



British Butterfly Conservation Society

DORSET BRANCH NEWSLETTER



Boloria selene at Powerstock, Dorsetshire.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

Welcome to issue number 2, which I hope that you will enjoy. It seems only the other day that we were hurrying to put together our first issue. The summer has passed so quickly and has been a real non-event for butterfly watchers. Right from the start the weather has been poor, but I do not think that any of us could have predicted the monsoon conditions which we endured for most of July.

These conditions have had an adverse effect on even our most common species and also for many of our rarer breeds such as the Duke of Burgundy and the Silver Spotted Skipper. However there seems to be somewhat of an 'Indian Summer' this October and early November and Red Admirals, Painted Ladies and Small Tortoiseshells were seen at Tyneham on the very sunny weekend of October 29th/30th.

There were some strange sightings earlier in the year. A Queen of Spain Fritillary was reportedly seen at Hengistbury Head, and a Short Tailed Blue was noted in Christchurch. (Does anyone else have knowledge of these sightings?)

Our Field Trips during the summer fared well and at Powerstock Common on June 12th, despite strong winds, we managed to see several Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries and a few Wood Whites, one of which was laying eggs on the bank of a narrow ditch. We all managed to examine the egg at close range after the female had departed. The cover of this Newsletter has been compiled from photographs of Small pearl Bordered's which were taken that day.

At Deadmoor on September 11th the morning group were rewarded with good views of Brown Hairstreak. Needless to say I arrived in the afternoon and despite several good breaks of sun, nothing was to be found. In fact we decided to extend our walk to a marathon trek to the (apparently) nearby Rooksmoor Copse on the advice given in Robert Smith's telephone call to me on the previous day. He had seen one there a few days earlier. The route was exhausting and hard going as the ground was saturated after a few days torrential rain and looked more like a scene from "All quiet on the Western Front". To make things worse, poor weather and darkness were closing in and the threat of impending hypothermia made me wonder about the situation regarding insurance to members of the group lost in action!

The highlight of the meeting for me was when Mike Murless, quite unprompted, decided to halt the exhausted party and recite a tale of intepid adventure and intrigue concerning his recent holiday in Portugal. Apparently he almost ran over an enormous snake whilst motoring on a deserted backroad and when the car halted over the unfortunate serpent it began slithering it's way up the exhaust pipe, through the manifold and into the bottom of Mike's trousers via the accelerator pedal housing. I was only too glad that Mr and Mrs Clarke had wisely turned their children home some half hour earlier as this story would have done wonders to their young minds!

Despite this the meeting was regarded as worthwhile by everybody present and we did see some wonderful flowers in this part of unspoilt countryside. Next time though, we need to go a week earlier in the season.

The Dorchester Show stand was quite successful, and many people showed an interest in our group, especially the flight cages set up by Martin Pirie. In the afternoon Brian Higgs, National Development Officer, materialised quite unexpectedly from Yorkshire to pay us a quick visit on his way to another event in Southern England. Nice to see you again Brian. Thanks must go to Humphries Garden Centre at Bridport for supplying the plants and Terry Jenvey of the New Forest Butterfly Farm for the livestock.

We have had a good response to our call for help in our first newsletter and have received several offers of help which have led to a few additions to the committee, which is now coming together very well.

Firstly, Stephen Hales is now Newsletter Editor and you will probably notice a great improvement in the quality of this newsletter compared to the last. Sarah Bovey has agreed to take on the work of Membership Secretary and has brought an order of efficiency to what was originally organised chaos, run by myself. Simon Beadles has volunteered to help with publicity. Robert Smith is acting as Conservation Officer and is already making valuable contributions to the Group. Bill Shreeves has finally be enticed into the committee as Records Officer and his aim is to bring all the information from his transect walks scheme for the Dorset Reserves under the wing of the BBCS. General trends can then be published in our newsletter. Furthermore we agreed that it would be a good idea to publish a more detailed account of reserve performance annually. This would follow the lines of the Hampshire report. At present we are attempting to raise sponsorship in order that this document might be published for next season. Bill has agreed in principle to co-ordinate the scheme and to summarise the results of walks for this year in this and the next newsletter.

Jean Matthews has decided to stand down from the committee as she feels that she lives and works too far away to help as much as she would like (at least for the present). Martin Pirie also resigned as he is finding his fieldwork for DTNC very time consuming. Martin will still be involved to some extent as he has offered to organise the Dorchester Show stand for us next year, which will now be a Branch, and not a National, concern. To both these members, a big thank you for helping to get the group started.

Lastly, thank you for all your help and support by being members of the group. Subscriptions will be due in April and it will be a crucial time for us as we will then be able to see if our group can be successful in the long term.

FIELD MEETINGS 1989.

These meetings will be confirmed in our Spring Newsletter but are included here to be pencilled into your diaries. Field Meetings start at 10 am for the morning session and 2 pm for the afternoon session. You can choose either or both times if you wish. Always bring a waterproof and wellington boots. These Field Meetings are strictly for members only.

Sunday MAY 28th 1989

Morning session meet at Washers Pit, Stubhampton Bottom. OS Sheet 184 MR;SY 897167. An easy walk for Pearl Bordered Fritillaries. The Forestry Commission are now very interested in conserving this colony here and it does seem as if the branch will be closely involved in monitoring the management plan, which is at last being set up to help stop the decline of this rare woodland species.

The afternoon session will be at Fontmell Down. Meet in the National Trust Car Park. OS Sheet 183 MR; SY886185. A more strenuous walk involving hill walking for Duke of Burgundy Fritillaries which will be led by Bill Shreeves.

Sunday JULY 9th 1989

This event will take place on Portland. Meet outside the Portland Museum. Cars can be parked in Wakeham, Easton. OS Sheet 194 MR; SY696713 . We will be looking for the cretaceous race of the Silver Studded Blue. Walk led by Paul Green and will involve some hill walking and also some steep steps.

Sunday AUGUST 6th 1989

Meet in Tyneham Car Park for a walk across the Army Ranges. OS Sheet 194 MR; SY882802 . We will be looking for Lulworth Skipper. Robert Smith will lead the walk and the Army will provide an escort for us. Our friends from the Hampshire Branch will join us for this meeting. They have promised to host a return meeting in Hampshire at a later date. Some hill walking will be necessary and stout footwear is advised.

FORTHCOMING INDOOR EVENTS.

All indoor events start at 7.30 pm. Entrance fee 50p to members and 70p to non-members. Refreshments are included. Please note though the AGM starts at 2 pm.

Friday January 20th 1989.

At Wimborne Minster Church House. A lecture by Dr Martin Warren from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Furzebrook.

Saturday 25th February 1989.

At St Marys Church Hall, Dorchester. Sarah Skinner, the Dorset Farming and Wildlife Advisor will talk on the role of the County FWAG in Dorset.

Saturday 18th March 1989.

At St Marys Church Hall, Dorchester. Phil Grey will give an illustrated talk on the "Scarcer Butterflies of Dorset"

Saturday 25th March 1989.

The AGM will include a social get together and will be held at the Kingcombe Centre near Toller Porcorum, Dorchester. Come and have a natter over tea and biscuits. Les Clements hopes to have a video film of the Isle of Wight, including Glanville Fritillaries. Possibly a slide show as well if time permits. Bring some of your own slides. The agenda should not take too long but you can always drop in a bit later during the afternoon. Members only.

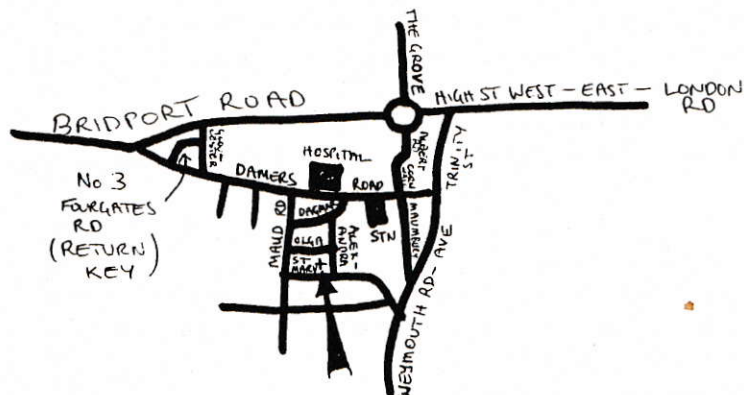
Saturday 22nd April 1989.

At Wimborne Minster Church House where Magaret Brooks will talk on "Butterflies around Britain" and give some inside information on how she compiled her book 'Complete Guide to British Butterflies', which has become a must for many of us since publication in 1982.

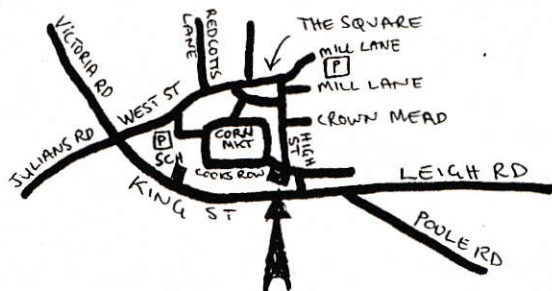
REMINDER

Dr Jeremy Thomas will be giving an informal talk at ST MARYS CHURCH HALL in DORCHESTER on SATURDAY 26TH NOVEMBER . The talk will be on Woodland Fritillaries with special reference to Pearl Bordered Fritillary, a species which is declining in the county. Please note that a follow up Field Meeting to this talk will take place on MAY 28TH 1989

INDOOR MEETING VENUES.



ST MARYS CHURCH HALL, DORCHESTER.



WIMBORNE MINSTER CHURCH HOUSE.

MEMBERS ARE ASKED PLEASE TO PARK CAREFULLY AT THESE VENUES
RESPECTING ACCESS TO PRIVATE HOUSES AND NOT TO BLOCK DRIVEWAYS.

THANK YOU.

The highlight of our calendar for 1988 had to be the lecture given by Gordon Benningfield at the new Council Chamber at Wimborne. After a wonderfully hot summer day that Saturday it was a delight to sit back and relax and listen to Gordon's commentary on his slides, which mainly presented his paintings, but also showing some wonderful landscapes of Dorset and his home in Hertfordshire. He contrasted this with examples of the all too frequent destruction of our countryside.

His passion for the countryside of his childhood is the driving force behind his art, and as he explained, the Dorset landscape is probably the best preserved example of that very different world that he knew as a child. He showed samples of his painting such as the Barn Owl in "Benningfield's Countryside" and informed us that the subject was a well known character to the villagers of Powerstock. Even the gate that the bird sits on is from Powerstock village and appears in several different paintings by the artist!

After an interesting 'question time' when Gordon gave detail regarding the construction and painting of his works, we retired for coffee and a social end to a wonderful evening. I did reflect after the event on Gordon's word - "All I can do is paint, I was never any good at anything else". At a time when his colleague David Shepherd is presenting a T.V. series on World Wildlife in danger I am sure it would be a great success if such an interesting, eloquent and enthusiastic speaker such as Gordon could do a similar series on the countryside of Southern England. I hope he will go from strength to strength as an ambassador for the conservation movement. I am sure those who were there that night will agree that painting is certainly by no means his only talent.

After the event Gordon generously donated an autographed copy of his book "Butterflies" into which he sketched a Small White and dandelion head in seed. He asked for the book to be donated to Branch Funds, so if anybody has an idea on how to achieve the best price for this very special item, besides a raffle or auction, then please let me know. Any Offers???

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BUTTERFLY RECORDS.

MEMBERS ARE REMINDED PLEASE TO FORWARD ALL THEIR BUTTERFLY RECORDS FOR THIS YEAR TO THE D.E.R.C. AT DORCHESTER MUSEUM. YOUR SIGHTINGS ARE NEEDED TO COMPLETE MANY UNFILLED GAPS.

EARLY NEWS FROM THE DORSET TRANSECT WALKS.

So far the records from nine of the sixteen Dorset Transect Walks have been completed. These show that the butterfly of the year seems to have been the Painted Lady. On all nine reserves it showed an above 50% increase on last years numbers, and was also much commoner than it was in 1986. The first sightings were made in the second week of May at Fontmell, West Moors and Powerstock. The last sighting was made in the last week of September at Jerry's Hole. The largest counts this year were made at Lydlinch Common (53) and Hod Hill (43).

Transects.	1986	1987	1988
Fontmell, Hod Hill, Powerstock, Sovell, Hambleton, Stubhampton, West Moors, Lydlinch, Jerry's Hole.	39	15	192

Other butterflies which did well with an above 50% increase on many of the transects were the Large White (8 out of 9); Small Copper and Small White (6 out of 9); Brimstone and Meadow Brown (5 out of 9). Butterflies which fared badly and showed more than 50% declines on many of the transects reported so far were Red Admiral, Orange Tip, and Small Tortoiseshell on 5 of the 9 transects. The most serious crash so far recorded must be the Dark Green Fritillary where 4 of the 5 transects which record them registered a greater than 50% decrease. On Fontmell the count fell from 80 in 1986, to 72 in 1987 and only 4 this year! Tragically no counts of Walls have been registered from any of the 9 reserves and this butterflies inland colonies must now be considered close to elimination.

SAVE THE PEARL BORDERED FRITILLARY

Stubhampton Bottom, near Ashmore, is one of the few Dorset woods where this butterfly has managed to survive. This year the Forsetry Commission has offered to co-ordinate with Dr Martin Warren over a management plan to make sure that they continue to thrive there. Although the area has been covered by transect walks for many years it does not cover the whole area and may not be reflecting a true distribution of the butterfly. What we need to know is whether it has managed to colonise any of the newer clearings made in the wood and also if it using the new rides as flight paths. Can any BBBS members help? Survey work is need over a few weekend dates in 1989. The most likely dates would be;

SAT/SUN MAY 20TH and 21ST;
MAY 27TH and 28TH
JUNE 3RD and 4TH.

If you would be interested in helping please keep one of these dates clear in your diary and telephone Bill Shreeves on Shaftesbury 2587. Special survey forms and maps will be provided. There is also the possibility that Duke of Burgundy Fritillary may be holding out in small numbers and our survey might throw some light on what has happened to it, since it failed to register on our transect walks.

DORSET BRANCH BBCS ACCOUNTS.

In order to fall in line with the BBCS accounting year which ends annually on 30th June, our first accounts cover only the three months up to 30th June 1988.

<u>Receipts.</u>		<u>Expenditure.</u>	
BBCS Grant	£25	First Newsletter	£34
Subscriptions	£107	Other Printing	£46
Donations	£2	Net Surplus	£80
Sales Profits	£6		
Fund Raising	£20		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	£160		£160

The surplus of £80 will go towards the printing of the second newsletter.

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MEMBERS WITH REACH OF WAREHAM WILL BE MOST WELCOME AT PHIL GREY'S ILLUSTRATED TALK ON THE "BUTTERFLIES OF PURBECK" TO BE HELD AT ST MARY'S CHURCH HALL, THE QUAY, WAREHAM. THE DATE IS 25TH NOVEMBER 1988 AT 7.30PM

The butterfly season has been a mixed bag due to the unusual weather pattern; some specimens emerged early and others were late; some fared well and others were adversely affected. Below are notes on some of the Purbeck species.

SATYRIDAE. There is no doubt that this was the year of the Meadow Brown which was recorded in exceptional numbers. They were first seen on the Downs on 4th June and were still pairing and mating and laying in mid-September. The Gatekeeper's appearance in July was short and sweet and the Marbled White had a poor year. Grayling was scarce in its downland habitats but in the heather country it did very well and was active until mid-September. The Wall Brown was well in evidence in both broods, particularly along the coast and was viewed with wonderment by visiting members from Surrey where it has become hard to find.

PIERIDAE. The only migrant butterfly actually seen coming in from the sea this year was the Large White. These migrant specimens appear generally to be more heavily marked than our local broods and are a lovely sight - that is as long as you do not grow cabbages! We had to wait until 30th September before we saw a Clouded Yellow, then just one was seen on the cliff path at Durlleston Head.

HESPERIIDAE. The Lulworth Skipper had a rather sparse year but no doubt it will recover. The first was seen on 25th June and the last, a fresh female, on Challow Hill, Corfe Castle on 10th September. In contrast the Large Skipper had a good season and was widespread for a longer period than usual.

NYMPHALIDAE. The Comma is not numerous in Purbeck and was only seen in singles except in the clearing in Langton West Wood. Here also the Silver Washed Fritillary was a gorgeous sight on the bramble blossom but no Valesina this year and only one sighting of White Admiral. Weather in July and August was poor and the Peacock stayed longer around than usual before hibernation about 10th September. After seeing so many larval nests we hoped to have an abundance of Small Tortoiseshell in the Autumn but this did not materialise.

Of the migrants there was no obvious influx but small numbers of Painted Lady and Red Admiral appeared at the beginning of May. By the time their local progeny were due to emerge they were put asunder by the weather. Of the two species the Painted Lady was the more successful and some superb large specimens were seen; this tends to occur when the larval period is prolonged by cool conditions.

On 1st October a few Red Admirals were seen at sea by a fisherman and for the next two days about fifty were counted at Durleston; there was no obvious direction of movement, in fact there appeared to be a hesitant reverse migration. On 4th October the same fisherman, three miles out, saw three which were very definitely flying South.

LYCAENIDAE. The Holly Blue in April was again in very small numbers but the second brood in August showed some improvement. The Adonis Blue was first seen on Steeple Hill on 16th May and did very well all along the chalk downs Eastward to Ballard Down; the second brood was greeted by appalling weather but both sexes were still evident at the end of September, grabbing what sunny spells were available and no doubt laying an adequate number of eggs for next year. The ChalkHill Blue in July had a very unhappy time but in that month the Small Blue had asurprisingly strong second brood despite the poor weather.

The Common Blue was widespread both in location and in times of appearance, as also was the Brown Argus which one normally expects to find in Rock Rose country but on 16th August a female was seen to lay an egg on a small isolated plant of Dovesfoot Cranesbill (*G. molle*) above the cliffs near Dancing Ledge; and on examining the leaf five other eggs were found, and five more on the other two small leaves of the plant.

Two male Silver Studded Blues were seen very early at Arne amongst the heather on 19th June. On 14th May a Green Hairstreak was seen with a Small Blue and a Dingy Skipper feeding on mud below the downs at Ulwell, surely an unusual sight in this country.

PHIL GREY

MEMBERSHIP FORMS.

The Committee have now put together a membership form for the Dorset Branch of the BBCS. We thank Mike Murless and Arthur Bryant for their efforts in producing this leaflet. The form will be distributed to the Butterfly farms within the county and will also be on show at future sales stands at indoor meetings, and the Dorchester Show.

BUTTERFLIES AT FONTMELL - THE SEASON REPORT.

The start of a new butterfly season on the transect walks is always interesting. In a sense the weather at the time is of secondary importance. The maximum totals for the butterflies have probably already been to some extent fixed by the previous year's weather; did the females have good sunny weather when they were laying? What sort of conditions did the young larvae have to contend with? In what form did the butterfly pass the winter? If it was mild and rather wet, as was certainly the case at Fontmell, how will it influence the survival of eggs or larvae or chrysalids?

Altogether the early summer counts on Fontmell have not suggested a good butterfly year. While Dingy and Grizzled Skippers did not fare much worse than last year, and in nearby Stubhampton Bottom even improved a little, the numbers of Orange Tips and Green Hairstreaks both fell by over 50%. The first brood of the Adonis Blue dropped to about half of the two broods of 1987. It seemed unlikely to be a Holly Blue recovery year as, like last year, none were counted from the first brood. Nor did any first brood Wall Browns appear to dispel the gloom after their total absence last year on most of inland Dorset transects. Duke of Burgundies started well but came to an abrupt end of season halt as the weather worsened.

With the late summer weather getting worse and worse the omens for the rest of the season looked very unfavourable. The Dark Green Fritillary, which enjoyed counts of 80 and 72 in 1986 and 1987, sank to a low of 5 and most other mid to late summer butterflies like Marbled White, Ringlet and Large Skipper seemed well below their normal counts. The only bright star on the horizon was the recovery of the Chalkhill Blue, already at the time of writing above its 1987 total and seemingly with many more weeks to run.

It looks like a winter of research into weather figures, management grazing, grass height and scrub clearance records to search for reasons. Above all, a careful analysis of the counts on other reserves in Dorset and the rest of the country will need to be made. If the dismal showing of the Dark Green Fritillary is not confined to Fontmell, for example, then it may well be that the exceptionally mild winter proved fatal to the hibernating young larvae or perhaps the ova laying period on 1987 will need to be checked. If other reserves report a boom in Dark Green Fritillary numbers (although it must be admitted that so far the entomological grape-vine suggests that they have experienced similar problems) then the management style must be re-examined. In the meanwhile what dismal horrors are being stored up for next year in the clammy cloud which confronts me in this last week in August as I write this.....?

BILL SHREEVES

BUTTERFLY TRANSECT WALKING.

DORSET BRANCH BBBS TO CO-ORDINATE LOCAL SCHEME.

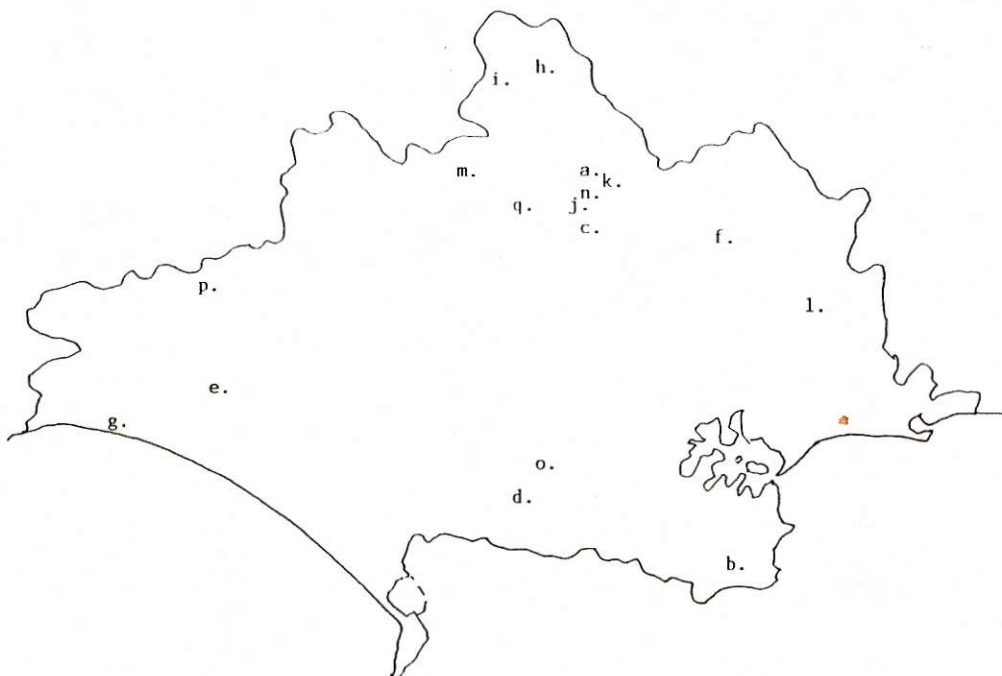
Once many areas of Dorset began to become Nature Reserves those of us interested in butterflies wanted to make sure that they were being looked after properly. Many reserves had no full time professional wardens to look after them and this made action of some kind even more important. Reserves have to be managed or they simply become overgrown and lose the species which they were designed to protect. But how could busy amateur management committees ensure that their programmes of scrub clearance, grazing and cutting were not harming the butterflies?

In the 1970's Dr Pollard and other researchers at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Monk's Wood devised a method for recording the fluctuations in the abundance of butterflies. A reserve was divided into sections or transects. For example transect 1 might be through woodland, transect 2 through scrub, and transect 3 through open grassland. A walk was then planned to pass through all the transects and the same route was followed by the butterfly walker at least once each week. As the walker proceeds a count of the numbers of butterflies from each species is kept and totalled up for each separate section of the walk. It was important that certain walking rules were constantly obeyed from week to week and from year to year. The whole point of the walk is not to produce an accurate count of the butterflies on the reserve but to measure any fluctuations from week to week or year to year. Failure to keep to the rules, summarised at the end of this article, would mean that any comparisons made say between the numbers seen in one year and another would not be valid. It can easily be seen that this idea of the transect walk was just what was needed to monitor the changes on nature reserves. If the management decided to cut the scrub or change the grazing density then the appropriate part of the walk would show whether this had a harmful or beneficial effect on butterfly numbers. The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Furzebrook in Dorset set up a walk in Swanage in 1976 which is still being operated today.

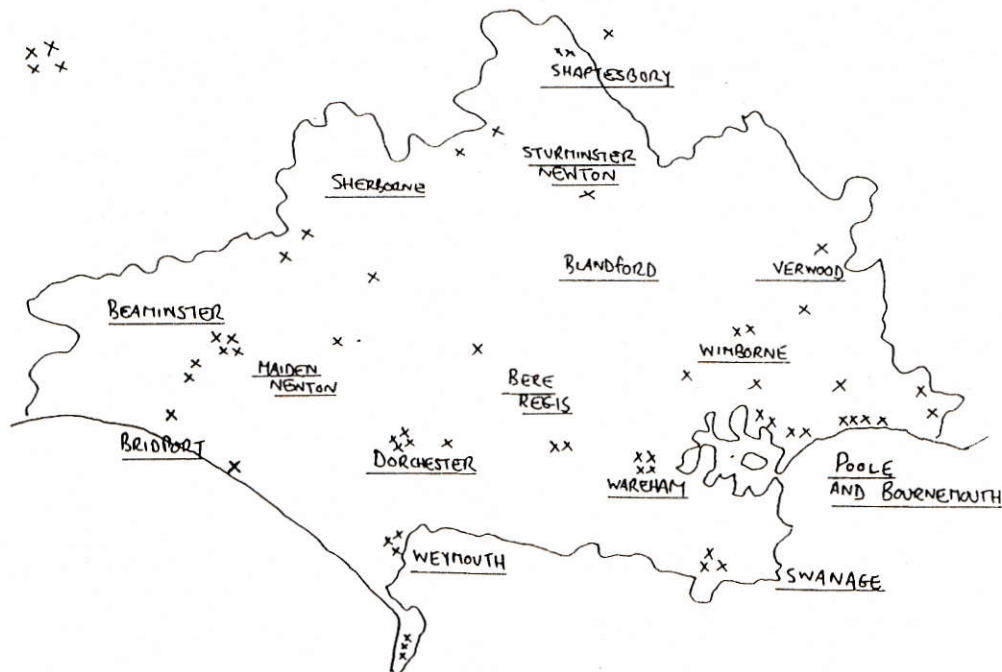
There are however several major difficulties in operating the original transect scheme in Dorset. Few Dorset reserves have a resident professional warden or research workers who can carry out the walk each week. The transect walking week begins on the week April 1st-7th and ends on the last week in September. This gives a total of 26 walking weeks; far too many for even a skilled amateur entomologist to undertake, especially when it is remembered that the only times likely to be free are traditionally wet British weekends! When the Conservation Officer for DTNC suggested that it would be useful to monitor the butterflies on Fontmell Down, the idea of a team transect walk was devised.

In March 1980 four amateur entomologists met to plan out which weeks they could walk and devise a route at Fontmell Down which would cover the main types of habitat and the known areas used by the different species of butterflies. From this 'Dad's Army' approach to the monitoring of butterflies on reserves sprang the present network of walks which now totals sixteen. From the table of walks shown at the end of this article it can be seen that there are many types of walk, some have a lot of different sectors or transects, some have only one, some are long and some are short. The walks are in woodland, over downland and heathland. The walkers themselves are as varied as the walks and habitats. Since 1980 Fontmell Down has been walked by schoolteachers, dentists, clergymen, nuns, nurses, housewives, retired ladies and gentlemen, the self-employed and the unemployed. The last three categories are much in demand with walk organisers as they can walk in mid-week when everyone knows the weather is much finer! Each march the volunteers meet to decide the walks and which weeks they will be able to operate. During the summer months they can be observed with clipboards or tape recorders following the routes marked out on their maps or sometimes by marker posts. In October, with the walking season now over, meetings are in progress to collate the records, interpret them and convey the findings to various management committees and also to the Dorset Environmental Records Centre.

One major problem however remained to be solved. If, say, the Common Blues on one reserve decline how are the management committee to know whether this is because of things they have done or because of extraneous factors like the weather? The reserves which have professional wardens to do their walks participate in the central scheme operated from Monk's Wood. Using a computer the reports are collated from all over the country and reserves can work out whether their butterflies have behaved in the same way as everyone else's or done something different. This central report has also been kindly made available free of charge for the Dorset walks to examine. However it is possible that Government funds may soon be withdrawn and in any case some of the Dorset walk organisers began to think that it might be useful to find a way of collating information about the Dorset Walk results. This has been done unofficially since 1985 but now that the BBCS Dorset Branch has offered to take the scheme under its wing it is hoped that this service will be much improved. If our plans are to succeed more walkers are always needed. Future editions of this newsletter will include descriptions of the transect walks and it is hoped that members of BBCS will feel inspired to try them out for themselves and perhaps join one of their local walk teams. If so please get in touch with the walk organiser (listed below). I should also like to know of any other walks not listed.



MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF DORSET TRANSECT WALKS.



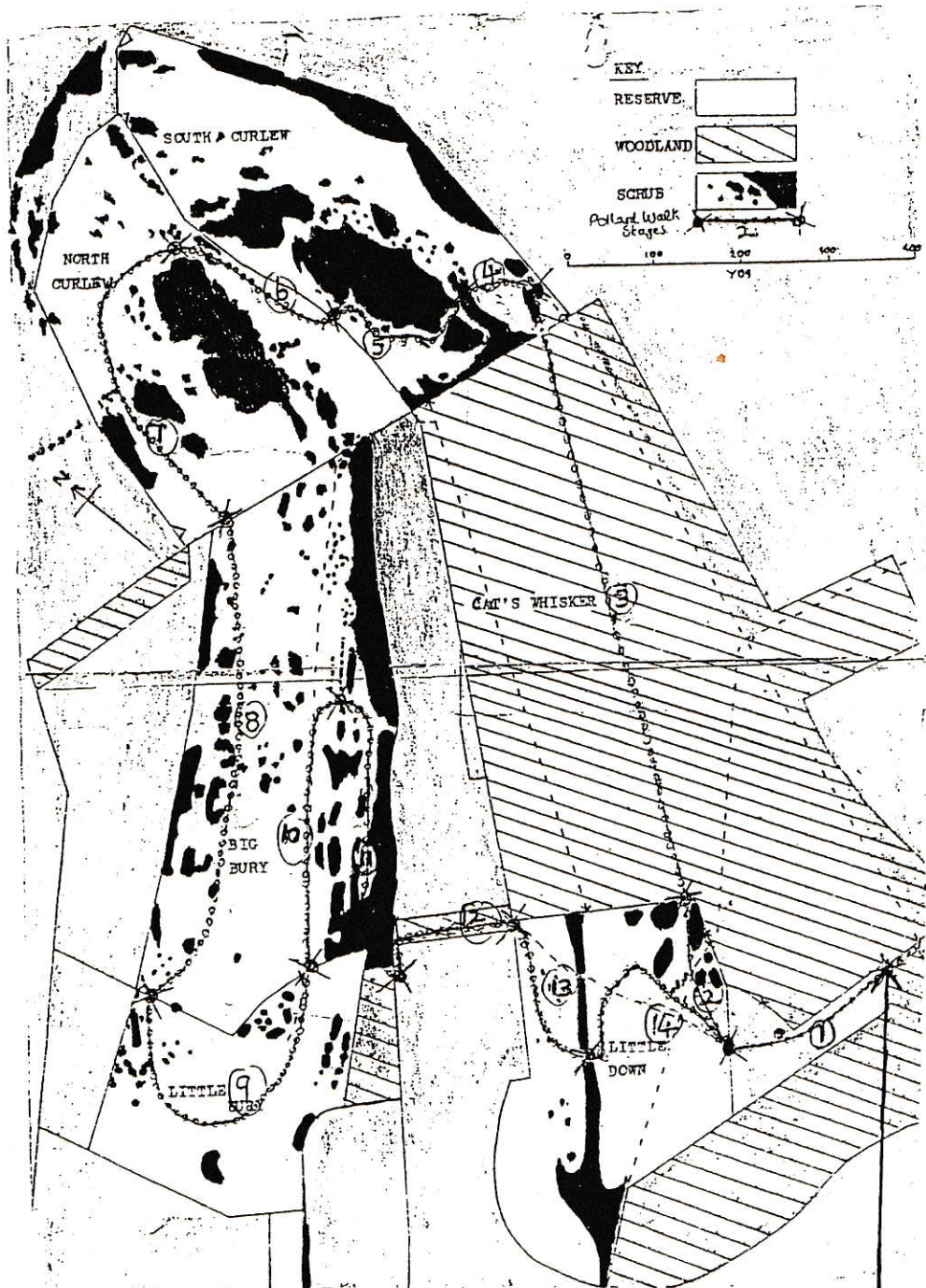
MAP SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF DORSET BRANCH MEMBERS.

DORSET TRANSECT WALKS - REFER TO MAP OPPOSITE FOR LOCATION

Key.	Area,	Map Ref.	Owner.	Habitat.	Sectors.	Start.	Organiser.
a.	Fontmell Down	884168	DTNC	Chalk Downland	14	1980	W.G. Shreeves Shaftesbury 2587
b.	Swanage	0281	Private	Chalk Downland		1976	Dr J. Thomas Wareham 51518
c.	Hod Hill	858108	NT	Chalk Downland	9	1982	J. Tubb 0425 54570
d.	Tadnoll	7987	DTNC	Heathland	7	1982	Tony Bates 0929 471563
e.	Powerstock	537965	DTNC	Woodland	6	1985	Robert Smith 0308 862764
f.	Sovell	993109	DTNC	Chalk Downland	5	1985	Bill Shreeves Shaftesbury 2587
g.	Newlands Batch	3893	DTNC	Woodland	9	1986	M. Torbett 0308 24856
h.	Duncliffe Wood	816222	WT	Woodland	5	1986	Brian Dicker 0963 32453
i.	Fifehead Wood	778217	WT	Woodland	5	1986	David Carter 91 820823
j.	Hambledon	846124	NT	Chalk Downland	13	1986	J. Tubb 0425 54570

k.	Stubhampton	896167	Private	Woodland	2	1985	Bill Shreeves
<hr/>							
l.	West Moors	0904	RAOC	Heathland		1985	Mr K Powrie 0202 876676
<hr/>							
m.	Lydlinch	735135	Private	Scrub Common	13	1987	Mr R Wheeler 0963 40158
<hr/>							
n.	Jerrys Hole	875165	DTNC	Scrub Grass	1	1985	Bill Shreeves
<hr/>							
o.	Oakers Wood	816920	Private	Wood/Heath		1987	Tony Bates 0929 471563
<hr/>							
p.	Bracketts Coppice	516072	DTNC	Woodland		1988	Dr J Thomas 0925 51518
<hr/>							
q.	Piddles Wood	7912	DTNC	Woodland		1989?	Brian Dicker
<hr/>							

FONTMELL DOWN



BUTTERFLY TRANSECT WALKS IN DORSET

FONTMELL DOWN. ST 885 178

This reserve is owned partly by the DTNC and the remainder is leased from the National Trust. The 143 acres of chalk downland is managed by a local committee with advice from DTNC Conservation Officer. From 1987 the Trust has grazed the reserve with its own sheep and, in late summer and autumn, with cattle from neighbouring farmers. For this reason it is important that any dogs are kept under control. Since the 1970s when the reserve was purchased, 41 species of butterfly have been recorded, but only 34 of these are recorded regularly. Collecting butterflies on the reserve is not allowed. The butterfly walk is monitored by a team of volunteers as no full time warden is employed here. The team hope this article will stimulate other BBCS members to assist them at this and the other seven walks which they monitor.

To find the start of the walk leave the A350 at Fontmell Magna and take the road to Ashmore. Before reaching the crossroads formed by the upper road to Shaftesbury from Blandford, park in a layby near the top of the hill (885168). Walk back down the hill a short way and go through the gate. Pass along a grassy track until you reach a wood. Go through the gate on your left and follow a path through a narrow strip of woodland. At the end of this path there is a gate and stile; this is the start of the walk.

To some extent the route is marked by white topped posts. At the end of each section there is an orange topped marker which indicates the number of the next section. Sheep, cattle and people meddle with these posts so you will most likely need the map! There are fourteen sections and the route takes about two hours. The butterflies mentioned will of course only be present at the appropriate time of the year.

Section 1; takes you through semi-improved grassland. Management policy is to cut this for hay. Not much here apart from Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers along the edge of the wood and the odd Small Copper. When you reach the corner of the wood keep straight on across the field until you reach the gate and stile which mark the end of this section.

Section 2; takes you across the stretch of downland known as Little Down. At present this is grazed by cattle in the autumn. The spring display of yellow cowslips is replaced in early summer by the darker shades of Yellow Rattle and in late summer by the blues and purples of Scabious and Knapweed. This area of longer grass favours Marbled White, Small Skipper and Meadow Brown. From the gate walk to your right and slightly downhill towards the wood. You will reach a slightly embanked path which will lead to a gate and stile which are the entrance to the strip of woodland known as Cats Whisker.

Section 3; this woodland section is not very good for butterflies. Cats Whisker was planted with mostly beech and conifer between the two wars on what was originally chalk downland. It is hoped to widen the rides and replace the conifers with deciduous trees but this will be a gradual process. If you pass through section 3 before lunch you will not see much. Later though the Speckled Woods are about guarding their territories and many Ringlets will be evident. In late summer the edge of the ride comes alive with Hemp Agrimony which attracts pre hibernating Vanessa's and the occasional Silver Washed Fritillary. Walk straight along the ride and pass over the gate and stile at the far end. If counting though keep on to the end of the scrub at the point where the path hits a small chalk quarry. Turn left and pause at the top of the embankment.

Here you have the best view of the reserve with the magnificent drop to the dry valley below. You now make a steep descent down the west facing chalk downland known as South Curlew. Walk more or less straight down the slope heading for a gap through the scrub at the bottom.

Section 4; is very short and ends as soon as the scrub closes in on either side. The shorter turf favours Small Heaths. Once into the scrub you are in Section 5; On your left and right you should pass tracks cut in order to break up the scrub and encourage the growth of Wild Strawberry and Violets for the Grizzled Skippers and Dark Green Fritillary. Pass through a narrow gap in the

scrub and on your left a magnificent Whitebeam. Keep walking downhill but before reaching the fence at the bottom turn right across the clearing below the scrub. The grass here tends to be very long and the committee plans to cattle graze in the autumn in order to create the right conditions for cowslips to regenerate. This is Duke of Burgundy territory. If you are lucky when you reach the shorter grass amphitheatre in the corner of the scrub you may find several males perching on their territories and engaging in aerial combat. At this point walk downhill to the gate and out of the section.

Section 6; starts by turning right up the valley. An 18th century estate map shows that this section was once farmed in small strips. However the normal chalk downland species of plants are gradually re-establishing themselves. This section is particularly favoured by Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and also by Common Blues. It is worth pausing in this area as often a visiting Marsh or Pearl Bordered Fritillary puts in a guest appearance. You now turn left and begin to climb out of the valley and into

Section 7; this section is known as North Curlew. These next four sections are probably the most important on the reserve. They are South facing chalk downland. It is here that the ChalkHill Blue and the Adonis Blue occur and also the last surviving colony in Dorset of Silver Spotted Skipper. Here you can also see the serious problem which the reserve management committee face. Research has shown that Adonis Blue and Silver Spotted Skipper only flourish on grassland of a few centimetres in height and with bare earth revealed. Such conditions were obtained in the past by intensive sheep grazing and heavy rabbit infestation. These days this is hard to perpetuate and there is a never ending battle against scrub and Slender False Brome Grass (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) which threatens to spread up from the bottom of the slope and join hands with the gorse moving down from the top. If they succeed then the rarer shorter turf species will become past memories. Keep moving leftwards up the slopes of North Curlew following a sheep track. Near the top follow a track and hopefully walk markers along a course near the fence at the top of the slope but below the gorse. The gate and stile mark the start of

Section 8; known as Big Bury. Keep to a series of sheep tracks which take a course below the gorse and sometimes pass through patches of scrub. Each patch of scrub usually boasts a Speckled Wood, a gaggle of Gatekeepers and even a Green hairstreak. Watch out for the occasional flash of passing orange which could indicate a Dark Green Fritillary but beware the day flying Oak Eggar Moth. Another gate and stile mark the start of

Section 9; called Little Bury. Walk slightly to the left and downhill towards a gap in the scrub. Soon you should reach the edge of a steep drop. Below is a small enclosure which was made to grow Kidney Vetch, the foodplant of the Small Blue. The aim is to re-introduce this species to the reserve. It once existed on a patch of land belonging to a farmer in the valley bottom but was accidentally grazed out. Turn left along the edge of the steep drop and then right down a gentler slope to a path at the bottom. Turn left here and head towards another gate and stile. The slopes at different times of the year are blue, pink and white with milkwort, yellow with Horseshoe Vetch, the food plant of the Adonis and ChalkHill Blues, and white with eyebright. Look out for the dwarf low lying thistles as these are favoured by feeding Silver Spotted Skippers and Dark Green Fritillaries. The stile marks the start of

Section 10; which passes along the bottom of Big Bury. Watch out here for the translucent blue-green male Adonis Blue which in a good year set up patrol territories all along the foot of the bank to the left of the path. On the banks look for the Yellow Rock Rose which is the foodplant of the Brown Argus. Keep straight along the path until you can see a large gap in the scrub which leads down to a gap in the hedgerow at the bottom of the down. Turn right and head into the scrub at this point. When you reach the grassy area surrounded by scrub you are in

Section 11; Turn right and follow a sheep track which passes through a long

thin glade surrounded by scrub. In early summer look out for Green Hairstreaks in the scrub and Duke of Burgundies on territorial duty in the small scalloped inlets along the hedgerow. This is a favourite spot also, but later in the year for the Large Skippers, which when disturbed return to the same perch more often than not. On a fine summer day in late summer large clumps of Marjoram give off a herbal aroma which attracts many ChalkHill, Adonis and Common Blues, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers and the occasional Brown Argus. When the path narrows and reaches a clearing, a stile can be detected hidden in the scrub to the left. Below the stile are a series of wooden steps cut into the steep slope which terminate at another stile and bring this section to an end. Section 12; here you will need to turn left and then right through a shady shelter belt. This is the only part of the walk which does not belong to the DTNC but the farmer owner has kindly allowed access to those walking through the transect. Apart from Speckled Woods there is little to be seen here. However when the Privet hedge is in flower look out for Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admirals and, in favourable years, Painted Ladies. The stile at the end of this shelter belt leads on to

Section 13; 'Little Down below the hedge' - this area is perhaps of more interest to orchid lovers than butterfly walkers! After the glut of Cowslips the area holds Early Purple, Twayblade, Butterfly, Common Spotted, Fragrant and Pyramidal Orchids. From the stile walk to the right on a diagonal towards a narrow gap in the hedgerow. This is now

Section 14; 'Little Down above the Hedge' - holds Green Hairstreaks in the hedge and Small Coppers and Dukes in the sheltered inlets. Pass through a 'tight' passage between some scrub and embankment. This is not a section for rarities but is usually well populated with the longer grass species like Marbled White and meadow Brown. If you can spare a moment look for Clustered Bellflower and Frog Orchid. Part way along the embankment climb up to the right and head for the gate and stile at the top of the down.

You are now back at the end of Section 1 and can retrace your steps back to your car. If you would like more information about Fontmell or would like to help please contact; Bill Shreeves, 5, Butts Mead, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP6 8NS or telephone Shaftesbury 2587. Look out in DTNC Newsletter for meets and guided walks.

NEWS SNIPPETS.

The branch tried to organise a line in scientific papers for our sales stand but although the authors of these documents are in favour of the idea there is unfortunately a copyright on the original script by the scientific journals in which they were first published in. If you are interested in any of these the new titles are published in the BBCS National Newsletter and you can order photocopies of these from your local library if you need them.

Thanks also to everybody who donated money to the branch. Les Clements will write soon to thank those members concerned.

Please let your feelings be known to the committee about the way in which the branch is being run. We need feedback to tell us if you like or dislike the type of events that are organised and of course we welcome any suggestions and ideas which you may have.

Any articles or news items considered worthy of publishing should be sent to the Editor. The deadline for the Spring Edition is MARCH 1ST 1989

In my younger days I found it difficult to believe that butterflies could migrate over long distances. It had to be accepted that certain butterflies and moths came to England from the Continent by flying the Channel under favourable conditions, but stories about the American Monarch arriving here having crossed the Atlantic seemed rather far-fetched, despite the prevailing wind and the choice they had of starting from Newfoundland. It was not until March 1974, when one could still travel in serenity by sea from Cape Town to Southampton, that something happened which obliged me to alter my outlook. We were three days homeward bound from Cape Town on a warm and flat tropical night, when I noticed a large



number of butterflies coming aboard at about 11 pm - from an Easterly direction. At that time we were 15 degrees south of the Equator and 600 miles from the nearest land, halfway between the coast of Angola and the island of St Helena. The insects settled near the various lights and on the passenger decks I counted over 100 specimens, of which a quarter were females. There must have been many more, but by morning they had all disappeared. The butterfly was *Hypolimnas misippus*, a nymphalid of up to three inches in wingspan. The male is velvet black with a large white spot on each wing, fringed with violet or iridescent blue. The female is quite different, being an accurate mimic of another migrant - the African Monarch (*Danaus chrysippus*) and being golden brown and distasteful to birds. *Misippus* is a native to the whole of tropical Africa where it breeds in large numbers early in the year. I have seen it in Rhodesia and in some years it travels as far south as Cape Town. The species is well known in India where it apparently has established itself and it appears to be known in other places but suitable larval foodplants are not always available. Since my humbling experience I have gleaned much information regarding *Misippus* migration. Westward from Africa it is known on the islands of St Helena and Ascension. It is also present sporadically on several islands in the West Indies. One can only surmise how it reached that far but probably from the coasts of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Eastwards, *Misippus* reaches the Seychelles, which lie 1000 miles from the coast of Kenya. It has also been found on Christmas Island in the Atlantic Ocean. It would be interesting to hear from other members who have knowledge of locations outside Africa of this amazing migrant.

BUTTERFLIES AT JUNIPER HALL.

Sunday 17th July was not only my birthday but it was also the day that the London Branch of the BBCS organised a Butterfly Festival at Juniper Hall, a field studies centre near Leatherhead. With a little persuasion my family and I spent a very enjoyable day there looking at butterflies from all sorts of angles and aspects.

The first thing which struck me was how relaxed the organisation was, but nevertheless, very efficient. Amongst other things there were displays of books on butterflies; butterfly stamps, and of course the real thing. These were to be seen in a number of breeding/flight cages. However if you were of stout enough mind and body you could take a walk on the nearby Downs and view the real thing. The weather though was not very good and much too windy so I decided not to venture forth. However there were many lectures and also demonstrations on a very wide range of topics and I prevailed myself on the lecture concerning butterfly photography. This lecture was in fact well attended and proved to be very interesting.

The laboratory held a number of microscopic exhibits. The details of many parts of butterflies were on view. It was essential to get ones eyes properly into focus in order to get the most out of this part of the exhibition. Some of the patterns on the wings made the scales were certainly worthy of an artist. There was in fact a small display of paintings and drawings which was fascinating - unfortunately though the prices of these were a little above my pocket. I only wished that I had had some of the talents which these exhibitors demonstrated.

However there was one display quite definitely 'above' - that of the British Gas Hot Air Balloon. This offered tethered rides to the winners of the raffle. The first two winners of the raffle were not available(sensible people) but I was third. At a height of only thirty or forty feet one certainly gets a different perspective of the world. This effect was strongly emphasised when the balloon listed some forty five degrees at times! The ground looked very hard from up there, but as the weather rapidly deteriorated the pilot thankfully returned to 'terra firma' .

A talk with the London Branch Chairman gave an insight to the organising required to stage such an event and also of course the publicity which goes with it. The day proved to be very enjoyable and I believe profitable for the London Branch. An event on similar lines here in Dorset could possibly benefit our local branch.

MR. B. L. WEEKS.

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