



# Ramsbury and Axford Village Diary

## September 2020



May we have items for the October diary before 10 September  
Please send to [diary@ramsbury.org](mailto:diary@ramsbury.org)

### **NATURE NOTES** by *Peter Marren*

Two rare and remarkable insects were discovered here in July and August, and both, by coincidence, look a bit like hornets - and are nearly as large. The first, spotted by Rowan Whimster, was a large greeny-yellow caterpillar with a maroon stripe running down its back. It was feeding on sallow by the old airfield. We eventually identified it as the larva of the Giant Willow Saw-fly, a hornet-mimic with only a few British records. The second was the Hornet Robber-fly, which settled on my trousers, still clutching its lunch of a smaller fly, one hot day on Spring Hill in early August. It was a female with a tapering abdomen, and, since I later spotted another, it may be an overlooked resident. It lays its eggs in horse dung, of which we have plenty on the hill! These are exciting beasties to have among us (well, exciting for me anyway!).

By early August, most of the meadow brown and gatekeeper butterflies still on the wing were fading, but we had a second generation of Common blues on Spring Hill, and numerous newly emerged brimstones, small tortoiseshells and peacocks, which will go into hibernation once the weather turns colder. Two big moths to look out for in August are the red underwing, whose bright hindwings flash red, black and white when it flies by day, quickly settling on a wall or tree. The other is the Old Lady moth, whose dark wings resemble the black lace once worn by widowed ladies. When at rest, it forms a nearly black triangle about an inch-and-a-half long.

By the second week in August the hedgerow berries were ripening. There seems to be a good crop of blackberries, elderberries and sloes this year, though the squirrels will probably beat us to the hazel nuts. There is also a good crop of decidedly non-edible scarlet berries – woody nightshade, guelder rose and the stalked clusters of lords-and-ladies. I once nibbled one of the latter out of curiosity and the effect was like munching a mouthful of pins. The berry's secret weapon is tiny needle-sharp oxalate crystals that shred the surface of your tongue. Never again!

There was still plenty of wild colour in the wet meadows, the downs, and even the wayside. Along Newtown Road and the various footpaths are woundworts and wormwoods, the white flower-heads of yarrow and hogweed, and purple spurts of knapweed and thistles. On the downs they are joined by blue scabious and bright yellow fleabane and St John's-wort. In the ditches we had a great flowering of shocking-pink great willowherb, while wherever there is flowing water we find the late-flowering water-mint with its mouth-watering scent. Perhaps the plant that brings most to the lanes at this time of year is hemp agrimony, whose flossy, sickly-smelling, pinky-purple flower heads are such a draw for bees and other insects. Until someone sprayed them, the pavement at Scholard's Lane was a delightful pink ribbon of mallow flowers.

I have had no reply from Littlecote hotel about their needless destruction of bee orchids and pyramidal orchids at the Roman villa. The problem seems to be finding anyone to admit responsibility. I will persevere.

### **BIRD NOTES** by *Paul Swan*

Our lovely swifts departed, as usual, in the first few days of August. It seems that they had a very good year here, with numbers probably up on last year. As they do not roost on their way to Africa, they fly very quickly. One young swift left Oxford on July 31<sup>st</sup> and was in Madrid by August 3<sup>rd</sup>! We look forward to seeing them back in May – please put up swift boxes if you can.

The Swallows and house martins are still very much with us and later in the month the swallows will be gathering on the wires, prior to making their own journey south. Only 7000 miles to go! Unusually, the swallows and martins do most of their flying south in the day time, navigating by the sun. However, the position of the sun is only a rough guide, unless you know the time. It is now believed that these birds do indeed have some form of internal 'clock' to help them. They are also sensitive to the Earth's magnetic field,

in a way that we can hardly imagine, and use that to assist their navigation. The swallow's journey south is relatively leisurely and usually takes four months, with them arriving in Southern Africa by Christmas time. In comparison, their journey back to us is a rush, often achieved in five weeks!

As I write, virtually all the birds are silent, and the birdfeeders are much less in demand as the majority of birds go through the annual moult – replacing their feathers one by one. Almost certainly the first bird to start singing again will be a robin, seeking to establish a feeding territory. In September they seem to sing all day long, and very unusually it will be the females singing as well as the males, as they each need their own 'patch' if they are to survive the winter. In autumn you will often see a robin perched at the top of a hedge, patiently waiting for an insect to appear from hiding. The robin will swoop down and grab its meal, safe in the knowledge that no other robin will have spotted to same insect and be competing for lunch.

### **RAINFALL**

Rainfall for July was 58.70 mm, 2.3 ins., very close to the average of 57.90 mm. August has started very dry, just 1 mm in the first 8 days. Good news for the harvest!

### ***Recreation Centre 200 Club August winners***

£100 to Bruce Ginger, £50 each to Sarah Swan, Ted Hiscocks, Peter Cheney, Darren Arekion and Julia Blunt and £25 each to Pat Coates, Mark Graham, Ronnie Stronge, Gail Keating, Andrew Fitton and Steve Cook.

The club costs £60 a year to join. Funds are split 50/50 between prizes and the Recreation Centre. To join, contact Ian Smith on 07977 473975 or [oldtiff@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:oldtiff@hotmail.co.uk)

### ***Ramsbury Memorial Hall Caretaker Required.***

After 10 years the Memorial Hall Caretaker, Steve Alder, has decided to take a well earned rest. Thank you Steve for your dedicated work over the years.

The Hall has been the centre of village life for 100 years and, although closed at the moment owing to Covid-19, still needs a caretaker. This is a great opportunity to help run this incredible village amenity, and takes only a few hours a week. The workload can vary depending on the number of hires, but most fall into a regular weekly pattern. Don't delay. For more details on hours and pay please contact Robert Osmond on 01672 520568 or email [osmond48@btinternet.com](mailto:osmond48@btinternet.com)

### ***Hills Stores Charity Shop***

From 1 September the Charity Shop will open normal hours - Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday 10am to 12.30. Tuesday and Thursday 2 to 4.30pm. Donations welcome but if you have had a grand lockdown clear out please try not to bring too much at one time. The shop raises funds for village organisations, all of which have had fundraising severely curtailed so your support would be really appreciated.

Mary Holdsworth & Sheila Glass

### ***Allotments***

Allotment plots are being well used and allotment holders are harvesting the fruits of their earlier endeavours. There are some small raised beds available. If you would like to have a taste of "allotmenting" without committing to a half or full allotment contact Denise Edwards at [allotments@ramsbury.org](mailto:allotments@ramsbury.org) or 07867921878 for details. There are people on hand to give advice and share experiences.

### ***Parish Council***

The Parish Council delivered an update newsletter to all residents recently. If you did not receive one please contact [parishcouncil@ramsbury.org](mailto:parishcouncil@ramsbury.org) or 01672 520045 and we will deliver one. Parish Council meetings are continuing on Zoom for the time being but Parish business is being transacted as usual. Contact as above if you have any matters you wish to discuss

## **Whitton Team news**

**New Team Rector announced** - The Revd Beth Hutton will be licensed on 19 November. Beth is a very experienced priest, currently serving as a Team Vicar at Clarendon, east of Salisbury. She has many gifts to share in mission and ministry. We look forward to welcoming Beth as Team Rector as we seek to serve our communities and share the good news of Christ with all ages.

Holy Cross Church is open every day between 2 and 3pm for private prayer, meditation, or simply to 'be in church'. You will be asked to sign in as part the NHS 'track and trace' initiative and, of course, observe the normal sanitise and distancing requirements!

### **Services**

Sunday 6 September 8am Communion Service in Holy Cross (Book of Common Prayer).

Sundays 6 and 20 September 10am Holy Communion service St Michael's, Aldbourne.

Sundays 13 and 27 September 10am Holy Communion service Holy Cross, Ramsbury.

(Video recordings of these services will also be made available on the Facebook page – see below).

Thursdays 10 and 24 September 10am Holy Communion service in Holy Cross, Ramsbury.

Services are rather different with sanitising and signing in, social distancing, no singing, no after church coffee, and other limits on what can and can't be done, but there is some beautiful live organ music at the 10am team services. Signing-in, if asked for, is purely for NHS "track and trace" purposes and your information will only be held for 3 weeks and then destroyed.

*Please remember that masks are now mandatory unless you are exempt.*

**Keep informed** - If you would like to be kept informed of all the latest service details and resources, please email [pcc@whittonteam.org.uk](mailto:pcc@whittonteam.org.uk) who will add you to the regular emailing list.

Details of all services and much more can be found on the website: [www.whittonteam.org.uk](http://www.whittonteam.org.uk) and on the Facebook page: @whittonteamnews where you can also find regular short video reflections "Whitton Wonderings" and the latest information on the planned 'Parish Away Weekend' scheduled for October 2021.

Dial-in and internet accessible Services of the Word at 11:30am every Sunday using ZOOM.

Wednesday 23 September at 7:30pm monthly contemplative service 'Reflective Spaces' on ZOOM.

Details on how to join Zoom services are available in the church notices, notice boards and online.

## **Methodist Church – message from senior steward Julie Coe**

As we move through the year it seems that Covid-19 will be with us for a long time to come. We learn to live with the new way of doing things. They call it the new normal. Writing this now I have no idea if our church in Aldbourne will be open from September or later in the year.

As Stewards we are looking at new ways we can do church, working with our congregation to find new ways of worship. In this new way of life we need to feel safe when out and about. Our online services will still be available by email by contacting our minister Reverend Stephen Skinner on [rev.stephen.skinner3@gmail.com](mailto:rev.stephen.skinner3@gmail.com) or just call me on 521085.

**Coffee Centre** – Sadly we do not expect to have use of the Lychgate until at least the New Year but good news is here. We have been making use of the lovely weather and have held two coffee mornings in our gardens, following the guidelines for social distance. Thank you to Rosie Pauline for hosting the first coffee morning in July in her lovely garden. What a joy it was to see, share and chat over coffee together. We are blessed with lots of sunshine in God's Creation. I held a coffee morning in my garden at Whitehill Close on 6 August at 10am. It started by raining but as the morning went on the rain stopped and coffee morning began. How lucky we were to have such a special time with friends, coffee and chat. It rained again but no one worried about the rain. There was too much news going on. Was it about all the new things we learn in lockdown, or were we just pleased to see friends again? Checking out the puzzles and books available, oh what fun we had. Keep a look out there will be more to come in the weeks ahead.

Watch out for more local garden coffee mornings to be held in September at short notice. Notices will be in the Post Office or Midway Stores.

Take care and keep safe.

## **Ramsbury Royal British Legion Club**

Ramsbury Royal British Legion Club will be open again from Wednesday 2 September at 7pm.

The club has been extensively refurbished and can't wait to show the new look to new and old members.

## ***Ramsbury & Axford Golf Society***

The Ramsbury and Axford Golf Society will have their first event for 2020. Unable to play because of Covid-19 restrictions preventing any golf societies playing, we can finally start the season with the Bell Trophy to be played at Weybrook Park, near Basingstoke on Wednesday 16 September. Further details available from Bob Osmond, 01672 520568 or osmond48@btinternet.com

## ***The GB September Clean 11 - 27 September 2020***

Please can we ask Ramsbury #LitterHeros to join in and be part of the pick so we can do our bit towards the clean-up of the environment on our door step. Remember to dispose of the litter you collect sensibly.

## ***Ramsbury Flyer***

The Ramsbury Flyer is back but operating a restricted service to Hungerford Tesco. Wednesday only – maximum with 5 return passengers, leaving The Pond, Aldbourne at 10am, The Square, Ramsbury 10.16am. **Strictly by booking in advance.** To book please call Janet on 01672 520682/07584 253117. Surgery Transport continues every Tuesday and Thursday.

## ***Ramsbury Roxy***

Ramsbury Roxy has been suspended during the Covid 19 situation. We look forward to seeing you all again at our film nights as soon as possible. We welcome suggestions for films you would like to see in our future programmes. Contact us on [roxy@ramsbury.org](mailto:roxy@ramsbury.org)

## ***Ramsbury Lunch Club***

Owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Ramsbury Lunch Club will not meet for the rest of 2020. The situation will be reviewed again early in 2021.

## ***Green Machines Computers***

What do you do with old mobile phones, laptops and other IT equipment? Green Machine Computers at 6 Whittonditch Works, Ramsbury, SN8 2XB redistribute IT equipment, either donating it to charities and local organisations or selling it then using the proceeds to fund in-house apprenticeships, training and education. For more information visit <https://greenmachinecomputers.com>

## ***Prospect Hospice August update***

Prospect Hospice launched its 'Help us to support you appeal' on 12 May following the Covid-19 outbreak and the nationwide lockdown. In her open letter to supporters chief executive Irene Watkins said: "The Hospice you know and love is still supporting your community, but to respond to the current needs for Covid-19 we have had to dramatically change and increase the size and scope of our services. This means we are supporting people in their homes, on a scale of operation we have never attempted before, at a time when income is all but drying up now that all community activities and events have been cancelled or postponed and all our shops closed."

The Hospice changed the way it worked almost overnight to ensure their patients got what they needed. This meant taking more of its specialist care out into the community. Following this change in service operation and seeing a sharp decline in donations at the same time, meant the charity identified there would be a gap of £2million in their funds this year due to the pandemic.

Just over two months later, the local charity is delighted to announce that it has already raised £1,019,000 towards the £2,000,000 predicted shortfall. It appealed to local people with a letter for support, made applications to receive emergency government funding and applied to Trusts and Foundations for additional support. The Prospect shops are re-opening.

Those wishing to donate directly to the hospice can do so at [www.prospect-hospice.net/donate](http://www.prospect-hospice.net/donate)

***Edited by John Herbertson***

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