

Committee Profile: Ron Blagden - Honorary Secretary

I suppose I have always been interested in wildlife, but my interest in birdwatching really began in the Sixth Form at 'King Ted's'. The Biology Department had formed a Natural History Society, and I was friendly with some of the members.

There was a trip to a place called Bempton one weekend, there was a spare place on the mini-bus (actually a converted ambulance), and did I want to come? I said yes, even though I had no bins, no suitable clothing, and only a vague idea which coast it was on. I can honestly say that the place took my breath away. The noise, the smell(!) and the sight of thousands of sea birds was amazing. I could not wait to go on the next, more local trips, my birthday present five months later was a pair of 8x40 Greenkat binoculars (a fortune at £20), and I was hooked.

The other defining moment in my local birding came nearly two years later, in March 1974. I had heard of a site on the moors in North Derbyshire not far from the south-west of Sheffield, and so, one Saturday morning, caught the bus to Owlbar. I then trekked the mile or so to this place: Barbrook Reservoir. The first bird I saw was a ringtail Hen Harrier (a tick), and I decided that this would be a good local patch. This place took up many hundreds of hours of my time over the next twenty-nine years.

I first met local 'celebrities' such as Roy Frost and Mick Taylor here, together with a keen motor-cycling birder from Chesterfield with amazing long range eyesight (now your Recorder). I also found my only current 'BB' rarity there (Baird's Sandpiper in September 1983). More recently, as family commitments have drastically reduced my birding, I tried to spend a few hours here on a Saturday or Sunday, invariably finding that John Atkin was there already. Sadly, the site is a shadow of its former self following drainage by Severn-Trent Water.

Involvement with SBSG began in the mid-1970's, when meetings were held at the Museum. The main reason for going was the Recorders Report, and to meet other, like minded birders. (young birders today forget that there were no pagers, no 'Birdline', few young people with their own cars and, in my case, no home telephone!). In 1992 I was asked to join the Committee, and have been a member ever since, becoming Treasurer in the mid 1990's. It is not too onerous and has the reward of helping to run an organisation which I think is the best £14 worth a South Yorkshire/North Derbyshire birder can buy.

Ron Blagden