

MARCH & APRIL 2017 MAGAZINE

Welcome to the March and April 2017 edition of our Magazine. This issue runs from 1st March to 30th April.

Reports include:

- Monthly main meeting—a talk by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
- Walking Group—March
- Science, Nature and all Things Technical meeting—March talk about cheese.
- Garden Appreciation Group—March visit to Packwood House

Last update: 25th March 2017



Morris Dancing in Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, April 2016

March 2017 Meeting—Wildlife in Warwickshire

Jo Hands of the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust spoke to us about the activities and Nature Reserves in Warwickshire. There are 61 trust sites in Warwickshire and Coventry and Solihull that are managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. Some are small and some are large. The major site is Brandon Marsh and is the headquarters of the trust. It has a visitor centre and is set in 220 acres of pools and surrounds created from gravel workings. It is outstanding for birds and has eight bird hides around the site.

One of the publicity drives this year is about hedgehogs. We have seen a big reduction in the population of hedgehogs in the last few years, which is put down to loss of habitat and food sources. The spread of houses with fenced or walled gardens also does not help. But there are ways to make your garden more friendly to hedgehogs. They are gardener friendly as they help to keep down slugs and some insects.

There is a good website which can keep you in touch with things going on at Brandon Marsh and some of the other reserves. It is not expensive

to visit Brandon Marsh and it can be a rewarding day out, especially for children. There is a visitor centre with toilets and tearoom.

The bird population changes all year long depending on the weather and migratory sequences.

The trust always welcomes new members and offers free entrance to the various reserves once you join and pay a subscription. Some reserves may only be visited by members. There are events, particularly at Brandon Marsh for members and non members to engage with wildlife—such as birdspotting, listening to birdsong, building a den in the woods, seeking out fungi.

Below is the table of gifts and projects brought to the meeting to be sold to raise funds.



Jo Hands the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust representative.



Walking Group - Walk on Wednesday 8th March

Sandy Stewart led the March walk. Eight members of the walking group met in Clifford Chambers despite heavy rain over-night and a grey sky. It was muddy in places due to the rain over the last week but the weather stayed dry for the walk and the sun even came out towards the end!

They walked from Clifford Chambers looking towards Brailes Hill & Ilmington Hill eventually reaching the attractive village green of Preston on Stour. Joining Shakespeare's Way they had good views of the early Gothic- Revival mansion and Alscot Park as they made their way back through Atherstone on Stour. Everyone seemed to

enjoy the lovely views and chat during the walk

The photograph below shows the group outside Preston on Stour church when they had stopped for a break.



Science, Nature and All Things Technical Group

"Cheese" by Ian Roberts, assisted by Elaine Roberts

Friday 10th March 2017

Ian gave an illustrated talk about some aspects of cheese. We make many types of cheese in the UK and we also have ready access through our supermarkets and specialist cheese importers to many cheeses from Europe and the rest of the world. Cheese can be and is made from several types of milk, including cow's milk, ewe's milk, goat's milk and buffalo milk. Also, it can be produced as full fat cheese, low fat cheese and several other classifications, including blue cheeses. There is even one which included an ash layer where the ash is applied to an open surface at the end of a day and stays there at the start of the new day.

Ian started by describing some of the popular cheeses and less well known cheeses and their effect on use, cooking and taste with sample for us to check.



The pictures illustrate the audience with sample tables and a plate of cheese samples to illustrate the taste tests.

Some thought was given to national characteristics of when and how we eat cheese.

In UK we will often have a cheese sandwich or have a cheese and biscuit course at the end of a meal. The French tend to have a cheese course during a meal and eat with a knife and fork. The Italians use a lot of cheese in cooking, much more so than British or French customs.

All in all, cheese is delicious. There are many types and tastes to try and many ways of using or eating cheese. Just get out there and try it.

Garden Appreciation Group—March meeting

In March the group made a visit to Packwood House, a National Trust property near Solihull. The house is an Tudor manor house that was updated during the 1920s and 1930s by the then owner, Graham Baron Ash, who then passed it on to the National Trust as he had no immediate heirs, being a bachelor with no children.

The garden has herbaceous borders, a park full of elegantly maintained yew trees and a larger park with lake, orchard and woods. During the spring there are many daffodils to enliven the garden. There is also a well maintained kitchen garden producing fruit and vegetables for the restaurant.

