



# Wild About Beds

Autumn 2013

## The work of Oliver Gregory Pike: an exhibition

by Rory Morrissey

Oliver Pike was the first President of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and Field Club when it was resurrected after the end of the Second World War. This year is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. He did a lot of good work for nature conservation, he was a fine naturalist and author, and he took lots of remarkable films and photographs.

I've written a booklet, which will be available for £5 at BNHS and Bird Club meetings, and organised a small exhibition of his work at the Leighton Buzzard library, running from 19 October to 2 November. Most of the photographs in the exhibition will be copies of ones held by the BNHS, and there will be a few items of photographic history. I've also created a website at [www.oliverpike.info](http://www.oliverpike.info).



Oliver Pike with his cine camera. Photo courtesy of the Pike family.

In 1922 Oliver Pike moved with his family to Leighton Buzzard, where he made many wildlife films in his garden and in the locality. He loved his garden nature sanctuary and the local wildlife hotspots like King's Wood, Heath and Reach. Unfortunately his garden has been filled in and developed, but his enthusiasm and knowledge of the natural world have inspired a generation of naturalists and filmmakers. At the very least, he deserves to be better appreciated.

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Wild About Beds is the newsletter of:



The Bedfordshire Natural History Society  
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BedsLife  
[www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk)

## The BNHS

The BNHS was formed in 1946, its main function to record the fauna and flora of the county. It has over twenty active Recorders who cover many branches of natural history study and whose annual reports are published in the *Bedfordshire Naturalist* journal.

Members receive a quarterly newsletter, Wild About Beds, and programmes of meetings. These meetings include field meetings to Bedfordshire sites and occasionally farther afield. During the winter months, there are illustrated lectures normally held in Elstow, Haynes, Toddington and Maulden.

The Society depends on annual subscriptions which are devoted to its working, as all offices are honorary. Membership is open to anyone, whether resident in the county or not. If you would like to join the Society, please contact **Mary Sheridan**, Honorary Membership Secretary, 28 Chestnut Hill, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 2TR. Tel: 01525 378245, [www.bnhs.org.uk](http://www.bnhs.org.uk).

## BedsLife

BedsLife - Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Partnership is a consortium of government and non-governmental agencies dedicated to promoting the maintenance and enhancement of Bedfordshire's biodiversity. The Partnership oversees the implementation and monitoring of the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan, which can be found online at [www.bedsbionet.org.uk](http://www.bedsbionet.org.uk).

### Editor: Heather Webb

The Wildlife Trust, Priory Country Park, Barkers Lane Bedford MK41 9DJ.

Email: [newsletter@bnhs.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@bnhs.org.uk).

Your comments/notes on anything that you have observed in the field, on the road or in a past Wild About Beds issue are welcome/essential for continuity. Please do send articles to me either as an attachment via email or through the post. Pictures are always welcome; material required by **15 December 2013** please.

**Thank you in anticipation.**

The next Wild About Beds will be published in **December 2013**. Please note that any views are independent of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society and BedsLife.

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Wow, somebody  
had a rough night...

This Silver Washed Fritillary (?) appeared on a Buddleia in Mike Watt's garden in Bedford. It's truly been through the wars!



### Easyfundraising update

by Mike Bird, BNHS Treasurer

In our attempts to avoid raising the annual subscription fee we are looking at alternative ways of raising money and reducing costs.

For organisations like the BNHS an easy and straightforward way of receiving an income is with the web-based system called easyfundraising. It is free to those users who like to shop online and is paid for by the organisations that use it as a marketing tool to encourage people to buy their products. Looking through the list of retailers with whom our current BNHS subscribers have raised some funds we find that John Lewis Partnerships, Marks and Spencer, Virgin Trains, and Amazon all provide donations to BNHS through the easyfundraising scheme. In the last 5 months BNHS has received £50 in this way and yet only 31 of our members currently subscribe to it. If more members subscribe and use the scheme we could all benefit significantly. You can register by clicking on this link: [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/bnhs](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/bnhs) or by visiting the easyfundraising website.

One function that easyfundraising provide is called 'Find and Remind'. If a user is looking to purchase an item online then some retailers, for example, John Lewis, will automatically remind you that by purchasing products from their website you will raise funds for your cause. Other retailers ask you to first visit the easyfundraising site which is only a single click of the mouse away. It really is very straightforward and your subscription to this new system has the potential to provide BNHS with a different stream of income. Please visit [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) for more details.

### Have you got information on Flitwick Moor?

The Voluntary Warden at Flitwick Moor, Colin Carpenter, is currently collating together as much information and documentation as possible about Flitwick Moor and Folly Wood SSSIs. He would like to hear from any members or volunteers if they can lend out or donate any old historical photographs, current photos and species records etc which would be of value to the possible publication of a proposed new book on Flitwick Moor and Folly Wood SSSIs, and to the continued recording of species on the site.

### Blow's Downs grazing update & vandalism report

by the Wildlife Trust BCN

The Dartmoor Ponies enjoyed the Paddocks: we shut them out of the eastern end to allow the Knapweed and Broomrape and other important plants to flower. They returned to Barton Hills at the end of the summer, hopefully to be replaced by some rare breed cattle.

The Blow's Downs cattle came off Cottage Bottom Field and were put on the downside slopes and then moved around to the slope above the Hayfield and the Chalk Pit sections.



Common Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*. Photo by Kristian Peters/Wikimedia Commons

Thank you to those who reported the damage to the various gates on Blow's Downs and Cottage Bottom Fields in June. It is likely this was caused by motorcyclists gaining entry to the site. The vandalism delayed the cows moving in to Cottage Bottom Fields and caused some £500 worth of damage.

The damage and presence of motorcycles was reported to the police who stepped up patrols in the area. Please do report any vandalism, however minor, to Esther (07540 669907 or 01525 874317) and if you see or hear motorbikes on site please call the police non-emergency number 101, or 01234 841212. Even if they can't respond at the time they will log the incident and arrange extra patrols accordingly.



Orchids which have established themselves over the last fifteen years or so  
by Martin Day

My soil type here at Houghton Conquest is Oxford Clay. As some of you may know it is fertile, approximately neutral and lies very wet in the winter and can bake hard during the summer. However four species of orchid have managed to establish themselves. Perhaps this should not surprise me unduly as I have seen orchids growing happily at Marston Vale Country Park in the callow (in early days used in brickmaking) which is the overburden of Oxford Clay latterly used for bricks. This callow is much more challenging than my soil.

Some fifteen years ago I found an *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (Pyramidal Orchid) in an undisturbed area. I could not believe my luck. This survived for about five years. Around 2003 about a dozen *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchids) emerged in a very shaded area in woodland and, predictably, they were very pale with very small flowers. *Purists avert your eyes for the next sentence.* I decided to move them, each in a large piece of soil, as the site would only become more shaded. They survived the move. In the intervening years a few have died and a few young ones have reached flowering size. They are definitely not, in general, monocarpic. Following these were a succession of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted Orchids). These increase by just a few a year but I am sure that I must miss some. Four years ago, some distance from the first one, another *Anacamptis* appeared. Last, but not least, is *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh Orchid) which has flowered for the last three years.



Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*. Photo by Ramin Nakisa

As orchid seed is so very tiny the young plants are very small in their first year or two. Some species flower after three years whereas others may not produce blooms for fifteen years. From this it is obvious that orchids need undisturbed sites such as woodland, permanent pasture and other such sites. Definitely not amongst annual crops.

Each year I wait hopefully to find yet more.

In Focus: family field meeting at Priory Country Park, Bedford 21 August 2013

by John Pitts and Sheila Brooke. Photos by John Pitts

Wednesday 21 August was a field meeting at Priory Country Park for families. As last year there was pond dipping and bug hunting, and members showed kids what delights fall off trees and are hidden in the grass. It was a lovely sunny but breezy day. There was good public response and all sorts of interesting finds including (we think!) Millers Thumb (aka European Bullhead *Cottus gobio*).



Is this the thumb of a miller?

Vacancy on BNHS Council for the position of Honorary Secretary  
by Boo Matthews

Are you interested in wildlife in the county of Bedfordshire?

Good at English and grammar?

Have access to a PC?

Would like to join the Council of Bedfordshire Natural History Society?

Then here is the role for you.

It is a great opportunity to positively support the local flora and fauna

I am currently the Honorary Secretary for the Society but have given Council notice that I wish to stand down at the next AGM (March 2014).

**The role includes**

- Preparing Agendas and circulating to Council before each meeting (approx 6 per year)
- Taking the minutes at the meetings, circulating and keeping paper copies for County Archive
- Booking meeting rooms for Council, Scientific & Records Meetings
- Circulating minutes received from Council Members representing BNHS on other committees
- Dealing with correspondence – mostly electronic
- Preparation for AGM including an annual report from Council
- Liaising with the Charity Commission plus responsibility for the annual CC Return

I have thoroughly enjoyed the years I have been involved but feel it is time for 'new blood' and someone with fresh eyes to take over. So, if you are interested please do not hesitate to contact me for all the advice, enthusiasm and information I can pass on?



The Tale of the unfortunate Jewish Lepidopterist

by Martin J Palmer, Kempston

Did you hear about the unfortunate Jewish Lepidopterist, Oak Eggar?

Well, apparently some years ago this Hebrew Character showed his Small Ranunculus to an Old Lady and her daughters which made the Maidens Blush. He was Uncertain what to do next being a Nonconformist, but the Old Lady had called the police and he was arrested by a Small Copper who took him off to jail where he was fed only on Spinach and had to sleep on just Barred Straw. A local Rustic and his Lackey were employed as the prison Gatekeepers where he was kept until his trial.



The country's head prosecutor was an ex-pat Russian naval officer known as the Red Admiral who, at the trial, entered the court along a Red Carpet. The judge was the Duke of Burgundy, a cousin of the Monarch and the Emperor. Other charges were brought concerning a young lady known as Rosy Minor, a Brindled Beauty and Kentish Glory.

The judge wore a Large Wainscot with White Ermine and a Royal Mantle with Beautiful Brocade and a Gold Spangle for the trial and the Usher called the first witness, Mother Shipton who had brought along her Burnet Companion to tend to her pets, a Dwarf Pug and a Sallow Kitten.

A Blackneck with a Grey Dagger in his belt which had a Silver Hook had our unfortunate lepidopterist in handcuffs and the second witness called was a local Snout who had a Large Ear for Nonconformist hearsay. He proved to be an Early Thorn in the debate but a bit of a Turnip and a Passenger as far as his testimony was worth. A Chinese Character was also called but he was clearly a Sorcerer. The Duke of Burgundy was now Confused because, although he Suspected our Hebrew Character of wrong doing there seemed little real evidence.

One of the court's Dingy Footmen called the next witness, Cudweed, but this Cabbage too was proven a Drinker and a Sprawler of little reliability. Next a common call-girl with a Riband Wave to her Green Hairstreak appeared. This Flounced Chestnut had been saved from the streets by a kindly Quaker but made only a Cameo appearance after breaking down in tears and being offered a Tissue by an Anomalous bystander. Wormwood, a Common Fan-foot, was the next witness but he too proved to be a bit of a Shark.

A Herald with a Golden Plusia announced the final witness. Dot Moth, professionally known as Blossom Underwing. She appeared wearing White Satin and her dress had White-points with a Chocolate-tip to one sleeve and an Orange-tip to the other. A Camberwell Beauty, this Straw Belle did a Figure of Eight in front of the jury but the judge considered her a Painted Lady and she was promptly dismissed.

In the end, the Duke of Burgundy reasoned fairly enough that the Old Lady was in fact a False Mocha and certainly no Vestal virgin, for it was proven that our hero had in fact a Large Ranunculus with a Large Emerald emblazoned. Everyone in the court now marvelled at this Great Prominent with its Dark Tussock – a Spectacle indeed. A Common Footman freed our hero to great acclaim – surely a Setaceous Hebrew Character of renown.

Shortly after the trial Oak Eggar met Olive Crescent whom, though she only spoke Latin, he married in a Gothic church with Black Arches and they had three Small Eggars, Phoenix who grew up to be a Miller, Grayling who became an Alchymist and a Highflyer, and little Fern who was a Delicate soul and a true Beautiful Utetheisa.





Edith Beryl Rands

by Alan R. Outen

Many members will remember Beryl Rands. In case anyone has not yet heard we thought people should be informed that Beryl died peacefully in her sleep on Friday 12 April 2013 at Collinson Care Home in Luton where she had been in respite care for just over 6 months, following the death of her daughter Pauline in September 2012. The BNHS was well represented at her funeral.

Beryl was Mollusc Recorder for the Bedfordshire Natural History Society from 1969 to 1991, also Recorder for Leeches (1972-1991) and briefly also for Flatworms (1972-1975). She was Honorary Secretary from 1975-1980. Together with her late husband Derek (who served as Recorder for Grasshoppers and Crickets and also as Society Chairman) they had a huge impact on the Society and a massive influence on our understanding of natural history within the County. It was in no small part due to them that the Society came to be recognised as one of the leading County natural history societies in the country. Beryl in particular gave a lot of help and encouragement to aspiring young naturalists. Beryl was also very active in the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland for which she also served as Society Secretary. She made many interesting and important discoveries in Bedfordshire and elsewhere. A full obituary is being written by Dr Bernard S. Nau and will appear in *Bedfordshire Naturalist*.

### Upcoming events

**15 Oct** 'Chiltern Commons and their Wildlife' by Rachel Sanderson, Chiltern Commons Project Officer. At 7.45 pm, Maulden Village Hall TL048380. Chair: David Withers

**29 Oct** 'Spring in Texas' by tour leader and club member Stuart Elsom, with the benefit of eight trips to this top migration hot spot. At 8.00 pm, Maulden Village Hall TL048380.

**3 Nov** Fungus Foray at RSPB Sandy, joint meeting with RSPB and Herts Fungi Group. Meet at 10.00 am for the morning and 1.30 pm for the afternoon at The Lodge car park TL191485. There may be a car parking charge for non-RSPB members. Leader: Alan Outen.

**10 Nov** Morning birdwatching, starting at Harrold Country Park with a WeBS count by Richard Bashford, with explanations as it happens! Possibly moving to another site later. Meet at 8.00 am at the Harrold Country Park car park SP956566. Leader: Sheila Alliez.

**19 Nov** 'Wildlife of Estonia' by Dr Wilf Powell. From trips to see birds, butterflies and other species. At 7.45 pm, Maulden Village Hall TL048380. Chair: David Withers.

**26 Nov** 'Paradise in Peril: the UK Overseas Territories, their wildlife and conservation' by Dr Mike Pienkowski, Director of UKOT Conservation Forum. Do we value our own Treasure Islands? At 8.00 pm, Maulden Village Hall TL048380.

**5 Dec** BNHS Christmas Social Evening with seasonal refreshments. Bring along a slides or digital photos (on a CD). Meet at 7.45 pm at Haynes Mission Hall, Northwood End Road, Haynes TL099419. Chair: David Withers.

**8 Dec** Morning Walk around east Bedfordshire area for wintering species. Park and meet at 8.30 am at Henlow Bridge Lakes TL188379. Leader: Roger Hicks.

**26 Dec** Morning only, annual Boxing Day walk through Woburn Park. Meet at 9.30 am at the Woburn Town Car Park opposite the church SP950331. Leader: Mary Sheridan.

**21 Jan** 'Bats in Bedfordshire and Beyond' by Bob Cornes. At 7.45 pm, Maulden Village Hall TL048380. Chair: David Withers.

**28 Jan** 'Birds and People: Bonds in a Timeless Journey' by Dr Nigel Collar of Birdlife International. A celebration of our relationship with birds by one of the greats of avian conservation. At 8.00 pm, Maulden Village Hall TL048380.

Central  
Bedfordshire  
Libraries

Central  
Bedfordshire

A talk about the life and work of local naturalist

# Oliver Pike

by **Rory Morrisey**

author of the book 'Oliver G Pike'

on **Tuesday 22nd October at 7.30pm**  
in **Leighton Buzzard Library**

Oliver Pike was a pioneer in the field of wildlife photography, both in stills and moving pictures. He was a prolific author and lecturer, and above all he loved nature.

Rory Morrisey has created a exhibition of Oliver Pike's photos and artefacts which will be on display in the Library from:

**Saturday 19th October - Saturday 2nd November**



If you wish to attend the **FREE** talk please speak to a member of staff to book your place!

Central Bedfordshire Council [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)