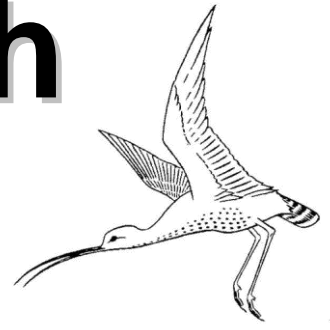


Loughborough Naturalists' Club



www.loughboroughnats.org

Kestrel © Jim Graham; Slow-worm © Steve Woodward; Marbled White © Steve Woodward,
Collared Earthstar © Jackie Green.



Annual Report 2023

LOUGHBOROUGH NATURALISTS' CLUB

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

as at 30 November 2023

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	Vacant
Outdoor Meetings Co-ordinator	Mr P Proudlove
Members	Mr M Buckley Mr J Graham Mr P Wilkinson Mr S Woodward Dr K Moore
OTHER OFFICERS	
<i>Heritage</i> Editorial Panel	Mr S Woodward Mr J Graham
Librarian	Ms H Ikin
Records Co-ordinator	Miss ML McLoughlin

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2023

Loughborough Naturalists' Club has again had a successful year in terms of its key functions:

- Information sharing between members about items of natural history concern at our indoor meetings followed by an interesting list of lectures.
- Recording – both individually, as a group on our organised Field Trips, in collaboration with other organisations such as Leicestershire & Rutland Entomological Society (LRES) and Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) and on the specific Loughborough Naturalists' project at Nanpantan Home Farm.
- Publications, both quarterly *Heritage* and *Newsletter*, and individual publications by the Club i.e. **More Than Meets The Eye – the Wildlife of Grace Dieu**. Also support for publications co-authored by a Member.

Indoor Meetings

With great relief we finally restarted our monthly Club Meetings in person at the Quorn Church Rooms which were all very well attended. It was wonderful after the isolation of Covid to finally be able to meet indoors in a civilised way in comfort, although we were still reluctant to commit to providing refreshments. However the members reacted well and brought their own. As usual, an interesting range of sightings and comments were discussed before each lecture. Pam Darby is again to be congratulated for arranging a stimulating series of lecturers.

- The first meeting in January by Nigel Slater **The Isles of Scilly** had many of us asking about the best way to get there, best time of year to go and where to stay.
- Richard Fenn-Griffin, Arborist at Loughborough University, gave our February lecture **Opening Pandora's Box – An Ecology of Loughborough University**. Loughborough Naturalists have permission to visit the private Holywell Wood for recording purposes as long as prior notification is given to Richard. Some of our members have availed themselves of this opportunity.
- The March Meeting should have been the first **Peter Gamble Memorial Lecture** by Ian Gamble but was delayed due to family illness. Steve Woodward stepped into the breach with a very well received talk **The Ecology of Bradgate Park**. Thanks Steve.
- Our AGM in April followed the normal pattern. Notice was given by some of the Committee of their desire to resign and invitations made to some of our newcomers to join the Committee and help run the Club. This was followed by a fascinating presentation by member Ann Brown "**All About Trees**" - the biggest, tallest, oldest, loneliest trees in the world.
- '**The Maasai Mara**', presented by Steve Woodward was the subject of our September Meeting charting Steve and Helens' safari, illustrated by his wonderful photography.
- Alan Cann entertained us in October with '**The Charnwood (and other) Spiders**', with Alan's amazing close-up photography.
- The November Meeting was the rearranged **Peter Gamble Memorial Lecture - Tales of the Riverbank** given appropriately by Peter's son Ian. Members were enthralled by Ian's description of his and his father's exploration of their "local patch". Ian is planning to publish some of this work as a book possibly with the help of Loughborough Naturalists' and some of it will be posted on our website.
- Finally in December, Kate Moore shared with us her background knowledge and visits, including bird ringing, of '**The Knepp Rewilding Project**', a subject of particular interest to some of us having collectively read the book on the project in our Natural History Book Club.

Recording

- Once again the Club has had a good year of Field Meetings, which are written up so eloquently by Sue Graham in the quarterly Newsletters. Many thanks to Peter Proudlove for co-ordinating these events, many thanks Sue and thanks also to all the leaders. Efforts are being made to ensure that as many species as possible found on these meetings are officially recorded either to the Club's Recorder Margaret McLoughlin, or to NatureSpot where our records can be lifted as a group by the Recorder and Chairman for use in writing *Heritage*. We are delighted to see some of our newer members recording on NatureSpot and I have offered help with this system at my home for those still struggling. Please contact me.
- Collaborative recording was a new venture with a highly successful Field Meeting jointly with LRWT Charnwood in January. BSBI encourages 3-hour visits to a local area to record plants in flower over three days at New Year. About 10 members explored the streets of Loughborough, including back alleys, carparks and eventually the Woodbrook and Queen's Park, concluded with lunch at a nearby café. Ruderals found in towns are more likely to be in flower than those native species found in our woodlands. A report of this event was published in the Newsletter. The plan is to repeat this event each New Year, visiting the same route to compare years.
- The second collaborative meeting was the Recording Field Trip with LRES to Sandhills Lodge. Records were made of a range of species and a report was made and shared with the Clubs' members and the landowner. The site is very large and a repeat visit is planned for 2024, with the intention of studying a different area of the estate. The site is being managed for wildlife so any information as to its current status is welcome. Many thanks to the landowner for allowing us access.
- The Club's Recording Project at Home Farm is progressing well. Beetles, Moths, Birds are being particularly well recorded. Refuges for reptiles were put out but none yet found. Camera traps for small mammals are now planned. Illness prevented some of the planned recording from happening, but when we come to write the interim report after 2024, we will have a very large amount of data to use. Many thanks to the farmer, Marie, for allowing us access.
- Thanks to Mike Buckley for reviewing and updating our Health & Safety Policy.

Publications

- Our quarterly bulletin, *Heritage* is now back on track after suffering some delays during the Covid difficulties. Plenty of records are reaching Margaret, our Recorder directly or through NatureSpot. However we need more members to volunteer to write the articles on various groups. Since Graham and Anona retired from the moth and beetle writing, we have vacancies in those areas. Similarly there are vacancies in for example, bugs, lichens, mosses and flies. Please come forward to volunteer to write. Some of the existing authors would be very happy to share some of their areas and lighten their load. Help would be available for new writers. Many thanks to Jim Graham, Steve Woodward and Margaret McLoughlin for the very large amount of work that goes into the record co-ordination and publishing of *Heritage*.
- Sue Graham continues to delight and inform us with the quarterly Newsletter full of interesting items including reports of past field meetings and notifications of the next series of events. Many thanks Sue.
- Sales of **More than Meets the Eye – The Wildlife of Grace Dieu by Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin** continue, with a second print run needed to meet demand.

- Geoffrey Hall and Stephen Woodward jointly authored **The Rare Plant Register of Leicestershire and Rutland (VC55)**, an extremely important publication to inform planning and development. This was privately published with financial support from Loughborough Naturalists' Club and Rutland Natural History Society. We were pleased and proud to support this publication. The Club owns a copy which I look after and use which can be made available to any member who wishes to see or consult it.

Other items

- The Club was very saddened to lose three of its long-standing Members in 2023, Maira Hall, Eric Webster and Ed Darby, the latter two of whose obituaries appear in this report. Members of the Club attended their funerals.
- The AGM is the time to refresh the Committee. Pam Darby stepped down at the AGM in April 2023 as Meetings Secretary. She had already planned and booked speakers for the rest of 2023 and left ideas for the start of 2024 which were followed up. We need a member to volunteer to take on this role. It was thought unrealistic for a new Meetings Secretary to start this role in 2024 with the need to plan the following season's events. Planning usually takes place in January so events can be used in advertising throughout the year. Therefore the 2024/25 season has already been planned, and the new Secretary will have plenty of time to gather ideas etc. I intend to step down from my role as Chairman. My belief is that no one person should hold this post for too long – new people need to step in with new ideas etc. I will stay on the Committee as Vice-Chairman to offer any support needed to the new Chairman and to step in and chair meetings if the new Chairman is unavailable. Please consider putting yourself forward for this role.
- Advertising. Now in-person meetings are again being held, it is possible to take a display stand to events. Our display was refreshed and set up at the LRWT Charnwood Event at The Brand. Thanks to Kate Moore and John Spencer for setting it up. I regularly take posters about Loughborough Nats and our events to the LRWT Charnwood meetings and talk to people who look at the displays. I also take and sometimes sell one of the Grace Dieu books. Perhaps other Members could share or display these posters at local post offices, parish noticeboards, church halls etc., and also promote the Grace Dieu book at other meetings they attend, for example other LRWT local groups. I could email each poster to you at the relevant times. LRWT Charnwood have success at advertising by using the local papers and journals. Many societies have a person who takes on the role of advertising – could someone volunteer to do this?

Conclusion

- The Club has had another successful and busy year in 2023. We are moving into 2024 with a planned lecture series, planned field trips, planned collaborative meetings with BSBI, LRWT Charnwood, and the Entomological Society, and continued planned recording on our Special Project at Nanpantan Home Farm.
- Thanks to all Committee Members for their work, to Officers for their specific roles, mostly mentioned above, and to Members for their suggestions and advice. Thanks to Graham Fisher for keeping track of our Membership and emailing details of our upcoming events to Members. And thanks to Jim Graham for managing the Club's website.
- I see no reason that our success will not continue through 2024 and beyond.

Hazel Graves
Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2023

This is my overview of the financial report for 2023. Full account copies are available on request, and a fully signed copy will be lodged with the AGM documents. These have again been independently checked.

MTMTE: All but a handful of the of 150 'More Than Meets The Eye' books have been distributed returning £1,891.50 against the cost of £2,130.79 which is of course a loss. I will point out that we gifted/donated a number of copies, and the funds we drew on came from a gift for that purpose. This more than adequately returns funds for future use. Indeed we have re-ordered a further 50 copies at the cost shown of £811.22. To achieve the same balance of return the selling price per copy has been raised slightly.

Home Farm Project: I have continued to provide a full return to the awardees. Money left will allow us to maximise our recording efforts on site. Funds remain in the NatWest account and will not make any profit or loss, but the Club will be the beneficiary's of a number of pieces of equipment.

Overall, we are showing a loss, but I take into account a number of factors: MTMTE books for sale are held as stock from 2nd print; the late submission of Gift Aid reclaim (which will produce approx. £180 for both 2022 and 2023); the £200 donation we made to the publication of the Plant Report; general printing costs have risen, and the return to indoor meeting costs.

We continue to be in a *relatively* healthy position and I again proposed to the Committee that there is no increase in the Membership fee for this year and thus present this report for scrutiny and comments.

M.L. McLoughlin

Simplified Income and Expenditure for 2023

Income	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	Expenditure	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Subscriptions	£837.00	£880.50	Affiliations & Subscriptions	£70.00	£70.00
Miscellaneous Sales	£0.00	£0.00	Speakers' Fees	£195.00	£190.00
Gift Aid Tax Rebate	£0.00	£196.41	Hire of Room, Meetings	£328.00	£0.00
Entrance Charges (Zoom)	£120.50	£5.00	Printing	£303.64	£176.26
Donations	£155.18	£63.00	Postage	£162.75	£150.55
Sale of MTMTE	£419.00	£1,472.50	Insurance	£212.24	£201.04
			Equipment	£1.80	£168.40
			Web Domain (3 years)	£0.00	£46.62
			Donations	£200.00	£0.00
			MTMTE expenses – reprint	£811.22	£2,122.95
TOTALS	£1,531.68	£2,617.41		£2,284.65	£3,125.42
+Surplus / -Deficit	-£752.97	-£508.01			

<u>Balances 31 Nov 2023</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>Notes:</u>
Cash in Hand	£40.14	£52.34	
NatWest Current Account	£4,831.24	£6,547.45	
NS&I Account	£6,312.00	£6,306.10	
Current Assets	£11,183.38	£12,905.89	

Produced by: ML McLoughlin 10 March 2024
 Checked by: AB Bass 10 March 2024

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2023

It has been a very enjoyable and productive year for the Loughborough Naturalists' Club. Getting back to normality after Covid has certainly reinforced the importance of our various gatherings, whether at indoor meetings, outings, project work or participation in other events throughout the year. It has also highlighted the value of face-to-face social interactions and sharing our experiences of the natural world in a friendly and supportive atmosphere.

As you will read in the Chairman's Report, Hazel has given a very comprehensive overview of the activities of the Club and has gratefully acknowledged the work of the LNC Committee and support of the Membership. The one person who has been most instrumental in propelling the Club forward however has yet to be mentioned. This is of course Hazel herself. Her strong leadership, innovative ideas and willingness to get involved have been second to none and as she steps down in April from her position as Chair, there is no doubt that she will be a hard act to follow. We are grateful that she will remain as an Editorial Panel Member and wish her well in her pursuit of other areas of interest in the future.

I would like to wholeheartedly thank Hazel, Members of the Committee and all Members of the Club for supporting me in my role as Hon. Secretary over the past year and look forward to another packed programme of events in 2024.

Sue Graham

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2023

Many thanks to all who have already renewed your membership for 2024 – at the time of writing we have received the subscriptions of almost three quarters of our members. Subscriptions are always due on 1 January each year regardless of the time of year you joined – unless this was in the last three months of the previous year, when your following year's subscriptions are included. If you are amongst the quarter that has so far overlooked your renewal, we hope you will forgive this reminder.

As usual, please forward your cheque or other payment to me at the address found in the Newsletter. You can also hand your subscription in person to any of the Committee by cheque or in cash or pay by bank transfer if you prefer (account details below). It would be of benefit to set up an annual Standing Order to avoid overlooking this task next year and helps with the Club's admin.

Rates remain unchanged for 2024 at just £12 for Full Membership or £17 for Joint Membership (including an additional person at the same address).

In 2023 we recruited a handful of new Members and overall numbers increased slightly on the previous year reaching just over 80 by the end of the period. It is so sad to hear of the passing of a number of long-standing Members.

If you require any assistance regarding membership or have a query regarding your subscription, please contact the membership secretary, Graham Fisher (tel. 01509-890077 or email grahamhfisher@outlook.com). Please also be sure to let us know if you change your contact details, especially your email address, so we can keep our records up to date and ensure you continue to receive your regular Newsletter and *Heritage* publications and also keep you informed about talks, walks and other items of interest.

Finally, if you have not already done so and are able, please consider Gift Aiding your subscription to enable us to reclaim an additional 25% of your subscription from the tax man! Please contact us for a form.

Graham Fisher

Club's account details for bank transfer or standing order:

Bank: NatWest Bank

Account Name: Loughborough Naturalists Club

Account number: 89289307

Sort Code: 60-14-10

HERITAGE REPORT

After a couple of difficult years with production, thankfully *Heritage* is now back on track with quarterly editions. More Members are using the dedicated NatureSpot recording system which we have up and running. This has helped with the co-ordination, collecting and collating of Club records and is being exceptionally well managed by Margaret McLoughlin. We still welcome all and any of your records in whatever format, electronically or pen and paper. *Heritage* could not be produced without your records, so we thank all Club Members and friends who take the time to report their sightings.

We still have a few vacancies for species authors and would be grateful of new volunteers. A number of authors are writing multiple species groups and they would welcome a reduction in their workload.

If you feel you could help out, we would be happy to talk you through the process.

The Editorial Team

PUBLICATIONS

Steve and Helen's Grace Dieu report "More Than Meets The Eye" has been exceptionally well received and sold in good numbers. A second batch of 50 has had to be ordered to meet demand.

The Club was pleased to be able to provide financial support to aid the publication of *The Rare Plant Register of Leicestershire and Rutland (VC55)*, written by Geoffrey Hall and Stephen Woodward.

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

www.loughboroughnats.org/publications

CLUB ACTIVITIES DIARY FOR 2023

After the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 in 2022, it was good to get back to in-person meetings at the Quorn Church Hall. The number of attendees increased through the year as people became more comfortable mixing.

INDOOR MEETINGS

- 14 January The Isles of Scilly – presented by Nigel Slater
- 11 February Opening Pandora’s Box – An Ecology of Loughborough University – presented
Richard Fenn-Griffin
- 11 March The Ecology of Bradgate Park – presented by Steve Woodward
- 1 April AGM: followed by All About Trees – presented by Ann Brown
- 9 September The Maasai Mara – presented by Steve Woodward
- 14 October The Charnwood (and other) Spiders – presented by Alan Cann
- 11 November The PETER GAMBLE MEMORIAL LECTURE – Tales of the River Bank – presented
by Ian Gamble
- 09 December The Knepp Rewilding Project – presented by Kate Moore

WILDLIFE FIELD TRIPS

Wednesday Morning Outings took place throughout the year.

- January No planned outing
- 1 February Sence Valley Forest Park – led by Peter Proudlove
- 1 March Hicks Lodge – led by Peter Proudlove
- 5 April Dishley Pool – led by Hazel Graves
- 3 May Cloud Trail, near Worthington – led by Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin
- 7 June Castle Hill Country Park – led by Jim and Sue Graham
- 5 July Aylestone Meadows – led by Jim and Sue Graham
- 2 August Oakthorpe Picnic Site – led by Peter Proudlove
- 6 September Stanford Reservoir – led by Kate Moore
- 4 October Bardon Hill SSSI – led by Peter Proudlove
- 1 November Broombriggs Farm, Woodhouse Eaves – led by Kate Moore
- 6 December Staunton Harold Reservoir – led by Margaret Mcloughlin

OBITUARIES

Ed Darby – A Personal Memory

I first met Ed shortly after my retirement – probably in 2016. I knew I wanted to further my botanical interests now I had more leisure time but was uncertain what to do to complement that. Ed, as a key and longstanding member of the Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group was promoting the National Bat Monitoring Programme, specifically monitoring the activity of Daubenton's bats along our county's waterways. Ed welcomed a group of potential volunteers at Quorn and we proceeded to walk along the river/canal side in the dark. This is when I first experienced Ed's quick-witted humour with his groan-aloud jokes – anyone who knew him will know exactly what I mean! I didn't take up the opportunity to work with bats – deciding that walking along canal or riverbanks in the dark was not going to be my forté. However, Ed was memorable!

Over the years I had grown to know Ed better as he and Elspeth volunteered at Charnwood Lodge. We enjoyed the butterfly transects and mothning activities together. I slowly learned more about Ed, his past history as an Environmental Consultant, his fitness – cycling, winter sport, his commitment to natural history and support for the environment, gardening, allotment, promotion of Shepshed Biodiversity Group which “was formed to encourage local people to develop an interest in, and the recording of, wildlife in the Shepshed area ... and to identify sites around Shepshed that can be made more wildlife friendly by planting trees, sowing wildflower meadows and building ponds.”

Ed also was keen to become involved in the Loughborough Naturalists' new survey at Home Farm, Nanpantan. Ed and Elspeth started to become involved in 2022, with mothning and some daytime searches for bugs, etc., but the lingering threat of Covid and Ed's vulnerability due to medical issues delayed his full engagement. The plan for Ed and Elspeth for 2023 was to take on the surveying of the Woodbrook as it flows through Home Farm; freshwater surveying having been one of Ed's specialities as part of the Loughborough Ecologists team.

The Covid pandemic 2020 made us all change our ways with unexpected consequences. Ed was a keen attendee at the Club's monthly Zoom meetings. I know Zoom was hated by some, but it gave individuals who needed to shield a chance to chat with fellow naturalists in safety.

My biggest and best memories of Ed are from the Natural History Book Club which was set up in January 2020. Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust have a book club running at Rutland Water's Lyndon Visitor Centre, but that is a long way to go for those of us centred on Charnwood Forest. The Book Club had two meetings face-to-face in our homes and then a hiatus for three months while we waited, naively, for Covid to pass. We restarted by Zoom in June 2020 and have been studying and discussing a book each month since, although following Ed's death we decided to have another break and reconvene in October where we will be studying Ed's choice. I find that when involved in 'in the field activities' naturalists often don't talk very much except about the activity in hand. The Book Club has been an opportunity to learn more from its members about their approach to and experiences of natural history. Ed was very, very passionate about conservation and discussed with relish the new ideas coming along to attempt to revert our worrying loss of biodiversity in Britain.

Ed was involved with Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, during the time I knew him, as part of the conservation committee which provides advice and support to the trustees and staff. I am sure that he had much relevant input into that organisation.

I will miss Ed's wide knowledge, opinion, understanding and ideas for our future more than I can possibly express. He was such an intelligent and thoughtful man. Many of our books

explored the environmental disaster we are fearing. Ed had so much to contribute to that debate.

My thoughts go out to his partner Elspeth, to his former wife Pam, and to his sister, who I am sure will all miss his humour and wisdom.

Hazel Graves

Eric Webster – A Personal Memory

Eric and his wife Doreen were stalwarts of the Loughborough Naturalists' Club. Doreen served for many years as the Indoor Meetings Convenor and Eric was sometimes Chairman. Richard and I have been members of Loughborough Nats since 1980, but both meetings and outings clashed with work and family life so we were "sleeping members" enjoying *Heritage* and the Newsletters but no real involvement until our later years. So my knowledge of Eric's involvement with the early years of the Club is very limited. I do know from other Members of the Club that Eric was very, very supportive of younger members in the early years. He was a firm favourite.

I do know that Eric was a keen botanist, giving talks on plants. I remember a talk on the "Flowers of Anglesey" given to the Loughborough Naturalists' and another on "What is a Weed?" given to the Leicester Lit & Phil Natural History Section. I also know that Eric led the group members on some of their outings, particularly to the Outwoods. The Outwoods were a great favourite of Eric and Doreen which they frequented almost daily with their beloved dog.

Eric was a very keen member of the Alpine Garden Society and other gardening Clubs, and a keen and very skilled photographer.

My most personal memories of Eric occurred after I joined the Loughborough Naturalists' Club Committee. The Committee meetings were held in Eric and Doreen's sitting room, accompanied by their dog. Eric was very prompt at fetching us all drinks and snacks when the business was over. Then we spent some quality time mulling over various natural history issues of the day. I wonder now if refreshments at the end of a committee meeting encourages a quicker meeting than having them at the beginning as we now tend to do. Something for new hosts to think about!

Eric was elected Chairman in 2018, at the same time that I was encouraged by Doreen to stand as Vice Chairman (after all it looks good on paper she said – you don't really have to do anything). Unfortunately Eric took ill before he was able to take up his post, and ill-health of both Doreen and Eric prevented them becoming actively involved with the Club again – a deep loss to all of us.

Eric and Doreen moved to the south of the county to be nearer their daughter as their poor health continued. Doreen is now in a care home near her daughter.

Both Eric and Doreen contributed enormously to our Club. Many of you will know how much more than I do.

I remember Eric with fondness and respect and have Doreen and his family in my thoughts.

Hazel Graves