

**Cellar Beetles *Blaps mucronata* and Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus* at Lyppard Grange, Warndon, Worcester, 1996-1998.**

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I received my copy of the *Worcestershire Record* 39 in January 2016 and read the two articles on the Cellar Beetle *Blaps mucronata* with interest.

I must correct the recorder details for the Cellar Beetle record at Lyppard Grange, Warndon. It was actually the late Dr. Don Goddard's record. I know this because I was there at the time of its discovery. In fact, we found several although I cannot remember exactly how many.

The operation that we undertook at the time (1996-1998) will, I am sure, be of interest to Worcestershire Recorders. We were engaged in rescuing Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus* under licence for the developer Bass Taverns. In those days, the ecologists could devise their own rescue plan subject to the approval of English Nature (now Natural England). As part of the scheme, I chose to undertake a two-week destructive search of the area in November 1997 and then a second search over a couple days in February 1998. This involved sorting through tons of building debris. We had a JCB at hand to lift blocks of concrete and dismantle larger objects. 01 shows preparative work. 02 shows us searching along the line of a wall. 03 and 04 show Great-crested Newts found in walls and under concrete slabs – they had a particular liking for hibernating beneath thick slabs of concrete and squeezing themselves in the crumbling lime mortar walls, of which there were numerous examples.



03. Great-crested Newts Lyppard Grange 1996. Will Watson



04. Great-crested Newts under concrete at Lyppard Grange. Don Goddard.



01. Lyppard Grange Great-crested Newt rescue 1996. Don Goddard.

In total, we rescued and relocated at least 133 Great Crested Newts. 71 Smooth Newts *Lissotriton vulgaris* and one Common Frog *Rana temporaria*. One adult Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* was seen but we failed to capture it. In total there were only six Great Crested Newt casualties. We also measured the depth and associated substrate surrounding the newts where they were found. The average depth was just 8 cm below ground level.

Such destructive searches are not allowed now because of the rigid guidelines, but I think this method compares favourably to other (expensive) methods now adopted in terms of locating and rescuing a large proportion of the animals present. All the rescued animals were relocated to new sites close to the ponds at Lyppard Grange. During the operation the late Don Goddard decided to record all macro-invertebrates encountered. I helped in this process. By the end of the two-week operation Don had quite an impressive list of beetles and bugs. I do remember seeing this list at the time but unfortunately, it never made its way to the Worcestershire Record Biological Record Centre. The Cellar beetles were found in association with the brick walls and lime mortar including the cellar walls (05).



02. Great-crested Newt rescue Lyppard Grange 1996. Will Watson



05. Lyppard Grange cellar excavation 1996. Will Watson.



The demise of Lyppard Grange is a sad story. The Grade 2 listed building was gradually dismantled; the owner was in dispute with the Council with regard to various planning applications. If my recollection serves me correctly, he maintained that the building was not secure and was being sabotaged by travellers. The upshot of all this was that by the time it was compulsory purchased there was not enough left of the buildings (06, 07) to restore them to the original condition. The iron frame in picture 06 reputedly once contained a rare grapevine.

The current (2016) pub/restaurant on the site is really just a pastiche of the original Lyppard Grange, but its chimney is made from the pre-existing Tudor style bricks from the Grange.



06. Lyppard Grange buildings 1986. Will Watson



07. A young Will Watson beside the remains of Lyppard Grange in the 1990's. Will Watson.

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