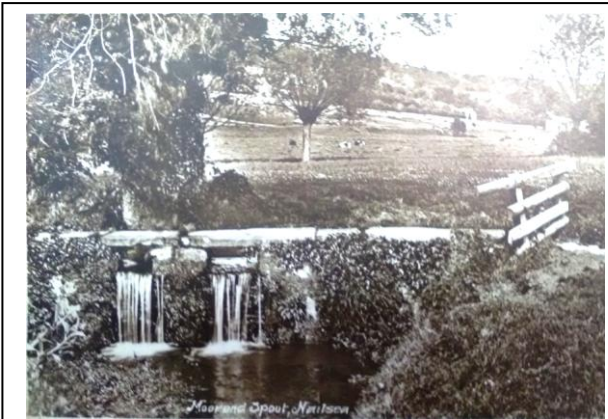


Brief history of Moorend Spout (a personal view)

Terry Smith

The origin of the Nailsea Environment & Wildlife Trust

About 40 years ago when my son was at primary school in Pound Lane in Nailsea, he used to come home with stories of going to a place called Moorend Spout in a field not far away where he and his friends would play games and catch sticklebacks. He was so enthusiastic about this that I decided to have a look for myself. I found a clapper bridge made of slabs of sandstone above a pretty waterfall, surrounded by an untouched wilderness - an ideal place for childhood games. Eight years ago I



Photograph of a picture post card showing the sluice at Moorend Spout, posted in 1931

The text reads 'Letter received safely. Hope the cream arrived in good condition. This is a very favorite spot with children. Hope both well. Yours W'.

wondered how it might be possible to preserve this area as a wildlife site and as an amenity for the community.

I eventually managed to contact the owner to express an interest in buying her six acre field. This included the area of wet woodland, mainly containing willow and alder trees, a small wet woodland known locally as a Carr.

In order to encourage recycling and to reduce landfill the Government introduced a scheme imposing the payment of a tax (at present over £80 per tonne) which could be reclaimed by local groups to support wildlife and biodiversity. We submitted a detailed proposal to YANSEC (Yanley and North Somerset Environmental

Company), the local administrators of the Landfill Communities Tax, and we established a trust with seven trustees in the hope that we could obtain funding from this source

The trustees come from a wide background of expertise. At present we have Ian Chambers (from the Backwell Environment Trust), Rosemary Dennis (retired from banking), Helen Iorwerth (with special skills in mapping), Tim Southwood (a former local GP), Hilary West (from the Avon Wildlife Trust) and Mike Woodley (a builder). We have now established a group (Nailsea Environment & Wildlife Trust, NEWT) as a registered charity, with the objective 'to advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment'.



Clearing one of the ponds in the carr at Moorend Spout. (A carr is a wet woodland, usually with willow and alder). This pond is more like a swamp and it can be dangerous!

After submitting a detailed proposal to North Somerset Council and following a visit by the Environment Agency, we were given planning permission for the installation of five large ponds



Formal opening of the boardwalk on the public footpath at Moorend Spout.30/03/2012



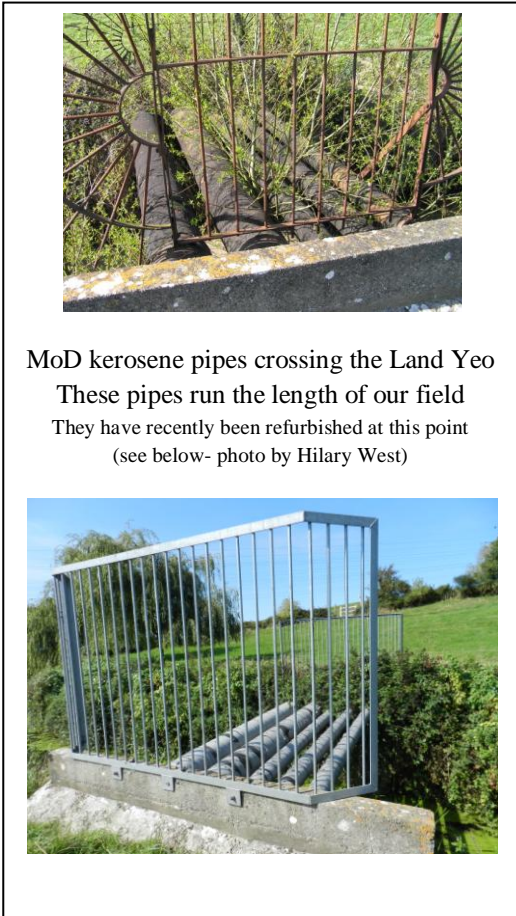
Our first Newt, justifying the name of our group!
Photograph by Rosemary Dennis 29/04/2015

on the field. Excavation for the first, located in the NE corner of the field was completed in 2013. and the second to the south was finished in 2015.

Although the field is wet, we found that the water table is usually at a depth of 50 - 100 cm below ground level. We wanted our ponds to be up to one

metre deep, but using liners was quite expensive. We therefore wondered if it would be possible to siphon water from the Land Yeo which flows at a level well above the field. As riparian owners we are allowed to take up to 20 cubic metres of water /day. This method proved to be quite successful and, so far, the water level in the ponds has been well maintained. Sometimes, especially during the summer, the flow of water through the siphon is insufficient to maintain the water levels. We have then had help from the fire brigade to pump water from the river. Their headquarters are only a short distance away and they have treated this as an exercise. We are also very grateful for their help in the irrigation of some of our newly planted trees.

As we had some money remaining after the purchase of the field we decided to install a board walk along the first section of the footpath, which could be quite muddy at times. Water from the springs in the Carr now flows under the boards. The Nailsea footpath group found that the boards could be quite slippery, and they paid the cost of adding wire mesh on the surface which made the path much safer.



MoD kerosene pipes crossing the Land Yeo
These pipes run the length of our field
They have recently been refurbished at this point
(see below- photo by Hilary West)



Oil pipes and 'the tunnel

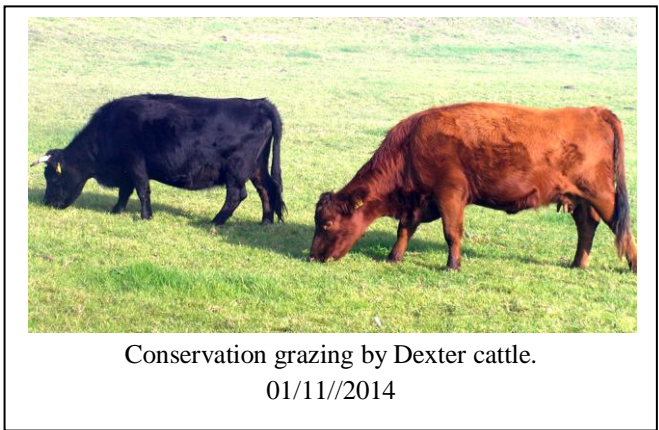
'Set in the fences at the East and West of the reserve there are some white-painted concrete posts spanning a width of about 5 metres. These mark the line of 5 pipes that were buried in the field in the nineteen-fifties, at the time of the so-called 'cold war'. As there was the prospect that we might

need to deploy a large number of defensive aircraft at that time, several fuel bunkers were installed across the country. One of these was at Flax Bourton, storing aviation fuel which was imported in tankers arriving at Redcliff Bay, where there are also several large bunkers. The pipes crossing our site were part of a large network crossing the country. The Ministry of Defence is keeping these pipes in case they are needed in the future at a time of national emergency. These pipes are probably empty at present or filled with water. The presence of these pipes means that some of our activities are restricted. For example we are not allowed to plant trees, nor do any digging within 3 metres of the pipes.

Also running the length of our field there is a major drain known as Jackland's Tunnel, which carries a large volume of water, This was probably installed as part of a drainage system added in the 18th century. There is an inspection shaft in our field and another in the field to the east. This drain originates at Jackland's Bridge, where the mill race starts on the Land Yeo, but we are still uncertain how it enters the rhyne system to the west.

Swamp

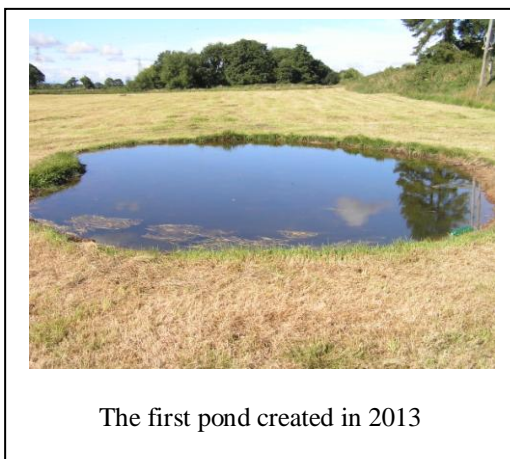
The carr is like a swamp and it can be dangerous. Several springs arise there, making the ground very wet, and some of our volunteers have found themselves trapped in the mud, needing assistance to be released. There was a report of a possible mortality in the last century (see NEWT Newsletter no 9). I have fallen in the water there while I was alone; making the discovery that mobile phones will not work after being submerged! Some of the ponds produce bubbles of gas like those in the well-known bubbling pond in Towerhouse Wood (see <http://www.nailseanature.org.uk>).



Conservation grazing by Dexter cattle.
01/11//2014



Scattering the hay from Netcott's Meadow.
Photo by Rosemary Dennis



The first pond created in 2013

Trees and Ponds
We have planted two substantial trees in the SE corner of our

field, notably an Aspen, in memory of Phyllis Stacey who had left £2000 to NEWT in her will, and a Black

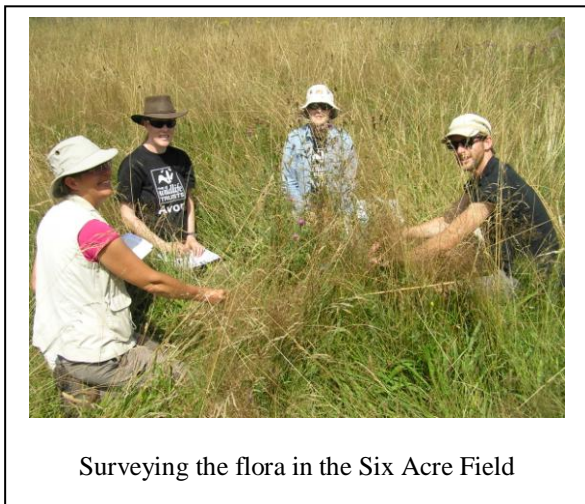


Flooded field at Moorend Spout 06/10/2012
Moorend Spout is in the flood plain

Poplar to celebrate the anniversary of the Queen's coronation. Trees have also been planted to the east of the carr, although they are growing slowly due to the competition from the grasses. Recently we have transplanted some self-sown Alder seedlings from the carr to shade the area to the south of the second pond.

The Ash tree to the west of the site will probably be killed by wilt, so we have planted a replacement Sycamore close by. Some of the trees that we had planted on the embankment of the Land Yeo have been moved at the request of the Environment Agency as it was thought that they could destabilize the soil. The hedge on the eastern boundary was

planted by KPMG (in pouring rain!) as a team-bonding exercise. Wild Flower Meadow Just



Surveying the flora in the Six Acre Field

after the Second World War I can remember my father taking the family into the countryside where we were able to lie in fields full of the most beautiful wild

flowers, as most meadows were in those days. There were enormous ant-hills, and he showed me a Skylark's nest amongst the grass, complete with eggs. I can remember watching the bird singing while flying above the field. It is now many years since I last

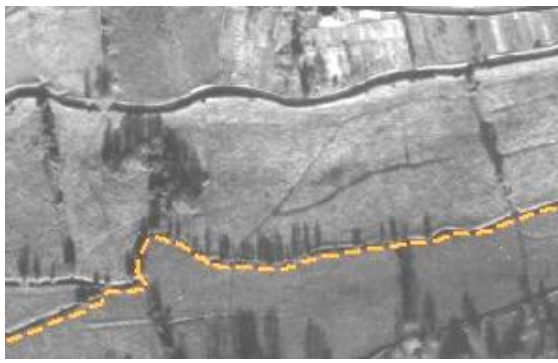
saw a Skylark – likewise Lapwings and much other such wildlife that epitomized our landscape at that time. This iconic wildlife was lost with agricultural intensification and with the introduction of fertilizers (producing the so- called ‘improved pasture’). There are now very few Skylarks and 90% of our wildflower meadows have disappeared, to be replaced by monocultures of cereals and forage grasses. The decline in the bees in the UK is probably at least in part due to the loss of our flower meadows. Prince Charles had also seen this change and he was determined to try to reverse it. In celebration of the Queen's Jubilee he suggested that those fields in which the wild flowers remain could be used as the seed source for other sites where the wild flowers had disappeared. Nectcott's Meadow to the north of Backwell Lake is one field near to Nailsea which still remains pristine, and which has many orchid flowers in June and July. This was designated to be a donor site for the so-called Coronation Meadow scheme <http://coronationmeadows.org.uk/>. In 2014 the Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) asked us (NEWT) if we would be willing to develop our field as a wild flower meadow (a recipient site) using seed harvested from Nectcott's. The hay was scattered over our field after harrowing the ground. AWT also organized the planting of soil plugs containing wild flower plants. With finance from BIFFA administered by the Avon Wildlife Trust, our field was fenced prior to the introduction of a herd of Dexter cows. This is the basis of 'conservation grazing' which is beneficial for the establishment of wild flowers.



Banded Demoiselle

This damselfly is abundant at Moorend Spout





Aerial view of Moarend Spout in 1947
The dashed yellow line marks the Tickenham - Nailsea parish boundary. The trees to the south of the field have now been lost.

The Augustinians

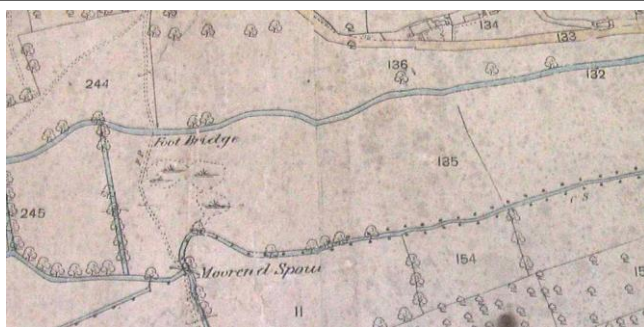
Water mills have probably been located on this site since 1148. The Land Yeo was ducted in a leete almost certainly constructed by the Augustinians. Cadbury Camp on Tickenham Ridge was another example of the industrious inhabitants of Tickenham. The Mill at Middletown in Tickenham is sited on a fault line which gives a 12 feet head from an over shot or high breast shot wheel. The Mill was purchased by Lady Smyth of Ashton Court, and converted to a water pump to supply water to her farms. The water was pumped to tanks

at Cadbury Camp from a well in Tickenham Court. The mill is now a private dwelling house. St Augustine's Abbey was founded in 1148, later to become Bristol Cathedral. At that time Robert FitzHarding marked the founding of the Abbey and Monastery by granting the Abbot the patronage of Tickenham, and the Mill was constructed soon after. Surprisingly I have not found a direct reference to the involvement of the Augustinians with Tickenham church. Their monastery was sited on College Green in Bristol, and the presence of the Augustinians is recognized by place names in Bristol, like St Augustine's parade.

Other activities

In the latter part of the 19th century, a school was held by Dame Bassett in a cottage near Jackland's Bridge. It was closed in 1880. The Trout Farm was established in c1985 by Harry Waygood, a former gamekeeper. The farm came under new ownership in 2009

Tickenham court, lying close to the Church of St Quiricus and St Julietta, was home to Eleanor Glanville (b 1650), a pioneer entomologist. After a tempestuous marriage during which she was threatened to be shot by her husband. She was thought to be insane due to her interest in the study of insects. However, she was well in



Map showing the Six Acre Field at Moarend Spout, dated 1886.

advance of her time, becoming adept in breeding butterflies and moths through their full life cycle. She was also the first to recognize the butterfly now known as the Glanville Fritillary which is sometimes found at Sandpoint. This was not far from Woodspring Priory, which was an Augustinian house and had St Thomas the Martyr as a patron saint. The priory was suppressed in 1536.



Woodspring Priory
Built by the Augustinians
1210 - 1536

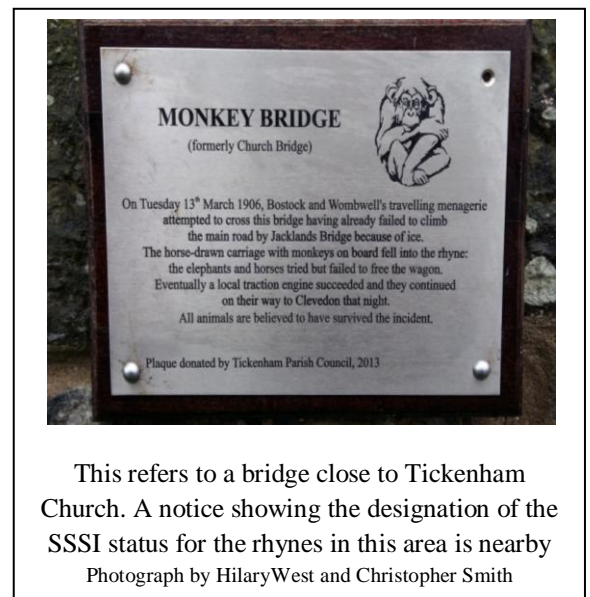
Many years ago Dr John White, a local GP, was known to tell his patients with injuries to go to Moorend spout and bathe in the waterfall. The success of this treatment is unknown.

Conclusion

In establishing this nature reserve we believe that we can at least in a small way redress the loss of wildlife in our countryside. We will probably not see the benefits from this project in our lifetimes, but we hope that future generations will be willing to continue our work and appreciate the biodiversity that this site will preserve. We already have Otters and Kingfishers, in addition to many species of flowers and insects. We have adopted the banded demoiselle in our logo and there are many other dragonflies and damselflies. There are records of Eels in the river and we have found Signal Crayfish, which probably escaped from the Trout Farm.

We are grateful to many for financial support, in addition to those mentioned in the text - notably Nailsea Town Council, North Somerset Council, The Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, The Marsh Christian Trust, Wessex Water, Bristol Airport, Bristol Ornithological Club, Bristol Naturalists' Society, Nailsea Footpath Group and to many private individuals.

We have many loyal volunteers who help us to manage the site. We offer them free hot drinks and delicious home-made cakes, and we provide the equipment. We meet regularly on the first Saturday of each month at 10 am in Pound Lane, close to the entrance which is signposted to the Moorend Spout footpath, near to Ravenswood School. If there is any doubt about the weather we advise you to phone us before coming.



This project would not succeed without the hard work of our trustees and volunteers.

I am grateful to David Franks (Stone Edge Barn, author of 'Story of Tickenham, Somersetshire') for his contributions to this article. Information on the activities of the Augustinians was kindly provided by James Bond. Further information may be found in the book 'The Nailsea I knew' by Jack Hart (1977)

See also www.NEWT.btck.co.uk and www.nailseanature.org.uk

Terry Smith