

Issue 167

DECEMBER 2025

Registered Charity No. 510146

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This has been a rather sad year with the passing of our founder member Raymond Roberts in June, longstanding member Carl Boswell who passed peacefully in a care home in Wiltshire in November and Bill Dickinson our field trips organiser and leader who passed away whilst on a birding holiday in Spain.

The Society is designated 'naturalist' - so an overview: We have put some more bat boxes up in the vicinity of the Dee hide and when checked, one had a few bat droppings and another had the beginning of a European hornet's nest.

On the road that crosses the Reserve there is a plant named black horehound which is rather scarce in North Wales and attracts lots of insects, especially carder bees. I am sure you will have seen the cluster of pyramid orchids near to the Middle hide, there are also single plants elsewhere but no bee orchids this year.

As for butterflies – on the buddleia bushes on the estuary road, in mid-July ten species have been identified.

Now for all the birders, where my highlights of the year were the 30+ whooper swans in January, an increase in the number of avocet on site and consequently more chicks reared, and a spoonbill at the end of the revetment. Thanks to Peter Haslem who showed me a curlew sandpiper in breeding plumage (stunning).

Uniper have informed us that work on the sluices, West hide steps, tree roots on the road and enlargement of the Ash pool island is imminent. I hope so.

All that remains to say is thank you to the committee members for their help this year especially Peter Haslem who is standing down from the committee but will continue as bird recorder.

This coming year we will be looking for two new committee members. Anyone who feels they would like to participate more in the running of the Society, please contact the secretary, Ian Spence. Thank you

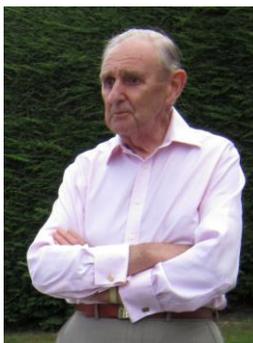
Keith Davies (Chair)



Bill Dickinson was a long-standing member of DNS and was our field trip coordinator and leader. An avid birder who travelled globally to fulfil his passion and who was very knowledgeable on the subject. Personally he was instrumental in a number of my lifetime sightings.

Rest well my friend.

Alan Smethurst



We met Carl Boswell on an Adobe Photoshop training course at Kelsterton College in Connah's Quay. During my time as Chair of DNS I was keen to make more use of the Field Studies Centre. When Carl joined DNS we spoke about starting a Photographic Group which Carl agreed to manage, this was held once a month on a Friday. His wife Doreen a keen art lover also agreed to start the Art Group which is still running today.

Carl became a committee member and his vast experience in his former occupation proved invaluable. Carl and Doreen had a beautiful garden and paddock in New Brighton and were keen bee keepers and gardeners. They eventually moved south to be near to their son, where sadly Carl passed away.

As friends, you couldn't wish to meet a nicer couple.

David and Janice Jones

Field trip DNS Reserve 14th September

Initially six of us met up at the re-vamped and redecorated field study centre for a warm drink before we set out to walk up to the West Hide. The day wasn't showing much promise it was overcast with heavy clouds.

As we walked towards the bunded pools a few other members joined us. Unfortunately, due to the collapsed sluice gates the pools aren't holding water these days so it is a bit hit and miss as to the level of water and the birds that are about. However today we were in luck with two curlew sandpipers, a green sandpiper, twelve little egrets, black-tailed godwits, a large flock of redshanks and several greenshanks.



Walking up the road we spotted a number of small birds wren, dunnock, greenfinch, blackbird, blue, great, and long tailed tits. Flying over the vegetation on the estuary was a charm of goldfinches, some fifty plus, landing on thistles and then flying up onto an elder bush.

Approaching the West Hide four avocets were on the estuary together with cormorants, shelducks, curlews and a great spotted woodpecker flew over the trees by the meadow trail. There was a steady stream of swallows flying south along the reserve, winter was on its way.

From within the West Hide we had views over the English side of the estuary of two marsh harriers drifting over the marsh, three great egrets, a peregrine chasing, but not catching a black headed gull.



We returned to the Field Study Centre, meeting up with a couple more members, just before the rains started. Whilst having lunch in the comfort of the centre we discussed possible field meeting venues for 2026.

The total number of species seen was forty-five and the stars of the show were the pair of curlew sandpipers. Many thanks to the members who turned up on the day

Bill Dickinson

Field trip RSPB Conwy 2nd Oct



RSPB Conwy was created in the early 1990's using the material excavated from the construction of the A55 Conwy tunnel. An area of mudflats was transformed into multiple habitats of lagoons, salt flats, reedbeds and grasslands. It was finally opened to the public in 1995.

Our small party met up at the visitors centre where we immediately had a number of long tailed tits flying overhead before heading to the Border lookout which proved rather disappointing due to the absence of any substantial water in the pool. The only subjects to be seen were magpies and crows. Continuing in a clockwise direction around the reserve we stopped at the feeder station where we had excellent views of greenfinch, chaffinch, goldfinch and an extremely lively squirrel. Onward to the Bridge pond hoping for a water rail sighting but all we had for company were the usual friendly robins.

We carried on to the Carneddau hide where the water level was also very low, however here we had more success with views of Little grebe, wigeon, mallard, moorhen coot, lapwing and common sandpiper. A sparrowhawk sat preening for a good ten minutes on the far bank giving superb views in the spotting scope.



Taking the Ganol trail to the estuary as the Ynys viewing screen was closed due to a wasp nest we stopped at the Foel Fras viewing screen and were rewarded by sightings of tufted duck, lapwing, redshank, mallard, teal, wigeon, moorhen and a solitary little egret.

Travelling downstream on the estuary bank we saw a number of heron and cormorants with curlew, oystercatcher plus black-headed, lesser and great black-backed gulls, and a lone great white egret. On the mudflats just before the bridge and encountered a group of around 30 redshank, lapwings, wigeon and a single pied wagtail while a buzzard was spotted thermalling over toward the Carneddau range. We did venture to the Conwy side of the road bridge where we had views of three great crested grebes.

All in all the weather was kind to us and an enjoyable day was had by all,

Alan Round

New Zealand

In February this year, I decided to re visit New Zealand after a lapse of ten years.

In 2015 I spent the month of February touring the South Island alone and by car, anticlockwise from Christchurch.

This year I followed the same route and used the same lodgings to see what changes there had been, if any.

From Christchurch, I drove north to Kaikoura then Blenheim. From there it was across country to Westport then south to Punakaiki, Greymouth, Fox Glacier, Wanaka, Queenstown, Te Anau, Invercargill and Bluff. I then followed the Catlins Coast around the bottom east corner and north to Dunedin, Moeraki, Twizel, Geraldine and back to Christchurch. A distance of 3500 kilometres.

I had not really gone with the intention of having a bird watching holiday, but I did have binoculars and camera with me at all times.

At Kaikoura I had booked for a two hour whale watching cruise.

In 2016 Kaikoura was hit by an earthquake of 7.8 magnitude, that destroyed road and rail links and effectively cut the town off from the rest of the surrounding country for quite some months.

The town, when I arrived, looked no different from what I remembered. I did find out, however, that during the quake, the sea bed rose by up to four metres.

The whale watch cruise takes passengers away from the coast by seven nautical miles, to the Kermadec Trench, which runs for 60 kilometres and reaches depths of 1200 metres. This is the sperm whale's feeding ground. Leaving the marina, our guide said there were whales in the area and we should see at least two. She was right, as we neared the feeding grounds the skipper slowed the launch as two water spouts were seen.



The whales stayed on the surface for about ten minutes before diving, plenty of time for photos to be taken. It's a pity that nothing more of the whales were seen there than fin and water spout. These creatures measure seventeen metres in length. All the while, our guide was giving out information about the whales and said the sighting of two whales was not always possible. As she was talking, the skipper shouted that another two whales had been spotted not far away, and we headed off to see them. By now the guide was getting excited, four whales was unheard of, and joked "A round of applause and a prize for anybody seeing any more". She had not even finished when I looked to my right and shouted "Starboard side, midships". Not two hundred metres away from us, another two whales spouted. The guide was ecstatic, jumping up and down and laughing. Never, as long as she had been guiding, had six whales been seen during one cruise. I was given a round of applause but had to refuse my prize, it was a free whale watching cruise! During the return to harbour we slowed to watch albatross', (Shy Mollymawks (*Diomedea cauta*)) squabbling over remains being thrown overboard from a fishing boat.



Back at the marina I left the launch and decided on a walk along the edge of the bay. Out on the mudflats I could see small flocks of waders and decided to take some photos of them. Apart from Pied oystercatchers (*Haematopus ostralegus finschi*), spur winged plovers (*Vanellus miles novaehollandiae*) and white faced herons (*Ardea novaehollandiae*) and a few banded dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus bicinctus*). One dotterel in particular caught my eye, it had coloured rings on both legs. After a bit of waiting the bird came close enough for me to be able to photograph it and the bands.

Later that evening I sent an email with my findings to the New Zealand Department of Conservation and thought no more of it.

Two days after returning home to North Wales, I had an email from the Banding Office Administrator, at Conservation House, Wellington, New Zealand, thanking me for the photo, and giving details of the bird.

In general, the bird, an adult female, had been ringed in the Kaikoura area, and my photo was the first recorded sighting since then. What was even more interesting, and a complete coincidence, was the fact that it had been ringed on 5th. October 2010..... My 70th. Birthday.

Ron Plummer

Elected Committee members for 2025/26

Keith Davies - Chair

Ian Spence – Secretary

Robert Lee – Treasurer

John Briggs – Membership Secretary
– Field Events

Alan Smethurst – Newsletter

Noel Hughes – Reserve Warden

David Colton – Committee Member

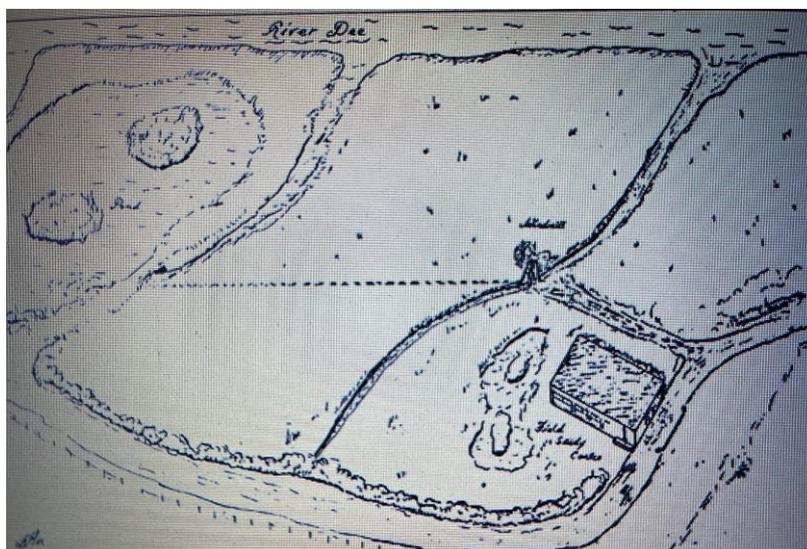
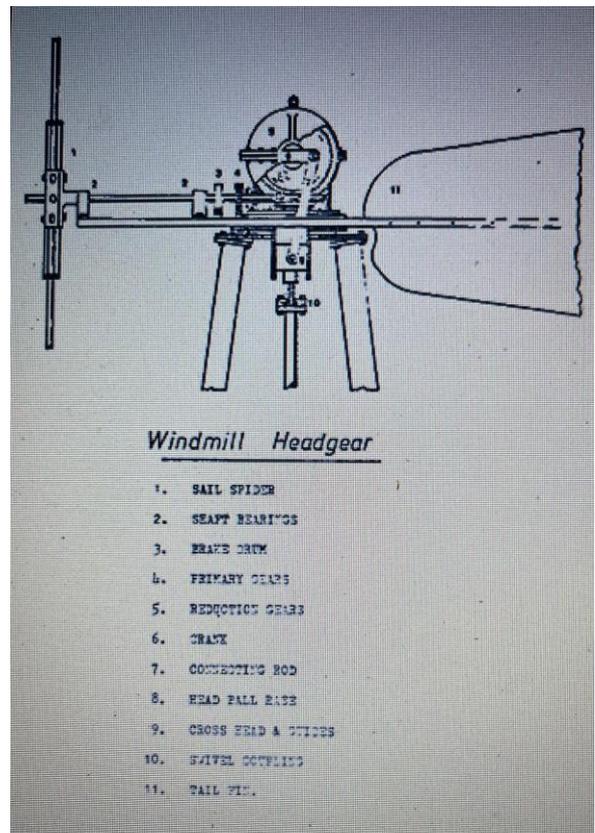
Mike Pollard – Committee Member

The DNS Windmill

Did you know that DNS once had a working windmill on site? Its primary purpose was to feed fresh water into the pool next to the Field Centre to reduce its salinity as it was primarily fed by the river.

Unfortunately it no longer exists having been toppled during a severe storm, An alternative supply of fresh water to the pool is now provided from the rainwater runoff from the present power station (which hadn't yet been built).

The following text/pictures are taken from archive material kindly donated by Colin Steward, son of the late Keith Steward who was plant manager of the old CEGB coal fired power station.



I have transcribed the following from the original documentation as the typewriter could have done with a new tape!

INTRODUCTION

The windmill at the bird sanctuary takes water from a fresh water stream, which it straddles, and pumps it across the marshland to a pool some distance away (see sketch). Most of the wild birds that arrive and rest here are not all salt water lovers or indeed is the plant and shell life. So in order to bring down the salinity of the pond and attract a greater assortment of wild life fresh water was needed, unfortunately the nearest stream was a distance away and ran at a lower depth than the pond, the pond which is kept full of river water at high tides and contains a fair quantity of salt.

The windmill pump was sited as near as possible and was designed to work in the lightest breeze, a small pump pumping constantly would give a steady supply of fresh water. The sail formation differs from the traditional design of multi blades and is known as a 'Cretian', from the island of Crete in the Mediterranean where light breezes drive pumps for irrigation.

The final design and construction of this windmill was undertaken by the staff of Connah's Quay Power Station and it is hoped that further improvements in performance will take place.

CONSTRUCTION AND WORKINGS

The windmill tower is made from square section steelwork and stands on two concrete pillars at either side of the stream. Access ladders and platforms are arranged for maintenance and for furling and unfurling the eight triangular sails, when the sail spider is in the correct position.

At the top of the tower is a platform fixed in the legs of the tower, atop the tower is the headgear.

The headgear comprises sails, drive shaft, gears crank and crosshead and finally the tail fin, all this is carried on the steel frame which is allowed to revolve on a large bearing race.

The reduction gear box is offset in order to accommodate the connecting rod, which passes through the top platform. Due to the offset of the gearbox primary gears were introduced as the drive shaft runs through the centre of the head gear.

The pump comprises a flap valve piston in a steel cylinder with a discharge chamber at the top, and a suction chamber at the bottom.

The water is drawn through a non-return valve and into the suction chamber (lower half of cylinder on the 'up' stroke of the piston, on the 'down' stroke the flap in the piston opens due to the pressure of the water in the cylinder, which cannot escape as the non-return valve is pressed shut.

The water fills the upper part of the cylinder and when the next 'up' stroke starts water is discharged through the pump discharge and the cycle starts all over again.

NOTICE BOARD

Membership Renewal

This is a reminder that memberships are due for renewal on 1st January 2026.

Memberships can be renewed online by following the link in the 'Join Us' section on our website Deenats.org.uk. Those members who we do not hold an email address for, should receive a paper application form with this newsletter. If, however you do not wish to renew your membership please contact the Membership Secretary on membership@deenats.org.uk for details of how to return the key for a deposit refund.

John Briggs

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due to the ever spiralling cost of postage, following Committee meeting discussions and a show of hands at the November AGM, sadly, the Society have taken the decision to stop sending out hard copies of the Newsletter. All members will receive a PDF copy by email and it will of course still be available to view, download or print off on the website at: www.deenats.org.uk

“The 2024 North- East Wales Bird Report” is now available free at
www.cofnod.org.uk/Projects/CBRG

Printed copies are available from: glenmanc@hotmail.com for £12 (+ postage) or from RSPB Conwy and Burton Mere Wetlands.

Glenn Morris

Noel Hughes has taken up the position of Reserve Warden Please report any problems or maintenance issues to Noel : 07792 110 360.

If and when the new carbon capture plant is built there will be a loss of 26 ha of sheep grazed pastures (adjacent to the Reserve and power station) which are used by up to 100 foraging curlews. We have raised this issue throughout the consultation process to date. Uniper have recognised this is a significant impact and have recently purchased 56.3 ha of land between Gronant and the Nant Hall hotel as an alternative habitat for Curlews with the hope that they will use the new area. Much of the land will be managed to provide wet grassland habitat with scrapes and they expect this will support an equivalent number of curlews to those displaced from the development area. We have also asked Uniper to maximise opportunities to mitigate the impact on curlews on site and have made a number of suggestions that would help to do this. It is to be noted that the development is currently subject to a planning process which is likely to last at least two years.

The Committee is currently two members short. If you feel you would like to become more involved in the day to day running of the Society, please contact the Secretary: secretary@deenats.org.uk

BIRD REPORT June - September

On 5th September Colin Wells was amazed to see thirty Glossy Ibis fly from Flint over the reserve at Connah's Quay. A pair of Great Crested Grebes produced three chicks on their Ash pool nest. A new breeding record for the reserve. Avocet successfully bred on the Ash pool island with up to eight nests. A pair of Stonechat were feeding two young around the West car park. A Grasshopper warbler was heard around the Bunded Pools

June.

Great crested grebe with 3 young, Mallard with 9 ducklings, 60 Avocets, Reed warbler, Sedge warbler, 4 Stonechat, Grasshopper warbler, Mediterranean gull, Skylark, 25 Common tern, Little ringed plover, Greenshank, Spotted redshank, Common sandpiper, Whitethroat.

July.

3000 redshank, Mediterranean gull, 25 Teal, Tufted duck, Great crested grebe, Little grebe with 2 chicks, Oystercatcher pair with one chick, 5 Chiffchaff, 800 Black-tailed godwit, Yellow wagtail, Whimbrel, Lapwing, 3 adult Curlew sandpiper, Ruff, Turnstone, Knot, Dunlin, Kestrel family, Marsh harrier, Peregrine, Great white egret, Wood sandpiper, 10 Spotted redshank, 10 Greenshank.

August.

4000 Black-tailed godwit, 8 Wheatear, 10 Grey heron, 4000 redshank, 3000 Knot, 40 Avocet, Snipe, Goosander, Ringed plover, Curlew sandpiper, 32 Greenshank, Bar-tailed godwit, Ruff, 5 Pintail, Hobby, Stock dove, Whinchat, 29 Great white egret, 33 Little egret, Spoonbill, Kingfisher, Wheatear, 20 Wigeon, 12 Shoveller, Gadwall, Tufted duck,

September.

60 Curlew, 8 Wheatear, 10 Grey heron, 4000 Redshank, Mute swan, Whinchat, Ruff, 2 Spoonbill, 300 Teal, Shoveller, Spotted flycatcher, Lesser Whitethroat, 44 Greenshank, 21 Spotted redshank, Swallow, 9 juvenile Curlew sandpiper, Kingfisher, 600 Knot, Little stint, Scaup.



Curlew Sandpiper

Peter and Sue Haslem (recorders)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2024-2025

Deeside Naturalists Society Accounts for the year ended 31st October 2025
Registered Charity No. 510146

ACCOUNTING STATEMENT
 Receipts and payments basis

<u>Income</u>	<u>2024/2025</u>	<u>2023/2024</u>
Bank Interest	357.21	371.93
Donations	550.51	454.00
Subscriptions	5167.50	5273.50
Gift Aid Tax Rebate	1022.09	972.70
Visits	0.00	22.00
Total Income	<u>7097.31</u>	<u>7094.13</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>2024/2025</u>	<u>2023/2024</u>
Insurance	127.68	96.00
Printing	1129.60	721.00
Postage	1362.78	892.99
Stationery	93.03	140.54
New keys / locks	360.00	490.26
Bird Food	380.90	612.96
Legal	95.00	0.00
WOS membership	50.00	100.00
Web Hosting	0.00	410.57
Equipment	1339.80	19.97
Field trips	20.0	50.00
Repairs & Maintenance	0.00	623.33
MOJO membership a/c	175.00	175.00
Stripe	157.48	158.73
AGM	64.00	41.50
Talks	75.00	150.00
Total Payments	<u>5430.27</u>	<u>4682.85</u>
Balance for Year	2911.28	2411.28
Cash funds last year end	26499.46	23671.18
Transfer from Key Deposit Money	-522.00	417.00
Cash funds this year end	<u>27644.50</u>	<u>26499.46</u>

Bob Lee, Treasurer

Dee marsh & Burton wetlands 27th Nov



The weather was kind to us despite the forecast for our trip to the far side of the Dee estuary. We walked the marsh edge from Denhall lane to the old Denhall quay and were rewarded with sighting of big numbers of canada and pink-footed geese, a smaller number of greylag geese and lapwings numbering in the region of 1000. A couple of great white egrets and a solitary marsh harrier were at a distance out on the marsh, whilst along the hedgerow and fields behind we had further sightings of skylark, blackbird, wren, dunnock, bluetit, raven, starling, wood pigeon, pheasant, crow, jackdaw, robin and grey heron. A Cetti's warbler was heard on a few occasions but didn't make an appearance. A lone kestrel kept us entertained off and on throughout the morning and as we were making our way back to the car a wedge of whooper swans settled down on the marsh. A short walk to the dung heap at the end of station road produced sightings of pied wagtail, meadow pipets and goldfinch.



We moved on to RSPB Burton Wetlands and from the visitors centre we had views of numerous ducks and waterfowl including mallard, shoveler, gadwall, shelduck, widgeon, teal, coot, moorhen, pintail, ruff, redshank and curlew. Lunch was taken in the Marsh Covert hide before a gentle meander over to the Border hide. En route we spotted chaffinch, siskin, redwing, kingfisher, grey wagtail and mute swan. The border hide was rather a disappointment as volunteers were clearing reeds with the result that the scrape was practically devoid of birdlife.



Back at the visitor centre feeding station the usual woodland birds were present including blue and great tit, coal tit, chiff chaff, nuthatch and greater spotted woodpecker. However the highlight of the day was enjoyed back in the centre when we were treated to not one or two but FIVE marsh harriers simultaneously quartering the reeds on the far side of the scrape.

Many thanks to Keith Davis for leading the trip at short notice. A very enjoyable days birding with an impressive 66 species recorded.

Alan Smethurst

NEST BOXES 2025

	BOXES	OCCUPIED	% BOXES USED
DEENATS	40	29	72%
OAKENHOLT FARM	13	11	85%
PAPERMILL POOL	6	6	100%
CHESHIRE FARM	16	13	81%
TOP-y-FRON	12	10	83%
KELSTERTON FARM	5	2	40%
YSGOL OWEN JONES	4	4	100%
PARK FARM	4	3	75%%
	100	79	78%

SUMMARY/ CASUALTIES
Not so many casualties this year as last with 1 dead adult (blue tit), 8 dead chicks (blue tit)
And 15 unhatched eggs (blue tit)
One nest box was left undisturbed with wood mice in occupancy.

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. The venue is excellent for painting as it provides ample north facing light.

If you would like to join us, you would be most welcome. Our meetings are held 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

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