

Are you ready to go on another intellectual journey of discovery?

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The Pigwell Bay Berd Riport

- For the year 2009

"It's a culinary masterpiece of avian fascination and brutal sarcasm" said F Solly Jan. 2007.

And so much better than Dylan's boring blog too!!

Nowhere near as flashy as the SBBO bird report mind you??

In this year's bumper super duper issue:

09 avian Sports review.

Shin Hi versus Klaus the super Nazi ...

Job training/dog strangler?

Exciting new bike!!

Penny Mallory and her wonderful semi decomposed face!!

Paper Talk: New specie of bird discovered at Pegwell Bay etc.

The weird and wonderful tale of Tex the wonder guitarist ... see PBR 2010

Aging has-been acquires onion farm in Grimsby.

The KTNC epic outdoors production of 'A midsummer night's dream' ... a review.

Trio of bumbling OAP's and a Scottish psychopath hunt the Great Auk.

Including extra added very little about birds!!

'Luminous wigs and their use in the field' – by J. T. A. Websper.

Crickey mate – it sounds exciting this year!!! Yes it ... ooh er ... isn't!!!

And all for the staggering low price of £34.76!! (*Not available in or out of Britain*)

Warning!! If you've never read a Pigwell Berd Riport before then you won't understand very much in it.

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Achtung!! Uv yoo have nein rid unt Pigsvill Berd Riporten you vill not be understandink ze verd unt it.

Important notice: Agoraphobics Anonymous no longer sponsors 'The Pigwell Bay Berd Riport'. A meeting was planned to discuss a new deal but the author was too frightened to attend or answer their many frantic phone calls. Never mind ... it doesn't really matter ... I say it doesn't really matter.

All will be revealed ... in good time ...

And if you're wondering ... yes he is still driving that silly little blue car.

Introduction:

Whoosh – ‘What was that?’ ‘That was your life mate!’ Yep another year has flown by – they seem to be passing quicker and quicker these days eh? Perhaps it’s my age – they say the years fly by the older you get? If it’s this bad now then what’s its going to be like in seven years time when I approach thirty?? I shudder to think? Anyway - welcome one and all to another dose of stupidity and tripe in equal measure courtesy of my new sponsor ‘Helped the Aged’ – well they were just so impressed with how much time and effort I put into including the wrinkley’s in my top class prose and written genius that Help the Aged felt the need to get in touch with me, offering a huge annual sum to – and I quote ‘help the decrepit OAP birder feel rather less useless than he actually is in reality’ as they so eloquently put it. So if you’ve got this far without falling asleep monsieur Hollyer, Laslett, Websper, Gilbert, Wrathall and Charlton etc, just be happy that you’re still included in the loop!

Anyway ... the following debased stupidity should include much of my last year of watching the area after a few half hearted years of birding due to brain bugs, morose moronism, yearning for happiness in other areas of life and my efforts at attempting a planned round the world, handmade yachting extravaganza which fell through at the last minute when my yacht - the good ship Yngwie – made from old rotted moth traps, was pinched by space pirates and carted off into Somalispac. Anyway with nothing better to do – I got stuck into the birding in 2009 and gave it a good go, pretty much watching all the way through the year. Its tough but someone’s got to do it. As usual it was a real struggle to motivate myself other than the odd bout of mania that is – in years gone by there used to be a nucleus of other local birders who’d watch the area, which was a real help with spending hours out in the field. In my later years I find bird free hours and hours of raptor watching especially difficult without a bit of support. My yoyo moody enthusiasm certainly isn’t as it used to be but then again I hardly ever get a change of scenery either so I suppose it’s to be expected? Next year I’m having the year off to study ‘leg length of dwarfs’ at Durham University for retarded ex Carp anglers. I’m already quite well read on the subject having known Gadget for about 7 or 8 years. I could well be a professor on the subject within a couple of months?? I have uncovered many fascinating facts during my studies on Dwarf leg length you know? For instance as a child I found at that our Gadgets legs were actually inverted and measured at a mind boggling minus 4 inches! His shoes were manufactured with a special ‘tube upper’ so that they could fit into the slots on his bum cheeks so as to stop his bottom rubbing on the ground. Before the invention of these shoes he used to get around by rolling around on the floor like a marble, which was fine until the football season arrived. The young Gadget was hospitalised on many occasions before the shoe invention. One autumn evening during a ‘roll’ to the local chip shop a Hedgehog even tried to mate with him!

Other than the birds that did or didn’t arrive during 2009 quite a few more important things stood out from the year – these included:

Cyber people I’ve put a face to in 2009: These included Ian Smith (not the ex PM of Rhodesia but a man who spotted a nice Hooded Crow that I would have otherwise missed), Tony Morris (thanks for the Rock Pipit photocopy you so kindly left me) and Ben Ring – who started stalking me soon after our first meet in April plus Nick Lever a man whose boredom with the local birding saw him taking up triathlon (a sport thing) just for something to do. Others included Steve Ray and Steve Ashton - both life ticks. I think that’s virtually the set now? I’ve heard of this geezer Pete the part time birder (his wording not mine) perhaps he’s the last cyber person I know of via Planetthenet but have not as yet met?? Come out Pete – wherever you are?

Weather and coverage for 2009: The coverage was on the whole pretty good – nowhere near the manic insanity of the mid 90’s/early 2000’s but a sustained effort was made ... well mainly by me, but you sort of expected that eh? We did have weather too – most days in fact. We even had a proper cold spell in January which lasted until mid month though from thereon it was back to the normal dingy dull and damp, seemingly endless dreary depressing awful birding weather until April when it eventually brightened up a bit. The spring was ‘spring like’ on occasion and inevitably led to summer, which was good for kite boarding but was ultra pants for our waderery migrating feathered friends. It could have been worse of course ... ultra mega pants! July was windy every day so summer proper didn’t arrive until August – when extra added wind, no rain and no migrant waders arrived once again – then autumn started with winds from the wrong direction and when it did eventually go round to the northeast in mid September is blew so hard for well over a week that not only was birding near

impossible but poor old Johnny Websper had to use extra added glue and extra strength nuts and bolts plus the bungee straps off his motorcycle (A 1927 Matchless 500 cc motorbike - with single cylinder and side valves if you're interested – on which he used to visit Dungeness in-between the wars) that he wrapped around his head just to keep his wig on. It didn't help too much as the first time he ventured out into the gales, his zimmer got caught up in a large gust and upended him straight into an extra deep muddy puddle which led the old duffer to catch a cold that led to swine flu (or Inglander Svinehunt flu as Klaus calls it) which then mutated into full blown wigatitus – where the scalp beneath the wig, seeing so little daylight in conjunction with the mutant virus, makes the head swells up to the point that its hard to get your head off the pillow in the mornings. Poor old Johnny eh? Back to the dreaded weather, autumn continued until early December this year ... a second cold snap came upon us in mid December when Siberian weather descended on Britain ... it was almost like the winters of my childhood, lots of snow and ice. It still wasn't a classic cold spell for birds mind you? Still it gives Solly and I something to moan about eh?

Other 'nothing to do with birds' bits of 2009 Pegwell trivia:

Early winter:

Solly went to Ethiopia early in the year with Mister Beadle and a couple of other Canadian dudes and of course I was hoping that he'd either stay in eastern Africa or perhaps that Somali Pirates might take him prisoner or something - but before we knew it he was back with us (in just a few weeks unfortunately) and for a short while after his return and as far-fetched as it may sound he actually appeared 'happy'. Well happy-ish! From then on Solly's moods were up and down for the rest of the year. Well I say 'up' as Solly doesn't do proper human 'happy' – his machine like attitude is probably best described as 'well oiled' like a rusty machine that's just had its moving parts doused in WD40. He must have been fairly 'happy' as after the Ethiopian trip I received an extended e-mail off the aforementioned hairmeister containing more than one succinct sentence as his more usual e-mails/texts normally contain when he can be bothered to actually get in touch. But surely the weirdest thing of all was that the e-mail even had a few photographs attached to it!! Now this just isn't Solly. I've known him for well over thirty years and he just doesn't do this sort of thing. To illustrate: once after a ten-day tour of Spain many moons ago, we all arrived home with many memory cards full of digital photos of the birds, insects and wonderful places we'd visited – you know like normal human beings usually do when they are away on holiday? Gadget had taken 1000's of photos, whilst Craig and I had filled every inch (giga-inch?) of our available cards, which were filled to the brim with photos. When I eventually received Solly's photos (via Gadget – I'd never had seen then if I'd have waited for Solly to send them me) there were exactly three photos. They were all virtually identical and were of the underside of a Clouded Yellow butterfly he'd seen whilst we were waiting for better views of a Crested Coot. Looking back on it – bored to death he'd devised a way to cheat those extra dull moments we all get whilst birding and started playing around with his camera. It was for such an occasion no doubt that he'd even bothered to take the camera at all? I hate to think how many one word texts I get back off him year in year out - he's turned non-elaboration into an art form has our Solly. I can imagine him reading this bit ... "Uh ... I don't know ... he's started on me again and I've only got to the second page". Don't worry Franny ... the Dylan bashing starts quite soon.

Springtime:

In March the prodigal son (young Craig) returned from a two-year enforced holiday in Cambridgeshire where he was accidentally voted the coolest man in the whole county for both years 2007 and 2008. No mean feat this as for seven consecutive years prior to Craig and Letty (His girlfriend) arriving in Cambridgeshire, the local farmer Horace Porridge had held the 'cool trophy' for his being able to drive a combine harvester one handed whilst having the archers blaring out on the combines radio at half volume. Third was Jimmy Akabussi - the eternal runner up prior to Craig's moving into the area as he was the only man in the village who had worked out how to comb his hair without help from a non-native Cambridgeshire person. He drove the local lassies wild with his grease back silver as it became known locally. Unfortunately shampoo isn't readily available in Cambridgeshire as many of the locals were experimenting with the strange fresh smelling substance by putting it in their beer and choking to death on the suds.

The new hide came under attack in April and was annihilated by brainless morons who made the understandable mistake of thinking that the glass slots were put there for target practise. Well perhaps they had noting better to do – bless them? In May Pete Forrest showed up fresh faced from sunny Brazil where he lives now as a prototype Yul Bryner impersonator. It was weird seeing Pete back at Pegwell again – his hairless head glowing in the spring Pegwell sun like the chrome bumper on a 1950's Cadillac on a sunny morning drive through the Arizona desert in one of those old road movies. Ah – it was just like the good old days for a while. He's taken up professional alcoholism by the sounds of it whilst he's been away? Then it all went pear shaped – Pete went back to Brazil and soon after, during a conversation with Tony Jolley regarding the little known fact (by him) that he didn't have a brain but in fact had a kettle* instead (we discussed that as he wasn't coping too well at the time that all he required was a new element) he hit me with news that left me bandy!! He was to retire in the autumn!! The date was set and he was actually looking forward to it!! But what about the rest of us left down this muddy hole come dog toilet without a Jolley to brighten our day with his foghorn laugh and ancient tales of plastering misery?? I mean who wouldn't be uplifted by hearing old TJ telling us how to clip the toenails of a highland cattle bull with the use of a small stick and a pair of wallpaper shears?? I don't care what sort of downer you're on at the time or how bad the birding is during any period in history you're bound to be uplifted into a sphere of elation after a conflag with mister Roy Rogers Jolley.

* Jolly saw the sense in my miraculous theory regarding the brain/kettle issue. When he admitted to having steam coming out of his ears on some frustrating occasions the penny dropped and he saw this reaction as evidence regarding my kettle/brain theory. This surely proves the theory as proven scientific fact? I don't have any electricians in my brain. No I've got one of those old chuck it on the gas things that whistles when it boils. I've also got a Cuckoo clock heart.

Summer:

The big event of the summer was the annual visit of the Beadles'. The normal eight month stint was off and they only stayed for a mere two and a half weeks so no sooner did they arrive than they disappeared back to Can 'a' dia again. They even went home Cootless* which I'm sure is Dave's main reason for coming over to old blighty so often? Can't be for the birding surely? Another summer event was the groundbreaking outdoor production of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' both produced and acted out by members of The Kent Trust. The cast included Jason Mitchell and guest star Caddy Lee Preston as Lysander and Helmia respectively and were ably backed up by a supporting cast of Tony 'gunslinger' Swandale as Thesus – Duke of Athens and ex KTNC thespian favourite Tony 'hoo ha ha' Jolley as Hippolyta, Queen of Amazons. I can imagine the scoffing going on out there in cyber land ... Jason, Tony S and Tony J ... as actors?? How preposterous!! Those off us 'in the know' so to speak, realise just how wondrous these travelling minstrels/nature conservers are at the acting game after seeing them all on many low level nature news bulletins on Countryfile, Inside Out, Crimewatch, Captain Pugwash and the like. Things didn't go to plan however as the weather wasn't conducive to an outdoor play of such enormous proportions and then Tony Jolley threw a lovey's strop when he saw the sequins on his Queen of Amazons dress were not of the right colour or tone and clashed with his knee length kaki woollen socks and Army handout boots! He wasn't Tony 'hoo ha ha' Jolley on the night more Tony 'Boo hoo hoo' Jolley! Then during the scene where Helmia and Lysander elope to the woods (Stone Lees) poor Jason got so nervous that he forgot his acting voice and went back into his normal west county brogue. Miss Preston, alarmed and insulted by Jason's lack of professionalism stormed off into the night, and already bedraggled by the fourth heavy shower of the evening, lost her footing on the dimly lit sea wall after staggering though the mud between Stone Lees and the car park and was last heard in the gloom screaming her head off somewhere out on the mud flat out near Shellness point. When dawn eventually broke the following morning and it was considered safe enough, a search party was employed but all that was found of Miss Lee Preston was a blonde wig, a 1996 Buntly annual and a single - still fluttering eyelash. The only good thing to come from the whole thing was that the future local BBC weather forecasts were improved beyond compare and Johnny Websper acquired yet another wig for his collection at the next KTNC auction and raffle. As a bystander on the night in question I was a little put out as I was awaiting the entrance of Ben Ring who was to play Francis Flute (the character not the musical instrument) and another unknown bloke who was to play the poorly named Shakespearian character namely Nick Bottom. The cast of the fairies were rounded up from the local people who hang around the toilet block I was told ... there's a joke in there somewhere but I just can't see it as I write? Unfortunately after the Lee Preston incident the event was called off.

*Not the bird but a man on a bike ... an awfully private joke.

Autumn:

In September during a non-existent Great Grey Shrike hunt on the farm fields a conversation between Dylan and I (one of the rare times I actually saw him face to face in 2009) saw him agree to an amnesty if I stopped taking the mickey out of his silly new car. Having written much of this bird report already by the time I – under duress, agreed to stop joking about his Noddymobile but only after publishing this document of tripe you are reading at this very moment in time. The hipster seemed content with this but of course will be gritting his teeth hoping that I stick to what I said. I suppose I will have to go mad and get all my ‘silly car’ material out of my system prior to the December 31st deadline? No probs. I always find Dylan a really affable chap y’know – I like the fact that I know exactly where I stand with him – the silly car incident is an example of this. I know his in your face attitude isn’t for everybody but it’s your loss and not his if you can’t get along with him as he’s a good bloke underneath all the snarling and growling is our Dyl. He’s just an ageing, miserable, mouthy, semi sozzled, half brained hippy that’s all. It’s not his fault – he was just born to tell it as it is. I realise that he goes on a bit nowadays and drives everybody up the wall – but I put that down to a mixture of age and about twenty years of Thanet/Kent birding, which is enough to drive anyone into moaning for Britain. He’s obviously going a bit nuts as he once tried to convince me that Joe Satriani was a better guitar player than Steve Vai. Ah poor old Dyl – bless his little cotton socks – he’s just going a bit demented since his sixtieth birthday that’s all.

The new KTNC warden arrived in early September. His name was and still is Ben Lewis and he was seen releasing his collection of home bred Fan Tailed Warblers onto the Country Park soon after arriving, which kept the local and not so local twitcher community happy for the duration. They’ll all have to untick this little beastie after this piece of information went they?

My old bike finally conked out in September. After a few autumn days of much peddling and little forward motion with the gears and the chain not in any sort of constant contact - I decided to let it go to the cycle path in the sky with my best wishes after five plus years of semi faithful service. With it being well into the migration period and having no other mode of transport other than for a pair of overly long legs – I had to get my head around the trauma of having to go into a real, proper shop (I don’t do shops) and buy myself a new set of wheels. This didn’t exactly go too well, as those who know me might have expected as I walked into the cycle shop, panicked and pretty much bought the first bike that sort of fitted my immense frame. The shop was full of other probably far better, more suitable bikes but me being me, as soon as it was apparent that (a) I fitted on it without my knees hitting me in the chin and (b) it went forwards when you peddled it – I had a very quick 200 metre test drive up the road before going back to the shop and saying the immortal words “I’ll take it” – paid the man and shot off home as fast as my legs would carry me. The whole ordeal lasted about five anxious filled minutes. Even on my short test run it was already apparent all was not well with the bike from hell. I had a quick click through all the gears – gears 1 – 3 were good as were gears 5,6 and 7. Gear four however was slipping a bit – I made no mention of this before I bought it, as this would have slowed down the transaction somewhat. When I got home, calmed down, got my head together and had a better look at the bike even I knew within minutes I’d bought the wrong one. The bike was for want of a better word ‘granddaddy’ – not hip and cool for an ultra dude like me anyway. The main problem however wasn’t so much its appearance but was caused by the awful noise it was making – it was just awful and amazingly irritating. The sound it made reminded me of a bout of tag team wrestling between a bunch of angry Twite versus their archenemy - a flock of Turkish Goldfinch with a Shrew with tourettes officiating as referee! Squeaking and chattering – on occasion grating and juddering – it was driving me up the wall. One of the worst things about it was that every time I would get anywhere near a pedestrian whilst riding the darn thing they immediately turned round to see what all the noise was about, making me feel really paranoid. I know what your thinking – Phil? Paranoid?? Doesn’t sound like me eh children? Anyway – not knowing what was causing the noise or even where it coming from and after about five days of nauseating brain numbing squeak filled cycling back and forth and all around Pegwell, I had a brainwave and decided to attack the bike with a spray can of WD40 – “that’ll sort it out” my idiotic brain said to my idiotic inner being, which has listened to my idiotic brain on far too many occasions throughout out my idiotic life. I furiously oiled the bike within an inch of its life – the suspension, the wheels and the bits that have no known name – every bit with a moving part ... and then on my next trip out on the bike, found it hadn’t made a ha’pence of difference! The squeak just went on and on and on and on etc. The culprit was eventually identified after over a week of squeak – and it was coming from the old granddad sprung seat. The clue was in the word ‘sprung’ in hindsight as this sort of summed up what I’d been hearing for ten days of cycling misery. In

future I will try and calm down the next time I have to buy something. I will 'try' but I've a feeling I won't succeed.

September also saw the launch of Dylan's blog from the deepest bowels of hell!! Many feathers were ruffled plus many an egotistical nostril was put out of joint and all in the name of fun and self-opinionated imaginary, avian autocracy on the hippie's part. With the arrival in September of the Fan tailed Wobbler many obscure faces from the past showed up in Pegwell land – this led to my semi annual meet with Johnny 'the wig' Websper, though not either Laslett or Hollyer unfortunately. Laslett did show but unfortunately I missed the old duffer! Thanks to this four inch bird I saw people I hadn't laid eyes on in years – John Cantello, getaway driver Martyno Wilsini, Peter Winifred Jimjam Findley ... even Brian Short – crickey he's looking haggard these days isn't he - old Brian eh? Gadget should have a name like Brian Short shouldn't he? He could hyphenate it and call himself Dennis Very-Brian-Short – one of a long line of posh triple-barrelled midgets going back to the 1640's perhaps? 2009 went Slimless as not once did I bump into Slim Splodge so there were no tales of 1950's blues guitarists called Sammy unsaturated Fats or whatever or obscure Folk bands waffled about during sessions of watching the mud flats this year just past. To rub salt in the wound old Jolley made his TV debut on Countryfile in September only days after his tear drenched departure – it was like opening an old wound. On checking the BBC website it came to light that never in the history of sound recording was the decibel meter pushed to such lengths of torture as old TJ laughed after each statement he made to Julia Bradberry, during the Q and A about the Konik ponies during a filmed stroll down at Ham Fen. Apparently 14 hours of film was cut from the three-minute piece as TJ waffled endlessly about his love of the ponies, Highland Cattle and more surprisingly 1930 Carry Grant films in-between bouts of seemingly endless ear bashing volumes of laughing.

Then in October two of the local Pegwell Bay report regulars – namely Shin Hi the Japanese Midget and Klaus the lovable Nazi had a falling out during a night out at the pub. On the night in question Shin Hi took Klaus to a boozier during its weekly Karaoke night and it was agreed that they would perform a duet over the backing track of Rolf Harris's rather wonderful old tune 'Two Little Boys'. Whilst onstage and a little over anxious about the whole event Klaus started telling Shin Hi after a quick preliminary practise run, that the correct pronunciation of the title wasn't 'two Rickle Boy' as Shin was trying to sing it. Shin Hi, already sick to the back teeth with Klaus' rather bullying attitude towards his English pronunciation, finally snapped under the pressure of being onstage and told Klaus in no uncertain terms that neither was the song sung as 'Two Leedel boyeses' as Klaus had been singing. Eventually it all came to fisticuffs and the two of them were dragged offstage by a drunken biker and his mates but not before Shin Hi had bashed Klaus' knee with so many Karate chops that it rendered him unable to go on his fundraising 'lets get the fifth Reich up and running' march as he would have done that and every other weekend. To this day they still are not on talking terms. Sad isn't it? How two lifelong friends with such differing ideologies and social backgrounds can fall out so badly over such a silly little thing is beyond me. So friends – all of us can perhaps learn a valuable lesson from the example of Shin and Klaus? If there's someone out there who you find it difficult to get along or perhaps goes about things in a different way to the way you would have done something - then try, try, try to show a little bit of empathy and fellow understanding to your compatriot out there in the bird watching fraternity. Take me for example – I would call even Francis Solly a sort of friend even though we're not only very different people with a different outlook on life and even though I hate his guts – I tolerate him. Whether the friendship is reciprocated or not I take into account his major failings – of which there are many, and overlook them. Of course its not easy even for a perfect being as myself, but – it keeps the peace and isn't that what its all about people? So the next time you find yourself getting annoyed with another birder – think about Klaus and Shin Hi and their foolish reaction to a petty little difference of opinion. We all can make this world a better place (well except for Dylan – I think he's too far gone?) and don't we owe it to each other?

NB: Currently Klaus and his mental uncle Fritz von Beefburger have gone into partnership with Dutch counterpart Hertz van Rentaal into yet another moneymaking scheme to kick-start the Fifth Reich. Shin Hi is still earning money off his clone website 'Prannitfrannit' which enables him to tour the world teaching counter culture to anyone that will listen. He's also paying Johnny Wilkinson a kings ransom to teach him how to play 'Lugby' ... so I presume his website much be doing quite well!

Late winter:

November: November was mild and there were still a trickle of common migrants showing on and off. It was memorable for me due to being driven mad by and handful of badly behaved twitchers intent on

ticking off the Fan tailed Warbler and the Pallas' by whatever means was at their disposal and very little else if memory serves correct? Dull and even duller.

December: December came in like a lamb and went out like a frozen lion in a deep freeze. Strong East to North East winds arrived mid month off the near and not too near continent and made things a little chilly lets say. The birding was decidedly average give the arctic conditions. My heart was warmed however during a dull and boring sea watch off the end of the east pier in mid month. I was staring out over the North Sea, dressed like the proverbial Michelin man, straining my eyes for any distant Divers on this particular day when I heard manic laughing approaching from out of the gloom to my left. Too embarrassed/frightened to look and potentially get any eye contact with one of the local nutters I decided to play dumb and tried to ignore the person, hoping beyond hope that he'd get bored and go away. As it happened 'it' turned out to be none other than Simon Mount playing one of his silly gags on me. A few years ago when cycling home a car pulled up alongside me with this apparent small dog yapping away at me ... this too was Simon – oh and by the way he hasn't got a dog, it was him yapping away at me. Anyway – as luck would have it and due to the rather inclement weather Simon was dressed in full bad weather regalia – the sort of thing he used to wear when birding Foreness in the old days ... i.e.: A torn, badly battered smelly looking yellow three quarter length plastic coat that I'm sure he found somewhere if memory serves correct? He was riding his old 1970's style-racing bike – many years had passed since its purchase. We said our greetings when it dawned on me and I asked him "What are you doing here?" as he obviously wasn't birding? "Oh – I'm just on my way to work" was his reply. Now this person resembling a tramp after a heavy night on the streets just doesn't have any old menial job ... oh no ... he's the bank manager of one of the local banks in Ramsgate!! You've got to love this sort of thing eh? His latest appointment certainly hasn't gone to his head has it? It's always a pleasure to see Simon – especially on an awful day in bad weather out on the east pier when no birds are moving. We discussed the chances of seeing Sprats as he said there were lots about apparently but I've been watching off that spot for nigh on twenty years or longer and still haven't got Sprat on any of my year lists (Year lists ... me having a year list ... such a profusion of irony in two very small words) and then he reeled off a couple of classic Uncle Mick (Mick Davies – the greatest and by far most interesting birder we've ever met) stories just to cheer me up even more. He's a bundle of fun is Simon. When he retires and writes his book ' The Foreness Years 1980 – 2020' it'll not only be a best seller but will split the sides of all lucky enough to read it. Imagine the mirth ... tales of a young F. Solly, Screaming Lord Kevin, Uncle Mick and the like ... wonderful stuff. Also during the so-called festive period when folk moan incessantly about the crowded shops and spend lots of money they don't have on things they don't need, which inevitably end up on some landfill site, my heart was warmed by a TV appearance of Vic and Bob on the BBC2 programme 'something for the weekend'. My love of surreal comedy – of which Vic and Bob used to be the best modern day protagonists in my humble opinion was tickled somewhat by seeing Vic and Bob doing the cookery bit on SFTW as when the resident chef asked what sort of cooking they did at home, Bob told a little tale about how obscure some of Vic's cooking actually was. My favourite was Vic's recipe for 'Swans headache' ... comedy genius and told totally off the cuff. The chef was using both cinnamon and cloves in the food he was making live on the TV ... Vic looked square into the camera and warned the viewers "Please don't do what I did and mistake cloves for gloves" also a bit later on "please when cooking from a recipe book don't use a Cinema instead of Cinnamon as I once did" ... ah, once again it was just like the good old days ... Milligoon and the Flying Circus in Vic and Bobs own Salvador Dali comedy form. The year ended with my annual Snow Wasp hunt, which yet again ended in failure. Is my information accurate or are Snow Wasps a creature of myth and legend like the Peruvian Flying Wildebeest or the 'yet to be' recorded in the area Inside Out Warbler? Like the information I received about the Sprats off the harbour during the winter I've yet to see any of these species after many years of furious research and painstaking observations. Time will tell perhaps?

2009 Pegwell sport in Technicolor:

This spring and rather annoyingly my beloved Liverpool FC very nearly almost won the League – if only El Nino (Torres) hadn't been injured for virtually the whole season? Life's full of 'if onlys' of course. Bah – humbug!! The F1 was good (shut up willya its always good!) firstly the last race of the 08 season was so dramatic that during the last lap of the last race at Interlagos (Brazil) my heart was beating so fast that at one point in played the drum solo from Deep Purples LP Made in Japan 'The Mule' note for note. Unfortunately Filipe Massa lost the championship by one single point. Then in July after Massa head butted a bit of Barrichello's car at 150 MPH, the way was left open for King Schueys' return. Unfortunately Schueys' chin had grown 2 millimetres since his retirement and would

no longer fit into the cockpit of the Ferrari – so that was off before it even got started. Luca Badoer was rushed in and he rather surprisingly got the drive due to nine years of patient loyal service test driving for Ferrari at Maranello - but proved so slow that the Ferrari mechanics fitted headlights on his car so he could finish the race during the hours of darkness, many hours after the rest of the field had finished the race. Especially apt was the fact that the graphics on the BBC coverage used 3 letter initials to show the name and position of each driver during qualifying and the race - poor old snail like Luca's abbreviated name graphic was BAD!! This year Button was running away with it then stalled then finished it off after an exciting race at Interlagos in October. I love F1 – I have done since I was a young lad and always will. If you however don't like F1 then visit the doctor asap I'm sure he'll be able to help you? In the summer Craig brought a bike as he's been threatening to for the last decade or so. He quickly acquired the name Eddie Merckx due to his amazing lack of speed whilst attempting to ride the vehicle. Incredible levels of slowness were achieved – it's any wonder he kept the darn bike upright! The laws of physics were well and truly put to the test as he puffed and panted his way backwards and forwards (moaning constantly) to and from Pegwell during the summer.

The sporting summer drew endlessly on Federer at last won 'the set' of Grand Slams after winning the French Open and by August England had somehow won the Ashes back. Don't ask me how? They got lucky I suppose? The best thing about the whole event was looking at Rickey Pontings 'bulldog chewing a wasp' face as he tried to be diplomatic and sporting about the series after the Aussies had lost. He just can't do the good loser act. Funnier still was watching Paul Collingwood applying his wooden batting style during the twenty-twenty world cup. He started getting carried away at one point and 'tried' consecutive reverse sweeps when playing a slow bowler – the first ball he miss-hit and it spooned up off his bat whacking him on the end of the nose. The second ball he missed altogether and got out LBW!!! The first ever reverse sweep LBW of all time surely? Watching him trying to play flash shots was like watching my Granny practising overhead kicks in the garden. Why are English people so naff at sport? I blame F. Solly.

The football season arrived mid August then within a jiffy the world athletics championships were upon us and we were treated to Mr Usain Bolt! If the last Olympics were not good enough he went and ran a 9.5 second 'undred metre dash' followed by a near 18 second 200 – times only ever beaten by a frantic Solly on his way to another twitch. Also from the World Athletics Championships: Real Madrid footballer Ruud Van Nistelroy broke the world pole vault record – pushing the new level up to an incredible 7.25 metres. He was later disqualified when on slow motion replay it became evident that he hadn't used the pole but used his chin as a lever to propel him to the new WR height. Other Athletics World Championship news – new 80 million pound whiz kid Ronaldo won the five metre diving gold medal (and not in the pool – boom boom!) and our own local Planetthaneteer Gadget set a new world record in the limbo dancing competition – going under 16 millimetres – not bad eh?? As a party piece he went below 20 millimetres wearing a Mexican hat and high heels, blindfolded whilst riding on a skateboard. He's unbeatable at the discipline surely? Motorcycling genius Valentino Rossi wrapped up his tenth World Championship in October. They call him the 'Goat' an acronym for Greatest Of All Time' – I can't imagine Moto GP without him nowadays?

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Incidental hippy, womble and bear tripe.

That infamous comedy show ' Bear Grylls incredible idiot' or whatever the channel 4 show is called, with each new series just gets more ridiculous, which of course makes it compulsive viewing. It's still nowhere near as funny as the amateurish Meridian News but at times it runs it extremely close. We quite often see Bear sliding down a shallow slope somewhere out in no-mans land telling us how he might die at any minute such is the daring of his activity – failing to notice the cameraman apparently risking life and limb as he films the whole over hyped demonstration right alongside Bear whilst carrying a camera! Anyway he had me in fits during this summers episodes when he was filming a piece in Siberia and he told one his outlandish tales of when the local Squirrels attacked a band of hunters tethered dog which they disembowelled! I kid you not. Is he seriously trying to tell us the viewer of this hilarious tripe that if when scaling the forests of Siberia we have to keep one eye on the local Squirrels in case of attack? During the show he trapped and killed one of these dastardly killing machines and it was much like one of our Grey Squirrels in size but a little darker coated. If I was wandering through outer Siberia in minus 20 temperatures without food and shelter the last thing I'm going to be worried about are the local Squirrels. I can imagine him in the boozier after filming with the

crew laughing as they reminisce over the ridiculous Squirrel tale. Look out for the next series where old Bear tells us how to counteract getting eaten by houseflies or beaten to death by moths. It's getting that silly – and of course I for one, wouldn't miss it for the world.

Oh and while I'm on the subject of things that go into the 'silly' category - then there's the letter I receive from Jolly old Johnny Hollyer in which he had the gall to slate the humble moth – a creature of which I am very much in love with. Of course it demanded a violent repost through the warlike medium of appallingly bad poetry:

I received a letter the other day - from a rotund wrinkly with much to say.
It filled me with dismay!!
He said that's moths were only suitable -
For feeding birds - how utterly disagreeable!!

I retorted ...

Never scoff at a moth
It's extremely rude - to call them 'Nightjar food.'
Even the man with the Hair,
agrees that nothing will compare -
with the extremely - elaborate and debonair
... and even more so if it's a migrant, rare ..
Moff!

And to finish - with a flourish ...

Of course it's only OAP nerds -
Who'd believe that moths are not far better than birds?

Once again on the subject of Dylan – he raised a point about my style of birding that got me thinking? As I say, I bumped into him in September looking for the invisible Shrike, during a day of intense Meadow Pipit migration and afterwards he wrote on his blog from hell something along the lines that he couldn't understand my haste to get down to the Country Park (where all the Mipits were moving) to watch a load of small brown blobs flying over when I could have stayed where I was and had the chance of seeing a fantastic Great Grey Shrike? This is a very understandable reaction of course. I had been whinging on that day about precious time wasted looking for the rarity when I was no doubt missing an epic day of common bird vismig by spending over an hour of the day standing in the wrong spot. I of course am not your conventional birder (a massive understatement) – and being stuck at Pegwell has made me appreciate certain things about common bird vismig that may not be obviously apparent to other birders?? You have to take into account with me that I get a nosebleed if I travel too far from Thanet. And unlike most birders when I hear of say a rare bird turning up at Dungeness, react in the same way as most birders would to news of a good bird turning up on the other side of the Atlantic. There's no way I'm going as far away as Dungeness for anything – they could re-discover the Dodo there and I still wouldn't flinch. My little world is a very narrow sphere with the boundaries pretty much set in stone between the Haine Road in Ramsgate, the Newington Estate (or to be precise - the west edge of the Newington Estate) then the southern boundary being from the Harbour at Ramsgate southwards down to Stone Lees. That's where I operate. Any bird heard of outside of this area may as well be in another continent most of the time. This autumn some bloke was shocked to hear I'd not gone for the long staying Brown Shrike in Surry – of course he wasn't aware I wouldn't go as far as Surry to see a mixed flock of Stella's Sea Eagles, Snowy Owls and Andean Condors, which had learned to ride monocycles in tandem, singing La Traviata in perfect pitch whilst throwing bundles of fifty pound notes into the assembled crowd! In recent years I've become just so stranded here that it's probably incomprehensible to the general birder what my style of birding entails these days? I don't drive which helps keep me captive and as the years go by I become less and less bothered by what's going outside of my little patch. When you only watch at one place – and you take into account my circumstances - then perhaps a record movement of Meadow Pipits can be put a little bit more into perspective? My sights are set very much lower in recent years of exclusively patch watching. It made me laugh how I'd changed over the years as when Craig was back on the scene his talk was full of the hope of rare birds, which is how I used to think many years ago when we both birded wherever the action was at the time. In Kent as a whole Craig's thinking isn't too far fetched a thought, as Kent does get a fair share of rare birds every now and then. My mental bar is set far lower now – a rarity in my world is a Lapland Bunting or a Shore Lark. I was well chuffed with a Coot about a nationally rare

bird! I've watched the area intensely over a long period of time and have still to this day only found one Pegwell Red-backed Shrike so they are much on par down here as the humble Coot. My mindset has certainly changed over the years. It was Dylan's comments that brought it to light in my own mind. A good movement of common stuff still gets me going ... well you know what I mean? Or do you?? Probably not?

Anyway ... on with the big 2009 competition:

The midget's apprentice:

The four would be apprentices were summoned before local media mogul Sir Allan Gadget at Planetthanet PLC headquarters deep in the Dumptidge nether land.

To set the scene - we find the final four hopefuls, sitting full of anticipation in the boardroom, namely – Phil Milton, François Solly, Dylan Wrathfull and little Craigy Sammels.

Twelve long weeks of trials of tribulation out in the Thanet field have led them all to the final of the 'Midgets apprentice' – a dastardly, embittered game of backbiting, counter back-biting, rivalry, accusation and mistrust full of huge over egged egos with extra added vicious rumour and innuendo. The aim of all the contestants is to be under the gaze and direction of the 'webmaster' for a whole twelve-month period to be trained within an inch of their lives into becoming Thanets next dictator of bird and insect information. Many other well meaning contestants have fallen by the wayside during the preceding twelve weeks and now the 'crème de la crème' are summoned into the final countdown at the boardroom of hell awaiting the entrance of one Sir Allan Gadget, who will inform them as to their next and final task which will eventually lead to one of the four being named as the winner. The large glass door at the front of the room burst open and in walks a tiny, over confident – breathtakingly shrewd figure of Sir Allan Gadget – the local self professed multi talented techno mogul. He sits down – stares menacingly at his terrified captive audience and opens with the line ...

“Right you ‘orrible lot – your task for the day is to get out there in the field and get me some news for my vastly over-rated website. The idea is to visit your respective patches and see as many birds as you can before six o'clock this evening, they'll be extra brownie points for photos – have you got that Solly? I expect only top quality stuff ... no rubbish – then I want you all back ‘ere to the boardroom where one of you is gonna' get fired – Now whose going to be the muppet who's going to be the whipping boy better known as team leader eh??? C'mon who is it to be?? I aint got all day!!”

FS: “Can I be team leader Sir Allan??

AG: “Nope – we had a woman last week – I want a man this time!”

FS: “But I am a man Sir Allan – well a semi android man anyway??”

AG: “Well you don't look like one? What gives you the right to be team leader you ‘orrible hairy suppressive lister??”

FS: “Well sir Allan – I'm motivated and highly professional, know all the Latin names of every plant, insect, amoeba and arachnid in the known universe and I'm not at all the semi android that I've been accused of being by the rest of the candidates in past weeks. I've been birding since I was in short hair and am far superior in every aspect of birding ability, which give me an unrivalled skill set-up to these other so called birders sir Allan?? The only reason I get slated by these lesser beings is that they all see me as a massive threat due to my vast list of moths and birds.”

AG: “Well what do the rest of you reckon? Would he – if indeed it is a he - make a good team leader??

Everyone in unison: “NO SIR ALLAN!!”

AG: “What do you reckon hippy – is old hairy here a reliable team leader for this task - you've always got something to say?”

DW: "Nah – he's not a team player. The last time he was the team leader he didn't even take up my expert advice to go to the boozers to get down to a semi sozzled anti establishment brain storming session and then he comes up with this crumbly concept about going sea watching in the gale force north easterly winds that were about on that day at the wrong location where you can't even buy a bacon sarni and was at least one whole mile from an ale house or off licence!! This upset the whole team morale in my opinion and ruined an otherwise ideal chance for a jolly at a local den of iniquity where team bonding and establishment slagging would have been high on the agenda and therefore useful to the overall task. I find him lacking in thinking outside of the box – he's too rigid and logical for my alcohol-addled brain. Oh and one other thing" ...

AG: "Shut it hippy – I won't ask you for your opinion any more you brain damaged lager lout!!"

AG: "Well what about you lanky – you never have much to say in the boardroom ... yeah you there cowering in the corner – why shouldn't I make old Francis here the TL??"

PM: "Well in my opinion Sir Allan I don't think we could respect a man with girly hair with such clean shoes and trousers? He has no respect for birds at all, referring to Buzzards as 'rubbish' – Ring Ouzels and Redstarts as 'common dross' and he once saw a rare bird of prey flying at distance and couldn't even get together the enthusiasm to even point it out to a group of other birders standing only a few feet away. The apprentice experience has taught us all he's just a self centred hardcore lister which isn't good for team morale"

AG: "I see?? Well I'm a busy man and I'm putting my foot down then – you are gonna be Team Leader then Phil – and you better do a better job of it this time than your last effort in week two when you scabbled together a dodgy list of waders and raptors! I'm far from convinced about your birding ability, mental stamina and ability as a leader so this is your last big chance to prove me wrong. Now all of ya – get out of here and go and get me some decent bird news."

All in unison: "Yes Sir Allan."

It was now eight am so after the extensive briefing by Sir Allan Gadget the team convene outside PT headquarters and Phil assigns the other three candidates their territory.

PM: "Solly you go to Foreness or what's left of it, Craig go to Ramsgate Cemetary and you Dyl why don't you go to as far away as possible so not to upset anyone - and I don't want any of your lip Mr. Wrathall – Sir Allan assigned me as team leader so please just do as I ask you big mouthed hippy. Perhaps you could check the outer edges of the Thanet recording area so as to keep out of trouble – perhaps a trip to Minnis and Shuart then a quick look at Minster marshes? There is very little chance of you seeing many people over there. Whatever you do – do not head straight down the Harbour before heading off to Deal Pier as you normally would – and don't waste precious time looking at boring gulls with rings on their legs as were on a strict time limit here? Anyway - I'm heading for Pegwell – see you back at Planetthanet HQ at eighteen hundred hours – good birding and good luck."

So they all went their merry way.

Later - back in boardroom:

His two right hand men, who had both monitored the progress of the group during the day, had joined Sir Allan Gadget in the boardroom. On his left was the right honourable Barry Child a well-respected ultra posh GP who, as well as being world renowned as having the maddest wife in all of Christendom was also an ace fighter pilot and art historian. To his right - the brains of Sir Allan Gadget's organisation – the scary Slimothy Splodge whose exploits in sub prime survey work had made him one of the most well respected entrepreneurs in the whole of Thanet. The four quivering wrecks of contestants were ushered in and the interrogation commenced - Sir Allan Gadget got the ball rolling immediately:

AG: "Well Barry – how did they get on?"

BC: Well Sir Allan - Francis saw 66 species, Craig 32, Dylan 11 and Phil failed miserably with only 6 species.

AG: "Remind me - who was the team leader?"

PM: hanging head in shame and mindless, sweaty panic – "I was team leader Sir Allan."

AG: "Was he a good team leader?"

Team: "No Sir Allan he wasn't – we hardly even saw him after leaving Planetthantet HQ and when we did his over emotional state rendered any leading of the team impossible. He wouldn't answer his phone all day for a team talk and when we did get together after the task all he did was waffle on about football, V8 engines, light gauge guitar strings and formula one!"

AG: "Phil you're an utter disgrace – what on earth went wrong?? I knew you didn't have what it takes!! So come on the rest of ya - what's your excuse - you there with the out of date long hair and big gob – what's your excuse for only seeing a measly 17 species?? C'mon – what have you got to say for yourself you big girls blouse?"

DW: Well Allan – I err mean *Sir Allan* ... the traffic between Ramsgate Harbour and Deal Pier was a joke and after arguing with 24 people before I even set my telescope up I felt peckish and went for a bacon sani in the café which led to a dry mouth and the need for alcohol and before I knew it I was sitting at a bar in Dumptidge shouting opinions at all and sundry with such gusto that hasn't been seen since the Saint Margaret's Booted Eagle saga ... about which might I add I'm completely not bothered about even though I haven't stopped going on about it for a whole decade! After a few light ales I decided to take umpteen photos of a ringed returning second year Herring Gull and before I knew it – it was nearly six o'clock and I had to get back here."

AG: "Well what on earth did you go to Ramsgate Harbour and Deal Pier for?? You know they are useless spot only good for Cormorants and Herring Gulls!! I've just had a chat with my head snitch Tim and I'm led to believe you went against your team leaders advice as he sent you to another site well away from where you eventually went."

DW: (already losing patience and says outspokenly) "Well some of us happen to like Cormorants and Herring Gulls ..."

AG: interjects: "Shut it you aging hippy has-been. And what about you (pointing towards Phil M) I'm told you went to Pegwell Bay – that's a good enough pitch and you bring me back news of only 6 very common species for my website!! What's your excuse you idiotic lanky pile of mindless irritating waffle?"

PM: "Well I'm so sorry Sir Allan – I did try my best but on arrival there were lots of nasty looking people about and I got scared and hid in the bushes just in case I had to talk to any of them – then I panicked and went home and locked myself in the bathroom for 6 hours. The six species I did record were the ones I saw from my bike as I peddled for a safe spot at breakneck speed."

AG: "What's up with you – you useless nutter? I told you to go out and get as many good bird sightings as possible and you bring me back a small list full of rubbish!! A team leader needs to put his foot down and scare the rest of this useless rabble into getting some decent bird news and you think its acceptable to bring me this list of utter garbage? Now get out the lot of ya – I'll have a chinwag with Barry and Slim here and when you get back in three of ya are gonna get fired and one of you is gonna get hired! Now get out of my sight!"

The four dejected birders leave the boardroom in shame – heads bowed low except Dylan who had to be restrained and dragged out kicking and screaming about Carbo nonsense. Within two minutes the phone rang in the lobby and they all went back in to face the music.

AG: "Right – it's an easy decision. I've had a conflag with my esteemed colleagues and feel that Phil – you're useless, unreliable, mental, inept and cowardly – you're a bit scruffy around the edges and you could do with a decent haircut. Your organisational skills are beyond belief – your inability to function as a human being is beyond comparison with any in the whole wide world and your endless mindless waffle drives me and everyone else up the wall. Your fear of things that don't exist makes it

impossible to fit you into my organisation. You're a liability ... Phil – you're fired! Craig – I'm afraid at thirteen years of age you're a little too inexperienced for the task at hand ... so regrettably Craig – you're fired!! Now ... this just leaves two of you. Dylan – if you'd just keep that big gob of yours shut for two minutes you could go a long way. You know your stuff – and your enthusiasm is admirable but I'm worried you'd upset the rest of my staff and alienate my company from the rest of the known universe with your opinionated attitude even if you're passionate in what you believe in?? Francis ... your ability is beyond compare ... there's no doubting you're a talented lad but we were all just saying - could he be trusted to part with any of the information that's knocking around in that brain of yours covered as it is with a thick mat of girly hair?? Right I've made my decision ... Dylan – you're hired!!

So the hippy won – and was granted the privilege of being Sir Allan Gadgets right hand man – a position of great authority and responsibility with a six figure salary plus extra tuition in the behind the scenes top secret stuff that goes on in a multi faceted high tech organisation. Unfortunately he was sacked at 09.12 on his first day in the office for causing a mass riot and subordination of a degree that cannot actually be put into words.

The 'actual' dull and boring **Pegwell Bay Bird Report for 2009**

Well you made it through to the birds then? Don't worry, as there's more tripe to delve into after all the boring birds. I've even written you horrible, unappreciative lot a nice little story – but that's a bit later on – you'll just have to make do with this for now.

Though hard work at times the year was a half decent one for birds on the whole with a few rarities and oddities (not including me) turning up plus a half decent bit of vismig during the autumn. The coverage was virtually continuous throughout for the first time in a few years and this time and effort turned up a few rare things like Balearic Shearwater, 2 Great White Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Black Kite, Lesser Yellowlegs, Ring Billed Gull, Alpine Swift, 2 Richard's Pipits, 2 Great Grey Shrikes and the long staying Fan Tailed Warbler. The two that got away included a Baird's Sandpiper in August and a Lesser Golden Plover that was seen on two dates in October – neither of which were quite seen well enough unfortunately. Once again on a positive note record numbers of Red-throated Divers arrived one January day whilst highs of Mediterranean Gulls, Meadow Pipits and Crossbills were seen during the year too. Other species that haven't been seen locally in years like Red-necked Grebe, Whooper Swan, Bewick's Swan, Red-legged Partridge, Coot – yes Coot ... Nightjar, Shore Lark, Pallas' Warbler, Marsh Tit, Treecreeper, Hooded Crow and Raven added a bit of excitement too.

Migrating raptors continue to jazz up an otherwise run of the mill day or two. Numbers of Buzzards are getting to the point where you almost expect them even during the autumn, which is a really recent phenomenon at Pegwell. As well as the Black Kite already mentioned 3 – 4 Ospreys, 5 Red Kites, 4 Montagu's Harriers and 4 Honey Buzzards were seen passing through. The Common Buzzard year was the second best ever (after 2008) with 83 birds seen passing through the area. How many of these birds are actual migrants is not properly understood, though many of them presumably are. Many of the sightings these days are unfortunately of semi local birds – I wish they'd clear off so I could get back on with my migrant Buzzard watching. The local Peregrines bred for the second consecutive year too, fledging at least 2 or 3 young.

Species doing badly in 2009 included Little Tern, Cuckoo, Turtle Dove and Nightingale whilst the Hirundine passage wasn't very good either and the Swift passage was appalling. Things like Willow Warbler rallied (a bit) as a passage migrant though breeding bird numbers fell to only two pairs. Some of the wintering birds like Hen Harrier, Merlin and Twite continue to disappoint and numbers of Red Breasted Mergansers and Eider had their worst year ever. The wader numbers are falling year on year as the bay gets smaller and the people using the area for recreation gets larger.

Systematic list:

Red-throated Diver/Diver Species (*regular winter visitor*)

In January: a few movements were noted during the last two weeks of the month which included a new area peak day count of 1170 birds flying south/southeast during a two and a half hour watch from the east pier on the 21st. Other southerly movements during January included 102 on the 5th, 56 on the 15th, 200 in half an hour on the 20th and 152 on the 26th. February peaks included 93 south and 20 north on 4th, 84 south and 4 north on 5th, 49 south and 9 north on 24th and 51 south on 25th. Birds were seen offshore regularly in small numbers (1 – 20 birds) between mid January and the end of February and single late birds were seen on April 13th, 16th and 20th.

One distant Diver (no doubting an unidentified Red-throat?) passed south off the harbour on September 10th. They were occasionally present offshore during November – 3 on the 3rd the highest count. Most of the late winter passage occurred during December when peaks of 132 on 14th, 242 on 15th and 266 on 21st were seen flying south off the east pier.

	JAN	FEB	MAR		OCT	NOV	DEC
South	1759	446	5		3	7	850
North	27	82	1		4	4	28

Black-Throated Diver (*scarce autumn/winter visitor*)

1 flew south on January 12th.

Great Northern Diver (*scarce winter visitor*)

1 flew south on January 5th and it (or another?) was present offshore in Pegwell on January 26th. One flew south past the east pier on December 14th.

Slavonian Grebe (*scarce winter visitor*)

1 flew south past the harbour on January 5th then another flew north on December 17th.

Little Grebe (*regular winter and occasional breeding bird?*)

Scarce in the early part of the year with two seen offshore in the bay on January 9th and single birds on the garage pools on only three dates between January and February. There was also a pair seen upriver on April 3rd and 5th. After this they could be heard calling from the unseen water reservoir of Little Cliffsend Farm between late April and August 24th so it's not impossible that they bred?

Two turned up on the garage pools on October 13th and between two to five birds were ever present until late December when the pools froze over, with 4 there on throughout November and early December with a maximum of 5 birds on November 9th. 2 more were seen in the estuary on November 27th.

Red-necked Grebe

One flew south on December 22nd.

Great Crested Grebe (*regular Sept – May*)

Good numbers were present offshore from the third week of January and into February. On January 26th in excess of 120 birds were counted offshore between the harbour and Pegwell then on February 6th there were 300+ present offshore between Pegwell and the West Cliff plus 150 were offshore in the bay on February 11th. No doubt many hundreds of birds were offshore in the recording area during this period when some sites on the Kent coast had 1000 or so birds present. 1 – 5+ were present offshore between January and May then September until the end of the year. A bit of passage was noted during December when peaks of 9 north on 17th, 12 south on 21st and 16 south on 22nd were seen passing off the east pier.

Fulmar (*regular December – August*)

20 flew south on January 5th. 5 – 10 pairs breed along the cliffs between Cliffsend and the Harbour. The only other Fulmar news I can muster up is that the odd one was till present up until early September and the occasional returning birds started to be seen again around the coast from mid November building up to peaks of around 20 birds seen off the harbour during mid December plus a light scattering around the cliffs – that's all you're getting. For more ultra exciting Fulmar news see the Pegwell Bird Report for 2010 – it'll knock you lovers of Fulmars bandy!

Manx Shearwater (*scarce passage migrant*)

One flew north on July 10th.

Balearic Shearwater (*rare passage migrant*)

One, that flew south through the main bay on July 28th was the fourth ever site record.

Gannet (*common passage migrant*)

A poor year with no decent movements noted whatsoever. The peaks were: 109 south on July 21st, 48 south on September 10th, 60 south on October 5th and 61 south on October 9th.

Monthly totals:

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
South	20	34	0	4	18	38	199	9	59	135	1	22
North	0	1	0	0	11	0	0	0	4	31	0	0

Cormorant (*non breeding resident*)

Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
11	c15	10	20	20+	12+	17	40	35	18	31	c.20

Shag (*annual winter visitor/passage migrant*)

They were scarce in the early part of the year – only one was recorded on February 3rd. 2 were present in the harbour on October 10th then 1 – 3 birds were seen regularly around the harbour throughout late November and December. A minimum of 4 birds were seen – 3 first winters and at least 1 adult. Three were present in the inner harbour on November 28th.

Grey Heron (*common non breeding resident/passage migrant*)

Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
4	4	3	4+	3	5+	4	6	6	3	4	

Great White Egret (*rare migrant*)

One flew west over the country park on April 3rd. This was the third area record after single birds on 17th March 1998 and 22nd August 2003. Another flew south eventually landing in the creek on the east side of the river Stour on July 10th.

Little Egret (*common non breeding resident/passage migrant*)

They were scarce during the early winter as usual when only 1 – 3 birds showed on 8 dates all through January and February. Though a bit more regularly seen in March, birds were not present daily until around April - Frank saw 5 during the first week, which was the annual peak up till then with numbers continuing to build during late spring and summer.

The summer/autumn numbers were quite low by comparison with recent years perhaps due to the dry summer and the lack of any water in the garage pools? The peak of 47 birds occurred on August 20th.

Monthly peak day counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
3	1	2	7	11	14	25	47	28	22	9	7

Glossy Ibis (*rare vagrant*)

One flew north then south on October 8th. This was the second record of this species in the area after one, which spent an afternoon in the general area on October 27th 2001.

Spoonbill (*scarce but annual visitor*)

A juvenile bird was present on March 24th with probably the same bird seen the previous day by Sid and Penny. Others were present on April 16th and June 12th.

Mute Swan (*irregular visitor*)

3 flew west on January 21st, 1 was present on April 10th, 1 flew n/west on September 9th, 15 flew south on September 20th, 2 on October 18th and 1 on November 2nd.

Bewick's Swan

Three (2 adults and a juvenile) spent the afternoon of December 11th sleeping out on the mud flat. These were the first site records since November 2006.

Whooper Swan (*scarce winter visitor*)

3 flew s/east offshore on February 6th. This was the first area record since December 2004.

Brent Goose (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

During the early winter period 5 – 10+ birds were present most days. Spring passage was noted from early February and included peaks during February of: 77 on 23rd, 84 on 24th, 126 on 26th and 300+ flew north on 28th. Also 40 flew north on March 12th, 34 were present on April 3rd and 47 were present on April 17th. One bird was ever present throughout the spring/summer period and was joined by two more on the rather strange date of June 5th.

Returning birds started to re-appear on September 16th. Most of the autumn passage occurred between mid and late October the peaks being: 73 present on 8th, 100 present and 1045 south on 9th, 779 north on 12th, 100 present and 120 north on 13th, 250 present and 70 south on 14th, 42 present and 65 south on 15th, 53 present, 49 north and 48 west on 16th then 49 present, 50 north and 4 south on 17th. Occasional small arrivals/passage was observed during November and December though as is usual very few birds overwintered. The only other influxes worthy of mention during the latter part of the year were 200+ birds on November 9th and 118 on December 18th.

Monthly peak counts of birds present were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
29	90+	20	30+	1	3	-	-	10	250	200	

Pale Bellied Brent (*B.hrota*) which is the Greenland/Svalbard breeding version of our normal Siberian dark bellied visiting species was present on April 25th. This was the first area record of the subspecies since the winter of 2003. Other single pale-bellied birds were seen on October 6th, 7th and 10th.

Black Brant (*B.nigricans*) An adult - the vagrant North American race of our common or garden Brent's was present offshore on November 1st. This was the fifth area record after single birds seen during the winters of 1987, 2001, 2002 and 2008.

White-fronted Goose (*annual passage migrant/winter visitor*)

41 flew north on January 3rd, 22 southeast on January 21st and 5 southeast on January 30th. During the late winter 3 flew west on November 9th.

Bean Goose (*scarce but increasing winter visitor*)

3 flew north on January 3rd and there was also one present upriver on the same date. After this a flock of 11 that were present for a while across at Sandwich were seen in Pegwell on February 21st and 26th.

Pink-footed Goose (*scarce passage migrant/winter visitor*)

A flock of 18 (or 19?) flew s/east on October 8th, 4 flew south on October 9th, 1 east along the cliff top on October 13th then 19 north east on October 14th.

Greylag Goose (*occasional visitor*)

A flock of 12 of the form 'rubrisrostris' flew south through the Bay on January 30th. This was only the third area record for these wild Greylags in the past 20 years or so.

January: 40 n/west on 1st, 17 on 9th and 12 south on 13th. *February:* 21 south on 23rd. *March:* 10 north on 17th. *April:* 4 on 4th, 2 west on 10th, 7 on 21st and 2 on 22nd. *May:* 2 were present on a few dates plus a pair with 4 young showed upriver on the 12th. *August:* 2 n/west on 4th and 4 north on 14th. *September:* singles on 6th, 7th and 15th. *October:* 3 north on 14th.

Canada Goose (*irregular/scarce visitor*)

1 flew north on June 8th and 22 were present on and off between September 6th and 15th. Another single bird was present on October 6th. Another group of 19 birds were present in the bay on 7th and 10th.

Shelduck (*breeding resident/passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Early winter numbers ranged between 20 and 61 birds daily. An influx occurred in the first week of April when there were 122 present on the 4th. After this up to 20 freshly fledged juveniles were present in two groups from early June onwards and a peak of 42 fully-grown juvenile birds were present on August 10th.

The rather poor numbers of the early winter were reflected during late winter too. Adult birds started to re-appear in numbers from the third week of September but not one single three-figure count occurred all winter. Little bits of passage did occur though 25 that flew north on November 11th was the very poor peak count. Peak numbers of birds present were 81 on September 20th and 82 on October 8th.

Peak monthly Shelduck counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
61	65	38	122	103	66+	24	c. 50	81	82	23	68

Mallard (*resident/passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
165	90	8	10	10	71	8	14	160	160	173	220

Gadwall (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

During the cold snap at the end of the year a goodly number of 46 birds were seen on December 15th.

Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
8	8	1	6	4	-	-	6	5	3	7	46

Pintail (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Little peaks of Pintail activity were noted during January with a half decent 26 present on the 14th and 16 on the 31st. Nick Lever spotted a very early or very late individual on June 7th.

Regular during October with 1 – 7 present on 6 dates with 13 birds on 12th. There were also 11 present on December 18th.

Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
26	3	2	1	-	1	-	-	5	13	5	11

Shoveler (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
13	22	1	8	-	-	-	12	8	1	1	14

Wigeon (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

During the early part of the year fairly average numbers of birds were present, peaking at around 400 birds on January 21st. They were present throughout January and February with most of the wintering birds clearing out by 1st week of March. The last ones showed in dribs and drabs until April 18th.

Autumn birds from September 7th with notable influxes during October of 115 on 8th, 500+ on 12th, 215 on 13th then 200 present and 200+ south on 14th. Also on November 9th numbers suddenly jumped from around 200 to 450 birds. The cold spell during December encouraged a bit of Wigeon activity – namely 640 on 16th and 740 on the 18th.

Peak month Wigeon counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
400	360	19	6	-	-	-	-	170	500+	450	740

Teal (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Good numbers were present offshore during January when 100 - 200 birds were present on a near daily basis due to the colder snap we were enjoying back then. Of note during January were: 253 on 13th, 290 on 14th, 260 on 17th and 420+ on the 30th. Slightly lower numbers occurred during February with peaks of 180 on 8th, 180 on 11th, 200+ on 15th and 160 on 16th.

Influxes of birds started to arrive throughout September until the end of the year. The best arrivals were 106 on September 30th and 125 on October 12th then in December: 125 on the 15th and 220 on the 16th.

Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
420	200+	9	28	0	3	1	23	105	125	80	220

Garganey (*irregular passage migrant*)

2 were offshore on April 6th.

Pochard (*irregular winter visitor*)

Singles were seen offshore on January 9th and February 17th.

Tufted Duck (*irregular winter visitor*)

A drake was on the garage pool on May 15th and a female/juvenile flew south over the mud on August 14th. In the autumn/late winter period: 1 was present on October 16th and 3 flew north on December 16th.

Scaup (*scarce passage migrant/winter visitor*)

1 flew north on October 16th. Incredibly this was the first area record since December 2004.

Eider (*declining winter visitor/passage migrant*)

Only 2 birds were present between January and March with a single bird present throughout April until May 2nd. A few were seen passing offshore during the early winter when 3 flew north on January the 1st then in February 4 flew north on 5th, 1 south on 26th and 6 south on 28th.

The late winter period was truly awful for Eiders. The only records being 27 flying north on November 9th, 2 north on December 18th, 1 south on December 21st and 1 present on December 30th.

Common Scoter (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

The peak counts were in *January*: 50 flew south on the 21st and 33 south on the 26th. *February*: 45 north on 6th. *March*: 30 south on 15th. *May*: 22 south on 20th. *July*: 20 south on 22nd. *August*: 40 flew north on 12th then 18 south on 14th. *September*: 20 south on 9th. *October*: 55 south on 14th then 42 north and 20 south on 16th. *December*: 60 south on 16th.

Monthly totals:

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
South	91	0	30	9	29	2	21	18	20	76	1	79
North	8	57	0	6	13	0	0	40	8	47	0	7

Velvet Scoter (*scarce passage migrant/winter visitor*)

1 flew south past the harbour on January 5th.

Goldeneye (*irregular passage migrant/winter visitor*)

2 flew south on January 2nd and a drake was present offshore on February 6th. Also in February two were seen offshore on the 24th and 26th. The only other records were 1 on October 16th, 1 south on December 15th and 1 north on December 21st.

Goosander (*scarce passage migrant/winter visitor*)

2 were present offshore on January 9th and 2 flew south offshore on January 31st.

Red-breasted Merganser (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

January: 2 flew south on 5th. *February*: 2 south on 4th and 24th. *March*: 2 on 16th, 1 on 24th, 1 on 25th and 2 on 31st. *April*: 1 on 7th, 5 on 17th, 1 on 18th and 1 on 20th. *September*: 1 on 10th. *October*: 2 south on 12th and 1 present on 16th. *November*: 1 on 2nd. *December*: 1 north on 14th.

Osprey (*scarce passage migrant*)

One that was seen flying over my estate was later seen at Pegwell on March 12th. A bird was later reported on March 11th too with presumably the same bird seen flying towards Pegwell over Ramsgate Town on the same date? A second/third bird flew in off the sea and high west on March 30th. Another had a good fly around the bay on May 28th before getting chased off to the south by a pursuing bunch of Oystercatchers in all out attack mode.

Red Kite (*scarce but increasing passage migrant/wanderer*)

Singles flew n/west on February 26th, west over the Country Park on March 2nd with another west (seen from Newington) on March 8th. During the autumn singles flew north on September 25th and October 13th.

Black Kite (*rare passage migrant*)

One flew west into Pegwell territory from the south then n/west inland on April 7th. This was the seventh area record.

Hen Harrier (*winter visitor/passage migrant*)

Early winter: singles were seen on 15 dates between January and March. 1 migrant flew north on March 5th and a ringtail was present on April 25th.

A ringtail, seen flying south on September 30th was the only record of the entire autumn/late winter period.

Montagu's Harrier (*scarce though annual passage migrant*)

A ringtail was seen on May 8th. Other ringtails flew north on May 15th then Scott saw another on May 25th. During August an adult female was seen quartering the marsh on the evenings of the 15th and 16th.

Marsh Harrier (*passage migrant/increasing summer and winter visitor. Breeds nearby?*)

During the early winter up to three birds were seen in the area during January and February. 1 – 3 were also seen displaying west of the country park from February 23rd into May with probably 2 pairs seen displaying in that same general area - up to 5 birds being involved.

Spring migrants in *March*: singles flew north on 5th, 16th, and 18th then 2 flew in off the sea (then west inland) on 27th and another went north on the 30th. *April*: 2 north on 7th and 3 north on 22nd. *May*: 1 north on 14th, 1 s/east on 15th and 1 west on 24th.

1 on July 8th and 2 juveniles were seen on July 30th. Others included 2 on August 14th and 27th, 1 on September 18th and 2 on September 22nd.

A few autumn migrants were seen passing through with 2 north on August 10th, 1 north on August 17th, 5 s/west on September 24th, 1 s/west on September 25th, 1 s/west on September 26th, 1 south on September 28th and 1 south on September 30th. Also in October: 1 north on 17th, 1 s/east on 19th and 2 n/west on 29th. Singles were seen on 4 dates between November 9th and December 16th.

Common Buzzard (*increasing wanderer/passage migrant*)

The over wintering bird (present since September 08) was still kicking about until January 11th. During February single wandering/early migrant birds were seen on 26th and 27th. With the exact status of local Buzzards not fully understood as yet all records are written as seen. The recent advent of birds being resident on the outskirts or even within Thanet just confuses the issue even more than it ever used to do, which drives me barmy at times. Many of the bird passing through between mid March and April then September and October would most probably be migrants?

Spring: 1 north on February 28th. During *March*: 1 south on 2nd, 1 west and 2 south on 15th, 7 north and 2 west on 16th, 2 n/west on 18th, 1 north on 20th, 2 north and 2 n/west on 21st, 1 south, 1 west and 2 s/west on 22nd, 1 south on 27th, 1 south on 29th and 2 west on 30th. *April*: 3 s/west on 7th and 1 n/west on 21st.

Autumn: in *September*: 2 south on 8th, 1 east on 19th, 1 south on 22nd, 36+ birds flew s/west and n/west on the 24th, 1 n/west on 25th, 4 n/west on 26th, 1 west on the 28th then 1 s/west and 3 loitering on 30th. *October*: 2 flew south and another single was circling inland on 13th and further singles were seen on 14th and 28th. Another was seen on December 10th.

Honey Buzzard (*scarce but increasing passage migrant*)

One was seen circling inland on May 21st, a flyover was reported on May 22nd and an adult was seen flying south into the area on July 16th. Another flew s/west after circling around inland for a few minutes on September 26th.

Sparrowhawk

Up to 4 were seen during the early winter and a few pairs could be seen displaying around the area, as is the norm these days. Obvious migrants were scarce during spring due to all the local birds but low numbers were recorded on occasion from mid March until early June. 4 flew north on March 20th, 3 north on March 30th and 4 north on April 20th the most obvious examples though others were no doubt overlooked.

Little bits of obvious migration were noted during the autumn – 9 north on September 22nd, 6 north on September 24th plus 6 north and 4 west on October 15th the best days. To be quite honest I can't be bothered following every Sparrowhawk that flies through so obviously these counts will be the thin end of the wedge rather than reflecting what migration actually goes on. 1 – 4+ birds were present on a daily basis.

Kestrel

4 - 6 birds were present pretty much throughout the year. I think there were two breeding pairs one on the cliff top and another in the mud cliff of the old hover port. No obvious migration was seen this year.

Hobby (*summer visitor*)

The first bird was seen on April 22nd with numbers increasing throughout May when birds were noted on 10 dates including 3 on 14th and 3+ on 21st. They were seen on and off in small numbers (1 – 3+) fairly regularly until virtually the end of September, with the last record on October 9th. A ridiculously late bird flew east on October 27th.

Peregrine Falcon (*resident*)

The resident pair showed throughout the year displaying between late February and the 2nd week of April. One of 2008's Juvenile birds was still present until March 11th. Successful breeding took place at the adjacent power station for the second successive year. 2 newly fledged juveniles were seen from June 22nd. Others were occasionally seen passing through the area.

Lanner type Falcon:

A largish falcon present on May 15th was thought to be a Lanner.

Merlin (*winter visitor/passage migrant*)

In the early part of the year singles were seen on only 13 dates until April 9th. During the autumn months they were recorded on 7 dates from September 22nd through October then 1 – 2 were seen most days throughout November and December.

Grey Partridge (*resident*)

2 - 3 breeding pairs this year - all present around the farm area. 20 were present in January then other counts included 21 on August 19th and 30+ birds were hanging around the farm fields/paddocks during the autumn months. The occasional birds were also seen on the hover port, it would seem that sightings on the country park these days are things of the past?

Red-legged Partridge (*waderer*)

Nick Lever found one in the sunken garden on April 6th. This was the first record since Slim's enigmatic bird in March 2005. In true 'bus' fashion another was seen through the fence of Stone Lees feeding on Pfizers playing field between May 3rd and 14th.

Pheasant

At least 5 males and numerous females were seen during the year - one of the male birds was frequenting the farm, which is unusual for the area. Most birds are usually to be seen around the country park or occasionally in Stone Lees. Regular family parties were run into every now and then until early autumn.

Water Rail (*mainly a winter visitor/may breed occasionally?*)

Numbers have dropped considerably in recent years. During January a few records occurred around the country park plus they could be occasionally heard calling from the salt marsh. With over wintering birds normally leaving the area by March or at latest April a bird that was seen on the main path of the country park on May 13th would be considered an unusual record. Its quite possible that the reed beds up near the hover port may hold birds as they get reported on occasion during the spring from there? Late winter numbers were low with birds being heard on occasion calling from the salt marsh around the new and old hide site.

Coot (local scarcity!!)

A great rarity in the area, one flew south into the bay on May 29th. The first record since long ago – way back when Woolly Mammoths walked the earth and Johnny Websper had his own hair and teeth.

Moorhen

Quite a few hang around the farm reservoir all year, though now the bushes have been left to grow up to above head height its now impossible to see how many are in there. A pair took up residence on the garage pool in March/April and other birds could be heard calling from the ditch between the cycle path and the main road in June.

Oystercatcher (*passage migrant/winter visitor/some over summer*)

One with orange legs and bill was seen on January 1st ... oh hang on a minute ... Anyway - 90+ individuals over summered – that's all your getting.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
720	510	370	180	151	98	230	870	800	690	690	620

Avocet (*irregular visitor/passage migrant*)

January: singles on 11th and 14th. *February:* 4 on 23rd and 3 on 25th. *March:* 2 on 12th, 4 on 17th, 1 on 18th, 11 on 19th, 2 on 21st, 4 on 22nd, 1 on 23rd and 1 on 30th. *April:* 1 on 4th, 7 on 17th, 1 on 18th, 1 on 21st, 1 on 25th, 1 on 26th and 2 on 30th. *May:* 4 on 12th, 5 on 14th, 4 on 20th and 2 on 26th. *June:* 1 on 5th. *July:* 6 on 9th and 1 on 14th. *August:* Zilch! *September:* 1 on 7th, 2 on 9th, 3 on 10th, 1 on 11th, 2 on 13th, 1 on 17th, 3 on 19th and 1 on 28th. *October:* 11 on 12th, 7 on 14th, 1 on 16th and 4 on 17th. *December:* 1 on 14th, 28 on 18th and 4 on 31st.

Kentish Plover (*scarce but annual passage migrant*)

Single males were present on April 17th and May 3rd then a female/juvenile bird was present on August 27th.

Little-Ringed Plover (*passage migrant*)

March: 1 on 30th. *April:* 2 south on 25th. *May:* 1 south on 13th and 2 on 15th. *June:* 1 on 15th. *July:* 3 on 7th. *August:* 2 on 4th and 1 on 11th.

Ringed Plover (*passage migrant/winter visitor/breeds*)

A pair was seen nest building on the hover pad on March 20th – and laid 4 eggs. I wonder to what fate they succumbed? Spattering by a motorcyclist or go-kart no doubt? Perhaps even shot at by the resident Rambo impersonator?

Migrants in May included: 95 on 12th, 60 on 13th, 420 on 14th, 240 on 15th, 75 on 16th and 50 on 21st.

A steady trickle of autumn arrivals started during August with peaks of 215 on August 27th, 80 on September 6th, 80 on September 9th, 120 on September 15th and 150 on September 16th.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
28	32	16	16	420	11	1	215	150	22	4	7

Grey Plover (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Migrants in May included: 52 on 14th and 70+ on 15th – the autumn migration was a non-event. Numbers on the mud flat built to three figures by October 19th.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
210	269	135	31	70	5	2	14	27	116	116	160

Golden Plover (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Cold weather and disturbance kept numbers low during January and all of the wintering birds had left by end on February. Autumn birds started to arrive from July 29th with larger flocks not until the second week of October.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2200	3140	11	2	-	-	1	10	650	1480	2108	3150

Lesser Golden Plover sp.

A greyish bird, showing a dark under wing in flight showed amongst some other Golden Plovers on October 1st and 5th.

Lapwing (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
6000+	8000+	42	6	2	2	-	-	220	c.3000	3500	10,000

Knot (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

The spring migrant's peaks were 36 on April 17th, 105 on May 14th and 260 on May 15th. Autumn passage during August and September was awful, the best counts being: 18 on August 25th, 33 on September 13th and 21 on September 17th.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
310	475	280	36	260	3	2	18	33	125	235	420

Sanderling (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Migrants were generally scarce though in May there were 280 on 14th and 160 on 15th. The autumn migration was almost non-existent when a rather awful peak of only 27 that showed their faces on September 13th. The autumn of 2009 went go down as a classic wader passage in the annals of Pegwell history lets say?

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
74	88	131	82	280	3	2	9	27	54	76	53

Purple Sandpiper (*winter visitor*)

One was on the western under cliff on January 12th and the hippy had two more there on February 20th. In December a flock of ten flew south past the east pier on the 7th and another single was seen on the 9th.

Turnstone (*passage migrant/winter visitor – a few over summer*)

High tide roost counts are taken on a monthly basis from the Cliffsend rocks/beach where numbers continue to decrease no doubt due in part to constant disturbance: Spring migrants started to arrive from mid April – the peaks were 21 on May 13th and 16 on May 14th.

2 arrived on June 28th then in July - around 40 were seen on the high tide roost mid month plus occasional migrants from 8th.

Monthly peak roost counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY		AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
115	80	90	100+	21		c. 60	c. 40	60+	107	120

Dunlin (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

During the spring many small arrivals were noted between April and mid May which included during April: 350 on 17th, 60 on 18th and 50 on 20th then in May: 65 on 12th, 100+ on 13th, 60 on 14th and 80 on 15th.

September: migrants: 260 on 6th, 300 on 7th, 240 on 9th and 270 on 16th. October: 940 on 14th.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1310	1060	820	350	100	4	50	170	300	940	740	1140

Curlew Sandpiper (*regular passage migrant - scarce in spring*)

Always scarce in the spring 2 on May 15th was the only record. Another very poor autumn passage occurred with - *July*: singles on 21st and 31st. *August*: 2 on 1st, 2 on 4th, 1 on 5th, 6 on 9th, 3 on 14th, 1 on 20th and 3 (the first arrival of juveniles) on 27th. *September*: 3 on 6th, 1 on 7th and 3 on 15th.

Little Stint (*passage migrant*)

A very poor year for little Stints with in *May*: 1 on 14th. *August*: 3 on 1st, 2 on 14th and 1 on 24th. *September*: 2 on 9th and 1 on 15th. *October*: 1 on 18th.

Temminck's Stint (*scarce passage migrant*)

1 on May 2nd.

Wood Sandpiper (*scarce but usually annual passage migrant*)

A better than average showing with 2 on May 14th, 1 on July 9th then 1 west on August 2nd and 2 were seen aimlessly flying about on August 7th.

Green Sandpiper (*regular passage migrant*)

April: 3 on 17th, 1 on 22nd and 1 on 24th. *May*: singles on 2nd and 28th. *June*: singles on 8th and 28th. *July*: 1 on 30th. *August*: 3 on 2nd, 1 on 4th, 1 on 13th, 5 on 14th, 1 on 17th and 1 on 19th. *September*: singles on 21st and 26th.

Common Sandpiper (*regular passage migrant*)

Spring: recorded on eight dates from April 17th until May 15th. The peak counts all occurred during May with – 7 on 13th, 11+ on 14th and 8 on 15th.

Autumn: recorded on 22 dates from July 10th until August 28th. The peak counts during August were – 20 on 11th and 18 on 13th.

Redshank (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Arrivals during May included: 40 on 14th and 130 on 15th. The peak autumn arrival was a rather lowly 220 birds on August 27th.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
70	76	125	170	130	20	80	220	180	170	130	c.100

Lesser Yellowlegs (*very rare Trans Atlantic vagrant*)

One was present on April 25th. This was the second or possibly third Pegwell record after one on September 19th 1943 and another probable in 1980's.

Spotted Redshank (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Wintering birds are much harder to see these days 1 – 2 were seen on only 6 dates between January and April 3rd then 1 on November 3rd was the only late winter record.

Single autumn migrants were noted on June 15th, July 14th and 23rd, August 25th then September 21st and 26th.

Greenshank (*common passage migrant*)

Spring: They were seen from April 6th with a light passage thereafter. The peaks were during April - 14 on 17th and 20 on 25th then 13 on May 15th.

Autumn: 2 singles were seen in late June with birds showing throughout summer until early September. Rather pathetic numbers showed during the autumn passage with 19 on August 19th being the only half decent arrival. Numbers were particularly awful during September when only single birds were seen on three dates all month!! The last one seen was on October 3rd.

Black-tailed Godwit (*increasing passage migrant and occasional winter visitor*)

February: 1 on 26th. March: 1 on 8th, 8 on 24th and 1 on 25th. April: 3 on 6th, 1 on 7th, 3 on 8th, 1 on 9th, 1 on 10th, 10 on 24th and 1 on 25th. May: 2 on 2nd, 11 on 3rd, 1 on 6th, 3 on 16th and 2 on 23rd. June: 1 on 7th. July: 2 on 22nd, 1 on 23rd, 1 on 28th and 1 on 30th. August: 1 on 10th, 25 on 11th, 6 on 12th, 4 on 13th, 8 on 14th, 3 on 16th, 41 on 17th and 2 on 19th. September: 1 on 18th. October: singles on 19th, 21st and 26th. November: singles on 4th and 11th. December: 1 on 9th.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
0	1	8	10	11	1	2	41	1	1	1	1

Bar-tailed Godwit (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Early winter numbers peaked at 220 birds on January 2nd. The peak spring days of migration were in April: 53 on 17th, 32 on 23rd, 48 on 24th and 88 on 25th then in May: 42 on 4th and 76 on 13th.

The tiniest speck of migration was just about apparent from July 7th though with not even one double figure count all autumn it seems pointless writing anything here.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
220	199	70	88	76	2	3	5	5	18	77	131

Curlew (*passage migrant/winter visitor/some over summer*)

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
235	540	340	230	18	106	520	510	550	290	285	320

Whimbrel (*common passage migrant*)

Spring: Recorded between March 27th when a flock of 6 flew in off the sea on March 27th and were seen with great regularity until June 5th. April: 1 – 10 birds were regular all month including 48 on 16th, 43 on 17th and 17 on 20th and May: regular throughout – 15 on 2nd, 30 on 4th, 39 on 6th, 23 on 12th, 17 on 14th and 32 on 15th.

Autumn: returning birds from June 28th with the last record of one seen on September 30th. The autumn passage was light with rather lowly peak counts of: July: 15 on 29th, 18 on 30th and 35+ on 31st then August: 15 on 1st.

Woodcock (*annual winter visitor/passage migrant*)

During January 1 – 2 birds were recorded on 6 dates on mostly around the Country Park. In February further singles were seen on the 4th and 14th.

October: 1 on 13th and 4 on 31st. Others were seen arriving by people watching for the Fantail during late October and early November. One flew in off on December 18th.

Snipe (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Early winter numbers fell heavily after the cold snap in January and never recovered with 35 on January 26th being the only post cold weather well into doubles figure count. Earlier on in the month there had been up to 60 birds present on the 1st.

Returning birds were seen from August 14th. Poor numbers were recorded during the later winter – the peak count being of 41 birds on November 20th.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
60	10+	1+	1	-	-	-	14	3	12	41	20

Jack Snipe (*mainly a regular winter visitor to the area*)

7+ were using (good wording eh Tony?) the Stone Lees section of salt marsh on January 7th. Also 1 on October 7th, 2 on October 31st and 1 on December 21st.

Baird's Sandpiper

A small attenuated Sandpiper, lacking a prominent supercillium and white rump was seen on August 2nd. I can only presume it to have been a Baird's though views were reasonably distant. I'm fairly happy it was one – if you can be 'fairly' happy about such a rare bird? Structurally the bird looked pretty good too. Me see one before – hee hee. Don't care ... hee hee.

Ruff (*annual passage migrant – occasional winter visitor*)

Another poor year for Ruff I'm afraid - *March*: 3 on 21st. *April*: 1 on 16th. *August*: 1 on 2nd, 1 on 16th, 2 on 17th and 1 on 19th. *September*: 1 on 9th.

Arctic Skua (*passage migrant*)

1 flew south on July 17th, 1 was present offshore on August 27th then sea watching off the pier in September turned up 4 south on the 9th and 8 south on the 10th. Another was present offshore on September 18th. In October 2 flew south on the 9th and 1 south on 10th.

Great Skua (*passage migrant*)

September: singles flew south on 9th and 11th. *October*: 1 flew west inland (which is most odd?) on 1st then singles flew south on 5th and 9th. *December*: 1 north on 14th and 1 flew south on the 17th.

Black-headed Gull

Lots were seen migrating west and n/west from late February and as I was so bored at that time of the year I decided to take a few counts. During March 1000+ flew n/west on the 5th and 500 n/west on 15th being the best days. Many other movements were ignored of course.

Adults and Juveniles started to re-appear in numbers from late June.

peak counts were:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1000	2600	1000+	220	200	500	3500	5500	4000	3000+	1000+	n/c

Common Gull

peak counts were:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1000	960	200	35	5	5	35	150	150	450	1500	1600

Ring-billed Gull:

A 1st winter was present on March 14th. The fifth ever site record.

Mediterranean Gull

January: 1 on 15th. *March*: 2 on 20th. *April*: 2 east on 6th, 2 on 8th and 3 on 18th. *May*: 2 on 5th. *June*: 1 on ... don't know? *July/August*: see below.

An unprecedented arrival occurred during July with 1 – 8 birds almost daily from the 5th and peaks of 25+ birds on 29th, 55 on 30th and 56 on 31st. Lots of these birds lingered into August when they were noted on 16 dates including 32 on 1st, 20 on 2nd, 15 on 3rd and 9 on 16th. These are a truly staggering array of records for Pegwell even though large numbers occur both in north Kent and as close as Folkestone very rarely do they even reach double figures in the Bay of hell.

It was back to 'as you were' by September with: singles on 18th, 19th and 20th. *October*: singles on 16th and 27th. *November*: 1 on 16th.

Herring Gull

peak counts were:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
4200	1240	860	800	850	c1000	1000	800	1200	1000	1500	5000

Yellow-legged Gull (*migrant/winter visitor*)

January: singles on 9 dates. *February*: 1 on 23rd. *March*: 4 on 3rd and 2 on 4th. *May*: 3rd/4th year bird on 5th. *August*: 2 on 14th and 1 on 24th. *October*: singles on 5th, 14th, 27th and 30th. *November*: singles on 6th, 9th and 16th. *December*: 1 – 4 on 7 dates.

Caspian Gull (*annual winter visitor*)

January: 1st and 2nd winter birds were present on 5th, a third winter on 12th then an adult on the 31st. *October*: a 1st winter on 30th. *December*: an adult on the 16th then different 2nd winters were present on the 17th and 21st.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Quiet a few of the Scandinavian subspecies 'intermedius' were seen passing though in March. There were 70 of the blighters on the mud on March 14th. If you think this bit is boring wait until you get a few more pages on – its even more mind numbingly tedious ... if that's possible?

Peak counts were:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
59	66	70	40	10	c10	25	50+	70	55	40	87

Great Black-backed Gull

Present in rather pathetic numbers during the early and late winter periods. Autumn numbers were poor until October 27th when 500+ were present then 580 on the following day.

Peak counts were:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
290	33	14	55	6	13	44	280	115	580	400	420

Little Gull (*passage migrant*)

1 flew south on January 12th, 1 present on March 5th, 2 offshore on May 4th, 1 on May 26th. August: 1 on 5th. Sept: 1 north on 9th. October: 2 south on 9th, 5 east on 15th and 2 were present offshore on 16th. December: 3 south on 7th, 2 north on 16th and 6 south on 21st.

Kittiwake (*regular winter visitor/passage migrant*)

A few small movements during the early winter period included 60 south on January 5th and 460 south of February 5th. In March: 12 south on 24th and 2 were present on 26th. April: 1 on 16th. July: 3 south on 17th. October: 18 south on 9th. Whilst sea watching in December they seen in very small numbers on a few dates.

Glaucous Gull (*scarce winter visitor*)

A first winter bird was present on January 21st then a pure white (bleached) 1st or 2nd year bird was seen on the mud on March 8th.

Iceland Gull (*rare winter visitor*)

A first winter bird flew south through the bay and loitered offshore on January 26th.

Little Tern (*decreasing passage migrant*)

Incredibly scarce this year with birds being recorded on only eight dates between April 17th and May 18th and a further seven dates between July 18th and August 14th. The only numbers worthy of mention were 75 on May 15th, 28 on May 18th and 23 on August 14th.

Common Tern (*common passage migrant*)

The first arrival was of 70 birds on April 17th. The spring passage was as is usual 'awful' with birds being recorded in very small numbers on only 14 dates until May 21st. The only other arrival worthy of note was of 60 birds on May 18th.

The return passage occurred from July 10th with birds being seen on and off until September 14th. Notable counts during this period included 140 on July 19th then in August: 335 on 1st, 420 on 2nd, 440 on 14th, a large arrival of 1420 on 15th, 650 on 16th and 240 on 17th. Numbers tailed off during September when 50 on the 1st and 40 on the 14th being the only half decent numbers spotted.

Arctic Tern (*passage migrant*)

April: 8+ on 17th, 2 on 19th. July: 1 on 16th, 2 on 17th, 4 on 18th and 1 on 31st. August: 3 on 1st and 2 on 14th. October: 1+ on 5th and 2 south on 9th.

Roseate Tern (*passage migrant – mainly during July*)

During the spring passage one was seen on May 11th. The autumn passage was very poor given the coverage with only 3 singles recorded on July 18th, 20th and the 28th.

Sandwich Tern (*passage migrant – has over wintered annually since 1991 at least*)

The over wintering bird was present on at least 5 dates during January. Migrants started showing from February 19th though not regularly until March 4th. The spring passage peaks were during April: 180 on 8th, 190 on 13th and 200+ on 17th. May: 140 on 18th.

Autumn numbers started building from late June. The peak counts during this period were in July: 435 on 13th, 620 on 14th, 700 on 15th, 440 on 16th, 1050 on 18th, 800 on 19th, 780 on 20th, 460 on 22nd and 600+ on 30th. August: 560 on 2nd, 470 on 4th and 460 on 10th.

The maximum number during September was 225 on the 16th though numbers were steadily dwindling by then. Birds were scarce by early October with the last obvious migrants seen on the 10th. The over wintering bird was seen on and off from the later part of October throughout.

Black Tern (*passage migrant with an autumnal bias*)

Being a scarce bird during the spring 2 that flew north on May 5th was a better than expected record – they are far from annual at this time of the year here. A better run of things occurred during August with: 57 on 1st, 2 on 2nd, 2 on 11th, 4 on 14th, 8 on 15th, 26 on 16th and 7 on 17th. Also 2 were seen on September 9th.

Auk Species (*autumn/winter visitor*)

Sea watching during the early winter turned up: 60 south on January 5th, 50+ south on January 20th, 730 south on January 21st, 514 south and 55 north on February 4th and 613 south and 8 north on February 5th.

The early winter totals were in January = 1002 south then February = 1127 south and 63 north. I won't even bother with the late winter birds.

Guillemot (*autumn/winter visitor*)

See Auks. 90+% of those are generally Guillemots.

Razorbill (*autumn/winter visitor*)

20+ were noted amongst a movement of 600+ large Auks passing the pier on February 5th.

Stock Dove (*resident/passage migrant*)

Virtually no notice at all was taken of Stock Doves during the year. A dozen plus were present during early winter and a few pairs breed around the cliffs and the hover port area.

Wood Pigeon (*resident/passage migrant*)

1500 flew south on January 1st and 1600 south on February 16th. Migrants during March included 300+ southwest on 8th and 360 n/west on 30th. In April 730 flew s/west on 8th.

In January 600+ were present on 2nd and 1000+ were present on February 16th.

October: 1200 west on 26th and 800 west on 27th. November: 5000 flew s/west on 6th, 1150 north on 9th and 1300 north on 11th.

Turtle Dove (*low level breeding bird, summer visitor and declining passage migrant*)

The first arrival was noted on April 20th with a peak of 8+ birds on May 18th. A Maximum of 4 singing males (holding territory?) were heard during June with 3 still heard purring around the country Park in July. During the August/September passage period the only record I have were of 1 on August 27th, 1 on September 1st, 2 on September 7th and 1 on September 8th which is an appalling and extremely worrying number.

Collared Dove (*common resident*)

I only took a few notes throughout 2009 of this species. All I have as I write is there were 20+ birds during January and 30+ during March. In August: 50+ were scattered around the stubble fields during the 3rd and 4th weeks building up to 100+ by late September.

Imperial Space Pigeon (*intergalactic traveller*)

Another poor showing I'm afraid with an all time record equalling low total of none.

Cuckoo (*summer visitor*)

Notably scarce these days being seen in very poor numbers from April 8th and only noticed with any regularity during May when 1 – 3 birds were present most days. After early June the only record was of one on the Country Park on August 1st.

Barn Owl (*scarce semi local resident/wanderer*)

1 was seen on January 11th. Other birds were seen flying near the sampher on March 31st in broad daylight near the middle of the day and on the country park on May 18th. Two were seen hunting over the salt marsh on the odd occasion during June and then most days throughout July until August 2nd. One was seen on December 1st, 2nd and 6th but then a wing of a freshly dead bird was found on the main path of the country park on the 15th and I would presume this to have been off the bird seen earlier in the month?

Long-Eared Owl (*usually a winter visitor*)

1 was seen in Stone Lees on January 11th. I would presume that reports of a Tawny Owl seen hunting at the southern end of the Country Park during early January was either the same bird or one of the same species? Another was flushed from Country Park on April 2nd.

Short-eared Owl (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

In the early part of the year singles were seen on January 18th, February 2nd, 18th, 19th, 21st and 27th then May 2nd.

Little Owl (*scarce wanderer*)

1 was seen on the cliff top on January 10th. An extremely scarce bird in the area this past twenty years or so.

Sand Martin (*passage migrant/occasional breeder*)

A light spring passage started on March 11th with 1 – 10 birds noted on another 19 dates between then and May 21st.

Birds started to reappear from July 7th then had all disappeared by September 21st. The peak movements were of 780 n/west on July 10th, 205 n/west on July 22nd, 40 south on August 4th, 1340 west on August 10th, 80 n/west on August 12th and 50 north on September 20th.

Swallow (*summer visitor*)

11 flying north on March 30th were the first ones. The spring passage was poor with peaks during April of 200 north on 17th and 220+ north on 20th. Regular passage continued throughout May when a maximum of 240 flew north on 14th.

110 north on July 8th was the start of a funny autumn when birds were present/migrating virtually daily throughout the whole summer which is most odd for here? Peak counts of passage were extremely low - 300 flew west on August 28th then in September 300 south on 8th, 400 south on 15th, 500 north on 18th, 2700 north on 21st, 450 north on 22nd and 400 north on 30th.

Late birds included 6 s/west on November 6th, 1 south on November 14th and 1 west on November 28th.

House Martin (*summer visitor*)

From April 8th though scarce until mid May and even then showing up in extremely poor numbers. Not regular until mid May – the peaks being 20 north on 20th, 65 north on 21st and 20 north on 28th.

Some very early birds were present from the second week of August (migrants don't normally arrive until September) when 100+ birds were present most days until the end of the month at least. 500 s/west on August 10th with 400+ birds present on the following day were the highest counts during this period. In September peaks of 600 north on 20th, 350 north on 21st, 260 north on 22nd and 500+ north on 30th. The peak of 2850 birds west or n/west occurred on October 3rd.

Rock Pipit (*resident/passage migrant/winter visitor*)

The salt marsh held many birds during January with up 50+ on 7th and 8th. There were also at least another dozen present at this time between the beach and the harbour too. 12+ roosted in the harbour on March 1st and the man with the yellow plastic coat reported birds displaying around the harbour from late February. Around 20 were still present in early March and the last birds hung around or passed through until April 8th.

Though no doubting many of the over wintering birds in the salt marsh (though not the resident harbour birds) are of the Scandinavian race 'littoralis' they are virtually impossible to identify during the winter as they are extremely similar in appearance to the nominate British race 'petrosus.' Birds during the winter months mainly stay hidden in the salt marsh, only giving brief flight views so even when they start to show a bit of semi-spring plumage in early winter they are still awkward to identify the best of times. In March when they are seen on migration they show up on the hover pad where devoid of any cover alongside the onset of summer plumage etc they are easier to identify. Well that's what I thought up until this spring when a photo appeared on the Portland website of a littoralis looking Rock Pipit with nesting material! Anyway – what we used to confidently say were 'littoralis' type birds were recorded as follows March: 2 on 4th, 3+ on 8th, 1 on 9th, 11th and 13th.

In the autumn birds started to show from mid September – building to 12+ by October 16th and 20+ during the late winter.

Water Pipit (*scarce passage migrant/winter visitor*)

1 was seen on December 31st 2008 and didn't make the first draft of the 2008 report, which went into cyber-press well before midnight on the same date. You can't say I'm anything but conscientious with the release date on my bird reports eh? Water Pipits are usually a scarce bird at Pegwell (though probably overlooked amongst the throngs of wintering Rock Pipits?) and Jason's find was the first definite Pegwell record since way back in November 2001. This bird was seen throughout the early winter and was joined by another on January 14th – the first multiple Pegwell record I've ever heard of though I expect Topper Solly will come out with a count of 421 birds or something as extravagant from the eighties? There were also two seen together on the new scrape on 4 dates between January 30th and March 18th at least. The last report was on April 3rd.

Birds started to reappear from early November and 1 – 2 were seen around the salt marsh or scrape area virtually daily until the end of the year.

Richard's Pipit (*rare passage migrant*)

1 flew west over the Country Park on the unseasonable date of January 7th. Another flew southwest over the country park on October 5th and it or another was seen flying over the 100-acre field (across the river at Sandwich) by Bill and Ben on the 7th then a 'probable' flying n/west over Stone leas on the 8th. I think it's quite possible that given the rarity of the bird, weather at the time and the paucity of east coast records at the time that the same bird could have been the source of all three October records?

Tree Pipit (*passage migrant*)

March: 1 was present on the country park on the 29th – the earliest record I've yet to hear of? Also in *March* - 1 west on 30th and 1 south on 31st. *April*: 1 on 7th, 1 n/west on 13th, 1 north on 14th, 1 on 17th, 1 north on 20th, 4 north on 21st and 1 on 30th. *May*: 1 on 6th.

Autumn: Migrant birds were seen moving again from mid August with 2 south on August 15th and further singles south on August 19th and 27th. In September there were singles south on 6th, 7th and 8th, 3 present on 15th, 2 on 19th, 6 south and 1 north on 20th, 2 north and 6 others on 21st and 1 north on 22nd. Also 2 flew south on October 5th.

Meadow Pipit (*resident breeder - common passage migrant*)

In the early winter period a peak of 61 flew south to roost on January 11th dropping to a mere 11 birds during February/March. 20+ birds used the salt marsh on a daily basis.

Spring: 4 + singing males were seen/heard around the country park/salt marsh – displaying first noted on March 9th. Overhead passage was light throughout with a measly peak count of only 37 n/west on April 4th.

Autumn: a steady passage between late August and late October produced peaks of *September*: 500 north on 18th, 500 north and 100+ present on 19th, 2380 north on 20th, 660 north and 180 present on 21st, 200 north and 100 present on 22nd, 110 south on 23rd and 130 north on 30th then *October*: 150 present on 6th, 200 on 7th, 135 west on 6 p on 11th, 130 north on 10th, 55 north on 12th, 200 p and 120 n/west on 13th, 100 p and 100 north on 14th and 45 north and 80 present on 18th.

The 2380 birds passing north on September 20th was a record count for the area and would have been far higher if I hadn't wasted time looking for the Great Grey Shrike that was present on that day. I missed a minimum of 1000+ birds no doubt looking for the invisible Shrike.

Winter roosting numbers included 104 south on November 28th.

Pied Wagtail (*resident/passage migrant*)

In the early winter the pre-roost around the harbour produced up to 100 birds in January and the hippy had 121 on March 1st. Up to 12 were seen between the cliff top and the Country Park in January and February. A pair bred in or around the garage area and another pair were hanging around Pfizers playing fields in April and May. 2 adults and 4 juveniles were presumably the birds that bred in the garage area and 32 birds were seen on Pfizers playing grounds on August 13th.

17 were present on the west cliff on September 11th. Peaks of alba Wagtails passing overhead were during *September*: 20 west on 19th, 16 north on 22nd, 20 north on 28th and 26 north on 30th then *October*: 56 north on 1st, 20 north on 6th, 28 west on 10th and 42 n/west on 11th.

White Wagtail (*passage migrant some may winter?*)

A reasonable run in March considering how few grounded migrants were showing at the time with 1 on 8th, 1 on 11th, 3 on 13th, 2 on 16th, 1 on 18th, 3 on 19th, 2 on 23rd and 3 on 31st. During April other singles occurred on the 1st, 17th and 18th. No effort was made to identify any autumn birds as it's far too time-consuming and difficult when you're as lazy and as apathetic as us lot. Once again I blame F. Solly.

Grey Wagtail (*regular passage migrant/wanderer*)

In January 2 were seen around the harbour on the 10th.

Spring migrants included – in March: 4 south, 2 west and 2 north then during April: 1 south on 14th and 17th.

Autumn: In August: 1 north on 2nd, 1 north on 14th and 1 south on 19th. Most of the autumn migrants passed through between the second week of September until the end of October. The peak day counts during this period were 3 north and 2 south on September 20th, 4 south and 6 north on September 22nd plus 4 north and 2 south on September 23rd. Autumn totals of migration between September 8th and the end of October were 19 south, 25 north and 11 west.

The occasional bird was seen around the west cliff/harbour in the late winter.

Yellow Wagtail (*common passage migrant/used to breed nearby*)

Spring: Birds started to appear from April 4th. A light passage during April included 3 north on 8th, 3 west on 14th, 3 north on 20th and 3 north on 25th. During May - 1 – 2 were seen on 5 dates.

Autumn: Birds were regularly present from the first week of August with 3 – 6+ birds most days using the salt marsh area presumably to feed. These birds present clouded counts of over flying migrants unfortunately when birds were seen passing over on numerous dates during August and September. Numbers peaked at 11 flying south on August 4th, 7 south on August 5th, 15 south on August 12th, 10 north on August 27th and 10 south on September 8th. Late birds were seen flying south on October 1st and 10th. The migrant totals between August and October were 23 birds north and 108 south or west.

Blue-headed Wagtail (*passage migrant*)

One flew n/west on April 10th then two were present on April 25th.

Wren (*common resident*)

No counts were taken. Francis Solly saw one but didn't write down the date.

Waxwing (*sporadic scarce winter visitor*)

1 flew north through the country park on January 5th then it or another was present in the same vicinity on January the 9th.

Dunnock (*resident/passage migrant*)

Very little notice was taken of the humble Hedge Accentor as normal, though there was a notable increase during September and they were calling all the over the place in the second week of October when there must have been a minimum of 50+ birds present.

Robin (*resident/passage migrant*)

A count of the winter birds present on January 14th produced 25+ birds around the Country Park and Stone Lees on the 14th. No proper migrant counts were done in the autumn but between late September and October there were a minimum of 50+ birds present on occasion.

Nightingale (*summer visitor/breeds on occasion*)

One was heard singing in Stone Lees on April 11th but for the first time in many years none held any territory/bred for whatever reason? In the autumn one was seen in Stone Lees on August 13th.

Redstart (*annual passage migrant*)

Spring: 1 was in Stone Lees on April 8th with another on the Cliff top on April 29th.
Autumn: In August - 2 on 11th and 1 on 12th. A half decent run of birds were seen during September with – 1 on 10th, 2 on 11th, 1 on 16th, 2 on 17th, 3 on 18th, 6 on 19th, 2 on 20th, 2 on 21st, 1 on 23rd, 3 on 24th, 2 on 25th and 1 on 26th.

Black Redstart (*annual passage migrant/winter visitor*)

A male was seen around the harbour on February 23rd then it or another male showed up on beach/hover port on March 9th. 2 were seen on the west cliff on October 18th, 1 on November 6th then singles showed up between the west cliff and the harbour on December 7th, 10th and 14th.

Wheatear (*passage migrant*)

As is usual a rather poor showing during the spring migration. After the first bird was seen across on Shellness on March 19th they were recorded on a further 11 dates between then and May 6th. The peaks were 5 on April 3rd and 12 on April 17th.

A fairly average autumn haul with birds arriving from August 16th and being seen until October 10th. Birds were noted on 20 dates during the autumn with peaks all during September of: 19 on 10th, 18 on 15th, 13 on 16th, 26 on 17th, 25 on 18th, 11 on 19th and 13 on 20th.

Stonechat (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

The over wintering apparent 'rubicola' male was last seen by the hippy on January 11th. It then went missing for a while leading us to consider its demise and we hoped that it hadn't succumbed to the extremely cold weather. I'm talking about the Stonechat here – not the hippy. The hippy was okay, as Gordon Browns wondrous offering of an extra cold weather payment had kept the old duffer tickedy boo throughout the cold snap. Mind you we were all relieved when it showed up again after the cold snap on February 11th (till 28th) the hippy 'not' the Stonechat!! All the wintering Stonechats disappeared suddenly by March 2nd. 2 migrants showed up on March 9th.

The autumn was quite a good one with the first arrivals on September 21st also 4 on 28th and 6 on 30th. Numbers of birds present built to 8+ by the third week of October with very high count of at least 12 birds on November 4th.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY		AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
4	5+	2	-	-		-	6	8+	12+	5

Whinchat (*passage migrant – regular during autumn*)

With them being a rather scarce bird during spring 1 on April 22nd was unsurprisingly the only record. The autumn was a bit better – we even had a decent arrival on August 10th when 30 birds turned up that afternoon. Otherwise 1 – 5 were recorded on 13 other dates between August 7th and September 28th.

Song Thrush (*resident/passage migrant*)

During the early winter up to 30 birds were scattered around the area in January. Autumn migration was noticeable from September 20th when around 50 arrived. After this there were 100+ on September 21st and 22nd plus many other small arrivals later during the month. A 'bit' of westward diurnal migration was noticed during the middle of October with 70 birds passing over on the 10th and 40 on the 15th being the highest counts taken.

Redwing (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

During the early winter period very few were seen at all. A maximum of only 3 birds were present during the whole period and 7 flew south on January 7th. By March birds were seen regularly in small numbers. The peak days of migration were noted in March - when 1190 birds flew west and 80 were present on the 8th with another 310 flying west and 60+ birds present on the 13th. Small numbers were seen during April when 1 – 7 birds were seen on 6 dates until the 21st.

Autumn: The first arrivals were on September 20th with some half decent numbers seen moving between then and October especially. The peaks all in October: 240 west on 10th, 10,000+ west on 13th, 215 west on 15th, 1115 west on 17th, 17,800 west on 27th, 270 west on 28th and 1570 west on 31st. A few smaller movements were observed during November – 100+ west on the 6th the best day. A few birds continued to show throughout December in small numbers.

Mistle Thrush (*resident*)

Little note was taken though there were 5 present in January and up to 8 in March. A few were seen moving west during the thrush movements during October.

Fieldfare (*passage migrant/winter visitor*)

2 were present around the country park on and off during January and February. Migrants included 80 south on February 18th, 50 west on March 8th, 7 present on April 1st, 10 west on April 7th then 3 north on April 20th.

During October: birds started to arrive on the 9th with peaks of 150 west on 17th, 3000+ s/west on 27th, 67 west on 28th and 65 west on 31st. Also during November 30 west on the 6th, 60 west on 10th and 27 west on 11th.

Ring Ouzel (*annual passage migrant*)

During the spring singles were seen on April 1st, 10th and 16th then 3 on 18th. A few more arrived during October with 1 on 9th, 2 on 10th, 6 on 13th, 2 on 14th, 1 on 15th, 2 on 27th and 1 on 28th. Also 2 were seen on the country park on November 1st.

Blackbird (*resident/passage migrant*)

Hardly any counts were taken though during January up to 120 were present and though seen regularly as newly arrived migrants throughout October the highest actual count/estimation was a mere 100 or so migrants on October 14th.

Dartford Warbler (*scarce passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Two birds were seen during the early winter period with one on the country park between January 9th and February 16th plus another frequenting the area around the garage pools between February 6th and 27th at least.

Cetti's Warbler (*wanderer/migrant?*)

One was heard singing on the western edge or just outside the country park on April 29th and 30th. Singles were seen/heard in Stone Lees on September 24th then October 14th and 15th then on the Country Park from October 25th until 29th. During November and December at least two or three birds were present with one still in Stone Lees on 11th and 2 birds on the country park on the 12th until the December 16th at least. This is quite a good influx of birds for here.

Garden Warbler (*low level breeding bird and common passage migrant*)

The first bird showed up on April 30th with spring migrants being seen on only another 3 dates during May then in early June males were heard singing in territory both on the country park and the s/west corner of Little Cliffsend Farm.

During the autumn birds continued to be scarce with birds being seen on only 9 dates from August 12th until the end of September. Other than 6 on August 13th all records were of only 1 or 2 birds. A late one was seen on the country park on October 8th.

Blackcap (*fairly common breeding bird and common passage migrant*)

One heard singing from the sunken garden on March 14th could have been an early migrant though was more likely to have been an over wintering bird? Birds started to arrive from April 1st with a marked increase mid month. 24 singing males were present on April 13th with quite a few pairs staying around to breed, as is the norm.

During the autumn migrants started to arrive during late August with 20 – 100+ birds present most days all through September into October when any decent numbers starting to drop off by mid month. The peak counts during autumn were during September 100+ on 6th, 60 on 7th, 70+ on 8th and 50+ on 19th. Also 50 were present on October 5th and 30+ on the 6th.

Lesser Whitethroat (*low level breeding bird and common passage migrant*)

Small numbers were present throughout the spring from April 11th with a maximum of 6 singing males present on April 24th.

During August - good numbers were scattered here there and everywhere but in the main around the scrub on the Country Park. The peaks during August were - 45 on 13th, 30 on 19th, 25+ on 27th and 60+ on 29th. Smaller numbers were present pretty much throughout September peaking at 20 on 6th and 15 on 7th. The last record was of 1 on October 8th.

Whitethroat (*common breeding bird and passage migrant*)

Singing birds started to arrive from April 8th with 40+ birds present on April 21st and 22nd. 45+ singing males were counted on May 2nd.

Vast numbers were seen mainly around the country park scrub during August and early September, as is the norm of late. During August the peak counts were 100+ on 12th, 120 on 19th and 175 on 29th. Numbers started to drop after mid September with the last record being 2 on October 1st.

Sedge Warbler (*low level breeding bird and common passage migrant*)

Poor numbers were recorded throughout the year though with their habit of using the salt marsh during migration many of the autumn birds would have been overlooked no doubt. Only 2 birds over summered/held territory though up to 4 were heard singing during May, I believe these were late migrants rather than summering/breeding birds.

The autumn movement was the worst I've witnessed with decent numbers present on very few occasions. The peaks were: 15 on August 13th, 30 on August 14th, 15 on August 19th and 20 on September 6th. A late bird was seen on October 1st.

Fan Tailed Warbler (*very rare visitor*)

One appeared (and frequently disappeared) on the country park, salt marsh and on the odd occasion in Stone Lees between September 6th and 8th. It then showed up (on the country park) out of the blue again for about five minutes during the afternoon of September 21st and once again performed to the crowds intermittently up until September 30th. After a gap of over two weeks it showed up again on October 18th and was seen most days again until November 12th. It showed again between November 28th and December 16th at least.

Reed Warbler (*low level breeding bird and common passage migrant*)

During the spring – birds were present from April 26th with small numbers arriving throughout May and early June. Peak counts were had in May of: 5 singing in hover pad reed bed on May 14th when at least 4 other birds were heard singing from various points around the country park and Stone Lees. An in depth 'search' on an otherwise dull morning on June 12th when I had nothing better to do turned up 3 singing males in the ditch running adjacent to the cycle path, 4 in the reed beds around Stone Lees, 6 in the reed beds south of the hover port and 1 singing from the country park scrub. Some of these birds 'may' have been late migrants as they turned up very late this year?

Autumn migrant numbers peaked with 20 on August 14th, 20 on September 6th and 30 on September 7th. The last ones were seen on the country park on October 6th.

Grasshopper Warbler (*passage migrant*)

One was on the old hover pad on April 20th. Other singles were found on the country park on August 12th and 27th then in scrub near the hover pad on September 7th.

Willow Warbler (*low level breeding bird and common passage migrant*)

The first arrival was on March 23rd with a rather lowly spring peak of 8 birds on April 16th and 18th. Only 2 pairs held territory this year.

Returning birds started to show from the last week of July in small numbers and small numbers of birds showed throughout August until early October. Maximum arrivals during August were: 15 on 11th, 40 on 12th, 30 on 13th and 25 on 19th with double figure counts on a few other dates. 1 – 6 birds were seen regularly virtually throughout September - the last record was of 1 on October 7th which is quiet a late date for the specie.

Chiffchaff (*low level breeding bird and common passage migrant*)

After the first one was heard 'weeing' near the roundabouts on March 2nd, birds starting showing regularly from March 14th. The peaks were 12 on March 30th then during April - 15 on 7th and 20+ on 14th.

During September birds started to arrive during end of the first week with peaks of 60 on 6th, 60 on 22nd and 60 on 24th. 20+ birds were present most days. Then in October the peaks were 120 on 5th and 50 on the 8th with a few other counts of over 30 birds taken during the month. Migrants continued to arrive until November 4th. A couple of birds were still showing into mid December with one in the gardens along Chalk Hill Road until the 16th and one on the Country Park on the 17th.

Yellow-Browed Warbler (*scarce autumn migrant*)

Singles were seen along Chalk Hill Lane on September 19th and Dylan found another in Stone Lees on September 27th. The Chalk Hill bird was the earliest ever recorded in the area.

Pallas' Warbler (*rare autumn migrant*)

One was seen in the bushes at the top of the chine on October 31st. Rather incredibly this bird was only the sixth ever-documented area record – the last one being seen in October 2005.

Goldcrest (*passage migrant*)

A few were present during the winter with a surprise 10 present on January 3rd. After this a peak of two birds were seen until February. The spring passage was as normal - light - peaking with about ten birds on April 4th. A male was regularly heard singing in cypress trees on Little Cliffsend Farm in late March/April, which would suggest at best breeding, or at worst territorial behaviour.

The autumn was a poor one for Goldcrests with the migrant birds arriving quite late and in very poor numbers. Most of the records were noted between October 15th and November 4th with peaks of 12 on October 15th then 22 on 27th.

Firecrest (*passage migrant*)

Spring: single birds were noted on March 19th, 31st then April 4th and 26th.
Autumn: noted on 24 dates between September 19th and November 12th with peaks of 6+ on October 29th and 5 on October 30th, 10+ on October 31st, 5+ on November 1st and 3 on November 10th.

Bearded Tit (*passage migrant/wanderer*)

1 flew west over the hover pad reed beds on January 9th.

Great Tit (*resident*)

Little notice was taken though there were 13 around the Country Park and Stone Lees on January 14th and during the spring small movements (mainly west) were noticed from mid March onwards.

Blue Tit (*resident*)

A count on January 14th turned up 24 around the Country Park and Stone Lees. Small movements (mainly west) were noticed during March (from the 16th) then in the autumn a small movement of about 30 moved west on September 26th.

Coal Tit (*passage migrant*)

2 made their way west on March 31st then 2 were seen on April 8th and 3 west on 21st.
In September there was one seen along Chalk Hill Road on the 19th plus another on the farm on October 5th.

Marsh Tit (*dunno?*)

One flew east, bush hopping along the cliff top on March 24th. The first Pegwell record since the late 70's or early 80's.

Long-tailed Tit (*common resident*)

Very little effort was made to monitor numbers there were at least 10 birds present during January and 6+ pairs kicking around the area during the breeding season. 20+ birds were present during the autumn months.

Treecreeper (*rare visitor/wanderer?*)

One was in Stone Lees on September 21st and 22nd. They are quite a rarity these days, this bird being only the first record since the autumn of 2003 and only the second record in over a decade.

Great Grey Shrike (*scarce passage migrant*)

A stunning adult was loitering on and off behind the Shell garage near the footpath off Chalk Hill Road on September 18th and 19th. I know it was a 'stunning adult' as I saw Dylan's photos of the darn thing. I couldn't actually find it myself though quite a few others did. My patience was rewarded when I found another one on the cliff top on October 31st. It's only taken me 18 years of flogging the area to death to find one myself!

Spotted Flycatcher (*declining but annual passage migrant*)

Spring: One was in Stone Lees on May 14th and 3 were seen between Stone Lees and the north end of they cycle path on May 18th.

Autumn: a decent run of arrivals showed up in September especially, with 3+ on August 20th then during September 11+ on 7th, 4 on 8th, 2 on 9th, 1 on 11th, 2 on 18th, 4 on 19th, 1 on 21st, 1 on 22nd and 1 on 24th. The 11+ birds on September 7th was a very good number for the area with at least 10 birds on the country park plus at least one more in Stone Lees on that day.

Pied Flycatcher (*annual passage migrant*)

No spring birds as is to be expected in the area but a few showed during the autumn with 1 on August 19th then during the run of n/east winds in September – 1 on 10th, 1 on 15th, 2 on 16th, 1 on 17th, 4 on 18th, 1 on 20th, 1 on 21st and 1 on 23rd.

Magpie (*common resident*)

Little effort was made to take any accurate counts. There were loose estimates of 10 – 20 birds seen on occasion throughout the year, with perhaps as many as 30 birds present during October? Perhaps even 31??

Jay (*resident/passage migrant*)

Two pairs were resident and during April 6+ were present most days. A bit of migration occurred in April when 5 flew south on 10th then another 5 south on 23rd when there were at least 12 birds present. Over 8 were present during October.

Jackdaw (*resident/passage migrant*)

10 were present on January 5th, 22 flew s/west on April 23rd and in October up to 10 were seen around the farm and a flock of 15 flew s/west on the 20th. That's it!

Rook (*resident/passage migrant*)

A peak of 57 was seen on February 3rd. In the spring there were 17+ nests on St Augustine's Golf course plus for the first time I noticed another rookery just outside of the area down towards Richborough. I would go down for a closer look but its 200 yards further south than my brain can cope with? I get all confused south of Stone lees??

Carriion Crow (*resident/passage migrant*)

The only count I took was of 300+ birds present on January 1st. Otherwise there were 50 – 100+ daily. During the late winter cold snap I made friends with a local pair, feeding them on whatever I had in my pocket or rucksack. The bolder of the two birds is now a Hobnob addict.

Hooded Crow (*rare winter visitor*)

1 flew in from the south then off west over the country park on March 25th. This was the first sighting in the area since December 29th 1999.

Raven (*rare visitor*)

One flew south along the cliff top between Ramsgate and Cliffsend on February 4th. This was the third Pegwell sighting after one n/west on March 17th 1998 plus one other older record I believe? Then on March 11th another sighting occurred when a bird flew south over the country park then back north less than an hour later. After this 3 birds flew southwest on September 7th, a pair s/west on September 23rd then 1 on November 8th.

Starling (*resident/passage migrant/winter visitor*)

Very few were seen during the early winter with the pre roost counts producing only 800 on January 5th and a mere 250 on February 18th. Migration during March (when 1 – 200 were regular) included 660 n/west and 620 s/west on 16th, 6650 n/west on 18th and 520 n/west and 340 s/west on 20th. By May 60+ were present from the last week of the month increasing to 1000+ birds passing through the area during July. 500+ were present around the country park in August and September.

1150 migrants flew north on October 8th and to emphasise just how poor the late winter numbers were I stayed on until dusk one evening to count the winter pre-roost in November and only c250 birds showed up.

Golden Oriole (*scarce passage migrant/over shooter*)

A female/immature male was seen in Stone Lees and on the country park on May 15th.

House Sparrow (*resident*)

I did take a few estimated counts during the year. There were around 40 on Jan 13th and then during July at least 90 birds were present with a flock of about 50 alone near the hover port/farm fields on July 30th. During October at least 55 were seen around the farm and cliff top.

Tree Sparrow (*declining passage migrant. No longer breeds or winters in the area*)

During March: 4 flew north on 17th and 2 were present on the country park on the 18th. 1 was seen on the hover port on March 31st and April 1st.

Autumn produced during October: 6 west on 3rd, 1 west on 5th, 11 west on 11th, 11 west on 13th, 9 north on 14th, 2 west on 29th and 2 north on 30th.

Chaffinch (*resident/passage migrant*)

Good numbers were present, mainly around the country park scrub in the early winter with around 200 on January 13th and up to 120 in February. The spring produced a light passage from the second week of March with peaks of 65 west on March 8th, 74 west on March 11th, 200+ north and 50 west on March 16th, 74 north on March 17th and 280 north on March 19th.

Autumn: Passage was noted from late September but didn't get going until mid October and even then the movements were generally small. October peaks: 215 west on 10th, 350 west on 14th, 280 west on 15th and 160 west and 100+ present on 27th, 115 west on 28th then 90 west on 31st. November: 120 present on 6th, 33 west on 10th and 100+ were present on 23rd.

Brambling (*passage migrant*)

1 – 2+ were present amongst the country park finch flock during January and February.

Migrants were scarce during the spring with during March: 1 west on 8th, 1 west on 11th, 1 present on 13th, 1 west on 16th and 2 west on 29th then April: 1 south on 9th and 4 north on 16th.

A light autumn passage was bulked up somewhat by the larger movement on October 15th. Birds were first noted from September 21st – the peaks occurring during October with 10 west on 13th, 42 west on 15th, 13 west on 17th. Up to 3 birds were seen amongst the large Chaffinch flock on the country park during October also 1 on November 4th and 1 flew west on November 9th.

Linnet (*resident/passage migrant*)

During January 200+ birds were frequenting the Country Park and farm though they had virtually disappeared by end of February. I did come across a large flock (120+) on the edge of the fields along the Haine Road on March 15th. The rather low peak spring migration numbers were 24 north on March 19th, 37 west on March 27th, 40 west on April 7th, 100+ north on April 20th and 40 north on April 22nd.

Small post breeding groups started to appear in July and built up into three figures by August. Numbers of autumn migrants continue to disappoint with peaks during September of 60 north on 21st, 120 north on 28th and 50 north on 30th. Then during October: 100 west on 6th, 80 west on 10th and 59 north on 12th. Up to 100 birds were present around the Country Park and salt marsh during November and December.

Twite (*declining winter visitor*)

None overwintered during 2008/09-winter period for the first time in recorded history. 7 early birds flew north on October 12th, then during November: 14 on 6th, 3+ on 8th, 5 on 9th, 3+ on 13th, 5 on 23rd. Up to 5 showed up every now and gain during December plus the hippy had a flock of 23 on December 20th.

Redpoll (*passage migrant*)

Only two records were to be had during spring with 6 north on April 16th and 1 north on April 28th.

Autumn migration was noted between October 8th and mid November. A light passage containing many small movements were noted during this period the peaks being 7 west and 22 north on October 26th, 22 west on October 27th and 50 n/west on November 10th. The total autumn passage consisted of 148 north and 99 west. A maximum of 8 were present on October 19th and November 4th then 16 on December 8th.

Serin (*scarce passage migrant*)

One flew s/east over Stone Lees on June 8th then two together flew n/west over or even from the car park bushes into Saint Augustine's Golf Course on October 18th.

Siskin (*passage migrant*)

In February 2 flew north on 28th. Quite a few spring migrants were noted between March 3rd and April 29th with peaks of 24 north on March 17th, 23 north on March 19th and 50 north on April 16th. The total migration period consisted of 28 birds west, 3 south and 187 north which is quite a good spring haul for here and no doubt reflects the record autumn arrivals of 2008.

As is usual the autumn produced far more birds with birds showing regularly from September 9th to mid November with the occasional sighting into December. The peak counts were all during October: 42 north on 8th, 33 west on 10th, 380 north on 11th, 65 north on 12th, 144 north on 13th then 24 west and 20 north on 15th and 20 west on 28th.

The total autumn passage consisted of 718 north, 123 west plus a handful south.

Goldfinch (*resident/passage migrant*)

Good numbers were present during the early winter with 250 birds in early January and 100+ during February. Most birds were hanging around the country park area.

The spring migration was awful with a maximum count of 40 birds, which flew north on April 20th.

A group of about 40 were on the Country Park in late July and 100+ were present on October 11th.

A pretty good autumn migration occurred between September 21st and Late October. The peak counts were in *September*: 20 north on 21st, 350 north on 28th and 250 north on 30th then *October*: good numbers – peaks of 220 north on 9th, 810 north and 100 west on 11th, 420 north on 12th, 580 mainly west on 13th, 270 west on 14th, 975 north on 16th and 430 north on 17th.

The autumn migrant totals were in September 620 birds north then in October 3280 north and 1120 west.

Greenfinch (*resident/passage migrant*)

Very little note was made of them during the early part of the year. 20+ were present during January and although there were a few moving during the spring nothing of any significance was noted at the time.

There were a few small movements during the autumn - 68 west on October the 15th being the best day.

Hawfinch (*scarce passage migrant*)

Although still a rarity in the area, records of Hawfinch continue to show up as a passage migrant every now and then. Prior to 2000 there was only one area record (in May 1980) but there have been 6 since including this years two birds. Anyway – in 2009 one flew over the country park then west inland on April 14th then another west over the cliff top on October 15th.

Bullfinch (*declining resident*)

1 – 2 birds were seen on and off in Stone leas between January and June plus the hippy saw around 7 birds in the same area on September 7th, which is a goodly number for the area these days. Even more notable was one seen on the cliff top on March 8th as birds away from Stone Leas are like hens teeth in the twenty first century.

Crossbill (*passage migrant*)

1 flew north on January 27th, some were heard calling on August 3rd (fantastic recording eh?) and 1 flew north on September 20th. During October - 1 east on 7th heralded an unprecedented movement with birds seen on 11 dates flying overhead between then and November 10th. The peak counts in October were 15 s/west and 27+ north on 8th, 40 north on 11th, 54 north on 12th, 105 north on 13th, 31 north on 18th and 27 north on 19th then during November: 15 over on 6th, 8 north on 9th and 4 west on 10th.

The total October/November movement consisted of East = 11, S/west and west = 79 and North = 275.

Reed Bunting (*resident and common passage/winter visitor*)

Not to be confused with the very rare and endangered Red Bunting. Good numbers were present during the early winter period when at least 100 birds were present in the salt marsh, reed beds and Country Park. 80 were seen in the salt marsh and Country Park alone on January 8th. Numbers of birds slowly decreased to 60 in February and 50 during the first week on March. During the spring 4 singing males were present plus a few migrants moved north during March.

Birds were frequently seen passing north and west overhead between September 20th and the end of October. The peaks were: 41 west on October 11th and 38 west on October 12th.

Numbers of birds present included 30 on October 6th, 80+ on November 10th and 40 on December 21st.

Lapland Bunting (*scarce passage migrant*)

A very good autumn with a group of 6 flying south, very low over the country park in vile weather on October 5th then further singles flew n/west on October 12th and north on 13th. Another was flushed from the cliff top on October 19th.

Snow Bunting (*autumn/winter visitor*)

A flock of c15 were seen across on Shellness on January 11th and 12th. 1 flew west on October 10th then during November: c12 across near Shellness on 6th, 3 on Shellness and 4 around Farm fields on 9th, 5 present between farm and hover pad plus 2 north on 10th then 7 on Shellness on 12th.

Yellowhammer (*passage migrant*)

A bird seen by me on the Country Park on February 13th was considered such a ridiculous record at the time that I was tempted to throw out a description of the bird I submitted (to myself as the autocratic single person Pegwell bird records committee) such is their rarity lately! But then ... a veritable plethora of records occurred during March when 3 were seen on the cliff top on the 13th with further singles seen flying south on the 18th and west on the 20th.

During October singles flew west on 10th, was present in Stone Lees on 11th, singles flew west on 14th and 14th then there were 3 on the country park on the 31st.

Corn Bunting (*mainly a winter visitor in recent years*)

Although up to 40 birds could be seen from the country park albeit across on Shellness point, over the river in Sandwich land, they were scarce on the Pegwell side during the early winter. The peak count over here was a flock of 13 birds, which were ranging between the country park and the salt marsh up as far as the Sportsman pub. 1 – 9 were seen on about another dozen or so other occasions during the period. A singing male was present on the farm between April and late June.

They started to show again around the country park from October 27th and were present in their highest numbers during December when there were 8 on the 14th and 14 on the 21st.

Contributors:

I would like to thank the following who have provided information for this so-called bird report mainly without the use of violence or bribery:

Steve Ashton, Rae Boulden, Phil Charlton, Barry Child, Steve Coates, Chris from North Kent, Claire, Keith Ellis, Frank, Martin Griffiths, Gadget, Ian Harding, Phillip Hayes, Ian Hodgson, Ian Hunter, Richard Jermy, Kent Bird News*, Nick Lever, Ben Lewis, Andy Lipczynski, Malcolm MacVail, Man in shorts, Jason Mitchell, Simon Mount, Planetthanet**, Steve Ray, Ben Ring, Roly W.C., Craig Sammels, Scott, Mick Shroepher, Phil Smith, Chris Solly, Francis Solly, Sally Solly, Sid and Penny King, Tony Swandale, Jason De Villeneuve, John Websper, Barry Wright, Barry Woolhouse and lastly and very least - Dylan Wrathall. To any whom I have forgotten I apologise. Please forgive me ... I'm a bit forgetful.

*Via Ian Harding who kindly sends me various bits of Pegwell info that would otherwise slip through the net.

**Via the Dumptidge garden gnome – my little mate Gadget.

Also special thanks to Hodge the Ian Son for reasons too complicated to be mentioned in such a shallow comic and Andy Lipczynski who allows me to yak incessantly whilst he's diligently taking counts when the SBBO mob are in town. He's as well trained in the art of note taking as any I've yet to meet at Pegwell. He's always shouting his counts down the path to me. Extra special thanks go to Mick Shroepher who not only keeps me entertained with his take on life but has a name so ridiculous that he has saved me many hours of pondering the realms of stupidity for idiotic made up names to use in this report that his name has rendered as useless whatever my sideways brain has or can come up with. Okay – I thought – its pointless and I gave up even trying. Cheers Mick. Most of all I'd like to thank me ... I'm great I am. Brilliant even.

Scanning through the local Thanet newspapers in 2009 I came across the following articles:

New specie discovery shock horror!! The first new British specie of bird unknown to modern science for well over 200 years was accidentally discovered skulking at Pegwell Bay on 14th May 2009. A small brown warbler sized wading bird with an enormous, oversized head was noticed skulking beneath a pile of discarded Alexander cuttings the two Kent Trust workers were loading into their truck. The two lucky finders namely local general dogsbodies Benny the Ring from Ash in Kent and Anthony 'I Claudius' Jolley from Ramsgate in Kent, recalled in some depth how the bird was easily coaxed into view by throwing scraps of half eaten bacon sandwiches which were pounced upon with relish by the small semi starving wader. Tony and Ben studied the bird at some length over the course of a few weeks and they discovered the following fascinating facts.

The Badger-faced Carrion Stint *Calidris brockerensis*

1: With a head the same size as a fully grown dog Badger and the body that of a Phylloscopus Warbler the Badger-faced Carrion Stint needs a whole rabbit carcass to provide enough energy to sustain a 20 yard flight due to the weight of it's huge Badger like head being totally out of proportion with it's Chiffchaff sized body. Tests show that it takes a BFCS 2 – 3 days to devour a whole rabbit, which makes its annual 17,000-mile migration a little tiresome.

2: Their barely audible nocturnal song is somewhere between Blackcap and Cuckoo with a touch of Nightjar.

3: They enjoy kipping on any one of its four legs (one leg is prehensile) and can be lured into full song by the sound of loud rap music.

Studies are ongoing and we all look forward to finding out much more about the fascinating life of the BFCS.

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General:

Wanted: Professional dog/twitcher strangler qualified enough to train crack dog strangling team to go to work on local nature reserve. Must be conscientious and punctual with own vehicle and range of weaponry substantial enough for the huge task in hand. Ring Thanet 5495467 for details. No time wasters please.

Lost and Found: Blue woollen hat found on path at Pegwell Bay nature reserve similar to type worn by one David Gilbert of Margate in Kent up until a decade or so ago. Ring 01843 9735566 before Tuesday as finder will put it on e-bay and sell it to the highest bidder as I hear that rare Giblet memorabilia is going through the roof these days. A 1995 pair of Gilbert Wellington boots made in excess of seven grand on the black market recently.

Stolen: Small blue children's electric car from seafront amusement parlour. Apparently an old grumpy man with a 1970's Status Quo haircut was seen in the vicinity only seconds before little Jimmy - who was riding the 50 pence ride at the time was heard crying and later found laying on the pavement in a small pool of spilt lager. A very small reward is on offer on return of three-foot vehicle.

For Sale: 1 pair of 10 x 50 Leica binoculars in good condition. Seller has no need of such equipment due local patch near Cliftonville is being destroyed by the general public and the KCC. Price negotiable – ring Francis on Thanet 8768752 after 6.00pm. If he can be bothered he may answer phone. Other items for sale include large range of ladies hairnets and a worn out much used vanity set.

Wanted: One set of new or used normal length wooden legs – undamaged and in good working order. Good price paid – ring Dennis on 01843 56768907.

Wanted: Large ocean going foghorn. Needed to replace ambient sound made by retiring landscape designer at local nature reserve from September 2009. Any price paid as we're worried about missing the old duffer and will resort to anything to re-create the dominant sound of the preceding decade. – Phone: Phil on 565456908 (please note - I may not answer phone)

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Tony Jolleys retirement.

I was shell-shocked to hear Tony's statement uttered out of the blue "September 9th 2009 is the first day of the rest of my life!" he announced to me a sunny May morning as he turned up to open Fort Knox. (Our new nickname for the super duper reinforced bird hide) It darn near knocked me bandy. It was true I'm afraid – the old foghorn-laughing ex plasterer come ranch hand – expert fencer and double Olympic champion three Michelin starred brush cutting aficionado has left the hallowed turf of Pegwell on a professional basis once and for all and the place will be a far sadder and quieter place for those poor sad fools left in Kent's bestist ever muddy dog toilet. His treble bass laugh may well be lost to the area forever. He had a good innings as they say but that's scant consolation for us Pegwell people who he's kept entertained for many a good year.

Good morrow young Jolley – good morrow.

Its time to get deep ...

Shin Hi's rather wonderful old Chinese ploverb: (or proverb)

A man absent of a moth trap – his soul will feel empty - bereft of all joy and unable to grasp the fullness of creation. His ignorance leaves him wanting and lacking in wisdom, his hands will be full of empty time and unfulfilled energy. His thinking regarding the natural world is distorted through lack of knowledge.

A man with use of a moth trap creates wonder in his meagre and otherwise uninteresting surroundings.

A man with two moths traps made with the sweat of his own brow - placed in close proximity to his humble abode however is wise amuch – all seeing and able to understand deeper matters with impressive ease. His might is beyond measure and his stature, great and striking. The power of his arm will move great mountains effortlessly - whilst his superior mind will grasp the greater complexities of life. The wind will be his enemy but the humble one his everlasting friend.

A man with three moth traps spread over a great area is seemingly greedy and apathetic – without obvious humility and unable to grasp onto genuine wonderment. His countenance will appear joyless and his head will be adorned with the mane of a female. He will forever exude a gloomy outlook whereas to those with whom he is better acquainted they themselves will know for a certainty his hidden elation. His unseen passion is apparent only when the effort to which he applies himself is taken into account.

A man too indolent to build or go out and buy a moth trap will forever be known as Daisy king of the slow moving twin wheeled non-motorised vehicle.

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In search of the ... ‘Great Auk’!!

Part I – Zoot Allures:

Nothing to do with the 1970's Frank Zappa LP I'm afraid – anyway ... the year was 1856. It was a bright sunny day at Balmoral – so nice that Queen Victoria requests tea in the garden. “And what exactly would your majesty prefer for afternoon sustenance ma'am?” said Jeeves her most trusted butler.

“A pot of Darjeeling for one with a side plate of Auk and cucumber sandwiches please one's good man. And what about you my most adoring Albert?” – said Victoria as she glanced lovingly toward her adoring husband constantly swatting midges as he sat in a makeshift bright red deck chair opposite her – a white knotted handkerchief adorning his balding German bonce.

“You is already knowing za routine for vot I unt eat for afternoon tea mine little kitten - I vill haff eine sausage wiz za sauerkraut unt za daddies* brun sauce unt caffee with unt small flag unt farterland unt top to remind me unt farterland” replied a rather succinct and irritated Albert.

“Might sir prefer tea with his sausage?” said Jeeves in sarcastic manner - going completely over poor Albert's sense of humourless head. Jeeves often teased poor, overly serious Albert, more to impress his staff than for any personal satisfaction. Albert had proved far too easy a target for one as well versed in the art of sarcasm as Jeeves.

“Oh nein nein nein I am asking for unt caffee only beink!!” came Albert’s annoyed reply, as his deck chair collapsed from beneath him - starting off all the servants and maids into much churlish, suppressed giggling from various parts of the garden.

“Very good Sir” said Jeeves as he made his way back towards the kitchen to tell the kitchen staff about the Royal food order – a sly, barely visible grin broke out on one side of his wooden featureless face. He returned almost immediately to regrettably inform the Royal pair that the kitchen was sadly without Auk. Queen Victoria was not amused and requested a conference with her entire kitchen staff. It transpired that Auk – or Great Auk as should have been its proper title was getting a little difficult to acquire and the kitchen ordering staff were completely out of ideas as to where any could be gotten a hold of? For over twelve years the only Auks that could be bought were in fact frozen birds – fresh Auk hadn’t touched the Queens belly for well over a decade. They had tried all their normal frozen Auk outlets (MacAuks, Auks and Spencer’s etc) and frozen food suppliers like Iceland (get it?) but it turned out that the whole country was dry. But why was this so? None of the staff could offer up a satisfactory answer? Queen Vic turned to her most trusted helper and friend – Mr Brown, a bearded Billy Connolly look-alike who arrived on the scene in no time looking decidedly windswept and interesting.

“Wahattlitbe my bonny lass willya?” said Brown as he staggered, half cut into Victoria’s presence.

“One would delight in an Auk sani and there isn’t any available? One wonders if you have any ideas Mr Brown?”

“Ya did ne have any Auk did ya say?” replied Brown in his slurred Glaswegian accent. He mulled the situation over for a few seconds whilst taking a slug of whiskey from his well used worn out hip flask and replied “Leave it ta me lassy – I will keep one ear ta tha ground Vicky ma old sausage.” After fixing a fierce gaze deep into Albert’s eyes (they didn’t get on) and taking another quick swig of whiskey from his rapidly emptying flask he turned away and left.

*Although the modern invention of Daddys brown sauce was many years yet in the distant future by strange coincidence for this both scientifically and historically accurate tale - Prince Albert’s father Ernest III, Duke of Saxe-Coburg had devised a brown sauce made with fermented sausage and boiled sauerkraut ... honest!

Part II – the search for the A-Team:

Two months had passed since the Auk Sandwich incident in Balmorals gardens. Brown – industrious and conscientious as ever had surprisingly drawn a complete blank as to getting any supplies of Great Auks, threatening to let Queen Vic down for the first time since he was posted as her right hand man. After asking around all the fishing boats going to and from any ports within a 50-mile radius, Brown had found out that the Auks had disappeared from their normal breeding spots on the surrounding islands and beyond. One night during the autumn months, Brown had stumbled upon a piece of information – more of a rumour that led him to the next village and its local drunk who, as a retired fisherman (from Hertfordshire south of the border) had moved to the area of Scotland frequented by Brown and his compatriots as a travelling photographer, seamstress and agitator of men. Brown was told he had information about the whereabouts of getting these Auks via the black market and was told to go to a certain back street ale shop where there was a man with girly out of date long hair tied back with a piece of plastic coated wire trace, who liked to shout his mouth off after a few glasses of the local ‘Ale’. His name was Dilbert Naffall - Brown was pre-warned to allow many hours of angry opinions and boring rants about various local authority figures but when sufficiently inebriated Brown was told that the fellow would no doubt divulge the information that Brown needed as Dilbert just couldn’t keep his big trap shut after the required amount of beverage. If Brown could be patient and sit through a torrent of semi drunken drivel then perhaps Dilbert might let the information slip?

So off Brown went into the dark dank Scottish countryside where wild haggis still roamed and the bagpipe was the chosen tool of torture. Eventually he found both the alehouse and the resident Mr Naffall in position just as his informant had said he would be. As Brown made his approach – Naffall was already mid rant, boring all within earshot – his slurred speech resonating throughout the 14th century drinking establishment causing many of the locals to don the ear muffs the bar owner hired out for such occasions. At one farthing a pair the bar owner had indeed become the first entrepreneur in the local area – due solely to this enterprising ear muff idea which had already amassed him a personal fortune of twelve pounds and sixpence, making him into the fifth richest man in that part of Scotland.

This illustrates perfectly both the amount of time Naffal spent in the boozier as well as the quantity of his well intentioned semi inebriated mind numbingly boring waffling that would emanate on occasion from his overly large hippy gob.

Now to cut an awfully long story short for you the beloved reader of such nonsense - the now fully intoxicated Naffal eventually refers Brown to his main man - a shady midget who he maintains has a source of Great Auk or anything else you might need for that matter. Naffal says he can get hold of anything 'under the counter' as it were. Brown - thinking the term 'under the counter' was a metaphoric rather than a literal term gets agitated with Dilbert's rather vague semi drunken waffle but then notices a very short strange looking man of unkempt appearance and shoes up to his bum standing 'under the counter!' "That's him" slurs Dilbert ... "He's the man you need to speak to" as he goes off into a tangent of mindless rage when he hears the unspoken words 'Booted Eagle' from the other side of the bar. The midget - now gets eye contact with Brown and comes over and introduces himself "Hi there - I'm Denny MacGadget - what can I do for you sir?"

Denny MacGadget as he's known to all those into dodgy dealings is an ex used cart salesman well renowned for selling shoddy standard overpriced carts to the rather gullible local gentry etc. His lack of height belies his massive ability to get his own way and his reckless pursuit of power and influence akin to an ability to win over anyone with his ability to barter and bully his opponent is legendary in the area.

After the initial meetings and greetings - Brown goes into great length to explain his predicament regarding the royal Auk sani and Denny MacGadget mulls over the chance of making a few bob. It turns out that although he hasn't any personal supplies of the Auks as Dilbert had intimated, Denny MacGadget knows 'a source' - a location of where to obtain the Auks that Brown is so desperate to purchase.

MacGadget has a 'name' "but it'll cost mind" says the stunted criminal type. "How mooch?" replies Brown who is renowned as the tightest Scotchman since little Jimmy McTight the notorious tight-fisted moneylender and founder member of the International famous Glaswegian company 'McTight and MacNally Co Ltd' who met his demise after foolishly allowing a sixpence to slip out of his sporran on a business trip to Niagara falls. As the sixpence rolled near to the edge of the raging waterfall an anguished cry was all that was heard as the mean Scottish multi billionaire dived to his death in a vain attempt to save the dropped coin. After an extensive search all that was initially found was his upper set of wooden hand made false teeth and his left hand - minus the arm, which contained the dropped sixpence in a vicelike death grip. His severed head was found a week later sporting an overly large smile - showing he'd knowingly grabbed hold of the sixpence before passing on.

Back in the alehouse - the longest ever in the history of longest ever tugs of wars ensues as to the price of the said information. Denny MacGadget clings on for farthing like a demented hungry rabid pit bull hanging onto a cat's tail whilst Brown sweats over every nickel he might lose out on in typical Scottish fashion - the irresistible force verses the immovable object. Eventually after 17 days 4 hours 18 minutes and 14 seconds of haggling a price is finally agreed and a worn out MacGadget hands over a crumpled piece of paper that he's just scrawled a few words on - it contains only one sentence - it reads 'The A-team 27 Shaftsbury avenue London SE3.

"Whata ya call this ya stunted wee twerp ya arr?"

Denny MacGadget, near to death after the near 18-day ordeal slumps down into the children's high chair he's been negotiation the high-pressure transaction from. Just before he falls unconscious with fatigue he whispers "Go to the address and ask for captain Toothy O'Wurzel - he will do the rest."

Now Toothy was an ex builder who had worked as a consultant with Thomas Telford on the rebuilding of the London Bridge and Isambard Kingdom Brunel (a fellow Wurzel) on the Clifton Suspensions bridge. Since then he'd put together a crew of pioneering ornithologists who had a secret site - the last known refuge of the Great Auk. Toothy hadn't always been much of a seafarer but had stumbled on this outlet of fun after falling off some poorly erected scaffolding into a children's boating pool in 1822 and having his life saved by a small child's model tea clipper, which he hung on to for dear life until rescue was at hand. His newly acquired love of the sea and the avian world led him on many trips throughout the known Victorian globe and with his crack team of octogenarian wrinklies namely - Johnny 'the wig' Websper and Johnny 'the worth womble' Hollyer at hand - no destination had proved to

dangerous for this valiant crew of wobbly old geezers with binoculars. The Great Auk population had been in great decline for many years and old Captain Toothy o' Wurzel knew of the favoured top-secret breeding grounds, which they had last visited twenty years previous.

Three days later after a mammoth trek from Scotland (on foot to save the train fare) Brown arrives at Shaftsbury Avenue with the crumpled piece of paper he negotiated over many hours three days prior. He finds number 27 and rings the bell and after a brief wait where he can hear much grunting and muffled west country mumbling from the other side of the door he eventually comes face to face with Captain Toothy O' Wurzel. Brown explains his predicament regarding the Royal Auk sandwich and after a few Oooh arr's he's invited into Toothy's den for further discussion.

The conversation lasts for over two exasperating hours and goes something along these lines:

Capt.T O'Wurzel: "Now let me get this roit – is you are sain' t'me that you will pay me and my wrinkly associates 28 guineas fur getting you a reliable source of tha Great Hawk?? Is that what yer sayin' t'me mister Brown?"

Brown: "Look for the forty seventh time man that is exactly what I trying to get through to you - you silly old twit – I'm losing the will t'live here man!!"

So a deal was 'eventually' reached and to cut a long story short Brown was told to arrive at the East India docks at 1600 hours the following day to sail for the secret Great Auk spot far far away. Brown was told to bring food, drink and some clean underwear, as the journey could be a long one. As proper kilt wearing men don't wear any underwear Brown was happy enough to fill his pant space in his kit bag with extra whiskey.

Part III – the sailing:

Brown arrived at the dock 30 minutes before the 1600-hour deadline. He was conscientious to a fault where old Queen Victoria's duties were concerned. At first he struggled to find Captain Toothy but then after hearing a flurry of Ooooooohh Arr's coming from a ship on the opposite side of the dock named the 'SS Dribbley Hasbeen' he headed ship ward and within a jiffy Brown was welcomed aboard m'harty then formerly introduced to the crew of the SS Dribbley - the infamous portrait artist Half Nelson Hollyer and Johnny 'the wig' Websper - both men of massive age and arthritic knees. Brown nervously enquired as to the whereabouts of the rest of the crew but was told that the three OAP's and himself are going to sail the ship themselves without any help from men of youth and clear thinking. Being a Scottish person Brown wasn't overly perturbed – if I fall overboard or we sink I'll drink the ocean dry and walk home he thinks to himself in good highlander type fashion. Nothing but nothing scares a man who has lived to over twenty years of age in the slums of Glasgow during the industrial revolution. This thinking proves a little ambitious when after setting sail the crew fall into unprovoked OAP dozing within 2 miles of reaching the North Sea!! Brown administered a stiff telling to the wrinkelies with the threat of a Glaswegian headbut as a side issue of intent if they didn't stay awake for more that 30 minutes at a time. Other issues continued to arise. One in particular happened off the coast of Essex when Captain Toothy confused by age and other issues shouted land ahoy and tried to re-enter the Thames estuary thinking it to be their destination which was in fact about a thousand miles due north!! An alert Mr. Brown pointed out his mistake otherwise they'd have ended up pretty much where they'd started? After a few hours of heading north darkness started to close in and Brown started to wonder how they were going to navigate the vessel at night as up until then Captain Toothy had kept land in view at all times and was obviously using this visual aid as a bearing. Brown was assured not to worry 'Oooh arr it be alroit m'harty' sang Captain Toothy in shanty fashion when up on top deck appeared head navigator Johnny 'the wig' Websper armed with a box of candles?? Brown, anticipating the candles were going to be used as semi useless lanterns to light up what was ahead actually started to worry, but old Johnny had a trick or two up his 97-year-old sleeve after many years at sea. Brown with much relief, marvelled as the old salty seadog Johnny removed his teeth, attached a candle to the upper set and after hiding the rest of the box of candles under his special issue 100% waterproof sea farers wig, he lined up the teeth on the newly exposed north star and uses them as a makeshift sextant!! Perhaps these old fogies's did know what they were on about after all thinks Brown?? Any confidence once again proved short lived as on the second day they accidentally wandered into Norwegian waters and they were boarded by a warlike Norwegian crew accusing Captain Toothy of being a pirate due to his silly pseudo west country accent (the little known cold war between the Norwegians and the British

was in full flow hence the problems between the polar explorers and Everest missions in latter years) and only resisted arrest due to Browns violent outburst which could ruffle a pack or rampaging Lions at 200 paces let alone a couple of Nancy boy Norwegian sailors! But then disaster struck when on Half Nelson Hollyer's watch just after midnight on the third day - he ran out of 'medicinal port' as he so eloquently put it and left the ships steering unattended whilst he undertook the two day walk to the opposite end of the ship for a refresher. Unfortunately the SS Dribbley ran aground on a sand bank and the entire crew were cast overboard into the North Sea 48 miles off the coast of east Yorkshire. Still Captain O'Toothy's ingenuity came to the fore and once again proved his worth when he removed his enormous kaki whale skin blubber greased shorts which they used as a makeshift life raft for the rest of the two year long journey up north to the islands southeast of Iceland (The country this time - not the freezer shop) to the exact spot where the Great Auks were or should have been present. Many things were discussed during those long nights during the northward sailing. One question asked by Brown was "Why the A-Team?" It turned out the name arose after three of the OAP's found out that they suffered with many things starting with the letter 'A' some of which were - asthma, alzheimers and alca seltzer addiction. Food soon became a problem, as within a week and three days the rations were down to 4 biscuits, a small lump of cheese and the gathering mould that was accumulating under Johnny's wig. They managed to eek this out for the duration of the trip. Men were real men back in those days eh? Just when things were starting to look bleak and both Johnny Hollyer and captain Toothy were considering the delights of making a meal out of Johnny W's wig with a sauce extracted from the stains in Browns sporran, land was at last sighted on the horizon. A hearty 'hoorah' went up from all aboard Captain Toothy's whale skin shorts.

They eventually arrive in Iceland smack in the middle of the 1859 Auk breeding season - only 23 months 2 days late, which wasn't too bad under the circumstances?

Part IV - the thingamy:

In Iceland everything continued to go wrong - firstly when it became apparent that the Auks were not where they were supposed to be - not even one single bird could be found? Some local fisherman and women were approached, though the rather strained but friendly conversation proved impossible as the trusty OAP's from the south couldn't understand a word of Icelandic. Then the locals mistake Captain Toothy's repeated requests for 'Auk' and take him to meet what turned out to be the descendants of Bjork!! Luckily mister and misses Bjork, who had eaten all the local Great Auk on the initial island of choice, knew of an island just off the east coast of where they lived where they thought the last remnant of Great Auks may still bred? So off the intrepid four went in foul weather and language risking life and limb for queen and country. Things at last were looking up and the Island was found without any further mishaps and it was here they met the long lost Captain Pye who had gone missing a decade prior after a rum drinking competition in Bognor Regis and was presumed dead at sea after his boat went missing two hours after he'd left the drinking establishment plastered within an inch of his life after downing half a gallon of rum in thirteen alcohol glugging, prize winning minutes. By pure chance Captain Toothy knew Captain Pye well, as not only had he taught Captain Toothy a thing or two about the art of sailing a Tea Clipper way back when they were more youthful lads back in Plymouth but Captain Toothy fell in love with Captain Pye's youngest daughter and pursued her for many years with marriage in mind. Captain Pye's daughter - Henrietta (an unfortunate meeting of two words) however was no beauty - Captain Toothy fell in love with her soul and the fact that she could set a sail whilst making tea and toast for a hearty crew in only four minutes and thirty seconds, which was an extra added bonus. It was banded around in Victorian Britain that poor Henrietta was indeed one of the most ugly women of all time. Even during the 21st century it was still being debated amongst eminent socialites that if she'd been born 100 years later she could have starred as a Klingon in Star Trek and not needed an ounce of makeup. Old sepia photos of Pye's daughter in later years shows that Henrietta proved even uglier than the ugliest woman still alive in our day - Penny Mallory the ex female rally driver and star of free-view TV's cheapskate car programme 'Used Car Road show' where she shows of her seemingly semi decomposed face with gay abandon completely unaware of how many viewers are frightened out of their wits as they've accidentally stumbled upon the programme whilst flicking through the channels and find her grimacing death stare glaring back at them through the TV screen. Anyway back in Iceland - Captain Toothy and Pye said their hellos and after chatting for many hours about old times, back slapping like a pair of old seals they were eventually shown by Captain Pye the last haunt of the legendary Great Auk. Captain Pye had been living off then for the past nine years after waking up with an enormous headache in a nearby cove with absolutely no knowledge about how on earth he'd managed to arrive there?? The entire island was completely devoid of food but after a week of eating pebbles, and volcanic rock stew laced with his own dandruff, Captain Pye - weak and

suicidal, luckily stumbled on a cave where deep in an eight-foot thick ice sheet he came across a store of many hundreds of deep frozen Auks that had become trapped and died many decades back after a huge winter storm. He was so sick of the sight of them that he would only be too glad to allow the crew to take their fill of them for old Queen Vic.

Part V – Rocky III:

To push on towards the fulfilment of this little tale - they set off across the rocky terrain and within only a few minutes walk (about two hours for the aging crew mind you) they come across a small sea alcove and there was the cave Pye had told them about. “How absolutely splendid” says Hollyer through Sherry filled lips. “OOOOooo Arrr” says Toothy through straw filled teeth! Johnny Websper was held back on lookout for Dragons, which the three OAP travellers still believed existed back then. Even to this day they are not entirely certain they were creatures of ancient mythology? Poor old Johnny Websper still believes that ‘The Land That Time Forgot’ is a documentary and waffles on endlessly about how brave lead actor Doug McClure was and how lucky he was to have escaped the imploding Island. Anyway - in a jiffy Brown, brave as any human can be, totally unafraid of the certain dragon attack his three OAP companions feel is imminent, starts digging manically at the ice with his bare hands and come across 14 delicious looking Auks. After exhumation, they end up in a potato sack and are carried back to the whale skin shorts ship where O’Toothy and his trusty crew say their goodbyes to Captain Pye and the Bjorks before setting sail – the midnight sun still glowing on their backs. Captain Pye didn’t fancy 2 years spent at sea in a pair of oversized khaki shorts covered in whale blubber with three OAP lunatics and an alcoholic psychotic Scotsman so stayed put hoping to be rescued by a more seaworthy vessel in the future.

Two turgid, life threatening years at sea later in Toothy’s whale skin shorts – specially adapted for extra added speed by the addition of a sail which they fashioned from a pair of Mrs Bjork’s knickers they’d half inched off her washing line when she wasn’t looking - they arrive back in London and Brown walks the 450 miles back to Scotland with the prize Auks in a specially adapted oversized seal skin sporran he’d fashioned during the sailing home. The weather is treacherous – wind and rain followed by gales and extra torrential rain – through endless knee deep muddy trails, hillocks, gorges etc and taking on many roadside vagabonds eager to steal his prized assets – they were all brutally attacked and left with broken limbs and skulls such was the savagery of Browns manic single minded march back to Balmoral. Then on a brutally cold February day in 1862 Brown staggers over another ice laded hill and there at last in the distance he spots Balmoral ... a frozen tear is snapped from his weather-beaten brow as he realises that he’s made it ... well almost. He reflects on the past five and half-year vigil to acquire those damned Auks Her Majesty ... his beloved Queen, friend and confidant – and all the things he’s been through to get them. He loses consciousness and falls down an icy crevice breaking both legs, his neck and pelvis – but after coming around he still manages to drag himself to the locked gates of the castle grounds where he’s found groaning and coughing in a pool of his own semi congealed semi alcoholic blood and rushed into the servants quarters where he falls into a coma – his still frozen kilt and beard rigid with ice! A doctor is called but the news isn’t good. A mixture of Kilt Mould alongside of his four year forced abstinence of needed Whiskey with which he has formed a life dependant relationship means the doctor gives him less than two hours to live.

Brown wakes – asks for his queen as he still feels duty bound to deliver the Auks personally – she’s locked herself away in a broom cupboard after Albert’s death less than a year past and cant stand the thought of facing an Auk sani anyway as it just reminds her of summer days out on the lawns in the castle grounds with her beloved husband in days gone by. With a blood curdling cry of ‘WHISKY’ Brown passes away in mind numbing agony. In true Highlander tradition his still frozen body is tossed out of the nearest window so as to feed the local Ravens and Buzzards and the bony remnants are retrieved, later being ground into a paste and mixed with the next bulk pot of porridge before being fed to his next of kin at a knees up at the local tavern in his memory.

So unfortunately this rather ridiculous but historically accurate tale doesn’t have a happy ending. The poor old Great Auk was hunted to extinction, Albert and Brown both passed away and Queen Victoria went down with brain bugs – a condition which pursued her for the rest of her days on this earth.

THE END

Great Auk Postscript: 'Where are they now?'

As for the three intrepid swashbuckling OAP's:

John 'the wig' Websper made his fortune selling wigs to celebrities such as Bruce Forsythe, Paul Daniels and Amy Winehouse and currently resides in a mock Tudor castle in Margate, Kent. Word has it that his collection of well-used false teeth is the finest ever assembled and is worth many fortunes.

Johnny Hollyer – gave up the sea and went on to model Womble costumes for Mike Batts Company 'Wombat's' before Benny Hill snapped him up as a stunt double. He still pursues fame like a demented I'm a celebrity contestant as a 21st century Rolf Harris impersonator. He lives to this day in a shed in Worth, Kent where he paints small fish, plants and anything else that accidentally gets in his way.

Captain Toothy – carried on with his voyages of discovery over the seven seas – went on to discover the rarely seen Madagascar Invisible Parrot and lives in small village in East Kent where he and his eighth wife plan cruises all over the globe in search of rare birds.

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Inspirational music used during the small wee hours during the writing of this epic avian study was: Acoustic Ladyland, Bjork, old Muse, King Crimson, Scott Walker, Brian Eno, Radiohead, Gorecki, Beethoven, Wagner and John Coltrane. Next year I are be listnin' to ... Carly Simon.

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If you would like to complain about the vast amount of awfully dull information about birds in this bird report or wish to register your disgust at the serious tone or overly elaborate highly intellectual content of the material within it then please send your correspondence to the head of our complaints department at:

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Los Endos ... Adios Amigo's.

The The Pigwell Bay Berd Riport was created by 'pHlumPH
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