

Brent Island Trust

Newsletter, February 2022



A Message from Graham

Dear Members,

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2022. It seems a while since it happened but, Happy New Year to you all. As we continue to learn, slowly, how to conduct our routine lives following the pandemic, thank goodness that we have the haven of The Island within our village. Every season is different, of course, but The Island remains a pleasure to visit. Winter time has been very mild so far and already we can see the beginnings of Spring with the appearance of many snowdrops near the Orchard and catkins appearing on many trees around.

We are currently working on a review of the Island Management Plan, something that we verify and update every five years. Once agreed by the trustees, it will be presented for approval at our next AGM (see below).

I am sure that many of you will be aware of the death of Tony Roper late last year. Tony was The Island's closest neighbour and had been a long-term member. He was a colourful and outspoken man and will be sadly missed by many as we used to see him walking through the village and around the local lanes, eager to entertain us with his observations. We will miss him and look forward to meeting the new owners of Millwood House when they take possession.

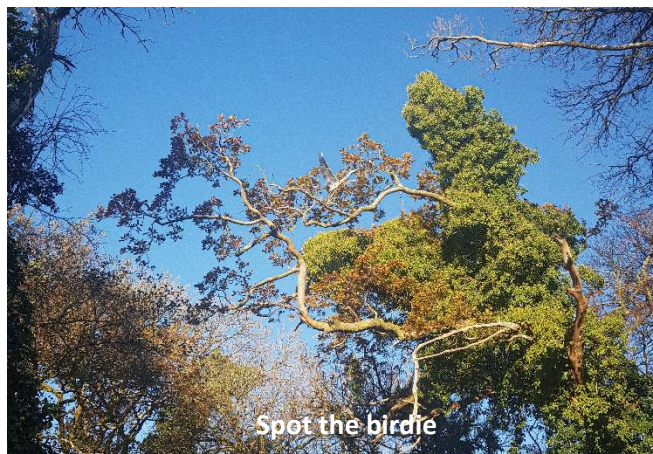
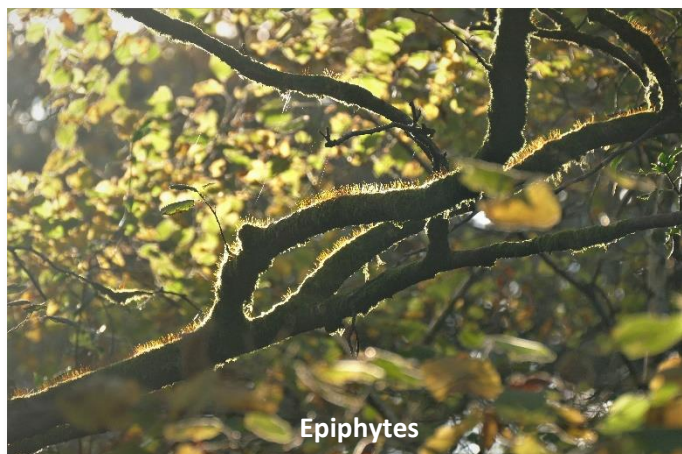
Best wishes, Graham Royle. (Chair)

Wildlife on The Island from Bridie Kennerley

We may not have had anything close to a white winter this year, but there's a certain exhilaration in the rainstorms we enjoyed instead over the last few months. Around The Island, the rising river carried tree trunks all the way down the weir until they wedged themselves beside the bridge. The resting 'Elephant Tree' (which fell two years ago and now lies comfortably over the river) has been well washed and appears fascinatingly sculptural.

The rain also kept The Island a bright and joyful green, not just with grass but in its leafless trees, which remain beautifully covered in mosses, lichens and ferns. These plants on plants are known as 'epiphytes' and are the key indicator of British temperate rainforests. A quick glance at almost any branch around The Island will offer you examples of this phenomenon and perhaps a new appreciation for our soggy local climate.

Plants aren't the only life to be found on The Island during the chillier months of the year. In November I spotted a heron perched high above, which flew off gracefully as I approached. I'm told it's still around, so keep an eye out! I've even heard a rumour of two seen together (which puts somewhat of a damper on my thrilling anecdote of just the one.)



And there are plenty of other birds to be found. My current favourite is the cartoonishly sweet long-tailed tit, hopping around bushes and branches. I've also recently caught a dipper dancing across the rocks just upriver of The Island where, last year, I glimpsed a goosander – The Island's sexiest bird according to Peter Reay's great talk at our last AGM!

All of this is to say that The Island remains a source of endless interest and beauty through changing weather and seasons and social upheaval. There are so many small and lovely things to be found around you if you pause for a moment, and such wonderful reminders of what nature can offer when given the chance to flourish. I hope you are making many discoveries of your own here – we'd love to hear about them!

Easter Egg Trail – Saturday 16th April

After an enforced two-year break resulting from the pandemic we are planning a reappearance of our traditional Easter Egg Trail on The Island on Easter Saturday, 16th April, between 10am and 4pm. It costs £2 per child to enter and follow the clues around The Meadow, leading to the reward of a chocolate egg. It's a fun way of encouraging youngsters to get closer to nature and explore The Island, so please do come along. Youngsters need to be accompanied by an adult. Offers of help on the day would be appreciated. Please contact our Chair – details at the foot of this newsletter.



Meet Geraldine Coleman

At the Brent Island committee on 23rd November Geraldine Coleman was co-opted onto the committee. Her sister has lived in Brent for over 25 years so we must have created a good impression as she decided to move here in 2021. Formerly a teacher in Taunton and Nairobi she has travelled widely including trekking up Mounts Kenya, Meru and Kilimanjaro as well as twice reaching Everest base camp. Among Geraldine's interests are photography, reading and sports – and we've clearly added to that list with her new role on the committee.

Annual General Meeting – a Date for your Diary

It hardly seems long since our last AGM – and indeed it isn't as our 2021 meeting was only three months ago. However, our constitution states that it "shall be held in the month of June in each year or as soon as practicable thereafter." Accordingly we're planning to hold it on 21st June at 7pm in the Village Hall. Of course, you'll then have the pleasure of electing Geraldine as a full trustee. We'll send further updates nearer the time.

Logging Work by the Bridge

I'm sure that visitors to The Island will have noticed the large tree trunks jammed into the bank both upstream and downstream of the bridge. The efforts of Harry Jennings, Graham Royle and Phil Dean have now cleared them which (we hope) will avoid damage to either the bank or bridge.



Christmas Stall

It was a pleasant return to normality when we held our Christmas stall outside the Village Shop on December 4th. The weather (mostly) held up and we raised over £375 to help with Island maintenance. About £40 of this came via our new contactless payment machine. Thank you to all the people who helped make it happen and we hope you saw the full page spread of photos in the Gazette the following week.



We make no excuse for, once again, reminding you about Amazon Smile which resulted in an additional £5.16 going to Island finds in December. As the slogan says "every little helps". When you buy from Amazon 0.5% of the purchase price of qualifying items is donated to a charity of your choice – we hope that will be Brent Island Trust. You can register for Smile at <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/>

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