

Just when you thought it was safe to go out once again ...

It's Back in inglorious technicolour -

The (sort of) Pegwell Bay Report for 2008

The (sort of) Pegwell Bay Report for 2008 - incorporating some of 2007 (due to lack of material, brain bugs and bad planning!)

Warning!! Not to be read by any O.A.P.s.

We also discourage those with a sense of humour bypass and those who take themselves too seriously to save themselves the agony of looking at this document from the bowels of lunacy. This bit applies mainly to Dylan.

Features:

'I love Milton' by D. Decker.

'Damn and blast' by F. Solly

'I'm not dead ...I'm just in hiding' by K. Thornton

'Fuhrer Milton ist greatest unt all Fuhrers' - by Klaus von Schumacher

'Its not all that much fun down here' by Dennis Gadget

'Man in shorts spotted at Pegwell' exclusive!

'Ha ha ha - it's the Anthony Jolly Q and A!!

'Dylan's newest acquisition - by Stan Astair-luft

Plus: the long awaited explanation regarding the sad loss of the 2007 Pegwell report with extra-added lunacy, violence and tomfoolery.

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The (sort of) Pegwell Bay bird report for the year 2008.

Introduction:

In a man's life there is a time for tears. There is a time for happiness. There is a time for reflection. There is a time for clear thinking and there is a time for fear. There is a time for eating and sleeping but enough of this infinite wisdom because good news is at hand people of our glorious planet – the return of the Pegwell Bay Bird Report and isn't it great? This 'time' it's the big one and glory be! When news broke of a new issue back in the autumn of 2007, life was good once more and hope abounded worldwide. From Delhi to Dover from Timbuktu to Timbukthree an outcry of such happiness was in evidence - the likes of which haven't been witnessed since the authors last great work written long ago in 2006. It seems like a lifetime ago for us addicts of fine literature. I find myself wanting to eat – yes gorge myself on its contents until endless puking of inner joy breaks forth in my bones with the gratitude and awe I behold in every word of the authors works of avian art, both past and present. I hereby 'vomit' my reverential gratitude that I – a humble man, a mere speck of vile stinking smelly dust by comparison - have the privilege of being chosen to write the introduction for this, surely the greatest and most important literary account of this year or indeed any year. I am not alone with these types of thoughts – below are a selection of some of the lorry loads of letters we received from all over the globe. I give you 'THE' Pegwell Bay Bird Report for the year 2008.

(Desmond Decker – London. President of the 'I love all things Milton' fanatics club of Great Britain.)

Dear Des,

One's life now is now complete. 2008 will in future be known as one's 'anus excellenticus'

(Liz - London)

Absolutely overjoyed when I heard the news! I had been reading the bird reports continuously between June 1999 and September 2006 losing my well-paid executive job in the city and all my friends in the process. When my wife complained about the amount of time I was spending glued to past reports, I killed her and sent her remains by post to 28 randomly selected addresses in the South Shields area. I received a life sentence for my crimes - but surely the loss of a loving wife and mother of seven children plus a mere 20 years in Jail is nothing when compared with the many hours I now spend alone in solitary confinement with Mr. Milton's excellent backlog of bird reports. I look forward to the PBR '08 with much relish!

(Jim – Parkhurst, England)

Damn!

(F. Solly – Ramsgate)

Listen to him go!

(F. Zappa U.S.A.)

It's all western capitalist infidel rubbish of course - but I never miss an issue. I even have a special light fitted into my cave for the readings.

(Mr. OBL - Tora Bora – Afghanistan)

Yes I am so happy. I can smile once more.

(V. Putin – Moscow)

There were many more such accolades. The world itself isn't big enough to contain such happiness. D.D. Read on – enjoy:

Meanwhile somewhere in a secret underground lunatic asylum in Outer Mongolia during the summer of 2007:

Mans voice: "Hello Mr. Milton ... is you awake?"

Milton: In confused fashion - "No!! Go away - leave me alone!!" he muttered under his breathe.

Man: "now now Mr. Milton - you've been unconscious for 16 munces. No vunder you are feeling a bit groggy. Perhaps you vill fancy talking to me a beet later on?"

Milton: *silence. Milton, pretending to be asleep, brooded as his captor awaited an answer then wandered away - his clicking footsteps getting fainter as he walked off at a brisk pace on the hard wooden floor. Milton's head was thick and drowsy and he wasn't at all sure where he was. The door clicked neatly shut. Milton opened one eye and had a quick look around. The room was brightly lit - white walls surrounded the bed he was strapped into. A circular plastic wall clock ticked loudly every second from the otherwise blank wall near a window. The window had thick bars and during his brief glance Milton thought escape unlikely without alerting his captors. He feigned sleep once more as the door at the opposite side of the room swung open once again.*

"I thought you said he'd be with us today?" said an obviously irritated posh man in a loud voice.

"I cannot be understanding zis" came a reply from a voice Milton recognized as the first man with the accent who had just left the room minutes earlier. "He has been given very high doses of Hippo strength tranquillizer for so long zat perhaps zis injection I give him earlier to bring him around isn't strong enough?"

"I'm busy for the rest of today," said the posh man with the loud voice in an abrupt fashion. "Give him another sedative and we'll try talking to him tomorrow?"

Milton - still feigning sleep - felt a sharp prick in his right arm and drifted off into a deep slumber.

The next recollection Milton had was of voices drifting in and out of his deep sleepy dream. The voices became clearer and clearer until Milton realised his unknown whereabouts and the voices were those of his captors.

"I gave him 55 milligram's and that's enough to wake the dead - he will be with us soon" said a voice he didn't recognise. Milton felt his bed being shaken as one of the captors said his name over and over - getting louder as he went on. Milton withstood this until he felt a sharp slap on his face...

"C'mon man wake up!" said the posh man with the loud voice - slapping Milton's face for a second time.

Milton sat up and opening his eyes and said in an annoyed fashion "What on earths going on here - do you not realise I could snap you in two with one single blow of my ultra muscle-bound arm!!"

Milton at that moment noticed there were at least six people in the room. The man closest to him, the man with the posh loud voice backed away and pointed in Milton's direction to two burly men dressed in white coats. The men advanced but foolishly took little notice of Milton's immense power - his awesome upper body strength powered both white coated henchmen by the necks, one in each hand - dispensing them with

ease to opposite ends of the large white room, where they laid unconscious. The lightning attack had lasted only a quarter of one second. The other four men backed off aghast at what they had just witnessed!

“I told you not to undo the King Kong strength restraints,” said the posh man with the loud voice.

Milton rose from the bed and threatened his four conscious would be captors that if they didn't start talking really soon, they would all be in intense pain within seconds. It was then that it dawned on Milton that he was without trousers and was only wearing the remains of a triple strength straight jacket he'd broken out of with consummate ease.

“Don't hurt us you Adonis like brute” said one of the cowering men in a white coat ... “it's not our fault you're here - its nothing to do with us” as he threw himself to the floor screaming like a banshee expecting certain and imminent death! “So why am I here ... and where am I - what's going on!” cried Milton advancing in menacing fashion. The posh man with the loud voice puckered up enough courage to approach Milton nervously. “Calm down old man - please calm down. Perhaps its time for you to know what's going on?”

The four conscious white-coated men explained how they had been paid an exorbitant amount of cash to keep Milton under strict surveillance. He'd turned up at the derelict mental institution (Outer Mongolia division central - near the post office) about 16 months ago. They were told at first that Milton was a rich comatosed imbecile from England who needed a foreign holiday. Over the 16 months of incarceration the doctors and hired help had grown to like old Milton much like you might an infirm pet and eventually came up with a plan to try and wake him up. Rumours of foul play had long circulated the institution about Milton and they soon deduced from the mountain of syringes full of a product called 'Hippo Sleep' (produced for the artificial insemination of female Hippopotamuses) that Milton wasn't indeed a rich comatosed imbecile from England on holiday in Outer Mongolia? Then the 'eureka' moment came - as one of the asylum workers detected Milton after months of scouring the Internet. It turned out that Milton was in fact a great author, birder, moth man and accidental world-class body builder from a place called Thanet in southeastern England. Apparently he had been worshiped like a god by all and sundry but had disappeared into thin air well over a year ago as had his uncle Lord Lucan Milton back in the 1970's. The police had been on the case since Milton had first been reported as missing but hadn't been able to get any sort of leads as to his whereabouts? They had found out Miltons disappearance had turned into a real mystery, hitting all the news broadcasts worldwide and here they were many thousands of miles away from home looking after this legend of the worldwide birding scene with extra-added muscle! This information was the catalyst to waking old Milton up out of his slumber. The captors had all got together and agreed unanimously to try and get to the bottom of this mystery. The problem they had now was that Milton was in a rage and looking likely to tear the whole building down.

“What's up wiv 'im - eee's gone radio rental - absolutely ape mate!! Let me out of 'ere - I need t'get up the apples and pears an' phone the rozzas” Said one particularly strange speaking Mongolian doctor as he made for the door in abject terror.

After a while though Milton calmed down as the situation was explained. His captors were only doing their job and were as perplexed about the situation as Milton - but who was behind this gross miscarriage of justice? Who was to blame? Who wanted Milton off the birding scene so badly that they were prepared to pay lots of money to keep him doped up in a foreign country for many months? Someone would have to pay for such a thing. But who was the instigator? The mystery deepened? Milton did have a vague recollection about being bundled into the back of a van out in the countryside somewhere? He could picture darkness and a bright light and it seemed like it all happened quite a long time ago? But that was all he could remember. Even this recollection was hazy?

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... Somewhere deep in Dumptidge Town, south eastern England:

Ring ring!! "Hello on the phone - Don Gadgetoni speaking - wadda ya want!"

Other voice on phone: "Would that be Don Gadgetoni, carer of one Phillip Horatio Milton?"

Don Gadgetoni: dropping the fake Italian accent - "Er ... um ... who is this?"

Other voice: "It's doctor Tam Watkinson here ringing you from the Vartak Himler lunatic asylum in outer Mongolia. We have a patient here - a Mr. Phillip Horatio Milton and it says in his top-secret file that you are his next of Kin and could be contacted in case of emergency? Is this correct?"

Don Gadgetoni: "Well sort of ... er um - ooh ahh."

Watkinson Interjects: "I understand this might be a little awkward for you Don Gadgetoni. Lets just say we've rumbled your little plan. Mr. Milton isn't an imbecile in a coma on his holidays now is he Mister so-called Don Gadgetoni?"

Don Gadgetoni: "He's not in a coma or on holiday I will admit - but he is an imbecile... honest!"

Watkinson: "that may well be the case Mr. Gadgetoni but the fact of the matter is that we are keeping him here under false pretenses and were are not prepared to carry on this facade any longer! Other arrangements will have to be made."

Doctor Watkinson hung up leaving Don Gadgetoni in a real quandary. What would the Don do now? A meeting would have to be arranged and quick!

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Don Gadgetoni:

Now Don Gadgetoni was a self-made multi millionaire and self made midget Mafioso head. Vito Gadgetoni was born at the turn of the 20th century into a family of nomadic dwarfs who carted a small traveling circus around a miniature island just south of Sicily. Times were hard and brutal back then. Vito's entire family were wiped out by inter dwarf fighting after a territorial dispute arose between the Gadgeetoni family and another vertically challenged Circus family known as the Teeni Toni's! Things got nasty like they always do between rival dwarf circus families and soon only a very young Vito Gadgetoni had survived the ensuing war. Vito - now seven years of age got on the first banana boat off the island after witnessing his last living relative being savagely beaten to death by a Teeni Toni clown with a swan vesta. He invested the whole families combined wealth on a one-way ticket and ended up where the wind took him, which turned out to be in Dumptidge - a small village on the outskirts of a vast concrete covered land known as Thanet. So Gadgetoni grew up in the back streets of Dumptidge as a scruffy streetwise ragamuffin who spent the long days endlessly dreaming of bettering himself and his circumstances. In his early years he gained much street credibility amongst the local kids as an ace scrumper - the other children marveled at his acrobatic climbing skills - no apple tree in Dumptidge during the depression was safe from Gadgetoni when on the rampage! His upbringing in the traveling circus had served him well. He enjoyed the feeling of power and celebrity and soon started a gang which grew and grew (unlike his stunted body) until by his teen years and now fed up with scrumping apples 'Gadgetoni's gang' as it became known, now

32 members strong and trained with military precision within an inch of their lives - upped the anti and moved on to Ginger knocking! This presented Gadgetoni with a major problem as at 17 years of age, only 3 foot five inches tall and not looking like growing any bigger anytime soon, he couldn't reach any doorbells above a normal human beings chest height. His amazing tree climbing skills were rendered redundant by this new daring activity. Never being one to be put off by any sort of personal calamity, Gadgetoni devised a plan where he would orchestrate all the local ginger knocking from his computerised hi-tech converted bedroom by using the latest technology (or gadget) at the time, namely tin cans strung together with long pieces of string. His bullying organisational skills were just perfect for getting the taller lads (ie any one of the other 31 members!) to knock all the doors down the street and run away even faster with the use of their normal length legs. Eventually he fell foul of the law when after one particularly heavy night of terrorising the locals with many hours of endless ginger knocking, one of the gang got his legs tangled up in the string can phone Gadgetoni was shouting orders at him with and got so snagged up that the local plod caught him and took him into custody. The 47-year-old man held out for 3 whole nights of interrogation without food, water or sleep but then suddenly cracked under the intense pressure and grassed old Gadgetoni up as the ringleader. Gadgetoni's house was immediately surrounded by a crack team of Bobby's sporting every weapon that Dumptidge police station held, but Gadgetoni barricaded himself in for the long haul and a stand off ensued for a whole 37 seconds as Johnny Law battered the pint sized front door down and rushed in. Gadgetoni was eventually found after an extensive seven-hour search, hiding in a cleverly concealed children's shoebox in the loft. During the court case six months later, Gadgetoni tried to lie his way out of it saying he'd never seen the 47-year-old man who had grassed him up in his life. This excuse didn't hold much water when the prosecution presented the evidence that the 47-year-old man in question was a string-collecting addict who worked in a tin can making factory and was in fact not only related to Gadgetoni, but actually lived within the same household! He was in fact Gadgetoni's uncle. Gadgetoni's second line of defence was that he was unable to handle string due to being allergic to the material. Once again photographic evidence was bought to the courts attention of a long piece of white string leading straight from the scene of the botched crime, along the road to Gadgetoni's house and up through an open window on the second floor which was not only Gadgetoni's bedroom but was also filled to the brim with empty cans, many balls of white parcel string and military style maps of the crime scene, door numbers and suchlike plus all the gang members names addresses and offshore bank account details! Gadgetoni's case didn't have a short leg to stand on! Within an hour the jury returned and Gadgetoni was pronounced '*very guilty*'! A roar of approval came from the public gallery as the neighbors joy was vocalised with gusto! Gadgetoni received 4 years hard labour at a Childs prison in Eastbound. For once his lack of height had worked to his advantage and he escaped a top security adult prison sentence by lying about his age - the court believed his assertions that he was only 8 years of age. The judges scathing comments at the summing up and sentencing about the levels of delinquency involved in the Gadgetoni inspired crime spree are unprintable in this publication unfortunately. The Judge was later dethroned, de-wigged and de-thingamywotsited after a particularly heavy bout of drink and drugs debauchery no doubt to release the pressures brought on by the dreaded and eternally infamous Dumptidge Ginger knocking case.

On release four long years later - it was only a short-legged leap to an extended life of crime for Gadgetoni. The following years were spent mugging unattended babies in prams, the illegal impersonating of Oompa Loompas with criminal intent and sneaking through the tiny gap under the locked doors of sweet shops after closing hours and eating many pounds worth of sweets amongst a host of other insidious short-legged crimes. He had turned into a one-man crime wave due to his mistrust of other gang members after the ginger knocking grassing up incident. All led to further criminal prosecutions and terms of imprisonment. On one fateful October night he'd sneaked in under the local sweet shops door and eat so many sweets that now fat and bloated with chocolate and mint imperials that escape proved impossible as he got

wedged under the shop door whilst trying to make his badly planned escape. Another time whilst climbing up the side of an unattended babies pram, his self-made climbing gadget had failed and he fell the two feet to the ground and was concussed making him easy meat for the local patrolling plod. Gadgetoni - now 62 years of age grew disillusioned with crime. He was now just a scruffy short fat old bloke with a shed full off knocked off babies' rattles, dummies and bottles plus many gallons of out of date, orange Oompa Loompa makeup. He had no friends and no purpose in life. He would have to find another outlet for his skills. Eventually Gadgetoni made a friend. Whilst waddling around the coast on the outskirts of Dumptidge he'd run into the local birding drunk, a man renowned for a fierce tongue and love of the limelight. His name was Dylan. Dylan had a good knowledge of the local bird life that Gadgetoni had been trying to photograph on the day they had met and soon an unbreakable friendship was formed. It had been a long time since Gadgetoni had entertained a friendship, he quite liked it but still felt the need to be in control. His desire to be 'the leader' meant he would go to any means to achieve his sinister ambition. Gadgetoni found Dylan could be controlled by alcohol and computer knowledge and within only a few months the seeming fierce uncompromising Dylan was manipulated into eating out of Gadgetoni's hand like a little longhaired hippy puppy dog. Gadgetoni had the first member of his empire in place and soon after months of deceit, cunning and bullying many others would follow. Soon King Milton himself was press ganged in service by Gadgetoni's immense over confidence, computer knowledge and arranging of foreign birding trips - another one bit the dust so to speak. Even the cynical, suppressor and keen local lister Solly was won over, but he proved by far to be Gadgetoni's greatest ever challenge. In time Solly became part of the 'gang' under Gadgetoni's control, so reminiscent of the ginger knocking gang from days long past. One Friday night in the secret meeting hole known only in code as 'Belle Vue' - a great ceremony was held and Gadgetoni was officially sworn in as 'Don Gadgetoni head of all Thanet birding and insect information'. In attendance were many other local family heads such as Don Slim Splodge of the select Minnis branch and new Don on the block, Don Hodgson of the infamous historical Sandwich family. His predecessor Don Thornton had disappeared a year or two back in mysterious circumstances? Word on the street had it that he had been the victim of inter birding Mafioso fighting and was thought to be propping up a bird hide in Sussex as part of the concrete foundations? Others at the ceremony included the rarely seen Don Mairs also the idiot Don - Don Simeone Mountainini of North Foreland who was frowned upon due to his insistence on talking incessantly about Herons and Rooks at family head meetings. Don Ray was invited but couldn't find the meeting place and missed the ceremony all together. Gadgetoni's plan had at long last come to fruition. Unsuccessful efforts were made to bring Don Davido Gibletni - the notorious aging bad joke telling Mafioso head into the gang too. Unfortunately Davido had been lured out of the Thanet coastal mob scene by the evil ex pony-tailed assassin and part time getaway driver Martino Wilsini of the newly formed gang of violent intent - the Grove Gravediggers. A particularly nasty and violent bunch of unspeakable evildoers they were - who no longer frequented Thanet. One of the vile clique even openly admitted to being a blatant Chelsea supporter and was proud of the fact! Oh the horrors of the gang!! No crime was beyond their combined mindset! Don Davido was seemingly lost forever?

Anyway - not everything went smoothly in Don Gadgetoni's Dumptidge family of course and inevitably problems arose. Firstly - Dylan wouldn't tow the line and had to be severely reprimanded on several occasions. Dylan's need for ale and celebrity proved to be his Achilles heel and no matter how much he struggled to keep his outbursts to himself after a few light ales he would sit in front of his computer, venting his fury and bring disharmony between Gadgetoni's organization and the other local families. Though he proved to be putty in Don Gadgetoni's hands when they were together he would need constant supervision if he wasn't to start off an inter-family war. As Gadgetoni's second in command, Dylan would have to learn to reel in his emotional beer sodden war cries. On several occasions Gadgetoni had to drum into Dylan the immortal words "never tell anyone outside of the family what your thinking" - such outbursts could potentially damage the family business and Dylan needed to learn this and

quickly. Then there was Solly who had to fight his 20 year old affliction to suppress sightings - but after a year or two even he joined in as information about local birds, insects and even plants was levered from his computer type brain. As the most knowledgeable and active member of the Thanet birding/insect scene, Gadgetoni would need Solly's input to control other lesser members and gain credibility from families from other regions. The worst and by far most ongoing problem though concerned the ramblings of Milton who aired all the families' dirty laundry in public both by word of mouth and over the Internet. Milton showed no respect for Don Gadgetoni's power and influence over technology, Solly's great insect knowledge or Dylan's need for boring over the top Gull ringing ramblings or Cormorant conundrums. As time progressed Gadgetoni's ear was being continually bent by the other family's, which could have caused much unrest if not quickly sorted out. The Codger family now partly split by age, dodgy hips and Alzheimer's would continually raise issue with Don Gadgetoni about Milton's comments regarding their wig wearing, loss of memory and modes of transportation. "Now look here Don Gadgetoni if you can't jolly well keep your individual family members like Milton in order then we might very well have to biff him up ourselves or even get my top assassin Luca Brasi-Worsfold to knock him off his bike with his Model T Ford?" said an enraged Don Jolly old Hollyer of the Worth family. "Eeee's gonna get the thick end o' moi most sharpest Sickie is eee ifeee mentions moi teef agen - 'eel be sleeping with tha' fishes if ee' dunt keep is marf shut" moaned Don 'The Teeth' Laslett of the almost defunct Wurzel family, now residing undercover in deepest Birchington. Something had to be done and during the next meeting between the family heads at 'Belle Vue' - Don Gadgetoni put forward the motion that if everyone paid in a little money then he knew of a way of keeping Milton quiet. Though many wanted Milton shut up permanently in violent fashion, Gadgetoni's superior thinking and ability to see the bigger picture - knew a war even with the amount of families affected and involved wouldn't necessarily be very easy to win seeing just how much power, intellect and muscle they would be up against in the individual known as the 'Man mountain of muscle Milton'. One night during a moth trapping session in the local woods Gadgetoni had Milton's blackcurrant drink spiked with huge amounts of sedative. When Milton fell unconscious whilst furiously and unsuccessfully trying to net a Large Emerald, he was bundled into the back of an awaiting van then onto a jet at the local airport and whisked off to Outer Mongolia where Gadgetoni had arranged for his incarceration. A secret insider at the institution would keep Milton doped up for as long as Gadgetoni kept paying him from the huge assembled Mobs kitty. A prolonged stay for Milton under such circumstances would give Don Gadgetoni some thinking time - at least until a better solution came along? Gadgetoni actually liked old Milton but he had just become too much of a pain in the backside to have around in his current mental state. The plan seemed bullet proof but once again things had gone wrong. A rethink was in order.

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The Bay had become a desolate place in Milton's absence. People wandered about aimlessly scratching their heads - totally bewildered at the loss of such an esteemed local field observer and commentator. People cried into their already tear filled burgers - even the local dogs looked glum, tail between legs and lifeless. Men beat their chests in anguish - ripping apart their garments as local women young and old wailed at the loss of the local hunk. In time the Bay returned to a shadow of its past existence but things would never be the same. Then in early January of 2008 many people who would normally have been looking forward to the mental lift of another excellently written bird report had the reminder of Milton's absence and many threw themselves off the cliff top, unable to cope with the recollection of their loss. Milton's annual bird reports had indeed become their reason for living and without it, life proved intolerable. Many lives were wasted back in the bad old days of January '08 or 1/1 as it became known throughout the world.

June 2008. Don Gadgetoni's headquarters Dumptidge:

Don Gadgetoni had arranged a meeting at the secret meeting place. Family heads from all over the southeast were in attendance and many agreed to Don Gadgetoni's reasoning put forward during the meeting that perhaps a truce was in order and that Milton may have learned his lesson and could now be allowed back into the birding fraternity once more? There was however a little dissention in the amassed ranks in attendance - "What are we going to do if he shows us no respect once more?" said Don Johnny Methusala Websper from his motorized gold plated Zimmer frame at the back of the crowd as his badly fitting gleaming white false teeth fell onto the floor for the fourth time that night. Don Gadgetoni calmly reasoned that problems could be dealt with as they emerged rather than just having the pessimistic attitude that Milton would behave as he had in the past. "Dun't yar think Don Gadgetoni that he moight 'ave a go at not only me teef agen but this shoulder length blonde wig I bought in America since ee' are be away so I can look young agen?" retorted Don Lastlett. "Let us give him a chance" came the respectful and considered reply. As murmuring went round the room from all the separate families Don Gadgetoni could see this wasn't going to be as easy as he thought and things were once again getting out of control? He decided to use his trump card, expertly held back for such an occasion - an offer they couldn't refuse. Don Gadgetoni raised his voice above the muttering and spoke - "Friends - friends, we need to be united. Come now - no one wants a war - none of us will gain from it. I've lost a son (he was lying again - he did this to get his way or to get out of any awkward situation that arose from time to time) and I'm getting too old for all this in fighting. We all need to push in the same direction - let us agree here and now to leave this building in peace." It was then the coup de grace came when there at the back of the auditorium emerged a figure from the shadows. It was Anthony - 'the strangler' - Jolly. His hair was swept back with two tubs of brylcream to give him a more menacing appearance. A fake scar, drawn by Gadgetoni earlier on that same day in black biro was visible from his forehead all the way down his left cheek, disappearing beneath the collar of his black sequined shirt, which all added to the affect. The crowd gasped as Jolly pulled out a brand new brush cutter from beneath his mud splattered jacket - then the blood curling laughing started - earsplitting at first and growing in volume massively to a crescendo, taking out not only all the windows in the building but many half way down the street too. Ha ha - ha ha ha ... HA HA HA HA HA - on Jolly went laughing like a madman as he started up the brush cutter forcing the assembled families back towards the furthest wall of the meeting hall! He looked deranged - HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA - he went on and on like he was never going to stop! Don Gadgetoni raised a hand akin to Herbert von Karajan at his pomp and Jolly only then stopped his manic sadistic laughing and switched off the brush cutter. The room fell silent. Gadgetoni had won and he knew it - all the families had got the message loud and clear. Gadgetoni had Jolly under his control and in his family - that could only mean one thing - trouble with a capital T! Gadgetoni held everyone's attention as he announced to the silenced room after being lifted onto a nearby table so he could be seen "If I should ever hear of any problems - if one of my family meets with an accident on the cliff top - or if any one of them gets found stuck upside down in the mud flat - then I will hold ALL of you family heads in this room responsible. And I will be FORCED to unleash Jolly and his amazingly noisy brush cutter on all of your patches during spring and autumn and he will cut down all your best habitat and scare off all your migrants with his enormous laugh and none of you will ever find a rare bird ever again! Do I make myself clear?" Don Gadgetoni then stormed triumphantly out of the room, his little one-inch legs going like pistons with his family and Jolly in tow. A sly smirk came across his ugly midget face, as he knew he'd won the day. His superior thinking abilities had outdone all the other families and he knew none of them would dare to take him on now that he had the amazingly noisy Jolly and his right hand. He would live to fight another day.

All this left the way open for Milton's return.

It took Milton a month or three to get used to the idea of going back to Pegwell. He'd arrived home in England at the airport to a massed adoring public spectacle akin to the Beatles first USA tour in the 1960's. Pegwell looked quite different after his enforced sabbatical. His confidence had been affected but with his imaginary friends in tow (Shin Hi and Klaus) eventually the move was taken to visit the area again. Once more his huge muscular frame would grace the area - and his vast size twelve boot could plant its first footstep on hallowed turf once again. On arrival a brand new shiny path and hide were in place ... not that Milton was too bothered about new paths and hides, as he just wanted a bit of peace and quiet and to see a few birds. Anything that attracted the general public was counterproductive in Milton's view and as expected there were loads of unappreciative people not realising or caring as to the harm they were doing, much the same as it was prior to his spell in Outer Mongolia. Milton was a little confused initially as he thought at one point that he saw the old warden Pete Forest (now known as 'Forestinho' of Brazil) wearing a wig? It turned out there was a new warden now - Tony - Tony Swandale from an area far far away on the other side of the world called Oare Marsh near Faversham. Milton would have to get his head around accepting such meteoric changes or else find another Pegwell in another distant land far away? Perhaps even Foreness or perish the thought - Sandwich bay even? At least there were no twitchers around at Pegwell on that day, which helped poor Milton's broken fragile brain somewhat. A booming laugh broke out somewhere down wind - unmistakably Tony Jolly who may or may not have been on the reserve or perhaps even a few miles away at Ham Fen? His vast laugh is easily audible at anything up to five miles or more. A dog jumped into the newly formed scrape as its owner screamed at it - oblivious to the surroundings as noisy city type people barged their way around the reserve flattening everything in their wake, throwing rubbish - verbal and literal. Some things never change - Milton muttered to himself. Milton remembered how things used to be prior to the Country Park setup and drifted off into the confines of his own imagination - the only way he knew how to cope. He found himself a quiet corner away from the masses - 'Hello there Klaus have you seen Shin Hi lately?' he mumbled to himself virtually inaudibly under his breathe as he stared out across the mudflat through his telescope ... another Pegwell chapter had begun ...

The end.

Thanks to the imaginary players:

Marlon Brando - as Gadget:

James Caan as Diane Wrathful.

Al Pacino as Phil Milton OBE/Hero

Tom Hagen as Dave Gibley

Virgil (The Turk) Sollozzo - as Martyn Wilson.

Johnny Fontaine as (singer extraordinaire) Simon Mount.

Fredo Corleone - as Iris Childs

Diane Keaton as Diane Wrathful in a wonderfully performed duel role. No surgery/makeup was involved or indeed necessary.

Connie Corleone as F. Solly

Luca Brasi as Don Worsfold

Philip Tattaglia as John Hollyer

208-year-old Moe Greene as John Websper

Wurzel Gummage as Pete Laslett.

Captain McCluskey as Capt. Slimothy McSplodge.

*Please note: The imaginary 2008/09 Oscar went to **Dylan Wrathall** for his excellent James Caan/Diane Keaton. Very convincing indeed. I now realise completely Kevin Thornton's excellent observation about Dylan's 'Guy Vaking' credentials.*

Meanwhile - back in relative reality - Ramsgate, England ... a Tuesday about 11.04 pm:

I hope the above explanation suffices? It's all true y'know - well apart from the stuff I made up anyway? If you hear tales of long neurotic periods combined with Howard Hughes type hiding episodes that kept me off the scene, then please consider them as all piffle and tripe! After a few years of personal struggle as I tried to watch the area and record the movements of its birds - it all got to me back in 2006 and I virtually gave up. It has become a circus at Pegwell when compared with 'the old days' (yawn!) and it proved far too busy for my liking. I did have the odd go at watching other areas but couldn't adapt. A try at watching the Foreness/North Foreland area last autumn only lasted about one week before enthusiasm waned and I was virtually back to square one. I was up till then still watching Pegwell in dribs and drabs but just couldn't cope with all the hassle that you have to put up with down there these days. Not being able to drive means I'm very much stuck in Thanet, an area full of people and over development. Even the one mile bicycle ride down to the Bay is far more hazardous than it was a year or two ago thanks to overcrowded roads, building work and local shopping developments. Progress? Not in my world. You can stick it and give both me a bit of peace and quiet thank you very much. Anyway - this so called bird report should give a flavour at my latest sustained attempt to watch the area from September 2008 plus a few highlights of what was seen both before this autumn and last year when I didn't write a report at all for the first time since 1997. Francis has been keeping an eye on some of the evening/weekend tides in my absence and a few others have provided some bird sightings, which I've nicked for inclusion. I've become a casual visitor to the area since the end of 2006 - perhaps even earlier if I'm honest? My mind started turning back towards doing a bit of birding again this summer just past, so as soon as the moth trapping dropped off as well as the ever increasing summer crowds at Pegwell I tried to give it another go. I broke up the monotony with the occasional sea watch off Minnis Bay and North Foreland plus the odd afternoon walk around Margate cemetery, which is the only half decent piece of habitat in the whole of Thanet where you can get any peace. No dog walkers and very few kid's means I can actually relax up there. The coast with its wading birds and visible migration will always draw me back of course but its quite a good birding spot in its own right is the cemetery.

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Liverpool Football Club R.I.P?

This next chapter was written with Dave Gilbert in mind - forgive me if you've read through 10 odd pages of utter tripe and not read a single word about birds! I know one of the other local birders is a Red so three out of one thousand warrants its inclusion surely? In days gone by 'Giblet' as he's lovingly referred to, and I used to chat about football for hours whilst watching the tides going in and out near the old hide (RIP) and I miss this part of my birding experience. I haven't laid eyes on old Giblet for ages so we communicate pretty much via these reports. Well I do anyway! Bear with us. In January of 2007 my beloved Liverpool Football Club caved in and finally sold the club to the highest bidder. My initial reaction was that money had at last ruined the last big institution in world football and no longer can I refer to my club as a big club with a small family club atmosphere. What a fiasco it's all become. The two yanks bought the club with big promises most of which haven't yet come to fruition the best part of two years on. I did try and think along the lines of if selling the club helps to win the league perhaps it's not all in vain? I now think my initial reaction was correct. Even El Nino's 33 goals last season can do nothing to make me think anything other than its all a waste of time. Now some bloke with more money than the rest of the world put together has bought Man City and now we've sold the club and are still too poor to buy the best of the greedy footballers this system produces. What was the point? It's only a game I hear you cry and your right of course. The problem is it matters too much to the weaker individuals of society and I know because I'm one of them! I know we got to the

Champions League final in May 2007 and should have won the game – also as I write we're top of the Premier League (though I bet we're not by the time your reading this?) but that's not the point. Now the back pages are full of mega rich non-football people playing at running a club not understanding the history or the general feelings of the community regarding this silly but addictive sport. It's all got out of hand. I wish I hated football. The problem is I just don't! Do me a favour Giblet will you and start doing a bit of birding at Pegwell will you? I need a consoling shoulder to cry on... someone who understands!! I will even laugh at your endless supply of silly childish jokes just - COME BACK!! Help!!!!

.....

Diane's and his wonderful Noddy-mobile? An explanation ...of sorts:

I always like to include a bit of topical stuff in these birding comics. This year's tale comes from news heard on the grapevine regarding our valiant local hero (in his own mind) Dylan Wrathall. Now Dylan is by far the most misunderstood of all the Thaneteer's and as he's grown older (and older – and older) has become one of the most fascinating case studies that any amateur psychologist could wish for. As revealed in the 2006 version of this rag Dylan was spotted in town sporting a ponytail, which for a man well on the wrong side of 50 is surely a massive faux pas? Those of us who have had the good fortune to know the old Dyl (as he's affectionately known by those of us that love him) well remember the time when he used to strut around the various birding spots of East Kent as a rough tough outspoken birding yobbo who would think nothing of walking 20 miles in his bare feet over thorny stony ground and wear a thin shirt and trousers during cold hard winter days out in the field, where the frozen noses were falling off the weasels and Eskimo men on holiday in Thanet broke down in tears such was the hardness of the birding weathers in days now long past. I mean here is a man who cycled to SHEPPY about ten years back to see a Great Reed Warbler!! The image of Dylan in town wearing a ponytail just doesn't fit somehow? 15 years ago Dylan himself would surely have slated such behaviour?

Anyway. This autumn just past, news came before my ears that made me shudder? Dylan was looking for a new set of wheels. But what sort? A bright shiny TVR? An old Jaguar perhaps? A fast sports car of some sort - surely? Nope! He ended up buying a new Vauxhall. Not the boy racer 1.9 litres V6 one with go faster stripes and side pipes – nope not on your nelly. He bought an old granddad one, equipped with a full 1-litre engine with a low back for easy wheelchair access!! It's called a Vauxhall Agila and does more to resemble Postman Pats van than any of the sporty cars that Dylan's been driving in anger over the past 30 years or so. Oh how I laughed. Word has it he did a deal and had the airbags replaced with incontinence bags, though it's only a rumour? I also heard after agreeing to the purchase with the car dealer his first port of call was to do a one mile an hour tour of all the motorbility shops in Thanet where he went for quotes on a 4-wheel Granny Buggy for use at the North Foreland/Foreness cliff top and a stair lift, which considering the fact that he lives in a bungalow just goes to show how old and befuddled the old boys become of late? Either that or I made the whole thing up? I used to have Dylan down as growing old disgracefully – a Keith Moon style blow out or a James Dean in a speeding Porsche, type car crash scenario on the way to a birding venue somewhere, but here we are in 2008 seeing the teeth gnashing self opinionated loudmouth turning into a placid hippy old biddy. It comes to us all I suppose? He'll be selling his Joe Satriani and Steve Vai CD's and replacing them with 'Mediocre Country Classics Collection' by Billy Bob – the banjo – O'Brien next? Lets hope I don't need to scrounge a lift off him in the near future eh?

Birds seen at Pegwell Bay in 2007 and 2008

Well believe it or not this is the 11th (almost) annual Pegwell Bay bird report. I can hardly believe it – how times flies when you're not enjoying yourself?? The following drivel gives a flavour of the past two years. It will in no way be as entertaining or libelous as the preceding ten pages but hopefully should be far more easy to understand. I didn't manage to write a bird report for 2007 and have included some of the more notable sightings from that year. As already mentioned elsewhere in this reservoir of rubbish I haven't been doing much time in the area of late and have pretty much cobbled together a sort of report from my personal scattered recordings during the period and stuff already reported on Gadgets website. Thanks to all whose info I've pinched for this rag. Names that spring to mind are Francis, Ben Ring, Steve Coates, Nick Lever, and Diane Wrathfull. One day I will bump into Nick, Steve or Ben Ring – I've still not had the privilege of seeing any of them in person. I still maintain in ultra paranoid fashion they must be avoiding me and who can blame them? I of course know Francis and Diane only too well. Phil Charlton always gives me all his bird sightings when we meet and I'm grateful for these also. Dave Beadle also gave me bits and pieces during his two visits from Canada during the past two years. If anyone can think of a good excuse that we can get him to move back to Thanet then I'm all ears as that would be great.

Unfortunately the computer I'm using has American language plumbed into it so if your reading this off a word document online then try and ignore the underlined so called 'mistakes' as I prefer to write in good old fashioned English. Another problem you may encounter is that the set out of the document might be messed about with too? Somehow this happens when they get on the website for whatever reason? I just don't understand technology too well and can offer no explanation for this annoying problem. Please take note that I take great care to set all the pages out in good order - the lay out somehow gets scrambled when they get put up online?

As I'm sitting here I'm toying with the idea of putting in sightings of over flying raptors seen outside of the recording area? I have in the past put in larger raptors seen from my garden, which is about half a mile outside the northern edge of the recording area. These birds of prey would easily been seen from the fields of Little Cliffsend Farm (which is part of the northern boundary) as they are in the same bit of sky viewable from there. Also – as this is the only set of bird records that I actually report then for my sake it's useful to put the sightings and send them off to the birding bods in grey pinstripe suits and bowler hats (KOS and SBBO) in the one document. One of my long established raptor watching sites has always been outside the normal walking area I normally record stuff from, but I have never had a problem with including sightings in the past as it overlooks Pegwell from a high patch of ground only a couple of hundred yards from the farm field which is inside the boundary. It's just a good vantage point so I make use of it. Whether or not I will put in stuff seen over Ramsgate will become apparent when you read the report, as I still haven't made my mind up. If I do then I will make it apparent within the text. As I write Robert Fripp's in full flow – I'm listening to a 1970's live version of the Talking Drum by King Crimson and its confusing the issue in my brain somewhat? The man's a genius.

The recording area covered is the normal area between Ramsgate West Cliff down to Cliffsend (Dave Beadles old patch) plus the fields either side of the cycle path plus the Country Park and Stone Lees. I do also include birds seen moving off Ramsgate Harbour, reasoning that these are the very same birds that can be seen from my old sea watching spot within the recording area proper. I also include all birds within the Harbour as I have been doing for many years.

For the newcomer, the following bits of Pegwell advice may come in handy:

- 1: Avoid men with long hair at all costs.
- 2: Ignore virtually everything I say, write and do. Let us begin:

At long last... and by a huge public demand ...

Birds actually *seen* at Pegwell during 2007 and 2008. (well – some of them)

Red-throated Diver:

2007: Very little offshore passage was noted. A rather pathetic 12 north on the 15th of January is the highest count I have on record. Very little actual sea watching was carried out in '07 but even then birds are often noticeable in good numbers offshore even when watching off the Country Park so you can hardly miss them if they are present.

2008: The early winter period wasn't covered but the late winter period showed that they were around in very low numbers generally. 1 – 4 birds were seen from the country park on a few dates in November and December. Sea watching off the east pier of Ramsgate Harbour in a stiff easterly wind turned up 81 south and 4 north on December 25th.

Great Northern Diver:

2007: A juvenile bird was present in Ramsgate Harbour on January 14th (PC) and 15th. (P. Hurst)

In 2008: A juvenile was present offshore in the bay on December 15th. (PM)

Slavonian Grebe:

One lingered on the garage pools for the last few days of December 2007 into January 2008. It was eventually picked up dead on January 2nd so I hear.

Little Grebe:

These little widdlers were seen quite regularly on the garage pools during early winter only (1 - 3) plus occasional sightings in the bay and river. None reported in the late winter period.

Black-necked Grebe:

1 was present briefly (landing in one inch of water!) before flying off north on December 12th. (CSy and PM) The same bird was seen flying across the main road into Pegwell from the direction of Saint Augustine's Golf Course on the following day. (FS) Franny now has Black-necked Grebe on his 'still in the car' list.

Great Crested Grebe:

Common offshore between autumn and spring and occasionally birds were seen in the bay during the summer months. Winter numbers were quite low in 07/08 with peaks of about 10+ birds present.

Fulmar:

No counts were undertaken due to laziness/apathy in the extreme. Many pairs breed along the west cliff area between Cliffsend and the Harbour as is usual.

Gannet:

Whilst they are a reasonably common sight at pretty much any time of the year offshore no effort has been made to take any counts. Good numbers can usually be seen passing through or feeding at sea in the summer and autumn if you can be bothered to look. During the winter months a few were seen offshore including 26 south on December 25th.

Cormorant:

Present on a daily basis in small numbers. Up to 25 birds were seen in the autumn months – often commuting inland in small groups. Sorry Dyl – that's all you're getting!

Shag:

In the early winter 1 – 2 were seen in Ramsgate Harbour between January and March 2nd. An early returning bird was seen, once again in the Harbour on September 6th. (DW) After this: 1 – 3 birds were recorded either in or around the harbour on quite a few dates until the end of the year – mainly by Dylan of course. An adult present off the west cliff on December 25th that flew south into Pegwell on a high tide was the only record away from the harbour area.

Little Egret:

Up to 3 birds were present in early winter and during the spring - 11 were present on April 28th. Summer numbers included 31 on July 26th, 50 on July 27th, 62 on July 31st, 45 on August 4th and 9th, and a new area peak count of 84 birds on August 17th. (FS) I bet he was chuffed with his new Pegwell record eh? Excuse my bludgeoning sarcasm. There were also 65 on August 24th dropping to monthly peaks of 26 on September 17th, 24 on October 6th and 6 on November 7th. Franny also had 46 on the garage pools on July 28th, which is quite a lot for such a small space eh?

Grey Heron:

1 - 6+ birds were regular. I saw one on ZZZzzzzzzz ahem . A bit well ZZZzzzzzzz ZZzzzzz

Spoonbill:

2007: 1 flew north on February 18th with another present on July 18th 2007. (both TS)
In 2008 an adult bird was present on July 11th. (FS)

Mute Swan:

Though never common at Pegwell these vast white lumps were obviously unreported in '08 as the only record I could find is of one on April 28th - 8 vast white lumps! In truth I did later find a couple of other records but couldn't be asked to tell you about them.

White-fronted Goose:

A flock of 45 flew west on December 8th, 4 flew south on December 25th and 80+ were seen on December 29th. (all PM) Another 5 flew s/west on December 31st. (PM)

Bean Goose:

A flock of 5 flew west on December 8th (PM) and c6 flew north amongst a flock of White-fronted Geese on December 29th. (PM)

Pink-footed Goose:

4 flew n/west on September 29th. (PM and DC)

Greylag Goose:

Small numbers were seen on and off throughout the period. Observations are probably increasing these past few years? They have been seen with a few goslings upriver in recent years. Mind you - who cares eh?

Canada Goose:

1 on April 5th 2007 and a bumper haul in '08 included 4 s/east on April 10th, 25 present on September 10th and 12 north on September 28th.

Barnacle Goose:

A group of 4 flew south past the harbour on December 25th. (PM)

Brent Goose:

Dylan saw the first migrant on August 17th, which is quite early - for the Goose, not Dylan. Birds started showing more regularly from mid September though recorded numbers were quite low (1 - 20 birds) due to poor coverage in October and early November. A group of 15 were loitering around the salt marsh upriver well into December. Perhaps I shouldn't have bothered writing a report this year? This is getting dire isn't it? Next year I'll just go the whole hog and do a proper comic?

Black Brant:

An adult bird was seen on December 22nd. (PM) The fourth Pegwell record.

Shelduck:

74 were present on January 1st.

The later monthly peaks were: Sept = 57 Oct = 43 Nov = 39 Dec = 96

Mallard:

The later monthly peaks were:

Sept = 32 Oct = 61 Nov = 100 Dec = 220

Gadwall:

They were extremely scarce in the period between early September and the end of the year. The peak counts were a measly 9 birds on November 27th and 18 on December 31st. I only laid eyes on them on a mere handful of dates.

Pintail:

1 - 4 birds were regularly seen between January and March then 1 - 4 were seen most days between October until the end of the year. There were also 7 on September 29th, 8 on November 7th and 7 on December 1st.

Shoveler:

Virtually a rarity during the period between September and the end of the year! They were only seen on about ten or so dates with a peak of 7 birds on November 7th.

Wigeon:

The highest early winter count was 584 on January 1st.
The later monthly peaks were:

Aug = 1 Sept = 90 Oct = 53 Nov = 380 Dec = 410

Teal:

The later monthly peaks were:

Sept = 75 Oct = don't know??? Nov = 60 Dec = 330 on the 30th.

Garganey:

1 was on the mud flat on September 12th. (PM)

Pochard:

2007: 3 were offshore on February 11th.

Red-crested Pochard:

A drake was present on April 15th. (FS)

Tufted Duck:

Singles on January 21st and 22nd.

Eider:

1 - 2 birds were seen offshore - but only every now and then during the period between September and the end of the year. The peak count was a not very astounding 4 on December 25th.

Common Scoter:

A few were seen in utterly insignificant numbers.

Goldeneye:

2007: Singles were present on February 3rd and 10th.
2008: A female/juvenile was present offshore on December 29th.

Red-breasted Merganser:

1 - 2 were seen on 4 - 5 dates from autumn until the end of the year.

Goosander:

3 redheads were seen flying in and then out of the Bay on December 8th.

Osprey:

2007: Whilst on a migrant Rook/Heron chase, Simon saw one flying west over Ramsgate town on August 6th. (SM) I'll bet he was gutted it wasn't a Corvid?

2008: 1 on May 16th (FS), 1 on September 7th, (DW), 1 north on September 21st (PM) and 1 s/west on September 29th. (PM)

Red Kite:

2008: 1 n/west on June 3rd. (TH) I had one fly west near my house on March 24th too.
2007: 1 flew n/west over Pegwell on February 2nd, (FS) and 2 flew north on April 6th. (PM)
Also from my garden - a juvenile was hanging about over my estate for about half an hour on January 3rd then 2 together flew west on May 23rd.

Black Kite:

2007: One was seen hanging around the estate where I live (flying down into Pegwell airspace before returning at one point) after doing a tour of Thanet on August 4th. Franny also had 2 separate birds from his place of work in Ramsgate during 2008 so it would appear they are at last starting to show a little more regularly in one of the only Black Kite free areas in mid Europe.

Marsh Harrier:

Very few records though obviously under recorded. The only records I have are: 2 on April 8th, 1 west on May 2nd, 1 n/west on August 9th, 1 on September 12th, 1 south on September 20th and 1 on October 4th - plus there were unprecedented regular sightings of 1 - 2 wintering birds in November and December. At least 3 different birds were seen during December.

Hen Harrier:

Not a common sight nowadays unfortunately. I could only find 3 early winter/spring records, which included 1 on April 3rd - though of course the coverage was poor. I did have a migrant fly n/west over my garden on March 24th - its taken me many years to get one. Single birds were seen on quite a few dates during the late winter period and 2 roosted on Shellness on December 8th.

Montagu's Harrier:

1 flew n/west on July 25th. (FS) He didn't tell anyone at the time. He'll have some excuse no doubt - all rubbish of course. The truth is he's not one of us - he's a strange mix of 50% android, 14% oil and 36% hair. He's recently had a pair of Eagle Owls eyes surgically transplanted/fitted for better after dark resolution/night listing. Ian Harding with have a fit reading this bit ... and he hasn't got to the spring Serin sighting yet. I knew it wouldn't be long before he was up to his old tricks?

Common Buzzard:

A fantastic influx of birds occurred in late September. 23 birds mainly s/west on the 20th was followed by a spectacular 43 birds on the 21st most of which appeared from the north before dispersing inland. Groups of 16 and 11 birds were noted on the 21st. There were also another 1 or 2 present on that day, one of which was still present on and off until December 19th at least. Another 5 migrants were noted on September 25th and one flew southeast on October 2nd.

Honey Buzzard:

2007: 1 west over Ramsgate on May 24th. (CS) I had another from my garden, which flew west over the estate on June 16th.

2008: A good run in September though we missed out on any of the larger numbers which showed elsewhere in the country: 1 west on 17th, 1 or 2 south on 19th, 1 west on 20th then 2 south and 1 north on 21st. I also saw one fly west from my house on August 25th.

Sparrowhawk:

With quite a few pairs holding territory around the general Pegwell airspace it's often difficult to count the proper migrant birds. What I'm trying to say here is I did my best to ignore them during my raptor watching this year. Ever present in small numbers, as is the norm these days.

Kestrel:

Once again little notice was taken. Numbers appear fairly stable or slightly declining.

Hobby:

1 - 2 birds were seen quite regularly during the late spring and autumn months. Dylan saw 3 on August 22nd. The last record was of one on October 1st.

Peregrine:

The normal pair stayed in residence throughout 2008 plus the occasional other bird. Successful breeding was thought to have taken place for the first time in the area. They have been ever present for many years but no young have ever materialised until 2008.

Merlin:

There were a few records of single birds in the early winter period as you might expect. They started to reappear from September 1st onwards and were seen singly in ever decreasing numbers throughout the winter period but only on about ten dates. 2 were seen on December 9th one of which was an adult male bird.

Grey Partridge:

Up to twenty birds were present during the autumn/late winter months. Franny outdid me yet again with a late update of 28 on October 17th.

Pheasant:

A few were ever present around the Country Park and salt marsh.

Water Rail:

They are seemingly rather scarce away from the garage pools these days? I'd hear them most winter days in years gone by but its far more unusual nowadays? The only ones I saw were singles on October 13th and one that I flushed near the garage pools on December 10th. Franny saw 5 on November 29th and at least 3 were heard on December 23rd.

Moorhen:

Ever present in small numbers around the reservoir of Little Cliffsend Farm, (1 - 6 birds) where they often forage around the edge of the fields. They nested in the Garage pools - I'm not sure if it was this year just gone or the year before? It's a good bird report this eh? I don't even know what year? Could have been in 1784 for all I know?

Crane:

2007: 1 was seen circling over Ramsgate on June 13th (CS) and 1 was present on October 4th. (PM)

Oystercatcher:

There were 650 on February 13th and 680 July 31st. A leucistic bird was seen on August 8th. Help!

The monthly peaks were:

July = 680 Aug = 780 Sept = 615 Oct = 590 Nov = 590 Dec = 730

Avocet:

January: 3 on 21st and 22nd. March: 3 on 17th and 2 on 27th. May: 1 on 8th, 3 on 27th and 1 on 30th. June: 3 on 1st. July: 1 on 26th. August: 1 on 5th. October: 2 on 4th. December: 1 on 1st, 12th, 3 on 15th and 1 on 29th.

One was hanging about between late November and the 2nd week of December.

Little Ringed Plover:

1 on April 12th, 1 on May 28th and 2 on May 30th.

Ringed Plover:

Migrants included: May: 140 on 23rd, 120 on 27th and 100 on 28th. August: 70 on 8th, 90 on 21st, 80 on 24th and 90 on 25th. Winter numbers are generally very low in the bay so 36 on December 14th were noteworthy - for 2008 anyway. It's starting to tail off already isn't it? Read on it'll get better soon ... surely?

Kentish Plover:

2007: 2 on August 8th. (FS)

2008: 1 on June 7th (NL) and 1 on August 17th. (DW)

Grey Plover:

The later monthly peaks were:

Sept = 28 Oct = 120 Nov = 279 Dec = 210

Dotterel:

1 flew s/east over the hover pad on September 19th. (PM) A juvenile was seen out on the mud flat amongst a flock of Golden Plover on October 6th.

Golden Plover:

Early winter numbers peaked with 6000 birds present on January 5th. During the late winter period they were put off using their usual roosting place on the mudflat by bait diggers, which made getting any accurate counts very difficult. Small numbers of birds (c1000) were using other areas of the mud flat away from their preferred safe day roosting area or were otherwise present in the surrounding fields during daylight hours. Overall numbers during November and December fell far short of what we've come to expect in recent years, some of which was down to disturbance.

The monthly peaks were: Aug = 5 Sept = 80 Oct = 330 Nov = 1590 Dec = 3700

American Golden Plover:

A stunning adult in summer plumage turned up on June 1st and stayed until the 5th. (FS) The second Pegwell record. Unfortunately I didn't see it ...it's a long story. A vile attack of brain bugs continued my life long fight with 'Eternal Yanky Golden Plover deficiency syndrome' a condition I've been suffering with since a trip to Texas in 1483.

Lapwing:

In January - 11000 were present on the 1st and 9000 on the 5th.

The monthly peaks were:

Sept = 560 Oct = 370 Nov = 2300 Dec = 9430

Knot:

266 were seen on January 1st.

The later monthly peaks were:

Sept = 17 Oct = 100 Nov = 240 Dec = 280

Sanderling:

The monthly peaks were:

Aug = 22 Sept = 22 Oct = 35 Nov = 74 Dec = 94

Purple Sandpiper:

Phil (Lurker) Charlton saw 3 on February 18th and 2 on March 31st - both times on the western under cliff. Slim had another in the same area on April 12th.

Turnstone:

70 - 100 birds were using the west cliff high tide roost on a regular basis between September and the end of the year. Numbers peaked at 128 birds on December 16th.

Dunlin:

The monthly peaks were:

July = 86 Aug = 260 Sept = 230 Oct = 280 Nov = 1150 Dec = 1240

Curlew Sandpiper:

Very few were seen in 2008. The only records were: 1 on June 3rd then July: 2 on 27th, 2 on 19th, 1 on August 8th, 1 on September 3rd, 6 on September 22nd and 4 on September 25th.

Temminck's Stint:

Singles on May 8th and June 1st - 3rd. (both FS)

In 2007: 1 on August 23rd. (FS)

Little Stint:

1 - 2 on only about ten dates between July 12th and October 13th. Now known locally as 'Near Invisible Stint'. Thank you.

Wood Sandpiper:

1 on July 27th. (FS)

Green Sandpiper:

There were a few records between July 27th and September 7th. Too few to bother with.

Common Sandpiper:

The peaks were: 14 on July 29th, 14 on August 2nd and 11 on August 4th.

Redshank:

The monthly peaks were:

July = 329 on 29th. Aug = don't know? Sept = 200 Oct = 220 Nov = 180 Dec = c100

Spotted Redshank:

1 on January 1st, July 29th and September 17th. During the late winter period single birds were seen on only a few dates in November and December, far less regularly than normal anyway. 1 - 4 birds have overwintered in the area in recent years.

Greenshank:

1 - 3 were seen on many dates in April and May then 1 - 8 were regular between July the wotsit and October 1st.

Black-tailed Godwit:

January: 2 on 21st and 22nd. April: 2 on 13th. May: 8 on 5th and 3 on 8th. July: 1 on 12th. August: 3 on 5th, 2 on 8th, 1 on 9th, 1 on 10th, 1 on 16th, 10 on 17th and 1 on 24th. September: 3 on 7th. December: 1 on 17th.

Bar-tailed Godwit:

The peak early winter count was 243 on January 21st.

The monthly peaks were:

Sept = 17 Oct = 9 Nov = 156 Dec = 161

Curlew:

The monthly peaks were:

July = 452 Aug = 446 Sept = 435 Oct = 380 Nov = 290 Dec = 224

Whimbrel:

They were regular in small numbers during April and May then July through September. The odd straggler hung around until October 6th. Dylan recorded 30+ on August 4th, which is the highest count I could find. Dylan only remembered the count, as it was roughly half his age. There were also 34 present on April 28th.

Woodcock:

1 was in Stonelees on December 11th.

Snipe:

240 were present on November 7th and there were 91 in the salt marsh on December 10th.

Jack Snipe:

Franny had 4 birds on November 29th and 2 were seen on December 11th.

Ruff:

A near swarm in 2008 - singles on September 8th and 14th then 2 on October 6th!!

Pectoral Sandpiper:

1 on July 29th. (FS) I did enquire as to whether it was of the black-breasted form but was refused an answer by a rather indignant Herr Hairy Pants.

Great Skua:

1 flew north through the bay on April 11th and 1 flew south past the harbour on December 25th.

Arctic Skua:

Very few were reported (2) so it's hardly worth taking the time and effort of writing them down. There must have been a few more than two surely?

Pomarine Skua:

At least one (a juvenile) passed south off the harbour on December 25th. (PM)

Black-headed Gull:

8000 birds were present on July 31st and 5000+ were seen on August 22nd.

The monthly peaks were:

July = 8000 Aug = 5000 Sept = 2000 Oct = 2500 Nov = 2500 Dec = 3400

Common Gull:

The monthly peaks were:

Sept = 200. Oct = 800 Nov = 1570 Dec = 1400

Mediterranean Gull:

Sightings were most prevalent in July and August when 1 – 8 birds were seen on quite a few dates. Otherwise quite scarce, especially in the late autumn/winter period when only two singles were reported, which is quite unusual. Sighting of more than one bird were: January: 3 on 11th, April: 2 on 3rd and 28th, July: 11 on 29th, August: 7 on 9th, 4 on 10th and 8 on 11th. The counts on July 29th, August 7th and 11th included 4, 6 and 5 juvenile birds respectively.

Herring Gull:

The monthly peaks were:

Sept = 2000 Oct = 2000 Nov = 2500 Dec = 4300

Yellow-legged Gull:

2 on January 11th and 5 on January 13th, 1 on April 14th and 5 on November 27th then in December: 3 on 1st, 3 on 4th then single birds on the 12th, 17th, 30th and 31st.

Caspian Gull:

2007: I did see an adult bird sitting out on the mud in January but forgot to write the date down. In February: A 1st winter on 5th (PM), single adults on 7th (PM) and 10th (FS) then 2 adults on 11th (PM)

2008: a first winter bird was seen on March 14th. (PM) Further first winter birds were seen on November 19th and 20th (PM) then December 14th. (PM) 3 different adult birds were seen on 2 consecutive dates with 2 on December the 28th and 1 on the 29th. (PM)

Lesser Black-backed Gull:

The monthly peaks were:

Sept = 22 Oct = 50 Nov = 43 Dec = 83

Great Black-backed Gull:

The monthly peaks were:

Sept = 75 Oct = c300 Nov = 450 Dec = 340

Glaucous Gull:

A first winter bird was seen between January 11th and 13th. (FS and DW)

Iceland Gull:

A first winter bird was seen in the Bay on January 11th (FS) with it or another present in the Harbour on January 25th. (DW)

Little Gull:

A little group of 5 flew south on September 8th and a little one was seen on October 6th.

Kittiwake:

Ignored. I did see 17 fly south on December 25th if that's of any use to you? Thought not?

Sabine's Gull:

A juvenile was present before flying off north on September 2nd. (IH and CSy)

Little Tern:

The maximum counts were 12 on July 29th and 17 on August 1st.

Sandwich Tern:

2007: One bird overwintered.

2008: One bird overwintered. The spring passage was quite poor by all accounts. The peak count that I have for that period was 170 on April 28th. The autumn passage included counts of in July: 460 on 12th, 356 on 13th, 500 on 25th, 400 on 26th, 724 on 27th, 600 on 28th, 1060 on 29th, 600 on 31st and August: 900 on 1st, 650 on 2nd, 600 on 3rd, 400 on 4th, 314 on 9th, 140 on 10th, 158 on 11th and 278 on the 26th. The (or 'An') overwintering bird was seen on and off until the end of the year. There has been an overwintering Sandwich Tern seen for the past 20 years odd.

Common Tern:

Insignificant numbers were recorded during the spring migration.
Autumn passage counts - In July: 108 on 27th, 80 on 28th and 474 on 29th then in August: 2000 on 1st, 1000 on 2nd, 450 on 3rd, 200 on 4th, 100 on 5th, 137 on 9th, 80 on 10th, 85 on 11th, 75 on 22nd, 80 on 24th, 50 on 25th and 143 on 26th. Also 60 were seen on September 8th. The 2000 birds on August 1st (FS) is a significant amount for the area.

Arctic Tern:

In May: 2 on 28th. July: 1 on 11th, 1 on 13th, 2 on 25th, 6 on 29th then in August: 2 on 1st, 15 on 3rd and 1 on 24th.

Roseate Tern:

2007: 2 on August 8th (FS) and 1 on August 17th. (DW)
A good run of birds in 2008 with: July - 3 on 11th, 1 on 12th, 1 on 13th, 2 on 25th and 4 on 29th. Then in August: 3 on 1st, 1 on 2nd, 1 on 3rd, 1 on 4th, 1 on 8th and 1 on 21st. (all records FS and DW)

Black Tern:

1 on July 29th then in August: 27 on 1st, 7 on 2nd, 4 on 3rd and 3 on the 4th.

White-winged Black Tern:

2007: A juvenile bird that was present on August 23rd was a new bird to the area. (FS)
Well probably? I won't explain that last sentence. Ask Franny?

Auk species:

2008 was very poor for Auks by all accounts. A better showing in late December - 316 flew south past the harbour on December 25th - most of them would have been Guillemots.

Razorbill:

Mutant scientific researchers on day release from SBBO headquarters reported one present during the autumn. I can't be bothered to dig out the date. Did you know that the acronym SBBO stands for Silly Billy Birding Officials? Well at last you've learned something then haven't you?

Stock Dove:

Common. I've nothing more to report, say, do or anything else thank you.

Wood Pigeon:

A bird I always 'try' and ignore but on a long cold and boring winters afternoon when they are passing over in vast flocks I did take note of a few this year. In mid December 1000+ were present on a daily basis around the surrounding fields plus a conservative estimate of 3000+ birds passed south on December 8th. There might have been twice that number on the afternoon in question as I only started counting them after doing my best to ignore them for an hour or so? Also 4550 flew south on December 23rd.

Collared Dove:

The only counts taken were 60 birds on September 18th and c20 on December 15th.

Turtle Dove:

No effort was taken blah blah etc though they do appear to be declining at a rapid rate both as migrants and breeding birds. With them being the favourite prey of the nocturnal 'Lesser Spotted Sparrow Buzzard' perhaps their days are numbered?

Cuckoo:

A late bird was seen in Stone Lees on September 17th.

Short-eared Owl:

2007: Up to 3 birds were present during the early winter period.
2008: singles were recorded on January 1st and 11th then December 4th and 20th.

Little Owl:

2007: A major scarcity in the area - 1 was seen on the cliff top on October 19th.

Barn Owl:

2007: Birds were seen near stone lees on May 12th and 13th. (NL and BR)

2008: Single birds were seen on January 5th, 9th, 11th and 16th. Another was seen on the country park on October 24th. (TS)

Swift:

No effort was made to take any counts. There was more than one and less than a billion.

Kingfisher:

As is usual these days they were seen (1 – 2 birds) with great regularity from mid August and into both winter periods either around the hover pad apron or in the Harbour and less regularly in the bay proper. A pair nested in Pete Lasletts left ear and raised 4 Kingfisherettes.

Ring-necked Parakeet:

2007: A site record count of 99 birds flew north over the Country Park on October 4th. I know its dull and boring information but we are talking about Pegwell here.

2008: Up to 30+ birds were seen in the autumn heading to and from Cliffsend into Ramsgate before and after roosting.

Green Woodpecker:

Up to four birds were seen regularly during the autumn.

Great Spotted Woodpecker:

Good numbers of presumed migrants were recorded during September with 6+ birds being seen quite regularly towards the end of the month. Otherwise just the occasional sighting of one or two birds throughout.

Wryneck:

One was on the Hover pad on September 19th. (PM)

Skylark:

Again little effort was made to take any counts. Up to 12 were present in the salt marsh during the winter months plus a handful were kicking around the fields.

Woodlark:

2 together flew s/west over the hover pad on October 13th. (PM)

Sand Martin:

No counts worthy of note were taken. I was too interested in my moths during their migration period and no one else bothered.

Swallow:

1000+ flew n/west on September 29th.

House Martin:

In the autumn: 8200+ N/west on September 29th and 3000 n/west on October 1st were the only notable records.

Tawny Pipit:

1 was present near Little Cliffsend Farm on September 17th. (PM)

Rock Pipit:

2007: It's always difficult to get a feel of exactly how many Rock Pipits there are in the area during the winter months as birds are strewn all along the coast including the salt marsh. On February 13th I did a massive 'flush as you go' count and disturbed over 40 birds from the many acres of salt marsh and the river with the help of the two Short-eared Owls I inadvertently disturbed from their daytime roost behind Stonelees. .

2008: 3 pairs were displaying around the harbour on March 2nd. (DW) 3 'littoralis' Rock Pipits were seen on the hover port on March 17th. (FS) Birds started to reappear away from the harbour in late September. In December there were 35+ birds present in the salt marsh so with the rest of the area included I would imagine that perhaps 50 were present between the country park marsh and the harbour and rocks?

Meadow Pipit:

Peak counts in September were: 1120 n/west on 19th, 133 n/west on 20th, 450 n/west plus 100+ present on 25th, 150 n/west on 26th and 260 north on 29th. Up to 154 birds were seen flying south through the area to roost during December.

Tree Pipit:

Singles were seen on April 24th then May 2nd and 5th. A good little run of mainly flyover birds from mid September until early October with 1 - 4 birds being recorded on 8 dates between mid September and October 2nd.

Pied Wagtail:

2007: The early winter roost peaked on January 15th when I counted 448 flying s/west over the Country Park whilst Craig Sammels saw another 400 on the pontoons in the harbour. No chance of double counting as all my birds were gone by 16.15 whilst Craig's birds were still present at 16.30pm.

2008: 85 migrants flew north on September 29th. 20+ were present on November 19th. Dylan saw 241 birds flying south between the harbour and the ferry terminal on December 17th. There was only one spring record of White Wagtail in 2008.

Yellow Wagtail:

Very few were recorded in the spring migration and a 1 - 2 were seen on a few dates in September up until the 29th of the month. ZZZzzzzz - it's very dull this bit eh? Slightly depressing even?

Grey Wagtail:

In the autumn 1 - 6 flyover migrants were recorded on 12 dates between September 9th and October 15th. Singles flew south on December 11th and 22nd. Another didn't fly south on December 45th.

Wren:

Ignored physically - not ignored vocally. A small passerine version of a hard at work Tony Jolly as they are very loud for their size and the end flourish of their song isn't unlike a brush cutter on it highest setting as it runs out of petrol.

Waxwing:

A group of 10 were seen along the cycle path on November 25th before flying off towards Manston, (TR) 2 were in Stonelees on November 27th (Roly), 2 were seen on the Stonelees section of the cycle path on December 11th (PM) and 1 flew n/west on December 14th. (PM) 2 were present on the Country Park on December 18th. (BR)

Duncock:

Ignored.

Robin:

100+ migrants arrived on September 25th.

Nightingale:

1 was heard singing in Stone Lees from April 16th and 2 were heard there on May 7th. None overwintered in 2008 - for the seven thousandth consecutive year. Funny that eh?

Common Redstart:

An early bird was seen on July 30th. In September: 1 on 9th, 4 on 17th, 3 on 19th, 1 on 22nd, 2 on 24th, 2 on 25th, 8 on 26th and 1 on 29th.

Black Redstart:

One was hanging about near the harbour/western under cliff between January and February 13th at least. One was present on the west cliff on November 5th (MS) with another on the same date on the cliff top. Further singles were seen on November 7th and the Hover Port on December 4th.

Whinchat:

In September: Recorded on 6 dates with 6 on 17th and 9 on 25th. Also 1 on October 1st.

Stonechat:

In September 1 – 5 migrant birds were present from the 19th onwards with 10 on the 24th and 8 on the 26th. 7 were seen on November 27th and at least 5 were present until the end of the year. Male birds showing signs of the continental form 'rubicola' were seen on March 2nd then another was kicking about in the salt marsh from December 14th till the 23rd at least.

Wheatear:

The spring passage was very poor as is the norm, with 1 – 2 recorded on very few dates in March and April and another month. Present most days in September with peaks of 25 on 17th, 15 on 18th, 14 on 19th then 50 on 24th and 100+ on 25th when up to 80 birds were reported on the west cliff alone and I personally recorded about 40 extra birds between the Country park and the Farm. After this: 26 on 26th and 13 on 28th. The last one I saw was on October 8th.

Song Thrush:

I did take a few counts. 50 newly arrived migrants were seen on September 25th and 50+ were counted on December 11th.

Redwing:

Only taken note of during the autumn. There was a massive movement on the afternoon of October 17th. I estimated that 3 – 6000 birds per hour were seen passing west over my garden between 12.00 and 17.00 when things slowed down nicely in time for tea. I had noticed a scattering of Redwing movement from 10.30 that morning but for quite a few hours during the afternoon they were absolutely flooding through. I counted 3000+ between 2.00 and 2.30 alone when they were at their peak. I would estimate a conservative number of at least 20,000 Redwings passed over along with around 1000+ Fieldfare, 50+ Song Thrush along with a scattering of Finches and 2 Bearded Tits! Franny recorded 4500 flying west down at Pegwell during a one-hour watch on the same day. No other decent numbers were offered up for publication in this - the most idiotic bird report ever to appear to modern man - though 20 – 30 were regularly seen hanging around the Country Park and Stonelees in November and mid December. 50+ were present on November 27th.

Mistle Thrush:

No proper counts were taken. They were regular enough in small numbers blah blah etc.

Fieldfare:

No large movements were noted. A few birds were hanging around the Country Park and Stonelees in November and December. 75 flew west in a one-hour watch during the large Thrush movement on October 17th. On the same day I had around a 1000 birds fly west over my back garden during the afternoon.

Blackbird:

Very few actual counts (or notice?) were taken. There were around 250 present across the whole recording area on December 11th.

Ring Ouzel:

Single birds were seen on April 24th and 27th then October 13th and November 4th.

Dartford Warbler:

One was seen on the Country Park on November 15th. (FS) Once again ...well you know the rest? In his defence he's been treading on them they are getting so common at Foreness these past few years.

Garden Warbler:

1 – 2 were recorded on about half a dozen dates during September.

Blackcap:

I did manage a few counts during the autumn migration – the peaks of which were in September: 35 on 17th, 37 on 19th and 28 on the 29th. About ten pairs generally breed in the area these days. Quite a few strange looking ones with brown caps were seen this year? Don't know 'im name – hee hee.

Lesser Whitethroat:

7 singing males were present on April 28th. 1 – 8 birds were seen regularly during September until early October.

Whitethroat:

35 singing males were counted on April 28th. Rather late turning up this year during our rather awful spring weather. 20+ were present on September 10th.

Sedge Warbler:

Once again very little effort was made to record this specie. At least two birds were heard singing on or around the Country Park in spring with at least one other in the habitat near the Sportsman. The last one of 2008 was seen on September 14th.

Cetti's Warbler:

2007: singles on April 17th then in Stonelees on May 12th (Nick Lever) Tony Swandale heard one calling on the Country Park during the winter of 07/08.

Reed Warbler:

A handful of pairs bred in the area. One showing all the signs of being a bird of the 'fuscus' race was present on the Country Park on September 25th. (PM)

Willow Warbler:

Only 2 singing males were holding territory in Stone Lees this year. Migrants were present in very poor numbers once again as you might expect. The last record was on September 27th.

Chiffchaff:

20 – 40 birds were regular during September/October. 1 was on the country park on December 11th and I've had enough of writing this boring, tedious tripe.

Yellow-browed Warbler:

2007: 1 was reported on the old hover pad on October 19th.
2008: 1 was seen in Stone Lees on September 28th. (PM)

Goldcrest:

The autumn passage was one of the best in recent memory with birds showing up very early and in good numbers. The best day was on September 26th when I made a very conservative estimate/count of 120+ birds when many hundreds were probably present. Virtually every patch of trees held Goldcrests on that day. 43+ were counted on September 29th. Up to four birds were still around in mid December.

Firecrest:

No spring records then singles were seen on 4 dates during the autumn. Rubbish.

Spotted Flycatcher:

In September: 2 on 14th, 2 on 17th, 2 on 24th, 2 on 26th and 1 on 29th.

Pied Flycatcher:

In September: 1 on 17th, 1 on 19th, 4 on 24th and 2 on 25th.

Great Tit:

Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah – pause for breathe - blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah etc.

Blue Tit:

See Great Tit, Wren, Dunnock, lesser Spotted Eagle etc.

Coal Tit:

2007: 1 on 27th March.
2008: 1 on September 25th and 2 west on October 2nd.

Long-tailed Tit:

10 – 20+ birds were regularly present during the autumn/winter period. I'm so bored.

Bearded Tit:

2007: A group of 6 flew over on October 11th. (SC)
2008: Phil Charlton found a few in the hover port reed beds on October 25th.

Great Grey Shrike:

2007: 1 on was seen on the cliff top on October 22nd. (FS)
2008: 1 was seen on the west cliff on September 24th (NL) with probably the same bird being re-found on Little Cliffsend Farm on the following day. (FS)

Magpie:

Common resident. 10 – 15+ birds regular. The Guardian Newspaper reckons they eat old people who fall asleep in their gardens? Sounds about right to me?

Jay:

A fairly common resident bird nowadays - being ever present in small numbers, with one to three breeding pairs in recent years. A little northward migration was noted on September 25th when 31 birds passed over. Also 12 flew s/west on October 13th.

Jackdaw:

A bird that's far too dull to record in this rather wonderful publication. A few flocks were seen migrating in the autumn (occasionally reaching double figures – ooh!) plus 1 – 4 were scattered around here and there. There were however 70 present on December 9th, which is a good amount for the area. Another 21 flew north on December 16th.

Rook:

I know a man who likes Rooks. He works in a bank, uses binoculars made out of cardboard with no glass in them (only for twitching) and vivid yellow plastic camouflage gear for autumnal migration birding. The only count I took was 17 birds on Ocemberarch the 35th. There were 17 birds but I made up the date. There are a few kicking about here and there.

Carrion Crow:

Common resident. Very little migration noted nowadays. I did count 90 birds from the cliff top one day during a moment of extreme boredom in September or October? Who cares? There were 270 present on December 4th.

Starling:

Up to 1000 birds were present in the summer months. Winter roost counts (flying north to roost in Ramsgate) in November and December held 800 - 1000+ birds on a daily basis including 1600 on December 8th and 2550 on December 9th.

House Sparrow:

50+ were present within the whole recording area during the autumn. Not on Pete Forrest's Pegwell list as yet.

Tree Sparrow:

In October: 2 west on the 2nd then 3 s/west on the 13th and 1 north on the 15th.

Chaffinch:

From my own migrant observations – they were hardly even worthy of mention. I did count 50 flying west on October 13th but that's about it. Up to 200+ birds were scattered around the whole recording area in November dropping to 100+ during December.

Brambling:

A few were recorded in the autumn from September 24th. As with Chaffinches, I'd stopped going out by the time you'd expect any larger movements though by all accounts 2008 wasn't a good year for the species. The occasional sighting (1 – 3 birds) was made in the autumn and winter - up until December 10th at least.

Linnet:

30 – 50+ birds were present daily during the early autumn months. The most I recorded on vismig was 150 birds north on September 25th. There were 150+ birds hanging around the Country Park into December. Oooh now isn't that interesting?

Twite:

2007: The 9 over wintering birds dropped down to 7 by mid January. 14 were present on January 24th. In the latter winter period 6 birds were ever present in the salt marsh from November onwards.

2008: A group of 6 birds were present until March 14th at least. Extremely scarce in the late winter when none over wintered for probably the first time in recorded history? Otherwise a flock of 21 present on November 7th then 20 on the 8th, 9 on the 15th and 7 that flew west on November 20th were the only records.

Redpoll:

Most of my coverage came to a standstill before most of the Redpolls got going. I did see 1 - 20 birds passing overhead most days that I went out between late September and early October. Other bits of guff included 75 flying west on October 17th and 4 were hanging around the Country Park on November 15th.

Siskin:

Quite good numbers were seen passing through the area during the autumn. I was so happy! The peak counts were: 191 north on September 19th, 310 north on September 25th, 90 north on September 26th and 150 north on September 29th. Also 40 flew west on October 17th. Birds were seen moving north most days of any coverage between mid September and mid October.

Serin:

One flew west on May 29th (FS) and another was seen from the old hover port on July 27th. (FS)

Goldfinch:

Up to 100 were present around the Country Park during September through until December. A little autumnal visible migration was noted as follows: 80 north on September 25th, 210 north on September 26th, 115 north on September 29th and 160 north on October 6th. Another specie that's not made it onto Peter Forrest's Pegwell list unfortunately.

Greenfinch:

A common bird that's seen regularly in small numbers. That's it!

Bullfinch:

1 - 2 were seen in Stonelees during the autumn.

Hawfinch:

2007: 1 flew n/west on September 30th. (PM) I like them.

Crossbill:

14 landed in the Cypress trees in Little Cliffsend Farm on June 20th (FS) and 1 flew north on June 27th. (TS) In August: 2 west on 25th (FS) and 1 west on 28th. (FS) Then September: 2 s/west on 12th, (PM) 8 over on 24th (NL), 4 north on 25th (PM) and 1 north on 26th. (PM) I wonder if there is anyone in England whose name is Christopher Bill? I'd love to have an entry here - 4 Crossbill seen by Chris Bill. Don't worry - I'm under no illusion here - I know I'm not normal.

Reed Bunting:

At least 3 singing males (if you can call it singing?) were present in the spring. 20+ were present on some days in the autumn if anyone's interested? Have a heart will you - I feel obliged to write something here? I was so bored during the second week of December that I did a massive Reed Bunt hunt. It came to light after two consecutive 'Reed Bunt hunt's' that about 40 or so birds were present. It can't get much duller than that can it? It took me two days of stomping the entire salt marsh, both sets of reed beds and the entire country park to supply this bit for your delectation.

Snow Bunting:

2007: 1 on December 13th.

2008: 3 on January 20th (PC) and 6 on December 29th. (PM)

Yellowhammer:

Ha ha! Yellowhammers are virtually nonexistent these days - a mythical beast. I did have a couple of flyover sightings (migrants) in the autumn of 2007 but none were reported this year.

Corn Bunting:

2007: Very low numbers were present during the winter months with only 2 hanging about in January. One was heard singing near Little Cliffsend Farm on May 12th. (NL)

2008: though large flocks were seen going merrily about their business across the river on Shellness (up to about 70 or 80 birds) they were extremely scarce in the late winter period on our more 'upper class' side of the estuary. All in all 1 - 2 birds were seen on less than a dozen dates only with the peak being a rather measly 4 birds that were spooked across the river by dog walkers.

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And now the bestist bit ... **Tony Jolly Q and A** (Hoorah!!)

I arranged - at great personal cost - an exclusive interview with Tony this summer just past. His popularity is undiminished after a decade or so on the Bay of hell, so I put a few questions to our very own beloved human foghorn.

Me: "Hi Tony - good to see you again. Tell me and rest of the T.J. fans out there in Pegwell land just how you got started down on the bay? What drove you? What was the ambition behind such a fascinating groundbreaking and dare I say totally radical move into exterior Hawthorn design, hedge and fence management and exterior grass elimination?"

TJ: "Well - I used to be a plasterer an I didn't like it. It got up me nose - it got in me hair - it got every flippin where - hang on that rhymes? I'm a poet an I didn't even know it - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!! Yeah - a poet!! Not a plasterer like Dylan - ha ha HA HA HA HA - no - He's always getting plastered - know what I mean - HA HA HA HA HA HA - yeah real plastered - HA HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA. Nah - plaster that goes on walls an' ceilings. Anyway after I couldn't face plastering any longer - I fancied a new backbreaking job with long hours, little pay or hope of promotion, where I went totally unappreciated for 52 weeks of the year. The sort of work that sucks the life out of otherwise happy and enthusiastic people if ya know wot I mean? So I took the job at Pegwell as advertised in a local newspaper and bobs yer uncle 'ere I am - HA HA HA HA HA - an' I aint even got an uncle Bob - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA - I've got an uncle Jack - ha ha ha ha - HA HA HA HA HA " etc.

Me: "Yeah thanks Tony - fascinating stuff really fascinating. Regarding your legendary 'brush cutting technique' - you are 'the' world renowned farsighted visionary - an artiste with the tool - Tell me and the readers - how on earth did you fashion your legendary brush cutting technique?"

TJ: "Well I dabbled in pre 18th century neo Germanic classical bassoon cleaning for a few months but had to give up after I developed a gammy thumb, which as it happened aided the use of the brush cutter. It aint rocket science is it - - HA HA HA HA HA - nah it's just whacking it in there an' wriggling it about until the weeds 'ave gone? - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA - oh that's priceless that is ... rocket science - HA HA HA HA HA - well it aint rocket science is it - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA etc. (ed. for ages) Yeah after the bassoon accident I got inta actin', became a member of RADA and started to get into Chekov and Shakespeare. There wasn't much call for a Noddy Holder look alike fog horned mouthed ex plasterer in roles

such A Midsummer's night dream, Othello or suchlike but one day whilst hanging about outside the Royal Drury lane Theatre hoping for a break - there I was, trying to buy an hotdog from a traveling café - an' I got mistaken for Michel Caine and an' before I knew what was happening I got quickly bundled into an audition as Romeo in the local production of Romeo and Juliet. Anyway when the bit in scene 17 of act 7 came a long this bit of stuff on a balcony shouts down to me "Romeo - Romeo where for art thou Romeo?" and I had accidentally dropped me script and improvised the reply 'ere I am love down 'ere - have I got any mustard on my shirt from the hotdog I eat earlier that one can see from up yonder?" and the director blew a gasket and told me "mister Caine - you will never work for me again" and before you could say the word 'lawnmower' I was escorted to the door an' booted out! The funny thing was the other actors reckon my acting was better than Michael Caine's usual effort in the west end theatres. They said I had become 'less wooden' whatever that means?"

Me: "Yeah thanks Tony - ultra fascinating stuff - really fascinating. And then you started the job at Pegwell - would that be correct?"

TJ: "Yeah - it was about that time I met up with Pete Forrest an' eee' said 'ee could put a bit of work my way. So I did a weeks trial and landed the plumb job as Pete's right hand man. A sort of general dogsbody - it was great! Ha ha ha - brilliant! ... It was about that time I started seeing you Phil - and you started to be a kind of birding hero to me."

Me: "That's very kind of you to say so Tony."

TJ: "Yeah who was that other bloke who used to come down ... looked a bit like a woman?"

Me: "That was Francis Solly - Tony."

TJ: "Yeah that's 'im - HA HA HA HA HA - I thought 'ee was a bird - HA HA HA HA HA - - HA HA HA HA HA - yeah with 'is long hair - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA" - etc. 'Eeee used to keep 'imslef to 'imslef at first but after only 17 years he lowered himself enough and started to actually acknowledge my existence. Eees meant ta be a top birder innnee?"

Me: "No Tony he certainly isn't - but thanks for asking. On that intriguing subject of characters you've met at Pegwell during the past years - who, other than me of course - has made the biggest impact in your life?"

TJ: "Well there's bin quite a few? There was this posh geezer with loads of dosh and a mad Irish servant who used to see Vulture birds and Bittern eyes - I aint too good wiv names? Eee used to drive around in a solid silver car? My other favourite bloke was that bloke who you used to call 'chicken guts' or something...?"

Me: "I think you mean Giblet perhaps?"

TJ: "Yeah that's 'im - Giblet - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA - eee used to tell lots of pre-war children's jokes and had a hand made tin foil telescope with no glass in it that he used to make out was a real expensive one! - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA - yeah I aint sin 'im fer ages?"

Me: "No no-one has Tony - no-one has. What about your professional relationship with Pete Forrest - how did that progress during your many years of activity together?"

TJ: "Well our relationship was sort of up and down as they say ... I was always up and he was always on a downer - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA - yeah on a downer - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA - a real downer - HA HA HA HA HA - HA HA HA HA HA etc. No seriously - Pete always wanted to improve his Pegwell bird list and moaned incessantly about how he would like to pass the 50 mark. Eee got stuck on 32 species for a few years then after hearing about how he had missed out on cracking views of a Pied Wagtail in the car park that he'd walked past 77 times (ed suppressed by an ever present Franny) ee threw a wobbler at me and threatened that if I didn't start getting him a few Pegwell ticks eee was gonna start making me polish 'is 'ead every morning. Luckily the following morning he saw his first ever Pegwell Golden Plover (ed: one the resident wintering group of 7600 as it happened) and was so happy that he completely forgot about his threat and moved to Brazil."

Me: "Yeah thanks Tony - fascinating stuff really fascinating - even more fascinating than the fascinating stuff already uttered. Tell me Tony - your well into your 89th year on planet earth and even you can't go on forever unfortunately - when will you finally hang up your shovel and retire?"

TJ: "Well its funny you should mention that as I do have a date in mind. Lets just say it's in less than fifty more years?"

Me: "And what a sad day that will be. Many thanks Tony - perhaps well leave it there - fascinating absolutely fascinating"

**An interactive DVD containing the full interview on high quality (only slightly out of focus) film - including outtakes and extra footage from my absolutely fascinating interrogation of Mr. Jolly can be obtained via my e-mail address for a mere £209.36. A bargain at any price surely? For an extra 50 quid I will throw in the classic 1998 video of 'When Jolly met Solly' that gives a rare documentary insight into two of Pegwell's true characters.*

Au revour. Ed.

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An open Letter to Jolly old Johnny Hollyer esq:

(From)Phlum Tiddleton
St John's Ave,
Ramsgate,
Kent.
CT12 6JZEE

'Ello mister Hollyer,

One day (many moons ago) during a Twit spotting session at a far away place called Stodmarsh - my companion and I (Craig Sammels) spotted two Twits in the distance, moving stealthily through the marshy habitat in search of their prey - namely birds. Under the guise of visiting birdwatchers - we viewed the 'twits' from afar, before risking a closer approach. On closer examination, one was a 'Rotund Twit' (formerly known as 'Lesser Spotted painting Twit') the other, the extremely rare and long-awaited 'Wurzel Twit'. (A western race of 'Gap-toothed twit' - easily identified by it's 'Oooohh Arrr' mating call.) Well pleased with our two new Twit ticks, Craig and I excitedly cycled back to Sturry Train Station, where we pawed through the 'European Guide to Twit Spotting', just to make certain that our identifications were in fact correct. As it turned out they were indeed correct - and we also read about

how the 'Wurzel Twit' has increased its range into Northern America in recent years, which is exciting news for the Transatlantic Twit spotter. Stodmarsh was always a happy hunting ground for Twits. We had cracking views of the now extinct (or at least decreasing?) 'Painted Faced Northern Twits' (A breeding pair perhaps?) and the rather raucous and aggressive 'Long haired mouthy Twit' (*Twitus dylansanus*) – unfortunately now only found around the Thanet coast. Just one of a handful of ever decreasing Thanet endemics to be found nowadays. Incidentally – I have some inside information as to the whereabouts of a few rare gettable Twits if you're interested? Perhaps we could meet up and swap some Twit information?

1: Short-legged Dumpy Twit: (*Twitus gadgocomputerani*) Easy to see at Dumpton even in this day of decreasing Twit habitat. Extremely brash, crass and vocal and therefore, virtually impossible to miss unless its skulking in extremely short grass.

2: Hairy Twit: (*Twitus longlistucanicus*) Best viewed near the coast during early morning where it searches out moths or during evening high tides at Pegwell Bay in July and August. Otherwise it moves around Thanet at breakneck speed in search of birds, which are devoured with relish when it gets the chance. Could turn up anywhere as its range is expanding due to loss of habitat locally.

3: Canadian Painting Twit: (*Twitus beadlinanus*) Normally a rare Trans Atlantic vagrant – though seen with increasing regularity on our side of the pond in recent years. He last showed with a mate and a small recently fledged youngster, so conversely things are looking up for Canadian Painting Twit as a species. Another known consumer of moths – check out any bright lights just in case it's foraging for prey? It's always a joy to see either of the two painting Twit species. Canadian Painting Twit has the largest range of all the Twit family, being recorded in Australasia, Asia, Europe, North America, East Africa and even South America where its become a pest specie in recent years and there's even talk of culling this specie in Peru where its starting to clash with the local resident twit species?

4: Wilson's Rear Crested Twit: (*Twitus exponitailanus*) another specie that's been scared away from Thanet (where it was once a common sight) by loss of habitat and disturbance. I've not seen this twit for many years but word has it that it can seen with some regularity, scouting for prey near the mound at Grove.

5: Gible's Twit: (*Twitus woolyhaticus*) The saddest loss to the Thanet coast where it once could be heard 'gibbering' most days. A great mimic (whole George Formby routines were heard by a lucky few on occasion) I've heard whispers of it reoccurring near to its old nesting ground at a secret Margate location? Gible's Twit hasn't graced any of my Twit year lists for about three years, which is far too long – perhaps we could have a joint effort and search it out in the near future? Oh how I would love to see Gible's Twit once again before I die? It's become the pinnacle of my life's ambition.

There's even more bad news on the Thanet twit front I'm afraid old bean. The last specimen of 'Bald Short-sighted Twit' (*Twitus forrestipi slaphedicus*) was last seen frequenting Pegwell Bay in the winter of 2006, and we fear it may be lost forever? Its Sanderling like leg movements and furrowed brow were always a joy to behold. Its inability to sight its prey even in good weather, though one of its most enduring features may have contributed to its demise? A South American Sub-specie of 'Bald Short-sighted Twit' is currently undergoing DNA and behavioral study as we speak by scientists on location in the Brazilian Rainforest. It's similar to the European specie by all accounts but seems far happier in a rain forest habitat than it ever was in a European coastal locality. 'Baby faced Twit' (*Craigus twitchicana twitchicana*) hasn't shown up for the best part of two years either, but the long-range weather forecast may force it further south in a month or two? Even then 'Baby faced Twit' has become a skulking specie

as you well know and will take some rediscovering even if it does ever frequent its old haunts? A vagrant 'Baby faced Twit' turned up out of the blue on the west coast of India only last winter so the potential for a Thanet sighting is perhaps imminent? Websper Twit (*Twitus methusalanus*) has declined to point of virtual non-existence too. The last time I saw a 'Websper's' in the flesh – it looked aged, haggard and weather-beaten. Lets hope it has the energy to make its huge migration into southern Thanet in 2009? 'Grey Headed Lurking Twit' (*Twitaphilas charltonii*) showed on a few occasions this autumn just past, but before I could pin down its location to alert the Twit twitcher community it disappeared into deep cover never to emerge again. A typically brief showing for the skulking Grey Headed Lurking Twit of course.

So there you go Mister Hollyer, that's about all the cutting edge Twit info I have for the time being.

See ya ... Phil.

Since the rise of Gadgets website (www.Plannetthanet/titch/midgit.org) it must happen that people read these reports and don't know a single soul that's getting a written kicking from my well meaning sideswipes? His website has readers from all over the world (Don't ask me why? We birders must be stranger than I at first thought) and I would love to be a fly on the wall when someone clicks on one of these bird reports and starts reading them? I bet I get called a few things? All deserved of course.

And to end off this overly serious scientific document, my good German buddy Klaus would like to put in his two penneth regarding issues that soon will be revealed to all and sundry in glorious pigeon German.

Hello Ingländers ... I am Klaus being. As I have been of the saying – I have been in awe of great Fuhrer Milton for years many – with muscle unt skills of the birds unt moths without of the to be compared. He unt giant in ways many beink. Anyhow – I am seeing no Pegvell Reporten for year 2007 and am of the head scratching much?? How can this be I am saying to unt loving wife of 30 years Ingrid?? Why can the report not be with the regular like good German bird reporten!!!! 'Deutsche Birden Reporten 2007' unt available since one second after January 1st 2008!! Her answer is weak and I am thinking of the remembering as to her health after her 2004 operatic tour via U-Boat skippering by the great Wagnerian maestro conductor unt local nutter Herr Hans von Kreuzschlitzschraubenzieher from unt Munchen Grand Opera Housen. Herr Hans has big ambition is beink to sink Ingländer svinehunt spy boats from U-boat unt mission unt Ingländer channel whilst simultaneously conducting underwater full nine hour version of Wagners Ring Cycle between torpedoing Ingländer ships with adapted baton during eine slow movements. In 2004 – 20 miles off Isle of Wight whilst meine Ingrid ist half way through soprano solo extended version of 'Nymphs enter unt Valhalla' (Track 4 – CD 17 of unt Wagner Live eine Leeds) local Ingländer coast guard is warning Her Hans by unt loudspeaker to disarm or be shot upon by huge Ingländer svinehunt battle cruiser he is having with in the sea with coast guard. Herr Hans is not shutting up with the Opera or eine shooting of Ingländer Ferry unt trawler fish boaten he is imagine will be exporting spies into unt Farterland unt ignoring warning unt then is shoot by unt Ingländer battle cruiser unt sunk unt middle of Ingländer channel!! Meine beloved Ingrid is beink of the rescued whilst Her Hans is going down with unt crew in U-boat whilst singing his own Nazi lyrics to unt theme tune to Celine Dione classic 'Meine hearten vill go on'! Anyhow – meine Ingrid is not the never beink the same since unt leaving me a very worried Klaus. She is taking unt death of great conductor Herr Hans Kreuzschlitzschraubenzieher very bad unt is not feeling herself since, unt to this day has not ever sung great Wagner music again. I am rising unt saying with loud voice "Ingrid – meine beloved Ingrid – the fourth Reich will rise again unt wipe out all who get unt way of Farterland with unt great heroism. Herr Hans valiant death will be avenged unt not be in vain!!" I am even with the adding of arm gesture reminiscent of unt Fuhrer Adolf unt Munich Rally 1936 and even this is not

making her feeling with the pride of unt master race!! She unt inside herself much with sadness unt melancholy. Then with no Pegvell Reporten unt 2007 might be final to her wonderful countenance. But there is no Pegvell Reporten unt 2007 and so I cannot raise poor Ingrid's spirit. So now I am sad too very much. Fuhrer Phil unt greatest of all Fuhrers maybe but now Inglander spirit has made him sloppy like pig stinking Inglander Train service unt lazy Inglander Dustcart men. Unt Farterland everything run like - how you say 'clickwork' is it beink? Lazy pigswine Inglander ways cut no Ice unt Farterland and now I am sad too with tears unt crying for Fuhrer Phil. Please let this never ever happen again Fuhrer Phil. I am happy yes - to read Pegvell Reporten unt 2008 - hoorah for unt Fuhrer Phil!!

Hello - Klaus von Schumacher.

Contributor's initials: (thanks to all Ed)

PC = Phil Charlton **SC** = Steve Coates **NL** = Nick Lever **PM** = Sir Phil Milton OBE
SM = Simon Mount **CS** = Little Craigy Sammels **DS** = Dennis Sawyer (Aka Gadget)
FS = Francis Solly **TS** = Tony Swandale **CSy** = Chris Solly **Fd S** = Fred Solly
DW = Dylan Wrathall (57 years of age now) **IS** = I'mso Solly **VS** = Velly Solly
BR = Benjamin Ring **DC** = Dave Coppen. **YM** = Yngwie Malmsteen **MS** = Mick Shroepher*
TR = Tony Redfern. **Roly** = Roly. **IH** = Ian Hodgson **SS** = Silly Solly.

*Unsure of correct spelling. It must be a made up name surely?

No animals were harmed in the publishing of this document. A few egos were bruised however.

Profound things to remember in 2009 'The pen is mightier than the sword' and 'I can't believe he's not a lister'. Also for next year - will Slim *ever* return? Was it Gadget inside a dustbin playing R2D2 in those awful Star Wars films? Watch this space.

The **Pegwell Bay Bird Report** was created by 'pHlumPH TidDleTon productions limited' (all rights reserved and on medication) December 2008.

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Hang on... hold your horses will you - I ain't finished yet!

For maximum effect the following ditty should be sung in full voice with a well trained backing vocalist group of at least 28 strong - to the well known tune of 'Postman Pat and his black and white cat'.

Dyl's new car - Dyl's new car
Dyl's new car - Is like an old Grandpa's.
Early in the morning
when all around's still snoring
he takes it down the harbour at -
leisurely speed - cos its not too far.

Dyl's new wheels - Dyl's new wheels
Dyl's new wheels - Is hot on the heels -
of ponytail wearing
And when he thinks we're staring -
He'll gets the grumps -
Cos' that's how the old boy feels. (at his age - 57)

Dyl likes things - like Gull rings -
Oh what fun to him it brings -
And sinensis Cormorants -
and other the things that bore us -
Dyl writes up - and it makes us all whinge.

Written by F. Solly* (reproduced by kind permission - Ed.)

*Actual completely genuine and legally binding signature. Honest Guv.