

Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment



**HERTFORDSHIRE AND
MIDDLESEX BRANCH**

**NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 67**

Winter 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chairman's Report.....	2
Members' Day Agenda	3
Photo Competition Rules	4
Brown Hairstreak Egg Hunts.....	5
Volunteers Needed.....	6
Campden Butterfly Trust.....	6
A History of our Branch over 20 Years.....	7
A Short History of Millhoppers.....	9
Branch Funds - in the Beginning	14
The Annual Report	14
Moth Recording.....	16
The Story So Far.....	17
My Butterfly Year Recording Observations in 2013	19
Welcome to New Members.....	21

Chairman's Notes, by Andrew Wood

I'm writing this as 2014 gets into its stride. We have, so far, had a relatively mild and sunny January but very few butterfly reports. This is a reminder that much of what we see in 2014 will have been influenced by the weather conditions and fortunes experienced by butterflies in 2013. Normally the butterflies seen in January are Red Admirals. They do not hibernate deeply in the same way as other species that over-winter as adults and so are able to take advantage of brief mild spells. They were not especially common in 2013, so not surprisingly we have seen little activity in 2014.

An area where there will be activity in 2014 is in the Branch as we celebrate 20 years since its creation in 1994. Several articles in this newsletter look back over the events that caused the creation of the Branch and its subsequent history. I hope that many of you will be able to come along to the Members' Day and Celebration on the 29th March. It will be an opportunity to hear and meet Martin Warren, our Chief Executive, who is also celebrating 20 years at Butterfly Conservation.

2014 is also an important year for Butterfly Conservation nationally. Cuts in funding and increased competition for grants mean that it is increasingly difficult to fund all the work that is needed at a national level and branches are being asked to look very carefully at their finances and reserves in order to ensure that vital conservation work is not set back. We are well aware of our responsibilities in this area and the Branch will continue to direct funds towards these major projects that can have an impact on the conservation of butterflies, moths and their habitats.

Are You Coming to Members Day 20-Year Celebration?.....

As part of the proceedings, we will be providing a buffet lunch to attendees (including vegetarian options). In order that we can plan for the appropriate numbers, please **let us know by 15th March** if you are attending, and will want lunch, by contacting Margaret Noakes (details on back cover). To part defray the costs there will be an opportunity to make a voluntary donation (e.g. £3/adult, children free).

(Don't be put off attending if you forget, or an unable, to give advance notice.)

**Members' Day and Celebration of 20 Years of the Branch
Saturday 29th March 2014**

**Indoor meeting venue: Welwyn Civic Centre,
Welwyn, Hertfordshire**

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1045 – 1100 | Doors Open tea/coffee |
| 1100 - 1110 | Welcome and Introduction |
| 1110 - 1140 | Branch AGM |
| 1140 - 1215 | “Recording the Invisible over 20 Years” – Liz Goodyear and Andrew Middleton |
| 1215 - 1230 | “Millhoppers Reserve” |
| 1230 - 1400 | Lunch Break, Mingle and judge photo competition – Buffet and drinks |
| | Including 1315-1345 Informal Q & A for new members with some of the committee |
| 1400 - 1500 | “Major Milestones in the History of Butterfly Conservation” - Martin Warren, Chief Executive, Butterfly Conservation |
| 1500 - 1530 | Break - tea and cakes provided |
| 1530 – 1600 | “Changes in Herts & Middx Butterflies in the last 30 Years” - Andrew Wood and Brian Sawford |
| 1600 - 1630 | “Trends in Herts & Middlesex Moths” - John Murray |
| 1630 - 1700 | Raffle and photo competition results |
| 1700 | Closing Remarks |

[Don't forget the photographic competition - the full rules are below](#)

How to Get to the Members' Day

By Road

Welwyn Civic Centre (TL232160) Prospect Place, Welwyn, Hertfordshire (AL6 9ER). Parking available.

By Public Transport

Trains run from Kings Cross and Finsbury Park (Victoria and Piccadilly line interchange), Potters Bar and Hatfield to Welwyn Garden City (4/hour) and from Royston, Baldock, Letchworth, (2/hour) and from Hitchin and Stevenage (4/hour).

A Welwyn Garden City plusbus ticket purchased with a rail ticket will give full use of all bus journeys between Welwyn Garden City and Welwyn.

At Welwyn Garden City Arriva 300/301 run to Welwyn Church 3 times an hour from the bus station (next to the Howard Centre) under 5 minutes walk from the railway station (in the Howard Centre). From Welwyn Church it is only 2/3 minutes walk back to the Civic Centre. This route also connects Welwyn to Hemel Hempstead, St Albans, Hatfield, and Stevenage at the same frequency up to 1800 hrs.

Centrebus 314 runs every two hours between Welwyn Garden City and Hitchin via Welwyn Church

Photo competition rules:

50p entry fee per picture. No limit on the number of entries which can be made in the following categories:

- UK Butterflies
- UK Moths
- Butterflies and moths photographed outside the UK
- Moth/Butterfly behaviour
- Non adult stages



Entries to be un-mounted, printed on good quality photographic or inkjet paper and be between 7x5 inches and A4 size.

Entries should not have been digitally enhanced, apart from cropping/re-sizing.

All pictures must have been taken in the period March 16th 2013 to March 26th 2014.

Entries, with fee, to be sent to the Branch Chair - Andrew Wood, 93

Bengeo Street, Hertford, SG14 3EZ, who will not be competing and whose decisions will be final, to be received by March 26th 2013.

Each attendee at the members' day will get a voting form to vote for their favourite in each category.

The entrant must be a member of BC and photographs must be their own work.

Entries must be clearly labelled with the entry category.

Entries will only be returned if an SAE is supplied, or collected in person at the Members' Day.

Copyright remains with the photographer, however by entering, entrants acknowledge that the Branch will be allowed to use any photograph (with accreditation) in Branch publications and web pages.

Photographs must be of wild insects, not captive bred stock.

Please contact Andrew Wood (0776 5098824 or 01992 503571) if you have any questions about the Celebration or the Competition.

Brown Hairstreak Egg Hunts

Following on from the exciting news of suspected Brown Hairstreak sightings last summer, we have organised two special winter field trips to search for the butterfly's eggs.



If you have not looked for them before, we will be offering training – its an easy skill to pick up once you know what to look for.

Wrap up warm, wear boots and bring along a hand-lens/magnifying glass if you have one.

The two dates we have set are:

Sunday 16th February – 2.30 pm – Redbourn Golf Course (TL108140). Meet just outside the clubhouse (parking available in the club car park). NB this is on a private site and has been organised with the permission of the golf club. Note the start time in the afternoon when there will no golfers in the areas we will be

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

searching. Directions: From the Redbourn Bypass (A5183) take the Luton Lane turning. After half a mile the golf course is on your right

Sunday 23rd February 10.30 am – Norton Green, near Stevenage (TL229233). Meet in the Hamlet of Norton Green (parking available). – Directions: From the A1(M) junction 7 take the A602. Turn left at the first roundabout onto the A1072. After about a mile take the left turn signed to Norton Green. Pass under the motorway and follow the road round to the left. The meeting place is half a mile further on in the car park layby in the hamlet of Norton Green.

Contact details for both events are: Malcolm Hull ~ 01727 857893 or email malcolmhull@hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk

Volunteers Needed

This year, the Branch will be attending a number of events to raise the public, and especially young people's, awareness of butterflies and moths. Volunteers are needed to attend the events and/or grow plants for sale to raise money. If you think you could spare a few hours or are interested in getting involved, please contact Alexandra Radley, e-mail; radleyalexandra@gmail.com Tel: 01920 465606

Camden Butterfly Trust, by James Leigh

From the moment my website was published in September 2009 I have been seeking out suitable sites for our wildlife habitat creation programme. We now have 6 sites of about 1000 square metres - 6 smaller gardens and 6 x 100 square metre wildflower meadows. I will be approaching Camden soon with our proposals for these sites that will, where possible, contain the four features described on my website (<http://www.bringbackthebutterflies.org.uk/>). Butterfly Conservation members are invited to support my petition to Camden Council concerning Hampstead Green at http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/bbtb_123-/

A History of our Branch over 20 Years - by Margaret Noakes

It was all Brian Sawford's Fault!!

We used to be part of the London Branch; it was in 1988 that Brian put forward the proposal that we needed to split. The London Branch was becoming too large and covered an absolutely enormous area. On the 29th of November 1990 a meeting was held in St Albans City Museum where a steering committee was formed, but it was felt that we should delay going solo until financial and membership considerations had taken place. On March 22nd 1991 Brian Sawford gave a talk (we will be hearing from him at our celebration in March 2014) in St Albans and finally, in 1994, on October 27th a decision was made to split into two branches; Surrey and South West London and Herts. and Middx.

Our first chairman was Malcolm Newland, who held that post until 1997. Our first newsletter was produced in February 1995 by Gavin Vicary who in 1997 succeeded Malcolm as Branch chairman.

For many years a newsletter was produced four times a year, later three times and more recently two or three times a year. Obviously the newsletter was and still is, dependant on contributions from members. Ian Small took over from Gavin in December 1997, when Gavin became chairman, and Ian remains newsletter editor until this very day. That is a huge role , involving a lot of work. It has always been a very important tool to keep our members in touch and to inform our membership of happenings in the Branch.

We have had four Chairmen since the inception of our Branch. In 2004 David Chandler became our Chairman and remained in post until Andrew Wood took over in 2011.

It is good to still have three members of the committee who joined right from the beginning. John Hollingdale, who has always been our treasurer, Margaret Noakes, who has always been our Membership Secretary and Ian Small, who has almost been there for ever.

People have joined the committee and have had to leave for various reasons, but have contributed hugely to the development of the

Branch. Norma Dean, who was secretary for many years and was replaced by Elizabeth Goodyear in 2000, will be remembered with affection. Roles have changed to some extent as the membership became larger and the role, particularly of secretary, became all embracing. For some years Liz had the title of Branch Organiser and Secretary, a role that is now seen as Liz as Branch Organiser, with the very welcome role that Margaret Huitson has taken on, that of Committee Secretary.

Malcolm Hull has played a very important role as Sales Officer, travelling all over the Branch area to various shows, raising the profile of the Branch and selling plants and other butterfly related goods. This has increased our funds hugely and help from Malcolm Newland and Alan Downie was significant to its success.

The annual report on the status of Butterflies in the Branch has been acclaimed as one of the most professionally produced documents in the whole of Butterfly Conservation, representing hours of work collating members' records and transect recording material, with the addition of fantastic photos. Both John Murray and Andrew Wood require a deal of praise for their painstaking work.

Moths have become a significant aspect of Butterfly Conservation and John Murray has, more recently taken on the role of Moth Officer

Looking back over the years, we have achieved a lot but there is so much more to do. There have been a number of important stages in our development. In 1998 we acquired Millhoppers as our reserve (there is a report on that in this newsletter) and Liz, together with Andrew Middleton, has done a huge amount of work, both in our Branch and country-wide on the Purple Emperor and, more recently, the White-letter Hairstreak. This work, together with all the work she has done for our Branch, has played a part in her receiving the award of 'Volunteer of the Year' presented by Martin Warren at the Society's national AGM in 2006.

Advice has been sought from various bodies, both private and public on how to create a sympathetic habitat for butterflies and, as Andrew Wood said in the newsletter of Spring 2012, 'we need to be seen as experts in conservation work, well before a disastrous planning application is passed'.

There has always been a great emphasis on field trips and more recently we have, on occasions, combined with other bodies. The organiser of the trips and the leaders have always had to work hard to share their knowledge with members and the public.

We have always been conscious of the distances that many of our members have had to travel to attend meetings and field trips. For that reason we have tried to organise our meetings in different areas of the Branch, but not always with the result that we had hoped, but we do try. Welwyn seems to be as central as we can get.

There is so much that I have left out and many people that I have not acknowledged. My sincere apologies for that, but I could go on for ever.

Do come and celebrate with us in March. There is a lot to celebrate.

A Short History of Millhoppers, by John Noakes

This article was first published in our newsletter in December 2007 ... editor

As I am about to step down as reserve manager of Millhoppers I thought it would be timely to review the history and major events since its acquisition by Butterfly Conservation.

In 1998 a piece of land of approx 3 acres, called locally Millhoppers, came up for sale. It was mainly unimproved grassland and had not in living memory been ploughed.

It was ringed by an ancient hedge together with a number of black poplar trees. Traversing the site was a free flowing stream together with a marshy area. Surrounding part of the grassland was a large stand of backthorn. On the east side a public footpath wound round the edge of the land.

Millhoppers is a strange name; it was clear that there had been a mill here in ancient times but now the water table is much lower. Hopper is not to do with hopping across stones or indeed grain hoppers. Hopper is a corruption of an old Saxon word meaning a small enclosed space; hence a mill in a small enclosure.

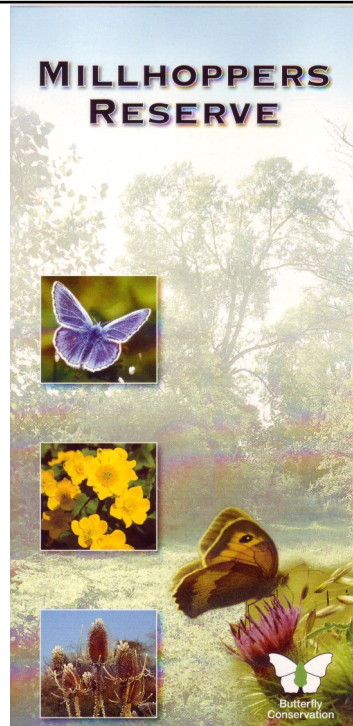
Hertfordshire and Middlesex

The site, although privately owned, had been enjoyed by local villagers who used it for walks and picnics. Many senior villagers remember paddling in the stream as youngsters. Clearly local people considered Millhoppers to be of great sentimental value and did not want to see it change.

A group of villagers in Long Marston were very concerned that the land would be sold on for future development and in the short term would not be managed in a sympathetic manner. The Group felt it had a considerable potential for a small nature reserve and at the same time being an amenity for the local population.

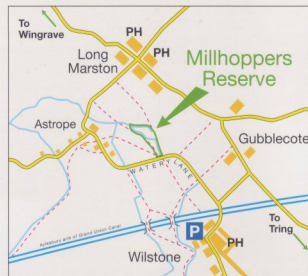
With these aims in mind each member contributed a sum of money to a fund and then approached Dacorum District Council to see if it would be prepared to make a grant to purchase the land. On looking at the site they considered it to be an important example of unimproved grassland and were sympathetic to the Group's aims. However they were not convinced as to its experience in conservation issues. Dacorum indicated to the Group that they would be prepared to help if they were backed by an organization who had expertise in conservation and who would also contribute financially.

Two of the Group were members of Herts and Middx Branch of Butterfly Conservation and put this proposition to this Branch. After consulting Head Office of Butterfly Conservation, the Herts & Middx Branch agreed to make available a large sum of money. Dacorum



ACCESS TO MILLHOPPERS

The main entrance to the reserve is from Watery Lane, at grid reference SP 900 148, a narrow lane where there is little parking, although access can also be achieved by footpaths from Long Marston, Wilstone and Putterham. Parking is available in Wilstone at the village hall.



District Council was now satisfied there was sufficient conservation and financial backing to give a very considerable grant in order to purchase Millhoppers.

The money raised by the local Group was not used in the purchase of Millhoppers. Instead the Group drew up its own constitution calling itself the Millhoppers Management Group. All the grants for equipment and the various works carried out were applied for, channelled through and managed by this Group. Where grants were not available, the Group funded work and equipment itself.

Both the Branch and the local Group felt they should celebrate the achievement of acquiring Millhoppers in some way. Sadly, shortly before this event Gordon Benningfield, who was President of Butterfly Conservation, died. It had been hoped he would officially open the reserve. In the circumstances, his wife Betty, kindly agreed to open the reserve with the Mayor of Dacorum. At the event many local people attended as did members from Head Office and Herts & Middx Butterfly Conservation. The reserve was rightly dedicated to the memory of Gordon Benningfield.

Having acquired Millhoppers, advice was sought from Brian Sawford, the Branch's conservation officer, on how best to manage the reserve over the next few years. He produced a five year management plan setting out a strategy of grassland management with the aim of encouraging grassland butterflies. Coinciding with management plan a botanical survey was carried out. This acted as a baseline for future reference. Even at this early stage regular butterfly transects were carried out from April to September by Margaret Noakes and this has continued ever since.

The first, rather formidable, task was to tackle the large expanse of grass. The Group decided to raid its own funds and purchase a Track Master Motor Scythe together with large rakes. This cut the grass and other herbage well but this all had to be raked off by a group of volunteers. This continued to be the strategy for the first few years. However the numbers in the working parties dwindled somewhat over time.

Fairly soon after acquiring the reserve it was plagued by vandalism. A

new gate that had been purchased and erected was smashed down, as was a second and soon after replacement a car was driven through and set on fire. This was pretty depressing and added to this, the stream at the entrance was subjected to regular fly tipping. Chucking beer cans into the stream was annoying but had a lighter side. One morning I collected 137 cans and spread them out on my lawn at home. I was able to do our first audit on Millhoppers; that of the local drinking habits of presumably the youth of Long Marston!

The idea of a wooden gate was abandoned and a tough metal bar and posts commissioned, which has proved indestructible. It can be removed for access and there are still two metal inner locked gates. This effectively kept the vandals out but did make getting machinery into the reserve difficult; this still is a problem. Vandalism fortunately is now less of a problem.

There was a weak and narrow bridge crossing the stream which was inadequate to take the cutting equipment. The Group was fortunate to obtain a grant to build a solid bridge and it so happened that some engineers were rebuilding a nearby canal bridge and a good deal was struck with them. It did prove somewhat slippery in the wet so wire netting had to be fixed down to make it safe.

Grass cutting was becoming arduous and raking and disposing of the material even more so. The Group had been advised that the solution and indeed best policy was to bring in cattle. John and Margaret Noakes went on a grazing course and came back enthused but how to find cattle? The local farmers who were approached saw many problems not the least one being that the site was not secure. It was back again to try and get a grant to fund making the whole site secure with stock fencing. This proved quite expensive but again the Group was fortunate and the site is now totally secure. Just prior to this a smaller grant was obtained to lay part of the hedge on the west side as the bushes and some trees were becoming too tall and the bottom of the hedge was thin and rather bare.

The Group was introduced to a farmer who used his cattle to graze Tring Park. He clearly was keen on conservation and cared for his animals. On advice from Butterfly Conservation Central Office a grazing contract was drawn up and four cows were introduced to the

reserve in late autumn until early winter. Visually they made a rapid impact. They removed a lot of the coarse grass and the softer shoots of the blackthorn. The marsh area was puddled down, increasing the area and removing a lot of the streamside weeds. At this time, fortunately, the large stand of marsh marigolds had not emerged. Although in the reserve for only a few weeks there was no doubt it made our management much easier. A considerable amount of cutting and raking still had to be done and paths cut.

This regime continued for approximately three years, butterflies seemed to be increasing in numbers particularly grassland species with a strong colony of Ringlets. At the far end of the reserve, finer grasses were more abundant with ant hills and nectar plants. This saw an increase in Common Blues and Small Coppers. It was now thought a good time to carry out a further expert botanical survey. This did show a clear link between the butterflies recorded on the regular transects and the presence of their larval host plants in good numbers on the reserve.

The reserve is not just about butterflies for there is a diverse bird population. Particular interesting features include a large badger set with a lot of evidence of their activity and 16 black poplars, all male! Many of these have become unsafe with branches breaking off. Most had been pollarded in the past and were due for more attention. A further grant was obtained in order to engage a tree surgeon to carry out this work.

Our most recent grant funded a notice board erected on the reserve together with a leaflet about Millhoppers. This coincided with an exhibition held at the Natural History Museum at Tring on Butterflies of Hertfordshire and promoting the reserve



As indicated in the brief Annual Report, the farmer has had to withdraw his cattle from the reserve. It is really very disappointing as grazing is the undoubtedly the best strategy for grassland management but in the current circumstances fully understandable.

This brings the history up to date. I would have wished to hand over

the reserve to the new manager in better shape. Millhoppers is very precious to all of us who have worked hard there. There are times, when jets are not flying over, that it would be difficult to tell which century one was in; there are few such places in the county. We are still custodians of this special piece of land and I am hopeful that it can be effectively and sympathetically managed for the future.

Branch Funds – In the Beginning, by John Hollingdale

The Branch has been in existence for twenty years. However, as I discovered when looking at the archives in our loft, we only received our share of the old London branch funds in January 2005. Remarkably this was £7800+. However a cheque for £1600 was post-dated and returned to me. I'm sure another was sent shortly afterwards correctly dated.

The reason for this large sum was twofold. Every two years the London branch organised a very successful event which took place at Juniper Hall near Box Hill. The highlight of this was the sale of donated plants which raised several hundred pounds each time. The other was participation in a Countryside Day in Hyde Park. With Dennis Newland's famous campervan full of fund-raising items parked nearby, the branch raised over £4000.

Herts & Middx Branch's first payment, £97.20, was to Buckingham Nurseries for hedgerow plants. The Branch planted a hedge at Standalone Farm, Letchworth organised by Brian Sawford. Another payment in 1995 was to Harrow Arts Centre for a room. The speaker was Colin Plant who, together with his son, showed us a how to make a cheap moth trap out of a plastic dustbin. He encouraged the branch to start looking at moths as well as they were all Lepidoptera. My dustbin trap is still in our garage.

I could go through every year since but looking at the first year has brought back memories

The Annual Report, by John Murray

When the Branch was formed, the recording of butterflies in our area was restricted to enthusiasts who contributed observations to 3 or 4 different organisations. Although 18 butterfly transects were already

being walked, the results were not being collated or published, so there was no way of telling whether butterfly numbers were rising, falling, or staying about the same.

Also, butterfly recorders tended to only report sightings from a few well-known top butterfly sites, so it was difficult to get any idea on how widespread each species was, and whether their range was expanding or contracting, and it was also evident that large areas of the two counties were not being visited. It was decided to publish a special report each year, giving details of how each butterfly was faring in both numbers and distribution.

The first report, for 1995, was a bombshell and a wake-up call to what was happening to some species in our area. Most dramatically, the Wall butterfly, which had been a common and widespread garden species in Brian Sawford's and Colin Plant's tetrad surveys of the Branch area completed in 1986, had dwindled to a few dozen sightings, and in fact became extinct in our area early in the new millennium.

The effect of regular annual reports on recording effort meant that observations rocketed. After 5 years, a total of 519,059 butterflies had been recorded by over 200 observers, and the number of transects walked had increased to 62, which may be compared with 120 transects walked for the entire UK under the C.E.H. scheme at that time. Such vast numbers required the creation of a branch database, started and run by Michael Healy, who entered every single record until Andrew Wood took over in 2004.

The report, with its publishing of detailed numbers, graphs and maps for every butterfly, achieved a widespread reputation, and its rapid publishing meant that it was frequently used by staff at Head Office as a reference for what was happening, and its format undoubtedly influenced the way other counties presented their data.

Today, the annual report, which since 2010 has been compiled and written by Andrew Wood, continues to publish valuable observations from our members, and the database has become a priceless record that is frequently used as critical evidence in planning applications and other vital conservation issues.

Moth Recording, by Andrew Wood

The name Butterfly Conservation only reveals the fact that moths are an important part of our Lepidoptera when one reads the strap line about saving wild butterflies moths and their habitats. However our branch has had a moth officer since its foundation in 1994 when Rob Souter joined the committee. From 1996 the Butterfly Report became the Butterfly and Moth Report and included selected reports on moths in our area. From early on there has been close cooperation between the branch and Colin W. Plant the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Moth Recorder. Rob promoted moth recording to the branch, including organising a number of moth trapping events for the branch. Interest in moths and moth recording has increased vastly since the 1990s and is common with many other areas of the country a Herts Moth Group (which has always informally covered Middlesex too) was founded in early 2000 by Colin and Rob. This is independent of Butterfly Conservation but works closely with it, first through Rob and later Andrew Wood.

In 2000 Rob moved on and Andrew Wood became moth officer continuing to work with Colin Plant through the Moth Group. Both Rob and Andrew have also encouraged the recording of day flying moths which have tended to be ignored by butterfly recorders while being missed by nocturnal moth recorders. We now receive many records for these species and our knowledge of their status is greatly increased. A moth report was included in the Annual reports up to 2006. The success of the Moth Group meant that many more records were coming in to Colin Plant and it was proving impossible to collate all these records in time for their inclusion in our report which was also seeing increased pressure on space from the amount of butterfly records coming in, so from 2007 the branch ceased to publish a moth report. However Andrew Wood worked with Colin on some aspects of the production of the Herts Natural History Societies "The Moths of Hertfordshire" published in 2008. He also maintains the Herts Moth Group's website which includes an updated database derived from that book on Hertfordshire's moths.

In 2011 Andrew Wood passed over the Moth Officer role to John Murray who has been recording moths for many years.

The branch continues to work with the Moth Group to promote an interest in moths in our area.

The Story So Far..., by Ian Small

As Margaret Noakes comments in her article, I have been with the Branch 'almost for ever' ! I moved to Hertfordshire in 1991, having been living close to the Hampshire/Wiltshire border (where I lived when I first joined Butterfly Conservation exactly 30 years ago, in 1984). My first specific Hertfordshire butterfly recollection is that of seeing a Wall Brown close to Stevenage while I was still house-hunting. Sadly, that was to be both my first and last sighting of that species in our area.

I don't recall exactly when I first joined the Branch Committee, but have the honour of being the first person ever to give an illustrated lecture to the Branch - on 'A Chalkland Paradise', given in March 1995, and describing my experiences of having access to the 4000 acres or chalk downland at Porton Down in Wiltshire, where I personally recorded 40 butterfly species.

Since 1997, I have been producing the Branch newsletters (my first was issue 12, this is 67). In those days, the content was always simply black and white, although we did use blue paper for the outer cover. The copies were produced centrally for a number of Branches using a BC-owned copier, which was cheaper than photocopying.

We made the transition to introduce colour to the newsletter from issue 20 in December 1999. To do that required a shift to printing with a colour inkjet printer. In those days, duplex printing was cost prohibitive, so printing was done a single side at a time e.g. print 100 copies of 1 side, then turn them all over and print on the other side, and so on until all the pages were printed. Then it was a matter of collating all the pages and building the actual newsletters. As the number of Branch members increased, so did the required printing time (we had 280 members in 1997 when I started). To keep this practical, I added a second printer after a couple of years, using one to print the first side and the other to print the second side of each sheet.

That pattern worked for a few more years until we were in the 400-500 member range, when the effort to collate all the copies became more problematic. That coincided with the availability of relatively low-cost colour laser printers, with the ability to duplex print. That was a revolution for me, as for the first time, I was able to print actual newsletters, rather than just individual pages. That said, all the printed newsletters still need to be individually stapled and folded, prior to being enveloped, labelled, stamped and posted.

Mentioning stamps brings back another memory - self-adhesive stamps were a second revolution! Once they became available, there was no need to wet each stamp to get it to stick to the envelopes.

So where are we today? Well, we now have 850 members. That's an awful lot of newsletters. The average edition has 5 sheets of paper (sometimes 7), all of which need printing. For 850 5-sheet newsletters, that is 8500 pages to print. At an average of about 5 sides/minute to print, that corresponds to over 28 hours continuous printing time! When limited to evenings and weekends, that leads to a fairly intensive couple of weeks, with folding/stapling running in parallel with feeding the printer with paper, toner etc.

So why do I go to all this bother? Wouldn't it make more sense just to pay to have copies printed somewhere? The answer is no. On average over the year, each newsletter costs approximately £1, including 50p postage, for all the materials used. Alternate methods would add significantly to the cost, perhaps by 30p or so per copy. That would leave less of the money you contribute through your membership fees etc. to be spent on conservation activities. I plan to update the printing technology soon in order to further reduce the unit costs per newsletter.

Over 100 members have now opted to receive their newsletters electronically, via e-mail, as a pdf file. Given what I describe above, it is clear that this results in significant cost-savings for the Branch, and more of your money to go to actual conservation work. If you would like to switch to electronic newsletters, then please just e-mail me (details on the back cover), preferably quoting your membership number. [Everyone will get this edition on paper, as it is being posted together with the Annual Review for 2013 - if anyone wants an e-version, just contact me.]

This is your newsletter. Please consider sending in contributions that you think would make interesting reading for other members. The more input I get, then the more interesting and enjoyable the newsletter will be. I look forward to hearing from you.....

My Butterfly Year Recording Observations in 2013 by David Chandler.

Having recently filed my Transect Walker data with the county recorders in Essex & Bedfordshire and at Butterfly Conservation Head Office in Dorset, I thought it would be a good time to take stock of the butterfly season just gone and make my own observations.

It has been quite widely reported that 2013 has been a good year for butterflies and this is true; however, I must qualify this statement, because the really lovely summer weather we enjoyed, which produced record Chalkhill Blue numbers on my transect at Sharpenhoe in August and September, came just a little too late for the Spring-flying species like Green Hairstreaks, Grizzled and Dingy Skippers who only had an average year in Bedfordshire.

The Duke of Burgundy butterfly fared a little better because it was fortunate in that dreadful summer of 2012 that its peak flight period coincided with a fortnight of good weather in May. Thus when I went to see them at Whipsnade this year they were present in good numbers.

It was a fair year for the Wall on my other transect at Benfleet Downs and at Canvey Wick with sightings in both flight periods. Funnily enough although I saw Wall regularly in low numbers, I hardly got a clear sighting all year, being only able to get one photograph of a roosting male at Hadleigh Castle on an evening nature walk with my old friend Trevor Liddle.

Finding the White Admiral and Silver Washed Fritillary was trickier than usual for me this year, although I got a couple of fleeting glimpses of Silver Washed Fritillaries on my Essex transect, it wasn't until my third visit to Bricket Wood, near my Watford home, that I had a good sighting of both. Strangely, I could not find a Small Copper anywhere at all this year. The White Letter Hairstreaks had a better year at Benfleet Downs recovering to roughly their pre-2011 numbers after a drop in recorded sightings during the cool wet summers of 2011/2.

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Andrew Wood, recorder in Hertfordshire, recently remarked that it has been an odd year for migrants and I would strongly agree with his view from my own observations. Now, in over 25 years recording I have “a rule of thumb” on migrants that until this year had held good. Crudely speaking over time for every 100 Red Admirals seen you might expect to see a Painted Lady, and for every 100 Painted Ladies seen you might just see a Clouded Yellow.

This didn't happen this year. In September 2012 Kathryn and I saw over 100 Red Admirals on the Benfleet transect but Red Admirals were scarcely seen in 2013 and I saw only one on this transect walk and that was a last-knockings single record during week 26 in late September

Painted Ladies were around but, as in an average year, were not particularly common.

Paradoxically, it was a personal Clouded Yellow year for me. It all started in mid-July near the NT car park at Sharpenhoe with a singleton sighting and then over following six weeks I saw another five there. At Canvey Wick, on my field trip, we saw at least four and on other visits there I found another three. On the Benfleet Downs I recorded seven including a very late sighting of a pair (with a Peacock) nectaring on a patch of yellow Cats Ear during a walk to inspect the new mountain biking route on an Indian Summer - like day in late October.



Clouded Yellow
Photo © Ian Small

NB These observations are personal and represent a snapshot view from my recordings in Herts, Beds and Essex; they do not necessarily represent the national country-wide view.

Welcome to New Members

2013 was a year of tremendous growth for our Branch, with over 200 new members joining, detailed below. We are delighted to have you as part of our Branch, and look forward to meeting you at one of our meetings or events.

Dr De Keyser, St Albans; Ms Kypriotis, Whetstone; Miss & Mr Radley/Burt, Ware; Mrs/Ms Tash, London; Mrs & Mr Coath, Hitchin; Mr Davis, Ruislip; Mrs Jones, Winchmore Hill; Mr Maes, London; Miss/Mr McIntosh/Medle, Letchworth Garden City; Miss Regan, Feltham; Ms Bowes, Carpenders Park; Mr Fisher, Redbourn; Mrs Ford, Barnet; Mr Humphrey, Baldock; Ms/Mr Lawrence/Hitchcott, Pinner; Mr&Mrs Porter, Pinner; Mrs Rogers, Harrow; Mr Williams, Royston; Dr Aplin, London; Dr Aulsebrook, Welham Green; Ms Hill, St Albans; Mr Mackenzie, Hounslow; Mrs Brown, Stevenage; Mr&Mrs Debnam, Potters Bar; Mr& Mrs Godfrey, Harpenden; Mr Holtby, Potters Bar; Mr&Mrs O'Riordan, Watford; Mr Taylor, Hounslow; Mr Wheeler, Welwyn; Mr Ambler, Enfield; Mr Elton, Harrow; Mrs Falvey, Stevenage; Ms Glanfield, Hemel Hempstead; Mrs McVeigh, London; Ms Batts, Bushey; Mr Brown, Broxbourne; Mrs Craven, W. Garden City; Ms Fairbairn, Welwyn Garden City; Mrs Floyd, St Albans; Miss Fremerova, Crouch End; Ms Gattenberg, London; Mr& Mrs Gazzard, Rickmansworth; Mr Harrison, Twickenham; Mr& Mrs Hookway, Ruislip; Mrs Jay, Brentford; Miss/Mr Kniecicka/Petit-Frere, Baldock; Dr Lumley, Hitchin; Ms Monkton, Chestnut; Mr Padilla Squire, London; Ms & Mr Pelman, Golders Green; Mr, Power, London; Mr Porter, London; Mr Prentice, St Albans; Mr Shand, St Albans; Miss Smith, London; Mr& Mrs Taylor, Ruislip; Dr & Mrs Ashford, Chipperfield ; Mr Busby, Ruislip; Mr Cooper, Hitchin; Mr& Mrs Crockett, Wood side Park; Mr Duce, Welwyn; Mrs Ghumania, Welwyn Garden City; Mr & Mrs Hester, Feltham; Mrs Lane, London; Miss Leslie, Harrow; Mrs Mulder, Wheathampstead; Mr Pople, Tring; Ms Sawyer, Letchworth Garden City; Mr&Mrs Scott, Shepperton ; Mrs Whitbourn, Ware; Miss Agbeyo, London; Mrs Anagani, Hatfield; Miss Black, Stevenage; Mr& Ms Boyce, Hitchin; Ms/Mr Brown/Letton, West Drayton; Ms Casey, Hampton; Dr Crabtree, London; Ms Crowhurst, Heston; Ms Doye,

Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Wheathampstead; Mrs /Miss Forbes, Bishops Stortford; Mr Gadhia, Watford; Miss Gannick, London; Miss/Mr Garrido/O'Brien, Brentford; Mr& Mrs Gauci, Greenford; Miss Gibbs, Hayes; Mr Granger, London; Miss Guijarro, Hertford; Mr, Hessing, Stevenage; Ms, Hodson, London; Ms Hulme, St Albans; Mr&Mrs Jha/Dave, Wembley; Mr Jones, London; Mr&Mrs Keep, Royston; Mr Kerr, Isleworth; Mr& Mrs Kerr, Feltham; Miss Khan, Southgate; Mr& Mrs Kirkland, London; Mr& Mrs Legg, Welwyn Garden City; Ms/ Ms Limb/Simon, Watford; Mr/Mr Mackay Miller/Da Silva, Hampstead; Mr Mitchell, Letchworth Garden City; Mr& Mrs Nagpal, Hemel Hempstead; Mrs Newbigging, St Albans; Miss Norton, St Albans; Mr Oates, Letchworth Garden City; Miss Packham, Kings Langley; Mrs Page, Baldock; Ms Pancic, Watford; Mr/Miss Parker/Funnell, Wraysbury; Mr& Mrs Pope, London; Miss Rizk, Barnet; Miss Roberts, St Albans; Mr Sale, Stevenage; Mr Scott, London; Miss Shaw, St Albans; Mrs Shire, Harrow; Mrs Shirley, Barnet; Miss Smith, Bushey; Ms/Mrs Smith, Hatfield; Miss/Mr Stovoid/Fattorini, Redbourn; Miss Vile, London; Miss Wallace, Enfield; Mr Weller, Hitchin; Mrs Wilkinson, Wheathampstead; Mrs Wimms, Cheshunt; Mr Yaganti, Hatfield; Mr/Ms Evans/Lee, Colney Heath; Ms Manning, Royston; Ms McElduff, Welwyn Garden City; Mrs Pashley, Hitchin; Miss Pearson, Hitchin; Mr Wilkinson, Letchworth Garden City; Miss Wills, Rickmansworth; Mr Archibald, St Albans; Mr De Groot, Hillingdon; Mr&Mrs Keable/Brutt, Hemel Hempstead; Mr Alps, Aldbury; Mr Bly, Braughing; Mr Cowdy, Royston; Mr Payne, Cornwall; Ms Thornwill/Potter, Feltham; Mr/Dr Treble/Beaumont, Ealing; Mrs Roomes, Bishops Stortford; Mr Wood, Pottersbar; Mr Anderson, London; Ms Auerbach, Stevenage; Mr&Mrs Bowlzer, Berkhamsted; Mr Brown, Borehamwood; Mr Bunn, Welwyn Garden City; Mr Burrus, Tring; Mr Cammack, London; Mr&Ms Clee/Jones, London; Mrs Cooper, Sawbridgeworth; Mr Cottrell, London; Mr&Mrs De Silva, Fordingbridge; Mr Diment, Essex; Mr Dowling, London; Mr D'Sa, London; Mr Earle, Hertford; Mr Eborall, London; Mr Edwards, Watford; Mr & Mrs Elcombe, Pinner; Mr Ellis, Chorleywood; Ms Flint, Berkhamsted; Mrs Gattenburg, London; Mr Guilford, Ipswich; Mr Halsey, Brentford; Mrs James, London; Mr Jarvis, London; Miss Kitchen, Chorleywood; Mr Lang, Watford; Mr Lunn, Hillingdon; Mr Mead, Barnet; Mr Oliver, Tring; Ms O'Riordan,

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Copy Deadline for the Spring Newsletter will be

4 April 2014

NB it helps the editor if you can submit an electronic copy of your article (but don't worry if you can't).

Files can be sent by e-mail to
ian-small@virginmedia.com

or send an article by post - address on back cover

I look forward to hearing of all your exciting butterfly or moth observations and anecdotes from what we all hope will be an excellent year for all our Lepidoptera and other wildlife.

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