



2023 SPRING ISSUE

STEEP HOLM NEWS

Official Newsletter of the Kenneth Allsop Memorial Trust



208 Step challenge finally finished

BY MARK HARRIS

After two years of hard graft and 350 metres of hand railings installed, the 208 Steps project is now completed, safe and open for the public to explore and enjoy.

This project may have been the biggest we’ve done this year, but by no means the only one. Read on for more details.



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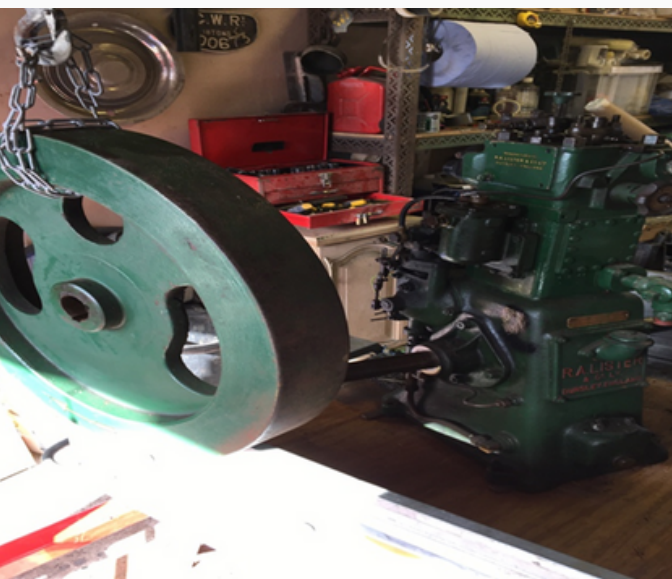


Dennis 'the Menace' has landed

BY MARK HARRIS

Even though the Easter trip was short, we managed to transport a considerable amount of stores and supplies over, including the remaining parts of our newish Lister generator and engine set, or as we've named it Dennis 'the Menace'. The Lister generating set was kindly purchased for us by John Watts.

Needless to say, transporting this to the island was a bit of a challenge, to say the least. Firstly the engine was located in Burton-upon-Trent. Chris Maslen, Jenny Smith and myself had to travel up on numerous occasions to dismantle as much as we could to get it on a trailer for transport back to my home garage. I spent a good couple of months further dismantling it, creating the smaller parts, and preparing the bigger parts for transportation to the island.



Transportation was carried out in three stages. Firstly, the smaller crated up items were transported towards the end of last year. Secondly, the base and flywheels went out on a special trip in January 2023. Lastly, the heaviest items, the engine block and generator went out on Easter trip. The generator was by far the heaviest item which involved seven of us to handle it landing on the island. The generator is presently being re-assembled.





The Big Clearance

BY MARK HARRIS

Our small but dedicated team of volunteers have been very busy in 2022. Chris Maslin, Greg Avis, Sandra Allen and myself, have all been undertaking lots of clearance work (including at the cliff cottage area). We focussed on the split rock gun battery and also made a new route through the undergrowth from The Nissen hut base at the Priory site to tombstone battery.

Unfortunately, the planned year-end maintenance trip to the island had to be cancelled due to bad weather. Bad weather had also managed cut short this year's Easter trip from four to two days. However, we still managed to carry out the vital path clearance work ready for our visitors.

Additional work was carried out in the 'Black Hole', the storage building attached to the end of the museum. This has been a dumping ground for the past decade.

Over the last five or six years we have given attention to clearing it particularly on rainy days, as this has not being high priority works. We are now at the stage we can start to neatly put away items of interest to the island but not necessarily worthy of public display. This will also have the added bonus of freeing up much needed workshop space enabling us to have a much easier and safer workshop environment.



Rust in Peace

BY ANTHONY SMITH

An early start on Good Friday and thank goodness for calm weather as we transported the heavy parts of the diesel engine to the island. The weight took four men to lift and land on a pebble beach. We spent the morning transporting both parts to the top of the hill. I learned how to use the tracked vehicle and managed to take one of the parts up myself with some guidance from Greg Avis.

Despite the cold barracks room and lack of fresh water we bunkered down on our air beds and sleeping bags to be woken by the sound of voices as a fry up of sausage and bacon prepared us for the tasks ahead.

We managed to clean the steps to the powder rooms at the batteries using the portable generator to power the pressure water. We also moved the old bedsteads that had been rusting at the back of the barracks to a pile accessible to the tracked vehicle so they can be transported to the 'rust in peace' pile near the quay. The steel crumbles over time into dust and some of the bedsteads were already crumbling as we carried them away. This is hard labour over several hours two at a time. They seemed to get heavier over time but eventually they were piled up ready to go down the hill.

Work on the island is hard and everything must be transported manually with the help of our tracked vehicle to the quay and back. The rusty bedsteads had been transported over 40 years ago, a few at a time, for use by venture scouts that bunked up in the barracks to carry our tasks over several days. These types of trips have not taken place for almost 40 years and now the old beds have been rusting outside, for just as long.



Recording the Wildlife

BY STEPHEN PARKER

Botanical records for Steep Holm date back as far 1562, these are some of the earliest records of plants in Britain. Over the centuries there have also been reports published on a wide range of the island's wildlife. In 1996 Tony Parsons published "The Invertebrates of the Island of Steep Holm in the Bristol Channel". This is a catalogue of all of invertebrates that had been found on the island, therefore it is an excellent record of the island's biodiversity.

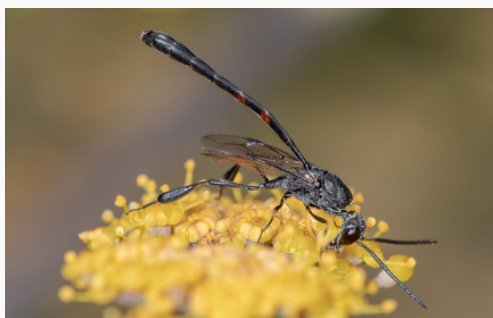
However, there have been very few systematic surveys of the island wildlife in the twenty-first century. In March 2022 KAMT applied to the Natural Sciences Research Committee of Somerset Archaeological and Natural History (SANHS) for a grant to encouraging naturalists with specialist skills to visit the and undertake surveys of the island's natural history.

Twenty experienced naturalists from across Somerset were approached and asked if they would like a trip to the island. They willing agreed and a programme of visits carefully worked out. As always, the weather and sea conditions played their part in disrupting this project and by the end of the season only eight had visited (the remainder will visit in 2023). In addition to recording the species the naturalists were ask to provide photographs of the island fauna and flora.

The KAMT are now taking these records and adding them to a database, so far over 250 species have been identified. The groups covered include butterflies (and a few moths), reptiles (Slow worm), grasshoppers, beetles, bees, wasps and flies. At least 4 new species for Steep Holm have been identified but analysis of the 2022 records have only just started.

The plan for 2023 is for surveys of plants, fungi, mosses & liverworts and birds. In addition to recording the species the naturalists were ask to provide photographs of the island fauna and flora. The KAMT hope to publish the findings of these surveys and other wildlife records in a new book on the island's wildlife.

UPCOMING NEWS (SUMMER 2023), a special feature bulletin will be circulated covering Bridget Wadey's experience on the Island as part of The Wildlife Group research activities.



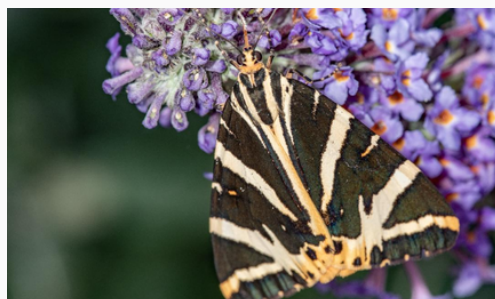
Gasteruption sp. cf jaculator



Chorthippus brunneus



Shrimp



Eupalagia quadripunctaria

Visit STEEP HOLM in 2023

If you ever wonder what lurks on the island that looks like a whale in the Bristol Channel seen from Weston seafront, why not join one of the sailings and find out?

The island is a site of special scientific interest and a peaceful haven (when the gulls have finished rearing their young) with 360 degree views of the Bristol Channel and the Somerset and Welsh coastlines.

Visitors can wander the clifftops, explore the military buildings, underground ammunition stores, and buy one of the island's own postage stamps.

Trips are operated by Bay Island Voyages, and these are scheduled to take place on 2023 as set out in the table, subject to weather conditions.

For further details visit our website www.steepholm.online or advert below.

| | | | FROM WESTON | FROM CARDIFF | |
|----------|------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------|
| Day | Date | Month | Dep | Dep | Return |
| Tuesday | 06 | June | 07:30 | 06:30 | 19:30 |
| Sunday | 18 | June | 06:00 | | 18:00 |
| Tuesday | 20 | June | 07:30 | 06:30 | 19:00 |
| Thursday | 06 | July | 07:50 | 06:30 | 20:00 |
| Friday | 21 | July | 08:30 | 07:30 | 20:00 |
| Thursday | 03 | August | 07:00 | | 19:00 |
| Saturday | 05 | August | 08:30 | 07:30 | 20:40 |
| Friday | 18 | August | 07:30 | 06:30 | 19:00 |
| Sunday | 20 | August | 08:30 | 07:30 | 20:00 |
| Thursday | 31 | August | 06:00 | | 18:00 |
| Sunday | 03 | September | 08:30 | 07:30 | 20:00 |
| Saturday | 16 | September | 07:00 | | 19:15 |
| Monday | 18 | September | 08:00 | 06:30 | 19:40 |
| Saturday | 30 | September | 06:30 | | 18:30 |
| Monday | 02 | October | 08:00 | 06:30 | 19:45 |
| Sunday | 15 | October | 06:30 | | 18:00 |

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How YOU can help Steep Holm Island



Lottery

Consider buying lottery numbers if you haven't done so yet. You can win up to £50.

For further details please contact our membership secretary on mgmembersholm@btinternet.com.

Wishing you good luck!

2023 Annual General Meeting

The 2023 AGM is planned to take place on **Saturday 23rd September 2023** at the Lauriston Hotel in Weston-Super-Mare. Further details to follow nearer the date.

Do make a note in your diary! It is a great opportunity to have your say and meet other members and Trustees who share a common interest of Steep Holm.

Volunteering

Do you have skills Steep Holm can benefit from? Want to be part of the team to help, protect, preserve and enhance for the benefit of the public the landscape, antiquities, flora and fauna, natural beauty and scientific interest of the Island? If so, we would love to hear from you. Please contact steepholmcompanysecretary1@gmail.com

Legacies

We would be delighted if you could consider leaving a legacy to the charity to help us maintain and enhance Steep Holm as an extraordinary nature reserve full of historic interest and open to the public.

Please contact mgmembersholm@btinternet.com if you would like to consider making a gift under your will to the Kenneth Allsop Memorial Trust Limited (register charity 270059) for its general purposes as trustee of the charity.

Membership fees

This remains £25 per year. If you would like to become a member of the Trust or set up a direct debit please contact our membership secretary on email mgmembersholm@btinternet.com

Applications for membership will be welcomed on the form by post or electronically, as you prefer.

Stay connected

For all the latest news on the island find us on www.steepholm.online and other social platforms.

