



DEVON MOTH GROUP

Please reply to: The Secretary/Treasurer
Roy McCormick
36 Paradise Road
TEIGNMOUTH
Devon TQ14 8NR
Telephone: 01626 779543
181525131225.devvm@talktalk.net

NEWSLETTER 2013 ISSUE 6 (November)

Welcome to the last newsletter of 2013. What an odd year it has been. A long, cold winter and spring with precious few moths to be found, followed by a long-awaited hot summer with really good moth catches (as shown in the reports of our field meetings) and then an exciting autumn immigration with huge numbers of *Rhodometra sacraria* Vestal, in particular, but also plenty of other 'goodies' including *Cyclophora pupillaria* Blair's Mocha, *Utetheisa pulchella* Crimson Speckled and *Catocala fraxini* Clifden Nonpareil. Now the nights have drawn in and there are only a few winter species to look forward to, you can console yourself by attending our indoor talks and Christmas dinner. See the end of this newsletter for details, especially about the Christmas dinner, for which we need bookings by 25th November please.

Please also remember that if you pay your Devon Moth Group annual subscription by standing order on 1st January each year, then this needs to be amended to reflect the increase in subs from 2014 to £9 for a single membership and £12 for a joint membership.

Most importantly though, please start sorting out all your moth records ready to send in to Barry Henwood, the Devon County Moth Recorder, by 20th January at the latest. Many thanks!
Richard Fox

Brian Bewsher, MBE, 16.10.1946 – 10.09.2013, Obituary

Brian was born at Harbertonford near Totnes on 16th October 1946, and he was educated at South Brent Primary and Ivybridge Secondary Modern Schools. He was good at field sports excelling in running where he represented one of the schools in the 'All Devon Cross County Championships'.

He joined the Royal Navy as a boy entrant at the age of 15, where after his initial and specialist training in communications, he was drafted to his first ship in June 1963. During his 42 years at sea he remembered vividly the assassination of President Kennedy and all the pomp and circumstance that followed.



He had several transfers to different ships and visited a multitude of countries where he had a lot of memorable occasions. One highlight was being on a ship acting as the tracking station of the Apollo space mission when Armstrong and Aldrin became the first humans to walk on the moon on 21 July 1969.

After serving in the Royal Navy for nine years, he joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) and attained the rank of Chief Petty Officer when again he visited several countries. He was involved in a number of conflicts and well remembered the training routines conducted in the unbearable heat of the Red Sea for the first Gulf War.

In December 2002 he received a letter telling him that he had been recommended to receive the MBE for 'dedicated services to the RFA', which included training and setting up National Vocation Qualifications for new

**Members of Council: Richard Fox, Chairman; Roy McCormick, FRES, Secretary/Treasurer;
Rob Wolton, Conservation; Nicola Bacciu, Membership & Distribution; Barry Henwood, County Moth Recorder.**

www.devonmoths.org.uk

entrant Communication ratings; this was published in the London Gazette on 31st December 2002 for the 2003 New Years Honours list.

He met Lorraine when she was a Wren reservist on the Portland Station tanker Black Rover, but he lost touch with her for a while meeting up again at a stop over doing the Two Moors walk; they married in April 1999.

Nature was his main pastime where spotting birds was his love, and a good list of these was accrued in the company of good friends, but thirteen years ago he and Lorraine got interested in moths and she had bought him a moth trap as a Christmas present the year before. Brian was still training new entrants and coming home for weekends to Lorraine. He joined the Devon Moth Group at the end of 1999 and his recording output was of great benefit to the group; he produced in excess of 15,000 moth records, going out recording with several members of the group and his knowledge built by his enquiring mind.

He was made Chairman of Devon Moth Group, much to his surprise, in 2001 as his skills were recognised as a good organiser and leader; he stayed with this for six years (two terms) and his contribution to the group was exceptional. I will never forget his constant thirst for knowledge and his visits to me when he got stuck with identifications; he always wanted to be 100% accurate with this.

He died after a long illness on 10.9.2013, which started with heart problems in the summer of 2009 followed by a stroke soon after Mavis got her stroke in February 2010; they were in hospital at the same time in Torbay. He will be sadly missed.

Roy McCormick

Field Meeting Reports

Moth Night 2013: Decoy Woods, Newton Abbot 9.8.2013

About 24 people attended this event including holidaying families from Holland and Orkney, the latter with a very knowledgeable 9 year old. In total 63 species were recorded. One of the commonest moths of the night was *Lymantria monacha* Black Arches, which delighted the crowd. Early on a large moth was seen fluttering between everyone's legs but was not keen on being caught. Eventually it did enter the trap and proved to be *Mormo maura* Old Lady. Several *Lithosia quadra* Four-spotted Footman were seen including both sexes. Those who were not previously aware were astonished by the sexual dimorphism. A fairly early *Ennomos alniaria* Canary-shouldered Thorn turned up and was much admired. Both *Amphipyra berbera* Svensson's Copper Underwing and *A.pyramidea* Copper Underwing appeared and I was able to demonstrate how to distinguish them. However, it is much easier to tell them apart in daylight. Other moths seen that are worth mentioning were *Epione repandaria* Bordered Beauty, *Cyclophora annularia* Mocha, *Ennomos quercinaria* August Thorn and *Furcula furcula* Sallow Kitten.

Barry Henwood

Moth Night 2013: Meeth Quarry 10.8.2013

At last (National) Moth Night was held over a three day period that had excellent mothing conditions! After several years of various weather conditions from cold and windy to absolutely awful we revelled in temperatures of 20°C plus by day and from 16°C to 18°C by night. On the night of August 10th there was almost complete cloud cover with a gentle southerly breeze at Meeth Quarry Devon Wildlife Trust Reserve. Mark Elliot and Lisa Schneidau from DWT jointly hosted the event and Lisa gave us an informative guided walk around quite a large part of the reserve before we started trapping. Seventeen people were in attendance, several local natural history enthusiasts bolstered by a few visitors from Scotland, and local moth experts Barry Henwood, Rob Wolton and Bob Heckford. This extra expertise certainly added to our final list, especially in the micro-moth department.

During the day I had done a walk of most of the reserve to ascertain the best trapping sites with shelter and a good variety of tree, shrub and ground flora. There were probably 5,000 or more Silver Y *Autographa gamma* flying on the reserve, which hinted at the possibility of some migrant activity to come. Meeth is also a cracking site for Wood White *Leptidia sinapis* of which I counted 27, along with 500 or more Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*, 50 or more Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*, around 60 Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia* and 2 Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*, which again suggested that we might get some migrant moths during the night.

Several people had brought traps along so we had an impressive 11 MV traps and two actinics, which together with the excellent weather conditions, held the promise of a bumper number of moths. Dusking started off fairly slowly with Blood-vein *Timandra comae*, Small Fan-footed Wave *Idaea biselata*, plus a few more interesting species such

as second brood Devon Carpet *Lampropteryx otregiata*, Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet *Xanthorhoe ferrugata*, Dark Marbled Carpet *Chloroclysta citrata* and Sharp-angled Peacock *Macaria alternate*. The Ash-feeding Coronet *Craniophora ligustri* was very common and of the various "Prominents" the Iron Prominent *Notodonta dromedarius* was an early arrival. For those not familiar with our moth fauna these colourful species come as a bit of a surprise and were duly photographed.

As the night progressed species were coming in thick and fast making it a full time job keeping up with the list without missing out on actually enjoying some of the more unusual species. Birch Mocha *Cyclophora albipunctata* was a moth I have not come across very much, as was the Olive *Ipimorpha subtusa*, Brown-veined Wainscot *Archanara dissoluta*, Bulrush Wainscot *Nonagria typhae*, Gothic *Naenia typica* and Chevron *Eulithis testata*. A female Oak Eggar *Lasiocampa quercus* was much admired whereas the perhaps more unusual but verging on the insignificant Golden-rod Pug *Eupithecia virgaureata* failed to get many oohs or aahs.



Birch Mocha (left) and Chevron (right) (Chris Manley)

On the micro-moth front Bob found a larval case of *Psyche casta* on one of the interpretation boards as well as folded Hazel leaves and mines indicating the presence of *Parornix devoniella*. Meeth Quarry appears to be about the only VC4 site for *Calamotropha paludella* which turned up again on the night. The Willow Tortrix *Epinotia cruciana*, *Agonopterix nervosa*, the plume moths *Stenoptilia zophodactyla* and *Oidaematophorus lithodactyla*, and *Pammene spiniana* were other interesting micros. One new to VC4 was *Phyllonorycter stettinensis*, which feeds on Alder, a very abundant tree at Meeth.

As the moths kept coming we kept recording until around 2am when the rain, which had been in the offing all evening, finally started to come down and brought the night to an end, a Large Emerald *Geometra papilionaria* being the last moth in. At the final count we recorded a very impressive 169 species, with one new VC4 record. Quite surprisingly the only migrants were a couple of Dark Sword-grass and a few more Silver Y. This very high number of species indicates the great variety of habitat niches present at Meeth Quarry and such a good moth fauna will no doubt indicate a high biodiversity in general here.

Thanks to all who attended, brought traps, expertise and enthusiasm on the night.
Paul Butter

Indoor Meeting Report: Autumn meeting, the Kenn Centre, Kennford 25.10.2013

All things bright and beautiful: light and colour in lepidopteran wing scales,
by Professor Peter Vukusic, Exeter University

This was a fascinating talk delivered in an engaging manner by Professor Vukusic (pictured, right, with some of the equipment he brought along), a physicist interested in how animals make use of light to produce colour. Although Newton had described how pigment-free feathers of birds such as the Peacock could appear to be brightly coloured back in the 17th Century, it was only with the advent of high-powered electron microscopy that the secrets of how such colours are produced have started to be revealed.

Drawing on examples from the Lepidoptera, the 27 members present were treated to an amazing microscopic tour of insect wings. The scales covering





the wings of *Morpho* butterflies, for example, are a tenth of a millimetre across but the surface of each scale is itself minutely ridged and even the sides of each of these tiny deep ridges have intricate structures. These complex arrangements absorb and reflect certain wavelengths of the light that strikes the wings, creating the stunning colours for which these tropical butterflies are famed (see image left). Clouded Yellow butterflies use a similar structural arrangement to produce a strong ultra-violet reflectance, unseen by us humans but clearly visible to other insects (their yellow colouration is due to pigments).

Another example was of a *Papilio* butterfly species that uses the polarisation of light so that it appears to be a green butterfly to vertebrates (which cannot detect polarised light) while appearing blue to other insects (which can). Handy perhaps for camouflage among the jungle leaves against vertebrate predators while remaining attractive to members of its own species.

A final example, covered in the talk, was of *Hemaris fuciformis* Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth. The transparent parts of these moths' wings have a specially textured surface that maximises the amount of light passing straight through the wing and minimises reflectance off the transparent wing surface, which might attract predators.

Other examples were given and the application of similar structures in cosmetics, fabrics and even the defence industry were discussed. The talk was very well received and we are grateful to Peter for an excellent evening.
Richard Fox

Pauper Pug *Eupithecia egenaria* in East Cornwall

On 6th June 2013, Mary Atkinson ran her Robinson trap at Pentillie Castle in the Tamar Valley, East Cornwall. The catch included a slightly faded grey/brown pug, which was difficult to identify. Mary photographed and kept the moth and sent me a copy (see image below). The forewing markings resembled Pauper Pug, so I forwarded the picture to Barry Henwood and Bob Heckford who both thought it a possibility. Barry kindly offered to dissect the moth and confirmed the identification as Pauper Pug, a species new to Cornwall.

The larvae feed on Limes *Tilia* spp. and the trap happened to be placed next to the self-explanatory "Lime Avenue" that night. Further trapping and/or searching for larvae are hopefully planned for this site in future. The current range of this Red Data Book category 3 species consists of scattered pockets throughout southern England. It does seem to be expanding its range and may well have colonised Devon on its way to Cornwall. Pentillie Castle is close to the Devon border. It will be worth trapping at sites containing Limes in the county to see if Pauper Pug can be found here.

Leon Truscott



Pauper Pug (Mary Atkinson)

Forthcoming events (see www.devonmoths.org.uk for more details)

Saturday 14th December 2013, Devon Moth Group Christmas Dinner, Clay Cutters Arms, Chudleigh Knighton 19.00 for 19.30 start.

Saturday 25th January 2014, National Moth Recorders' Meeting at Birmingham & Midland Institute, Birmingham. See http://www.mothscount.org/text/54/national_conferences.html for more details.

Thursday 30th January 2014, AGM and indoor meeting at the Kenn Centre, Kennford (www.kenncentre.co.uk) 19.30 for 20.00 start. Illustrated talk by John Walters entitled *Recent Wildlife Highlights*.



Christmas Menu 2013

£22 per person (£3 steak supplement)



- Cream of Tomato and Fresh Basil Soup – *delicious winter warmer*
- Tasty Pork Pate – *a rich buttery pork pate, served with toast and real ale chutney*
- Smoked Salmon and Prawn Cocktail – *finest smoked salmon and large juicy prawns with homemade marie-rose sauce and fresh lime*
- Creamy Garlic Mushrooms – *mushrooms sautéed with onions in a delicious cream sauce, topped with crispy bacon*
- Fruit Juice – of your choice

All served with warm bread



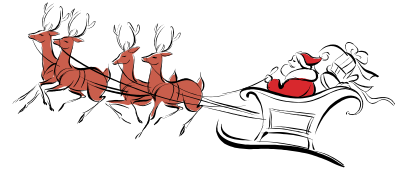
- Succulent Roast Turkey – *served with stuffing, pigs in blankets and smothered with rich gravy*
- Finest Roast Beef – *served with Yorkshire pudding and smothered with rich gravy*
- Steak and Kidney Pudding – *a suet pudding filled with tender steak and kidney and smothered with rich onion gravy*
- Fillet of Salmon – *poached and served with a plump prawn and watercress sauce*

All the above main dishes are served with fresh vegetables and potatoes

- Prime 6oz Sirloin Steak – *cooked to your liking and served with all the trimmings and our delicious creamy peppercorn sauce* (£3.00 supplement)
- Vegetarian – please see normal menu for a choice



- Christmas Pudding – *rich and moist with brandy sauce and clotted cream*
- Individual Raspberry Meringue Glace – *drizzled with raspberry coulis*
- Profiteroles – *drizzled with a toffee and caramel sauce*
- Warm Chocolate Fudge Cake – *with Belgian chocolate sauce*
- Selection of Ice-cream and Sorbet



Coffee and Warm Mince Pies

✂-----

Christmas Event at the Claycutters, Chudleigh Knighton on Saturday 14th December 2013. 19.00 for 19.30 start

I would like to bookplaces @ £22 per head (£25 if having steak)

Please give your choices of meal(s). If choosing steak indicate how you would like it done:

Please make cheques payable to Devon Moth Group. Please reply by 25th November 2013 to: Barry Henwood, 6 Lakeland, Abbotskerswell, Newton Abbot TQ12 5YF