

CONTENTS

Society Diary

Calendars of Meetings of Affiliated Societies.....2

The Discovery of Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*) in the Oldham Area in 2011

Steve Smith5

Horrible or Beautiful ?

Joyce Riley7

Obituary for Colin Smith FRPS

Phil Kirk9

May Bug in Bury

Patricia Francis.....9

A.G.M. Notice.....9

Contributions for the next issue by the end of February please!

Contributions are welcomed as e-mail attachments to patricia.francis@oldham.gov.uk, or on disk, in most PC word processing formats (with a second file in rich text format *.rtf) or in typescript from contributors who do not have a PC. Illustrations should, ideally, be produced on A4 paper with a margin of at least 2.5cm all round with 'over-sized' lettering (14pt normal/body text, if typed) to allow for it to be photographically reduced to A5 (approx 70% reduction) and still be readable.

SOCIETY DIARY

Please note that members of the Northwestern Naturalists' Union are welcome to attend the meetings of all the affiliated societies

ACCRINGTON NATURALISTS' AND ANTIQUARIANS' SOCIETY

Meetings start at 2.30 pm at Antley Methodists' Church Hall, Blackburn Road, Accrington. Enquiries 01254 381236 or 236076. Non-members welcome.

Sunday 8 January : Members' Presentation – slides, exhibits, readings

Followed by afternoon tea

Sunday 22 January : The Methods of Archaeology

Dave Simmonds

Sunday 5 February : Costa Rica – Nature's Paradise

Stuart & Anita Kellington

Sunday 19 February : Don't Fall into the Trap – The Confusing Story of Chinese & Japanese Pitcher Plants

Martin Ashworth

Sunday 4 March : Ingleborough – Insight into an Iconic Mountain

David Johnson

Sunday 18 March : The Peregrines of Malham

Trevor Wood

Sunday 1 April : Annual General Meeting

refreshments

ALTRINCHAM AND DISTRICT NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Except where otherwise stated, all meetings will be held at Bowdon Parish Centre, Stamford Road, Bowdon and will be timed approximately as follows : 7.30 pm informal gathering, 7.45pm lecture, 9.15 tea and chat.

All excursions leave from the public car-park, Cecil Road, Hale (behind supermarket) at the times indicated. If you intend to join the excursion please give three days notice to the leader. Food and drink for the day and suitable footwear are advisable.

Tuesday 24 January : 'Welsh Cottage Days'

an illustrated talk by Margaret McCormick

Tuesday 14 February : 'Lost among the Alpines'

an illustrated talk by Marion Bray

Tuesday 28 February : 'Close Encounters - the Next Generation'

an illustrated talk by John & Margaret Sixsmith

Tuesday 13 March : 'Seashore to Mountain Top'

an illustrated talk by Peter Smith

Tuesday 27 March : Annual General Meeting - With a short slide show to conclude the meeting. Natural History exhibits are welcome. The supplementary spring/summer programme will be available at the meeting.

Tuesday 24 April : Nature Rambles round the N.W. Pacific
an illustrated talk by Mike Ashworth.

Tuesday 25 September : First indoor meeting.

CHEADLE HULME & BRAMHALL NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Indoor meeting venue: St. Michael's Church Hall, St. Michael's Avenue, Bramhall, Stockport, SK7 2PG at 7.30pm

MERSEYSIDE NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION

Indoor meetings are held at Wadham Road, Bootle, Liverpool, Merseyside, L20 2DD. Start 2.00 pm. Visitors are welcome at all meetings. Admission free to all indoor meetings. Coach trips: Book seats with coach secretary : John Clegg 0151 523 7353

LIVERPOOL BOTANICAL SOCIETY

Indoor meetings are held in the Clore Natural History Centre, World Museum, Liverpool, starting at 11.00am.

Saturday 14 January : Plants of the Himalayas and Beyond
Lecture by Joan Vincent

Saturday 11 February : Annual General Meeting
Followed by a resume of the 2011 field meetings, slides, photos, exhibits etc.

Saturday 10 March : Plants of North Lancashire
Lecture by Eric Greenwood

MACCLESFIELD & DISTRICT FIELD CLUB

Meetings commence 7.30 pm at the Salvation Army Hall, Roe Street, Macclesfield.

Saturday 14 January : Afternoon Walk at 1.30 pm
Leader Jean Alston

Monday 23 January : Peak District National Park
Celia Lea

Saturday 18 February : Afternoon Walk at 1.30 pm
John Langdill

Monday 27 February : Three Generations at Arley
Tom Acton

Saturday 10 March : Afternoon Walk at 1.30 pm
Dave Tolman

Monday 26 March : Charles Tunnicliffe
Ken Broughton

Saturday 21 April : Afternoon Walk at 1.30 pm
Gill Barber

MANCHESTER FIELD CLUB

Outdoor meetings The walks are leisurely and rarely exceed 5 miles. Members are quite willing to give lifts; please contact the walk leader for details. New people are always very welcome.

Indoor meetings are held at Sale United Reformed Church Hall, Montague Road, Sale, M33 3BU, near Sale Metro station, commencing at 7.00pm. (Members £1.00, visitors £2.00)

www.manchesterfieldclub.org.uk

Saturday 14 January 2012 : Botanists & Historic Plants of the Mersey Valley

Dave Bishop

Committee Meeting 6.30

Saturday 28 January : Mersey Valley, Chorlton and Sale

Meet 11.00 at Chorlton Water Park car park, Maitland Avenue, Chorlton.

Leaders: Christine Walsh and Roger Snowden (740 7670).

Saturday 11 February : Ferns

Yvonne Golding

Saturday 25 February : Prestwich Clough

Meet 11.00 at Prestwich Metro Station, map ref: SD 814 041.

Leader John Lowell (485 6892).

Saturday 10 March : When is a moth not a moth?

Michael Dockery

Committee meeting 6.30

Saturday 24 March : Little Bollington and Dunham

Meet 11.00 at National Trust Car Park, Dunham Massey (fee for non-members).

Leaders : Linda and Alan (215 0971 or 07719 659 689)

MARPLE NATURALISTS

Meetings commence at 8.00 pm at United Reform Church, Hibbert Lane, Marple, SK6 7NN.

Wednesday 1 February : Wild Flowers of East Cheshire

Jack Swann

Wednesday 7 March : Greater Manchester's Hidden Wildlife

David Winnard

Wednesday 4 April : AGM & slideshow

Wednesday 2 May : Life on the Seashore

Hugh Jones

Wednesday 6 June : Maderia – Island of Eternal Springtime

Tony Pioli

Wednesday 4 July : British Bats

Tony Parker

(Continued on page 10)

THE DISCOVERY OF RINGLET (*Aphantopus hyperantus*) IN THE OLDHAM AREA IN 2011

Steve Smith



I was intrigued by the record of a Ringlet on the Lancashire's sightings web page of 'Butterfly Conservation', a British charity devoted to saving butterflies, moths and their habitats throughout the UK. This was reported by Glenn Hutton on 11 June, at Church Wood, Bircle (near Bury) and I wondered if this was the beginning of a Ringlet 'invasion'. So I visited the site on 2 July and saw 2, possibly 3 Ringlets and reported this via e-mail to Martin Elsworth of Butterfly Conservation with a further comment that I intended to visit possible Ringlet sites in the Oldham area.

Things moved rather quickly after my initial e-mail as Martin copied the report to other interested parties, in particular Peter Hardy, also of Butterfly Conservation and author of the book - *Butterflies of Greater Manchester* (1998), and Richard Greenwood who lives in Bury and is another dedicated butterfly watcher. Two days later on the 4th July, I visited the old disused railway line in the Park Bridge area that formally ran between Oldham and Ashton-under-Lyne. Having not visited the area for some considerable time, I was surprised to see that the dirt track had now been hard surfaced. I initially walked south from the dismantled bridge on Alt Hill

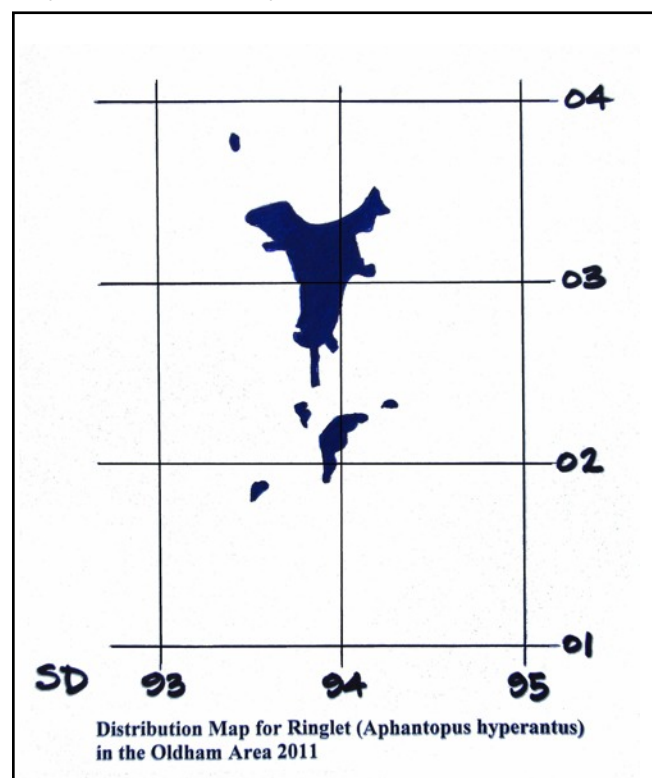
Road but soon retraced my steps as the area did not look suitable for Ringlets. I then started up the incline onto the former trackbed to walk north towards Park Bridge. Just before reaching the level trackbed I spotted a dark butterfly - it was constantly on the move but through my binoculars I identified it as a Ringlet. As soon as the butterfly had been identified, I immediately saw another, then another and more - both sides of the trackbed and in large numbers. The area was 'alive' with Ringlets for some 60m. I reported via e-mail my visit to Richard Greenwood and Peter Hardy and the other interested parties previously referred to.

I visited the area again on Saturday 9th July and started out from Park Bridge northwards along the disused railway line. Again ringlets were seen as soon as I reached the top of the embankment and proceeded to walk towards Oldham. An open area near to a housing estate at Fitton Hill revealed further Ringlets and then following a track down to my right into an open meadow, there were Ringlets everywhere. An amazing sight! I then proceeded on towards Oldham for about half a mile with Ringlets both sides of the pathway.

The future weather forecast was not looking too good, so on Thursday 14 July I took the afternoon off work to explore more fully the area to try and ascertain the limits of the Ringlet range. I spent four hours surveying the area and at the end of the afternoon was pretty sure that the boundaries of the Ringlet population had been located. Unknown to me until later, was that Peter Hardy and Phil Kinder, another well known butterfly enthusiast, were also in the area that afternoon. An

email from Phil revealed that he had made a count of 146 Ringlets.

With the results from my various visits and walkabout, I have drawn up a distribution map, which I think is a fairly accurate assessment of the area where Ringlets are located. Oldham town centre is located just to the northern edge of this map. This should serve as a useful reference point for any further survey work.



The most interesting unanswered questions are:

1. How long have the Ringlets been in this location?
2. Have they been introduced or have they naturally colonised the area?

Due to the abundance and their widespread distribution in the area, I would guess that the Ringlets have been resident for at least five years and possibly ten years or more.

As to question 2 - this will remain unanswered unless somebody with further information comes forward.

HORRIBLE OR BEAUTIFUL?

Joyce Riley, Chorley & District Natural History Society

Several times in previous years, wasps have built nests in and around my home. For example, there was one in my compost bin last year and as wasps do occasionally use the same place the following year, I was able to prevent another developing by scattering wasp killing powder in the bin when I saw wasps entering the compost again this spring (2011). Then in May, a workman cleaning out my gutters saw wasps going under a tile on my roof and immediately spread some powder around the entrance to kill the wasps at this early stage.

June, the nest was quite small and only just visible amongst the Ivy leaves but by the end of July, when I decided to write this article, the nest was over one foot or 30 cms in diameter and the outermost shell-like plate structure was clearly visible!

I initially assumed that the nest was built by the Common Wasp, *Vespula vulgaris*, but when Colin Smith and Phil Kirk came to photograph the nest and we looked carefully at the superb close-up pictures they had taken, we realised I was wrong. We have identified the species that built the



However, when I was weeding the border in my back garden when I returned from holiday in mid June, I discovered that there was a well developed wasps' nest in the ivy covering my boundary fence. I decided not to touch this nest and I have found it fascinating to watch some of the activities of the insects from the safe position of inside my nearby conservatory! In mid

nest in my garden as one of the 'tree' wasps, *Dolichovespula media* that only arrived in England from Europe in the 1980s and is slowly expanding its range northwards.

Wasps are classified into three groups, parasitic, solitary and social wasps, the species found in my garden being one of the latter types (as is the Common Wasp)



that lives in annual colonies, each founded in spring by a female that was mated in the autumn (queen) and hibernated over winter. When she emerges in spring, the queen finds a suitable nesting site and a source of dried wood, which she chews into a pulp. With this she builds a few cells, which soon harden into 'wasp paper'. In each cell the queen lays an egg that hatches into a grub, which she feeds with chewed-up captured insects. The grubs pupate then emerge as worker wasps – infertile females, smaller than the queen. The workers then take over the task of enlarging the nest while the queen concentrates on egg-laying. By August, the colony can number several thousand insects! Until this period, wasps are entirely beneficial to humans as the workers destroy large numbers of insect pests to feed the grubs. In return, the workers feed on the sweet saliva that the grubs produce.

Towards the end of August, larger cells are constructed and eggs which develop into new queens are laid. Males are produced at

the same time and the new queens mate with them before seeking suitable hibernation sites. The male wasps then die off and the queen stops laying. Deprived of the sweet saliva from the grubs, the redundant workers go in search of other sources of sweetness. It is at this stage that wasps become a nuisance by feeding on fruit and foods containing sugar – and, as only the females can sting, these workers also sting! The colony disintegrates in autumn and only the mated females (queens) survive the winter.

When I have shown visitors the amazing nest, their reactions have varied considerably from horror to admiration. Although as a naturalist I have been very interested in the wasps nest as I have never had the opportunity to observe one so clearly before, I am now waiting for the winter when the insects die and I can at last dig up the weeds in the border as they have grown big and are swamping my other plants!

[This article was first printed in the Summer 2011 edition of the Chorley & District Natural History Society newsletter.]

Colin Smith FRPS

Sadly, since Joyce Riley wrote the wasp article (page 7), Colin Smith, who is mentioned in the article and who took the second photograph, has died. He suffered a major heart attack in September and complications ensued resulting in his death on 13 November 2011, aged 74.

Colin was one of the group of enthusiasts who first formed the Chorley & District Natural History Society in 1979 and was the only person to have served on the committee continuously from the beginning, arranging all of the speakers for indoor meetings. He himself gave about 20 talks to the society, all illustrated by his exceptional photographs. He also gave his talks to lots of other natural history societies, including many affiliated to the North Western Naturalists' Union.

Although he was a nationally acclaimed photographer, having won many awards, he gave his photographs freely for use in Chorley & District Natural History Society's publications and natural history displays in local visitor centres and libraries. A teacher by profession, his great gift was to share his knowledge and skills without ever wanting praise or reward. He was also a good sportsman, having represented Chorley at cricket and playing table tennis until shortly before his death. He had a wonderful sense of humour and was a devoted family man.

His love of natural history, and his extensive knowledge of it, made him a tremendous asset to the Chorley & District Natural History Society. He was a dearly loved friend to all who knew him and will be greatly missed.

Phil Kirk, Secretary of Chorley & District Natural History Society.

May Bug in Bury

I happened to be in Bury town centre on the evening of 28 May 2011. On Manchester Road (SD803107) by a Silver Birch and under a street light I saw what appeared to be an acorn on the pavement. It was no acorn, and was unlikely to be in May, but when I got the object in to better light I realised I had found a dead May Bug or Common Cockchafer (*Melolontha melolontha*).

I have no recollection of seeing one of these beetles before in Lancashire and I have added this specimen to the natural history collection at Gallery Oldham (2011.66).

May Bug larvae eat plant roots while the adult is a voracious feeder on tree leaves. The adults fly in May and June and are attracted to light sources, including moth traps.

Patricia Francis

NORTH WESTERN NATURALISTS' UNION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2.00 pm on Saturday 3 March 2012

At Bolton Central Library, Le Mans Crescent, BOLTON

Wednesday 1 August : Fungi

Martin Ashworth

PRESTON SOCIETY

Meeting commence at 7.30 pm at St Mary's Church Hall, Cop Lane, Penwortham, PR1 0SR.

Monday 16 January : Through a Year - Through a Lens

Peter Smith

Monday 23 January : Batting for Lancashire & England

Charlie Liggett

Monday 30 January : From the Andes to the Amazon – the Volcanoes and Flora of Ecuador

Mike Gosling

Monday 6 February : Dragonflies

Graham Jones

Monday 13 February : The Bowland Wader Project

Gavin Thomas

Monday 20 February : Member's Evening

Bring your own images

Monday 27 February : With Which I am Less Familiar

Steve Halliwell

Monday 5 March : Fungi

David Winnard

Monday 12 March : Birds of the White Peak of Derbyshire

John Power

Monday 19 March : Swiss Souvenirs – The Bernese Oberland

Phil Kirk

Monday 26 March : Hutton Roof and Local Vis-Mig

Bryan Yorke

Monday 2 April : Lammergeier to Ural Owl - European Travels

John Gardiner

Monday 16 April : AGM

ROCHDALE FIELD NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

www.rochdalefieldnaturalistsociety.co.uk Indoor meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month, September to April, at Cutgate Baptist Church, Edenfield Road, Rochdale. Charges: Members £2.00, Non-members £3.00. Enquiries: 01706 630707 and 814884 All Excursions depart from the cul-de-sac at Manchester Road, Rochdale. Time: Coaches 0900hrs, Cars 1000hrs Coaches return at 1700hrs except during the months of November, December, January and February when return is at 1600hrs. Queries: Field excursions – contact Rick Cowley on 01706 853791 / Coach bookings – contact Fred Royle on 01706 644394 Coach Price: Members £13, Non-members £15.

Saturday 7 January : Mytholmroyd, W. Yorks – Car Trip

M. Colley

Saturday 14 January : YWT Potteric Carr, S. Yorks* – Coach Trip

P. & D. Francis

Saturday 28 January : Lead Mine Clough, Anglezarke – Car Trip

A. Cross

Thursday 9 February: Life and Colour in our Northern Coastal Waters

Ron Crosby

Saturday 11 February : Fairburn Ings, W. Yorks – Coach Trip

R. & K. Cowley

Saturday 25 February : Dovestones, Saddleworth – Car Trip

G. Ashworth

Thursday 8 March: Brockholes Reserve

Sophie Leadsom (Reserve Manager)

Saturday 10 March : Grasmere/Rydal Water, Cumbria – Coach Trip

S. Allen

Saturday 24 March : Hardcastle Crags, Hebden Bridge – Car Trip

P. & D. Francis

Thursday 12 April : Members Night

(A selection of members' slides) All welcome.

Saturday 14 April : Wirrall/Dee estuary, Cheshire* – Coach Trip

M. Dean & P. Maddock

Saturday 28th April : LWT Brockholes, Lancs* – Car Trip

A. Cross & R. Cowley

Saturday 12 May : Cressbrook Dale, Derbyshire – Coach Trip

S. Carr & R. Newing

Saturday 26 May : Broadhead Clough, Cragg Vale – Car Trip

C. Flynn

Saturday 16 June : Bempton Cliffs/Flamborough Head* – Coach Trip

R. & K. Cowley

Saturday 30 June : LWT Mere Sands Wood, Lancs – Car Trip

P. Jackson

Saturday 14 July : Harfield Moor, S. Yorks – Coach Trip

P. & M. Culkin

Saturday 28 July : Barley, Pendle, Lancs – Car Trip

S. Pinnington & Y. Mynett

Saturday 11 August : Smardale, Cumbria – Coach Trip

E. & D. Clutterbuck

Saturday 25 August : Swindon Water, Burnley – Car Trip

F. Royle

Saturday 15 September : Upper Wharfedale, N. Yorks – Coach Trip

A. Cross

Saturday 29 September : Alderley Edge, Cheshire – Car Trip

M. Heywood

Saturday 13 October : Goyt Valley, Derbyshire – Coach Trip

S. Allen

Saturday 27 October : Pennington Flash – Car Trip

P. & M. Culkin

*NB There may be extra costs of entrance fees for non-members of RSPB, WWT and local Wildlife Trusts when visiting their reserves.

SADDLEWORTH NATURALISTS

All events listed are indoor meetings held at 7.30pm at the Brownhill Visitors' Centre at Dobcross.

Wednesday 11 January : Studying Small Mammals

Nick Martin

Wednesday 8 February : The Red Grouse

Derek Yalden

Wednesday 14 March : Your Wildlife Records are Important!

Speaker to be confirmed (Greater Manchester Ecology Unit)

Wednesday 11 April : Annual General Meeting

Plus members' digital pictures & light refreshments

WILMSLOW GUILD NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Indoor meetings held at Wilmslow Guild, 1 Brown Street at 7.45 pm. Visitors welcome to indoor meetings (£3.00) & field-trips (free). Contact Roy Beacham (secretary) for further information on [01606 891957](tel:01606891957)

Thursday 19 January : The Art of Misidentification

Tim Melling

Thursday 16 February : The Woodland Trust

Andrew Bonehill

Thursday 15 March : Wildlife of the Pennines

Gordon Yates

Thursday 26 April : Wild Scotland

Judith Lovelady