

No. 58

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2004

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Contents

Chairman's Notes.....	front cover
AGM at Bishops Wood.....	2
Moth Atlases for Worcs. & Herefds.....	3
National Moth Night	4
What More do you want—sunshine?	4
Branch Spring Meeting	5
Minibeast Hunting.....	6
Brown-field sites or, from Chainmail to e-mail	7
Dingy's future's looking Pits	9
A Chance to get snapping over Summer	10
Regional Officer Report June 2004.....	10
Conservation Corner	12
Dates for your Diary.....	15
Instructions for Contributors	16
Health and Safety	16

Chairman's Notes Summer 2004

1. Prees Heath

Unfortunately our bid for part of Prees Heath was unsuccessful. We are now trying to establish contact with the new owner to determine what the options are for us working together to conserve the important lepidoptera on the site.

2. Committee Changes

I am sure all of you will be sorry to learn that Neil and Corinna Gregory will be leaving the area. Neil has an exciting new job in Scotland and they will both be moving there shortly.

I would like to thank Neil and Corinna very much for the great deal of work they have put in for the branch. They have been instrumental in getting

moth recording well established in Worcestershire as well as acting as transect coordinators for the West Midlands. Between them they have input on to the computer all the historical transect data for the area – a great achievement. In addition, Corinna has acted as branch secretary. We will miss them both but would like to wish them every success and happiness in their new life in Scotland.

Their departure means we are now looking for a new Branch Secretary and moth officer for Worcestershire – any volunteers? I am very pleased to report that John Tilt has taken on the role of regional transect coordinator. Please can you now send all your transect records to John – see address at the back of the newsletter.

Jenny Joy has found it increasingly difficult to

combine the roles of Regional Officer and Chair of the Branch Conservation Committee. I am therefore very pleased to say that Dave Jackson has agreed to take on the position of chair of the conservation committee. I am also pleased to announce that Dave has accepted the position of branch vice-chairman. I would like to thank Jenny very much for all her hard work chairing the Branch Conservation Committee. I am pleased to say that she has agreed to continue to stay on the committee as a member.

Finally, it gives me much pleasure to welcome John Bryan to the Committee. John will increase our representation in Staffordshire where we are keen to establish a greater presence. With this in mind this year's AGM will be held at the Wolseley Centre near Stafford on 16 October.

3. Atlas – Volume 3

The third and final volume of the atlases covering the distribution of the lepidoptera in Herefordshire

& Worcestershire is now ready for publication. This volume will largely be devoted to pyralids and tortrices and will provide lots of new information on these interesting and well recorded moths.

The first volume has now sold out so be sure to secure your copy of volume 3 by placing your order promptly with Christine Chance – see details for ordering on the facing page.

4. Butterfly Records

This is the final year of recording for the 5 year follow-up to the Millennium Atlas. Please send all records to Jim Chance, the branch butterfly recorder by the first week in December, to ensure that all records are included in the update so that we have the best possible information on the current status of the butterflies in our area.

• Ian Duncan

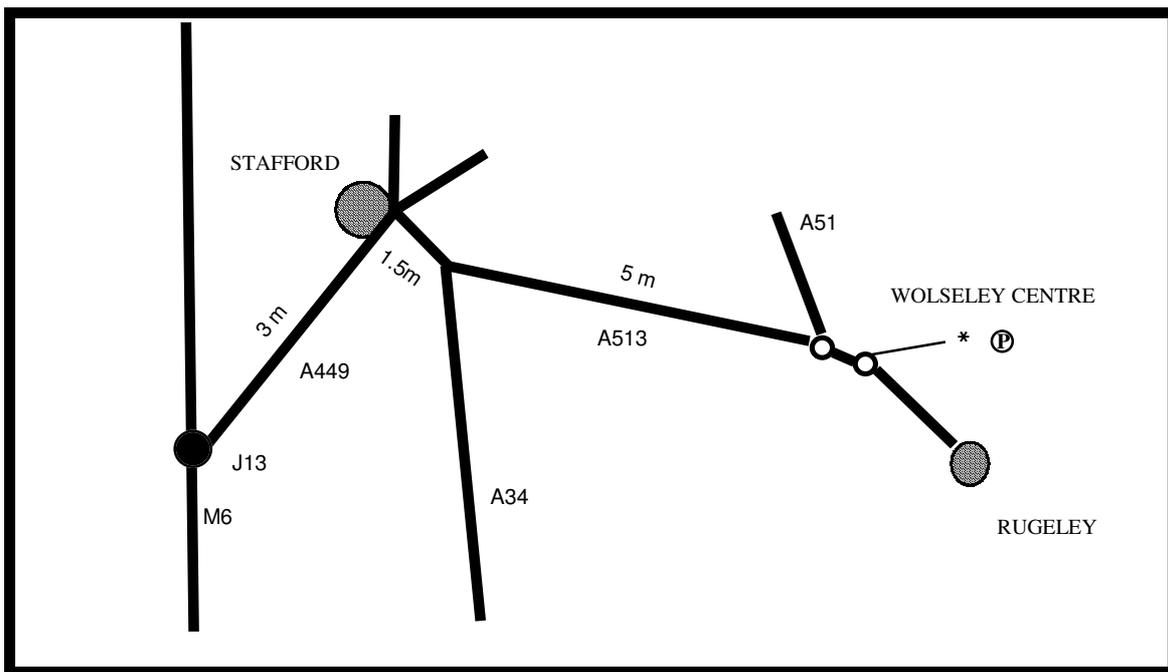
Coming Events

Branch A.G.M. Saturday 16 October

The venue for the A.G.M. on October 16 will be in Staffordshire at the Wolseley Centre. Leave the M6 at J13 for Stafford (3m). Take the A34 southbound and after 1.5m join the A513. After 5m cross the island where the A51 joins the A513. Off a second island immediately following,

is the drive to the Wolseley Centre. Paul Kirkland of Butterfly Conservation Scotland will give a talk entitled “**Kentish Glory, Marsh Fritillary & Chequered Skipper**—the Work of BC”. Light refreshments will be available.

AGM Agenda: **14.00 AGM**
 14.45 Coffee (free)
 15.15 Paul Kirkland—talk
 16.30 End



Herefordshire and Worcestershire Moth Atlases

“Smaller Moths part 2” is NOW ready for sale

all of this magnificent trilogy of local lepidoptera by Michael Harper and Tony Simpson is complete at last.
The full set of 3 books is now available

“Larger Moths and Butterflies of Herefordshire and Worcestershire”

We sold out the whole initial print run of 200 just recently, but have managed to obtain 25 extra reprints at the original price (apart from postage). This is Butterfly Conservation members and Herefds. and Worcs. Wildlife Trust Members £7.50. Price for non-members £10.00.

“Smaller Moths of Herefordshire and Worcestershire part 1” (Micropterigidae to Scythrididae).

Butterfly Conservation members and Herefds. and Worcs. Wildlife Trust Members £9.50. Price for non-members £12.00.

“Smaller Moths of Herefordshire and Worcestershire part 2” (Tortricidae to Pterophoridae).

Butterfly Conservation members and Herefds. and Worcs. Wildlife Trust Members £9.50. Price for non-members £12.00.

Postage and packing is £2.50 for each volume. Books are sent separately because this (surprisingly) minimises the postage cost.

Please order from Dr. Christine Chance, 65 Wentworth Rd., Harborne Birmingham B17 9SS, tel 0121-427-1706.

Cheques should be made out to “Butterfly Conservation, West Midlands Branch”

National Moth Night – 22 May 2004 (Trench Wood, Worcestershire)

National Moth Night is an event organised by *Atropos* and BC. Many public moth trapping sessions are held around the country in addition to people noting what comes to their garden or house lights. This year's public event for Worcestershire took place in Trench Wood. The focus had been made broader this year to include day-flying moths, so both a daytime and night-time event was planned.

During the daytime, a group of 5 of us searched along the main rides using nets and also beating for larvae. We found **Cream Wave**, **Garden Carpet**, *Adela reaumurella*, *Micropterix calthella*, **Common Marbled Carpet**, **Grey Birch**, *Nemophora degeerella*, *Ancylis badiana*, **Common Swift**, **Silver-ground carpet**, *Epiblema scutulana*, *Eulia ministrana*, *Glyphipterix fuscoviridella*, **Common White Wave**, *Epinotia subocellana*, **Small White Wave**. We found many interesting larvae, including **Yellow-tail**, **Mottled Umber** and

Common Quaker.

The night-time event was unfortunately not so productive, as the temperature fell quite rapidly to 4°C. However, the species that were attracted to our lights were interesting, which made up for low numbers. They included **Pebble Hook-tip**, **Common Wave**, **Pale Tussock**, **Common Swift**, **Lime Hawk-moth**, **Ingrailed Clay**, **Chocolate-tip**, numerous **Green Carpet** and **Silver-ground Carpet**.

We would like to thank all the people who sent in their records for this year from public events as well as those who recorded what they saw in their own garden. We would also like to say a very big thank you to all of you who have been contributing your records to us over the past few years. We now have a very good database for parts of the region and this is expanding all the time.

- Neil Gregory

What more do you want - Sunshine?

An early start from Stourbridge in Irish weather that continued for most of the day did not dampen the spirits or the expectations to see *davus* form **Large Heath** at Wem Moss or **Silver-studded Blue** at Prees Heath if past experience was anything to go by. Nor did it deter 10 others when we met at the nearby pub car park of the Horse & Jockey at Northwood.

Only one fresh **Large Heath** was spotted by the eagle eyes of new member, John Bryan, in an area where Phil Hopson counted 56 the following day. Many moths were disturbed, the most common being **Common Heath**, but the visit produced a definite identification of three **Purple-bordered Gold**, a nationally scarce moth, much to the delight of everyone.

The weather encouraged us all to have a snack in the pub at lunchtime and Norma and Phil handled our requests admirably. They took a great interest in our activities and were enthusing about our exploits to the rest of their clientele before we left. We all laughed at the fact they were having an 'Irish Night' that night, the comment being 'It's already started. I suspect we might have to establish a publicans' wing to Butterfly Conservation in future. Our thanks go to them for use of the car park.

The car convoy to Prees Heath was an interesting experience along the country lanes caused by either the impatience of male drivers, or was it the inability of you ladies to read maps! I will say no more but leave it up to your imaginations as to the answer.

Prees, for those of you who don't know, is an old airfield, dead flat and totally missable from the main roads that sandwich it along with some half-hearted attempts at farming and an EEC Intervention grain silo. The odd burnt out car and gipsy rubbish tip have been known to adorn the site along with two boy scramblers on this occasion. The habitat for the **Silver-studded Blue** is the broken up runway that produced over 750 butterflies roosting on the heather and other shrubs. Jane Southwell counted the maximum number on one bush, a grand total of 58, quite remarkable. Other butterflies recorded included **Small Heath** and **Meadow Brown**.

This site is one of the most important in the country for the endangered **Silver-studded Blue** and at the time of writing, it is still not known who the new owner is. Although common land, a Jersey based company acquired the commoner's rights but Shropshire Council have protected it for the next ten years by placing a 'no-development' order in their County Plan.

I suspect the anonymous owners of Prees Heath Limited have an objective to extract the gravel underneath the runway at some future date. The Branch is currently in the most frustrating position of not knowing the outcome of the recent auction where we were one of the bidders. This site is a national treasure and I wish my colleagues well in their efforts to

acquire it.

All in all what a day! All the target species seen and more. Good company, a decent pub and as Richard Lamb remarked casually on the way back to the cars – ‘Who needs sunshine’.

• Richard Southwell

Branch Spring Meeting

Saturday 8 May 2004, Saltwells Nature Reserve

Around 27 persons attended this years event, on a day that looked very unpromising for the intended guided walk to follow the earlier part of the proceedings. Richard Southwell opened the event and welcomed everyone, including Councillor Les Jones, Chairperson of Dudley M. B. C. Economic Regeneration Committee; our guest speaker. Richard took time out to pass on a "thank you" message from Digby Wood, (our branch chairman prior to Ian Duncan and still an active committee member), thanking the membership for their kindness and good wishes during his bout of illness.

Three branch members then entertained us with slide show presentations, thus: Pete Boardman: Shots of relevant branch Regional Action Plan species - **Green Hairstreak**, **Dingy Skipper** and the smaller **Fritillaries**. Pete then followed up with a nice selection of butterflies photographed during his European holidays.

Keith Harris: (Recently returned from 18 years work as a conservationist in Indonesia). A selection of butterfly slides, particularly those taken in Java formed the basis of allowing Keith to speculate over comparison with similar species of the same genus from different continents.

David Jackson: David's presentation concentrated on recording priorities for the completion of the Millennium Atlas Update. David requested that the branch membership all make a special effort to reconfirm the continuing existence, (or otherwise), of currently notified colonies of butterflies and/or adjacent sites that might be suitable for species expansion. Comment was made that members in the Stoke-on-Trent area have recently identified two new colonies of **Dingy Skipper** in the Stoke area. Hopefully, these finds will convince others to make new discoveries. –

Guest speaker: Les Jones

Presentation topic: Economic Regeneration and Conservation - can they be bedfellows? Richard Southwell probably won't mind me repeating a remark made by our guest speaker whereby Les once called Richard a "wimp". This epithet related, basically, to Richard's early attempts at making representations over objections to proposed development of a site containing colonies of endangered, localised butterflies. Perhaps a situation ensued of "red rag to a bull" -

Richard spurred on by this tongue in cheek derogatory remark, subsequently got to know Les better and consequently Les was invited to speak to branch members.

Representing, basically, an urban area (Dudley), where few natural, green, open spaces occur, our speaker put forward several ideas and themes to support a positive response to his rhetorical debate. There are probably more brownfield sites in the Dudley/Sandwell/Walsall environs than any of the other areas within the branch. Part of Les' remit is to turn the neglected and unproductive into business and employment opportunity. Where nature has reclaimed some of these "earmarked" brownfield sites - the potential for conflict becomes apparent.

Les suggested that to assume that someone else has made a formal objection to development of such sites is "wimpish" and, even if objections are overruled then to discontinue lobbying will not save any more sites and even contribute to further losses towards local extinctions of some brownfield specialities - **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak** being prime examples. Keep trying is a very useful motto and rallying call. Les further explained that some regeneration projects can involve compromise, where conservation issues are advised by the likes of ourselves, as individuals/branch members, so that plans are then required to be re-submitted to take into account a localised butterfly colony and, as Les rightly pointed out, one species can have a knock-on effect to a whole eco-system.

In Les' own territory, a brownfield wildlife "corridor" exists, stretching from Halesowen, through to Baggeridge Country Park - including "corridor" pockets situated at Mushroom Green, Saltwells Nature Reserve, Netherton Hill, Pensnett Trading Estate and related disused railway line and Barrow Hill. Where brownfield "corridor" sites are threatened with development, the potential for fragmentation comes into play and colonies can become corrupted and may not be able to recolonise once the "corridor" is breached.

The emphasis on rejected proposed developments can then change to the creation of another local resource - perhaps a green "corridor" - a much needed wildlife and/or leisure resource - benefiting the local urban population (for instance, a cycle/walk route serving the local community). Regeneration does not have to always equate to commerce, it can so easily be translated into leisure - still a resource - a haven or green "lung" where nature has had to adapt; so why shouldn't the developers do likewise. We have a voice -our butterflies don't- so, shout up and be heard and, as Les half-seriously pointed out, if his party won't listen the chances are the opposition will!

A refreshment break followed during which time we all had the opportunity to view moths caught in a moth trap by Pete Boardman and Dave Friday, the previous evening at Saltwells.

The previous night had been a cold one, with few species caught; however, specimens caught included: **Chocolate Tip** and **Lime Hawkmoth**. These were potted up for us to look at and clearly see how very well camouflaged moths can be. Finally, Steve, a Reserve Ranger from Cotwall End Nature Reserve, Sedgley led us all over the Saltwells Reserve - pointing out the sites' various habitats en route. The weather was really poor and we saw no butterflies. Talking to meeting attendees, most expressed surprise at Saltwell's potential and were able to see that a brownfield site and conservation designation area can readily co-exist.

A vote of thanks to Les Jones, our guest speaker, Steve who led us over Saltwells and the staff of Saltwells Nature Reserve are duly acknowledged and recorded here. On 29 May, two committee members were able to visit another site, part of a local brownfield corridor. The site in question, Dreadnought, at Pensnett, would have been visited during the Spring meeting, if the weather had been encouraging. On a sunny afternoon, found in really good numbers, among the overgrown, old railway tracks, were sizeable colonies of **Common Blue** and **Dingy Skippers**. **Green Hairstreak** and **Small Copper** were also present. **Latticed Heath**, **Cinnabar**, **Burnet Companion** and **Mother Shipton** were among the moths found.

• Philip Hopson.

Minibeast Hunting

I was recently asked to cover a Reception Teacher's absence in the school where I teach. I hadn't taught the class before, but my Head thought I would enjoy taking them on a day of minibeast hunting! We spent a wonderful day searching in the school grounds amongst log piles, flower beds, the Conservation Area - every nook and cranny possible. We went pond dipping and used 'real' sweep nets and bug boxes in the meadow area of the local park. The children learned and reinforced skills in such an enjoyable way: counting, comparing colours and sizes, finding information on identification charts, the importance of using equipment safely and many more.

The following day the enthusiasm was still there. Many of the children came in clutching jars of moths, spiders, snails, even a stick insect. I took in a selection of moths from my garden including a **Small Magpie**, a **V-Pug** and an **Elephant**

Hawkmoth. The children were amazed that moths come in such different shapes, sizes and colours, and even more amazed that they could see ones like these in their own garden. We had another wonderful day making sparkling spiders webs, setting free the Painted Lady butterflies they had seen grow from caterpillars, writing about and making pictures of the minibeasts they found.

Young children love minibeasts. They are fascinated by their different colours, sizes and the sounds they make. They haven't yet developed a fear that makes them recoil when they see a creepy-crawly. Fortunately, there is space in the over-crammed Primary curriculum, as well as schemes such as 'Eco Schools', for engendering a love of our world and respect for our environment. Let's remember that these children are the conservationists of the future.

• Corinna Gregory

Brownfield battle lines – or, from Chain-mail to e-mail.

From the analysis of canvassed responses received it is evident that Members would like to get personally involved in more conservation issues rather than just receiving the Branch Newsletter and BC Magazine.

Following the production of the BC leaflet – “Brownfields for Butterflies” and the commencement of a Branch Register of brownfield sites with high Lepidoptera value, the main purpose of this article is to seek your help in recording and submitting details of brownfield sites which are considered to be worthy of notification to Local Planning Authorities and together seeking a positive conservation outcome with, if requested, the assistance of one of our Regional Development Officers or Committee members in making representations for measures of protection against the weapons of mass construction.

It has been estimated to date that UK Brownfield land could accommodate nearly a million new homes with countless sites for business development opportunities. Conservationists’ battle lines have had to be re-drawn to encompass the value of brownfield sites in our campaigning.

Conservation organisations are not against development, as of course not all sites have conservation value - but we need to strengthen the armament of the powers who determine planning applications and if possible seek changes in the thought processes of strategic planning – the only way to effect this is to inform your local planning authorities of sites we think need protection.

Recently, Jane Ellis one of our two Regional Development Officers asked me if I knew of any important local brownfield sites for lepidoptera. Ashamedly, I had to admit that I could only think of a couple of sites in the area which would be worthy of recording on the Register. How could I redress this inadequacy on my part?

Having just read the autobiography of one of the nations favourite wildlife crusaders ‘Jolly Green Giant’ by David Bellamy OBE, (he surely by now is deserving of a knighthood) it set a flight of fancy in my mind, as David comes across in life as in the title of his book. His outlook seems to me that conservation, should be as much fun as possible. I once spent a wet afternoon knee deep in the middle of a stream, holding a megaphone for

David as he held court over a large assembly of admirers hanging on to his every amplified word!

There can of course be difficulties when faced with the serious issue of trying to protect a valuable site, which has been earmarked for development. But what is a valuable site and how do we go about trying to protect it?

Imagine the scene – Sir Percy Vere and Sir Cumference, Knights of the Round Table, in an ivory tower, pacing up and down, scratching their heads for a plan as to how to defeat marauding land grabbers. In those days they would have mustered troops and able villagers taking up their swords and their bows and arrows in readiness. Today, the pen, or if you prefer, the mightier word processor has replaced the need for sharper objects, thank goodness! There are however a number of proverbial arrows in the quiver of the modern day crusaders looking to protect valuable sites of natural history importance, but firstly:

What exactly is a Brownfield Site?

A Brownfield site is one that has previously been developed, but which is no longer in use for that purpose. Old industrial sites, disused mine workings, disused quarries, disused railway lines, landfill sites and gravel pits, fall into the brownfield catalogue. A brownfield site will not necessarily be contaminated, although many are to varying degrees and some will require great expense to the owner/developer to remove contaminants prior to any development. Almost inevitably, land that is contaminated will be brownfield and may have lain untouched for a number of years. Some sites have developed themselves into havens for numerous species – as in the case of Hawne Colliery near Halesowen, which has more butterfly numbers than most mono-crop farms in the Midlands and beyond.

The Government has been pressing for some time to see the development of brownfield sites using both policy and financial incentives. Organisations allied to the government such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) are taking positive measures to seek development of parklands, open spaces and brownfield sites, which they see as wasted space. Part of the Fens Pool open space near Dudley has been one such area in which CABE has shown an interest – although local opposition groups should by now have staved off any such attempts - this area being

locally important for wetland and grassland creatures having **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak**, Great Crested Newts and a host of avian visitors, amongst others.

Conservation battle lines have been re-drawn wider than the 'countryside' as we need to plan how best to deal with a planning proposal on any important brownfield land. In the past, the Branch has tended to be reactive to issues, e.g. Anchor Meadow, Aldridge, where planning permission had already been given for housing and the proposed development of a railway station. Here we entered the fray late in the proceedings and are still continuing to negotiate with all interested parties in an effort to retain further parts of the site for the **Dingy Skippers**, **Common Blues** and **Burnet Companions** etc.

Which Brownfield sites are important?

Obviously, the ones that have been identified by Branch members as having species of interest, or sites notified to us by County Wildlife Trusts etc.

- The majority of brownfield sites will not be of nature conservation value.
- Those sites with Local Authority initiated Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and BC Regional Action Plan (RAP) species or perhaps significant numbers of commoner species should merit approaches to landowners and local authorities.
- If a brownfield site has been assessed as being rich in biodiversity, it may/may not warrant English Nature to declare SSSI status. (Site of Special Scientific Interest) Local Authorities could be persuaded to add a good site to their list of Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) or as a (SINC) Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.
- Thus signalling the fact to prospective developers.

One of Sir Percy Vere's servants steps forward with a cunning plan – on how Sir Percy might maintain their efforts in the face of difficulties and how Sir Cumference might get around their dilemma (every pun intended) :-

1. Initially, we need your help in identifying sites for the Register of brownfield lands which hold the following RAP species – **Green Hairstreak; Dingy Skipper; Grizzled Skipper; Small Blue; Wall**

Brown and **Chalk Carpet** and any other notable moth or butterfly populations. Either Jane Ellis, Jenny Joy, Peter Boardman or myself can be contacted for Register Forms (contact details on the back of this newsletter).

2. We will then pass on this information to the relevant Local Authority Planning Department and endeavour to seek any reasonable measures of site protection that are available and attempt to influence, in a bio-positive way, the mindsets within the planning process.
3. We need your essential help in monitoring Local Planning Application Lists, as this is too daunting a job for one or two members across each of the Branch Counties which have innumerable Local Planning Authorities. We need volunteers to help in this respect – please come forward if you can help and we will get you started. We need to react very quickly to a proposed development of any important site, as we only have a short timescale in which to make an objection to the Local Planning Authority, (usually within 21 – 28 days) We would then have to consider our tactics, either trying to negotiate with the developers, reach a compromise where possible, or even run an objection to a Public Local Inquiry, if needs be. Please feel free to contact me for advice and assistance, if required.
4. The Branch Register database will be shared with County Nature Trusts, Eco-Record and other wildlife interest groups so that we can work together. On the Internet recently I found details of a national Society called 'Buglife' (The Invertebrate Conservation Trust) who have similar aims to our own for the protection of insects. Buglife also has major concerns over wholesale development of important Brownfield sites. We will try to foster links with such organisations, and this can only be of benefit to the invertebrate populations under siege.
5. People power really counts. At the risk of stating the obvious, we do need your help to signal invaders who appear on your local patch and the more people who object, write letters to MPs, Council Planning Departments and Councillors

and who attend at site meetings, inform the Press and TV, the more we can raise the profile of an important site.

I'd like to think that the two knights would have been proud, as latter day conservators carry on the crusade. If you wish to obtain the guidance Leaflet - Brownfields for Butterflies together with a site register form, please contact either

Jane Ellis, Jenny Joy, Peter Boardman or myself.

I would like to thank Jane Ellis, Richard Southwell and James Hill for contributing advice and information for this article.

• David Jackson
davidjackson@centro.org.uk
Tel . 01902 344716

Dingy's Future's Looking Pits

Early spring had promised much, but here in The Potteries, May arrived in an exceptionally bad mood putting the recording season on the backburner. However, with the weatherman's prediction that the sixteenth day into the month would be the year's first 'hot one' I decided to visit my local spoil tip. I've been living in its shadow for seven years and been up many times throughout the year, but never early in the season. As promised, the day dawned clear and bright, camera gear packed, I set off and by 09.30 am the day had started to really warm up, true (for once) to the weatherman's word.

Chatterley Whitfield closed in the mid 70s, had a brief spell as a mining museum in the early 80's and closed again, unusually though, the bulldozers didn't move in and it stands intact as it was, the day it closed. This is so rare for a closed mine; it is unique in Europe, so much so that, after Stonehenge, Chatterley Whitfield is English Heritage's next most important project with an estimated £85 million earmarked for its restoration and development. Part of its working legacy was the 25-hectare spoil mound I was slowly combing. The early signs were promising, on the 20 minute walk from home I'd seen **Small**, **Large** and **Green-veined white**, **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Peacock** and **Speckled Wood** on the wing. On the spoil mound, a female **Common Blue** and a **Small Heath** in appeared; **Cinnabar** and **Mother Shipton** were enjoying the sunshine as were **Small Yellow Underwing**, very small day flying moths which require a quick eye to track their flight as they search for nectar. It was while I was concentrating on following one of these, as it shot to and fro, that I caught a brown bobbing movement out of the corner of the other eye. I decided to follow it as I was starting to suffer eyestrain and it looked like an easier target.

Unfortunately I lost my new quarry and stood still trying to pick it up again. By this time I'd been on site approximately 90 minutes and obviously the air temperature had reached the ideal flying temperature for the multitude of **Dingy Skippers** which were now dancing above the Common Bird's Foot Trefoil. This site is blessed with 'fields' of their larval plant and only in mid June, when it is all in flower turning the slopes yellow, can you really appreciate how much there is. The old mine and spoil tip thankfully all sit within a Local Nature Reserve and the **Dingy** can be found in many parts of this extensive site in varying concentrations, at the peak of emergence I counted 73 in an hour. It is being mooted (to be confirmed) that this may be the biggest colony yet discovered nationally, certainly it's the biggest in the West Midlands and puts The Potteries firmly on the map. The area has a 250 year history of open and closure of mining, most of it coal being taken close to the surface to satisfy the ceramic industry, as both declined we have been left with a landscape scarred by the past. Study of an O.S. map of the locale reveals plenty of potential sites, unfortunately I only got round to visit another five but found **Dingy** in good numbers on three of them, a 60% hit rate with literally dozens of other promising sites to be investigated next spring. Work by other inquisitive members meant that nine previously unrecorded **Dingy Skipper** sites turned up in May this year, all of which are brownfield sites previously involved with quarrying or mining. As far as the **Dingy Skipper** is concerned, what may turn up next year is confirmation that The West Midlands is its stronghold and that its future is looking pits.

• John Bryan

A Chance to Get Snapping Over Summer

(Press Release 8/6/04)

If a picture can speak a thousand words, what would you like to say about the wildlife of the West Midlands? That is the question being posed by the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership with their *West Midlands Wildlife Photography Competition 2004*. The competition will run over the summer and will help to raise the profile of the Region's amazing wildlife. It will also give people a chance to express how they see the landscapes, plants, animals and habitats of the West Midlands Region.

The competition is looking for the public's view of the wildlife and habitats of the West Midlands Region, which includes Birmingham and the Black Country, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. There are four categories that budding photographers can enter including landscapes, species, our connection with nature and a junior wildlife photography award for those aged 16 years and under. The closing date is 31 October 2004 so you have all summer to get snapping! However, don't forget when you're out and about that the welfare of wildlife is much more important than a photograph.

One winner will be picked from each category, from which the overall West Midlands Wildlife Photographer 2004 will be chosen. The star prize has been kindly donated by Sigma and is a 70-300mm telephoto zoom lens and a Sigma close up lens. Other prizes include a family day out with the National Trust, a signed book from Heather Angel, a beanbag from Wildlife Watching Supplies, and membership of Butterfly Conservation.

Amongst others, award winning photographer Nick Garbutt will be judging the entries. He has had articles published in BBC Wildlife and National Geographic, and has won the Gerald Durrell Award for Endangered Wildlife as part of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. There will be a special prize-giving and exhibition for the winners in January 2005 at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens with Nick.

The competition is forming part of the WMBP's project, Rebuilding Regional Biodiversity, which aims to look after wildlife in the Region by promoting its needs and the issues surrounding it and ensuring it is included in regional policies and plans. The project is funded by Defra's Environmental Action Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Steve Holliday, Chair of the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership and judge of the competition says, "*The West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership are delighted to launch this photographic competition to celebrate the wildlife of the West Midlands and its importance to local people. It will give an idea, in images, of how people view the habitats and wildlife of the West Midlands, and will hopefully encourage more people to get out and about enjoying the wildlife around them. We hope the competition will encourage greater interest in our wildlife and more people to look after it. After all, you can't photograph what isn't there!*"

So don't delay, get your entries in today! For more information about how to enter please visit www.wmbp.org or contact Helen Taylor on 0121 454 8018.

Regional Officer Report - June 2004

Despite the rain and cold temperatures of the last few weeks I think this spring and summer has been a really good one as far as the regional officer post is concerned. We are now being contacted by a lot more organisations and individuals with requests for help with survey, identification, training opportunities and management advice. While this is all very good news the problem comes deciding where to put our priorities and at what level we can maximise our inputs and effects. I am now certainly much more used to driving long distances than I was before I started the job but

this has been compensated for by the fact I have now met a much greater variety of organisations, individuals and volunteers in the region and found out more about the huge amount of effort they are putting into the monitoring and conservation of Lepidoptera. Yes we are missing Jane and her input into the job but Peter Boardman has been doing a great job with his specific work areas and has organised some really good events as well as significantly progressing some of the regional officer moth work. For example, Peter ran a very successful and well attended national

moth night event with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, he attended the Grafton Wood open day, he organised a successful **Wood White** training day in Warwickshire and is currently undertaking some survey work for regional priority moths (**Argent and Sable**, **Forester** and **Square-spotted Clay**).

One of my main events of the past few months was organising and running the West Midlands **Fritillary** Action Group which took place on 11 May in Haugh Wood in Herefordshire. I would particularly like to thank Jeff Andrews (BC) and Kate Wollen (Forest Enterprise) for their huge input into the day which without a doubt helped to make it so successful. The day was attended by 43 people (from a variety of organisations as well as branch members) and consisted of morning presentations (by Dan Hoare, Susan Clarke and Mark Parsons) followed by a guided walk around Haugh Wood. The whole day went off really well - Woolhope Village Hall was a great base for the morning, the presentations were all excellent (thanks very much for those) and the sun shone for our walk around Haugh Wood - what more could we ask for! I have had nothing but really good positive feedback about the whole day so wonder how we can beat it next year - has anybody has any ideas?

Another successful event was a **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** Training day in the Stiperstones area of Shropshire on 22nd June. This was organised by John Tucker as part of the Blue Remembered Hills Project (Shropshire Hills AONB) with Jenny talking about the life history, survey and management for the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Father Silouan for hosting this event and for taking on board our management suggestions for his field. His three Exmoor ponies were the star attraction of the day and grazed the appropriate part of the field while we talked about the management. The only thing the ponies stopped me from doing

was finding some eggs before everybody arrived - whenever I knelt down to try to search the marsh violets they all rushed over to see what I was doing which was rather off putting! The food on the day (coffee, lunch and tea with cake all in the space of four hours) was great, the rain held off until we drove home and we all saw plenty of **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries**. Both John and I were pleased with the way the day had gone and people on the course seemed very keen to put their new knowledge into action. I very much hope John and I will be able to work together again next year and put on a similar event.

I am also very pleased to be able to report that Susan Clarke has undertaken survey for **High Brown Fritillary** habitat in two areas of the region this spring. When I first met Sue in the pouring rain outside Malvern where her tent was pitched in the only part of the field that was not under water I was not convinced that the project was going to go at all well - trying to work in torrential rain is not easy and it all takes so much longer! Fortunately for us the weather improved and Sue was able to make her assessments for us in the time allowed. Sue has now made recommendations for new areas to survey for **High Brown Fritillary** adults in the next few weeks and we hope that this will lead to further discussion with relevant parties in the autumn.

If anybody has any further ideas for events or training sessions you think we should be organising this winter please do contact me - we need to start thinking about them now so that they can go in the diary. One suggestion already made is that we organise a butterfly and moth photography course.

- Jenny Joy

Conservation Corner

Having recently agreed to take on the responsibility of the Branch Conservation Committee Chair, I would like to extend not only my own thanks but I am sure the thanks of the whole Branch to our outgoing Chair-person Dr Jenny Joy for her outstanding efforts during her term in the post. Jenny, who now continues her role as one of our two salaried Regional Development Officers, is in my mind one of the Society's pathfinders.

Her seemingly tireless efforts saw the production of the West Midlands Regional Action Plan, yearly RAP Reports and her Papers on rarer species studied in the field, make our Branch the envy of others. Thanks to Jenny, our Branch was the first to produce a Regional Action Plan and she also wrote the Action Plan for Wales whilst running a family to boot!

I can but try to follow.

How best can we conserve a species?

This is **the** million-dollar question. How do we best conserve any species?

There are around fifty six species of Butterfly regularly breeding in the U.K. of which currently six are fully protected under the provisions of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. (and nineteen protected from sale/trade) these species also receive 'some sort of' protection through conservation measures, whether it be on reserves or by the good practices of sympathetic landowners. Eight species of moth are also protected by the Act. It must only be a matter of time before other declining species are given full legal protection.

At a recent Committee meeting one of our respected 'elder' members mused on the fact that there are hundreds of Moth species (Micro and Macro) in the UK. How do we go about conserving individual species of Moths when we need to learn more about their specific habitat requirements?

Does part of the answer lie in the question?

We need more members to identify, record and monitor both butterflies and moths to enable recommendations to be made on how best to advise landowners etc, to conserve or manage

habitat to benefit lepidoptera.

When it comes to Moths I confess that I am a complete novice, but learning as much and as fast as I can. Butterflies are relatively easy to identify but moths are – well lets say they need dedicated Moth-ers to travel to suitable venues, run traps, take time to identify and record their night's work, and release their catch, and for those like me who need their sleep this committed band have my full admiration. It helps when there are quite a few day time flyers to identify.

A great aid to both novice and expert moth-ers came along recently with the publication of the Field Guide to Moths of Great Britain and Ireland by Paul Wareing and Martin Townsend with, as always, superb illustrations by Richard Lewington. I thoroughly recommend this book, reasonably priced at £29.95, as it covers all our Macro moths – those generally with a forewing measurement of more than 1cm.

In the run up to the proposed Atlas of British Moths some members are collecting records to supplement recently produced County Moth Atlas data. We still have a Mam-moth task ahead (groans expected) collecting more records and, as with the National Butterfly Atlas, inputting the data – this time on a much larger scale.

Once we have a picture of distributions we can refine our work to concentrate on rare, scarce and vulnerable species, we can also try to identify their specific habitat requirements and will endeavour to protect threatened habitat and manage it, if necessary. This is where your membership and local knowledge are essential, as we rely on you to inform the Branch of any threats to specific butterfly and moth locations, which may hold scarce species or exceptional numbers of 'dare I say' commoner ones.

I look forward to hearing from members on any conservation concerns and will do my utmost to advise and assist.

Round the Shires: Herefordshire

Jeff Andrews informed me that following conservation work at Haugh Wood, in partnership with Forest Enterprise, **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** have colonised a handful

of new areas. However five previously known sites were visited around the complex, and the **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** had seemingly vacated these. Numbers were slightly down on the whole with thirty plus being seen over five weeks.

Jeff also stated that it has been an excellent year for **Wood Whites** including a recent colonisation of Netherwood, following clearance work carried out by Forest Enterprise 18 months ago. Jeff and FE are currently arranging a management policy for this site.

Thanks must go to Jeff and the representatives of Forest Enterprise for their efforts.

Staffordshire

I often bemoan the fact that I tend to be reactive rather than pro-active when it comes to conservation initiatives, in that I usually wait for members to flag up any potential issues, which might require Committee involvement. These are mercifully few and far between, not because of any inertia on my part, I might add, as I can only assume that members may take matters on themselves or possibly use other avenues e.g. approaching County Trusts for advice.

Not so in north Staffordshire, where three very active Branch members are looking to set up a Staffordshire Members Group and have circulated questionnaires seeking to gauge responses to various initiatives – I look forward to an article on the inaugural meeting and hearing about future plans in due course.

John Bryan, one of the founders, has already set a Midlands record in locating a colony of 70 plus **Dingy Skippers** on a disused mine working at Chatterley Whitfield. Alas, the owners of the site currently plan a major earth-moving programme and John is putting together an Action Plan to try to save the core areas. He has also identified several other **Dingy Skipper** colonies in north Staffs – thus going some way in bucking the trend of national decline for this species.

Well done north Staffs – what else awaits to be found?

A joint initiative between the Branch and the Woodland Trust saw the two Societies coming together at Bunker's Hill Wood in mid-July. Peter Boardman arranged an identification workshop with a buffet lunch at the Whittington Inn, generously paid for by the Woodland Trust,

then a walk in the wood to discuss management to benefit lepidoptera. Around forty people attended and were ferried to the wood by a coach organised by the Trust. Thanks to the Trust members for arranging a successful day.

We hope to build on this meeting and together widen our working relationship.

Shropshire

Jenny Joy informed me that counts of **Silver-studded Blue** have been fantastic on the Prees Heath transect this year with over 700 plus on one day. Even though our Branch Field Meeting on 26 June was held on a cool grey day, we still marvelled at nearly two hundred **Silver-studded Blues** perching pale petal like amongst the heather.

The land ownership issue still boils up and down, as I am currently informed that the owners are still trying to sell the site. The Branch recently made an offer, which was declined. Could any experienced legal eagle out there let me have their comments and advice on whether or not a Registered Common can be sold and, if so, what would be the position of a prospective purchaser if development was proposed?

Phil Hopson counted a remarkable 56 **Large Heath** on Wem Moss on 27 June – the sun shines on the righteous, as Phil went back again the day after our wash out, when we only managed to locate one perched individual.

A transect walker, Stephen Lewis from Shropshire Wildlife Trust, has recorded a superb tally of 68 **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** on one of their Trust reserves.

Worcestershire

Chris Johnson, a new member in Malvern, found a **White-letter Hairstreak** on the early date of 14 June – the average date is usually around the 30 June – A global warning perhaps?

Following a recent press article requesting volunteers to walk Transects on the Malverns this has already paid dividends in that five people have volunteered and one person has found two **High Brown Fritillaries** to date. Trevor Bucknall has located five **High Brown Fritillaries** on a site near to their traditional haunt, but as with the **Pearl-bordered** in Herefordshire, the old location now appears to

have been vacated. Trevor puts this down to changes in habitat– thankfully there appears to be just enough suitable habitat in the vicinity to continue to support the **High Browns**.

Hats off to Jonathan Boaz who farms near Grafton Wood and whose farm is going into Countryside Stewardship. Trevor Bucknall tells me that with the proper management of Jonathan's Blackthorn hedgerows there is no doubt in Trevor's mind that **Brown Hairstreaks** will benefit. Trevor has located no less than four new squares where **Brown Hairstreak** eggs have been found around Grafton, making 39 squares to date! John Tilt, Trevor and others have created another superb ride at Grafton Wood in which Blackthorn is now suckering everywhere.

Richard Southwell and myself admired the conservation efforts of another farmer recently on a visit to Mike Southall's farm. Mike is considering entry level, to Countryside Stewardship, that is putting part of the farm under stewardship, but he has already created superb habitats including a new pond, which looks natural, with several dragonfly species darting about. **Ringlets** and other grassland species have colonised the surrounding edges in good numbers. Not only does Mike work the farm he also burns the midnight lamp on moth trapping nights – where does he get the stamina?

West Midlands

Our Branch Organiser Richard Southwell goes

on from strength to strength currying up support amongst his Local Council Officers and Councillors – more on this in the article on this Years Spring Meeting. Paul Wilkinson, a Countryside Officer with British Waterways, is helping to develop wild/buglife friendly corridors along canals in and around Birmingham. He envisages that plants should soon re-colonise areas, which have been sprayed or cut in the past.

On 6 July I attended a very encouraging Seminar in Birmingham, hosted by Groundwork Birmingham, on the issues of the Sustainability of Eastside. One of the Topics was the biodiversity audit for this part of the City. Although sustaining wildlife is probably the last thing on a City Developer's mind, the City Council and conservation minded organisations were invited to add their views on future schemes and initiatives and I intend to submit suggestions and hopefully add to the voices trying to influence the decision makers.

On the edge of city workshop walk later that afternoon we noted nine species of butterfly, including a **Ringlet** near Curzon Street canal tunnel, a **Gatekeeper** and a few **Meadow Browns** on so called wasteland, and a fresh **Comma** glowing like a hot coal as it basked on a bracken frond. One observation was clear from one of sites we visited and aimed at Landscape Architects the message is - sterile landscaping with shrubs and lawns is no mitigation for the loss of wildspace.

Lastly, please remember to submit this and last

years butterfly records to Jim Chance (address on the back cover) so that we can add to and update your Counties records for the National Atlas.

- David Jackson

Dates for your Diary

Moth programme 2004

Contacts

Neil and Corinna Gregory: 01905 771623
Mike Williams: 01299 824860
Rosemary Winnall: 01299 266929 (day) 01299 266489 (eve)

July

Sat, 24/07/04, Hanley Dingle, Map 138 SO698666, 20:00, General Recording, Meet where track goes off minor road, 1 mile north of Stanford on Teme. Strong boots are needed because of the steep sided dingle. Contact Neil Gregory

Sat 24/7/04 Woodgate Valley Country Park, Birmingham Public event run by Birmingham City Council including a small barbecue and moths, running from about 8.30pm till 12, small charge for refreshments. Contact Dave Grundy 0121-446-5446

August

Sat, 07/08/04, Tiddesley Wood, Map 150 SO929462, 20:00, General Recording. Meet in reserve car park west of Pershore, Contact Neil Gregory

Fri, 13/08/04, Wyre, Map 138 SO749740, 20:00, General Recording, Meet at the visitors centre. Location to be decided depending on weather conditions. Contact Rosemary Winnall

Sat, 21/08/04, Monkwood, Map 150 SO804606, 20:00, General Recording, Meet in reserve car park. Contact Neil Gregory

September

Fri, 10/09/04, Hartlebury, Map 138 SO822704, 19:00, Heathland specialities. Meet in car park. Contact Rosemary Winnall

Sat, 18/09/04, Grafton, Map 150 SO963557, 19:00, General Recording, Meet at 3 Parishes Hall by the church, Flyford Flavell, off A422 Worcester to Stratford road. NB strong boots essential as there will be a walk to the site. Contact Neil Gregory

October

Sat 9/10.04 Wyre Forest Visitor Centre SO749740, 10.00 Leaf Miner Day . Tutor: Dr Tony Simpson

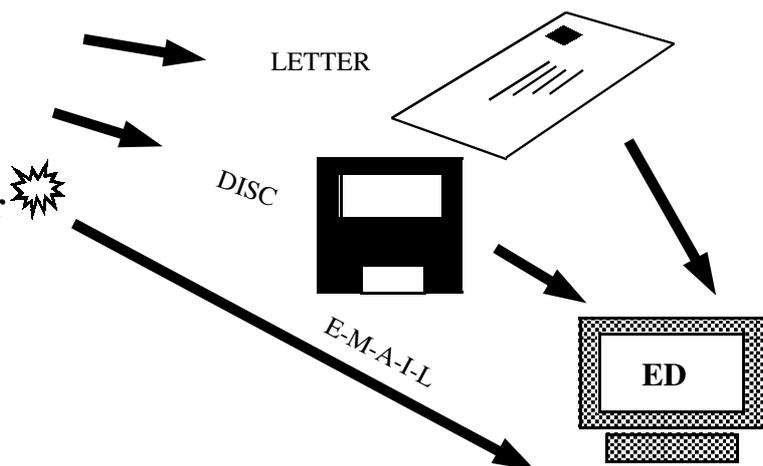
OCTOBER

9 October (Saturday) Monkwood Fungus Foray with Diane and Tim Bateman. Meet in the car park 10.30 am (probably lasting until about 1.00 pm). Adults £1 and children 50p. GR SO804606

16 October (Saturday) AGM; Wolseley Centre Staffs Speaker Pat Kirkland Please see page 2 for more details.

Instructions for Contributors

Deadline for Autumn Newsletter contributions is Saturday 9 October 2004



Hand-written articles will be transcribed and returned for checking. Printed documents are less prone to transcription errors and can often be scanned in. Laser printed 14 point copy usually scans perfectly, 12 point is OK but 10 point is hopeless. **Text on 3.5" disc is best of all but please send or attach to your email as plain text (e.g. "save as" a ".txt" or ".rtf" file under MS Word, not as a ".doc" file) as some formatted texts received recently, especially by email, have proved to be totally unreadable and, unlike a .txt or .rtf file, could contain viruses**, which frighten me to death. Newer software often produces files which are incompatible with older software even of the same name.

Pictures will normally be scanned in and should be black and white. (The final reprographic

process for printing off the newsletter does not do justice to 'grey scale' or colour). Note that, unlike text, pictures cannot be modified by me (except for size adjustment).

Copyright: Pictures for publication must of course be free of copyright restrictions.

Spelling: I will try to correct obvious spelling mistakes unless this affects the writer's style but, in the cause of achieving a consistent format, will use the Word UK dictionary spelling where there are several options.

v Christine Chance
harbornchristine@aol.com

Health and Safety

Guidelines for health and safety during activities organised by Butterfly Conservation will be received from Head Office in due course - in the meantime we reproduce those adopted by the Devon Branch:-

"There are important responsibilities laid upon us to do what we can to ensure your safety at events organised by Butterfly Conservation. Please take a little time to read, consider and act upon the following points at any of our events:

- Wear appropriate foot wear for the conditions expected underfoot.
- Wear appropriate clothing for the conditions to be expected. Protect yourself against Cold, Heat, Sun, Rain, Wind and Thorns.
- Consider what precautions you should take to prevent being bitten or stung by insect, plants, snakes or animals.
- Children must be adequately supervised by

an adult.

- Dogs must be kept on a lead. Seek permission from the leader before bringing your dog.
- Listen carefully to instructions given by the leader at the beginning of the event.
- Beware of branches swinging back onto you after being passed by the person in front.
- Beware of carefully dug rabbit holes, dug to twist your ankle.
- Inform the leader if you intend to leave early.
- Keep up with the party.
- Carry a drink - you may be away from your car for several hours.
- Observe the country code at all times.
- Enjoy yourself.

Site specific hazards will be outlined by the leader at the start of the field trip."

Committee Members:

Ian Hart
Laurel Cottage
Newton St. Margarets
Hereford HR2 0QN
01981-510259

Mike Williams
2 Dewberry Close
Stourport
Worcs DY13 8TB
tel. 01299-824860

Ron Hatton
45 Delabere Road
Bishops Cleeve
Cheltenham
Glos GL52 4AN
tel. 01242-673923

Digby Wood
Jasmine Cottage
2 Upper Ferry lane
Callow End
Worcester WR2 4TL
tel. 01905-830391

John P Brayford
7 Coton Mount
Coton Hill
Shrewsbury
SY1 2NN
tel. 01743-270481

Phil Hopson
7 Woodhall Rd
Penn
Wolverhampton WV4 4DL

Anita Ferguson
14 Glendale Drive
Wombourne
Wolverhampton
WV5 0HD
tel. 01902-892187

John Bryan
15 Patrick Place
Brindley End, Stoke on Trent
Staffs ST8 7RF
tel. 01782 518900

Regional Development Officers

Dr. Jenny Joy (Shrops)
The Croft, off Haygate Rd
Wellington, Telford,
Shrops TF1 2BW
tel 01952 245684

Jane Ellis
111 Grosvenor Rd
Rugby
CV21 3LE
tel 01788 543809

Conservation Reserve Wardens**Grafton Wood**

John Tilt
9 Meadow Close
Flyford Flavell
Worcs WR7 4DE
tel. 01386-792458

Monkwood

Paddy Harrison
Moorcroft Barn
Sinton Green
Hallow
Worcs WR2 6NW
tel. 01905-641523

Trench Wood

Neil McLean
10 Hammond Close
Droitwich
Worcs WR9 7SZ
tel. 01905-795381

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION



WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS

Chairman :

Dr. Ian Duncan
Midway Cottage
Upper Welland Rd
Malvern WR14 4LD
tel. 01684-568415

Vice-chairman:

David Jackson (Staffs)
11 Hyperion Drive, Penn
Wolverhampton WV4 5QW
tel. 01902-344716

Treasurer:

Tony Hatton
24 Loxley Drive
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire NG18 4FB
tel. 01623-659998

Newsletter Editor:

Dr. Christine Chance
65 Wentworth Rd
Harborne
Birmingham B17 9SS
tel. 0121-427-1706

Transect Coordinator:

John Tilt
9 Meadow Close
Flyford Flavell
Worcs WR7 4DE
tel. 01386-792458

Conservation Officers:

David Jackson (see above)
(Coordinator)

Dr. Jenny Joy (Shrops)
The Croft, off Haygate Rd
Wellington, Telford,
Shrops TF1 2BW
tel 01952 245684

Trevor Bucknall (Worcs)
26 Vine Street
Northwick
Worcester WR3 7DY
tel. 01905-755757

James Hill (N Staffs)
15 Parkside Drive
Maybank
Newcastle
Staffs ST5 0NL
tel. 01782-610377

Andy Nicholls (Hfds)
2 Auckland Close
Hereford HR1 1YE
tel. 01432-275834

Branch Recorder:

Jim Chance
65 Wentworth Rd
Harborne
Birmingham B17 9SS
tel. 0121-427-1706

Branch Organiser:

Richard Southwell
Sandilands
48 Whitehall Rd
Stourbridge DY8 2JT
tel. 01384-397066
(after 4pm only)

Webmaster

Nigel Stone
8 Grove Lane, Keresley End
Coventry CV7 8PN
tel. 02476 335189

Branch Secretary:

Vacant

Moth Officers:

Jeff Andrews (Herefordshire)
Meadow View
Dinedor
Hereford HR2 6LQ
tel. 01432-870301

Peter Boardman (Shropshire)
7 High St
Weston Rhyn
Shropshire SY10 7RP
tel. 01691 773026
(after 6pm please)

Education Officer:

Richard Lamb
Stratford-on-Avon Butterfly Farm
Tramway Walk, Swan' s Nest Lane
Stratford-on-Avon
Warks CV37 7LS
tel. 01789-299288



**Please see overleaf
for more Committee members RDOs & Conservation Reserve Wardens**



HEAD OFFICE: MANOR YARD, EAST LULWORTH, WAREHAM, DORSET BH20 5QP
THE BRITISH BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION SOCIETY LTD. (tel 01929 400209)

REGISTERED IN ENGLAND No. 2206468 REGISTERED CHARITY No. 254037