

Butterfly Conservation  
Cumbria Branch



Newsletter 35  
Autumn 2017



## The Marsh Fritillary life cycle.



Freshly laid egg batch



Eggs about 10 days old.



Tiny first instar larvae in protective web.



Bigger fourth instar larvae, not always in a web.



6<sup>th</sup> instar immediately prior to pupation.



In pupation.



Adult butterfly.



Mating pair, male left bottom, female centre right.

## MESSAGE FROM...

### .... our BRANCH CHAIRMAN



Welcome to the autumn 2017 issue of our Cumbria Branch Newsletter. This issue maybe a little 'slimmer' than late as our editor has never been so busy at this time of year with managing an expanded programme of Marsh fritillary web counts. [If you have not been able to help Steve Doyle count webs this year let him know if you are able to help for next year and he will add you to his list of volunteers!]

In addition to a heavy work load Steve has been our newsletter editor for all our 35 issues to date.....and what an outstanding job he has done over the last 18 years. However circumstances change and he now wishes to pass this task onto another after what will be his final 36<sup>th</sup> issue next spring. Our former committee member Karen McLellan [see our AGM report] has kindly agreed to 'shadow' Steve over this and the next issue and will take over as our new newsletter editor from autumn 2018. We will say a proper 'thank you' to Steve in what maybe a 'bumper' issue next time but at the risk of embarrassing Steve if you have any anecdotes or short passages on his tenure since 2000 please e-mail me....I hope most will pass his editorship for his final issue!

With Marsh fritillary on more sites than at any time since the 1980's [see further details in this issue] the re-introduction programme has been a remarkable success. Keith Porter, who along with Steve has led this project, has recently retired from his senior post with Natural England. Keith has done a fantastic job and we wish him well in his retirement.....the good news is that he is not retiring from [MF] work in his native Cumbria....'thank you' Keith.

Also on personnel changes with Karen standing down from the committee I am delighted to welcome Lynne Fromison and Rob Petley-Jones onto the committee. Lynne is a very fine botanist and willing work-party volunteer and Rob is known to many as the [recently retired] senior reserves officer for Natural England in North Lancashire/South Cumbria. As mentioned in a previous issue Rob has made a life-time contribution to the conservation of moths and butterflies [and all things natural history] and was recently awarded a prestigious national award by Butterfly Conservation for his outstanding work. 'Welcome to you both'.

As I write this passage in late July I have to be optimistic for 2017/18. Most Cumbria species have done well...the only clear exceptions being the lower numbers of Northern Brown

Argus, Large Sipper, Large Heath and Small Blue. First generation numbers of Small Copper and 'Whites' have also been down but can 'bounce' back with the late summer brood.

Spring started well with good numbers of hibernating adults emerging from their torpor....followed by Speckled Wood and excellent numbers of Orange Tip. More encouraging our rare fritillaries have started to 'fight back' against recent declines with the endangered Pearl-bordered fritillary having an excellent fight season on its few remaining sites....especially at Warton Crag [Lancashire] and on Whitbarrow. Small Pearl-bordered also held up well on most sites and more recently Dark Green and the rare High Brown Fritillary have been seen in reasonable numbers at known sites. Marsh Fritillary have continued to do well and non-fritillaries including Duke of Burgundy, Dingy Skipper, White-lettered and Purple Hairstreaks, Grayling and the more widespread Small Skipper, Ringlet, Gatekeeper and Red Admiral. We will learn more over the remaining weeks of our all too brief adult butterfly season!

A big 'thank you' to all who send in records to our web-site 'sightings page'. Equally we must mention the many that walk butterfly transects and who record for the Wider Countryside Scheme.



Most of this year's many programmed Spring/Summer Field Trips and Moth Events have been well attended with numbers boosted where we have planned joint events with other like minded natural history societies. Several members have also given up time to give talks/slide shows to various societies in Cumbria and beyond.....this is a key part of our education programme and a valued way of further increasing our membership. With Cumbria membership approaching 350 do keep encouraging others to join.....it is always worth looking on line [or contacting myself or HO] to see if there are any special offers open to help. Also if you know of any society or group who would like to book a butterfly or moth [or related] talk/presentation do let Steve or myself know and hopefully we can arrange this.

This issue has details of all our Wednesday and Sunday work-parties. The sites are all key sites for rare butterflies and moths and would benefit from conservation management. We have a wonderful group of volunteers who work with loppers, bow-saws and in some cases are trained to use power tools however we are always very keen to welcome new volunteers. You receive training, tools, work at your own pace, often have bonfire food, meet really interesting folk, work in some great countryside and do something outdoors

that is really rewarding.....what is stopping you! For more information please contact me or David Eastlick.



Congratulations to Julie Williams on becoming our new Butterfly Conservation Chief Executive. Julie has been senior administrator at BC Manor Yard for some time and acting CEO for the last 6 months since Martin Warren retired. She has done a brilliant job and was recently confirmed by Trustees as permanent CEO. Well done Julie....we look forward to working with you.

Finally next year is a special year for BC.....the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the charity was established. A series of special events will soon be published by Head Office: let's all think how we can join in nationally but also how we can make 2018 a really special milestone for Cumbria branch. Best wishes,

**Chris Winnick.**

## **Cumbria Branch (Sunday) Work Parties – 2017/18.**

Work parties are arranged for the second Sunday in each month (except November this year when it is the first Sunday) starting in September. Meet at 10:00 at the places in the table below. Bring rainwear, warm clothing, lunch and stout footwear and note additional advice below.

Contact in the first instance the named individual in the table for updates or Chris Winnick 01539 728254. It will be as well to check the status of the work party during periods of bad weather particularly ice and snow.

### **10 September 2017 10:00 Farrer's Allotment Whitbarrow**

Directions: Turn off A590 at Gilpin Bridge and follow Lyth Valley road, A5074. Take first turning left, where the main road bears right. After 500m, turn left into Johnscals. There is a locked gate on right. Please wait by gate and we'll offer lifts, up a good forestry road. Grid reference SD 462867 **Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **8 October 2017 10:00 Farrer's Allotment Whitbarrow**

Directions: see entry for 10 September  
**Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **5 November 2017 10:00 Township Plantation Whitbarrow**

Directions: Take A5074 from Gilpin Bridge, take second left turn to 'The Howe' (no signpost), cross minor road and climb to the centre of the hamlet. Turn left on tarmac road and then bear right onto a track with concrete wheel tracks. Parking (limited) at the first clearing in the wood. Grid reference SD 454885

**Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **10 December 2017 10:00 Wartbarrow, Allithwaite**

Directions: From the east, turn off A590 at Meathop roundabout at first exit and follow sign posted road to Grange. Drive through Grange centre following the major roads signed to Allithwaite and Flookburgh. Leave Grange by Risedale Hill (large pink building on right) and enter open country. In Allithwaite, turn right at Yakkers pub, then right just after Post Office into Quarry Lane, which leads to the community playing field. Grid reference SD 388767. From the west, turn right at Haverthwaite crossroads and follow B5278 to Holker, Cark and Flookburgh to Allithwaite. Turn left at Yakkers pub, then right just after Post Office into Quarry Lane, which leads to the community playing field. Grid reference SD 387767. Please do not park in Quarry Lane as it causes friction.

**Contact:** Martin Chadwick 015395 32553

### **14 January 2018 10:00 Township Plantation Whitbarrow**

Directions: see entry for 5 November **Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **11 February 2018 10:00 Wartbarrow, Allithwaite**

Directions: see entry for 10 December **Contact:** Martin Chadwick 015395 32553

### **11 March 2018 10.00 Gillbirks, Whitbarrow**

Directions: Take A5074 from Gilpin Bridge, take second left turn to 'The Howe' (no signpost), cross minor road and climb to the centre of the hamlet. Turn left on tarmac road, and then bear right onto a track with concrete wheel tracks. Parking (limited) at the first clearing in the wood.

Grid reference SD 454885

**Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254



## Cumbria Branch (Wednesday) Work Parties – 2017/18.

Meet at 10:00 at the parking places. For full directions, please see the Branch website. [www.cumbria-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.cumbria-butterflies.org.uk) Check the web site for last minute changes or ring Chris Winnick 01539 728254 or David Eastlick 015395 32076.

Dress appropriately for Cumbrian weather, boots, waterproofs, warm clothing and, bring lunch and drinks. We supply tools and protective items.

### **13 September 2017 10:00 White Scar Quarry, Whitbarrow**

Directions: White Scar Quarry is at the southern end of Whitbarrow Scar. From either direction along the A590, turn off this road at the last turning before (from Barrow direction) or the first turning after (from Kendal direction) the A5074 Lyth Valley road (SD 466850). After 500m on the former main road, turn right towards Raven's Lodge. Pass through the farmyard, bearing right and park in the second car park on the left Grid reference SD 460852

**Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **27 September 2017 10:00 Hampsfield Allotment, Hampsfell, Cartmel Valley**

Directions: Approach from Lindale mini roundabout—take B5271 north up Lindale hill, past Windermere Road junction and turn next left on Hollow Lane SD 412808, just before reaching the Lindale bypass. There is a bench at the junction. Then, turn left at signpost/no through road to Hampsfield.

Approach from Cartmel Lane SD 401872, turning the other end of Hollow Lane. In this case, turn right at the Hampsfield/no through road sign.

In both cases, follow the narrow lane past the first house, then there is a right turn into High Hampsfield Farm driveway SD 404803 (selling various meats off the farm). We have consent to park at the farm. The space is tight, share lifts. **Contact:** David Jackson 015395 33322

### **11 October 2017 10:00 Hampsfield Allotment, Hampsfell, Cartmel Valley**

Directions: see entry for 27 September **Contact:** David Jackson 015395 33322

### **25 October 2017 10:00 Halecat Woods, Witherslack**

Directions: Turn off A590 at Witherslack junction, then follow brown "Halecat" in the village centre and park in the Garden Centre parking, Satnav LA11 6RT, Grid ref SD433835.

**Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **8 November 2017 10:00 Yewbarrow**

Directions: Turn off A590 towards Witherslack, continue on road to pass through the village to Witherslack Hall. Turn right on to a rough track (the Kennels) for parking. Grid reference SD 4368599 Tools can be driven part way.

**Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **22 November 2017 10:00 Witherslack Woods**

Directions: Turn off A590 towards Witherslack, continue on road to pass through the village to Witherslack Hall. Turn right on to a rough track (the Kennels) for parking. Grid reference SD 436859. **Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **6 December 2017 10:00 Witherslack Woods**

Directions: see entry for 22 November **Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **20 December 2017 10:00 Gillbirks, Whitbarrow**

Directions: Take A5074 from Gilpin Bridge, take second left turn to 'The Howe' (no signpost), cross minor road and climb to the centre of the hamlet. Turn left on tarmac road, and then bear right onto a track with concrete wheel tracks. Parking (limited) at the first clearing in the wood. Grid reference SD 454885 **Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **10 January 2018 10:00 Wartbarrow, Allithwaite**

Directions: From the east, turn off A590 at Meathop roundabout, first exit and follow sign posted road to Grange. Drive through Grange centre following the major roads signed to Allithwaite and Flookburgh. Leave Grange by Risedale Hill (large pink building on right) and enter open country. In Allithwaite, turn right at Yackers pub, then right just after Post Office into Quarry Lane, which leads to the community playing fields at grid reference SD 387767. From the west, turn right at Haverthwaite crossroads and follow B5278 to Holker, Cark and Flookburgh to Allithwaite. Turn left at Yackers pub, then right just after Post Office into Quarry Lane, which leads to the community playing field. Grid reference SD 387767. Please do not park in Quarry Lane as it causes friction. **Contact:** Martin Chadwick 015395 32553

**24 January 2018 10:00** to be confirmed

### **7 February 2018 10:00 Holme Stinted Pastures**

Directions: Take the Burton in Kendal road from the roundabout A65/A6070 on the Kirkby Lonsdale road, just off M6 junction 36. Head south for about 3km before turning left onto the Clawthorpe road at the Clawthorpe Hall Hotel [before Burton in Kendal]. Follow this narrow lane uphill for about 1.5km until you almost reach the hill summit. Park in the layby

on the right. Approximate Grid reference SD 543783 **Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **21 February 2018 10:00 Holme Stinted Pastures**

Directions: see entry for 7 February **Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **7 March 2018 10:00 High Dam Primrose Planting**

Directions: Turn off A590 over bridge at Newby Bridge towards the Swan Hotel. Bear left after bridge and take right turn to Lakeside. Continue through Lakeside. At Stott Park Bobbin Mill, bear left to Finsthwaite (ignore minor junction on right) and continue for 500m. At entrance to village, turn right up unmarked tarmac road and park in the High Dam car park. Parking authorisation will be provided. Grid reference SD 368882

**Contact:** David Eastlick 015395 32076



### **21 March 2018 10:00 High Dam to be confirmed**

Directions: see entry for 7 February **Contact:** David Eastlick 015395 32076

### **4 Apr 2018 10:00 Gillbirks, Whitbarrow**

Directions: see entry for 20 December **Contact:** Chris Winnick 01539 728254

### **18 Apr 2018 10:00 to be confirmed**

## **Moth Recording, Sightings and Recording Generally.**

Our moth recorders are going great guns at present with more records than ever. You might have noticed more moth articles appearing in our Branch newsletters nowadays, that is intentional to reflect the growing trend of moth trapping and recording in Cumbria.

Our now ex Committee member Gary Hedges set up a whole new world of wildlife recording at Tullie House in Carlisle before he left to work at Liverpool Natural History



Museum. However Gary has now been replaced at Tullie House by Stuart Colgate and we look forward to working with Stuart. Whilst Gary had departed and Stuart was arriving the reliable and most helpful Mustafa Edweda was still there and believe me, he is a star! Moustafa creates all the charts, diagrams, analyses you could ever imagine from all the records sent in to the Cumbria Biological Data

Centre (CBDC) – just ask for something and Moustafa will oblige. Testament to that are the moth distribution map which follows this article and also the High Brown Fritillary distribution map on the back cover of this newsletter. Thanks Moustafa.

We've said it before and make no apologies for saying it again but accurate records are so, so important if we are to conserve our wildlife. Records can give us 'heads up' on declining species and at least allow us to try to do something about it when in years past without the information quite often the point of no return was already with us e.g. the Marsh Fritillary extinction in Cumbria in 2004. We were lucky to be able to do something about that but the point is that if we, and others, had the information of decline long before the species might never have become extinct here in the first place.

So, it is a well done to all the present day recorders and to Tullie House for collating all the records which are also used to guide and help with planning applications which might conflict for example with a protected species on site.

**SIGHTINGS PAGE** - For those of you who do not send records directly to Tullie House Records Centre you can use the Sightings page on Butterfly Conservation's website. All records put there will automatically be sent on to Tullie House and on from there to the national records centre.

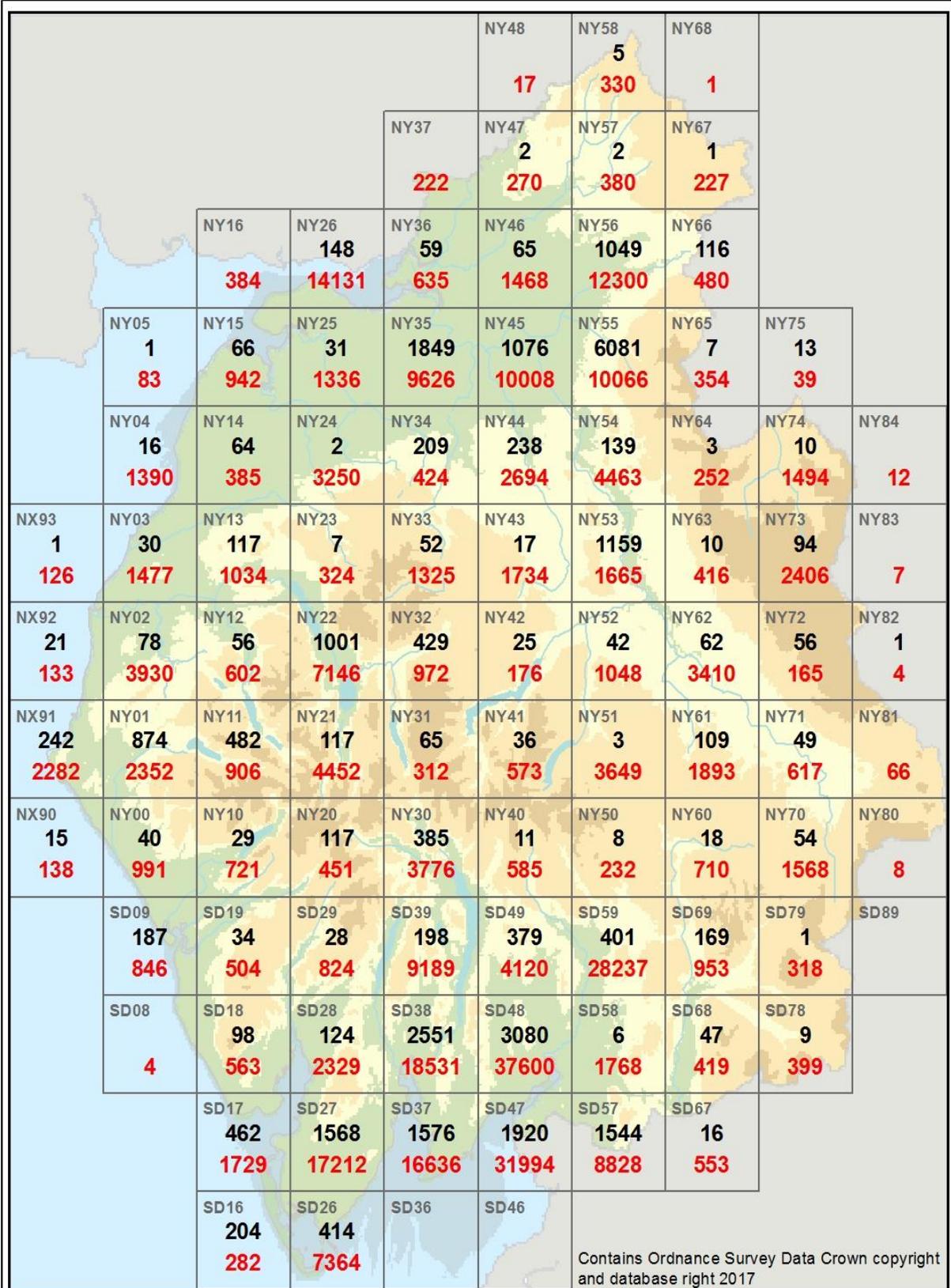


**Steve Doyle**

**On the next page .....**

..... Moustafa Edweda of the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) has provided us with a map showing the vast rise in moth recording in recent years. As has been pointed out before, such data is vital to us nowadays as it not only helps conservation of species and habitat but it also guides planners especially by giving up to date data on the presence of a protected or endangered species so that up front action can be considered before planning reaches a more advanced stage. I know that might not always be the case but it certainly has helped in a number of cases and without the knowledge it would not happen at all.

**Steve Doyle**



Contains Ordnance Survey Data Crown copyright and database right 2017

Number of recorded moths in hectads: Observations in 1970 (in BLACK) versus current observations (in RED). Includes CBDC database moth records between 1800-2017.

Moustafa Edweda

## Small Blues

We have spent a lot of time and energy (and Grant Aid) in the last decade in an effort to conserve the habitat for the locally Endangered Small Blue butterfly in West Cumbria which is the only place it breeds anywhere within 200 miles of us. We have local volunteer groups comprising retired people, out of work people, disabled people and students of all ages out there helping us to restore and create more habitat where the egg laying plant, and thus the butterfly can thrive. It takes a long time for habitat to respond and become suitable, there is no magic wand to make it happen any quicker. BUT, it can be destroyed in an instant with a digging



machine and that is the greatest threat. Over the last couple of decades at least Allerdale Borough Council have passed planning applications which have destroyed totally or harmed significantly several wildlife sites where Small Blue butterflies in particular bred. Having said that, it is not so much a damning indictment, though it could be, because we realise that housing, industry and re-development of brownfield sites is vital to the community. However their Local Plan also prioritises the welfare of the Small Blue butterfly and other key wildlife along with important connectivity routes. That is where they appear to be lacking in direction. Develop by all means but wildlife patches can be included in the plans along with connectivity routes. At present I can not see how they intend to implement their Local Plan in respect of wildlife – there is no indication of where it fits in. Quite the contrary in fact because to cite one example we have worked for several years with local volunteer groups to restore and create more habitat on the Oldside brownfield site which at present is 'wild' except for wind turbines. There is a vast array of wildlife there including protected species BUT, the present Allerdale proposal is to dig it up and convert it into a Gypsy and Travellers site. There are other areas of Workington where that could happen and would not cause harm to wildlife.



The overall situation in 2017 with Small Blue emergence is that numbers have steadied and to be honest that is a little disappointing. However whilst weather conditions were fine enough it was very windy which made movement of species difficult and the result was a very sedentary season. Eggs will have been laid however and there is more

larval foodplant Kidney Vetch available thanks to our efforts so we will await the 2018

season with interest. In the meantime we continue to work on habitat creation and will be collecting seed and sowing it in prepared habitat in early to mid August. Once again I thank all the volunteers who work tirelessly with me under the stewardship of Workington Nature Partnership Officer Raegan Blacker and my 'foreman' Midge. Hopefully we can persuade Allerdale Planning to think again and leave Oldside alone for the benefit of the wildlife which is 'home' to them – and for the benefit of the increasing number of local people who are visiting the site in increasing numbers to see nature at its best by joining our guided walks.

**Steve Doyle**

## **Cumbria Branch - 2017 Annual General Meeting**

Held at 1 p.m. on Saturday 3rd June 2017 at Blackwood Farm, Keswick

### **Minutes**

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Chris Winnick (CW) chaired the meeting and welcomed twenty-five members and also introduced the members of the Committee present.

Apologies were received from: David Eastlick, Martin Chadwick, John Mounsey, Rob Petley-Jones and Hillary Smith.

#### **2. Minutes of the AGM held on 11 June 2016**

It was proposed by Peter and seconded by Keith that these be approved as a true and correct record.

#### **3. Matters Arising**

There were none

#### **4. Chairman's Report**

CW thanked Martin Tordoff for once again setting up the moth traps. The night had unfortunately been very cold resulting in only a few moths in the traps.

CW reported that the last 12 months have been challenging. After the 2016 Open Day at Haybridge nature reserve last June, butterfly numbers struggled for the rest of 2016. A warm and sunny May gave way to mixed weather, indifferent numbers of butterflies and real concern for the future of our rare fritillaries. Fortunately after a better winter and a dry and sunny spring, most early species have done better in 2017. Particularly pleasing is that the serious and continuing decline in Pearl and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries has been halted at least for now and that most other species to date have emerged with weather suited to good mating and egg laying opportunities.

Another challenge is to turn more of our members into 'active participants' and especially conservation volunteers. We continued with an ambitious programme of Wednesday and Sunday work parties with much excellent work done at several sites in the Morecambe Bay area ..... in particular at Wart Barrow near Grange and at Farrer's Allotment on Whitbarrow. However, we have found it difficult to attract new volunteers ..... our band of brilliant volunteers need

reinforcement. Where finance has allowed conservation work has been contracted to professionals. This is an excellent use of funds but with so many sites deserving professional and/or volunteer work lack of financial and human resource could become a major concern. In the north and west of Cumbria Steve Doyle has had success in working with other organisations and volunteers to help Marsh Fritillary and Small Blue.

A further challenge is to grow our membership. Membership fees help to pay for tools, training and programmes of e.g. growing and planting caterpillar food plants as well as for our much improved newsletter. We are still the smallest BC branch by membership but have the greatest responsibility towards protecting the finest assemblage of rare butterflies north of the south Midlands. We must be more creative and do more to attract new members and new committee members.

There are many challenges: some are being tackled, some need extra resources and some relate to matters beyond our control ..... notably climate change, micro-climate, land use and environmental policy in a post-Brexit world. However, CW said, this report cannot be ended without reference to two fine achievements. First it was wonderful to see over 100 butterfly enthusiasts at our joint BC/Lancashire University conference in March on 'Saving the Rare Butterflies of the North-West'. There is tremendous enthusiasm out there to help save our butterflies ..... the challenge is how to best harness this good will. Second, on a more personal level, CW had recently found Pearl-bordered fritillaries in areas on Farrer's Allotment that until this winter's conservation work were completely overgrown and unsuitable: very satisfying and even more so when you share this with enthusiastic members on one of our published guided walks.

#### **5. Treasurer's Report 2016-2017 (David Eastlick, DTE)**

Copies of the Treasurer's Report were distributed to all present.

The branch accounts for 2016-2017 were audited externally at HQ without adverse comment. Donations continue at a gratifying level of £340. A balanced P&L account is available. The year contains payment for 3 newsletters since the cost of Spring 2016 entered this financial year. The cost of printing each newsletter has risen due to the use of colour. The committee will continue to monitor the cost. A new chainsaw was bought to replace an existing machine which was beyond economic repair. A first aid course was organised by the branch and the cost was shared with the Lancashire branch and the Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB. One volunteer underwent a chainsaw refresher course. Costs were met from non-restricted funds and (after change of use by agreement) from the Mountain Ringlet Fund and the designated First Aid and Tools Fund.

A budget has been prepared for 2017/2018 and accepted by the chairman. The branch starts the current year with unrestricted funds of £2756 and restricted and designated funds totalling £3757.

Starting in this year, 2017/2018 Head Office has centralised branch finances. Payment is initiated by a paper/email system after approval at branch level and notified to Head Office.

CW reported that any surplus funds in the past have been returned to Head Office where they have been matched by landfill payments for BC contractor work. Unfortunately this "match pot" scheme is due to end soon, without obvious replacement.

#### **6. Moth/Wider Countryside/Mountain Ringlet Report**

Martin Tordoff (MT) presented his report, a copy of which is attached.

#### **7. Membership Report**

CW reported that we now have approx. 380 members in total with about one-third living in other parts of the country. He hoped the good weather might encourage new members.

## 8. Questions and Answers Session

One member said how rewarding he thought the Wider Countryside Scheme was.

Karen McLellan (KMc) suggested arranging an event to help and advise members about butterfly gardening.

The problem of neonicotinoids in purchased plants was raised. It was reported that B&Q have already changed their policy.

KMc raised the possibility of advertising work parties to people in particular areas.

CW suggested Tom Dunbar might send out something by Dotmailer.

## 9. Election of Officers/Committee

KMc is standing down from the Committee but will continue to help. CW said this was much appreciated. CW appealed for new Committee members and asked if anyone would like to come along to a Committee meeting to see what they thought.

Andrew Smith proposed the re-election of the remaining members of the Committee and KMc seconded this.

## 10. Any Other Business

CW thanked Steve Doyle for the fantastic job he has done with the newsletter since 2000.

No other matters were raised. The meeting closed at 1.45 p.m.

Cumbria Branch Committee 2016-2017

Chairman: Chris Winnick

Treasurer: David Eastlick

Moth Officer: Martin Tordoff

Committee Members: Peter Boardman, Martin Chadwick, Wendy Nelson, Tom Dunbar, Karen McLellan, Gary Hedges, Jennifer Rae (co-opted as Membership Secretary). David Wainwright and Martin Wain from BC, are invited to attend meetings.

## Blackwood Farm Members' Day: Bassenthwaite.

Our member's day this year was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> June at the wonderful Blackwood Farm, a Marsh Fritillary site 2 miles west of Keswick. Just over 40 attended on a day of improving weather for a full programme of indoor and outdoor activities. Our moth officer, Martin Tordoff, kindly set up traps the night before but as nocturnal temperatures plummeted to just two degrees there were few moths to study at the start of the day.

Indoor events started with Steve Doyle giving a very interesting review of our Marsh



Fritillary re-introduction project..... from the day the last few Cumbrian caterpillars were taken into a captive breeding project to where we are today with 17 MF sites across north Cumbria. Steve's excellent slides took us through all stages of this ground breaking project from the importance of cross-breeding with Scottish stock to identifying and preparing suitable receptor sites to how to manage thousands of devils-bit scabious hungry caterpillars! The project has had to overcome problems related to weather, land use, access, human resources and other issues but with Steve and Keith Porter [NE] and a team of committed volunteers driving this forward the future of the Marsh Fritillary in Cumbria has been secured. As I write this Steve is busy organising MF web counts.....the work goes on.... but with MF now establishing new sites by natural colonisation all the hard work has been rewarded. [Steve will continue to give updates on progress in our newsletters].

Next, Martin Tordoff gave us an illustrated presentation on the Moths of Cumbria....including reference to some of the moths we did not see in the traps! Martin's talk is not a 'here is another moth' slide show....it is personal and full of detail on how to get



into 'mothing' in Cumbria. [What equipment you need, what reference books are most helpful, how you can record and send in data to increase understanding and how you can join the Cumbria Moth Group to get more out of your interest.]

I especially liked the historical references to past Cumbrian moths and mothning techniques and how with a small town garden

Martin has been able to record 500 species of stunningly beautiful moths.....including some rarities and first sightings for Cumbria.

After lunch and a brief AGM [see elsewhere in this issue for a report on the AGM] Steve Doyle took us to several of the fields that host Marsh Fritillary. The weather was a little mixed but warm and bright enough to see reasonable numbers of adults on the wing. We were also pleased to see freshly laid MF egg batches and both Small Pearl-bordered fritillary and 'metallic' green day-flying Forester moth.



All agreed it had been a superb day.....and 'thank you' to our host Paul Barnes who is a great supporter of Marsh fritillary and BC. We hope you can join us for our 2018 member's day in south Cumbria: we will publish details in our spring newsletter.

**Chris Winnick.**



**Marsh Fritillary eggs one and two weeks old**



**Marsh Fritillary pupa.**

## **RIODINID BUTTERFLIES, OUR DUKE'S TRANSATLANTIC COUSINS**

Our Duke of Burgundy Fritillary is one species out of a Family total of 1532 species worldwide of the



Butterfly Family Riodinidae. The vast majority of these exist either side of the Equator in the New World but they are also represented by tiny numbers on all other continents, excepting Antarctica.

### **TAXONOMY**

Riodinidae are closely related to Lycaenidae ( Blues and Hairstreaks ) but are separated in traditional taxonomy by front leg anatomical joint structure. The larval structures and biology ( symbiosis with ants, as per the Large Blue ), suggests such affinity with Lycaenidae ref.1. However diversity of wing structure and patterning mimics in miniature the most spectacular groups of all other butterfly families eg Papilionidae ( Swallowtails ), Nymphalidae, Satyridae ( Browns ) and Hesperidae ( skippers ).

Chromosomal counts in Riodinidae have a far greater range of number than all other butterfly families, further leading to puzzlement of their true evolutionary status. Indeed D'Abrera, ref.2 ended up being converted to a " Creationist " after many years of their taxonomic study !

### **MIMICRY**

Many Riodinids mimic brightly coloured butterfly and moth species of other families that are known to be toxic to predators e.g. Ithomiidae and Heliconidae. The toxic species accumulate alkaloids from their larval food plants and exhibit bright red or yellow warning colours. Again, Riodinids defy traditional thinking on mimicry. The food plants of many Riodinids are unknown and it remains uncertain whether their bright coloration is toxin related and protective against predation, or whether they are just taking the mick out of predators and taxonomists ( illustration 1 *Amarynthis meneria* ).

### **WORLD CONSERVATION ISSUES.**

Most species exist in Primary, un-logged forest edge habitat and sub-canopy. Initially, many were recorded from single sites in remote areas of South and Central America but they have a habit of cropping up as

single sitings in areas far from their original distribution. Colony numbers appear to be very small and isolated.

Riodinids prefer brief sunny spells in the wet season and are probably particularly sensitive to recent El Nino weather patterns.

Some genera such as *Helicopis* have more predictable habitat needs, the edges of oxbow lakes associated with the Amazonas and Guianas. Colonies are bigger but are very prone to flooding and forest clearance. Their exquisite wing shape bear silver wing markings uncannily reminiscent of human tears ( often shed when trying to photograph them from a canoe ).

## CONSERVATION IN ECUADOR

Ecuador straddles the equator and has retained primary forest habitat at all altitude both on the West and East slopes of the Andes, also in the Western Amazonas. It is probably the best place in the world to see the greatest number of Riodinids on a short visit. As with Costa Rica, there has been a big re-wilding project, buying up poor quality cattle pasture and allowing rapid regeneration of secondary growth forest once the cattle are taken off. Being mountainous, isolated endemic species have spread out from small primary forest remnants surviving in deep ravines where logging was never feasible. Secondary forest has



achieved up to 20m height in under 30 years of re-wilding the uplands.

Conservation in the Amazonas is maybe more pragmatic—the oil industry has been there for some years and a pipeline crosses the Andes to Ports on the Pacific Coast. Nevertheless, some of the Indigenous Communities, such as the Sani have been savvy in their negotiation. They have used their oil money wisely, building Eco-lodges that take paying visitors and allow income from forest preservation. The oil pipeline is actually excellent forest edge habitat and may allow spread of isolated species populations. It can have rather vigorous secondary growth, making a machete an essential butterfly recording tool.

Nationally, Ecuador's oil money has allowed building of a new international airport with flights direct from Europe and a well developed internal flight structure that allows good value and accessible Eco-Tourism. The forest communities benefit directly from Eco-tourism without too many middle-men.

Preservation of iconic bird species is the main draw for Eco-tourism but many other species groups such as Riodinid butterflies benefit from the habitat preservation. Birders tend to visit in the dry season, whilst the wet season is best for insects. If insect enthusiasts visit during the rainy season, it extends the tourist season and makes the Eco lodges more economically viable and able to preserve more habitat.

## SUMMARY

Riodinids represent the most enigmatic group of world butterflies, challenging taxonomy and theories on evolution. They are probably the most diverse and spectacular family of butterflies particularly if you can approach them with a macro lens, photo *Nymphidium caricae*.

They are the “ Canary in the mine “ in terms of rainforest conservation, climate change and world biodiversity. I was lucky to visit Ecuador in March 2017 and can highly recommend a visit.

## References

1 De Vries P., Butterflies of Costa Rica and their Natural History, Volume 2 Riodinidae, Princeton 1997  
2 D' Abrera, B. Butterflies of the Neotropical Region, Part 6 Riodinidae, Hill house, 1994

**Guy Broome**

## **The Marsh Fritillary Story continues**



.....

As I write this we are just about to start a very challenging time by getting out there to count the number of larval webs on each of our Marsh Fritillary sites. There are 16 or 17 sites nowadays depending on how you look at it because one of our sites covers a wide area and it could be described as at least two and maybe three separate colonies. The problem we have is that a third of it is in separate ownership and we don't have access to that large chunk so we can't check it out and count the larval webs. We know there are some there and suspect there are decent numbers. The habitat is very suitable and we have seen them there in recent years but the new landowner will not allow us access. That's a great pity but we respect his wishes and hopefully time will pass and he will have a change of heart because all we want to do is help him, work with him and interfere as little as possible with his use of the land. Indeed we might be able to be a benefit to him. At present however the butterfly will be there whether we are there or not and appearances suggest that no harm is being done to the habitat – but we would like to have a rapport with him.

Elsewhere in the old county of Cumberland (which is where all the sites are and traditionally were) there are six colonies in Ennerdale, five on the Solway Plain, two in the Penrith area, one (or two?) near Keswick and one in West Cumberland. The key time to search for larval webs is from the start of the second week in August through

to the end of the month. That is when the larval foodplant Devils Bit Scabious is most noticeable and in flower so the webs are more easily detectable as they are around those plants.

In the past there were only a couple of us who did the web counts but I'm



pleased to say that the number of volunteers has now increased and in 2017 we now have at least 20 lined up to help out on the various sites and in groups depending on location. That's great because it not only shares the load but it also allows for continuity in the future as others get to know the requirements of the butterfly and develop a keen interest in its welfare. Having said that, most of the sites are on private land so access has to be respected and the location of some sites should be kept confidential by all volunteers. Failure to do that might well adversely affect the situation as we must remember we are working with farmers who still need to farm their land and do not want uncontrolled access especially when livestock are present, and of course excess trampling can be a problem at certain times of year. I'm sure you know what I'm getting at.

By the time you read this we will have completed our 2017 larval web surveys and returned home to see if our wives still recognise us. It's very much fingers crossed time but the flight season in Cumbria was very good as far as weather conditions were concerned this year so hopes are high that the end result will be satisfactory. No doubt there will be a few surprises however and that some will be good ones whilst others are not and occasionally we just don't know why – that's nature. To give you some idea of the success of this project however, remember the Marsh Fritillary was declared extinct in Cumbria in 2004. Since our reintroduction project was launched, (and that was against a background that such a project had not before been successful) the ongoing success has been measured by the number of larval webs on each site and of course the number of sites themselves. That latter number has increased over the years by additional reintroductions plus self-colonisation by the butterflies themselves to suitable habitat in connectivity distance from reintroduction sites. This happened noticeably in 2016 but is likely to have begun earlier as the original 'core' reintroduction sites became so big that inevitably the butterflies, or at least some of them, ventured further afield.



In 2007 when reintroduction started on four sites we had a total of 169 larval webs and frankly we were very happy with that. By 2009 that figure had risen to 409, by 2011 it was 968 (now over 8 sites) and by 2014 it was 2130 and in 2016 it was 3252.

A couple of our largest sites have had habitat condition changes due to flooding and necessary sward cutting where natural grazing was not possible so my thoughts are the total number of larval webs in 2017 might be lower – but what do I know, after all we are dealing with nature and nobody has complete control over that!

**Steve Doyle**

# Inbreeding.....

..... and thinking back to my years with the Large Copper.

Not the most eye catching headline for an article perhaps but read on, think about it then draw your own conclusions. I'm not a scientist, I'm a volunteer but having spent many years breeding Marsh Fritillaries in captivity (prior to release under licence) in the more sunny areas of my back garden, I was able to watch them every day and just as importantly learn from it all.

One of the other things I have done for several years now is to check and verify the county butterfly records before they are sent to the national recording centre and to try as far as possible to ensure those records are as 'clean' as is practical bearing in mind some mis-identifications are possible or errors are made with Grid References.

That sets the scene for this article which is really putting into print what I think about some of the conclusions I have arrived at and why I say you can draw your own conclusions.



Male Large Copper



Female Large Copper

Going back to the headline which relates to my years working on the Large Copper butterfly project I'm now able to answer questions I had at that time, well answer them in my own mind at least. I was a volunteer then, back in the 1980's I think it would be when at weekends and odd summer nights I would go along to Woodwalton Fen in Cambridgeshire with my (still) good friend Michael Chinery. He liaised closely with Dr Ian McLean of Natural England at nearby Peterborough as Ian I think headed up the Large Copper project. Michael and I lived not far from Bury St. Edmunds so a trek across the fens to Woodwalton was great for us. What we did there was to pull on the wellies and wade into the fenland water amongst the *Phragmites* and other herbage to count not just adult Large Copper butterflies but also at the right times of year the eggs, then the larvae and then the pupae. That involved surveying for the larval foodplant which is Great Water Dock. The *Phragmites* was quite tall and thick in places which meant we could only communicate by word as we couldn't see each other though you always knew when one or other of us got a wellie full of brackish water!



Having done that work for several years the numbers of Large Copper butterflies were dwindling and it became clear that we were losing the battle- they would become extinct. A great guy called Ron Harold was employed by Natural England as the Warden at Woodwalton and he bred Large

Mating Large Coppers

Coppers in a greenhouse in his back garden then released them into Woodwalton Fen at yearly intervals, but still the population in the wild continued to dwindle. The decision had to be made, just how long do we continue to breed them in Ron's greenhouse when that strategy is not having a long term benefit? At the time I'm not sure if the captive stock in Ron's greenhouse became infertile through inbreeding or if he refreshed the stock annually in an effort to avoid inbreeding. I certainly was not involved in the decision making process and I never thought about inbreeding being a problem, or at least one of the problems. Anyway the decision was made to stop the captive breeding routine and as we know the Large Copper became extinct at Woodwalton which was its only UK colony and thus far it has not been reintroduced.

Fast wind to the present time and my own experience of breeding Marsh Fritillaries in captivity. That project is headed up by Dr Keith Porter who is only just now retired from Natural England at Peterborough but still actively involved in our Cumbrian project. I'm sort of heading it up on the ground locally. Before we started reintroducing the Marsh Fritillary we wanted to establish as best we could the reasons why it became extinct in Cumbria in the first place. To cut a long story shorter we came to the conclusion that the dozens, hundreds even, of colonies which existed in Cumberland in the 1950's and before, became fragmented and thus isolated from each other with non viable connectivity routes in between them. There were other reasons as well such as changes in agricultural methods after World War Two but the loss of connectivity was thought to be the trump card even if the agricultural changes were largely the cause of that. What the loss of connectivity between colonies did was to establish 'island' colonies some of which were small anyway but others were very large. Without connectivity there was no movement between colonies (think of as families) and that meant breeding then took place only within each 'island' colony. Fine for a while but after a while longer inbreeding causes genetic weakness and that in turn leads to infertility and then the downward spiral really takes effect and your colony is on the road to no return i.e. extinction. As I said, we came to that conclusion by use of commonsense in the first place when our Marsh Fritillary project started in 2004 but our theory was to some extent confirmed when we started to breed captive stock. We bred some of our remaining Cumbrian stock together but all failed or were infertile so a reason to think inbreeding/genetics were indeed a problem. We bred some Scottish stock acquired under licence from several sites in Argyll and they were almost all successful. We bred some Cumbrian stock with Scottish stock and they were partially successful (although some

looked a bit tartanish!). Looked like we were getting somewhere as far as commonsense was concerned.



After a few years of captive breeding our captive stock also started to show signs of tiredness by way of infertility. For goodness sake we thought, if we were of the opinion that 'island' colonies in the wild would be a road to nowhere then our captive 'island'

Ron's greenhouse

colonies in breeding

cages were even more likely to be affected and more quickly than wild colonies. We started to refresh our captive stock each year and behold, problem solved. We always put a great number more back in the wild than we remove for breeding.

The upshot of all this is that we think we have learned a lot about the adverse effects of inbreeding within ever reducing and particularly in 'island' colonies. This is why the present day strategy with most declining species, insects anyway, is to manage habitat on a landscape scale in conjunction with landowners and agri-environment schemes. That way we can create and maintain wildlife connectivity corridors. It might not end forever the decline in butterfly numbers but it should result in a levelling out or at least slowing down of the decline in several of our key or endangered species.

So, going back to my days at Woodwalton Fen I strongly suspect that whilst it was fun at the time we were in fact fighting a losing battle and that whatever Ian, Ron, Michael myself and others did, extinction was always going to be the end result. You see it was an 'island' colony.



Large Copper caterpillar/larva.



Large Copper pupa.

Now, think about our other species which are struggling locally. Small Blues are having a connectivity problem due to habitat loss (Planning Authorities have other priorities as well), Pearl Bordered Fritillaries and Duke of Burgundies have struggled for years. Scotch Argus are not as numerous as they used to be on Arnside Knott, could there be an ongoing and accelerating inbreeding problem there. Hmmm.

**Steve Doyle**

## Unusual looking butterflies .....

Most of us have probably seen a few butterflies which looked unusual. We no doubt knew what species it was but there was something about it which was not quite right. There are several reasons why we can see unusual butterflies, firstly it could simply be a regional form or as some rightly or wrongly call them, sub-species. A good example of this is the Silver Studded Blue *Plebejus argus* which can look, in my opinion anyway, quite different in various parts of the country where it occurs. It has the same basic colouration i.e. it's blue but the markings on the upper (wings open) side and maybe less noticeably the underside can look quite different and even the size of each variation can be and usually is different. On the Great Orme at Llandudno there is a very different form of the *caernensis* Silver Studded as it is in most cases smaller than *caernensis* seen elsewhere and it emerges a good couple of weeks earlier. A good case I would have thought to give it its own name variation.



On Portland Bill above Weymouth the Silver Studded there is the *cretaceous* form which is only found on chalk or limestone habitats. On each colony I've been to I always see differences and on Prees Heath in Shropshire for example the females can be tiny and almost black in appearance rather than brown or very blue forms. Same with the Great Orme females as well but I've not found that to be the case in the colonies in the New Forest, Studland in Dorset or the colony in Suffolk at Martlesham Heath. There was incidentally another variation found in Cumbria many years ago before it became extinct. That was known as the *masseyi* form.

Another reason for unusual butterflies is that they may



be what's called 'abberations' and which are eagerly sought after by photographers because of their rarity – that is the butterflies, not the



photographers. With this article I've included some aberration photos I've encountered in the Comma, Marsh Fritillary and Common Blue though the latter is not so much an aberration, it is what is known as a Gyandromorph which means it is half male and half female. That photo was taken at Workington a couple of years ago.

The Small Copper is a common butterfly seen throughout Cumbria but in low numbers. It has differences as well though you might not have noticed. Next time you see one look for the blue spotted variant



*caeruleopunctata*. The blue spots are on the hind wings, upper side just inside the bottom edge and above the orange/copper outer markings. This variant is not that common but don't be surprised to find one in the coastal areas, but look at every one you see elsewhere too.



Another Cumbrian speciality is the Ringlet with no rings. It used to be common in north Cumbria but is less so now but you can still see Ringlets with just a few white spots instead of rings or nothing at all, just plain with no rings or spots.

Others I've seen over the years have been a Gyandromorph Silver Washed Fritillary and a White Admiral with no white markings at all known as *nigrina* and also a version with irregular white markings *obliterae*

So, if you have managed to see and maybe photographed all the British butterflies, male and female, upper side and underside, mating pair – now you have a challenge on your hands to find and photograph variations. Most British butterflies produce unusual variations from time to time so look out for them and try to get a photo. If you manage to get any please send them on and we'll try to publish them in a branch newsletter.



## Steve Doyle

### Butterflies of Undermillbeck Common Field Trip, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2017 Leader Martin Chadwick

Nine people met Martin on the outskirts of Winster to search for Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries off Green Lane at Undermillbeck Common.

We set off up the road with great hopes – none more so than two chaps from Huddersfield who had made the long journey specifically to get High Brown Fritillary. It was a breezy day with not much sunshine but soon after leaving Green Lane onto the common the group spread out and before long a few species were spotted including Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Straw Dot moth and our first Dark Green Fritillary, Martin caught one in his net and let everyone have a good look and explained the finer points between this and the elusive High Brown Fritillary.

We sat together on a banking having lunch and Martin and Tom Dunbar kept jumping up and chasing fritillaries with their nets but still no sign of the HBF !

We went back onto Green lane and walked a few hundred yards further up and entered another suitable field on the right. Here we saw a Green Carpet moth, quite a lot of Small Skipper and a very obliging Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary which allowed everyone to have a good look and take pictures.

Martin then decided that we would return to where we had lunch as this was still the best place to see the High Brown, at this stage myself and a colleague had to leave due to other commitments.

However I later learned from Martin that they finally got a High Brown Fritillary, the chaps from Huddersfield were absolutely delighted and no doubt everyone else was too.

All in all a very successful day considering the weather, other notable species recorded were one Common Blue, a few Green-veined White and a Speckled Wood.



## Ian Tallon

### **'GETTING MORE' OUT OF YOUR INTEREST IN BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS**

The following is a very personal, wide-ranging and incomplete list of ideas that may help further your interest in lepidoptera and the countryside. They are in no particular order and some will have little appeal or relevance to you. However if some do appeal then I shall be delighted!

[1] For an extra £6.00 join an additional BC branch.....many branches have brilliant newsletters and annual reports.

[2] Study all the various sections of the BC national web site and sign up to receive the e-newsletter.

[3] Look at the web sites of all 30 branches!.....they are a wealth of information and if you are planning a UK holiday to e.g. Devon look at their sightings page to see where to go and what to look out for! Many also list field trips to attend, reserves and recent newsletters. Some even produce their own book/booklet on the butterflies and walks of their area.

[4] Look at Peter Eeles amazing web site 'UK Butterflies'. Apart from articles and the latest news it has superb pictures to help with identification. There is also a great 'app' to help with butterfly identification.

[5] Many branches have facebook and twitter accounts.....join in!

[6] Get a moth trap.....they are great. First find someone who has one and ask their advice.....warning you could get hooked!

[7] Read some good books. You cannot beat Thomas and Lewington on 'The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland', Waring & Townsend on 'Moths', Newland & Still on 'Britain's Butterflies'

[as a field guide] and Newland, Still & Swash 'Britain's Day Flying Moths' [field guide] The above are for reference but for pleasure of reading see the three by Oates, Barkham and Marren.]

[8] Keep an annual diary of what you see.....you could even attempt what Patrick Barkham did.....and try to see all UK species [in a year!] Alternatively keep a video or picture diary. If less ambitious.....why not try to record all species in your branch?.....or for moths keep a record year on year....you may find species new to your county? [do not forget to send in your sightings to your branch sightings facility and to your county recorder.]

[9] Find out what events are going on locally.....your BC branch will have field trips in the Spring/Summer to suit all, work parties in the Autumn/Winter and other events like Members days.

[10] If you have any expertise in a wide range of activities from education to marketing/fundraising to health & safety to IT to photography.....please contact your local branch as they may need your help.

[11] Write an article for your branch newsletter.

[12] Create a wildlife area or garden on your land.....or [with permission!] on someone else's land. [BC has a new booklet on butterfly gardening and there are tips on the national web site.] Do not forget caterpillar food plants as well as nectar sources for adults.

[13] Introduce children to the beauty of butterflies through art and craft work, photography, education and the keeping of caterpillars.....to see their metamorphosis. I suggest Peacocks or Small Tortoiseshell.....and under adult supervision not least because nettles sting, 'starter kits' can be bought to help.

[14] Go on a Field Studies Council course on butterflies and/or moths [ask them to send you their latest brochure].....or there are other centres that offer similar courses like at the Kingcombe Centre in Dorset. If feeling extravagant you could even book a specialist holiday abroad with eg NatureTrek or Green Wings.

[15] Many local natural history museums will have collections of preserved butterflies/moths from late Victorian times.....if they are not all on show ask if you can have an appointment to see their collections they keep 'in reserve'.

THIS IS THE END OF PART ONE 1.....LOOK OUT FOR AN EQUALLY LENGTHY LIST NEXT TIME! Best wishes,

**Chris Winnick**

## If you visit Milton Keynes!.....then take time to visit these places!

Before I moved to Kendal 6 years ago I lived for 24 years in Leighton Buzzard on the border of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. This area had some great butterfly

Black Hairstreak



‘hot spots’ and if prepared to travel 25 miles the list of places I can recommend dramatically lengthens.

Starting nearer to ‘home’ [the small hill top village of Great Brickhill 5 miles south of Milton Keynes] the BLUE LAGOON local nature reserve [access at GR872 325]....flooded clay pits, remnant wood margins, hedge rows and species rich grasslands on the edge of Bletchley.....is a 4km square former London Brick Company ‘brown field’ site that is managed by the enlightened Milton Keynes parks department for butterflies. They have an excellent rotational grass/shrub management plan that has allowed their resident collection of Small Blue, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Common Blue and Green Hairstreak to flourish.....and if you turn up in late May you may see all five! It also has a good population of Marbled White and a small population of White Admiral but the icing on the cake for me was always the White Letter Hairstreak found on suckered Wych Elm but more impressively on a very large surviving Old English Elm on the ‘rubbish re-cycling side’ overlooking the largest lake. Just to the north-west of MK is the Northamptonshire village of



Deanshanger and, by way of country lane, Wicken Wood [which straddles the Bucks/Northants border] If you access this large mixed woodland from the small car park at GR 730 413 in the second half of May you will have the delight of encountering 10-30 fluttering Wood White.

Marbled Whites male & Female Do not be fooled if dull as they are good at hiding but once the sun shines you too can

have the frustration of following the weakest, floppiest flight of any UK butterfly.....for miles! Will they settle?....almost....repeatedly! If you get chance to photograph just take it; do not wait for the wings to open!

The disappointment of Wood White is all too well known to the good folk of Buckinghamshire. The BBOWT site of White Cross Green on the border with Oxfordshire was a classic site until they died out there in the early part of the new millennium. Sadly they also disappeared from the old Oxford to Bletchley railway cutting north of Mursley at the same time having already succumbed to woeful lack of management at sites on the

edge of Milton Keynes including Linford Wood. They may still be hanging on in some of the fragmented woods to the west of MK such as College Wood but apart from Wicken Wood [and possibly adjacent private woodland] you must travel deep into Northamptonshire to Salcey Forest to be sure to find this rare and threatened butterfly.

There is better news from Milton Keynes itself where three remnant semi-ancient woodland pockets have survived development..... although in the last few years they have become more like islands in a sea of brick, tarmac and concrete. In particular Howe Park Wood still has Black, Purple and White-letter hair-streak, with occasional visits from White Admiral, While Shenley Wood and Lindford Wood are carpeted with spring flowers and host most of the common species out at that time....always a delight to see early Vanessaids, Speckled Wood and whites....especially Brimstone and Orange Tip.



The 'North Bucks Way' might run behind MK prison but ten years ago it could still host 25-30 species including Black Hairstreak, White Admiral and Marbled White. Sadly there has been much building along the western edge of the city with some excellent sites now lost to development. However there are still some places in MK where on a sunny day in April/May you could almost forget that you were close to the former largest indoor

shopping precinct in Europe and those famous concrete cows! Next issue I hope to get round to some of the many sites that lie to the south of Milton Keynes.

**Chris Winnick**

### **Report of a visit to Warton Craggs, 23 May 2017.** (Joint Butterfly Conservation and Kendal Nats)

Over 30 attended on a warm sunny day with a light breeze to see one of the finest Spring butterfly sites in Morecambe Bay. Chris Winnick explained that this site is jointly managed by LWT, the AONB and the RSPB for wildlife and especially for some of the rarest fritillary butterflies. Chris led us first to a large south-facing bank and explained how the habitat there suits Pearl Bordered Fritillaries.



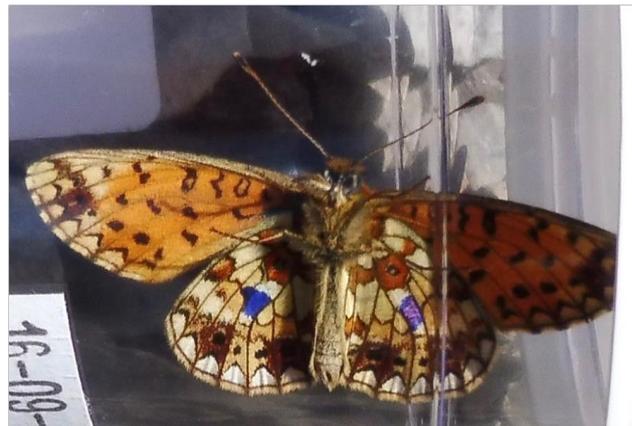
He introduced us to MSc student Liz Atkinson a research student from Lancaster University who explained the population studies she is working on. Catching first a Small Pearl-bordered fritillary and then a Pearl-bordered fritillary, she showed us how she marks

individuals so as to be able to record their position and longevity on recapture. We then walked up and around the site, noting other butterflies, day-flying moths and the limestone grassland flora. May blossom and gorse in full bloom made a colourful foreground, while the view on such a clear day was extensive. Some violets were still in flower and many other patches of violet leaves were noted because violet is the sole foodplant of the Pearl-bordered Fritillary caterpillars.

At the far side of the site, we came upon another Lancaster student who is working on the breeding requirements of the Fritillaries, examining the micro-climates and positions of the points chosen for egg-laying.

With 13 species of butterflies, several day-flying moths, an interesting beetle and a slow worm seen by some of the party, it was agreed that we had had a very good day.

**Judith Robinson** (see below a list of what was seen).



Liz marking the wings of a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, and the specimen after marking.



Spotted Pliers Support Beetle



Speckled Yellow Moth

Black-

## Butterflies

Brimstone, Comma, Common Blue, Dingy Skipper, Green Veined White, Holly Blue, Large White, Orange Tip, Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown.

## **Moths**

Chimney Sweeper, Silver Y, Speckled Yellow.

## **Flora**

Bluebell, Common Bird's Foot Trefoil, Common Dog Violet, Cowslip, Cross-wort, Cranesbill, Dove's-foot, Early Purple Orchids, Germander Speedwell, Gorse, Hairy Rock-cress, Herb Robert, Horse-shoe Vetch, Hawthorn, Red Campion, Red Clover, Rockrose, Spring Sandwort, Thistle sp. Tormentil, Twayblade, Wild Strawberry, Wood Sanicle.

## **Other Taxa**

Bee-fly, Mining Bee, White tailed bumble bee, Slow worm, Black Spotted Pliers Support Beetle.

## **BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION CUMBRIA BRANCH – REPORTS FOR AGM 03 JUNE 2017**

### Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS)

The WCBS aims to monitor the health of butterfly populations across a wide range of habitats, and the data complements that from the traditional transect method which in the past has tended to focus on nature reserves and sites “good for butterflies”. This is now enabling the UKBMS to produce ever more accurate data on the fortunes of individual species and habitat types across the UK. With WCBS now into its ninth year, up to 1,000 randomly-generated 1km squares are monitored annually, predominately in farmland but including some in uplands and urban areas. Forty-one squares are available for monitoring in Cumbria, nine by BTO surveyors and 32 by BC volunteers. Progress in finding new surveyors for the still vacant Cumbrian BC squares continues slowly, but with 2017 promising to be the best year so far, with volunteers now lined up for 20 of the 32 squares. We doubt we'll ever get volunteers for the randomly-generated squares on top of Ill Bell and Pillar mountains, but several lowland squares are still up for grabs in 2017 – please contact me if interested. A minimum of only two visits per annum, one in each of July and August, is all that is required per 1km square though additional spring visits are welcome. As co-ordinator of WCBS for BC Cumbria Branch I'd like to say special thanks both to those volunteers who have continued to survey their chosen sites year after year and to those taking on WCBS squares for the first time in 2017. Link here to the results of the 2016 WCBS season, showing how some of our wider countryside species are faring:

[http://www.ukbms.org/Downloads/Wider\\_Countryside/WCBS2016\\_hires\\_final.pdf](http://www.ukbms.org/Downloads/Wider_Countryside/WCBS2016_hires_final.pdf).

### Mountain Ringlets

It is good to report that high-level scientific study of Mountain Ringlets (MRs) in Lakeland is progressing on three fronts in 2017: (1) RSPB Conservation Science Department's study at Haweswater, now in its third year, is examining females' egg-laying preferences in terms of micro-habitat, and its findings will eventually inform on, among other things, optimum

sheep stocking levels and general management of uplands. (2) Meanwhile, York University's team continues to focus on the effects of climate change, revisiting sites last surveyed in 2006 and examining changes and movements in populations of four upland butterfly species, including MRs, in both Lakeland and the Scottish Highlands, as possible response to warming of uplands. Historic Lakeland MR records are consulted as a base for comparison in both the 2006 and 2016/17 surveys – around 800 positive records, almost all from volunteers and spanning over a century, are held by CBDC and have provided invaluable base data on historic sites and abundances of this species. (3) Finally, Lancaster University's Environment Centre's research continues to seek explanations for the distribution across Lakeland of MRs, with particular reference to their varying presence or absence from sites of similar geological base and apparently similar soil and vegetation. Reports from all three projects will be welcomed by BC in due course. At a meeting in May 2017, attended by four members of your committee, the three bodies above met together for the first time to discuss and pool some of their knowledge of MRs, and this offers hope that we may at last be some way towards having an answer to the age-old question of why Lakeland's MR populations are where they are, while apparently suitable locations have remained unoccupied. There are opportunities here too for volunteers - in June and July 2017 to assist the RSPB in searching a number of apparently extinct MR sites (ie with no positive records since 2000) for the exciting possibility of finding that they are in fact still occupied. Please contact me if you think you can help.

### Moths in Cumbria

I must start with a very special thank you to Gary Hedges, formerly Recording Officer at Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) for his invaluable work in enhancing our knowledge of Cumbria's moths and their distributions in his four-year tenure of that post. Early in 2017 Gary left to take a post in Liverpool Natural History Museum's prestigious entomology section. Though an excellent all-round entomologist, his love and perhaps speciality in that field was moths, and his legacy at Tullie House includes, among other things, production of an on-line atlas of Cumbria's macro moth species and providing the base data for a national glossy version of the same thing, due in 2018. To boost input to the latter, Gary's imaginative idea of the "Grey Square Challenge", encouraged by his former team leader Teresa Frost, led to many Cumbrian recorders, including myself, spending long nocturnal hours in 2015 and 2016 attending to moth traps in some very remote spots endeavouring to reach at least the target figure of 100 post-2000 macro moth species records in each of Cumbria's 80 or so 10km squares. Between us we almost did it, but for a few of the most bleak and hostile squares the moths stubbornly refused to show and we had to settle for less. Thanks too to county moth recorder Liz Still who has worked very closely with Gary over the years sorting out both old and current records and in particular acting as verifier for some of the trickier species. Finally, thanks too to Rob Petley-Jones,

newly retired from his post as a senior reserves officer in Natural England for his outstanding contribution to mothy things in Cumbria, including his decade-long role as county moth recorder before Liz took it on. In charge of the iconic Roudsea Woods and Mosses NNR Rob was a tireless moth recorder on that site and his tally of well over 800 species there must be a record for any Cumbrian site; this includes the Rosy Marsh Moth, discovered there by Rob in 2005, the species' first English record since the mid-1800s. He was fully deserving of BC's prestigious National Conservation Award earlier this year. So thanks and best wishes to all those mentioned above. Turning to the present and future it is good to report that probably a record number of individuals are now actively recording moths in Cumbria. New names appear almost daily on the Cumbria Moths Yahoo and Facebook groups, now with well over 100 mainly active members, many in parts of the county where recording has to say the least hitherto been somewhat patchy. So having included several very worthy individuals' names above, and probably excluded many other worthy ones, and mentioning only a single moth species by name, I'll conclude by saying that moth recording in Cumbria is thriving as probably never before despite some of our past stalwarts no longer occupying centre stage.

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1 June 2017

## **BACK COVER**

Tullie House Records Centre (CBDC) have kindly supplied the map which shows the High Brown Fritillary distribution/records. There have been a few new squares added since 2000 but that does not reflect the lower numbers in each square now being found. In other words we must not be complacent.



It is a very striking and beautiful butterfly but under great pressure for survival. Because of its status it is carefully monitored and recorded so the decline is not just through lack of recording though without such attention it is most likely it would be extinct long before now.

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**Brimstone moth**



**Emerald moth**



**Garden Tiger moth**



**Green Carpet moth**



**Poplar hawk-moth**



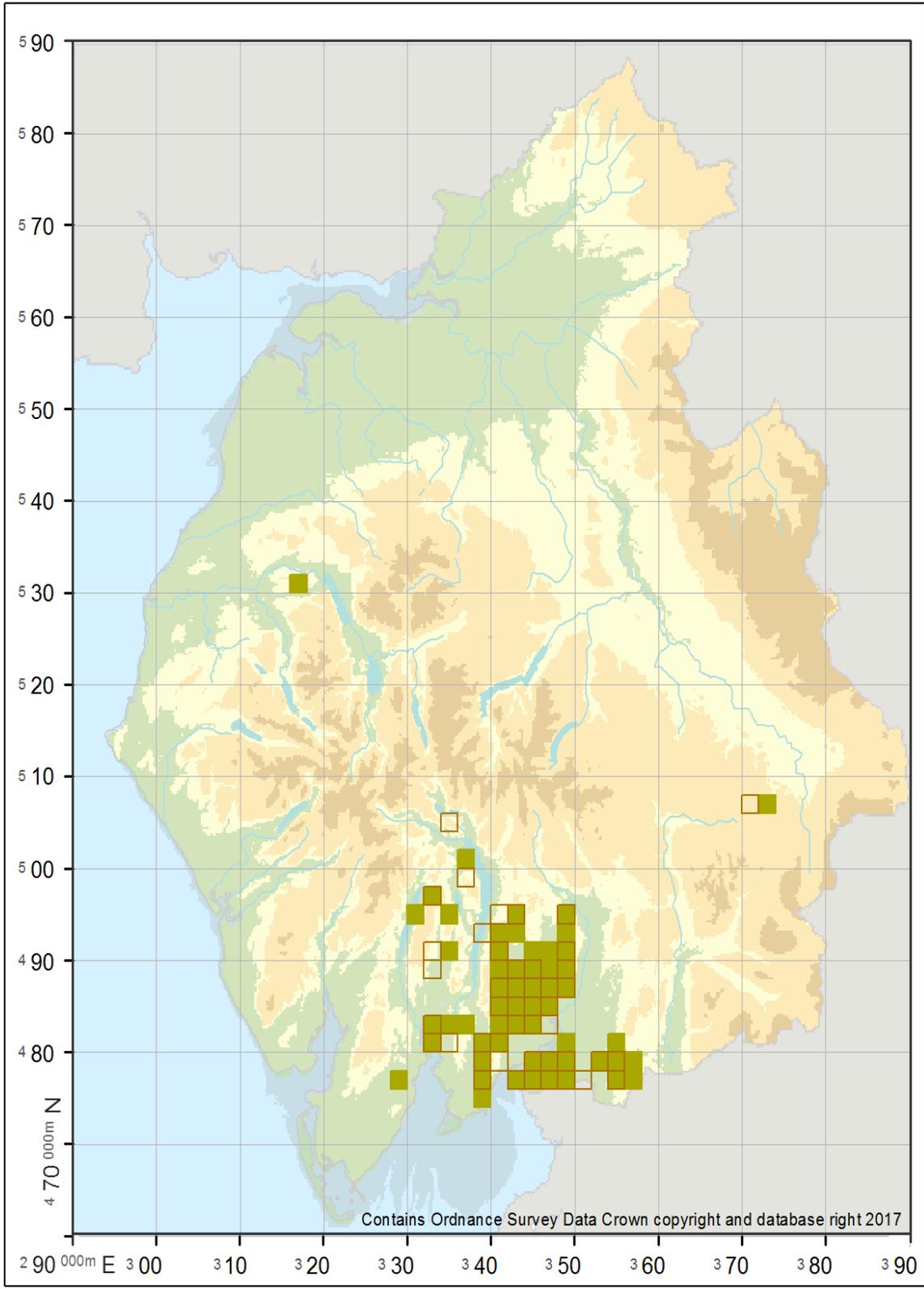
**Elephant hawk-moth**



**Cinnabar moth**



**Burnet Companion moth**



**High Brown Fritillary**  
*Argynnis adippe*

- Pre 2000
- Post 2000





