



e-Newsletter

July 2023, Issue 11



What we have been up to!

On Monday 1st May SSWCG had a stall at the South Stoke May Fayre. We met lots of interested locals and chatted about our planned activities for the coming months. Since our last newsletter we have started up our wildflower walks on Thursday evenings, 18:00-20:00. These have been well attended and it's been great to see some new faces coming along to enjoy nature on these increasingly long evenings. These continue into August so check out dates and locations on our website.

Our popular dragonfly walk returned on Sunday 28th May where we saw banded demoiselles, an emperor dragonfly, lots of azure blue damselflies, four-spotted chasers, red-eyed damselflies and a couple of hairy dragonflies (newly sighted in the village).

You will also have noticed that some new No Mow signs have made their way onto the verges of South Bank and Ferry Road, along with the recycled signs from last year's competition. Congratulations again to Grace, from South Stoke Primary School with her winning design.



White Hill Quarry, South Stoke

Geology

White Hill is about 1500m NE of South Stoke and is a chalk hill with a cap of a harder rock. The main bulk of the hill is in what used to be called Lower Chalk, but is now known as the Zig Zag formation, named after Zig Zag hill near Shaftesbury in Dorset. The Lower Chalk

includes a harder horizon known as the Totternhoe Stone. This was used for building stone and is probably what was quarried in the Little Stoke and White Hill Quarries. The top of White Hill is what used to be called Middle Chalk, (now known as the Holywell Nodular Chalk formation) which includes another hard layer known as the Melbourn Rock.

These rocks were laid down in a clean warm sea, between 94 and 101 million years ago.

Pre- enclosure

Somewhat more recently, the land around South Stoke was divided into many narrow strips. Each strip was allocated to one of the many local people and these were farmed for generations.

Enclosure

In 1853, the land around South Stoke was enclosed. This meant the end of the strip-farming system. Fewer, much larger fields were created and some small areas of land were allotted for the poor and for purposes such as gravel and chalk pits. The South Stoke Enclosure Act of 1853 includes a map, with all parcels of land numbered, and an accompanying, hand-written schedule which sets out what each piece of land was allocated for. The original copies of these are in the Oxford Local Studies library in Cowley.

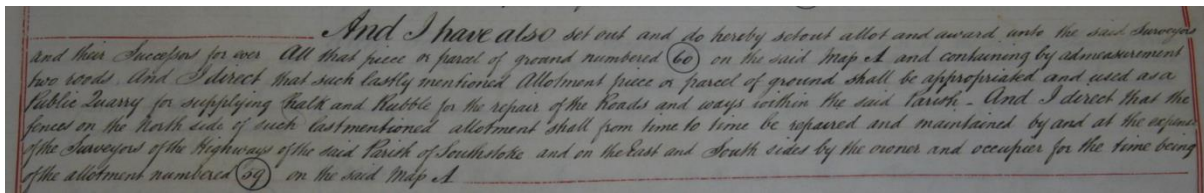
White Hill Quarry

White Hill Quarry appears on the enclosure map as No.60 and was allotted for the production of chalk and rubble to repair the roads and ways in the Parish.



The handwritten entry in the South Stoke Enclosure Act says:

“...And I have also set out and do hereby set out, allot and award unto the said surveyors and their successors for ever all that piece or parcel of ground numbered 60 on the said map A and containing by admeasurement two roods and I direct that such lastly mentioned allotment piece or parcel of ground shall be appropriated and used as a Public Quarry for supplying chalk and rubble for the repair of roads and ways within the said Parish – and I direct that the fences on the north side of such last mentioned allotment shall from time to time be repaired and maintained by and at the expense of the surveyors of the highways of the said Parish of South Stoke and on the East and South sides by the owner and occupier for the time being of the allotment numbered 59 on the said map A...”



We don't have any pictures of White Hill Quarry when it was in use, but we understand that the access road was to the west, and presumably the pit was dug into the side of the hill. The pit was subsequently infilled with rubbish and, apparently, from material dug for the foundations at Chapel Close.



UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme



SSWCG would like to introduce you to the **UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (UKPoMS)**. Pollinating insects play a vital role in our environment, ensuring that many of our crops and wild plants are able to set seed and produce fruit. UKPoMS would like our help with gathering data on a wide range of flower-visiting insects in order to get a better idea of how pollinator populations are changing. With reports of dramatic losses of insects occurring across the globe, and concern about what this means for wider biodiversity and ecosystem health, there has never been a more important time to document evidence of change in populations of pollinating insects. Here's how you can help...

If you can spare 10 minutes you can get involved by carrying out a **FIT (Flower-Insect Times Count)**! All you have to do is watch flowers and insects in good weather – easy right? The simple survey collects data on the total number of insects that visit a particular flower, ideally chosen from the UKPoMS list of 14 target flowers (e.g. buttercup, dandelion, thistle, lavender...) **FIT Counts can be done anywhere, including gardens and parks, in warm, dry weather during daylight hours from 1 April to 30 September.**



Image source: UKPoMS website - <https://ukpoms.org.uk/fit-counts>



Image source: UKPoMS website - <https://ukpoms.org.uk/fit-count-app>

Every single count helps and if you can carry out several counts at one location during that time you will be adding extra value to your survey records. All the information you need is provided in the survey materials on the UKPoMS website <https://ukpoms.org.uk/fit-counts>. There's also a fantastic app (<https://ukpoms.org.uk/fit-count-app>) that can be used to guide you through the survey. Why not give it a go today?



PoMS in numbers image taken from the recently published (26th May) UKPoMS annual report - <https://ukpoms.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf/PoMS-AR-2022-EN-Final.pdf>



Hawk-moths of South Stoke

We now have a gallery of photographs of hawk-moths on our website. The photos were taken by John Lindley, and the full collection can be found at <https://www.southstokewildlife.org/hawk-moths>.

We plan to add to our galleries of flora and fauna found in South Stoke, so if you have any images you would like us to add to our website please send them to contact@southstokewildlife.org with a brief description; we will acknowledge you if you're happy for us to do so.



Eyed hawkmoth



Hummingbird Hawkmoth



Lime Hawkmoth



Governance!

On 16th March 2023 South Stoke Wildlife & Conservation Group became a registered charity, and is now formally recognised by the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

The objects of the CIO are to promote for public benefit in and around the parish of South Stoke, Oxfordshire, the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by promoting biological diversity and wildlife-friendly management of green spaces within the area of benefit; including the provision or assisting with the provision of any facilities that allow the public to better engage with these spaces. Such official status brings a number of benefits and duties.

Firstly, the charity is a separate legal entity. Unincorporated charities are not legal entities and, therefore, when they enter into commercial contracts, the trustees are effectively the parties to the contract.

Secondly, and more importantly from a financial perspective, the Wildlife Group as a registered charity can claim Gift Aid on eligible donations from eligible taxpayers. Currently that amounts to a further 25p of every £1 donated at absolutely no cost to the donor.

Thirdly, such official standing is recognised by grant providers giving what is a small local charity more clout in the tough competition for environmental funding.

The charity's Gift Aid declaration is available to download from the group's website, print, complete and submit should you wish to do so.



Improved app makes wildflower recording simpler

South Stoke wildflower walks have now been running for a couple of years, with the aims of helping people to identify the plants growing in the village, and also recording the species found for the National Biodiversity Network database. Historically recording the data has been an onerous task, involving looking at photographs taken, identifying the plant, and then logging the record onto iRecord <https://irecord.org.uk/>

But now an update to the iRecord app has been released, enabling a "1 step process". The app will now identify the plant from a photograph taken on a smartphone, and immediately upload the record, including the exact location. This simplified procedure means that records are now being updated "live" on every walk, rather than in a block at the end of the growing season.



Bee Orchid found during wildflower surveys



Upcoming Events and Dates

As ever we have many plans in the pipeline. We love to see new and also familiar faces joining in and welcome everyone no matter your level of experience.

Glow Worm Survey – Saturday, 22nd July 9pm (meet at The Perch & Pike pub)

Bat Walk – Friday, 4th August 8.30pm (meet at The Perch and Pike pub)

BBQ with the Amenities Charity – Sunday, 27th August

Visit the SSWCG website <https://www.southstokewildlife.org/> or find us on social media for up to date information about upcoming events and how to get involved.