



Chairman's Report

Finally, we were able to open the Reserve in May with some restrictions still in place. The faulty toilet door has been fixed as well as the faulty lock to the East hide. Hopefully we should not have any more problems with them.

This year we had over 135 bird species recorded visiting the site, with a family of breeding Avocets (3 chicks) on the Ash pool. The adults were very protective of the chicks, driving everything away that got close. The family moved across the West hide car park and on to the mud flats where the chicks continued to feed and grow. All three chicks were seen to fly and hopefully headed south. Hatched on 23/06/2021 and last seen on 22/08/2021. Thanks to Peter Haslem for these records.

If any member would like to get involved with the DNS or if you have any issues to put forward, please contact any of the Committee.

Please remember to renew your membership this year and hopefully we can have a full year open. Please remember to keep to the Welsh covid rules and the DNS Reserve rules.

I will be standing down as Chair at the 2022 AGM, so plenty of notice for anyone who would like to take on the role.

Phil Hotchkiss (Chair)

Below are the results of the poll conducted by Survey Monkey and postal ballots (to be completed by IMS late on 29th November 2021

| Responses | online | postal |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|
| sent | 428 | 45 |
| returned | 175 | 12 |
| % returned (37% overall) | 40.70% | 26.70% |

| ITEM | YES | NO | ABSTAIN |
|---|-----|----|---------|
| 1. acceptance of minutes of AGM on 26/2/2021 | 183 | 2 | 2 |
| 2. Acceptance of Chairman's report | 180 | 11 | 6 |
| 3. Acceptance of Treasurer's report | 183 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Election of Phil Hotchkiss as Chairman | 183 | 1 | 2 |
| 5. Election of Bob Lee as Treasurer | 182 | 1 | 4 |
| 6. Election of Ian Spence as Secretary | 184 | 1 | 2 |
| 7. Election of John Briggs as Membership Secretary | 183 | 1 | 2 |
| 8. Election of other committee members: Dave Colton Keith Davies, Bill Dickinson, Peter Haslem, Alan Smethurst | 184 | 1 | 2 |
| 10. Preference for meetings to start at 19.30 | 112 | 58 | 17 |
| 9. Preference for meetings to start at 14.31 | 59 | 98 | 29 |

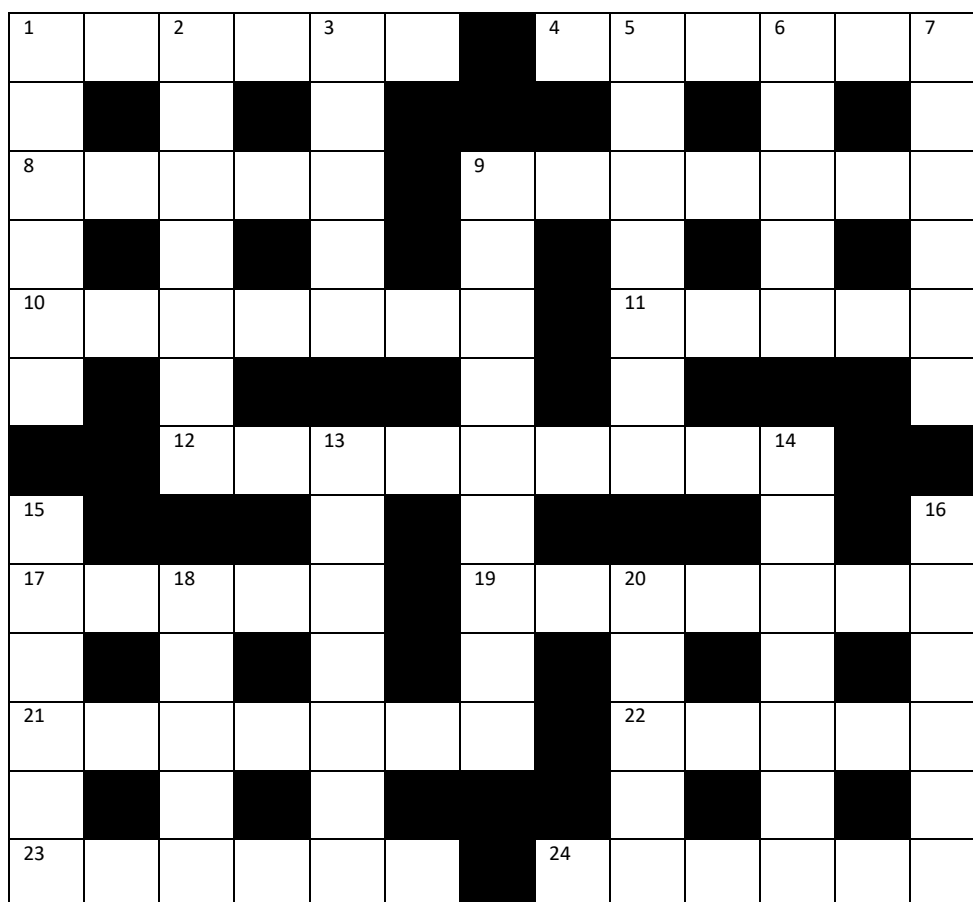
The date of the next DNS Committee meeting will be 1st February 2022 at 13.30. Anybody with an issue they would like to be aired, please contact the Secretary, Ian Spence or alternatively, you would be most welcome to come along to the meeting.

Many thanks to Bill Dickinson for constructing a number of nest boxes and to Raymond Roberts, Keith Steward and Ron Plummer for their contributions to this month's Newsletter.

Finally, the Committee would like to wish all our members a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year

Alan Smethurst

Coffeetime Crossword



ACROSS:

1. Title given to a nun (6)
4. Infrequently (6)
8. Long necked animal (5)
9. Modesty (7)
10. Obvious (7)
11. Cuban dance (5)
12. Shown (9)
17. Light purple (5)
19. Slope (7)
21. Trip (7)
22. Wild West show (5)
23. One taking part in game (4,4)

DOWN:

1. Precious metal (6)
2. Language of East Africa (7)
3. Dodge (5)
5. Selected passage (7)
6. Jeans material (5)
7. Distress signal (6)
9. Sleuth (9)
13. Measure of noise intensity (7)
14. Non - iron (4,3)
15. Shut (6)
16. Consume (6)
18. Wingless parasitic insect (5)
20. Shade of pink (5)

Hilbre Island 21st Aug

The Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve is within the Dee Estuary on the northwest coast. The Dee Estuary is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area, a Ramsar Site which is a Wetland of International Importance and a candidate EU Special Area of Conservation. The group comprises of three tidal islands, Little Eye, Middle Eye and Hilbre Island.

It has to be said that that weather wasn't at its best and the rain continued all morning before easing off after lunch.

Starting at the Sailing Centre the walk over to Hilbre Island is out to Little Eye turn right and continue on the sand past Middle Eye to the ramp on Hilbre. It was whilst passing alongside Middle Eye that three species of jellyfish; barrel, blue and compass, were found stranded on the sand by the outgoing tide.

Between Middle Eye and Hilbre Island Oystercatchers, Herring gulls and several little Egrets were massing before the high tide.

Walking up the track onto Hilbre Island there was a sense of calm and peacefulness, even in the rain. Taking shelter in the old lifeboat station from the inclement weather the Rock pipits, that I believe fledged back in May, were still present and stuck around all day. On the rocks below the lifeboat station was a group of Turnstones that were only put off as the incoming tide began to cover the rocks.



Rock Pipit - photo, Bill Dickinson



Sandwich Tern - photo, Bill Dickinson



Northern Wheatear - photo, Bill Dickinson

Birds on the Island itself are not numerous but apart from the Rock pipits there were Meadow pipits, Pied wagtails, Crows, three Wheatears, and a good number of Swallows flying overhead and zipping through the old lifeboat station.

Out at sea were distant Gannets and a flock of common Scoter, closer into the shore were Cormorants and Sandwich terns. The ubiquitous grey seals appeared to be popping up everywhere keeping a watchful eye on the Island.

Heading back to West Kirby the rain had abated and it was a nice end to the day with sightings of ringed Plover, Dunlin, black-tailed Godwit and Curlew.

Bill Dickinson

Llanfairfechan & Morfa Madryn 12th Sept

On arriving at the promenade at Llanfairfechan, our first port of call, we had good views of Puffin Island and Penmon Point, beyond a calm sea. 250 hectares of sand and mud habitats can be seen, which are important feeding grounds for several native and migratory bird species, such as Shelducks, Oystercatchers, Curlews, Lapwing and large flocks of Wigeon.

We assembled on the promenade, initially viewing over the large expanse of sand that was exposed at low water, birds noted were little Egrets, Curlews, Oystercatchers, Herring gulls and a couple of great Black backed gulls. A small flock of common Scoters were seen flying over the sea.

No Dippers were present on the Afon Llanfairfechan but we did have the briefest glimpse of a grey Wagtail before it disappeared upstream and out of sight.

A walk through Glan y Mor Elias Nature Reserve to the edge of Morfa Madryn produced a good number of Swallows and ringed Plovers, forty plus of each. A large flock of Linnets was descending onto the path and then flying back into the scrub.



Morfa Madryn Nature Reserve, a mixture of primarily wetland habitats – woodland, coastal pasture, freshwater pools and reed beds. Three bird watching hides where a variety of birds can be spotted. The reserve was created as a disturbance free area for birds to feed rest and breed, it is an important nesting site for Lapwing and attracts a good variety of birds all year round. From the elevated lookout we saw Willow warbler, Goldcrest, Bullfinch and two Ravens were spotted gliding down the hillside beyond Aber Falls.



From the hides, a good place for hightide wader watching, we had good views of Snipe, Redshank, red breasted Mergansers, Sanderling, Dunlin and Knot.

Walking back to the cars the incoming tide had brought in Shelduck, great crested Grebe and Eider ducks together with a flypast of fourteen Sandwich terns and the local HM Coastguard.

Bill Dickinson

Bird report Jul-Nov 2021

Late summer leading into autumn on the Reserve witnesses the successes of breeding birds with parents and young feeding on what nature provides. The Reserve provides trees and vegetation which in turn provides a source of insects and seed. The estuary mud provides micro organism and crustacean needed by our waders to survive. The Reserve has evolved into a delicately balanced eco system that supports our resident and migratory birds.

Trees, hedges and green areas are managed within an agreed **Management Plan** to optimise that resource. Sometimes the Reserve looks untidy with long grass, brambles and hedges that encroach onto the road and with nettles and reeds that inhibit the hide view. Mowing is done as late as possible to match insects' life cycles, for grasses to seed and berries to mature. We benefit from seeing large flocks of feeding finches and the attendant falcons.

Water levels controlled by the tidal estuary and the sluices that help retain it produce a roosting area used by thousands of Redshank on passage throughout August and September. Low tides mean no water in the bunded pools and High tides mean no margin for roosting birds. Necessary work will have to be agreed and added to **The Management Plan** to preserve the effectiveness of the sluices and the water levels (timed to have minimum impact on our passage waders).

Bird Sightings.

July: Blackcap with young, Reed warbler, Grey partridge, Marsh harrier, 40 Linnet, Spoonbill, 14 Great egret, 70 Little egret, Whimbrel, Little ringed plover, Willow warbler, Chiffchaff, Yellow legged gull, Turnstone, 2000 Redshank, Sanderling, Knot, Snipe, 10 Spotted Redshank, Common sandpiper, 1200 Black-tailed godwit, 14 Goosander, 2 Mediterranean gulls, 400 Starlings.

August: *Reserve bred Avocets seen to fly.* Green sandpiper, 500 Mallard, 2 Kingfisher, Bar-tailed godwit, 3000 Redshank, Marsh harrier (red wing tags), 90 Little egret, 21 Great egret, Stonechat, Wheatear, 24 Greenshank, Merlin, 15 Spotted Redshank, Green woodpecker, 100 Pintail, 3 Hobby, 20 Wigeon, 300 Teal.

September: 60 Goldfinch, 5 Little Stint, Barnacle geese, 30 Greenshank, Grey wagtail, 19 Spotted Redshank, Ruff, 2500 Teal, Sedge warbler, 24 Snipe, Cetti's warbler, Curlew sandpiper, Black tern, 15 Avocet, Hen harrier.

October: 7 Red-legged partridge, Nuthatch (reserve rarity), Curlew sandpiper, 27 Greenshank, 15 Spotted redshank, Spoonbill, Grey plover, 17 Little grebe, 450 Pintail, 400 Wigeon, Redwing, Goldcrest.

Peter and Sue Haslem (Recorders).

The history of the Reserve – part I

Forty years ago the chairman of Connah's Quay Urban District Council called a public meeting to determine whether there was sufficient interest to form a Natural history group in Connah's Quay. Twenty people turned up and there was unanimous agreement to form a Group. It was initially called Deeside Naturalists' Club but soon changed its title to Deeside Naturalists' Society. Cedric Lynch was appointed chairman.

The committee was soon underway planning field meetings and a series of lectures which would be held in the schoolroom of St John's Methodist Church.

In those early days I can recall fascinating talks given by the late Dr John Raines and Mrs Valerie McFarland. on the Dee Estuary, they were a revelation.

Field meetings were also planned to local high spots such as Wepre Park, the steelworks and the river shoreline following the track alongside the Nature Trail.

One year on the Government introduced a scheme called the Quality-of-Life Experiment, whereby funds could be allocated to organisations to expand their activities. The Society applied for a grant to buy a bird hide. The application was successful. We were getting a hide but where would we put it?

There were three fairly good local birding areas, the sewage works, a non-runner, Wepre Park and possibly a spot somewhere overlooking the Dee Estuary.

While we were trying to sort this out we decided to build the hide ourselves, thereby saving money to buy a telescope.

A number of members enrolled in an evening woodwork class at the local High School and built the hide there in sections.

Meantime we asked the manager of the CEGB power station Mr Keith Steward if we could place the hide on the site overlooking the embryo bunded pool. Mr Steward who has been so helpful to the Society over the years agreed. Much later he was honoured with an OBE.



The cv of the first hide is quite interesting. It was located on the top edge of the Bunded Pool embankment. At one particularly high tide the embankment was eroded to such an extent that the hide slid down the bank into the water and floated serenely across the pool. We could have been erecting the hide alongside the bandstand at Chester if an island in the pool had not halted its progress. At low water the hide was taken apart and relocated in its original position after forming a solid base.

The CEGB were now undertaking a considerable amount of work using earth moving equipment. Miraculously the equipment was turned around and within a few days we had a Bunded Pool with islands and later weirs. So now the Reserve was really taking shape and in 1978 the Society and CEGB were awarded a Prince of Wales award for conservation.



The power station burned coal to produce steam to power the turbines to generate electricity. Coal ash is a product of this activity. The power station added water to the ash to form a slurry. This was then pumped along a pipeline to a constructed bunded area on the salt marsh. The Ash Pool is typical example of a bunded area but is much smaller in size.

Each lagoon had a filter to drain water from the slurry to the river. These filters of rectangular shape, were steel pile driven and filled with grades of stone. Such was the amount of fly ash produced that all of the Reserve fields are grown over about ten feet of ash.

At a later stage the station ran out space to deposit the ash, so the boundary of the land was extended to the stream flowing across front of the front of the west hide. The filling of the created space commenced but was soon aborted because the power station ceased to generate. It was soon obvious that an underground water course had been uncovered during the excavation . The area was filling up with water. So we now had the Ash Pool which has made a significant increase in the ornithological value of the site.

Raymond Roberts.

Dr Glen Morris has produced the third edition of his bird report “The Birds of Connah’s Quay Nature Reserve and Oakenholt Marsh”. Listing the 247 bird species and the mammals recorded in the area. A publication which will be of immense interest to members visiting the Reserve. The book will sell at about £5 depending upon sales. I doubt if there such a quality report on a Reserve is to be found anywhere.

Raymond Roberts.

RSPB Conwy 21st Nov

It was just the weather for birding – bright, clear and dry. Conwy RSPB did not disappoint, early sightings of 2 water rail set the standard for the day.

Waders on the main lagoon included a large flock of Redshank with five Spotted Redshanks on one end and six Dunlin on the other.



There was a good selection of ducks: Wigeon, Shoveler, Tufted, Teal, Gadwall and Mallard and also Little grebe and five red-breasted Mergansers. A flock of black-tailed Godwit looked stunning as they flew by with the blue sky as a backdrop.

A reed Bunting was spotted at the top of some phragmites immediately above a Water rail. A lone mute Swan dabbled at the back of the lagoon.

Returning to the Centre for morning coffee, blue tit, great Tit, Chaffinch, long-tailed Tit, Robin, Dunnock and Blackbird were added to the list.



Our mid-morning walk to the estuary was enjoyable but we dipped on the Firecrest which was reportedly about. There were plenty of birds on the river with the imposing medieval Conwy castle as background. A very, very, very late Swallow surprised us as it zipped by, and this was followed by sightings of Snipe, Pochard, Oystercatcher and Lapwing. We ticked off all the gulls, including common, and followed up with great views of 2 Peregrines and a Raven. As we got back to the cars a Bullfinch was flitting among the trees at the back of the car park.



After lunch we went on to Pensarn beach for a little bit of sea watching on the way home. Facing directly into a strong northerly wind, this was only for the hardy! There were plenty of Scoter, two hundred plus, both on the sea and in the air, but it was too rough for large numbers of other species. Eider, Cormorant and a small flock of Oystercatchers along with a good number of gulls completed our day.

A total number of forty-six species and an excellent day out.

Bill Dickinson

Treasurer's Report 2020/2021

Deeside Naturalists Society Accounts for the year ended 31st October 2021 Registered Charity No. 510146

ACCOUNTING STATEMENT Receipts and payments basis

| <u>Income</u> | <u>2020/2021</u> | <u>2019/2020</u> |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| Bank Interest | 1.52 | 18.88 |
| Donations | 92.18 | 1765.00 |
| Subscriptions | 840.00 | 4942.00 |
| Gift Aid Tax Rebate | 136.20 | 903.35 |
| Visits | | 66.00 |
| Total Income | <u>1069.90</u> | <u>7695.23</u> |
| <u>Expenditure</u> | | |
| Insurance | 102.20 | 113.00 |
| Printing, Photocopying, Stationery, Postage | 1274.53 | 902.31 |
| Room Hire | | 100.00 |
| Guest Speakers | | 110.00 |
| New keys / locks | 240.00 | 797.53 |
| Bird Food | 555.57 | 302.78 |
| FLVC subscription | | |
| Membership | 50.00 | 50.00 |
| Web Hosting | 388.46 | 15.09 |
| Travel | | 30.00 |
| Equipment | | |
| Repairs and Maintenance | 2836.00 | 1484.00 |
| Visits | | 20.00 |
| AGM | 19.00 | |
| Books | 25.00 | 10.20 |
| Total Payments | <u>5490.76</u> | <u>3934.91</u> |
| Balance for Year | -4420.86 | 3760.32 |
| Cash funds last year end | 22325.76 | 18135.44 |
| Transfer to/from Key Money | 295.00 | 430.00 |
| Cash funds this year end | <u>18199.90</u> | <u>22325.76</u> |

Bob Lee, Treasurer

DNS Website (www.deenats.org.uk)

I took over the editing of the DNS website in 2012 and since then it has gone through several iterations. Not least the change of the web address from *deesidenaturalists.org.uk* to the current one *deenats.org.uk*. It was felt that trying to type in the full version, especially on phones or smaller tablets, could cause some frustration and changing it to a simplified version made more sense.

Over the years several of the original concepts; Sales and Wants option, Uniper information page and members images have been discontinued either through lack of use or members preferring to use Facebook and other social media channels. Also, at the AGM two years ago it was agreed to discontinue the passworded Members Only page for similar reasons.

The current version of the website has been designed to hold details of the annual programme (field trips, members events etc), the constitution and regulations governing entry along with contact details of the committee and the membership renewal forms.

It also holds electronic copies of past newsletters and the annual site reports. And, for visitors to the site, a brief history of the Society and joining instructions.

There is also a page covering the Recording of bird sightings that members may find useful.

The front page (shown here) contains any relevant notices and information that the committee wishes to advise members of. The date at the bottom of the page shows when it was last updated.

The website is designed to work on desktop PCs, tablets and smart phones so the format of the page may look different to this image depending on the device you are using to view it on.

In adopting the current design, it is hoped that it will meet the needs of the Society going forward. Please check the main page regularly for any changes that the committee needs to pass on.

Bob Must, web editor

The screenshot shows the front page of the Deenats website. At the top, there is a blue header with the text "Welcome To The Website Of The Deeside Naturalists' Society" and a navigation menu with links: Home, About Us, Join Us, Find Us, Contact Us, Group Visits, Programme, Recording, and Members. Below the header is a large green box containing several sections of text. The first section is titled "Reserve Now Open" and contains a notice for members. The second section is titled "2022 Field Meetings" and contains information about the upcoming year's meetings. Below this is a section for "Additional Notices" with two sub-sections: "Photography Group and Wednesday Club" and "Problems with emailing to btinternet accounts". At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the text "Click here to contact the Web Editor by email" and "This page was last updated on: Fri, 01-Oct-2021 13:48".

Field Events 2022

Sunday 9 January, BEDDMANARCH BAY AND INLAND SEA. The Beddmanarch is a (SSSI), the site comprises the area of coastal saltmarshes, mudflats and shallow coastal water. The Inland Sea is adjacent to the bay but isolated by the A55. Meet Penrhos Coastal Park at 10.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Thursday 3 February, RIVER CLWYD. The stretch of the tidal River Clwyd between Rhyl and Rhuddlan provides good birdwatching, with close views of mudflats and river channel from either bank. Meet at Rhyl Harbour Car Park at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson on 07968438121 for more details.

Saturday 19 March, GIGRIN FARM AND ELAN VALLEY for red Kites and more. Meet at 11.0am in the small car park at the reception area of Woodlands Caravan Park, Devils Bridge. Post Code SY23 3JW, we will then continue along the Elan Valley to Gigrin Farm in time for feeding, prices are £8.00, concessions £7.00. It is strongly recommended that individuals (not DNS leader) book online, gigrin.uk . Contact Ron Plummer on 07778557402 for more details.

Thursday 14 April, WORLDS END, LLANGOLLEN. For black Grouse. Meet at grid reference SJ233484, World's End at 7.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Saturday 14 May, WHIXALL MOSS. Raised peat bog SSSI with rare flora and fauna. Maybe a Hobby? Meet at Morris's bridge car park, Whixall at 10.30am Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details

Saturday 27 August, FRODSHAM/WEAVER BEND. Migrants and waders on the settling pools and the Weaver Bend. Meet at Brook Furlong (motorway bridge) Frodsham at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Saturday 10 September, CONNAH'S QUAY RESERVE, high tide watch, Members Day, Meet Field Study Centre at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Sunday 16 October: Field trip to **POINT OF AYR AND BIG POOL WOODS.** Coastal and woodland birds. Meet at the Station Road car park at 9.00 am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222 for more details

Saturday 12 November Anglesey **MALTRAETH AND CORS DDYGA.** Meet at RSPB Cors Ddyga, grid ref: SH463725 at 9.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Saturday 10 December, GREENFIELD PARK AND DOCK. Woodland and estuary birds. Meet at Greenfield Valley Park car park, off Greenfield Rd, at 9.00am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222 for more details.

Bill Dickinson

Crossword Answers

ACROSS: 1. Sister. 4. Seldom. 8. Llama. 9. Decency. 10. Evident. 11. Rumba. 12. Indicated. 17. Lilac. 19. Incline. 21. Stumble. 22. Rodeo. 23. Dwells. 24. Player.

DOWN: 1. Silver. 2. Swahili. 3. Evade. 5. Excerpt. 6. Denim. 7. Mayday. 9. Detective. 13. Decibel. 14. Drip dry. 15. Closed. 16. Devour. 18. Louse. 20. Coral.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

A paper copy of the application form is included with this newsletter for the renewal of membership for 2022. Fees for 2022 are being held at the current level and membership renewal is due on 1st January 2022.

We have made a number of changes made to the application and renewal process.

The application form has been revised to reflect current requirements of Gift Aid and the GDPR over the storage, use of data and how we contact you. Please complete the Gift Aid Section, if applicable, so we have an up-to-date record of your wishes even if you have completed a Gift Aid Declaration before.

Payment of the membership subscription is now possible using bank transfer as well as by cheque. Please ensure you include your surname and membership number as the reference if paying by Bank Transfer so we can identify your payment.

The membership application and renewal form is available on the Society's web site and can be completed on line prior to printing.

Can I remind members that keys to the reserve are on loan and should be returned to the Membership Secretary if you no longer wish to continue with your membership. If you return within 13 months of expiry of your membership, your deposit will be refunded. After 13 months your deposit will be forfeited and incorporated into the Society's funds.

John Briggs (membership secretary)

DNS Art Group

We are a small group of members who enjoy painting together each month. We paint in various mediums and gain stimulation and encouragement from each other.

If you would like to join us, you would be most welcome. Our meetings are on the second Thursday of the month in the Field Study Centre from 1-30 until 3-30 pm.

Contact: Kay Mattocks on 01244 821810

Digital Media

Web site: www.deenats.org.uk

Email address: webeditor@deenats.org.uk

Facebook: MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY