

Lynn Fomison's Page - Reserves Latest

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Butterfly Conservation

Lynn Fomison is our Reserves' Officer who is employed by the branch to oversee policy regarding the management of our reserves and to ensure that they provide a suitable habitat for the conservation of butterflies and moths. From time to time she has announcements to make to the members of the branch and this web site is one of the suitable mediums to ensure that these quickly reach those with computers.

Thursday, 16th December

On Wednesday 15th December conservation work was undertaken at Yew Hill to positively help one of the reserves less common species - White-letter Hairstreak. A few have managed to continue breeding on elm trees on the bridleway by the reserve. But all of the old trees have died & when the suckers that have created new trees get to a certain size they die too. It is pleasing to report that the Hampshire Branch project to provide trees resistant to Dutch Elm Disease, which is organised by Andrew Brookes, has supplied 7 *Ulmus LUTECE@nanguen*. This variety was bred in the Netherlands and patented in France where it has been adopted for general planting. It combines hardiness with good growth on well drained soils. Young trees at Great Fontley Farm were found hosting larvae of the Comma butterfly and the Grey Dagger moth. The trees at Yew Hill were planted by Ivan Arnold, Jenny Mallett and myself. Old elders had been cleared from several areas the previous day by two volunteers working with me. The elms have fitted in well & the whole area looks transformed.



The soil was very dry so they got well watered in with buckets of water. We hope the trees will thrive and provide our WLHS with a secure future.

Yew Hill - Hilltop: This field is currently being grazed by 4 bullocks and heifers. You can see from the photo below that some of the grass is quite coarse - in theory grazing should improve it. The old hedgerow is a mass of berries and birds abound in Hilltop and in the field next door but one where there are outdoor pigs. Lovely to hear the lapwings!



Saturday, 11th December

The winter is a busy time for conservation work parties on nature reserves. It is at this time that vital projects to improve the habitat for wildlife are undertaken. Butterfly Conservation have a 55 acre reserve at Magdalen Hill

Down Winchester and Sunday 5th December saw the start of a new joint venture with Hampshire Probation Service. A group of seven offenders, from the north of the county, fulfilling community service orders undertook scrub clearance work under the supervisor of Jerry Payne. Lynn Fomison and Jenny Mallet of Butterfly Conservation were on hand to explain why the work was necessary and what conservation benefits it would achieve. Future sessions are planned. See the picture below and click on it for a larger image. Steve Howell Placement Manager Community Service North, commented on behalf of the Probation Service, "It is really helpful to us when charitable organisations provide demanding but fulfilling tasks for offenders to undertake. The offenders are able to learn new skills and others benefit from the work that they do." Lynn Fomison Reserves Officer for Butterfly Conservation endorsed these comments, adding "We always have great ambitions of the work we want to achieve each winter because we know what we do will benefit wild flowers butterflies and other wildlife. To have a group of hard working individuals along in addition to our regular volunteers means we are really able to implement ambitious plans for habitat improvement."



Thursday, 25th November

Wednesday 24th November, Bentley Station Meadow

It is pleasingly to report we had an excellent work party today. The weather was mild & did not rain. Ideal for the job of tidying up two large-ish turkey oaks and a few smaller diseased ones which had been felled by a contractor early that morning. This selective thinning of the turkey oaks in the small copse by the railway line is now a completed project. It was funded by Defra and was work recommended by Ken Willmott to allow more light into this area. We are seeking to encourage more violets to grow in the dappled shade that this area provides. I certainly saw a number of courting couples in there this summer. Silver-washed Fritillaries' that is!

I first advocated clearance work in this area five years ago because it was severely overgrown with brambles. A programme of regular cutting has reduced the bramble and some wild flowers both primrose plants, and seed - Jack by the hedge and birdsfoot trefoil have been introduced. (NB. This area of the reserve is not in the SSSI.) Those who know this area well will recognise that a real transformation is taking place.

However the work party still got an amazing surprise. As we were collecting up logs Sue Clark & June Bailey simultaneously each spotted a Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*. I saw a third and more were soon noticed. This led to Janet Jones joining in the Great Helleborine hunt. 42 were initially found but the total quickly reached 68.

How pleased Peter Beale would have been when he was warden. This is an excellent example of "Letting in the Light" and shows that conservation work WORKS!

Also today Patrick with the help of a volunteer cut brambles down in the meadow and these were eagerly eaten by the three remaining cattle.

BSM - More news

For some time we have been expressing our concern to Network Rail about plans to extend the platform in a northerly direction from Bentley station. The platform would have been visible from the reserve, especially its lights. A letter has now been received saying these plans have been shelved and that the problem of Bentley's short platform will be addressed by selective door opening.

Wednesday, 17th November

See the picture below. At Bentley Station Meadow this year we have a creamy cow called Bambi with a large black and white calf Hogwarts, the Gloucester (brown, white stripe) is Gerald, the small brown cow is Gwyneth who has a tiny calf called Hiccup!! They are pictured here from right to left. The area where the cows are grazing had been cut several times in the summer to control scrub. Contrast this with the taller vegetation containing blackthorn & birch regrowth. This will be cut down soon with a brushcutter but summer cutting is a better option. Except it does mean we lose some flowers that year!



Thursday, 11th November

Bentley Station Meadow 30th October:

We had a very successful work day at the reserve - volunteers worked at the northern end of the meadow on the scrub blocks. We were also helped by a team from Probation Department - individuals serving community service orders, along with two supervisors. They cleared up several fallen/felled trees.

As you will see from the photos below the cattle were intrigued by proceedings or maybe it was lunch that attracted them! They were taken by Ken Jones; click on them for larger images. The guy in maroon is Steve Howell, the Placement Manager, Community Service North. He wrote to me ' Thanks for a great day out Saturday I hope everything was satisfactory from your point of view. The offenders did enjoy it as well, they were quite animated about the project on the way home. It does make a difference if they are aware of why they are doing something. '

Yew Hill 10th November:

We were very low on numbers of helpers but nevertheless managed to achieve clearance of scrub re-growth from flower rich areas. Next WP is **Wednesday 15th December**.



Tuesday, 12 October

Lynn reports that the cattle arrived at Bentley Station Meadow on Friday. There are two cows with calves and another cow. They have been provided by Millers Ark Animals as usual.

Thursday, 23rd September

On Monday 20th September we undertook an important job at Yew Hill. The area of grassland which is managed by cutting (in front of reservoir) which is very rich in species was mown & the cuttings collected and then spread on the new field Hilltop to encourage diversity in this former agricultural field. It is going to be a very interesting exercise - one we shall monitor. Already John Arnott from Merrist Wood College has collected some base data on species present. Some funding for hay spreading is provided by Defra in our Stewardship agreement. The work was done really expertly by Serco and the picture below shows Charlie and the Charterhouse cut & collect machine in action. Click on picture for a larger image.



Tuesday, 7th September

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION - EVENTS AT RESERVES 2004/5

Work Parties.

Duration 10am to 4pm. helpers most welcome for part of day. Every odd hour helps. It really does! Enquiries Lynn Fomison 01962 772251.

Saturday 30th October Bentley Station Meadow. Make a Difference Day. Conservation work day aimed at new volunteers, but old regulars desperately needed too! 10am Meet in station car park or join us on the reserve.

Wednesday 10th November Yew Hill. 10am . Meet at end of old Kennels Lane or join us on the reserve.

Wednesday 3rd November Magdalen Hill Down. Meet at the top of the track by cemetery to the extension or park opposite cemetery.

Wednesday 24th November Bentley Station Meadow. Meet as 30th October.

Sunday 5th December Magdalen Hill Down. Meet on original reserve. Entrance on A31. Park in lay-bys near Chilcomb turn Grid reference 504 291. Scrub clearance with South Downs Volunteer Rangers.

Wednesday 15th December Yew Hill. As 10th November.

Wednesday 12th January. Magdalen Hill Down. Meet at the top of the track by cemetery to the extension. .

Extra work parties are likely to be added to this list. We know the regulars who attend work parties or who come & help us at other times and we will contact you as more dates, particularly at Magdalen Hill, are fixed. If anyone would like to be added to this list please contact Lynn.

Wednesday, 11th August

AS FROM 11TH AUGUST, 2004 ALL PICTURES THAT INCLUDE ADULTS AND/OR CHILDREN HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THIS PAGE UNTIL NATIONAL BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION HAVE AN AGREED POLICY ON THEIR INCLUSION ONTO WEB SITES or WE HAVE WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM THE PARTICIPANTS.

Monday, 9th August

Educational Opportunities: At our reserves we provide a wide range of educational opportunities from walks for the public, to help them to learn to identify butterflies and to see the habitat that supports so many species, to visits from specialist groups like the Querkett Microscopical Club, based at the Natural History Museum, who visited yew Hill on 17th July. In addition to groups we afford facilities to individual students and this summer one person we are helping is Kate Fagan. She is doing a PhD on calcareous grassland reversion schemes. She is studying 40 different sites and I met her at MHD Extension on 6th August when she was recording ants visiting bait along a tape measure.



Thursday, 5th August

The public walk at Yew Hill yesterday was well attended with over 40 people present. Numbers were swelled as we were joined by Radio Solent presenter Sylv Willoughby (bottom right on the picture below) and her gang (listeners keen on walking in nice country places). Our walk was their third one this year and they found the flowers and butterflies really impressive. Comments ranged from " A well conducted and informative walk" to "Fascinating never seen such a variety of butterflies" . Which made me think how those of us who are always visiting good butterfly sites take for granted the treasures that we see and forget that it is a novel experience for many people. Our reserves team works hard during the summer to host visits at reserves, both public walks and special visits for groups - well over twenty have taken place at the three reserves. The period from mid July to mid August is a great time to see butterflies. 44 people attended a walk led by Brian Fletcher on the 31st July at Magdalen Hill Down and our next event there is on Wednesday 11th August. See events.

Thursday, 29th July

Ragwort

We have to clear ragwort from Magdalen Hill Down for the sake of the good health of the suckler cows that graze there. The job is virtually completed this year thanks to help from Wednesday Conservation Volunteers, Alresford Young Farmers Club and Hampshire Conservation Volunteers, plus of course help from individual members.

Magdalen Hill - North Down

Work has started on the grassland recreation scheme to the north of our reserve. The site is fenced off for health & safety reasons but work can be seen from the road or from parts of our reserve. This is a Hampshire County Council scheme to create 55 acres of habitat in place of an arable field and once completed will be managed by BC. It is an exciting and imaginative scheme incorporating areas scraped of top soil and some deeper chalk pits too. Charles Flower is the consultant on the grassland creation and he has harvested seed from Salisbury Plain. Needless to say we welcome this development which will expand the butterfly habitat at Magdalen Hill Down.

Saturday, 24th July

Report of visit to Cholderton Estate 21st July 2004

One of the things that helps us to manage our reserves well both in terms of providing information and inspiration is visiting other sites.

To this end I arranged a visit which was attended by a number of members of the Reserves Sub Committee, along with reserve volunteers, Charles Flower (our consultant on wild flower growing) and Andy & Linda Barker to see the downland owned by Mr Henry Edmunds. He is legendary in farming & conservation circles, with his two and a half thousand estate providing both a wonderful habitat and viable organic farming enterprise.

The first area of downland had been a dense pine wood with only a carpet of pine needles. It has been gradually cleared & thinned over the last twenty years & is now rich in orchids, cowslips and other downland flowers. We even saw bastard toadflax there.

We reached a second area of downland by walking through a recently harvested hay meadow. It is the practice to leave a wide margin at the edge uncut and also a very wide strip down the centre of the field. Because manure had been stacked in this area it was rich in nettles. Both of the uncut areas had many flowering plants & butterflies including Dark Green Fritillaries, were plentiful on greater knapweed. It was interesting to see a sainfoin (old French for Holy Grass) which is of great historical significance having been grown locally for many centuries. It is a rich nectar plant & helps to maintain an amazing diversity of bees at the Estate. This simple technique of leaving portions uncut ensured that there was good habitat for the butterflies and other insects.

The third area of downland we saw had been in stewardship for 15 years. It was truly amazing having been an arable field previously, but now displaying carpets of thyme. Horse shoe vetch has been introduced as plug plants and protected from the rabbits.

It was most interesting to see a range of downland which had been encouraged in different ways and we are most grateful to Mr Henry Edmunds for sparing the time to give us a guided tour and the benefit of his long experience.

See his web site www.sustainable-cholderton.co.uk .

Sunday, 18th July

Bentley Station Meadow - recent visits:

Sunday 11th July - Although the weather was not sunny it was warm and the butterflies were really co-operative. 12 species were seen including a Holly Blue. Particularly memorable for visitors were 4 or 5 sightings of Silver washed fritillaries including one female and three Essex Skippers which even to the naked eye were very obviously Essex with the black undersides to the tips of their antennae. Ringlets were present in great numbers. 12 visitors attended the walk several of whom were new to looking at butterflies. See photo below.

Thursday 15th/Friday 16th - Year 3 from Bentley School visited the meadow in two groups. We were studying why the meadow was such a good home for butterflies and moths. The children enjoyed walking through the flower filled meadow & seeing so many butterflies. We are going to try & use what they learnt in the meadow to improve the school grounds for butterflies when I visit the school on Monday.

Next Public event at the meadow is a walk for children & adults on Tuesday 27th 10.30am. All welcome. Any groups wishing to visit are invited to contact me on 01962 772251.

Sunday, 13th June

Around 20 people enjoyed this morning's walk at Yew Hill Reserve. The walk was timed to catch orchids at their peak - and we did. Visitors were thrilled to see numerous bee orchids and Greater butterfly orchids, hundreds of fragrant and just a few pyramidal starting to come out.

We saw lots of Common Blues, Meadow Browns, a couple of Small Tortoiseshells, a female Brimstone - obviously an old girl still lingering on from last summer! Large Skippers danced rapidly over the flowers. Equally fast moving were several Painted Ladies!

It was particularly pleasing that a lot of non-members were in attendance. Several had come in response to the entry in the HCC walks booklet but many were there as a result of a letter from Linda Barker. The Branch had been asked by Head Office to mount a special event for the hundreds of people who had been participating in the Garden Butterflies Count for the last few years. Linda & I discussed a suitable response & Linda agreed with our Chairman that she would send out a letter & a leaflet detailing all our walks (from June onwards) so that they could come along to various field trips to see butterflies in the wild. Our visitors today were thrilled by the special nature of Yew Hill. Four people saw a Marbled White. Although we looked carefully we could not see the Small Heath, Small Copper & Small Blues that Pat Fleet had seen last Wednesday. But with a Green Veined white and a Speckled Wood down the bridle path a good selection of species had been seen.

Saturday, 5th June

Wednesday 2nd June

Our reserves are a great educational resource! A group of parents and children had the enjoyable experience of seeing around ten species of butterfly and several moths today. There was a profusion of Common Blues to the delight of all!

We also saw several Small Blues and this was particularly pleasing as certain of our conservation efforts are directed at encouraging this tiny little butterfly. We are pretty sure it is breeding on both the extension and original reserve. On the extension we have a specially constructed horse shoe of chalk where the kidney vetch is thriving. It has been designed in such a way that new chalk can be added to keep the open habitat that both the KV and SB's need. Below is a picture of the Small Blue taken by Roger Buchanan on the Percy Hobbs Roundabout (click on it for a larger image).



In the evening I led a walk at Bentley Station Meadow - gardeners and land owners from the East Hants Self Sufficiency Group. Although plants and habitat management were the main focus of the visit one sharp-eyed visitor spotted a Common Blue roosting. Peacock & Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars were also found. And the evening birdsong on a still, warm summer's evening was a delight. Many of the group felt inspired to come back to see the flowers and butterflies in July.

Thursday, 20th May

At Magdalen Hill Down we are developing a 'Bare Ground Strategy' - a management plan of which is being produced with the aid of funding from DEFRA. We already have a number of measures on place to achieve the conditions of sparse vegetation adjacent to bare ground that several species seem to need. We noticed that the number of Small Coppers dropped as the vegetation developed on the extension and sorrel ceased to grow in open soil situations. However early signs are that they are picking up. Several have been seen already this year - three by Linda Barker. The photo below was taken at MHD by Roger Buchanan of the one he saw recently. Along with Small Coppers the other species we are seeking to encourage with the BGS are Dingy & Grizzled Skipper and Small Blue. Please report any sightings of these at our reserves.



Tuesday, 18th May

Yew Hill was the venue for a field trip for people to hone their butterfly identification skills. The butterflies were very obliging with 11 species being seen. Dr Andy Barker who had recently run a course on butterfly identification was there to help. Whilst I described to people what sort of conditions butterflies needed to thrive. The magic formula being the four 's' s - sun, shelter, sustenance and sympathy. In this context we looked at foodplants, nectar sources and conservation management issues.

It was most rewarding that 5 Green Hairstreaks were seen - a good example that "Conservation work" works. When we undertake scrub clearance we are always careful to leave suitable dog wood for this species as that is one of its larval foodplants.

Other examples of "Conservation work" works could also be seen. Over the last two winters we had cleared a lot of derelict scrub from along the bridle way. It is now a mass of Jack-by-the-hedge and numerous Orange Tips were observed. We saw numerous Holly Blues which reflect our policy of careful management of ivy on our reserves.

The walk up to Yew Hill took us up the side of an arable field. Interestingly this had not been sprayed with herbicide to control the weeds in the crop. Dr Andy Barker soon spotted a Green-veined White laying on what we think was charlock. He explained to the group that this member of the white family was not a pest as unlike Large & Small White its caterpillars do not feast on the brassicas people grow, but rather it chooses to breed on wild members of the crucifer family.

The photo below shows people taking interest in a day flying moth - the Burnett Companion.

Wednesday, 5th May

On Wednesday April 21st DEFRA held an Agreement Holders Workshop at Magdalen Hill Down. This was aimed and managers with land in or about to go into Countryside Stewardship Schemes.

Despite the wet weather 24 visitors attended the morning session and 12 the afternoon session. The cowslips were particularly good and people could see what a good mix of wild flower plants the sowing had produced on the exte Down was an example of arable reversion at the early stages. On the original reserve we were able to demonstrate scrub management techniques.

Kathy Stearne, Harold Makant & Dr Simon Duffield were DEFRA's representatives and Dr Andy Barker, Lynn Fom Matthews provided the Butterfly Conservation perspective.

Thursday, 29th April

Tuesday 27th April

David Green & Sue Clark gave invaluable help in surveying an area of clear fell in the Forest Enterprise woodland adjacent to Bentley Station Meadow. David was trying to find larvae or feeding damage of Pearl-bordered Fritillary. It was an important task as we are still trying to ascertain if the PBF seen in BSM last May was "natural".

We saw Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells, Brimstones, Holly Blue and Orange-Tips. David found lots of moths - unpronounceable!! Best non-butterfly sightings were common lizards and tree pipit.

Another important reason for the visit was to identify the plants & Sue documented everything we found. There was a good selection of plants including quite a few of value to moths and butterflies. Amazing ! Until 3 years ago it had been a very dense block of conifers.

Ken Willmott & I had met representatives of FE at this area back in the autumn and they are keen to develop it in a way other than just replanting with conifer. We hope that the information we are collecting this year and our assessment of the habitat that is developing will help to steer this project in a beneficial direction. Butterfly Conservation recognises the real importance of working collaboratively with neighbouring land owners and we were pleased to be consulted by Forest Enterprise.

Lynn Fomison.

Wednesday, 28th April

Conservation Work works!

Remember our work party on a private site back in early March, viz. 8th March - well here's the results! Loads of cowslips able to thrive & bloom now that a choking carpet of grass & moss has been removed. (see pics, supplied by Sue Ellis, below & click for larger images).



Tuesday, 27th April

The latest [newsletter for Bentley Station Meadow](#) is now up on site.

Warm sunshine encouraged 13 visitors and 8 species of butterfly to Magdalen Hill Down on Saturday 24th April. I saw Holly Blues, Commas, Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells, Brimstones - the most numerous species, a nice male Orange Tip (How do I know he was nice John Taverner would ask - I am trusting my womanly intuition!). The

highlight was about seven sightings of Green Hairstreak. The last species seen and only identified after a hot pursuit by Terry Hotton was a Green-veined white. Some of the female Brimstones seen at a distance might have been Large Whites but our inclination is to think not. See picture below by Roger Buchanan; click on it for larger image.

Friday, 16th April

Magdalen Hill Down

The photograph below (click on it for larger image) shows that the cowslips which were sown in the seed mix are doing well. They are a lovely sight. But perhaps not for long! This week end 150 black-faced sheep are arriving. They do not eat the cowslips straight away but their presence does have an impact. So why do we graze now? Well, one of the grasses *Arrhenatherum elatius* - False Oat Grass is very strong growing & the sheep grazing in Spring is one of the best ways of controlling it.

There is a walk around the outside of much of the stock fence where the cowslips do really well so it is still worth a visit. Butterflies are not being seen in great numbers but there is a good chance of seeing Green Hairstreak and hopefully Holly Blues and Orange Tips.

There is a public walk on Saturday 24th April - all are welcome.



Thursday, 15th April

Defra are holding an event for holders (and potential holders) of Countryside Stewardship Agreements at Magdalen Hill Down on Wednesday 21st April. Topics to be covered will include wildlife value and management of chalk grassland, arable reversion, grazing management and scrub management. If you wish to attend ring 01483 452050 Moira Cassidy.

Wednesday, 14th April

The spring newsletter for Magdalen Hill Down is now up on this site; [click here to view](#).

Wednesday, 24th March