2009**, with a morning session from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and an afternoon one from 2 to 4.30 p.m. Meet at Interpretation Centre, Instow Road. Please contact Jean Hackett [jeanh149@btinternet.com](mailto:jeanh149@btinternet.com), or phone 0118 986 1115.
- April:** **To be decided**. Watch for details on posters and in press.
- May:** **Walk in Moor Copse BBOWT Reserve, Sunday 3 May**. Leader Anne Booth.
- June:** **Walk in Highwood Local Nature Reserve - details to follow**
- July:** **Visit to London Wetland Centre - details to follow**
- August** **Green Fair, Saturday 1 August**

## Bits and Pieces

**A Christmas Gift for those interested in Earley:** Why not give a copy of *Sutton Seeds, A History* or *Earley Memories*, both by the Earley Local History Group, at the very special price of £10 each, reduced from £14.99, or £15 for the two. Obtainable from Earley Town Council Office, Radstock Lane, phone 0118 986 8995.

**A visit from Maiden Erlegh pupils:** It was a bright, sunny Sunday morning when 60 Year 7 pupils, 3 Year 12 students and 3 members of teaching staff arrived at 10:00 a.m. at the ranger's hut at Maiden Erlegh Lake to undertake a variety of tasks to make a difference to their environment. On arrival, armed with their equipment, pupils were eager to understand the tasks they were to be given during the day. Six groups were quickly organised and allocated an adult to supervise them. Tasks undertaken included cutting back overgrown plants encroaching onto pathways to allow easier access by the public; filling deep ruts in a meadow left by a large lorry while delivering heavy poles; repairing the walkways using shingle; mulching the paths allowing public access to the lake and litter-picking to clear the area around the lake. Pupils experienced the use of numerous tools including secateurs, loppers, saws, shovels and wheelbarrows. This gave them 3 hours of community service towards their 5-hour certificate for Passport for Life.

The pupils worked hard and had a wonderful time. This resulted in a positive experience for them with their environment.

Grahame Hawker, Rangers and Water bailiffs were thanked for their input, without which the event could not have happened. A grand day was had by all.

**EEG Committee Members** can be found on [www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk](http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk) under Contacts, or phone 0118 962 0004

For **Wildlife Survey Forms**, go to the website or phone Earley Town Council 0118 986 8995

**Comments or contributions to the newsletter** to: [sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com](mailto:sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com) or 2 Reeds Avenue, Earley, RG6 5SR. We would welcome short contributions from members to the newsletter.

If you know anyone who would like to **join EEG**, **membership forms** are available from Earley Town Council, 0118 986 8995, on the [website](#) under Downloads, or send an e-mail to Liz Wild [e.a.wild@reading.ac.uk](mailto:e.a.wild@reading.ac.uk). **Please inform Liz if you intend to change e-mail or address** at 50 Kenton Rd, Earley RG6 7LG, or send her an e-mail.

**Can you offer active help to the Group?** Phone 0118 962 0004 if you can. **If you have no expertise and would like to get involved, you may be able to give practical help. We also need people with some expertise to undertake surveys of small habitats in Earley. To join the Earley Veteran Tree Survey phone 0118 962 0004.**

### SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHOPS

**The True Food Co-op, Silverdale Centre** :There is now a True Food Co-op operating in Earley. Their mission is to take low cost organic food out to the people, bypassing the supermarkets which charge a lot for organics They hold markets at the Silverdale Centre on the second & fourth Fridays in the month, 5pm to 8. 15pm. They have a website giving dates [www.truefood.coop/truefood.html](http://www.truefood.coop/truefood.html)

**Pet Fayre 9 Maiden Lane Centre Lower Earley** : A small independent shop, with bird feeders of all kinds, a variety of bird feed, large bags of which the shop is willing to deliver locally, or pick it up in your car from the back of the shop tel 0118 9266512, or e mail [enquiries@petfayre-reading.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@petfayre-reading.co.uk).

**No Page Unturned: A bookshop in Earley, 3 Maiden Lane Centre.** 5% off for EEG members.

Before visiting, phone 0118 966 9351 or e-mail [emily@nopageuntuned.org.uk](mailto:emily@nopageuntuned.org.uk). New and second-hand books, wrapping paper, audio books, etc.

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