

Programme for 2019/2020

We meet at the Tamar Valley Centre, Cemetery Road, Drakewalls, and we hope to see lots of members attending. Unless otherwise stated, indoor meetings are on the first Friday of the month and start at 7:30 pm.

Non-members are welcome at meetings, although a small charge is levied. We hope the events will prove popular and we look forward to welcoming you to as many as possible. Please contact Jane Kiely (01822 834964; janekielyintamarvalley@uwclub.net) or any other Committee member (see page 3 for contact details) if you have any queries about the programme.

Date	Speaker and/or Event
6 September	Terry Faull – The Lost Garden of Lew Trenchard
4 October	Bruce Hunt – Crossing the Tamar via Ferries and Bridges
1 November	Rick Stewart – The History of Morwellham and its Connection to Tavistock
6 December	David Bouch – The Famous Cotehele Garland
10 January 2020	TBC – Cornwall Air Ambulance
7 February	Clive Charlton – The Tamar: A Very Useful River
6 March	Paul Rendell – Winter on Dartmoor
3 April 7:00 pm	Annual General Meeting Followed by Laura Martin – The story of Ferguson's Gang: Strong Women Before their Time
1 May	Win Scutt – The Real History of Tintagel and not the Myth

The Friends' Newsletter is edited by Anthony Lewis and Helen Wilson. If you would like to write anything for the next edition please contact Anthony or any member of the Committee (see page 3 for contact details).

Friends of the Tamar Valley



Newsletter Autumn 2019

Chair's Report Autumn 2019

I should be out dead-heading my plants before the walk around Calstock this afternoon to see the Blue Plaques with tea in the Tamar afterwards, but maybe there will be time before that! It is a lovely sunny day for our last event of 2019 and I will report on it later. But the events this year have all been well attended and enjoyed by those members who have come out, and it has been great to see a lot of different people. You will see the reports of these events elsewhere in this newsletter.

If you came to see Rupert Kirkwood's talk in March this year you will have seen that he is now quite a celebrity with his recent and rare sighting of a Humpback Whale off the Cornish coast making national news and again with leaping dolphins!

And so to this year's programme for 2019-2020. Those from September to December you will have seen in the last Newsletter, and I hope you will all come to the January talk to hear about the Cornwall Air Ambulance, something we hope we will never need but who knows....! Moving on to February to May, there is a wide selection and hopefully something that appeals to you, with Clive Charlton entertaining us in his unique style, Paul Rendell with some great winter photographs.

The April talk may well be a very different subject but this gang of women has fascinated me for many a year and I am sure will intrigue you when you hear their story, so please make an effort to join us for that talk.

As usual we could do with a few more people on the committee and helping us out and of course any suggestions for speakers and/or outings are gratefully received.

We look forward to welcoming all members and their friends to this new series of talks.

Jane Kiely, Chair

August 2019

Reports of Meetings and Events

We include reports of our monthly meetings and visits up to and including February 2019.

Rupert Kirkwood – Kayaking around the South West Coast: Part II (1 March 2019) by The Editor

A full report of Rupert's presentation was not available at the time the Newsletter went to press. However, we were presented with a tour de force of kayaking around the beautiful Devon and Cornwall coastline. As Jane mentioned, Rupert's report of a breaching humpback whale garnered widespread coverage in the local and national media and a good place to see

Front cover: Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*) by Helen Wilson.

my departure by train from Plymouth for the exhibition, and duly arrived at the great city. After seeing the show, having heard of Covent Garden Market, my friend and self determined that we would rise early and visit this renowned market whilst yet business was in progress. It was early in June, and to my surprise I found that there were no out-of-door-grown strawberries offered, whilst the crop at home was nearly finished before we left.

On inquiring the price of the hot-house fruit offered, I was staggered at the difference from that we had been receiving Devonport. I got into conversation with a salesman named Israel, and explained that I had hailed from Cornwall and was a grower of strawberries, which were now practically finished. If he would undertake the sale I would write the people at home and get them to forward a small quantity as an experiment. He promised to do his best, and I made the venture.

On the morning when they should have arrived, I, full of expectation of golden harvests, made my way to interview friend "Israel." But my hopes were speedily dissipated when he exclaimed "Rubbish," Full of grit," and "Threw them away."

NOT PACKED PROPERLY.

Afterwards he explained that they were not properly packed, and I found that they had been gathered in wet weather, so had no doubt but that the result was as he described. I paid the amount of carriage and tolls, and so ended my fruit venture.

I felt certain, however, that the complaints could be overcome. I asked him from whom I could get a supply of 1lb. punnets, in order that I may be ready for next year. He said if I wrote to him in time he would supply them on the understanding that when filled he would sell the fruit. Accordingly the following year I wrote to him, and he kept his promise and sent the baskets.

The first fruit gathered was duly despatched to Mr. Israel, and, being the only out-of-door-grown strawberries in the market, made what to me was an astonishing price—2s. 6d. per lb. At that time the price made at Devonport was only 6d. per lb.

Of course, I sent all I had to Mr. Israel, and seeing there were other growers sending to Devonport I offered to give them the price making there (so saving market costs) and obtained large quantities to forward with own.

From that day in 1863, when the first Cornish strawberries were sold in Covent Garden, the Tamar Valley Fruit Industry became a fact, and has been the means of enriching the neighbourhood and supplying the needs of distant populations.

The result of finding distant markets at which higher prices were obtained was that the business of fruit production, especially strawberries, developed rapidly and continued do so for many years, until present it is the principal industry of the district.

Cotehele Quay, with Boetheric Farm, which he transferred to my father, consisted of about 70 acres, was cultivated as an arable farm, but was encumbered with miles of unnecessary fences. Needless say, under the conditions that prevailed immediately after the abolition of corn duties and the general depression experienced after the Napoleonic War it was with great difficulty that my parents could eke out a livelihood.

My paternal grandparents were James Lawry and Mary Cowling, the former born at Roche, migrating to Lamorran after marriage about the beginning of the century, from there removing to St. Anthony Barton, opposite Falmouth, where he subsequently died, and was interred at Lamorran, where his wife and son had been previously interred. I have a dim recollection of my grandfather, who had the reputation of being a good, outspoken, and upright man. He and his wife and children were members of the Methodist Church.

BIBLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

My grandmother Lawry, being a sister of the wife of W. O'Brien, founder of the Bible Christian Church, brought the family into sympathy with that Church.

As a small boy I was sent to various dames' schools, and to finish my education went as a weekly boarder with Mr. J. Knight, who had a private school at Callington. This was about 1853-4. I was only there, however, for about one year when I returned home and at once engaged in the work of the farm. Soon I acquired a practical knowledge of all farm work—sowing, reaping, thatching, and threshing. In fact, I could do all farm work in creditable manner. Meantime, I was naturally fond of reading, and had the opportunity of getting books, chiefly of a religious character, from the Sunday-school library. Many the books, however, dealt with missionary adventure, and were very captivating. Amongst the most exciting were two books written Rev. Walter Lawry, a first cousin of my father, describing his experience as a missionary in Fiji, at that time a cannibal country. This reading served to broaden my outlook. I learned of the great world beyond those islands. I felt, however, that it was my duty to help my parents in their struggles with adversity, and gradually succeeded in doing so.

STRAWBERRIES FOR DEVONPORT.

Some of the land of the farm was hilly and of little use for corn growing. A former workman, the great grandfather of a present wealthy family of yeoman farmers, having acquired a small holding in the parish, on which he was growing strawberries for the Devonport Market, suggested that the worst of the hills alluded to might be used for this purpose.

This accordingly was done, and although at first it was not a startling success—for the fruit was often sold at Devonport at 1½d. per lb. —it was yet more profitable than corn growing.

This continued until 1862, the year of the second great exhibition at the Crystal Palace. As I was now 22 years of age, together with a friend, I took

photographs and video is either his blog 'The Lone Kayaker' or the BBC News website (<https://thelonekayaker.wordpress.com/> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-cornwall-49219571/rare-sighting-of-humpback-whale-off-coast-of-cornwall>, respectively).

Natalie Mitchell – The History of Penlee Battery on the Rame Peninsula (5 April 2019) by Helen Wilson

Natalie is the East Cornwall Reserves Officer for Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT). The Trust owns and manages 21 reserves in East Cornwall, from Rame Head in the very south up to the Kilkhampton area in the north and west as far as Bodmin Moor. The main priorities for CWT are: Access – for people and management; Habitat Management – to increase biodiversity and diversity of habitats; Surveying – of plants and animals to inform management; Public Events – to introduce people to the wildlife. The reserves include moorland, woodland, wetlands, grasslands and farmland.

Natalie introduced us briefly to some of these CWT reserves, such as: Priddacombe Downs, a large area of open moorland lying at the northern end of Bodmin Moor, Armstrong Wood near Trebulet, a riverside wood with open meadows known for its dormice, and Sylvia's Meadow below St Ann's Chapel, a haven for orchids, including the Lesser Butterfly.

Churchtown Farm is one of the larger CWT reserves, run very much in partnership with the local community. The 60 ha of mostly farmland is owned by the Antony estate on a 25-year Farm Business Lease since 2000 and is entered into the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. It has a wide variety of habitats including hay meadows, pasture, arable land, traditional farm boundaries, species-rich hedges, woodland, quarries, rocky shore and mudflats. One of the management strategies is to sow a seed mix designed to provide winter feed for birds such as Goldfinch. The abundance of small mammals attracts Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Buzzard. It is hoped to attract Osprey by placing poles in the estuary on which they may choose to nest, but meanwhile there are plenty of waders such as Greenshank, Curlew and even Spoonbill. Wildflowers are encouraged in the meadows by the planting of Yellow Rattle, which parasitises grasses, thus weakening them and allowing

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wild species such as Knapweed, Selfheal and Lady's Bedstraw to thrive. There are volunteer wardens who work with Friends of Churchtown Farm to organise events and walks.

Greena Moor near Week St Mary is an important CWT reserve, as it comprises the rare habitat of Culm Grassland – poorly drained Purple Moor Grass and rush pasture found primarily in lowland and upland fringe areas. It is noted for a wide diversity of species, including the extremely rare March Fritillary butterfly. The CWT site is adjacent to land owned by the charity Plant Life and the two organisations are working to increase the area of Culm Grassland. Strategies employed are reseeding with clippings from the more widespread Devon Wildlife Trust sites. Scrapes are formed and cattle grazed to create poached areas, within which higher water levels allow bog plants such as Ragged Robin, Upright Vetch and Cotton Grass to thrive. Marsh Fritillary butterflies are encouraged by the introduction of Devil's Bit Scabious, the food plant for the caterpillars. Areas of the site are also burnt on rotation to remove the thatch that builds up, thus encouraging fresh new growth and creating more open areas.

Penlee Battery near Rame Head is, as the name implies, an ex-military site. Natalie showed us a photograph from when the Battery took part in the National Military Competition in 1935. The impoverished soil is ideal for wild flowers and a bank of trees on the southern edge provide protection sufficient to create a micro-habitat in which plants and insects thrive. Dartmoor ponies are used to help keep the grass down, although fencing around the site needs to be well-maintained to ensure they do not escape. The habitat encourages extensive carpets of Camomile, which produce a wonderful scent when walked upon. Bee Orchid appears here but does not increase, as there are not the right bees to pollinate it. Butterflies and moths enjoy the sheltered location and Silver Washed Fritillary, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Marbled White, Small Skipper, Six-Spot Burnet and Garden Tiger Moth have all been recorded.

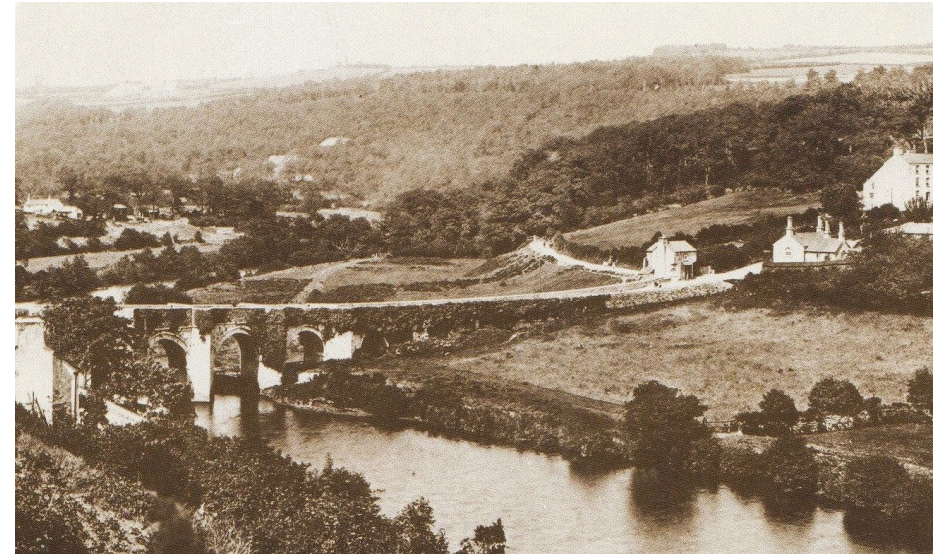
Natalie concluded by telling us about the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS) which works to collate, manage and disseminate biological and geological information for use in research, conservation and sustainable development. As a Local Environmental Record Centre, ERCCIS works to support and facilitate recording across Cornwall, through their Wildlife Information Service and online recording website ORKS (Online Recording Kernow and Scilly; <https://ercis.org.uk/>), which Natalie illustrated.

We were left very much looking forward to our visit to Penlee Battery with Natalie in June.

Jill Lane – The Remarkable Story of *Tharsis*, a House in Calstock (3 May 2019) by The Editor

An article about the family that originally built and owned *Tharsis* and their mining activities in Spain will be published in the 2019 volume of *Tamar*, so

We include here a postcard of Gunnislake Bridge from 1893.



Postcard of Gunnislake Bridge 1893 (Frith)

Helen Wilson Collection

The Tamar Valley in the Newspapers

Returning to a feature of previous newsletters, here is an extract from the *Western Morning News*, Saturday 19 September 1931. The death of James Walter Lawry, on 15 August 1931, and his funeral were widely reported in the local press. Further information on market gardening in the Tamar Valley may be found in *Sovereigns, Madams and Double Whites* by Joanna Lewis and Ted Giffords.

REMINISCENCES.

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HOW VALLEY INDUSTRY BEGAN

CORNISHMAN'S VENTURE WITH STRAWBERRIES

How the Tamar Valley fruit-growing industry was started the late Mr. W. Lawry, J.P., of Tharsis, Callington, a well-known Westcountry agriculturist, is shown below, as told by himself.

Next week we shall give further extracts from Mr. Lawry's writings.

I was born in the parish of St. Dominick in 1840. My father, Walter Lawry, hailed from St. Anthony Barton, opposite Falmouth. He married the eldest daughter of George Vosper, a man of very progressive ideas, who introduced many road improvements, notably the cutting of a new road and connecting by a bridge.

to show us the cavernous interior. We then saw Residences 1 and 2, two grand houses built for civil service officers in the RWY and were continuously occupied as homes until shortly after Plymouth Development Corporation took over ownership. The garden was a haven from the hustle and bustle outside.

We all then dispersed to various eateries around and made our own way back home. Cliff, Trish and I had a day of ferries, catching one from Cremyll to RWY then walking around the waterfront to catch a different ferry back to our car – once we had enjoyed an ice cream of course at Mount Edgcumbe! Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day and came away feeling we had done the Royal William Yard proud. Our thanks go to Ron for a great morning and he was more than satisfied with the donation we made to his chosen charity.

Jill Lane – Guided walk around Calstock to see Blue Plaques (21 August 2019) by Jane Kiely

Thirteen members gathered for the last of the summer events, a few people having had to cancel for various reasons, and Jill Lane explained the project she had undertaken on behalf of Calstock Archives, which has taken over seven years to come to fruition. Quite a few names cropped up regularly with the generations moving from one building to another, marrying into various families and taking up different occupations. There were five bakers in Calstock and we were surprised to find so many women being post mistresses, publicans and running the shops, usually after their husband had died, but still very ambitious for the times. Jill had some great photographs to show us and as we stood on the same spot it was amazing to see how some things had definitely changed but in other instances how things were instantly recognisable. The final photograph will definitely not be seen in Calstock or elsewhere nowadays – dancing bears going past The Boot Inn.

We finished up in The Tamar Inn for a very convivial cream tea and felt that we knew a great deal more about Calstock. Our thanks go to Jill for a very interesting afternoon.

500th Anniversary of Gunnislake Newbridge

In 2020, Newbridge in Gunnislake (Grade 1 Listed) will have served the people of Devon and Cornwall for 500 years. The bridge is currently the designated crossing point for the Tamar in the event that the '1961' Tamar Bridge is closed, showing it is still an important asset for the two counties.

Gunnislake Community Matters intend to mark the anniversary of the Bridge with a variety of events in the summer of 2020. To make the anniversary really special, other groups and organisations are being invited to be a part of the celebrations. At the time of writing, an inaugural meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 4 September to which a range of local organisations, including the Friends, have been invited. Initial ideas for the celebration include the Sealed Knot, a history exhibition and talk creative workshop and art exhibition but it is hoped other ideas will be forthcoming.

we have decided not to pre-empt that in this Newsletter. Suffice it to say this was a most interesting presentation that whetted many appetites!

Natalie Mitchell – Guided walk around Penlee Battery Rame Head (28 June 2019) by Helen Wilson

On a beautiful late June day 15 members and friends, along with several dogs, visited Penlee Battery Nature Reserve, led by Natalie Mitchell, East Cornwall Reserves Officer for Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT). The Trust owns and manages this unusual site near Rame Head, formerly the location of a gun battery, constructed between 1889 and 1892. It is now managed as a wildlife site comprising seven hectares of woodland and coastal grassland with calcareous soils.

Natalie gave us an outline of the history of the reserve before leading us down to an open area of grassland with woodland to the south, where the sheltered nature of this site became evident. Butterflies were everywhere and we managed to identify a few, such as Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) and Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*). The ground was carpeted with low-growing plants, including Eyebright (*Euphrasia* agg.) and both Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*) and Lesser Centaury (*C. pulchellum*). In the taller-growing marginal areas we found the purple-flowered Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and its showier relative Greater Knapweed (*C. scabiosa*), a huge favourite of all kinds of butterflies. Tall spikes of yellow-flowered Weld (*Reseda luteola*) and pinky-white umbels of Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) rose above the mat of grasses.



Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*) and Eyebright (*Euphrasia* agg.)

Helen Wilson

The group spent some time exploring this area before the beating sun drove us to seek shade down a woodland path towards the sea. Here we encountered the splendid Goat's-beard (*Tragopogon pratensis*), a tall and elegant member of the Daisy family whose yellow flowers only open in morning sunshine. This was a new identification for Natalie and served to emphasise one of the benefits of bringing groups to the site. As we emerged into the sunshine, we entered an open field from which there was a panoramic view spanning the coast from Wembury in Devon to well into Cornwall. Walking along a path westward we found Restharrow (*Ononis repens*) a creeping, pink-flowered plant



**Common Red Soldier Beetle
(*Rhagonycha fulva*) on Hogweed
(*Heracleum sphondylium*)**

Helen Wilson



**The group enjoying the view from the
lower fields of Penlee Battery Reserve**

Helen Wilson

typical of this calcareous grassland. Further on, one of the group spotted mating Marbled White (*Melanargia galathea*) fluttering around conjoined. This species is often recorded in this field, attracted to the many flowers of knapweeds, thistles and scabiouses. Another insect that attracted attention was the Common Red Soldier Beetle (*Rhagonycha fulva*), which is also known as the Bloodsucker Beetle or the Hogweed Bonking Beetle. On this occasion, although characteristically feeding on the pollen of Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), they were not mating.

Towards the end of the morning some of us were treated to further surprises. A Hummingbird Hawk-moth (*Macroglossum stellatarum*) was not only seen but photographed. And finally, an Adder (*Vipera berus*) was spotted, no doubt taking advantage of the sunny day to warm itself. We were sad not to see any Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) flowering, but it was just a bit late for these beautiful plants, for which the site is noted. Back in the car park, we thanked Natalie for a great morning and great weather. As a mark of appreciation, the Friends gave Natalie a generous donation for CWT towards their fantastic work.

Ron Smith – Guided walk around Royal William Yard (16 July 2019) by Jane Kiely

We were 20 on this outing on a lovely summer's day as Ron took us first around the outside of the Royal William Yard (RWY), and said he would only explain buildings that could actually be seen as we strolled our way around. It was a brilliant way to set the scene before we finally went down the comparatively new steps over the steep cliff and into the RWY itself with the wonderful view over to Mount Edgumbe. RWY was the major victualling depot for the Royal Navy, hence the size of it, and it was designed as a statement of the times. Before the Yard was built, victualling had been carried out around Sutton Harbour. RWY was designed by Sir John Rennie and built between 1826 and 1835, being named after King William IV, uncle of the future Queen Victoria. It was in use for naval purposes until 1992 and is now being regenerated by Urban Splash into flats, bars, cafes, offices etc and is well used all around the little harbour with ferries going to the Barbican and over to Cremyll.



**Melville Building at Royal William Yard
(not taken on this visit)**

Anthony Lewis

The buildings are vast and all named, some by their function, i.e. Brewhouse, Cooperage, Slaughterhouse, etc. and others after the Royal Family, such as Clarence. Ron walked us round the various buildings and inside one of them