

BadgerNews

THE NEWSLETTER OF GWENT BADGER GROUP | SPRING 2021



Tribute to Nova Barrows



Gwent Badger Group is saddened to report the death of Nova Barrows on 6th

January this year.

Nova, who was the wife of GBG Chairman, Colin Barrows, was an active and popular member of the group and had a lifelong love of wildlife and gardening.

Born Nova Thornborrow in Handsworth, her family moved, during the war, to Oxfordshire and then on to Wales in 1947 where they settled at "The Walnut Tree Cottage" in Mamhilad.

After attending Goytre school, Nova worked briefly for a market gardener who persuaded her to attend the Agricultural College at the Rhadyr, Usk to study gardening. On leaving college Nova worked for Major General Rees at Goytre Hall and then went on to work at Nantyerry nurseries.



Nova Barrows

Nova met Colin at Raglan Castle in 1961 and after their marriage the couple moved to Ffynnonau Cottage which belonged to the Clytha estate. The gardens were rather neglected and covered with brambles but through her hard work they became her pride and joy.

Following the birth of daughters

Anna (1966) and Esther (1969) Nova settled into a devoted family life with her girls and her pet cats. Badgers would emerge from the sett at the bank behind her cottage and Nova liked to watch them for as long as possible. After the sett was disturbed by the Monmouthshire hunt in 1985 Nova became involved with the Gwent Badger Group and attended most meetings and functions until recently, when Parkinson's disease, which was first diagnosed in 2005, took a firm hold. Her hand tied fresh foliage decorations at GBG Christmas parties were always an attractive and welcome touch. Her husband Colin added: "Nova, with her ability to listen to and make friends with everyone she met will be missed by all. No stray cat was ever turned away from the cottage and each visitor was welcomed in for a cup of tea."

A note from the Treasurer...



As we roll into another year, I am mindful, due to Covid, recent accounts have not been laid before an AGM for consideration and approval.

If you need reassurance, the Group is in fine financial health. The final accounts for 2019 will show a surplus of income over expenditure of £707, and in 2020 £96 (the difference mainly due to Gift Aid claims, which for 2020 have yet to be received).

Hopefully before too long we shall have an AGM when full details will be laid before you.

Finally, a plea, members have been reminded that subscriptions were raised in 2019 to £15 for individual members, £20 for family membership while the



senior/junior rate remained at £2.50 (there being insufficient members at the AGM to consider this due to the wording of our constitution). Would you please ensure you pay the correct amount (this may mean notifying your bank to vary your standing order). Sadly, several

members have not increased which can only lead to a reduction in our ability to help and protect the badger population.

Take care – keep safe – have fun.
Paul



Registered Charity No. 507651

Following the passing of the 1973 Badgers Act the Gwent Badger Group was formed in May 1974 as a small group of people interested in uniting their efforts to enforce the Act locally and estimate its effectiveness. The Group aims to protect and study badgers, educate the public and where necessary offers assistance in dealing with the problems badgers may cause.

Contact Details

Web site

www.gwentbadgergroup.org.uk

Who's Who

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Persecution continues.....



Whilst many of us have our movement and actions restricted by Covid lockdown, there are still those who move around the countryside illegally with the aim of targeting wildlife. A recent incident where GBG has given assistance is, possibly, just one example of offences that go unnoticed in the pandemic. Firstly, a call from the RSPCA to attend a digging incident near Brecon. Four dogs were found at the scene and one man had been taken into police custody. On visiting the site all of the entrances to the sett were blocked and there had been two attempts to dig in to the sett – both holes nearly 1m x 1m (3ft x 3ft) square – one dug to a depth of 1m (3ft) the other to a depth of .6m (2ft) – an indication the diggers had been on site some considerable time. Following an intensive search of the area the spades and bars used in the offence were found hidden in a nearby ditch. After many hours it was established the person detained had been unfortunate enough to have been in the immediate area at the time of the incident but was not involved in any way and was duly released. At the time of going to press there is no indication of whether the owner/s had tried to reclaim the dogs – which would be a sure sign of involvement.

New treatment centre for SWWR



Construction started in October 2020 of a brand new treatment centre for wildlife casualties at Secret World Wildlife Rescue (SWWR) in Somerset. This charity receives no Government funding and is looking for donations to fund the rest of the building project. Founder Pauline Kidner started treating injured or young, orphaned deer, badgers, hedgehogs, birds, etc in her farmhouse kitchen many years ago. As demand for space grew, outbuildings and Portacabins were used but now even these have been surpassed and are outdated. Planning permission is running out for the Portacabins by the end of this year and cannot be renewed. SWWR has treated and advised on many badgers for GBG over the years and are open from 8am to 8pm 365 days a year, taking in wildlife casualties from many



different parts of the UK, not just locally. If you would like help this fantastic project move towards completion please contact SWWR on: info@secretworld.org
01278 768700
(Lesley Browne, CEO)
Or: 01278 768701
(Pauline Kidner, Founder)

The truth behind 'no cull' statement



Please ignore the attention-grabbing headlines stating that it is to be "banned".

You may remember that around this time last year we were all discussing the government's announcement that badger culling would be phased out.

Unfortunately many people believed that this meant that culling was over and this is not the case.

Below we have summarised the proposals regarding culling and included the consultation and PDF detailing the full proposals. We will be writing a longer piece on the entire proposal shortly.

In short, the government is currently proposing to make various changes to the bTB control strategy and, as intensive and widespread culling was only ever intended to be a "phase" of the strategy, this is the time they have decided to prepare to move to non-lethal methods. The cull-specific parts of the proposal are:

1. No new licences for intensive culling (zones culling for 4yrs) will be issued after 2022
2. New zones granted licences in 2021 and 2022 could see these licences revoked after only 2 or 3

years if a progress report concludes it necessary

3. Supplementary culling (the 'maintenance' culls which follow on from the 4yr culls) will be limited to 2yrs, with no re-issuing of licences to areas which have already completed supplementary culling



4. Some local areas may still see some culling of badgers occur if it is deemed necessary in the future
In practice we could still see new zones given licenses in 2022 and carrying on for 4yrs (finishing in 2025) then moving on to a 2yr supplementary cull in the area, meaning culling would end in 2027 in those zones. What it means for current supplementary zones is yet to be seen - depending on when the proposals are acted upon (and if changes are made to them) we could still be fighting supplementary culls in Gloucestershire and elsewhere this

year despite it already occurring for longer than 2yrs.

The idea of a 2yr period of supplementary culling is to give areas time to train and prepare for widespread vaccination of badgers and of cattle to avoid any 'limbo period'. The reason that 2022 has been decided on as the last potential year for issuing licences is to allow any areas which are interested in culling and have not previously signed up to prepare for culling and to apply for a licence. And, remember, these are the current proposals. So nothing is set in stone anyway...

The Consultation:

[Bovine tuberculosis: consultation on proposals to help eradicate the disease in England. - Defra - Citizen Space](#)

Prior to completing the consultation you would need to read the following PDF as not all of it refers to the cull. Up to page 22 gives you the information, the remainder of the pages are annexes to refer to. The PDF is here:

[2021 bTB Consultation .pdf \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)

This article was first published by Gloucestershire Badger Office (28th January 2021) and is reproduced with their kind permission.

Amazon Smile



GBG is now signed up to Amazon Smile . This means that if you choose to shop with Amazon and select GBG as your chosen charity at smile.amazon.co.uk you will get the same shopping experience but 0.5 per cent of the net purchase price of eligible purchases will go to GBG.

Remember you have to use smile.amazon.co.uk.



Badger births and fatalities



Despite mating at almost any time within the year, mid-February remains the peak time for the birth of badger cubs. Litter size ranges from one to five cubs, with two or three the more common number. At birth a cub would weigh about 100g (4 ozs) increasing to 1,500g (3lbs) at about 8 weeks - which is when most cubs come above ground for the first time. Small, noisy cubs above ground in daylight are a cause of concern. This could indicate the hungry cub is searching for its mother who has left the sett but failed to return - possibly due to injury or death when foraging. Many cub rescues have come about as a result of laying the dead lactating sow close to the nearest sett and if the cubs come above ground they will follow her scent and remain with her rather than wandering off to suffer starvation or predation. This offers a chance to monitor and rescue them.



Bramble at two weeks old

February is not only the peak time for births but also the month when the highest number of RTA's are recorded. Males, looking for females to mate with, become territorial leading to increased movement around their areas. Younger males will fight ferociously with the older males inflicting deep wounds, normally to the rump and drive them from their home range. If you see a dead badger by the roadside and it is safe to check it, try and ascertain if it is a lactating sow. There could be small, vulnerable cubs nearby.

Callouts



The Group received a request to assist in an investigation into sett interference near Clytha, Raglan. The incident was reported to GBG by PC Louise Thorpe, one of the local Wildlife Crime Officers (WCO's) with the Gwent Police Rural Crime Team and it was felt the entrances to the sett in question had been filled in. Obstructing access to a badger sett is an offence under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Larry Howe volunteered to meet PC Thorpe at the site to inspect the damage. The site was an historic monument and the damage had been done by sheep trampling around the holes! Other entrances showed signs that badgers were still in residence. It was agreed that the reinstating of a fence around the sett would prevent further damage.

In addition to Larry, Dave Cooksey has also been willing to attend incidents when members of the public have contacted the group with concerns about badgers. As GBG is a registered Charity we are permitted to attend incidents relating to badger welfare despite restrictions due to Covid-19.

Where do your Subs go?



As a supporter of GBG you may occasionally wonder how your subscription is used. It is true that, like many organisations, we have not been as active during Covid 19 lockdown. However there is still the reserve to be maintained (hedges to cut, strimming and tree surgery), plus sacks of peanuts for the resident badgers! We try to answer as many enquiries and call outs as possible from concerned members of the public or Police regarding badgers. A Newsletter is produced and delivered on a quarterly basis. We pay an insurance premium for the group's activities. Accounts are

kept and a membership list updated. A yearly fee is paid to the national organisation Badger Trust in order to be an affiliated group and benefit from their resources and keep up to date with national campaigns. Then there are sometimes vet bills for sick or injured badgers and sadly those that have to be euthanased.

This is a group of volunteers who give their time freely in the listed activities.

We plan to revamp and update the GBG website to keep our members informed of news and events.

When Covid 19 restrictions ease we are available to give educational talks on badgers to schools and

other interested groups who require a speaker.

Lastly, we hope to be able to meet up in the near future for an AGM and a modest social, even if it is just a gathering for tea, cake and a chat in the open air, observing social distancing of course. Watch this space.

Thank you for your continued and valuable support.

