



## Strapwort makes a comeback

**N**ot every village has a national treasure, but Slapton has its own little gem – Strapwort (*Corrigiola litoralis*). This plant is so rare that we have the only population left in the UK.

This insignificant little plant was once found in abundance along the exposed shingle shores of the Lower Ley. But after years of steady decline it had disappeared from its two main sites and was clinging on, in single figures, at the boat moorings. Urgent action

was needed! So in 2005 the FSC and the Whitley Trust (Painpton Zoo) launched a joint initiative to gain a better understanding of the habitat requirements of this precious little plant and set about working to increase the size of the remaining population.

The first stage of the painstaking process was to gather seed from the flower heads of the few remaining plants. The seed was propagated in a polytunnel at Painpton Zoo under the watchful eye of their curator of plants. In the spring of 2006 these were planted out to boost Slapton's small remaining population. This proved to be highly successful! Seed from these introductions produced over one hundred plants the following year.

A similar process was carried out on the former site at Hartshorn in 2008 and 2009 and the results have been dramatic, with over two thousand examples recorded this year.



We now need to work to maintain these populations with the eventual aim of re-establishing a viable population at Slapton Ley, and even encouraging the re-introduction of Strapwort to other suitable sites in the country.

## Let's celebrate!

**C**elebrate Start Bay defied the weather at the end of August to welcome an estimated 1500 visitors to Slapton Field Centre and the Village Hall. The show was opened by artist Sarah Gillespie who has painted the Slapton Ley Nature Reserve extensively and Caroline Curtis of Eden Designs who designed the makeover of the Field Centre's grounds.

Have-a-go activities on the day included pizza making, bug hunting, wildflower spotting, pot throwing, a singing workshop, bush craft and woodworking. Canoeing and kayaking were offered on the Ley as a 'one off'. A 'Secret Slapton' walk to parts of the nature reserve not normally seen by the public ended with refreshments at the Stokeley Barton farm shop.

Budding young actors directed by Rebecca Crookshank from SHAC (South Hams Arts Collective) interpreted the theme of the 50 year anniversary of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to an impressed audience.



Well-attended talks included beekeeping, how green is your garden, changes in farming and the community over 50 years, and also the future of the Slapton Line. A wide variety of stalls provided information about activities in the area as well as goods and products from local suppliers.

Head of Centre Andy Pratt commented "there was a buzz all day despite the weather. The event proved a fun way for locals and visitors to participate in and find out more about the diversity of activities and products available in Start Bay."



## Learning with a changing coast

**T**his summer the *Learning With A Changing Coast* project gave 82 children from Stokenham, St John the Baptist R.C. and East Allington Primary Schools the opportunity to learn more about the issues facing the Start Bay Coast and the local community, and to think about possible solutions.

We started by thinking about the local geography and the importance of the coast road linking Torcross and Slapton. The coastline round Slapton is continually changing – during the last ice age the coast was 25 miles further out and the bar has not always been here. Now the sea is close to the road; the storm of 2001 washed away parts of the shingle bar, damaging the road and impacting on the local community.

Then a chance to think about the future. Overall, we had some very imaginative and innovative solutions to a problem that adults have yet to solve! Some of the children were determined to protect the road at all costs. They had many ideas on how to overcome the power of the sea including giant sea walls, tunnels with windows and a huge bridge spanning Slapton Sands. Other children thought we should rebuild the road every time it washed away. Some imagined a future without a road, and were even positive about the idea of an area with no road so they could play, ride bikes and use a horse and cart to travel from Torcross to Strete along the shingle.

Our thanks to all the partners involved in the project including Dartmouth Golf Club players, who contributed 5p per cup of coffee bought at the club; Slapton Line Partnership; Tally Ho Coaches who provided transport; Start Bay Centre who assisted with leading the groups.

Next year we hope to provide opportunities to more children from other schools in the local area including some secondary schools. Please contact the Centre if you would like to find out more about the project.

*Bryony Swinfen, Senior Tutor*

## Asthma Alley breaths again!

'Asthma Alley' (as it is affectionately known) is the precipitous route linking Lower Bow Park at the top of Wood Lane with the upper path in Slapton Wood. Over recent years it had fallen into disuse and total disrepair. But with increasing numbers of students using study sites within the wood, taking this route would mean less time walking – so more time for working!

With one hundred, soggy leaf covered steps in urgent need of repair help was needed. Our solution – BTCV to the rescue! We were delighted when Brian and James from the Plymouth-based BTCV group offered help. The project was undertaken under the government's E2E scheme, (Entry to Employment), which gives 16-18 year olds practical work experience. The restoration was completed to a high standard, just in time for the new student intake. Our thanks to the entire BTCV team.

Why 'Asthma Alley'? Try the uphill journey – the answer will be painfully clear!



## The little things in life

**I**t's easy enough to go out and buy a digital camera. Getting to know how to use it, seeing the magical worlds of nature open up – that's something else!

I was in just that position. New camera – with its impenetrable new manual! A background in birding and botany and an interest in the natural environment. Above all, the need to learn both the jargon and how to use photography to see nature.

I was lucky. I got a place on a two-part course offered by Adrian Davies at Slapton Ley Field Centre. The introductory weekend taught us a lot: how to use the camera; how to use the computer to process the results; how to see everyday nature all about us. The second part of the course took us to a variety of venues –



## SUPPER IN THE SUN

Slapton Ley Field Centre kicked off this summer season with its newly-designed outdoor catering area. Each week we fired up the wood-fuelled brick pizza oven and the BBQ to offer alfresco suppers to our visitors. The catering staff produced a variety of pizzas, salads, desserts, freshly brewed coffees as well as the odd cup of tea.

We had some memorable early evenings! The mild summer evenings allowed staff and visitors alike to sit under the new canvas canopies next to the fragrant herb garden, and enjoy the atmosphere of outdoor cooking in good company with a few laughs.



*Above: Bird's-nest fungus – each tiny cup of spores is 1cm across.*

*Right: Skullcap (Scutellaria galericulata) – one flower is about the size of a small fingertip!*

places that would challenge our use of the digital camera. In this part of Devon, with Slapton Ley on the doorstep, you're spoilt for choice!

It was a good course with a friendly group of mature students. Our tutor – a professional photographer and experienced lecturer – knew not just about photography, but also how to help his students. We learnt photographic techniques and about

the natural environment. Importantly, we developed our own individual interests.

New discoveries were made. Bird's-

nest fungus, never previously recorded at Slapton, excited us all. Skullcap, a tiny blue flower important to herbalists, was found by the nature trail. Photography had truly opened up a world of nature discovery for us all.

*Brenda Child*



## Slapton goes to the beach

**W**hat a summer! Once again during August we packed up the trailer and headed for the beach where we delivered a staggering 51 events in 31 days! Despite the adverse weather we attracted a staggering 2807 visitors – that's 108 per day – not including people who attended events from our summer programme which totalled over 400!

The summer events programme kept people of all ages entertained throughout August, from guided walks to hands-on activities. The trailer has proven to be very popular with both holidaymakers and local residents. Hopefully it will become another reason people visit Start Bay rather than a bonus attraction they happen upon.



The trailer had some fresh additions this year – a new sign announcing 'Slapton Ley Beach Trailer', interpretation panels and a table banner. There will be more upgrades in the future.

Lastly, we would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped ensure the smooth running of the trailer making it as successful as we had hoped – volunteers, FSC tutors, the Reserve Manager, FSC administration team, maintenance and domestic staff (especially for the steady flow of cakes!).

# Upcoming events...



Church of St James the Great by night

**Village Week 2010** will be held at the end of October with events focussed on Slapton village and the surrounding area. The first Village Week, held last year, was a great success, with both local residents and visitors taking part in guided walks and quizzes. Let's hope this year's programme will be just as popular...

### Slapton memories

**Saturday 23rd October, 9.30am**

Join us on a guided walk through Slapton to discover the fascinating history of our charming village. Listen to tales of the past as told by nature reserve staff and local residents • **Meet at Slapton Ley Field Centre** • Tea or coffee and delicious homemade cakes available before the walk

### Pub quiz

**Thursday 28th October, 8pm**

Test your knowledge against other teams in our popular quiz event. Try and answer questions on a variety of topics, both of local and global interest, ranging from wildlife and wild ideas to the environment and entertainment • **Meet at the Queens Arms** • Entry is £1 per person which includes snacks during a break in the quiz

### Autumn colours

**Tuesday 26th October, 9.30am**

Enjoy a guided walk through Slapton village and the surrounding sanctuary areas of Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve. Find out about the rich history and wildlife of the area, and enjoy the sights, sounds and colours of a woodland in Autumn • **Meet at Slapton Ley Field Centre** • Tea or coffee and delicious homemade cakes available

### Coastal Stroll

**Friday 29th October, 9am**

Accompany us on a guided walk along the beautiful Start Bay coastline, from Start Point to Torcross. Find out about the amazing history, geology and wildlife of the area, with stories of brave local villagers and views of secluded beaches and rugged cliffs, as you enjoy exploring our heritage coast • **Meet at Slapton Ley Field Centre**

### Coffee morning

**Wednesday 27th October, from 10am**

Spend a morning at the Field Centre finding out a little bit more about our role in local education. Enjoy a hot drink and some homemade cakes. You might even win a prize if you enter the raffle! Donations from this event go to *Learning with a Changing Coast*, an education project for local children.

### Halloween Walk

**Saturday 30th October, 7pm**

Explore Slapton at its spookiest with this night-time walk, where we'll discover some of its haunting inhabitants and hear terrifying tales. Finish the walk at the Tower Inn for a Halloween drink whilst looking up at the remains of the tower silhouetted next door • **Meet at Slapton Ley Field Centre**

Booking is essential for the guided walks. All events are free to join (apart from the pub quiz). Sorry no dogs. Allow 2–3 hours for most events.

To book or for more information please contact the Field Centre on **01548 580466**

Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve (NNR) is owned by Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust and managed by the Field Studies Council's (FSC) Slapton Ley Field Centre.

Head of Centre: Andy Pratt.  
Reserve Manager: Nick Binnie.



**SLAPTON LEY**  
FIELD CENTRE & NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

in partnership with:

