

the Bardsey Beacon



issue 132 | October 2008

Editor's Blurb

Welcome to my third issue as editor of the Bardsey Beacon. With this copy you will also receive a copy of the Annual Report.

In this issue there is a mini-review of Peter Hope Jones' new book 'Beauty and spirit at Bardsey' and a piece from Alan Morley about his recollections of past times on the island.

My brother, Pete, and I recently spent a week on the island. It really was great to be back on the island again after a gap of several years.

We got over a day late because of bad weather and the forecast for the week was pretty grim, but, in fact, it turned out to be an improving picture. The last few days were wonderfully sunny and warm. We did quite a bit of sea watching and were fortunate to see a sooty shearwater - a lifer for both Pete and myself. It was a tad early for the autumn migration proper - it was a mere trickle, but the ringing at Nant by Mike Archer and the two Richards proved worthwhile with small but steady numbers of goldcrest.

I am always gratified to see that nothing much changes on the island and things are basically very much the same as they were on my first trip to Enlli in 1975.

Friends and work colleagues always say that they cannot see why I would want to visit a small island with no shops and no pub! I then tell them I'm there for the birds!

Mike Armitage

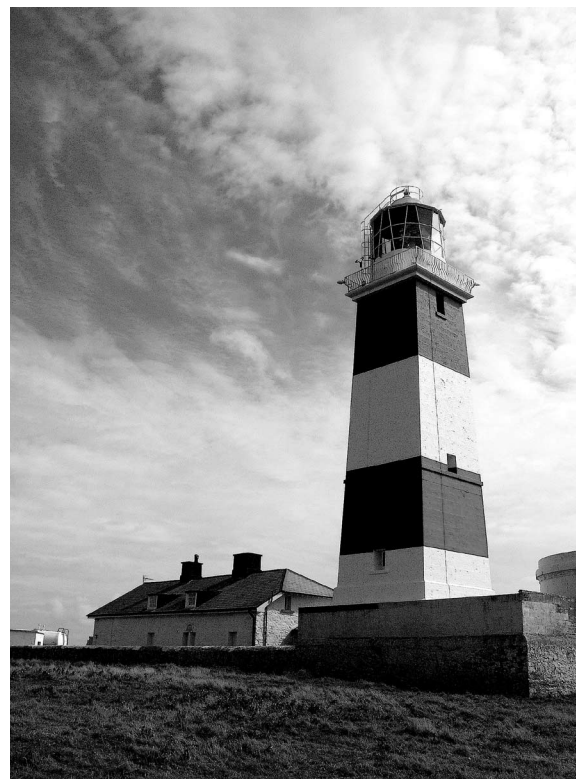


PHOTO: Mike Armitage

WebLinks

Bardsey Website:
www.bbfo.org.uk

The Bardsey Blog:
<http://bardseybellman.blogspot.com/>

The Beacon On-line:
www.bbfo.org.uk/beacon.htm

The Bardsey Beacon is the newsletter of the Friends of Bardsey Bird and Field Observatory (Registered Charity No. 249790)

A member of the Bird Observatories Council



Warden's Report

Spring on Bardsey 2008

March to Late June

Upon arrival on the island on 15 March, along with Richards Brown and Else, Emma, Connor and I set about unpacking all our stuff.

Richard Brown is to be my Assistant for the year and Richard Else is the Manx Shearwater Researcher. As a consequence of Bardsey Island Trust handing back the lease of the lighthouse keepers cottages to Trinity House, we were forced to try and negotiate with Trinity House to get a lease from them. However, due to problems with overcoming tenant law, Trinity were unable to allow us to lease the cottages. We were therefore forced to house Richard Brown in the treble room in the north side of Cristin. Richard Else will be accommodated in the Annex (vols. room).

As it was three years ago that we did a complete redecorate of the Obs. 2008 was the year we would give every area inside the house a coat or two of paint. With the help from the two Richards ('Rich E' and 'Rich B') the place looked better than ever, and, along with the new rugs and furniture from Tony Bianchi, the place is now almost palatial! We had only just finished (well not quite) when our first visitor of the year, David Lee, arrived. Thanks, David, for being understanding about the wet paint etc. and helping out.

In March, Ian Wright made another trip to the island as a volunteer. Ian and I were tasked with re fitting the Office in Cristin. The shelves that were there were dismantled and the place completely gutted and new shelves made by Ian and I. This was all done thanks to a donation of a kind member of the Observatory, who incidentally was so impressed with our workmanship has now donated more money to get the Library done to the same standard!! (hope you're ready Ian!)

In April, Jim Winsper and Bevan Healey arrived for the first of their many trips to the island in the spring. This time was to get the new generator in and up the hill. By the week end we had power to Cristin and the generator was running at last.

As we were now having staff living in Cristin full time, it was decided that we had to provide some basic amenities required for people living on the island. Therefore a shower room and washing machine were fitted by Jim and Bevan in early May. The shower room was constructed within the washroom and the washroom was also given a complete facelift. The shower is primarily for staff use, however, for a small fee visitors can use the shower if there is enough water on the island – this year there has been more than enough!!!!

We had a very short Scientific committee meeting on the island on 31 May. The committee thought the island was in pretty good shape and were pleased to be shown Small Adders-tongue Fern on the south end of the island that I had found the week before.

Also on 31 May, Bevan Healey and Denise, along with Bevan's brother Neil and our very own town crier, Bevan Craddock and Di came along to re-fit the gift shop. The place was transformed from tatty and old looking to swish and modern looking in just a week. Neil and Bevan did the woodwork, Denise and Di the material work, painting and stocking, and 'Bevan C' helped with all areas. On the Friday afternoon we had an official opening where Bevan C cut the ceremonial ribbon and declared the shop open for business. On the opening day alone we took over £400!

In early June, we had our first visit of the year from our three jolly fishermen, (they are due back tomorrow for another week!). They not only caught us 27lb of fresh fish, but also won the prize of a bottle of Welsh single Malt Whisky and a BBFO engraved lead crystal glass from

the raffle that many of you entered.

Mid-June saw Gwyn Stacey on the island for his first stint as a volunteer. He took to the task well and undertook many jobs that were set for him. We also had Peter and Ann Evans from Bangor who both helped clear the grass in the plantation, clean out the tool shed amongst other things. In late June, Christine Evans again held a writing course on the island based at the Observatory. They all had a good time and created many wonderful pieces of writing.

In the summer Emma, Connor and I visited North Norfolk for our week's holiday. We saw some nice birds and lots of wonderful dragonflies and butterflies such as Norfolk Hawker and White Admiral. Upon our return Rich E had gone off for his two week break and as he returned Rich B went off.

Summer has been fairly miserable weather wise on the island, with wind, rain, more wind and more rain. Colin has managed to cross to the island on Saturdays not many times this year, the wind has just been too strong. We have had several changeovers on Sundays and Mondays and even one on Wednesday! Lets hope that the rest of the year is better.

With this newsletter will be the 2007 annual report. I have spent an enormous amount of time working on it and getting it looking good. The proof I produced looked good and the file will be going off to the printers in the morning. I am sure that it will look good when it comes back from the printers, and I hope you enjoy reading it.

In early September we were visited by the 'A Rocha' group. 'A Rocha' is a Christian conservation organisation, with groups and members scatted all over the world. The group was led by Steve Hughes, a former treasurer of the Observatory and now Chief Executive Officer of 'A Rocha UK'. Several

members of the group wanted to help around the Obs. and took time out of their holiday to help with cleaning the shop, pollarding trees and cutting down Nant Withy!

Happily married one year on

By the time you get this newsletter it may be mid-October. Last year you will remember that Emma and I were married in the Chapel on a lovely sunny summer-like day with yellow-browed and barred warblers around! Well, almost one year on and we are still happy and smiling and still getting surprises when gifts continue to appear. We would like to thank all who sent gifts, cards and letters of good wishes.

Birds and Spring Migration

After a slow start to spring, there was an arrival of 220 Goldcrests and four Firecrests, 85 Chiffchaffs and 32 Willow Warblers on 31st March. A fine Lapland Bunting was found on 1 April in the North West Fields. On 3rd there was 52 Chiffchaff and 31 Willow Warblers. On 4th there was 46 Chiffchaff, 36 Willow Warbler, 46 Goldcrest and another Firecrest. The 8th saw 7 Common Scoter, a Kestrel, 2 Dunlin, a 'littoralis' Rock Pipit, 3 White Wagtails, a Grasshopper Warbler, a Blackcap, 29 Chiffchaffs, 34 Willow Warbler, 47 Goldcrests, a Bullfinch, and a Yellowhammer.

The 16th saw the first Osprey of the year fly north over the island, with a Great Northern Diver and a smart male Pied Flycatcher the following day. On 22nd two Tristis Chiffchaffs were trapped and ringed at the Observatory Garden, and a Little Egret was seen the following day. The first cuckoo and Lesser Whitethroat were seen on 24th with the first Turtle Dove on 26th. On 27th another arrival saw 7 Dunlin, 32 Whimbrel, a Common Sandpiper, a Sandwich Tern, another Turtle Dove, a Cuckoo, a Swift, 53 Sand Martins, 180 Swallows, 25 House Martins, a Tree Pipit, 5 White Wagtails, a Redstart, 32 Wheatear, a Redwing, 20 Grasshopper Warblers,

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Sedge Warblers, a Reed Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, 60 Common Whitethroats, 57 Blackcaps, 14 Chiffchaffs and 300 Willow Warblers – not a bad ending to the month.

May started with smaller numbers of migrants than April ended with up to 200 Swallows were seen regularly. On 2nd a 'white-winged' Gull was seen briefly on Carreg yr Honwy. A male Blue-headed Wagtail and a female/immature Golden Oriole were seen on 5th. A Wood Warbler and 29 Jackdaws were seen on 6th. The 7th saw a Turtle Dove with another Blue-headed Wagtail, another Wood Warbler and a fine Dotterel on the 8th.



Dotterel

PHOTO: Steve Stansfield

On 9th there were two Tree Pipits, a Whinchat, a Hen Harrier, another Wood Warbler and a Pair of Garganey (only the 6th record for the island). There were also 32 Wheatears, 43 Sedge Warblers, 16 Whitethroats, 11 Blackcaps, and 9 Spotted Flycatchers.

On 13th a Great Northern Diver was seen flying past the south end of the island. A male Redstart was trapped in the garden of the Observatory, with a female Subalpine Warbler ten minutes later.

The 14th saw three Eider were seen (two

drakes and a duck). The 16th saw one of the rarest birds of the spring for the island – an Avocet flew round the island a couple of times before heading off north (it was found the following day at Carmel Head on Anglesey!). This is only the second record for the island, the first was a flock of three that circled the island four years ago. On 17th the female Subalpine Warbler was re-trapped in the Observatory garden, a Golden Oriole was seen briefly in the garden and a Nightingale was trapped in the evening having been heard singing briefly in the early morning and a Honey Buzzard was seen flying over the north end of the island.

On 19th a Marsh Warbler was seen very briefly on the South end of the island, and one lucky observer managed to bump into a female Rustic Bunting in Cristin Withy. The bird was very vocal and stayed only for a couple of minutes – long enough, however, for him to get a very good record shot of the bird!

On 20th a Yellow Wagtail was seen and a Marsh Warbler was trapped in the Observatory Garden. On 22nd a Short-toed Lark was found by the lighthouse where it remained until the following day. The 25th saw three Crossbills and yet another Golden Oriole, this time at Nant. On 27th a stunning Little Stint was seen on Solfach and the female Subalpine Warbler was again re-trapped just as a boatload of birders arrived to stay at the Observatory for a week! On 28th a female Grey-headed Wagtail was seen on the Narrows in the evening, and a very elusive Melodious Warbler spent the morning singing around the Observatory garden.

The first of June saw a fine summer plumaged Grey Plover, which stayed for a couple of days. An Arctic Skua was seen on 9th and a fine adult male Rosy Starling was seen just outside the Observatory on 10th. This was a wonderful splash of colour rounding off a fine spring all in all.....

Numbers of common passage migrants were, in general, in low numbers, however, scarce birds made up for this. Breeding birds were generally ok in number, but the seabirds took quite a hit this year. The number of auks on ledges was somewhat lower, and the number of eggs laid was exceptionally low.

We were pleased to have a brief visit from Tony Bianchi recently.

If you are impressed with this list of birds that were seen this spring and would like to experience it for yourself, why not consider coming to say at the Observatory for a week? We are fully booked up for this autumn and we are already taking bookings for the 2009 season, so if you want to stay look at the BBFO website www.bbfo.org.uk or contact our bookings secretary, Mrs Alicia Normand on 01626 773908.

Steve Stansfield
Cristin, Bardsey Island, Off Aberdaron
Pwllheli, Gwynedd, LL53 8DE

Steve Stansfield

Secretary's Bit

A meeting of the Observatory Council was held on Saturday 12th July at the Marine Hotel, Criccieth, followed by an Extraordinary General Meeting. The only item of agenda for the EGM was to receive and accept the audited accounts for 2007.

The Council Meeting started on time at 10.30am with our Chairman, Patrick Davies, welcoming all members and observers and thanking them for their attendance.

The Chairman then introduced Pam and Alan Hollingshead, who submitted detail of a

scheme, which if adopted, would raise funds for the Observatory. The scheme required that a minimum number of Members signed up to receive gas, electricity, broadband, etc from one source, these services to be comparable or better in price than those offered from other suppliers. Leaflets were handed out which again explained the services offered and members were requested to consider whether or not they had any interest in joining this scheme. If the minimum number of members required joined the scheme, the Observatory funds would receive a 'commission' based on a percentage of the invoiced cost of usage.

Members present agreed to consider the proposal and the Chairman suggested that any members interested should contact any of the Executive Officers who would coordinate progress.

To date, I have had no reaction from anyone, despite sending an email to Members of the Committee and I have had no indication from any other Executive Officer saying that they have received any response.

If there is any interest from the wider membership, please contact Patrick, Dianne, Alicia or myself so we may take action to suit.

The Chairman introduced Jill Lawrence, who has volunteered to undertake the task of Membership/Recruitment Secretary.

The Chairman had submitted a written report, which was circulated to all Members of Council prior to the meeting.

Patrick summarised the points raised in that report, adding any detail that had arisen since then. The diesel generator at 'Cristin' is unstable on its mount and needs stabilising. Accommodation for our Assistant Warden(s) is still of concern and is under further consideration.

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Jim Winsper and Bev Healey have done a great job in re-fitting and re-plumbing the washroom at Cristin, providing much improved facilities.

The Sales Room has also been re-vamped. Emma, Dianne Craddock and others are thanked for their efforts which have made such a difference.

Dianne Charles, our Treasurer, presented the audited accounts for 2007, giving details of income and expenditure over the past year. Council accepted the accounts, which were presented to the following Extraordinary General Meeting where they received acceptance.

Alicia Normand, our Bookings Secretary reported good visitor numbers throughout 2008, although delays due to poor weather have seen some refunds being claimed.

The Sales Team of Denise Healey, our Warden Steve and Emma have made the shop a great success, well supported by Simon Hugheston-Roberts and Dafydd Phillips who maintain supplies to the Observatory.

Denise Healey has arranged for some items of clothing with a new design to be provided for sale and a suggestion has been made that a 'catalogue' of items for sale by 'mail order' be made available.

Our 2007 Annual Report is expected to be published and ready for circulation by end of October, hopefully sent along with this edition of the Beacon.

The Bardsey Island Trust has entered into an agreement with the RSPB to help with an update of the Island Management Plan which includes advice on habitat management, grazing and farming on the island. This agreement has received approval from Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and is

welcomed by the Observatory.

Thank you all very much for your continued support for the Bardsey Bird and Field Observatory.

The next meeting of Council will take place on Saturday 6th December 2008, at the Haling Dene Centre, Penkridge, Staffordshire.

Mike West

Tales from years gone by



**Summer Tanager
Bardsey Island, 1957**

PHOTO: Alan H Morley

My first visit to the Island was with a school friend in 1955. We were mad keen birdwatchers and went over from Aberdaron beach with Captain Jones on the tourist boat trip. We went to Ty Pellaf farm and asked Will Evans if we could sleep in his hay barn. He didn't think that was a good idea and suggested we stayed at the "Birdhouse", so he took us up there and handed us over to Reg Arthur (the warden at that time).

There were these big tall men there who

knew everything about birds and we 15 year olds were rather intimidated by them, but also in awe of them as they knew so much!

My next visit was in 1957, on this occasion for several weeks, I was one of the lucky few who were there when the Summer Tanager was caught. My next visit was 1959, I went over in April determined to stay the whole year and to be taken on as an assistant. It worked, and I stayed till the end of October. In those early days the observatory was packed with visitors all through the season, using every bam and outhouse with beds and sleeping bags everywhere, with 20 or more people staying at a time. 1959 was the year of the big drought and drinking water had to be taken to the island by boat in dustbins (new ones, I hasten to add!)

Many years later when the Island was for sale once again, several interested locals including David Thomas and our famous poet RS Thomas and several others had several winter meetings in a farmhouse with big log fires and talked endlessly about how we could set about buying the Island.

I knew Susan Cowdy well and was quite sure that she could do the job of persuading people to part with money for the Bardsey Island Trust fund. For the next few years she and her daughter Fennela put all their energies into buying the Island. The owner wanted £100,000 for it and gave us three years interest free to raise the money. In only fifteen months Susan and Fennela had raised £200, 000. So, the Trust was formed.

I have so many stories about Ynys Enlli, I could probably fill a book with them, but I'm sure many others have stories to tell, too.

Alan H Morley

Beauty and spirit at Bardsey by Peter Hope Jones

Peter Hope Jones has just published this new book "Beauty and spirit at Bardsey".

As many of you will know, Peter has had a long and very close involvement with the island and the Observatory and is a past editor of the Annual Report over many years.

Unlike Peter's previous books on Bardsey that have covered its flora and fauna, this one combines his excellent photographs with snippets of verse and extracts of works by some well-known and some not so well-known authors.

Anyone who loves Enlli could not fail to be impressed and moved by this book.

I understand that copies will be for sale at the Observatory.

Mike Armitage

Can you help - part 1?

Have you got any old mobile phones, used ink cartridges, (not Dell or Epson) and used postage stamps.

Also there is a raffle, if you buy a date in the diary for £1 there are 3 prizes First-£50, Second-£25, Third-£15.

Ann Vaughan

>> PTO

Can you help - part 2?

We are hoping to set up a bird feeding station in the garden at Cristin that can be viewed from the bench.

So can I appeal for donations of bird feeders or bird food to help with this, please? All contributions gratefully received. Thanks.

Emma Stansfield

Please contact Steve Stansfield, BBFO Warden for both the above items.

Bevan's Bardsey Blog

For up-to-the-minute information on the latest bird sightings on the island (and developments on the 'court and social' front), why not visit Bevan's Blog at:

<http://bardseybellman.blogspot.com/>

CONTRIBUTIONS

Editor's Request

Most people already do submit copy by email or typed and saved to a CD. It really does help me to have items this way as I'm afraid that I simply do not have the time to type up lots of text.

Proofing your work (especially for spelling of unusual names or spellings) before submitting it also helps me enormously and ensures that what you meant to say is what actually appears on the pages of the Beacon!

Thanks.

Contact Information

Chairman

Patrick Davies
70 Glen Eldon Road
Lytham St Annes
Lancashire, FY8 2AZ
chair@bbfo.org.uk

Secretary

Mike West
6 Woodend Road
Walsall, WS5 3BG
tel: 01922 639931

Treasurer

Dianne Charles
2 Regent Close, Edgbaston
Birmingham, B5 7PL
tel: 0121 249 0490
dianne.charles@tesco.net

Bookings Secretary

Alicia Normand
46 Maudlin Drive, Teignmouth
Devon, TQ14 8SB
tel: 01626 773908
bookings@bbfo.org.uk

Bardsey Observatory Boatman

Colin Evans
tel: 07971 769895 or
07791 683422

Bardsey Observatory Warden

Steve Stansfield
Bardsey Bird & Field Observatory
Cristin, Bardsey Island
off Aberdaron, via Pwllheli
Gwynedd, LL53 8DE
tel: 07855 264151

Bardsey Sales Goods

Denise Healey
41 Nursery Drive, Penkridge
Stafford, ST19 5SJ
tel: 01785 715137
denise.healey@tiscali.co.uk

Newsletter Editor

Mike Armitage
tel: 07974 376681
bardseybeacon@btinternet.com