

*THE
NORTHWESTERN
NATURALIST*

New series



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Margaret McCormick: Naturalist, Campaigner and Poet

25 June 1933 - 8 November 2023



Perfectly chosen, the music made a fitting farewell to the life of Margaret McCormick at her funeral. All Things Bright and Beautiful and Louis Armstrong's, What Wonderful World mirrored her life-long love of nature in all its forms.

Daughter Jean gave the Eulogy at a packed Altrincham Crematorium, and Margaret's granddaughter read her poem 'Dawn', written for her English homework when she was 14.

A kindly, gentle soul, always willing to help others, Margaret died last November, aged 90. Her knowledge and enthusiasm influenced clubs like the Alt Nats (we all know the Sunday name),



Maurice Lees, Margaret and
Barbara Waghorn

the North West Fungus Group and the late lamented Manchester Field Club. As a stalwart of Cheshire Wildlife Trust, she and her late partner, award-winning beekeeper Maurice Lees, were regular faces working with other volunteers to guard one of the few remaining nests in the northwest of the fast-flying Peregrine Falcon. Both also served as volunteer wardens at Sale Water Park. Countless hours were spent working on nature reserves.

Rarely has there been such a talented all-rounder in our local natural history groups. Patiently she nurtured the chrysalis into a colourful live Hawk Moth on the south-facing kitchen window ledge of her Broadheath home. As an amateur lecturer, one of her excellent talks to the Alt Nats featured a stunning compilation of a Puffball ejecting spores in a great plume. Somehow, she had done it using a photocopier!

Birding was another speciality. I remember her counting nearly 500 Lapwing roosting on roofs at Altrincham Retail Park. Taking photos, she downloaded them onto her computer using a large zoom. "All were taking advantage of the stores central heating rising to warm the roofs, providing a cosy rest for them during the day", she recalled.

My late wife Barbara and I revelled in the Field Club botanical meets, Audrey Locksley often joked about "the flower fairies" - Priscilla Tolfree and the two Margarets, Margaret McCormick and Margaret Brown.

On a Fungus Group foray at Moses Gate Country Park she'd identified specimens before any of us had even spotted them. On another in Lakeland, I remember the dreamy, delighted look on her face as we sat by Derwent Water watching Cormorants on an island. Active on conservation issues, she once confronted Alex Ferguson (not a Sir at the time) about plans to build the Manchester United training ground on Carrington Moss. She didn't get a red card nor score any green goals!

One curious quirk - she loved visiting markets. She and Maurice often took the Metro from Altrincham for a market lunch at Bury. On a group birding holiday to the Algarve (organised by Margaret of course) she insisted on shopping at Portuguese markets.

Finally, one delight was that she served specially baked scones to small groups on our outings. We'll really miss you, Margaret. Thanks for your special company, for the cherished memories... and the tasty scones.

Tom Waghorn (with help from Mike Pettipher)

DAWN

by Margaret McCormick

The fox slinks back into his chilly lair,
The otter swims away into his holt,
No sound breaks through the silent frosted air,
As dawn breaks on a shadowed covered world.

The greyness takes a silver pearly tone,
Then swift across the eastern sky, there streams
Tumultuous rays of rose-tipped golden light,
The unseen herald's joyful trumpet gleams.

The lark soars up from dewy meadow nest,
Filling the morning air with liquid trills.
Now shows the flush of crimson on a robin's breast,
With the thrushes' song the woodland edge is filled.

Norman Bamforth (1947-2024)



Compiled by Norman's family and friends This is a slightly edited version of what was read by David Whaley at Norman's funeral.

Norman was born on the 14 June 1947, a post-war baby for Eric and Gertrude Bamforth and home was that forever home at Corporation Street, Audenshaw. Norman had a brother in Alan who passed away in 2019.

Norman's fascination for botany began at a young age. He was hospitalised with TB and was visited by a local natural historian by the name of Charles Hamilton who gave him his first book about English wild-flowers. Norman was hooked.

Neither brother married and in his working life Norman went on to be an electrical draughtsman.

Norman's passion outside his work was the great outdoors. He completed an impressive 45 years volunteering around the Tameside countryside. He joined Tame Valley Countryside Warden Service as a volunteer warden in 1978 and took up a similar role with the Werneth Low Country Park wardens ten years later in 1988. And more recently, in 2013 he transferred to being a greenspace volunteer with Tameside Greenspace. In his days with Tame Valley Norman was involved in the planting of thousands of trees, many of which were in urban locations.

Norman also used to lead flora rambles with his brother which took place from May through to August. Then in October they organised fungal forays. Norman was a regular at the monthly volunteer meetings – only missing them if he was on holiday – often contributing with his extensive knowledge in what can politely be referred to as “lively exchanges”. Then across at Werneth Low he was in the front line in planting new oak woodlands and hazel coppices and with several sizable sections of new hedgerows. He led all-day day rambles here too, his ‘Rome About the Low’ earned him the nickname ‘Maximus Bamforth’. He also ran evening flora walks in the summer months.

And it was incredible that Norman would have over 100 attending his mid-Christmas walk around Werneth Low. And as if that was not enough, you would often see Norman, Alan and friend Ros on weekend ‘Womble Patrols’ collecting up litter and picnic debris.

Norman and Alan would always look forward to those trips to Northumberland, the local farmers knew summer had arrived once the two brothers were about studying the local moorland habitat. They also used to make regular autumn trips to Dollgellau on the Mawddack Estuary in Snowdonia to search for rare lichens and mushrooms.

Norman became a member of several photographic, and historical societies. He was group secretary of the North Western Naturalists' Union (Bryophyte and Lichen Section). He also completed detailed historical research into the socio-economic history of Tameside and in 2006 with Tameside MBC and the Manchester University Archeological Unit he published his own book “We Dee With Eawr Hearts Up” a book about the mining disasters of the past in the borough. Other passions were trains, railways and his Rover car.

He was not materialistic in the slightest... owned few clothes and was never one to splash the cash. Norman was quietly spoken, a shy man but a man with a dry sense of humour. Fame and stardom never dazzled him. He once shared a tiny plane with legendary songwriter and performer Donovan who had bought a boathouse on the Isle of Skye. He exchanged pleasantries without really knowing who the man was until they got off the

plane to be greeted by a posse of reporters and photographers. No thank-you – Norman was more interested in tracking down a corncrake than meeting a celebrity. He did later admit that he never got to see the bird... though it did keep him awake at nights with its distinctive crexing.

Norman lived a largely healthy life up to having a pacemaker fitted some five years ago. That slowed him down a little, but he was still able to get about. However, a month before Christmas last year he was diagnosed with a brain tumour. It came as a shock as friends thought he had gone into hospital to have his pacemaker checked. He would spend time in Tameside Hospital and Stamford House before a place was found at Sunnybank Care Home. Sadly, he died on the 29 April at Manchester Royal Infirmary. He was 76 years of age. Norman will be remembered as a gentle man who was equally generous with his time and knowledge and always enthusiastic about what was coming next.

SOCIETY DIARY

Very few Societies have been in contact so please check the details and visit websites and Facebook pages where they are given for further information.

Please note that members of the Northwestern Naturalists' Union are welcome to attend the meetings of all the affiliated societies.

ALTRINCHAM AND DISTRICT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The indoor meetings are held at Jubilee Community Centre, The Firs, Bowdon, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA14 2TQ at 7.30pm. Excursions leave from the Jubilee Centre car park at 6.30 pm or meet at the venue itself. Entrance charges: £2.00 members, £3.50 guests. Please contact us at least 3 days in advance if you wish to attend any of the excursions.

<http://www.altnats.org.uk>, info@altnats.org.uk, 0161 865 0118

BLACKBURN BIRD CLUB

Indoor meetings are usually held on the first Monday of the month at Feniscowles Methodist Church, Preston Old Road, Blackburn, BB2 5ER at 7.30 pm. Outdoor meetings are held to observe and study birds in the field, and are usually led by a member of the committee.

CHORLEY AND DISTRICT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Meetings September - April St Mary's Parish Centre Chorley.

See www.chorleynats.org.uk for details or contact Paul Brennan, 14 Merton Grove, Chorley, PR6 8UR

CROAL-IRWELL LOCAL GROUP

The Croal-Irwell Group was set up by local volunteers who wanted to protect nature and encourage people to value native plants and creatures under the guidance of the L.W.T.

We have field trips to nature reserves and do practical conservation work in Summerseat.

Please note indoor meetings are on Tuesdays and start at 7.30pm at Our Lady of Grace, The Cottage, Highfield Road, Prestwich M25 1AS. Admission and refreshments by £4 donation. Please bring your own cup. Please note field trips are on Wednesdays and start at 10.30am. Further details are available at the indoor meetings or by phoning 07377 539882.

GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL RECORD CENTRE

Any queries contact: Steve Atkins, Local Record Centre Development Officer

E-Mail: Stephen.atkins@tameside.gov.uk, Mobile 07792 041 528

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, Council Offices, Clarence Arcade, Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside, OL6 7PT, Tel: 0161 342 4409

JOY OF WILDLIFE

The group gets together weekly at sites around Shropshire to record the wildlife that we can find and identify. Outings are on a Wednesday, starting at 10.30am and finishing around 3.30pm. We meet as a group of friends out for the day together doing something we all enjoy. Everyone welcome but children must be accompanied by an adult,

For further details contact Keith Fowler (vc40joyofwildlife@gmail.com). Follow our exploits at <https://wrekinforestvolunteers.blogspot.com/>.

LANCASHIRE & CHESHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are at 7.30pm, unless indicated and are at Frodsham Community Centre, Fluin Lane, Frodsham

LEIGH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are in the Derby Room at Leigh Library. There is ample free car parking in the car park next to the Library (but please note that you do park at your own risk). Meetings are on Fridays at 7:15pm for a 7:30pm start. Everyone is welcome free of charge but a small donation to our funds from non-members would be gratefully accepted. A varied programme of speakers and slideshows on wildlife subjects is organised, commencing in September running through to May each year.

For all up-to-date information visit our website www.leighos.org.uk. A warm welcome is guaranteed at any of our meetings.

LIVERPOOL BOTANICAL SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held in the Weston Centre, World Museum, Liverpool, starting at 11.00am. Unless otherwise stated field meetings begin at 10.30am. Please check the website for details.

Saturday 7 September : Parbold for late summer canal bank and hedgerow flora
Leader Peter Gateley (07518 685807)

Meet at Parbold Station, The Common, WN8 7NU, (SD490107). Car parks at WN8 7DA (over the road), or by the canal bridge to the South.

Saturday 14 September : Leighton Moss

With Merseyside Naturalists Association, coach trip, Cost £25.

Please book with MNA coach secretary Seema Aggarwal (07984 231059)

Saturday 21 September : Marshside for saltmarsh plants

Leader Steve Cross (07807 341220)

Meet at car park Marshside RSPB, PR9 9TF (SD3522020471), (What3Words: outfit.factories.tulip).

Saturday October 5 : Freshfield Fungus Foray for fungi and any late flowering plants.

Leader Steve Cross (07807 341220)

Meet at Freshfield station car park L37 7DD, (SD2912408326), (What3Words: parent.cats.crass).

Saturday 9 November : Grass Identification

Peter Gateley (online zoom meeting, details to follow)

Saturday 14 December : Bryophyte Basics

Gabriel Dixon

Saturday 11 January 2025 : The Wonderful World of Diatoms

Geraldine Reid

Saturday 8 February : AGM + members' field meeting photos

Saturday 8 March : The 'Trees & Shrubs Online' Project

Tim Baxter

MACCLESFIELD COUNTRYSIDE AND HERITAGE CLUB

Indoor meetings commence at 7.30pm at the Salvation Army Hall, Roe Street, Macclesfield, SK11 6PH, maccfieldclub.org.uk.

MANCHESTER AND NORTH MIDLANDS FERN GROUP

All meetings at 10.30 unless otherwise stated

Field meetings organiser : Mike Canaway mikecanaway@gmail.com

For field meetings members must abide by the BPS Code of Conduct <https://ebps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/BPS-Code-of-Conduct-2015.pdf> and

https://ebps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/BPS_Safety_Code_A42015.pdf - the Safety Code which covers responsibilities, clothing and equipment etc.

MANCHESTER MICROSCOPICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

All meetings are held in the Stopford Building (Medical School) University of Manchester M13 9PT, corner of Oxford Road and Aker Street (next to the Holy Name Church), Manchester, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. **All are welcome** – feel free to bring a friend or two. Non-members and members of other Societies are welcome. The Society's library will be available at all Stopford meetings and includes copies of our Newsletters and literature on microscopic history, as well as many books on microscopy and Natural History. See also our Internet site at <http://www.manchestermicroscopical.org.uk>

MARPLE NATURALISTS

Meetings commence at 8.00 pm at United Reform Church, Hibbert Lane, Marple, SK6 7NN. Visitors welcome: £4 for individual meetings, Children free. For further information:

Jane Michael 07917 434598 or Derek Clifford 427 4611 or redgate104@gmail.com or Marple Naturalists Community page on www.marple-uk.com or www.facebook.com/marplenaturalists

Outdoor meetings - arranged separately and announced at meetings.

MERSEYSIDE NATURALISTS ASSOCIATION

Full programme listings are on our website www.mnapage.info and reports of previous trips on our blog at www.NaturalistsNotebook.mnapage.info

NELSON NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

All meetings are held at NELSON NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held at Higherford Methodist Church Hall BB9 6JZ and start at 7.30pm. Autumn meeting dates: 26 Oct. 9, 23 Nov. 7 Dec.

Enquiries and requests for copies of East Lancashire Butterfly Report and enquires contact David Nelson 01282 863012 davidnelson@btinternet.com Visitors welcome £4.

NORTH WEST ENGLAND FERN GROUP

This group covers only Cumbria and Lancashire. Field meetings organised with an indoor meeting in October at Holehird, Windermere.

Contact: Roger Golding, Fell View, Bowness on Solway, Cumbria, CA7 5AF

tel: 07718 290241. NorthWest@eBPS.org.uk

NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION - BRYOPHYTE & LICHEN SECTION

All meetings on Saturdays, starting at 10.30 am and will commence whatever the weather. Bring food and clothing adequate for a full day in rough country and bad weather. Please check with section secretary a day or so before the meeting, in case of cancellation or changes.

“Beginners” are welcome any ANY meeting and there will always be a more experienced field bryologist present who will be more than happy to name and talk through the identification features of species encountered. There will not always be a Lichenologist present.

NORTHWESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION – VASCULAR PLANT SECTION

Contact: David Earl - David.Earl@lancashire.gov.uk

NORTH WEST FUNGUS GROUP

Forays start at 10.30am and are planned so that they can continue into the afternoon. Please bring food and drink. Please contact the foray leader to confirm you attendance and for possible last minute details.

Beginners always welcome at all forays. Forays are not suitable for small children. No dogs.

<https://northwestfungusgroup.com/>

OLDHAM MICROSCOPICAL & NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Lifelong Learning Centre, Oldham, at 7.30 pm for more information call Phil Whiteman 01612900722, philipwhiteman333@hotmail.com or <http://www.oldham-wildlife-link.org.uk/micro/>

THE PRESTON SOCIETY: BIRD WATCHING AND NATURAL HISTORY

The meetings are at St. Mary's Church, Church Avenue, Penwortham, PR1 0AH. Enquiries should be made by e-mail to prestonwildlife@gmail.com, through our website www.prestonsociety.co.uk, or by phone on 07565 497065.

There is a charge of £3.00 on the door for any visitors.

ROCHDALE FIELD NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month from September to April at 7-30p.m. at Cutgate Baptist Church, Edenfield Road, Rochdale, OL11 5AQ. Coach trips and local walks are held each month. Details of all these events are on our website www.rochdalefieldnaturalists.org.uk and our Facebook page.

If you would like more information about events or RFNS in general, please email our Secretary (Ian Short) at rfns_enquiries@btinternet.com

SADDLEWORTH NATURALISTS

Indoor meetings are held at 7.30 pm at Saddleworth Conservative Club, 75 High Street, Uppermill OL3 6AP.

To assist with venue costs and speakers' expenses a small collection will be made - suggested donations: £2.00 for members, £2.50 for non-members. Guests are welcome - please introduce yourself at the start of the meeting.

More details at <http://www.oldham-wildlife-link.org.uk/saddleworth/>

SHROPSHIRE MOTH GROUP

The Group organises a programme of moth trapping field trips on Friday nights from March to October. Observers, beginners and experienced trappers welcome, so why not join them? For further details please contact **Tony Jacques** (Shropshire County Butterfly and Macro-moth Recorder) at vc40tj@gmail.com

SOUTH EAST CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Indoor Meetings are held on the second Friday of each month from September to April, starting at 7.30pm. Tea, coffee and biscuits are available at the end of each indoor meeting. We meet at Ettiley Heath Church Community Centre; Elton Road, Ettiley Heath, Sandbach, CW11 3NE. Visitors are charged £3 and are welcome at any indoor meeting.

Field trips are held on one Sunday a month from September through to June and a long weekend meeting in March is very popular. More local field meetings are also held on the first Tuesday of each month and local evening walks in the summer. Travel is usually by car, or sometimes by bus or mini-bus, to sites of particular birding interest and will be led by experienced birdwatchers. Bookings for the trips are made at the indoor meetings. Further information is available at www.secos.org.uk or by telephone: MikeTonks (Chairman) 07484 306147.

WARRINGTON PLANT GROUP

<https://gailqb.wordpress.com/warrington-plant-group/>

WILMSLOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held at Wilmslow Guild, 1 Bourne Street, Wilmslow, SK9 5HD

Monthly on Thursday evening at 7:30 p.m. from Sept to Apr and field trips Feb to Oct

Visitors welcome to indoor meetings (£5) and field trips (£5)

Contact Steve Osborne on 01625 879087 steve.osborne42@gmail.com

October : Alderley Edge seasonal sortie field trip (date TBC)

WORLD MUSEUM LIVERPOOL

Part of the Tanyptera Project/North-West Invertebrates. This is a regional project aimed at promoting the study and conservation of insects and other invertebrates. Contact www.northwestinvertebrates.org.uk/events for booking instructions.

Oldham Microscopical and Natural History Society Natural History Collections an important update for 2023

Patricia Francis

In an account published in the Society newsletter, Athene in 1964, on the 100th anniversary of the Oldham Microscopical & Natural History Society it was said that they were the second oldest (1864) microscopical society in the country. The oldest, the Royal Microscopical Society being founded in 1839. Oldham's society was then closely followed in 1865 by the [Edwin] Quekett Microscopical Society and in 1867 by the Manchester Microscopical Society.

Oldham Museum opened in 1883 and from then onwards the two organisations were very much connected. Society members helped set up the first displays in the new museum by an agreement with Dr James Yates who had been mayor in 1882. Historic plans tell us these first displays were of a systematic nature exhibiting different animal groups and geology. These were followed by six large habitat displays including woodland and seashore dioramas which were set up in the early 1900s.

The Society maintained its own collections whilst at the same time supporting the town museum. Unfortunately, there is no formal register to evidence donations into the Society Collection, however there are occasional mentions of donations in newsletters and annual reports. For some reason, James Nield, one of the founder members of the Society had his geology specimens, about 3000 in number, transferred directly to Oldham's council museum after his death in 1896 and not to the Society. Perhaps this was a collection that was just too big for the Society to hold?

However specimen labels on Society Collections suggest that collecting within the Society continued for almost 100 years after this, at least until the 1980s. But it was not until 1995 that another major collection was passed to Oldham Museum from the Society. This was the botanical collections of 10,000 specimens. Meanwhile individual members smaller collections were being passed directly to Oldham Museum. For example, the George Lees egg collection in 1976 and the Arnold E. Baron egg collection in 1990.

From 2010 onwards to the time several smaller collections were transferred from the Society to Gallery Oldham, formerly Oldham Museum. For example, some snake skins, pinned insects including a Victorian 'mosaic picture' made from butterflies and beetles, lantern slides (272) and moss packets (224), which had been missed from the 1995 transfer. Then in early 2023 a box of 86 Microscope slides made by Mr & Mrs Bescoby.

The Society archive, containing journal, reports, proceedings, syllabi, lecture notes, catalogues of holdings and correspondence etc was initially loaned to Oldham Archives and Local Studies Department. This was fully catalogued and officially added to the Town Archive in 2014.



The Society's first microscope, purchased in 1884

In July 2023 the last items, apart from a very few, were transferred to Gallery Oldham, including those most precious to the Society, an important collection of 10 historic microscopes and 1249 historical microscope slides.

The impetus to carry out this transfer was due to the evening closure of the Werneth Park Life-long Learning Centre, formerly Werneth Park Study Centre, where the Society had met since July 1951 and where there was sufficient storage space for collections. The Society will continue to meet but in Oldham Town Centre at the Life-long Learning Centre (premises shared with Oldham Library and Gallery Oldham). The total transfer consists of over 2,500 specimens and 48 archival items including local geological maps. Additionally, there are almost 200 books including 43 of the New Naturalist series all to be added to Gallery Oldham's Natural History Library. Previously in 2019 the Society had donated 38 books.