



**WARWICKSHIRE BRANCH  
MOTH EQUIPMENT**

**2016 - A Difficult Year**



**Alan Prior & Val Weston**

**Photographs by Pete Smith  
Cover Photograph by Alan Prior**



14 Ghost Moth



463 *Ypsolopha vitella*



701 *Agonopterix ocellana*



1054 *Acleris cristana*



1174 *Notocelia cynosbastella*



1380 *Anania perlucidalis*

## Introduction

It would prove to be another below average year for moths and a difficult one for the authors of this account of 2016. This is not going to be the easiest year to document as half way through Val had what she had suspected for a while confirmed and that was she had cancer. We realise that this may come as a shock to some of our regular readers and for that, we are sorry that you have had to find out this way. The local mothing community has been magnificent and many of the organised recording nights went ahead whether we could attend or not. We are truly grateful that everyone carried on doing what we do and enjoy. As this is written, Val is doing well and living life to the full, if just at a much slower pace. Long may that continue, but who knows? So **this year's story will have** certain differences from our normal review but, we hope it will be no less enjoyable a read for them.

## January

On a cloudy, dry and mild evening towards the end of the month Alan talked Peter Beasley and Pete Smith into joining him at Chaddesley Wood. The four traps were set up and switched on by 5 pm and there was a steady flow of moths attracted to them over the following six hours. It was a relaxed start to the years recording and a very acceptable fourteen species were recorded by the time everything was packed up. It came as no surprise that *Tortricodes alternella* was the most numerous with 67. Pale Brindled Beauty, Chestnut and Spring Usher were also well represented. A dozen Brindled Pug was a reasonable tally so soon into the New Year and single individuals of Dotted Border, Early Moth, Small Quaker and Dotted Chestnut were also found.

## February

**The month's weather was either cold and frosty or wet and windy**, so no recording trips were managed at all.

## March

It was a return to Chaddesley Wood for the first recording trip of the month. Martin Kennard and Ieuan Blackmore joined the three attendees from January this time and so eight traps were set up. It had all been done in good time and so Pete offered to drive to the chippy while Peter wrote down **the orders. They left after Alan agreed to switch on Peter's generator when it was time. This he duly attempted but the bulb would not start glowing. After checking this and that Alan replaced Peter's socket board with our spare and that did the trick. It was just as well there had been a long queue at the chippy, as Alan needed the time to get Peter's light on! When dinner arrived Ieuan felt a bit left out as the others produced cutlery and condiments. Well it was his first experience of a "chippy run" so we forgave him his surprised amusement.** After dinner Alan explained to Peter how he'd got his trap on. There were plenty of moths to see on a tour of the traps to help to walk off **the excess's** of dinner. Peter had an inquisitive visitor as he was finishing packing up. A Red Fox had apparently smelt the empty chip papers in the back of his vehicle. The fox even followed him as he drove down to where Alan was just finishing loading the car. The most difficult part of this incident to believe was that Peter actually gave away one of his mini Jaffa Cakes and watched the fox gulp it down! **So the fox got the nickname of 'Jaffa'! The final tally of 30 species recorded was good and Martin** managed to get the star of the show with Red Sword-grass, which was the first recorded at Chaddesley for over ten years. Just short of 1,000 moths were recorded overall. Almost 400 of them were Brindled Pug and March Moth also managed a three-figure total. Some of the other species recorded were *Semioscopis avellanella*, *Agonopterix ocellana*, Red Chestnut, Pine Beauty, Grey Shoulder-knot and Oak Nycteoline.

The lure of stopping off at The Finest Catch for dinner on the way to the next moth night was too much for Val to pass up. However, Alan did ban her from having a Knickerbocker Glory, after the mess she got herself into last year! We arrived well fed at Snitterfield Bushes for the first visit of the year. Chris Johnson was next to appear, followed by Pete and lastly Martin. It was a cold night with intermittent drizzle **and the 'tea shop' was going to be well used this evening.** Chris had brought a follow up book to read **after last year's trawl through a 1950's childhood. We moved** a decade further on and just as the first chapter of Chrisanory had got underway Les Finch showed up. **He was just breaking up his journey back to Berkshire and thought he'd come and see some moths.** Due to the cool weather they were fairly reluctant in being tempted to the lights so Chris began his new reading adventure for a fair while until everyone wanted to move and warm up. After a tour of the well spread traps Les decided to continue his journey and the rest of us decided to begin packing up. Considering the less than perfect weather just over 200 moths representing 19 species were recorded with Dotted Chestnut being new for the site. Only Common Quaker appeared in any great number and amongst the other species found were *Diurnea fagella*, Yellow Horned, Early Thorn, Engrailed and Satellite.

## April

As was the norm the first planned visit to Weethley Wood would have been plagued by terrible weather. Thankfully we managed to delay it by a week and so the visit became the first trip of April rather than the last of March. Alan was joined by Martin, Peter, Pete and John Sirrett, which meant there would be eight traps set up. For Weethley it was an incredibly mild evening for the time of year and we actually hoped to record some moths for a change! There was an annoying light drizzle that arrived part way **through and it didn't really stop after that. With Val unable to make it,** everyone was left to bring their **own supplies and Pete's 'Rocky Road' produced the biggest laugh of the night.** When he offered a second piece to Peter the reply came **"I better not, as I don't want to appear greedy!"** **This had everyone falling** about laughing and true to form Peter had another bit anyway! Thanks for not letting us down Peter! As for the moths, well over 600 individuals were recorded representing 23 species of which four were new for the site. So everybody was well satisfied with their efforts as we made our way home around 2 am. The new species were *Diurnea fagella*, Shoulder Stripe, Water Carpet and Pine Beauty. Amongst the other species recorded were *Eriocrania sangii*, *Acleris cristana*, Yellow Horned and Lead-coloured Drab.

Pete and Peter joined Alan ten days later for a return visit to Chaddesley Wood. Despite some idiot dog walker almost blocking the gate with their vehicle they all just about managed to gain access to the track. It proved to be quite a slow and uneventful night after that. An annoying 15-minute light shower passed through around midnight and it was decided to pack up after that, as the skies **cleared and the temperature dropped significantly. It wasn't** a great night, but 23 species were recorded and included *Acleris literana*, Early Tooth-striped, Red Chestnut and Twin-spotted Quaker.

The following moth night began in shambolic fashion due to yet more personnel changes at Middleton Hall **and we'd considered calling it off earlier in the week. We're not sure they should have** gates here, possibly more useful would be a revolving door! The Hall's Wildlife Officer Bob Williams had agreed to open up for us, however there was a meeting going on in our usual tearoom and so we all had to wait in the cold until that was finished. Lack of communication seemed to be becoming a regular thing due to the constant staff turnover, which is not at all helpful. The weather was wet, cold, windy and pretty miserable. However, Pete, Peter, Martin, Chris, Keith Warmington, Scott Hackett and a late arriving Colin Kimberley completed an impressive turnout. We decided to have a **night off from running a trap, as we didn't feel it would add much to the five that were set up apart that is, from one more soggy trap!**

Chris provided the main entertainment this evening with the reading of the next chapter of this **year's book. On several occasions he managed to get the words mixed up which caused much** laughter. We felt his best mess was Swimney Cheap! It was generally thought **that he'd meant to say Chimney Sweep and now have a feeling that the Chimney Sweeper moth will become known as the Swimney Cheaper in Chris's 'honour'!** **Being warm, snug and dry in the tearoom while hearing the rain hammering down on the roof didn't** inspire a check of the traps until there seemed no other option. The miserable return of 19 moths of four species was about all that could be expected on such an uninspiring night. However, there was an upside and it was that Lead-coloured Drab was newly recorded for the site.

The following Thursday Alan was joined by Peter and Pete for the initial visit of the year to Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground. They arrived to find a rather nagging and very annoying northeasterly breeze blowing across the site. Anyway, the four traps would have to be as tucked into the hedges as was possible to have any chance of catching some moths. Site Manager David appeared before the traps were switched on and a good old catch up chinwag was had before the lights went on. As expected it was a very slow night due to that breeze and Peter had no moths in his trap on the first tour round. Thankfully by the end he managed to contribute a couple of records as two Hebrew Character and a pristine Streamer showed up at his trap. Pete managed to get the moth of the night with *Semioscopis steinkellneriana*, which was newly recorded for the hectad. The arrival of Powdered Quaker signaled pack up time and took the species tally for the evening to ten.

The next night a venture to the opposite end of the county was undertaken as Alan joined Keith, Ieuan, Chris and Nigel Stone for the first visit of the year to Alvecote Wood. However, the evening got off to another shambolic start as everyone was locked out, Keith hadn't got an up to date key for the lock on the gate. Thankfully, it wasn't too long before Stephen, one of the woods owners, arrived to restore order and provided the key required for entry. Keith stood in as keeper of the refreshments tonight, for which everyone was very grateful. The same nagging breeze that had been a pain the previous night was still in evidence, with the added unwelcome addition of the cloudy skies clearing. This sent the temperature plummeting and as it went below freezing a unanimous decision to call it a night was made. Only six species were recorded but Powdered Quaker was new for the site. A reasonable tally of 19 Lunar Marbled Brown was also welcome. The only species to be found in all of the six traps was *Dyseriocrania subpurpurella*, which was unsurprising in this oak dominated wood.

The last day of the month was one of the most mad moth nights we've ever been involved in. Val had to stay home and wait for our friends in the rock band The Treatment to arrive from their gig in Cardiff. Meanwhile, Alan made his way down to the Army base at Kineton for the first of this years moth nights at the site. The equally insane Peter, Pete, Scott, and Nigel joined him on a record-breaking night for all the wrong reasons. The afternoon had been very cool and showery and none of them expected to record any moths at all, as the starting temperature was below 5°C. However, five traps were set up with no particular hope of any of them becoming inhabited by Lepidoptera. With the skies clearing and the temperature continuing it's rapid downward trend the chat turned to 'cold animals'. This turned up the little known fact that the largest terrestrial animal on Antarctica is a wingless midge called *Belgica antarctica*. Well who knew? With us all turning into icemen, a tour of the traps was taken just to see if our limbs still worked! Incredibly, four moths were found in the traps, this came as a large surprise to us all, as did the fact that our limbs did indeed still work. After another cuppa and with the jokes becoming worse and cruder it was decided to pack up. This provided the last bit of complete nonsense of the evening, as Scott and Alan argued over whose was the 'best' trap. Alan said it was his as it contained two species, while Scott replied that his had three moths in, although they were all the same species! You can make your own minds up who won the argument, as we'd obviously completely lost ours! With the temperature approaching -4°C we could swear that we could see the grass getting whiter as we watched. The final tally was Common Quaker (2), Clouded Drab (2) and Hebrew Character (3). A footnote to this night is that Alan managed to get home before the band arrived and so Val got some extra sleep. Come to think of it, that was probably what we should have all done in the first place!

## May

This is when things started to get a bit messy. We were due to visit Jean Cholerton's nature reserve at Cranhill on the Bank Holiday Monday. However, we were running what was known as the "Generation Me Hotel" for The Treatment and their road crew at the time. A traditional van breakdown in Sheffield had meant we had three band members at the hotel and they then needed to be in Oxford for that night's show. Alan drove and dropped them at the venue in Oxford before encountering a horrendous storm on the way back. The concentration it took to get through safely was extremely tiring and he didn't feel it would be safe for him to go to the moth night after that. However, Nigel, Peter, Pete and Les all went and reported it was another freezing night with low moth activity. The habitats though are being improved all the time. Jean's soup, cake and all round hospitality was rated "top notch"! All who went thoroughly enjoyed the evening. Unfortunately only nine species were recorded and none of the seven traps attracted more than nine moths. Despite that we were disappointed not to have felt able to go.

Most of the rest of the month was taken up being in charge of the 'hotel' and then we had a few day's in Denmark as we had a very small part in getting The Treatment to play at the Nordic Noise Festival in Copenhagen to finish off their tour. It also helped that Val's favourite musician Mike Tramp, was also playing at the Festival. Despite having a respiratory problem at the time nothing was going to stop her from being there. Anybody who knows Val would know that trying to reason with her in this sort of situation is futile. It was a memorable few days for many reasons not least the fact we were treated magnificently by everyone we met. Special thanks to Mike too, for going way above and beyond to make our last trip abroad together such a fantastic one.

We returned in time for another adventure at Middleton Hall. We arrived to find Bob waiting but he'd forgotten his keys and was desperately trying to locate the caretaker to save him a trip home. Eventually it got sorted and ten traps got set up around the Hall. Another exceptional turnout included Pete, Martin, Keith, Peter, Chris, Colin, John Finlay and a rare appearance from Stephen and Corrine Howarth. Not everyone ran a trap and it became a very social evening. Val was delighted that Bob had remembered to make up the Black Country specialty dish called Groaty Pudding and couldn't wait to tuck in. It was another less than perfect weather night. It was mild, but that came with a variable and gusty wind and some light rain. Chris managed to get a bit more of the book read while people drank and munched. It was unsurprisingly another slow night with few moths. By the end the ten traps had only managed to attract just over 100 moths. A mediocre species list did reach 49 with a couple new for the site. That usually urban specialist Ruddy Streak (*Tachystola acroxantha*) and Tawny Pinion were the two. Amongst the others were *Elachista maculicerusella*, *Phalonidia manniana*, *Eudonia angustea*, Latticed Heath, Pebble Prominent and White Ermine. **This would prove to be Val's last proper moth night and she was happy to spend it with such a good group of people.**

It was yet another cold night as Alan ventured over to Abbey Farm in Wolvey. When he arrived Martin, Pete and Peter were chatting with farmer Jon Slee. Shortly after the mothing contingent was complete as Chris drove up. Farmer Jon then left us to set up the seven traps. When they were up and running we all retired to the relative warmth of the barn for the usual line in banter. On a tour of the traps Martin and Chris found their lights had been off for some time although both had a couple of moths still in them, so they had been on for a while.

A repositioning of the generator fixed the problem of the lights, but the clear sky and dropping temperature was of little encouragement for helping moths to fly. It was the all too familiar story of very low numbers due to freezing cold nights. A poor total of 26 species were desperate enough to fly in such conditions, although the upside was that eight of them were newly recorded at the farm. So our efforts were of some value. Amongst them were *Glyphipterix simpliciella*, *Scrobipalpa acuminatella*, Oak-tree Pug, Seraphim, Muslin Moth and Hebrew Character...**yes Hebrew Character!**

A few nights later it was finally a little warmer although the trip to Chaddesley Wood came with a gusty northerly breeze and clear skies. **Peter and Pete were again Alan's moth recording companions** and all three of them were surprised that as soon as the lights were on moths were flying around them. This was the first time this year such a phenomenon had been witnessed! Pete was slightly disappointed with this, as he had to leave early due to a commitment the following day. After all the **suffering we'd been through this year it did seem a bit unfair.** Unsurprisingly the species count of 66 was the largest so far in 2016. They included: *Coleophora caespititiella*, *Capua vulgana*, *Eulia ministrana*, *Rhyacionia pinivorana*, Clay Triple-lines, Barred Umber, Lobster Moth, Alder Moth and Green Silver-lines. So it was Alan and Peter who saw out the first all-nighter of the year and finally with a decent range of **moths too, but there was no sign of 'Jaffa the Fox' this time!**

## June

For many years we have attempted to record at Focus Optics at this time of year. The weather has always been against us by being clear and very cold. However, this year we finally managed to have a good night. Maybe it was because we were trying a Friday night instead of the usual Saturday. It was rather forced on us, as the following day Tim was having a sort of "open day" **at the site** and hoped that some moths would provide added interest. There were a total of ten traps set up around the site by Alan, Chris, Martin, Peter, Pete, Scott and Keith. Chris decided to drive to the furthest boundary of one of the fields and got up to his old tricks by managing to run over his own cable reel whilst setting up! Yes Chris, **somebody did "grass you up" on that one!** It was good to see that Ros and Steve Smith managed to find a little time to join us for a while too. After a round of the traps there were a few departures, as Tim and Keith would be back early in the morning for the open day while Ros and Steve had to return to their farm. The clouds stayed all night and with little or no wind it was a good night for recording. The list built steadily and by the end had reached just short of 100 species. A very pleasing 16 species were newly recorded for the site and over 1,000 moths were counted. However, over half of them were of one species! During late May the country had seen an unprecedented number of Diamond-back Moths arrive from Southern Europe. Martin was **the most 'unlucky' recorder as he had almost 200 in one of his traps. Numbers were more** manageable in the other traps, although still extraordinarily high for the time of year. It had been daylight for a while when the final bulb **went out at 4:15 am. Alan had counted Keith's trap for him** and then added any species to it that would possibly go down well with the open day visitors before covering and securing it for when he arrived back on site.

**Finally our perseverance had paid off and we had a successful night's recording after years of trying.** Amongst the species new for the site were *Adela reaumurella*, *Caloptilia azaleella*, *Rhyacionia pinivorana*, Dwarf Pug, Yellow-barred Brindle, Waved Umber and Least Black Arches. It was also pleasing to get both Marbled and Rufous Minor confirmed for the site.

Alan was off down to his **Mum's in Essex next. A reasonable journey meant there wasn't the normal** manic rush to set up the traps before darkness fell. The nagging Northeasterly wind was a pain and **didn't inspire a quick set up either! It was a relatively slow night due to the wind and the only** species to reach double figures in number was unsurprisingly the Diamond-back Moth. However, Alan was most surprised and delighted to find two *Coleophora amethystinella* at the trap. With their large size, for a *Coleophora*, orange eyes and eyelashes they are unmistakable. After some enquiries, Alan learned that the species seems to be doing OK and has been turning up more frequently in recent times. A good news story for a moth – reason for a small celebration! The following night was a little better in number of species but with the clear skies and nagging wind it felt cold. Eyed Hawk-moth and Shears were a couple of the species that braved the elements. The following day was a nice warm and sunny one. It prompted Alan to take an afternoon stroll **around the field opposite his Mum's. Other than the clouds of** Diamond-back Moth he also came across *Incurvaria ohlmanniella* and the odd looking but very pretty *Alabonia geoffrella*. After dinner he went back to the field and attempted to count the Diamond-back Moths around the hedgerows. It took a couple of hours to do just three sides of the field and he managed to count 1,259! He did come across a few people on his trawl round and informed them that their Christmas **dinner 'veg' may be a little harder to come by this year** and showed them why! On walking across the middle of the field he estimated around another thousand and guessed this one field in Essex could hold up to 100,000 Diamond Back Moths alone! Absolutely staggering! Later in the year he **met Pete Cranswick who had done a similar thing in Gloucestershire around the same time and he'd** come to a similar conclusion about numbers. The total number of the species in Britain is almost unimaginable, but it would probably run into ten figures at least! Due to cloud and barely any wind it was a much warmer night and the traps were very busy. 76 species were recorded with *Coleophora amethystinella* appearing again. Amongst the others were *Coleophora deauratella*, *Notocelia cynosbatella*, Thistle Ermine, Pebble Hook-tip, Broken-barred Carpet, Clouded Silver, Cinnabar Moth and Shark.

A couple of nights later was the first of this year's National Moth Nights and David Brown had arranged to go to Oversley Wood. Despite being quite tired from his trip to Essex and Val's health being a concern Alan decided to go, as the weather was so good. **It's difficult to pass up an opportunity of going to Oversley when the weather is so good, as there's always a slim chance that *Sciota hostilis* may be on the wing.** Alan was one of the last to arrive after a slow journey and decided to leave Martin to pick a spot and then set his trap close by. Ieuan was also in attendance and was a little further along from Alan. In all there was probably around 20 traps set up in the wood. A lot of them were targeting the Lime trees in the expectation of attracting Pauper Pug. We were never going to get around them all but did try and get a list of the micro species in traps other than our own. It was a very busy night as expected and the list we built ended up at 190 species. Sadly no *hostilis* were seen, but there was success with the Pauper Pug target. Some of the other species recorded included *Stigmella salicis*, *Phyllonorycter maestingella*, *Coleophora orbitella*, *Alabonia geoffrella* (see cover photo), *Ethmia dodecea*, *Lobesia reliquana*, *Pammene aurana*, Poplar Lutestring, Little Emerald, Dingy Shell, Red-necked Footman, Pale-shouldered Brocade, Obscure Wainscot and Pale Pinion. Alan did feel a little guilty at leaving Martin still counting his first trap, but he was very tired and thought it better to drive home while he still could do safely. He still had another trap to count when he got there too!

After a period of recovering over the weekend Alan prepared himself for a long night back at Sun Rising NBG. He had gone early to discuss recording methods with David and Emma and show them how we do it for moths. The time flew by and before they knew it Peter and Pete had arrived and were ready to set up some traps. Luckily, David was conversant with excel spreadsheets which made the discussions fairly straight forward so with the new arrivals, **Alan's job was done.** Emma and David then made their way home while those of us left on site set up the traps. Conditions were **completely opposite to last year at this time and were 13°C warmer!**

It was mainly cloudy too which made the traps quite busy and always with something interesting to find on a tour round them. One of the most memorable parts of the night was at dusk when a large number of Ghost Moth males were dancing on their territories. **It's always a mesmerizing sight,** but did give Alan a slight concern as David had mentioned the area they were inhabiting was due to be cut for hay the following week. After a brief phone call the following day the hay cut was put back six weeks and so we hope the Ghost Moths will put on an even more impressive show next year. The other major highlight was for Pete, as Alan found on the last egg box in the last trap a pristine Privet Hawk-moth. **He had been hoping one would show up, as he hadn't seen one before.** It was a 'Wowie-Wowie' moment for him, as he didn't expect it to dwarf the Eyed Hawk-moth that was sitting adjacent to it on the same egg box. Time was taken getting some photos while Alan finished packing up his traps. So a memorable night for all sorts of reasons – not least the weather! **Not even the light drizzle near dawn dampened any "spirits" on this night! Amongst the 74 species recorded,** nine were new for the site and they included *Elachista argentella*, *Pseudargyrotoza conwagana*, *Hedya ochroleucana*, Brown Silver-line, Small Clouded Brindle and Tawny Marbled Minor. The journey home proved interesting as Alan was driving around large puddles and bits of tree in the road. For once it appeared the moth recorders had been lucky and beaten the weather! It was a small and all to infrequent victory, but nonetheless it was **very satisfying that we'd finally won one!**

A few nights later it was a difficult decision for Alan to leave Val and join Scott and John Sirrett at **Monkspath Meadow.** **Alan agreed not to run a trap but just help out.** **Scott's vague directions** on where to meet meant Alan parked near a red building when it was supposed to be the blue one! However, Scott found him and soon they were all on the way around the back of the superstore to find the meadow. A handy hole in the fence meant Scott could get a trap out into the meadow, but the grasses were so tall he needed to balance it on his seat so the light got out. No problem with the other two traps as they were set up firmly **on concrete at the meadow edge.** **It didn't take long for all three of them to be satisfied as early on *Pammene aurana* showed up and was new for both John and Scott while Sharp-angled Carpet was new for Alan.** **It wasn't a perfect night but it was OK** and by the time dawn was breaking 66 species had been recorded on this inaugural moth night at this site. Apart from those already mentioned *Glyphipterix thrasonella*, Timothy Tortrix, Plain Pug, Lime Hawk-moth, Small Dotted Buff and Beautiful Golden Y were amongst the species recorded.

It was in the following days that we received confirmation of Val's diagnosis and so things would have to be done slightly differently from now on. The good news was that now we knew what we were dealing with we could try and manage the situation better. We didn't get off to the best of starts as we allowed too many people to visit in too short a time. It was lovely that they wanted to come but Val needed a break between visitors. We did eventually get a workable system that ended up with Alan being Val's 'booking agent'!

The last moth night of the month was a return to Weethley Wood. Alan had spent most of the afternoon telling people it would still go ahead despite how wet it was at that time. Alan knew it would have passed by the time the lights would go on at the wood and he was right, as the skies were clear on arrival. **However, normally after a day like that the night's mothing isn't brilliant.** Peter, Pete, Nigel and Jean Cholerton had the faith and ran traps more in hope than expectation. **Alan was expecting another visitor and so didn't run a trap himself. Around half an hour after switch on Alan's expected visitor arrived.** It just so happened that Karen was staying in the area when she would normally reside in Norfolk. She brought her sister Kate along for her first experience of a moth night. They had a good old chinwag and saw some moths too. After a couple of hours the yawns of tiredness started and they said their farewells and headed back to their hotel. Alan then did a round of the traps and helped where he could. Nigel was a bit out of field practice and needed a bit of help with the micros despite being the County Micro-moth Recorder. That produced some laughter, but we were all genuinely pleased to have him back out there with us. There were a couple of hours where the clouds rolled in and trap activity picked up markedly. So by the end of the night almost 100 species had been recorded with five being new for the site. This was a far better result that we could have expected when leaving home. Well done everyone for keeping the faith! The new species were *Coleophora discordella*, *Lozotaeniodes formosanus*, *Ancylis diminutana*, *Epinothia rubiginosana* and Lilac Beauty. Some of the other species recorded were Lackey, Blotched Emerald, Barred Yellow, Satin Beauty and Buff-tip.

## July

The trip to River Arrow Local Nature Reserve would provide us with a problem. Val had promised somebody at Ryton Meadows Open Day that she would bake a pineapple and coconut cake with cherries added at **his suggestion. This was the night he was expected to attend. However, Val wasn't** well and having been forced to retire from mothing it created a dilemma. Never wanting to let anyone down and always keeping her promises there appeared to be only one solution - Alan would have to bake it, under strict supervision of course. Not by any stretch of **anyone's** wildest imagination is Alan known for his baking skills and so this could prove somewhat of an adventure. Not wanting to let Val down as she has an unbeatable reputation for cooking, Alan tried his absolute best to follow her instructions. A lot of fun was had doing it and the result appeared to look OK. However, the taste test would only happen on the moth night. The teachers from Alcester Grammar School who used to encourage our annual visit as part of the students wildlife week have all now retired, but they wanted us to keep going as they always enjoyed it so much and could still arrange access to the playing fields where we parked. It was one of the former teachers husbands who had **requested the cake and so he'd better turn up! It was also decided that Alan should attempt to run Val's 'tea shop' for the evening instead of a moth trap. So it was with some trepidation that Alan set** off for Alcester. His first problem was trying to get out of the end of our road as there had been a car accident and people and police were running all over the place. Thankfully, he managed to negotiate the carnage and continue his journey. It was a pleasant surprise to find the gate to the playing fields open when he arrived. He also found Nigel, Jean and Steve Chappell waiting for his appearance. None of the former teachers seemed to be around which was a bit of a problem as the gate onto the reserve was still locked! Eventually after Martin arrived it was decided to climb over it, as the only person that had been before was Steve and the others wanted to have a look round. Jean very wisely decided against and waited with Alan for somebody/anybody to arrive. Martin German did finally appear and the gate was unlocked in time for the return of others. **Trapping locations were decided and everyone got to work setting up. Alan had a go at setting out the 'tea shop' but it took a veteran of the service to sort it out properly! Thanks MK!** More good news came in the form of **Mary Preston's husband Mark the instigator or possible victim of Alan's first effort at** baking had arrived. With the traps up and running and **a properly organised 'tea shop' it was time** for the big taste test. Obviously Mark had the first piece. He commented that the added cherries had made all the difference and soon everybody was taking a chance and having a piece as well. It seemed to be a success, which came as a great relief to Alan! After visiting half the traps the moth recorders were left to it while the others headed home for some sleep promising to return just **before dawn. Not long after they'd gone Scott arrived to replace them!** He stayed for a while before departing and the others minus a certain Mr. German returned to see how we'd done.

Nigel had managed to get a Poplar Hawk-moth, which was passed to Mark to hold. This caused the inevitable laughter from everyone else, as we knew how difficult it could be to get rid of **sometimes. It was impressive enough for the 'newbies' though and that's always a good bit of PR for the moths.** Overall though, **the weather wasn't great** being cool with showers at either end of the night, but the seven traps did manage to attract a decent range of species and another nine could be added to the site list. While everyone packed up, **Alan did the same with the 'tea shop'.** He also sent Mark home with the four pieces of uneaten cake and was very proud to show Val an empty cake tin when he got home! Amongst the new species for the site were *Elachista canapennella*, *Helcystogramma rufescens*, *Grapholita tenebrosana*, Phoenix and Lesser Common Rustic.

The following Friday we were supposed to return to Middleton Hall. With Val preparing herself to make a mammoth effort to go and see everyone we found out a few days before that the keyholder **was disappearing on holiday. That didn't go down well**, but at least Val could relax, **as she wouldn't** be able to go anywhere else if an alternative venue could be found. Thankfully, Stephen and Sarah stepped in and made Alvecote Wood available at short notice and so at least a moth night would take place for those who wanted to go. As it turned out Keith, Nigel, Peter, Pete and Martin all made it and they had a very productive night. Our thanks go to Pete for this brief summary of events. "Both Alan and Val were missed, but we had a pretty good night. No rain and sub tropical temperatures for "summer" mothing, only falling to 13.9°C briefly and then rising to 15.9°C when the light cloud came in. It made a pleasant change. As you can imagine it was pretty busy from "lights on" and we only managed one tour of the traps, which revealed just over 100 species and after a tea break we decided it was probably best to start counting at just after 2:00am. It wasn't overwhelming but busy enough as we were all a bit out of practice and we managed to get away at just after 4 am." The total of 166 species was indeed impressive with 40 of them being new for Alvecote. Included amongst them were *Caloptilia populetorum*, *Coleophora kuehnella*, *Coleophora tamesis*, Ruddy Streak (*Tachystola acroxantha*), *Agonopterix conterminella*, *Epiblema foenella*, *Gillmeria pallidactyla*, Large Emerald, Sandy Carpet, True **Lover's Knot**, Dingy Shears and Slender Brindle. **Middleton Hall's loss was certainly Alvecote Wood's gain.**

A long-standing date in the diary was a trip down to Breakheart Quarry in Gloucestershire to join Steve. Val was still struggling and so arrangements were made for her nephew, Gavin, to come over and stay the night so that Alan could still go with the knowledge that she was being looked after. As seems the norm whenever we go down to Breakheart the rain was fairly torrential on the journey down. It had stopped by the time Alan reached the quarry and joined Steve, Scott, Guy Meredith, Pete Cranswick, Dave Sims and Peter Hugo in putting up traps. Alan managed to do something a little different and set his up on a handy outdoor but undercover pool table! Val would have been proud! This site selection lent itself to many a joke throughout the night. The weather was far from perfect with showers every now and then making it feel particularly cool for the time of year. However with thirteen traps set up and good habitats to work with there was still hope that a decent **list would be slowly built. This was Scott's first venture into this sort of habitat and it didn't take long for him to hit his personal "new moth" trail. A lot of the night was spent catching up and taking advantage of the refreshments on offer in the Magnox Centre. It was an enjoyable night although Val was never too far from everyone's thoughts. Alan decided to pack up first and was soon done. He said his farewells while the other continued to tally. Considering the poor weather a total of 110 species was very respectable. Amongst those recorded were *Agryresthia brockeella*, *Epagoge grotiana*, *Catoptria pinella*, *Paratalanta hyalinalis*, *Oidaematophorus lithodactyla*, Satin Lutestring, Fern, **Blomer's Rivulet**, Lunar Thorn, Muslin Footman, Heart & Club, Green Arches and Clouded Brindle. Alan had a good journey home and was pleased and relieved to find everything was OK when he got there.**

**As Chris had been away for quite a while he hadn't heard the news about Val. With Windmill Hill** being the next moth night on the agenda Alan decided to drive over to Nuneaton and tell him personally. Val was still struggling, **so he wouldn't stay** to trap. Chris appreciated the gesture and wished Alan well as he headed for home. The night went ahead with Martin, Peter and Pete joining Chris in setting up the traps. Being new to Windmill Hill Pete had a feeling he was being set up by the regulars and commented "As a Windmill Hill virgin I was allocated the scruffy bit of unassuming concrete behind the shed and despite Chris saying that it was a very good spot, it was hard to believe when I saw the much more vegetation rich and inviting spots where he and Peter set up. However, as soon as it got dark the moths started to arrive and continued to do so steadily all night. Over 100 species ended up in my trap but fortunately no great numbers of any particular moth so, whilst it was a "busy" count it wasn't overwhelming and there were some good new moths for me. The only low spot came half an hour in when someone reported a "flash" at the wire leading to one of Martin's far traps and his lights going out.

Then as we were digesting this information all the traps went off." **Martin added** " It looked like the rain had found it's way through a split in the outer cable and caused it to short out - luckily it was at the plug end and I **could relocate the trap and only lost a few metres of cable**". Finding the fuse box in the shed with a tripped fuse and resetting it soon got the lights back on and despite steady drizzle/light rain all night, Windmill Hill produced good results. The six traps produced records for 196 species of which 21 were new for the site. It was generally agreed that Scallop Shell was the star moth of the night. Other highlights included *Schreckensteinia festaliella*, *Batrachedra pinicolella*, *Phalonidia manniana*, *Epinotia signatana*, Common Emerald, Purple Clay, Dot Moth and Beautiful Hook-tip.

We then had a good friend arrive from Chicago at the third year of trying. Rob would be with us for the following two weeks and so Alan had to miss out on the biggest night of the year as Keith, Martin and Nigel made their way over to Peastockings Meadows. Last year's initial visit was blighted by ridiculously low temperatures for late July and unsurprisingly the moths were reluctant to fly in such conditions. The potential of the site was in no doubt though, even then. Martin reported shortly after this **year's visit** "Well I can safely say that given the better conditions, Peastockings Meadows is a great site for moths! **With temperatures about 15°C warmer than last year**, both meadows produced loads of moths. I am on 190 species at least, so it could be the biggest night of the year! We saw some nice species typical of damp grassland and a few Pine-related species that were dragged out of the adjacent Meriden Shafts. Quite a few new for the year, like *Udea lutealis*, Common Lutestring, Twin-spot Carpet, Magpie Moth, Black Arches, Suspected and Lunar-spotted Pinion.

So I think it is safe to say we have boosted the site list slightly!" **The final list amounted to 208** species and some other highlights were *Opostega salaciella*, *Yponomeuta sedella*, *Caryocolum proxima*, *Gypsonoma oppressana*, *Anania perlucidalis*, *Stenoptilia pterodactyla*, Barred Hook-tip, Round-winged Muslin and Herald.

**The end of the month saw Rob's last night with us and after much discussion between the three of us** it was decided that Alan should go to the moth night at Snitterfield Bushes, but merely to assist the others and not to trap himself. So he joined Martin, Peter, Jean, Ieuan and Nigel and helped where he could. There was the usual entertaining banter on the long trawl around the seven traps. There was little wind and despite the sky being clear **it didn't feel too cool, so it took quite a while to get round** as there was a lot to see. It made Alan around half an hour later leaving than he had intended, but he had enjoyed being out with the mothers again. The final tally for the night was 132 species with eleven being newly recorded for the site. They included *Gelechia rhombella*, *Hedya salicella*, *Cydia fagiglandana*, Devon Carpet, Barred Rivulet, Vapourer, Grey Dagger and Knot Grass.

## August

Quite a bit of organising had gone into the first trip of the month to Abbey Farm. Farmer Jon Slee had wanted somebody to give a talk on moths to various interested parties and Alan knew nobody **better than Pete Cranswick to fill that roll. He'd agreed to come up from Gloucestershire, which prompted Val to want to go desperately as she'd missed out seeing his brilliant talk at Slimbridge for the past two years.** The news that Val was going prompted Roger Ward to make the trip over from Norfolk and John Finlay to travel down from the North East. They joined Pete, Peter and Anna Ryder as the recorders who set up traps tonight. Chris had also come along to see Val. Everyone was as pleased to see her as she was to see them. Alan sorted her out a seat in the barn ready for when Pete got underway. The room was full to overflowing as Pete enthralled us with his moth talk. Everyone was thoroughly impressed and a number of the guests were inspired to ask if the mothers could come to their property at sometime in the future and record some moths. Even Farmer Jon **was surprised and delighted by how well it all went. Val was also delighted to have heard Pete's talk for the first time in three years. After the talk Alan got chatting by one of Anna's traps and Chris took the opportunity of reading Val another chapter of this year's book, which she thoroughly enjoyed.** By the time Alan had returned to the car and Val was ready to head home all the mothers had been by and wished Val well. On a cool feeling night the eight traps had produced records for 117 species with fourteen of them being newly added to the site list. They included *Argyresthia semifusca*, *Caryocolum fraternella*, *Epinotia tenerana*, Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet, Scalloped Oak, Chocolate-tip, Southern Wainscot and Straw Underwing. Although tired when she got home Val was in agreement with everyone else that the night had been a great success. Many thanks to all those who travelled some distance to contribute to a memorable night.

The time had come when we had to make some difficult decisions. **Val didn't want Alan to stop going on moth nights and he didn't really want to stop either. So after much discussion, many a** contingency plan made and with no little bravery on both sides, it was decided that Alan should go on his first proper moth night in a month and leave Val on her own to see if she could cope. Alan had a tortuous journey down to Kineton and arrived five minutes late. After checking in at the gate he was told everyone else was waiting by the missile! That always brings a smile and so lightened his mood a bit. After checking in through the second gate the convoy of Alan, Martin, Pete, Peter and Chris set off for the Dead Elms Wood area. There was an extra part that needed checking out to see if it would be a good spot for some traps. As it was being investigated two Barn Owls were disturbed from their perching points and flew off in front of them. The wind was a factor tonight and so it was decided that Martin would shelter behind the mature hedge and run his traps there while **the rest took refuge in and around Dead Elm's Wood. With everything up and running it** was time for refreshments and the usual catch up chat. Chris told a very funny story involving a barge and some false teeth, which we will not go into any further here! Ask Chris if you want the full grizzly details! It was a reasonable night weather-wise and the traps were moderately busy. On the first tour of the traps the list built fairly quickly and there was always something interesting to see. One of them was a strange looking Rabbit Moth (*Ypsolopha sequella*) but it was beige instead of black and white. Luckily Martin had seen *Ypsolopha vittella* once before as it was a new species to the rest of us. **It was decided it would become known as the Hare Moth, but we don't think it will stick like the Rabbit Moth has for us, as it seems unlikely we'll come across it very** often. It was then back for more refreshment and daft tales before going on a second round of the six traps. On reaching **Martin's** furthest one he counted it and the rest of us then headed back to count our own. The final tally of 160 species was very pleasing especially as 38 of them were new for the site. Some of the new species were *Caloptilia semifascia*, *Phyllonorycter tristrigella*, *Coleophora coracipennella*, *Depressaria douglasella*, *Depressaria sordidatella*, *Bryotropha basaltinella*, *Cnephasia pumicana*, *Acrobasis suavella*, Purple Thorn, Sallow Kitten and Double Lobed. It proved a very productive night. To round it off all Alan had to do was get home and find out that Val was OK. Thankfully she was and so he could then go and count the garden trap with a relieved smile.

Having been at a gig the night before Alan wanted to stay and keep an eye on Val to make sure she recovered OK. That meant he missed out joining Keith, Chris and Pete on the scheduled moth night at Alvecote Wood. However, Pete has done **a brilliant report of the night's events.**

"A much quieter night than of late, probably due to the rain all day followed by a clear moon filled sky and nagging wind. It was also not helped by those pesky Hornets deciding to put in an appearance. The first **tour of the traps revealed 20 or so Hornets in Keith's trap**, but we valiantly went about ID'ing the moths outside the trap and what we could safely see whilst avoiding the Hornets. We then switched off his trap and left the Hornets to disperse whilst checking out the other traps. Chris was next and he was hornet free, however he seemed to have attracted all the local midges and the biggest slug you have ever seen. He did have a Bordered Beauty to compensate. I had brought 2 traps and my Actinic was also clear of Hornets. However, there was an unusual Maiden's Blush, which had us checking the books but after ruling out "new to science" we decided it was probably just a strange form. My 50w MV had attracted 3 Hornets, which were busy devouring what I think was an *Agriphila straminella*, **but no post mortem was held so it didn't** make the count. On returning to "base" we found that whilst some of the hornets had obligingly bugged off there was still a hardcore contingent of about 10 who had decided to settle in for the night, so we potted them all and moved the trap about 20 feet (that should fool them!) before switching back on to give Keith a chance of getting a few more moths. Time for a breather and cuppa...and watch a couple of bats **hunt over Keith's trap! It really wasn't his night and his list will** reflect that. Also the relocation of the trap didn't fool the Hornets and there were soon 5 or 6 back for more. We decided to leave them to it and just record what we could. On the plus side we somehow remained dry and warm when many places seemed to get some very heavy showers." The final tally of 54 species included five new species for the wood. Apart from Bordered Beauty the other four were *Monopis weaverella*, Honeysuckle Moth, *Cochylis hybridella* and *Agriphila selasella*.

Val had invited one of her friends round to keep her company for part of the evening while Alan headed down to Sun Rising where he was joined by Peter, Pete, Chris and Nigel for what turned into a very surprising night. **Knowing what a 'frost pocket' it can be**, being there on a warm night is a rare event. This would prove to be one of those rare events. Emma arrived to say "Hello" while we were all setting up and left just before the switch on. With a mild Southerly breeze blowing across the grounds I decided to put one of the traps out in the middle of the grassland and hope for the best. **When the lights went on the temperature was an incredible 20.8°C. With no great need for shelter** the seven traps were well spread for a change and they really produced. The first tour of them took over two hours, as there was so much to see. During a break for refreshments Alan **asked Pete and Peter if they would consider taking over Val's 'tea shop' as it had laid unused** for far too long. After a short discussion they agreed to give it a go, which Alan knew would please Val enormously. A second round of the traps was undertaken with everyone trying to be a bit quicker than last time. Then it was decided to start counting up. There were some large counts of some species amongst the 118 recorded. *Agriphila tristella* won with 174 but surprisingly, Brimstone Moth with 169 beat Small Square-spot into third commonest species of the night by one individual. Dusky Thorn also managed an impressive total of 52. Almost 1,500 moths were counted and 32 species were added to the site list on an exceptional night at Sun Rising. Yet another site had been found for *Ypsolopha horridella* whilst *Agonopterix purpurea*, *Mirificarma mulinella*, *Mompha langiella*, Maple Pug, Feathered Gothic, Bulrush Wainscot and Gold Spot were amongst the new species for the site. So it was a **long but extremely productive night... and about time** some of would say!

With Val having visitors during the day it was only after much discussion that Alan made a very late decision to head down the M5 and help Pete Cranswick out with the public moth night at Slimbridge **WWT Centre. He wouldn't run any traps, but did take a lot** of pots! Thankfully he had a trouble free journey and was delighted to see that our regular spot had a moth trap in it. Pete was unaware that Alan would be showing up and when he popped his head round the door of the lecture theatre to let Pete know that he had, **Pete's face** lit up in grateful relief! That is a reaction Alan will never forget! **When Alan saw how many people were sitting in the theatre listening to Pete's talk he understood** why. There were around 50 people in attendance and that was at least double the number that could normally have been expected on a good night! With none of the other regular recorders being on site either, Pete would have had to try and deal with the crowd on his own! As usual nothing was really ready for the refreshment break and so Alan got to filling up and boiling kettles while Pete finished his talk. It was only when Pete had finished his talk that Alan found out how many and where the traps were set. Paul and Ria were running the one in our usual spot and being quite new **to nothing didn't have the confidence to take some of the group** there on their own. So Alan volunteered to help them out. **The splitting of the group wasn't going to plan as Pete explained he** would take some and Alan would lead the rest. Alan saw around 75% of the group heading his way! **He said, "Hold on a minute, that doesn't seem very even!" Eventually a better balance was achieved** and 'Alan's group' headed out to the reedbed. Alan picked up the bag of pots on the way so the group could catch some moths at the trap and then take them back to look at in more detail while having a cuppa and a biscuit. It all worked well with the highlight being a good-looking Elephant Hawk-moth. **The other group's highlight was a Red Underwing.** For a cool-ish night it was a pretty decent start. After that first round about half the group disappeared home while the rest were ready for another go. Pete and Alan swapped groups and so they got to see different trapping locations and the same process **was undertaken. It's always very satisfying when you have a** genuinely interested group of people to show moths off to and this was especially true tonight. After some more refreshments and looking at the recently arrived species the group dwindled to around **half a dozen. This was still exceptional, as by this time it's normally only the recorders that are left.** Alan thought Pete would be able to manage on his own now (Ha-ha!), and so said his farewells and headed for home very pleased that he had decided **to go. Pete was glad he'd gone and he said to Alan that if he'd told him how many people had turned up he wouldn't have believed him and that** was probably true! Another good journey home was also very welcome and Val was pleased Alan was able to go when he told her about what had happened. Some of the other species that helped impress tonight included Pale Eggar, Canary-shouldered Thorn, **Dog's Tooth**, Burnished Brass and Spectacle.

Val's health was slowly improving after a visit from a breathing physio and the pills were really kicking in now. Even so, after some more daytime visitors Alan decided to be cautious and stay with Val while Nigel and Peter joined Jean for another mothing session at her place. The weather was good and with plenty of moths, a lot of the time was spent at the five traps identifying the newest arrivals. Peter still managed to fit in **a couple of slices of Jean's delicious cake at some point though!** Jean also accommodated a couple of interested locals and they enjoyed seeing the variety of shape, size and colour of the moths. The list built to a very healthy total of 96 species. Amongst them were *Ypsolopha scabrella*, *Grapholita janthinana*, Brown China-mark, *Adaina microdactyla*, Blood-vein, Purple Bar, Peacock Moth, Dark Arches and Frosted Orange.

## September

With Val getting better daily, Alan decided he could join Martin, Peter, Pete and Scott on the latest trip to Snitterfield Bushes and take a trap too! Once trapping locations were sorted it was time for **the big hand over of 'Val's tea shop'**. Peter was eager to get on with it and created plenty of space in the back of his car in readiness. Alan had filled the flasks so as normal a service as possible could be resumed. Obviously everybody missed Val, but they were delighted to have a nice cuppa and some yummys while catching up on recent events. So much so that it was quite a while before a tour of the traps was undertaken. It was a reasonable night and the moths arrived in steady fashion. After another tea break Alan decided he would pack up. This meant Scott would have to pack one of his traps up too, **as it was plugged in to Alan's generator**. Due to it being in the coolest and most **exposed position there weren't any complaints**. Once that was completed the two traps that had been set up over the road were next to be tallied, while Alan concentrated on doing his own. Just as Alan arrived at the gate the others came back from packing up the two traps and so he could say his farewells and set off for home. The final result was 75 species with seven being newly recorded for the wood. They were *Phyllonorycter viminiella*, *Scrobipalpa costella*, *Celypha striana*, *Agriphila geniculea*, *Amblyptilia punctidactyla*, Rosy Rustic and Bulrush Wainscot. Amongst the other species recorded were *Epermenia falciformis*, *Carpatolechia fugitivella*, August Thorn and Olive.

With Val on the up Alan was able to do the scheduled night at Weethley Wood. He found Pete, Peter and Jean waiting when he arrived. That left just one more expected arrival and Patrick Clement duly appeared shortly after everyone had negotiated the entrance and parked. With trapping locations **agreed and everything set up and switched on it was time for the grand unveiling of the "Under New Management" sign for the 'tea shop'!** It was certainly well appreciated and used throughout the evening and so the future looked promising for the new managers. A round of the six traps **instigated the usual fun banter but Patrick wasn't quite used to it these days, as he generally goes mothing with more "serious" people!** Ha-ha! During the next tea break we received a visit from a **couple of the Estates Rangers**. It turned out they hadn't received the message that the moth recorders would be there, as the person who normally deals with it was on holiday. They'd received a call about poachers in the wood and so had to come and check it out. They were fine about it only being us, but a little upset that their evening had been disturbed and a wasted trip made, which was understandable. After the Rangers had departed Patrick said he was going to start packing up, as he **would be back out with the "serious people" tomorrow night! At least his reputation as a "lightweight" remains intact!** Alan then helped Jean count and pack up her trap before she headed home just after Patrick. The remaining three traps were visited once more as the cloud had rolled in and moth activity had risen slightly. However, there then came an annoying shower and it was decided to call it a night. As usual, by the time everything was counted and loaded back in the vehicles the shower had passed! It had been a steady night with 63 species recorded. The only new species found was White-shouldered House-moth! Amongst the other species recorded were *Agonopterix ocellana*, *Hypatima rhomboidella*, *Acleris rhombana*, *Eudonia pallida*, Yellow Shell, Scorched Carpet, Centre-barred Sallow and Small Wainscot.

The only concern Alan would have about Val the next time he went on a moth night was she would **survive all the laughing she'd have to cope with!** Chris had volunteered to come and read the book to her, as she couldn't get out mothing herself. The opportunity arose when Alan made his final visit of the year to Sun Rising. Peter and Pete were waiting when he arrived, as were Jason and Farrell Hawkes who had finally managed to find some time to get out on a moth night for a short while. As the weather was way better than expected the traps could go anywhere tonight. It was decided to keep them near the hedges as that was most likely where the moths were resting. Emma & David arrived just after the lights went on.

Val had supervised Alan's **latest** attempt at baking and he handed out a rock cake to each of the attendees and waited for any opinion that would head his way about his efforts. Thankfully, the comments were all positive from the ~~victims~~, **err... we mean lucky recipients! Emma and David** stayed awhile for a chat before making their way back home. On the first tour of the traps Alan had got half way through looking into one of his traps when the lights went out. Jason decided it would be an appropriate time to head home as Farrell had school the following morning. Alan let them out the gate before putting some oil in the generator and there were no further problems. The temperature went up and down as various patches of cloud came and went, but overall it was a **mild night and so there was a steady flow of moths to the traps. The new "management" had the 'tea shop' to themselves for the night and made good use of it too.** By the time everything was loaded back into the vehicles 39 species had been recorded and they contained half a dozen that were new for the site, which were *Eudonia angustea*, Black Rustic, Merveille Du Jour, Brick, Beaded Chestnut and Copper Underwing. They were exactly the type of species Alan had hoped to record before setting out. Alan returned home to find Val had been thoroughly entertained by Chris with his **unique way of reading a book. Alan wonders how many "Swimney Cheapers" there had been!!!**

The final trip of the month was the long awaited return to the Wetland Reserve in Wolvey. It had been over two years since our last visit due to the boardwalk being unsafe. Alan arrived to see **Keith, Martin and site 'newbie' Nigel surveying the newly refurbished boardwalk. Chris and John** Finlay were last to arrive and with such a good turnout it was agreed to run a single trap each, although Martin did put an extra actinic in the churchyard. With everything switched on David Alford wandered over to the wetland to fill us in on all the local news from the past two years. Alan dished **out the remaining rock cakes he'd made and David declined the offer of one, which didn't go** unnoticed by Keith. Suddenly somebody noticed that some of the lights had gone out. Martin, Chris and John went and investigated. Keith was desperately hoping that Alan and Nigel would have gone too as he loves rock cakes and had his eye on that last one. Alan had sussed his plan and in the end Keith had to break it in half and share it with Nigel! It was the old problem of low oil in the generator that had caused the problem. A small realignment and all was well again. When everyone was **back at Keith's 'tea shop'**, Chris decided to read us some very cringe worthy verses from a different book. There were many a moan and a groan, but undeterred he made us suffer a second one! It was all a bit of fun and passed some time on a clear and cold evening. **It didn't take long to count up tonight but considering the conditions 27** species was a fair return. Both *Paraswammerdamia nebulella* and *Acleris emargana* were newly recorded for the site, so it was a worthwhile venture. Other species found included *Caloptilia rufipennella*, *Acleris sparsana*, Dark Sword-grass, **Blair's** Shoulder-knot and Pink-barred Sallow.

## October

It had been a cool and showery day and so Alan set off for Kineton with low expectations of a good nights nothing. He arrived to find Nigel in the gatehouse getting his passes and by the time Alan had done the same Martin, Pete and Peter had shown up. With everybody present and correct we **proceeded to check point two before heading out to Dead Elms Wood again. With Nigel's extra couple of traps we thought he would fill the gap between Martin's traps and the rest of us** in the wood. Umbrellas were set up along with the traps as **we had a feeling the showers hadn't quite done** with us yet. That proved true, but when they did come they were only light and with large gaps in between. With everything switched **on the 'tea shop' was set up and we thought we'd seen the** highlight of the night when a Barn Owl was seen sitting on a fence post. However, on a tour of the eight traps we were delighted to find moths inhabiting all of them. In fact I think every trap contained at least one Barred Sallow. There were questions about why Nigel had managed to park in the middle of the road instead of neatly in the lay-by behind Martin. He tried to explain that there **had been a large lake in residence when he'd arrived. With no evidence of aforementioned lake** he did take a bit of ribbing about his idea of parking! Early on the tour a Red-green Carpet had been seen and Alan new that was new for the site, so everything else came as a bonus. After that first round Martin and Nigel got to work on finding moth leaf-mines. It was a good time of year to search **for evidence of species that don't often seem to come to the traplights. They did a spectacular job** too and added 30 new species to the site list. So from such an uninspiring beginning to the night's efforts, it was turning out to be quite productive. A second round of the traps added further to the list and eventually 22 species of adult moths were recorded with nine being new for Kineton. Amongst them were *Acleris sparsana*, Deep-brown Dart, Green-brindled Crescent and Yellow-line Quaker. Overall I think we can safely say it was a very worthwhile visit and that our leaving much later than originally had been anticipated was totally justified.

## November

It was a poor month for moths, which was just as well. Val was in better shape than she had been for months and it was just in time for the gig season. We had many shows to go to and bands to accommodate at home throughout the month. Val came through it all absolutely brilliantly and she had a great time, which pleased everyone no end.

## December

Just when you think the mothing year is done some fool arranges another one! Only joking. We had been trying to find a window of opportunity for a few years to get over to Alvecote Wood and record December Moth, as it would not only be new for the wood but for the hectad too! Martin had identified such a window and so Alan joined him, Keith, Chris and Pete in the quest. With a choice of trapping spots due to reasonable weather we hoped to be successful. The lights went on just before 4:30 pm (yes, I know, just after breakfast, what are we thinking!) and then there was an embarrassment of riches due to Pete and Keith providing their own versions **of the 'tea shop'**. This meant the only time anybody wanted to do a round of the traps was because cold had got to them by sitting there too long! However, a tour proved most productive with a lot of Winter Moth being found on the tree trunks by torchlight. At least half a dozen of the weird looking wingless females were also encountered and then the first December Moth in a trap was seen. Job done! We did give it a bit longer and allowed the moths the chance to build in number. In the end we managed six species and December Moths ended up just scraping into double figures. Mottled Umber put on a good showing with their endless variety. As always it was an entertaining evening and a good way to finish off the year.

## Summary

So how do we try and sum up a year like 2016. Difficult seems to understate it somewhat. Managing **the balancing act about when to go mothing and when not to go due to Val's health was taxing** to say the least. Thankfully, we have both come through some very worrying times over the summer months and as this is written Val is doing fine and looking forward to still doing what she can in 2017. As for the moths, the undoubted event of the year was the Diamond-back Moth invasion at the back end of May. A truly incomprehensible number of that species must have covered the whole of the British Isles. I doubt whether such a set of circumstances will align themselves for a repeat anytime soon, but who knows. On a personal level, we would like to thank all those who continued to **do the moth nights we'd** arranged, despite our absences on occasion. Thank you also for the continuous good wishes that we have received throughout this difficult year.

**As we always say "Mothing is never dull!"**

## Clarification

All species mentioned in the text have been adults. No leaf-mines or cases etc. have been included unless specified. Difficult to identify species will have been confirmed by dissection.

## Further Information

For information on Moth Nights or Butterfly Walks in Warwickshire see the Butterfly Conservation web site at: <http://www.warwickshire-butterflies.org.uk>

Or contact David Brown on 01789 840295 or Keith Warmington on 01827 715873

## Moth Nights 2016

Date	Site	Traps	Species	Individuals
24/01/2016	Chaddesley Wood, Worcestershire	4	14	188
12/03/2016	Chaddesley Wood, Worcestershire	8	30	944
18/03/2016	Snitterfield Bushes, Warwickshire	7	19	223
02/04/2016	Weethley Wood, Warwickshire	8	23	664
12/04/2016	Chaddesley Wood, Worcestershire	4	23	164
15/04/2016	Middleton Hall, Warwickshire	5	4	19
21/04/2016	Sun Rising NBG, Warwickshire	4	10	35
22/04/2016	Alvecote Wood, Warwickshire	6	6	77
30/04/2016	DSDA Kineton, Warwickshire	5	3	7
03/05/2016	<b><i>Cranhill, Warwickshire</i></b>	7	9	34
20/05/2016	Middleton Hall, Warwickshire	9	49	112
27/05/2016	Abbey Farm, Wolvey, Warwickshire	6	26	73
30/05/2016	Chaddesley Wood, Worcestershire	4	66	452
03/06/2016	Focus Optics, Corley, Warwickshire	10	97	1,070
05/06/2016	Weeley, Essex	3	27	108
06/06/2016	Weeley, Essex	3	34	85
07/06/2016	Weeley, Essex	3	76	616
09/06/2016	Oversley Wood, Warwickshire (NMN1)	20	190	1,522
14/06/2016	Sun Rising NBG, Warwickshire	4	74	501
17/06/2016	Monkspath Meadow, Warwickshire	3	66	258
28/06/2016	Weethley Wood, Warwickshire	5	98	424
01/07/2016	River Arrow LNR, Warwickshire	6	62	201
08/07/2016	<b><i>Alvecote Wood, Warwickshire</i></b>	7	166	1,723
12/07/2016	Breakheart Quarry, Gloucestershire	13	110	532
16/07/2016	Windmill Hill, Nuneaton, Warwickshire	6	196	1,229
20/07/2016	<b><i>Peastockings Meadows, Warwickshire</i></b>	5	208	1,830
30/07/2016	Snitterfield Bushes, Warwickshire	7	132	801
05/08/2016	Abbey Farm, Wolvey, Warwickshire	8	117	815
11/08/2016	DSDA Kineton, Warwickshire	6	160	875
19/08/2016	<b><i>Alvecote Wood, Warwickshire</i></b>	4	54	170
23/08/2016	Sun Rising NBG, Warwickshire	7	118	1,478
26/08/2016	<b><i>Slimbridge WWT Centre, Gloucestershire</i></b>	6	48	N/A

Date	Site	Traps	Species	Individuals
28/08/2016	<i>Cranhill, Warwickshire</i>	5	96	742
02/09/2016	Snitterfield Bushes, Warwickshire	8	75	528
08/09/2016	Weethley Wood, Warwickshire	6	63	384
20/09/2016	Sun Rising NBG, Warwickshire	5	39	298
23/09/2016	Wetland Reserve, Wolvey, Warwickshire	7	27	97
01/10/2016	DSDA Kineton, Warwickshire	8	22	127
08/12/2016	Alvecote Wood, Warwickshire	6	6	170
TOTALS	*Note: (Species is average per night)	248	*68	19,576

BC Warwickshire Branch Moth Nights 2017  
Leader – David Brown

Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> May 8:00 pm	Sutton Park, Sutton Coldfield
Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> June 8:30 pm	Borden Hill Nursery, Stratford upon Avon
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> June 8:30 pm	Bubbenhall Wood & Meadow
Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup> July 8:30 pm	Bubbenhall Wood & Meadow
Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> August 8:00 pm	Rowley Fields, Welcombe Hills, S upon A

Full details including map references, meeting/parking locations and target species will be available on the Butterfly Conservation – Warwickshire web site. If you are considering attending one of these events please contact David Brown directly on 01789 840295 or 07977 379330 or e-mail: [davidcgbrown@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:davidcgbrown@yahoo.co.uk).

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1794 Sharp-angled Carpet



1799 Winter Moth



1804 Barred Rivulet



1842 Plain Pug



1906 Brimstone Moth



1926 Pale Brindled Beauty



2186 Powdered Quaker



2258 Chestnut



2312 Olive



2422 Green Silver-lines



2442 Beautiful Golden Y



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