

# Brent Island Trust

## Newsletter, July 2019



### What a way to celebrate 25 years!

A big thank you to all our members and friends for the tremendous support you gave to the Trust's Silver Jubilee Fair on The Island on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June. All the hard work of setting up marquees, ordering supplies of food and drink and the 101 other jobs to be done before the day paid off magnificently. Hundreds of people braved the showers, and enjoyed the sunshine, to make the event a tremendous success. The fair was opened by naturalist and broadcaster Kelvin Boot, who performed the original opening of The Island in June 1994. He shared the honours with Bridie Kennerley, who was also at the opening, 25 years ago, but as a baby of just a few days old. By a quirk of fate they now work together at Plymouth Marine Laboratory.



Visitors were able to enjoy the host of information stands on show, including many from wildlife and countryside groups such as Dartmoor National Park Authority, Devon Wildlife Trust, Brent Birders, Sustainable South Brent and Devon Moth Group. Brent Island Trust mounted a display of our work over the past 25 years, while eager youngsters were able to study some of the aquatic life in the River Avon in samples taken by the Westcountry Rivers Trust. Our thanks to all those who worked to provide refreshments, including the ladies of the Women's Institute, who ran the cream tea tent, and the many helpers with the barbecue, the bar and ice cream stall. Fair-goers were entertained throughout the afternoon by a variety of musical groups, organised by Ursula Reid-Robertson. A lot of people devoted a great deal of time and energy to organising the event, but the biggest vote of thanks must go to former Chairman Mike Roberts, for masterminding the fair.



As part of the celebrations we produced a booklet highlighting the history of the Trust over the past 25 years, copiously illustrated with colour photographs. These are highly recommended as souvenirs and can be bought for just £2 from the Village Shop, or our Secretary Phil Dean (see contact details below).

### AGM

Members who attended our AGM on 26<sup>th</sup> June enjoyed an illuminating and entertaining talk by our eminent guest speaker, Dr Kevin Bishop, Chief Executive of Dartmoor National Park Authority. He outlined the history of the National parks movement and went on to describe the growing pressures and problems facing the Parks, and Dartmoor in particular, now and in the next few years. At the meeting two stalwart members stood down from the Committee – our Membership Secretary Peter Stevens, and Denise Quayle. Both were presented with Honorary Life Membership and a photo montage of The Island. The committee also gained two new members, Graham Royle and Bridie Kennerley. Also elected were: Chairman, Guy Pannell; Secretary, Phil Dean; Treasurer, Felicity Ferry; Committee members, Laurette Guest, John Hoare, Martin Ross, Rob Wills and David Worrall.



Kevin in full flow



Peter receiving Life Membership



Guy with new committee members, Graham and Bridie

## Riverbank Erosion

Visitors to The Island may have noticed that repairs have now been carried out to the badly-eroded section of the riverbank just upstream from the linhay. A team from Westcountry Rivers Trust carried out the work by driving chestnut stakes into the ground and then backfilling with logs and brash from the large beech limb that had conveniently broken off a nearby tree. The whole structure was then tied together with hemp rope and it will capture silt, leaves and other debris carried down the river and so form a stable platform over time.



## Plant Survey

In July we surveyed flowering plants in the meadow. This summer survey is designed to capture those plants which may not be apparent in the spring survey. We counted 28 different species and were delighted to find several Eyebright plants. These are very small (only a few centimetres high) but display attractive white, purple and yellow flowers (see photo).



Many thanks to one of our eagle-eyed readers, who's also an expert in botany. He pointed out that the plant we named as Dead-nettle in the May Newsletter is, in fact, Yellow Archangel.

## Photo Record

In May 1999 we took photographs of eleven different views of The Island. This was repeated in 2002 and 2009 to show how The Island's vegetation has changed over the years. After a gap of a few years this exercise has now been repeated and the results will be posted on our website. However, as a taster, here are views from 1999 and 2019 taken at the west end of The Island looking back along the path. There's clearly been some erosion over the years.



## Invasive Species

Dartmoor National Park Authority has employed a contractor to remove invasive plants from the Rivers Avon, Bovey, Tavy and West Dart headwaters. His main target is Himalayan Balsam and Skunk Cabbage and a team spent some time removing Himalayan Balsam from The Island before continuing their activities further downstream.

## Bracken bashing

Our next working party on the morning of Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> August, will be tackling the bracken which is continuing to invade the western end of the Meadow. We invite as many members as possible to come down, equipped with gardening gloves and suitable sticks, to give the bracken a good bashing. Meet at 9.30am by the bridge.

## Contacts:

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