



## South Derbyshire Badger Group

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# The Badger

Newsletter Summer 2011

## South Derbyshire Badger Group

Findern Parish Rooms, Lower Green. Findern. Derbyshire. DE65 6AD.



Member



Affiliated to the Derbyshire  
Wildlife Trust



### **Badger Cull to go Ahead?**

After months of waiting for the Badger Groups, the Environment Secretary, Caroline Spelman, has declared that she is 'strongly minded' to allow a cull of badgers in Britain – something we really did not want to hear. However, in typical political parlance this would give the indication that she still really does not know what to do. She has not actually said there *will* be a cull and only being 'strongly minded' might, hopefully, indicate that she is still 'testing the water' and waiting to see what reaction her 'non-announcement' causes.

It would appear that the minister may be prepared to go ahead with a pilot cull. In parts of the South West in the face of all the scientific evidence which the previous government at least had the sense to accept. If it goes ahead marksmen will be licensed to shoot badgers on sight, in the dark of course, which will open up a real can of worms. Many badgers could just be wounded and maimed and left to die slowly and horribly. It will be impossible to know if a whole sett has been eradicated, which would be necessary if the badgers in that sett were carrying bTB. It is not going to be possible to tell if badgers are carrying bTB before they are shot so about 97 per cent of the badgers that may be killed will be TB free. Even more worryingly there are no plans for any of the badgers which are shot to be tested for bTB.

Free shooting of nocturnal animals is a practical non-starter and such a hare-brained scheme will do nothing to lower the incidence of bTB anywhere.

Once again we wait to see what develops.

### **Lodge your Protest against a Proposed Cull**

The campaigning group '38 Degrees' has decided to launch a petition against a possible badger cull in England. This was the group that helped overturn the Government's plan to sell off the National Forests so they have been quite effective. If you use a computer then please sign their petition on line and urge any like-minded friends to do likewise.

38 Degrees can be found at –

<http://www.38degrees.org.uk/page/s/badgers-petition#petition>

## Group Meetings 2011

The first indoor meeting of the new 'membership year' was 'The History of South Derbyshire Woodlands'. This was a fascinating talk, beautifully illustrated with slides of many local areas. It was presented by member Dot Morson who has given us several talks in the past, all accompanied by her own wonderful photography. So most of you know how good they always are. This was no exception.

Regrettably only **eight** members attended. Where were you?

Please – it takes a great deal of arranging to sort out a programme of talks and events for the year, so a bit of an effort on members' behalf would be appreciated. Don't just think 'it won't matter if I don't go tonight' because it will when half a dozen others may be thinking the same as you. Fortunately Dot took the lack of numbers in her stride but it must have been very disappointing for her, after all her efforts too!

The second meeting in May was a Group visit to the Tean Valley Nature Reserve, set up by Sylvia and Alan Williams. They gave a talk to us early in 2010 and this visit was a chance to see it for ourselves. On this occasion fifteen members and friends turned up for what proved to be a very pleasant and interesting afternoon. Everyone seemed to be impressed with the reserve and the amount of work that had been done since its inception seven years ago. The visit was rounded off very nicely with tea and biscuits in the Reserve's log cabin.



The June meeting at the Swan Inn, Milton, was a short talk and fascinating photographic display by Richard Farman on the history of brewing in Burton. Richard set up a very comprehensive display of photos of old Burton, all connected to the brewing industry, and explained how the breweries had evolved over time. We had TEN members present on the night.

The last Monday in July saw thirteen members; friends and assorted dogs take part in a walk around Ticknall, with some wonderful panoramic views over the Trent Valley and Staunton Harold reservoir. Judging by reports of complaining leg muscles and joints the next morning, four and a half miles was perhaps a little too ambitious. We shall have to cut the mileage down a little next year.



As usual there was no meeting in August and the September one is a talk on Ashby Canal, at the Swan Inn, Milton on **TUESDAY 27<sup>th</sup> September, 7:30 pm.**

### **From the Chairman**

Last month, for the first time in ages, we had a call out in the middle of the night to an injured badger. I was phoned by the RSPCA central office to see if I would attend as once again their inspector was ‘a good two hours away’, which usually seems to be the case. I moaned a bit when told that the casualty was at Burton on Trent. I’m a bit like that when woken from a deep sleep apparently, but knowing that the Staffordshire Group doesn’t have anyone around Burton I agreed to go.

A couple, driving back home, had seen the injured badger in the road at Stanton and everyone was steering around it. They stopped and picked it up in a blanket (without getting bitten) and put him in the boot of their car. They then took the badger to their own vet in Stapenhill only to find that the practice’s on call vet was at Derby at which point the RSPCA was contacted.

When I arrived the boot was opened to reveal the injured animal sitting up and looking much improved, according to the lady. We transferred it to our cage, I thanked the couple for their help and telephoned the Swadlincote vet who agreed to meet me at the surgery. I arrived about two minutes before the vet only to find that when I opened my boot the poor badger had bled out, obviously from internal injuries, and was dead.

I had to report this to the vet when he pulled up but he seemed to take it in his stride and I was at least able to give him the RSPCA reference code which would allow him to claim his call out fee from them. We can’t win them all.

## 2011 Badger Trust Conference

The conference in Sheffield was well attended this year by representatives from badger groups all over the country. These included Northumberland, Staffordshire, Devon and many more.

The emphasis this year was on the rise in badger persecution and other rural crime including deer poaching and lamping with dogs. Although it has been assumed in the past that lamping did not include badgers there is now definite proof that badgers **are** being lamped. Concern was raised over the increase in young people digging badgers, especially in the north of the country. Ian Hutchison urged group members to report any evidence of persecution or dug setts to the police in the first instance and also to enter the information on the Operation Meles website as soon as possible.

Group members were given the opportunity to attend a choice of workshops in the afternoon. These were:

1. Ways to study deer carcasses in order to determine cause of death
2. Nick Moyes on peregrines and people
3. Wildlife rescue training
4. Ways of vaccinating badgers against TB

There was the inevitable discussion of bovine TB and a lecture from Dr Angela Cassidy from East Anglia University gave us food for thought when she put forward the idea that when considering the issue, there is a cultural tendency to focus on the badger rather than on the actual disease.

I was also able to speak to David Williams, the Badger Trust Chairman, and thanked him on behalf of our group for all the work that the Badger Trust carry out.

Overall this was a very informative conference with some very interesting points raised. I would definitely recommend it as any badger group member can attend, and the group is able to cover the cost of one member's attendance each year.

Heather

## Fund Raising this Summer Season

The Group has had stands at Donisthorpe Gala, Overseal Fete and Aston on Trent well dressings this year, and profits in the region of a total of £380 have been taken.

Not many of you rallied to the call in previous newsletters to supply us with homemade goods and crafts for Sale on our stalls, but to those who did many thanks for some really excellent products. Thanks also to all those members who manned the stalls at the various events. You did a great job!

In mid-July the Chairman gave a talk and presentation on badgers and the Badger Group to the Swadlincote Lung Support Group – this after a great deal of pressure from the Lung Support Group's Secretary. It seemed to be well received and a small donation was made towards our Group's funds. Margaret also had a stall of goods for sale and these went well too, all adding to our coffers.

We have also this year held a raffle in aid of our own funds, partly in preparation for any expenses that we may incur by taking on the lease of the woodland described elsewhere. This was the brainchild of junior member, Sophie Skinner, of Ashby. Many excellent prizes were sourced from various retail outlets and manufacturers and the whole Group membership was notified and urged to buy and sell raffle tickets.

The grand total raised was £218 which is magnificent! As a thank you to Sophie for her efforts she was presented with a Group sweatshirt by the committee. Thanks also go to Annette, Sophie's Mum, who also 'did a bit' and to all of you who bought tickets and sold some to friends and relations for the Group.

Here is the list of prize winners for the Sophie Skinner & Friends Raffle in support of South Derbyshire Badger Group

<b>Prize</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Winner</b>
Free Family Day Visit	Conkers	Sally Vardy
Indulgence spa pack and wine	Mrs Skinner	Hazel Green
Harveys Bristol Cream Sherry (1litre)	Mrs Skinner	G. Regent
Basket of Goodies	Ashby Soap Factory	J. Joyce
Basket of Homemade Jam	Mrs Margaret Grimley	P. Unwin
Teddy Bear	Miss Skinner	Jacky Spencer
Bottle of Whisky	Mr Stephen Grimley	T. Hindley
Cellophane wrap of Chocolates	Mercury News	Marilyn Miller
Box of Hula Hoops	KP Foods	L. Robinson
Tin of Biscuits	Mrs Margaret Grimley	J. Skinner
Battlefield Line Tickets	Mrs A. Skinner	A. Harris
Bottle of Wine	Mrs Jane Taylor	S. Alexander
Bottle of Wine	SDGB	Brian Jones
'Fresh' Cosmetics Purse	Mrs Jane Taylor	S. Alexander



### Erythristic of Albino Discovery

Early in the summer I received a phone call out of the blue from a resident of Hatton, near Tutbury. His brother keeps a small wood where he breeds pheasant chicks for shooting and there is a badger sett, registered by us with The Wildlife Trust, on one side of the wood. The caller was interested in the badgers and suggested to his brother that they set up a remote camera near the sett to see what it would pick up.



This they did, and the next morning, expecting little, was astounded to find that the camera had been activated 327 times, mostly by badgers. The main reason for his call was to check with me that it was possible for badgers to be white. The photographs will explain all. I was able to tell him that very occasionally albino badgers are produced but that I had never seen one. You will see from the pictures that the light coloured badger could well be erythristic rather than albino, in the light of the camera flash but it was certainly a productive exercise on the brothers' part.





### **Current R.T.A. Total for 2011**

The total number of RTAs that we have been called out to two thirds of the way through the year is 61. Last year we only had 59 during the whole of 2010.

So – are there more badgers in South Derbyshire? Are the motorists being more careless? Or are the badgers being more careless? Your thoughts on a postcard please!

### **Food for Thought**

If it weren't for electricity, we'd all be watching television by candlelight!

*George Gobel*

### **Electronic Wizardry**

Members are reminded that it is now possible for those of you with computers to receive the newsletter by email which would be cheaper for the Group. If you would like to do this, then please send your email address with 'Newsletter' as the subject to [news@southderbyshirebadgergroup.co.uk](mailto:news@southderbyshirebadgergroup.co.uk)

### **Parish Rooms Findern**

It seems that there has been little progress on the repair of the Parish rooms at Findern. Apparently contractors have been appointed and surveys done but work has not been started. The committee does intend that our Group meetings will return to Findern but do expect most of the talks for 2012 to still be at The Swan in Milton.

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This extended dry summer period is making life very difficult indeed for the badger with the ground being rock hard for weeks and almost impossible to dig. Worms are almost impossible to come by at the moment. Surprisingly we have only received two calls for advice regarding dug up lawns and flowerbeds, those both recently, and both just across the river in Staffordshire. The callers seemed happy with our advice and hopefully have by now put it into practice. (We shall have to start billing the Staffordshire Group if we have any more!)

## Group Woodland Takeover

On Saturday 23 June, in response to a letter sent to all members a group of seventeen convened at the small piece of woodland at Castle Gresley, which we have been trying to lease from the County Council for some time. Everyone seemed much taken with the idea of looking after the wood which has badger setts in it. The main reason that the committee feels it necessary to protect this woodland and the setts is the fact that they are slowly being enclosed on two sides by a housing development. Everyone had suggestions and ideas as to how we should go about it and it proved to be a very productive meeting. It was decided that the group would take on the lease, at a peppercorn rent, and everyone there seemed keen to get involved.

The committee has decided that there should be a preliminary tidy up attempt on the piece of woodland that we have leased from the County Council, This will be held on Saturday October 1<sup>st</sup>. Meet at the wood opposite Toon's Furniture and Carpet Warehouse on the A444 at Castle Gresley – 10:00 am.

Please bring work gloves and wear sturdy shoes or boots. A shovel, spade or garden rake would be useful. We shall provide sturdy plastic bags for rubbish, particularly broken bottles to be collected. We need your ideas about how we should progress with the wood. This project is open to all members – the more the merrier on this first work party.

Last time, some of you parked in Toon's car park – we do not actually have permission for that. Parking is available down the track at the roundabout side of the wood. The choice is yours.

N.B. In the unlikely event of the lease not actually having come through you will be notified in plenty of time should we have to postpone.

## Competition

We should really have a name for the wood instead of calling it 'The wood on the A444'. So, a small prize will be given to the member who comes up with the most apt name (in the opinion of the committee).

Suggestions already –

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Toon's Wood | - Might get us some sponsorship from the company |
| Castle Wood | - Opposite the Castle Motte and Bailey           |
| Tippet Wood | - Repton Tip – Get it?                           |

Badger Wood is definitely out as there is one by that name nearby on the Cauldwell Road.

Let's have your suggestion to the Chairman or any committee member please.





Please detach and keep for future reference

## South Derbyshire Badger Group

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### Programme Remaining for 2011

Please note – Several changes from Monday nights!

All indoor meetings at the Swan Inn, Milton – 7:30pm

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September** – Geoff Pursglove on ‘Ashby Canal, past and present’

**Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October** – John Hill will give a presentation on the work of the RNLI

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November** – Bill Cove, Head Ranger at Calke Park

Will show us ‘A Winter Wonderland’.

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

### COMMITTEE CONTACT NUMBERS

CHAIRMAN	STEPHEN GRIMLEY	07754 094177
VICE CHAIR	VACANT	
SECRETARY	CAROL STONE	
TREASURER & MEMBERSHIP	ALAN STONE	
COMMITTEE	ANN BENNETT	
	MARILYN MILLER	
	MARK TAYLOR	
	RICHARD THORNEWILL	

**DIARY DATES**



Member



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