



# BRANCHLINE



## ISSUE 50

## Summer 2007

### Creative Nature



In the Victorian era, many people sought to become amateur naturalists. The Victorians felt that the contemplation of

nature both educated the mind and uplifted the soul. They used inspiration from the natural environment to feed in to all sorts of hobbies from embroidery to poetry writing.

One of the ways the Victorians enjoyed studying botany was by keeping nature diaries. These often included nature observations, as well as botanical studies and scientific drawings. They kept records of the natural world around them in their nature journals in the form of words, pictures and pressed plants.

Some of these diaries have survived and we can now use them to find out about life in Victorian times, as well as the wildlife that surrounded the people. The diaries are important historical documents and act as inspiration to those who view them. Today, most people are still fascinated by wildlife. Increasingly people are spending more time outdoors, re-creating connections with the



countryside. The media are also increasing natural history broadcasting with programmes such as Springwatch and Nature's Calendar, as well as gardening programmes putting more emphasis on attracting wildlife.



Now the Community Heritage Initiative is launching 'Creative Nature', an exciting programme to encourage people to make and keep their own modern day nature diaries. The project is running from June 2007 for a year.

Free training through Creative Nature will give participants new ideas and skills to record wildlife in creative ways. Topics include creative writing (working with artists and using inspiration from the countryside, as well as the museum collections), digital and traditional photography, botanical drawing, calligraphy, letter illumination and artworks using different media. People can also request a free Recording Naturally pack, which is full of ideas to make their own wildlife diaries, with modern day twists such as wildlife web sites and digital scrap books. The free pack complements many of the wildlife and habitat surveys available from the Initiative.

For more information visit [www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating\\_wildlife](http://www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating_wildlife) or call 0116 267 1377.



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**The National Lottery**  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Rutland County Council

**Community Heritage Initiative**

Leicestershire County Council, Holly Hayes  
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG  
Tel: (0116) 267 1377 Email: [chi@leics.gov.uk](mailto:chi@leics.gov.uk)  
[www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating\\_wildlife](http://www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating_wildlife)



### **What is the Teen Ranger Project?**

Teen Rangers is an exciting new project, organised by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, in association with Leicestershire County Council, with funding from Heritage Lottery Fund Young Roots. Support has also been provided by Youth Work Development Funding from The Wildlife Trust's National Office, to enable the Teen Rangers project to ensure that as wide an audience as possible sees, hears and learns about the work of the project.

### **What is it about?**

The Teen Rangers' catch phrase is "Be seen to make a difference". One of the main aims of the Teen Ranger Project is to promote a positive image of 13 -19 year olds and of how they can be involved in conservation and environmental activities.

### **Who is the project organised by?**

The Teen Ranger Project is managed by Tracy Hayes, Teen Ranger Project Manager for the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. The project works with staff from Leicestershire County Council's Country Parks Service; phase one was based at one of their sites. The project has the support of Connexions, The Wildlife Trusts, Leicestershire County Council's Youth Service plus local schools and colleges.

### **What have they been doing?**

The first group started work in October and had a very busy six months improving an area on Shenton Wildlife Walk, near Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre. They were involved in practical conservation tasks including surveying, recording, photographing and interpreting the natural heritage, weaving an outdoor classroom from willow, organising, promoting and running an Open Day, meeting new

friends and having fun outside.

In February half-term the group went 'Over the Sea to Skye' to undertake conservation work with the John Muir Trust. The trip was paid for with grant funding from Leicestershire County Council's Youth Bank and a generous donation from Severn Trent Water. The group stayed at the old school house, an outward bound centre at Torrin, on the shores of Loch Slapin, part of the John Muir Trust Reserve.

During their stay, the Teen Rangers visited the International Otter Survival Fund, run by Grace and Paul Yoxon. The Teen Rangers were delighted to see three wild otters, many seals and lots of birds, as well as enjoying a sunny picnic lunch on the beach.

The second day was spent beach clearing, removing plastic and other rubbish from the shore of Loch Slapin.

The group was amazed at how much they collected, and delighted to see a Golden Eagle and three Buzzards hovering on the breeze above one of the mountains. Fantastic!

The Open Day in March was attended by the Mayor of Hinckley and Bosworth, the Chairman of Leicestershire County Council and representatives from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. All activities were organised by the Teen Rangers.

### **What happens next?**

The second phase of the project will be based near Melton Mowbray, starting in May 2007. In an exciting, unplanned development, some of the young people from the first phase have volunteered to join the second team as assistant leaders.

### **Who can I contact to find out more?**

Tracy Hayes  
Teen Ranger Project Manager  
Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust  
Brocks Hill Environment Centre  
Washbrook Lane  
Oadby  
Leics LE2 5JJ  
Tel 0116 272 8859 (answer phone)  
thayes@lrwt.org.uk  
www.lrwt.org.uk

## Leicestershire and Rutland Recorders' Conference 2007

The Rothley Centre, Rothley  
Saturday 31st March

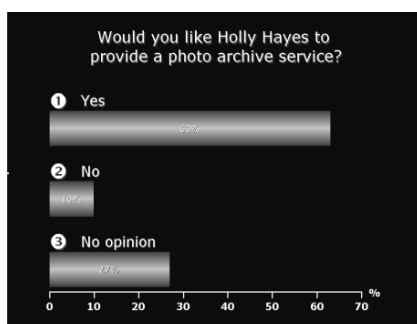
A conference to celebrate and explore the work of natural history recording in Leicestershire and Rutland, and beyond!

As well as an opportunity for groups to meet and share project ideas, the day included talks by national experts, such as Stuart Ball, Project Manager Joint Nature Conservation Committee, who talked about how identifying major distribution trends at national level was dependant on local records being fed in to the network.

Colin Howes, natural history curator at Doncaster Museum, explained the role of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union as a focus for recording in the Vice County of Yorkshire, talking about its specialist groups, field excursions and publications, and its plans for the future.

Holly Hayes staff talked about recent projects and the use of local information in the planning process, as well as ideas for getting the most out of websites.

Delegates also had the opportunity to use the latest technology in the form of electronic handsets which allowed them to vote for their preferences on such subjects as how their records are stored and future services provided by Holly Hayes.

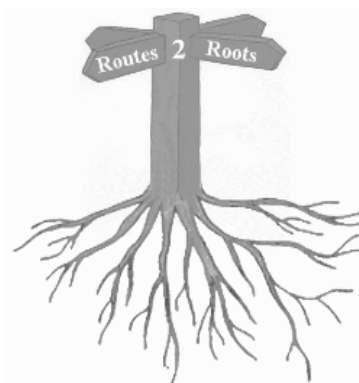


For a full list of all the speakers and copies of their talks, visit [www.leics.gov.uk/recorders\\_conference\\_07](http://www.leics.gov.uk/recorders_conference_07)  
Or contact the Community Heritage Initiative.

## Routes to Roots CHI Annual Conference 2007

A celebration of heritage in the  
Leicestershire landscape  
Broughton Astley Village Hall  
Saturday April 28th

The day featured a wide variety of speakers, including:



- Heritage Wardens explaining the work they had carried out in their parishes and how they had achieved it

**"Great for networking."**

- LCC Literature Development Officer running a fascinating exercise showing how wildlife observations could be used in creative writing
- An introduction to how the leicestershirevillages.com website can help groups promote their work
- LCC's Keeper of Natural Life giving a brief introduction to how groups can use the natural history collections to help with their activities
- Volunteers from Rothley explaining how a partnership between the Parish Archaeology Warden, Heritage Warden and Village History Group attracted over 800 visitors to Rothley as part of the Civic Trust's Heritage Open Day.

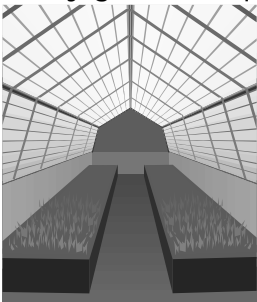
**"Thank you for an informative day.  
I have learnt a lot more and hope to now  
get more involved."**

For details, photos of the day, and to download copies of presentations, visit [www.leics.gov.uk/chi\\_conference\\_07](http://www.leics.gov.uk/chi_conference_07)  
Or contact the Community Heritage Initiative.

## The end of one cricket season and the start of another? .....

### The story so far.....

I've been aware of Craighill Nurseries in Craighill Road, Knighton since a friend took me there at the end of the 80's. The nursery sold trees, shrubs, sundries and plants, including houseplants. It must have had about a dozen really spacious glasshouses, the majority of which were unheated, to raise its own stock. However, the one which was used for houseplant retail purposes had a boilerhouse. This nursery had existed for several decades at the point when I discovered it. Over the years Craighill Nurseries became one of my focal points for my garden acquisitions.



In the summer of 2006, I was told that this nursery was going to close towards the end of the year and that the land was going to be used for housing development. I was

saddened to hear this not only at the loss of a plant source but because I knew that camel crickets lived in the heated glasshouse and I was concerned about what would happen to them; I thought they wouldn't survive out of their heated environment.

You see, at some point between 1999 and 2003, whilst I was browsing the houseplants, I spotted an insect in an empty pot that I didn't recognise. It seemed like a grasshopper / cricket with very long antennae and an arched back with very definite striped markings. I asked the assistants if they knew what it was - a greenhouse camel cricket (*tachycines asynamorus*).

When I got home I looked them up in Chinery. Although my interest in natural history has been a life-long one, I neither belonged to any societies at that point nor made formal records. I perhaps made an assumption that local naturalists were fully aware of this particular colony and that I was just one of many who knew about it.

Last autumn, I made enquiries with Leics Environmental Resources Centre/Holly Hayes as to whether any of the staff had any ideas where the crickets could be relocated. Soon local naturalists and orthopterists started to network and were on the case. Anona Finch contacted Helen Ikin who considered the Butterfly Centre at Rutland Water where it was thought, however, that the camel crickets would relish the butterfly larvae. Maggie Frankum made enquiries with the the Botanic Garden in Leicester too. There were no takers. Later Helen contacted Peter Sutton, the National Orthoptera Recorder, who said he could find a home for them.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2006, I visited the nursery to ask its owners, Clive and Vivien Wheat, if they'd mind a small group of people catching some of the insects for relocation before they closed down; the Wheats were extremely helpful and an arrangement was made for the visit to take place during the week before Christmas.

Whilst at the nursery on 2<sup>nd</sup> December I found 2 large live adult specimens, again in the same type of setting and environment as previously – in dry, empty pots in the heated house, in daylight, and in almost the very spot where I'd stumbled across my original beast. On that day there were also approximately 15 dead specimens at the bottom of a dry, empty florists' bucket (which I must admit I wrongly assumed would still be there when we returned for the catch!).



Mr and Mrs Wheat informed me that the camel crickets were brought in with houseplant deliveries from the Continent – especially Belgium, Holland and Denmark. Clive said that particular glasshouse had been built 20 years ago, and added that he'd first noticed the camel crickets 15 years ago.

On 21<sup>st</sup> December, Peter Sutton, Maggie, Helen and myself duly met for the big search where Helen and Maggie did some sterling work 'dabbling uptails all' in the dark under the low staging. Somewhat

disappointingly, only one adult, and 3 nymphs were found in the humid conditions beneath. The camel crickets were resting under upturned, empty plastic pots and when disturbed would jump and 'ping' against them. Once the pots were examined for livestock, they were duly placed back in position and re-checked later. Two rather smelly dead insects were also found and were taken to Barrow on Soar as their final resting place for reference material.

Peter took the adult and 2 of the nymphs away to re-home – possibly at a Butterfly Centre that he knows or possibly to be used for educational purposes. On arriving home though Maggie discovered the missing nymph in one of her containers and is now nurturing it with livestock from her compost heap and garden.

As the Nursery's final closure kept being reviewed, Helen and Maggie revisited it on 7<sup>th</sup> January to try to catch more – and they did! (I bumped into them because I thought I might catch a last-minute bargain on the last day of trading – which I did!)



The staff had alerted Maggie and Helen to new sightings in a different spot and the haul this time was 15 live, adult specimens at

different stages of development. Helen and Maggie had started to perfect their method of capture – which was an art in itself because these creatures, whilst possessing no wings, can jump with a great deal of stealth! They were again found in dark, humid and warm conditions where the temperatures ranged from 13C to 17C. The three of us now have 5 each to nurture. We also took samples of soil away from the site just in case eggs might be present and could be coaxed to develop.

Camel crickets were officially recorded in Leicester circa 1961. This occurrence was mapped in David Ragge's book (1965), and his record was also cited in Marshall and Haes (1988). However,

neither anyone locally nor at the Natural History Museum seems to know the record's exact location and/or who actually submitted it. After making some enquiries via Phil Rudkin and Jim Reynolds, Judith Marshall (although now retired) contacted me saying that she was not aware of any recent camel cricket records in Leicester, but my query about the earlier one had now been passed to George Beccaloni, the

current Curator of Orthopteroid Insects, to see if an old card index of records can be found which might shed more light on it. I think it's a case of watch this space .....



Without the help of everyone involved, this story wouldn't have started to unfold – and it's not yet at an end. The Wheat family are now going to run a garden centre at Tilton on the Hill. At some point they hope to have a heated greenhouse with houseplants, possibly from the same suppliers – so, who knows, a new colony of camel crickets may well start up again in the county. Moreover, Judith Marshall has even approached the London Zoo about the possibility of Leicester's camel crickets being housed there. So the innings isn't over yet .....

### **Glenys Panter**

#### **References**

CHINERY, Michael – Insects of Britain & Northern Europe - Collins;

MARSHALL, JA & HAES, ECM – Grasshoppers & Allied Insects of Great Britain and Ireland (1988) Harley Books;

RAGGE, David R – Grasshoppers, Crickets & Cockroaches of the British Isles (1965) Warne.

**The CHI Natural History & Heritage Information Sessions programme for July - December 2007 is now available. Contact the CHI for a copy now as sessions quickly become fully booked.**

## Writing a village history

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2006 the Dunton Bassett Local History Group launched their book; it had been nearly three years in preparation. Entitled 'Dunton Bassett – A Village History', it is a much extended edition of a first book printed in 1985. We were fortunate to obtain financial funding from a Heritage Lottery Grant. A small editorial committee was quickly formed, led by an enthusiastic and diligent chairman.

It was a daunting task because we had virtually undertaken to try to compile the known history of the village from prehistoric times. (An archaeological dig in 2004 had probably discovered the original settlement dating from the Iron Age and we included the U.L.A.S. report in the book.)

As little is known at present of early Dunton, our writings were concentrated on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A few years ago the Enclosure Award and Map of the village dated 1795 had been discovered, hidden in the Record Office, and they provided the basis for our historical documentation. It included the names and locations of the old strips and their owners within the boundaries of the original three field system. (or four in Dunton's case!) For evidence on the ground we relied mainly on the architecture of farm houses and cottages within the village, some of which we could date. For early twentieth century history we had oral evidence, which had been recorded some years ago, and could be written down verbatim in the text.

Dunton was a 'Domesday' village and a farming community but, during the early and mid nineteenth century, the chief occupation of the villagers was framework knitting according to the censuses we consulted. When the Enclosure Act became law many agricultural labourers were forced off the land and into the cottage industry.

The book details this local history and also catalogues the changing trades and occupations of the village residents over the last one hundred and fifty years, again gleaned from census information. The Enclosure Map and Award provided evidence of ancient footpaths and bridleways, all of which are still in existence today. The book also tells of the coming of the great Central Railway to Ashby Magna Station, just over the parish boundary, in 1899.

The most comprehensive chapter relates to the school which dates from 1849; it provided extensive records which we supplemented with old photographs. One of the features which aroused great interest were the photographs of scenes and personalities of bygone Dunton. The Parish Church and Primitive Methodist Chapel (the latter now sadly extinct) are naturally given prominence, as is the Village Hall, as these three venues formed the centre of village life in the early 1920s and 1930s, together with the four pubs. Wartime Dunton provided many humorous memories and anecdotes, particularly with regard to the Home Guard. Again, oral evidence proved invaluable. Although the editorial team thoroughly enjoyed compiling the book, it was not an easy task. Altering, condensing, drafting and redrafting for the umpteenth time proved an onerous and, at times, a controversial exercise! In comparison, finding a printer proved relatively easy, although we were proof reading up to the last minute!

The reward came when it was so well received by those who read it. As a requirement of the Lottery Grant, all households in the parish received a free copy on request. Inevitably, there were mistakes in historical accuracy and from day one we were told about them! We promised corrections in our next edition. Copies can be obtained from the Record Office at Wigston or by phoning 01455 202184.

**Millie Smith (Heritage Warden  
Dunton Bassett)**

## Something's stirring in the heart of rural England!

*Cotesbach celebrates the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a countryside revolt*

Four hundred years ago, in the heart of rural England, 5000 people from three counties gathered in Cotesbach for the largest non-violent protest of the time. They were protesting against the land being enclosed for sheep grazing, enclosures which so disastrously affected their lives and livelihoods. They brought whatever tools they could and risked their heads by tearing down the divisions that had been erected in the fields. Cotesbach villagers fed and watered the rioters from their 'carts laden with victuals'.

This July, on the auspicious date of the 7<sup>th</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> 2007 the sleepy village of Cotesbach, near Lutterworth in Leicestershire, will stir once more. If you come armed with tools they can be used - not for violent means - but to support organic gardening projects so that people can learn to re-connect to the land. From three counties, walking groups of 'peasants', dressed in 17<sup>th</sup> century costume and bearing tools, will converge on Cotesbach in the morning. The commemoration of the event will include living history displays, local artisan food producers, music, crafts and an environmental forum. Key speakers have been invited from the environmental movement, including Fiona Reynolds, Director General of the National Trust and Graham Harvey, author of *We Want Real Food*. There will be live music from Rory McLeod, the Original Backroom Boys and The Endless Knot, amongst others. (5) So come along to engage about climate change and sustainability and/or come for a taste of quality local food, good music and fun!

For more details contact: The Cotesbach 2007 group, Cotesbach Hall, Nr.Lutterworth  
Leics LE17 4HX cotesbach@onetel.com or visit [www.cotesbach.net](http://www.cotesbach.net)



## Wildly Wicked Photo Competition

# Wildly Wicked



CHI are running a photo competition - 'Wildly Wicked' - for young people aged 11-20 years, focusing on the environment.

Wildly Wicked offers the opportunity for young people to send in photos on the theme of what matters to them most about the natural environment – whether it's where they live, wildlife, a favourite natural place or our impact on the environment (pollution, graffiti, recycling, climate change).

The competition will run from June – October 2007 and entry forms are available from CHI – email [wildlywicked@leics.gov.uk](mailto:wildlywicked@leics.gov.uk) or go to the web page [www.leics.gov.uk/wildlywicked](http://www.leics.gov.uk/wildlywicked)

In order to encourage entries there are a number of different ways that photos can be sent in:

- email to [wildlywicked@leics.gov.uk](mailto:wildlywicked@leics.gov.uk)
- post to CHI, (print or on a CD) Holly Hayes Environment & Heritage Resources Centre, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire LE4 4DG
- text to number 07864773830
- dropped off at a local library (Leicestershire only) See [www.leics.gov.uk/county\\_libraries.htm](http://www.leics.gov.uk/county_libraries.htm)

We have posters available advertising the competition and if you are able to publicise the competition in your parish, please contact Kay Snowdon on 0116 267 0003.



## Where to watch birds in the East Midlands

The second edition of 'Where to watch birds in the East Midlands', part of the popular and well-known Helm series of books, has recently been published. It is written by LROS County Recorder Rob Fray and features 79 of the best birdwatching sites in the East Midlands, an area which covers Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire.

Each site is described in terms of habitat, species likely to be seen at each season and access, and detailed maps are provided. Leicestershire and Rutland are represented by a total of 16 sites, ranging from the obvious areas, such as Rutland Water and Eyebrook Reservoir, to the less visited sites like Bardon Hill and Sence Valley Forest Park.



Further afield, nationally famous locations such as Gibraltar Point, Donna Nook, Clumber Park and the Peak District are well catered for, along with many

equally as interesting, but less well-known, woodland, moorland, gravel-pit and reservoir sites.



The book is priced at £16.99 and is available in most good book shops or online at sites such as Amazon.

The Creative Nature programme of events, designed to give you new ideas and skills to record nature in different creative ways, begins soon.



Contact CHI to book your place on any of the following events being run at Holly Hayes, or ask us to put you on the mailing list for future events.

### Digital photography 5 week evening course 7pm-9pm

Intro / Taster	4th June
Session 1	18th June
Session 2	25th June
Session 3	2nd July
Session 4	9th July
Session 5	16th July

### Creative Photography 4th July 7.30 - 9.00

This session, run by enthusiast Alan Eales, is aimed at anyone who has ever wondered if their photographs could be more interesting and artistic.

## ABOUT BRANCHLINE

Branchline is produced by Leicestershire County Council's Holly Hayes Environment & Heritage Resources Centre and is the newsletter for the Community Heritage Initiative (CHI), a project developed with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Rutland County Council. It aims to be a networking publication and used as an information source for Parishes, groups, and individuals interested in protecting and discovering more about the area's countryside and heritage. Mailings are free of charge as a service to the communities of Leicestershire and Rutland. If you have any articles that you would like to see in Branchline, drop us a line at Holly Hayes (details below), or e-mail them to [chi@leics.gov.uk](mailto:chi@leics.gov.uk). Articles are welcome and **the deadline for the Autumn 2007 Edition is August 1st 2007.**

*The articles supplied do not necessarily reflect the views of Leicestershire County Council or the CHI partners.*



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**Community Heritage Initiative**  
Leicestershire County Council, Holly Hayes  
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG  
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