



Withycombe and Rodhuish Newsletter

July 2019

More Rodhuish Memories

Reading about Alan Thomas' memories of bad winters at Rodhuish (Newsletter February 2019) reminded me of the happy childhood I had growing up there.

We had to learn to amuse ourselves. We never said we were bored; we were soon found a job if we did. We all loved haymaking and harvest time when Mr Thomas would take us up to Croydon in his old jalopy - no roof or seat belts, about six of us in the back. He would put what he called a sweeper on the front and comb the field for loose hay or straw. We were told to be good or we would have to walk home, a long way for small legs.

Sundays were spent playing cricket or football and, sometimes, riding on Alan's pony.

In summer and autumn we picked whatever fruit we could find: wortleberries or blackberries for jam-making.

In the winter we would catch a lift in the wagon taking feed to the cattle on the hill - it was lovely going up with the hay but not so good coming back in an empty wagon.

My friend Alice and I did go to church at Rodhuish on Sundays but I think it was only because we were a bit struck on the organist.

I could go on for ever: memories never forgotten.

PS By the way, I think the name of the shopkeeper at West Street was Ethel Eames.

Marion Badcock

Growing Old Gracefully

People say that dog owners grow to become like their pets. Well, if they do it works in both directions. My two Labs know exactly what I am about to do, anticipating every move. And if absent-mindedly, I get something wrong they are completely at a loss. One routine is to give them a chew when I leave the house and mini-bonio when they go to bed. One night I got it the wrong way round and they refused the proffered treat - this is labradors we are talking about, who are never know to refuse food!

Cary, my Black Lab is now 98 in dog-years and, as befits someone about to receive a birthday telegram from a royal corgi, she has decided not to join Mollie, her sprightly 70 year old yellow friend, on twice-daily walks. I can't imagine walking up Withycombe Hill myself at the age of 98 and there are days... well I'm sure you will understand. It's all about growing old gracefully.

John Thorogood

"Thank you to everyone who came to my Bumble Band coffee morning. Together with donations I raised £145 for the Hope for Tomorrow's Bumble Bus." Albert Vickery

Albert will be playing his saxophone at 2 concerts, afternoon and evening, this Saturday (13th July) at the Regal Theatre Minehead - also to raise money towards the upkeep of the local Mobile Chemotherapy Unit.

Tickets are still available.



Withycombe Memorial Hall

Withycombe Memorial Hall are hoping to hold a Christmas craft fair in the hall on Saturday November 23rd. We are looking for local crafts people who would like the opportunity to sell their products and the hall would charge £5.00 per table. If you would be interested in taking a table please contact Liz Steadman on 01984 640273 - daytime, or email : theleatherworkshop246@gmail.com by 31st August.

Upcoming Events at the hall:

August 3rd, 4th & 5th - Art Exhibition

September 28th - Quiz Night

October 19th - Homemade Soup & Roll Lunch

December 14th - Christmas Quiz.

Hall bookings/enquiries: David Tilley 01984 641231

Regular activities in Memorial Hall

Daytime

Evening

Monday		Table tennis (Winter months only) Contact: Bob/Anne Rivett 01984 641656
Tuesday		
Wednesday	Active living (twice a month) Contact: Roger Hurst 01984 640060	Snooker (Winter months only) Contact: Graham Burnett 01984 640946
Thursday	Pilates Contact: Fiona Pascall 07711 296116	Short mat bowls Contact: Mike Burnett 01643 822301
Friday		

Memorial Hall Committee

Current committee members are:

Liz Steadman (Chairman), Helena Nichols (Secretary), Richard Barnham (Treasurer), Chris Adams, Audrey Bateman, Judith Blathwayt, Tracey Cawthra, Teresa Flynn, Dave Maynard, Anne Rivett, Bob Rivett, Judith Tilley, Carol Wheeler.

Our meetings are open and minutes are posted on the noticeboard at the front of the Memorial Hall.

If you would like to help in any way please contact one of the committee members (telephone numbers on hall noticeboard).

From the Hills

Here in the hills, the month of July means purple spears of bee-busy Willowherb lining the track leading up to the common. I'll find jewels of wild strawberries hiding in the verges of the road through the woods. There will be isolated, surprise poppies rising above the ripening barley; but some years there are whole drifts of them; particularly in the fields to the East of Forche's Garden

The Hummingbird Hawk Moth will appear once again in our garden; zipping from flower to flower like a tiny bird and then hovering as its delicate proboscis uncurls like a watch spring and stiffens needle-straight while it probes for nectar.

In the vegetable garden I am sure I will again catch sight of a Bank Vole, brazen and unapologetic, eating my courgette and pumpkin flowers in broad daylight.

I hope to see a Grass Snake on the compost heap; or sliding confidently and unhurried into the stream, tasting the air with its forked tongue as I approach.

July is the month of the big, black-banded dragonflies - turquoise ones and yellow ones - which aggressively patrol the stream and hunt to and fro across the greening waters of the pond in the valley.

We have a lot of swallows this year and all summer we can expect great excitement and acrobatics in the sky above the farm - from youngsters learning to fly, and from adults as they bravely mob a Sparrowhawk who has wandered into *their* airspace.

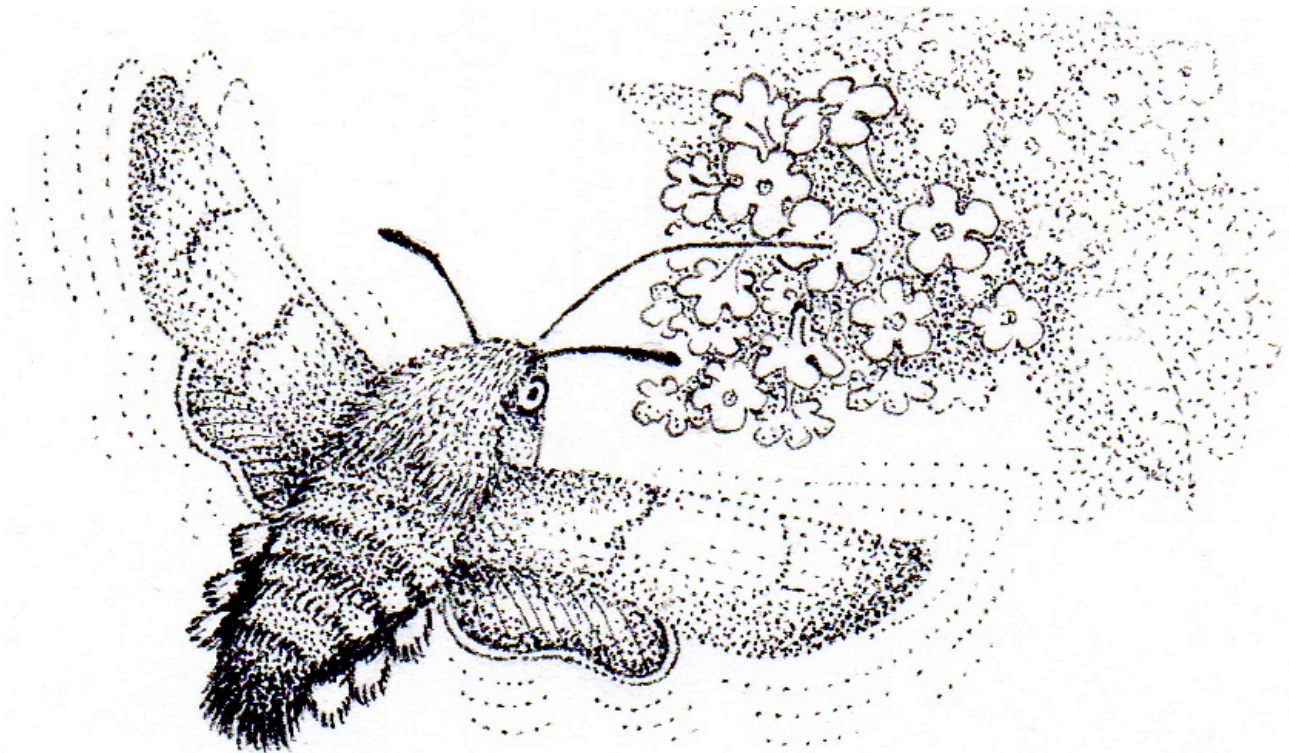
On the common I might hear the two-pebbles-being-clacked-together call of the Stonechat; and then see him - unmistakeable with his black head, white ear-muffs and orange breast - perched on the very top of a gorse bush.

If I come across a Ragwort plant I'll look for the tiger-striped caterpillars of the beautiful black-and-scarlet Cinnabar Moth. Unafraid of predators, the caterpillars store the toxins of the plant in their bodies and birds seem well aware that they are very bad to eat.

Some nettle tops will be heavy with a strange tangle of restless, pitch-black caterpillars; these have a scattering of tiny bright-white spots over their bodies, like stars in a night sky, and are barbed all over with daunting punk-rock spikes - hard to believe that one day they will be beautiful Peacock Butterflies.

At night I might hear noisy fledgling Tawny Owls on the gate of the field below our bedroom; and in the southern sky the planet Mars, impassive, watching, always there above the rolling hills.

Ben



Bird life on Withycombe Common as seen from Dumbledeer Spring 2019

After one fall of snow in the 1st February, by the 3rd week it was spring-like weather, masses of frogs appearing every evening on our track and a heron enjoying the feast on our pond. Away for the first two weeks of April, we returned to find not much evidence of swallows and only one pair nesting. However by June their first brood took to the wing. Have only seen two swifts by the end of June and no house martins. However much activity from lots of goldfinches, together with a number of siskins, a brave bird less likely to fly off if I appear. A common redpoll has been spotted twice, so I hope that the large number of birch trees we have planted will encourage them.

At the end of May we heard our first churring of a Nightjar to add to the constant call of the Cuckoo since Easter. In fact Easter weekend and the May bank holiday gave us and the birds a taste of summer, but for much of June it was not like that at all and quite wet. Bird life quite quiet except, for us, a big flock of up to 30 mistle thrushes pecking away at the paddock in the evening.

In the last week we've seen quite a few painted lady butterflies, quite subdued in colouring and we certainly don't see them every year up here.

We'll see what real summer brings.

Richard Devitt



Titholes Update

As you will all have noticed work on the carpark and play area is now proceeding apace. The works have been fully instructed - with the right drawings this time! - and the work should be completed by the middle of July. We understand that there is still a holdup with the Lease agreement and the sale of the building plots cannot go ahead until this is sorted out.

PARISH COUNCIL

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Telephone: 01984 641602 Email: burny150@gmail.com

Parish Council website:
www.withycombepc.co.uk

Parish Clerk:

Sam Rawle, 60 Paganel Road, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 5EY
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Please send us your email address if you would like to receive newsletters by this means.

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE A LARGEPRINT VERSION OF THIS NEWSLETTER.

Contributions to the next newsletter (including photos, drawings, poems, stories etc) can be sent or delivered to Anne Rivett, Squirrels, Lower Street. (anne.rivett@btinternet.com 01984 641656) - by 30th September please!