

## A SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY Gilbert White 1720-2020

2020 is the year of the celebration of the anniversary of the 300th birthday of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century naturalist the Reverend Gilbert White, who is considered to be the father of ecology and conservation for his detailed investigation of the relationship between plants, animals and humans. Gilbert White is one of the most important names in Britain's natural history. He was the author of the famous book "*The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*", which has never been out of print since its publication in 1789.

Gilbert White's home and garden in Selborne, Hampshire, is now an important museum and tells the story of Gilbert White, in the context of the spaces he lived and wrote in. White's 30 acre 18th Century garden has been recreated using White's diaries and correspondence. The museum, which is family friendly and interactive, also tells the stories of two explorers in the Oates Collections, the story of Lawrence Oates, who undertook the epic journey to the South pole with Captain Scott in 1912 and the naturalist Frank Oates and his travels through Central America and Africa during the nineteenth Century.

You may ask what the interest of the BCG is in this celebration? A tortoise living in a walled courtyard at a place Gilbert White visited regularly caught his attention and he remarked on its hibernation, habits, food preference and the fact it seemed to recognise its owner as the provider of food, ignoring other visitors. The tortoise, named Timothy, became Gilbert White's property in April 1780 and received a lot of attention and observation on "its mode of life and propensities" during the following years. Timothy's shell incidently, has been preserved and can be viewed in the Natural History Museum in London.

The fact that Timothy Tortoise had Gilbert White's attention is, of course, the reason that the British Chelonia Group is interested in this anniversary and has been asked to partake in the celebrations. The BCG hopes to have a stall on the actual birthday on 18th July 2020 in the museum grounds and may possibly host a "tortoise day" during the summer.

GW300 is a partnership dedicated to raising the profile of Gilbert White. During a partnership meeting at Gilbert White's House and the Oates Collections on October 3rd 2019 the GW300 partners celebrated the launch of a tree planting project at Selborne by East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) which plans to plant 120,000 trees across the district. The tree, an oak, is planted in the shadow of another great oak planted by Gilbert White himself as a 10 year old boy in 1730.

We will keep you informed of the various family events planned for the celebrations, especially those at the Gilbert White and The Oates Collections museum in Selborne, Alton, Hants, GU 34 3JH. But for further information see also the new section of the Gilbert White's website: <https://gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk> - click on GW300 tab.



*A portrait of the Reverend Gilbert White*

### GW300 partners celebrate launch of EHDC tree planting project at Selborne

