

# MOTHS OF DORSET

## NEWSLETTER NO 5

27 FEBRUARY 1998

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fifth Moths of Dorset Newsletter.

The mild spring of 1998 has already produced some interesting finds and a few immigrants (Striped Hawk-moth & *Euchromius ocella*), and we are sure most of you are looking forward to the coming season. However, cast your mind back to 1997 and let us provide you with a summary of progress. Your correspondence has kept us fully occupied indoors this winter. We have received a mass of 1997 observations from network contributors and all of it will assist us in reaching our goal of quantifying moth species status countywide. Once more a big THANK YOU to all of you who have sent in records for locations all over the county.

This year is the last year of the project as far as data capture is concerned. It is our intention to produce one final newsletter early in 1999 to communicate the progress made on the work behind the scenes, plus a brief resume of the 1998 season. By then we will have analysed most of the data we have, sufficient for us to formalise the provisional conservation status of macro and micromoths put forward in the last two newsletters. We also hope to create a big list (in taxonomic order) of who caught what species where and when. In 1999, we hope to go one step further and pigeon-hole critical species into the large matrix of different habitat types that make up the county. This exercise will generate the core of our publication.

### STATUS OF MACROMOTH SPECIES IN DORSET

In Newsletter #3 we put forward a provisional conservation status for each of the 692 macromoth species observed in the county (this has now risen to 700). There are a few changes and additions to make to the Appendices in Newsletter #3 because of the records we have received. Changes are as follows:

- Add 2475 Waved Black to Appendix A2 as Notable b (National status) and Migrant (Dorset migrant status).
- Add 2261 Red-headed Chestnut to App. A2 as Rare Immigrant (National status) and Migrant (Dorset migrant status).
- Add 174 Triangle to Appendix A1 as RDB3 (National status).
- Add 2482 White-line Snout to Appendix A1 as Notable b (National status) and delete from Appendix A2.
- Add 1656 Satin Lutestring to Appendix A1 as Notable b (National status) and delete from Appendix A2.
- Add 2276 Pale-lemon Sallow to Appendix A2 as Notable a (National status) and Migrant (Dorset migrant status).

### STATUS OF MICROMOTH SPECIES IN DORSET

In Newsletter #4 we listed in Appendix A the important micromoth species as far as we knew then. Again, there are a few changes and additions to this appendix as follows:

- Add 7 *Eriocrania chrysolepidella* (Notable) - 1997 record Yellowham Wood.
- Add 349 *Phyllonorycter nigriscentella* - 1997 record Frome St. Quintin.
- Add 727.1 *Metzneria aprilella* - 1997 record Badbury Rings.
- Add 851 *Acanthophila alacella* (Notable) - 1996 record Trigon.
- Add 1023 *Cnephasia genitalana* (pRDB2) - 1997 records Chase Woods, Holton Heath.
- Add 1227 *Pammene inquilana* - 1997 record Piddles Wood.
- Add 1357.1 *Evergestis limbata* - 1997 record Swanage.
- Add 1380 *Phlyctaenia perlucidalis* - 1997 record Lodmoor.

In searching through historical records, 7, 349, 1227 were recorded last century, and 1380 in 1992, but were not listed in Appendix A of Newsletter #4. Others appear to be new records for Dorset.

We now have recent records for the following species:

41	<i>Ectoedemia atrifrontella</i>	Holt Heath & Arne
212	<i>Haplotinea insectella</i>	Yellowham Wood
475	<i>Acrolepiopsis marcidella</i>	Rempstone Heath & Harman's Cross
487	<i>Metriotes lutarea</i>	Gaunt's Common & Holt Forest
733	<i>Eulamprotes wilkella</i>	Ferrybridge
809	<i>Pexicopia malvella</i>	The Fleet shoreline & Abbotsbury
827	<i>Caryocolum alsinella</i>	Studland
881	<i>Mompha terminella</i>	Cole Wood, Wool
916	<i>Scythris siccella</i>	Ferrybridge
934	<i>Piercea curvistrigana</i>	Portland
942	<i>Aethes piercei</i>	Powerstock Common
1101	<i>Endothenia ustulana</i>	Green Pool, Furzebrook
1112	<i>Bactra robustana</i>	Poole Harbour
1222	<i>Strophedra nitidana</i>	Chase Woods & Yellowham Wood
1280	<i>Dichrorampha consortana</i>	Portland
1505	<i>Stenoptilia pneumonantes</i>	Dorset heaths

## DATA CAPTURE

Most of you will either have sent your records to Peter, Phil or DERC. As before, all of these post boxes are happy to receive your records. Please note that DERC have had to move yet again and are now back at: Colliton Annexe, County Hall, Dorchester DT1 1XJ (Tel: 01 305 225081)

### Data capture of Macromoths

Further progress has been made towards centralising and standardising all Dorset macromoth records. We are attempting to computerise every recent and historic record for the 420 macromoth species deemed to be scarcer than common in the county. All other records are being retained on the original correspondence. So far the database contains just under 10,000 individual entries. Every entry is a single species record for a single locality; however, some entries contain first seen and last seen dates for 'regular full count' trap records in a given year, whereas other entries are single date records. The computer stores the data in such a way that we are able to sort records by species, by locality, by scarcity, by captor, by date, etc. It is even possible to do sorting within sorting. These facilities make it possible to locate specific information extremely quickly.

### Data capture of Micromoths

The processing of micromoth data lags behind that for macros, but some significant progress has been made in 1997. David Jeffers has kindly offered to enter records onto the DERC database 'Recorder'. He has now become quite an expert in the use of this idiosyncratic programme, and has successfully entered all of John Langmaid's records, as well as Phil's micros for 1997 in a short time. Thanks to David's efforts we are looking forward in 1998 to a considerable speeding up of the process of capturing data onto computer and lodging it with DERC. Another DERC volunteer, Frank Hawes, is re-ordering the micro records in the Parkinson Curtis manuscript so that by the end of this year a list with updated nomenclature and taxonomic order will be available.

Phil also visited Maitland Emmet in early April to extract records of micros from the distribution maps he holds of all micro lepidoptera in Britain. Maitland constantly updates these maps and they are a very useful source of data.

Further to this, a full set of the Lepidoptera entries in the Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History & Antiquarian Field Club (now Proc. DNHAS) has been copied by a volunteer at the Dorset County Museum, and it is hoped to verify and enter this data onto computer in the next year.

## 1997 RECAP

### Indigenous Highlights

The year again saw many superb finds across the county.

The Blair's Wainscot came under close scrutiny in 1997 in an attempt to confirm that the species is indigenous to Dorset. Searches for larvae in three totally separate localities up to thirty kilometres apart were undertaken in the early summer by a number of individuals in the network. Twenty larvae were detected in the original locality (plus an adjacent sedge bed site) feeding within Lesser Pond-sedge; no larvae were found in the other two localities. Later in the year all three localities were revisited. Amazingly in one of these where no larvae were detected, John Chainey and Mark Parsons observed adult moths; in another where no larvae were detected Chris Manley observed adult moths. A third sedge bed within one kilometre of the original locality was found to contain a colony of the species. Evidently the species is well established in suitable localities adjacent to the Dorset river system where the Lesser Pond-sedge grows. The relatively large distances separating localities may indicate that the species has been resident in the county for some period of time. Incidentally, we hope you enjoyed the article on this species together with the photo of Phil pursuing his quarry; the piece appeared in many of the broadsheets just after Xmas.

One species that has not been recorded in Dorset for more than forty years is the Barberry Carpet. This is a Red Data Book 1 species that feeds on *Berberis*. The Ministry of Agriculture has encouraged the grubbing out of this shrub from hedgerows across the country because it is one of the winter hosts of the poisonous wheat rust. Very few sites for the plant survive in Dorset today, and so it is a triumph that the moth has survived in the face of tremendous odds.

We have been watching for any expansion in the resident Cypress Carpet population. The species was initially found by David Brown at Studland in late October 1988. The following year, it was seen at Durlston. By 1994, Roy Eden had recorded the species at West Bexington; in 1995, Phil Grey trapped it at Lytchett Matravers, and by 1996 larvae were found on Portland by Mark Parsons. This year, there have been three further locality records, from Paul Harris at Upwey, Peter Knight at Preston, and John Hunnisett at Winfrith. We would suggest any of you who regularly trap Blair's Shoulder-knot and/or Freyer's Pug, and who have *Cupressus* hedgerows or trees nearby, look out for this species in July, September or (mainly) October. The first Blair's Shoulder-knot to be recorded in the county was caught at Durlston in October 1959 by Brian Baker, and this species subsequently spread throughout Dorset - it can now be found wherever *Cupressus* grows in good numbers. The Cypress Carpet appears to be expanding its range in a similar fashion, although it is still too early to be certain whether it will succeed to the same extent as the Blair's Shoulder-knot.

David Foot and Mark Forster, relative newcomers to the network, undertook a series of visits to some of Dorset's prime woodland sites. They were amply rewarded in Oaker's Wood on a warm July night when the Triangle came to light. This rather obscure moth that looks more micro than macro, is a Red Data Book 3 species and a first for the county. The record underlines the importance of the Oaker's Wood site.

The Nottingham Catchfly feeding White Spot was trapped at light by Roy Eden at West Bexington. This is the third adult to be trapped in Dorset in five years. It may have originated from the colony discovered by Phil in 1996 rather than the Devon colonies, as winds were from the north-east prior to and on the date of capture.

Our bid for joint funding from English Nature at Peterborough, and Dorset County Council, to research into the ecology of the Speckled Footman moth at the site where one adult had been trapped in 1996, was accepted, and research was begun in March by John Hunnisett. Despite many hours of transect walking, sweep net and hand searching techniques, no larvae were detected; however, John did manage to net several of the very local micro moth *Amphisbatis incongruella*. Although very limited dedicated light trapping was undertaken for the species in 1997, Peter did turn up a single Speckled Footman in late July at a second and completely unconnected heath land locality some distance away from the research site.

Following the news of the discovery by Phil of the Alder Kitten at Melbury Park in 1996, Phil and Derek Hallett caught a singleton in Yellowham Wood to the east of Dorchester on 17 May, and Derek Hallett, Steven Hales and Maureen Spencer trapped two more Alder Kittens at Hooke Park on 18 May.

The Sand Dart and the pyrale *Gymnancyla canella* have supremely precarious habitat requirements. Both species are associated with flora that grow on the drift line and most frequently on dune slacks. Sand Dart larvae can be found on several species of flora, whereas *Gymnancyla canella* must have Prickly Saltwort. Unfortunately, disturbance by man and the vagaries of tides impact the survival of these flora species and inevitably the host moths. Apart from two potential immigrants, one trapped at Lyme Regis in 1994 and another on Portland in 1995, Sand Dart moths have been recorded recently and in limited numbers at two Dorset sites. Alan Bromby, Peter Davey and Ray Cook visited a third site in 1997 where the requisite flora was growing, and succeeded in finding a number of Sand Dart larvae. There are two recent records for *Gymnancyla canella* both trapped by Mike Jeffes; the first recorded inland near Iford, Christchurch in 1996, the second

recorded in the reed beds at Hengistbury Head in 1997. It is just possible that these originated locally, however there is just a handful of Prickly Saltwort plants growing on the drift line at Hengistbury.

There are three Snout species occurring in the county that because of their small size resemble micro moths. The most widespread of these is the Pinion-streaked Snout. The second is the Marsh Oblique-barred which is strictly confined to bogs and marshes on acid soils, where it can be common. The third is the White-line Snout. The only Dorset record we have is for a specimen caught by A G B Russell more than forty years ago at Swanage. Peter trapped two White-line Snouts in late July in Holt Forest whilst attempting to trap and sugar for Light Crimson Underwing. The Holt Forest locality is rather similar to the New Forest localities where the White-line Snout and the Crimson Underwings occur, ie. ancient deciduous woodland on acid and/or clay soil.

In the last newsletter we listed some of the species that were recorded by H J Moore at Iwerne Minster, up to the late 1960s. One of these was the Large Nutmeg, a species that appears (in Dorset at least), to be a casualty from the loss of unimproved dry grassland, primarily, but not exclusively, on calcareous soils. Apart from a single record from Martin Cade on Portland in 1994, we had no recent records for this species until this year, when Paul Benham trapped a single Large Nutmeg at Woolland near Blandford, in June.

Prior to 1997 there were no verified Dorset records of the birch feeding Satin Lutestring, apart, that is, from the singleton Phil trapped at Lulworth in 1995 which was believed to be an immigrant from France. However, this year Ian Cross trapped one in mid-July at Thorncombe Wood. This wood contains good stocks of mature birch. It would seem that the moth is indigenous to the county after all - the nearest strongholds for the species are up to 100 miles away, so the potential for the existence of a colony in Dorset is excellent news.

We discussed the status of the Lunar Yellow Underwing in Newsletter #3. This species was to be found in suitable heath land and chalk downland habitats across England including Dorset, in the middle of this century, but now only occurs with any regularity in East Anglia. One Lunar Yellow Underwing was trapped by Peter near Sixpenny Handley, and this, we hope, signals the existence of a small and possible remnant colony there.

English Nature provided expenses via DERC for research into several Red Data Book macro moth species during 1997. The cross-leaved heath feeding Shoulder-striped Clover fell within the scope of this research, and Peter netted a singleton as it flew across Holt Heath on one sunny July afternoon. This is the first record for the county since Margaret Brooks saw three in the same locality in 1986, and this is despite sweeping for larvae both at Holt Heath and Stoborough in 1996.

A second Red Data Book macro moth species falling within the scope of the English Nature initiative was the Orange Upperwing. Four ancient deciduous woodland sites were visited during March to look for this oak feeding hibernator, three on Cretaceous soil, the fourth on clay soil; unfortunately no Orange Upperwings were seen. However, two of the sites did yield the Blossom Underwing, a species which was last seen in the county in 1989 by Gordon Le Pard at Matchams in VC11. Peter trapped more than forty on one night at Deadmoor Common - this indicates that extremely favourable conditions exist for the species in the oak woods there. 1997 appeared to be a very good year in Dorset for the Blossom Underwing as the species was also recorded by Roy Eden at West Bexington, by Peter at Lydlinch Common and Gaunts Common, and by Mark Forster and Dave Foot at Powerstock.

1997 was an extraordinarily good year for discoveries or confirmation of historical records of scarce, rare, or otherwise interesting micromoths in the county, as can be seen from the amendments required to Newsletter #4, Appendix A. Two of the species are relatively recent arrivals in Britain and one is new to the county. *Phlyctaenia perlucidalis* was first recorded in East Anglia in the 1960s and had spread to Hampshire by the early 1990s. The first Dorset record for this species was from Wareham in June 1992 (Brian Withers); further moths were trapped at Lodmoor, near Weymouth in 1997 (by Mick Parker, Di & Phil Sharpe). In the past few years *Evergestis limbata* has been recorded on the south coast and in East Anglia as an immigrant, although in 1997 it was found to be breeding in Sussex. The Swanage record (by Rees Cox) is probably an immigrant, but it might be breeding locally where there are good stocks of Jack-by-the-Hedge.

The finding of *Acrolepiopsis marcidella* (by Phil) is noteworthy. Until 1997 there were only seven records of the moth in Britain, six of which were from last century. It was recorded at Studland by Rev. Digby between 1886 and 1892. Phil found two adults at rest on the cladodes (= leaves) of Butcher's Broom on Rempstone Heath, and this led to him and John Langmaid to discover the previously unknown life cycle of the moth on this plant. Also not seen in Britain for over 100 years is the tiny micromoth *Scythris siccella*, (by Phil) previously only known in Britain from a small area on Chesil Beach. It is still there, probably in exactly the same location it was in last century.

Last but not least is the most pleasing rediscovery on the Dorset heaths of the gentian plume moth, *Stenoptilia pneumonantes*, by Phil and Bob Heckford. This moth was last seen, prior to 1997, on Parley Common in August 1961, despite considerable effort to re-find it by a number of entomologists in the ensuing three decades. Accounts of the three species mentioned immediately above are to be published this year in the Entomologist's Gazette.

A detailed account of the 1997 moth highlights has been submitted for publication to the editors of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Proceedings. If you have been disappointed at not seeing your highlights here, do not worry, they will be recorded in the Proceedings.

## Locality Highlights

Many interesting localities were visited during 1997. Three were outstanding.

Holton Heath Marsh, is a relatively small area containing salterns, reed beds, bog, marsh and carr with birch, alder, bog myrtle and willow scrub. Interesting species recorded at the locality include the Flame Wainscot, Dingy Mocha, Mathew's Wainscot, Crescent-striped, Dentated Pug, *Cynaeda dentalis*, Square-spot Dart (17 on one August night), Obscure Wainscot and the first county record of *Cnephasia genitalana*.

Rooksmoor, is again a relatively small area (32 acres), containing ancient deciduous woodland and ancient unimproved grassland on clay soil. Although trapping was undertaken on only four occasions in 1997, some unexpected species were seen. These included Waved Black (see Migrant Highlights), the Lunar Thorn, the Forester (during the day), many Grass Waves, the Mere Wainscot (sixty-two on one July night), the Satyr Pug, plus a strong colony of July Belle moths.

Chesil Beach at Ferrybridge is an easily overlooked habitat - how many of us have driven straight past on our way to Portland? In 1997 it produced a number of good micromoth records. *Scythris siccella* had not been seen there since last century but was re-found by Phil and John Langmaid in good numbers, but very locally. It appears to be confined to a variety of herbs growing in small patches of open sand within a stretch of the beach just 150 metres in length. Ferrybridge remains the only known site in Britain, and it is apparently rare in Europe. Good numbers of two scarce species, *Eulamprotes wilkella* and *Pediasia aridella* were recorded by Martin Cade.

## Migrant Highlights

1997 was notable for the relative absence of the more common immigrants. The Silver Y, Painted Lady and *Nomophila noctuella* were usually only seen as singletons, contrasting starkly with the abundance of all three in 1995 and 1996. Despite this, 1997 produced some spectacular and rare immigrant events around the county.

In the early summer, Peter looked unsuccessfully for larvae of the Waved Black feeding on bracket fungi on Parley Common and Holt Forest - this species occurs in Surrey and Berkshire in similar habitats to those searched. Amazingly, Ray Cook trapped a Waved Black at his home at Ferndown on 21 July; this is the second Dorset record for the species. Two nights later Peter trapped a second Waved Black, this time at Rooksmoor. At the present time, we can only surmise that these two individuals were primary immigrants from outside the county and not resident. As far as we know, the Waved Black has only been recorded once before in Dorset - Brian Withers trapped one at Harmanswater near Swanage on 20 July 1991, and he believes that his Waved Black was an immigrant. Just after the records of the Waved Black, on 22 July, Rees Cox caught a pyralid moth he couldn't identify and made a colour sketch of it. He matched his drawing to the photograph of *Evergestis limbata* in *Atropos* #4. As mentioned earlier, this is a new record for Dorset for this recent addition to the British list.

The Scar Bank Gem moth is named after the locality where the first British specimen was seen, namely Scar Bank at Swanage. The captor was A G B Russell, and it was caught at the end of the hot summer of 1947. A second Scar Bank Gem was caught at Durlston in 1992, a year of high migrant activity. A third Scar bank Gem was trapped by Martin Cade at Portland Bird Observatory on 29 July in 1997. This species, which to a limited extent resembles the Silver Y, apparently frequents the sub-tropics and is a very rare visitor to Britain. A superb colour photograph of this specimen appears in *Atropos* #4, which was published recently. Coincidentally, there was a sighting of the Queen of Spain Fritillary butterfly at Sandbanks on the 29 July. Talking of rare butterfly visitors, Martin also saw a Monarch butterfly on 12 October - this is the third consecutive year that Monarch's have been seen on Portland.

One of the first large influxes of immigrant species occurred during the second week of a stifling August, and included relatively large numbers of the Silver Y and the Diamond-back micro *Plutella xylostella*. The first Convolvulous Hawk was seen in the county, and rarer migrants included two pyrale *Margaritia sticticalis*, one trapped by Chris Manley at Trigon, the other trapped by Paul Benham at Woolland; the pyrale *Platytes alpinella* was caught by Martin Cade on Portland. An even rarer clover and campion feeding Marbled Clover was trapped by Brian Baker at West Moors on 8 August. The Marbled Clover is primarily a denizen of unimproved chalk downland; unfortunately this is another species that has declined in numbers country-wide since the middle of this century. The combination of the absence of any suitable habitat near West Moors plus the aforementioned immigrant peak leads us to the conclusion that the Marbled Clover caught by Brian was of continental origin.

There were many records of the Latticed Heath between the 27 August and 1 September from Portland, Christchurch, Winfrith, Gaunts Common and Weymouth. These were probably remnants of a huge immigration of this species witnessed in Essex between 22 and 25 August, where thousands were recorded at light traps there. The Latticed Heath moths coincided with an even more massive influx of Small Tortoiseshell butterflies that were seen in their countless thousands along the UK's southern and eastern shores.

The Passenger was trapped in 1983 and again in 1996 (see Newsletter #4). A third Passenger was trapped by Roy Eden at West Bexington on 10 September. This species occurs in central France and all points south.

Brian Withers has encountered some unusual immigrants during his time in Dorset. He caught the first and only example in Great Britain of the Dorset Cream Wave at Stoborough in 1978 (a year when other exceptionally rare immigrants were seen, eg. Porter's Rustic and the Mediterranean Brocade, the latter caught also by Brian at Stoborough). He is also one of the few people to have encountered the Dark Mottled Willow (in October 1995) in the UK, again at Stoborough. Brian often operates his light trap at Wareham close to where he works and close to where mature poplar trees grow. On 5 October, he trapped the first Dorset record of the poplar feeding Pale-lemon Sallow. A second Pale-lemon Sallow was trapped on the Isle of Wight on the same night, and two more were trapped in Kent and Essex on the 1 October and 3 October, respectively. This species is not known to migrate, and in Great Britain is confined to the home counties and East Anglia. However, considering that four were seen well away from their UK headquarters within a four day period, we would support the view that Brian's Pale-lemon Sallow was not resident but a primary immigrant, possibly from north-eastern France or Belgium.

One of the most beautiful, large and unmistakable visitors to our shores is the aspen feeding Clifden Nonpareil. Anne Stevens came across one in fine condition inside her garage at Ansty on 10 October.

As in previous years, the Hoary Footman, the Flame Brocade and the Great Dart, all put in an appearance in 1997. We have five records for the Flame Brocade, all between the 17th and 18th October and all from the Dorset coast.

A spell of warm southerly winds towards the end of November brought a number of White Speck, Gem and White Point moths across the Channel to the county. Together with these late immigrants was a fine example of the Red-headed Chestnut trapped by Martin Cade at Portland Bird Observatory. This is the first record of this species in VC9; two others were recorded in Bournemouth (VC11) in 1902.

We mentioned above that the Scar Bank Gem was recently featured in a publication called *Atropos*. The journal focuses on butterfly, moth and dragonfly immigrations to the UK. *Atropos* #4 has recently been published; if anyone is interested in obtaining copies, please contact Mark Tunmore whose address is given at the end of this newsletter.

A detailed account of the 1997 moth immigrations to Dorset plus proposed sources of origin has been submitted for publication by Peter to the editors of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Proceedings.

## **PUBLIC MOTH EVENTS IN 1997**

Once again, a number of public trapping events were organised. These were in conjunction with Butterfly Conservation, Dorset County Council's guided walk programme, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset Bat Group, DERC and Poole Borough Council. Sites included: Thorncombe Wood, Sopley Common, Hammoon, Upton Country Park, Higher Hyde Nature Reserve, Broadcroft Quarry (Portland), DWT grounds at Forston, and Melbury Park. We hit a record at Broadcroft Quarry when well over 50 people turned up from as far away as Bath to go through the several moth traps, and there was considerable jostling amongst the punters for a front row position to view the catch!

Many thanks to those who organised and helped out at these events.

## **THE LATE G.W. OTTER COLLECTION**

During the autumn Phil was contacted by Mrs Caroline Carless, daughter of the late Mr G W Otter, a lepidopterist who lived in Poole. As part of a clear out when his house was sold Mrs Carless asked if any of his specimens and equipment could be of use to recorders locally, or they would probably have to be destroyed or sold. Most of the specimens were of no value, being riddled with museum beetles, and much of the equipment has already found homes, but there remain 8 store boxes in varying states of repair which may of use to recorders. If you are interested please contact with Derek Hallett who is holding them in Dorchester.

Remarkably, one specimen which did survive was a noctuid labelled Selehurst, Sussex 13.vii.1931, G W Otter. Phil did not recognise the species, but thought it might be in the genus *Spodoptera*. The species was kindly confirmed by Martin Honey from the British Museum as *Spodoptera mauritia*, Rice Army Worm, a moth widely distributed in south-east Asia and the Indian Ocean. It appears to be the first record of the moth in Britain. The specimen is in excellent condition and looks as if it had been set freshly killed, rather than relaxed from unset material. It was amongst his British noctuids labelled as a Sand Dart. He collected many macrolepidoptera at Selehurst, including a Great Brocade in August 1931, which was presumably an immigrant. Mr Otter and his wife had travelled to Australia some two years prior to the date on the label, arriving back in this country in early spring 1930. This is too long a gap for a live specimen of such a species to have survived. Mr Otter had a foreign collection, but this consisted only of butterflies. From this evidence we can only surmise that it was a genuine British capture, though quite how it came to be introduced into Sussex remains a mystery.

## **A MOTH DISPLAY IN DORSET COUNTY MUSEUM**

Richard de Peyer, Curator of the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester, has asked whether, in 1998, a display of some of the more interesting moth species found in Dorset can be displayed in the Museum in Dorchester. Phil and John Hunnisett have initially offered to put together material, but if anyone would like to help, or would like to contribute photographic material, ideas or artistic talent, please get in touch soon so that we can plan any material we need to collect in 1998.

## **RECORDING IN 1998**

### **Are you interested in a weekend's mothing in the relaxed surroundings of West Bexington?**

You are warmly invited to join a mothing weekend at 'White Wings', West Bexington between 22 and 24 May 1998 being organised by Tim Walker. Tim's moth trap will be run there on Friday and Saturday night, and people can then enjoy the local terrain (including a delightful hay meadow leading down towards Chesil Beach) for the rest of the time, or to record elsewhere on the coast between Portland and Lyme Regis, or the woodlands, downlands and heathlands to the north and west. Experts and beginners, birders, botanists and other natural historians are welcome.

White Wings is a house with comfortable, fully equipped, self-catering accommodation for up to 16 people, including 3 double rooms. Bed and Breakfast for the period would be £50 (payable in advance), and you can either bring ingredients for an evening meal or visit the local pub in the village. Camping is another option with use of the house facilities. In this case the charge would be £30.

Facilities include a well-equipped modern kitchen, dining room, 2 lounges and a conservatory facing the sea; there are ample baths and showers available. Guests are asked not smoke or bring dirty footwear in the house.

If you are interested in coming, please contact Tim Walker for further details at: 8 Whiteshute Lane, Winchester, Hants. SO23 9RA (Telephone 01 962 866940). If this weekend proves successful, then more regular meetings could be arranged for 1999.

### **Other organised moth events**

As usual a number of mothing events have been planned for 1998. Peter Davey, Phil Sterling and Ian Cross, amongst others, will be leading the meetings. Full details of these will be available in the Dorset Countryside Yearbook 1998, to be published shortly by the County Council at a cost of £2.00 (+ 60p p&p); this publication will be available from the Business Support Unit (telephone 01 305 224258), bookshops and tourist information centres.

## Recording Red Data Book moths

The English Nature/DERC initiative to record rare and scarce species looks set to continue in 1998. The success in re-finding the Shoulder-striped Clover, and a number of sites for the Blair's Wainscot has already been mentioned. At one site for the Wainscot scrub clearance has been undertaken and grazing management is to be introduced; at another one field is heavily grazed, whilst the neighbouring one remains ungrazed. In 1998 we have a good opportunity to investigate what effects grazing has on the moth. We also know, thanks to David Pearman and DERC, of a further 20 sites with stands of lesser pond-sedge, *Carex acutiformis*, which could be examined for larvae or adults.

As well as work on Blair's Wainscot, we feel we should continue to work on finding sites for Shoulder-striped Clover, too, but we are yet to decide on another target species.

We are hopeful that research will continue into the ecology of the Speckled Footman; as this newsletter reaches you a meeting to include a number of national invertebrate experts will be held in Dorset to discuss how to take the studies forward.

If anyone is interested in doing survey or research work on target species, please contact Phil, Peter or DERC. As in the past two years DERC will very likely be able to offer travel expenses to recorders.

## A 1998 year planner

As mentioned in earlier newsletters, we are keen to get records from anywhere in Dorset. To assist those of you who are willing to search specific sites for key macromoth species, we have compiled a list, see Appendix 1, containing about one hundred species that we have very few or no records for. We have taken an informed guess as to which sites may potentially harbour a given species, and we have provided reasons why we believe a given site is suitable for that species. We have turned the list into a year planner or diary that starts in February and finishes in November. The date against a given species represents the optimum date to look for the moth in question (there are two entries for some of the double-brooded species). The date may vary according to how advanced or curtailed the season is. The first column in Appendix 1 contains a unique species number to facilitate cross-referencing between the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Appendix 2 lists the many sites appearing in Appendix 1 in alphabetical order. For each site, we have detailed the unique species number(s) to enable cross-referencing back to the species appearing in Appendix 1. In cases where moth species have been included in Appendix 1, but we only provide generic habitat (eg. Bloxworth Snout, Orange-tailed Clearwing, Waved Black, etc.), these species will not appear in Appendix 2.

Anyone wishing to visit non-public sites must first contact the individual appearing in the "Initial Contact" column against that site. This Initial Contact will communicate the following to you:

1. The feasibility of accessing the site - often permission is only considered once a written request is received, and permission to access cannot be guaranteed for any of the private sites listed.
2. Which interested parties will need to be notified prior to the visit.
3. What constraints will be in force during the visit.

Finally many thanks to those who have helped the project continue to be successful in 1997, especially to landowners and managers for allowing access for recording, and to English Nature, Dorset County Council and DERC for their financial support and encouragement. We wish you every success for the coming season, and thank you again for your contribution last year.

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