



# NEWSLETTER

## October 2017

### Issue 18

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The past few months have been very challenging ones for YACWAG and it is thanks to all our busy volunteers that we have kept focused on the good things that our charity is doing 'on the ground'.

It is even possible to lose sight of wildlife altogether while wrestling with problems like sorting out our financial commitments, organising management of our land and dealing with Land Registry.

Much of the work we have been doing behind the scenes has been sorting out issues to make the charity's future secure so YACWAG's supporters are not left with problems to solve.

I am delighted that our land now has the Charity Commission as the 'official custodian', which means there will be no cost to the charity when trustees retire or change. This issue has taken a great deal of time for the Chairman and Secretary and has taken up two years of bureaucratic hair-pulling.

Some of the things that have given a lift, however, are the things that are YACWAG's core activities - what it is all about: meeting people and sharing the wonders of local wildlife, and seeing the results of our efforts in our nature reserves.

Thank you all for your continued support. Tony Moulin, Chair

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#### **BATS R US**

**SATURDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2-5**

**AT CLEEVE VILLAGE HALL**

- **learn about bats**
- **greater horseshoe project results**
- **meet a live bat**
- **batty arts and crafts fun**
- **refreshments**

**FREE EVENT FOR ALL AGES**

## So - what's it like to take part in the Batmap Survey?

*Win Lowman shares her experience this summer*



So far, so good! The weather has been very pleasant and it has been surprisingly relaxing spending a couple of hours in the dark just waiting for some bat action. One of the most enjoyable aspects has been meeting other YACWAG members doing the surveys.

Our first outing was in a lane in Wrington – we sat near a gateway with our bat detectors and were joined for most of the time by a very friendly stripey ginger kitten. He liked me a lot and even sat on my lap – it wasn't till the next day when I began to itch that I realised he must have been covered in fleas! Another recorder did better than me in the same area being provided with tea and biscuits by the nearest homeowner. It was lovely to hear a very vocal tawny owl in this area.

The power of a high-vis vest was useful when we parked our cars by Corporation Wood – we looked a bit suspicious parking a car and a white van in this quiet spot in the dark when some dog walkers came back to their car. However, when they saw **YACWAG BAT GROUP** on our backs they came to have a chat and were interested in what we were doing. I say this was a quiet spot – that is until we got into position in the woods and realised we were just beyond the end of the runway at Bristol Airport and the noise when planes were taking off was incredible. However, there was a bit of bat activity and we enjoyed watching a badger in the field.

We have been using a traditional Batbox Duet detector where you have to set the frequency for each bat but also one of the new Echo Meters attached to an iPad screen which shows any bats in the area and pleasingly we have picked up Lesser and Greater Horseshoe bats. One evening in the lane at Wrington the bats were flying over my head on their way up the lane. Another surveyor further up the lane heard my message on the radio and a few seconds later the bats flew past him – so definitely a flight corridor - quite exciting!

We were pleased to use the Echo Meter with a YACWAG member who is deaf – she could see the bats flying overhead in her garden and we were able to show her the bat calls displayed on the screen - the app we use suggests the most likely species flying overhead.

We are looking forward to seeing the results of this year's Batmap Survey at the meeting on 28th October at Cleeve Village Hall.

## Harry's Oak – a Habitat in its Own Right

After the AGM last May a group of YACWAG members walked down from Hangstones in Stowey Road, Yatton, to see Harry's Plot – a small piece of land off Claverham Close which has been bequeathed to the charity. Its centrepiece is a mature oak tree, pictured on the right.



Tony and Faith Moulin had noticed an unusual gall on the tree. It had been identified with the help of a Facebook insect group and the record passed on to the Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre\* (BRERC). BRERC collects biological records from the West of England (former County of Avon) and these records are stored on a national database. This service is important to planning authorities in highlighting the presence of protected species. YACWAG regularly submits records of any unusual sighting from our area and we encourage our members to do the same. This contributes to our understanding of the impact of climate change on our local species and helps with monitoring our land.

When BRERC reviewed the record they queried it as it was something they had never come across before. 'Are you sure?' they asked. Faith said she could not be sure at all - but she had a photo. The photo was duly passed by BRERC to a gall expert and proclaimed to be correctly identified as Cotton-wool Gall (*Andricus quercusramuli*). This was the first record for the West of England and since then it has been discovered it is also the first record in the whole of the South West! They are probably under-recorded, so you can look out for them on oak trees now.



*Andricus quercusramuli*

Galls are caused by insects, in this case a tiny wasp which laid its eggs on an oak catkin in the Spring. The ball of hairs hides up to 20 gall chambers each occupied by one larva. This sexual generation matures in late June, the females laying eggs on buds on the oak tree. In turn these cause a different kind of gall on the oak buds from which will hatch the alternate asexual generation of the little wasps.

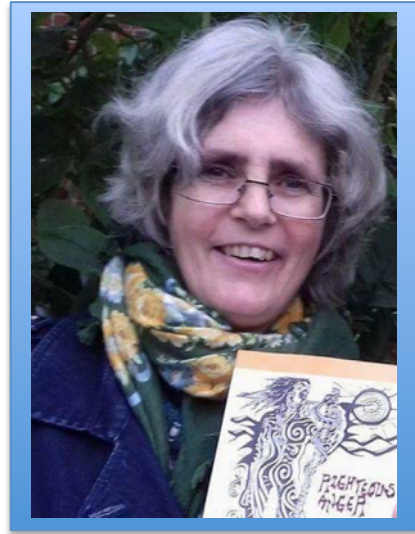
### **Interested in Wildlife? Do You Like Working with Computers?**

BRERC is looking to expand the number of regular volunteers at their Yatton office. Two YACWAG members already enjoy helping out for a couple of hours between 10.30am and 4.30pm on a Wednesday at Hangstones, Stowey Road, Yatton. You would probably have a meticulous approach, an eye for detail and be keen to learn new skills. If this is something that appeals to you, please email [volunteering@brerc.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@brerc.org.uk) and mention the Yatton office. Alternatively please ring Daniel on 0117 934 9833.

\*For information about BRERC see [www.brerc.org.uk](http://www.brerc.org.uk).

# YACWAGger Profile – Juley Howard

*Juley is a trustee of YACWAG and has been its recycling champion for many years. She is currently collecting biscuit wrappers - any brand - which are sent to McVities for recycling.*



## **How did you get interested in nature?**

I grew up in a village near Rugby, Warwickshire. I used to go on lots of walks and from an early age enjoyed collecting things – fossils, feathers, etc. I remember going for a walk one New Years Day one and finding a rabbit skull – I kept it for years.

I was a member of the RSPB Young Ornithologists Club. I got interested in birds mainly because I was curious about the seabirds I saw far from the sea in the Midlands. I liked cycling in the countryside and my interest in birds went well with that.

When I went to live at Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp during the years of anti-nuclear protest I couldn't believe the nightingales there. It was a different habitat from what I was used to in Rugby and I had only ever heard owls before at my Grandma's. At Greenham we heard owls all the time. At Greenham I was living outdoors for a few years and enjoyed being in the open air and having contact with nature. I would have become a better birdwatcher if I had not been so vain: I was short sighted but didn't want to wear glasses, so I switched my interest to trees, which are easier to observe with poor eyesight!

Once when I and a friend were hitch-hiking, the driver said that because of our interest in wildlife we should get into nature conservation. My friend Hannah said, 'We are trying to save the world from destruction! What is more for nature conservation?'

## **How did you come to get involved with YACWAG?**

I have been in Yatton for twenty years. I had been living in central Bristol for some time and wanted to live in the countryside. I was looking for somewhere to rent within an hour's bus ride of the city. I literally came to Yatton for the first time and rented a flat here. I didn't even realise there was a railway station! One day I walked down the Strawberry Line and bumped into a YACWAG workparty and asked what was being done. I joined YACWAG and later when I saw in the newsletter that a volunteer was needed to co-ordinate the recycling of printer cartridges, I decided to take that job on as I had always been very keen on recycling. I feel that being a member of YACWAG is a small thing to do in making the world a better place. I became a Trustee because I felt that it would be good for the charity to have someone with a general nature interest as a lay person rather than 'boffins'. I believe that everyone can make a difference and I

wanted my two children to see that it isn't only experts who can be useful to nature.

**How do you feel about YACWAG and what it is doing? What would you like to see in the future?**

YACWAG is involved in local community development. If everyone acted like YACWAG in their locality the world would be a better place. Local action links to global action. I wouldn't change anything that YACWAG does at all, or the way it does it. I don't think it is doing anything wrong at all.

The thing I really want to see is more members being involved in the work of YACWAG. It worries me that the people involved are getting older and we cannot see a line of succession.

*You can read more about Juley's experiences as an anti-nuclear protester in the decade 1983-1993 in the book 'Righteous Anger' available on Kindle or as a paperback from Amazon, other bookshops and Yatton News (Clive's).*

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***PLEASE PUT ANY (NON-SAVOURY) BISCUIT WRAPPERS THROUGH JULEY'S FRONT DOOR AT 3 BARBERRY FARM ROAD, YATTON, OR BRING TO ANY EVENT. This recycling of biscuit wrappers raises money for YACWAG.***

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**WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP ON YACWAG'S RESERVES THIS AUTUMN AND WINTER?**



YACWAG would be glad of some new volunteers on conservation projects this season. Join us for a Tree Maintenance Walk and see the Jubilee trees we planted five years ago. We will be checking ties and stakes and making sure they are in good health. Or perhaps you would like to help Trevor and others clean out and maintain YACWAG's extensive bird box estate? Other jobs might include some log stacking, bramble cutting and associated tasks on our reserves.

Helping on a work party is a great way to get to know other people and also to visit YACWAG reserves. These are often the occasions on which new wildlife sightings are made.

If you have any time to spare please let Win know and someone will be in touch with some suggested dates. All workparties are also on the YACWAG website calendar.

There are regular workparties at St Mary's Churchyard on the last Saturday of every month when pollinator-friendly plants are being planted on some of the old untended graves. YACWAG members also get notified of workparties at Yatton station garden. Other opportunities are more ad hoc, so please let Win know you are interested and she will let you know when things come up. All tools and training provided.



## FAREWELL TO THREE YACWAG SUPPORTERS



*Tony Moulin and Andrew Sheppy in 2007*

**NEIL TUTTIET** - Headteacher of St Andrew's School, Congresbury - had been a huge encouragement to YACWAG and visiting the school and its calm and enthusiastic pupils was always a pleasure. It was Neil's support for tree planting in the school grounds that led to the St Andrew's Jubilee Wood (60 trees planted on the school field to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.) Neil said that the children preferred playing among trees to playing on a grassy open area and encouraged the project. Neil will be greatly missed.



**Andrew Sheppy** had helped YACWAG for over a decade with conservation grazing on YACWAG reserves. He was knowledgeable and interested and his Dexter cattle did a wonderful job on Congresbury Moor to keep the fields in good condition for wildlife. In May this year he was particularly optimistic about the forthcoming season and it was a huge shock to hear a month later that he had suddenly died and the Cobthorn Trust would have to be wound up. He will be sadly missed both at the Plough quizzes and on the Moor.

**YACWAG is grateful to Steve Devine of Land Farm for stepping in with his Dexter herd to fulfil the reserve's grazing requirements this year.**

*Photo on left shows **Gerald Harris** in New Croft on his vintage tractor.*

*YACWAG Trustees were sorry to hear of the death of Gerald Harris of Kingston Seymour. Our 'Field Day' in 2002 and 2003 using traditional hay-making equipment was his idea. YACWAG was grateful to Gerald for his experience, expertise and support in the running of those public events with his extensive network of local farmers and countrymen.*

## REACHING OUT TO YOUNGER PEOPLE



Daniel and Heidi Hargreaves, along with Princess the Noctule Bat, enthused people about bats at the Yatton Schools Carnival in June. The Bat Cave housed displays and information and other YACWAG volunteers helped children to make bouncy bat hats and adults to mark on a large scale map of Yatton where they had seen bats.



At Congresbury Village Fete Sue Lovesey, Higgy and Chloe, with Holly Vickery, chose the Very Hungry Caterpillar as their book-themed stall, and were able to show live caterpillars to enthralled children and adults.



## **ST ANDREW'S WALK FOR WILDLIFE**

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) sent out a mail to members earlier this year advising that they were participating in 'Walk 4 Wildlife' this year and that there would be a schools' event. The idea was for people and schools with an empathy for wildlife to undertake a sponsored walk to raise funds for a wildlife organisation and to attempt to get in the Guinness Book of Records. Trevor Riddle mentioned this to Sue Lovesey who contacted St Andrew's School and to our delight the school said that they were keen to be involved. Sue Lovesey takes up the story:

Shortly after lunch, on the gloriously still and sunny afternoon of Friday 19th May, they set off class by class. Accompanied by a Police Community Support Officer, staff and many parents in hi-vis attire, they snaked along the A370 to the Strawberry Line. Once away from the traffic, everyone relaxed into a meander and the lively chatter of the party could be heard long before it was seen! Not even halfway at the left turn into Dolemoor Lane, young and old were enjoying the freedom and fresh air. In no time at all route marchers and stragglers alike reached Paul's Causeway and all continued on through the churchyard and back to school, arriving earlier than expected but still chatting and smiling. "Can we do it again?" one child asked.

Trevor again: After the event YACWAG representatives were invited to an assembly at the school for the sponsorship funds to be presented to us. It is no exaggeration to say that we were all shell-shocked at the amazing amount of £1,749.03 revealed visually to us, and it seems that this represented over two percent of the total collected throughout the UK. We are still waiting to hear if the event nationally created a world record. YACWAG is so grateful to the school and everyone involved there and we now have the pleasurable task of seeking a suitable project with connections to Congresbury and young people. We do hope to erect some smart new woodcrete bird boxes at the school this winter as a small starter.





### **Do you Enjoy Facebook?**

Join our Facebook Group, share your wildlife sightings and 'meet' other YACWAGgers.

### **Have You Thought About 'Give As You Live'?**

Please see our website for a link to start online shopping in a way that benefits YACWAG. It involves just one extra click per transaction; most of the big stores participate, even for your weekly grocery shop, so it is a painless way of supporting YACWAG at no cost to yourselves.

### **Do You Eat Biscuits?**

Here is another painless way of supporting YACWAG: eat biscuits! All the wrappers, from whatever brand, can be sent to McVities for recycling. Juley Howard is making this easy for YACWAG members, and raising a little bit of money in return. Simply pop your used wrappers through Juley's door at 3 Barberry Farm Road, Yatton, or bring them along to a meeting.

### **[www.yacwag.org.uk](http://www.yacwag.org.uk)**

Have you explored our new website yet? It is full of interesting facts and figures about YACWAG and its work and aims to give you a good insight into why and how we do what we do. We would love to hear what you think, or any ideas for improvement or addition.

### **Get Involved!**

**Please – our local wildlife needs you! Whatever your interest or ability there is something you can be doing to help.**

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