

### Grasp the Nettle!

*Stinging Nettle*     *Urtica dioica*



I am sure that there will be few people reading this that have not encountered the sting of a nettle. You could almost say that it is part of our childhood memories; that and the dash to search for a suitable dock leaf!

Like all our wild plants the nettle has its old names, amongst them Devil's leaf, Devil's apron and Devil's plaything. It was also believed that if you threw a nettle on the fire it would protect you from lightning.

Although nettles may not be attractive to us, more than a 100 insects have been found on them. The caterpillars of the peacock, red admiral and tortoiseshell butterflies rely on them for food, as do the caterpillars of the spectacle, small magpie, the snout and mother of pearl moths.

The seeds are equally valuable for chiffchaffs, bullfinches and goldfinches.

Talking of food, I remember being given young nettle tops cooked up with spring greens as a spring tonic!

As long ago as the Bronze Age, nettle fibres were used to weave ceremonial burial shrouds, sail cloth, sacking and fishing nets.

Cloth found on a body that was pulled out of a Danish peatbog was so well preserved that the method of spinning could be reproduced.

During the 1914-18 war the Germans collected over 2000 tonnes of nettles and used their fibres to weave fabric for military uniforms. They are one of the richest sources of chlorophyll in the vegetable kingdom and because of this, in the Second World War, they were used to produce a dye for camouflage material.



To bring us up to date, in 2014 a professor of textile engineering at Leicester's De Monfort University pioneered the first modern project to develop nettles as a fabric. From this, a company has produced a strong naturally fire retardant cloth for upholstery.

So if you want to protect yourself from lightning, give butterflies a food plant or have your upholstery fire retardant you need to "grasp the nettle".

Rosemary Hatton

Many thanks to Rosemary for this fascinating article.

If you would like to write an article for our front page please let us know.

We would be delighted to hear from you!

You can find our contact details overleaf.

## Indoor Meetings

Everyone is welcome to all meetings  
Holy Innocents Community Hall, Kidderminster  
7.30p.m. Admission £2.50

Thursday September 5<sup>th</sup>  
*The Secret Life of Garden Birds*  
Richard Cory



*An intriguing talk by Richard who lives on the edge of the countryside and has been observing the birds in his garden for many years.*

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October  
*Coastal Birds of the British Isles*  
Eric (The Fish) Davies

*A welcome return to Eric who will share with us one of his entertaining talks and also his excellent photographs.*



Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November  
*Marvellous Molluscs*  
Rosemary Winnall



*Rosemary needs no introduction and we look forward to hearing her new talk about these fascinating creatures.*

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December  
*A.G.M. and Christmas Social*

**Our Visit to Uncllys Farm**

*We were lucky to have lovely weather for our fourth visit to Uncllys Farm.*

*John took us on a most enjoyable walk around the farm describing some of the history of the area and also current and future plans.*



**Editors: David and Ruth Howell**

For further information about the group please contact David Howell : 01562 741891

## Outdoor meetings

Walks for everyone to enjoy this autumn  
All start 10a.m. Donations to Trust Funds

Sunday September 8<sup>th</sup>  
*A Circular walk to a Prominent Church*  
David Howell

*A four mile walk to the lovely hilltop church at Tardebigge over a gently undulating lane, a farm track fields and the canal tow path.  
Opportunity for lunch at the Inn*

**Meet:** Queen's Head car park. Stoke Pound  
B60 3AU GR 953680

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October  
*Walking The Wetlands of Stourport*  
Paul Allen, Wyre Forest District Council

*A circular walk looking at Stourport's wetlands. This will include the diminutive Moorhill Marsh and a walk along the River to Redstone Marsh. The walk will probably end at one of Stourport's cafes where light refreshments may be bought.  
A shorter walk 1.5 to 2 hours.*

**Meet:** Main Riverside car park by Stourport Civic Centre. DY13 8UJ GR 807712. Parking charges apply.

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November  
*Exploring the Sights around Hanbury*  
Carl Graef

*A circular walk of 4.8 miles in lovely countryside around Hanbury Hall. It will include Hanbury Church, the grounds of Hanbury Hall and Piper's Hill and Dodderhill Common nature reserve.  
There are three stiles.*

**Meet:** Pipers Hill car park Hanbury B60 4AS GR 960649

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December  
*Clumping around Clent*  
Glyn Walters

*A circular walk to the lovely hill monument at Wychbury, with splendid views of the Malverns and the Clees. This four mile walk has several hill climbs and crosses the A456 twice. Bring some money if you want to treat yourself to one of the Clent "butties" at the end of the walk.*

**Meet:** Nimmings car park, Clent (National Trust)  
Nearest postcode for satnav B62 0NL GR 953 680  
*Car parking charges apply unless you are a member of the National Trust*

Would you like to suggest a walk or lead one that is special to you? If so please contact Glyn Walters:  
01562 637556