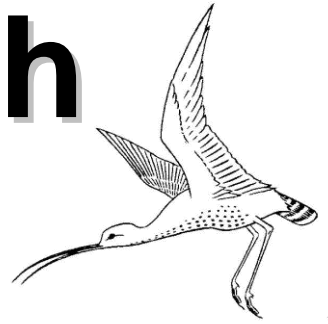


Loughborough Naturalists' Club



www.loughboroughnats.org

Yellowhammer © Jim Graham; Painted Lady & Muntjac © Steve Woodward; Phyllobius roboretanus & Bordered Beauty © Graham Finch.



Annual Report 2020

LOUGHBOROUGH NATURALISTS' CLUB

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

as at 30 November 2020

President Ms H Ikin

COMMITTEE

Chair Mrs H Graves

Vice-chair Vacant

Honorary Secretary Mrs S Graham

Honorary Treasurer Miss ML McLoughlin

Membership Secretary Mr G Fisher

Indoor Meetings Co-ordinator Mrs P Darby

Outdoor Meetings Co-ordinator Vacant

Members
Mr M Buckley
Mr J Graham
Mr P Wilkinson
Mr S Woodward

OTHER OFFICERS

Heritage Editorial Panel
Ms H Ikin
Mr J Graham
Mr S Woodward

Librarian Ms H Ikin

Records Co-ordinator Ms H Ikin

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2020

2020 has been a very difficult year for many people, including the Members of the Loughborough Naturalists' Club.

By nature of being naturalists we are often "outdoor people" and have had to endure restrictions on our outdoor activities that we never expected to see imposed in peacetime. Many of us have also had to be separated for long periods from our families and friends and that has often been quite hard to bear. And some of us have lost family and friends – to those I offer sincere condolences.

However, the upside was that we were, unlike in some countries, always allowed outside to exercise, if only locally, even at the heights of the various waves of the pandemic. Many of us have spent more time than usual studying and enjoying the varied fauna and flora of our home patch, including our gardens. The ability to be outside in nature has been a great solace to many people. Despite that, for many of us, the company, friendship and shared natural history interest of our Loughborough Nats friends has been sorely missed.

The year started well with a very enjoyable walk to Queen Elizabeth 2 woods near Heather, on 8 January, which has been described in detail in the Winter 2019/2020 Newsletter by our Secretary, Sue Graham. This was followed by the customary lunch at Cattows Farm, a favourite of our Members.

Our first indoor meeting was 11 January 2020 "The Work of the Leicestershire Wildlife Hospital" presented by Sue Bonnington. Sue is one of the volunteers at the Wildlife Hospital. The talk was about the work of the Hospital and the wildlife it cares for. This was extremely well received and generated a lively question and answer session at the end.

We continued our walks and talks programme in February even though the spectre of Covid-19 pandemic was on the horizon.

Our February outdoor excursion was to Thornton Reservoir on 5 February 2020 and was led by Helen Ikin. The wildlife encountered was reported by Sue Graham in the Spring 2020 Newsletter. This meeting was followed by lunch at the Bricklayers Arms, Thornton.

The February indoor meeting on the 8th also went ahead. John McDonald, Chairman of Coleorton and New Lount Volunteer Group, talked about the history of the site, the development of the Nature Reserve, an insight into its major habitats, and then some information on the work of the Volunteer Group. This again was very well received and generated many questions. The Club had previously had an outdoor meeting to this site, and it was hoped that a revisit could be arranged in a future programme

We also managed a superb Club outing to Bradgate Park on the 4 March which was led by Steve Woodward. We parked at Hunt's Hill car park and spent some time exploring the area near the perimeter wall, around the reservoir, and in the very boggy areas nearby, mainly looking for plants and listened to the sound of birdsong as Spring approached.

However, the first Lockdown designed to hopefully reduce the spread of the new Coronavirus was announced on 18 March, and the Committee had already taken the decision to postpone the indoor meeting on the 14th, as it was becoming obvious that meeting as a group was no longer a sensible option. This was to have been a lecture by Adrian Lane "Invasive Species – Leicestershire's Riversides" which was later rescheduled as a Zoom meeting for Saturday 9 January 2021.

At that point our outdoor and indoor meetings, including the AGM, were all cancelled until further notice. Little did we know that we would still be in that situation, almost a year later.

The Committee was very aware of the need to provide some activity for the Club, for members to connect with one another, to provide items of interest on local natural history and to keep the Club vibrant whilst we waited out the pandemic. Members were asked to

contribute “Nature Notes from Lockdown Leicestershire” to the Newsletter, which gave us some interesting items and photographs.

We took the decision to explore the use of the Zoom Virtual Meeting Platform, and practised using the technology amongst the Committee and then holding a Committee meeting on 15 May 2020. The decision was made to conduct the 2020 AGM on 10 June mainly by postal and e-mail communication with the option of members attending a Zoom meeting to confirm the written communications.

We decided that we would experiment with Zoom meetings for our members, holding them on the 3rd Wednesday evening of each month during the summer months. We asked members to volunteer to do short presentations on the natural history that they have discovered during lockdown. We had many volunteers for this and really fascinating presentations, which were all recorded and posted on YouTube to be available for Club Members at their convenience. The first Members’ Meeting was on 17th June and as it was deemed successful we continued in July, August and September. The Zooms covered a wide range of topics for example, local botany, entomology, fungi, birds, localities such as Bradgate Park, and more far flung destinations such as Skokholm and Borneo. Every contribution was excellent and enjoyed by all.

We were very aware that not all of our members could or were happy to access meetings by Zoom, but unfortunately, apart from the Newsletters and Heritage, we were unable to find a way to engage with those members.

It was apparent that we had an audience for continuing our Club by Zoom whilst the pandemic was still restricting activity, so Pam Daarby, our Indoors Meeting Coordinator, was able to contact the speakers she had booked for the winter 2020/21 season and they were all able and willing to present their meetings by Zoom.

Margaret McLoughlin, our Treasurer and a Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust Volunteer, gave us the first talk of the winter season on Wednesday 21 October: “It Started as a Mothing Challenge at Charnwood Lodge”. This was a fascinating account of the start and development of the Moth Recording Group at Charnwood Lodge, the honing of skills and dedication to the subject, and the continuing development of interest in other areas of natural history especially entomology.

Our November talk by Zoom was on Saturday 14 November, when Bill Cove shared “The Wildlife of Calke Park” with us. Bill has been associated with Calke since 1972, first whilst working for the Harpur Crewe family on their Home Farm and then for 21 years as the manager of its outside areas for the National Trust. He has an unrivalled depth of experience of the place and its wildlife. Many of us were unaware of the treasures that this site has to offer and are hoping to visit as soon as restrictions allow. Another site for a future Club visit for certain.

Our “unusual” year of talks was successfully rounded off by Peter Jones and Sue Wilson on Wednesday 16 December who took us on a superb photographic tour of “Yellowstone and Iceland in Winter”. Peter is a longstanding member of our Club, who moved away, and it was a delight for many of our members to meet up with him again.

We have experimented with Wednesday and Saturday meetings to try and get feedback about which evenings the members would prefer.

Our Indoor Meetings Secretary, Pam Darby, has also arranged speakers presenting by Zoom for the rest of the winter season, and we are all looking forward to those talks very much.

Heritage is still delayed but we hope to catch up soon. Remember it is a summary of records received from Club members – we do need the records to be able to publish.

Steve and Helen have used some of the Lockdown Restrictions to plough on with the Grace Dieu report which promises to be a fascinating, well presented publication. I look forward to its publication as it will be of interest to many of our members and county naturalists in general

To sum up, 2020 was the most unusual year that anyone could imagine, but our Club has carried on connecting with its members and natural history by Newsletter and by Zoom. We are all hoping that with the advent of the vaccination programme that sometime in 2021 we may be able to hold indoor and outdoor meetings again, even if we still have to abide by extra precautions. I look forward very much to meeting you all again in person.

Many thanks to the Officers and Members of the Committee, for all pulling together in this peculiar year, and to the Members for their presentations.

Hazel Graves - Chairman

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2020

As 2020 unfolded, so the emergence of a novel virus in our midst gradually began to transform the way in which we went about our lives. The resulting Covid-19 Pandemic forced many of us to reconsider our approach to this challenging situation and has translated into innovative actions across innumerable areas, including our very own Loughborough Naturalists' Club.

In the absence of any meaningful social contact, we have had to rethink ways to keep in touch with our Members, particularly when our Indoor Meetings and Wednesday Morning Walks have been out of the question. Fortunately, we have a relatively small but very loyal Membership and your support throughout these difficult times has been both heartening and humbling.

Hazel Graves, our Chair deserves a special mention in this regard, because she has been consistently proactive throughout this period of great uncertainty, initiating new links with Members through Zoom at a time when many of us were unfamiliar with the concept of virtual meetings, let alone the technology. It has been a steep learning curve, but this digital world has been some recompense at least, while our usual format of gatherings has been put on hold.

Pam Darby has done a fantastic job in securing a programme of virtual talks with some excellent Speakers. This has had the additional benefit of being able to reach out to some Members who for whatever reason have been unable to attend our usual Indoor Meetings. It has certainly given us much food for thought in that when 'normal' service is resumed, we could possibly retain some meetings in virtual format in order to reach out to a wider audience.

Graham Fisher, our Membership Secretary and Margaret McLoughlin, our Treasurer continue to do sterling jobs in managing our Memberships and Finance respectively and we are very fortunate to have such competent and dedicated Officers on the Committee.

Our President Helen Ikin and Editorial Panel Member Steve Woodward have been working away in the background too, amongst other things on the Grace Dieu Report which represents the culmination of many years of surveys and detailed research into the Natural History of this area. This extremely comprehensive work is now nearing completion and we look forward to when this is finally published.

As well as one of the authors for Heritage and undertaking desk-top publishing for the Club, Jim Graham has also been working to further develop the LNC Website and much more information can now be accessed including historical copies of *Heritage* and the LNC 50th Anniversary publication.

I would like to extend my thanks to all our Officers and Committee Members Peter Wilkinson and Mike Buckley for their support and valuable input. Everyone's unwavering enthusiasm and contribution of new ideas to keep the Club afloat through this most difficult period continues to make my job as Secretary a very enjoyable one.

Finally, I would like to pay my personal respects to several eminent and longstanding Members, who have sadly passed this year. Not least among these was our founding

President, Peter Gamble. He is sorely missed, both as a true friend and gentleman and for his incredible knowledge of the Natural World and field skills which were second to none. We are fortunate indeed that his exemplary legacy lives on and provides the inspiration and solid platform upon which the Loughborough Naturalists' Club continues to thrive.

Sue Graham

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2020

The wide-ranging difficulties of the last 12 months have also affected the club in a variety of ways and presented the committee with new challenges. This has meant we have had to temporarily change the way we have done some things such as indoor meetings and suspend others indefinitely – hopefully however things will soon begin to get back to normal. In spite of this we have continued to attract new members, some of whom undoubtedly resulted from of us resorting to new channels of communication, such as our 'Zoom' meetings and talks, which have been well supported and also reached a new audience through being publicised online via NatureSpot and our own website.

In total we welcomed six new members in 2020, many of whom are active recorders, so just what the club needs to help sustain us into the future.

Sadly we also lost seven members for a variety of reasons, including of course the sad loss of our former President Peter Gamble, who will of course be missed greatly by the Club.

In total at the end of the year we numbered 90 members, a total which has now remained fairly stable over the past few years. I am also pleased to report that 2021 has got off to a flying start with a further 5 recruits at the time of writing. Although we remain a small club, happily we are fortunate to have a surprisingly loyal core of longstanding members and I think we have a bright future, when so many other membership organisations are struggling.

We have continued to retain membership subscriptions at the same level for nine years now, even though costs are continually rising. I am sure you will agree that they are good value, as they enable us to continue our mission to record the flora and fauna of our locality as well as disseminating such information and hopefully providing interesting and informative talks and excursions.

Please may I remind members that, in accordance with our Constitution, subscriptions are always due on 1st January each year, regardless of the time of year you may have first joined. The only exception being that if you join during the last three months of the calendar year, this covers the following year's subscription also.

So thank you once again, to all who have already kindly renewed their subscription for this year in a timely manner. For those who may have overlooked this crucial task, we would be most grateful to receive your renewal at your earliest convenience. Please forward you subscriptions to the membership secretary or hand them to any of your committee members. Better still, set up a Standing Order so that you don't forget next year!

Thanks also to all who responded to last year's appeal for contact details so we may be in touch if necessary at short notice. I am pleased to say we have now improved our records so that we hold such contact details for over 70% of our members. This is useful if we have to make any last minute changes to arrangements for meetings or walks, and is particularly relevant to the current situation, not least because it means we can keep you informed of online talks and meeting. So if you have not done so already, please provide us with a contact telephone number (land line and/or mobile) and e-mail address to help us stay in touch. We promise to keep your details safe and only use your details for club-related reasons. If you would like to help us keep in touch, just send an e-mail from your mail account to the membership secretary at: *grahamandmaggie@waitrose.com* - or let

any committee member know your contact details and no doubt I will be advised for the record.

Please remember that if we have your email address, you can also receive your copy of Heritage and Newsletter via e-mail if you wish, saving the club postage costs. This way, you also get the information more quickly and Heritage in full colour! Just let us know by e-mail or speak to one of your committee.

Finally, if you require any assistance regarding membership or have a query regarding your subscription, please contact the membership secretary, Graham Fisher (tel. 01509 890077) who will also be pleased to receive your cheque etc, either by post or via any committee member. Please also let us know if you change your address so we can keep our records up to date and ensure you continue to receive your regular newsletter and Heritage publication by post where applicable.

Graham Fisher

HERITAGE REPORT

Editions 233 and 234 were combined and published in 2020. We are sorry that we have been unable to catch up with the normal quarterly schedule and 235 will be combined with 236.

We are extremely grateful to those of you who have contributed records during the year – it is very much appreciated. The number of records we receive is dwindling – it was noted in edition 234 that 85% of members sent in no records. We realise that a number of our long-standing members do not find it quite as easy to record their sightings as they once did, and are not travelling quite as far as previously, but records even from gardens or on your shopping trips are just as valid and important and we would encourage you to continue sending them to us, no matter how few. The workload of the editorial team would be eased if the guidance were followed (see: www.loughboroughnats.org/recording) and the deadlines met (ten days after the end of the quarter)!

We welcome leading articles for *Heritage*, and would be pleased to accept short articles on any Natural History subject.

For writing the various sections, we are grateful to the authors: Baz Forgham, Jim Graham, Helen Ikin, Tony Onions, Helen Shacklock, Graham and Anona Finch and Phil Morrish.

The Editorial Team

PUBLICATIONS

A full list of publications and downloads are now available on the Club's website:

www.loughboroughnats.org/publications

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2020

It is my pleasure to present this year's financial report to the AGM. This simplified report is an overview of the FULL account but without reducing its content. The Committee have been presented with the full breakdown but copies are available should anyone wish to see it.

Well what a year we've all had, but thanks to all the members continuing to support the club we have made a net surplus of almost £490. This is due mainly to the reduction in room hire costs for our club meetings despite the loss of Entrance fees and the sale of a moth trap donated by a member.

The 2020 Gift Aid now only reflects a single year's submission, and it is great that the vast majority of members have now completed a Gift Aid form.

Our greatest costs continue to be for printing and postage, and this can only continue to climb. Much that I appreciate that for some a 'hard copy' is much more preferable, if we should get back into the full swing of all our publications this could become prohibitive and I would ask members to consider taking the electronic version (and home printing should they wish), or it may require re-visiting our membership costs.

At this juncture, I again proposed to the Committee that there is no increase in the Membership fee for this year and thus present this report for your scrutiny and comments. Thank you.

Margaret McLoughlin

March 2021

Simplified Income and Expenditure for 2020

<u>Income</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
Subscriptions	£902.50	£957.00	Room Hire	£90.00	£ 240.00
Entrance Fees			Speakers Fees	£110.00	£205.00
And Zoom	£124.00	£307.00		(£200.00)	(£445.00)
Donations	£22.00	£66.00	All printing costs	£193.14	£386.87
Gift Aid	£185.91	£362.86	All postage costs	£218.41	£243.95
Misc. Income	£0.00	£200.00	Insurance	£201.04	£201.04
Misc. sales	£130.00	£5.00	Affiliations and	£60.00	£60.00
			Subs /Donations	£0.00	£0.00
			Equipment	£2.94	£47.57
			Web Domain	£0.00	£11.99
TOTAL	£1,364.41	£1,897.86	TOTAL	£875.53	£1,396.42
Surplus/Deficit	+£488.88	+£501.44			

<u>Balances</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	Notes:
Cash in Hand	£22.26	£22.26	
NatWest Current Account	£3,387.53	£2,898.65	
Reserve Fund	£8277.67	£8,211.97	
	<u>£11,687.46</u>	<u>£11,132.88</u>	

Produced by: ML McLoughlin 10 March 2021

Checked by: AB Bass 10 March 2021

CLUB ACTIVITIES DIARY FOR 2020

Club activities were unfortunately curtailed by Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown.

INDOOR MEETINGS

- 11 January The Work of the Leicestershire Wildlife Hospital,
presented by Sue Bonnington
- 8 February New Lount Nature Reserve,
presented by John McDonald
- 14 March Invasive Species – Leicestershire’s Riversides,
CANCELLED presented by Adrian Lane
- 18 April AGM followed by Members' Short Talks and Exhibits
CANCELLED
- 12 September Members’ Presentation,
By ZOOM presented by Hazel Graves, Margaret McLoughlin Joy Noble-Rollin and
Steve Woodward
- 21 October It Started as a Mothing Challenge at Charnwood Lodge,
By ZOOM presented by Margaret McLoughlin
- 14 November The Wildlife of Calke Park,
By ZOOM presented by Bill Cove
- 16 December Yellowstone and Iceland in Winter,
By ZOOM presented by Peter Jones and Sue Wilson

OUTDOOR MEETINGS

Wednesday Morning Walks

- 8 January Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Wood/Longmoor Lake
- 5 February Thornton Reservoir
- 4 March Bradgate Park - CANCELLED
- 4 April Ashby Canal - CANCELLED
- 6 May Charnwood Lodge - CANCELLED
- 2 June Dishley Pool - CANCELLED
- 1 July Bagworth Heath - CANCELLED
- 5 August - CANCELLED
- 2 September - CANCELLED
- 7 October - CANCELLED
- 4 November - CANCELLED
- 2 December - CANCELLED

OBITUARIES

PETER HORACE GAMBLE 1927 -2020

Born in March 1927 in Quorn where he lived for most of his life, Peter attended St. Bartholomew's Church of England Elementary School in 1932 and stayed there until 1941. On leaving school at 14, he signed on at Loughborough College of Further Education for various building courses. After completing his apprenticeship Peter worked as a bricklayer until 1961, after this he worked initially as a lab technician and later as senior lab technician at Loughborough Technical College until 1987. Peter's early interests in the natural world were fostered by visits to his grandfather who lived in King's Cliffe, Northants. Here, many school holidays were spent with his grandfather who also had his own large collection of stuffed birds, many of which he prepared himself. Together they explored the wildlife opportunities the surrounding countryside had to offer. Here Peter found Chequered Skippers, and began a lifelong interest in wildflowers particularly on the local limestone areas which were so different from his local patch, Quorn. During his teenage years birdwatching was high on the agenda, Swithland Reservoir was a mere stone's throw away and we can easily imagine how many hours he must have spent there. It wasn't long until Peter bumped into like-minded souls and soon plans for ventures further afield were being hatched, discussed and brought to fruition. East Leicestershire soon became a favourite haunt, especially Eyebrook Reservoir, where many Easter holidays were spent camping and recording migrant birds. Peter and friends would think nothing of cycling to Suffolk and Norfolk setting up camp and having amazing adventures in this wonderful part of the country. Adventures being an understatement, as one day in early May whilst walking off Scolt Head Island, a Spitfire or Hurricane began strafing an old wreck offshore, Peter and colleague Gerald Felstead had to draw the pilot's attention by waving their shirts to make him aware of their presence. A similar occasion occurred on Cley Marshes, again returning from a day birdwatching they just happened to look back and noticed several signs stating they had just walked through a mined area! It's impossible to list all of Peter's excursions, but here's a taster: 1947 with Dennis Felstead and Jim Wastnage they visited Skomer and Skokholm where they were involved in ringing large numbers of Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels; 1948 Spey Valley and the Cairngorms where, with Michael Fewkes, they found most of the highlands most sought-after birds, including Crested Tit, Scottish Crossbill, Capercaillie, Dotterel, Ptarmigan, Golden Eagle and Snow Buntings; 1949 took Peter further afield to the mountains and fjords of Norway staying in youth hostels, then on to the Spanish Pyrenees in 1950. A return to Scandinavia in 1951, this time to Sweden, he and Eric Chapman while camping in the Arctic Circle near Lake Tornetrask, even though it was late spring most of this large lake was still frozen, they were accompanied by the calls of Black-throated Divers and the song of Bluethroats. A little closer to home in 1952 with visits to Minsmere and Havergate Island, Avocets were recent colonisers and Red-backed Shrike could still be found at several sites nearby. The list goes on, but you get the idea of how busy Peter was planning and executing all these excursions during this period, and that would be taking up most of his spare time. However, in 1949 Peter also found time to enrol on a series of geology courses in Loughborough and Leicester, also romance was in the air, Peter and Margaret were steadily getting serious, and in 1953 they were married. Oh yes, then in 1954 there was the small matter of building a house, which he did, and he and Margaret and their daughter Jane moved in late 1955, then Ian was born 1956. It all sounds fairly straightforward, although busy doesn't it? But before any building took place, Peter had to clear and prepare the land, two old cottages needed knocking down and the bricks cleaned, ready to be used for constructing the inside walls, an impressive bit of early recycling. Even so, Peter still managed to fit in a trip to the Isle of May in 1953, plus with Harry Clements, a long-time birding friend, they were colour-ringing birds in Kay's Plantation in Quorn. In his early teens Peter had joined the RSPB he remained a member to the present, he joined the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society in 1944, and soon became Chairman of the Referees Committee in the early 1950's. The Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation was formed in 1956 and Peter was a founder member, serving on various committees throughout, he was still involved in

the Conservation Committee when he died. Meanwhile ticking along in the background, there was obviously a small select but very active group of naturalists in the counties and during a day out in the late 1960's, Peter, John Crocker and David Binns had to take refuge under a tree to shelter from a storm. Here a conversation ensued regarding the possibility of setting up a natural history club. Soon after, the Loughborough Naturalists Club was formed, and the rest as they say is history. Peter took on the role of newsletter editor for the first eight years, also editing the bird records until 1971, he also wrote the sections for miscellaneous insects from 1972 to 1982, the moths up until 2008 and he continued to write the butterfly section. In 1967 the Leicestershire Flora Committee held its first meeting under the Chairmanship and ever watchful eye of Ian Evans. Fieldwork for the flora started in 1968 and after 20 years of hard work the Flora of Leicestershire was published. As work on the flora began, the LNC were also involved in the BTO breeding bird survey, the club took on two, ten-kilometre squares. These were divided into tetrads and Peter was responsible for Buddon Brook, Buddon Brook Meadows and Swithland Reservoir, all areas he knew exceptionally well. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Peter was busy giving lectures on natural history at both Loughborough and Melton. Anona and I got to know Peter in the mid-1970s when we returned from a holiday on Skokholm, not ringing but counting Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels. It was on Skokholm we were introduced to moth recording by Jeannie Lawman, half of the husband and wife team wardens on the island at the time. When we returned, we immediately got in touch with Peter and Jack Ward as we knew they went out "mothing". Soon we were accompanying them every Friday night for the next ten years or so to record moths mainly on the Charnwood Forest. Peter and Jack were out mothing together almost every Friday night for 25 years, Margaret used to pack them a flask and a box of cheese and onion sandwiches. Jack would pick Peter up an hour or so before dusk, depending on where they were planning to go. They operated two Mercury Vapour bulbs about 30 yards apart, each suspended over a white sheet, Anona would be with Jack and I would be with Peter. Halfway through the night, Peter would take the flask and sandwiches down to Jack and left me to man the sheet, I made sure I would fill as many pillboxes as I could with moths for Peter's return, I didn't want him to think I wasn't earning my keep while he was away. On the nights Jack couldn't get over or was going to be late, we would pick Peter up in our 750cc Reliant 3-wheeler; Jack passed away in 1998. We carried on taking Peter out, but he missed Jack tremendously and things were not the same. Not long after, Peter decided he would stop going out, and on one of his last nights with us at Charnwood Lodge he spoke to Mike Walpole explaining it would make sense if Graham and Anona continued with the moth survey work, Mike agreed. This was at a time when Charnwood Lodge was more or less a closed shop, and only certain people with written permission from Mike would be allowed on to the reserve. Peter knew the importance of continual recording here, I don't think many people could have persuaded Mike that this should happen. We continued mothing here for several years, until the reserve was opened up more freely to members. My trade was a decorator, and over the years I decorated most of the rooms at Peter's home in Meeting Street, plus the outside, Peter said he didn't have the time, "now there's a first". I was always invited in at mid-day to join him and Margaret for lunch, natural history was always the topic of conversation, but before the table could be set, it had to be cleared of paperwork. Peter would always sit at the dinner table, as it was next to the window overlooking the garden, the table was covered in A4 pieces of paper that had been cut into various lengths and sellotaped or pasted to another piece. Sometimes these joined pieces of paper would be much longer than a standard A4 sheet, especially where additional information had been added or where Peter had a rethink, cut that particular section out, re-written the new piece and taped into position. This went on until he was happy with the result, and it was then passed on to Margaret to type it all out. Editing newsletters then was slightly different to what it is today, "cut and paste" meant, literally cut the piece you are keeping and paste it to another. There are so many societies and organisations Peter and Margaret supported, with many he was not just a member but often on one committee or another offering advice and guidance wherever he could.

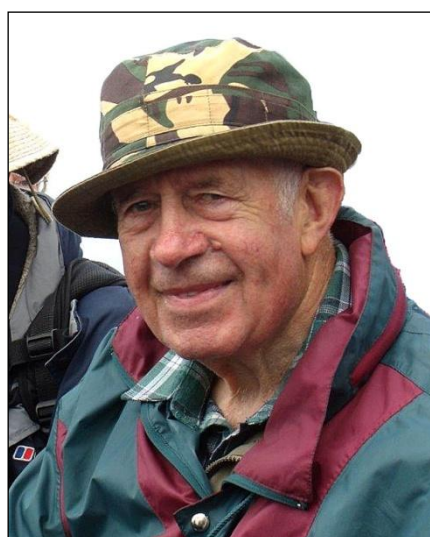
Peter and Margaret made many trips abroad, mainly into Continental Europe. We joined them on the "famous Valmorel trip" at the time it was quite a modern ski resort amongst the most amazing alpine meadows in the French Alps. There must have been

over a dozen LNC members on that trip, the weather was perfect, the meadows in full bloom after recent rain and full of butterflies. Between us, with Peter and Jack's guidance, we recorded 117 species of butterflies, about one third of the then known European population, now I think the European list is close to 500. Peter and Margaret loved their natural history holidays and, on their return, Margaret would spend hours putting together the most wonderful and beautiful photographic record of their trip, while Peter would be sorting through hundreds of slides, many of which the LNC were treated to at the A.G.M., various club evenings and exhibitions. There were no prompts on the slides when they appeared on the screen, Peter would just reel off the names of hundreds of alpine plants, butterflies and moths and assorted insects. Most of us keep a notebook when out in the field, but Peter not only contributed animal and plant records to the club for 47 years he also kept a natural history diary for over 60 years, just think of the incredibly priceless information they contain. They are a window into how the countryside was and how it has changed, species lost and species gained. He was most likely the last person to see and document the last Red Squirrel in VC55 1943, then in 1947 he found Nightingales nesting along Buddon Brook Meadows, he also heard Corncrake calling close by. Ian was lucky one day in 1962 while walking in Buddon Wood when Peter found a moth called the Argent and Sable, this lovely black and white day-flyer was soon to become extinct in the county and endangered nationally. Peter and Jack often used to comment on how the number of individual moths had dramatically declined, this upset Peter greatly. Early in the 2000s Peter and Margaret would join Ian and Pamela on holidays abroad and closer to home, on their return Peter would always make a point of showing photographs and telling us the highlights of what they had seen. He already knew how to take a good photo, but he really enjoyed using the new-fangled super-zoom digital cameras, all your lenses in one, and no need to carry dozens of those familiar canisters of film either. Of course, this is barely a glimpse into what Peter stood for and achieved, and everyone who knew him will also have so many motivating stories to tell. We have not even touched on all the walks and talks he gave and organised for dozens of societies, the help he gave to many students with their college work, and much, much more; it really needs a book. Peter was unequalled in his depth of knowledge and understanding of his subjects, indeed he was without doubt the best in the county.

In a recent phone call, he told Anona how he was blessed, he had a wonderful life, a wonderful wife, family and friends and he had no regrets.

I guess we could all write several pages about Peter and how he has affected us in one way or another, and maybe that is something we all should do, so nothing is forgotten. Peter has always been there, and now it is very difficult to accept that he has gone.

Graham Finch



Gerald Felstead

It is with sadness that I have to report the death of Gerald Felstead on the 13 January 2021 aged 93. Gerald was born in Leicester on the 21 June 1927. From an early age he and his brother Dennis had a passion for natural history, particularly birds. He was educated at Alderman Newton's School and it was here that he would meet fellow birders and life-long friends Peter Jones and Frank Pickering.

At the age of 16 in 1943 my father, Peter Gamble, met Gerald and his brother Dennis while birdwatching around Swithland Reservoir and another life-long friendship started. They spent many hours in the field together and did not think anything of cycling to east Leicestershire, Norfolk or Suffolk for a bird-watching holiday.

Eyebrook Reservoir was completed in 1940 and it was primarily built to supply the Stewart and Lloyds Steel Works in Corby. During the spring and summer bank holidays Gerald, Dennis, Frank Pickering and my father would camp on the wide road verge below Stoke Dry, at the bottom of the hill where the road turns sharp right. In those days it was a quiet, undisturbed spot and being close to the reservoir, ideal for tents. From here they often walked around the entire reservoir margins in the early morning, before breakfast. The construction of the reservoir provided an excellent habitat for passage birds to pause to feed. Kentish Plover, Temminck's Stint and Spotted Redshank had rarely, if ever, been recorded in the two counties whilst others such as the Black Tern, though recorded from time to time, had never been recorded in the large numbers that appeared.

In 1943 Gerald became a member of the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological society. In the early years of the Society he played an active role serving on the committee between 1948 and 1954 and the referee committee between 1951 and 1954. On his return to Leicestershire in 1971 he compiled the county bird ringing report for several years and was Vice-chairman of the society between 1980 and 1981.

On the 19 May 1945 Gerald Felstead and my father went on holiday for a week to Brancaster on the north Norfolk coast; this was just 11 days after the Allies' victory in Europe. They cycled from Leicestershire to Norfolk. During their stay they made several visits to Scolt Head Island. On one occasion while on the island a Spitfire or Hurricane started strafing an old ship wreck just offshore and they had to take their shirts off and wave them vigorously in the air in order to draw the pilot's attention to their presence. Five days later in the holiday they visited Cley Marshes where they spent the day birdwatching. It was only when leaving the area that they noticed the warning signs stating that the area was mined!

The Second World War finally came to an end on the 2 September 1945 and around this time Gerald was called up and joined the Royal Marines. It was often stated to family and friends that the surrender came because they knew he was coming!

Gerald had the ability to learn languages – French, German and Spanish – and his ear for an accent were amazing. He learnt French at School and continued learning after a French evacuee, Suzanne, was sent to stay with his family from Nantes during the Second World War. After the war ended Gerald and my father travelled further afield together visiting Norway in 1949 and the Pyrenees in 1950.

Between the 20 and 27 September 1952 my father and Gerald Felstead went for a week's birdwatching and ringing to Gibraltar Point in Lincolnshire. At that time both of them had started bird ringing. Gibraltar Point was proposed as a nature reserve in 1949 by the Lincolnshire Trust when the Bird Observatory came into being, but it was not declared a Nature Reserve until 1952. The Bird Observatory has always been a small part of the overall reserve and for years its main activity revolved around two large Heligoland traps in the east dunes. In 1952 the only accommodation at the site was an old railway carriage. During their stay it appears that the main food was locally caught and cooked rabbit. Gerald apparently wrote his thoughts (last will and testament) about my father's cooked rabbit in the Observatory Log. I can understand his reluctance to eat this delicacy when cooked by my father, as my father had always had limited culinary skills which have mainly centred on the cooking of a full English breakfast!

Bird ringing in Britain started with two independent schemes in 1909. One was in conjunction with Aberdeen University started by Arthur Landsborough Thompson and this came to an end during the First World War. The second was started by Harry F. Witherby in conjunction with the journal "*British Birds*" and this was taken over by The British Trust for Ornithology when it was founded in 1933. Bird ringing's initial aim was to understand bird migration. In the early years of the scheme most of the birds that were ringed were nestlings because there were few traps and mist-nets did not come in until 1956. In 1956 all ringers in Britain had to be licenced and my father and Gerald gained 'A' permits which allowed them to ring wild birds without supervision. Gerald was one of the first group of ringers to use mist-nets which allowed them to catch a wider variety of birds and greater numbers. During the intervening years with stricter laws safeguarding birds, bird ringing has become more professional with high standards and all permit holders now have to undergo a long period of training.

After his National Service he worked for a while for Leicester City Council before attending a teachers' training college at Bognor Regis. Once he completed his course he went to work in a Primary School in Brentwood. From there he went to Clacton-on-Sea in Essex where he worked at the Ogilvie School (a special boarding school for delicate and maladjusted children). It was while working at the school in 1960 that he discovered some of the first Collared Doves nesting in Essex. The Collared Dove was first recorded breeding in Britain in 1955. While in Clacton Gerald told me he caught and ringed both Black Redstart and Common Rosefinch in his garden. He also ringed at a coastal site in Essex and one year he caught and ringed three Lapland Buntings which were the only ones ringed in Britain that year.

Gerald met Joanna at a bus-stop which was followed by a dance the following Saturday night. Their relationship blossomed and they eventually got married in 1961. Sarah their first child was born in 1962, followed by Andy a year later and Simon in 1971.

In 1969 his work took him to Kent where he became headmaster of a special school before moving back to Leicester in 1971 where he worked at Ashfield Special School until his retirement in 1981.

Although Gerald had been a family friend throughout my life, I really first started to get to know him shortly after his return to Leicestershire in 1971. In 1972/3 he started to visit our house regularly with his two trainees, Graham Walford and Michael Webster in order to ring birds in our Quorn garden. My father had been a bird ringer until 1971 but then retired from the scheme. For a young birdwatcher Gerald's visits were captivating and it was the first time I had the opportunity to watch mist-nets being used.

He was a bird ringing trainer and gave of his time and experience to help others. I became Gerald's trainee in November 1974 and for the next few years we spent many happy hours together. He taught me how to handle birds, sex and age them and attach the metal rings around their legs before releasing them. Gerald was very similar to my father in many respects. I never heard him use bad language, he never talked badly of anyone, he did not grumble, he was patient, kind and self-controlled.

I shall never forget when we caught a pair of Bearded Tits, probably the first to be caught in Leicestershire, in March 1975. He took the birds out the net and then turned to me and said "You ring this one"! Gerald had not caught this species previously and I was amazed that he was willing to share that big personal moment with me. In some ways this pair of Bearded Tits epitomise what bird ringing is all about. In the October of 1975 the male was caught again but this time at Fordwich, Canterbury, Kent probably in Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve. Both birds were caught together there in 1977 and the female was last caught there in August 1978. We would later repeat our success with Bearded Tits catching another 17 between the 23 October 1977 and the 22 January 1978 and this remains the largest number to be recorded in Leicestershire. Five of those birds were already ringed, four near Goole in Yorkshire and one from Titchwell in Norfolk.

Gerald joined the Loughborough Naturalists' Club in 1996. He sent in regular wildlife sightings for the quarterly bulletin "*Heritage*" from 1996 until 2012. He also collated and

wrote the mammal section for *Heritage* from April 2000 until December 2006 with a short break due to ill health from April to December 2005.

Gerald spent the last few years of his life in the Aigburth Residential Home in Oadby where he went in 2016. Gerald loved to sing – especially old war-time songs, and songs from his time in the Brentwood Amateur Operatic Society where he was a powerful baritone. His favourite song in the Home was ‘A -You’re adorable, B -You’re so beautiful’... always making the carers laugh and was still singing this to them the week before he died. He loved classical music – and the carers ensured that when in his room, classical music was always playing, and he would nod his head in time to the music.

It was Gerald and his generation that have given us much of our understanding of our natural world we have today. They were true pioneers. I would like to send my condolences to Joanna, Sarah, Andy, Simon and their families. He was a lovely man and will be missed.

Ian B. Gamble



Gerald Felstead, Peter Gamble and Dennis Hill (Lincolnshire birdwatcher)
Railway carriage accommodation at Gibraltar Point - September 1952

JOHN MICHAEL STANLEY

Michael Stanley, the name most of us knew him by, died on the 1 August 2020, a few days short of his 89th birthday. John Michael Stanley was born to Ernest and Ethel Stanley at West End Farm, Stanley Lane, Eastwell on the 14th August 1931. He had an older brother David and two sisters Anne and Janet, none of which survived him.

He was born into a farming family and from an early age took a keen interest in natural history. This was encouraged by his mother who would take the children into the countryside on picnics.

Michael very nearly did not make it through his childhood years because one day after playing in a water trough he got severely chilled which led to pneumonia. While his mum nursed him, his father hitched his best horse Major to a trailer and travelled the seven miles to Melton in order to get an oxygen cylinder. This was a 40 minute round trip in those days, but he managed to get back in time and saved the boy's life.

Michael was educated at Eastwell School and one of his favourite teachers was Miss New, who would bring flowers into the classroom for the children to draw. He also remembered making baskets and chairs with split cane. He later attended Brownlow School in Melton Mowbray before moving on to grammar school. He left school at the age of 14 and went to work on the farm helping with the harvest and feeding the animals.

Living on a farm Michael had many early memories of nature such as the noisy display and protective nature of nesting Lapwings and watching and hearing the Corncrakes in the fields or hearing the grasshoppers. He also took an interest in the flowers and enjoyed finding new or unusual plants in and around the farm. When his father had the time he took the children for rides in the horse and trap and on one occasion he remembers his dad showing him a Red Squirrel on a large beech tree in Frog Hollow. At harvest time Michael and his Brother David would stand on the edge of the field and catch the rabbits that ran out from the crop. Roast rabbit or rabbit pie with kidney beans and lots of white sauce were favourite dishes!

Growing up during the war left him with his own personal wartime memories. Apparently several planes crashed nearby and he and his brother and sisters would visit these sites for souvenirs. Also on the farm Italian and German prisoners of war came to help with the harvest and these were guarded by soldiers. On returning home from school in 1944 he witnessed hundreds of paratroopers being dropped from planes and gliders along the Belvoir escarpment. After this the children tried to copy the paratroopers by jumping from haystacks!

In his youth he enjoyed sport playing football and cricket for the villages of Eastwell and Eaton but unfortunately working on the farm gave him little spare time to take it up seriously. Michael missed national service at the age of 21 because farming was a reserved occupation. The country needing food more than soldiers in the years following the Second World War.

Throughout the 1940s and 50s he was a member of Melton Young Farmers' Club and became chairman in 1960. It was here he learnt public speaking and the art of judging cattle. He would also take part in events such as horse ploughing competitions. It was while attending the Young Farmers' Club that he met Wendy Golling.

Wendy and Michael were married at Sage Cross Chapel in Melton in 1960. After the wedding they lived at Eastwell and worked on the farm. They have two sons Martin born in 1969 and Richard in 1972.

My father first met Michael in Melton Mowbray when he attended a WEA Natural History Course which my father tutored, in 1964. They remained close friends until their deaths. He taught my father much about agriculture and the countryside and the importance of farming in a responsible way. He also showed him many of the most important botanical sites in the Belvoir area.

In the 1970s Michael and Wendy, along with his brother David, wrote a book about the history of Eastwell. A second edition being brought out in 2001. Michael and Wendy also

took an active role in village life helping with pageants, fetes and singing nights at the local church. They also held bonfire nights on the farm inviting villagers and friends.

In 1974 Michael had a major road accident which left him with serious leg and knee injuries which would cause him problems for the rest of his life.

Michael joined the Loughborough Naturalists' Club in 1977 and for the next 35 years he would regularly send in records for *Heritage*. He would attend indoor and outdoor meetings and was regularly accompanied by Wendy and his two boys on bus trips during the 1980's. He was a Committee member 1990-91 and Chairman in 2003 and 2004.

In 1981 he found a pair of Hobbies breeding on his farm in one of the hedgerow trees. He invited Gerald Felstead and myself over to ring the three large chicks. As you can imagine this was a red letter day for me!

Michael was a good all round naturalist with an extensive knowledge of wild flowers and he assisted with botanical recording for the *Flora of Leicestershire* which was published in 1988.

In 1993 Michael became the Loughborough Naturalists' Club representative on the Leicestershire and Rutland Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). Michael and his wife Wendy played an active part in the Leicestershire and Rutland branch of FWAG. In 1997 FWAG was made a bequest of Coombe Meadows at Stathern. Following this gift Michael became part of the management committee for the site prior to it being taken over by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. Michael had known the Coombe Meadows for many years and had taken Pat Evans there in the late 1970s when they were carrying out work for a book on flora of Leicestershire. Wendy was treasurer for FWAG for several years and Michael continued taking an active role until 2011 when he was starting to suffer with ill health.

Michael and Wendy left West End Farm Eastwell in 2001 and moved to Eaton to enjoy their retirement. Wendy died in 2010 and Michael continued to live at Eaton but after a bad fall he became wheelchair bound. He eventually went into Scaford Court Care Home where he stayed until his death.

His son Richard sums his dad up very well in the notes he gave me to write up this account when he states "he was a kind humble man who loved nature". I particularly liked his childhood nickname which I saw in Richard's notes, which was "smiler" and that is my abiding memory of Michael - a smiling gentleman.

We send our condolences to Martin, Richard and family. Your dad will be greatly missed and it was a privilege to have known him.

Ian B. Gamble