

Chiff Chaff

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 307098

GILBERT WHITE'S HOUSE & GARDEN
and THE OATES COLLECTION

Issue 8



June 2011

Captain Lawrence Oates Soldier, Explorer, Hero

We are delighted to announce that work has just started on the redevelopment of the Lawrence Oates Gallery – to be officially opened in March 2012 to coincide with the centenary of the death of Lawrence Oates and the demise of the final Scott Expedition to the Antarctic.



We have succeeded in securing another *Your Heritage* Heritage Lottery Fund Grant. This grant money has been most generously matched by the United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust – so we are well on the way to ensuring a really exciting, fresh new presentation, of our Lawrence Oates Gallery.

However, we are not quite at our fundraising target for this gallery yet! Having arrived at preliminary costings with our newly appointed designers, *Imagemakers*, there are a number more interactive educational elements we would simply love to include in our final designs that we cannot yet afford. We also need to fund the complete upgrading of the rather poor lighting in that Gallery, to complement the new look presentation and to show our Antarctic artefacts to best effect. So fundraising for the Oates 2012 Project continues.

There are many ways you could help us with this fundraising target:

- Visit the Museum again soon, bringing friends and family too;
- Offer practical support to our Fundraising Team;
- Buy tickets for some our great summer events, come yourself or give them as presents;
- Adopt a penguin! (They're all in need of some conservation treatment.)
- Sponsor one of the proposed gallery showcases or educational interactives;

Find out more! Why not join us for our Oates Summer Lecture in the Marquee on Thursday, 16th June, to be given by Major General Patrick Cordingley, and see the preliminary designs.

Miriam Tong



June is bustin' out all over



That's literally true as far as the birds are concerned. It's all happening in June with chicks busting out of their shells and fledging from their nests. Not surprising then, that the BBC chooses this time of year to screen Springwatch. I happened to switch on the TV a few days ago to find Chris Packham, Hampshire naturalist and Springwatch anchor-man, enthusiastically describing a nest of Redstarts. By coincidence, earlier that same day, I had been looking at a Redstart nest myself and had great views of the adult birds coming to feed their young.

As Chris was eager to point out, the Redstart is one of our most attractive and colourful summer visitors. Similar in size to a Robin, but slimmer and more upright, the male Redstart also has an orange-red breast. Its tail too is red which gives the bird its name, *steort* being Old-English, and *staart* Dutch, for tail. It has a blue-grey back, a black face and throat and a narrow white forehead.

Despite it being such a spectacular bird I would wager that relatively few people in southern England are familiar with it which is surprising given that in Gilbert White's day it was widespread and common. In July 1766, White wrote in his journal 'Young redstarts in plenty. Redstarts are a very common bird in fields and gardens.' Today, although it can still be found close to Selborne, it is decidedly thin on the ground. It has disappeared from fields and gardens and is now restricted, in Hampshire, to woodland in the New Forest, the Wealden Heaths and the Thames Basin Heaths.

What's brought about this decline in its fortunes? Like many other species, one of the main culprits is likely to be the intensification of agriculture. This is supported by the fact that, in White's home county, Redstarts are now restricted to uncultivated areas. They feed on insects and other invertebrates so it's possible that the use of agricultural herbicides and pesticides and other changes in farming practices have reduced their food supply.

Whatever the reason, the reduction in Redstart numbers would certainly be obvious to Gilbert White were he able to walk the fields around Selborne today. He would miss some other summer visitors too - birds such as the Stone Curlew, Turtle Dove, Wryneck, Nightingale and Grasshopper Warbler. Although, with the exception of Wryneck, these species still breed in Hampshire, there are far fewer today than there were in the 18th century. This is one aspect of White's legacy that I find so intriguing. His records of wildlife around Selborne allow direct comparison with the situation today and the obvious changes lead one to ask the simple question 'Why?'

John Eyre



Summer Holiday Activities

Wild @ White's Family Expeditions

Every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday throughout August. **Family Expedition Ticket £48**

White's Wild Wednesdays

Every Wednesday throughout the school holidays. Self-led family activities.

See our website for full details

www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk



The Wakes Garden This Spring & Summer

This year we're really pleased that the ranunculus (Asian buttercup) has done particularly well. In previous years they have failed to produce such a wonderful colourful display, but the climate this year seemed to suit them. Volunteer Juliet, who's planted them for the past three years, is delighted with this season's success.

Next to the House we have planted the usual bed of marigolds and sunflowers. We have found a very tall, branched sunflower, for the centre of the bed, that could grow to fourteen feet! This was the sort of sunflower that was grown in the eighteenth century. We are hoping for spectacular results.

In the annual garden we have an unusual display of spider plants (*cleome*) and larkspur as well as the usual ornamental gourds of which I have many unusual varieties for sale this year. Even if you can't make it to the Unusual Plants Fair next weekend, you should find these plants available for sale in the Plant Sales area within the next month.

We also have a tub of blue and magenta peas (*lathyrus sativus azureus* and *l. tingitanus*), which are forming a focal point near the house.

Up on Baker's Hill the melons are doing well in their hot-bed. One of the varieties is Black Rock which was probably grown in the eighteenth century. Nearby on another hot-bed we have cucumbers which we hope may be offered in sandwiches, for those who want to enjoy a traditional tea-time treat in the Tea Parlour.

In the cutting beds, as flower arrangers will be aware, we have a good crop of Sweet Williams – which are making a lovely display in the house. Later on there will be cornflowers, marigolds and clary, which is an unusual cottage garden annual, with purple, dark blue or magenta bracts.

So far this has been a very good year in the garden in no small part thanks to our volunteers, the Wakes Weeders. Do come and see for yourself, or better still join the Weeders on the first Sunday of the month, or any Monday or Friday to get involved.

Best Wishes & Good Gardening

David Standing

Timothy's Titbits

June 16 1782 *This hot weather makes the tortoise so alert that he traverses all the garden by six o'clock in the morning. When the sun grows very powerful he retires under a garden-mat, or the shelter of some cabbage; not loving to be about in the vehement heat. In such weather he eats greedily.*





Summer Events



Thursday 16th June 7.30pm Summer Lecture in the Marquee

Captain Lawrence Oates – Soldier, Explorer, Hero by Major General Patrick Cordingley DSO DSc FRGS

Please see our website for more details – www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk.

Tickets £18.00 to include wine & canapé during interval – **To book phone 01420 511275**

Saturday 18th – Sunday 19th June 10.30am – 5.00pm

Unusual Plants Fair

Please see our website for full details – www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk.

Admission to the House, Garden & Fair for only £6. (No concessions, Friends free entry or season tickets.)

Sunday 3rd July 11.00am Garden Lecture & Lunch

Bees, Birds & Butterflies – Encouraging them into your garden by Marina Christopher

Please see our website for full details – www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk.

Tickets £50.00 – includes all refreshments and lunch – **To book phone 01420 511275**

Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th July 10.00am – 5.00pm

Festival of Wood & Rural Crafts

Please see our website for full details – www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk.

Admission to the House, Garden & Fair for only £6. (No concessions, Friends free entry or season tickets.)

Saturday 16th July – Sunday 31st July 10.30am – 5.00pm Art Exhibition

Tea for Two with local artists **Tony Goffe & James Marnan**

Please see our website for full details – www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk.

Normal admission charges apply.

Sunday 28th August 7.30pm Open–Air Garden Theatre

Cranford with Chapterhouse Theatre Company

Please see our website for full details– www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk.

Tickets £12.50 Adults, Students & Children £8.50, Families (2 A + 2 C) £37 – **To book phone**

GILBERT WHITE'S HOUSE & GARDEN *and* THE OATES COLLECTION

The Wakes, High Street, Selborne, Hampshire GU34 3JH

01420 511275

info@gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk

www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk

An Independent Charitable Trust and Accredited Museum

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 307098

