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NEWSLETTER

Winter 2004

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

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Vice-Chairman's Notes Summer 2004

Our Branch Chairman Ian Duncan has asked me to pen a few notes.

By way of a sort of introduction:

I have been a Branch Committee member for almost 6 years.

I grew up in Lancashire and remember going to school on the odd winter days, before the clean air Acts, when the smog from household chimneys, merged with early morning fog was almost thick enough to plait. I moved down to the West Midlands in the mid-eighties and now live on the edge of Wolverhampton, famous or infamous as being the heart of the Black Country.

There are a few theories as to how the region

earned its nickname; my favourite tale relates to when Queen Victoria passed through Wolverhampton, she drew the curtains on the Royal train so that she need not see the smoking chimneys of the area, which she is reputed to have called this black country.

Others say that the name comes from the eight-foot thick black coal seams, which mix with the loamy earth others say the name evokes memories of long gone furnaces, lighting up the night and billowing factory and household chimneys.

You may ask. What's this got to do with butterfly conservation?

Thankfully town and city air is clearer nowadays, though air pollution is still a threat through

carbon monoxide emissions and, as we all know, in the built environment there is the need to build on brownfield sites. Throughout the wider countryside, butterflies and moths now suffer greater threats from habitat loss, degradation of habitats, the proposed introduction of genetically modified crops, with their 'built in' insecticides and the uncertainties of global warming and so on.

Big issues and controversial ones – that is why your membership is highly prized, as it enables the Branch and the Society to seek ways of advising and assisting with conservation measures.

I am very pleased to say that it is envisaged that funding should be made available for at least a further twelve months, to enable Jane Ellis and Jenny Joy, our two salaried Branch Regional Officers, to continue the excellent work they have carried out to date and allow them to continue in their shared post. A big thank you from the Branch for your efforts to date.

Placing my soapbox to one side, I also wish to thank James Hill from Newcastle, Staffs for agreeing to take over the role as Branch Secretary and to welcome John Bryan from Stoke to the Committee.

If any Members wish to become more actively involved within the Branch, please contact me

and let me know where your interests lie and any ideas you may have to further the cause.

I know ! - It's been a fairly appalling season weather wise, having only seen a couple of **Red Admirals**, a few **Small Whites**, one **Peacock** and the odd **Speckled Wood** in my garden to date, but please don't forget to submit your Butterfly records to Jim Chance by early December so that we can add to the proposed update of the national Atlas.

Lastly, if you can make it, I would be pleased to see new and old faces at the forthcoming Branch A.G.M., which will be held on **Saturday 16 October** at the Wolseley Centre, the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's new Headquarters, near Rugeley, commencing at 2.00pm. Entrance is from the second island just beyond where the A51 joins the A513 alongside the entrance to the Wyevale garden centre. See page 16 for map and more details.

Paul Kirkland of Butterfly Conservation Scotland will give a talk entitled "**Kentish Glory, Marsh Fritillary and Chequered Skipper** – the work of BC". For a map and more details see the Summer Newsletter or page 16.

I look forward to seeing you there.

◆ David Jackson (Vice-chairman)

Camberwell Beauty in Worcestershire

It's always exciting to see a new species of butterfly for the very first time. Perhaps you have gone to some particular site especially to see the species or maybe you have just caught a glimpse of something that you can't immediately recognise. After this initial sighting there may well be a chase, ploughing through brambles, up hill and down dale until, if you are very lucky you are rewarded with a "full frontal" view and immediately recognise it, a new species for your records. But it isn't always like that. Sometimes it is a much slower and more cerebral process.

15 July, a warm, sticky, overcast afternoon. Reading or maybe dozing in my garden in Callow End, I got up and, wandering into the house through the open half-door, I disturbed a butterfly in the rear hallway. **Small Tortoiseshell** was the immediate reaction, but no! It was very big and very dark. **Peacock** then? As it headed towards the open door I got a good view of the silhouette and the wing

shape was certainly like a Peacock, but something wasn't right about it. Twice it tried to re-enter the house and twice I shooed it out again. (Fool!) and then it fluttered up among the exposed ceiling beams of the covered extension at the back of the house. It was then that I noticed that that both the very dark, plummy-black fore and hind wings were edged with a band of dirty white about 5mm wide. It was in view for about 10 to 15 seconds before heading into the garden leaving me to go through a process of elimination until the penny finally dropped, it must have been a **Camberwell Beauty!** A quick search of the garden, particularly the Buddleias, proved fruitless. However a glance at the Millennium Atlas confirmed that, whilst most sightings are in August and September, July sightings have been recorded even as far west as Worcestershire, these migrant butterflies having come from the east over the North Sea from their breeding grounds in Sweden, Finland and maybe northern Germany.

It is always gratifying to see a rare butterfly, but there is a bizarre twist to this story. In "A Practical Guide to the Butterflies of Worcestershire", the late Jack Green records sightings of Camberwell Beauties in Welland 1966, Callow End 1975, Great Malvern 1976, Leigh Sinton, Upton Warren and Alfrick 1977. I met Jack Green once; he came to my house on butterfly business (What else!) and as he

entered he remarked that he had been here before and proceeded to tell the story. In 1975 the then owner, the village doctor Margery Pitman, phoned him to report an unusual butterfly in her garden. He called round to see her and was given a very accurate description of a **Camberwell Beauty** and he had no hesitation in adding it to his records. One wonders what he would have thought about a second specimen turning up in the same garden

Success in Dudley – We name names

I will not catalogue all the activities to promote the continued existence of wildlife in general, and lepidoptera in particular, that have taken place in my local authority during this new millennium. Suffice it to say there are a lot, many of which have been referred to in previous newsletters. However, it might be useful to highlight to whom approaches were made since this should give you ideas how to instigate a similar campaign in your local authority area.

The successful campaigns to protect Hawne Colliery and question the need for the proposed Dudley bypass extension started by contacting the Planning Department. In both cases the final judgement went to adjudication by an Independent Government Inspector since the Unitary Development Plan, a ten year planning policy document, was in the final throes of endorsement. Both the proposed schemes would impact on its structure, hence the involvement of the Inspector, but I now understand this is not the norm.

Do not for one moment think that just objecting is the only route to success. When a leading councillor said to me 'You wildlife people always tell us what we can't do' I realised we would never win the war if that is people's reaction to our aims. Since then I have been an advocate partnership.

Initiatives to improve current habitat, such as the council's parks and open spaces, started by local councillors approaching me, sometimes after they had received representations from local interest groups. A good example is the flagship borough park, namely Mary Stevens in Stourbridge. The 'Friends of Mary Stevens' Group were initially motivated by growing levels of vandalism and not biodiversity. However, what is better than a thorny hedge to keep out miscreants along with a wildlife hedge margin that local schools can monitor as part of the Community Plan and Lifelong Learning

initiatives.

Finally, do not forget a council's 'amenity department', the one responsible for dustbins, litter, grass cutting, spraying etc. In Dudley it is called Engineering for some strange reason that is lost on me. It became increasingly apparent that they had an equal, if not greater, impact on biodiversity than the Countryside Services Department, the latter being responsible for nature reserves and nature friendly areas. Engineering has always been difficult to influence. I now know why. How would you react if you get about a hundred complaints a day from ratepayers and councillors without adequate funds to address issues in an appropriate manner? We therefore approached them officially through the council's LA21 Committee, where I am a member. In a formal meeting we agreed to a 'step-by-step' approach to improve current practices in a cost neutral manner but also get favourable publicity. We nearly had our hands bitten off by their enthusiasm.

All this has not been a 'one-man-band' and I would like to thank the following for their contributions –

Local Branch Members who have both recorded butterflies and sent in their records to inform the Council and those that wrote to object to the proposed developments at Hawne Colliery and the Bypass Extension - Mrs Armstrong, Celia Barton, Eric Bird, Mark Chester, Colin Hale, Steve & Carol Harper, Keith Harris, Tony Marsh, Brian Marsh, Joy Stevens, Jim Whitehouse, Nick Williams and Richard Woolley. I special thanks to Dave White for his transect data at Hawne which was so influential during the appeal process.

Local Agenda 21 Organisations who have either been pressure groups, other wildlife organisations or educational bodies –

Stourbridge College, Nick Williams – **British Trust Conservation Volunteers**, Richard Billingsley & Alison Wilkes - **Soroptomists**, Iris Berrow - **Halesowen Wildlife Group**, Colin & Hazel Gurney – **British Waterways**, Paul Wilkinson – **Friends of Bumble Hole**, Mike Parks - **Urban Wildlife Trust**, Chris Parry & Paul Stephenson.

Local Council Officials - Planning Department, Ali Glaisher & John Mainwaring - **Countryside Services**, Kevin Clements, Jonathon Preston, Antony Ravenscroft & Anna Gorski - **Engineering**, Russell Newey – **Community Plan Officer**, Alex Webb.

Other organisations and Individuals – **EcoRecord**, Sara Carvalho – **Birmingham University**, Dr Andrew Pullin & Alison Loram, the latter who is about to publish her doctorate on ‘Butterfly species in urban grasslands’ – **Pensnett Wildlife Group**, Brian Marsh & Celia Barton – **Halesowen Township Council**, I have learned a huge amount about planning regulations and technical details from Mike & Carol Freer, a special thanks – **WM Police**, Dave Friday who has championed the cause of biodiversity, kept me informed and put up with my constant queries on moth identification – **Dave Grundy** for getting a number of moths into the area’s Biodiversity Action Plan, more on this in the future I predict - **Non Ratepayer**

Branch Members, John Wills, Alan Prior & Val Weston, and all those who wrote to object to the planning consent at Anchor Meadow that prompted all this local activity – **The Media**, including BBC Midlands Today, the Birmingham Post and the Express & Star – **Commerce**, Chelsfield PLC (Merry Hill) & LCP Properties (Pensnett Trading Estate) - and last but not least , all the **Local Councillors** from all political persuasions who took more than a passing interest.

My apologies in advance for anyone I have missed either due to my memory or those that did something anonymously. Has wildlife benefited? Yes it has. The improving habitat infrastructure in the borough is flagging up more colonies of **Dingy Skipper** and **Green Hairstreak** who are finding new locations in which to breed suggesting Dudley is reversing the national trend.

And the future? Wildlife will go on in Dudley with so many ‘safe pairs of hands’ taking an active interest but my hope is the newsletter will receive articles of others’ experiences in your metropolitan boroughs and rural districts throughout the branch territory. It’s already happening in Stoke but what about?

♦ Richard Southwell

Trip to Kazakhstan July 12 –29 2004

While we were waiting at Frankfurt airport for our flight to Almaty, the major city and former capital of Kazakhstan, the seven of us who had opted for this year’s trip abroad shared notes about other people’s reactions to the prospect. Most people had no idea where Kazakhstan was or that it was a country the size of Western Europe. But perhaps the most telling response, reported by Mike Williams, was the stark question, ‘Why? Now, looking back at our seventeen days spent in the steppes and mountains of Central Asia, I feel sure that all of us, in our own ways, could convince the most hardened sceptic of the virtues of Kazakhstan.

When we arrived at Almaty it was 10.0 pm local time and after meeting Vladimir, our guide for the trip, we were ushered into the first of many small buses of uncertain vintage, diesel-smelling bone-shakers which were robust enough to go virtually anywhere, on or off-road. Then we drove for two hours into the night, first through the sprawling city and its suburbs and then in increasingly lower gears high into the

Tien Shan (translated from the Chinese as ‘The Celestial Mountains’) to the ski hotel at Cimbulak where we were to spend the night. For me, thereafter, this sense of being on the move never ceased. For the first time on one of these Green Tours we were going to explore both the Tien Shan, in the south of the country bordering Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and the Altai, further north and east bordering Siberia, Mongolia and China and because of this there would be a lot of travelling. Thus the trip took on the character of an expedition, or as Vladimir put it, ‘a gipsy journey’, which seemed appropriate in a country where in pre-Soviet times the people were largely nomadic.

On our first morning patterns were set. Vladimir made sure we kept to schedule; breakfast was at 8.00 sharp and we were away at 9.00. Though breakfasts varied, our first one contained items such as tomato and cucumber, strips of cheese, Swiss roll and a kind of rye bread cut into unaccountably small pieces, which were not only breakfast staples but turned

up at lunch and dinner too. Overall, the food prepared by our Tien Shan Kazakhi cook and our Altai 'Russian' one was very good and distinguished by the use of a wide variety of herbs.

We were blessed with bright sunshine for our first morning in the mountains above Cimbulak. Climbing to 3000 metres, the distant glaciers glistened and the flora was spectacular, especially the salvias. Within minutes Vladimir had spotted a Lammergeier perched on a crag. As it warmed up butterflies appeared, joining the small day-flying moths in the still air. My first impression was of the number of common British species present such as **Peacock**, **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Small Copper**, **Large** and **Green-veined Whites** and **Orange Tip**. Then there was a sprinkling of Continental butterflies like **Niobe Fritillary**, **Eastern Bath White** and **Eastern Clouded Yellow**. However, for me, it was the Asian ones that caught my eye. The wonderfully named *Boloria generator* was one of my stars of the trip, a small brilliant orange fritillary with minimal black markings on its upper wings. I also took a fancy to a beautiful little copper, *Polycaena tamerlana*, with single white spots on its upper forewings. Exotic by European standards was an Asian heath, *Coenonympha sunbecca*, a wraith-like creature with bold white markings on pale grey. There were high expectations of seeing some of the local species of **Apollo** and we were not disappointed to find the magnificent *Parnassius delphius* with blue spots at the lower edges of its hindwings. Settling among rocks between short hops, this butterfly seemed to behave more like a grayling than an Apollo. At lunch time the cloud began to build up setting a pattern for the weather in the Tien Shan in the days that followed.

That afternoon we started our overnight train journey to Dzhabagly, four hundred miles west of Almaty, by spotting Rollers, Bee-eaters and Lesser Grey Shrikes on the telegraph wires. During the next four days it seemed that we had the pristine mountain wilderness of the Aksu-Dzhabagly nature reserve entirely to ourselves. After a day at the stunning Aksu Canyon and surrounding area where we saw three species each of eagle and vulture among other raptors, and butterflies such as **Hungarian Glider**, **Ripart's Anomalous Blue** and a distinctive Asian wall brown, *Lasiommata eversmanni* which was as ubiquitous as Eversmann the taxonomist in these parts, we headed for the mountain house where we spent three nights. For me,

this part of our journey was memorable for the mountain ascents on horseback and by the extraordinarily rich alpine meadows. At higher altitudes several species of tulip were still in flower and one of the ultra-rare local specialities, *Primula minkwitzae*, a tiny pink primrose which grows in rock crevices. At lower levels the glowing orbs of purple, white and pink alliums stretched away as far as the eye could see, while up at 3000 metres, brilliant against the snow patches, were drifts of bright orange Globe Flower.

Having seen bear prints and dung on our way to the mountain house, while we were there we were privileged to see one of the sixty resident Isabelline Brown Bears feeding high up on the mountainside. On another occasion, also with the aid of a telescope, Vladimir counted twenty-six Siberian Ibex. Closer at hand we saw Red Marmot, while in the house itself we were entertained by the delightful, resident Forest Dormouse.

My favourite butterfly images of this area were the freshly emerged **Cardinals** nectaring on pink scabious with their green suffused hindwings and pale green underwings with their distinctive light crimson flush, and my first encounter with **False Comma** and **Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell** which reawakened childhood memories of at last finding the elusive Large Tortoiseshell. After our precipitous ascent to the Ukkun Kaindi Pass, in the saddle, the Apollo-fanciers were delighted to catch and identify the superb *Parnassius maximinus*, broadly similar to *delphius*. This took place against a dizzying backdrop of glaciated peaks soaring to nearly 5000 metres, perhaps the lepidopterist's ultimate mountain experience !

As we flew north-east to Ust-Kemenogorsk to begin our Altai adventure, the rain clouds dispersed and the steppe-desert below could be clearly seen . Vladimir described Ust as a 'Siberian' town and it had a more 'Russian' than Kazakhi population. In fact, this country is ethnically very complex because of Stalin's 'redistribution' policies in the thirties. In Ust I had a strong sense of the former Soviet regime with lots of concrete buildings, either in the process of going up or coming down; we suspected mainly the latter.

Next morning after meeting our 'Russian' team we climbed into two smaller but no less rugged vehicles and departed for the Kalbinskiy Hills. These hills rise to about 1800

metres and from a distance look parched and barren. Up close there is a rich and colourful flora with plenty of butterflies as we discovered at a little place we dubbed 'the gully' where over 35 species were congregated. The smaller fritillaries were a special feature – **Twin-spot, Lesser Marbled, Glanville, Spotted, Knapweed** and **Nickerl's**. We also saw plenty of ordinary **Apollos**. The fresh **Amanda's Blues** were eye-catching and I was pleased to get close enough to photograph a **Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell**.

Our first night in this region provided us with one of the most surreal experiences of the trip. We stayed at a large former Soviet biological research station which was gently disintegrating and seemingly doing service as an ersatz holiday camp superintended by some formidable Russian matriarchs. Needless to say, 'Butlins' became its name. Here we had at our disposal the usual earth closets plus a communal one and an outdoor metal trough for washing in where, for my taste, the sort of nipple-release water dispenser was no match for the free flow of a mountain stream.

A memorable stop on the next leg of our journey through the hills was at a roadside yourta, the traditional Kazakhi tent made of hides, which among other things provided curdled mare's milk to thirsty travellers. Against my better judgement, I was persuaded to sample it. My forebodings underestimated the experience. The phrase that came to mind was 'the quintessence of vomit'. Vladimir said that my mistake was to taste it, I should have knocked it straight back like vodka. However, there were consolations at this unlikely spot. Behind the earth closet with its collapsed roof I found a crowd of nectaring white admirals, the Asian species *Limenitis helmanni*. Nearby were **Hungarian Gliders** and **Map** completing this study in black and white. The little roadside stream had attracted a lot of butterflies, **Mallow** and **Orbed Red Underwing Skipper, Holly Blue, Wood White, Apollo** and plenty of fresh **Chequered Blues** with their bold underside markings.

Before taking a ferry across a vast lake, which was strangely reminiscent of the West Coast of Scotland, we made a desert stop, particularly to see the Zaissan Toad-headed Agama, a lizard, the male of which was fearless in guarding its territory thus allowing us some close-up photos.

I think all of us enjoyed staying at Mimir,

which was our last stop before ascending the Altai Mountains. Here we were accommodated in yourtas, a shack and a converted railway carriage while Olga our excellent, and it must be said, beautiful cook, combined forces with our hostess to produce a lovely evening meal, starting with borsch.

Our ascent into the Altai was via the notorious Austrian Road. By any standards, this was not a road. In parts it was a boulder-strewn mountain stream bed and in other parts a quagmire; nowhere was it better than a very rough track. It was estimated that we travelled up it at an average of six miles per hour. Its name derived from the Austrian prisoners who built it during The Great War because the Tsar wanted the delectable fish from Lake Markakol, twenty miles from the Chinese border, transported to his table. Our destination too was Markakol and our first butterfly stop was at the Burkhat Pass. My impulse on arriving here was to climb to the top of a crudely cairned hill and take pictures of the mountain panorama. This done, I noticed two, presumably male, **Swallowtails** hilltopping. Some other butterflies enjoying the ample nectar were **Small pearl-bordered** and **Mountain Fritillary** and two attractive Asian fritillaries *Melitea arcesia* and *Issoria eugenia* which as the name suggests is a relative of the **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (seen frequently during the trip) and has striking dark green and spangled underwings. This was the only place we saw **Purple-edged Copper** and it was here that I began my attempts to get a good picture of the skittish Asian *erebia, theano* which with its orange barred wings is like nothing in Europe.

Given the average age of our group, sleeping on the ground in tents while the temperature dropped to near freezing that night was fairly challenging. Unforgettable, however, was sitting around a driftwood fire on the riverbank drinking vodka under the brilliant stars while Vladimir extolled the elements and the joy of living in the moment. I must have been suitably mindful the following morning as I managed to find a single **Violet Copper**, a tiny butterfly in rapid decline in Europe. That day on the Austrian Road was bright and clear affording fabulous views of the mountain scenery at the Pass of Alatay and luring blues, fritillaries and whites to the water's edge at the rivers and streams we passed. At one such place I was surprised at the sheer size of the **Tessellated Skipper**, one of the largest of the European 'grizzleds'.

Eventually we arrived at Markakol, a 'Siberian' village on the eastern edge of the huge lake. With its mud roads, shacks and general debris it reminded me of Eskimo settlements when the snow had melted. Here we spent three nights at the Nature Reserve's HQ, which offered basic accommodation but with an excellent sauna. In this area there was a wonderful show of **Scarce Coppers**, but although we only added one new butterfly to the list there were birds to marvel at, especially the Black Storks at the lakeside. For me, seeing China for the first time is an indelible memory. Looking down from the Marble Pass, the country could not have presented itself more dramatically. At a natural border, the green foothills of Kazakhstan stopped abruptly at the edge of the luminous golden mountain-desert of China.

Throughout our journey Mike Williams was constantly aware of what butterflies had been seen in the visited localities on previous trips and he was keen to search for what we had not yet found. Our efforts increased on the return journey along the Austrian Road. For example, we wondered how thousands of hectares of meadows dominated by Great Burnet would not yield a single **Dusky Large Blue**. However, our diligence rewarded us with one **Scarce Large Blue**. In the same spirit we found **Small Apollos** sailing up and down a steep flowery mountainside. But the *piece de resistance* was stunning a **Poplar Admiral** which had been settled on the main road and flew up under our

vehicle as we sped towards the airport at Ost. We had long since given up hope of seeing this magnificent butterfly and here it was in a large container for everyone to admire.

We completed our journey in style by staying in a mountain observatory at 8952 feet, high among the peaks of the Tien Shan south of Almaty. There was an improbable experience of looking through telescopes at the moon just before midnight and then being addressed by the resident astronomer, an archetypal Russian scientist. The following morning, unbelievably, we found two more species of Apollo, **Clouded Apollo** and then most fittingly, *Parnassius tianschanicus*. Altogether we recorded 136 species in Kazakhstan.

For me this trip was a 60th birthday present and it turned out to be an experience that I shall cherish for the rest of my life. It was made possible by great company, the kindness of the people who looked after us and the depth of our guide's knowledge, his passion for nature and, what might be called his frontier scout skills which included snake-catching and skating down glaciers on his trainers. However, none of this would have happened without the industry and dedication of Mike Williams who made the unlikely idea of Kazakhstan a wonderful reality.

◆ Peter Darch

Next Trip Borneo?

I am investigating the possibilities of a trip to Borneo in Autumn 2005, to see butterflies (especially birdwings), birds and Orangs. More details later, but if anyone would like to register an interest, could they please get in touch.

◆ Mike Williams

Mapmate software

Free copies of Mapmate are available to Butterfly Conservation members in the region.

Have you ever considered using Mapmate to put on all your butterfly and moth records directly onto the computer? If you have not yet got to the stage of actually buying it think again. I purchased a Group Mapmate User Licence on behalf of Butterfly Conservation members in the region earlier this year and still have some free copies available. The only future cost to BC members will be the annual maintenance costs which are due in February 2005 (but these are less for group members than they would be for individual users).

The remaining copies will be distributed on a first come first served basis.

If you are interested please contact Jenny Joy on jjoy@butterfly-conservation.org

◆ Jenny Joy

Regional Officers' Report - September 2004

Last Friday after a long week of catching up on e-mails and writing letters after the school summer holidays I had a very good reminder of just why I enjoy this job - you get to see so many people and places you would never normally encounter! I spent the morning at a manned signal box on the railway line at Harlescott in Shrewsbury. Why was I there? Because I had been contacted by Mark Eccleston who has been managing the track edges for wildlife for the past two years. Mark has recently developed a passion for photographing butterflies and realised the habitats he is creating could be beneficial to a wider range of species. Mark wanted advice on how he could improve the habitats further for butterflies and moths as well as hoping for some official recognition from us about the fantastic job he is doing (which might help Railtrack provide further support for his project). So if any of you have any spare plants or seeds (especially those that are good nectar sources or provide potential breeding habitat for butterflies and moths) and can get them to me so I can pass them on Mark we would be very grateful. The limestone track edges already support a huge range of species such as knapweed, common centaury, bird's-foot trefoil, teasel, cowslip, red campion, oxeye daisy, harebell, ragged robin and selfheal. There is also potential here for expanding potential butterfly and moth breeding habitats by techniques such as scrub removal in selected areas (e.g. to encourage bird's-foot trefoil) or the creation of more grassy areas.

The news about the **High Brown Fritillary** in the region is still fairly positive with a number of sightings in several different places this year. A meeting with the Eastnor Estate and Bromesberrow Estate is planned for October so that the results of Sue Clarke's habitat survey (carried out in May this year) can be discussed. The Bringsty Common Manorial Court have recently acquired a bracken bruiser which will enable them to carry out the management prescriptions (we have recently recommended) for the **High Brown** more effectively. We have also just heard that another large estate in the Malverns area has successfully entered some of its land into a Countryside Stewardship Scheme to benefit fritillaries and that the owner has already bought the cattle to graze the land - we can't wait to see the results! On the subject of

environmental schemes we have recently been invited to all the regional meetings about higher level environmental stewardship targeting - this is a great opportunity for Butterfly Conservation (BC) to get involved with DEFRA to ensure that key species and habitats are mentioned in targeting statements (as they are then more likely to get entered into schemes and brought into suitable habitat management).

The re-targeting of sites involved in the original 1997 national BC survey for **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** has produced mixed results. The **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** is still doing fairly well in the Wyre Forest and responding well to recent coppicing work carried out by English Nature in the Shelfheld and Wityhed areas as well as to bracken rolling carried out in Wimperhill and Longdon areas maintained by Forest Enterprise. The **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** is also still doing well at Haugh Wood (where lots of management is geared towards this species) and Ewyas Harold Common (where general management appears to benefit this species). We now know that the Herefordshire Nature Trust has been successful in acquiring funding for the Herefordshire Commons Initiative whose long term aim is to ensure sympathetic ecological management on all the 14 sites in the scheme. We hope to be able to work alongside the Trust and others involved in this scheme in the future as it involves a number of important Lepidoptera sites (such as Ewyas Harold Common). The Shropshire Wildlife Trust has also successfully bid for a project to carry out some management work on a number of sites in the Oswestry area. Although no **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** were recorded on any of its former sites in this area in 2004, they still occur close by (in Montgomeryshire) and we hope to be able to work closely with the Trust in the next few months to increase the chances of **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** returning to the Shropshire side again in the future.

Peter Boardman has now very successfully completed his contracts for us. I would like to thank Peter very much for his efforts on our behalf as I think he has done a brilliant job. Everybody who has had dealings with him during his time working for us have given me nothing but positive feedback. Since the last regional officer report Peter has run a number of very successful events. These included a very

successful first ever joint training day with the Woodland Trust (who organised the publicity, lunch and transport for around 40 people), a training day for BTCV in Warwickshire (based on the butterflies and moths of allotments with the purpose of the day being to get participants recording) and a day looking at **Chalk Carpet** on one of its threatened Warwickshire sites.

I mentioned in the last newsletter that we are

now starting to consider ideas for further events and training sessions in 2005. Please do let us know if you do have any ideas as we do want our events to reflect the needs of local volunteers. Although the funding for our Regional Officer posts officially runs out in at the end of March 2005 we will continue to plan work further into 2005.

◆ Jenny Joy

Conservation Corner

I have lost count of the weekend nights this summer and early autumn, when I thought I might have the chance to set up the Branch Moth Trap, only to venture out onto the back lawn towards dusk and find there has been a significant drop in temperature, or the chance of rain.

Due to family commitments I can usually only plan to trap on a Saturday night, but this works well when it happens, as my seven year old son delights in helping me pot, identify and release our catch.

Ah well, there's always next year.

Around the Shires

Shropshire

Small **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** have been re-discovered on Brown Clee. Up to eight were seen at three sites there by Richard Southwell.

Bill Davidson has scored a major conservation success following his discovery two years ago of a colony of **Grizzled Skipper** on private land. (the colony is probably the first record for south-west Shropshire) The landowner has agreed to take conservation measures to protect the site and enhance the habitat around the colony to allow its sustainability. Well done Bill - pass on our thanks to the landowner.

RS and BD have also jointly found a new meta-population of **Graylings** in a valley near Little Stretton. Does it get much better?

Staffordshire

The inaugural meeting of the Staffordshire Moth Group will take place at 7.30 p.m on Friday 29 October at the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Headquarters the Wolseley Centre near Rugeley (see page 16).

(directions as for the Branch AGM)
All interested Moth-ers are invited to attend.

Jenny Joy and Craig Yates have carried out fieldwork on the **Argent** and **Sable**, locating larvae in a private wood to the north of the county. Work is also continuing on a survey for the **Common Fanfoot** in north Staffs.

Moth traps have held the 2nd county record of **Dingy Footman** at Consall and the 5th record of **Barred Rivulet** at Apedale.

James Hill hosted a successful butterfly awareness day held jointly with the Friends of Hartshill Park. Around twenty people attended. James has also had records of Dark Green Fritillary at Thors Cave and two at Consall on 31 July.

Three **Small pearl-bordered Fritillaries** were recorded at Consall and the Rangers/volunteers' efforts there are paying off with the spread of Marsh Violet into the cleared 'wet glade'

John Bryan informs me that **Dingy Skippers** have been located at *nine* new sites in the north of the county!

Two possible locations for **Grizzled Skippers** will be visited next Spring to see if the single records there can be multiplied.

The results of a County members survey were encouraging and show that some members wish to become more active either within their District Council area or further afield – two members actually shocked us – one in a pleasing way by volunteering to attend work parties – are there any more willing people out there? And the other member who has been a devotee for twenty years but apparently has never been contacted by the Branch before,

other than through receiving the Newsletter.
If any members feel out on a limb or should I say Branch – please feel free to contact any committee member – We are all volunteers, and we don't bite.

Worcestershire

At least four farmers are entering into the Countryside Stewardship around Grafton Wood. Good news for **Brown Hairstreaks** with a sympathetic hedge management scheme planned. At least six adults were recorded on one day alone this year. The task is now on to look more closely for males – as they are usually less frequently recorded than females. Their habits lead us to believe that we should be looking for them slightly earlier in the summer, probably around the third week in July. Mike Williams has located two Ash trees where there is evidence of 'male activity!'

The next **Brown Hairstreak** 'egg hunt' will start from Grafton Church car park on Saturday 8 January commencing at 10.00 a.m.

A National Day will be held at Brinkworth Village Hall, Wiltshire on 15 January 2005 – **Brown Hairstreak** please contact Jane Ellis for more information.

There is evidence that **Marbled Whites** are spreading to new pastures, please send any new site records or records generally to Jim Chance by early December.

Essex Skippers have also been positively identified at a number of new locations.

Nigel Stone has added 20,000 County Moth

records onto the Branch database and has to date recorded around 80, 000 to date!!! – thanks Nigel.

Herefordshire

At least 80 people attended a Fritillary Action Day held at Woolhope Village Hall this Spring – the attendees then visited Haugh Wood where they saw **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** in this marvellously managed setting.

Jeff Andrews reports that **Wood Whites** had a good year, having colonised another area of forest.

West Midlands

Peter Newell informed me that the small colony of **Dingy skippers** still holds on at Anchor Meadow, Aldridge, where he and a friend carried out Bramble clearance in the winter. He says the more favoured location is still the rough ground alongside the Health Centre car park – at least six were seen on one occasion.

Dave Grundy is trying to set up a garden moth survey in West Midlands – before taking out nation wide – watch this space.

If Members from our more urban environments wish to contact me with regard to suggesting new initiatives I will be glad to assist or advise.

◆ David Jackson

ANNUAL REVIEW:

Moth Reports received after the publication of the Annual Review 2003

Shropshire Moth Report 2003

Shropshire Moth Group newsletters now reach 30 or so recipients and have helped publicise moth recording in the County. Amongst the highlights reported in recent months were **Orange Footman** at Dudmaston from Adrian Miles, both **Drap Looper** and **Common Fan-foot** in the Shropshire part of the Wyre Forest courtesy of Dave Grundy during May. I found **Argent & Sable** several times at Fenn's, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses NNR during May & June, whilst Jenny Joy found it at its other known Shropshire site. Jenny later found larvae at this site also.

Stephen Lewis found **Forester Moths** at the Bog Mine, Stiperstones in good numbers in early June, Adrian Miles and myself had **Red-necked Footman** at Dudmaston and Whixall respectively. Adrian also had **Clay Triple-lines** from Linley, whilst later in June I had **Marbled White-Spot** and **Beautiful Snout** - both new to Whixall.

Howard Davies recorded the migrant **Pearly Underwing** at home near Craven Arms in July. Also during that month Godfrey Blunt (Shropshire's new micro moth recorder) found the pyralid moth *Perinephela lancealis* at Ironbridge, the first time it has been recorded outside the Wyre Forest, also the tortrix moth *Epinotia subocellana*, the first time that this

moth has been found away from Whixall in the County. He also asked whether recorders in Shropshire could supply status details for the **Firethorn Leaf-miner** *Phyllonorycter leucographella*?

The pick of August's records were **Manchester Treble-bar** from Whixall by Nick Greatorex-Davies, **Blomer's Rivulet** and **Cloaked Carpet** by Howard Davies, **Cloaked Carpet**, **Dingy Footman** and **Buff Footman** at Earl's Hill by Ian Cheeseborough and myself.

I would remind anyone with macro moth records for Shropshire to please send them to me (my address is on the back cover) whilst anyone with micro moth records please send them to Godfrey Blunt, 8 Holmes Orchard, Alveley, Bridgnorth, WV15 6NX or A.G.Blunt@wlv.ac.uk.

◆ Peter Boardman

P.S. I would like to thank everyone within the West Midlands and Warwickshire branches of BC who helped me during my brief spell of contract work for BC over the summer. In particular I would like to thank Jenny Joy, Richard Southwell, Mike Slater, Chris Johnson and David Brown.

Herefordshire moth report 2003

After a cool spring, the first noteworthy species to Mercury vapour light in Ledbury was a male **Scarce Prominent** (*Odontosia Carmelita*) on 25 April 2003. This very scarce moth was last seen in 1995, eight years ago and also here in Ledbury. It still presumably survives here in South-east Herefordshire but in low density. Another rarity in the County is the **Grass Rivulet** (*Perizoma albulata*). A single female was recorded in Ledbury at m/v light on 7 June 2003 after several years of absence. The food plant is hayrattle, now a rare plant in pasture and hay meadows.

June continued to show some interesting moths at light including the exotic **Eyed hawkmoth**

(*smerinthus ocellata*) which has been rare in recent years. Also the **Pale-shouldered Brocade** (*Lacanobia thalassina*), the **Rustic-shoulder Knot** (*Apamea sordens*) and the **Dusky Brocade** (*apamea remissa*) have reappeared after about ten years disappearance.

Of interest is also was the appearance of the **Red-necked Footman** which was seen in Ledbury on four different nights in June with many more seen in woodland in the Woolhope Dome by Mark O'brien, and I saw one flying in day sunshine in Credenhill Wood, near Hereford City, on 26 June 2003 flying amongst conifers. To complete this amazing movement of these

lichen feeding footman moths over the last few years was a single worn **Orange footman** (*Eilema sororcula*) here in Ledbury on 24 June 03, a new County record.

On the 11 July 03, two fresh specimens of the **Double Line** (*Mythimna turca*) appeared at m/v light in a small wood within the Woolhope Dome by Mark O'brien. This is a National Notable B species and is a surprising record considering the last record was seen around the latter half of the nineteenth century in Stoke Wood which is inside the same 10km square. I feel fairly certain these moths have bred here but have been overlooked for over 100 years.

Moving on to the micro-moths, the local tortrix moth *Endothenia ustulana* was seen at light in Wigmore Rolls in the north-east of the County. This was only the second moth seen (in 2002) after a long gap (1987). A fleeting glimpse of two other tortricid moths out of the foliage of a

very old veteran Maple tree in Ledbury Park on 17 July 03 of the rare *Pammene trauniana* was an important record also, and gives confirmation to the single record in Ledbury in 1991. *Pammene suspectana* was another species of this difficult group of moths seen in Ledbury at light on 10 August 03. This small tortrix is apparently very scarce with only a few records for the whole Country although we have had another singleton from Worcestershire in 1979.

On 10 September 2003, in a well-known supermarket car park in Hereford, three tenanted mines on a single leaf of the London Plane Tree were found. These were a species of *Phyllonorycter* belonging to the very recently discovered *p. plataui*. First found as recently as 1990 in London, the species has spread north and west slowly to other urban sites.

◆ Michael Harper

The Worcestershire Moth Report was printed in the Annual Review in the summer newsletter

Midlands Garden Butterflies 2003

What a superb year for garden butterflies! For many recorders it started in March with early **Brimstones, Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admirals** and **Commas**. These species had a particularly long season being recorded also in October and November.

The fortunes of the **Small Tortoiseshell** improved greatly with numbers of gardens recording visits in the midlands rising from 91% in 2002 to 98% in 2003. Just to recap, for the purposes of this analysis the midlands includes Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire as well as Warwickshire and the counties of the West Midlands branch.

The good news does not stop there - there were dramatic recoveries in garden visits from many species, particularly the **Small Copper** up from 18% in 2002 to 44% last year, and the **Common Blue**, up from 36% to 47% . The rarer garden visitors **Small Skipper, Large Skipper** and **Wall** improved but **Ringlets** were down. The sunny weather enabled several species not usually associated with gardens to roam further afield and visits from **Marbled**

White were recorded in one in five gardens with 3% seeing a **Silver-washed Fritillary**. Other rare species to visit midland gardens included **Brown Argus, Clouded yellow** and **Essex Skipper**.

Probably the highlight for most recorders was the huge influx of **Painted Ladies**, not only were they recorded in 92% of gardens but the buddleia bushes were covered with nectaring insects, no doubt hungry after their long migration. Truly a sight to remember. It is good to record that 96% of midland gardeners returning the survey form grow at least one buddleia, while 90% grow nectar plants especially for butterflies and 62% grow larval foodplants. The most common larval plants to be grown are the cabbage family, stinging nettles, holly, ivy and the various foodplants of the **Orange Tip**.

A summary of the data for 2002 and 2003 is given in the table below.

Thank you to all recorders; the survey continues

but with a modified recording form this year.

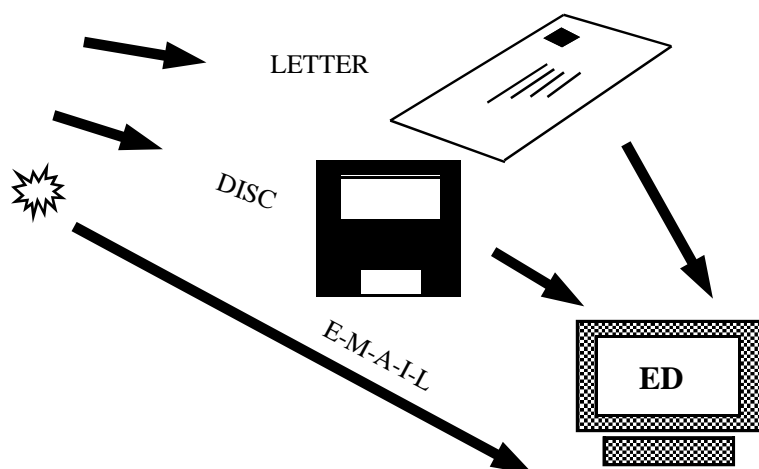
Summary 2002-2003

Species	% gardens recording presence of species	
	2002	2003
The most widespread species		
Red Admiral	88	94
Small Tortoiseshell	91	98
Large White	95	91
Small White	94	89
Peacock	92	94
The less widespread species		
Painted Lady	70	92
Comma	88	85
Gatekeeper	83	85
Meadow Brown	70	78
Speckled Wood	86	81
Orange Tip	88	78
Holly Blue	86	67
Brimstone	78	72
Green-veined White	67	67
Common Blue	36	47
The least widespread		
Small Copper	18	44
Ringlet	30	38
Small Skipper	25	32
Large Skipper	22	21
Wall	9	7

◆ Margaret Vickery

Instructions for Contributors

**Deadline for
Spring Newsletter
contributions is
Monday
31 January 2005**



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.

■ 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."

Dates for your Diary

Winter work days and other events

OCTOBER

- 16 **October (Saturday) AGM; Wolesley Centre, Staffs.** Speaker Paul Kirkland (BC Scotland)).
- 24 **October (Sunday) Conservation Task Trench Wood.** Meet 10.00 am at reserve entrance on Sale Green—Dunhampstead road. OS map 150 GR SO929588. Please contact Neil at 07710 626668 before coming.

NOVEMBER

- 7 **November (Sunday) Conservation Task – Monkwood** Meet 10.00 am in the reserve car park just off the Sinton Green-Monkwood Green road. OS map 150 GR SO803603
- 14 **November (Sunday) Conservation Task, Grafton Wood.** Meet 10.00 am at Three Parishes Hall, Grafton Flyford (next to church). Just off the A422 the Worcester—Stratford Rd. OS map 150 GR SO963557.
- 20 **November (Saturday) Firewood Log sale** 10.00-12.30 in Monkwood car park. Logs £3.50 per bag. Discount for bulk purchases
- 20 **November (Saturday) Conservation Task - Wigmore Rolls** - meet 10.30 am GR SO397688
- 28 **November (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood NR** - meet 10.00 am at reserve entrance on Sale Green—Dunhampstead road. OS map 150 GR SO929588. Please contact Neil at 07710 626668 before coming.

DECEMBER

- 5 **December (Sunday) Conservation Task – Monkwood** Meet 10.00 am in the reserve car park just off the Sinton Green-Monkwood Green road. OS map 150 GR SO803603
- 12 **December (Sunday) Conservation Task, Grafton Wood.** Meet 10.00 am at Three Parishes Hall, Grafton Flyford (next to church). Just off the A422 the Worcester—Stratford Rd. OS map 150 GR SO963557.

- 27 **December (Monday) Conservation Task Haugh Wood Meet** 10.00 main car park SO593365

JANUARY 2005

- 2 **January (Sunday) Monkwood Conservation Task — Whitbread Action Earth Event.** Soup and mince pies on offer. Management for the Wood White. Meet 10.00 am in the reserve car park just off the Sinton Green-Monkwood Green road. OS map 150 GR SO803603
- 8 **January (Saturday) Grafton Wood;** Join us for our annual Brown Hairstreak egg hunt (full training will be given!). Meet 10.00, Grafton Church SO963557.
- 9 **January (Sunday) Grafton Wood—Whitbread Action Earth Event.** Meet 10.00 am at Three Parishes Hall, Grafton Flyford (next to church). Just off the A422 the Worcester—Stratford Rd. OS map 150 GR SO963557.
- 15 **January (Saturday) Haugh Wood Conservation Task** 10.00 am at main car park. SO593365
- 23 **January (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood NR** - meet 10.00 am at reserve entrance on Sale Green—Dunhampstead road. OS map 150 GR SO929588. Please contact Neil at 07710 626668 before coming.

FEBRUARY

- 6 **February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood** - Meet 10.00 am in the reserve car park just off the Sinton Green-Monkwood Green road. OS map 150 GR SO803603
- 13 **February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Grafton Wood.** Meet 10.00 am at Three Parishes Hall, Grafton Flyford (next to church). Just off the A422 the Worcester—Stratford Rd. OS map 150 GR SO963557. Ride and glade management.
- 19 **February (Saturday) Conservation task Haugh Wood** at main car park SO593365

20 February (Sunday) Conservation Task Prees Heath Meet 11.00 am (note later start time) at parking area east of A49. OS map GR SJ558367.

27 February (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood meet 10.00 am at reserve entrance on Sale Green—Dunhampstead road. OS map 150 GR SO929588. .Please contact Neil at 07710 626668 before coming.

MARCH

6 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Monkwood - Meet 10.00 am in the reserve car park just off the Sinton Green-Monkwood Green road. OS map 150 GR SO803603

13 March (Sunday) Conservation Task,

Grafton Wood. Meet 10.00 am at Three Parishes Hall, Grafton Flyford (next to church). Just off the A422 the Worcester—Stratford Rd. OS map 150 GR SO963557

19 March (Saturday) Conservation Task - Wigmore Rolls. Meet 10.30 am at the edge of the southern end of the woods, turn left opposite school in Wigmore if coming from Hereford. GR SO397688

27 March (Sunday) Conservation Task - Trench Wood NR - meet 10.00 am at reserve entrance on Sale Green—Dunhampstead road. OS map 150 GR SO929588. Please contact Neil at 07710 626668 before coming.

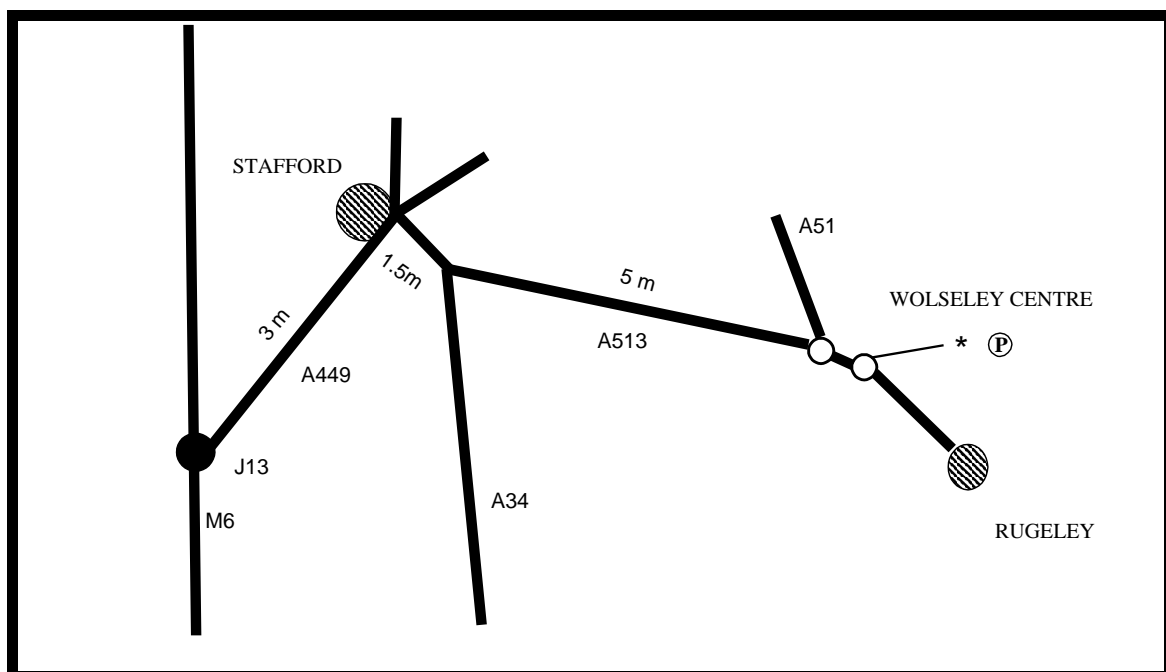
Coming Events

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



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



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