



Let's Have Some Good News!

Globally, if you follow the environmental news, the outlook seems quite bleak, with many species of animals, plants and swathes of natural environment disappearing, not forgetting burgeoning world population, to frack or not to frack? etc., etc. The list goes on ad infinitum.

To escape the stress of world troubles, it's time to calm the nerves and focus on what we have locally. Local wildlife still exists and we can take simple pleasure from it, although it needs an observant eye to see it sometimes - witness some of our members' photos (pages 3 and 4).



One of the pleasures for many this summer was to see the flowery verges in Earley, providing nectar for local insects. The poppy beds were particularly significant (see pages 5 and 6).

Anne Booth keeps a look out for any wild orchids that pop up in our verges, and was assisted by a very observant council contractor (page 2).

With increasing competition from technology, children need exposure to the natural environment to even the score, and there are items about our Bug Hunt, and other exciting new things happening in the Maiden Erlegh Reserve, which involve children (pages 2 and 3).

Two forthcoming talks, details on page 7: Ray Reedman's talk on October 17th is on **Special Places for Special Birds**, and the more serious contentious matter of **Fracking** is the subject on October 6th. Pages 7 and 8 gives details of future events.

Items of special interest:

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Earley Orchids

For a few years now we have been able to admire patches of **Pyramidal Orchids** along Lower Earley Way. Earley Environmental Group has liaised with Wokingham Borough Council so that this area is left uncut in the flowering season.

In June this year while mowing the rest of this stretch of road verge, an eagle-eyed council contractor spotted two more orchids of a different type some distance away, and was able to spare them from the cutters. These plants turned out to be the rather wonderful and exotic **Bee Orchid** (see photo), an exciting find. It will be interesting to see if they return next year, as they usually only flower once. They reproduce by setting seed, and I don't know whether these plants will have had the chance to do that.

This year more Pyramidal Orchids have popped up in other places, one off Bradmore Way, and quite a large number by the Black Boy roundabout, near the traffic lights.

Both species have suffered because of habitat destruction, but happily both are also good colonisers and often appear on road verges, waste ground and old quarries. Nature will find a way if we give her a chance!

Anne Booth

Praise is due to Anne for her efforts to protect local orchids, and to the council contractor who spotted them. The bee orchid in this country is self-pollinated, although in the Mediterranean area its pollinator is a bee.

The 2014 EEG Bug Hunt in Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve

This took place on August 6th. It was organised differently this year, with two sessions, morning and afternoon. Not only did Alan Broodbank, our expert entomologist, lead groups in sweeping for bugs, but also Natalie Ganpatsingh, Director of Nature Nurture (<http://www.nature-nurture.co.uk>), assisted by Emma, provided environmental creative activities for the children. The 28 children who took part thoroughly enjoyed the event. More photos on the EEG website.



More children's activities... **TREE MORNING AT THE RESERVE**



On a sunny August morning, 5 families from the local area learned more about trees in the reserve. The session was run jointly by Head Ranger Grahame Hawker and local teacher Charlotte Allchin.

The families learned the parts of the tree and their functions, as well as creating their own 'human tree'. Grahame used his extensive knowledge to show the families how to recognise different native trees, and the children learnt a method to work out the height of a tree, and then recreated the same length using their own bodies. The children ended their session with refreshment, and leaf rubbings as a souvenir.



ERLEGH ELFINS: A NEW PLAYGROUP

Charlotte is about to launch a new playgroup on Thursdays at the Interpretation Centre in Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve. Charlotte, a teacher, will soon be a Level 3 Forest Leader. The preschool playgroup will run from 10am to 11:30am with a focus on outdoor play and exploration of the natural environment. The children will have opportunities to explore the nature reserve, and Head Ranger Grahame Hawker or members of his team will be on hand to share their extensive knowledge of the habitats, creatures and work that occurs within the reserve.

For more information, please contact erleghelfins@gmail.com or Charlotte on 07771 605825. There will be a limit on numbers to ensure safe play, so please make contact to give your name and details of your child. Child-minders are welcome. Adults are responsible for the children they bring with them, so a ratio of 2:1 is recommended. A charge of £1.50 per child will apply.

MEMBERS' NATURE PHOTOS

During a morning walk David and Barbara Jupe noticed the slightly unusual colour of a Stinking Iris growing in the Maiden Erlegh Woods. This one appeared white, although the colours are usually a dullish grey-blue. They commented that last autumn it looked terrific with triple sprays of berries.

A not-so-common native plant, that is not particularly exciting in the summer, has its moment when the fat green seed pods burst to reveal the vibrant orange fruits. Birds do not seem very interested, and the berries may last a long time.



Photo by Brian Hackett.

MEMBERS' NATURE PHOTOS cont'd



We spotted a female sparrowhawk on the arch in our garden on Sunday lunchtime (15 June). Pity she was facing away from us, but Edwin took this photograph before she flew away.

Elizabeth Trout.

Sparrowhawks are often spotted in Earley. Dominic Couzens describes them as the stuntmen of the bird world. Their sole food of small birds means they often take up station near a bird table. Sitting silently nearby, often in a tree, using sharp eye-sight for picking out details, it takes flight, using its talons to catch the marked prey.



More pictures: from Trisha, on the left, an **Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillar**. They feed on fuchsia and the caterpillars are seen from July to September, and are very characteristic: greyish-green or brown, with two enormous, black eyespots towards the head. When disturbed, they swell up to show these spots and scare-off predators.

From Anne, on the right, a **Mullein moth caterpillar**. The larval foodplants in the wild are various species of mullein (*Verbascum*), but it also feeds in gardens on buddleia.

THE FLOWERING OF EARLEY 2014

Many residents have commented on the colourful flower displays this summer on Earley verges. One onlooker commented, 'It makes me want to sing'. As well as the visual appeal to us, it also offered nectar and pollen to insects. There were beds of wild flowers and old-fashioned annual favourites.



The Butterfly Garden, Instow Rd (left) was spectacular, as was the verge in Rushey Way where flowers included:

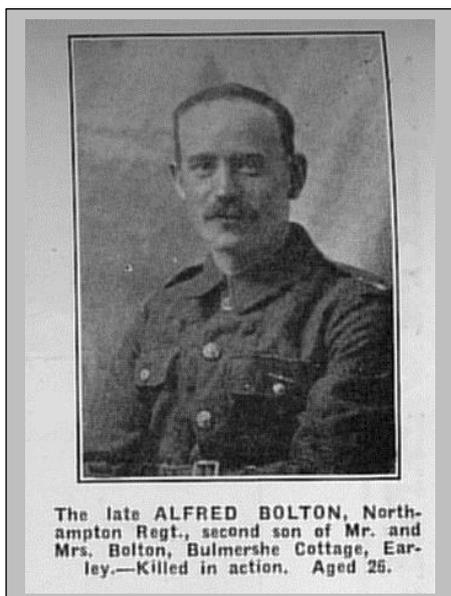
Alyssum white, Cornflower, English poppy, Coreopsis, Cosmidium, Cosmos, Californian poppy, Baby's Breath white, Flowering flax red, Flowering flax salmon, Pot Marigold.

Supplier of above , large quantities only: Rigby Taylor, Camberley.

Red poppy mix: Emorsgate Seeds, Kings Lynn. **Instow Road Butterfly Garden:** Stratford Butterfly Farm, Stratford on Avon. **See EEG website.**

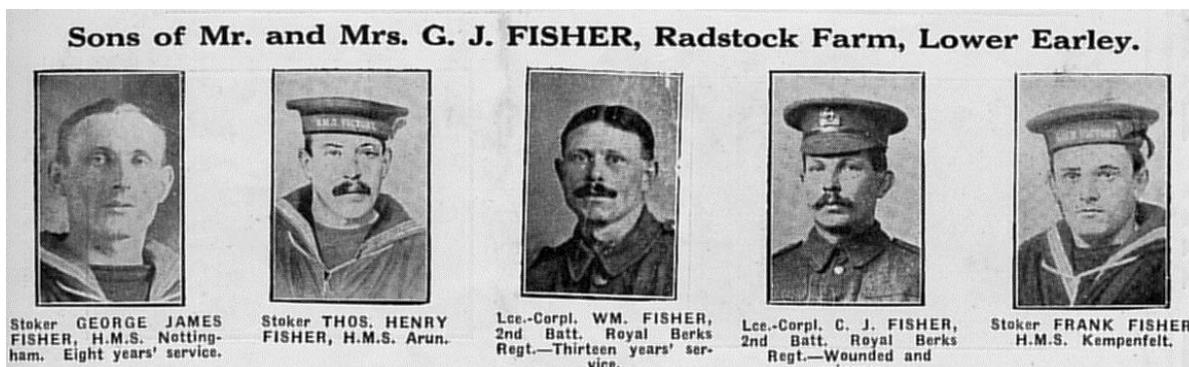
Beds of poppies were planted in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the start of World War 1, and a poignant reminder of those who served and died in it.

'A Poppy is to Remember'



In 1916 Alfred Bolton was one of many Earley young men who died in WW1. Remembered with honour
BAZENTIN-LE-PETIT COMMUNAL CEMETERY

Mr & Mrs Fisher had five sons in the war. George James Fisher served on HMS Nottingham which took part in the Battle of Jutland, and was later sunk by U-boat U-52. Perhaps they all survived, as no deaths are recorded in the Commonwealth Graves data.



40 former pupils of Earley St. Peter's School lost their lives in WW1. Originally unveiled on 14th February 1921, a wooden board/plaque commemorated former boys who lost their lives in WW1. The board was lost in the late 1950s or early 1960s. Fundraising enabled a replica to be made and placed in 2011.

The wild flower planting was the inspired idea of Grahame Hawker, Head Park Ranger, Earley Town Council, ably supported by council employees, Ashley and Stuart, together with the Wednesday volunteer group (see EEG website for more details).



Possible Future Community Orchard for Earley

The latest information from Jean Hackett:

"After intervention from our local councillors, I've received a reply from Parks and Open Spaces to say that they agree in principle to our using the land behind the children's playground (Laurel Park) for an orchard, and they are investigating whether there are any restrictive covenants which would prevent this. They

also require more detailed information about what we propose, so the next stage of the process involves my contacting those interested and doing a site visit."

WBC wants details of planting, area of the space, who's involved and will be working there, and about signage. The first part involves measuring an area and deciding on spacing between trees, as well as the proposed varieties to plant.

GET INVOLVED. DO SOMETHING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY AND YOURSELF. More volunteers wanted. Get in touch with Jean at

jeanh149@btinternet.com

NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

Government Schemes for Domestic Renewable Heat and Business Energy Efficiency

Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (DRHI) scheme opened on 9th April 2014 and the Department of Energy and Climate Change hope around 36,000 homes will benefit this year, and more next year. It rewards people switching to renewable heating systems with quarterly payments for seven years. Technologies covered are: biomass; air sourced heat pumps; ground sourced heat pumps; and solar thermal (PV panels for electricity generation are still supported by the Feed-In Tariff). It applies to systems fitted to existing homes and to new self-built homes, but not to commercial new-build.
<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-programmes/domestic-renewable-heat-incentive>.

EARLEY WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS AND GARDEN SURVEYS

Our garden survey news from Gillian and Margaret for June/July

JUNE: For Gillian June was notable for gt. spotted woodpecker seen on nut feeder, then feeding young in tree. Butterflies, red admiral (on second occasion 2 seen fighting) and small white, beautiful lime moth seen on jumper on washing line!

Margaret noted the dreaded vine weevil and a bronze shield bug on loganberry, pine ladybird on roses, froghopper, currant pug moth and green shield bug.

JULY: Margaret had heron by pool, and two vole nests. Noted comma on blackcurrant, also saw holly blue, painted lady, peacock, red admiral, small tortoiseshell, small white. Emperor dragonfly, horntail (sunning on a leaf), pine ladybird, green shield bug and 7 spot ladybird, all on runner beans.

LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2014/15

2014/15

Tuesday, 16th September, 6.45 to 8.30 p.m., Ridgeline Trust guided tour & talk. EEG visit to the garden run by this local charity in East Reading, with guided tour, followed by a talk on the work they do within the community. Meet at The Paddock, Mockbeggar House, 25 Whiteknights Rd, Reading. Contact: melorros@yahoo.com.

Monday, 6th October, 7.30 to 9.30 p.m., Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, off Kilnsea Drive. **Why bother with Fracking?** Professor Chris Rhodes will explore this controversial subject within the broader context of a declining supply of conventional crude oil. His talk will include issues around population, energy use/efficiency, and where we are going (or should go) as a human society. He is a chemist now working as an independent consultant specialising in energy and environment issues.

Wednesday, 8th October, 10.00 to lunchtime, location to be decided. **Autumn litter pick**. Come along for a gentle stroll and tidy up, ending with a sandwich lunch in a local cafe. See the EEG website nearer the time for joining instructions.

Monday, 17th November, 7.30 to 9.30 p.m., Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, off Kilnsea Drive. **Special places to see special birds** Local expert Ray Reedman will give another of his popular talks, this time looking at the variations in habitat and how different species exploit those habitats, with particular emphasis on local birding sites.

Monday, 19th January (to be confirmed), 7.30 to 9.30 p.m., Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, off Kilnsea Drive. **Annual General Meeting** followed by a talk by local resident Edwin Trout **Earley in bloom: the flora of Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve**. See website and posters for details.

Bits and Pieces

Don't forget. We're on Facebook now!

The Earley Environmental Group now has a **Facebook** presence. We will be using this in addition to the main website, the Yahoo Group and the Newsletter as a way of keeping everyone up to date with our activities and to let you know about upcoming events. Members are also welcome to post news stories or any photographs relevant to the group. If you are a Facebook user, please do join up - just search for 'Earley Environmental Group' and we should pop up. Look forward to seeing you on there. Mel Orros

EASI (Earley Adopt-a-Street Initiative) would like more volunteers. Help keep your street clear of litter. Everything provided. Phone Brian Hackett on 0118 986 1115 or email ask.mera@btinternet.com.

Can you offer active **help to EEG**? If so, phone 0118 962 0004 or go to [the website](http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk) <http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk>. We would welcome more member involvement. If you have no expertise and would like to get involved, you may be able to give practical help. Perhaps help with distributing the newsletter hard copies, or maybe you have graphic design skills (for occasional posters, leaflets), computer skills, any other skills to offer.

Join the **EEG Yahoo Group** and post your sightings and messages. You'll find a link to Yahoo on our [website](#).

EEG committee members can be found on www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk under Contacts, or phone 0118 962 0004

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

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

If you know someone 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 the [Membership Secretary, Liz Wild at liz@helva.plus.com](mailto:Liz.Wild@helva.plus.com). **Please inform Liz if you intend to change e-mail or address** at 50 Kenton Rd, Earley RG6 7LG, or [e-mail](#) her.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHOPS

Pet Fayre, 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 926 6512, e-mail sales@petfayre-reading.co.uk or go on the comprehensive website www.petfayre-reading.co.uk

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