

My interest in birds started as a small boy influenced by two big brothers and other kids growing up on a housing estate in Sheffield. Manor Park was at the time a lovely place to live and houses were relatively new, being post war semis and terraced, which was a far cry from the houses at Pitsmoor and Parsons Cross where my parents lived previously. As youngsters we had a fair sized gang who made the most of enjoying a childhood there with an abundance of open spaces, fields, allotments and gardens. We collected bird's eggs during the breeding season and often would travel further afield into the Peak District at weekends on expeditions!

At school I got involved with the Young Ornithologists Club (YOC) along with a neighbour who lived 7 houses away, a certain Roy Twigg, and shortly after went on a few trips with the local RSPB group, coincidentally around Bradfield, one of the venues for our previous expeditions. We were led by a chap called Dave Barr who had a difficult task of keeping us under control as we were a "bit lively". I didn't have much money in those early years and swiped my brothers telescopic sights from his air-rifle to use in lieu of binoculars. I remember twitching Great Tit with Roy at Agden Res and seeing my last Red Squirrel in the Sheffield area there around the same time.

Myself and Roy joined the SBSG shortly after its inception and I recall many interesting meetings at the "Museum" encountering a wide variety of characters, sadly a few who are no longer with us. The urge to collect eggs had long since gone and the interest in seeing new species, finding and recording birds generally had gripped me in what would be a lifelong passion. I was also interested in photography and art with the latter being encouraged by another friend at the time and to this day, Paul Leonard, who also lived locally. Myself and Roy often went further afield, cadging a lift from a chap called Malcolm Oxlade on occasion, and I recall some unforgettable trips to grip species such as Stone Curlew, Red-backed Shrike, Woodlark, Golden Oriole and Montagus Harrier. Other eventful trips I recall with Roy and Paul included stays at Gibraltar Point, Leighton Moss and Boat of Garton, the latter where I took great pride in finding trip ticks such as Dotterel and Golden Eagle.

A "wilderness" period in life followed where I found out about the fairer sex and also took a varied career path for a few years. The only real connection with the group was a regular call up as goalie for the SBSG as we took great pleasure in demolishing the Barnsley Bird Study Group (I only ever recall one defeat and I think that was out of pity!). I met many other well known friends over those early years including the likes of Keith Clarkson, Kevin Gould, Andy Deighton and Pete Wragg to name a few.

I returned to the group in the late nineties thankfully a happily married man with stable career and have actively attended meetings and submitted records since then. I have what my wife Mal calls an obsession with photography and birding, not sure which takes priority, but certainly wherever I go, whether for a walk in the countryside or on foreign holidays, the bins and camera go with me. About 10 years ago (is it really ten?) I started to join the annual October trips to Cornwall with Roy, Keith Clarkson, Andy Deighton, Tony Morris, Richard Dale, Helen Hipperson, Simon Roddis, Pete

Wragg and a few others on and off, and must say in one way or another these have enriched my birding knowledge and my thirst for real ale, cheese and Roy's Porridge (or is it?). We have recently migrated North to the Shetlands for Autumn and what an amazing decision that was as in 2014 we had an incredible list including Storm Petrel, Little Bunting, King Eider, Barred Warbler, Temminks Stint, Bluethroat, Eastern Subalpine Warbler, Yellow-Rumped Warbler, Whites Thrush, Yellow-Browed Warbler, Horneman's Arctic Redpoll, Pallid Harrier and the jewel in the crown an adult male Siberian Rubythroat!

Life's strange in that my career has taken me to a senior management position in a national construction company and I often find myself in the board room in meetings facing a certain "Roy Twigg" across the table, and sometimes bumping into John Hewitt (of Wath Ings Mecca fame) in the office!

I am a long term member of the RSPB and the Scottish Ornithologists Club (SOC) and also have a regular wildlife column in our local parish magazine. As a committee member, and in recent years an annual report contributor, I hope to give something back to the group and although I'm not an expert birder (believe me, I have already named the experts), I love birding. If I can also share my interest and knowledge of photography then that would be satisfying too; please don't hesitate to contact me if you fancy a geeky chat about cameras, lenses, depth of field, noise or bokeh!